



## John Michael McCormack

May 20, 2020

McCORMACK, John Michael of Elmhurst, NY (formerly of Tenafly) passed away on May 20, 2020. Dear son of the late James and Ann McCormack. Beloved brother of Katherine McCormack (Ted Kagy), Mary Mazza (Tony), James McCormack, Paul McCormack (Kathleen) and the late Roy McCormack. Adored uncle of Ryan Kagy (Laura), Alex Kagy, Ainsley McCormack and Trevor McCormack. John loved the theater, and was an Off Broadway Producer for multiple theaters during his career. Funeral services will be private. To visit John's tribute page please visit [www.barrettfuneralhome.net](http://www.barrettfuneralhome.net).

INTAR (Lou Moreno, Artistic Director) is sad to announce that John McCormack, longtime Executive Director of INTAR, died on Monday May 18th in his Queens NY home from natural causes related to COVID-19. McCormack was 61.

"The loss of John McCormack is not just a loss for INTAR, but for the Off-Broadway theatre community as well. He was a living history of Off Broadway. There was scarcely a name or a play he did not have intimate knowledge of and that perspective is what kept our offices full of chatter and laughter. INTAR lost the Executive Director with the longest term in our history. Our community lost a kind and generous soul. And Off-Broadway lost its biggest champion and fan," said Mr. Moreno.

John McCormack was born in New York City on April 13th 1959. He attended Hamilton College graduating in 1981.

One of the unsung heroes of New York's not-for-profit theater, McCormack worked tirelessly behind the scenes, nurturing many emerging artists – writers, directors, actors, and designers – over his almost 40-year career. He began his career at Ensemble Studio Theatre, where he was Producing Director and co-founded the Directors Project with the Drama League, followed by stints at Naked Angels (Artistic Director); the Zipper Theater (co-founded/Artistic Director); Summer Shorts (co-founded/Producing Artistic Director); his own company, All Seasons Theater; and INTAR (Executive Director since 2006). He served as guest lecturer and oversaw student productions at Sarah Lawrence College. Some of the many careers he championed include Kevin Bacon, Mark Brokaw, Patricia Clarkson, Marian Fontana, Richard Greenberg, Roger Hedden, Lucas Hnath, Wendy Kesselman, Leslie Lyles, Eduardo Machado, Deb Margolin, Rob Morrow, Keith Reddin,

Will Scheffer, Paul Weitz, and Alan Zweibel. Some of those he nurtured would go on to be artistic directors of their own theatres such as Douglas Aibel, Bernard Telsey and Christopher Ashley. In 2014 he was proud to bring Albert Innaurato and Jack Hofsiss back to NY theater after a long absence (“Doubtless”).

"Nobody encouraged me more as a playwright than John McCormack. He produced the very first staged reading of Side Man and at least a dozen of my one-acts over the past 25 years. He was tireless in his support of writers and actors, and utterly self-effacing when anyone tried to thank him." –Warren Leight, Tony Award winner & Pulitzer Prize finalist for Side Man and Executive Producer “Law & Order: SVU.”

“John was a remarkable blend of intelligence, curiosity, thoughtfulness, good humor and modesty. He was interested in sports, 13th-century philosophers and everything in between. He had a self-effacing devotion, not only to friends but to others who needed his help. He loved to laugh and he loved a good play.” - D.S. Moynihan, Vice President of Creative Projects, The Shubert Organization.

“John McCormack gave me space to bring in an early rough draft to an informal reading series he was having with my partner, John Augustine. It was the first act of what was to become Betty’s Summer Vacation. And later I saw the Summer Shorts series and they were exciting to see. And then he asked me to write one which I did. He was a great supporter of writers on every level.” – Tony Award winner & Pulitzer Prize finalist Christopher Durang.

“I met John at Ensemble Studio Theatre within days of arriving in New York, and he immediately took me under his wing - as he did so many others - and guided and nurtured me over the years. He was a wonderful, kind, smart, generous and wickedly funny man - we spent so much of our time together just laughing.” - Award winning director Mark Brokaw (How I Learned to Drive, This is Our Youth).

