



# Yale University

*Three Hundred Fifteenth  
Commencement*

Honorary Degrees

New Haven, Connecticut  
May 23, 2016

# Honorary Degrees

Since the Commencement of 1702, certain distinguished persons, selected by the Yale Corporation, have received honorary degrees. The Provost announces the name of each recipient, the senior marshal and corporation marshal place a hood over the shoulders of the recipient, and the President reads a citation and confers the degree.

The following men and women will be awarded honorary degrees:

Rosalie Silberman Abella	<i>Doctor of Laws</i>
Jennifer Doudna	<i>Doctor of Science</i>
Calvin Hill '69 B.A.	<i>Doctor of Humane Letters</i>
Audra McDonald	<i>Doctor of Music</i>
Haruki Murakami	<i>Doctor of Letters</i>
Arnold Rampersad	<i>Doctor of Humanities</i>
David Saperstein	<i>Doctor of Divinity</i>
Alice Waters	<i>Doctor of Humane Letters</i>
George C. Wolfe	<i>Doctor of Fine Arts</i>

# Biographical Sketches of the Honorands

*Doctor of Laws*



ROSALIE SILBERMAN ABELLA is a justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. She is the first Jewish woman and the youngest person ever appointed as a judge in Canada, and the first Jewish woman appointed to the country's Supreme Court.

Born in a displaced persons' camp in Stuttgart, Germany in 1946, Justice Abella is the daughter of two Holocaust survivors. In her early years, her father—who, in 1930, was one of only four Jewish students in his law school class at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland—served as the head of legal services for residents of displaced persons' camps before the family emigrated to Canada as refugees in 1950. Although her father was unable to continue his legal career because he lacked Canadian citizenship, his experiences inspired the young Justice Abella's interest in the legal profession. She was also a gifted pianist. In the same year that she graduated high school, she earned a diploma in classical piano, becoming one of the youngest people to have ever graduated from Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music.

She attended the University of Toronto, where she earned a B.A. in 1967 and a law degree in 1970. She was called to the Ontario Bar in 1972 and practiced civil and criminal law until 1976, when she was appointed to the Ontario Family Court. She became active in a number of cases and commissions that sought to provide equal justice for all people. She served on the Ontario Human Rights Commission for five years, and as chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, the Ontario Study into Access to Legal Services by the Disabled, and the Ontario Law Reform Commission.

In 1983 she was appointed sole commissioner of the federal Royal Commission on Equality in Employment, which sought to address workplace discrimination against women, aboriginal peoples, minorities, and those with disabilities. Her seminal work on this commission, now known as the Abella Commission, led to the creation of the concept of employment equity. The theories she defined were later adopted by the Supreme Court of Canada in its first decision dealing with equality rights under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1989. The report has since been adopted by the governments of New Zealand, Northern Ireland, and South Africa.

She was appointed in 1992 to the Court of Appeal for Ontario, where her rulings included the 1998 landmark decision that resulted

in the extension of survivor benefits to same-sex partners. In 2004 she was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Justice Abella is dedicated to the education of young lawyers and jurists and the advancement of diversity in the legal profession. She has served as a visiting professor at McGill University and was responsible for organizing the first judicial seminar in which all levels of the judiciary participated, the first national education program for administrative tribunals, and the first national conference for Canada's female judges.

She has written more than eighty articles and written or co-edited four books. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. A dedicated friend of Yale Law School, she is a regular participant in the school's Global Constitutionalism Seminar program. Her many awards include honorary doctorates, the Distinguished Service Award of the Canadian Bar Association (Ontario), the International Justice Prize of the Gruber Foundation, the Human Relations Award of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, and the Bora Laskin Award for Outstanding Contributions to Canadian Labour Law.

*Doctor of Science*



JENNIFER DOUDNA is a professor of chemistry and of molecular and cell biology at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research on the structures and behavior of ribonucleic acids (RNA) has led to groundbreaking genome-editing techniques that have major implications for the treatment of genetic diseases.

Ms. Doudna grew up in Hawaii. Her mother was a history lecturer and her father was a professor of American literature at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Ms. Doudna's interest in science blossomed early. She loved her high school math and chemistry classes, and was also further inspired by a lecture given by a female scientist at a local hospital about how healthy cells become cancerous. She continued to pursue these interests in college and earned a B.A. in chemistry from Pomona College in 1985. She then earned a Ph.D. in biochemistry in 1989 from Harvard University. She studied under the direction of Jack Szostak, who would later earn the 2009 Nobel Prize in Medicine.

