



## Patricia Mary Gleeson

June 1, 2019 - November 8, 2019

Patricia Mary Gleeson, 75, passed away November 8, at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis. She was surrounded by her entire family. She is survived by her husband of 52 years, Michael Gleeson, and four children – Megan Schy Gleeson, married to Jeffrey Schy Gleeson, Molly Gleeson, Catherine Gleeson, married to Ruben van Leeuwen and parents to grandchild Oscar van Leeuwen, and Thomas Gleeson. She is also survived by brothers Bernie Kalkbrenner and Dennis Kalkbrenner. Throughout her life, Pat directed over 200 plays, musicals, and other performances. She formed two children's theatres – Mount Vernon Community Children's Theatre in Alexandria, Virginia, and Acting Up in Bloomington, Indiana, taught and directed for the Powderhorn Players in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Bloomington High School North, and served as Executive Director for the Boston Children's Theatre and Stages Bloomington. She impacted the lives of thousands of children, some of whom have gone on to work in theatre or become parents of young actors today. Pat's passion for theatre and arts education, especially for children, was unsurpassed. Her family, her colleagues, and her young actors often heard her say, "All children are gifted and talented," and she believed that theatre was a way for children to find out what those talents were – even if those talents did not lie in theatre itself. She strongly believed in the benefits of arts education, as a way to understand history and the human condition. Pat's intention was to broaden the minds and enrich the lives of the children she worked with. For her, theatre was not just an after school activity. She insisted on the professionalism and the discipline of the theatre. Loved and revered throughout her life, Pat Gleeson will be missed by many.

A celebration of life will be held at 2:00 p.m. at the Waldron Art Center on Sunday, May 24, 2020. The family of Mrs. Gleeson would like to invite any students that may have a video to please email to [mollykathleengleeson@gmail.com](mailto:mollykathleengleeson@gmail.com) by April 1, 2020, to be included in a video memorial collage.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Stages Bloomington, [www.stagesbloomington.org](http://www.stagesbloomington.org), P.O. Box 5036 Bloomington, IN 47407. Online condolences, photos, and memories may be shared with family and friends at [www.allencares.com](http://www.allencares.com).



# Comments

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“There are only two reasons to miss rehearsal: if you're sick or if you're dead. If it's the latter, you don't need to call me.” This is just one of the many wise phrases I learned from Mrs. Gleeson during my nine years under her wing at BCT. More than that, I learned so much from Mrs. Gleeson about teamwork, discipline, and accountability. Mrs. Gleeson was without question the most influential educator of my entire life, and the world is a sadder place without her. She believed that theatre was essential for all children, regardless of economic or social status. She created a truly diverse melting pot at BCT, where children not only learned about the practice of theatre, but so much more about responsibility and dedication. Mrs. Gleeson expected professionalism from her students, and because of her, we rose to the occasion.

I re-connected with Mrs. Gleeson a few months back and felt so fortunate that I had the chance to hear from her one again. Thank you, Mrs. Gleeson, for the opportunity to bring so many wonderful roles to life, and thank you more for all of the lessons in life. Upon hearing of your death, these phrases instantly came to mind:

“I'm going to go home and have an apple and a beer.”

“If you're going to take a step, TAKE A STEP.”

“Who am I? What's my relationship to the other characters in the scene? And what's going on here?”

Thanks for these phrases. They'll stay with me forever.

**Kevin Mahoney** - December 31, 2019 at 01:24 PM

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Thank you so much for these phrases, Mrs. G. They'll stay with me forever.

Thank you for everything.

Kevin Mahoney - December 30, 2019 at 02:27 PM

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“ I just now heard about Mrs. Gleeson's passing. My son Kevin started BCT when he was 9 (1999 or so). He continued under her wing until he aged out at 18. She was such an inspiration to him and so many other kids. When he first tried out for Oliver, she told me he was too Broadway and she would have to tone him down some. I didn't understand, wasn't that what we were doing? Broadway? Boy i was so new to this. Mrs. Gleeson was so wonderful with those kids all those years. So many friends, experiences, funny funny stories. I can't imagine the Mahoney family not having had Mrs. Gleeson and BCT for those 9 wonderful years. To the Gleeson family, thank you for having shared her with us, it meant the world.

Maureen Mahoney

Maureen Mahoney - December 28, 2019 at 07:54 PM

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“ I am so sorry for your loss, and so deeply grateful to have known Pat Gleason while she was a Director at BCT. I spent more time under her wing than I did with any other adult aside from my parents, and I learned some of the overarching lessons of my life from her. At nine, I saw Mrs. Gleason as a wise mystic, and her magic transfigured my life; she taught me about commitment, respect, and humility during rehearsals for Sound of Music, Music Man, Big River, Oliver, and Peter Pan - she gave me the gift of my dream role as Peter. Her teachings still resonate: “life is all about choices” and “do your homework,” she would tell us. I made lifelong friends at BCT who shared the incandescent experience of creating live performances, all because of the safe space she fostered for us, every member of the young cast an indispensable stitch in the quilt. “There are no small parts, only small actors,” she would say. I will never forget when she gave me the option to wear pants when she saw how much I didn't want to wear the skirt - she made me feel like she really saw me. Thank you for sharing her with Boston for almost 20 years. Generations of kids in Boston are better adults because of her dedication.

