AJA to Present “Richard Tucker and the Golden Age of American Jewry” on September 18

CINCINNATI, OH: — On Sunday, September 18, 2016 at 3pm, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) will present, Richard Tucker and the Golden Age of American Jewry. The program, which will feature recordings of the legendary opera singer and reflections on his personal and professional life, will be narrated by his son, Dr. David N. Tucker, and James A. Drake, biographer of Richard Tucker.

The event will take place in the Scheuer Chapel at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 3101 Clifton Avenue, 45220. A reception will be held immediately following the program.

“Richard Tucker’s extraordinary career -- his amazing transformation from a beloved cantorial soloist into a world renowned cultural icon -- serves as a case study of the American Jewish experience at the midpoint of the 20th century,” said Dr. Gary P. Zola, Executive Director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of American Jewish Archives and the Edward M. Ackerman Family Distinguished Professor of the American Jewish Experience & Reform Jewish History at HUC-JIR, Cincinnati. “We are deeply grateful to Dr. Tucker for giving the AJA the honor of being the first to bring this wonderful program to Cincinnati.”

Richard Tucker was born on August 28, 1913 in Brooklyn, New York—two years after his parents emigrated to the United State from Bessarabia. Even as a child, Tucker’s singing drew praise. Prior to appearing on the operatic stage, Richard Tucker sang in many New York congregations as a cantor. Even after he became an international star and a fixture on the Metropolitan Opera stage, Tucker continued to perform as a cantor throughout his career. “My father never forgot his Jewish roots,” said David. “He always reminded us to never forget where we came from. It was an important life lesson.”

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His debut at the Metropolitan Opera took place on Jan. 25, 1945 as Enzo in Ponchielli’s *La Gioconda*. Tucker quickly rose to international acclaim as a tenor whose voice and artistry were synonymous with the “Golden Age” of the Metropolitan Opera — where he reigned as a superstar tenor for three decades. Tucker died of a heart attack in Kalamazoo, Michigan on January 8, 1975.

“The program will include diverse selections of my father’s music—operatic, Neapolitan, popular, and liturgical — presented with video clips of interviews, performances, and photos,” said Dr. Tucker. “Each selection will be introduced to the audience with commentary, and will provide an intimate, personal view of a son’s reflections of his father’s legendary career. James Drake’s narration will provide an academic perspective of my father’s impact on the operatic world.”

Today, 50 years after his last performance, Richard Tucker is still revered as America’s last great tenor. His numerous recordings continue to be released in new digital formats, and his legacy is perpetuated through the annual gala concerts of the Richard Tucker Music Foundation, which are telecast nationally through the PBS network. “In death as in life,” as Luciano Pavarotti once said of him, “Richard Tucker is still a master, still a model and still an inspiration to us all.”

The event is free and open to the public, but SEATING IS LIMITED. RSVP to: sboyce@huc.edu or call 513-487-3000.

For more information or to arrange for an in-person interview with Dr. David Tucker, please call Joyce Kamen at 513-543-8109.

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