

Fred Melamed

Fred Melamed (born May 13, 1956) is an American actor, comedian and writer. After spending most of his early career primarily as a renowned voice over artist, and occasionally playing small roles in films, notably in seven films directed by Woody Allen, he established himself as a revered character actor, with his role as Sy Ableman in the Coen Brothers' *A Serious Man* (2009). Other notable film credits have included *In a World...* (2012), *Hail, Caesar!* (2016), and *Shiva Baby* (2020).

His television roles include Bruce Ben-Bacharach in *Lady Dynamite* (2016–2017), Gumbald in *Adventure Time* (2017–2018), Arthur Hart in *WandaVision* (2021), and Tom Posorro in *Barry* (2022–2023). *Vulture* named him one of the greatest character actors working today.^[1]

Early life

Melamed was born in Queens, New York, the product of a brief love affair between Nancy Zala, an actress and director, and Stan Silverstone, a British psychoanalyst. He was adopted by a secular Jewish family, Louis Melamed, a Manhattan television producer, and his w Syma (Krichefsky) Melamed,^[2] a sometime actress and housewife.^[3] His biological father was a relative of the prominent Adler acting family, including Luther and Stella Adler.^[4] He attended the Hunter College Elementary School, a primary school for gifted children, and Riverdale Country School.

His father worked with the TV pioneer Nat Hiken on such shows as *Car 54, Where Are You?* and *The Phil Silvers Show*. When he was sixteen, his family had financial difficulties, and was forced to move to Hollywood, Florida. Melamed has said that he was raised in a non-believer Jewish family who never went to synagogue, except to attend a cousin's bar mitzvah. When he was asked if he wanted to attend Hebrew school, he said no, and thus had no religious training. However, he credits his non-religious upbringing as helping him to develop a belief in God later in life, as he had no "forced dogma to overcome."^[3]

Career

Early career

Fred Melamed



Melamed in 2013

Born	May 13, 1956 <div>New York City, <u>New York</u>, U.S.</div>
Education	<u>Hampshire College</u> (BA) <div><u>Yale University</u> (MFA)</div>
Occupations	Actor • writer • comedian
Years active	1981–present
Spouse	<u>Leslee Spieler</u> (m. 1999)
Children	2

He began his theatrical training at Hampshire College, where he worked with (and was heavily influenced by) Tina Packer, John Guare, Jean-Claude van Itallie, and members of The Living Theatre. Melamed then entered the Yale School of Drama. At Yale, he was a Samuel F. B. Morse College Graduate Fellow. He was also a nominee for the Irene Ryan Award, a prize conferred upon the most promising young actors in the United States. While still at Yale, he was an instructor at the well-known performing arts camp, Stagedoor Manor. After his training, he appeared on stage with several resident theatre companies, including The Guthrie Theater, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, The Yale Repertory Theater, and on Broadway in the Tony Award-winning Amadeus. Following Amadeus, Melamed entered what he called "a period of personal darkness", during which he effectively stopped acting on stage. At the same time, with an insider's understanding of the industry and assistance from his agent, he became established as a voice actor, and continued to do film work.^[5]

Melamed's voice became a familiar presence on television, serving as the sound of the Olympics, Mercedes-Benz, CBS Sports, USA Network, the Super Bowl, and numerous commercials and television programs. He became known within the industry as a voice actor, appearing in the Grand Theft Auto series, and dubbing several actors' entire performances in films.

Melamed's feature film debut was in Marshall Brickman's 1983 romantic comedy, Lovesick, starring Dudley Moore and Elizabeth McGovern. Melamed's second film was Woody Allen's comedy-drama Hannah and Her Sisters (1986). In addition, Melamed has prolifically appeared in other Allen films. He has appeared in more Allen movies than any other actor besides Diane Keaton and Mia Farrow (and Allen himself). He has appeared in Radio Days (1987), Another Woman (1988), Crimes and Misdemeanors (1989), Shadows and Fog (1991), Husbands and Wives (1992), and Hollywood Ending (2000). During the 1980s Melamed played significant supporting roles in Roland Joffé's religious epic The Mission (1986), Elaine May's comedy Ishtar (1987). Also in 1987, he appeared in Peter Yates' legal mystery thriller Suspect (1987) starring Cher, Dennis Quaid, and Liam Neeson as well as the romantic comedy The Pick-up Artist starring Robert Downey Jr. and Molly Ringwald. The following year he appeared in The Good Mother (1988), opposite Diane Keaton and Liam Neeson.

