

THE PRODUCERS

*“First it was a movie, then it was a Broadway musical.
Now it’s going to be a Broadway musical movie.
I think the next thing will probably be claymation.”*

-Mel Brooks

Production Notes

From the brilliantly twisted mind of MEL BROOKS comes a scheme so clever, so bold and so disturbingly simple that it can’t possibly go wrong:

Step One: You start with Broadway’s smash hit *The Producers—The New Mel Brooks Musical*, winner of a record-breaking 12 Tony Awards, and based on Mel Brooks’ Oscar®-winning 1968 film *The Producers*.

Step Two: You have two major film studios, Universal Pictures and Columbia Pictures, join forces to bring the musical play to the big screen.

Step Three: You enlist the phenomenal SUSAN STROMAN, winner of five Tony Awards, including two for directing and choreographing *The Producers—The New Mel Brooks Musical* on Broadway, to make her motion picture directorial debut with the film version.

Step Four: You bring the original Tony Award-winning stars, NATHAN LANE and MATTHEW BRODERICK, back to recreate their signature roles and surround them with two of Hollywood’s biggest talents, Academy Award® nominee UMA THURMAN and comic superstar WILL FERRELL.

And before you can say “Step Five,” you have the makings of the big, fun-filled, laugh-a-minute musical movie event audiences have been waiting for: *The Producers*.

Only one person in the world could have conceived of such a plan: the incomparable Mel Brooks, whose fabulous career comes full circle with this new film version of *The Producers*.

Brooks was already a television veteran when he made his feature film directorial and writing debut with *The Producers* in 1968. The modestly budgeted comedy, starring Broadway favorite Zero Mostel and a newcomer named Gene Wilder, became a sleeper hit and earned Brooks an Academy Award® for Best Original Screenplay.

At the time, movie audiences were shocked at the sheer audacity of the film's premise involving fading theatrical producer Max Bialystock (Mostel) and timid, neurotic accountant Leo Bloom (Wilder), who conspire to intentionally produce a Broadway flop in order to bilk the show's backers out of millions of dollars. The film has since become a classic.

Fast forward to 2001, when Brooks, having spent 30 years creating such comic masterpieces as *Blazing Saddles*, *Young Frankenstein*, *High Anxiety*, *Silent Movie* and *Spaceballs*, became the toast of Broadway with his stage musical of *The Producers*—with an original score by Brooks, book by Brooks and THOMAS MEEHAN (*Annie*, *Hairspray*) and choreography and direction by Susan Stroman (*Contact*, *Crazy for You*). The show's stars, Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick, both of whom had already scored successfully in movies and on Broadway in both plays and musicals—winning Tony Awards along the way—saw their careers soar to dazzling new heights in the career-defining roles of Bialystock and Bloom. *The Producers* was nominated for 14 Tony Awards and won 12, more than any other show in Broadway history. It received Tonys in each category it was nominated, including three for Brooks—for Best Musical, Best Score and Best Book of a Musical.

A few years later, when serious conversations started taking place about a film version of the musical, Brooks was adamant that as many as possible of the talents responsible for the success of the original Broadway production would return for the film version, including director / choreographer Stroman, stars Lane and Broderick, as well as Tony Award winner GARY BEACH and Tony Award nominee ROGER BART, who, respectively, created the roles of the flamboyantly untalented director Roger DeBris and his common-law assistant Carmen Ghia.

However, there were a couple of opportunities for casting major talents who would be new to the project. The role of Ulla, Bialystock and Bloom's luscious Swedish secretary / slash / receptionist, was the perfect showcase for an actress to demonstrate her skills at comedy, singing and dancing. Everyone agreed that Uma Thurman—red-hot from her roles in *Kill Bill: Vols. I and II* and Oscar®-nominated for *Pulp Fiction*—could make the part her own. And to play the

wildly demented Hitler-loving playwright, Franz Liebkind, none other than Hollywood's top comic actor, Will Ferrell, was given the chance to broaden his range with the role of the singing and dancing Nazi.

With Brooks producing, along with his frequent associate JONATHAN SANGER (*The Elephant Man, Vanilla Sky*), from a screenplay by Brooks and Meehan, the movie classic that became a Broadway sensation is now a comedy-musical movie event.

Jokes Brooks, "First it was a movie, then it was a Broadway musical, now it's going to be a Broadway musical movie. I think the next thing will probably be claymation."

Among the behind-the-scenes talent assembled to bring *The Producers* back to the screen are co-producer AMY HERMAN (*Analyze That*), cinematographers JOHN BAILEY (*As Good as It Gets*) and CHARLES MINSKY (*Pretty Woman*), production designer MARK FRIEDBERG (*Far From Heaven*), costume designer WILLIAM IVEY LONG (Broadway's *Nine, La Cage Aux Folles*) and film editor STEVEN WEISBERG (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*).

FILM SYNOPSIS AND MUSICAL NUMBERS

"The concept is simple," says producer / writer / composer / lyricist Mel Brooks. "They've got to raise a lot more money than they need to put on a show. Then they've got to produce the worst play ever written. So they'll put on a show called *Springtime for Hitler*, which will close the same night, and they can run off to Rio with the rest of the investors' money."

It's 1959, and Broadway is buzzing with some of the theater world's biggest names. Producer Max Bialystock (Nathan Lane), however, is no longer one of them ("Opening Night"). One day, mousy accountant Leo Bloom (Matthew Broderick) shows up at Bialystock's office to do his books and innocently remarks that, under the right circumstances, a dishonest man could make more money producing a flop than a hit show. Immediately, a light bulb goes off in Bialystock's head, and he tries to persuade the reluctant Bloom to join him in his perfect plan to embezzle a fortune by producing a sure-fire Broadway misfire and then skip town with the cash ("We Can Do It"). Unsure, Bloom returns to his dismal job and fantasizes about a much more glamorous life ("I Wanna Be A Producer"). Deciding he's had enough, he seizes the day and becomes Bialystock's partner in crime.

Searching for the *ultimate* bad play, Max and Leo discover “the mother lode,” a musical entitled *Springtime for Hitler—A Gay Romp with Adolf and Eva in Berchesgarten*. They decide to pay the playwright, Franz Liebkind (Will Ferrell), a visit on his Greenwich Village rooftop. Before he will agree to let Bialystock and Bloom produce his play, however, the Nazi-loving Liebkind insists the two would-be producers join him in celebrating the Aryan way of life (“Der Guten Tag Hop Clop”) and forces them to pledge allegiance to Hitler.

Having sealed the deal on what they are convinced is the worst play ever written, Bialystock and Bloom embark upon securing the most appropriately untalented director. Upon entering the piss-elegant apartment of Roger DeBris (Gary Beach) and his common-law assistant Carmen Ghia (Roger Bart), the duo finds that DeBris and company are reluctant to take on such serious subject matter (“Keep It Gay”) until the producers convince them that, in their hands, *Springtime for Hitler* could bring the director the respect and prestige (read: Tony) of which he’s always dreamed.

When blonde Swedish bombshell Ulla (Uma Thurman) shows up at the office looking to audition (“When You Got It, Flaunt It”), Bialystock and Bloom hire her on the spot for the chorus. Until rehearsals, the panting duo agree that she’ll work as their secretary / slash / receptionist.

In order to raise the two million dollars needed to “fund” the play, Bialystock must pay a visit to his demanding benefactors, hundreds of sex-starved little old ladies across Manhattan (“Along Came Bialy”). Meanwhile, the girl-shy Bloom becomes hopelessly smitten with Ulla (“That Face”) and is surprised to find that the attraction is quite mutual.

Auditioning actors to star as the Führer proves frustrating for all involved in the production, particularly the musical’s author—who perfectly demonstrates the way the role should be performed (“Haben Sie Gehurt Das Deutsche Band?”) and proves he’s the only man for the job. Right before the opening night performance, after a lively discussion of theater-world superstitions (“You Never Say Good Luck on Opening Night”), Bialystock and Bloom are horrified when their playwright-turned-leading man literally breaks a leg. The show must go on, however, and luckily director Roger DeBris knows all the character’s lines. In the great tradition of backstage musicals, the starring role in the show goes to this last-minute substitute.

At first, the audience is horrified by *Springtime for Hitler*, but once the leading man appears as a fey Hitler (“Heil Myself”), they realize that this is not a show they should take

seriously and begin to eat it up. When their surefire flop is hailed as a hit, the partners have a serious disagreement about what to do next. Bloom wants them to turn themselves in, while Bialystock has other ideas. As they argue, DeBris and Ghia show up at the office, ready to celebrate, only to have a deranged Liebkind arrive brandishing a gun...eager to kill all of them for denigrating the memory of his beloved Hitler. Hearing gunshots as they arrive on the scene, the police cart Liebkind away. Before they leave, however, they notice two sets of accounting books, one marked “Show to the IRS” and the other marked “Never Show to the IRS.” They promptly arrest Bialystock, but Bloom escapes the raid while hidden behind the office door.

