



[Marcel Marceau](#)

## Biography

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### Overview (3)

Date of Birth	<a href="#">22 March 1923, Strasbourg, Bas-Rhin, France</a>
Date of Death	<a href="#">22 September 2007, Cahors, Lot, France</a>
Birth Name	Marcel Mangel

### Mini Bio (1)

Marcel Marceau was the legendary mime, who survived the Nazi occupation, and saved many children in WWII. He was regarded for his peerless style pantomime, moving audiences without uttering a single word, and was known to the World as a "master of silence."

He was born Marcel Mangel on March 22, 1923, in Strasbourg, Alsace, France, and was brought up in Strasbourg and Lille. There he was introduced to music and theatre by his father, Charles Mangel, a kosher butcher, who also sang baritone and was a supporter of arts and music. His mother, Anne Mangel (née Werzberg), was a native Alsatian, and the family was bilingual. At the age of 5, his mother took Marcel to a Charlie Chaplin's movie, and he was entranced and decided to become a mime. Young Marcel was also fond of art and literature, he studied English in addition to his French and German, and became trilingual.

At the beginning of the Second World War, he had to hide his Jewish origin and changed his name to Marceau, when his Jewish family was forced to flee their home. His father was deported to Auschwitz, where he was killed in 1944. Both Marceau and his brother, Alain, were in the French underground, helping children to escape to safety in neutral Switzerland. Then Marceau served as interpreter for the Free French Forces under General [Charles de Gaulle](#), acting as liaison officer with the allied armies.

Marcel Marceau gave his first big public performance to 3000 troops after liberation of Paris in August of 1944. After the war, in 1946, he enrolled as a student in Charles Dullin's School of Dramatic Art at the [Sarah Bernhardt](#) Theatre in Paris. There his teacher was [Etienne Decroux](#), whose other apprentice [Jean-Louis Barrault](#) hired Marcel Marceau, and cast him in the role as Arlequin. His biggest inspirations were Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Marx Brothers. In 1947, blending the 19th century harlequin with the gestures of Chaplin and Keaton, Marceau created his most famous mime character, Bip, a white-faced clown with a tall, battered hat and a red flower. In 1949 he created his own company and toured around the world.

Marcel Marceau shone in a range of characters, from an innocent child, to a peevish waiter, to a lion tamer, to an old woman, and became acknowledged as one of the world's finest mimes. In just a couple of minutes, he could show a metamorphosis of an entire human life from birth to death. Through his alter ego, Bim, he played out the human comedy without uttering a word. His classic silent works such as *The Cage*, *Walking Against the Wind*, *The Mask Maker*, *In The Park*, and satires on artists, sculptors, matadors, has been described as works of genius. For many years Marceau's 'Compagnie de Mime Marcel Marceau', also known as 'Compagnie de Mimodrame', was the only company of pantomime in the world. Marceau played several silent film roles and only one with a speaking part, as himself, speaking the single word "Non" in Mel Brooks' [Silent Movie](#) (1976).

In 1959, Marcel Marceau established his own school in Paris, and later the Marceau Foundation to promote the art of pantomime in the United States. His latest performances in 2000-2001 received great acclaim. He was made "Officer de la Legion d'Honneur" (1978) and "Grand Officer de la Legion d'Honneur" (1998), and was awarded the National Order of Merit (1998). He won the Emmy Award for his work on television, and was elected member of the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin, the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, the Academie des beaux-arts France and the Institut de France, and was declared "National treasure" in Japan. In 2002 he was UN Goodwill Ambassador at the international conference on aging in Madrid.

His "art of silence" filled a remarkable acting career that lasted over 60 years. He was an actor, director, teacher, interpreter, and public figure, and made extensive tours in countries on five continents. Outside of his mime profession, Marcel Marceau was a multilingual speaker and a great communicator, who surprised many with his flowing speeches in several languages. In his later years he was living on a farm at Cahors, near Toulouse, France. He continued his routine practice daily to keep himself in good form,

never losing the agility that made him famous. He also continued coaching his numerous students.

Marcel Marceau passed away at his home in France, on September 23, 2007, like an Autumn leaf after the Autumn Equinox, and after Yom Kippur in Jewish calendar, having the Day of Atonement as his final curtain. His burial ceremony was accompanied by the Mozart's piano concerto No21, and the music of J.C. Bach. Marcel Marceau was laid to rest in the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris, France.

He brought poetry to silence.

- *IMDb Mini Biography* By: [Steve Shelokhonov](#)