

BROADWAY

Broadway
THE AMERICAN MUSICAL



press information

PBS STAGES AN UNPRECEDENTED HISTORY OF “THE GREAT WHITE WAY” WITH
BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL, PREMIERING IN OCTOBER

Landmark Six-Part Series, Hosted By Julie Andrews, Brings Alive The Epic Story Of Musical Theater And Its Inextricable Link To 20th-Century American Life

With Mel Brooks, Carol Channing, Betty Comden, Joel Grey, Kitty Carlisle Hart, John Lahr, Arthur Laurents, Harold Prince, Stephen Sondheim, Tommy Tune, Ben Vereen, George C. Wolfe, And Many More, Includes An Extraordinary Collection Of Rare Archival Footage, Private Home Movies, And Original Cast Recordings

Today, with new musicals such as *Wicked* enjoying phenomenal success with 10 recent Tony Award nominations, revivals like *Fiddler on the Roof* delighting new generations, and the Hollywood adaptation of *Chicago* winning the 2003 Oscar for Best Picture, Broadway is proving once again that its vitality and magic endure. Now, Thirteen/WNET New York presents ***BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL***, an unprecedented six-part, six-hour PBS documentary series premiering Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, October 19, 20 and 21 at 9 p.m. (ET) (check local listings).

The first comprehensive documentary series on the history of the American musical ever created for television, ***BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL*** is a co-production of Ghost Light Films, Thirteen/WNET New York, NHK, and BBC in association with Carlton International.

A signature event this fall on PBS, the series was produced by Michael Kantor, who recently cre-

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Funding for the series was provided by Capital One, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Dorothy and Lewis Cullman, the Shubert Organization, the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cornelius V. Starr Fund for Arts Programming, the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Philanthropic Fund, Judith B. Resnick, Vivian Milstein, Rosalind P. Walter, Bob Boyett, the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation Inc., Mary and Marvin Davidson, Allen & Company, Susan R. Malloy and the Sun Hill Foundation, the DuBose and Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund, the Karen A. and Kevin W. Kennedy Foundation, The Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, Mary Rodgers and Henry Guettel, public television viewers, and PBS.

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ated *Quincy Jones: In the Pocket* for the *American Masters* series, and who has worked on PBS long-form series such as Ken Burns' *The West* and Ric Burns' *New York: A Documentary Film*.

Julie Andrews, Academy Award-winning star of stage, film and television – and public television's unofficial “ambassador for the Broadway musical” – will serve as series host.

BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL tells two stories: the 100-year history of musical theater, and the story of its relationship to 20th-century American life. Kantor's chronological approach begins with the immigrant experience at the turn of the century, when a melting pot of voices and styles gave rise to a popular new form of entertainment. The series ends with today's Broadway, where big budget new productions and revivals of classic favorites compete side by side for box office success.

Peppered throughout are legendary moments in Broadway history: George Gershwin's sojourn to Folly Island, where he began to compose his legendary score for *Porgy and Bess*; the thrill of *Oklahoma!*'s opening night; comedienne Fanny Brice's heart-grabbing performance of “My Man.” From the titillating yet artful spectacle of *The Ziegfeld Follies* to Ethel Merman's brassy rendition of “I've Got Rhythm,” and from Julie Taymor's visionary staging of *The Lion King* to a behind-the-scenes look at *Wicked*'s opening night, the series enlightens, educates and offers unique insight into this truly American art form.

BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL assembled first-person accounts from dozens of theater luminaries – among them late greats such as **Adolph Green, Brendan Gill, Peter Stone**, “Ziegfeld Girl” **Dana O'Connell, Al Hirschfeld**, and **Frances Gershwin Godowsky**. The whole of Broadway is represented: writers, lyricists, producers, performers, directors, and scholars. Among them are **Mel Brooks, Carol Channing, Betty Comden, Kitty Carlisle Hart, Jerry Herman, Margo Jefferson, John Kander and Fred Ebb, Joel Grey, Harvey Fierstein, Robert Kimball, Chita Rivera, John Lahr, Rocco Landesman, Jerry Orbach, Arthur Laurents, Harold Prince, Gerald Schoenfeld, Stephen Sondheim, Tommy**

Tune, Ben Vereen, George Wolfe, and many others.