After two years working as a postdoctoral research fellow at Harvard, Ms. Doudna moved to the University of Colorado at Boulder, where she served as the Lucille P. Markey Scholar in Biomedical Science from 1991 to 1994. She worked in the laboratory of Nobel Laureate Thomas R. Cech on developing a deeper understanding of RNA, the molecules that help transmit genetic information and regulate processes within cells, through her research into the structure of ribozymes, which are RNA molecules that can act as enzymes.

In 1994 she relocated to Connecticut, and joined the faculty at Yale. She was appointed Henry Ford II Professor of Molecular Biophysics and Biochemistry in 2000 and continued her innovative research into RNA structures, completing the ribozyme project she had begun in Colorado. She remained on the Yale faculty until 2002, when she was appointed to her current position at the University of California, Berkeley.

After a conversation with a geomicrobiologist colleague, she began investigating DNA patterns, known as CRISPRs, within certain bacteria and their associated protein structures. She met French microbiologist Emmanuelle Charpentier in 2011, and the two began collaborating on research into a protein within a CRISPR in a strain of strep bacteria. Along with Charpentier and her team, Ms. Doudna and her lab developed a technique, using the CRISPR-Cas9 protein, to “edit” cells by cutting precise segments of DNA. This technology can be used to alter cells to remove HIV, correct the mutation that causes sickle-cell anemia, or adjust cells to be more responsive to chemotherapy and other treatments. Currently, the Doudna lab is continuing its work on CRISPR-Cas9 to understand its molecular behavior and to determine if it can correct genetic defects that cause neurological diseases.

Ms. Doudna is a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Medicine, and the National Academy of Inventors. She is a Foreign Member of the Royal Society, a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and an investigator of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Ms. Doudna is also the winner of various awards, including the Gruber Genetics Prize, the 2015 Princess of Asturias Award, the Dr. Paul Janssen Award for Biomedical Research, and the Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences, all of which she shared with Emmanuelle Charpentier. In 2014 she earned the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health’s Lurie Prize in Biomedical Sciences. She is a trustee of Pomona College and a member of both the Packard Fellowships Advisory Panel of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Pew Scholars Program National Advisory Committee of the Pew Charitable Trust.

*Doctor of Humane  
Letters*



CALVIN HILL '69 B.A is a former American professional football player and one of the most revered student-athletes in Yale history. At Yale he helped lead the football team to two consecutive Ivy League championships. As a member of the National Football League (NFL), he played for three teams over the course of twelve seasons between 1969 and 1981.

Mr. Hill was raised in the steel mill-affiliated community of Turner Station in Baltimore County, Maryland. His parents instilled in him the importance of an education from an early age, and his father, a

construction worker who had learned to read and write as an adult, encouraged Mr. Hill to seek opportunities that would tap his full potential. His father learned of a scholarship offered by the Riverdale Country School in The Bronx, New York, and encouraged Mr. Hill to apply. In the fall of 1961, Mr. Hill relocated to Riverdale as a boarding student. Although he had always been a talented athlete, it was not until high school that he was introduced to football. He became a multi-sport athlete, excelling in football, basketball, baseball, and track and field. He made *Parade* magazine's 1964 All-America team as quarterback and was recruited to play football at a number of colleges and universities. He chose Yale.

Early in his freshman year, he transitioned from the position of quarterback to halfback, where he remained for the rest of his college career. Under the guidance of legendary coach Carm Cozza, Mr. Hill, a two-time All-Ivy selection, and his classmate, quarterback Brian Dowling, led Yale to Ivy League championships in 1967 and 1968. Mr. Hill was also a standout member of the track and field team. He was the long jump and triple jump Ivy League champion in 1967 and 1968, and he still holds the school record for the outdoor triple jump. As a scholar-athlete, Mr. Hill was a leader on and off the field. He was a member of the Battell Chapel Deacons, Delta Kappa Epsilon, and the Black Student Alliance at Yale. He also was a TIP counselor and a member of St. Elmo's.

He graduated in 1969 with a B.A. in history. That same year, Mr. Hill was selected by the Dallas Cowboys, making him the first Ivy League player ever picked in the first round of the NFL draft. In his first season with the Cowboys he was named NFL rookie of the year and selected to the All-Pro team. He was on the first Cowboys team to win a Super Bowl, and in 1972 he became the team's first player to rush 1,000 yards in a season. Over the course of his illustrious career, he also played for the Washington Redskins and the Cleveland Browns. He was invited to the NFL Pro Bowl four times and was selected to two All-Pro teams. He completed his career with 6,083 yards rushing and 64 touchdowns.

