



Marian Seldes

August 23, 1928 - October 6, 2014

New York, New York

Marian Seldes, the Broadway actress who appeared in every single performance of a hit play for more than four years and then spent decades teaching others to love the stage as much as she did, died at her home in Manhattan on October 6, 2014. She was eighty-six.

Marian Hall Seldes was born in Manhattan on August 23, 1928. Her father was Gilbert Seldes, the critic who took popular culture seriously before it was fashionable, and her uncle was the crusading journalist George Seldes. She grew up surrounded by talkers and writers, trained at the Neighborhood Playhouse, and studied with Sanford Meisner, Katharine Cornell and the dancer Martha Graham.

She made her Broadway debut in 1948 in *Medea* and went on to a career of tall, elegant, faintly dangerous women. She won a Tony Award in 1967 for Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance* and was nominated four more times. Her most remarkable feat came with Ira Levin's thriller *Deathtrap*, which opened in 1978: she played all 1,809 Broadway performances without missing one, and the Guinness book named her its most durable actress. Understudies of the era did not get much work.

She was just as devoted in the classroom. From 1967 to 1991 she taught drama at the Juilliard School, where her students included Robin Williams, Kevin Kline, Patti LuPone, Christopher Reeve and William Hurt. She later taught at Fordham. Radio listeners knew her voice from more than two hundred episodes of the CBS Radio Mystery Theater and from story readings at Symphony Space.

Her first marriage ended in 1961, and she later spoke candidly about how frightening it had been. In 1990 she

married the writer and director Garson Kanin, who died in 1999. She was survived by her daughter, Katharine.

Accepting a lifetime achievement Tony in 2010, she said she had simply lived her life in the theater and loved it, and that if there were an award for being happy, she had won that too.

Services

Died at home in Manhattan, New York City, October 6, 2014, aged 86. Stage actress and teacher; Tony Award, *A Delicate Balance* (1967); Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement (2010); American Theater Hall of Fame (1995). Portrait: photograph by Carl Van Vechten (public domain, Library of Congress), hosted by Notice Nearby.

NN-OBIT-2026-H245

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