

A Family Affair

Richardson and Redgrave (in 2000) now costar in *The Aspern Papers*—their fourth time acting together.



Fame, Family & SURVIVING LOSS

Ten years after the death of Natasha Richardson, her mother, Vanessa Redgrave, and sister Joely talk about their special family bond

By **MONIQUE JESSEN**



Born Famous

Vanessa Redgrave, with baby Joely in 1965. “We still sit a family table we were all babies around,” says Richardson.



An Acting
DYNASTY

Cozying up together on a sofa backstage at London’s Noël Coward Theatre, the legendary Vanessa Redgrave, 81, and her daughter, actress Joely Richardson, 54, sip tea and recall their recent family Christmas. “It was all very last minute, because I have builders at my house,” says Richardson. Still, she managed to host about 20

relatives amid the chaos of a kitchen renovation, and her mother came through with her famous Christmas pudding. They may be acting royalty, but during the holidays, the Redgrave-Richardsons hang like everybody else. “We cooked up a storm, and were happy and relaxed,” says Richardson. “It was all about just being together.”

Family has come first since a 2009 accident took the life of Vanessa’s daughter and Joely’s older sister, Natasha Richardson, at 45. “Time does not heal, that would seem to me to say that suddenly it’s OK, and it’s not,” says Redgrave. “It never becomes OK.” Nearly a decade after her sister’s death, Richardson feels much the same. “You are different, you aren’t stronger or weaker,” she says. “Just different—changed.”

For both, healing has meant spending time together. Redgrave and Richardson have acted with one another several times



All the World’s a Stage

Joely (foreground) and Natasha visited their mother in Italy while she filmed *Isadora* in 1968.





Remembering NATASHA

Her Amazing Life

Natasha found Hollywood success and settled in NYC with Liam Neeson (at right, and with Vanessa and Joely below). Her death changed her family forever. “Every birthday that goes by, I’m so grateful because we’re lucky to be here,” says her sister.

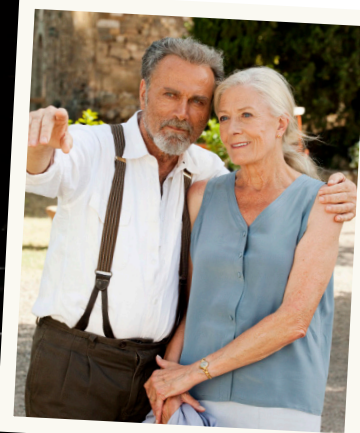


(notably in Joely’s FX series *Nip/Tuck*), but their latest collaboration is a special family affair. The pair costar in a new movie of Henry James’s 1888 novel *The Aspern Papers*, a tale of secret love letters that is a clan tradition. Vanessa’s father, actor Michael Redgrave, starred in a 1959 film based on the novel, and she’s acted in two stage adaptations. This time out, Joely plays Miss Tina, the subversive niece to her mother’s formidable Julianna, the muse of a famous poet. “What was fun for me was watching the process of how [my mother] works,” says Richardson of the Venice-based project. “I still have no idea how she does it. She’s off-the-charts brilliant.”

A Timless LOVE AFFAIR

Loving Franco

Redgrave met Franco Nero on the set of *Camelot* (in 1967, left). Decades later, they reunited and had a “spiritual” wedding.” in 2006. “That was Joely’s idea,” says Redgrave (with Nero in 2009’s *Letters to Juliet*.)



About that there is little dispute. Redgrave is an Olivier, Tony, Emmy and Academy Award winner who also made headlines for her unabashed left wing politics. Born in 1937 to Michael Redgrave and actress Rachel Kempson, she rose to fame in ’60s London hasn’t stopped working since, starring in a long list of acclaimed plays and more than 60 films, including 1977’s *Julia*, for which she won her Oscar (she’s been nominated six times). In 1962, she wed director Tony Richardson, The pair Natasha a year later and Joely in 1965, both of whom became famous actresses. The two divorced in 1967 after Tony left her for another woman; he later came out as bisexual and died from AIDS-related complications in 1991. Redgrave found love with Italian actor Franco Nero. They had a son, Carlo, now 49, but then broke up in 1969. Twenty years later, the pair reconnected

and have been together ever since. “I call him my stepfather,” says Richardson. “He’s been a part of our family for so many years.”

In the last decade, the family has endured more than its share of pain. In 2010, Redgrave lost both her sister, actress Lynn, 63, and her brother, actor and activist Corin, 70, to cancer. In 2015, she had her own health crisis, suffering a near-fatal heart attack. But it was Natasha’s sudden death in that hit hardest of all. The actress sustained fatal injuries during a ski lesson in Quebec while vacationing with husband Liam Neeson and sons Michael, now 23, and Daniel, 22. “I’m not quite sure what drives me,” Redgrave says of her resilience. Richardson has a theory: “What keeps mum going is that she has this life force. She’s the least self-pitying person I have ever met.” Natasha shared that vitality. “If she were in the room now, there would be a centrifugal force,” says Richardson. “At her memorial [British director] Richard Eyre said that Tash was the most alive person he knew, which made her death so incomprehensible.”



Power Pair

“Venice was a dream,” says Redgrave of the city where she and Richardson shot *The Aspern Papers*. Her passion for acting is undimmed. “I can say with certainty I care as much about the work as I did when I began.”



Beautiful Bond

“It’s about being there to support someone,” says Richardson (with dog Zep), of life with Vanessa (with her

But as the years pass, they have found new meaning in their work, and in each other. “I treasure my family much, much more,” says Redgrave, who just returned to the London stage in the play *The Inheritance*. “You realize that the difference between being alive and being dead is the difference of a little fingernail.” Richardson, who has a daughter, Daisy, with her ex, producer Tim Bevan, agrees. “Everyone’s lives changed irrevocably [after Natasha’s death],” she says “But what we have done as a family is that in honoring and supporting each other, we reformed to become a

BY IMAGES

‘I treasure my family much much more.’

—VANESSA REDGRAVE
ON LIFE AFTER LOSING
A CHILD

