

# MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK



PBS

## ***MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK KICKS OFF SECOND SEASON THIS FEBRUARY ON PBS***

### **Three-Part Series Continues Exploration of American Popular Music Through the Performances and Adventures of Its Most Passionate Preservationist**

NEW YORK – **MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK** kicks off its three-part second season February 3 on PBS, with a multifaceted journey through the history of American song by the acclaimed musician and five-time Grammy®-nominated vocalist. Produced and directed by Amber Edwards of Hudson West Productions, **MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK** gives viewers an intimate look at Feinstein on stage, behind the scenes and on the road, where he has all-new adventures in his quest to celebrate and preserve the gems of classic American music. The show airs Fridays, February 3-17, 2012, 9:00-10:00 p.m. ET on PBS.

“I don’t know if it’s some sort of karmic thing that I am supposed to be given all of these recordings and pieces of music to preserve,” Feinstein says in the show, “but it’s clear that for whatever reason, it is also my responsibility to share it and get it out there.”

“In our second season, we continue to find a surprise around every corner — and what unexpected corners we turn,” says Edwards. “Las Vegas, Kansas City, the Mississippi Delta, Hugh Hefner’s Playboy Mansion — everywhere we go we find that this music reflects a different aspect of who we are as a people. It’s as if the American Songbook is an ever-spinning prism.”

**MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK** chronicles Feinstein’s lifelong mission to keep the Great American Songbook alive, as he champions the lyrics and melodies of songwriters like George and Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Harold Arlen, Duke Ellington, Johnny Mercer, Irving Berlin, and Rodgers and Hart, all while performing more than 200 shows a year across America. Season two further illuminates Feinstein’s passion for American song, as he meets fanatical collectors of sheet music, records, manuscripts and memorabilia, and solves an astonishing musical mystery. Feinstein and his fellow collectors represent a tiny world devoted to saving a gigantic body of work. Their eccentricities make for a colorful cast of supporting characters.

Filled with generous portions of live performance and a wealth of archival footage that puts the music in historical context, the series offers both an intimate portrait of a multi-talented artist and a fresh appreciation of 20<sup>th</sup>-century popular culture. It makes the material accessible to viewers who are new to the music and its history, yet offers sophisticated details and analysis for the connoisseur. The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) honored season one of

**MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK** with its Deems Taylor Award for Outstanding Musical Content.

### Episode Synopses

- Episode One, “**Time Machines**,” explores how technology has preserved and altered the way we think about the great songs and singers of the past. Feinstein goes on a cross-country quest — even stopping at Hugh Hefner’s mansion — to uncover the various ways musical performances were documented, and the eclectic array of collectors and performers who are keeping that music alive. Includes a guest appearance by Hefner.
- Episode Two, “**Lost and Found**,” follows Feinstein's investigation of a mysterious music manuscript he finds that's attributed to Irving Berlin. Feinstein also persuades legendary Broadway songwriter Jerry Herman to teach him an unknown song from his own songwriter’s “trunk,” one that’s never been heard prior to this broadcast. Includes a guest appearance by Tony Award-winner Christine Ebersole.
- Episode Three, “**Saloon Singers**,” examines the allure of musical nightlife, from Mississippi juke joints to the neon lights of Las Vegas. Feinstein delves into the history of nightclub entertainment, from the Cotton Club to Sinatra’s Rat Pack. In addition, he talks to pioneers of the form, including entertainer Rose Marie, and poet and author Maya Angelou, who once made her living doing a calypso club act in San Francisco.

**MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK** is part of PBS Arts, highlighting PBS’s ongoing, multi-platform commitment to the performing and visual arts that gives millions of viewers a front-row seat and back-stage pass to the best music, theater, dance, art, and cultural history programs on-air and online. For more information, [www.pbs.org/arts](http://www.pbs.org/arts).

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### Series Credits

Producer/Director: Amber Edwards; Co-Producer/Director of Photography: Dave Davidson;  
A production of Hudson West Productions, © 2012  
Format: CC STEREO 5.1 Surround Sound HD

### Underwriters

Sara P. Carruthers, The Shelley and Donald Rubin Foundation, Louise Kerz Hirschfeld and Lewis B. Cullman, The Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation, Irwin Helford, The Lizzie and Jonathan M. Tisch Foundation, Peter O. Hanson, Susan and Hank Scherer

### About PBS

[PBS](http://www.pbs.org), with its nearly 360 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches 124 million people through television and 20 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’ broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS’ premier children’s TV programming and its website, [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org), are parents’ and teachers’ most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org), one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or through our [apps for mobile devices](#). Specific program

information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom) or by following [PBS Pressroom on Twitter](#).

### **About HudsonWest**

Hudson West Productions makes socially meaningful documentary films about the arts, history and education. Founded in 1985, its mission is to fill in gaps left by commercial media, by preserving, interpreting, and presenting unique, overlooked narratives to a wide audience.

In 2010, Hudson West provided four hours of primetime programming to PBS. The three-part series **MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK**, produced and directed by Amber Edwards with Dave Davidson as co-producer and director of photography, received the ASCAP Deems Taylor Broadcast Award for Outstanding Musical Content and two nominations from the International Documentary Association Awards for Best Limited Series and Best Use of Archival Footage. In May that year, PBS premiered **A PLACE OUT OF TIME — THE BORDENTOWN SCHOOL**, which tells the story of the rise and fall of the last publicly funded, co-educational, all-black boarding school north of the Mason-Dixon line. Directed by Dave Davidson, co-produced by Amber Edwards and narrated by legendary actress Ruby Dee, **A PLACE OUT OF TIME** was the only PBS program to receive the Christopher Award in 2011, for “media that salutes the highest values of the human spirit.”

Currently in post-production is a documentary and set of multi-media curriculum guides about the pioneering avant-garde artist and filmmaker Hans Richter, **EVERYTHING TURNS, EVERYTHING REVOLVES**, directed by Dave Davidson, which will premiere at the Los Angeles County Museum in 2013 in conjunction with a major retrospective of Richter's work.

Over the past 25 years, Hudson West has introduced viewers to gospel and rhythm and blues pioneer Cissy Houston (**SWEET INSPIRATION**, 1988), the legendary one-legged tap dancer (**THE DANCING MAN: PEG LEG BATES**, 1992), impresarios of the early motion picture industry (**INTO THE LIGHT**, 1995); and the not-so-ordinary life of public schools (in **QUICKSAND & BANANA PEELS**, 1998; **BRICK CITY LESSONS**, 1999; **NO PLACE TO BE SMART**, 2000.) All of Hudson West's documentaries have been broadcast on PBS stations and have been seen in the U.K., Norway and Australia. The company's awards include two Emmys and four CINE Golden Eagles, and acclaim from film festivals around the world.

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### **MEDIA NOTES**

- Michael Feinstein and producer/director Amber Edwards are available for interviews.
- PBS President Paula Kerger is available to discuss the importance of expanding access to arts programming.
- Additional information about **MICHAEL FEINSTEIN'S AMERICAN SONGBOOK**, including photos, bios and more, is available at [www.hudsonwest.org/feinstein](http://www.hudsonwest.org/feinstein) and <http://pressroom.pbs.org/>.
- A preview screener disc is available with excerpts from all three episodes.

### **MEDIA CONTACT**

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