

= Marcia Mitzman Gaven =

Marcia Mitzman Gaven (born February 28 , 1959) is an award @-@ winning American actress from New York . Since studying at the High School of Performing Arts and the State University of New York at Purchase , she has appeared in many musicals during her career singing in both mezzo @-@ soprano and soprano roles . Her Broadway debut came in 1979 when she played Betty Rizzo in Grease , serving as the replacement for the original actress of the role . In the 1980s she appeared in the musicals The Rocky Horror Show , Oliver ! , Zorba , Nine , Anything Goes , Chess , and Welcome to the Club , and in the operas Brigadoon , South Pacific , and Sweeney Todd .

In 1992 , Gaven played the character Mrs. Walker in a new production called The Who 's Tommy at La Jolla Playhouse . The musical was a success , resulting in its move to Broadway in 1993 . Gaven was praised by critics for her performance and received a Tony Award nomination in the " Best Featured Actress in a Musical " category . She eventually had to leave The Who 's Tommy before its Broadway run ended because of an allergic reaction to a smoke effect used in the show . In 1995 , she won an Ovation Award and a Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for her portrayal of Florence Vassy in Chess at Hudson Theatre . She was also awarded an Ovation Award for the role of Mother in the staging of the musical Ragtime at Shubert Theatre in 1997 . Gaven 's latest role in a musical was in a 2001 production of 1776 by UCLA 's Freud Playhouse . Since then she has appeared in concerts and fundraisers .

Gaven has also made guest star appearances in numerous television shows and films , playing both live @-@ action and animated roles . She voiced several characters in the animated series The Simpsons from 1999 until 2002 , including Maude Flanders , Helen Lovejoy , Miss Hoover , and others . She was hired after Maggie Roswell departed from the show , due to a pay dispute . She has not been heard on the show since Roswell 's return in 2002 . Gaven has also lent her voice to television and radio advertisements . She is currently married to Seth Gaven owner of AV Squad , a film marketing company .

= = Early life = =

Gaven was born as Marcia Mitzman on February 28 , 1959 in New York City , New York . She was raised with her two siblings in the village of Hastings @-@ on @-@ Hudson , New York by their mother Patricia Mitzman , who had previously had a career in art . Newt Mitzman , their father , directed television specials and commercials for a living . Gaven went to Hackley Elementary School in Tarrytown , New York when she was young . At that time she was certain that she wanted to work in show business . As the result of a lie , she was able to study at the High School of Performing Arts even though the school was only open to inhabitants of New York City . She then became a drama major at the State University of New York at Purchase , though she did not get a degree . She said in a 1987 interview with The New York Times that " they kicked me out because I missed a major rehearsal " , and she never applied for readmission since she had already made her first appearance on Broadway in Grease by then . While at Purchase , Gaven performed in student productions such as The Taming of the Shrew and Trumpets and Drums .

= = Career in theatre = =

Gaven has had a prominent career in musical theatre and has appeared in many rock musicals . She told TheaterWeek in 1993 that she thinks those kinds of musicals are harder to sing in compared to standard musicals , and that " the nature of rock and roll is that it 's on the edge . It 's written to be done dangerously . You can 't be careful and do it at the same time . If you don 't do it dangerously , you run the risk of losing the impact . " During her career , Gaven has sung in both mezzo @-@ soprano and soprano roles , and has been cited for her belting . According to Alvin Klein , theatre critic for The New York Times , she " is categorically a mezzo soprano . " Gaven has also been noted for her strong voice , and was once told by a sound technician at An Evening Dinner Theater in Elmsford , New York that " We always turn off the mikes when you sing " because

she did not need amplification .

== 1979 ? 1989 ==

In March 1979 , when Gaven was twenty years old , she served as the replacement actress for the character Betty Rizzo in the original Broadway production of Grease . This was her Broadway debut . In late 1980 , she was cast in the lead role of Janet in the musical The Rocky Horror Show that ran for six nights at Warner Theatre . It tells the story of a couple , Brad and Janet , who find themselves lost one night and end up in the laboratory of an alien doctor . The cast , including Gaven , was praised by critics . In 1984 , she played a Londoner in the revival of Oliver ! at Broadway and was the understudy for the major role of Nancy . That same year , in the Broadway revival of Zorba , Gaven played the role of The Widow who is eventually stoned to death by the townspeople after being held responsible for the suicide of a young boy who fell in love with her . She then portrayed the character Luisa , the wife of an Italian film director , in a production of Nine at An Evening Dinner Theater in 1985 .

