SIMON, MARION

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PASSAGES

Marion Simon, driving force behind scenes at Trinity

Simon joined the theater in its early days, gained a reputation for getting things done

Marion Simon, 90, who helped make Providence's Trinity Square a nationally recognized theater company, died Monday in New York City of complications from pneumonia.



Marion Simon

As the executive assistant to former Trinity artistic director Adrian Hall, she ran the theater operations, secured grants and donations, ruled on contracts, hired and fired, and organized the Project Discovery theater experience for tens of thousands of Rhode Island school students. Others may have had their names on projects, but those close to the theater recognized it was Simon's authoritative voice that usually made things happen.

Project Discovery provided first-time trips to the theater for public high school students from across the state, coordinated with teacher preparation. It garnered support from the National Endowment for the Arts, which provided a stream of money to help Trinity grow from a tiny performance space in a church basement off Broad Street to the full repertory company in a refurbished landmark building in downtown Providence.

Hall was the well-regarded director of the theater; Simon was the driver. Actors, directors, critics, political figures and others said they knew the route to successful relations with the theater went through her.

Born in Philadelphia, Simon had come to Rhode Island in the late 1940s, the wife of Dr. Stanley D. Simon, an orthopedic surgeon. She had graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1944, and earned a master's degree in linguistics at Brown in 1962. She tried a variety of jobs and volunteer work before she and her husband found themselves interested in theater. She began volunteering, then worked at Trinity in its first days as a community-oriented organization.

After 27 years at Trinity, she worked with the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center and became a board member of the League of Professional Theater Women in New York City, where she moved in the late 1990s. In recent years, she volunteered at the Actors Fund in New York and endowed an annual lecture series in her husband's name at the Medical School at Brown University.

Simon leaves two children, Peter Simon, of Providence, and Patricia S. Schwadron, of New York, six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

This obituary was written by Patricia Schwadron and her husband, onetime Journal editor Terry Schwadron.

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