In the 1970s Mr. Hill attended Southern Methodist University's School of Divinity. Dedicated to service for and in his community, he collaborated with Yale teammate Kurt Schmoke to establish the Calvin Hill Daycare Center for Yale and New Haven. After retirement, Mr. Hill served as vice president of the Baltimore Orioles. He then became a player development consultant for the Cleveland Browns and subsequently for the Dallas Cowboys, where he currently specializes in providing support to players. In the 1990s he served on the President's Council on Physical Fitness. Mr. Hill's many honors include the Walter Camp Football Foundation's Man of the Year (1997), the George Herbert Walker Bush Lifetime Leadership Award (2001), and the NCAA Silver Anniversary Award (1994).



AUDRA MCDONALD is a multi-talented, award-winning performer who is known for her work as a singer and actress on stage and screen. A six-time Tony Award winner, Ms. McDonald holds the record for the most Tonys won by any performer. She is also the first person to have won a Tony Award in each of the four acting categories.

Ms. McDonald was born in Berlin, Germany and raised in Fresno, California, by parents who both worked in education and enjoyed music. Her father was a high school principal, and her mother was a college administrator. Ms. McDonald developed an interest in theater at an early age, and often put on performances at home with her sister and cousins. After she was diagnosed with hyperactivity at the age of eight, something she has spoken openly about in the years since, her parents enrolled her in a children's theater troupe, hoping it would help her to focus her emotions and energy. As a member of the Good Company Players' junior company, Ms. McDonald took part in a range of productions, from *The King and I* to *A Chorus Line* and *The Wiz*. She graduated from Roosevelt School of the Arts in Fresno, and then continued honing her talents at The Juilliard School, where she studied classical voice.

She graduated from Juilliard in 1993, and earned her first Tony Award a year later for best performance by a featured actress in a musical for a role in *Carousel* at Lincoln Center Theater. She went on to win two other Tony Awards, for performances in *Master Class* (1996) and *Ragtime* (1998), for a total of three Tonys before the age of thirty. In 2004 she received a fourth Tony for her role in *A Raisin in the Sun*, and she won her fifth in 2012 for *The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess*. In 2014 she won her sixth Tony for her portrayal of Billie Holiday in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar and Grill*.

Ms. McDonald's varied off-Broadway experiences showcase her many talents. On television, she has appeared on a number of PBS telecasts and is the host of that network's *Live from Lincoln Center* series, for which she won an Emmy Award in 2015. Her many television specials include the 1999 Disney/ABC television remake of *Annie*, the 2001 HBO production of *Wit*, and the 2013 NBC live telecast of *The Sound of Music*. For four years, between 2007 and 2011, she starred in ABC's *Private Practice*. She has appeared in a number of films and has also performed on opera and concert stages across the world. Ms. McDonald has released five solo albums that feature a range of music, from Broadway standards to contemporary hits.

An outspoken advocate for marriage equality, Ms. McDonald has participated in campaigns for Freedom to Marry, NOH8, and PFLAG NYC. In 2012 she and her husband, actor Will Swenson, received PFLAG's Straight for Equality Award. In 2014 and 2015 she spent the night outside to better understand the experience of homeless youth as part of the "Sleep Out" initiative organized by Covenant House International, which oversees programs for homeless youth in six countries.

Ms. McDonald is the recipient of two Grammy Awards, five Drama Desk Awards, and five Outer Critics Circle Awards. In 2015 she was named one of *Time's* 100 Most Influential People. She serves on the advisory committee of Broadway Impact, an organization of theater artists in support of marriage equality, and on the board of Covenant House International.

*Doctor of Letters*



HARUKI MURAKAMI is a Japanese author whose novels, short stories, and nonfiction works have sold millions of copies worldwide. He is best known for his fiction, which captivates readers through its blend of fantasy and reality, intertwined with mystery and science fiction, to reveal deeply human characters who struggle with feelings of loneliness and alienation.

Mr. Murakami was born in 1949 during the postwar baby boom, and raised in Kobe, Japan by middle-class parents who were both teachers of Japanese literature. From an early age, seeing Japanese society as homogeneous and restrictive, he gravitated toward western culture, specifically western literature and jazz. He was particularly influenced by Franz Kafka and by American authors Richard Brautigan, Raymond Chandler, and Kurt Vonnegut. As a boy, he taught himself English by reading American crime novels. He attended Waseda University in Tokyo, majoring in theater arts, and spent much of his time at the university's theater museum poring over American film scripts. He met his wife, Yoko, and married her while a student. After graduation they opened up a jazz bar together in Tokyo, called Peter Cat.