When Ulla enters and finds Bloom hiding, she convinces him to take the money and disappear with her to Rio. In his jail cell, Bialystock is surprised to receive a postcard from Brazil, and it sends him off the deep end (“Betrayed”). At Bialystock’s trial, Bloom and Ulla suddenly appear (“Til Him”), just in time for the judge to pronounce both Bialystock and Bloom guilty. Incarcerated in Sing Sing, they, along with Liebkind, produce a brand new musical with a cast of inmates titled *Prisoners of Love*. Pardoned by the governor “for having, through song and dance, brought joy and laughter into the hearts of every murderer, rapist and sex maniac in Sing Sing,” Bialystock and Bloom take the show to Broadway, where they go on to produce hit after hit after hit.

“There’s something timelessly appealing about this story,” says director / choreographer Stroman. “Like any good musical, each character fulfills all his hopes and dreams. Audiences either see themselves in Leo Bloom, a caterpillar who wants to become a butterfly, or they see themselves as Max Bialystock, a man who was on top and wants to rise to the top again. Our movie also has an endearing love story—the mousy accountant wins the most beautiful woman in the world.”

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

“He finished the song, looked down at me and said, ‘Hello, I’m Mel Brooks.’

And I thought, no matter what happens with this show, it’s going to be a great adventure.”

-Susan Stroman

The idea for a musical version of *The Producers* began in 1998, when music and film impresario David Geffen began to hound Brooks about turning Brooks' 1968 Oscar®-winning film into a stage musical. A great fan of the theater since his Uncle Joe took him to see Cole Porter's *Anything Goes* at the age of nine, Brooks had always had the desire to be a Broadway composer / lyricist. In fact, he had written numerous songs for his own films including "I'm Tired," "Doing the French Mistake" and the title song for *Blazing Saddles*, not to mention "Springtime for Hitler" and "Prisoners of Love" for *The Producers*.

At Geffen's suggestion, Brooks met with Broadway composer Jerry Herman (*La Cage aux Folles, Mame, Hello, Dolly*) to discuss the project. When they got together, Herman was sure he knew of a better candidate to write the original music for *The Producers* and began to play some of the writer's songs. That composer was Brooks.

So Brooks took the suggestion, tackled the songs and asked his old friend and collaborator Meehan (*Spaceballs, To Be or Not To Be*) to co-write the book. Meehan was a Tony-winning writer (*Annie*) and eagerly welcomed the opportunity to co-write a new musical.

When asked to meet with Brooks about the project, five-time Tony Award-winning director / choreographer Susan Stroman recalls, "I got a call saying Mel Brooks wants to meet you. Tonight." So the choreographer of such popular Broadway shows as *Crazy for You, Oklahoma* and *Contact* quickly stopped a rehearsal and went home. There was a knock at the door.

"I knew all of Mel's movies, and I knew all of his lines and I knew everything he'd done...so I was very excited," she recalls.

"I opened the door and there he was, this legend. But instead of speaking, he launched into full voice singing, "That Face" which opens Act Two of *The Producers*.

"He kept singing...he walked past me, all the way down the hallway and jumped on my sofa. He finished the song, looked down at me and said, 'Hello, I'm Mel Brooks.' And I thought, no matter what happens with this show, it's going to be a great adventure," she laughs. "And in fact, it has been one of the greatest times of my life."

Twelve Tony Awards, two national touring companies and three international productions later, Brooks asked Stroman, "If we were to make this show into a movie, what movie would you want to make it like?"

“When she answered, ‘*Singin’ in the Rain*,’” Brooks recalls, “I told her ‘you’ve got the job!’ Because *Singin’ in the Rain* to me is the classic of what we call a head-to-toe musical—where you see the dancers, not just quick cuts to faces or eyes or ears, but you see a beautiful body in motion.”

“When it came to directing advice,” continues Brooks, “I told Susan you must say ‘action’ and then you say ‘cut.’ If you say ‘cut’ first and then ‘action,’ there’ll be no film. I had to explain the rudiments. No, I’m kidding,” he jokes. “I knew immediately that she would take to this. She has an incredible visual gift.”

“Her transition to movies seems just effortless,” observes Matthew Broderick, who has worked with Stroman since the first read-through of the musical in 2000.

“She’s extremely prepared...a very hard worker,” he continues. “You never get to a rehearsal and have to fill the time. She has it all very well planned out so you feel her strength and her smarts all the time.”

Stroman was excited to approach filmmaking. With the eye of a seasoned stage director and choreographer, she loved the introduction of a camera into the mix. She notes, “In the theater, the audience sees everything in a wide shot; on film, I am able to use the close-up to tell the story more immediately and in a more intimate way. Plus, getting a close-up on the humorous faces of Nathan, Matthew, Gary and Roger heightens the comedy even more.”

Jonathan Sanger, who early in his career worked for Brooks as an assistant director on *High Anxiety* before joining him to produce such films under Brooksfilm’s banner as the Academy Award®-nominated *Frances* and *The Elephant Man*, was invited to see the play on Broadway soon after it opened. He knew that the original movie had such a devoted cult following that many fans were reluctant to see it in another version.

“But to my immense surprise,” recalls Sanger, “the musical was even better. So I told Mel that if it winds up becoming a movie again, I’d like to help him produce it. And one day Brooks called and said, ‘Get your track shoes on, and let’s talk about how we can do this on film.’”

Brooks and writing partner Meehan began working on a screenplay. While the structure of a movie is traditionally three acts, Broadway musicals are constructed in only two acts. Meehan explains that just as he and Brooks had taken Brooks’ original three-act screenplay and

fashioned it into a two-act Broadway musical, with the new film he and Brooks “had to take it all apart and reconstruct it all over again.”

Meehan shares, “The big end of Act One is the ‘little old lady land’ with all those ladies in their walkers...and the big rousing dance number. Now that number is in the middle of the picture [“Along Came Bialy”]. We don’t come to a big orgasmic finish to send the curtains down, because the show is still rolling.”

Meehan feels that expanding the production to the big screen gives the production a previously unexplored breadth. “When you take it off the stage and put it in movies, you can do a lot more things in terms of places. This movie doesn’t just take place in offices and in the theaters, it takes place out in Central Park and on Fifth Avenue in New York. It gives it more room to breathe.”

For the film, Brooks wrote two original songs that were not in the Broadway play: “You’ll Find Your Happiness in Rio,” which is briefly heard as background music during the brief glimpses of Leo and Ulla frolicking together in paradise as Max sits in his jail cell; and “There’s Nothing Like a Show on Broadway,” performed by Broderick and Lane and heard over the end credits, with the actors still very much in their characters of Leo and Max—the former, full of unabashed excitement and joy at his newfound career in show business, and the latter, hilariously acidic and world-weary after having to weather decades of the theater’s ups and downs.

“We’re a Broadway story! It would have been heartbreaking not to shoot this movie in New York.”

-Mel Brooks

Along with wanting to retain as much of the original Broadway cast and crew as possible, the filmmakers were adamant about one other thing: the new movie, just as the original 1968 film, would have to be filmed in New York.

It may only be a coincidence, but the first movie musical to film on location in New York City was 1949’s *On the Town*, with its opening scenes at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. So perhaps it was fitting that *The Producers*, set in 1959, would film at the Steiner Studios, a new, state-of-the-art facility at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

In fact, *The Producers* has the distinction of being the first feature film to shoot in the impressive 100,000-square-foot facility. Taking a page from the old MGM musicals, they constructed sets on four of the five stages—including a '50s version of Broadway's historic Forth-fourth Street and Shubert Alley—on an enormous 27,000 square-foot-space with ceilings that are 45 feet high.

“We’re a Broadway story!” exclaims Brooks. “It would have been heartbreaking not to shoot this movie in New York. And here we are in Brooklyn, only eleven and a half blocks away from where I was born and bred. Mostly bred. We were so poor the neighbors had to give birth to me,” he jests.

“To get this movie right, it had to be made by New Yorkers,” suggests production designer Mark Friedberg. “As much as I designed what you see on our Shubert Alley set, there are hundreds and hundreds of hands in the making of it, and every stroke of paint or layer of dust meant significant decisions made by people who are living here in New York.”

Perhaps one of the greatest advantages of filming in New York was the proximity to Broadway's most talented singers and dancers. More than 3,700 dancers auditioned for approximately 350 coveted roles in spectacular production numbers including “Springtime for Hitler,” “Prisoners of Love” and “I Wanna Be A Producer.”

“To have these singers and dancers from Broadway who are so professional, devoted and committed has been a joy,” says Stroman.

William Ivey Long, a Tony-winning costume designer who has been a frequent collaborator of Stroman's jokes, “Every single person that Susan Stroman has ever worked with, and I think she was born on the half-shell from Zeus's imagination, is in this movie. You can walk down our 44th Street set any day and you'll see the best of the best of Broadway here.”

“Matthew said that shooting this on film can be like doing a very quiet Wednesday matinee.”

