

Bari Gilbert

Don't Talk Unless You're Speaking!

At the age of 10, Bari's mother, who taught guitar at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, introduced her to Muriel Sharon's children's acting classes and The Production Workshops. This was not her first brush with the performing arts as she had studied ballet, recorder and piano at Julliard, but it was Muriel, "who gave us the stage, paved the way, made it all possible.

"She was so engrossed, so focused and so committed. She was the puppeteer."

Bari's remembrances of Muriel and her memories of her childhood and youth became a mix of competing stories; filming *The Unborn* at the beach suddenly morphed into childhood summers spent with family and friends at Fire Island. Abby Imber's Tuesday mime class "that was so important to me" segued into meeting Marcel Marceau after a performance. "He had the audacity to speak to me. I was so disgusted."

Bari was in the following plays as part of The Production Workshop at the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street YM-YWHA:

*The Prince Who Learned Everything Out of Books*, Year 1963. According to the cast list, she played The Wood Chopper, but in her own words, "I think I did a few parts in *The Prince Who Learned Everything Out of Books*, like one of the gypsies. But I'm not sure if I was stepping in last minute, doubling up, or miss-credited."

*The Servant of Two Masters*. Year 1964, Played one of the four Zanies.

Additionally, she performed in Muriel's production of *The Servant of Two Masters* at the New York State Pavilion of the 1964 World's Fair. During one scene, a Zany hat fell off one of the Zanies and Bari, in true Commedia dell'Arte fashion, placed the hat atop her own Zany hat and merrily scampered off-stage.

*Turandot*, Year 1965. Played Turandot, a cold, beautiful princess, whose suitors must answer three riddles in order to marry her. Otherwise, death to the suitor! In one rehearsal, Bari blacked out her teeth, causing mayhem when she lifted her veil. \*Muriel was not pleased, as sometimes happened.

*The Unborn*, Year 1966. Played one of the children, ("sweet scenes of children") in the beach scene at Fire Island and in character she had to slap Debbie Offner. "It made me feel so bad I apologized to her last year but it left me so guilt-ridden I don't remember my own section other than the voice-over words "being alive."

In response to my query as to whether there was a difference in Muriel's approach to directing this film as opposed to the plays, Bari said, "Yes. I felt Muriel was very moved and emotionally invested as these were 'our' stories and not ancient plays. I also sensed ... that she was torn between stepping in and directing us, and stepping back and let our feelings and memories dictate.

"She respected my acting choices, my point of view."

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\* "Muriel's outbursts could be hilarious. When angry at rowdy students, she would hold her shirt, clench her fists and lifting her shirt, scream, 'Don't talk unless you're speaking!'

"I knew exactly what she meant", Bari said.