“One of JMAC’s talents was bringing together amazing people. From EST to the Zipper to 59E59. He would call me and say, ‘I want you write a one-act. 20 to 35 minutes. It should have at least 2 laughs in it.’ And then he would chuckle. John never saw a problem. He only saw possibility and solutions. He was a great mentor and friend to so many writers, actors, and directors. All were special and equal in his eyes. He made me feel more talented than I am. He made me feel loved and appreciated. He did that for everyone he met.” – playwright John Augustine.

“He was always so supportive of everyone except himself,” said Karen Hauser, Director of Research at the Broadway League.

He is survived by his sister Katherine McCormack and her spouse Theodore Kagy, his sister Mary Mazza and her husband Anthony Mazza, his brother James McCormack, and his brother Paul McCormack and his spouse Kathleen McCormack. He is also survived by his beloved niece and nephews: Ryan Kagy and his spouse Laura Goodman, Alex Kagy, Ainsley McCormack and Trevor McCormack. He is predeceased by his father James

McCormack, mother Ann Root McCormack, and his brother Roy McCormack.

Funeral services were private. A memorial service will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested donations in his memory be made to the Actors Fund COVID-19 Emergency Relief.

# Comments

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“ This is heartbreaking. John was the loveliest guy. I will miss his gentle and soothing voice, his astute observations and his resolute determination, always, that yes, we'll get this play done, somehow, some way. His love for the art of making theatre was inspirational. To his family... my deepest, sincerest condolences.

**Stephen Starosta** - 3 hours ago

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“ John McCormack remains in my heart as one of the most graceful people I have encountered in any corner of the world. His compassion supported a luminous intelligence. I am aggrieved by his loss. He made everything softer, everything clearer and sweeter.

**Deborah Margolin** - 3 hours ago

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“ John was one my teachers at Sarah Lawrence College when I was a Graduate Theatre student there from 92-94. I had the pleasure of being in his class to learn how to be a Producer for a student-run space called, "Downstage". John lead that class with ease. He guided us with encouragement and let us make our mistakes pointing out where we can learn. When you directed a play he was there - whispering insight in a subtle way. When you needed advice he was there with a sympathetic ear. He was always there. When I graduated he would put me up for countless Directing and Casting jobs introducing me to his friends from his theatre roots. I can trace back those introductions to every single job I ever got. When John called, you answered. But when he called he never needed a favor from you but instead always had an opportunity he thought was in your own best interest. He was always right - always. We became friends over the years touching base as needed. We worked in the same neighborhood and bumped into each other on occasion. Those were good days. I learned so much from John. I will miss him tremendously. My thoughts are with his family and friends. The community has lost someone who is irreplaceable.

**Rob Decina**

**Rob Decina** - 4 hours ago

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“ Of all the souls I have encountered, I have never met one as kind as John. I'd like to say that we were friends but that isn't quite accurate. The relationship was so one sided, a better comparison would be parent-child. He gave me so much. I would always come to John with questions, issues, complaints, struggles and John would always give me advice, solutions, opportunities, blessings and care. But most of all

he gave me love. And that was probably the only thing that went both ways. I loved John and I will miss him so so much.

Cezar Williams - Yesterday at 09:06 PM

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“ It’s hard to imagine that John won’t be there. He has always been there. For me, for everyone he worked with, everyone he touched. He was our rock. And sage, and believer. That was the thing about John; he always believed it was possible, that it was going to be okay. No matter what the obstacles. And he always believed in me, in us. He took care of us. He was wise about most everything and always knew what to say. And he seemed to do it with pure heart, without effort (although I know it cost him) and with joy. He was St. John.

One time especially stands out for me. I was directing a play at E.S.T. and struggling with a lot. The writer, the actors, Curt. I was about to quit. John talked me off a ledge one night on the phone in a way that made me believe that not only could I do this, and that this would work, but that I had talent, real talent, something that hit me in my heart that night and stayed with me forever. And when the play went up first preview and was going quite well (lots of laughs in the audience, it was a comedy) and I stood in the back of the (small) house with him, he held my hand, smiled that John smile, and said: “See, I told you. Not so hard. They love it.”