-Nathan Lane

In contrast to most films that have little or no rehearsal time in advance of shooting, *The Producers* had the benefit of key principals from the musical who have worked together for years. Lane, Broderick, Beach and Bart opened the Broadway show in April 2001, and several have since participated in alternate roles and alternate companies. Lane, for instance, opened the

London production in the role of Bialystock after only a few days' notice. Not long after, he was nominated for and won the prestigious Olivier Award.

“Nathan Lane is a once-in-a-generation Broadway performer,” says co-author Meehan. “He’s in that rare class, someone who comes out on a stage and just mesmerizes you. He has this incredible energy and excitement and great comedy timing.”

“Matthew Broderick, on the other hand,” he continues, “is a kind of a sly humorist who really makes you care about Leo Bloom.”

“What Matthew is able to do is imbue this mousy guy with not only great comic timing but a sense of pathos as well,” says producer Sanger.

“Because the actors are so familiar with the material and the characters, it’s given me the freedom to add layers to what they already know,” Stroman explains. “Matthew and Nathan are natural stage actors, and they’re also natural on film. They know what it’s like to perform for 1,500 people, and they know what it’s like to perform for one camera. I’m very lucky to have them on board.”

Prior to teaming for the Broadway version of *The Producers*, both Lane and Broderick, having started their careers in the theater, managed to carve highly successful careers alternating between stage and screen. The pair had even worked together once before doing the voices for Disney’s animated classic *The Lion King*. Lane was nominated for a Tony Award for his performance as Nathan Detroit in Jerry Zaks’ revival of *Guys and Dolls* and starred in Terrence McNally’s plays *The Lisbon Traviata* and *Love! Valour! Compassion!* before winning the Tony for the revival of *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. He has appeared in such films as *Ironweed*, *Stand by Me*, *Frankie and Johnny*, *Addams Family Values*, *Mousehunt* and, perhaps most memorably, opposite Robin Williams in *The Birdcage*.

Broderick won his first Tony Award for his Broadway debut in Neil Simon’s *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, and went on to win a Tony for his stage musical debut in Jack O’Brien’s revival of Frank Loesser’s *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. Broderick starred in the John Hughes smash *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* and subsequently appeared in such films as *Biloxi Blues*, *Family Business*, *Glory*, *Addicted to Love*, *Inspector Gadget*, *Election*, *You Can Count on Me* and Frank Oz’s recent comedy remake of *The Stepford Wives*.

From the actors’ perspective, the transition from performing their roles in *The Producers* on stage to screen was initially a bit startling. For years, Lane and Broderick had shared the

musical's phenomenal success with wildly enthusiastic, applauding audiences whose laughter often exploded over their lines of dialogue. They had learned to adapt or "put air" between certain sentences as needed for the audience response. Once in front of the cameras, however, that audience of 1,500 people had shrunk to approximately 60 or 70 crew people on set with them.

Lane jokes, "Matthew said that shooting this on film can be like doing a very quiet Wednesday matinee. We were so used to an audience being there, and they can be an active part of the process with a certain rhythm. But you have to let go of all that—to go back to what it is your character wants and needs."

Observing the differences between the theater and film performance, Broderick adds, "Movies are very slow, and you have to have energy when you need it over a three-month period with a lot of waiting around. In a play, you're sort of shot out of a cannon. It's a very different feeling."

On the flip side, two of the principals, Uma Thurman (as Ulla) and Will Ferrell (as Franz), are not only new to the material, but neither of them has ever had the opportunity to sing *and* dance on film before.

Thurman, whose renowned dance routines in *Pulp Fiction* and *Be Cool* with John Travolta—as well as the expertly choreographed martial arts moves in *Kill Bill: Vols. I and II*—gave her confidence as a dancer, explains that she had never done the romantic partner dancing that is one of Stroman's signatures. "Fortunately for me, there was a wonderful dance department on this show, and basically I went into boot camp with them for a couple of months," admits Thurman. "Matthew and I do a kind of Ginger Rogers / Fred Astaire piece, and I also have three other numbers."

Recalls the director, "When I met with Uma, who's almost six feet tall, she asked me, 'Do you think it's okay that I'm so much taller than Nathan and Matthew?' I said 'Absolutely okay! They'll look up to you like a goddess.' Uma also told me that she is of Swedish descent. I hit the jackpot!"

With the dance rehearsals underway, Thurman turned to a task she considered more daunting: singing. "I wasn't really scared of the dancing—that's not so hard for me," she recalls. "But when it came to the singing, our musical director, Patrick Brady, helped me find a voice—

which isn't a recording artist voice—but the good news is that they're not having someone else sing for me, so it couldn't be too bad.”

In fact, musical director Brady was very impressed with her abilities. “She had never had a voice lesson, and she really worked hard at it,” he states. “You should have seen the look on her face when she experienced the live orchestra...it was overwhelming and terrific.”

“She's fearless,” adds Stroman, “and that's a quality that makes a great musical comedy performer. She loves to learn, and she loves the physical challenge of it all.”

When it was time for Will Ferrell to become a song and dance man, he also proved himself a natural talent.

“I had a slight reservation as to how I'd fare with the singing and dancing, but I couldn't resist the part,” says Ferrell, who is a longtime fan of the original movie and the stage show. “It was intimidating at first—in the recording studio with a big orchestra for the pre-record session and everyone listening,” he admits. “But once I got comfortable with it, it was kind of fun. It's a whole different ball of wax for me.”

Broderick laughs, “Yeah, he seemed delighted to wear a German helmet and big black leather coat. He was hilariously funny, he sings great and he totally made the character his own.”

Lane had his own take on Ferrell as Franz Liebkind. “He reminded me of a very awkward sixth grader who just happened to be a Nazi. He was a combination of slightly threatening and a big goofy kid, which was always very funny.”

Gary Beach and Roger Bart, both so memorable in their respective stage roles as Roger DeBris and Carmen Ghia, were thrilled when they heard the news that the stage musical was being made into a movie and that they would be recreating their roles for the movie.

Beach, a Tony nominee for *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* and this past season's revival of *La Cage aux Folles*, won the Tony for his performance as Roger DeBris. Bart, a Tony winner for *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* and a Tony nominee for his performance as Carmen Ghia, co-starred with Broderick in the recent comedy remake of *The Stepford Wives* and can be seen on ABC-TV's hit series *Desperate Housewives*.

“I'm just so happy that they're doing it in such a grand way and that Gary and I are involved,” says Bart.

“The camera has become like another dancer to me. The other day I saw one of the camera crew pass the crane up into space as if he was passing a dancer into the air.”

-Susan Stroman

Stroman, who hails from Delaware, can’t remember a time when her life didn’t have a soundtrack. Raised in a musical household—her father was a piano player—even as a little girl, she would visualize images when listening to music.

“Whether it’s an old standard or rock-and-roll or classical, I’ve always imagined scenarios with hordes of people dancing through my head. It isn’t always relaxing because my mind spins.”

“Storytelling is most important, but when you can also sing your emotions, everything is heightened,” Stroman explains. “And all of these characters get to sing about their wants and needs, so it heightens the whole emotional pitch of the story.”

Mel Brooks’ favorite film of all time is the Astaire-Rogers musical *Top Hat*.

“With Fred Astaire, there was no cutting,” explains Brooks. “The number starts, two people are dancing. The camera can move in a little bit and move back, but there’s no cutting. We want to think it’s a dream, a fantasy. And Stroman knows this.”

Stroman honors the legendary dancers by paying homage to their pairing with *The Producers* number “That Face.” She notes, “Leo Bloom dreams about dancing like Fred Astaire with Ulla as his dream Ginger, and ‘That Face’ represents his dream realized.”

She feels, “Partnering in dance needs both parties to have a gracious personality, patience and respect for one another. Matthew has a charm and vulnerability on-screen that cannot be matched, and Uma is the perfect Swedish secretary / slash / receptionist goddess. I would delight at seeing them spin across the room.”

For Stroman, the greatest challenge in making her first film was adapting to four walls instead of three and expanding the scenes into the enormous stages of Steiner Studios in Brooklyn. She started early with a talented team that would grow to include first assistant director Sam Hoffman, production designer Mark Friedberg, sound mixer Tod Maitland, cinematographer Charles (Chuck) Minsky and editor Steven Weisberg.

“The camera has become like another dancer to me,” she explains. “The other day I saw one of the camera crew pass the crane up into space as if he were passing a dancer into the air.”

During the scenes and the production numbers, the camera would partner the actors as if they were a dance couple musically embraced. If the actor took eight counts to move from left to right, so did the camera. The cameramen loved to shoot to the tempo of the music.”

Stroman, who made use of every inch of space on the stage for the Broadway production, was particularly excited about the opportunities to reconceive the musical numbers for the screen.

In “We Can Do It,” where Bialystock first persuades Bloom to join him in his scheme to produce a flop, the sequence originally took place in Bialystock’s office. For the film, Stroman had the number start in the office...with Bialystock following Bloom fleeing from the office, onto a Times Square street, into a taxi cab and landing in front of the Bethesda Fountain in Central Park.

