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Encyclopedia > Tony Kushner

Tony Kushner

Born [July 16, 1956](#) (age 51)
[New York City, New York](#)

Tony Kushner (born [July 16, 1956](#)) is an award-winning [American](#) playwright most famous for his play *Angels in America*, for which he was awarded the [Pulitzer Prize](#). He is also co-author of, along with [Eric Roth](#), the screenplay of the 2005 film *Munich*, which was directed by [Steven Spielberg](#) and earned Kushner (along with Roth) an [Academy Award](#) nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay.

He was born to a [Jewish](#) family in [Manhattan](#). His parents, William Kushner and Sylvia (Deutscher) Kushner, both classically trained musicians, moved to [Lake Charles, Louisiana](#), the seat of [Calcasieu Parish](#), shortly after his birth. During high school Kushner had a reputation in policy debate, at one point going to a camp, and making it to the final rounds. Kushner moved to New York in 1974 to begin his undergraduate college education at [Columbia University](#), where he completed a B.A. in Medieval Studies ^[1] in 1978. He studied directing at [New York University's](#) Graduate School, from which he was graduated in 1984. During graduate school, he spent the summers of 1978-1981 directing both early original works (*Masque of Owls* and *Incidents and Occurrences During the Travels of the Tailor Max*) and Shakespearean plays (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*) for the children attending the Governor's Program for Gifted Children (GPGC) in his home town of [Lake Charles, Louisiana](#).

Angels in America is a play in two parts. The first part is entitled *Millennium Approaches*, and the second is entitled *Perestroika*. Kushner's other plays include *Hydriotaphia, Slavs!: Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness*, *A Bright Room Called Day*, *Homebody/Kabul*, and the book for the musical *Caroline, or Change*. His new translation of [Bertolt Brecht's](#) *Mother Courage and Her Children* was performed at the Delacorte Theater in the summer of 2006 starring [Meryl Streep](#) and directed by [George C. Wolfe](#). Kushner has also adapted [S. Ansky's](#) play *The Dybbuk*.

In January 2006, a documentary feature about Kushner entitled *Wrestling With Angels* debuted at the [Sundance Film Festival](#). The film was directed by [Freida Lee Mock](#).

In April 2003 Kushner and his long-time partner, [Entertainment Weekly](#) editor Mark Harris, had a wedding ceremony in New York.

Kushner's plays are published by T C G and Broadway Play Publishing Inc.

Contents

- [1 Controversy over views on Israel and Zionism](#)
 - [1.1 Other statements](#)
- [2 Works](#)
 - [2.1 Plays](#)
 - [2.2 Books](#)
 - [2.3 Magazine contributions](#)
 - [2.4 Other works](#)
- [3 Interviews](#)
- [4 Career](#)
- [5 Awards and nominations](#)
- [6 Further reading](#)
- [7 External links](#)
- [8 References](#)

Controversy over views on Israel and Zionism

In an interview with the *Jewish Independent*, Kushner insisted that "I want the state of Israel to continue to exist. I've always said that. I've never said anything else. My positions have been lied about and misrepresented in so many ways. People claim that I'm for a one-state solution, which is not true." However, he later stated that he hopes that "there might be a merging of the two countries because [they're] geographically kind of ridiculous looking on a map," although he acknowledged that political realities make this unlikely in the near future.^[2]

Kushner's anti-Zionism has created some controversy in the Jewish community, including some opposition to his receiving an honorary doctorate at the 2006 commencement of Brandeis University. The Zionist Organization of America unsuccessfully lobbied for the university to rescind its invitation to Kushner. In the course of the controversy, quotes critical of Zionism and Israel made by Kushner were circulated. Kushner said at the time that his quotes were "grossly mischaracterized." Kushner told the *Jewish Advocate* in an interview "All that anybody seems to be reading is a couple of right-wing Web sites taking things deliberately out of context and excluding anything that would complicate the picture by making me seem like a reasonable person, which I basically think I am."^{[3][4][5]}

