

= Katharine Hepburn =

Katharine Houghton Hepburn ( May 12 , 1907 ? June 29 , 2003 ) was an American actress . Known for her fierce independence and spirited personality , Hepburn was a leading lady in Hollywood for more than 60 years . She appeared in a range of genres , from screwball comedy to literary drama , and she received four Academy Awards for Best Actress ? a record for any performer . In 1999 , Hepburn was named by the American Film Institute as the greatest female star of Classic Hollywood Cinema .

Raised in Connecticut by wealthy , progressive parents , Hepburn began to act while studying at Bryn Mawr College . After four years in the theatre , favorable reviews of her work on Broadway brought her to the attention of Hollywood . Her early years in the film industry were marked with success , including an Academy Award for her third picture , *Morning Glory* ( 1933 ) , but this was followed by a series of commercial failures which led her to be labeled " box office poison " in 1938 . Hepburn masterminded her own comeback , buying out her contract with RKO Radio Pictures and acquiring the film rights to *The Philadelphia Story* , which she sold on the condition that she be the star . In the 1940s , she was contracted to Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer , where her career focused on an alliance with Spencer Tracy . The screen @-@ partnership spanned 25 years and produced nine movies .

Hepburn challenged herself in the latter half of her life , as she regularly appeared in Shakespearean stage productions and tackled a range of literary roles . She found a niche playing middle @-@ aged spinsters , such as in *The African Queen* ( 1951 ) , a persona the public embraced . Three more Oscars came for her work in *Guess Who 's Coming to Dinner* ( 1967 ) , *The Lion in Winter* ( 1968 ) , and *On Golden Pond* ( 1981 ) . In the 1970s , she began appearing in television films , which became the focus of her career in later life . She remained active into old age , making her final screen appearance in 1994 at the age of 87 . After a period of inactivity and ill health , Hepburn died in 2003 at the age of 96 .

Hepburn famously shunned the Hollywood publicity machine and refused to conform to society 's expectations of women . She was outspoken , assertive , athletic , and wore trousers before it was fashionable for women to do so . She married once , as a young woman , but thereafter lived independently . A 26 @-@ year affair with her co @-@ star Spencer Tracy was hidden from the public . With her unconventional lifestyle and the independent characters she brought to the screen , Hepburn epitomized the " modern woman " in the 20th @-@ century United States and is remembered as an important cultural figure .

= = Early life and education = =

Hepburn was born in Hartford , Connecticut , on May 12 , 1907 , the second of six children . Her parents were Thomas Norval Hepburn ( 1879 ? 1962 ) , a urologist at Hartford Hospital , and Katharine Martha Houghton ( 1878 ? 1951 ) , a feminist campaigner . Both parents fought for social change in the US : Thomas Hepburn helped establish the New England Social Hygiene Association , which educated the public about venereal disease , while the elder Katharine headed the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association and later campaigned for birth control with Margaret Sanger . As a child , Hepburn joined her mother on several " Votes For Women " demonstrations . The Hepburn children were raised to exercise freedom of speech and encouraged to think and debate on any topic they wished . Her parents were criticized by the community for their progressive views , which stimulated Hepburn to fight against barriers she encountered . Hepburn said she realized from a young age that she was the product of " two very remarkable parents " , and credited her " enormously lucky " upbringing with providing the foundation for her success . She remained close to her family throughout her life .

The young Hepburn was a tomboy who liked to call herself Jimmy , and cut her hair short like a boy 's . Thomas Hepburn was eager for his children to use their minds and bodies to the limit , and taught them to swim , run , dive , ride , wrestle , and play golf and tennis . Golf became a passion of Katharine 's ; she took daily lessons and became very adept , reaching the semi @-@ final of the

Connecticut Young Women 's Golf Championship . She loved swimming in Long Island Sound , and took ice @-@ cold baths every morning in the belief that " the bitterer the medicine , the better it was for you . " Hepburn was a fan of movies from a young age , and went to see one every Saturday night . She would put on plays and perform for her neighbors with friends and siblings for 50 cents a ticket to raise money for the Navajo people .

On April 3 , 1921 , while visiting friends in Greenwich Village , Hepburn discovered the body of her adored older brother , Tom , dead from an apparent suicide . He had tied a sheet around a beam and hanged himself . The Hepburn family denied it was suicide and maintained that Tom 's death must have been an experiment that had gone wrong . The incident made the teenage Hepburn nervous , moody , and suspicious of people . She shied away from other children , dropped out of Oxford School , and began receiving private tutoring . For many years she used Tom 's birthday ( November 8 ) as her own . It was not until her 1991 autobiography , *Me : Stories of My Life* , that Hepburn revealed her true birth date .

In 1924 Hepburn gained a place at Bryn Mawr College . She attended the institution primarily to satisfy her mother , who had studied there , and recalled disliking the experience . It was the first time she had been in school for several years , and she was self @-@ conscious and uncomfortable with her classmates . She struggled with the scholastic demands of university , and once was suspended for smoking in her room . Hepburn was drawn to acting , but roles in college plays were conditional on good grades . Once her marks had improved , she began performing regularly . She performed the lead role in a production of *The Woman in the Moon* in her senior year , and the positive response it received cemented Hepburn 's plans to pursue a theatrical career . She graduated with a degree in history and philosophy in June 1928 .

= = Career = =

= = = Breaking into theatre ( 1928 ? 32 ) = = =

Hepburn left university determined to become an actress . The day after graduating , she traveled to Baltimore to meet Edwin H. Knopf , who ran a successful stock theatre company . Impressed by her eagerness , Knopf cast Hepburn in his current production , *The Czarina* . She received good reviews for her small role , and the *Printed Word* described her performance as " arresting " . She was given a part in the following week 's show , but her second performance was less well received . She was criticized for her shrill voice , and so left Baltimore to study with a voice tutor in New York City .

Knopf decided to produce *The Big Pond* in New York and appointed Hepburn the understudy to the leading lady . A week before opening , the lead was fired and replaced with Hepburn , which gave her a starring role only four weeks into her theatre career . On opening night , she turned up late , mixed her lines , tripped over her feet , and spoke too quickly to be comprehensible . She was immediately fired , and the original leading lady rehired . Undeterred , Hepburn joined forces with the producer Arthur Hopkins and accepted the role of a schoolgirl in *These Days* . Her Broadway debut came on November 12 , 1928 , at the Cort Theatre , but reviews for the show were poor and it closed after eight nights . Hopkins promptly hired Hepburn as the lead understudy in Philip Barry 's play *Holiday* . In early December , after only two weeks , she quit to marry Ludlow Ogden Smith , a college acquaintance . She planned to leave the theatre behind , but began to miss the work and quickly resumed the understudy role in *Holiday* , which she held for six months .

