

# TERRENCE McNALLY

b. November 3, 1938

d. March 24, 2020

## PLAYWRIGHT

*"I think the theatre teaches us who we are, what our society is, where we are going."*

**Terrence McNally is a Tony award-winning American playwright and screenwriter.**

Terrence McNally is an award-winning American playwright whose career spans five decades. His work, which delves into themes of family, war, sexuality and religion, has earned him four Tony Awards.

Raised in Texas, McNally moved to New York City to attend Columbia University. His first job was as a tutor for John Steinbeck's children. During this time, McNally wrote his first play, and Steinbeck asked him to write the libretto for the musical based on his novel "East of Eden."

McNally spent much of his early career writing and submitting works to theater companies around the country. At the famous Actors Studio, he met the playwright Edward Albee, with whom he became romantically involved.

McNally's first play was a flop, but he went on to write several successful off-Broadway shows, including "Witness" and "Sweet Eros." His breakout, "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune," was later adapted into a film starring Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer. Several of McNally's plays have been adapted for the screen.

McNally's "Lips Together, Teeth Apart," about two married couples who spend a weekend on Fire Island, is a landmark play about AIDS. McNally also explored gay themes in the book for the musical "Kiss of the Spider Woman," for which he won his first Tony Award. His play "Love! Valour! Compassion!" earned him another Tony Award for its portrayal of eight gay men facing issues of fidelity, love and happiness. In 1996 McNally was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame.

McNally's controversial play "Corpus Christi" depicts a modern-day Jesus as a homosexual. The Manhattan Theater Club, the first company to consider staging it, received death threats and temporarily canceled the production before enjoying a successful run. The play continues to spark controversy.

In 2014 McNally's play "Mothers and Sons" opened on Broadway. It explores the relationship between a mother and her dead son's former gay partner. The play revisits McNally's 1990 television movie, "Andre's Mother," for which he won an Emmy Award.

McNally and his partner, Thomas Kirdahy, married in Vermont in 2003 and again in Washington, D.C., in 2010. In 2020 McNally died from complications of the novel coronavirus. His collection of works and notes are held in an open archive at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.



© GETTY IMAGES

**lgbt**<sup>™</sup>  
**HISTORY**  
**MONTH**

[www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com](http://www.lgbtHistoryMonth.com)

Copyright ©2016 – A Project of Equality Forum