



# RIP: William M. Hoffman, Playwright of the 1985 AIDS Drama “As Is”

Nominated for a Tony Award, the groundbreaking “As Is” was produced shortly before Larry Kramer’s “The Normal Heart.”

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The playwright William M. Hoffman, whose *As Is* was one of the first plays to deal with the AIDS epidemic, died of cardiac arrest in the Bronx, reports [The New York Times](#). He was 78.

Produced by the Glines, a gay theater company, *As Is* opened in March 1985 at the Circle Theatre in New York before moving to Broadway on May 1 of the same year. [As Is](#) was nominated for a Tony Award for best play and won a Drama Desk Award and an Obie Award for outstanding new play. The story follows a gay couple who break up but then rely on each other when one of them is diagnosed with AIDS and experiences discrimination from doctors, friends and family.

In 1986, *As Is* was made into a Showtime television movie starring Robert Carradine, Jonathan Hadary and Colleen Dewhurst.

Hoffman also was nominated for an Emmy Award for his work on *One Life to Live*. Earlier in his career, he was a book editor who published gay and lesbian playwrights. In recent years, Hoffman was the librettist for the Metropolitan Opera’s production of *The Ghosts of Versailles*.

According to the Times obit, he was also a professor of journalism, communication and theater at Lehman College, part of the City University of New York (CUNY). He hosted a television series, *Conversations with William M. Hoffman*, on CUNY TV, during which he interviewed notable theater and musical stars. You can view many of those episodes on [YouTube](#).

Larry Kramer’s AIDS play, *The Normal Heart*, also opened in the spring of 1985 (though it did not play on Broadway until a 2011 revival). That play portrays New York City Mayor Ed Koch in an unfavorable light. In a 1985 *New York Times* [review](#) of *The Normal Heart*, Frank Rich notes that when asked about that play, Koch responded through a spokesperson, “I haven’t seen the play, but I hope it’s as good as *As Is*, which is superb.”

Hoffman is survived by his husband, William Russell Taylor II, and a brother, Edin Hoffman.

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