In 1929 , Hepburn turned down a role with the Theatre Guild to play the lead in *Death Takes a Holiday* . She felt the role was perfect , but again she was fired . She went back to the Guild and took an understudy role for minimum pay in *A Month in the Country* . In the spring of 1930 , Hepburn joined a theatre company in Stockbridge , Massachusetts . She left halfway through the summer season , and continued studying with a drama tutor . In early 1931 , she was cast in the Broadway production of *Art and Mrs. Bottle* . She was released from the role after the playwright took a dislike to her , saying " She looks a fright , her manner is objectionable , and she has no talent " , but then

rehired when no other actress could be found . It went on to be a small success .

Hepburn appeared in a number of plays with a summer stock company in Ivoryton , Connecticut , and she proved to be a hit . During the summer of 1931 , Philip Barry asked her to appear in his new play , The Animal Kingdom , alongside Leslie Howard . They began rehearsals in November , Hepburn feeling sure the role would make her a star , but Howard disliked the actress and again she was fired . When she asked Barry why she had been let go , he responded , " Well , to be brutally frank , you weren 't very good . " This unsettled the self @-@ assured Hepburn , but she continued to look for work . She took a small role in an upcoming play , but as rehearsals began she was asked to read for the lead in the Greek fable The Warrior 's Husband .

The Warrior 's Husband proved to be Hepburn 's breakout performance . Biographer Charles Higham states that the role was ideal for the actress , requiring an aggressive energy and athleticism , and she enthusiastically involved herself with its production . The play opened March 11 , 1932 , at the Morosco Theatre on Broadway . Hepburn 's first entrance called for her to leap down a narrow stairway with a stag over her shoulder , wearing a short silver tunic . The show ran for three months , and Hepburn received positive reviews . Richard Garland of the New York World @-@ Telegram wrote , " It 's been many a night since so glowing a performance has brightened the Broadway scene . "

= = = Hollywood success ( 1932 ? 34 ) = = =

A scout for the Hollywood agent Leland Hayward spotted Hepburn 's appearance in The Warrior 's Husband , and asked her to test for the part of Sydney Fairfield in the upcoming RKO film A Bill of Divorcement . Director George Cukor was impressed by what he saw : " There was this odd creature , " he recalled , " she was unlike anybody I 'd ever heard . " He particularly liked the manner in which she picked up a glass : " I thought she was very talented in that action . " Offered the role , Hepburn demanded \$ 1 @, @ 500 a week , a large amount for an unknown actress . Cukor encouraged the studio to accept her demands and they signed Hepburn to a temporary contract with a three @-@ week guarantee . RKO head David O. Selznick recounted that he took a " tremendous chance " in casting the unusual actress .

Hepburn arrived in California in July 1932 , at 25 years old . She starred in A Bill of Divorcement opposite John Barrymore , but showed no sign of intimidation . Although she struggled to adapt to the nature of film acting , Hepburn was fascinated by the industry from the start . The picture was a success and Hepburn received positive reviews . Mordaunt Hall of The New York Times called her performance " exceptionally fine ... Miss Hepburn 's characterization is one of the finest seen on the screen " . The Variety review declared , " Standout here is the smash impression made by Katharine Hepburn in her first picture assignment . She has a vital something that sets her apart from the picture galaxy . " On the strength of A Bill of Divorcement , RKO signed the actress to a long @-@ term contract . George Cukor became a lifetime friend and colleague ? he and Hepburn made ten films together .

Hepburn 's second film was Christopher Strong ( 1933 ) , the story of an aviatrix and her affair with a married man . The picture was not commercially successful , but Hepburn 's reviews were good . Regina Crewe wrote in the Journal American that although her mannerisms were grating , " they compel attention , and they fascinate an audience . She is a distinct , definite , positive personality . " Hepburn 's third picture confirmed her as a major actress in Hollywood . For playing aspiring actress Eva Lovelace ? a role intended for Constance Bennett ? in Morning Glory , she won an Academy Award for Best Actress . She had seen the script on the desk of producer Pandro S. Berman and , convinced that she was born to play the part , insisted that the role be hers . Hepburn chose not to attend the awards ceremony ? as she would not for the duration of her career ? but was thrilled with the win . Her success continued with the role of Jo in the film Little Women ( 1933 ) . The picture was a hit , one of the film industry 's biggest successes to date , and Hepburn won the Best Actress prize at the Venice Film Festival . Little Women was one of Hepburn 's personal favorites and she was proud of her performance , later saying , " I defy anyone to be as good [ as Jo ] as I was " .

By the end of 1933 Hepburn was a respected film actress , but she yearned to prove herself on Broadway . Jed Harris , one of the most successful theatre producers of the 1920s , was going through a career slump . He asked Hepburn to appear in the play *The Lake* , which she agreed to do for a low salary . Before she was given leave , RKO asked that she film *Spitfire* ( 1934 ) . Hepburn 's role in the movie was Trigger Hicks , an uneducated mountain girl . It is widely considered one of her worst films , and Hepburn received poor reviews for the effort . She kept a picture of Hicks in her bedroom throughout her life to " [ keep ] me humble . "

*The Lake* previewed in Washington , D.C. , where there was a large advance sale . Harris 's poor direction had eroded Hepburn 's confidence , and she struggled with the performance . Despite this , Harris moved the play to New York without further rehearsal . It opened at the Martin Beck Theatre on December 26 , 1933 , and Hepburn was roundly panned by the critics . Dorothy Parker quipped , " She runs the gamut of emotions all the way from A to B . " Already tied to a ten @-@ week contract , she had to endure the embarrassment of rapidly declining box office sales . Harris decided to take the show to Chicago , saying to Hepburn , " My dear , the only interest I have in you is the money I can make out of you . " Hepburn refused , and paid Harris \$ 14 @,@ 000 to close the production instead . She later referred to Harris as " hands @-@ down the most diabolical person I have ever met " , and claimed this experience was important in teaching her to take responsibility for her career .

= = = Career setbacks ( 1934 ? 38 ) = = =

After the failure of *Spitfire* and *The Lake* , RKO cast Hepburn in *The Little Minister* ( 1934 ) , based on a Victorian novel by James Barrie , in an attempt to repeat the success of *Little Women* . There was no such recurrence , and the picture was a commercial failure . The romantic drama *Break of Hearts* ( 1935 ) with Charles Boyer was poorly reviewed and also lost money . After three forgettable films , success returned to Hepburn with *Alice Adams* ( 1935 ) , the story of a girl 's desperation to climb the social ladder . Hepburn loved the book and was delighted to be offered the role . The film was a hit , one of Hepburn 's personal favorites , and gave the actress her second Oscar nomination . She received the second most votes , after winner Bette Davis .

Given the choice of her next feature , Hepburn decided to star in George Cukor 's new project , *Sylvia Scarlett* ( 1935 ) , which paired her for the first time with Cary Grant . Her hair was cut short for the part , as her character masquerades as a boy for much of the film . Critics disliked *Sylvia Scarlett* and it was unpopular with the public . She next played Mary Stuart in John Ford 's *Mary of Scotland* ( 1936 ) , which met with a similarly poor reception . *A Woman Rebels* ( 1936 ) followed , a Victorian era drama where Hepburn 's character defied convention by having a child out of wedlock . *Quality Street* ( 1937 ) also had a period setting , this time a comedy . Neither movie was popular with the public , which meant she had made four unsuccessful pictures in a row .

