

Thomas

cont'd from pg 7

I thought it was spiders in my ears, but I would just deal with it. It's been tough, but acting is what I do here on Earth. I am not going to sit around and wait for death. I am having as much fun as possible."

Thomas was slated to perform the roles of Capulet and Ensemble in 2018's *Romeo and Juliet*, and was to take part in his third *Black Swan Lab* — OSF's primary play development incubator.

Thomas also worked at A Contemporary Theatre (ACT) in San Francisco, Seattle Children's Theatre, Bathhouse Theatre, Seattle Group Theatre, Empty Space Theatre and Pioneer Square Theatre, and served on the faculty of The Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. He is the winner of two Seattle-based Gregory Awards: Outstanding Actor in a play (2013) and Outstanding Supporting Actor in a play (2016).

In addition to his acting accomplishments, Thomas had a passion for music and took part in three seasons of the OSF Green Show. In 2014, when he performed "a musical

look at the influence of Blues and R&B" on his life with a group billed as "G. Val and Friends," Thomas shared these thoughts in his Green Show biography: "Black Americans brought forth Blues music from the experiences they went through and were going through. The music it became had the strength to hold the entire country on its shoulders."

Gregory Valmont Thomas was born Dec. 15, 1959, in Nuremberg, Germany; the family moved a great deal due to his father's military career, and Thomas spent his teenage years in Washington state. He received a bachelor's in Theatre Arts from Western Washington University and an MFA in Directing for the Theatre from Pennsylvania State University. He is survived by his daughter Aria Thomas; son Langston Thomas; brother Raymon E. Thomas, sister-in-law Deborah and their child Blair; sister Bronwyn K. Thomas, her children Morgan and Zachary, brother-in-law Jay and two great nephews. Thomas was preceded in death by his parents, Henry R. Thomas Jr. and Kathryn C. Thomas (nee Hollingsworth).

Founded by Angus

Bowmer in 1935, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) has grown from a three-day festival of two plays to a nationally renowned theatre arts organization that presents an eight-month season of up to 11 plays that include works by Shakespeare as well as a mix of classics, musicals, and world-premiere plays and musicals. OSF's play commissioning programs, which include *American Revolutions: the United States History Cycle*, have generated works that have been produced on Broadway, throughout the American regional theatre, and in high schools and community theatres across the country. The Festival draws attendance of more than 400,000 to approximately 800 performances every year and employs approximately 575 theatre professionals.

OSF invites and welcomes everyone, and believes the inclusion of diverse people, ideas, cultures and traditions enriches both our insights into the work we present on stage and our relationships with each other. OSF is committed to equity and diversity in all areas of our work and in our audiences.

OSF's mission statement: "Inspired by Shakespeare's work and the cultural richness of the United States, we reveal our collective humanity through illuminating interpretations of new and classic plays, deepened by the kaleidoscope of rotating repertory."

Transparency in Education Improves Parental Engagement, Experts Say

Just in Time for Christmas: Education Law Requires Easy Access to Report Cards



OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA

President Barack Obama hugs students during a visit to a pre-kindergarten classroom at the College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center in Decatur, Ga., Feb. 14, 2013.

By Stacy M. Brown
NNPA Newswire Contributor

The public reporting requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) offer greater transparency about school quality, according to experts and education advocates who also predict that the new law will empower parents and make them more informed partners in the education process of their children.

President Barack Obama signed ESSA into law on December 10, 2015.

"Public reporting is going to be very important, because state systems, like what goes into [calculating] letter grades for schools, are incredibly complex," said Phillip Lovell, the vice president of policy development and government relations for the Alliance for Excellent Education, a Washington, D.C.-based national advocacy organization that's dedicated to ensuring all students graduate

from high school, ready for success in college and in the workplace. "States are aware of and working on how to communicate information on school performance clearly."

Brenna McMahon Parton, the director of policy and advocacy for Data Quality Campaign, one of the nation's leading voices on education data policy and use, said that everyone deserves information, which is why ESSA requires that report cards are easy to understand.

"To date, states haven't focused on parent needs and, as a result, report cards are difficult to find and use," said Parton. "As states develop new report cards, they should be sure that parents will have a one-stop-shop that provides information they need about how students and schools in their community are performing."

ESSA reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA),

See EDUCATION on page 10

FILM

cont'd from pg 6



'Roman J. Israel, Esq.'

horns of an ethical dilemma. Should he abandon his morals to keep a roof over his head? That is the question at the center of *Roman J. Israel, Esq.*, a compelling character portrait written and directed by Oscar-nominee Dan Gilroy (for *Nightcrawler*).

The legendary Denzel Washington is quite convincing as well as moving, here, as a beleaguered soul afflicted with Asperger's syndrome. His powerful performance might very well be remembered at Oscar time, given the Academy's recent history of rewarding thespians playing impaired characters, including Eddie Redmayne (2014) for Stephen Hawking (who has ALS); Colin Firth (2010) for stut-

tering King George VI; Geoffrey Rush (1996) for mentally-ill David Helfgott; Tom Hanks (1994) for developmentally disabled *Forest Gump*; Tom Hanks (1993) for AIDS patient Andrew Beckett; Daniel Day-Lewis (1989) for Christy Brown, the celebrated author who had cerebral palsy; and Dustin Hoffman (1988) playing an autistic savant in "*Rain Man*."

Win, lose or draw, "*Roman J. Israel, Esq.*" deserves accolades aplenty in its own right for its touching treatment of such a sensitive subject.

Excellent ★★★★★

Rated PG-13 for violence and profanity

Running time: 129 min.

To see a trailer for *Roman J. Israel, Esq.*, go to TheSkanner.com



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