

Refined actor Brock, known for 'Mockingbird', dies

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Brock Peters, who began his Hollywood career in the landmark productions of "Carmen Jones" and "Porgy and Bess" and gave a heart-breaking performance as the Black man falsely accused of rape in "To Kill a Mockingbird," has died at age 78.

Peters had been receiving chemotherapy after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in January, according to Marilyn Darby, his longtime companion. His condition worsened in recent weeks and he died peacefully in bed Tuesday, surrounded by family, she said.

Peters was born George Fisher on July 2, 1927, in New York. His long film career began in the 1950s; he appeared in "Carmen Jones" (1954) and in "Porgy and Bess" (1959).

In recent years, he played Admiral Cartwright in two "Star Trek" films and appeared in numerous TV shows. Peters was often used for animated characters, in-



Veteran actor Brock Peters played the Black man Atticus Finch defended in "To Kill a Mockingbird."

cluding Jomo in 2002's "The Wild Thornberrys Movie."

He also sang background vocals on Harry Belafonte's hits "Banana Boat (Day-O)" and "Mama Look At Bubu."

But he was perhaps best known for portraying accused rapist Tom Robinson, defended by Gregory Peck's Atticus Finch in the 1962 film "To Kill a Mockingbird."

"He was such a dear friend and one of the most lovely human beings I knew

in my life," said Mary Badham, who played Jean Louise "Scout" Finch in the film.

Peters paid tribute to Peck after he died in 2003.

"In art there is compassion, in compassion there is humanity, with humanity there is generosity and love," Peters said. "Gregory Peck gave us these attributes in full measure."

Peters recounted how, shortly before he was to start filming, he was awakened early on a Sunday morning

by a phone call from Peck to welcome him to the production. He was so surprised, he recalled, that he dropped the telephone.

"I worked over the years in many, many productions, but no one ever again called me to welcome me aboard, except perhaps the director and the producer, but not my fellow actor-to-be."

In May, Peters was on hand as Harper Lee, the reclusive author of "To Kill a Mockingbird," made a rare step into the limelight to be

honored by the Los Angeles Public Library.

In "Carmen Jones," Peters worked with Dorothy Dandridge and Belafonte. Otto Preminger's production of "Porgy" starred Sidney Poitier and Dandridge, and featured Sammy Davis Jr., Pearl Bailey and Diahann Carroll, as well as Peters.

Among Peters' other films were "Soylent Green," "The L-Shaped Room" and "The Pawnbroker."

His accolades include a National Film Society

Award, a Life Achievement Award from the Screen Actors Guild, and a Tony Award nomination for his performance on Broadway in "Lost in the Stars."

In a 1985 story by The Associated Press on Blacks in the movies, Peters said there had been a string of recent hits involving Blacks, but "I have been here a long time, and I have seen this cycle happen before. I'll wait awhile and see if this flurry of activity leads to anything permanent."

LA post office renamed in honor of Ray Charles

LOS ANGELES (AP) - The warm voice of Ray Charles filled the neighborhood near his recording studio during a ceremony christening a post office in his name.

As Charles' rendition of "America the Beautiful" rang out over speakers, family, friends and associates watched Wednesday as workers unveiled the new Ray Charles Station post office sign.

"My hopes are that the naming of this post office facility is only the first of many tributes for a man who started from nowhere to end up a national treasure and global phenomenon," said Rep. Diane Watson, D-Calif., who sponsored the federal bill to rename the post office.

President Bush signed the bill into law last month. Charles died in June 2004 of acute liver disease at age 73. His death ended a 58-year career in which he combined rock 'n' roll with gospel and soul to create a new style for hits such as "What'd I Say," "Hit the Road Jack," "Georgia on My Mind" and "I Can't Stop Loving You."

Born Ray Charles Robinson, he lost his eyesight at 7, was an orphan at 15 and struggled for nearly 20 years with an addiction to heroin. He quit the drug cold turkey in 1965 after an arrest at a Boston airport.

His life story was chronicled in the 2004 film "Ray," which earned a best actor Oscar for Jamie Foxx.

The renaming of the post office touched all of Charles' family, said his son, the Rev. Robert Robinson.

"We miss him so much. So we appreciate every little piece that people do to keep his memory there," Robinson said. "Now we have something we can always see with his name on it and the world can share."

The Ray Charles Station is located just blocks away from the recording studio and business office where Charles produced "Georgia on My Mind" and his final album, the Grammy-winning "Genius Loves Company."

His longtime manager, Joe Adams, told nearly 200 people at the renaming ceremony that he remembered when there was a bar instead of a post office at the corner. He joked that Charles used to sort mail at the facility, which explained why some letters took six or seven years to get delivered.

Adams also presented a letter from Bill Cosby to former President Clinton and asked that it be the first mailed from the newly renamed post office.

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