

# MART CROWLEY

b. August 21, 1935

d. March 7, 2020

# PLAYWRIGHT

*"I had no agenda in writing this play except expressing myself."*

**He advanced gay representation onstage with his groundbreaking play, "The Boys in the Band."**

Mart Crowley was a gay American playwright famous for "The Boys in the Band" (1968), a groundbreaking play that shocked mainstream audiences with its open, unapologetic portrayal of gay life.

The son of an alcoholic father and a drug-abusing mother, Edward Martino "Mart" Crowley was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi. He attended an all-boys Roman Catholic high school and studied theater at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. He earned his bachelor's degree in 1957 and moved to New York City.

In New York, Crowley worked as a personal assistant for the film director Elia Kazan. He later worked for the actress Natalie Wood, who encouraged Crowley to write.

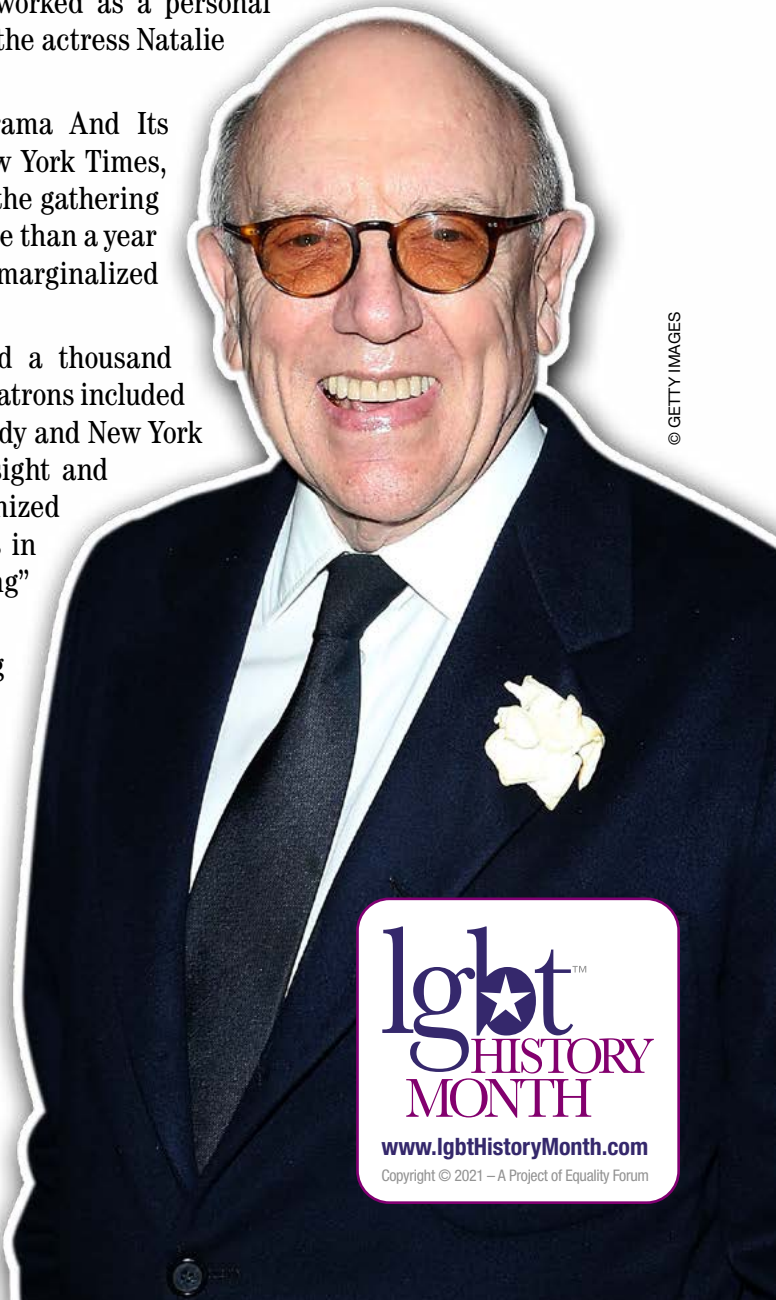
Inspired by a controversial article titled "Homosexual Drama And Its Disguises" by Stanley Kauffman, a theater critic for The New York Times, Crowley penned his first play, "The Boys in the Band." About the gathering of gay men for a birthday party, it premiered Off Broadway more than a year before the Stonewall riots, at a time when homosexuality was marginalized and vilified.

"The Boys in the Band" ran for more than two years and a thousand performances, attracting both gay and straight theatergoers. Patrons included prominent figures such as former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and New York City Mayor John Lindsay. The play earned praise for its insight and honesty. A film adaptation was released in 1970. As the organized gay rights movement gained momentum, however, "The Boys in the Band" drew criticism for its reinforcement of "unflattering" gay stereotypes.

Crowley wrote and produced five additional plays, including "The Men From the Boys" (2002), a sequel to "The Boys in the Band." He wrote for television, including the popular ABC mystery series "Hart to Hart," which he produced. Crowley also appeared in several documentaries.

In 2009 Crowley won a Lambda Literary Award for his collected plays. The same year, in celebration of its 50th anniversary, "The Boys in the Band" was restaged on Broadway. It earned Crowley a 2019 Tony Award for Best Revival. In 2020 Netflix released a cinematic adaptation of the work with many of the same Broadway actors.

Crowley died in New York from complications of heart surgery.



**lgbt**  
HISTORY  
MONTH

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

Copyright © 2021 – A Project of Equality Forum