Other statements

On the issue of Israel, Kushner has stated that:

"there's a very strong democratic tradition in Israel – a secular, pluralist, democratic tradition in Israel. I believe that there's a great deal of jurisprudence and legislative history and executive action in Israel that supports a vision of Israel as a progressive, democratic, secular, pluralist state. I don't know how you reconcile that with the notion of Israel as a Jewish state and that's always been a question that I've had about it, but I leave that to Israel to work out. I believe that there are a lot of people in Israel who absolutely want to see the country equally enfranchise its Jewish citizens and its non-Jewish citizens, its Arab citizens, and I would hope that would be an ongoing struggle that resolves itself in the direction of pluralist, constitutional democracy; a secular, pluralist, constitutional democracy. And there's good reason to hope for that and I think that needs to be supported."^[2]

Works

Plays

- *The Age of Assassins*, New York, Newfoundland Theatre, 1982.
- *La Fin de la Baleine: An Opera for the Apocalypse*, New York, Ohio Theatre, 1983.
- *The Umbrella Oracle*, Martha's Vineyard, The Yard, Inc..
- *Last Gasp at the Cataract*, Martha's Vineyard, The Yard, Inc., 1984.
- *Yes, Yes, No, No: The Solace-of-Solstice, Apogee/Perigee, Bestial/Celestial Holiday Show*, produced in St. Louis, Missouri, Imaginary Theatre Company, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, 1985, published in *Plays in Process*, 1987.
- *Stella* (adapted from the play by Johann Wolfgang vonGoethe), produced in New York City, 1987.
- *A Bright Room Called Day*, produced in New York, Theatre 22,^[22 April 1985]; San Francisco, Eureka Theatre, October 1987; London, ^{Bush Theatre}, 1988), Broadway Play Publishing, 1991.
- *The Heavenly Theatre*, produced at New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, 1986.
- *In Great Eliza's Golden Time*, produced in St. Louis, Missouri, Imaginary Theatre Company, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, 1986.
- *Hydriotaphia*, produced in New York City, 1987 (based on the life on SirThomas Browne)
- *The Illusion* (adapted from Pierre Corneille's play ^{L'illusion comique}; produced in New York City, 1988, revised version produced in Hartford, CT, 1990), Broadway Play Publishing, 1991.
- *In That Day (Lives of the Prophets)*, New York University, Tisch School of the Arts, 1989.
- (With Ariel Dorfman) *Widows* (adapted from a book by Ariel Dorfman), produced in Los Angeles, CA, 1991.
- *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes Part One: Millennium Approaches* (produced in San Francisco, 1991), Hern, 1992.
- *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, Part Two: Perestroika*, produced in New York City, 1992.
- *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes (includes both parts)* Theatre Communications Group (New York, NY), 1995.
- *Slavs! Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness* Theatre Communications Group, 1995.
- *Reverse Transcription: Six Playwrights Bury a Seventh, A Ten-Minute Play That's Nearly Twenty Minutes Long*, Louisville, Humana Festival of New American Plays, Actors Theatre of Louisville, March 1996.
- *A Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds* (adapted from Joachim Neugroschel's translation of the original play by S. Ansky; produced in New York City at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, 1997), Theatre Communications Group, 1997.
- *The Good Person of Szechuan* (adapted from the original play by Bertolt Brecht), Arcade, 1997.
- (With Eric Bogosian and others) *Love's Fire: Seven New Plays Inspired by Seven Shakespearean Sonnets*, Morrow, 1998.
- *Terminating, or Lass Meine Schmerzen Nicht Verloren Sein, or Ambivalence, in Love's Fire*, Minneapolis, Guthrie Theater Lab, ^{7 January 1998}; New York: Joseph Papp Public Theater, ^{19 June 1998}.
- *Henry Box Brown, or the Mirror of Slavery*, performed at the Royal National Theatre, London, 1998.
- *Homebody/Kabul*, first performed in New York City, ^{19 December 2001}.
- *Caroline, or Change* (musical), first performed in New York at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, 2002.
- (Director) Ellen McLaughlin, *Helen*, produced at the Joseph Papp Public Theater, 2002.
- *Only We Who Guard The Mystery Shall Be Unhappy*, 2003.
- Translation with "liberties"—but purportedly "not an adaptation"—of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (2006)^[6]

