

## THOMAS BABE (LIBRETTIST) (1940–2000) – BIO



Thomas Babe's plays *Rebel Women*, *A Prayer for My Daughter*, *Taken in Marriage*, *Fathers and Sons*, *Salt Lake City Skyline*, and *Buried Inside Extra* were first produced by Joseph Papp and the New York Shakespeare Festival. He has also been produced in many other theaters throughout the United States, as well as in England, Ireland, Canada, Germany, and Holland. In the musical theater, he wrote the text for Twyla Tharp's *When We Were Very Young* and the libretto for *Tesla* (music by Carson Kievsman). Babe and Kievsman worked on the storyboard and outline for *Tesla Opera* together and the libretto was completed by Babe (and Kievsman) prior to his premature death from cancer on December 6, 2000. He has also written for film and television. Mr. Babe was born and raised in upstate New York, went to Harvard and Yale Law School, and studied in England. He has received grants from the Guggenheim, Rockefeller, and CBS foundations and the NEA.



***Taken in marriage* by Thomas Babe  
Meryl Streep, Colleen Dewhurst, Dixie Carter,  
Kathleen Quinlan, Elizabeth Wilson**

Babe's work brought together many elements of American history and cultural mythology. He was fascinated by the concept of the traditional hero figure – and the reality behind it. Strained family relationships often featured – specifically focusing on fathers and daughters, love and individual rights. These themes come together in Babe's 1977 play *A Prayer for My Daughter*.

Babe was one of a group of 70s US playwrights who laid the ground for the likes of Quentin Tarantino and Aaron Sorkin. Like David Mamet and Sam Shepard, his plays contain half-crazed

but intelligent, articulate characters. Darker passions of the human soul feature strongly

Mr. Babe's writing first came to widespread attention in 1975, when his play *Kid Champion*, with Christopher Walken as a physically and emotionally broken rock star, bowed at the Public.

Mr. Babe's plays were often populated by mythic figures from history. *Fathers and Sons*, for instance, featured Wild Bill Hickok. (The play was later the basis of a 1995 Walter Hill film starring Jeff Bridges, the screenplay for which Mr. Babe co-wrote.) And *Salt Lake City Skyline* concerned Joe Hill. A then-unfamous John Lithgow played the labor leader.

Mr. Babe's work rarely lacked for top acting talent like John Lithgow and Walken. *A Prayer for My Daughter*, set in a police station, starred the solid foursome of Jeffrey DeMunn, George Dzundza, Laurence Luckinbill and Alan Rosenberg. *Rebel Women* featured Mandy Patinkin and Peter Weller. And the cast of *Buried Inside Extra*—a rare play directed by Joe Papp himself — included Hal Holbrook, Dixie Carter, Vincent Gardenia and Sandy Dennis. *Taken in Marriage*, the women of a well-off New York family are gathered in the basement of a New Hampshire church for a wedding rehearsal starred Dixie Carter, Colleen Dewhurst, Kathleen Quinlan and Meryl Streep.