Alongside a series of unpopular films , problems arose from Hepburn 's attitude . She had a difficult relationship with the press , with whom she could be rude and provocative . When asked if she had any children , she snapped back , " Yes I have five : two white and three colored . " She would not give interviews and denied requests for autographs , which earned her the nickname " Katharine of Arrogance " . The public was also baffled by her boyish behavior and fashion choices , and she became a largely unpopular figure . Hepburn sensed that she needed to leave Hollywood , so she returned east to star in a theatrical adaptation of *Jane Eyre* . It had a successful tour , but , uncertain about the script and unwilling to risk failure after the disaster of *The Lake* , Hepburn decided against taking the show to Broadway . Towards the end of 1936 , Hepburn vied for the role of Scarlett O 'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* . Producer David O. Selznick refused to offer her the part because he felt she had no sex appeal . He reportedly told Hepburn , " I can 't see Rhett Butler chasing you for twelve years . "

Hepburn 's next feature , *Stage Door* ( 1937 ) , paired her with Ginger Rogers in a role which mirrored her own life ? that of a wealthy society girl trying to make it as an actress . Hepburn was praised for her work at early previews , which gave her top billing over Rogers . The film was nominated for Best Picture at the Academy Awards , but it was not the box @-@ office hit RKO had

hoped for . Industry pundits blamed Hepburn for the small profit , but the studio continued its commitment to resurrecting her popularity . She was cast in Howard Hawks ' screwball comedy Bringing Up Baby ( 1938 ) , where she played a flighty heiress who loses a leopard while trying to woo a palaeontologist ( Cary Grant ) . She approached the physical comedy of the film with confidence , and took tips on comedic timing from her costar Walter Catlett . Bringing Up Baby was acclaimed by critics , but it was nevertheless unsuccessful at the box office . With the genre and Grant both hugely popular at the time , biographer A. Scott Berg believes the blame lay with moviegoers ' rejection of Hepburn .

After the release of Bringing up Baby , the Independent Theatre Owners of America included Hepburn on a list of actors considered " box office poison " . Her reputation at a low , the next film RKO offered her was Mother Carey 's Chickens , a B movie with poor prospects . Hepburn turned it down , and instead opted to buy out her contract for \$ 75 @, @ 000 . Many actors were afraid to leave the stability of the studio system at the time , but Hepburn 's personal wealth meant she could afford to be independent . She signed on for the film version of Holiday ( 1938 ) with Columbia Pictures , pairing her for the third time with Grant , to play a stifled society girl who finds joy with her sister 's fiancé . The comedy was positively reviewed , but it failed to draw much of an audience , and the next script offered to Hepburn came with a salary of \$ 10 @, @ 000 ? less than she had received at the start of her film career . Reflecting on this change in fortunes , Andrew Britton writes of Hepburn , " No other star has emerged with greater rapidity or with more ecstatic acclaim . No other star , either , has become so unpopular so quickly for so long a time . "

= = = Revival ( 1939 ? 42 ) = = =

Following this decline in her career , Hepburn took action to create her own comeback vehicle . She left Hollywood to look for a stage project , and signed on to star in Philip Barry 's new play , The Philadelphia Story . It was tailored to showcase the actress , with the character of socialite Tracy Lord incorporating a mixture of humor , aggression , nervousness , and vulnerability . Howard Hughes , Hepburn 's partner at the time , sensed that the play could be her ticket back to Hollywood stardom and bought her the film rights before it even debuted on stage . The Philadelphia Story first toured the United States , to positive reviews , and then opened in New York at the Schubert Theatre on March 28 , 1939 . It was a big hit , critically and financially , running for 417 performances and then going on a second successful tour .

Several of the major film studios approached Hepburn to produce the movie version of Barry 's play . She chose to sell the rights to Metro @-@ Goldwyn @-@ Mayer ( MGM ) , Hollywood 's number one studio , on the condition that she be the star . As part of the deal she also received the director of her choice , George Cukor , and picked James Stewart and Cary Grant ( to whom she ceded top @-@ billing ) as co @-@ stars . Before filming began , Hepburn shrewdly noted , " I don 't want to make a grand entrance in this picture . Moviegoers ... think I 'm too la @-@ di @-@ da or something . A lot of people want to see me fall flat on my face . " Thus the film began with Grant knocking the actress flat on her backside . Berg describes how the character was crafted to have audiences " laugh at her enough that they would ultimately sympathize with her " , which Hepburn felt was crucial in " recreating " her public image . The Philadelphia Story was one of the biggest hits of 1940 , breaking records at Radio City Music Hall . The review in Time declared , " Come on back , Katie , all is forgiven . " Herb Golden of Variety stated , " It 's Katharine Hepburn 's picture ... The perfect conception of all flighty but characterful Main Line socialite gals rolled into one , the story without her is almost inconceivable . " Hepburn was nominated for her third Academy Award for Best Actress , and won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Actress .

Hepburn was also responsible for the development of her next project , the romantic comedy Woman of the Year about a political journalist and sports journalist whose relationship is challenged by her independence . The idea for the film was proposed to her by Garson Kanin in 1941 , who recalled how Hepburn contributed to the script . She presented the finished product to MGM and demanded \$ 250 @, @ 000 ? half for her , half for the authors . Her terms accepted , Hepburn was also given the director and co @-@ star of her choice , George Stevens and Spencer Tracy .

Released in 1942 , Woman of the Year was another success . Critics praised the chemistry between the stars , and , says Higham , noted Hepburn 's " increasing maturity and polish " . The World @-@ Telegram commended two " brilliant performances " , and Hepburn received a fourth Academy Award nomination . During the course of the movie , Hepburn signed a star contract with MGM .

= = = Slowing in the 1940s ( 1942 ? 49 ) = = =

In 1942 , Hepburn returned to Broadway to appear in another Philip Barry play , Without Love , which was also written with the actress in mind . Critics were unenthusiastic about the production but with Hepburn 's popularity at a high it ran for 16 sold @-@ out weeks . MGM was eager to reunite Tracy and Hepburn for a new picture , and settled on Keeper of the Flame ( 1942 ) . A dark mystery with a propaganda message on the dangers of fascism , the film was seen by Hepburn as an opportunity to make a worthy political statement . It received poor notices but was a financial success , confirming the popularity of the Tracy ? Hepburn pairing .

Since Woman of the Year , Hepburn had committed to a romantic relationship with Tracy and dedicated herself to helping the star , who suffered from alcoholism and insomnia . Her career slowed as a result , and she worked less for the remainder of the decade than she had done in the 1930s ? notably by not appearing on @-@ stage again until 1950 . Her only appearance in 1943 was a cameo in the morale @-@ building wartime film Stage Door Canteen , playing herself . She took an atypical role in 1944 , playing a Chinese peasant in the high @-@ budget drama Dragon Seed . Hepburn was enthusiastic about the film , but it met with a tepid response and she was described as miscast . She then reunited with Tracy for the film version of Without Love ( 1945 ) , after which she turned down a role in The Razor 's Edge to support Tracy through his return to Broadway . Without Love received poor reviews , but a new Tracy ? Hepburn picture was a big event and it was popular on release , selling a record number of tickets over Easter @-@ weekend 1945 .

