

JERRY HERMAN

b. July 10, 1931

d. December 26, 2019

AWARD-WINNING COMPOSER

He was the Tony award-winning composer and lyricist for the hit musicals "Mame," "Hello Dolly!" and "La Cage aux Folles."

"Writing for me is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle."

Gerald "Jerry" Herman was an openly gay Broadway composer and lyricist best known for the smash musicals "Hello, Dolly!," "Mame" and "La Cage aux Folles." Herman was born in New York City and grew up in New Jersey. His family made frequent trips to the New York theater, which ignited his passion for Broadway musicals.

Herman spent his childhood learning the piano and writing songs. Every year he attended a summer camp owned by his parents. Before long, he was directing the camp's theater shows.

Herman attended Parsons School of Design in New York. A talented interior designer, he renovated more than 30 homes. After a year at Parsons, Herman left to pursue theater at the University of Miami. At the time, the college offered one of the most innovative theater programs in America.

In Miami, Herman wrote, produced and directed his first musical, "Sketchbook." The successful show ran for 17 additional performances beyond its original schedule.

Herman received his bachelor's degree in drama in 1953 and relocated to New York, where he worked with an Off Broadway revue. In 1961 the theater producer Gerard Oestreicher asked Herman to write the music and lyrics for "Milk and Honey." It was Herman's first full Broadway score.

In 1964, with David Merrick and Michael Stewart, Herman produced "Hello, Dolly!" The longest-running musical of its time, "Hello, Dolly!" won 10 Tony Awards, and the show's original cast recording was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. Multiple Broadway revivals have been produced since.

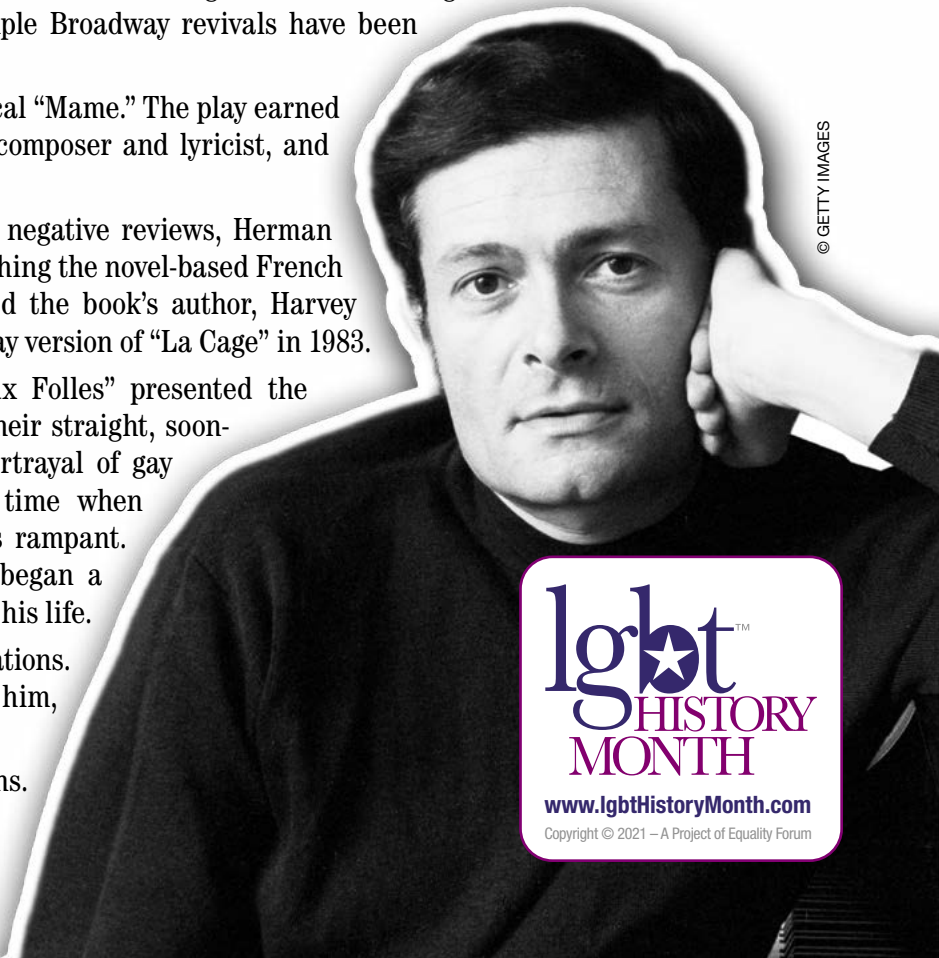
In 1966 Herman wrote the score for the hit musical "Mame." The play earned eight Tony Award nominations, including best composer and lyricist, and won three.

After several of his subsequent shows received negative reviews, Herman took a break. His inspiration returned after watching the novel-based French movie, "La Cage aux Folles." Herman contacted the book's author, Harvey Fierstein, and the two collaborated on a Broadway version of "La Cage" in 1983.

The winner of six Tony Awards, "La Cage aux Folles" presented the funny and touching story of a gay couple and their straight, soon-to-be married son. It provided a watershed portrayal of gay relationships and same-sex parenthood at a time when the AIDS epidemic raged and homophobia was rampant. Herman himself contracted HIV in 1985 and began a series of experimental drug therapies that saved his life.

Herman received numerous awards and nominations. The University of Miami named a theater after him, and the Kennedy Center honored him in 2010.

In 2019 Herman died of pulmonary complications. The New York Times published his obituary.



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