Books

- *A Meditation from Angels in America*, HarperSan Francisco, 1994.
- *Thinking about the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness: Essays, a Play, Two Poems, and a Prayer*, Theatre Communications Group (New York, NY), 1995.
- Howard Cruse, *Stuck Rubber Baby*, introduction by Kushner (New York: Paradox Press, 1995).
- David B. Feinberg, *Queer and Loathing: Rants and Raves of a Raging AIDS Clone*, introduction by Kushner (New York: Penguin, 1995).
- ^{David Wojnarowicz}, *The Waterfront Journals*, edited by Amy Scholder, introduction by Kushner (New York: Grove, 1996).
- "Three Screeds from Key West: For Larry Kramer," in *We Must Love One Another or Die: The Life and Legacies of Larry Kramer*, edited by Lawrence D. Mass (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 191-199.
- Moises Kaufman, *Gross Indecency*, afterword by Kushner (New York: Vintage, 1997), pp. 135-143.
- *Plays by Tony Kushner* (New York: Broadway Play Publishing, 1999). Includes:
 - *A Bright Room called Day*
 - *The Illusion*

- *Slavs! Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness*
- *Death & Taxes: Hydrotaphia, and Other Plays*, Theatre Communications Group (New York, NY), 2000. Includes:
 - *Reverse transcription*
 - *Hydrotaphia: or the Death of Dr. Browne*, (adaptation of [Hydrotaphia, Urn Burial](#)) (A fictitious, imaginary account of Sir Thomas Browne's character not based upon fact)
 - *G. David Schine in Hell*
 - *Notes on Akiba*
 - *Terminating*
 - *East Coast Ode to Howard Jarvis*
- *Brundibar*, illustrated by [Maurice Sendak](#), Hyperion Books for Children, 2003.
- *Peter's Pixie*, by Donn Kushner, illustrated by Sylvie Daigneault, introduction by Tony Kushner, Tundra Books, 2003
- *The Art of Maurice Sendak: 1980 to the Present*, 2003
- *Save Your Democratic Citizen Soul!: Rants, Screeds, and Other Public Utterances*
- *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, with Alisa Solomon, Grove, 2003.

Magazine contributions

- "The Secrets of Angels," *New York Times*, [27 March 1994](#), p. H5.
- "The State of the Theatre," *Times Literary Supplement*, [28 April 1995](#), p. 14.
- "The Theater of Utopia," *Theater*, 26 (1995): 9-11.
- "The Art of the Difficult," *Civilization*, 4 (August/September 1997): 62-67.
- "Notes About Political Theater," *Kenyon Review*, 19 (Summer/Fall 1997): 19-34.
- "Wings of Desire," *Premiere*, October 1997: 70.
- "Fo's Last Laugh--I," *Nation*, [3 November 1997](#): 4-5.
- "Matthew's Passion," [1] *Nation*, [9 November 1998](#)
- "A Modest Proposal," *American Theatre*, January 1998: 20-22, 77-89.
- "A Word to Graduates: Organize!," *Nation*, [1 July 2002](#).
- "Only We Who Guard The Mystery Shall Be Unhappy," *Nation*, [24 March 2003](#).

