LEONARD NIMOY AND RUTH ROMAN

“To put it simply, the Elizabeth Peabody House was a blessing. Programs were offered in sports, theatre and science as well as in classes of all kinds to help immigrants find their way into the American culture. My brother was active in the science lab and became an MIT graduate and a chemical engineer. I was drawn to the theatre program and it set me on a path which became my life's work. We are grateful to the founders and to Eddie Real, Maurice Mezoff and Joe Chalfin...” –Leonard Nimoy

The first play Nimoy participated in at the Playhouse was Hansel and Gretel in which he played a leading role, Gretel, “I was walking down the hallway one day and one of the women told me to go into a classroom. There was a woman sitting there and she asked me, ‘Can you sing?’ I hadn't really thought about singing before. But she asked me to sing something like ‘God Bless America,’ so I did. That’s how I became Hansel in the Peabody House's production of Hansel and Gretel. That was how I first made it to the stage.” This unexpected opportunity turned into a deep and long lasting relationship with the Peabody Playhouse and would eventually lead him towards his career in acting and directing. Nimoy was born in the West End on March 26, 1931 to a Yiddish speaking household of immigrants from Iziaslav, in what is now Ukraine. Nimoy found his roots in Community Theater, playing his first leading role at 17 in the play Awake and Spring, a play about a struggling Jewish family during the depression. After Awake and Spring Nimoy has said he could not imagine pursuing any other career and eventually would go on to play the iconic role of Mister Spock in Star Trek.

Like Nimoy, Ruth Roman got her start in theater on the small stage at the Peabody House. Roman, born on December 22, 1922 in Lynn, Mass and raised in the West End, came from a family of Lithuanian Immigrants. Her father was a carnival barker, who threw knives at Revere Beach. She spent her youth in the West End participating in the Peabody Houses many and varied activities, swimming in the Charles and playing characters on the Peabody Playhouse stage. Roman’s most famous role came to her in 1951 when she played a lead role in Alfred Hitchcock’s Strangers on a Train.