For “I Want to Be A Producer,” a cavernous turn-of-the-century bank building in lower Manhattan was transformed into a magnificent set for the accounting firm of Whitehall & Marks, where Bloom is one of an army of unhappy accountants in a Kafkaesque workplace. In an elaborate fantasy sequence, what were just six chorus girls in the Broadway version now become 20 dancers in the film.

“What we’ve done is take the original concept of an office into a completely different reality,” shares production designer Mark Friedberg.

As Leo’s fantasy literally “blooms,” the beautiful girls burst from cabinet doors, and a wall of cabinets becomes a staircase. When he dances to the top of the stairs and leaps forward, he and the 20 dancers pass through a portal into “Marquee Heaven.”

Stroman staged the number across three different stylized sets: a shiny black floor with a backdrop that expands like an accordion, a riser of sparkling stairs and a multi-tiered platform that illuminates Bloom’s name in thousands of lights (the latter was inspired by the unique photography of Busby Berkeley films).

“Matthew has a real song and dance man inside him, so I think he really enjoyed learning the new choreography,” adds Stroman.

Cinematographer Minsky, who had never before filmed a musical, was pleased to learn that Stroman had storyboarded every single musical number. It wasn’t long before he and his camera crew learned the rhythm of each scene, making it possible for the camera to move in synch with the dancers.

“Now even the dolly grip knows what the downbeat is because so much is filmed to a count,” he laughs.

If the camera department was new to the elements of a movie musical, so was the sound department, headed by Tod Maitland.

Eager to combine state-of-the-art digital technology with the tried-and-true methodology of period MGM musicals, Maitland and a team of five people worked closely with Stroman and musical director Patrick Brady to prerecord all their vocals with an impressive 70-piece orchestra prior to the start of filming.

Once shooting was underway, the principals would have the option to perform live or rely on “playback,” a method of recording music and voice tracks in advance of the shoot day so that it can be played back during filming.

Sometimes, an actor will opt to sing the song live as he or she is filming a scene. “When you give the actor the opportunity to go live, they’re not locked into the one performance they gave during prerecords,” explains Maitland. “And sometimes that gives them the freedom to relax and create some great ‘takes.’ Then again, on this show, there are some big dance numbers that are very rigorous. On these, there’s no way you could really sing and dance.”

Brady, the musical conductor of *The Producers* since its opening on Broadway, also served as the film’s orchestra conductor, vocal arranger and resident lip-synch police, carefully scrutinizing each actor’s performance so that all the performers’ vocals were perfectly in synch.

For “Springtime for Hitler” and “Prisoners of Love,” the filmmakers enlisted veteran lighting designers Jules Fisher and Peggy Eisenhauer, who individually and together have been responsible for lighting many of Broadway’s biggest hits, along with countless live concert shows.

Eisenhauer explains, “One of the things we’re able to provide is a moving lighting landscape that works with the choreography. What we do is change the quality, the composition and the colors, all live for the camera. So it’s almost like a performance of light that unfolds alongside the dancers.”

“Along Came Bialy” now features more than 50 little old ladies with walkers dancing in Central Park and across Fifth Avenue. “There’s nothing like blocking off traffic on Fifth Avenue for six hours in the middle of the day,” Minsky quips.

When the company moved onto the streets for a week in April, the stylized world that had been carefully crafted on the stages followed the production into the city, with its colorful trees and floral blossoms.

“It’s not just Central Park,” notes Minsky. “It’s our version of Central Park.”

There were other opportunities to cinematically expand moments from the stage version. For example, when the incarcerated Bialystock receives Bloom’s postcard from Rio, Brooks and Meehan were inspired by such classic Donen and Kelly movie musicals as *On the Town* and *Singin’ in the Rain* to fashion silent vignettes which illustrated in somewhat exaggerated style Bloom and Ulla enjoying their new life together in paradise. Later, as part of Bialystock’s tour de force soliloquy, “Betrayed,” the songwriter even borrowed images from the Gary Cooper film *Sergeant York* (his first name was Alvin) for a bit where Bialystock reminisces about his childhood, only to discover that it isn’t his past that he is remembering.

A longtime fan of stage and movie musicals, producer Sanger had always felt disappointed that he didn’t live in the era when the big studio musicals were made. “I hope that *The Producers* will help others to get made,” he says.

“Movie people are used to measuring things in feet and inches, but now we measure them in bars and notes. Stroman will tell me that she needs a 12-bar hallway. And that’s the way it’s been.”

-Mark Friedberg

When Sanger and co-producer Amy Herman first began to scout locations for the film and hire a crew for a February 2005 start date, Susan Stroman suggested that this particular production be a hybrid of people from both the theater and film worlds. Rather than a culture clash, the worlds of theater and movies seemed to blend together seamlessly.

“I feel like we’ve had the best of Broadway and the best of New York movie-making come together,” says Stroman. “It has been a perfect cross-fertilization of both mediums. We’ve learned from one another and even enjoyed the different terminology. Eventually, the cameramen learned to say, ‘Please move downstage or move upstage.’”

Echoes production designer Friedberg, “Movie people are used to measuring things in feet and inches, but now we measure them in bars and notes. Stroman will tell me that she needs a 12-bar hallway. And that’s the way it’s been.”

Another example of the theater-movie collaboration of the production was the way they cast the stand-ins for principal actors. Since stand-ins literally take the physical place of performers during elaborate lighting set-ups and rehearsal periods, Stroman suggested that the production hire people who were singer-dancers and familiar with the play. Their ability to move gracefully and learn the dance routines was an invaluable time-saver. The movie stand-ins for Nathan, Matthew and Uma have, in fact, all performed their parts on the New York stage or in a touring company of the production.

Friedberg says, “To have our two worlds merge this way has been special on both sides. Those of us in the film world have really come to appreciate the work ethic and enthusiasm and skills of all the people who have been working on the Broadway side.”

“This is Singin’ in the Rain. It’s The Band Wagon, Royal Wedding and Cover Girl! It’s all the great Hollywood musicals come to life.”

-Mel Brooks

As the movie takes place in 1959, a contemporary Forty-fourth Street would no longer resemble the period, and it would have been impossible to close down city blocks or theaters in the middle of the city’s busy theater district adjacent to Times Square. With the help of a team that included art director Peter Rogness and set decorator Ellen Christiansen, production designer Mark Friedberg designed a stylized Forty-fourth Street that includes Shubert Alley and a variety of iconic New York theater marquees, including the Shubert Theater and the St. James Theater, as well as the legendary Sardi’s restaurant and even the delivery dock of *The New York Times*.

Brooks took one of the first strolls on the set and admits he was taken by surprise. “When I first walked onto Stage 3, I said ‘Oh my God, this is incredible! This is *Singin’ in the Rain*. It’s *The Band Wagon*, *Royal Wedding* and *Cover Girl!* It’s all the great Hollywood musicals come to life.’ I needed a Kleenex...had to blow my nose it was so thrilling,” he shares.

“It was very emotional,” agrees Stroman. “This is like theater heaven...so all of our day players, dancers who came to New York with a dream to work on Broadway, they became very

emotional when they walk on the street and learn that they'll be dancing in front of Sardi's and Shubert Alley."

Among the many unique discoveries that Friedberg made when designing the Forty-fourth Street buildings was the importance of doors to director Stroman. She describes that in order to have certain jokes transfer from the stage to screen, you have to change how the set flows.

"It's true," laughs Stroman. "The doors and the floors are very important in a musical. They're not as important in a film because people enter 'frame.' But for a musical on stage, doors often punctuate the comedy."

"Max will say a joke and slam the door," she explains. "Or Leo and Ulla will be kissing and the door will open and they almost get caught. Franz Liebkind falls down the stairs and yells 'I broke my leg!' and Bialystock shuts the door. Sometimes it's not funny if the door opens from left to right; it may be funnier the other way. So I've worked closely with Mark on all of these doors."

Tony Award-winning costume designer William Ivey Long suggests that working on the movie has been like "a graduate course in film design. Because I'm learning from the production designer and the sound designer and I'm asking a million questions," he explains. "It's as if I'm being paid to take this great graduate course in satire and magic."

Among the differences he observes between theater and film may be costume "wearability." When designing for stage actors and dancers who may appear in hundreds, sometimes thousands, of live performances, the costumes simply need to hold up longer than an outfit that is needed for a day or two of filming. That may be one of the reasons why Long had so much fun designing a wardrobe for the statuesque Thurman.

"As Ulla, Uma gets to sashay a bit. But she doesn't have to do eight shows a week for a year or two on Broadway, so we've made things skintight. There's nothing between her and these clothes...Perfume, maybe," he laughs.

Thurman returns the compliment with "William approaches it like an artist. He does beautiful paintings of you as the character."

Ulla's dazzling blue dresses, one a deep turquoise and the other a crystal blue evening gown, drew applause from the crew when Thurman first made her arrival on the set.

