

= Sarek (Star Trek : The Next Generation) =

" Sarek " is the 23rd episode of the third season of the American science fiction television series Star Trek : The Next Generation , and the 71st episode overall . It was originally released on May 14 , 1990 , in broadcast syndication . The story for the episode was created by Marc Cushman and Jake Jacobs , with the teleplay written by Peter S. Beagle . " Sarek " was directed by Les Landau . Set in the 24th century , the series follows the adventures of the crew of the Federation starship Enterprise . In this episode , Sarek (Mark Lenard) , the father of Spock and a highly regarded but elderly ambassador , is ferried by the Enterprise on his final mission for the Federation . While he is aboard the ship , the crew experiences an outbreak of irrational anger amongst themselves . It is revealed that Sarek has Bendaii syndrome , which is telepathically causing the problems among the crew . It is only resolved after the Vulcan mind melds with Captain Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) .

The appearance of Lenard was originally suggested by Gene Roddenberry as an alternative to an appearance by Leonard Nimoy , as it was suspected that it would be too expensive to have the latter actor reprise the role of Spock on television . Roddenberry had previously barred references to Star Trek : The Original Series in The Next Generation ; the inclusion of Sarek in his namesake episode , along with a mention of Spock , was seen by the crew of The Next Generation as a breakthrough , allowing them to reference The Original Series more freely in the future . Sarek 's failing health was intended to be a reference to the declining health of Roddenberry . " Sarek " received Nielsen ratings of 10 @.@ 6 percent ; it was praised by critics , who lauded the performances of both Lenard and Stewart .

= = Plot = =

Federation Ambassador Sarek (Mark Lenard) of Vulcan has arrived on board the Enterprise with his human wife , Perrin (Joanna Miles) . His mission is to attend a conference to lay the foundation for trade relations between the Federation and an alien race called the Legarans , after which time he will retire due to old age . Though Captain Jean @-@ Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) and his crew attempt to provide for Sarek and have arranged for a chamber music concert for him , the ambassador expresses apprehension and annoyance . Picard is surprised when Sarek starts crying in the middle of the performance , an emotional trait Vulcans normally suppress .

Across the ship , the crew members start to act with uncharacteristic hostility towards one another , leading to a large brawl in the Ten Forward lounge . The onset of the events is tied to Sarek 's arrival . Ship 's Counselor Deanna Troi (Marina Sirtis) and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Beverly Crusher (Gates McFadden) believe Sarek may be suffering from Bendii syndrome , a degenerative neurological disease that only affects aged Vulcans . This condition causes individuals to lose control of their emotions and emit " broadcast empathy " , destabilizing the emotions of others around them . Picard attempts to approach Sarek about this , but Sarek 's aides deny that there are any problems . Picard asks Lt. Commander Data (Brent Spiner) to speak with Sakkath (Rocco Sisto) , Sarek 's second assistant , who has mutual respect with Data ; Data confirms that Sakkath has been attempting to channel his emotional strength into Sarek , but has been overwhelmed by the pressures of the conference . Picard directly confronts Sarek on the matter , who attempts to deny the problem . When Sarek breaks down emotionally in front of Picard , Picard realizes they may need to cancel the conference .

As Picard prepares to cancel with the Legarans , Perrin arrives and suggests an alternative option : Sarek could mind meld with another , allowing him to temporarily transfer his emotions onto someone else . This would leave Sarek able to successfully complete the conference and maintain his dignity , reputation and honor . Perrin , however , warns of the possible dangers to the receiver 's mind from Sarek 's strong emotions . Picard willingly agrees to be the host . Sarek performs the mind meld with Picard , and is able to retain full control of his emotions for the duration of the conference . However , Picard , monitored closely by Dr. Crusher , suffers through the numerous emotions that Sarek has pent @-@ up for years , including his regrets of not being able to show his

love for his wife Amanda , their son Spock , or his current wife Perrin . With the conference successfully completed , Sarek prepares to take his leave . Picard lets Perrin know of Sarek 's love for her , and Perrin says she has always known it . Sarek thanks Picard for his kindness , and with deep respect states " We will always retain the best part of the other , inside us . "

= = Production = =

Following creator Gene Roddenberry 's suggestion that The Next Generation would be unable to afford an appearance by Leonard Nimoy as Spock , it was suggested in a memo that Mark Lenard could appear as Spock 's on @-@ screen father , Sarek . Lenard had made his first appearance as Sarek in the Star Trek : The Original Series episode " Journey to Babel " . Trent Christopher Ganino and Eric A. Stillwell began to work on a script involving both Lenard as Sarek and Denise Crosby as Tasha Yar . This was because Crosby told Stillwell that she wanted to return to the show after her character was killed off in " Skin of Evil " in the first season of The Next Generation . This script would change over time to become " Yesterday 's Enterprise " .

Ganino and Stillwell 's original pitch for " Yesterday 's Enterprise " featured a team of Vulcan scientists , led by Sarek . They accidentally travel to the past using the Guardian of Forever (a time portal seen in The Original Series episode " The City on the Edge of Forever ") and kill Surak , the founder of modern Vulcan logic . When they return to the present , they find that the Vulcans are allied with the Romulans and at war with the Federation . Only Sarek and his Vulcan scientists are unaffected by the change , and so he elects to return to the past and replace Surak , allowing the timeline to be restored . Michael Piller was not happy with this script as he wanted the episode to be more centered on The Next Generation cast ; as such , Sarek and the Guardian were dropped from the story .

