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## An Experience L.A. Event

Thursday, March 2, 2023  
Pasadena Playhouse, Pasadena

## KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- 🕒 *Sunday in the Park with George* is a beloved American musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine that originally premiered off-Broadway in 1983, and on Broadway in 1984. It won the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.
- 🕒 This production is directed by Sarna Lapine (a niece of James Lapine), who directed the acclaimed 2017 Broadway revival.
- 🕒 This production is part of Pasadena Playhouse's 6-month "Sondheim Celebration," which features productions of two of Sondheim's monumental musicals seldom seen in the greater Los Angeles area; an all-new tribute concert starring his most beloved performer, Bernadette Peters; a partnership with the USC School of Dramatic Arts; and additional Sondheim-centered programming.

## SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE

*Sunday in the Park with George* is a beloved musical by Stephen Sondheim (music and lyrics) and James Lapine (book) that premiered off-Broadway at Playwrights Horizons in 1983. It went to Broadway in 1984 and was nominated for ten Tony Awards that year—it won two, for lighting design and scenic design. The musical takes as its subject the last months of George Seurat's painting of *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884–1886), with themes about the creative process and the relationship between art and life.

The lead roles were made famous by Mandy Patinkin and Bernadette Peters on Broadway.

*Sunday in the Park with George* was inspired by the time Sondheim and Lapine spent together looking at *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* at the Art Institute of Chicago. The musical fictionalizes Seurat's life and is not an accurate biography.



Stephen Sondheim



James Lapine



George Seurat, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, 1884–1886



George Seurat

## STEPHEN SONDHEIM AND JAMES LAPINE

Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine’s legendary collaboration produced the musicals *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Into the Woods*, and *Passion*.

**Stephen Sondheim** (1930–2021) was one of the most important talents in twentieth-century musical theater. The *New York Times* called him “the theater’s most revered and influential composer-lyricist of the last half of the 20th century and the driving force behind some of Broadway’s most beloved and celebrated shows.”

Sondheim is credited with reinventing musical theatre. With dazzling lyrics, his musicals address weighty subject matter with emotional and intellectual complexity. In the 1950s, Sondheim wrote the lyrics for *West Side Story* and *Gypsy*. And then in 1962, the first musical with music and lyrics by Sondheim opened on Broadway and won a Tony Award for Best Musical: *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. Sondheim would go on to write music and lyrics for acclaimed and much-loved musicals including *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971), *A Little Night Music* (1973), *Sweeney Todd* (1979), *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984), *Into the Woods* (1987), *Assassins* (1990), and *Passion* (1994).

Sondheim received the Kennedy Center Honors for Lifetime Achievement in 1993 and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Barack Obama in 2015, among many other honors.

**James Lapine** (b. 1949) is a director, playwright, screenwriter, and librettist who has won three Tony Awards for Best Book of a Musical for *Into the Woods*, *Falsettos*, and *Passion*.

Lapine studied photography and graphic design at CalArts, and taught design at the Yale School of Drama before his plays started being produced off-Broadway in the late 1970s.

In addition to making musicals with Sondheim, Lapine has frequently collaborated with composer William Finn. The Finn-Lapine collaboration has produced *Falsettos*, *A New Brain*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and *Little Miss Sunshine*.

Also a director, Lapine directed the 2012 Broadway revival of *Annie* and the new musical *Flying Over Sunset*, for which he wrote the book.

## GEORGE SEURAT

**George Seurat** (1859–1891) was one of the most important post-Impressionist painters—specifically, a founder of the French school of Neo-Impressionism known for the technique of Pointillism, in which small dots or strokes of color compose an image that coheres from a distance. *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884–1886) is one of his best-known works.





Pasadena Playhouse



*Cynossema: A Dirge from the Dog's Tomb*



*Tales of Clamor*

## PASADENA PLAYHOUSE

The Pasadena Playhouse is one of the most prolific theaters in U.S. history—it has produced about 1,200 shows, commissioned more than 550 new works, and developed several shows that went on to Broadway. The Pasadena Playhouse has also had a historic impact on theatre arts education.

