

People & Places

Obits

Pulitzer winner

Historian Robert Massie dies at 90

NEW YORK, Dec 3, (Agencies): **Robert K. Massie**, the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian who specialized in best-selling and critically praised biographies of the Russian tsars and discovered a personal connection to the country's past through the blood disorder that afflicted both his son and the son of Nicholas II, died Monday at age 90.

Son Christopher Massie told The Associated Press that the author, who had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease, died at his home in Irvington, New York.

Likened to David McCullough and Edmund Morris as a popularizer of history, Robert K. Massie wrote epic page turners on two outsized tsars: the 900-page "Peter the Great", winner of the Pulitzer in 1981; and the 600-page "Catherine the Great", winner in 2012 of a PEN award for biography. Reviewing "Catherine the Great" for The New York Times, Kathryn Harrison praised Massie as both a scholar and literary stylist.

"Massie, who has spent almost half a century studying czarist Russia, has always been a biographer with the instincts of a novelist," Harrison wrote. "He understands plot – fate – as a function of character, and the narrative perspective he establishes and maintains, a vision tightly aligned with that of his subject, convinces a reader he's not so much looking at Catherine the Great as he is out of her eyes."

Massie's first book drew upon his interest in Nicholas' heir apparent, the Tsarevich Alexei, a hemophiliac like the eldest of Massie's three children, Robert Jr. "Nicholas and Alexandra" was published in 1967, in the midst of the Cold War, and praised in The New York Times as a long-needed and balanced account of the last tsar and his family. Massie's book also was a commercial success and the basis for a 1971 film adaptation, starring Michael Jayston and Janet Suzman, that won the Oscar for art direction. Massie thought the film superficial, but took advantage of the publicity to raise money for hemophilia treatment.

Celebrity

"Nicholas and Alexandra" made Massie a celebrity, phoned by strangers who invited him for lunch, and a magnet for relatives and alleged relatives of the Romanovs. He discussed hemophilia with the Duke and Duchess of Windsor (The Duke was the Tsarevich's first cousin), and with Earl Mountbatten of Burma, a grandson of Queen Victoria. He received "fat, bulky envelopes," one containing a letter from a woman identifying herself as "Mrs J. Edgar Hoover, Her Imperial Majesty Catherine III Romanov-Hoover, Diplomatic Agent Five Star A.G., Chief of Mission for President Lyndon Baines Johnson."

His other works included "The Romanovs", which tackled the mystery of the royal family's remains after they were executed in 1918 by the Bolsheviks, and a pair of books about the military rivalry between Britain and Germany in the early 20th century: "Dreadnought" and "Castles of Steel". Massie and his first wife, Suzanne, collaborated in the mid-1970s on "Journey", a memoir about their son. The couple, who also collaborated on "Nicholas and Alexandra", divorced in 1990. Two years later he married the literary agent Deborah Karl, with whom he had three children. Massie served as President of the Authors Guild from 1987-1991, and strongly criticized bookstores in 1989 for pulling Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses", which had angered Muslims and led to threats of violence.

Born in Lexington, Kentucky, in 1929, Robert Kinloch Massie was a "bright, fiery boy from an old Southern family," Suzanne Massie once wrote. He was a Rhodes Scholar who studied American and European history at Yale University and Oxford University. After serving in the Navy, he considered going to graduate school to become a teacher or a lawyer. But when his wife became pregnant with their first son, born in 1956, he needed immediate income and looked for a job in journalism. He began as an office assistant at Collier's, where he would work under Theodore H. White, the future author of "The Making of the President" series. Massie later joined Newsweek as a book critic and The Saturday Evening Post as a features writer.

By the mid-1960s, he was struggling to keep up with their son's medical bills and was frustrated professionally. For years, he had been anxious to write about hemophilia. He submitted a story to Reader's Digest in the late 1950s, but was turned down, and was no more successful while at Newsweek. The Saturday Evening Post did run a story by Massie in 1963, but declined a separate sketch on the tsar's son. (On White's recommendation, Massie was signed by Atheneum, for a \$2,500 advance).

Massie had read enough about Russian history to know that little had been told about the Tsarevich's hemophilia.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: **Joe Smith**, whose four decades in the music business included heading Warner Bros in the 1960s and '70s, Elektra in the '70s and '80s and Capitol in the late 1980s and '90s, has died at 91, multiple sources have confirmed.

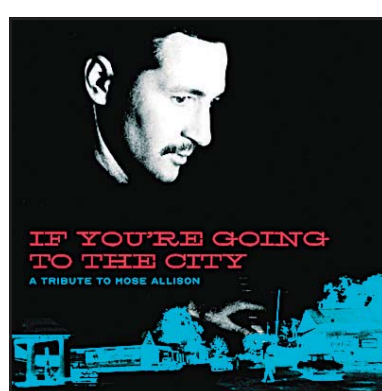
"I'm so fortunate to have gotten out of (the music business) when I got out of it because there's no fun anymore," Smith, whose Warners run included the signing of **Van Morrison**, **Black Sabbath**, **America**, **Alice Cooper** and the **Doobie Brothers**, told Variety when he received his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame four years ago. "We were there during a great time, and (then) it hit a wall."