But in contrast to Ulla's sexy, romantic wardrobe, Long also designed the navy blue costumes for the little old ladies whose checks bankroll all of Bialystock's productions. "Honestly, they're all based on my great Aunt Mary from Baltimore," Long explains. "She wore this lace dress that had a little capelet sewn in. So as a child, I was always waiting for her to fly."

Adapting Bloom's imaginary showgirls from stage to screen was also a kick for Long. "Twenty beautiful girls wearing nothing but pearls are actually wearing about 20 pounds of nothing but pearls," he comments. "I made a nude leotard for each lady, and then I drew a sort of pearl corset on them, with all the jewels sewn in place. It's totally see-through. So it may look light as a feather, but it's actually a lot of pearls."

It took an army of dancers, actors, musicians, designers, crew members and Broadway lovers to bring *The Producers* to life on the screen. Though the beloved characters have lived in his head for almost forty years, Brooks is thrilled to once again bring his brainchild to audiences in yet another incarnation. In the words of Max Bialystock, "Worlds are turned on such thoughts."

Brooks concludes, "Life is often very difficult and very hard to live through. But for two hours you really can forget your worries. You really can live in this delicious cloud of musical comedy."

Universal Pictures and Columbia Pictures present A Brooksfilm Production: Nathan Lane, Matthew Broderick, Uma Thurman and Will Ferrell in *The Producers* with Gary Beach, Roger Bart, Jon Lovitz. The film's costume designer is William Ivey Long, and the co-producer is Amy Herman. Mark Friedberg serves as the production designer and Steven Weisberg is the editor. John Bailey, ASC and Charles Minsky, ASC are the directors of photography. Choreography is by Susan Stroman. Music and lyrics are by Mel Brooks. *The Producers* is produced by Mel Brooks and Jonathan Sanger with a screenplay by Mel Brooks & Thomas Meehan. The film is directed by Susan Stroman.

SOUNDTRACK TO THE PRODUCERS

Featuring vocal performances by Nathan Lane, Matthew Broderick, Uma Thurman, Will Ferrell, Gary Beach and Roger Bart, *The Producers* original soundtrack recording was released by Sony Classical on Tuesday, November 22, 2005. In addition to featuring most of the hit songs from the stage production, including “We Can Do It,” “I Wanna Be a Producer,” “Keep It Gay,” “Along Came Bialy,” “That Face” and, of course, “Springtime for Hitler,” the soundtrack includes two brand new songs written by Mel Brooks especially for the film: “There’s Nothing Like a Show on Broadway,” performed over the end titles by Lane and Broderick, and “You’ll Find Your Happiness in Rio.”

Brooks reflects, “I’ve never been happier than when I was writing the musical score of *The Producers*. “One song after another tumbled out of my head in what was the most soul-satisfying experience of my career. And in my less than humble opinion, I must say that it turned out to be surprisingly good.”

As a second end-title track, Ferrell has recorded “The Hop-Clop Goes On,” a “power ballad” arrangement of his character’s song from the show, “Der Guten Tag Hop-Clop.” Additionally, the score has been rearranged for larger musical forces by Douglas Besterman, who won a Tony for his orchestrations of the stage production.

Sony Classical made the original cast recording—which went on to win a Grammy for Best Musical Show Album—and also produced a documentary film about the recording session, *Recording The Producers: A Musical Romp with Mel Brooks*, that won a Grammy for Best Longform Music Video.

ABOUT THE CAST

NATHAN LANE (Max Bialystock) is an equally successful actor on stage, screen and television who reprises the role he created in the smash hit Broadway musical at the St. James Theater in New York. He is starring in Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple*, which opened on Broadway on October 27, 2005.

His wildly acclaimed portrayal of Max Bialystock won Lane the Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Tony Awards for Best Actor in a musical. In addition, Lane won the Olivier Award for his performance in *The Producers* in London. Lane also recently starred in Stephen Sondheim's adaptation of Aristophanes' *The Frogs*, for which he wrote the book.

Film audiences will remember Lane's triumphant performance that helped catapult Mike Nichols' *The Birdcage*, into a major blockbuster. His portrayal of Albert earned Lane a Screen Actors Guild Award and a Golden Globe nomination. He also won great acclaim as the voice of Timon the Meerkat in the smash hit film *The Lion King*. Lane has also starred in such box office hits as *Stuart Little* and *Mousehunt*.

Broadway audiences have long embraced Lane as one of the shining lights of the theater. In 1996, his performance in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, directed by Jerry Zaks, earned him the Tony, the Outer Critics Circle and the Drama Desk Awards.

Among other Broadway credits are Buzz in Terrence McNally's *Love! Valour! Compassion!* (Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Obie Awards); Max Prince in Neil Simon's *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*; Nathan Detroit in *Guys and Dolls* (Drama Desk & Outer Critics Circle Awards, Tony Nomination); *Present Laughter* (Drama Desk nomination) and *On Borrowed Time* with George C. Scott; *Merlin*; *The Wind in the Willows*; *Some Americans Abroad* and the national tour of Neil Simon's *Broadway Bound*. Early in the 2001 Broadway season, Lane starred in the Roundabout Theater Company's revival of *The Man Who Came to Dinner*.

Off-Broadway credits include Terrence McNally's *Lips Together, Teeth Apart, The Lisbon Traviata* (Drama Desk and Lucille Lortel Awards) and *Bad Habits at the Manhattan Theatre Club*; *The Film Society* and *In A Pig's Valise* at Second Stage; *The Common Pursuit*; *She Stoops to Conquer at the Roundabout*; and *Measure for Measure*, directed by Joseph Papp at the NYSF. Lane starred off Broadway in Jon Robin Baitz' acclaimed *Mizlansky/Zilinsky*, and he

played Dalton Trumbo in the off-Broadway play *Trumbo*. Most recently, Lane starred in Huntington Theatre Company's staging of *Butley*.

Lane has also been recognized with two Daytime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Performer in an Animated Program for his work in Disney's *The Lion King's Timon and Pumbaa* and *Teacher's Pet*.

Additional film credits include: *Isn't She Great?*; *Trixie*; *Love's Labours Lost*; *Addams Family Values*; *Life with Mikey*; *Frankie and Johnny*; *He Said, She Said*; *Ironweed*; *The Lemon Sisters*; *Jeffrey*; *Nicholas Nickelby* and *Win a Date with Tad Hamilton!*

Lane's television appearances include Terrence McNally's *The Last Mile*, Hallmark Hall of Fame's presentation of *The Boys Next Door*, and the recent *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*.

MATTHEW BRODERICK (Leo Bloom) is a two-time Tony Award-winning stage actor and instantly recognizable film presence. In *The Producers*, Broderick reprises his Tony-nominated performance from the smash hit Broadway musical. He is starring in Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple*, which opened on Broadway on October 27, 2005.

Broderick starred in the critically acclaimed *You Can Count on Me* opposite Laura Linney. He also earned considerable acclaim starring opposite Reese Witherspoon in the critically lauded and Independent Spirit Award-winning political satire *Election*, directed by Alexander Payne.

Broderick starred in the smash hit *Godzilla*, directed by Roland Emmerich (*Independence Day*). He also starred opposite Meg Ryan in the hit romantic comedy *Addicted to Love*, directed by Griffin Dunne, and in the darkly comic *The Cable Guy*, opposite Jim Carrey. He also starred in the smash hit *Inspector Gadget*.

A New York native, Broderick made his professional stage debut opposite his father, James Broderick, at age 17 in a production of *On Valentine's Day*. His performance in Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy* won him the Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Supporting Actor. Broderick won his first Tony Award for Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs* and starred in the play's sequel, *Biloxi Blues*. He won his second Tony for his role as J. Pierrepont Finch in the Broadway revival of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. He also appeared opposite Ellen Burstyn, Hallie Foote and Polly Holliday in *Death of a Papa*.

Broderick has starred in such blockbuster movies as *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, *Glory*, *War Games* and Disney's *The Lion King*, as the adult voice of Simba. Additional credits include *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*, *Biloxi Blues*, *Max Dugan Returns*, *Project X*, *On Valentines Day*, *Torch Song Trilogy*, *Family Business*, *The Freshman*, *The Night We Never Met*, *The Stepford Wives* and *The Last Shot*.

In addition to his stage, screen and Broadway credits, he has appeared in the Showtime film *Master Harold...and the Boys* and received an Emmy nomination for the TNT production of David Mamet's *A Life in the Theater*, in which he starred opposite Jack Lemmon.

Broderick resides in New York with his wife, Sarah Jessica Parker, and son, James Wilke Broderick.

UMA THURMAN (Ulla) has proven herself to be one of the world's most versatile young actresses by playing a variety of compelling characters. The daughter of a psychologist and a college professor, Thurman was raised in Amherst, Massachusetts, and Woodstock, New York. She attended a preparatory school in New England, where at 15 she was discovered by two New York agents. At 16 she transferred to the Professional Children's School in New York City to pursue an acting career.