The Pasadena Community Playhouse was founded in 1917 by Gilmor Brown. It was at one time one of the largest theatre complexes in the world, and in its golden era of 1920 to 1945, it was known as the “Star Factory” because so many talents who would become film and TV stars were discovered at the playhouse. From the 1920s through the 1960s, the Playhouse School of Theatre Arts (later the College of Theatre Arts) offered renowned education in the dramatic arts.

Today, the Pasadena Playhouse presents acclaimed theatrical productions, with a mission “to enrich people’s lives through theater, community programs and learning.” The 2023 Season at the Pasadena Playhouse honors Stephen Sondheim, considered by many as the greatest musical theatre writer of all time, in an ambitious and momentous celebration featuring full-scale productions, special events, and unforgettable performances by Broadway legend Bernadette Peters (*A Little Night Music*, *Follies*), Larry Owens (*A Strange Loop*), Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles, Pasadena Chorale, Vox Femina Los Angeles, and many more.

## FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ◉ Did *Sunday in the Park with George* move you? If so, what especially moved you?
- ◉ What does this musical illuminate about “the art of making art”?
- ◉ How did the elements of stagecraft—such as set and lighting design, costumes, and sound—enhance or shape the production?

## IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- ◉ Other Sondheim Celebration events at the Pasadena Playhouse | [pasadenaplayhouse.org](https://pasadenaplayhouse.org)
- ◉ “An Audience’s Guide to Stephen Sondheim” created by the Pasadena Playhouse
- ◉ Classes and performances at the USC School of Dramatic Arts | [dramaticarts.usc.edu](https://dramaticarts.usc.edu)
- ◉ Upcoming Visions and Voices Events  
**3/8/23** [Birds of No Nation: Live Art Session by Shamsia Hassani](#)  
**3/8/23** [Birds of No Nation: Creative Workshop with Gazelle Samizay](#)



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- 3/8/23** [Birds of No Nation: Afghan Women on Art, Gender, Freedom, and Exile](#)  
**3/18/23** [The Met in HD: Richard Wagner's \*Lohengrin\*](#)  
**3/30/23** [Musicals in the Metaverse featuring \*Urinetown\*](#)  
**4/12/23** [Cynossema: A Dirge from the Dog's Tomb](#)  
**4/30/23** [Tales of Clamor](#)

## DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

**CHRISTINA SNIDER** of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at [libraries.usc.edu](http://libraries.usc.edu) but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

### BOOKS

- ⦿ Diane Alexander and Raymond Burr, [Playhouse](#) (Los Angeles: Dorleac-MacLeish, 1984).
- ⦿ Geoffrey Holden Block, [Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from "Show Boat" to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber](#) (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009).
- ⦿ Michelle Foa, [Georges Seurat: The Art of Vision](#) (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2015).
- ⦿ Robert Gordon, [The Oxford Handbook of Sondheim Studies](#) (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2014).
- ⦿ John Leighton and Richard Thomson, [Seurat and the Bathers](#) (London: National Gallery Publications, 1997).
- ⦿ Larry Stempel, [Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theater](#) (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

### DATABASES

- ⦿ [BroadwayHD](#)
- ⦿ [Twentieth Century Drama](#)
- ⦿ [Digital Theatre Plus](#)
- ⦿ [Theatre in Video](#)
- ⦿ [Theatre in Performance](#)

### JOURNALS

- ⦿ [Back Stage](#)
- ⦿ [Journal of American Drama and Theatre](#)
- ⦿ [Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism](#)
- ⦿ [Theater](#)
- ⦿ [Theatre Journal](#)

### USC LIBRARIES RESEARCH GUIDES

- ⦿ [Broadway/Off Broadway Musical Recordings in the Music Library \(CDs\)](#)
- ⦿ [Feature Films Available in Streaming: Musicals](#)
- ⦿ [Theater and Drama](#)