Besides leading three of the more historically important labels in the business across different eras, Smith is also remembered for his 1988 book "Off the Record: An Oral History of Popular Music", which included interviews with a slate of legendary artists few others would have enjoyed access to – including **Bob Dylan**, **Barbra Streisand**, **Paul McCartney**, **Artie Shaw**, **Woody Herman**, **Ella Fitzgerald**, **Mick Jagger**, **Elton John**, **Ray Charles**, **Tony Bennett**, **Neil Diamond** and **Billy Joel**. Smith was the head of Capitol Records when he conducted the interviews.

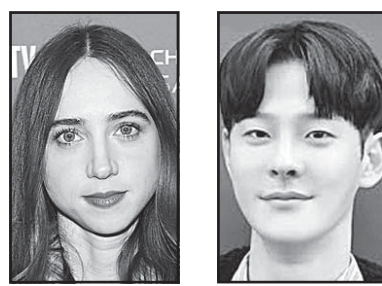
A native of **Chelsea, Mass.** Smith first fell in love with music as a youngster listening to the jazz of **Count Basie**, **Duke Ellington** and **Stan Getz**. After a stint in the military and a degree from **Yale**, Smith got into radio as a disc jockey, and as a DJ in **Boston** in 1960 was called to testify in the congressional payola hearings before moving to the west coast the following year to work in promotion for Warner Bros.



Actress Noomi Rapace poses for photographers upon arrival at the British Fashion Awards in central London on Dec 2. (AP)



This cover image released by Fat Possum shows "If You're Going to the City: A Tribute to Mose Allison" performed by various artists. (AP)



Kazan

Cha

Variety

LOS ANGELES: Young Korean actor **Cha In-ha** has been found dead, according to local media reports in **South Korea**. He was 27.

Cha's agency, Fantagio, issued a statement confirming his death, saying it was "truly heartbreaking to deliver sad news to everyone who has sent lots of love and support" to the actor.

Within the last day, Cha (real name Lee Jae-ho) posted a picture of himself on Instagram posing with a white mug and looking moodily at his phone. "Everybody, watch out," he wrote.

Cha's death is the third inside three months of a young South Korean performer. In October, outspoken 25-year-old singer **Sulli** died shortly after leaving a note that hinted at depression. Last week, 27-year-old K-pop star **Goo Hara** was found dead at her home in **Seoul**.

Cha emerged at the forefront of the South Korean entertainment scene only in the past couple of years. He was a member of Fantagio's actor group **Surprise U**, and had starred in dramas including "The Banker", and "Miss Independent Ji Eun 2". He had recently appeared in MBC drama "Love With Flaws".

Fantagio asked people not to spread rumors or speculate about Cha's death, to spare the family unnecessary additional grief. The agency said a private funeral would be held. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Netflix has announced the main cast of its upcoming thriller series "Clickbait".

Zoe Kazan, **Adrian Grenier**, **Betty Gabriel**, and **Phoenix Raei** will all star in the eight-episode series. It is said to explore the ways in which our most dangerous and uncontrolled impulses are fueled in the age of social media and reveals the ever-widening fractures we find between our virtual and real-life personas. Production has commenced on the series, which is shooting in **Melbourne, Australia**.

Kazan will play Pia Brewer, described as a young woman desperate for answers in the search for her missing brother in a case that has become a media sensation. Kazan is known for her starring role in the Oscar-nominated film "The Big Sick" as well as the feature "Ruby Sparks", the latter of which she also wrote. She will also star in the upcoming HBO series adaptation of "The Plot Against America". She is repped by **UTA**, **Washington Square Films**, and **Jackoway Tyerman**.

Grenier will play Sophie Brewer, an **Oakland** woman struggling to keep her family together as they become the

Music

Swift admits 'weirdness' of 'Cats'

Allison tribute hits the right spots

By Pablo Gorondi

'If You're Going to the City: A Tribute to Mose Allison', Various Artists (Fat Possum)

It may be a tired cliché to say someone was one of a kind, but Mose Allison most definitely was.

A jazz and blues pianist whose songwriting career meshed lyrics with Mad magazine wit, keen philosophical observations and pure melodies that he sang in a cool conversational voice, Allison, who died three years ago at age 89, was an inspiration to everyone from Pete Townshend to Van Morrison.

In an album benefiting the Sweet Relief Musicians Fund, a true collection of greats – from **Fiona Apple** and **Bonnie Raitt** to **Taj Mahal** and **Iggy Pop** – put their own artistry at the service of 15 outstanding Allison tracks from across his extensive career.

It's their diversity and personalized takes on the songs that makes this album so enjoyable. There's been many versions of Allison's songs over the years and several here are absolutely marvelous.

They include **Loudon Wainwright's** guitar-and-voice take on "Ever Since the World Ended", with its upbeat descriptions of post-apocalyptic life, **Dave and Phil Alvin's** fierce version of "Wild Man on the Loose", **Ben Harper** and **Charlie Musselwhite's** fiery "Nightclub" and **Iggy Pop's** late period Miles Davis-like adaptation of the title track.

