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CHAPTER TWO

ACTRESS MARSHA MASON ENJOYS BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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By **MICKI SIEGEL**

Last updated: 12:10 am
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Marsha Mason knows how to make herself at home in two different worlds. One day she'll be on a Broadway stage. Then she'll be planting and harvesting on her organic farm in northern New Mexico.

It's just routine for a woman who manages to be both an established actress and a working farmer.

An Oscar nominee for "Cinderella Liberty" and Neil Simon's "The Goodbye Girl," "Chapter Two" and "Only When I Laugh" (Mason was once married to Simon), the two-time



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Golden Globe winner has most recently been working in live theater.

And that's where the New York part of Mason's life comes in. She rents a sunny 834-square-foot two-bedroom, two-bath Upper East Side pad with a big terrace.

"I've sublet it from the owner for the last three years," Mason says. "I just renew the lease every year. But I only live here when I'm working in the city."

Mason has been working in the city quite frequently, starring alongside [Christine Ebersole](#) and Delta Burke in the 2005 Broadway revival of "Steel Magnolias" and in the 2007 off-Broadway production "A Feminine Ending." Currently, she can be seen in the play "Impressionism," with Jeremy Irons and Joan Allen, at the [Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre](#).

"I love the theater," Mason says. "The theater actually offers more interesting and challenging roles for a woman my age [67] than movies."

In the play, "I have three different roles," Mason says, "and they're all quite different. The audiences love it. I think the themes resonate with everyone right now -- relationships, second chances, new beginnings."

Mason's New York experience is quite the opposite of her life in New Mexico.

"I'm outdoors much more when I'm on the farm, and I'm more attuned to nature," she says. "My New York life is hectic. And my hours are completely different. On the farm, I get up around 5 a.m., and I'm in bed by 9:30. Here, I'm up at 10 or 11, and I don't go to bed until 1 or 2 in the morning."

Mason has brought a bit of her rural life into her city apartment, including a rust-red rug from her farm and a New Mexico-inspired painting by artist David Florimbi, who's married to Simon's daughter, Nancy.

As for the furniture, "Most of it comes from Crate & Barrel," she says. "But I bought the couch and the bed at a design place in SoHo. I like the taupe-y color of the couch."

Other things she's done to personalize the place: photos of family and friends; a stuffed dog that "Steel Magnolias" castmate Rebecca Gayheart gave her; a bike (still in the box) she plans to ride to Central Park; bouquets of flowers; a wooden box with a mother and baby elephant carved onto it ("Elephants are a symbol of good luck," she says); a framed piece of fabric from Christo's "The Gates."

Mason will say goodbye to the city on July 5, when "Impressionism" ends its limited 18-week run, but that doesn't mean she'll stop working.

"This summer I'm going to do Samuel Beckett's 'Happy Days' at the California Shakespeare Theater, and that's going to be fascinating. It's practically a solo performance," she says.

She'll also head back to New Mexico.

"I have a big, certified organic farm in Abiquiu," she says. "I'm a commissioner, appointed by Gov. Bill Richardson, in the New Mexico Organic Commodity Commission. We certify that the growers are keeping to organic standards."

Mason's company, Resting in the River, sells wellness and bath-and-body products that are made from the organic herbs and flowers grown on her estate. And she isn't afraid to get her hands dirty: "I grow herbs; I actually work in the fields."

Mason, though, is looking to downsize and simplify her New Mexico life, which will allow her to do more theater. Known as Rio Abajo Rio, her 247-acre estate, ranch and herbal farm is now on the market for \$7.975 million.

But even if she sells it, she has no plans to leave New Mexico. She'll just move to a smaller place, which will still give her much more room to roam than anybody has in Manhattan.

For the time being, though, Mason has to deal with the typical NYC headaches.

"The noise is a big issue," she says. "And all the people! I'm used to big, open spaces."

"But I know I'm fortunate to live in a beautiful apartment like this. I don't think I could function if I was in a dark, claustrophobic kind of place."

LIFE ON MARSHA: Mason splits her time between her New Mexico home and the Upper East Side two-bedroom (above), where she has a great view from the terrace.

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Marsha Mason's favorite things

- * A David Florimbi painting inspired by New Mexico
- * A carved elephant box from India
- * Fabric from Christo's Central Park installation, "The Gates"
- * Her bed
- * Her fragrance sticks (she gave some as a gift to the cast on the opening night of "Impressionism")

ON THE MARKET


Just call her the "good-buy girl."

Marsha Mason's 247-acre organic farm and ranch, Rio Abajo Rio, in Abiquiu, NM, is on the market for \$7.975 million. The area of northern New Mexico where the property is located is most famous as the place where Georgia O'Keeffe lived and painted many of her landscapes.

And the property is indeed inspiring.




In addition to the farm's many floral and herbal offerings (grown for Mason's Resting in the River line of natural products), it's situated along a 2-mile riverfront and comes with a three-bedroom main house, a separate two-story art studio and a two-bedroom guest house. The main house is Spanish-influenced and features a great room with fireplace and a paneled library with private study. And did we mention the interior courtyard and fountain? Perfect for a romantic dinner, should Richard Dreyfuss stop by. Broker: Don DeVito, Santa Fe Properties, 505-946-0436




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