Chrissy Chilingerian - December 20, 2019 at 09:21 PM

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“ My daughter was so blessed to perform under Mrs, Gleeson. What a great, loving teacher, friend and a second mother to some kids. Boston Children Theatre, was a true family. I loved the Charlie Brown performances and Make way for Ducklings preformed in the Boston Garden. My heart goes out to the family and other students who lives she touched.

Deatrice Moore senior - December 13, 2019 at 09:38 PM

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“ To Mrs. Gleeson's family, my thoughts and prayers are with you. I just came to find out about Mrs. Gleeson's passing and my heart broke. I can't tell you how Mrs. Gleeson shaped my life. I started Stagemobile when I was 13 years old. I was so scared of myself and felt that I didn't fit. When I went to audition I was so nervous because Mrs. Gleeson just had a presence, you wanted to make a good impression. She had the ability to see the potential in someone, even if they didn't see it in themselves. She provided the opportunity to explore theater and take part in going to different communities, exposing children to theater and the arts that might not have had the opportunity to. She always pushed for you to do you best and not to apologize, I still can hear her say "don't be sorry, just be right" and "reach for the brass ring". Her passion and dedication still resonates with me. Thank you so much for sharing her with us. Her impact will forever be with me and I know everyone who has had the honor to be around her feels the same. Mrs. Gleeson, thank you for everything you have done for me. For having faith in me when it was truly needed the most!

With all my love and gratitude,

Shavonna Moore

**Deatrice Shavonna Moore** - December 13, 2019 at 09:03 PM

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“ My sisters Kim, Courtney and I spent so many years in Mrs. Gleeson's presence learning and growing. I now have a young budding actor and all of those special BCT memories come back. What a safe space it was to be ourselves. Rest In Peace Mrs. Gleeson, my thoughts and prayers are with your family. - Jennifer (Comer) Ryan

**Jennifer Comer Ryan** - November 29, 2019 at 10:25 PM

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“ Dear Mike,  
We were surprised and saddened to read of Pat's passing. We enjoyed getting to know both of you through Margo's dance class. All of us in the class had recently commented that we were missing the two of you during this 6-week session. You both always seemed in good spirits there, and we appreciated the times that you shared news of other opportunities in the community for musical or dance events. Please know that we will be thinking about you and the rest of your family in coming weeks and months, as you adjust to this new phase of your life.  
Frank Lester and Diana Lambdin

**Diana Lambdin** - November 18, 2019 at 04:48 PM

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“ Pat Gleason shaped my life in ways that continue to be passed on. She fostered in me a love for theater and the arts, and a sense of validation that the arts were indeed a life path worth taking. She treated us with respect and expected a lot from us, instilling in us a sense of worth and teaching a great sense of responsibility to each other and to the craft. I went on to make a life as a performer and now as a teacher, as did so many of us who were raised up together in the Acting Up world. I too still know all the words to Really Rosie, and countless other musicals and plays! Her wisdom and words still come into my mind. Now, I teach hundreds of young people and continue to create space and opportunities for youth people to make art and use art as a way to express and BE themselves. I can only strive to have the same commanding and yet companionate presence she had, magically get hundreds of unruly kids to create meaningful and quality art. I wish that I had had the chance to tell her, and hope that she knew how important her work was I have students who have also gone on to be teachers So her legacy extends so much farther than any of us Pat Gleason shaped my life in ways that continue to be passed on. She fostered in me a love for theater and the arts, and a sense of validation that the arts were indeed a life path worth taking. She treated us with respect and expected a lot from us, instilling in us a sense of worth and teaching a great sense of responsibility to each other and to the craft. I went on to make a life as a performer and now as a teacher, as did so many of us who were raised up together in the Acting Up world. I too still know all the words to Really Rosie, and countless other musicals and plays! Her wisdom and words still come into my mind. Now, I teach hundreds of young people and continue to create space and opportunities for youth people to make art and use art as a way to express and BE themselves. I can only strive to have the same commanding and yet companionate presence she had, magically get hundreds of unruly kids to create meaningful and quality art. I wish that I had had the chance to tell her, and hope that she knew how important her work was I have students who have also gone on to be teachers So her legacy extends so much farther than any of us know. Blessings and love to her entire family. Alessandra Ogren

Alessandra - November 17, 2019 at 11:00 AM

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“ Mrs. Gleason (I don't think I ever called her Pat to her face) taught me so many things during my years at the Boston Children's Theatre. She taught me the importance of dedication both onstage and off. It wasn't so important that you act well or sing well, but you had to be present and focused in rehearsal, you had to respect your fellow actors, and you \*absolutely\* had to make your entrances on time,

lest your lines for that scene be transferred to another actor who was actually paying attention.