Thurman's entrance onto the mainstream film scene began with *Johnny Be Good*, opposite Anthony Michael Hall. But it was her role as the goddess Venus in Terry Gilliam's 1988 fantasy *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* which brought her international attention. This striking and versatile actress went on to receive critical acclaim for her portrayal of a virginal 18th century convent girl, Cécile de Volanges, seduced by John Malkovich in Stephen Frears' *Dangerous Liaisons*. The following year she starred opposite Fred Ward and Maria de Medeiros in Philip Kaufman's *Henry & June* playing the neurotic and exotic bisexual spouse of Henry Miller. She then played Daphne McBain, one of a trio of Dabney Coleman's spoiled children in the comedy *Where the Heart Is*, directed by John Boorman. In 1991, Thurman starred opposite Richard Gere and Kim Basinger as Diana, a conniving therapy patient in Phil Joanou's thriller *Final Analysis*. She then reunited with Malkovich in the thriller *Jennifer 8*, playing Andy Garcia's blind girlfriend, Helena. In *Mad Dog and Glory*, she played a barmaid who becomes an indentured servant to Robert De Niro for saving Bill Murray's life. Her most eccentric movie to date is Gus Van Sant's film *Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*, in which she played Sissy Hankshaw, a big-thumbed, bisexual hippie hitchhiker.

In 1996, Thurman received an Academy Award® nomination for Quentin Tarantino's critically lauded *Pulp Fiction*, in which she played Mia Wallace, a sexy and comedic mobster's wife. Later that year, she was seen in the period romance *A Month by the Lake* with Vanessa Redgrave and the contemporary romance *Beautiful Girls*, directed by Ted Demme. Thurman next appeared in *The Truth About Cats & Dogs*, *Batman & Robin*, *Gattaca* opposite Ethan Hawke, *Les Misérables* with Liam Neeson and *The Avengers*. In the spring of 1999, she made her stage debut in an updated version of Molière's *The Misanthrope* at the Classic Stage Company in New York.

Her most recent films include Woody Allen's *Sweet and Lowdown*, opposite Sean Penn and Samantha Morton; *Vatel*, opposite Gérard Depardieu and Tim Roth; the Merchant/Ivory film *The Golden Bowl*, with Nick Nolte, Angelica Huston and Jeremy Northam; and *Tape* with Ethan Hawke and Robert Sean Leonard, for which she was nominated for an Independent Spirit Award as Best Supporting Actress. She also starred in both installments of Quentin Tarantino's bloody action film, *Kill Bill* (for Vol. II she was nominated for a Golden Globe), as well as in John Woo's thriller *Paycheck*. Thurman also starred in the HBO film *Hysterical Blindness* with Juliette Lewis and Gena Rowlands, which she also produced. She won the 2003 Golden Globe for Best Actress in a Miniseries or a Motion Picture Made for Television for her portrayal of Debby Miller and was nominated for a SAG Award. Other recent projects include MGM's *Be Cool*, a sequel to the hit *Get Shorty*, opposite John Travolta.

Thurman's latest film, *Prime*, in which she stars opposite Meryl Streep, opened October 28, 2005.

WILL FERRELL (Franz Liebkind) completed his seventh and final season on the legendary NBC late-night hit *Saturday Night Live* in 2002, having taken the nation by storm during "Indecision 2000" by impersonating President George W. Bush on the show. Some of his most memorable *SNL* characters include Craig the Spartan Cheerleader, the musical middle school teacher Marty Culp and Tom Wilkins, the hyperactive co-host of *Morning Latte*. Among his many impressions are Janet Reno, Alex Trebek, Neil Diamond and the late, great Chicago Cubs sportscaster Harry Caray. His work on *SNL* garnered him two prestigious Emmy Award nominations in 2001 for Outstanding Individual Performance in a Variety or Music Program and for Outstanding Writing for a Variety, Music or Comedy Program.

In the feature film world, Ferrell helped bring in big numbers for *Old School* for DreamWorks Pictures and *Road Trip* for director Todd Phillips. *Old School* follows three men who are dissatisfied with their lives. In an effort to recapture the youthful feelings of their college days, they move in together in a large house near their old college campus that quickly becomes the hub of the campus party activity. Ferrell starred opposite Vince Vaughn and Luke Wilson.

Ferrell opened his first lead feature, *Elf* (for New Line Cinema and director Jon Favreau), at number one for two weekends in a row. The film made the ranks as the seventh highest grossing film of 2003, with current worldwide box office earnings at over \$218 million. In the film, he plays a man who is raised from infancy as an elf after accidentally falling into Santa's gift sack during Christmas and stars alongside Bob Newhart, James Caan, Zooey Deschanel and Edward Asner as Santa Claus.

In the summer of 2004, Ferrell starred in the comedy *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy* for DreamWorks Pictures, which grossed over \$85 million domestically. Ferrell co-wrote the script with *SNL* writer Adam McKay. Judd Apatow (*Freaks and Geeks*) produced, with David O. Russell (*Three Kings*) executive producing. Ferrell portrayed Ron Burgundy, a 1970s anchorman with an inflated ego who becomes threatened by the arrival of an ambitious female newscaster who, unlike Burgundy, has mastered journalism.

In March 2005, Ferrell starred in the Woody Allen feature *Melinda and Melinda*, as part of an ensemble cast including Josh Brolin, Brooke Smith, Amanda Peet, Zak Orth, Wallace Shawn, Chloë Sevigny, Jonny Lee Miller, Radha Mitchell, Gene Saks and Vinessa Shaw for Fox Searchlight.

Next Ferrell was seen in the May 2005 comedy *Kicking And Screaming* for Universal Pictures. In the film he played a man who coaches his young son's soccer team. The film follows him as he and his team are pitted against his father's (Robert Duvall) and its star player—his son from a new marriage. He also starred in this summer's feature-length remake of *Bewitched*, with Nicole Kidman.

At the end of the year, Will Ferrell will be seen in the drama *Winter Passing* with Ed Harris, Zooey Deschanel and Amelia Warner. The film tells the story of a young woman who returns to her estranged father's home to discover that a strange cast of characters has moved in.

Ferrell has co-starred in two ensemble comedies. In the fashion-world-themed *Zoolander*, he starred opposite Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson—playing Mugatu, an over-the-top fashion designer. In Dimensions Films' Kevin Smith-helmed, *Jay And Silent Bob Strike Back* he

played an ambitious park ranger. In 2000, Ferrell graced the big screen in the Paramount Pictures/ SNL feature *The Ladies Man* starring SNL castmate Tim Meadows. Prior to *The Ladies Man*, he starred in *Superstar* for Paramount opposite another SNL castmate, Molly Shannon; the TriStar/Phoenix Pictures Nixon parody *Dick*; and in the Paramount comedy, *A Night at the Roxbury*, which he co-wrote with castmate Chris Kattan and Steve Koran. Ferrell debuted as a feature film star in the Jay Roach hit *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*.

Raised in Irvine, California, Ferrell attended the University of Southern California and graduated with a degree in sports information. Upon graduation, he worked as a sportscaster on a weekly show broadcast over a local cable channel. Soon after, he enrolled in acting classes and stand-up comedy workshops at a nearby community college. Ultimately, he was asked to join the esteemed comedy/improv group The Groundlings after just one year of training. It was at The Groundlings that Ferrell was discovered for *Saturday Night Live*.

GARY BEACH (Roger DeBris), as the flamboyant director, takes his award-winning role from the Broadway stage to the screen.

A native of Alexandria, Virginia, and a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts, Beach received 2001 Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards for his performance as Roger DeBris in Mel Brooks' smash *The Producers*. He also created the role of Lumiere in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, winning both Tony and Ovation award nominations.

Other Broadway credits include *Annie*, *Doonesbury*, *The Moony Shapiro Songbook*, *Broadway Bash* and *Sweet Adeline (Encores!)*, *Something's Afoot* and *1776*.

Beach appeared in the original Los Angeles productions of both *Beauty and the Beast* and *Les Misérables* and toured nationally with the James Kirkwood comedy *Legends!* starring real-life legends Mary Martin and Carol Channing. Regionally, Beach appeared in *Closer Than Ever* (LA premiere), *Lend Me a Tenor*, *She Loves Me* (Comet Award) and *Of Thee I Sing* (Helen Hayes nomination).

Television credits include 2003 Kennedy Center Honors (where he portrayed Mrs. Wiggins honoring his friend, Carol Burnett); *Recording The Producers*; *Queer as Folk*; *The Jamie Foxx Show*; *Murder, She Wrote*; *Cheers*; *Sisters* and so on. His film work includes *Defending Your Life* and *Man of the Century*.

Recordings include *The Producers*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Home for the Holidays*, *Les*

Misérables (symphonic version) and *Sondheim at the Movies*.

Currently, Beach has returned to *The Producers* on Broadway, where he is reprising his role as Roger.