Hepburn 's next film was Undercurrent ( 1946 ) , a film noir with Robert Taylor and Robert Mitchum that was poorly received . A fourth film with Tracy came in 1947 : a drama set in the American Old West entitled The Sea of Grass . Similarly to Keeper of the Flame and Without Love , a lukewarm response from critics did not stop it from being a financial success both at home and abroad . The same year , Hepburn portrayed Clara Wieck Schumann in Song of Love . She trained intensively with a pianist for the role . By the time of its release in October , Hepburn 's career had been significantly affected by her public opposition to the growing anti @-@ communist movement in Hollywood . Viewed by some as dangerously progressive , she was not offered work for nine months and people reportedly threw things at screenings of Song of Love . Her next film role came unexpectedly , as she agreed to replace Claudette Colbert only days before shooting began on Frank Capra 's political drama State of the Union ( 1948 ) . Tracy had long been signed to play the male lead , and so Hepburn was already familiar with the script and stepped up for the fifth Tracy ? Hepburn picture . Critics responded positively to the film and it performed well at the box @-@ office .

Tracy and Hepburn appeared onscreen together for a third consecutive year in the 1949 film Adam 's Rib . Like Woman of the Year , it was a " battle of the sexes " comedy and was written specifically for the duo by their friends Garson Kanin and Ruth Gordon . A story of married lawyers who oppose each other in court , Hepburn described it as " perfect for [ Tracy ] and me " . Although her political views still prompted scattered picketing at theatres around the country , Adam 's Rib was a hit , favorably reviewed and the most profitable Tracy ? Hepburn picture to date . The New York Times critic Bosley Crowther was full of praise for the film and hailed the duo 's " perfect compatibility " .

= = = Professional expansion ( 1950 ? 52 ) = = =

The 1950s saw Hepburn take on a series of professional challenges , and stretch herself further than at any other point in her life at an age when most other actresses began to retreat . Berg describes the decade as " the heart of her vast legacy " and " the period in which she truly came into

her own . " In January 1950 , Hepburn ventured into Shakespeare , playing Rosalind in *As You Like It* . She hoped to prove that she could play already established material , and said , " It 's better to try something difficult and flop than to play it safe all the time . " It opened at the Cort Theatre in New York to a capacity audience , and was virtually sold out for 148 shows . The production then went on tour . Reviews for Hepburn varied , but she was noted as the only leading @-@ lady in Hollywood who was performing high @-@ caliber material onstage .

In 1951 , Hepburn filmed *The African Queen* , her first movie in Technicolor . She played Rose Sayer , a prim spinster missionary living in German East Africa at the outbreak of World War I. Costarring Humphrey Bogart , *The African Queen* was shot mostly on location in the Belgian Congo , an opportunity Hepburn embraced . It proved a difficult experience , however , and Hepburn became ill with dysentery during filming . Later in life , she released a memoir about the experience . The movie was released at the end of 1951 to popular support and critical acclaim , and gave Hepburn her fifth Best Actress nomination at the Academy Awards . The first successful film she had made without Tracy since *The Philadelphia Story* a decade earlier , it proved that she could be a hit without him and fully reestablished her popularity .

Hepburn went on to make the sports comedy *Pat and Mike* ( 1952 ) , the second film written specifically as a Tracy ? Hepburn vehicle by Kanin and Gordon . She was a keen athlete , and Kanin later described this as his inspiration for the film : " As I watched Kate playing tennis one day ... it occurred to me that her audience was missing a treat . " Hepburn was under pressure to perform several sports to a high standard , many of which did not end up in the film . *Pat and Mike* was one of the team 's most popular and critically acclaimed films , and it was also Hepburn 's personal favorite of the nine films she made with Tracy . The performance brought her a nomination for the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress ? Motion Picture Musical or Comedy .

In the summer of 1952 , Hepburn appeared in London 's West End for a ten @-@ week run of George Bernard Shaw 's *The Millionairess* . Her parents had read Shaw to her when she was a child , which made the play a special experience for the actress . Two years of intense work had left her exhausted , however , and her friend Constance Collier wrote that Hepburn was " on the verge of a nervous breakdown " . Widely acclaimed , *The Millionairess* was brought to Broadway . In October 1952 it opened at the Shubert Theatre , where despite a lukewarm critical response it sold out its ten @-@ week run . Hepburn subsequently tried to get the play adapted into a film : a script was written by Preston Sturges , and she offered to work for nothing and pay the director herself , but no studio picked up the project . She later referred to this as the biggest disappointment of her career .

= = = Spinsters and Shakespeare ( 1953 ? 62 ) = = =

*Pat and Mike* was the last film Hepburn completed on her MGM contract , making her free to select her own projects . She spent two years resting and traveling , before committing to David Lean 's romantic drama *Summertime* ( 1955 ) . The movie was filmed in Venice , with Hepburn playing a lonely spinster who has a passionate love affair . She described it as " a very emotional part " and found it fascinating to work with Lean . At her own insistence , Hepburn performed a fall into a canal and developed a chronic eye infection as a result . The role earned her another Academy Award nomination and has been cited as some of her finest work . Lean later said it was his personal favorite of the films he made , and Hepburn his favorite actress . The following year , Hepburn spent six months touring Australia with the Old Vic theatre company , playing Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* , Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* , and Isabella in *Measure for Measure* . The tour was successful and Hepburn earned significant plaudits for the effort .

Hepburn received an Academy Award nomination for the second year running for her work opposite Burt Lancaster in *The Rainmaker* ( 1956 ) . Again she played a lonely woman empowered by a love affair , and it became apparent that Hepburn had found a niche in playing " love @-@ starved spinsters " that critics and audiences enjoyed . Hepburn said of playing such roles , " With Lizzie Curry [ *The Rainmaker* ] and Jane Hudson [ *Summertime* ] and Rosie Sayer [ *The African Queen* ] ? I was playing me . It wasn 't difficult for me to play those women , because I 'm the maiden aunt . " Less success that year came from *The Iron Petticoat* ( 1956 ) , a reworking of the classic comedy

Ninotchka , with Bob Hope . Hepburn played a cold @-@ hearted Soviet pilot , a performance Bosley Crowther called " horrible " . It was a critical and commercial failure , and Hepburn considered it the worst film on her resume .

Tracy and Hepburn reunited on screen for the first time in five years for the office @-@ based comedy Desk Set ( 1957 ) . Berg notes that it worked as a hybrid of their earlier romantic @-@ comedy successes and Hepburn 's spinster persona , but it performed poorly at the box @-@ office . That summer , Hepburn returned to Shakespeare . Appearing in Stratford , Connecticut , at the American Shakespeare Theatre , she repeated her Portia in The Merchant of Venice and played Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing . The shows were positively received .

