

Beat: Vips

Nobel-winning Irish poet Seamus Heaney dead at 74

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USPA News - Irish writer and poet Seamus Heaney, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995 and was acclaimed by many as the best Irish poet since W. B. Yeats, died early Friday morning after a short illness, his family and publisher confirmed. He was 74 years old.

A brief statement issued by the Heaney family confirmed the famed poet died at a hospital in the Irish capital of Dublin on Friday morning, but details about the exact cause of death were not immediately released. The statement requested privacy on behalf of the family and said funeral arrangements would be announced at a later date. Heaney, born on a farm west of Belfast in Northern Ireland in April 1939, was awarded numerous prizes and received many honors for his work, including the 1995 Nobel Prize in Literature for works of "lyrical beauty and ethical depth, which exalt everyday miracles and the living past." Irish President Michael D. Higgins, who is a poet himself, said he learned of Heaney's death with "the greatest sadness" and applauded his work. "The presence of Seamus was a warm one, full of humor, care and courtesy - a courtesy that enabled him to carry with such wry Northern Irish dignity so many well-deserved honors from all over the world," he said. Higgins added: "As tributes flow in from around the world, as people recall the extraordinary occasions of the readings and the lectures, we in Ireland will once again get a sense of the depth and range of the contribution of Seamus Heaney to our contemporary world, but what those of us who have had the privilege of his friendship and presence will miss is the extraordinary depth and warmth of his personality." Heaney's publisher, Faber and Faber, described the poet as "one of the world's greatest writers" and called his death a great loss. "His impact on literary culture is immeasurable. As his publisher we could not have been prouder to publish his work over nearly 50 years," a statement said. Tributes flowed in from many others across the world, including former U.S. President Bill Clinton who personally knew Heaney. "Both his stunning work and his life were a gift to the world. His mind, heart, and his uniquely Irish gift for language made him our finest poet of the rhythms of ordinary lives and a powerful voice for peace," he said. Clinton added: "We loved him and we will miss him. More than a brilliant artist, Seamus was, from the first day we met him, a joy to be with and a warm and caring friend -- in short, a true son of Northern Ireland. His wonderful work, like that of his fellow Irish Nobel Prize winners Shaw, Yeats, and Beckett, will be a lasting gift for all the world." Heaney is survived by his wife, Marie, and his children, Christopher, Michael and Catherine Ann.

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