

BUZZ

REVIEWS

SHOW FOLK

HOT TICKET

THEATER BUFF

BEYOND BROADWAY

ABOUT US



THE BROADWAY BLOG

[Home](#) > [Show Folk](#) > [Every Act of Life: An Evening Celebrating Terrence McNally](#)

SHOW FOLK

EVERY ACT OF LIFE: AN EVENING CELEBRATING TERRENCE MCNALLY



Celebrating Terrence McNally's birthday at 92nd Street Y. (Photo: Rod Morata/Michael Priest Photography)

By Winnie McCroy

On Sunday, October 21, the 92nd Street Y observed playwright Terrence McNally's 80th birthday with a screening of Jeff Kaufman's documentary *Every Act of Life*, a panel discussion, and performances featuring Christine Baranski, Nathan Lane, Michael Urie and more.

In opening remarks, Kaufman called McNally, "a pioneer working on LGBTQ rights since before Stonewall" whose life was "a story only Hollywood could tell." Across the aisle, Baranski tipped her head to laugh, her buttery highlights shimmering as the house lights went down. Kaufman's 93-minute documentary (on Amazon November 6) outlined McNally's life since his move from Corpus Christi to New York City, an incredibly handsome, young, aspiring playwright.

Peter McNally said neighbors never knew what to make of his brother, "a teenager producing operas in our garage," also admitting their mother never truly accepted her son's sexual orientation.

McNally was self-effacing, saying "I don't need to talk about myself; it's all in my plays." Still, the documentary explores McNally's lasting legacy breaking barriers in both playwrighting and the struggle to live an actualized life as a gay man.



BUZZ

REVIEWS

SHOW FOLK

HOT TICKET

THEATER BUFF

BEYOND BROADWAY

ABOUT US



Celebrating Terrence McNally's birthday at 92Y. (Photo: Rod Morata/Michael Priest Photography)

The documentary outlined hits including *Ragtime*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Mothers and Sons*, and 20 more. Footage charted McNally's four Tony and three Drama Desk Awards, including Lily Tomlin presenting the 1996 Tony for *Master Class*. Stars spoke of their love for McNally, including Audra McDonald, Lynn Ahrens, and Nathan Lane.

And Kaufman didn't sweep McNally's personal life under the rug, giving due time to relationships including his early dalliance with Edward Albee, who said McNally had "the most beautiful face" he'd ever seen. Albee wouldn't publicly acknowledge McNally, and one closeted relationship followed another, including actor Robert Drivas, who died of AIDS-related complications in 1986.

Rita Moreno, Billy Porter, Doris Roberts and F. Murray Abraham weighed in on McNally's life and work, and best friend Tom Roos talked about how McNally admitted that more than fame, he "wanted to be happy, in love, and in a good relationship."

McNally took risks, from critical flop *Things That Go Bump in the Night* to the Rita Moreno project *The Ritz*, set in a gay bathhouse. But he was drinking heavily and steadily going downhill. After he spilled his drink on Lauren Bacall at Stephen Sondheim's party, Angela Lansbury pulled him aside for an intervention, begging him not to let booze end his brilliant writing career.

By then, AIDS was decimating the community, impacting plays like *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*; *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*; and the seminal gay work *Love! Valour! Compassion!* Later hits include *The Full Monty*, *The Visit*, and *Mothers and Sons*.

Love! Valour! Compassion! Trailer



In 2003, McNally partnered with Broadway producer Tom Kirdahy; they married in 2010 and renewed their vows in June 2015 with Mayor Bill de Blasio officiating. McNally is currently working on three new plays.



[BUZZ](#) [REVIEWS](#) [SHOW FOLK](#) [HOT TICKET](#) [THEATER BUFF](#) [BEYOND BROADWAY](#) [ABOUT US](#)

adding “quite frankly, it brings up emotions.”

Lane recalls McNally consoling him by promising a role; he ended up in *Lisbon Traviata*, saying, “you want to work with the best people, and Terrence is one of them.” Baranski noted how beautifully McNally writes for women. Ahrens admitted while they sometimes butted heads, “our work seems to mesh very well. I know where not to musicalize, and to let his words just *be*.”

Said Kaufman, “Terrence’s work is so fresh and new even now that I hope people keep exploring it,” adding that his favorite sight was “Terrence and Tom at their home in the Hamptons sitting on their couch, so sweet and loving and real together.”

The evening ended with performances: Lane and Baranski reprised a scene from *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*; Michael Urie and Michael Benjamin Washington paired with Nick Blaemire and Justin Quakenbush for *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, and Christy Altomare sang “Journey to the Past” from the Broadway musical *Anastasia*. The audience returned the favor, singing “Happy Birthday” as they presented McNally with a cake.

Winnie McCroy is a longtime arts & entertainment writer who lives in Brooklyn with her wife and her giant Rottweiler, Dixie Carter. For more of her reviews, visit winniemccroy.com.

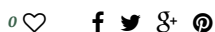
Like

CHRISTINE BARANSKI

MICHAEL URIE

NATHAN LANE

TERRENCE MCNALLY



previous post

On the Street Where She Lived: Margo Seibert

CATEGORIES

> Beyond Broadway

> Buzz

> Hot Ticket

> Reviews

> Show Folk

> Theater Buff

YOU MAY ALSO LIKE

**DON'T MISS: JUSTIN SAYRE'S FINAL
SEASON OF THE MEETING* AT JOE'S
PUB**

January 22, 2017

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: LEA DELARIA

June 27, 2014

**BEBE NEUWIRTH'
LIVE AT**

Novem



FACEBOOK



TWITTER



RSS

@2017 - PassportMagazine. All Right Reserved.

^
BACK TO TOP