After two years away from the screen , Hepburn starred in a film adaptation of Tennessee Williams ' controversial play Suddenly , Last Summer ( 1959 ) with Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift . The movie was shot in London , and was " a completely miserable experience " for Hepburn . She clashed with director Joseph L. Mankiewicz during filming , which culminated with her spitting at him in disgust . The picture was a financial success , and her work as creepy aunt Violet Venable gave Hepburn her eighth Oscar nomination . Williams was pleased with the performance , writing , " Kate is a playwright 's dream @-@ actress . She makes dialogue sound better than it is by a matchless beauty and clarity of diction " . He wrote The Night of the Iguana ( 1961 ) with Hepburn in mind , but the actress , although flattered , felt the play was wrong for her and declined the part , which went to Bette Davis .

Hepburn returned to Stratford in the summer of 1960 to play Viola in Twelfth Night and Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra . The New York Post wrote of her Cleopatra , " Hepburn offers a highly versatile performance ... once or twice going in for her famous mannerisms and always being fascinating to watch . " Hepburn herself was proud of the role . Her repertoire was further improved when she appeared in Sidney Lumet 's film version of Eugene O 'Neill 's Long Day 's Journey Into Night ( 1962 ) . It was a low @-@ budget production , and she appeared in the film for a tenth of her established salary . She called it " the greatest [ play ] this country has ever produced " and the role of morphine @-@ addicted Mary Tyrone " the most challenging female role in American drama " , and felt her performance was the best screen work of her career . Long Day 's Journey Into Night earned Hepburn an Oscar nomination and the Best Actress Award at the Cannes Film Festival . It remains one of her most praised performances .

= = = Success in later years ( 1963 ? 70 ) = = =

Following the completion of Long Day 's Journey Into Night , Hepburn took a break in her career to care for ailing Spencer Tracy . She did not work again until 1967 's Guess Who 's Coming to Dinner , her ninth film with Tracy . The movie dealt with the subject of interracial marriage , with Hepburn 's niece , Katharine Houghton , playing her daughter . Tracy was dying by this point , suffering the effects of heart disease , and Houghton later commented that her aunt was " extremely tense " during the production . Tracy died 17 days after filming his last scene . Guess Who 's Coming to Dinner was a triumphant return for Hepburn and her most commercially successful picture to that point . She won her second Best Actress Award at the Oscars , 34 years after winning her first . Hepburn felt the award was not just for her , but was also given to honor Tracy .

Hepburn quickly returned to acting after Tracy 's death , choosing to preoccupy herself as a remedy against grief . She received numerous scripts and chose to play Eleanor of Aquitaine in The Lion in Winter ( 1968 ) , a part she called " fascinating " . She read extensively in preparation for the role , in which she starred opposite Peter O 'Toole . Filming took place in Montmajour Abbey in the south of France , an experience she loved despite being ? according to director Anthony Harvey ? " enormously vulnerable " throughout . John Russell Taylor of The Times suggested that Eleanor was " the performance of her ... career " , and proved that she was " a growing , developing , still surprising actress " . The movie was nominated in all the major categories at the Academy Awards , and for the second year running Hepburn won the Oscar for Best Actress ( shared with Barbra Streisand for Funny Girl ) . The role , combined with her performance in Guess Who 's Coming to Dinner , also received a British Academy Film Award ( BAFTA ) for Best Actress . Hepburn 's next



appearance was in *The Madwoman of Chaillot* ( 1969 ) , which she filmed in Nice immediately after completing *The Lion in Winter* . The picture was a failure critically and financially , and reviews targeted Hepburn for giving a misguided performance .

From December 1969 to August 1970 , Hepburn starred in the Broadway musical *Coco* , about the life of Coco Chanel . She admitted that before the show , she had never sat through a theatrical musical . She was not a strong singer , but found the offer irresistible and , as Berg puts it , " what she lacked in euphony she made up for in guts " . The actress took vocal lessons six times a week in preparation for the show . She was nervous about every performance , and recalled " wondering what the hell I was doing there . " Reviews for the production were mediocre , but Hepburn herself was praised and *Coco* was popular with the public ? with its run twice extended . She later said *Coco* marked the first time she accepted that the public was not against her , but actually seemed to love her . Her work earned a Tony Award nomination for Best Actress in a Musical .

= = = Film , television , and theatre ( 1971 ? 83 ) = = =

Hepburn stayed active throughout the 1970s , focusing on roles described by Andrew Britton as " either a devouring mother or a batty old lady living [ alone ] " . First she traveled to Spain to film a version of Euripides ' *The Trojan Women* ( 1971 ) alongside Vanessa Redgrave . When asked why she had taken the role , she responded that she wanted to broaden her range and try everything while she still had time . The movie was poorly received , but the Kansas City Film Critics Circle named Hepburn 's performance the best from an actress that year . In 1971 she signed on to star in an adaptation of Graham Greene 's *Travels with My Aunt* , but was unhappy with early versions of the script and took to rewriting it herself . The studio disliked her changes , so Hepburn abandoned the project and was replaced with Maggie Smith . Her next film , an adaptation of Edward Albee 's *A Delicate Balance* ( 1973 ) directed by Tony Richardson , had a small release and received generally unfavorable reviews .

In 1973 , Hepburn ventured into television for the first time , starring in a production of Tennessee Williams ' *The Glass Menagerie* . She had been wary of the medium but it proved to be one of the main television events of the year , scoring high in the Nielsen ratings . Hepburn received an Emmy Award nomination for playing wistful Southern mother Amanda Wingfield , which opened her mind to future work on the small screen . Her next project was the television movie *Love Among the Ruins* ( 1975 ) , a London @-@ based Edwardian drama with her friend Laurence Olivier . It received positive reviews and high ratings , and earned Hepburn her only Emmy Award .

Hepburn made her only appearance at the Academy Awards in 1974 , to present the Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award to Lawrence Weingarten . She received a standing ovation , and joked with the audience , " I 'm very happy I didn 't hear anyone call out ' It 's about time ' . " The following year , she was paired with John Wayne in the western *Rooster Cogburn* , a sequel to his Oscar @-@ winning film *True Grit* . Echoing her African Queen character , Hepburn again played a deeply religious spinster who teams up with a masculine loner to avenge a family member 's death . The movie received mediocre reviews . Its casting was enough to draw some people to the box office , but it did not meet studio expectations and was only moderately successful .

In 1976 , Hepburn returned to Broadway for a three @-@ month run of Enid Bagnold 's play *A Matter of Gravity* . The role of eccentric Mrs. Basil was deemed a perfect showcase for the actress , and the play was popular despite poor reviews . It later went on a successful nationwide tour . During its Los Angeles run , Hepburn fractured her hip , but she chose to continue the tour performing in a wheelchair . That year , she was voted " Favorite Motion Picture Actress " by the People 's Choice Awards . After three years away from the screen , Hepburn starred in the 1978 film *Olly Olly Oxen Free* . The adventure comedy was one of the biggest failures of her career ? the screenwriter James Prideaux , who worked with Hepburn , later wrote that it " died at the moment of release " and referred to it as her " lost film " . Hepburn claimed the main reason she had done it was the opportunity to ride in a hot @-@ air balloon . The television movie *The Corn Is Green* ( 1979 ) , which was filmed in Wales , followed . It was the last of ten films Hepburn made with George Cukor , and gained her a third Emmy nomination .

