



SOCIETY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
*Bringing the World's Best to Houston*

## ***Press Release***

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **See the Legendary Stephen Sondheim in Houston for One Night Only!**

**The Famed Lyricist and Composer to be Interviewed on Stage by  
*New York Times* Columnist Frank Rich,  
Presented by Society for the Performing Arts**

HOUSTON (Sept. 30, 2009) – Society for the Performing Arts (SPA), bringing the world's best to Houston, presents *An Evening with Stephen Sondheim*, an onstage conversation between the legendary Stephen Sondheim and host Frank Rich of *The New York Times*, on Sunday, Oct. 25, at 7:30 p.m. in Jones Hall.

Composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim is the most important artist to work in American musical theater over the past half-century. During this live, unscripted conversation, Sondheim and Rich will reminisce about Stephen Sondheim's career including his collaborations with Leonard Bernstein and Jerome Robbins; his predecessors, including his mentor Oscar Hammerstein II; the state of American musical theater; and, in a very personal series of reflections, his own creative process, speaking specifically on works ranging from his early shows *Gypsy* and *West Side Story* to such later classics as *Company*, *Follies* and *Sweeney Todd*.

The two have been friends since 1971, when Rich was a student at Harvard University and reviewed Sondheim's production of *Follies* for the school paper. Sondheim read the review and was so impressed by Rich's insight and understanding of musical theater that he personally encouraged the young man to keep writing.

At 79, Sondheim has spent more than 50 years in professional musical theater. He has won seven Tonys, multiple Grammy Awards, and in 1985 his *Sunday in the Park with George* won the Pulitzer Prize for drama. (The Pulitzer was shared with James Lapine, who wrote the book for the musical.) Sondheim has also worked in film and wrote the score to Warren Beatty's 1981 movie *Reds*. Also, having collaborated as a young man with such titans of the American musical theater as songwriter Jule Stein and composer-director Leonard Bernstein, Sondheim is a living link to the mid-20th-century artists who made the musical theater one of America's great art forms.

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Frank Rich became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in 1994 after serving for 13 years as the newspaper's chief drama critic. He has written about culture and politics for many other publications and was on the staffs of *Time*, the *New York Post* and *New Times* magazine after starting his career as a founding editor of *The Richmond Mercury*, a weekly newspaper, in the early 1970s. He is the author of *Ghost Light*, a childhood memoir; *Hot Seat: Theater Criticism for The New York Times*, 1980–1993; and *The Theatre Art of Boris Aronson*, coauthored with Lisa Aronson.

Prior to Sondheim's appearance, patrons may enjoy the Performance Prelude by Katy Visual & Performing Arts Center's Encore Players at 7 p.m. in the Jones Hall lobby, piano level.

Part of SPA's Notables series, this event is generously sponsored by The Mithoff Family Charitable Foundation, Haynes & Boone, Continental Airlines, H-E-B, The Brown Hand Center and BMC Software.

Tickets range from \$20-\$60 and can be purchased online at [www.spahouston.org](http://www.spahouston.org), by phone at 713-227-4SPA or at the courtyard level ticket office at Jones Hall located at 615 Louisiana St. Hours of operation: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Monday – Friday, and 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Saturday. For groups of 15 or more, call 713-632-8113.

#### **About Society for the Performing Arts**

Founded in 1966, Society for the Performing Arts (SPA) is the largest independent non-profit presenting organization in the Southwest. Since its inception, SPA has sponsored more than 800 performances of the world's finest music, dance and theater events, in adherence to the belief that the arts are fundamental to the overall enrichment and quality of life within the community. In addition to presenting artists, SPA seeks to provide a variety of learning experiences for adults and children through master classes, lectures and special student performances, as well as build relationships between the performing arts and other interests within the greater Houston area and throughout the state of Texas.

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