

= Heather Chasen =

Heather Jean Chasen (born 20 July 1927) is a Singapore @-@ born English actress . Chasen is known for her roles in soap operas ; playing Valerie Pollard in the ITV soap opera Crossroads from 1982 ? 86 and guest roles in Doctors , Holby City and Family Affairs . Chasen also played many roles in BBC Radio 2 's The Navy Lark from 1959 ? 77 , and appeared in the television series Marked Personal from 1973 ? 74 . She played Lydia Simmonds in the BBC soap opera EastEnders , a role which received positive reviews from critics , EastEnders cast members and crew . Furthermore , she has appeared extensively in theatre productions and film ; in 2012 , she appeared in a film version of Les Misérables .

= = Early and personal life = =

Chasen was born on 20 July 1927 , in Singapore . Chasen 's father , F.N. Chasen was an English ornithologist , who fought in World War I under the Norfolk Yeomanry as a trooper . In 1921 , he left England , to work at the Raffles Library and Museum in Singapore , marrying Chasen 's mother , Agnes H McCulloch , in 1926 . After Chasen 's birth , her parents had another daughter , Christine Elizabeth , on 4 May 1931 . Her parents split in 1938 , and both remarried . Before the Japanese occupation , which led to the Battle of Singapore during World War II , Chasen and her mother left Singapore on the last boat before the occupation . Her father , on a separate ship , HMS Giang Bee , perished however , when it was sunk by the Japanese on 12 February 1942 , and Chasen 's new stepfather , G.C.R Franks , too perished fighting , a month later , on the 22 March . Chasen and her mother moved to England and Chasen trained at Royal Academy of Dramatic Art , where she then acted on stage and went on a tour with Frankie Howerd in Hotel Paradiso . She also appeared with Sybil Thorndike in Call Me Jacky , as well as going on tour with Douglas Fairbanks , Jr. in The Pleasure of his Company , in Toronto . Chasen is good friends with , and previously had a relationship with , Amanda Barrie . In 1949 , she married John Webster in Surrey and has one son with him , Rupert , born in Kensington , 1955 .

= = Career = =

= = = Crossroads and EastEnders = = =

In 2011 , Chasen was cast as Lydia Simmonds , Janine Butcher (Charlie Brooks) ' s maternal grandmother and Norman Simmonds ' (George Layton) mother , in the BBC soap opera EastEnders , after the original actress Margaret Tyzack had to pull out of the role due to personal reasons . Two episodes featuring Tyzack had already been broadcast , and she featured in a further one on 14 April . The producers wanted to keep Lydia in the show as they had plans for her , so Chasen was cast and she replaced Tyzack in the role , beginning filming on 15 April for scenes broadcast from 21 April . EastEnders ' executive producer , Bryan Kirkwood , added : " In order to continue the current storyline we 've taken the decision for Heather Chasen to take over the role of Lydia . " The character died on @-@ screen and Chasen made her last appearance on 13 June 2011 , and , though not credited for it , did a voice @-@ over for the 14 and 28 June episodes . Kirkwood later said " Lydia 's storyline was perfect " and that Chasen had made the part her own after Tyzack 's departure . Brooks said of the storyline as a whole , " I absolutely loved exploring Janine 's background . I was really proud with the scenes with Heather Chasen [Lydia] . It was really hard work , but worth it . "

= = = Other work = = =

Chasen has appeared in other television programmes such as The Bill and The Harry Hill Show . She has had guest roles in Z @-@ Cars and Dixon of Dock Green and has voiced a number of

characters in the radio show *The Navy Lark* , most notably WREN Heather Chasen and " battle axe " Ramona Povey . In soaps , she has had four separate stints in the BBC soap opera *Doctors* , with her most recent stint in 2014 , reprising her role as Grace Barberry from 2012 , played Sylvie Leigh in *Holby City* and played Madge Bennet in the Channel 5 soap opera , *Family Affairs* , for five episodes . More earlier credits include , playing " rich bitches " Caroline Kerr , in *The Newcomers* and Isabel Neal in *Marked Personal* , alongside Stephanie Beacham . She also played the " evil " headmistress in *Schoolgirls in Uniform* at the Battersea Arts Centre . In stage and theatre , Chasen appeared in *The Rat Trap* . Michael Billington from *The Guardian* described Chasen 's character , Burrage the maid , as " trundling " , rating the play three stars . Other than this , she has appeared in *Pardon Ma Prime Minister* alongside Gerald Flood and Paul Curran , written by Edward Taylor and John Graham who created the BBC radio series *The Men from the Ministry* . The *Birmingham Mail* described the play as " hilarious " and " promising " . One of Chasen 's more recent plays was *My Three Angels* in which she played Madame Parole , other plays include , *The Man Who Came to Dinner* , *Who Bombed Birmingham* playing Margaret Thatcher , and *The Lizard of Rock* , in which she played the main role , appearing alongside actor Jack Hawkins . Chasen opined that she had a " lovely time " playing Miss Marple in *A Murder is Announced* alongside Richard Todd and Barbara Murray . In 2009 , Chasen appeared in the award @-@ winning Anglo @-@ Russian feature film *Season of Mists* , playing Jane . Chasen appeared alongside Marina Blake , Sergei Chonishvili , Ifan Huw Dafydd and ex @-@ *EastEnders* actor Dudley Sutton . Other films Chasen has appeared in include , *The Kiss of Tosca* in 2000 , *The Toybox* in 2003 and *Cat Run* , a 2011 film .

= = Awards and nominations = =

Chasen was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Performance by a Featured Actress in a Musical , while she appeared in the New York adaptation of *A Severed Head* between 1963 @-@ 65 . She appeared the cast of the *Seasons of Mists* which won a number of awards internationally .

= = Filmography = =

Television

Film

Radio

Stage / Theatre