Mr. Murakami had what he described as a revelation while attending a baseball game at Jingu Stadium in Tokyo between the Yakult Swallows and the Hiroshima Carp. Just at the moment when an American player, Dave Hilton, hit a double, Mr. Murakami realized that he could write a novel. He began writing that evening and in ten months completed his first book, *Hear the Wind Sing*, which won the prestigious Gunzo New Writer Award. The book was a commercial success in Japan and became the first installment in his *Trilogy of the Rat*. He began to focus solely on his writing career, completing the second and third installments of the trilogy, titled *Pinball, 1973* and *A Wild Sheep Chase*. The trilogy examined the themes of loss and nostalgia through a science fiction lens and used western pop culture references throughout. His next novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, delved further into the surreal by telling two separate stories. *Hard-Boiled Wonderland* takes place in a secret part of the Japanese subway system, and *The End of the World* is about a fantasy world complete with unicorns, guarded by a feared gatekeeper. Eventually as the two stories converge, the protagonist is forced to choose which to call home.

Mr. Murakami's breakout novel, *Norwegian Wood*, is set in the 1960s and tells the story of Toru during his college days in Tokyo and his relationships with two very different women. The book sold four million copies in Japan and catapulted Mr. Murakami to superstar status. His other novels – *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, *Kafka on the Shore*, and *1Q84* – have been both commercially and critically successful. He has also written a memoir, *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*, which details his passion for long-distance running.

Mr. Murakami is also a very active translator, having produced Japanese translations of works by Raymond Carver, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Irving, Grace Paley, Paul Theroux, Truman Capote, Mark Strand, Tim O'Brien, and J.D. Salinger.

His numerous awards include the Yomiuri Literary Award in 1996 for *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*; the Junichiro Tanizaki Prize in 1985 for *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*; and, in 2006, both the Franz Kafka Prize and the World Fantasy Award for Best Novel for *Kafka on the Shore*. He was also named one of *Time*'s 100 Most Influential People in 2015.

Doctor of  
Humanities



ARNOLD RAMPERSAD is a biographer, literary critic, and the emeritus Sara Hart Kimball Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University. He is widely credited with renewing the genre of the literary biography and is considered among the nation's leading biographers. His works, which chronicle the lives of African American luminaries, including W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Arthur Ashe, Jackie Robinson, and Ralph Ellison, have made a distinctive contribution to American culture.

Mr. Rampersad was born in Trinidad, where he attended the Belmont Boys' Intermediate School and went on to high school at the College of the Immaculate Conception. He credits his early education, which he acknowledges that some might view as "colonial," with exposing him to the type of literature that eventually helped him to hone his skills as an American biographer.

After five years as a teacher and a radio broadcaster, he moved to the United States to attend college at Bowling Green University, where he earned both B.A. and M.A. degrees in English. He went on to earn an A.M. and a Ph.D. in English and American literature from Harvard University. His life changed, however, upon reading W.E.B. Du Bois's 1903 book, *The Souls of Black Folk*. Mr. Rampersad subsequently wrote his dissertation on Du Bois, and in 1976 he published the much acclaimed *The Art and Imagination of W.E.B. Du Bois*, a thorough and analytical review of Du Bois's social, political, and artistic views.

Mr. Rampersad was then approached by the executor of the estate of Langston Hughes, who invited him to write a biography

of Hughes. The resulting study, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, was published in two volumes in 1986 and 1988. Mr. Rampersad's biography was lauded for its comprehensive and unbiased view of Hughes as a writer and for its masterful illustration of American culture and society during the poet's lifetime. The book won the National Book Critics Circle Award and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1986.

Drawn to biography as a means of interjecting stories of African American personalities into American history, in which these persons were so often presented in a limited or one-dimensional way, Mr. Rampersad took on subjects that allowed him to showcase the singular achievements and intricate lives of public figures, while educating his readers about the rich and complex history of African Americans and of America.

He co-authored *Days of Grace: A Memoir* (1993) with the tennis player and civil rights activist Arthur Ashe and also penned the story of Jackie Robinson, the first black player in major league baseball in the modern era, titled *Jackie Robinson: A Biography* (1997). Rather than focusing solely on their professional accomplishments as a traditional sports biography might, Mr. Rampersad's works explored every aspect of the athletes' lives. His biography of the author Ralph Ellison, titled *Ralph Ellison: A Biography*, was a finalist for the 2007 National Book Award.

