

# Shirin Devrim Trainer

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Shirin Devrim was born in Istanbul, Turkey and was educated in Berlin, Baghdad, Istanbul and New York. She was a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.

Her first professional appearance was in 1950 at the Court Theatre in Wisconsin as Bella Manningham in *Gas Light*. In 1953, she made her off Broadway debut as Rosa Gonzales in Tennessee Williams' *Summer and Smoke*. In the mid 1950's she returned to her native land and overnight became one of the leading actresses and directors of the Turkish theatre. Among the many parts she played are Mrs. Harrington in Peter Schaeffers' *Five Finger Exercise*, Mrs. Levy in *The Matchmaker*, Mrs. Rosepettle in *Oh Dad, Poor Dad...*, Mrs. Gant in *Look Homeward Angel* and Mary in *The Women*, and Serafina in the *The Rose Tattoo*, as well as Katherina in *Taming of the Shrew*, Lady Macbeth, and Queen Gertrude in two different productions of *Hamlet*.

During this period, she was awarded a four month Rockefeller grant which enabled her to observe theater in ten different countries, and in 1964 she was invited by the Greek government to attend the Epidaurus and Athens festivals.

In 1967-68 Ms. Devrim was visiting actress and director at the Stanford Repertory Theatre, where she directed a highly acclaimed production of Jean Anouil's *The Cavern*, and performed Anna Andreyevna in *The Inspector General*. While she was professor of drama at Carnegie-Mellon she played Brecht's Mother Courage at the University's theatre. At the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Ms. Devrim portrayed Euripides' Medea, and Lady Politic in *Volpone*. Other U.S. roles include: Illona in *The Play's the Thing* at the Cincinnati Playhouse. Grand Duchess Olga in *You Can't Take It With You* at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis, Madame Soupeau in Brecht's *Visions of Simone Machard*, and Madame Pernelle in *Tartuffe* at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton. Of her performance of Lidya Vasileyevna in *Old World* at Syracuse Stage, the Syracuse Herald said, "Much of the charm emanates from Shirin Devrim, an actress of extraordinary gifts." When she played Mrs. Rosengarten in Hans Sahl's *House Music* at the American Jewish Theater in New York, Richard Shepard of the New York Times wrote, "Shirin Devrim is marvelously bubbly as the strong minded, culturally oriented mother."

In 1989, after an absence of twenty years, Ms. Devrim returned to the Turkish state to portray Sarah Bernhardt in *Memoir*. "The warm electricity Shirin Devrim exudes immediately envelopes the audience. The persona she creates as Sarah Bernhardt is fascinating, for the actress has an interesting and uniquely personal style of acting that we have not encountered before," wrote the leading Istanbul paper.

She has lectured on Turkey and the Turkish theatre, as well as the Middle Eastern situation, across the United States in colleges, universities and private clubs and also at the Woodrow Wilson School in Princeton, New Jersey. She was Vice President of the Milwaukee Ballet and a Trustee of the Chelsea Theater in New York City.

She was a Regent of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and a member of the Cosmopolitan Club.

In 1996, Ms. Devrim published a book about her family called *Turkish Tapestry*, which was published by Quartet Books in London.

She was the recipient of *Daughters of Ataturk's Women of Distinction Award* in 2001.

**Source:** *Daughters of Ataturk*. <http://www.daughtersofataturk.org/bios/us-c/devrim.html>