Other works

- *La Fin de la Baleine: An Opera for the Apocalypse* (opera) 1983
- *St. Cecilia or The Power of Music*, (opera libretto based on Heinrich von Kleist's eighteenth-century story *Die heilige Cäcilie oder Die Gewalt der Musik, Eine Legendē*)
- *Brundibar*, (an opera in collaboration with Maurice Sendak)
- *Munich*, a film by Steven Spielberg (2005) - screenplay (co-written by)

Interviews

- Gerard Raymond, "Q & A With Tony Kushner," *Theatre Week* ([20-26 December 1993](#)): 14-20.
- Mark Marvel, "A Conversation with Tony Kushner," *Interview*, 24 (February 1994): 84.
- David Savran, "Tony Kushner," in *Speaking on Stage: Interviews with Contemporary American Playwrights*, edited by Philip C. Kolin and Colby H. Kullman (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1996), pp. 291-313.
- Robert Vorlicky, ed., *Tony Kushner in Conversation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).
- Victor Wishna, "Tony Kushner," in *In Their Company: Portraits of American Playwrights*, Photographs by Ken Collins, Interviews by Victor Wishna (New York: Umbrage Editions, 2006).

Career

- Governor's Program for Gifted Children, Lake Charles, LA, Drama Teacher, Director, Playwright, 1978-1981
- United Nations Plaza Hotel, New York City, switchboard operator, 1979-85
- St. Louis Repertory Theatre, assistant director, 1985-86
- New York Theatre Workshop, artistic director, 1987-88
- Theatre Communication Group, New York City, director of literary services, 1990-91
- [Juilliard](#) School of Drama, New York City, playwright-in-residence, 1990-92
- Guest artist at New York University Graduate Theatre Program, Yale University, and Princeton University, beginning in 1989.

Awards and nominations

Academy Award

- Nominated: Best Adapted Screenplay, [Munich](#) (2005)

Emmy Award

- Won: Outstanding Writing for a Miniseries, Movie or a Dramatic Special, [Angels in America](#) (2004)

Golden Globe Award

- Nominated: Best Screenplay, [Munich](#) (2005)

Tony Award

- Won: Best Author of a Play, *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* (1993)
- Won: Best Author of a Play, *Angels in America: Perestroika* (1994)
- Nominated: Best Book of a Musical, [Caroline, or Change](#) (2004)
- Nominated: Best Score, [Caroline, or Change](#) (2004)

Other Awards

- [Pulitzer Prize](#) for Drama
- Evening Standard Award
- Olivier Award Winner - Best New Musical - *Caroline, or Change*, 2007
- OBIE
- New York Drama Critics Circle Award
- American Academy of Arts and Letters Award
- Whiting Writers Fellowship
- Lila Wallace/Reader's Digest Fellowship
- National Foundation of Jewish Culture, Cultural Achievement award
- Honorary [Doctor of Letters](#) from [Pace University](#) on [May 25, 2004](#)
- Honorary Degree from [Brandeis University](#) on May 21, 2006

Further reading

- *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Gale (Detroit), Volume 81, 1994.
- Bloom, Harold, ed., *Tony Kushner*, New York, Chelsea House, 2005.
- Brask, Anne, ed., "Ride on the Moon", Chicago, Randomhouse, 1990.
- Brask, Per K., ed., *Essays on Kushner's Angels*, Winnipeg, Blizzard Publishing, 1995.
- Dickinson, Peter, "Travels With Tony Kushner and David Beckham, 2002-2004", in *Theatre Journal*, 57.3, 2005, pp. 229-50
- Fisher, James, *The Theater of Tony Kushner*, London, Routledge, 2002.
- Fisher, James, ed., *Tony Kushner. New Essays on the Art and Politics of His Plays* London, McFarland & Company, 2006.
- Geis, Deborah R., and Steven F. Kruger, *Approaching the Millennium: Essays on Angels in America*, University of Michigan Press, 1997.
- Klüßendorf, Ricarda, "The Great Work Begins". *Tony Kushner's Theater for Change in America*, Trier, WVT, 2007.
- Lioi, Anthony, "The Great Work Begins: Theater as Theurgy in Angels in America", in *CrossCurrents*, Fall 2004, Vol. 54, No 3
- Soltý, Ingar, "Tony Kushners amerikanischer Engel der Geschichte", in *Das Argument* 265, 2/2006, pp. 209-24 [\[2\]](#)