By the 1980s , Hepburn had developed a noticeable tremor , giving her a permanently shaking head . She did not work for two years , saying in a television interview , " I 've had my day ? let the kids scramble and sweat it out . " During this period she saw the Broadway production of On Golden Pond , and was impressed by its depiction of an elderly married couple coping with the difficulties of old age . Jane Fonda had purchased the screen rights for her father , actor Henry Fonda , and Hepburn sought to play opposite him in the role of quirky Ethel Thayer . On Golden Pond was a success , the second @-@ highest grossing film of 1981 . It demonstrated how energetic the 74 @-@ year @-@ old Hepburn was , as she dived fully clothed into Squam Lake and gave a lively singing performance . The movie won her a second BAFTA and a record fourth Academy Award . Homer Dickens , in his book on Hepburn , notes that it was widely considered a sentimental win , " a tribute to her enduring career . "

Hepburn also returned to the stage in 1981 . She received a second Tony nomination for her portrayal in The West Side Waltz of a septuagenarian widow with a zest for life . Variety observed that the role was " an obvious and entirely acceptable version of [ Hepburn 's ] own public image . " Walter Kerr of The New York Times wrote of Hepburn and her performance , " One mysterious thing she has learned to do is breathe unchallengeable life into lifeless lines . " She hoped to make a film out of the production , but nobody purchased the rights . Hepburn 's reputation as one of America 's best loved actors was firmly established by this point , as she was named favorite movie actress in a survey by People magazine and again won the popularity award from People 's Choice .

= = = Focus on television ( 1984 ? 94 ) = = =

In 1984 , Hepburn starred in the dark @-@ comedy Grace Quigley , the story of an elderly woman who enlists a hitman ( Nick Nolte ) to kill her . Hepburn found humor in the morbid theme , but reviews were negative and the box @-@ office was poor . In 1985 , she presented a television documentary about the life and career of Spencer Tracy . The majority of Hepburn 's roles from this point were in television movies , which did not receive the critical praise of her earlier work in the medium but remained popular with audiences . With each release , Hepburn would declare it her final screen appearance , but she continued to take on new roles . She received an Emmy nomination for 1986 's Mrs. Delafield Wants to Marry , then two years later returned for the comedy Laura Lansing Slept Here , which allowed her to act with her grandniece , Schuyler Grant .

In 1991 , Hepburn released her autobiography , Me : Stories of my Life , which topped best @-@ seller lists for over a year . She returned to television screens in 1992 for The Man Upstairs , co @-@ starring Ryan O 'Neal , for which she received a Golden Globe nomination . In 1994 she worked opposite Anthony Quinn in This Can 't Be Love , which was largely based on Hepburn 's own life , with numerous references to her personality and career . These later roles have been described as " a fictional version of the typically feisty Kate Hepburn character " and critics have remarked that Hepburn was essentially playing herself .

Hepburn 's final appearance in a theatrically released film , and her first since Grace Quigley ten years earlier , was Love Affair ( 1994 ) . At 86 years old , she played a supporting role alongside Annette Bening and Warren Beatty . It was the only film of Hepburn 's career , other than the cameo appearance in Stage Door Canteen , in which she did not play a leading role . Roger Ebert noted that it was the first time she had looked frail , but that the " magnificent spirit " was still there and said her scenes " steal the show " . The New York Times made similar observations as they reflected on the actress 's final big @-@ screen appearance , stating that " if she moved more slowly than before , in demeanor she was as game and modern as she had ever been " . Hepburn filmed one final role in the television movie One Christmas ( 1994 ) , for which she received a Screen Actors Guild Award nomination at 87 years old .

= = Personal life = =

= = = Public image and character = = =

Hepburn was known for being fiercely private , and would not give interviews or talk to fans for much of her career . She distanced herself from the celebrity lifestyle , uninterested in a social scene she saw as tedious and superficial , and she wore casual clothes that went strongly against convention in an era of glamour . She rarely appeared in public , even avoiding restaurants , and once wrestled a camera out of a photographer 's hand when he took a picture without asking . Despite her zeal for privacy , she enjoyed her fame , and later confessed that she would not have liked the press to ignore her completely . The protective attitude thawed as she aged ; beginning with a two @-@ hour @-@ long interview on The Dick Cavett Show in 1973 , Hepburn became increasingly open with the public .

Hepburn 's relentless energy and enthusiasm for life is often cited in biographies , while a headstrong independence became key to her celebrity status . This self @-@ assuredness meant she could be controlling and difficult ; her friend Garson Kanin likened her to a schoolmistress , and she was famously blunt and outspoken . Katharine Houghton commented that her aunt could be " maddeningly self @-@ righteous and bossy " . Hepburn confessed to being , especially early in life , " a me me me person " . She saw herself as having a happy nature , reasoning " I like life and I 've been so lucky , why shouldn 't I be happy ? " A. Scott Berg knew Hepburn well in her later years , and said that while she was demanding , she retained a sense of humility and humanity .

The actress led an active private life , reportedly swimming and playing tennis every morning . In her eighties she was still playing tennis regularly , as indicated in her 1993 documentary All About Me . She also enjoyed painting , which became a passion later in life . When questioned about politics , Hepburn told an interviewer , " I always just say be on the affirmative and liberal side . Don 't be a ' no ' person . " The anti @-@ communist attitude in 1940s Hollywood prompted her to political activity , as she joined the Committee for the First Amendment . Her name was mentioned at the hearings of the House Un @-@ American Activities Committee but Hepburn denied being a communist sympathizer . Later in life , she openly promoted birth control and supported abortion . She practiced Albert Schweitzer 's theory of " Reverence for Life " , but did not believe in religion or the afterlife . In 1991 , Hepburn told a journalist , " I 'm an atheist , and that 's it . I believe there 's nothing we can know except that we should be kind to each other and do what we can for other people . " Her public declarations of these beliefs led the American Humanist Association to award her the Humanist Arts Award in 1985 .

### == Relationships ==

Hepburn 's only husband was Ludlow Ogden Smith , a socialite @-@ businessman from Philadelphia whom she met while a student at Bryn Mawr . The couple married on December 12 , 1928 , when she was 21 and he was 29 . Hepburn had Smith change his name to S. Ogden Ludlow so that she would not be known as " Kate Smith " , which she considered too plain . She never fully committed to the marriage and prioritized her career . The move to Hollywood in 1932 cemented the couple 's estrangement , and in 1934 , she traveled to Mexico to get a quick divorce . Hepburn often expressed her gratitude toward Smith for his financial and moral support in the early days of her career , and in her autobiography called herself " a terrible pig " for exploiting his love . The pair remained friends until his death in 1979 .

