

Beat: Vips

Lawrence of Arabia star Peter O Toole dead at 81

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USPA News - British actor Peter O'Toole, who shot to international fame by playing T. E. Lawrence in the 1962 blockbuster movie "Lawrence of Arabia," died at a hospital in London on Saturday after suffering from a long illness, his family announced on Sunday. He was 81. "Peter O'Toole's family announced today that, very sadly, Peter died yesterday (Saturday), peacefully in hospital. He had been ill for some time," his agent Steve Kenis said.

The retired actor was being treated at Wellington Hospital in London, the largest independent hospital in the United Kingdom, but the nature of his illness was not disclosed. "His family are very appreciative and completely overwhelmed by the outpouring of real love and affection being expressed towards him, and to us, during this unhappy time," daughter Kate O'Toole said in an e-mailed statement on late Sunday. "Thank you all, from the bottom of our hearts." O'Toole officially retired from acting in July 2012 after a career spanning more than 50 years, which earned him eight Oscar nominations and an honorary Oscar. Besides "Lawrence of Arabia," other works that earned him Oscar nominations include the 1964 movie "Becket," the 1968 movie "The Lion in Winter," the 1969 movie "Goodbye, Mr. Chips," the 1972 movie "The Ruling Class," and the 2006 movie "Venus." "Ireland, and the world, has lost one of the giants of film and theater," Irish President Michael Higgins said after hearing the news. "In a long list of leading roles on stage and in film, Peter brought an extraordinary standard to bear as an actor. He had a deep interest in literature and a love of Shakespearean sonnets in particular." Higgins, who had been friends with O'Toole for more than four decades, said he will miss his humor and friendship. "[My wife] Sabina and I and our children will miss him, as will all those who saw him on screen or stage or had the privilege, as I had, of enjoying his friendship and humor," he said. British Prime Minister David Cameron also praised O'Toole's work in a brief message on the social networking website Twitter. "My thoughts are with Peter O'Toole's family and friends. His performance in my favorite film, Lawrence of Arabia, was stunning," the prime minister wrote. O'Toole's daughter Kate said a memorial service will take place in the near future, but asked for privacy in the meantime. "In due course there will be a memorial filled with song and good cheer, as he would have wished. We will be happy to speak to you all then, but in the meantime, if you could give Peter O'Toole the respect he deserves and allow us to grieve privately, we'd appreciate it," she said.

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