

‘Fiddler on the Roof’ Star Chaim Topol has Died at 87

Chaim Topol, the star of the 1971 movie “Fiddler on the Roof,” passed away on Wednesday at age 87.

Topol also performed his role as the poor Jewish milkman, Tevye, live on stage over 3,500 times.

Born in Tel Aviv, Topol served in the acting troupe in the Israel Defense Forces. He first gained critical attention for his role as Sallah Shabati in an Israeli film of the same name. In that movie, Topol played the role of a destitute Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) Jew living in a transit camp with his family.

While that film was a success in Israel, it was the role of Tevye that would win him international fame.

Topol had been playing the part of Tevye in Hebrew in the Israeli musical, but when he decided to audition for the British production of “Fiddler on the Roof,” he landed his role in the film adaptation.

Film director Norman Jewison went to London to watch Topol and was so smitten with his performance that he hired him for film. The success of the Fiddler on the Roof musical led to Topol being one of the first Israeli actors to win international recognition.

Many Israeli politicians mourned Topol’s passing.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted a farewell message” “My wife Sara and I, like all citizens of Israel, part with great sorrow today from our beloved Chaim Topol—a favorite of the audience who was one of Israel’s greatest artists. He was one of the great lovers of the Land of Israel,

and the nation loved him back.”

President Isaac Herzog called him “a titan of Israeli culture.”

President @Isaac_Herzog mourns the passing of Chaim Topol:

– Office of the President of Israel (@IsraelPresident) March 9, 2023

Opposition leader Yair Lapid also tweeted, “Chaim Topol, winner of the Israel Prize, man of spirit and culture. Tovia (using the Hebrew version of the name Tevye), Fiddler on the Roof and the legendary Sallah Shabati, who taught us love of culture and love of country, has passed away.” {eo}

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