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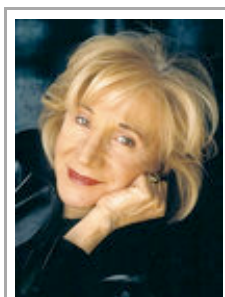
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Biography for Olympia Dukakis

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Date of Birth

[20 June 1931](#), [Lowell, Massachusetts, USA](#)

Height

5' 3" (1.60 m)

Mini Biography

Olympia Dukakis went to Arlington High School in Arlington, Massachusetts, which is six miles northwest of Boston. She is a member of the Arlington High School Hall of Fame, which includes [Alan Wilson](#) (aka "Blind Owl"), guitarist/songwriter for [Canned Heat](#), and two navigators for the famous Dolittle Raids on Tokyo during WWII.

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IMDb Mini Biography By: [Ben Craig](#)

Mini Biography

Long a vital, respected lady of the classic and contemporary stage and the epitome of Mediterranean-styled weariness, this grand lady with the perpetually forlorn look and worldly wise demeanor did not become a household name and sought-after film actress until age 56 when she turned in a glorious, Oscar-winning perf as [Cher's](#)

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sardonic mother in the romantic comedy [Moonstruck](#) (1987). Since then movie (and TV) fans have discovered what the East coast theater-going audiences had uncovered decades before -- an acting treasure. Her adaptability to various ethnicities (Greek, Italian, Jewish, Eastern European, etc.), as well her chameleon-like versatility in everything from cutting edge comedy to stark tragedy, has kept her in high demand for the past 30 years as of one of Hollywood's topnotch character players.

Olympia Dukakis was born on June 20, 1931 in Lowell, Massachusetts, the daughter of Greek immigrants (Constantine and Alexandra (nee Christos) Dukakis). Her father in particular sparked an early passion in acting by having her perform with his amateur theater troupe as a teen. She majored, however, in physical therapy for a time at Boston University, where she graduated with a BA. This came in quite handy later during her fledgling actor days where she was able to support herself as a physical therapist in between acting lessons and jobs. She later returned her alma mater and entered her graduate program in performing arts and attained an MFA.

Olympia took the long road to success by distinguishing herself first on stage performing in summer stock and with several repertory and Shakespearean companies throughout the country. She made her [Broadway debut](#) as an understudy in "The Aspern Papers" at age 30, but did not make the grade there with very short runs in the plays "Abraham Cochrane" (1964) and "Who's Who in Hell" (1974) following.

Olympia married Yugoslav-American actor [Louis Zorich](#) in 1962. The New York-based couple went on to co-found The Whole Theatre Company in Montclair, New Jersey, and ran the company for 15 years (1973-1988). As actress, director, producer and teacher, she still found the time to raise their three young children. She also became a master instructor at New York University for lengthy periods during the 60s, 70s and 80s. Preferring the smaller, more intimate stage she scored theater triumphs in "A Man's a Man", for which she won an Off-[Broadway](#) Obie [Award](#) in 1962; several productions of "The Cherry Orchard" and "Mother Courage"; "Six Character in Search of an Author"; "The Rose Tattoo"; "The Seagull"; "The Marriage of Bette and Boo" (another Obie [Award](#)); and, more notably, her many performances as the title role in "Hecuba". A good portion of her successes were launched within the walls of her own theater company, which encouraged the birth of new and untried plays. Her prolific directing credits include many of the classics: "Orpheus Descending," "The House of Bernarda Alba", "Uncle Vanya" and "A Touch of the Poet", as well as the more contemporary ("One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "Kennedy's Children"). She also adapted such plays as "Mother Courage" and "The Trojan Women" for the theater company. Over the duration of their marriage, she and husband Zorich have experienced shared successes, appearing together in "Long Day's Journey Into Night", "Camino Real", "The Three Sisters" and "The Seagull", among many others. Both are master interpreters of Chekhovian plays -- one of their more recent acting collaborations was in "The Chekhov Cycle" in 2003.

Making an inauspicious [debut](#) in a bit role as a mental patient in [Lilith](#) (1964), she tended to gravitate toward off-the-wall films with various offshoots of the ethnic mother. She played mom to such leads as [Dustin Hoffman](#) in [John and Mary](#) (1969), [Joseph Bologna](#) in the cult comedy [Made for Each Other](#) (1971) and [Ray Sharkey](#) in [The Idolmaker](#) (1980). Interestingly, it was her scene-stealing work on [Broadway](#) in the comedy "Social Security" (1986) that caught director [Norman Jewison's](#) eye and earned her the [Moonstruck](#) (1987) movie role. The Academy [Award](#) win for Best Supporting

Actress was the last of a stream of [award](#)s she earned for that part, including the New York Film Critics, Los Angeles Film Critics, British Film and Golden Globe [award](#)s. From then on, silver-haired Olympia was first in line for a number of cream-of-the-crop matron roles: [Steel Magnolias](#) (1989), [Dad](#) (1989), [Look Who's Talking](#) (1989), [The Cemetery Club](#) (1993), [Mr. Holland's Opus](#) (1995) and [Mother](#) (1996/I). On TV, she received kudos of the highest order, especially for her sympathetic transgendered landlady in the acclaimed epic miniseries ["Tales of the City"](#) (1993) (mini) and its sequel (the latter earning her an Emmy nomination).

An ardent liberal and Democrat, she is the cousin of one-time presidential candidate Michael Dukakis. Moreover, she is a strong advocate of women's rights and environmental causes. Olympia finally published her best-selling warts-and-all autobiography "Ask Me Again Tomorrow: A Life in Progress" in 2003, a searing, introspective chronicle chocked full of her trademark candor and wry humor. These days she is also a well-oiled figure on the lecture circuit covering topics as widespread as life in the theater to feminism and osteoporosis. A hardcore New Yorker, she still resides there with her husband. In 2007 she revived her solo turn in the play "Rose" (2000), which initially earned her an Outer Critics Circle [Award](#) and Drama Desk [Award](#) nomination.

IMDb Mini Biography By: [Gary Brumburgh / gr-home@pacbell.net](#)

Spouse

[Louis Zorich](#) ([5 December 1962](#) - present) 3 children

Trivia

Sister of [Apollo Dukakis](#)

Daughter, Christina, and two sons Peter and Stefan, with actor/husband Zorich.

Cousin of 1988 Democratic US presidential candidate Michael Dukakis.

She and [Anita Gillette](#) have had the same on-screen love interest twice: [Larry Haines](#) on ["Search for Tomorrow"](#) (1951) and [Vincent Gardenia](#) in [Moonstruck](#) (1987).

Her Best Supporting Actress Oscar statuette was stolen from her home kitchen in 1989. The burglar left only her nameplate.

First cousin of [Michael Dukakis](#).

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