Washington State JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Recording Date: June 12, 2025
Last Edited: July 10, 2026

Hannah Votel

SUMMARY

Actor Hannah Votel played a younger villager in a production of "Fiddler On The Roof" as a child and is proud to once again act in this Jewish classic as a young adult. She describes her connection to cultural rather than religious Judaism and shares some details from her family's traditions.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Will you state your name for me, please?

Hannah Votel: Yes, Hannah Votel. Do you want me looking at you or here.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: At me.

Hannah Votel: Okay. Gorgeous.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Um, may I have your consent to record this interview?

Hannah Votel: Yes.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Great. And can you tell me about your connection to the Jewish community or to Fiddler on the Roof?

Hannah Votel: Yeah. Um, I am Jewish, on my mother's side. Um, so I grew up celebrating Hanukkah, and we weren't super practicing, but, um, we felt it deeply, like, culturally. Um, and I actually did do Fiddler when I was much smaller. I was just one of the younger villagers in the background. And I remember just like looking up at the, at the older ones being like, I want to be one of those. And so, like, it's been very, very nice to be able to come full circle in like my adult professional life and having my parents and specifically my Jewish mother come and see this again and see me in a larger capacity. It was really special.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: That's so sweet. Um, where do you find Jewish community where you live?

Hannah Votel: Not as many places as I'd like it. Um, yeah. I think that something that has been hard for me to find is the community that celebrates culturally more than religiously, um, because I'm not a very religious person, but I do feel really connected to the culture. And I think that's something that isn't talked about as much is the ethno religion aspect of Judaism. Um, and so it's been really great. I did a whole genealogy test, and I wanted to see exactly what regions we were from and everything, um, and specifically like the community in this cast as well, like having a few other people who are in the same boat as me of really feeling the connection to the culture. Um, but yeah, not as many places as I'd like it. I'd like to see more.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: Yeah. The show is about tradition and change. Are there traditions that your family keeps alive or have changed? Or what does it bring up for you?

Hannah Votel: Yeah. Um, I mean, well, we've, my whole life we've done like, all aspects of holidays. So we've had our Christmas, we've had our Hanukkah. Um, and, um, we're always trying to make a lot of food. Ah, we're a big food family, always have been. Um, so that's a big thing. We have very, like, specific dishes that we always bring back. Um, I have tried to make latkes and burnt them to a crisp. Um, so that's not necessarily a tradition that I will probably keep up. Um, but, yeah, I think a lot of our, a lot of our traditions revolve around food and specific dishes that we look forward to every time we get together.

Ruth Kodish-Eskind: I love that. Thank you so much for sharing.

Hannah Votel: Thank you.