ROGER BART (Carmen Ghia) is a gifted actor whose tremendous presence extends to both the small and big screens, as well as to the stage.

Currently, Bart can be seen as George Williams, the menacing pharmacist trying to seduce Bree Van De Kamp (Marcia Cross' character), on ABC's hit drama *Desperate Housewives*.

Bart is no stranger to the character of Carmen Ghia, having originated the role in the Broadway production of *The Producers*, for which he received Tony and Drama Desk nominations.

Additional film roles include Jeff Garlin's independent comedy *I Want Someone to Eat Cheese With* and Paramount Pictures' *The Stepford Wives*. Bart received critical acclaim for his hilarious role as the gay Stepford wife. The role was created for Bart based on his flamboyant role in the Broadway production of *The Producers*. Other films include *The Insider*, starring Al Pacino and Russell Crowe, Disney's *Hercules* (singing voice of Young Hercules), and *Lady and the Tramp II* (singing voice of Scamp).

On Broadway, Bart received the 1999 Tony and Drama Desk Awards for Best Featured Actor in a Musical as Snoopy in the revival of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, directed by Michael Mayer. Other Broadway and first national touring credits include *The Frogs*, starring opposite Nathan Lane, *Triumph of Love*, *King David*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, *The Secret Garden*, *Big River* and *The Who's Tommy*.

Television credits include *Bram and Alice*, directed by James Burrows; *Law & Order*; *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* and *The George Carlin Show*.

A native of New Jersey, Bart currently divides his time between New York and Los Angeles.

JON LOVITZ (Mr. Marks) gained notoriety as a cast member on *Saturday Night Live* between 1985 and 1990. Since then, he has starred in over 30 feature films including *A League of Their Own*, *City Slickers II: The Legend of Curly's Gold*, *Rat Race* and *The Wedding Singer*.

He voiced the title character of the cartoon *The Critic* and has done recurring voices on *The Simpsons*; dolls have been based on two of his characters.

Lovitz began doing stand-up two years ago and can be found working Laugh Factory audiences on Wednesday and Thursday nights in Los Angeles. Most recently, Lovitz filmed *Southland Tales* for director Richard Kelly. He may also be seen in the upcoming film, *The Benchwarmers*, starring opposite Rob Schneider, David Spade and Jon Heder.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

SUSAN STROMAN (Director, Choreography by) is a renowned and highly awarded Director and Choreographer in the theater. She received the American Choreography Award for her work in Columbia Pictures' feature film *Center Stage*. Stroman directed and choreographed the Broadway production of *The Producers*, winner of a record-making 12 Tony Awards, including Best Direction and Best Choreography.

She co-created, directed and choreographed the groundbreaking musical *Contact* for Lincoln Center Theater, winning the 2000 Tony Award for Best Choreography, as well as Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Lucille Lortel Awards and a 2003 Emmy Award for *Live at Lincoln Center*. Other Broadway credits include *Oklahoma!*, *Thou Shalt Not*, *The Music Man* (Outer Critics Circle Award), *Crazy for You* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, Olivier Awards), *Showboat* (Tony, Outer Critics Circle Awards), *Big, Steel Pier* and *Picnic*. Off-Broadway productions include *And The World Goes 'Round* (Outer Critics Circle Award) and *Flora the Red Menace*. Stroman also directed and choreographed *The Frogs* for Lincoln Center, with music by Stephen Sondheim and a new book by Nathan Lane.

She choreographed Madison Square Garden's annual spectacular event *A Christmas Carol* (Outer Critics Circle Award), directed by Mike Ockrent. For New York City Opera, she choreographed *Don Giovanni*, *A Little Night Music* and *110 in the Shade*. Stroman created *Double Feature*, a full-length ballet for the New York City Ballet, featuring the music of Irving Berlin and Walter Donaldson. She has created the ballets *Blossom Got Kissed* for the New York City Ballet's 50th Anniversary season and *But Not For Me* for the Martha Graham Company. Her choreography received an Emmy nomination for the HBO presentation *Liza – Stepping Out at Radio City Music Hall*, starring Liza Minnelli. Other television credits include *An Evening*

with the Boston Pops—A Tribute to Leonard Bernstein and co-conceiver/choreographer for PBS' *Sondheim—a Celebration at Carnegie Hall*.

Stroman is the recipient of a record four Astaire Awards, and holds a doctorate from the University of Delaware.

MEL BROOKS (Produced by, Screenplay by, Music and Lyrics by) is a renowned director, producer, writer and actor—the creator of such comedy film classics as *Blazing Saddles*, *Young Frankenstein*, *High Anxiety* and *Silent Movie*.

Brooks received three 2001 Tony Awards for *The Producers*: Best Score, Best Book of a Musical and Best Musical. In addition, he won two 2001 Grammy Awards: Best Musical Show Album for *The Producers* and Best Long Form Music Video for *Recording The Producers—A Musical Romp with Mel Brooks*, as well as the 2005 Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Musical.

Brooks entered television during its 'Golden Age,' beginning as a writer for Sid Caesar on *Your Show of Shows* in 1951. In 1955 and 1957, he received Emmy Award nominations (with others) for Best Comedy Writing for *Caesar's Hour*, and in 1956, he was nominated (with others) for Best Writing for a Variety or Situation Comedy.

In 1952, he wrote sketches for Leonard Sillman's Broadway smash-hit revue *New Faces of 1952*, and in 1957, together with Joe Darion, he wrote the book for the Broadway musical *Shinbone Alley*, which starred Eartha Kitt. In 1962, he wrote the book for the Broadway musical *All-American*, starring Ray Bolger.

In the '60s, Brooks teamed up with Carl Reiner to write and perform *The 2000 Year Old Man* albums, which became immediate bestsellers. In 1960 and 1961, Brooks and Reiner received Grammy Award nominations for Best Spoken Word: Comedy for *2000 Years* and for Best Comedy Performance for *2000 and One Years*. In 1997, Brooks and Reiner teamed up again for *The 2000 Year Old Man in the Year 2000*. Both a book and CD were released, the CD winning a Grammy Award in 1998 for Best Spoken Word: Comedy.

Brooks wrote and narrated *The Critic*, a short satire on avant-garde art films, for which he won the Academy Award® for Best Animated Short Subject in 1964. In the following year, he teamed up with Buck Henry and created *Get Smart*, the long running television show starring Don Adams as Agent 86. Brooks received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing

Achievement in a Comedy-Variety in 1967 for *The Sid Caesar, Imogene Coca, Carl Reiner, Howard Morris Special*.

In 1968, he wrote and directed his first feature film, *The Producers*, starring Zero Mostel and Gene Wilder, which earned him an Academy Award® for Best Original Screenplay. He then went on to create a remarkable string of hit comedies: in 1970, he wrote, directed and acted in *The Twelve Chairs*; in 1974, he co-wrote, directed and acted in *Blazing Saddles* and was nominated, along with John Morris, for Best Title Song, “Blazing Saddles”; in 1974, he co-wrote and directed *Young Frankenstein*; in 1976, he co-wrote, directed and starred in *Silent Movie*; in 1977, he co-wrote, directed, produced and starred in *High Anxiety*; in 1981, he wrote, directed, produced and starred in *History of the World, Part I*; in 1983, he produced and starred in *To Be or Not to Be*; in 1987, he co-wrote, directed, produced and starred in the hit sci-fi spoof, *Spaceballs*; in 1991, he co-wrote, directed, produced and starred in *Life Stinks*; in 1993, he co-wrote, directed, produced and starred in *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*; in 1995, he co-wrote, directed, produced and starred in *Dracula: Dead and Loving It*.

For three successive seasons, 1997-1999, Brooks won Emmy Awards for his role as Uncle Phil on the hit comedy show, *Mad About You*.

His visionary film company, Brooksfilms Limited, founded in 1980, has produced some of America’s most distinguished films. Among them are: David Lynch’s *The Elephant Man*, David Cronenberg’s *The Fly*, Graeme Clifford’s *Frances*, Richard Benjamin’s *My Favorite Year*, and David Jones’ *84 Charing Cross Road*, for which Brooks’ wife, Anne Bancroft, won the British Academy Award® opposite Sir Anthony Hopkins.

Brooks is in an elite group with Helen Hayes, John Gielgud, Rita Moreno, Audrey Hepburn, Marvin Hamlisch and Mike Nichols as only one of seven artists/entertainers to earn all four major entertainment prizes—the Tony, the Emmy, the Grammy and the Oscar®.

THOMAS MEEHAN (Screenplay by) is an award-winning writer who has worked in film, television and the theater, and recently wrote the book for an original opera based on George Orwell’s *1984*.

Meehan won the 2003 Tony Award for *Hairspray* as well as the 2001 Tony Award for co-writing the book for *The Producers*. He received his first Tony Award in 1977 for *Annie*, also

his first Broadway show, and has since written the books for the musicals *I Remember Mama*, *Ain't Broadway Grand* and *Annie Warbucks*.

