

= Sebastian Shaw (actor) =

Sebastian Lewis Shaw (29 May 1905 ? 23 December 1994) was an English actor , director , novelist , playwright and poet . During his 65 @-@ year career , he appeared in dozens of stage performances and more than 40 film and television productions .

Shaw was born and brought up in Holt , Norfolk , and made his acting debut at age eight at a London theatre . He studied acting at Gresham 's School and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art . Although he worked primarily on the London stage , he made his Broadway debut in 1929 , when he played one of the two murderers in *Rope 's End* . He appeared in his first film , *Caste* , in 1930 and quickly began to create a name for himself in films . He described himself as a " rotten actor " as a youth and said his success was primarily due to his good looks . He claimed to mature as a performer only after returning from service in the Royal Air Force during World War II .

Shaw was particularly known for his performances in productions of Shakespeare plays which were considered daring and ahead of their time . In 1966 , he joined the Royal Shakespeare Company , where he remained for a decade and delivered some of his most acclaimed performances . He also wrote several poems and a novel , *The Christening* , in 1975 . He is also known for his brief but important performance in *Return of the Jedi* , the original third installment in the Star Wars franchise , in which he portrayed an unmasked Darth Vader and Anakin Skywalker 's ghost in the original version of the film .

= = Early life and career = =

Shaw was one of three children born to Dr. Geoffrey Shaw , the music master at Gresham 's School , a Norfolk independent boarding school , where Shaw began his education . His uncle , Martin Shaw , was a composer of church music , and his family 's love of music heavily influenced Shaw 's career path . Shaw made his acting debut at age eight on the London stage as one of the juvenile band in *The Cockyolly Bird* at the Royal Court Theatre in Chelsea on New Year 's Day of 1914 . During his time at Gresham 's , he also played Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* , his first of many performances from the works of William Shakespeare ; schoolmate W. H. Auden , who would go on to become a highly regarded poet , portrayed Katherina in the play opposite him . After Gresham 's , Shaw planned to become a painter and spent two years at the Slade School of Fine Art before switching his interests to acting ; regarding the change , his father informed him , " I wondered when you would come to your senses . " He earned a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in Bloomsbury , London . Actor Charles Laughton enrolled in the Academy at the same time as Shaw , who later said his first impression of Laughton was " a poor fat boy " . Although Shaw and his fellow students initially felt pity for Laughton , they were quickly impressed with his talent .

Shaw appeared in regional theatres in Bristol , Liverpool and Hull . In 1925 , he performed in London as the Archangel in *The Sign of the Sun* , and played first Lewis Dodd and then the Major in separate productions of *The Constant Nymph* . He received instruction in verse speaking under famed theatre director William Bridges @-@ Adams in the Stratford Festival Company at Stratford @-@ upon @-@ Avon , where he played some of his early Shakespeare roles , including Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet* , Ferdinand in *The Tempest* and Prince Hal in *Henry IV* in 1926 . He was criticised for the audacity he displayed in the latter role . When Prince Hal takes on his kingship and rejects the self @-@ indulgent character Falstaff , convention of the day called for Prince Hal to change from a jovial drinking partner to an arrogant snob , but Shaw saw the view as simple @-@ minded and contradictory toward Shakespeare 's script . Instead , he displayed inward regrets about leaving Falstaff and accepting the new responsibilities . The interpretation was criticised at the time but , years later , became the standard approach to the character .

Shaw made his Broadway debut in 1929 , when he played the murderer Wyndham Brandon in Patrick Hamilton 's stage thriller , *Rope 's End* . In 1929 , he married Margaret Delamere and lived with her in the Albany , an apartment complex off of Piccadilly in London . The two would eventually have a daughter together named Drusilla (born 1932) . He returned to the works of William

Shakespeare in 1931 , playing Claudio in Measure for Measure at London 's Fortune Playhouse . In 1932 he once again played Romeo at the Embassy Theatre . Other works around this period included productions of Ivor Novello 's Sunshine Sisters in 1933 , Double Door alongside actress Sybil Thorndike in 1934 , J.M. Barrie 's A Kiss for Cinderella in 1937 , and Robert Morley 's Goodness , How Sad in 1938 .

