

Spalding Gray

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Spalding Gray (June 5, 1941 – ca. January 10, 2004) was an American actor, screenwriter and playwright.

Contents

- 1 Career
- 2 Death
- 3 Posthumous works
- 4 Cultural references
- 5 Filmography
 - 5.1 Movies written and performed by Spalding Gray
 - 5.2 Actor
 - 5.3 Television
- 6 Bibliography
- 7 External links

Spalding Gray



Gray in the 1996 film *Gray's Anatomy*

Born	June 5, 1941 Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.
Died	ca. January 10, 2004 (aged 62) New York, New York, U.S.
Spouse(s)	Renée Shafransky (1991-1993) Kathleen Russo (1994-2004)

Career

After a few minor cinema roles and appearing in *The Farmer's Daughter*, a pornographic film, Gray first achieved national prominence with his film *Swimming to Cambodia*, a filmed version of one of his monologues. He based the monologue on his experiences in Southeast Asia while filming a small part in the 1984 movie *The Killing Fields*.

He attracted some attention from postmodernist critics over the extent of the overlap between his off-stage self and his on-stage persona. He was sometimes accused of appropriating the fortunes or misfortunes of others for material for his monologues. He was a founding member of the experimental theater company The Wooster Group. He also appeared in a Broadway revival of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*.

In the early 1990s, Gray published his first and only novel, *Impossible Vacation*. The novel is strongly based upon Gray's own life experiences, including his Christian Scientist upbringing, his WASP background, and his mother's suicide. True to form, Gray wrote a monologue about his experiences writing the book, entitled *Monster in a Box*.

In June 2001 he suffered severe injuries in a car crash while on holiday in Ireland. In January 2004, Gray, known to suffer bouts of depression in part as a result of these injuries, was declared missing. The night before

his disappearance he had seen Tim Burton's film *Big Fish*, which ends with the line "A man tells a story over and over so many times he becomes the story. In that way, he is immortal." Gray's widow, Kathie Russo, has said "You know, Spalding cried after he saw that movie. I just think it gave him permission. I think it gave him permission to die." (*New York Magazine* February 2, 2004)

Death

When Gray was first declared missing, his profile was featured on the FOX Network show *America's Most Wanted*.

On March 7, 2004, the New York City medical examiner's office reported that Gray's body had been pulled from the East River. It is believed that he jumped off the side of the Staten Island Ferry. In light of a suicide attempt in 2002, and the fact that his mother had taken her own life in 1967, suicide was the suspected cause of death. It was reported that Gray was working on a new monologue at the time of his death, and that the subject matter of the piece – the Ireland car crash and his subsequent attempts to recover from his injuries – might have triggered his final bout of depression.

Gray was survived by his wife, three children (stepdaughter Marissa, a writer, and sons Forrest Dylan Gray-- aka "Forrest Fire Gray," a musician with the band "Too Busy Being Bored," and Theo Spalding Gray, an actor), and his brothers Rockwell, an English professor in St. Louis, Missouri, and Channing, arts writer for the *Providence Journal*.

Posthumous works

In 2005, Gray's unfinished final monologue was published in a hardcover edition entitled *Life Interrupted: The Unfinished Monologue*. Running 39 pages, the monologue — which Gray had performed in one of his last public appearances — is augmented by two additional pieces he also performed at the time, a short remembrance called "The Anniversary" and an open letter to New York City written in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Also included in the book is an extensive collection of remembrances and tributes from fellow performers and friends.

Spalding Gray's voice is still being heard through the resurrection of his journal entries in the 2007 play *Spalding Gray: Stories Left to Tell* at the Minetta Lane Theatre in New York City. The concept for this play was derived by Gray's widow. The show includes a cast of four actors as well as one revolving cast member.

Cultural references

- A film adaptation of *Life Interrupted* is to be released in 2007, and is being directed by Steven Soderbergh.
- Currently, the play *Spalding Gray: Stories Left to Tell* is being performed by a cast of four and a rotating guest star, at the Minetta Lane Theatre in New York City.
- An article titled "What It Feels Like to Find Spalding Gray's Body" on page 91 in the August 2007 issue of *Esquire*, depicts the first hand experiences of the man who discovered Spalding Gray's body.
- In season one, episode 3 of *Family Guy*, Brian calls Peter Griffin the "Spalding Gray of crap" after Peter

tells an elaborate and unbelievable story.

