

Dreaming of the Stage "I never sat around thinking I wanted to be a movie star," said Dukakis (in a '60s portrait). "I just wanted to play great parts."



"Olympia was a great actress and brought immense joy to anyone who was lucky enough to see her work her magic," said Cher, who played her daughter. "People around the world will miss her." She said she spoke to the ailing Dukakis only weeks ago.

Zorich by her side. (Her husband, actor Louis Zorich, who played Burt on NBC's Mad About You, died in 2018.) An actress who could project regal, leonine authority while knowingly undercutting herself with droll comic timing, Dukakis racked up an additional 80-plus credits in her four decades of stardom. She remained best known as Moonstruck's Rose Castorini ("Get your head out of the toilet") but was also loved as Clairee Belcher in 1989's Steel Magnolias, an all-star comedy-drama costarring Sally Field, Dolly Parton, Julia Roberts and Shirley MacLaine. "She was a gift," said Field, "unique and talented and one of a kind." Dukakis was in Look Who's Talking

The Homebody

Dukakis and her

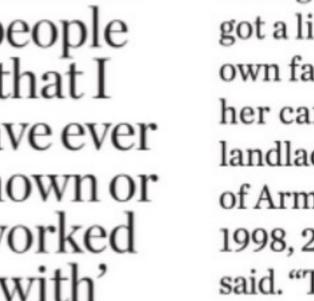
children Christina, Peter and

Stefan (right) in 1973.

'One of my favorite people that I have ever known or worked with'

(1989) and its two sequels and played Frank Sinatra's mom, Dolly, in the 1992 TV movie Sinatra. (After watching her shoot a scene, she said, Sinatra himself "came over to me and, by way of telling me it had been very good, said, 'Look, I've got a little money. You wanna run away?") Her own favorite role—one that figured centrally in her campaign for LGBT rights—was the trans landlady Anna Madrigral in the TV adaptations of Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City in 1993, 1998, 2001 and finally 2019. "That's the one," she said. "That affected me. Not only as an actress but as a human being living my life."

Throughout her career Dukakis was also a dedi-



-DOLLY PARTON

## Love & Family Time with her kids

and husband, Louis Zorich (in 2008) was everything to her. "I want more of our family vacations where we all gather water and eat and play and genuinely enjoy one another, she wrote in her memoir. But she was happy to hit the trail for family too, campaigning when cousin Mike (with wife Kitty) ran for President in 1988.







she wrote of the powerhouse ensemble of actresses in the 1989 hit



Tales of the City Dukakis (with Laura Linney) played Anna Madrigal, a transgender landlady in San Francisco, in four adaptations.

cated acting teacher, with students including Better Call Saul's Michael McKean. "She would tell us: don't forget that the reason you wanted to do this was that it looked like fun," he said on Twitter. Says Harry Mavromichalis, a longtime friend and director of the 2020 documentary Olympia: "She was so smart and intelligent. Always searching and questioning."

A first-generation American, the Lowell, Mass., native was the daughter of working-class Greek parents, Constantine and Alexandra. Olympia loved acting from the get-go-she said her stage debut came at 13, playing the Spirit of Greece in a local production to raise money for the Red Cross. "I was supposed to open a box and free two white doves into the air," she wrote in her 2009 memoir Ask Me Again Tomorrow. "I remember taking a dove in each hand, lifting them to the sky, and having one of them relieve itself all over my arm. Now I recognize this was an omen about what much of my life in 'show biz' would be like."

## She had a challenging but produc-

tive actor's journey ahead of her. For years she ran a theater company, the Whole Theater, in Montclair, N.J., the town where she raised three children with husband Louis, whom she married in 1962. He was the love of her life, and vice versa. "They would make each other laugh and tease each other," says Mavromichalis, "and then they would talk about acting and help each other rehearse and create projects together." None of it was glamorous: "I used to do the laundry, repair the props, whatever," she Winner's Circle Dukakis won both the Oscar and the Golden Globe for Moonstruck.

## The Good Fight

Dukakis became an idol to the gay, lesbian and trans community largely through her acclaimed work on television in Tales of the City and was herself a longtime champion for LGBT rights. (She also played a lesbian in the 2011 independent film Cloudburst, with Brenda Fricker.) She cherished the memory of serving as a celebrity grand marshal in the San Francisco Pride parade in 2011. "Never let anyone intimidate you," she once said. "Continue the work to move the conversation forward....Justice always prevails."



once said. "I was capable of doing a lot of things."

Back then Dukakis occasionally had small film and TV appearances. One of her first network roles was on an episode of Dr. Kildare in 1962, and she had a run on the soap Search for Tomorrow in 1983.

Moonstruck changed everything, even though she later said she hadn't expected much from the movie. "As a matter of fact," she recalled, "one day we were sitting around talking, and somebody asked Cher what she thought was going to happen, and she gave it the thumbs-down." Dukakis suddenly went from having to pay her daughter's college tuition with credit cards to buying a house on St. Maarten in the Caribbean and christening it after the film. "Before, I would never have spent money on something like this," she told the Los Angeles Times in 1992. "Still, I'm renting it out, using it as an investment. I'm too much of a Greeksome part of me can't do it all the way."

Up until her last major role in 2019, Dukakis's whole self remained committed to being an actress. Asked in 2003 if she ever intended to retire, she answered, "From what? I love this chaotic, contradictory, loving mess that has been my life."

Reporting by GILLIAN TELLING

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: MGM/KOBAL/SHUTTERSTOCK; BRUCE GLIKAS/FILMMAGIC;

With Her

Brother

Dukakis's only

sibling, Apollo (in

1940), also found

a career in acting,

often on TV.