2010s

For his portrayal of "sensitive" villain Sy Ableman, in Joel and Ethan Coen's 2009 film, A Serious Man, which was nominated for Best Picture at the 2010 Academy Awards, he became widely known. About that character, Film Confidential said, "Sy Ableman is as great a contemporary movie villain as The Joker, Hans Landa, or Anton Chigurh.... The character Fred Melamed contrives is the year's most brilliant force of destruction." For his performance in A Serious Man, Melamed, along with the Coen Brothers, and the film's Ensemble and Casting Directors won Film Independent's Independent Spirit Robert Altman Award. New York magazine listed Melamed's work as among the Best Performances of the Decade, and Empire called Sy Ableman "One of The Best Coen Bros. Characters of All Time". Several leading U.S. critics, including A. O. Scott of The New York Times, Michael Phillips of the Chicago Tribune, and Roger Ebert all said his performance was worthy of Academy Award nomination.

On television, Melamed starred with Maria Bamford in the Netflix comedy Lady Dynamite, on FX's Emmy Award-winning Fargo, Hulu's Golden Globe Award-nominated Casual, the Fox comedy New Girl, and Verizon Go90's sports send-up Now We're Talking. He is a present or past recurring guest star on USA Network's Benched, Showtime's House of Lies, HBO's Girls, Childrens Hospital, Blunt Talk, FX's Married, and Trial & Error. In previous seasons, he played Larry David's smug psychiatrist, Dr. Arthur

Thurgood, on *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, tough-guy jurist Judge Alan Karpman on *The Good Wife*, and played himself in the CBS situation comedy *The Crazy Ones* with Robin Williams and Sarah Michelle Gellar. In 2017, he appeared as a special guest star in the acclaimed *Fargo* episode "The Law of Non-Contradiction". He also appeared in 2 episodes of *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* as fantasy author D.C. Parlov.

Melamed appeared in the Sundance film *Lemon* (2017), a collaboration with Brett Gelman and Janicza Bravo, *Brawl in Cell Block 99* opposite Vince Vaughn, Sean McGinly's *Silver Lake*, which he starred in with Martin Starr, and *Dragged Across Concrete*. Melamed had previously starred as Sam in Lake Bell's *In a World...*, winner of the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award at the Sundance Film Festival, opposite Kurt Russell and Richard Jenkins in *Bone Tomahawk*, and re-teamed with the Coen brothers and co-stars George Clooney, Tilda Swinton, and Ralph Fiennes in *Hail, Caesar!* (2016). Prior to that, he had starred in *Get on Up* (2014), a bio-pic about the life of James Brown, and opposite Elliott Gould, as auteur/director Bob Wilson, in *Fred Won't Move Out*, a film about the decline of a stubborn patriarch and his family. Other 2010s appearances included *The Dictator* (2012), with Sacha Baron Cohen and Sir Ben Kingsley, where Melamed appeared in a cameo as the Director of the dictator's Nuclear Weapons Program, and *Some Kind of Beautiful*, where Melamed played a villain, opposite Pierce Brosnan and Jessica Alba.

On Broadway in 2011, after a long hiatus from the theatre, Melamed originated the roles of The Father in Ethan Coen's *Talking Cure*, and Thomas Moran in Elaine May's *George Is Dead*, two of the one-act plays that comprised *Relatively Speaking*. Subsequently, Melamed took on the role of Vanya in the Guild Hall production of *Uncle Vanya*, about which *The New York Times* said he gave "an excellent (...) multi-layered performance (...) Mr. Melamed easily inhabits the comic, awkward lover, but also brings out Vanya's vast loneliness".