External links

- Film Site for Wrestling with Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner. A Documentary Film by Academy Award winner Freida Lee Mock
- Review of *Caroline, or Change* at the national theatre
- [Bio at Steven Barclay Agency](#)
- [Author interview in Guernica Magazine \(Guernicamag.com\)](#)
- Comedy on the Bridge and Brundibar, a collaboration with Maurice Sendak
- [Caroline, or Change in Washington, DC](#)
- [AfterElton.com Interview with Tony Kushner \(10/06\)](#)
- [Production: Caroline or Change Working in the Theatre](#) video at American Theatre Wing, 2004

References

1. [^] [PBS](#)
2. [^] ^{[a](#)} ^{[b](#)} Cynthia Ramsey. "Tony Kushner as film subject", *Jewish Independent*, August 24, 2007.
3. [^] Shayndi Raice. Brandeis graduation honoree draws fire. *The Jewish Advocate*. May 4 2006.
4. [^] Nicola Brodie. New controversy for Brandeis as school honors playwright Kushner. *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*. May 12, 2006.
5. [^] Tony Kushner. Letter to President Jehuda Reinharz, Brandeis University. April 25, 2006. Reprinted in *The Forward*. Accessed March 13, 2008.
6. [^] Kalb, Jonathan. "Still Fearsome, Mother Courage Gets a Makeover", *The New York Times*, [2006-08-06](#), p. 2.4. Retrieved on [2006-08-14](#).



Results from FactBites:

[Tony Kushner Collection](#) (485 words)

- ▶ **Tony Kushner** was born in [Manhattan](#) and raised in Lake Charles, Louisiana, the son of professional musicians.
- ▶ **Kushner** is the recipient of grants from the New York Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts, a 1990 Whiting Foundation Writer's Award, and an Arts Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, among others.
- ▶ **Tony Kushner**, the son of William and the late Sylvia **Kushner** was born in New York but graduated from Lake Charles High School.

[Tony Kushner - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#) (1306 words)

- ▶ **Tony Kushner** (born July 16, [1956](#)) is an award-winning American playwright most famous for his play *Angels in America*, for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize.
- ▶ He was born to a [Jewish](#) family in [Manhattan](#), but his parents, William **Kushner** and Sylvia (Deutscher) **Kushner**, both classically trained musicians, moved to Lake Charles, Louisiana, the seat of [Calcasieu Parish](#), shortly after his birth.
- ▶ **Kushner** moved to New York in [1974](#) to begin his undergraduate college education at [Columbia University](#), where he completed a B.A. in English literature in 1978.

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Anthony Robert Kushner (born July 16, 1956) is an American playwright, author and screenwriter. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1993 for his play *Angels in America*, then adapted it for HBO in 2003. He co-authored the screenplay for the 2005 film *Munich*, and he wrote the screenplay for the 2012 film *Lincoln*. Both films were critically acclaimed, and he received Academy Award nominations for Best Adapted Screenplay. He received a National Medal of Arts from President Barack Obama in 2013. Anthony Robert Kushner is an American playwright, author and screenwriter. He received the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1993 for his play *Angels in America*, then adapted it for HBO in 2003. He co-authored the screenplay for the 2005 film *Munich*, and he wrote the screenplay for the 2012 film *Lincoln*. Both films were critically acclaimed, and he received Academy Award nominations for Best Adapted Screenplay. For faster navigation, this Iframe is preloading the Wikiwand page for Tony Kushner. Home. News. Tony Kushner is Professor in the Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations and History Department at the University of Southampton. Educated at the University of Sheffield (BA and PhD) and the University of Connecticut (MA), he was formerly historian for the Manchester Jewish Museum.