In addition, he is a long-time contributor of humor to *The New Yorker*; an Emmy Award-winning writer of television comedy; and a collaborator on a number of screenplays, including Mel Brooks' *Spaceballs* and *To Be or Not to Be*. He and his wife, Carolyn, divide their time between a home in Nantucket and an apartment in Greenwich Village—near which she owns and presides over the long-running and near-legendary children's store, Peanut Butter & Jane. Meehan is a member of the Council of the Dramatists Guild.

JONATHAN SANGER (Produced by) has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with Mel Brooks, having produced both *The Elephant Man* (recipient of eight Oscar® nominations) and *Frances* (Oscar® nominations for Jessica Lange and Kim Stanley) for Brooksfilm.

Coming up through the ranks as an assistant director, Sanger has moved easily between producing and directing. He made his directorial debut with *Code Name: Emerald*, a World War II spy drama for NBC's feature film division, starring Ed Harris, Max Von Sydow and Eric Stoltz. That same year, he produced *The Doctor and the Devils*, starring Jonathan Price, Timothy Dalton and Twiggy. In 1986, he executive produced *Flight of the Navigator* for Walt Disney Productions, which received the Best Picture Award from the Academy of Family Films and Television.

In 1987, Sanger formed Chanticleer Films and created The Discovery Program, a program designed to present showcase opportunities to film industry professionals who wish to cross over into directing. Forty-two short films have been produced to date—including the Academy Award®-winning *Ray's Male Heterosexual Dance Hall* as well as the 1992 Academy Award® winner *Session Man*. Additionally, Chanticleer received seven more Academy Award® nominations and all of The Discovery Program shorts have won awards at international film festivals.

Sanger's directing credits include such episodic television shows as *Twin Peaks*, *Wiseguy* and *L.A. Law*. He wrote and directed the short film *Peacemaker* with Lucas Haas for PBS' American Playhouse and has directed such television movies as *Children of the Bride* for CBS, *Chance of a Lifetime*, *Just My Imagination* (NBC) and *Obsessed* (ABC).

He executive produced *Lush Life*, a movie for Showtime starring Jeff Goldblum and Forest Whitaker, and directed *Down Came A Blackbird*, starring Laura Dern, Raul Julia and Vanessa Redgrave for Showtime, which was nominated for three Cable Ace awards.

In 1996, Sanger was hired by Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner (C/W Productions) to executive produce and second-unit direct their feature *Without Limits*, written and directed by Robert Towne. Subsequently, he re-teamed with C/W Productions and supervised production on *Mission: Impossible II*.

In 2000, Sanger produced (with Ed Elbert) his first large format IMAX film, *'NSYNC: Bigger Than Live*, a concert film of America's hottest pop music group. A year later, he produced the feature film *Vanilla Sky* for C/W Productions. The film starred Cruise and Penelope Cruz and was written and directed by Cameron Crowe.

In 2003, he and his partner, Ed Elbert, founded Grand Illusions, a new production company for the development and production of feature films, television programs and projects in all visual media.

JOHN BAILEY, ASC (Director of Photography) focused on cinematography as a graduate student at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television. After apprenticing and working as an assistant cameraman with such notable cinematographers as Nestor Almendros, Vilmos Zsigmond and Don Peterman, his first solo credit on a long-form feature was the 1978 film *Boulevard Nights*.

Since then, Bailey has compiled an eclectic body of work that includes: *American Gigolo*, *Ordinary People*, *The Big Chill*, *The Pope of Greenwich Village*, *Silverado*, *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, *The Accidental Tourist*, *Groundhog Day*, *In the Line of Fire*, *Nobody's Fool*, *As Good as It Gets*, *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, and *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*.

CHARLES MINSKY, ASC (Director of Photography) is a veteran cinematographer with numerous commercial, television and feature film credits to his name. Minsky's visually inventive photography has earned him repeat collaborations with several filmmakers including director Garry Marshall on *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*, *Raising Helen*, *Pretty Woman* and *Dear God*. Minsky's other film credits include *Tomcats*, *Guinevere*, *Looking for an*

Echo, Kazaam, The Gun in Betty Lou's Handbag and *Dutch*.

Minsky's select television credits include *Lucky*, starring John Corbett for F/X, the Showtime telepic *Past Tense*, the television series *Amazing Stories* and the pilots for *Keys, Lois & Clark, Capital News* and *China Beach*.

STEVEN WEISBERG (Edited by) was born in New York and earned a MFA in film at Syracuse University. A frequent collaborator of directors Barry Sonnenfeld and Alfonso Cuarón, Weisberg's credits span both film and television productions. They include *Harry Potter and the Prisoner Of Azkaban, Men In Black II* (co-editor), *Big Trouble, Nurse Betty* (co-editor), *Message in a Bottle, Permanent Midnight* (co-editor), *Great Expectations, The Cable Guy, A Little Princess, Miami Rhapsody, Mistress* and *Gaby: A True Story* (additional editor). Weisberg's television projects include *The Tick, Last Light* and *Mrs. Cage*.

MARK FRIEDBERG (Production Designer) most recently collaborated with Jim Jarmusch on *Broken Flowers*, starring Bill Murray. Friedberg spent most of 2003 in Rome with Murray designing *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* for Wes Anderson, for which he was nominated for an Art Director's Guild award. Friedberg also designed *Coffee and Cigarettes* with Jarmusch and starring Murray, Cate Blanchett and Alfred Molina.

Friedberg received kudos for his work on *Far from Heaven*, directed by Todd Haynes and starring Julianne Moore and Dennis Quaid. Prior to that, he worked with Jim Mangold on both *Identity* with John Cusack and *Kate & Leopold* with Hugh Jackman and Meg Ryan. He designed *Autumn in New York*, directed by Joan Chen and starring Richard Gere and Winona Ryder. Friedberg's other credits include Garry Marshall's *Runaway Bride*, with Gere and Julia Roberts; Ang Lee's civil war film, *Ride with the Devil; The Ice Storm*, also directed by Lee; *Kama Sutra* and *The Perez Family* for Mira Nair; Herb Gardner's *I'm Not Rappaport; The Ballad of Little Joe; In the Soup; The Paint Job; A Matter of Degrees* and *Comedy's Dirtiest Dozen*.

AMY HERMAN (Co-Producer) entered the film industry as a production and office assistant under producer Robert Greenhut on such Woody Allen films as *Hannah and Her Sisters* and *Radio Days*. She used that experience to become a location manager in New York and soon

became one of the top unit production managers on the East Coast. Her filmmaker associations include some of the most respected names in the industry, including Martin Scorsese, Mike Nichols, James L. Brooks and Robert Redford.

Her major film credits include *Big*, *Working Girl*, *Goodfellas*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Quiz Show*, *Jerry Maguire*, *Six Degrees of Separation*, *As Good as It Gets*, *The Horse Whisperer*, *Analyze That*, *Ladder 49* and *Dark Water*.

WILLIAM IVEY LONG (Costume Designer) currently has six shows running on Broadway: *Sweet Charity*; *A Streetcar Named Desire*; *La Cage Aux Folles*; John Water's *Hairspray* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Awards) New York, First National Tour, Toronto; *The Producers* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Awards), New York, First and Second National Tours, Toronto, Australia, Tokyo; and *Chicago* New York, National Tours, Montreal, London, Melbourne, Vienna, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Paris, Moscow, South Africa.

Other credits include *The Frogs*; *Little Shop of Horrors* New York, First National Tour; *The Boy from Oz* starring Hugh Jackman; Susan Stroman's *Double Feature* at the New York City Ballet; *Twentieth Century*; *Cabaret* New York, Australia; *Never Gonna Dance*; *Contact* New York (Hewes Award), London, National Tour, Tokyo; *Thou Shalt Not*; *45 Seconds from Broadway*; *Big*; *The Music Man*; *Annie Get Your Gun*; *The Man Who Came to Dinner*; *Swing*; *The Mystery of Irma Vep*; *Steel Pier*; *1776*; *Smokey Joe's Café* New York, National Tour, London, Las Vegas; *Crazy For You* New York (Tony, Outer Critics Circle Awards), London, Toronto (Dora Award), Tokyo; *Guys and Dolls* (Drama Desk Award), Madison Square Garden's annual *A Christmas Carol*; *Six Degrees of Separation*; *Assassins* (Obie Award); *Lend Me A Tenor* (Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Awards); *Nine* (Tony, Drama Desk, Maharam Awards); Robert Wilson's *Hamlet Machine*; Leonard Bernstein's *A Quiet Place* and *Trouble in Tahiti*; Vienna State Opera, LaScala, Houston Grand Opera, and the Kennedy Center; *The Lost Colony*; Mick Jagger for the Rolling Stones' *Steel Wheels* tour; *Siegfried and Roy* at the Mirage Hotel; The Pointer Sisters at Caesar's Palace, Paul Taylor; Twyla Tharp; Peter Martins; David Parsons.

Long holds a BA from The College of William & Mary. He also studied at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and holds a MFA from the Yale School of Drama.