As a writer, he has produced screenplays including *Girl of the Perfume River*, *A Jones for Gash*, *The Asshat Project*, and is currently at work on a long-form, television version of *The Preservationist*, a fictional drama inspired by the case of Melamed's college friend, Edward Forbes Smiley III, a renowned cartographic expert and dealer, who admitted to having been the most brazen and prolific map thief of all time.

In 2019, Melamed acted in the crime thriller *Lying and Stealing* alongside Theo James and Emily Ratajkowski. The film was a modest critical success with Dennis Harvey of *Variety* writing, "*Lying and Stealing* manages to be a retro escapist pleasure — one whose cleverness might actually have been muffled by flashier surface assets."^[6]

2020s

Melamed joined the Marvel Cinematic Universe in *WandaVision* as Arthur Hart, Vision's boss. In 2020 he appeared in Emma Seligman's directorial debut *Shiva Baby*. The film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival and received critical acclaim. The following year he appeared in Nikole Beckwith's pregnancy comedy *Together Together* starring Ed Helms, and Patti Harrison. The film also received critical plaudits. In 2021, Melamed was named by a host of prominent critics and film professionals in *Vulture* and *New York Magazine* as one of "The 32 Greatest Character Actors Working Today".

Personal life

After living in the Hamptons hamlet of Montauk, N.Y. for many years, Melamed moved with his wife, Leslee, and twin sons to Los Angeles in 2013. Both of the Melamed children were diagnosed with autism and he and his wife have been involved in advocacy for persons living with autism spectrum disorder and their families. ^[3] Melamed and his wife divorced in 2021. ^[7]

Filmography

Film

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1983	<u>Lovesick</u>	Psychoanalyst	
1986	<u>Hannah and Her Sisters</u>	Dr. Grey	
	<u>The Mission</u>	Cabeza	Voice; special thanks
	<u>The Manhattan Project</u>	Assay Technician	
1987	<u>Radio Days</u>	Bradley	Uncredited
	<u>Ishtar</u>	The Caid of Assari	
	<u>The Pick-up Artist</u>	George	
	<u>Suspect</u>	Morty Rosenthal	
1988	<u>Sticky Fingers</u>	The Cop	Voice; Uncredited
	<u>The Good Mother</u>	Dr. Payne	
	<u>Another Woman</u>	Engagement Party Guest / Patient	Voices
1989	<u>Crimes and Misdemeanors</u>	The Dean	Uncredited
1991	<u>Shadows and Fog</u>	Undesirables Onlooker	
1992	<u>Husbands and Wives</u>	Mel	Uncredited
2002	<u>Hollywood Ending</u>	Pappas	
2009	<u>A Serious Man</u>	Sy Ableman	
2011	<u>Interpersonal Exopolitics</u>	Hank	Short film
2012	<u>The Dictator</u>	Head Nuclear Scientist	
	<u>Fred Won't Move Out</u>	Bob	
2013	<u>In a World...</u>	Sam	
	<u>Hair Brained</u>	Benny Greenberg	
	<u>Blumenthal</u>	Jimmy Basmati	
2014	<u>Get On Up</u>	<u>Syd Nathan</u>	
	<u>Adult Beginners</u>	Story Book Reader	Voice
	<u>Some Kind of Beautiful</u>	Victor Piggott	
2015	<u>Raise the ToyGantic</u>	Irving Goldbath	Short film
	<u>You Are Whole</u>	Norman	Short film
	<u>Bone Tomahawk</u>	Clarence	

