

## FACEBOOK TRIBUTES:

### HAL PRINCE

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Hal Prince died today. The first time I met Hal, composer Claibe Richardson and I were in the Prince office in Rockefeller Center to audition our musical, *“From The Bodoni County Songbook Anthology.”* While waiting for Claibe, I recall slowly panning a wall of legendary Broadway productions that Hal had either produced and/or directed (up to that time)— including “West Side Story,” “Fiddler On The Roof,” “Cabaret,” “Sweeney Todd,” and thinking that the only other wall at the time that could equal it would be the office wall of legendary Broadway producer David Merrick (*“Hello Dolly,” 42nd Street”*).

I recall an upright piano in Hal’s office and might have asked him if Stephen Sondheim or Kander and Ebb had played their new scores on it. Hal listened to the *“Bodoni County”* score and was generous, professional — and encouraging. Later, in my office at West Virginia University, I got a call from Hal — from Venice, Italy. He thought he had a venue for Bodoni. I met him again here in Pittsburgh at the William Penn Hotel. He was here to get an award. I was then the Artistic Director of The Carnegie Mellon “Showcase of New Plays,” and cheekily invited Hal to direct a play by one of our emerging playwrights. He graciously declined.

I last saw him and his lovely wife Judy on 5th Avenue on my way to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. I recall the moment, because I told him the sad news that Claibe was not well, and dying. He liked Claibe. He liked Claibe’s work.

At some point, Hal called me and asked if I’d be interested in trying to write a new book for the legendary Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer musical of the 1940s, *“St Louis Women.”* He loved that score. I tried, but I could never (sigh) find a way into that book.

Over the years we'd correspond. I sent him a copy of my novel, "*Anton's Leap*," that he read on one of his European trips; to Germany, as I recall. Liked it. Said it was very sexy. I had hoped to get into NYC to see "*The Prince Of Broadway*." He wrote me that the show had a limited run but they were interested in extending it. I never made it.

My favorite musical of all time is, "*A Little Night Music*." I saw Hal's glorious production of it during its initial run. Something about that production has stayed in some deep, bitter-sweet emotional memory part of me.

. . .Clichè, I know—but true, none-the-less: The Golden Age of the American Musical can be defined, in part, by the theatre life span of Harold Prince—and that wall in his office.

Another clichè: We will never see Hal Prince's like again. But what a life! What a legacy! What a marvelous human being. My sympathies to Daughter Daisy and the Prince family. RIP Hal.

