

CHRONOLOGY

- 1905 Born March 15 in New York City at 260 West Fifty-ninth Street, only child of British actors Benjamin Nottingham Webster III and Mary Louise (May) Whitty. In June, the family returns to London from the United States and lives at 31 Bedford Street in the Strand.
- 1911 Enrolls in the Burlington School for Girls and makes amateur acting debut at Albert Hall in a *Pageant of the Stage*.
- 1914 Enrolls in Bradley Wood House, a Christian Science school in Devonshire.
- 1917 Attends Queen Anne's School in Reading.
- 1922 Appears in *The Shoe*, written and directed by Edith Craig, with Ellen Terry and May Whitty, Palace Theatre.
- 1923 Graduates from Queen Anne's and begins formal training for the stage at the Etlinger Dramatic School.
- 1924 Makes professional debut as a chorus member in Euripides' *The Trojan Women* with Sybil Thorndike and Lewis T. Casson, New Theatre.
- 1925 Plays a gentlewoman in John Barrymore's *Hamlet*, Haymarket Theatre, appears in the Chorus of Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Regent Theatre, and understudies Sybil Thorndike in a tour of Shaw's *Saint Joan*.
- 1926 Appears in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* with Sybil Thorndike, Lewis T. Casson, and Laurence Olivier, Empire Theatre, tours with the Charles Macdona Players in plays by George Bernard Shaw, and plays the Gentlewoman in *Macbeth*, Prince's Theatre.
- 1927 Tours with J. B. Fagan's Oxford Players.
- 1928 Joins the Ben Greet Players, touring plays by Shakespeare in outdoor productions, and appears opposite John Gielgud in *The Lady from Alfaqque*, Court Theatre.
- 1929 Plays Fanny Willoughby in James M. Barrie's *Quality Street* with Hilda Trevelyan, Haymarket Theatre; plays Chorus Leader in Euripides' *Medea*, Wyndham's Theatre; joins the Old Vic Company, playing Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Nerissa in *The Mer-*

- chant of Venice*, Toinette in Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid*, the duchess of York in *Richard II*, and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- 1930 At the Old Vic plays Audrey in *As You Like It* and Megaera in Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*; at the Old Vic and Queen's Theatre plays Lady Macduff in *Macbeth* and the Second Player in *Hamlet*; at the Savoy Theatre plays Judith Anderson in Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple* with Martin Harvey.
- 1931 Appears in Gilbert Wakefield's *Etienne* with Emlyn Williams, St. James's Theatre, tours in Williams's *A Murder Has Been Arranged* and with Maurice Evans in *After All*; elected council member of British Equity.
- 1932 Plays Mary Preston in *Musical Chairs* with John Gielgud, Criterion Theatre, countess of Derby in Gordon Daviot's *Richard of Bordeaux* with John Gielgud and Gwen Ffrangcon Davies, New Theatre, and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* with Alastair Sim, Anthony Quayle, and George Devine, Old Vic and Sadler's Wells Theatre.
- 1933 Appears in *Richard of Bordeaux* with John Gielgud and Gwen Ffrangcon Davies, 463 performances, New Theatre.
- 1934 Appears in Emlyn Williams's *Spring 1600*, Shaftesbury Theatre, Lesley Storm's *Dark Horizon*, Daly's Theatre, and H. T. Wood's *Royal Baggage*, Little Theatre; makes directing debut with Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* for the British National Federation of Women's Institutes, Kent; plays Mary Beaton in *Queen of Scots*, New Theatre.
- 1935 Directs Martha Steinitz's *Tarakin*, Kingsway Theatre, Walter Hudd's *Snow in Winter*, Whitehall Theatre, Philip Stuart's *Love of Women*, Phoenix Theatre and Arts Theatre, and Sarah Millin's *No Longer Mourn*, Gate Theatre; appears with Paul Robeson and Coral Brown in Peter Garland's *Basalik*, Arts Theatre; plays Abigail Hill in Norman Ginsbury's *Viceroy Sarah*, Phoenix Theatre, and tours in *Viceroy Sarah*; appointed actor-delegate to the London Theatre Council; attends the Moscow Theatre Festival; writes article on the working conditions in the Soviet Union for *British Equity*.
- 1936 Directs Henrik Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*, The Playhouse, Louis Verneuil's *Heads I Win*, Embassy Theatre, Sewell Stokes's *The Four Partners* and Daisy Fisher's *A Ship Comes Home*, Q Theatre, Phillip Leaver's *The Three Set Out*, Hull Repertory Theatre, and F. C. Davison and John Mitchell's *Family Hold Back*, Aldwych Theatre; adapts and plays Nurse Lisa in Ferenc Molnár's *Girl Unknown*, New Theatre; plays Anna Steele in Elsie T. Schauffler's *Parnell*, New Theatre.