I could always call him, always know that he had something wise and clear to say, that he knew the way when I didn’t. I will miss that so much.

And 8 months ago, when my daughter, Gracie, made the move to NY after college to start her life in the theatre and film, John reached out to her and offered her a job, took her under his wing, mentored her, and started it all over again. She grieves with us all. She told me the day he died that he was the first person to whom she was close (and loved) who she had lost as an adult. It hit her deep in her gut, like the rest of us.

We will have to carry on we will have to carry John forward, in our hearts, in our actions, in our art. St. John forever.

Risa Bramon Garcia  
risabg1@gmail.com  
friend, peer, colleague

Director, Casting Director, Producer, Teacher

Risa Garcia - Yesterday at 01:46 PM

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“ Thank you, John, for all you did to support so many people in the theatre. I’m personally grateful to you for your generosity and guidance when I was a Drama League directing fellow at EST in 1985, and for many kindnesses since.

Christine Sumption - Yesterday at 01:39 AM

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“ I first met John when he was the Artistic Director of Naked Angels, and a play of mine had been chosen for production in an evening of one acts. In the course of a rewrite of the play for the production, I ran afoul of a few folks who didn't like the new version--so much so there was talk of pulling the play. John had my back the entire time--it seems hard to believe now, but I believe that he threatened to quit his job. Who does things like that? John did. Of course, he never mentioned to me what he did, and the play went up as I wrote it.

Blowing his own horn was something he did not do. He never asked for any credit. But I knew that he was completely on my side. He was on the side of writers, at all costs. Maybe only a writer could appreciate that. That wasn't the first play of mine John produced. Years later, he chose another play of mine for the Summer Shorts Festival, and it was one of the most satisfying experiences I ever had. I owe a lot to him and I will never forget his forthrightness, his implacability. He was not someone who revealed very much about himself. He made you feel you were the important person, the one who mattered, not John. I will never forget his generosity of spirit and what he did for me, and his kind and handsome face, his wonderful smile, his wryness. I was extremely fortunate to know him.

Daniel Reitz - Yesterday at 01:34 AM

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“ John was not so much the Executive Director at EST, he was the Savior. I don't know how he did it, and for so many years, but he selflessly helped everyone, and turned every imaginable mess into.... another day of theater-making at EST. I had the unbelievable good fortune to work with him when I was Curt's assistant so so many years ago. John would explain with elan: every confusion, every quirk, he made everything -- function, somehow. He gave it all to not for profit theaters, to the self involved artists, nuts, and geniuses who passed through, on their way to more success, more money, more fame. But he stayed. And he sure had the chops to go anywhere. As far as I can tell, he kept giving, and giving, to an art form and a world that doesn't always give back. . He ferociously focused on promoting others, but not himself. I honor his heart, his smarts, his talents, his modesty. He was the real deal. A rare soul. A mystery. Condolences to everyone lucky enough to have known him.

Jackie Reingold - May 24 at 09:33 PM

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“ John was a reliable, steady, wonderful producer who soothed egos and made calm the behind the scenes drama with no drama. He was always there - at every meeting, every show, every party, workshop, reading, whatever. I worked with him at a pivotal time in my life and he made me a better actor, I like to think, person.

Kevin O'Keefe - May 24 at 09:24 PM

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“ Thank you, John, for letting me play.

For letting so many of us play.

For creating a superb space for play.

We are called The Players, are we not.

Bradbury - May 24 at 09:16 PM

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“ John was the kindest, most generous and hardest working theatre person I have ever known. He knew everybody and was always figuring out ways to help artists. He was often behind the scenes arranging opportunities for everyone and anyone who had the good fortune to meet him.