Gaven starred in the New York City Opera 's Broadway revival of Brigadoon , in which she played Meg Brockie , at New York State Theater in 1986 . The story is about a mysterious Scottish village that appears for only one day every hundred years , and Meg is one of the villagers . According to Sy Syna of the magazine The World & I , Gaven was " a huge crowd pleaser " in the role . She was also cast in the New York City Opera 's spring 1987 revival of South Pacific as the female lead character Nellie Forbush , a U.S. Navy nurse who works on a South Pacific island during World War II . This nine @-@ week run of South Pacific had an alternating cast and Nellie was also portrayed by Susan Bigelow . Later that year in July during the New York City Opera 's regular season , she appeared in the opera company 's Sweeney Todd as Mrs. Lovett , who makes and sells meat pies made from the victims of serial killer Sweeney Todd .

In Pioneer Theatre Company 's fall 1988 production of Anything Goes , Gaven played the lead role of nightclub singer Reno Sweeney . It is set on an ocean liner on which Reno helps the character Billy Crocker win the heart of the engaged Hope Harcourt who he has fallen in love with . While reviewing the musical for the Deseret News , Joseph Walker commented that Gaven " is sensational as Reno Sweeney , the saucy , sassy hoofer @-@ with @-@ a @-@ heart @-@ of @-@ gold . She has an arresting presence and a golden voice ; the whole show always seems better when she 's on stage . " At the end of 1988 , Gaven returned to the musical Oliver ! in a Theatre Under The Stars production in Houston , starring as Nancy . A critic for the Houston Chronicle commended her performance , writing that she " acts the compassionate Nancy with warmth and spirit , and sings in a strong voice full of character . "

Also in 1988 , Gaven played the part of the Russian chess player 's wife Svetlana in the short @-@ lived Broadway production of the musical Chess , for which she was praised by critics . The following year she appeared as Carol Bates in the Broadway musical Welcome to the Club . It revolves around four men who have been put in jail for not paying alimony . The musical shows why they ended up divorcing their wives , one of which is played by Gaven . Both Chess and Welcome to the Club were unsuccessful . John Simon criticized the latter musical in a New York Magazine review but praised Gaven 's performance , writing : " The cast ranges from the charmless to the hopeless [...] in this mess . Only Marcia Mitzman manages to stand out from the crowd , and when she gets the right part in the right show , she 'll do just fine . " Associated Press drama critic Michael Kuchwara also wrote negatively about Welcome to the Club while giving praise to Gaven for projecting " a sympathy [to her character] that isn 't apparent in the book . "

== 1990 ? 1995 ==

In December 1990 , Gaven once again appeared as Nancy in a revival of Oliver ! ? this time in a production at 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle , Washington . A theatre critic for the Seattle Post @-@ Intelligencer noted that she " has the voice to anchor anything you 'd care to name , even the 5th Avenue Theatre . 5th Avenue performers often sound as if they were speaking and singing through

a football stadium public address system . But Mitzman overpowers malevolent acoustics . " After Oliver ! , she appeared as Countess Charlotte Malcolm in Ahmanson Theatre 's production of A Little Night Music that was performed from April 18 to June 30 , 1991 at James A. Doolittle Theatre in Los Angeles , California . Gaven worked at 5th Avenue Theatre again in December 1991 in the musical Here 's Love . She portrayed the divorced Doris Walker , a single @-@ working mother of a girl who doubts the existence of Santa Claus . During spring 1992 , she played the love interest of a male songwriter and his best friend in the musical The Tin Pan Man (set in 1905) at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts .

