

MARIST CLS - THE POWER OF READERS THEATRE  
FALL 2023 - CLASS #3  
GARSON KANIN & *BORN YESTERDAY*

BORN YESTERDAY BY GARSON KANIN

WRITTEN IN 1946, *BORN YESTERDAY* IS THE STORY OF A CORRUPT RICH JUNK DEALER, HARRY BROCK, AND HIS SHOWGIRL MISTRESS BILLIE DAWN. WHEN BILLIE'S IGNORANCE BECOMES A LIABILITY TO BROCK'S BUSINESS DEALINGS IN WASHINGTON DC, HE HIRES JOURNALIST, PAUL VERRALL, TO EDUCATE HIS GIRLFRIEND. IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING, BILLIE DAWN REALIZES HOW CORRUPT HARRY IS INCLUDING HIS PLANS TO BRIBE A SENATOR INTO PASSING LEGISLATION THAT WOULD ALLOW BROCK'S BUSINESS TO MAKE MORE MONEY.

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## GARSON KANIN

GARSON KANIN WAS A 20TH CENTURY RENAISSANCE MAN: A MUSICIAN, BURLESQUE COMEDIAN, ACTOR, STAGE AND FILM DIRECTOR, WRITER, AND RACONTEUR. HE WROTE PLAYS, ESSAYS, SCREENPLAYS, SHORT STORIES, NOVELS, MEMOIRS, SONGS, AND A LIBRETTO, AND DIRECTED PLAYS, MUSICALS, DOCUMENTARIES AND FILMS.

BORN IN 1912 IN ROCHESTER, NEW YORK, THE YOUNG KANIN FELL IN LOVE WITH SHOW BUSINESS, DROPPED OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL DURING THE DEPRESSION AND FORMED HIS OWN BAND, GAR KAY AND THE RED PEPPERS.

IN HIS EARLY TWENTIES KANIN WORKED AS A COMEDIAN IN THE CATSKILLS AND AT THE ELTINGE THEATER IN NEW YORK. HE GRADUATED FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DRAMATIC ARTS AND MADE HIS BROADWAY DEBUT IN 1933.

IN 1936, AT THE AGE OF 24, GARSON KANIN DIRECTED HIS FIRST BROADWAY PLAY, HITCH YOUR WAGON. HE WAS RECRUITED TO BECOME A PRODUCTION ASSISTANT WITH SAMUEL GOLDWYN IN HOLLYWOOD.

HE MARRIED STAGE AND FILM ACTRESS RUTH GORDON IN DECEMBER, 1942, AND MONTHS LATER, THE MILITARY ENLISTED KANIN IN THE OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES (OSS), THE PRECURSOR TO THE CIA,