Elyse Knight - May 24 at 08:20 PM

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“ I met John just after college, in Manhattan, in the 1980s. While I have not seen him in over 30 years, memories flooded back of what a fun, caring friend he was when we were all "growing up" in the City. He had an unforgettable charm. RIP, John. ---Anne in AZ

Anne Shiff - May 24 at 07:09 PM

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“ I arrived in New York in the late 1980s with a lot of gumption, little guidance, and absolutely no plan. I knew enough to know that I needed to find a creative home — and pronto! I found it when I stumbled through the doors of the Ensemble Studio Theater to inquire about an acting class. John McCormack, then a Producing Director for EST, quickly recruited me into Jane Hoffman's class, an experience that would define the trajectory of my life for the next decade. In that class and under the EST roof, I met my creative tribe: a group of wonderfully talented, eccentric, funny (so funny), and kind artists who simply wanted to tell stories (and drink and get laid, of course). And tell stories we did! Thank you, John McCormack, for believing in me as an actor and playwright, and for introducing me to so many incredible humans. Give Janey, Maureen and Dan a kiss for me. Thanks for coming to my wedding. Thanks summer workshops in Lexington - all of it. We'll miss you here. See you soon. Love, M



Michele Karas - May 24 at 06:35 PM

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“ I met John when I first moved to New York. He encouraged me to become a writer. He introduced me to the most important people in my life. He produced my first play, *The Group*, at EST. I can't even begin to think of my life if I hadn't met John. I spent so many hours sitting in whatever theater office he happened to be in at the time EST, *Naked Angels*, *The Zipper*, and listened to his stories of the theater, mostly about Jane Hoffman, and his advice and support and encouragement. He supported so many writers, actors and directors. We were his merry band. He loved us all unconditionally and whenever we were down about the business or our careers and lives he would find a new space and do an evening of one acts and include everyone. He would carry the sets through Times Square, He would give notes all hours of the day or night. After a dress rehearsal of my play at EST he and I stayed until midnight painting the set. He was absolutely one of a kind. He loved the theater and supporting young artists and bringing them together and letting them shine while he slipped out the back door and we would all turn around and say "where's John?!". I love you McCormack wherever you are.



Tom OBrien - May 24 at 03:40 PM

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“ Oh, John. You taught me so much about so many different things - more than anyone I've ever met. It was unbelievable what you could pull off without a budget; if the writing and the acting was great the other stuff didn't matter. You were one of a small handful of people I knew that I could trust to do something and know it would get done as well or better than I could do it myself.

You introduced me to the cream of the New York Theater crop and always had a one act or a project for me to work on. I kinda just showed up at your office one day after one of my many hiatuses and you welcomed me with open arms and always made me feel like I belonged somewhere. When everyone else had moved on and out of touch I always knew you were up the block at Intar and I could pop in and 'surprise' you and we'd grab a coffee and catch up. I am so sorry you couldn't make it to the theater in January when we last spoke - and I know you'll keep the coffee pot warm

in heaven.

My life was better for knowing you, for tiling the bathroom at the zipper, and working in the box office, slinging drinks, and doing countless plays and readings. It was under your watchful eye that I first played the guitar in public. One of my proudest moments was one day after a reading we did you told me 'if that were a real production you would have just won a Tony award.' And I believed you. Because you believed in me.

You treated the theater and it's contributors - actors, writers, directors and designers with the respect and admiration I always admired. And working with you always felt like a safe haven from the harsh realities of 'the business'.

You were also the only person I ever allowed to call me 'Paulie'. I love you Johnny Mac from the bottom of my heart.



**P. Megna** - May 24 at 12:39 PM

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“ Richard McCormack sent a virtual gift in memory of John Michael McCormack



**Richard McCormack** - May 24 at 11:02 AM

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“ Ginny Read lit a candle in memory of John Michael McCormack



**Ginny Read** - May 22 at 05:38 PM



“ Our condolences to John's family. We can't believe he's gone. Rest in peace my dear friend. I will miss you more than words can say.