Soon after moving to California , Hepburn began a relationship with her agent , Leland Hayward , although they were both married . Hayward proposed to the actress once they had each divorced but she declined , later explaining , " I liked the idea of being my own single self . " They were involved for four years . In 1936 , while she was touring Jane Eyre , Hepburn began a relationship with entrepreneur Howard Hughes . She had been introduced to him a year earlier by their mutual friend Cary Grant . Hughes wished to marry her , and the tabloids reported their impending nuptials , but Hepburn was too focused on resurrecting her failing career . They separated in 1938 , when Hepburn left Hollywood after being labeled " box office poison " .

Hepburn stuck to her decision not to remarry , and made a conscious choice not to have children . She believed that motherhood should be a full @-@ time commitment , and said it was not one she

was willing to make . " I would have been a terrible mother , " she told Berg , " because I 'm basically a very selfish human being . " She felt she had partially experienced parenthood through her much younger siblings , which fulfilled any need to have children of her own . Rumors have existed since the 1930s that Hepburn may have been a lesbian or bisexual , which she often joked about . In 2007 , William J. Mann released a biography of the actress in which he argued this was the case . In response to this speculation about her aunt , Katharine Houghton said , " I 've never discovered any evidence whatsoever that she was a lesbian . "

= = = = Spencer Tracy = = = =

The most significant relationship of Hepburn 's life was with Spencer Tracy , her co @-@ star in nine films . In her autobiography she wrote , " It was a unique feeling that I had for [ Tracy ] . I would have done anything for him . " Lauren Bacall , a close friend , later wrote of how " blindly " in love Hepburn was with the actor . The relationship has subsequently received much publicity , and it is often cited as one of Hollywood 's legendary love affairs . Meeting when she was 34 and he was 41 , Tracy was initially wary of Hepburn , unimpressed by her dirty fingernails and suspecting that she was a lesbian , but Hepburn said she " knew right away that I found him irresistible . " Tracy remained married throughout their relationship ; although he and his wife Louise had been living separate lives since the 1930s , there was never an official split and neither party pursued a divorce . Hepburn did not interfere , and never fought for marriage .

With Tracy determined to conceal the relationship with Hepburn from his wife , it had to remain private . They were careful not to be seen in public together , and maintained separate residences . Tracy was an alcoholic and was frequently depressed ; Hepburn described him as " tortured " , and she devoted herself to making his life easier . Reports from people who saw them together describe how Hepburn 's entire demeanor changed when around Tracy . She mothered and obeyed him , and Tracy became heavily dependent on her . They often spent stretches of time apart due to their work , particularly in the 1950s when Hepburn was largely abroad for career commitments .

Tracy 's health declined significantly in the 1960s , and Hepburn took a five @-@ year break in her career to care for him . She moved into Tracy 's house for this period , and was with him when he died on June 10 , 1967 . Out of consideration for Tracy 's family , she did not attend his funeral . It was only after Louise Tracy 's death , in 1983 , that Hepburn began to speak publicly about her feelings for her frequent co @-@ star . In response to the question of why she stayed with Tracy for so long , despite the nature of their relationship , she said , " I honestly don 't know . I can only say that I could never have left him . " She claimed to not know how he felt about her and that they " just passed twenty @-@ seven years [ sic ] together in what was to me absolute bliss . "

= = = Final years and death = = =

Hepburn stated in her eighties , " I have no fear of death . Must be wonderful , like a long sleep . " Her health began to deteriorate not long after her final screen appearance . In the winter of 1996 she was hospitalized with pneumonia . By 1997 she had become very weak , was speaking and eating very little , and it was feared she would die . She showed signs of dementia in her final years . In May 2003 , an aggressive tumor was found in Hepburn 's neck . The decision was made not to medically intervene , and she died on June 29 , 2003 , at the Hepburn family home in Fenwick , Connecticut . She was 96 years old and was buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery in Hartford . Hepburn requested that there be no memorial service .

Hepburn 's death received considerable public attention . Many tributes were held on television , and newspapers and magazines dedicated issues to the actress . American president George W. Bush said Hepburn " will be remembered as one of the nation 's artistic treasures . " In honor of her extensive theatre work , the lights of Broadway were dimmed for the evening of July 1 , 2003 . In 2004 , in accordance with Hepburn 's wishes , her belongings were put up for auction with Sotheby 's in New York City . The event garnered \$ 5 @.@ 8 million , which Hepburn willed to her family .

= = Performances : technique and analysis = =

According to reports , Hepburn was not an instinctive actor . She liked to study the text and character carefully beforehand , making sure she knew them thoroughly , and then to rehearse as much as possible and film multiple takes of a scene . With a genuine passion for the industry she committed heavily to each role and insisted on learning any necessary skills and performing stunts herself . She was known to learn not only her own lines but also those of her costars . Commenting on her motivation , Stanley Kramer said , " Work , work , work . She can work till everyone drops . " Hepburn involved herself in the production of each of her films , making suggestions for the script and stating her opinion on everything from costumes to lighting to camerawork .

The characters Hepburn played were , with very few exceptions , wealthy and intelligent , and often strong and independent . These tough characters tended to be humbled in some form and revealed to have a hidden vulnerability . Garson Kanin described what he called " the formula for a Hepburn success : A high @-@ class , or stuck @-@ up ... girl is brought down to earth by an earthy type , or a lowbrow ... or a cataclysmic situation . It seems to have worked time and time again . " Due to this repeated character arc , Britton sees Hepburn as embodying the " contradictions " of the " nature and status of women " , as the strong females she depicts are eventually " restored to a safe position within the status quo " . Film critic Molly Haskell has commented on the importance of this to Hepburn 's career : with an intimidating presence , it was necessary that her characters " do some kind of self @-@ abasement , to stay on the good side of the audience . "

Hepburn is one of the most celebrated American actresses , but she has also been criticized for a lack of versatility . Her on @-@ screen persona closely matched her own real personality , something Hepburn admitted herself . In 1991 she told a journalist , " I think I 'm always the same . I had a very definite personality and I liked material that showed that personality . " Playwright and author David Macaray has said , " Picture Katharine Hepburn in every movie she ever starred in and ask yourself if she 's not playing , essentially , the same part over and over ... Icon or no icon , let 's not confuse a truly fascinating and unique woman with a superior actress . " Another repeated criticism is that her demeanor was too cold .

= = Legacy = =

Hepburn is considered an important and influential cultural figure . Ros Horton and Sally Simmons included her in their book *Women Who Changed The World* , which honors 50 women who helped shape world history and culture . She is also named in *Encyclopædia Britannica* 's list of " 300 Women Who Changed the World " , *Ladies Home Journal* 's book *100 Most Important Women of the 20th century* , *Variety* magazine 's " 100 Icons of the Century " , and she is number 84 on VH1 's list of the " 200 Greatest Pop Culture Icons of All Time " . In 1999 , the American Film Institute named Hepburn the " greatest American screen legend " among females .