Mr. Rampersad served as a member of the English Department at Stanford University from 1974 to 1983, and again from 1998 to 2011. In the intervening years, he held teaching positions at Rutgers, Columbia, and Princeton universities. He was senior associate dean for the humanities at Stanford from 2003 to 2006, and is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and of the American Philosophical Society. His awards and honors include a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and the 2012 BIO Award of the Biographers International Organization. In 2010 President Barack Obama awarded him the National Humanities Medal.

#### *Doctor of Divinity*



DAVID SAPERSTEIN is the ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom and head of the Office of International Religious Freedom in the U.S. Department of State. He assumed his duties as adviser to the United States president and secretary of state and as the country's chief diplomat on issues of religious freedom worldwide in January 2015. He is the first non-Christian to hold the position and the fourth person ever to serve in the role, which was created in 1998.

Rabbi Saperstein, a lawyer, community leader, and public servant, has dedicated his life to social justice and civil rights. Prior to his appointment to his current position in the State Department, he served for forty years as director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

He was raised on Long Island in Malverne, New York, where his father, Rabbi Harold Saperstein, was a prominent, popular, and long-serving rabbi in the community and his mother, Marcia Saperstein, was an activist in a number of civic causes including as a founder of the Long Island Women's Forum. Service to religion and community was part of the Saperstein family legacy; his two great-uncles were Reform rabbis, and his two great-grandfathers were Orthodox rabbis. Both of Rabbi Saperstein's parents were actively involved in the civil rights movement, and their commitment to public service and to the Jewish religion made a strong impact on him during his formative years. He earned his B.A. from Cornell University in 1969. He decided to pursue a career as a lawyer and a rabbi, a path that would allow him to connect his two passions. He earned a Master of Hebrew Letters and was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in 1973. He also earned a J.D. from American University's Washington College of Law in 1978.

Rabbi Saperstein served for several years as a rabbi in New York City, where he helped organize a successful daily hot lunch program for over 350 elderly poor on the Upper West Side of the city. He also organized a rabbinic hunger strike to protest the bombing of Cambodia.

The call of social justice work on a broader scale soon led him to Washington, D.C. where, in 1974, he assumed leadership of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC). RAC is a center for Jewish social justice and legislative activity that advocates for civil rights, religious liberty, and economic justice. It has been a voice in every major civil rights issue since its creation in 1961. During his tenure, Rabbi Saperstein expanded the center's staffing while dedicating himself and the organization to advocacy work related to civil rights, women's and LGBT rights, health and welfare, the separation of church and state, and Israel.

He presented the invocation at the 2008 Democratic National Convention, and in 2009 he was appointed to the White House Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships by President Barack Obama. Rabbi Saperstein has served on a number of other councils and boards, including as inaugural chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom from 1999 to 2001, and on the boards of the NAACP, National Religious Partnership for the Environment, and the World Faiths Development Dialogue.

He served for 35 years as an adjunct professor of law at the Georgetown University Law Center, teaching courses on First Amendment church-state law and Jewish law. In 2009 *Newsweek* named him the most influential rabbi in the country.



ALICE WATERS is a chef, restaurateur, and pioneer of the local and organic food movement. She is the founder of the renowned Chez Panisse Restaurant and Café in Berkeley, California, and of the Edible Schoolyard Project, which educates children worldwide about food and agriculture through gardens and kitchen classrooms that are integrated into academic curricula.

Ms. Waters was born in Chatham, New Jersey. Her father worked in insurance, where he developed a unique, participatory management style, from which Ms. Waters would later benefit when he helped her to launch and run her restaurant in the 1970s. Her mother, a proponent of healthy food, was a stay-at-home mom who taught her children the value of nourishment. The family rarely went out to restaurants and instead harvested from a bountiful backyard vegetable “victory garden.”

Ms. Waters began college at the University of California, Santa Barbara, before transferring to University of California, Berkeley, where she received a B.A. in French Cultural History in 1967. A year abroad in Paris opened her eyes to the possibilities of gastronomy and was a catalyst for her own career in local and seasonal food. After graduation, she moved to London in 1968 to train at a Montessori school. While abroad, she took advantage of her proximity to Europe to continue her self-education in the culture and politics of food.