Ginny Read (and Terry and George Adams)

**Ginny Read** - May 22 at 05:40 PM



“ To my awesome cousin RIP you be sadly missed

**Richard McCormack** - May 24 at 11:01 AM



“ John had a gift for believing in you, even when you didn't. His passion, his commitment, his joy were only outdone by his generosity of spirit. I loved him more than I can say and am grateful for his friendship and guidance over the years.

**ben lipitz** - May 24 at 12:55 PM



“ Dearest John, losing you is devastatingly sad for so many of us. We were your friends, your cohorts, your colleagues, your disciples, your family. You were unwaveringly nurturing of everyone except yourself. You were monastically humble, yet you had a wicked sense of humor. Your passion for new plays was as infectious as your smile. You had the interests of a Renaissance man, and the virtue of a saint. Your heart was just too kind and too generous for this world. We will miss you. Love forever, Karen and Warren

**Karen Hauser** - May 24 at 08:33 PM



“ I directed a couple of plays with John at the helm. He was a good and humble man -- with a sort of devilish edge. In all the years I've known him I can't think of anyone who didn't have a good word to say about John. He will be greatly missed by many.

**Richard** - Yesterday at 10:33 AM



“ I met John when he was the Artistic Director at Naked Angels. I did not know him well but he was always kind and thoughtful. I saw him again at a play of J. Julian Christopher's at INTAR and it was the same John, kind, self-effacing, and funny. Just a really nice person. He will be so missed.

**Jean Marie McKee** - Yesterday at 11:12 AM



“ Heartbroken. The friendship and love John easily gave allowed a perspective to the empathy and times shared. Both in work his talents and knowledge were available with grace and a desire to see the next steps happen. A true gentleman of the theatre and the world. I directed a lot at the Zipper and new plays with John. He had a zest for life and after one hard rehearsal day the show was about to start. John and I were at the bar. He looked over as the audience came in and said "isn't this fun?" He meant it. He was private and loyal. From the early times at EST a bond was made. Both personal and artistic. He was the most supportive friend. Last time he called it was to wish me Happy Mother's day. He braved a blizzard to make a reading of my new play. Rest in peace my friend. You live on in our hearts.

My thoughts are with his family I am so so sorry.

Shirley Kaplan

**shirleyKaplan** - 10 hours ago



“ From Jodie Markell ;

Oh beloved John. I am so grateful to have known you. After working on several plays together, one day, John and I realized we shared the same birthday - same date, same year - and it made perfect sense to me - because I already felt like John and I were creative soulmates. I am forever in his debt for helping me realize my visions and also for introducing me to material I would never have found without him. John had the perfect understanding of how to find a play that was filled with heart, sometimes dark, sometimes funny, but always revealing something deeper about the human condition. He had exquisite taste and real vision. And then he knew exactly who to cast to make the play sing. He understood playwrights and actors so well- and created experiences for us all, created safe places for us to explore and to grow. He was also very loyal- once he believed in you, he would support your work, travel to see your work, and continue to look for material to explore together. He gave tirelessly of himself to fight to make a play happen. He didn't care if it was a Broadway smash- he cared if it was authentic. He looked on the bright side even when the chips were down. He had a brilliant sense of humor and that adorable smile and little laugh whenever we encountered folks who didn't believe in our work- as if to say- "Well, it's their loss, poor things..." He understood human nature so well, he saw all the way through people, even to the dark side of things, but continued to believe in the light within them. He focused on the potential and the heart. I think the theater world will never be the same without him. I will miss you so much, dear friend.

Jodie Markell

**Jodie Markell** - 7 hours ago



“ When I heard you had died I howled. . . . Not John, oh please not you. . . .Now I've read what others have said here, concurring again and again\_\_

Oh John you really are, a theatre saint; here it is written in these testimonials to your bodhisattva, devilish, saint self. I always felt when I spoke to you I had your full attention. That is what saints do for we-who-are-not. You were always 'present' - and as that is the quality that makes for greatness - you offered it; reflecting back to me my best, returning me from ego and back into the work, the spirit, the purpose. May I 'pay forward' everything you've given me dear, good John.

love, Rae C

**Rae** - 12 minutes ago