

February 27, 2015

Leonard Nimoy (1931–2015): In Memory of an American Original

Popular Actor Hosted Radio Series for the Milken Archive



The Milken Archive is deeply saddened by the death of Leonard Nimoy, a remarkable individual whose contributions made an impact worldwide. As the host of the our 13-part radio series ([American Jewish Music from the Milken Archive](#) with Leonard Nimoy), he introduced millions to the Milken Archive's musical treasures and became its de facto voice. Nimoy also hosted the Archive's "One People, Many Voices" concert at Walt Disney Concert Hall in 2006, featuring prominent artists and members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

As was the case with so much of what he did, Nimoy made the radio series his own. It seems impossible to think of the series without hearing the actor's unique voice speaking with characteristic authority. Nimoy introduced each of the series' two-hour episodes and provided historical and contextual information in between musical selections along with Lowell Milken, Neil W. Levin, and Gerard Schwarz.

Born in Boston to Orthodox Jewish immigrant parents from Ukraine, Nimoy rose to fame as Spock, a half-human half-Vulcan character known for cool detachment and reasoned assessment on the television series *Star Trek*. The series, and subsequent feature films, became one of the hugest pop culture phenomena of the latter half of the 20th century and spawned a cult-like following that persists today. Many of the series catchphrases, such as "Beam me up, Scotty" and "I'm a doctor, not a..." became regular slang expressions. Nimoy was most famous for "Live Long and Prosper," the abbreviated form of which (LLAP) he often used to sign off messages with on Twitter—the platform he used to announce his lung condition and urge smokers to quit in January 2014. In addition to acting, Nimoy was a director, author, and photographer.

Though much of Nimoy's most famous work was not explicitly "Jewish," his upbringing had a profound effect on the artist he became. As he recounted in an oral history with the Yiddish Book Center, his famous Vulcan hand sign came from an early synagogue experience that left a deep impression on him. He also played a lead role in the Yiddish theater production *Shver tsu zayn a yid* (It's Hard to Be a Jew) when it came to Los Angeles with Maurice Schwartz's Yiddish Art Theatre. A 2002 photography book titled *Shekhina* (after the Hebrew term for the feminine presence of God) caused a stir in some circles for its portrayal of nude women posing in *t'fillin* (phylacteries). In an interview with *Moment*, he responded to the criticism by saying, "My approach to this project . . . is totally reverential. I feel deeply about my Judaism."

The Milken Archive is very fortunate to have benefited from Leonard's wonderful talents. How many more are aware of the vibrant and diverse history of Jewish music in America because his personage drew their interest? Leonard Nimoy was a true American original, one whose loss will be felt throughout the world and send ripples across the galaxy for years to come.

We leave you with this clip of Leonard Nimoy introducing the Milken Archive's "One People, Many Voices" concert with an apropos message close to his heart that will be forever remembered in ours:



The legendary voice of Leonard Nimoy introduces the Milken Archive's 13-part radio series.



Leonard Nimoy hosts the Milken Archive's "One People, Many Voices"



To be notified of future releases of the American Jewish Music from the Milken Archive with Leonard Nimoy and other Milken Archive news, please [subscribe to our newsletter](#).