Starting at the beginning of July 1992 , Gaven appeared in a new musical called The Who 's Tommy at La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego . It was based on the rock opera album Tommy by The Who . Gaven starred as Mrs. Walker , the mother of the boy Tommy who is traumatized when he sees his father murder Mrs. Walker 's new boyfriend . Tommy ultimately becomes non @-@ responsive , leading people to believe that he is deaf , mute , and blind , and his parents try to find a cure for his condition . Gaven later told TheaterWeek that she initially did not want to do the musical , since she " had no idea how this could be staged as a theatrical piece . I hoped my agents wouldn 't call me and ask me to audition . " However , they did , and she was cast as Mrs. Walker after an audition in which she sang the song " Heaven Help My Heart " that she performed in Chess , also a rock musical . The Who 's Tommy was La Jolla Playhouse 's biggest success yet and as a result its run was lengthened by several weeks . Later that year , Gaven once again played Doris in Here 's Love ? this time in a Theatre Under The Stars production .

In late 1992 it was announced that because of the success of The Who 's Tommy , it would be produced for Broadway and open in April 1993 . The production cost eight million dollars and it broke the box office record for the biggest non @-@ opening day with US \$ 494 @, @ 897 earned on April 23 , 1993 at St. James Theatre (where the musical opened on April 22) , beating Guys and Dolls ' 1992 record . Des McAnuff , who directed the musical at both La Jolla Playhouse and on Broadway , decided to bring many actors from the original cast with him despite weeks of auditions with thousands of actors trying out for the roles in front of him . The Broadway production featured some changes to the musical , such as a new song devoted to Tommy 's parents that Gaven thought " helps show their side of the story . " However , as she told The San Diego Union @-@ Tribune , the biggest difference was the increased amount of money she earned . Gaven was praised by critics for her portrayal of Mrs. Walker in the Broadway production , with one critic from The Miami Herald writing that her " alluring alto voice makes you wish Tommy 's mother had even more to sing . "

It was announced on May 10 , 1993 that The Who 's Tommy had received eleven Tony Award nominations , tying with Kiss of the Spider Woman for the most nominations that year . Gaven received a nomination in the " Best Featured Actress in a Musical " category . However , as the result of an allergic reaction , she could not perform in the musical some nights . When Daryl Miller interviewed Gaven in the Los Angeles Times in 1997 , he noted that " this was one of the biggest disappointments of her life , and clouds cross her face for the first time in the conversation . She glances across the room at the Tony citation ? recognizing her nomination for best featured actress in a musical ? as she describes how her throat became infected due to a reaction to the oil in a haze @-@ making compound that designers pump onstage to enhance lighting effects . She missed a lot of performances , and an untold number of Tony voters missed her performance . She can 't help but wonder how that affected the outcome . " At one point , Gaven 's understudy Alice Ripley took her place for eight consecutive weeks while Gaven recovered . Gaven eventually had to leave The Who 's Tommy some months after it opened because of her allergy . She also disliked the idea of performing in one musical for more than a year .

In late 1993 , she was cast in Pasadena Playhouse 's musical Sweet , Smart , Rodgers & Hart that featured music and lyrics previously written by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart . It originally played from the middle of November to December 17 , 1993 , but was then extended for another run between January 6 and January 23 , 1994 . In July 1994 , Gaven played the role of the partly African @-@ American showboat actress Julie Dozier in Music Circus ' adaptation of Show Boat in California . In the spring of the following year , she reprised her part as the Countess in a production

of A Little Night Music , also by Music Circus . Gaven returned to Chess in the summer of 1995 in small @-@ scale production at Hudson Theatre , this time as the lead character Florence Vassy . The story involves a romantic triangle between the two top players , an American and a Russian , in a world chess championship , and the woman Florence who manages one and falls in love with the other . Gaven received an Ovation Award (Best Lead Actress in a Musical) and a Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award (Best Lead Performance) for her work in the musical .