Regarding Hepburn 's film legacy , broadcaster Sheridan Morley said she " broke the mold " for women in Hollywood , where she brought a new breed of strong @-@ willed females to the screen . Film academic Andrew Britton wrote a monograph studying Hepburn 's " key presence within classical Hollywood , a consistent , potentially radical disturbance " , and pinpoints her " central " influence in bringing feminist issues to the screen . Maryann Pasda DiEdwardo has claimed that Hepburn 's performances fostered a " decisiveness toward a new vision of women . "

Off screen , Hepburn lived in a manner ahead of her time ; she thus came to symbolize the " modern woman " and played a part in changing attitudes towards the gender . Horton and Simmons write , " Confident , intelligent and witty , four @-@ time Oscar winner Katharine Hepburn defied convention throughout her professional and personal life ... Hepburn provided an image of an assertive woman whom [ females ] could watch and learn from . " After Hepburn 's death , film historian Jeanine Basinger stated , " What she brought us was a new kind of heroine ? modern and independent . She was beautiful , but she did not rely on that . " Mary McNamara , an entertainment journalist and reviewer for the *Los Angeles Times* wrote , " More than a movie star , Katharine Hepburn was the patron saint of the independent American female . " She was not universally

revered by feminists , however , who were angered by her public declarations that women " cannot have it all , " meaning a family and a career .

Hepburn 's legacy extends to fashion , where she was a pioneer for wearing trousers at a time when it was radical for a woman to do so . She contributed towards making trousers acceptable for women , as fans began to imitate her clothing . In 1986 she received a lifetime achievement award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America in recognition of the influence she played in women 's fashion .

A number of Hepburn 's films have become classics of American cinema , with four of her pictures ( The African Queen , The Philadelphia Story , Bringing Up Baby , and Guess Who 's Coming to Dinner ) featured on the American Film Institute 's list of the 100 Greatest American Films of all time . Adam 's Rib and Woman of the Year were included in the AFI 's list of the Greatest American Comedies . Her clipped , patrician voice is considered one of the most distinctive in film history . [ Sample , from Stage Door ( 1937 ) ]

= = = Memorials = = =

Hepburn has been honored with several memorials . The Turtle Bay community in Manhattan , New York City , where she maintained a residence for over 60 years , dedicated a garden in her name in 1997 . After Hepburn 's death in 2003 , the intersection of East 49th Street and 2nd Avenue was renamed " Katharine Hepburn Place " . Three years later Bryn Mawr College , Hepburn 's alma mater , launched the Katharine Houghton Hepburn Center . It is dedicated to both the actress and her mother , and encourages women to address important issues affecting their gender . The center awards the annual Katharine Hepburn Medal , which " recognizes women whose lives , work and contributions embody the intelligence , drive and independence of the four @-@ time @-@ Oscar @-@ winning actress " . The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center was opened in 2009 in Old Saybrook , Connecticut , the location of the Hepburn family beach home which she loved and later owned . The building includes a performance space and a Katharine Hepburn museum .

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences library and the New York Public Library hold collections of Hepburn 's personal papers . Selections from the New York collection , which documents Hepburn 's theatrical career , were presented in a five @-@ month exhibition , Katharine Hepburn : In Her Own Files , in 2009 . Other exhibitions have been held to showcase Hepburn 's career . One Life : Kate , A Centennial Celebration was held at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington from November 2007 to September 2008 . Kent State University exhibited a selection of her film and theatre costumes from October 2010 to September 2011 in Katharine Hepburn : Dressed for Stage and Screen . Hepburn has also been honored with her own postal stamp as part of the " Legends of Hollywood " stamp series . In 2015 , the British Film Institute held a two @-@ month retrospective of Hepburn 's work .

= = = Characterizations = = =

Hepburn is the subject of a one @-@ woman play , Tea at Five , written by Matthew Lombardo . The first act features Hepburn in 1938 , after being labeled " box office poison " , and the second act in 1983 , where she reflects on her life and career . It was first performed in 2002 at the Hartford Stage . Hepburn has been portrayed in Tea at Five by Kate Mulgrew , Tovah Feldshuh , Stephanie Zimbalist , and Charles Busch . Feldshuh also appeared as Hepburn in The Amazing Howard Hughes , a 1977 television movie , while Mearle Ann Taylor later portrayed her in The Scarlett O 'Hara War ( 1980 ) . In Martin Scorsese 's 2004 biopic of Howard Hughes , The Aviator , Hepburn was portrayed by Cate Blanchett , who won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance . This marked the first instance where the portrayal of an Academy Award @-@ winning actress was turned into an Academy Award @-@ winning role .

In 2014 , two Hepburn biopics were announced to be in development . The first deals with her relationship with Spencer Tracy , and the second covers her early years in Hollywood ( based on William Mann 's account ) .

= = Awards and nominations = =

Hepburn won four Academy Awards , the record number for a performer , and a total of 12 Oscar nominations for Best Actress ? a number surpassed only by Meryl Streep . Hepburn also holds the record for the longest time span between first and last Oscar nominations , at 48 years . She received two awards and five nominations from the British Academy Film Awards , one award and six nominations from the Emmy Awards , eight Golden Globe nominations , two Tony Award nominations , and awards from the Cannes Film Festival , Venice Film Festival , the New York Film Critics Circle Awards , the People 's Choice Awards , and others . Hepburn was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame in 1979 . She also won a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Screen Actors Guild in 1979 and received the Kennedy Center Honors , which recognize a lifetime of accomplishments in the arts , in 1990 .

Hepburn was recognized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for the following performances :

6th Academy Awards ( 1934 ) : Best Actress , win , for Morning Glory

8th Academy Awards ( 1936 ) : Best Actress , nomination , for Alice Adams

13th Academy Awards ( 1941 ) : Best Actress , nomination , for The Philadelphia Story

15th Academy Awards ( 1943 ) : Best Actress , nomination , for Woman of the Year

24th Academy Awards ( 1952 ) : Best Actress , nomination , for The African Queen

28th Academy Awards ( 1956 ) : Best Actress , nomination , for Summertime

29th Academy Awards ( 1957 ) : Best Actress , nomination , for The Rainmaker

32nd Academy Awards ( 1960 ) : Best Actress , nomination , for Suddenly , Last Summer

35th Academy Awards ( 1963 ) : Best Actress , nomination , for Long Day 's Journey into Night

40th Academy Awards ( 1968 ) : Best Actress , win , for Guess Who 's Coming to Dinner

41st Academy Awards ( 1969 ) : Best Actress , win , for The Lion in Winter ( shared with Barbra Streisand for Funny Girl )

54th Academy Awards ( 1982 ) : Best Actress , win , for On Golden Pond

= = Filmography and theatre credits = =

During her 66 @-@ year career , Hepburn appeared in 44 feature films , 8 television movies , and 33 plays . Her movie career covered a range of genres , including screwball comedies , period dramas , and adaptations of works by top American playwrights . She appeared on the stage in every decade from the 1920s to the 1980s , performing plays by Shakespeare and Shaw , and a Broadway musical .

Select filmography :

Select theatre roles :