She returned to Berkeley, where she began teaching at a Montessori school and writing a cooking column for a local newspaper. In 1971 she opened Chez Panisse. In its early days, she served variously as chef, waiter, and manager of the restaurant, which focused on sourcing seasonal ingredients from local farms. In 1983 when Ms. Waters had a baby, she stepped back from her responsibilities as chef but remained intimately involved with the restaurant, which grew in popularity as “farm-to-table” cooking became increasingly mainstream.

In 1996, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Chez Panisse, Ms. Waters established the Chez Panisse Foundation and the Edible Schoolyard at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School in Berkeley. The one-acre garden and adjacent kitchen classroom allowed students at the school to learn about the importance of a sustainable food system and how to achieve and be empowered by it. The ultimate goal of the Edible Schoolyard Project is to feed every child in America a free, sustainable school lunch.

At Yale Ms. Waters was instrumental in the creation of the Yale Sustainable Food Program, which began taking shape in 2001 when her daughter enrolled as a student in Yale College. Ms. Waters and Richard C. Levin, then university president, began conversations about the campus-wide initiative that would grow to include sustainable dining, farm and composting projects, and academic components. Ms. Waters now serves on the Sustainable Food Program’s Advisory Board.

Over the years, Ms. Waters has penned a number of cookbooks, including *Chez Panisse Cooking*, *The Art of Simple Food I and II*, and her latest, *My Pantry*, which was co-written and illustrated by her daughter Fanny Singer. She has earned a wide range of honors for her work. She was named Chef of the Year by the James Beard Foundation in 1992, and earned that organization's lifetime achievement award in 2004 and its leadership award in 2015. In 2007 she was elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, and she was awarded a 2014 National Humanities Medal by President Barack Obama.

*Doctor of Fine Arts*



GEORGE C. WOLFE is a Tony Award-winning playwright and director who has brought his creative talents to such stage hits as *The Colored Museum*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, *Angels in America*, *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*, and *The Normal Heart*. He wrote the book for and directs the Tony Award-nominated *Shuffle Along, or, the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed*, now running on Broadway.

Mr. Wolfe was born in Frankfort, Kentucky to middle-class parents. His mother was a school principal and his father was a government employee. His love of theater and acting was sparked at the age of thirteen when he saw a production of *Hello, Dolly!* He began his college career at Kentucky State University, a historically black institution, but transferred to Pomona College in California, where he completed his B.A. in theater arts. He stayed in Los Angeles following graduation, working at acting, writing, and directing, but moved to New York City in 1979 to be closer to the theater scene. He went on to earn his M.F.A. from New York University in musical theater, and struggled for several years before writing his first hit, *The Colored Museum*, a satirical comedy about black culture. Critics applauded Mr. Wolfe's "courageous and fresh voice." The production originally opened off Broadway in New Jersey and eventually moved to the Public Theater in New York City (previously known as the New York Shakespeare Festival), thus beginning his long relationship with the non-profit theater institution. *The Colored Museum* was also televised as part of the *Great Performances* series on PBS. Under the auspices of the Public Theater he next directed *Spunk*, a production consisting of three vignettes by author Zora Neale Hurston for which he received an Obie Award, and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, a play by German modernist playwright Bertolt Brecht.

Mr. Wolfe wrote the book for the musical *Jelly's Last Jam*. He also directed the play, which is about the life of black jazz musician Jelly Roll Morton, racial prejudices among blacks, and the birth of jazz during the 1920s. *Jelly's Last Jam* received eleven Tony Award nominations and was a box office success. For his next project he directed *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*, the first part in

Tony Kushner's epic story of homosexuality and the AIDS crisis in America during the 1980s, for which he earned his first Tony Award, for best direction of a play.

In 1993 Mr. Wolfe was appointed artistic director of the Public Theater in New York, where his goal was to produce "a theater that looks, feels, and smells like America," and also to improve declining revenue. During his leadership at the Public Theater he directed *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*, a financial success that earned him his second Tony, for best direction of a musical. During his years overseeing the Public, he directed such hits as *Top Dog/Underdog* and *Radiant Baby* and was responsible for bringing two Shakespeare plays to Broadway—*Julius Caesar* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

More recently Mr. Wolfe directed *Lucky Guy*, the final play written by Nora Ephron before her death. It starred Tom Hanks in his Broadway debut portraying 1980s–1990s *New York Daily News* Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Mike McAlary, and it received six Tony nominations. Mr. Wolfe has also brought his creativity and storytelling ability to his position as chief creative officer of the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia, where he designed a powerful interactive, multi-sensory visitor experience while telling the story of the civil rights movement.