

Multi-award winning author to lead writer, actor workshops

◆ **Ernest Thompson:** Master classes being offered for all levels at his home this summer.

By **VIRGINIA BATTLES-RAFFA**
Special to the Sunday News

NEW HAMPTON — Academy Award-winning writer Ernest Thompson, along with his partners, Morgan and Lori Murphy, will offer intensive workshops for actors and writers of all levels this summer at his home on Whitebridge Farm.

The writers' workshops will be held July 17-19 and Aug. 21-23. A one-day masters class in acting will be offered Aug. 1.

Thompson won a Golden Globe for his play "On Golden Pond," and an Academy Award for his screenplay adaptation of that play. He has also received nominations for a Tony, an Emmy and a British Academy Award. He has written and directed numerous plays and films, including "1969," starring Robert Downey Jr., Keifer Sutherland and Winona Ryder.

Thompson said he welcomes both the novice and the experienced writer or actor to his workshops. "I like to mix seasoned writers with new ones in a workshop ... It combines a certain freshness with professional experience that adds to the workshop." Attendees will be expected to arrive with a blank pad and a pen or a computer, but no works-in-progress are necessary.

"I actually prefer they don't come with a work-in-progress ... Friday night, people will show up at my home for cocktails, and then we will sit around my dining room table and hash out an overview with each person ... We'll get a basic idea of where he or she wants to go with his or her story and then the writers will go ... and create their



COURTESY PHOTO

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ERNEST THOMPSON

On his workshops

Thompson

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outline. ... The process can go as fast as the person can develop his/her idea. It's about storytelling and that process."

Thompson said he decided to hold the workshops at his gentleman's farm to add a warm, inviting atmosphere. "I'm hosting them at the farm because I think it adds to the intimacy of the workshops. Here, writers and actors are in a protected environment where they can explore their craft without fear." The Murphys will help facilitate conferees' housing arrangements at various inns and B&Bs in the area. A catered lunch will be served at the farm each day.

Thompson said he was inspired to teach workshops because much of what he has seen taught at schools and workshops promoted fear of failure. "People are told how hard this business is and how competitive it is. They are reminded of how unlikely it is they will make it. There is so much negativism in this business, but we offer an antidote to it ... no promises, but you are given permission to give it a shot."

There are a swimming hole, volleyball court, and plenty of room to roam at Whitebridge Farm, and workshop attendees are welcome to utilize them, but Thompson and the Murphys were

adamant that this would be a working vacation for anyone attending.

"They're going to be very busy the entire weekend," said Thompson. "They are given a very clear sense on Friday night about what they need to get done. They are given notes on the outlines they bring back on Saturday. By Sunday afternoon, professional actors join the process and the writers get to see their work come to life."

Added Morgan Murphy: "These are product-based workshops, not a how-to lecture series. You leave with something you've created and you get access to Ernest, someone who has been in

this business for over 30 years, and has won an Academy Award for his work and now brings his talent to an active production company."

Thompson and the Murphys emphasized their workshops offered the opportunity to work with Thompson and others who are actively involved in the business.

Whitebridge Farm Productions would like to be instrumental in growing the film and theater industry in New Hampshire.

Workshops vary in price from \$200 to \$1,800. More information is at whitebridge-

farmproductions.com.