And for all the training I later received in college for things like the Stanislavsky method, I don't think any acting lesson will resonate with me more than "It doesn't matter if your pants fall down onstage, as long as you react to it \*in-character!\*"

Mrs. Gleeson helped to foster a life-long love of the theatre in me, which persists to this day. When I think of my closest friends, the first faces that come to mind are the ones that stood beside me in productions of Big River and Oliver!, of Honk! and Peter Pan.

And even after BCT, she continued to influence my life. One of my college essays, about "a person who has had a major impact on your life," was about her. I majored in theatre, I stayed involved in community theatre after graduation, and the first conversation I ever had with my future wife was about musical theatre.

To those in her family who might see this - thank you for letting Boston borrow this wonderful woman for all those years. She had a tremendous impact on my life, and I know that I'm far, far from alone.



Michael DeFillippi - November 17, 2019 at 08:11 AM



“ I can't imagine what my life would have been like without Mrs. Gleeson and Acting Up. The community she created, which allowed older and younger to work together on shows, was such a lifeline for me during years when I was going through hard times at school and at home. It gave me the opportunity to meet dear friends of my childhood and fostered in me a love of theater and the arts that has shaped my whole life.

I remember with so much love and appreciation how seriously Mrs. Gleeson took us even when we were really young, always expecting us to have a pencil in hand to mark down our blocking; to be "off-book" and letter-perfect by a certain date; to be fully present in every scene and react to what others were doing onstage. She treated kids with so much respect and had such high expectations, and we loved her for that. How much time and energy and creativity she poured in, not only to the shows, and creative arts camp she ran, but also to stuff like the Enchanted Forest, which really was such an enchanting (and hilarious) experience for me, to be out in the woods late at night, feeling so independent and part of a tight-knit community working together and having fun.

This may seem kind of trivial, but I also remember how much I loved her style: during that awful era of puffed sleeves and whatnot that was the 1980s, she always wore chinos and tucked-in an oxford shirt, and I thought she was so cool, in a tough broad, Katherine Hepburn/Humphrey Bogart kind of way. She was such a legend to me that, when I went over to play with Cate at the Gleeson house, I remember feeling weirded out to see her living a normal human life!

Getting to play Rosie in REALLY ROSIE under her direction when I was 11 or 12 was, no kidding, the highlight of my life as a performer--which tells you something about how I did in my college B.F.A. musical theater program, but oh well! I love being a literary critic who writes about (and teaches) the history of theater, too! And anyway, what I value even more than the performance skills I learned from her was the sense of belonging she fostered, by showing us how much joy could be had by working hard together in a group toward a shared goal.

May her memory be a blessing to you, dear Gleesons, as it is to me and so many other kids who grew up enriched by the experience of knowing her.

**Marah Gubar** - November 16, 2019 at 12:59 AM

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“ I'm so very sorry that Pat has died. What a gal! In the Hoosier Youth Philharmonic, she was known as half of the couple who "could actually dance." Even kids who didn't know who she was and how she was a great theatrical director knew that she could cut a rug. I enjoyed her perspective and professionalism when I served on the Stages board with her for 1 year, back in 2011-2012. She always greeted me in such a friendly fashion after that year, and I enjoyed sitting next to her at a banquet earlier in 2019. I'm really sorry she's gone. You've posted some amazing pictures. I take it it was windy on the wedding day.

**Laura Kao** - November 15, 2019 at 11:23 PM

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“ My daughter, Amelia, began working with Pat as an acting coach this past summer. She was such an amazing coach and beautiful person. Not only did she help her so much, but shared with her the joy and love of theatre. Amelia loved her beloved Mrs. G. We are so incredibly sad and can't imagine a world without her bright light.

**Wendy Miller** - November 15, 2019 at 09:43 PM

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“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Tom Gleeson - November 15, 2019 at 11:17 AM

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“ 5 files added to the tribute wall



Tom Gleeson - November 15, 2019 at 08:23 AM

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“ 7 files added to the tribute wall



Tom Gleeson - November 14, 2019 at 09:33 PM

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“ I'm so sorry to hear of Pat's passing. She will be missed at Stages and throughout the community. I so appreciated her motivating and commanding presence as we dropped off and picked up our daughter from Stages practices. Take care and be well  
- Sincerest condolences,  
Kate Wiltz

Kate - November 14, 2019 at 05:06 PM

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“ Mike, Molly, and all of the Gleeson family...it is hard to imagine her not here. She lived as if invincible...a force of nature, and such an incredible example of the fact that age is just a number and passion is timeless. I could never ever feel tired around her...she dreamed big and showed us what is possible when you put your mind and

elbow grease to work. And she had such a big heart...part of what made her a true mighty girl. I'm so glad to have known her, and so very sorry for your loss.

**Molly Whelan** - November 14, 2019 at 01:28 PM

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“ Pat was a powerhouse until the end. Firm, kind, caring, and fearless. I'm thankful for her contributions to Bloomington and the world.

**Holly Thrasher** - November 14, 2019 at 11:21 AM