“There’s no place in the world like Broadway – it’s where the American dream is realized eight times a week, and even though it’s become an expensive ticket, it continues to embody the optimistic heartbeat of American culture,” says Kantor. “As Times Square celebrates its 100th anniversary, it’s crucial to hear from the key Broadway figures who actually had a role in shaping the course of American culture – to document the stories of these creative legends in their own words – before it’s too late.”

Executive producer Jac Venza says the series is a sterling addition to Thirteen’s four-decade tradition of showcasing musical theater and its creative talents on PBS with such series as *Great Performances*, *Theater in America*, *Dance in America*, and *Stage on Screen*. “With offices just a few blocks from the heart of Broadway, it’s not surprising that Thirteen is in a unique position to bring this ambitious project to a national television audience,” Venza says. “Our long history of collaboration with the theater community, as well as our extensive track record in performance programming, has provided us with the access and relationships necessary to tell the complete, epic story of Broadway.”

The series traverses a century of national events with seismic reverberations on the Broadway stage, including recorded sound, the rise of Hollywood, the Great Depression, both World Wars, labor relations, the advent of television, civil rights, the sexual revolution, and AIDS. Each of the six films demonstrates how America’s ever-changing cultural landscape is reflected back from the Broadway stage.

To bring this story to life, **BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL** will use an extraordinary collection of archival footage, newsreels, private home movies, original cast recordings, still photos, diary excerpts, personal correspondences, rare television and audio archives, and autobiographical material.

BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL is geared toward audiences of all ages,

offering insights from Irving Berlin, Bert Williams and Yip Harburg through to Agnes DeMille, Hal Prince and George C. Wolfe, while spanning a century of musical productions from *Show Boat*, *Anything Goes* and *On the Town* to *Company*, *Hair* and *The Producers*.

“With this series, we not only showcase the magic of the musical theater, we discover its underlying connection to history,” says executive producer David Horn. “And it’s a history underscored by some of the most memorable music ever written – songs that are brash, unforgettably passionate and indelibly American.”

To complement and expand the reach of the series, Kantor is creating a lavishly illustrated companion book with co-writer Laurence Maslon, to be published by Bulfinch Press in conjunction with the PBS premiere. Maslon wrote the 2001 *American Masters* special, *Richard Rodgers: The Sweetest Sounds*. The series will be released on home video and DVD by PBS Home Video. A companion five-CD box set, a dynamic Web site and a variety of educational outreach activities are also in development.

BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL is a co-production of Ghost Light Films, Thirteen/WNET New York, NHK, and BBC in association with Carlton International. Michael Kantor is series producer-director. Bill O’Donnell is supervising producer. Jac Venza and David Horn are executive producers.

Funding for the series was provided by Capital One, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Humanities, Dorothy and Lewis Cullman, the Shubert Organization, the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cornelius V. Starr Fund for Arts Programming, the Ira and Leonore Gershwin Philanthropic Fund, Judith B. Resnick, Vivian Milstein, Rosalind P. Walter, Bob Boyett, the Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation Inc., Mary and Marvin Davidson, Allen & Company, Susan R. Malloy and the Sun Hill Foundation, the DuBose and Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund, the Karen A. and Kevin W. Kennedy Foundation,

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Stage on Screen*, *EGG the arts show*, and *Cyberchase* – as well as the work of Bill Moyers – to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as The Ethnic Heritage Specials, The New York Walking Tours, *New York Voices*, *Reel New York*, and its MetroArts/Thirteen cable arts programming. With educational and community outreach projects that extend the impact of its television productions, Thirteen takes television “out of the box.” And as broadcast and digital media converge, Thirteen is blazing trails in the creation of Web sites, enhanced television, CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs, educational software, and other cutting-edge media products. More information about Thirteen can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

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Photos available on request.

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