With **Apple** backed by, among others, **Benmont Tench** and **Fred Tackett**, the all-too-brief "Your Molecular Structure" applies scientific terms to explain the whys and hows of physical attraction but ends in most primal fashion – "Your mo-

lecular structure baby, ooh weel!"

Other highlights are live versions by **Raitt** of "Everybody's Crying Mercy" and **Richard Thompson** of "Parchman Farm". **Robbie Fulks** puts a folksy spin with banjo and fiddle on "My Brain" and daughter **Amy Allison** and **Elvis Costello** close the album in fine fashion on the sophisticated "Monsters of the Id".

The album comes with a bonus DVD of a 2005 documentary about Allison by **Paul Bernay**, "Ever Since I Stole the Blues", that shows in what high regard far more famous musicians held him.

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"Cats", **Tom Hooper's** upcoming adaptation of the long-running musical, ignited the internet with hot takes after the first trailer introduced audiences to "digital fur technology" and full-figured felines. But **Taylor Swift**, who stars in the buzzy film alongside **Judi Dench**, **Idris Elba**, **Jennifer Hudson** and **James Cordery**, is on board with its quirkiness.

"I really had an amazing time with 'Cats,'" Swift told **British Vogue**. "I think I loved the weirdness of it. I loved how I felt I'd never get another opportunity to be like this in my life."

For **British Vogue's** cover story, Swift sat down with **Andrew Lloyd Webber**, the musical theater legend behind "Cats". The duo, who co-wrote a new song "Beautiful Ghosts" for the movie, discussed the importance of songwriting.

"I think is really important – also from the side of ownership over what you do and make," Swift said. "Even if you aren't a natural writer, you should try to involve yourself in the messages you're sending."

Lloyd Webber added, "Today,

very few people have a major career unless they write."

In the upcoming adaptation, **Dench** plays a gender-swapped **Old Deuteronomy**. **Lloyd Webber** recalled the actress was supposed to appear in his original stage production but had to drop out for medical reasons.

"Judi was in the original version, but she snapped her Achilles tendon and had to withdraw," he told **British Vogue**. "Then I had this idea, which I ran past Tom, that we could make **Old Deuteronomy** a woman. Seeing her perform this time was quite an emotional thing for me, because it was a very, very sad day when she had to leave the original show."

"Cats" arrives in theaters Dec 20.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: **Billie Eilish** will be the first recipient of the **Apple Music Award** for global artist of the year, one of three honors for the pop singer.

Apple announced Monday that Eilish's "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?" has been named album of the year. Eilish and her brother **Finneas** will also receive songwriter of the year honors.

Eilish will perform a live-streamed concert from the **Steve Jobs Theater** at **Apple's** campus in **Cupertino, California**, beginning at 6:30 pm PST on Wednesday.

Lizzo has been named the breakthrough artist of the year.

Lil Nas X's "Old Town Road" is the company's pick for song of the year.

The company says its album and song of the year honors are determined by streams on its **Apple Music** service. Other awards are determined by **Apple Music's** editorial team. (Agencies)

subject of the biggest media story in the nation. **Gabriel** is known for her roles in the films "Get Out" and "The Purge: Election Year". She has also appeared on the shows "Westworld", "Counterpart" and "Good Girls Revolt", and will next be seen in the **Apple** drama "Defending Jacob". She is repped by **ICM** and

Untitled Entertainment.

Grenier will play **Nick Brewer**, who has a seemingly perfect life-loving wife, two sons, and a beautiful home. His life is derailed when he becomes a part of this bizarre crime. **Grenier** is best known for his starring role in the **HBO** comedy series "Entourage". After the show ended

in 2011, a follow-up film was made and released in 2015. (RTRS)

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LOS ANGELES: Location-based virtual reality (VR) startup **Dreamscape** has teamed up with **DreamWorks Animation** to launch a new "How to Train Your Dragons" experience at its flagship **Westfield Century City VR** center in **Los Angeles** later this month.

The 11-minute "DreamWorks Dragons Flight Academy" experience allows up to 8 participants to hone their dragon-flying skills together, and take part in a high-flying rescue mission, complete with help from **Hiccup** and **Astrid**, and their dragons **Toothless** and **Stormfly**. Like other **Dreamscape** titles, "DreamWorks Dragons Flight Academy" is a free-roam experience with full-body tracking and physical props for added immersion.

"We are turning the audiences into the star of their own movie adventure," said **Dreamscape** chairman **Walter Parkes** in a statement. "No longer are audiences just watching **Hiccup** and **Toothless** take on a group of ruthless poachers, but now, audiences can fly alongside them on their very own dragons as they protect the **Isle of Berk**. We are excited to introduce audiences to this unprecedented full sensory experience of becoming a dragon rider."

Dreamscape is one of a handful of startups looking to bring VR out of the living room, and into malls and movie theaters. (RTRS)



Filmmaker **Noah Baumbach** (right), accepts the Best Feature Award for "Marriage Story", as actors **Adam Driver** and **Laura Dern** look on at the **Independent Filmmaker Project's** 29th Annual **IFP Gotham Awards** at **Cipriani Wall Street** on Dec 2 in **New York**. (AP) – See Page 12