= = = 1996 ? present = = =

On May 21 , 1996 , Gaven and seventeen other well @-@ known musical theatre artists appeared in the show Say It With Music at Carpenter Performing Arts Center . It was staged to raise proceeds for the Musical Theatre Group , which was described by John Woolard of the Press @-@ Telegram as " a new organization formed to help rejuvenate musical theater in Southern California . " The show was made up of singing and dancing numbers that had previously appeared in different Broadway musicals . From June to September 1997 , Gaven played the role of Mother in the Los Angeles production (pre @-@ Broadway) of the musical Ragtime at Shubert Theatre . She received her second Ovation Award (Best Lead Actress in a Musical) for this performance . The musical tells the story of three ethnic groups in the United States : White Anglo @-@ Saxon Protestants , African @-@ Americans in Harlem , and European immigrants . Gaven played the mother and matriarch of the Protestant family . Ragtime director Frank Galati praised her in the Los Angeles Times for her " grace and beauty and magnificent voice " and her " extraordinarily keen intelligence ? she 's a very deep reader of text , " and commented that " she seizes the stage with energy . " Many critics praised Gaven as well , though Laurie Winer of the Los Angeles Times wrote that she played Mother " valiantly but with a shade too much effort . " David Littlejohn of The Wall Street Journal cited her as " the best single performance in this production . "

In May of the following year , she appeared in California Musical Theatre 's production of Triumph of Love , a musical that had previously been staged on Broadway and is set in Sparta . It ran for six days at the Community Center Theater in Sacramento , California and featured Gaven in the role of the philosopher Hesione . In 2001 , Gaven reappeared as Julie Dozier in another adaptation of Show Boat by Music Circus . Davis Enterprise critic Bev Sykes wrote positively about her voice but criticized her performance for not being credible , writing : " Marcia Mitzman Gaven gives an uneven performance as Julie , a singer of mixed race who passes for white until she 's betrayed by a spurned suitor . She is re @-@ discovered in Act 2 , having fallen into decline . Though obviously under the influence of the liquor in the bottle she carries around before and after her delivery of the song ' He 's Just My Bill , ' the song itself is performed straight , with no hint of the ravages that alcohol have taken on her body and voice . " Later that same year she played the role of Abigail Adams in a production of 1776 by UCLA 's Freud Playhouse .

Gaven performed in a cabaret , called The Girly Show , at a fundraising gala for the Blank Theatre Company on August 15 , 2005 . It consisted of an all @-@ female cast singing songs by Michael John LaChiusa , with LaChiusa playing the piano . On December 15 , 2008 , celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of The Who 's Tommy , Gaven and the rest of the original Broadway cast reunited for a concert at August Wilson Theatre in New York City . This performance was a benefit for Broadway Cares / Equity Fights AIDS , the Broadway Dreams Foundation , and the Bachmann @-@ Strauss Dystonia & Parkinson Foundation .

= = Career in television and film = =

Gaven has done much voice acting in her career , lending her voice to television and radio advertisements and playing animated characters in The Pink Panther (1993) , Red Planet (1994) , and Small Soldiers (1998) . Working with advertisements earned Gaven more money than playing theatre . " I can make in an hour what I make in a week doing theater , " she said in 1997 . Gaven has also made guest star appearances in live @-@ action television series such as The George Carlin Show (1994) , Ellen (1995) , Get Smart (1995) , The Drew Carey Show (1996) , Hangin '

with Mr. Cooper (1997) , Frasier (1998) , and Beverly Hills , 90210 (1998) . In addition , she had a minor role in the 2002 film Moonlight Mile .

When Maggie Roswell left the animated series The Simpsons in spring 1999 after a pay dispute with Fox Broadcasting Company , Gaven was hired to fill in for Roswell 's characters . These characters included Maude Flanders , Helen Lovejoy , Miss Hoover , and others . However , Maude Flanders was killed off in the 2000 episode " Alone Again , Natura @-@ Diddily " to open up new storylines for the show . Maggie Roswell returned to The Simpsons in 2002 after reaching a deal with Fox to record her lines from her home , and Gaven has not worked for the show since that year .

= = Personal life = =

Gaven resided in Los Angeles from 1991 to 1993 , when she had to move to New York City to act in The Who 's Tommy . However , her stay in the city was short because of the allergic reaction and she moved back to Los Angeles . While performing in musicals , Gaven had to be protective of her vocal cords and this affected her personal life . She told Miller in 1997 that " you have to give up so much of your life " , and gave the example that when " somebody coughs behind me [at the cinema] I immediately say to my husband , ' We may have to move . ' " She also had to avoid shouting . Gaven is currently married to Seth Gaven who owns AV Squad , a film marketing company .

= = Acting credits = =

= = = Theatre = = =

= = = Television = = =

= = = Film = = =