

BWW Interview: Playwright Murray Mednick's Serving THREE TABLES & Much More

Padua Playwrights world premieres poet/playwright Murray Mednick's *Three Tables* April 23, 2022, at the Zephyr Theatre

by Gil Kaan



Padua Playwrights world premieres poet/playwright Murray Mednick's *Three Tables* April 23, 2022, at the Zephyr Theatre. The playwright himself directs the cast featuring Eric Stanton Betts, Raquel Cain, John Fantasia, Laura Liguori, Dennis Renard, Corey Rieger, Richard Sabine and Michael Uribes. I got the chance to throw a few questions at Murray on *Three Tables*, Padua Playwrights and his long history with Los Angeles theatre.

Thank you for taking the time for this interview, Murray!

Your writing resume contains over fifty plays that you wrote since you began with *Sand* in 1967. What was the inspiration for *Three Tables* that you started in 2019?

I don't remember what specifically inspired me, but everything that I write- everything that's written in the world - is about the human condition.

What would your three-line pitch for *Three Tables* be?

It's a beautiful production and a beautiful play. It's a reminder of the Holocaust and a kind of Jewish affirmation.

You and Padua Playwrights go back a long way. You founded and were the former artistic director of the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival from 1978 to 1995. Any particular incident sparked your creation of the Padua Hills Playwrights Festival?

Back in New York at Theatre Genesis, we did a lot of teaching. And I wanted to bring that with me. And I wanted a lot of my friends to come out. And I wanted to do my own work. So those three things kind of conspired. LaVerne University, where I was living at the time, offered us funding and showed me the Padua Hills site. So that's how we started.

What working playwrights have you personally seen go through Padua Playwrights?

There were so many. Sam Shepard, María Irene Fornés, John Stepping, Walter Hadler, Martin Epstein, Susan La Tempa, John O'Keefe, Leon Martell, Elizabeth Ruscio... just to name a few.

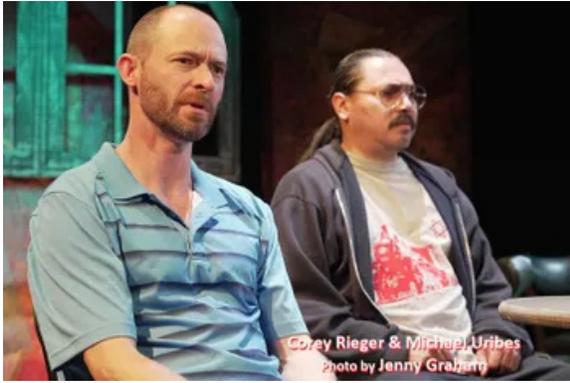
You're directing this world premiere of *Three Tables*, as you have frequently directed many of your past scripts. Was it easy for you to release your directorial reins to Steve Albrezzi to direct your *Heads* in 1991?

Yes. I kept an eye on him. It was a Padua production, so I was there. But it was easy. He did a good job.

You're also a celebrated poet. What did you originally want to be as a teenager? A poet? A playwright? A director?

All! I wanted to do all of it!





Is retirement a state that you find yourself far away from even after over five decades in the theatre?

We don't retire. I feel at home in the theater. I feel more at home, in a way, than I do at home. I like working with a stage. And if I can get it right, it works.

Are you working on a newer project since finishing Three Tables?

Not at the moment. I'm directing Three Tables now, so I don't have much energy to do anything else. But it's what I do. Writing is what I do.

When does a script become set in stone for you? After a workshopping? Post-dress rehearsal? After the premiere's curtain call?

After the first audience.

A pioneer of the off- and off-off-Broadway movements in the '60s and '70s when you were playwright-in-residence for New York City's Theater Genesis, you relocated to Los Angeles in 1978. What changes have you seen in the Los Angeles theatre community throughout the decades?

It's huge. When I first came out here, there was almost nothing. El Teatro Campesino was the only company, that I could see, that was actually working on finding new ways to be on stage. The Mark Taper Forum was only doing plays that had been done first in New York. No one was doing original plays by people who live here. It's changed enormously since I've been here. Now there's all kinds of theater going on.

Out of the many, many accolades you have earned, does one in particular stand out amongst the rest?

The Ovation Lifetime Achievement Award from the L.A. Stage Alliance. That one meant a lot to me.

What sage advice would you give to a budding young playwright?

See the stage and listen from the stage. What young people do, is they write TV scripts, or movie scripts, and the stage is not like that. You have to see and be around and work with the stage. It's totally different. I can't say it enough. The stage is a living, three-dimensional space with a live audience. It's very interesting when people think they're writing plays, but it's not for the stage, it's for the screen.

What is in the near future for Murray Mednick?

I'm just going to keep doing what I do.

Thank you again, Murray! I look forward to experiencing your Three Tables.



For tickets to the live performances of Three Tables through May 22, 2022; log onto onstage411.com/tables