



Daniel A. Drew

September 26, 1953 - November 13, 2020

Early in the morning on November 13, 2020, Daniel Arthur Drew found his light and went home to God. He was surrounded by his family, and his soul was at peace. In a review from his signature role as Jesus in *Godspell*, a critic remarked that he was “a wisp, a rock, a bit of magic,” and the description could not be more fitting for Dan Drew the actor, and Dan Drew the man.

Dan was born to Daniel and Rose Drew, and lived to the ripe old age of seven, taking to heart the idea “I believe if I refuse to grow old, I can stay young 'til I die.” He was raised in Newark, NJ, and grew up as an active member of Our Lady of Good Counsel parish. He was an Eagle Scout, and spent many years playing softball for the Golden Touch Diner.

Dan was active in music ministry and was the cantor and choir director at OLGK for over 35 years, even writing his own liturgical music. One Sunday, after mass, he spotted a gorgeous blonde woman holding a baby, and was compelled by the Holy Spirit to shoot his shot anyway. The baby in the woman’s arms turned out to be her sister, and the woman became Dan’s beloved wife. They were best friends, soulmates, true partners in crime who spent forty years together. Commenting on their parents’ relationship, their children remarked, “They were the most disgustingly in love couple you ever saw, and it was wonderful to watch your parents have such a special relationship.” Even the last few months, Dan was caught many times watching his wife walk away with a twinkle in his eye, when nurses finally told her that visiting hours were long over. Together, Dan and Susan shared a beautiful life, complete with midnight cruises on Lake Hopatcong, dancing to any and every song that would come on the radio, and raising three children: Daniel, Teresa, and Mary Catherine.

Dan said frequently to anyone who would listen that his children were the best things that ever happened to him, the most precious gifts that he had received and the greatest thing he could have ever been a part of creating. He spent many hours taking them on “Daddy Adventures” to New York City, Child’s State Park, Wild West City, and countless other destinations. He and his wife read to them every night as children, he studied with them and helped them with their homework, and brought them to work frequently to teach them the tricks of the family trade. He co-wrote, composed, and produced two musicals at NJIT with his three children: *Hell Hath No Fury: The Rap and Roll Story of Medea*, and *I: The Icarus Project*. He also enjoyed the title of “Ultimate Feis Dad,” and could often be found stoning a dress for his daughters or making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for his kids while they competed. He knew how to set hair in rollers, was often consulted for feis make up, and always had a roll of gaffers and electrical tape in his back pocket. He gave the best pep talks, to every dancer, and was always ready with a hug whether the results were good or bad.

In addition to being Dad to Daniel, Teresa, and Mary Kate, he was shared with any and all who needed a father figure. He was dearly cherished by his children’s friends and his friends’ children, who are mourning the loss of Papa Drew along with his biological children. He is also mourned by his many students, whom he loved so dearly. He spent many hours striving to give each student he

had an opportunity to succeed in his classes, and in life.

Dan's soul was in the theater. For 30 years he was a fixture at the Rutgers-NJIT theater department. He could often be found at 3:30 in the morning in the Bradley Hall Theater, which he tore down to stud and rebuilt from the ground up, working on a show or rehearsing with students. He conjured sets from nothingness, created magic with light, and pulled performances from students who didn't dare to dream they could be actors. He could often be found focusing lights and standing on the very top step of the ladder (you know, the one you're not supposed to stand on) in the theater, ripping 8' sheets of plywood by himself in the shop, or comforting and counseling a student or friend in his office. Once he was even found on top of the curtain track during a show, having climbed the curtain to fix it. He often said his class was more about life than it was about theater. He was a confidant, a friendly face, listening ear, and a shoulder to cry on for the entire Rutgers/NJIT community. Hearing their memories of Dan has been a great comfort to his family as they grieve.

It would be criminal to write an obituary for Dan and not mention his acting. He was a consummate performer whose booming baritone could be heard filling churches and theaters, ringing out through the Jim Wise and Bradley Hall Theaters during a build, and singing his children to sleep each night. Performing highlights include an off-Broadway production of *The Tempest*, in which his Prospero was described as being better than Raul Julia's, and of course his signature role Jesus in *Godspell* where one reviewer gave us the iconic description for totality of Dan Drew: "a wisp, a rock, a bit of magic."

It is impossible to encapsulate the life of this great man in a few paragraphs. He made friends wherever he went, including the staff at University Hospital, to whom the Drew Family is grateful for their kind and compassionate care. He will be missed by many who knew him as a great man, a great friend, and the life of the party wherever he went.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Daniel and Rose, his father-in-law, Richard, and three of his and Susan's children. He was survived by his beloved wife Susan, his children, Daniel, Teresa, and Mary Kate, his mother-in-law Mary Ann, who loved Dan like he was her own son. He is also survived by many brothers and sisters in law, and numerous loving cousins throughout New Jersey, the United States and Ireland. He is resting comfortably in the peace of the Lord.

There will be a wake at O'Boyle's Funeral Home in Bloomfield, NJ, on Friday, November 19 from 2 pm - 4 pm and 7 pm - 9 pm; and a funeral mass at Holy Family in Nutley, NJ, on Saturday November 20, at 10:30 am. The family would like to invite any and all that wish to celebrate Dan's life. Protocol will be in place to keep guests protected. The family will be holding a celebration of his life in the next year, when restrictions are lifted, and dearly wishes that you join them when that time comes.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to St. John's Soup Kitchen in Newark in Dan's memory, and try to be the wisp, the rock, the bit of magic in someone's life, like Dan was for all of us.

Events

20
Nov

VISITATION
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

O'Boyle Funeral Home
309 Broad Street,
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

20
Nov

VISITATION
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

O'Boyle Funeral Home
309 Broad Street,
Bloomfield, NJ 07003

21
Nov

SERVICE
10:30 AM

Holy Family Church 28
Brookline Avenue,
Nutley, NJ 07110

21
Nov

GRAVESIDE
11:30 AM

Holy Cross Cemetery
340 Ridge Road, North
Arlington, NJ 07031

Tribute Wall

M

Michele Rittenhouse

Oh, there are so many memories. We worked together for a very long time. But, with Dan, it wasn't working, it was something deeper than that. Creating art together, debating over issues, and then those issues all falling by the wayside as the project developed a mind and beauty of its own. Sitting quietly in rehearsal and watching the magic come to life. Sharing a smile and relieved sigh when it worked and a shrug, we learned something didn't we when it almost worked. Being artists together, making theatre, and watching our students grow year after year and finally take flight and leave. That was our reward and heartbreak. But because of Dan and the hard work we all did with him, they came back with new stories about their new lives. Like they are coming back now to honor his memory. He was like a brother to me and I hold just a fraction of the sorrow and the joy of remembrance that we are feeling right now. Thank you Dan for sharing a bit of your time in my life. Bless you, Dan, and sing with the angels. #rememberingdandrew



D

Dian Mills O'Reilly

Dan Drew was my teacher and guardian angel. In his own no frills way, he made a massive difference in my life. I will always think of him and smile.



Tribute Store

A memorial tree was planted in memory of Daniel A. Drew.

M

Michele R Rittenhouse

Grow well, Dan Tree. You will surely outlast us.



Tribute Store

A memorial tree was planted in memory of Daniel A. Drew.

M

Michele Rittenhouse -RU/NJIT Theatre


