

SinaiFree Film Society  
Special Edition

A conversation with renowned screen and stage actor *Nehemiah Persoff*  
Saturday, October 16th, 2021

**EPILOGUE:  
SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES**

(Also on our website, the “Prologue: Viewing Recommendations” has more information and free video links to a selection of Mr. Persoff’s television appearances from the ‘50s and ‘60s)

Nehemiah Persoff is a consummate character actor, now 102 years old, who has appeared in 40+ films and over 400 TV episodes. On October 16, 2021, the SinaiFree Film Society was honored to host a conversation with Mr. Persoff in which synagogue members had the rare opportunity to ask him about his life and career and to hear him recount many remarkable stories from his experiences in film, television, and the theater.

Our audience on October 16<sup>th</sup> also included members of the Actors Studio, the venerable institution where Mr. Persoff began his career in 1947, the year of its founding. Invited by cofounder Elia Kazan to join the first class, Mr. Persoff arrived at the momentous first meeting on October 5, 1947, to discover that he was in the company of Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift. And Julie Harris, James Whitmore, Maureen Stapleton, and Steven Hill were in his beginners’ group, along with other young actors who, together with Mr. Persoff, were destined for notable careers.

In his recently published memoir, *The Many Faces of Nehemiah* ([available on Amazon](#)), Mr. Persoff describes that long-ago first meeting of The Actors Studio as “life changing”! The memoir is “endearing and revealing,” and it also “fleshes out the saga of the Jewish immigrant experience in America.” (*Jewish Journal*, 9/9/2021)

Now that our Film Society conversation with Mr. Persoff has taken place ([the recording is here](#)) we are pleased to offer this “Epilogue” of supplemental resources that you can enjoy at your leisure.

*Videos: Tribute and Interviews*

A [101st birthday tribute](#) (29 min). It includes Mr. Persoff’s classic scene as Little Bonaparte (starting at 4:44) in *Some Like It Hot* and a lovely tribute from Barbra Streisand on working with him in *Yentl* (at 26:45), in which Mr. Persoff portrays her father, Reb Mendel.

A short [excerpt from an interview](#) (3 min) in which he talks about his start as an actor, The Actors Studio, and Method Acting.

A beautiful [interview](#) that he gave on September 24th (78 min).

An [interview](#) with the Veterans History Project in 2012 (44 min).

*The Stories of Sholem Aleichem (video) and other Jewish-related roles*

In the ‘80s and ‘90s, Mr. Persoff performed a one-man show, which he developed and edited, entitled *Nehemiah Persoff Tells Stories of Sholem Aleichem*. “[Sholem Aleichem](#)” (98 min). He took the show to various communities, including:

<https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1986-04-16-8601220858-story.html>

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-12-10-ca-2174-story.html>

His other Jewish portrayals include Reb Mendel, as mentioned above (*Yentl*; 1983), a mohel (*L.A. Law*; S4, E10; 1990), a Holocaust survivor who may have been a collaborator (*Law & Order*, “Night and Fog”; S3, E13; 1993), a rabbi (*Chicago Hope*; S1, E8; 1995), and the voice of Papa Mousekewitz (*An American Tail*; 1986, 1991, 1998, 1999). On stage, Mr. Persoff has also played Willie Loman in Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* (Stratford Festival, Ontario, Canada; 1983) and Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* (San Bernardino Civic Light Opera, California; 1985. Elsewhere).

These roles contrast sharply with his vivid characterizations of Jewish mobsters during Prohibition in *The Untouchables* (four episodes, 1959-1962). For more information and links, please see the aforementioned “Prologue: Viewing Recommendations.” And in even starker contrast, he has portrayed a German U-boat captain inescapably haunted by his past (*The Twilight Zone*, “Judgment Night”; S1, E10; 1959).

*Other Links*

Complete filmography (full-length features and television): [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0675490/?ref =ttfc\\_fc\\_cl\\_t2](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0675490/?ref =ttfc_fc_cl_t2)

Broadway performances: <https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/nehemiah-persoff-55984>