

# Barry Morse

## *The Stage*

by Patrick Newley

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Actor Barry Morse was best known on television for his role as police chief Philip Gerard in *The Fugitive*, the hugely popular US drama series which was shown on ITV from 1964-67.

The series, which also starred David Janssen as Dr Richard Kimble, spanned 120 episodes. It was shown all over the world and made both Janssen and Morse international stars. When the final episode was shown - on the same day all over the world - more than 20 million people watched in Britain.

Morse was also remembered for playing Professor Bergman in the ITV sci-fi series *Space 1999*, Wolf Stoller in the mini-series *The Winds of War* and, more recently, he guested in *Doctors* and *Waking the Dead*.

Born Herbert Morse in London on June 10, 1918, he studied acting at RADA, where he held the Leverhulme Scholarship, 1935-36. He went on to appear in repertory in Croydon, Leeds, Bradford and Newcastle. He met his wife, the Canadian actress Sydney Sturgess, while appearing in rep in Peterborough.

He made his film debut in the Will Hay comedy *The Goose Steps Out* (1942) and his early West End appearances included *School for Slavery* (1942) and *Crisis in Heaven* (1944). On tour he appeared in productions of *The First Mrs Fraser*, *War and Peace* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (as Lord Henry Wootton).

Other early film credits included *When We Are Married* (1942), *There's a Future in It* (1943), *Daughter of Darkness* (1948) and *No Trace* (1950).

He and his wife moved to Canada in the early fifties where Morse found himself in demand as an actor on Canadian radio and television. He played a wide range of roles, both modern and classical, and was also in demand as a director. In 1959 he was billed as "Canada's leading actor". He won Canada's Best TV Actor award five times and in 1984 toured the country with his acclaimed one-man show, *Merely Players*.

After *The Fugitive* brought him world fame he divided his time between Canada, New York and London. On the Broadway stage he directed the then ground-breaking gay drama *Staircase* (1968) starring Milo O'Shea and Eli Wallach, and he starred as Father William Rolfe in *Hadrian VII* (1969).

In London in 1976 he became vice-president of the Shaw Society and 20 years later was elected president.

Later TV roles included Mr Parminter in the secret agent series, *The Adventurer*, Alec Marlowe (The Tiger) in *The Zoo Gang*, and he was Adam Verver in an adaptation of Henry James' *The Golden Bowl*. He was also Murgatroyd in Barbara Taylor Bradford's mini-series *A Woman of Substance* and played the US president, Johnny Cyclops, in the comedy hit *Whoops Apocalypse*.

In recent years Morse had been involved in fund-raising performances of his one-man show for the National Parkinson Foundation after his wife developed the disease. His last performance of *Merely Players* was in 2003.

He died, aged 89, in London on February 2. His wife died in 1991 and his daughter in 2005. He is survived by his son.