	<i>The Dazzling Darling Sisters</i>	Leo Reznik	Short film
2016	<i>Hail, Caesar!</i>	Communist Writer	
	<i>Passengers</i>	Observatory	Voice
	<i>Kid Gambled</i>	The Repair Man	Short film
2017	<i>Lemon</i>	Howard	
	<i>Chicanery</i>	Arthur Schekner	
	<i>Brawl in Cell Block 99</i>	Mr. Irving	
2018	<i>The Spy Who Dumped Me</i>	Roger	
	<i>Silver Lake</i>	Howard	
	<i>Dragged Across Concrete</i>	Mr. Edmington	
	<i>Killer Black</i>	RK Sherwood	Short film
2019	<i>Lying and Stealing</i>	Dimitri	
	<i>The Vigil</i>	Dr. Kohlberg	
2020	<i>Shiva Baby</i>	Joel	
2021	<i>Together Together</i>	Marty	
	<i>Barking Mad</i>	Diego Fiesta	
	<i>Rumble</i>	The Mayor	Voice
2022	<i>Diary of a Spy</i>	James	
2023	<i>Cat Person</i>	Dr. Resnick	
	<i>Peak Season</i>	George Friedman	
	<i>Fuzzy Head</i>	The Quadruped	
2024	<i>Little Death</i>	Augustus	

Television

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1981–1982	<i>One Life to Live</i>	Alberto Cervantes	Soap opera
1989	<i>Another World</i>	Crazed Homeless Man	1 episode
1990	<i>America Tonight</i>	Announcer	Voice
1991–1993	<i>Silk Stalkings</i>	Announcer	Voice; 54 episodes
1992–1996	<i>FTL Newsfeed</i>	The Alien Presence	Voice
1998–2003	<i>The NFL Today</i>	Announcer	Voice
2000–2001	<i>Courage the Cowardly Dog</i>	The Magic Tree of Nowhere Spirit of the Harvest Moon Various characters	Voice; 12 episodes

2005	<u>Wonder Pets!</u>	The Magician	Voice; Episode: "The Amazing Ollie"
2010	<u>Law & Order</u>	Judge Bertram Hill	Episode: " <u>Steel-Eyed Death</u> "
	<u>Law & Order: Special Victims Unit</u>	Dan Goldberg	Episode: "Merchandise"
2011	<u>Curb Your Enthusiasm</u>	Dr. Thurgood	Episode: "Mister Softee"
2011–2014	<u>The Good Wife</u>	Judge Alan Karpman	3 episodes
2012	<u>30 Rock</u>	Jack	Voice; Episode: " <u>There's No I in America</u> "
2013	<u>Two Wrongs</u>	Steven	Pilot
2013–2014	<u>The Crazy Ones</u>	Himself	2 episodes
2014	<u>Benched</u>	Judge Nelson	5 episodes
	<u>Superior Living</u>	Marty	Voice; Pilot
2015	<u>Girls</u>	Avi Mensusen	Episode: "Tad & Loreen & Avi & Shanaz"
	<u>House of Lies</u>	Harvey Oberholt	4 episodes
	<u>Childrens Hospital</u>	Leonard Hillman	Episode: "With Great Power..."
	<u>Married</u>	Professor Donald Holt	Episode: "1997"
2015–2016	<u>Blunt Talk</u>	Dr. Mendelson	3 episodes
2015–2018	<u>Casual</u>	Charles Cole	8 episodes
2016	<u>New Girl</u>	J. Cronkite Valley-Forge	3 episodes
	<u>The Detour</u>	Conquistadors' Announcer	Voice; Episode: "The Restaurant"
2016–2017	<u>Lady Dynamite</u>	Bruce Ben-Bacharach	20 episodes
	<u>Brooklyn Nine-Nine</u>	D.C. Parlov	2 episodes
2017	<u>Trial & Error</u>	Howard Mankiewicz	2 episodes
	<u>Fargo</u>	Howard Zimmerman	Episode: "The Law of Non-Contradiction"
2017–2018	<u>Adventure Time</u>	Gumbald	Voice; 7 episodes
2018	<u>Life in Pieces</u>	Dr. Dave Collins	Episode: "Parents Ancestry Coupon Chaperone"
	<u>Please Understand Me</u>	Dr. Rick	Episode: "Dr. Rick"
2018–2020	<u>Superstore</u>	Richard Simms	2 episodes
2019	<u>Black Monday</u>	Not Michael Milken #2	Episode: "Not the Predator's Ball"
	<u>Summer Camp Island</u>	Monk Receptionist Additional characters	Voice; Episode: "Radio Silence"
	<u>Room 104</u>	Narrator	Voice; Episode: "Drywall Guys"
	<u>The Morning Show</u>	Neal Altman	2 episodes