The first film Shaw appeared in was Caste in 1930 . He soon began to make a name for himself in films such as Brewster 's Millions in 1935 , Men Are Not Gods in 1936 and Farewell Again in 1937 . He was making about £ 300 a week during this stage of his career , a significant sum higher than the salary of the British Prime Minister of the time . He brought what the Daily Telegraph described as a " smooth villainy " to the role of Frank Sutton in The Squeaker in 1937 , while in 1939 he played the hero Cmdr. David Blacklock alongside Conrad Veidt and Valerie Hobson in The Spy in Black , Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger 's first collaboration . Shaw described himself as a film buff and called Academy Award @-@ winning actor Spencer Tracy his " great god of all screen actors " ; he was so impressed by Tracy 's technique that he claimed to become depressed while watching his films because Tracy made acting look simple , while Shaw claimed to find it so difficult to master himself .

= = World War II and post @-@ war career = =

When World War II broke out , Shaw took a break from acting and joined the Royal Air Force . He was commissioned as an Acting @-@ Pilot Officer on probation in the Administrative and Special Duties Branch on 25 April 1941 and over the next three months was promoted to Pilot Officer on probation , then Flying Officer and then Flight Lieutenant . According to his obituary in the Guardian , he saw little action in the service and was told the only chance he would have to fly would be as a rear gunner . Some of his fellow airmen hounded Shaw for autographs while others mocked his posh accent , to which he retaliated with an excellent and unflattering imitation of their less refined speech . He continued to hold a Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve commission after the war until he resigned the commission on 10 February 1954 ; he was permitted to retain his rank .

Immediately upon returning to London after the war , Shaw lost his Albany flat and his acting contract , and essentially had to restart his acting career . Although he made 20 films before the war and had already begun to develop a reputation as a strong leading man , in later years he would describe himself as " a rotten actor " in the 1930s who landed roles based mainly on his good looks . He used the phrase " a piece of cinema beefcake " to describe himself as an actor during that period . He felt that after his return home from military service , he learned to act properly and began to mature as a performer . Shaw 's Royal Air Force experience was put to good use when he played a pilot in Journey Together , the 1946 RAF training film in which actor Edward G. Robinson coached actor Richard Attenborough in the rudiments of flying .

In 1945 , Shaw returned to the Embassy Theatre to direct Fyodor Dostoevsky 's The Gambler . Significant theatre roles that decade included Hercules in The Thracian Horses at the Lyric Theatre , Hammersmith in 1946 , Mr. Hern @-@ Lawrence in Florida Scott @-@ Maxwell 's experimental I Said to Myself at the Mercury Theatre , Notting Hill Gate in 1947 , Sir James Kirkham in His Excellency at Prince 's Theatre in 1950 , and Filmer Jesson , MP , in Arthur Wing Pinero 's His House In Order at New Theatre in 1951 . In 1956 , he played the title role in the first British production of Hugo von Hofmannsthal 's Everyman . That same year , he wrote the lyrics to his father 's ballad @-@ opera , All at Sea , which played at the Royal College of Music . In 1957 , he played Lucifer in Brother Lucifer in Shrewsbury , Shropshire , and a sinister Venetian agent in Jonathan Griffin 's The Hidden King in Edinburgh .

As Shaw grew older , his reputation as a dramatic actor grew stronger , and he became known for a sharp intelligence and dignified style . Although his good looks diminished , reviewers felt that he used his florid and weatherbeaten face well in evoking grandeur and self @-@ assuredness in such roles as generals , priests and his familiar Shakespearean parts . In 1956 , his wife Margaret Delamere died ; she was survived by their daughter Drusilla . Shaw began a romantic relationship in the mid @-@ 1950s with Joan Ingpen , the well @-@ known classical music and opera talent agent

who had previously represented him . The two were romantically involved , to the point that she took his surname , until Shaw 's death . During the 1980s , however , Shaw also had a brief relationship with Harriet Ravenscroft , the mother of the disc jockey John Peel , whom he met while performing at Ludlow Castle at Ludlow . He split his time between Ingpen and Ravenscroft on a four @-@ day rotating basis to which both women consented . Although Peel got along with Shaw and said he made his mother happy , he said he did not feel comfortable with the arrangement . He felt it disrupted his mother 's friendships and prospects for a more stable relationship .

In 1965 , British theatre director William Gaskill was named artistic director of the Royal Court Theatre , where he hoped to re @-@ establish a repertoire . He approached Shaw , who had made his acting début at the Royal Court Theatre as a youth , and Shaw agreed to return . There he delivered several performances over the next year , including General Conrad von Hotzendorf in John Osborne 's *A Patriot for Me* ; various roles in Ann Jellicoe 's *Shelley* ; Sir Francis Harker in N.F. Simpson 's *The Cresta Run* and Pte Attercliffe in John Arden 's *Serjeant Musgrave 's Dance* .