- 1937 Makes Broadway directing debut with Maurice Evans in *Richard II*, St. James Theatre; also directs Gladys Hurlbut's *Lovers' Meeting* and Phillip Leaver's *The Three Set Out*, with Constance Cummings and Michael Redgrave, Embassy Theatre, Keith Winter's *Old Music* with Greer Garson, St. James's Theatre, and Elswyth Thane's *Young Mr. Disraeli*, Fulton Theatre.
- 1938 Plays Masha in the Theatre Guild production of *The Seagull* with Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontanne, Sydney Greenstreet, and Uta Hagen, Shubert Theatre; directs Maurice Evans in *Hamlet* with Mady Christians, St. James Theatre.
- 1939 Directs Maurice Evans as Falstaff in *1 Henry IV*, with Wesley Addy and Mady Christians, St. James Theatre; directs, and plays Mary of Magdala in, Leonore and William Cowen's *Family Portrait*, Morosco Theatre; directs abridged versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *As You Like It*, World's Fair, Flushing, N.Y.; directs tryout production of Sidney Howard's *Madam, Will You Walk* with George M. Cohan and Keenan Wynn, Baltimore and Washington, D.C.
- 1940 Signs director's contract with Paramount Pictures and moves to Hollywood; directs an all-star benefit of Noël Coward's *Tonight at 8:30* for the British War Relief Fund, Hollywood; directs Maurice Evans and Helen Hayes in *Twelfth Night*, St. James Theatre, and Tennessee Williams's *Battle of Angels* with Miriam Hopkins, Wilbur Theatre.
- 1941 Writes chapter on directing Shakespeare for *Producing the Play* by John Gassner; directs and plays Andromache in *The Trojan Women*, Cort Theatre; directs *Macbeth*, National Theatre.
- 1942 Publishes *Shakespeare without Tears*; gives first lecture tour on Shakespeare; broadcasts readings of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* for WABC radio, Boston; directs and plays Emilia in *Othello* with Paul Robeson, Uta Hagen, and José Ferrer, Brattle Theatre and McCarter Theatre; directs Terence Rattigan's *Flare Path* with Alec Guinness and Nancy Kelly, Henry Miller's Theatre.
- 1943 Directs Janet and Philip Stevenson's *Counterattack*, Windsor Theatre; restages *Othello* for Theatre Guild tryout production in New Haven, Boston, and Philadelphia; directs and plays Emilia in *Othello* with Paul Robeson, Uta Hagen, and José Ferrer, Shubert Theatre.
- 1944 Codirects *The Cherry Orchard* with Eva Le Gallienne, National Theatre; delivers the Helen Kenyon Lecture at Vassar College, published as *Shakespeare and the Modern Theatre*.
- 1945 Directs *The Tempest*, Alvin Theatre, and Thomas Job's *Therese*,

- Biltmore Theatre; receives Achievement Award from Women's National Press Club, Washington, D.C.; restages *The Tempest*, Broadway Theatre and New York City Center; restages *Othello* with Robeson, Ferrer, and Hagen for New York City Center.
- 1946 Cofounds the American Repertory Theatre with Eva Le Gallienne and Cheryl Crawford; directs musical revue sketches for Nancy Hamilton's *Three to Make Ready* with Arthur Godfrey and Gordon MacRae, Adelphi Theatre and Broadhurst Theatre; directs *Henry VIII* (and plays the Old Lady), James M. Barrie's *What Every Woman Knows*, George Bernard Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, and Sean O'Casey's *Pound on Demand* (and plays the Woman) for the American Repertory Theatre; plays Mrs. Borkman in Henrik Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* for the American Repertory Theatre.
- 1947 Plays the Red Queen in an adaptation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* for the American Repertory Theatre; receives an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ.
- 1948 Prepares an English adaptation of Luigi Pirandello's *As You Desire Me* for Italian actress Marta Abba; directs Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* and supervises production of *Hedda Gabler* for the American Repertory Theatre; records an original cast album of *Alice in Wonderland*; founds the Margaret Webster Shakespeare Company (Marweb) with impresario Sol Hurok; directs *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* for Marweb tours.
- 1949 Prepares an English adaptation of Felix Salten's play *Royal Highness*, Lyric Theatre; directs *Julius Caesar* and *The Taming of the Shrew* for a second U.S. Marweb tour; broadcasts *Emma Lazarus* for NBC radio.
- 1950 Directs George Bernard Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*, New York City Center and restages it at Royale Theatre; broadcasts *The Patrician* for the NBC Theatre of the Air; in Chekhov's *The Three Sisters* plays Olga at Brattle Theatre and Masha at Woodstock Theatre; stages Verdi's *Don Carlo*, Metropolitan Opera Company, New York City; listed in *Red Channels: Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television* and blacklisted from employment in film, and network radio and television.
- 1951 Directs *Richard II* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, New York City Center, and Shaw's *Saint Joan*, Cort Theatre; plays the nun-detective in Charlotte Hastings's *The High Ground*, Forty-eighth Street Theatre; appears as Mistress of Ceremonies in *ANTA Album*, with Tallulah Bankhead, Hedda Hopper, and Faye Emerson, Ziegfeld Theatre;