When it was pitched by Marc Cushman and Jake Jacobs , the idea which formed the basis for " Sarek " featured an original character instead of Sarek . The staff writers felt the degenerative disease conceit would be a subject that viewers could relate to , as it could be a metaphor for dementia in the elderly . The element of the plot wherein the disease would cause telepathic problems for the rest of the crew was then developed , with Sarek added to the plot at a late stage in order to ensure an emotional impact on the audience . Piller said that " it brings home the idea that even the greatest of men is subject to illness " . He also said that the plot was a direct reference to the declining health of Roddenberry . The script was written by Peter S. Beagle , better known for the 1968 novel The Last Unicorn .

Because of the chronological differences between the settings of The Original Series and The Next Generation , it was decided that Sarek 's first wife , Amanda Grayson , would have died by the time of the events of " Sarek " . As such , the character of Perrin was created as a second human wife for Sarek . Perrin was played by Miles in her first Star Trek appearance . Both Miles and Lenard would return in the same roles for the first part of the fifth season episode " Unification " . The writers and producers were nervous about mentioning Spock in " Sarek " , with an early version of the script only calling for a reference by Picard to Sarek 's son 's wedding . The third season had seen a relaxation in Roddenberry 's previous direction that The Next Generation could not touch on aspects of The Original Series . This was especially seen at the end of " Sarek " , in which Picard mentions Spock by name during the mind meld . Piller later described this one act as " the breakthrough which allowed us to open the doors , that allowed us to begin to embrace our past " .

The episode features several works of classical music at a concert meant to feature music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart . While the first is Mozart 's String Quartet No.19 in C @-@ Major , the second piece is String Sextet No.1 by Johannes Brahms . The rest of the episode was scored by Dennis McCarthy ; " Sarek " was one of several episodes on which he worked . Story editor Ronald D. Moore thought that " Sarek " was better than " Journey to Babel " , and it allowed Lenard to do some " solid acting " . Director Les Landau also praised Lenard 's performance , saying that a moment when a tear rolls down Sarek 's face was portrayed as " something special " . He added that the dynamics in the mind meld scene reached " a level that I think is classic in Star Trek history " , describing Stewart 's performance as " truly spectacular " . The mind meld scene was shot in a

single take .

= = Release and reception = =

= = Broadcast = =

" Sarek " aired in broadcast syndication during the week commencing May 12 , 1990 . It received Nielsen ratings of 10 @. @ 6 , reflecting the percentage of all households watching the episode during its timeslot . This was the highest ratings received by the series since " Captain 's Holiday " six weeks earlier . No episodes of The Next Generation received higher ratings until the second part of " The Best of Both Worlds " which opened the fourth season .

= = Critical reception = =

Mark Jones and Lance Parkin , in their book Beyond the Final Frontier : An Unauthorised Review of Star Trek , wrote that " Sarek " " could have simply pressed fanboy buttons " , but was actually " a moving story of a great man brought low by old age and illness " . They praised Lenard , but thought that Stewart " steals the show with an extraordinary performance " . Chris Gregory , in his book Star Trek : Parallel Narratives , suggested that Bendii syndrome as seen in this episode " has echoes of Alzheimer 's disease " . James Van Hise and Hal Schumer , in The Complete Trek : The Next Generation , compared the plot of " Sarek " to that of the The Original Series episode " Day of the Dove " . They described " Sarek " as " excellent " and said that it was " exciting and emotional , with real conflicts overcome by real people " . They added that " TV doesn 't get much better than this . "

Zack Handlen reviewed the episode in 2010 , for The A.V. Club , giving it a rating of an A. He praised the fact that there was no mystery to the episode , and that it was instead explained immediately that Sarek was the cause of the crewmembers ' problems . He added that there was a " beautiful simplicity to this concept , an elegance that makes the tragedy at the heart of the episode all the more powerful " . Handlen said that the scene in which Picard deals with the emotions of Sarek after the mind meld was a " remarkable work , a level of naked , raw intensity that we rarely get on [The Next Generation] , and in the hands of a lesser actor (basically anyone else in the ensemble) , this could 've been ridiculous " .

Keith DeCandido , in a 2012 review for Tor.com , gave the episode a score of 7 out of 10 . He said that the majority of the guest cast were " pretty nowhere " , but that the backbone of the episode was Lenard portraying Sarek , " one of the most beloved recurring roles in the franchise 's history , and this episode is a beautiful illustration of why " . He called the telepathy plot " dopey sci @- @ fi stuff " , but praised the direction of Landau in ? among others ? the concert scene , which he called a " tour de force " . He said , however , that the standout part of the episode was the interaction of Stewart and Lenard , who he referred to as " two great actors at the absolute top of their game " . He said that " Stewart simply owns the mind @- @ meld , a turbulent , raw scene that leaves the character of Sarek completely exposed , and Stewart sells it amazingly . At that point , the plot contrivances are forgotten , as you realize that the whole episode was worth it to watch this amazing scene " .

James Hunt , reviewing " Sarek " for Den of Geek in 2014 , appreciated the episode 's metaphor for the declining health of Gene Roddenberry . He felt that there was no follow @- @ up to the emotional disturbances suffered by the crew , but said that despite this the episode worked because of the presence of Lenard as Sarek . He said that " they cunningly build up [Sarek 's] respect for Picard throughout the episode so that the proposed solution to his problem doesn 't seem too far @- @ fetched , and the rapport between Lenard and Stewart is so immediate that you can believe a literal mind @- @ meld makes sense for the characters . It 's not a perfect episode in terms of its writing , but the acting sells it far better than it could 've . " In 2014 , the episode was ranked as the 70th best out of the over 700 episodes in the Star Trek franchise by Charlie Jane Anders for io9 .

= = Home media release = =

The first home media release of " Sarek " was on VHS cassette , appearing on October 3 , 1995 in the United States and Canada . The episode was later included on the Star Trek : The Next Generation season three DVD box set , released in the United States on September 3 , 2002 . The first Blu Ray release was in the United States on April 30 , 2013 .