= = Royal Shakespeare Company = =

In 1966 , Shaw joined the Royal Shakespeare Company , where he spent the next decade of his career and eventually became an associate artist . He mostly appeared in Shakespeare plays , including the title role in *Cymbeline* , Edmund of Langley in *Richard II* , the King in *All 's Well That Ends Well* , Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* , and Leonato in *Much Ado About Nothing* . The Times described his performance in the title role of *Cymbeline* as " awe @-@ inspiring " , and The Independent described his performance as Polonius in *Hamlet* as " unrivalled in his complacency and sense of circumstance " . The Telegraph described his performance of Gloucester in *King Lear* as " doleful " and his performance of Duncan in *Macbeth* as " decent " . Many of the company 's Shakespearean productions at the time were considered interpretive and modern , which drew criticism from some traditionalists , but Shaw defended the experimental nature of the shows and rejected the notion that plays should be restricted to preconceived interpretations .

During his time with the company , he also demonstrated what the Daily Telegraph called a " crusty charm " as Sir Oblong Fitz Oblong in Robert Bolt 's children 's play *The Thwarting of Baron Bolligrew* . He was also noted as possessing a gift for dry comedy during this period of his acting career , exemplified by his roles in Maxim Gorky 's plays *Enemies* and *Summerfolk* . He demonstrated a particular knack for Russian comedy in Jonathan Miller 's productions of the Anton Chekhov plays *Three Sisters* and *Ivanov* .

In 1978 , Shaw earned acclaim for his performance as a judge in the stage debut of *Whose Life Is It Anyway ?* at the Mermaid Theatre . The production won Laurence Olivier Awards for Best Play and Best Actor (Tom Conti) . Although 73 years old , Shaw did not let his age slow down his career . During the run of this production a mugger tried to steal his money , but Shaw chased him down , tackled him and recovered his property . Later that year , he was painted in the nude by his nephew , Brian Ocean . During his later years , Shaw suffered a physical disability that made him tremble , which had a negative impact on his television roles , particularly when handling cups or trays of drinks . One of his later television appearances was in *The Old Curiosity Shop* , a 1979 mini @-@ series based on the novel by Charles Dickens . Around this time , he also voiced the part of Squire Beltham in a radio production of *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* , which the Daily Telegraph said was " remembered with affection " . He lent his voice to several radio performances , both Shakespearean and modern , including protagonist John Tanner in the five @-@ hour *Man and Superman* by George Bernard Shaw .

= = Writing career = =

Shaw wrote *Take a Life* , his first play , in 1961 . He directed a production of the show at London 's Mermaid Theatre , where he also played the lead role of the Detective . That same year he played two lead roles in George Bernard Shaw plays at the Dublin Theatre Festival : *Mrs. Warren 's Profession* and *Candida* . Around this time , he also wrote an outline for a television comedy series

about four girls sharing a flat , inspired by his real @-@ life daughter , who was in her early twenties and living in a flat with other girls her age . The series was submitted to the Granada Television company , which expressed interest in the show and said it was one of two under consideration for television . The company ultimately chose the other show , the long @-@ running British soap opera Coronation Street .

Shaw agreed to take certain roles only on the condition that he have complete freedom to rewrite his dialogue . When he appeared in *It Happened Here* , a 1966 World War II film , he wrote many of his own lines , which the filmmakers later said " gave his dialogue an individual slant which enhanced his performance " . He also helped in other aspects of the filmmaking , including casting ; he introduced the filmmakers to Fiona Leland , who would be cast as Shaw 's wife in *It Happened Here* . He wrote other plays , including *The Ship 's Bell* , *The Cliff Walk* , *The Glass Maze* and *Cul de Sac* . He also wrote *Poems* , a collection of his personal poetry , which saw a limited print of 300 editions by publisher Exeter University .

Shaw wrote *The Christening* , his only novel , in 1975 . It centres around Miles Madgwick , who believes that he is bisexual but is too timid to find out through physical intercourse , so he instead describes his most intimate thoughts in his diary . He then meets a married woman named Alice and her son , Rodney ; he comes to identify with Rodney 's childhood innocence , and in Alice sees a symbol both of his mother and a heterosexual lover . Alice starts to tire of her husband and grow fonder of Madgwick , who experiences mixed emotions in his continued interactions with her and Rodney . One night , Rodney stays overnight at Madgwick 's house and , when he takes the boy home in a taxicab , the driver observes their strange behaviour and accuses Madgwick of being a pederast . When Alice asks Madgwick to become the godfather to her new child , the driver threatens to expose Madgwick , creating a conflict between losing his first feelings of intimacy with others or facing humiliation and ridicule at the driver 's exposure .