- directs *Aida*, Metropolitan Opera; named by José Ferrer in testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee.
- 1952 Narrates a recording of *Hedda Gabler* for Theatre Masterworks; directs and performs *An Evening with Will Shakespeare*, opening at New Parsons Theatre and then touring.
- 1953 Records *An Evening with Will Shakespeare* and directs and narrates a recording of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* for Theatre Masterworks; performs *An Evening with Will Shakespeare*, National Theatre, Washington, D.C.; broadcasts *The Genius of Shakespeare* for WNYC-Radio; directs Fritz Hochwalder's *The Strong Are Lonely*, Broadhurst Theatre, and *Richard III* with José Ferrer, New York City Center; appears before McCarthy's Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations.
- 1954 Tours with lectures and solo performances of Shakespeare to U.S. colleges and universities.
- 1955 Publishes revised edition of *Shakespeare without Tears*; directs William Walton's opera *Troilus and Cressida*, New York City Center, and *The Strong Are Lonely*, Piccadilly Theatre; performs readings of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* for BBC Radio.
- 1956 Restages *The Strong Are Lonely* at the Haymarket Theatre; directs *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon.
- 1957 Publishes a revised edition of *Shakespeare without Tears* under the title *Shakespeare Today*; directs Verdi's *Macbetto*, New York City Center and *Measure for Measure*, Old Vic, London.
- 1958 Directs Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*, Ambassador Theatre, and Vittorio Gianni's opera *The Taming of the Shrew* and Richard Strauss's opera *The Silent Woman*, New York City Center.
- 1959 Writes article on classical acting for *Theatre Arts*.
- 1960 Directs Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*, Metropolitan Opera, Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, tryout production of Noël Coward's *Waiting in the Wings*, Olympia Theatre, Dublin, and premiere of Noël Coward's *Waiting in the Wings*, Duke of York's Theatre.
- 1961 Represents the American Specialists Program of the U.S. State Department in South Africa and directs Eugene O'Neill's *Touch of a Poet*, National Theatre, Johannesburg.
- 1962 Elected to the Board of Directors of the American National Theatre and Academy; directs Michael Redgrave's adaptation of Henry James's *The Aspern Papers*, The Playhouse, a dramatization of Pamela Frankau's novel *Ask Me No More*, Royal Theatre, Windsor,

- and Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*, Civic Theatre, Johannesburg.
- 1963 Adapts and gives solo performances of *The Brontës: A Dramatic Portrait of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë*; named Regents Professor at University of California, Berkeley; directs *Antony and Cleopatra*, Hearst Theatre, Berkeley.
- 1964 Performs *The Brontës*, New Arts Theatre, London; directs *Measure for Measure*, Boston University; directs Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Men*, Queen's Theatre, and restages it at Lyric Theatre.
- 1965 Records *The Brontës: A Dramatic Reading* for Vanguard Records and *Your Mr. Shakespeare* for J. Norton Publishers; directs National Repertory Theatre touring productions of Jean Giraudoux's *The Mad Woman of Chaillot* and Euripides' *The Trojan Women*.
- 1966 Stages *Julius Caesar* for the American Shakespeare Theatre; gives solo performances of *The Seven Ages of Bernard Shaw*, Theatre de Lys, New York City.
- 1968 Directs Graham Greene's *Carving a Statue*, Gramercy Arts Theatre.
- 1969 Publishes family memoir *The Same Only Different: Five Generations of a Great Theatre Family*; appointed artist-in-residence, Department of Speech, University of Wisconsin, Madison, and directs Chekhov's *The Three Sisters*.
- 1970 Directs Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford, England.
- 1972 Publishes autobiography, *Don't Put Your Daughter on the Stage*; dies of cancer in Sydenham, England, November 13.
- 1979 Named to the Theatre Hall of Fame, New York City.