Filmography

Movies written and performed by Spalding Gray

- *Swimming to Cambodia* (1987)
- *Spalding Gray: Terrors of Pleasure* (1988)
- *Monster in a Box* (1991)
- *Gray's Anatomy* (1996)

Actor

- *Cowards* (1970)
- *Love-In '72* (1972)
- *The Farmer's Daughter* (1973)
- *Little Orphan Dusty* (Uncredited, 1976)
- *Maraschino Cherry* (Uncredited, 1978)
- *Variety* (1983)
- *Almost You* (1984)
- *Hard Choices* (1984)
- *The Killing Fields* (1984)
- *The Communists Are Comfortable (And Three Other Stories)* (1985)
- *Seven Minutes in Heaven* (1985)
- *True Stories* (1986)
- *Beaches* (1988)
- *Stars and Bars* (1988)
- *Clara's Heart* (1988)
- *The Image* (1989)
- *Heavy Petting* (1989)
- *To Save a Child* (1991)
- *Straight Talk* (1992)
- *King of the Hill* (1993)
- *Zelda* (1993)
- *Twenty Bucks* (1993)
- *The Pickle* (1993)
- *The Paper* (1994)
- *Beyond Rangoon* (1995)
- *Bad Company* (1995)
- *Hoogste Tijd* (1995)
- *Glory Daze* (1996)
- *Buckminster Fuller: Thinking Out Loud* (1996)
- *Diabolique* (1996)
- *Bliss* (1997)
- *Drunks* (1997)
- *Coming Soon* (1999)

- *Revolution #9* (2001)
- *Julie Johnson* (2001)
- *How High* (2001)
- *Kate and Leopold* (2001)

Television

- *Saturday Night Live* (1 episode, 1977)
- *Spenser: For Hire* (1 episode, 1987)
- *Trying Times* (1 episode, 1987)
- *The Nanny* (9 episodes, 1997-1998)
- *The Mike O'Malley Show* (1 episode, 1999)

Bibliography

(All are based on monologues unless noted)

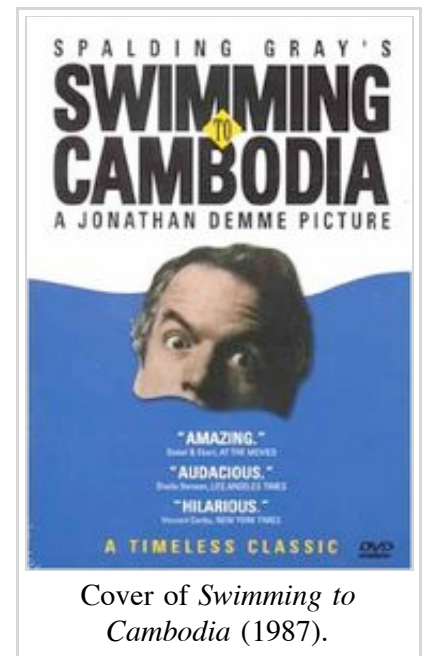
- *Rumstick Road* (1977)
- *Point Judith* (1979)
- *Swimming to Cambodia* (1985)
- *Rivkala's Ring* (in *Orchards*, 1985)
- *Sex and Death to the Age 14* (1986)
- *In Search of the Monkey Girl* (1987)
- *Monster in a Box* (1992)
- *Impossible Vacation* (novel, 1993)
- *Gray's Anatomy* (1994)
- *It's a Slippery Slope* (1997)
- *Morning, Noon and Night* (1999)
- *Life Interrupted: The Unfinished Monologue* (2005)

External links

- Spalding Gray (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0336960/>) at the Internet Movie Database
- Remembering Spalding Gray – Fresh Air Audio Archives (<http://www.npr.org/features/feature.php?wfId=1781976>) (NPR)
- Overview of Spalding Gray's Work (<http://www.spalding-gray.com>)
- Website and Homage from the Estate of Spalding Grey (<http://www.spaldinggray.com/home.html>)
- Spalding Gray's Last Interview (<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/pajj.2008.30.1.1>) , Theresa Smalec, PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art Jan 2008, Vol. 30, No. 1, (PAJ 88): 1–14.

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spalding_Gray"

Categories: Articles lacking sources from December 2007 | All articles lacking sources | American dramatists and playwrights | American film actors | American screenwriters | Former Christian Scientists | Emerson College alumni | Rhode Island actors | Writers who committed suicide | Actors who committed suicide |



Cover of *Swimming to Cambodia* (1987).

Deaths by drowning | 1941 births | 2004 deaths | New York City performance art

- This page was last modified 18:30, 5 January 2008.
 - All text is available under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License. (See **Copyrights** for details.)
- Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a U.S. registered 501(c)(3) tax-deductible nonprofit charity.