2020	<i><u>Medical Police</u></i>	Dr. Richard Waters	6 episodes
2020–2021	<i><u>Viral Vignettes</u></i>	Neal	3 episodes
2021	<i><u>WandaVision</u></i>	Todd Davis / "Arthur Hart"	Episode: " <u>Filmed Before a Live Studio Audience</u> "
	<i><u>Impeachment: American Crime Story</u></i>	<u>Bill Ginsburg</u>	3 episodes
	<i><u>The Harper House</u></i>	Roderick Shipdown	Voice; Episode: "Making the Lie Real"
	<i><u>F Is for Family</u></i>	Dr. Erwin Goldman	Voice; 5 episodes
2022–2023	<i><u>Barry</u></i>	Tom Posorro	9 episodes
2022	<i><u>The Mysterious Benedict Society</u></i>	Captain Noland	2 episodes
	<i><u>Reboot</u></i>	Alan	5 episodes
2023	<i><u>The Boss Baby: Back in the Crib</u></i>	Russ Tisdale	Voice; 4 episodes

Theatre

Year	Title	Role	Playwright	Venue
1981–1983	<i><u>Amadeus</u></i>	Priest Count Orsini-Rosenberg	<u>Peter Shaffer</u>	<u>Broadhurst Theatre</u> , Broadway
2011	<i><u>Relatively Speaking</u></i>	The Father	<u>Woody Allen</u> <u>Elaine May</u> <u>Ethan Coen</u>	<u>Brooks Atkinson Theatre</u> , Broadway
2012	<i><u>Uncle Vanya</u></i>	Vanya	<u>Anton Chekhov</u>	<u>John Drew Theatre at Guild Hall</u>

Video games

Year	Title	Voice role	Notes
1998–2003	<i><u>NCAA Football series</u></i>	Announcer	
1999	<i><u>The Multipath Adventures of Superman</u></i>	<u>Lex Luthor</u>	
2004	<i><u>Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas</u></i>	Cris Formage	
2013	<i><u>Grand Theft Auto V</u></i>	Cris Formage	
2013	<i><u>Grand Theft Auto Online</u></i>	Cris Formage	
2014	<i><u>Diablo III: Reaper of Souls</u></i>	Male Atarias	
2018	<i><u>Adventure Time: Pirates of the Enchiridion</u></i>	Gumbald	
2018	<i><u>Fallout 76</u></i>	Senator Joel Chambers, Red	Nuclear Winter DLC

Awards and nominations

Year	Award	Category	Nominated work	Result	Ref.
2009	Village Voice Film Poll	Best Supporting Actor	<i>A Serious Man</i>	Nominated	
	Gotham Awards	Best Ensemble Performance		Nominated	
	Boston Society of Film Critics	Best Ensemble Cast		Nominated	
2010	Independent Spirit Awards	Robert Altman Award		Won	
2014	Voice Awards	Lifetime Achievement Award	Body of work	Won	
2021	Studio City Film Festival	Best Ensemble Cast	<i>Barking Mad</i>	Won	
	New York International Film Festival	Best Acting (Duo)	<i>Jack's Inferno</i>	Won	
2022	Crown Point International Film Festival	Best Ensemble	<i>Viral Vignettes</i>	Won	
2023	Riverside International Film Festival	Best Ensemble	<i>Deadly Draw</i>	Won	
	Vegas Movie Awards	Best Supporting Actor	<i>Deadly Draw</i>	Won	
2024	Screen Actors Guild Awards	Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series	<i>Barry</i>	Nominated	[8]

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External links

- Fred Melamed (<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0577329/>) at IMDb
 - Fred Melamed (<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/490487>) at the Internet Broadway Database
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