

John Murrell
1945-2019

We're very sad to share news of the passing of John Murrell, O.C., 2008 Governor General's Performing Arts Awards laureate, playwright, librettist and translator. Mr. Murrell received the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards' Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award in 2008 and mentored playwright Anita Majumdar through the GGPAA Mentorship Program in 2013.

Mr. Murrell was born and raised in Texas and came to Calgary in 1969. He worked as a teacher until his play *Power in the Blood* won the Clifford E. Lee Award in 1975. He's perhaps best known for his 1977 play *Waiting for the Parade* or his 1978 play *Memoir* which has been translated into 15 languages and performed in 26 countries. In 2003, he was the librettist for the opera *Filumena* with composer John Estacio. Among the recognition for his work, he received three Chalmers Best Canadian Play Awards, the Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts and the Order of Canada in 2002, an honorary doctorate from the University of Calgary and the Governor General's Performing Arts Award.

Mr. Murrell served as Literary Advisor to Theatre Calgary and Alberta Theatre Projects, Associate Director of the Stratford Festival of Canada, Head of the Banff Playwrights Colony, Head of the Theatre Section of the Canada Council for the Arts, and Executive Artistic Director of Performing Arts at The Banff Centre, among others. In these capacities he made an invaluable contribution to the Canadian arts community by supporting emerging talent not only in theatre, but also in dance, opera, and the technical arts.

Of her GGPAA Mentorship Program mentor, Anita Majumdar, writer of *The Fish Eyes Trilogy*, wrote about her experience with Mr. Murrell and how they worked so well together.

"One of the first comments about my mentorship with John was that we seemed like an unlikely mentor/mentee pairing. I disagree. And I think John would have disagreed as well. Certainly, John was a Canadian icon, his plays are rooted in Canadian spirit and identity. Yet, I don't think my desire to capture Canadian identity is all that different from his; only my lived experience and lens. And that difference is what made both of us deeply interested in one another's process and approach to writing."

Mr. Murrell was a great supporter of the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards and we thank him for his contribution to the arts in Canada throughout his long career. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to his family, friends and colleagues.