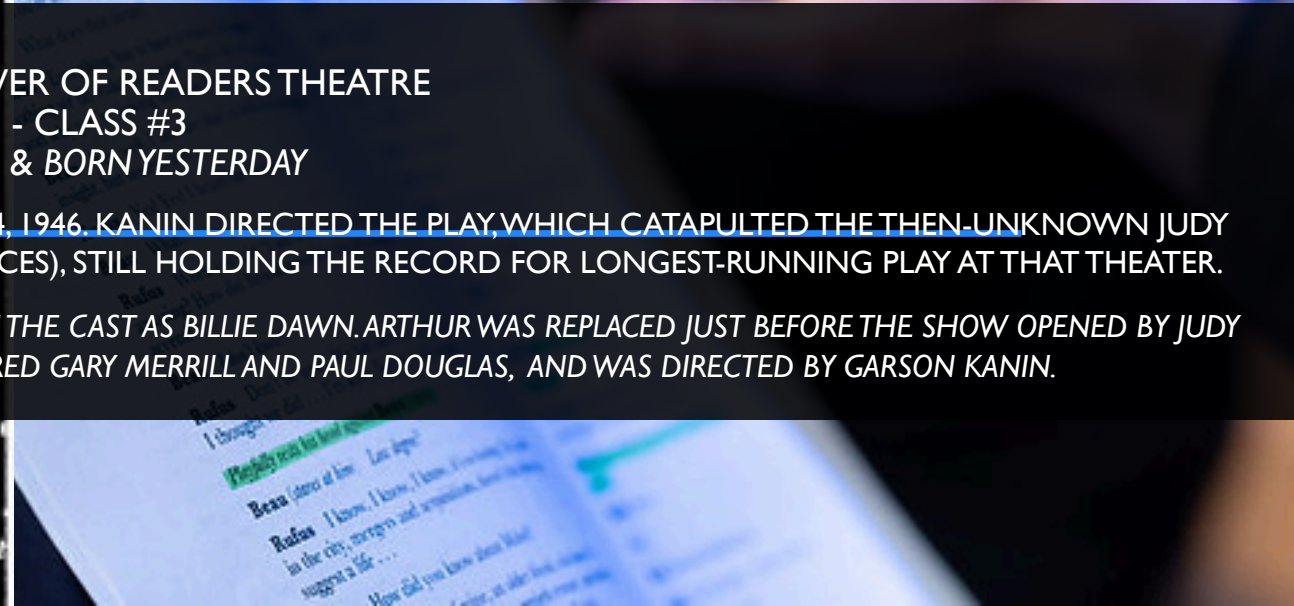




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BORN YESTERDAY OPENED ON BROADWAY AT THE LYCEUM THEATER ON FEBRUARY 4, 1946. KANIN DIRECTED THE PLAY, WHICH CATAPULTED THE THEN-UNKNOWN JUDY HOLLIDAY TO STARDOM. THE HIT COMEDY RAN FOR FOUR YEARS (1649 PERFORMANCES), STILL HOLDING THE RECORD FOR LONGEST-RUNNING PLAY AT THAT THEATER.

IMAGE AT LEFT IS FROM A REHEARSAL OF BORN YESTERDAY, WHILE JEAN ARTHUR WAS STILL IN THE CAST AS BILLIE DAWN. ARTHUR WAS REPLACED JUST BEFORE THE SHOW OPENED BY JUDY HOLLIDAY, WHO WAS IN TURN MADE A STAR BY THE ROLE. THE SHOW ALSO STARRED GARY MERRILL AND PAUL DOUGLAS, AND WAS DIRECTED BY GARSON KANIN.



IN 1985 KANIN'S WIFE AND PARTNER OF MORE THAN FORTY YEARS, RUTH GORDON, DIED IN MARTHA'S VINEYARD.

IN 1990 KANIN MARRIED THE ACTRESS MARIAN SELDES. HE DIED IN 1999 IN NEW YORK CITY.

TODAY THERE IS A BRONZE PLAQUE ON THE 41ST STREET SIDEWALK ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY. THE QUOTE IS FROM BORN YESTERDAY, BUT IT REFLECTS GARSON KANIN'S PERSONAL BELIEF:

*I WANT EVERYBODY TO BE SMART. AS SMART AS THEY CAN BE. A WORLD OF IGNORANT PEOPLE IS TOO DANGEROUS TO LIVE IN.*



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*BORN YESTERDAY* OPENED ON FEBRUARY 4, 1946 ON BROADWAY AND RAN UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 1949, AFTER A TOTAL OF 1,642 PERFORMANCES. AS OF 2019 IT WAS THE SEVENTH LONGEST-RUNNING NON-MUSICAL PLAY IN BROADWAY HISTORY. WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY GARSON KANIN.

KANIN'S OTHER STAGE WORK INCLUDES DIRECTING *THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK* (1955), AND *THE MUSICAL FUNNY GIRL* (1964),

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- HE WAS A COLLEAGUE OF THORNTON WILDER, WHO MENTORED HIM, AND AN ADMIRER OF THE WORK OF FRANK CAPRA.
  - KANIN AND KATHARINE HEPBURN WERE THE ONLY WITNESSES TO LAURENCE OLIVIER AND VIVIEN LEIGH'S WEDDING IN CALIFORNIA ON AUGUST 31, 1940.
  - HE IS QUOTED AS SAYING, "WHEN YOUR WORK SPEAKS FOR ITSELF, DON'T INTERRUPT."





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A REMINDER - READERS 'THEATRE OFTEN INCLUDES A "NARRATOR" (STORYTELLER) WHO SERVE S AS A NONPARTICIPATING WITNESS.

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- NEXT WEEK
- WINNER OF THE PULIZTER PRIZE FOR DRAMA (1998)
- *HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE* BY PAULA VOGEL





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• **TODAY'S MENU**

- **Act One – Scene 1 – Narrator, Paul, Helen**
- **Act One – Scene 2 – Narrator, Brock, Devery, Eddie**
- **Act One – Scene 3 – Narrator, Senator & Mrs. Hedges, Brock, Devery, Billie**
- **Act Two – Scene 4 – Narrator, Paul, Billie**
- **Act Three – Scene 5 – Narrator, Brock, Devery, Senator Hedges, Eddie, Billie, Paul**

