

# Delve Deeper into "Wrestling With Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner"

A film by Freida Lee Mock

This multi-media resource list, compiled by Rebecca Federman of the New York Library in partnership with the American Library Association, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the upcoming P.O.V. documentary "Wrestling With Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner" that premieres on December 12 at 9 PM on PBS (check local listings at [www.pbs.org/pov/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/)).

Tony Kushner, whose epochal *Angels in America* won a Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award, has emerged as one of the country's leading playwrights — and one of its fiercest moral critics. In the new award-winning film "Wrestling With Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner", Oscar-winning director Freida Lee Mock ("Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision," P.O.V. 1996) followed Kushner for three tumultuous years, from Sept. 11, 2001 to the 2004 presidential election, to delve into the passions that keep him reaching for the great American play. Actors Marcia Gay Harden, Meryl Streep, Tonya Pinkins and Emma Thompson, directors Mike Nichols and George C. Wolfe, and writer/artist Maurice Sendak are seen collaborating with Kushner on such landmark works as *Angels in America*, *Caroline, or Change*, and *Homebody/Kabul*.

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## WORKS BY TONY KUSHNER

**Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes : Millennium Approaches/Perestroika*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2003.** In two full-length plays--*Millennium Approaches* and *Perestroika*--Kushner tells the story of a handful of people trying to make sense of the world. Prior is a man living with AIDS whose lover Louis has left him and become involved with Joe, an ex-Mormon and political conservative whose wife, Harper, is slowly having a nervous breakdown. These stories are contrasted with that of Roy Cohn and his attempts to remain in the closet while trying to find some sort of personal salvation in his beliefs.

**Kushner, Tony. *A Bright Room Called Day*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1994.** About the dying days of Weimar Germany among a group of left-wing activists who slowly realize they are losing to the Nazis.

**Kushner, Tony. *Brundibar*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2003.** Illustrated by Maurice Sendak, *Brundibar* is based on a Czech opera for children which was performed fifty-five times by the children of Terezin, a Nazi concentration camp in 1943.

**Kushner, Tony. *Caroline, Or Change*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2004.** Louisiana, 1963: A nation reeling from the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement and the Kennedy assassination. Caroline, a black maid, and Noah, the son of the Jewish family she works for, struggle to find an identity for their friendship.

**Kushner, Tony. *Homebody/Kabul*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005.** The play centers around the disappearance of an eccentric British woman (the Homebody) and the search for her by her husband and daughter. In their quest for the truth and closure, the lines between real and unreal, the political and the personal are intentionally blurred and are fully ambiguous.

**Kushner, Tony. *Death & Taxes: Hydriotaphia and Other Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2000.** A collection of plays including *Reverse Transcription: Six Playwrights Bury a Seventh*, *Hydriotaphia or The Death of Doctor Browne*, *G. David Schine in Hell*, *Notes on Akiba*, *Terminating or Sonnet LXXV*, and *East Coast Ode to Howard Jarvis*.

**Kushner, Tony. *Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness: Essays, a Play, Two Poems, and a Prayer*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995.** A collection of writing about the playwright's personal views on culture and politics.

**Kushner, Tony and Alisa Solomon (eds.). *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. New York: Grove Press, 2003.** Jewish writers and thinkers contribute to the dialogue on the current state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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## ADULT NONFICTION

**Evans, Eli N. *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History*. Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2006.** Essays on the history of the Jewish South, from the 18th century settlers to the present day.

**Fisher, James (ed.). *Tony Kushner: New Essays on the Art and Politics of the Plays*. North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2006.** A deeper exploration into Tony Kushner's political voice, and his insight into the human condition.

**Geis, Deborah R. and Steven F. Kruger (eds.). *Approaching the Millennium: Essays on Angels in America*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1998.** Scholarly essays on Angels' themes of gay identity, and American drama.

**Goldfarb, Jeffrey C. *The politics of Small Things: The Power of the Powerless in Dark Times*. Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2006.** Goldfarb emphasizes micro-movements, in the form of dinner table conversation and drama, as incredibly effective forces in political dialogue.

