



G R E A T
P E R F O R M A N C E S

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press information

**COMPANY'S COMING: MUSICAL
BOWS ON THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK'S
GREAT PERFORMANCES ON PBS**

Raúl Esparza Leads
Era-Defining Classic



A Production of
Thirteen/WNET
New York for PBS.

Funded by
the Irene
Diamond Fund,
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for the Arts,
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and public television
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Long before *Sex and the City*, the Stephen Sondheim/George Furth musical *Company* took an unconventional look at love and commitment in complex modern New York. The 1970 era-defining classic was – and is – an honest, funny and sophisticated portrayal of five married couples as seen through the eyes of their mutual friend Robert, a waffling, 35-year-old bachelor evaluating the pros and cons of wedded life.

How timeless the work remains is evidenced in its recent Broadway incarnation by brilliant British director John Doyle (*Sweeney Todd*). Showered by critical praise (“best musical of the year,” *New York Magazine*; “unquestionable brilliance,” *Entertainment Weekly*), the 2007 Tony Award winner for Best Musical Revival comes triumphantly to television Wednesday, February 20 at 9 p.m. (ET) on Thirteen/WNET New York’s **GREAT PERFORMANCES** on PBS (check local listings). Raúl Esparza, who won Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for his portrayal of leading man Robert, heads the cast of actor-musicians.

As conceived by director Doyle, each performer doubles as orchestra member, placing all the music on stage rather than in the pit, adding a fresh warmth and spontaneity to the score. Even Robert, or Bobby as he is affectionately called, sits at the piano for his concluding number, “Being Alive.”

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“Bobby finally joins the band of human life,” wrote Ben Brantley in his glowing *New York Times* review. “There’s something about Mr. Sondheim that allows Mr. Doyle to find a new clarity of feeling through melding musicians and performers. It is, after all, the person who controls the music in a Sondheim production who has the best chance of finding the show’s elusive but resonantly human heart.”

Completing the cast are Barbara Walsh (Joanne), Keith Buterbaugh (Harry), Matt Castle (Peter), Robert Cunningham (Paul), Angel Desai (Marta), Kelly Jeanne Grant (Kathy), Kristin Huffman (Sarah), Amy Justman (Susan), Heather Laws (Amy), Leenya Rideout (Jenny), Fred Rose (David), Bruce Sabath (Larry), and Elizabeth Stanley (April). Mary-Mitchell Campbell conducts and provides the new orchestrations.

Recorded onstage in performance at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre June 30, 2007, the production premiered at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park in early 2006. It opened at the Barrymore November 29 and closed July 2 the following year. Among its many musical highlights: “The Ladies Who Lunch,” “Another Hundred People,” “Barcelona,” and “You Could Drive a Person Crazy,” this last performed by three of Bobby’s girlfriends blasting saxophones as if they were assault weapons.

Esparza, 37, is known to theater fans for his stunning performances in *Taboo* (Tony Award nomination, Drama Desk Award); *Cabaret*; *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*; *The Rocky Horror Show* (Theatre World Award), and Jonathan Larson’s *tick...tick...BOOM!* (OBIE Award, Drama Desk nomination). His “singularly magnetic” (*Wall St. Journal*) performance as Bobby netted his most recent Tony nomination. He is currently starring in Daniel Sullivan’s revival of Harold Pinter’s *The Homecoming*.

Director Doyle’s acclaimed production of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* for LA Opera, starring Audra McDonald, Patti LuPone and Anthony Dean Griffey, premiered on **GREAT PERFORMANCES** last December.

An Ellen M. Krass Production with Thirteen/WNET New York, in association with NHK/NHK Enterprises, **Company** is produced by Ellen M. Krass and Mort Swinsky, with Darren Bagert, Robert G. Bartner, Bonnie Comley, Stewart F. Lane, and David Horn as executive producers. Lonny Price directs for television, with Gary Bradley as editor. Set design is by David Gallo, costumes by Ann Hould-Ward, and lighting by Thomas C. Hase.

Beginning with *You Can't Take It With You* in 1984, featuring Jason Robards and Colleen Dewhurst, Ellen Krass has produced a number of outstanding programs for **GREAT PERFORMANCES**, including *'Follies' in Concert* (1986), with Barbara Cook, Lee Remick, Carol Burnett, and the New York Philharmonic, and, most recently, *Leonard Bernstein's 'Candide' in Concert* (2005), with Kristin Chenoweth, Patti LuPone and the New York Philharmonic.

The original **Company** production opened on Broadway at the Alvin (now the Neil Simon) Theatre on April 26, 1970. It garnered 14 Tony nominations (the record until *The Producers* in 2001), winning six, including Best Musical. The show was last seen on Broadway in a Roundabout Theatre **Company** limited engagement in 1995.

GREAT PERFORMANCES is funded by the Irene Diamond Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, public television viewers, and PBS. Special funding for this telecast was provided by the Lillian Goldman Programming Endowment and the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust.

Visit **GREAT PERFORMANCES Online** at pbs.org/gperf for additional information on this and other **GREAT PERFORMANCES** programs. The Web companion contains a wide variety of images, in-depth information about the programs and activities for teachers, including lesson plans, tips and resources.

David Horn is series producer for **GREAT PERFORMANCES**, with John Walker as senior producer for music and Bill O'Donnell is director of program development.

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as **GREAT PERFORMANCES**, *Nature*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *NOW With David Brancaccio*, 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 Thirteen Walking Tours, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions through educational and community outreach projects – including the Celebration of Teaching and Learning – as well as Web sites and other digital media platforms. More information can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

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(Photos available at thirteen.org/pressroom and pbs.org/pressroom)