A description in the book cover flap reads , " In this tender , sensitive and blackly comic novel , Sebastian Shaw , the distinguished Shakespearean actor , explores areas of sexual and emotional encounter that are rarely seen and , unfortunately , too rarely understood . " Shaw originally planned to call the novel *The Godfather* , but later said he was glad he did not due to the popularity of Mario Puzo 's book of that name . He was said to have been working on another novel shortly after *The Christening* was completed , but no others were ever published .

= = Return of the Jedi = =

In 1982 , Shaw was chosen for the small but crucial role of redeemed Anakin Skywalker in *Return of the Jedi* , the third and final film in the original Star Wars trilogy . Although David Prowse played the costumed scenes and James Earl Jones voiced Darth Vader , just as they had in the first two films , Shaw was cast in a single scene with Mark Hamill , during the moment aboard Death Star II when Luke Skywalker unmask's his dying father . Since the scene was unquestionably the emotional climax of the film , the casting crew sought an experienced actor for the role .

When Shaw arrived at the set for filming , he ran into his friend Ian McDiarmid , the actor playing Emperor Palpatine . When McDiarmid asked him what he was doing there , Shaw responded , " I don 't know , dear boy , I think it 's something to do with science @-@ fiction . " His presence during the filming was kept secret from all but the minimum cast and crew , and Shaw was contractually obliged not to discuss any film secrets with anyone , even his family . The unmasking scene , directed by Richard Marquand , was filmed in one day and required only a few takes , with no alteration from the original dialogue . When the film was re @-@ released on DVD in 2004 , a few changes were made : the unmasking scene with Hamill remained mostly the same , but Shaw 's eyebrows were digitally removed to tie in with the injuries Anakin Skywalker suffers at the end of *Revenge of the Sith* . Shaw 's eyes were also digitally coloured to look like those of Hayden Christensen , the actor who played Anakin in *Attack of the Clones* and *Revenge of the Sith* .

Star Wars creator George Lucas personally directed Shaw for his appearance in the final scene of the film , in which he is a Force Ghost of Anakin . Shaw 's image in this scene was replaced with that of Christensen in the 2004 release . This last attempt to tie the prequel and original trilogies

together proved to be possibly the most controversial change in the Star Wars re @-@ releases .

Although Shaw 's unmasking scene lasted only two minutes and seven seconds and included just 24 words of dialogue spoken by Shaw , he received more fan mail and autograph requests from Return of the Jedi than he had for any role in the rest of his career . He later reflected that he very much enjoyed his experience filming for Return of the Jedi and expressed particular surprise that an action figure was made of him from the film .

= = Later career and death = =

Shaw remained active in his later years ; along with fellow Royal Shakespeare Company actors Ian Richardson , John Nettles , Martin Best and Ann Firbank , he engaged in discussions and workshops with acting teachers and students in the early 1980s . Although appearances in films became far less common in his later career , he received much acclaim for his performance as the Cold War spy Sharp in Clare Peploe 's High Season at the New York Film Festival in 1987 ; The San Diego Union @-@ Tribune said Shaw played the role with " endearing , sweet gravity " . One of his last performances was in the Christmas season of 1988 and 1989 , when he played the wizard in a stage production of The Wizard of Oz at the Barbican Centre . The Times said audiences were " delighted to recognise his honeyed threats from behind the great carapace that disguised the Wizard of Oz " . Shaw became an honorary life @-@ member at the Garrick Club , which included such past members as writers Charles Dickens , J.M. Barrie , Kingsley Amis and A.A. Milne ; artists Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Everett Millais ; and composer Edward Elgar .

Shaw died of natural causes on 23 December 1994 at age 89 in Brighton , Sussex , England . A memorial service was held 15 February 1995 at St Paul 's , Covent Garden , commonly known as the Actors ' Church due to its long association with the theatre community . Actors Ian Richardson and Ben Kingsley read works by William Shakespeare , stage actress Estelle Kohler read How Do I Love Thee ? by Victorian poetess Elizabeth Barrett Browning , actress Sheila Allen read Life by Welsh poet George Herbert and actor Kenneth Branagh read from the works of Canon Henry Scott Holland . One of Shaw 's own poems , Gemini , was also read . Baritone Stephen Varcoe sang Wie bist du meine Königin by Johannes Brahms , accompanied by Graham Johnson on the piano , and guitarist Martin Best performed and sang his composition of Ariel 's Songs from The Tempest . Shaw was survived by his partner Joan Ingpen , daughter Drusilla MacLeod , sisters Susan Bonner @-@ Morgan and Penelope Harness , and sister @-@ in @-@ law Olga Young .

= = TV and filmography = =