

*Darienite*

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## **Miriam Scott, 79, Actress, Producer, Director, Playwright, Dinner Theater Founder**

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**Date :** February 4, 2020

Miriam "Mimi" Koblenz Scott, “one of the brightest stars in the universe” Passed away on Feb. 2 in Darien after a long and courageous battle with dementia. She was 79.

Mimi was born Dec. 15, 1940 in Albany, New York to Edmund Akiva “Kibbe” Koblenz and Tillie Paul Koblenz.

Mimi was predeceased by her parents, her brother, Hershel Koblenz, and her beloved husband, Barry.

She attended Albany Public Schools and Albany Academy for Girls. After graduating from Albany High

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School (Class of '58), she attended the University of Vermont and Russell Sage College in Troy, New York with a degree in education. Mimi continued on to SUNY Albany where she received her Master of Arts degree.

In 1983 Mimi continued her education earning a master's degree in social work and doctorate in psychology, resulting in her private practice in Latham, New York, which provided individual and group counseling to devoted patients throughout the Capital District.

In 1961 she married the late Barry Scott at Temple Israel, which her father, Kibbe, co-founded. In 1964, Mimi and Barry welcomed daughter, Karen, followed by son, Jeffrey in 1966, whom she adored and would shape their world in the most unique and profound ways over the next 50 plus years.

While her husband Barry embarked on building a career in insurance, Mimi helped support her family as an English teacher at Albany Public School's Hackett Junior High School in downtown Albany.

In the late 70s Mimi created and performed the memorable Barry Scott Insurance radio ads which served as the catalyst for the great success of the business, ultimately acquired by Progressive Insurance.

Most of all Mimi was a born performer and pursued this passion throughout her life, performing for various religious groups and becoming a fixture at Albany Civic Theater, where she starred in, and frequently directed, numerous productions.

Among them were "Guys and Dolls" (Adelaide), "The Prime of Miss Jean Brody" (director), Woody Allen's "Don't Drink the Water" (director), "Damn Yankees" (Lola), "Pippin" (Fastrada), "Stop the World I Want To Get Off" (Evie), "Little Mary Sunshine" (Nancy Twinkle) and many more.

Mimi's film and Television career began in 1972 with a small role in the Oscar-, Grammy- and Golden Globe- winning film "The Way We Were," filmed at Union College in Schenectady, New York.

Her resulting friendships with director Sydney Pollack, co-star James Woods and writer and composer of the film's score and theme song, Marvin Hamlisch, served aspirational.

Thereafter, Mimi gained local celebrity having conceived, produced and hosted, a first of its kind, talk show, "Coffee Break," which aired on Albany, New York's NBC affiliate, WNYT Channel 13. Following Coffee Break, Mimi relocated part time to New York City, where she was cast in several national commercials and performed in Off-Broadway theater.

During her children's formative years, she resided full time in Albany, investing her incredible energy into the Capital District. In 1978, together with husband Barry, Robert Eustace and Nick Toscano, she launched the Capital District's first musical dinner theater, The Four Seasons Dinner Theater at the Thruway house on Washington Avenue.

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The Four Seasons' 20-plus musical productions were continuously sold out to its 300 person audiences, some of which featured Mimi in leading roles, including "Gypsy" (Mama Rose) and "Annie Get Your Gun" (Annie Oakley).

In 1989 Mimi succeeded Pat Devane as executive producer and artistic director of Washington Park's free outdoor theater, "Live at the Lakehouse."

Building on Devane's initiative to bring free professional theater to the Capital District, Mimi brought it to ever greater heights, having aptly renamed it "Park Playhouse," attracting some of New York City's most talented actors, directors and artists and, together with the support of Mayor Thomas Whalen and husband Barry, constructed its current 2,000 seat amphitheater.

In 1996, Mimi landed a feature role in the Off-Broadway hit show "[Grandma Silvia's Funeral](#)," which served up more than 1,000 funerals at the SoHo Playhouse on Vandam Street.

Following "Grandma Silvia," Mimi wrote and co-produced with Dana Matthow, "Dressing Room," a musical based on the backstage antics and often shattered dreams of its performers, which also ran at the SoHo Playhouse.

She continued to exercise her writer's muscle with the likes of the one-woman show "Eating the Drumstick," murder thriller "Mind Tricks" and the founding of the Manhattan Playwrights Group.

In 2012 she penned her last show, "Mah Jongg, the Musical," performing and producing it at the famous "Don't Tell Mama's" cabaret and theater in the heart of New York's theater district, where it sold out its four-week limited engagement.

Throughout her life Mimi lent her energy and producing talents beyond the stage to serve the many communities to which she belonged. As many of her friends were being lost to AIDS in the mid-1980s, at which time the disease's stigma completely stymied activist efforts to enlist public support from large philanthropists and critical elected officials, Mimi took action conceiving, organizing and chairing the Country's first AIDS gala benefit in 1986 at the Palace Theater in Albany.

Mimi's friend, the late Gov. Mario Cuomo, while a devout Catholic, lent his support to her AIDS benefit, delivering an historical keynote address calling on politicians to put aside their prejudices and get to work on a cure.

Cuomo's unprecedented public support was the first of any U.S. governor and, as a result, Mimi's AIDS benefit has been widely viewed as the turning point after which elected leaders could safely lend their public support and resources to the fight against AIDS.

Mimi co-chaired a follow-up AIDS benefit in South Florida and, together with Barry, chaired and supported many other charities including the March of Dimes (Barry himself was a polio survivor), The Leukemia

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Society and their adored Capital District Mental Health Players. All of this represents but a glimpse of Mimi's life.

Characteristically, and no doubt with this in mind, she authored her memoirs "[Doin What Came Natur'ly: The Merry, Madcap N'Moxie Memoirs of Mimi Scott](#)" to share her experiences with the world ranging from her childhood on Kuyler Avenue to life in the 1950's at Albany High School in the carefree age of the "greaser" generation.

In her remaining 28 years following Barry's death, she enjoyed her Lincoln Center apartment and lakeside home on Burden Lake in Averill Park, New York, in the company of her surviving daughter, Karen Zantay (Doug), son Jeffrey Scott (Lisa), grandchildren Chelsea, Koti, Jazz (Zantay), Dylan and Jordan (Scott), her precious pups, and many special friends, most notably Bill McHugh, who was her last call of every evening right up until the end.

Mimi was a ditzzy red head with true comedic timing and a contagious ability to laugh at herself with an amazingly bright and shining light whose smile and big personality lit up every room with positive energy. She had the ability to make friends with everyone from the homeless to countless celebrities, always seeing the best in people, and becoming a "best friend" to so many.

Above all, Mimi's most extraordinary and enduring gift to her children, grandchildren and close friends was her orbit of countless extraordinary, diverse, and infinitely talented people which brought them a simply magical life every day.

A memorial celebration of her incredible life is planned at the Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. New York NY 10013. 11:30 a.m., Thursday Feb. 6. Memorial contributions can be made to the [Scott Family Foundation](#) or [Broadwaycares.org](#).

— [an obituary](#) from *Levine Memorial Chapel*