**Krupnick, Mark. *Jewish Writing and the Deep Places of the Imagination*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.** Deep, elemental questions answered by some of the most illustrious Jewish writers and thinkers of today.

**McGraw, Eliza R. L. *Two Covenants: Representations of Southern Jewishness*. Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.** A historical and literary look at the many examples of Jewish history and representation in Southern states.

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Mews, Sigfried. *Essays on Brecht: Theater and Politics*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1974. Brecht's works in English and essays on his works.

Vorlicky, Robert (ed.). *Tony Kushner In Conversation*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1998. A compilation of many Tony Kushner interviews from the past decade.

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## ADULT FICTION

Busch, Charles. *Whores of Lost Atlantis*. New York: Hyperion, 1993. A semi-autobiographical look at life in New York's performance spaces, and the drama both on and off the stage.

Jaffe, Daniel M. *The Limits of Pleasure*. New York: Southern Tier Editions. Harrington Park Press, 2001. Dave Miller, a 40-something year old gay, Jewish man raised by his Holocaust survivor grandmother, is obsessed with his dead family's history and with dangerous trysts with available men.

Lowenthal, Michael. *The Same Embrace*. New York: Dutton, 1998. Twins Jacob and Jonathan come from the same family and world, but take different paths in life, and their close relationship as children begins to unravel.

Ortleb, Charles. *Iron Peter: A Year in the Mythopoetic Life of New York City*. New York: Rubicon Media, 1998. A satirical novel about a gay, New Yorker, determined to expose the lies of the AIDS epidemic.

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## NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

Bentley, Nancy and Donna Guthrie. *Putting on a Play: The Young Playwright's Guide to Scripting, Directing, and Performing*. Millbrook Press, 1996. A practical, step-by-step guide for putting together a play - from set design to casting. Includes sample scripts.

Glencoe McGraw-Hill. *The Stage and the School*. Ohio: Glencoe/McGraw Hill, 2004. A textbook in theater training for both students and teachers, from classical training exercises, to casting and directing plays.

Levithan, David and Billy Merrell. *The Full Spectrum: A New Generation of Writing about Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Other Identities*. New York: Random House Children's Books, 2006. Includes poems and essays by young adults on a variety of themes, including sexuality, family and religion.

Volavkova, Hana. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children's Drawings & Poems from the Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-44*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971. Drawings and poems from children in the Terezin concentration camp.

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## FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

Koja, Kathe. *Talk*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. Kit finds his calling for acting while performing in the controversial school play, and struggles with his own sexuality through his relationship with his co-star.

Levithan, David. *Wide Awake*. New York: Random House Children's Books, 2006. Jimmy and Duncan take to the streets to support a gay-Jewish presidential candidate, while also exploring their relationship with politics in America.

Mamet, David. *Bar Mitzvah*. Pennsylvania: Diane Publishing Company, 1999. On the eve of his Bar Mitzvah, a boy learns about life from an old man and his watch.

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## FILMS/DOCUMENTARIES

"And the Band Played On." A film by Robert Spottiswoode, HBO Pictures, 1993. (141 min.) An examination of the beginnings of the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco in the late 1970s. Based on the book of the same name by Randy Shilts.  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

"Angels in America." A film by Mike Nichols, Avenue Pictures Productions, 2003. (352 min.) Screen adaptation of Tony Kushner's play. In six parts.  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

"Shalom, Ya'll." A film by Brian Bain, Shalom Ya'll Films LLC, 2002. (60 min.) Bain, a Jewish documentary filmmaker from New Orleans explores his own Southern-Jewish heritage and finds a rich history of Judaism in the South.  
[www.brandeis.edu/jewishfilm/Catalogue/films/shalomyall.htm](http://www.brandeis.edu/jewishfilm/Catalogue/films/shalomyall.htm)

"Trembling Before G-D." A film by Sandi Simcha Dubowski. Simcha Leib Productions, 2001. (84 min.) A documentary on the lives of gay and lesbian Hasidic Jews.  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)