

Director and Pioneer of Actors' Studio Was 89

[Variety.com/2020/film/obituaries-people-news/jack-garfein-dead-dies-broadway-acting-coach-director-1203454890](https://www.variety.com/2020/film/obituaries-people-news/jack-garfein-dead-dies-broadway-acting-coach-director-1203454890)

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[Jack Garfein](#), the longtime teacher, director, writer, producer and pivotal member of the Actors Studio died on Dec. 30 due to complications from leukemia, [according to Playbill](#). He was 89.

Garfein's influence and expertise touched the lives of many names from directors George Stevens and John Ford to actors Sissy Spacek and Bruce Dern.

Garfein founded the Actors Studio West in Los Angeles, created the Actors and Directors Lab (both in New York and Los Angeles), co-founded the Strasberg Institute in N.Y. and the Jack Garfein Studio in Paris. He was also a co-founder of the Hollywood Theater Row, a collection of over 22 stages now called the Live Theater District of Los Angeles.

Establishing the first Actors Studio on the West Coast wasn't immediate — first he had to convince actor Paul Newman, Garfein recalled on a recent panel for the [Film Society of Lincoln Center](#). “[I called and said] Paul I found a place that has a New York atmosphere, it's a perfect place to start and Actors Studio. Paul said, ‘Are you crazy, an actors studio in Hollywood? What's the matter with you Jack?’ And I said listen, Harold Clurman — who influenced us both — once said: to be in this profession you have to be crazy, so Paul, let's act on it!”

Apart from his work establishing theaters and schools for artists, Garfein was also a director. His most well-known work was his film directorial debut, “The Strange One.” The 1957 film depicted commonplace despotism and the brutal mental and physical toll of hazing in a military college in the South. “The Strange One” also included a gay character, which was banned and rigorously censored by the motion picture production code. A Holocaust survivor, [Garfein told TCM](#) he was compelled to direct “The Strange One” and confront the segregation he witnessed with Jim Crow laws in America.

In 1961, Garfein directed “Something Wild” starring his then-wife, the Oscar-nominated actress Carroll Baker. The two were married from 1955 to 1969. Another socially disruptive film, “Something Wild” depicted the emotional aftermath experienced by a rape victim.

Garfein created the Harold Clurman Theatre and Samuel Beckett Theater, which hosted many Garfein-centric workshops. He also directed two Broadway plays — “The Sin of Pat Muldoon,” and “Girls of Summer” — and productions across the globe including in England, Canada, Austria, Germany and France.

In 2010 he published the part-memoir, part acting guide “Life and Acting: Techniques for the Actor,” and kept on teaching late into his life. Even at the 2017 Lincoln Center panel, Garfein continued to dole out his advice to the crowds, “When I was teaching a directing class in London and I asked [the students] to read the classics... [It’s] more important today, because when you read you create your own images instead of getting somebody else’s images, fine you can enjoy that. But in reading you create your own images. That’s why I keep telling them, keep reading the classics.”

Born in Czechoslovakia, he survived 11 concentration camps and moved to the U.S. in 1946, where he began studying acting before joining the Actors Studio.

He is survived by his partner Natalia Repolovsky and his children — Emmy-winning actress Blanche Baker, Grammy-winning composer Herschel Garfein, Rela Garfein and Elias Garfein.



<https://youtu.be/5Yw7HV8ioak>