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# TONYS GO for TV GOLD

SMALL-SCREEN STAR POWER PIQUES VIEWER INTEREST—AND RATINGS!—FOR BROADWAY SHOWS AND AWARDS

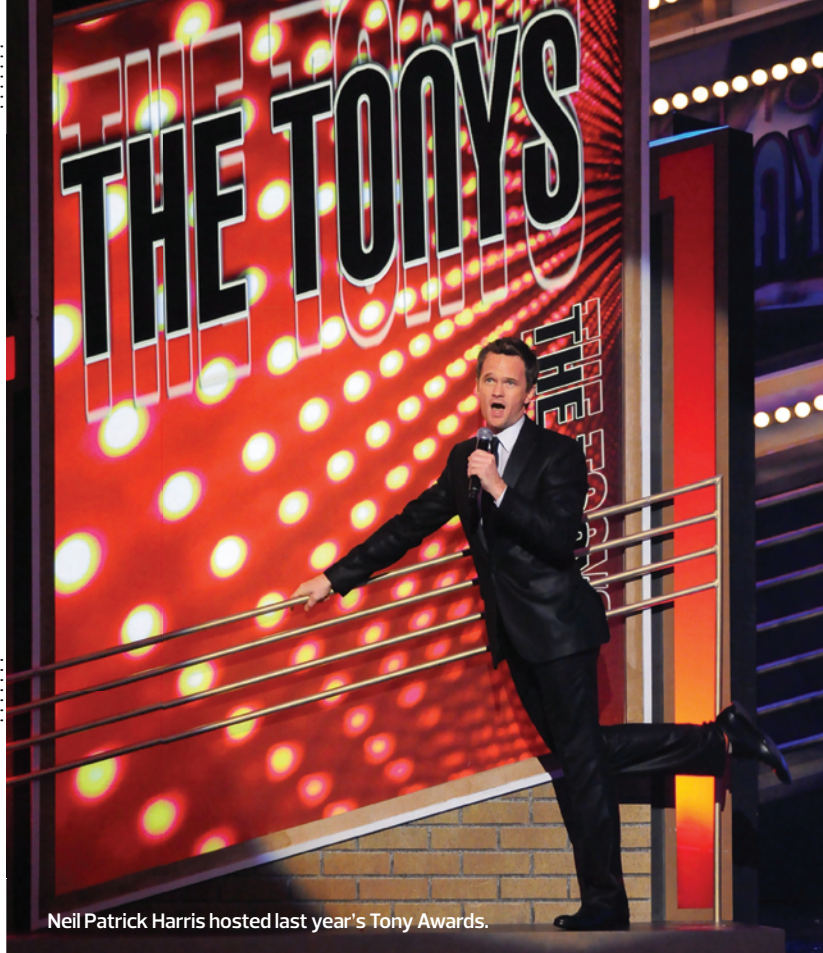
—By Jim Colucci—

**T**HIS past January, *How I Met Your Mother* celebrated its 100th episode with Barney Stinson strutting his sartorial stuff in a full-on musical number. As he sang an ode to Barney's now-famous suits, actor Neil Patrick Harris danced on taxis and around light posts like a true Broadway pro. That's because he is one.

Between his *Doogie Howser, M.D.* days and this latest sitcom stardom, Harris appeared in the stage musicals *Cabaret* and *Assassins*. Harris' love of theater must be infectious, because when he hosted the Tony Awards in 2009, key demographic ratings jumped by double-digit percentages.

Leading up to the 2010 Tony Awards telecast June 13, a new crop of productions has hoped to harness TV's firepower. *Frasier*'s Kelsey Grammer returned to the stage in this year's *La Cage Aux Folles*, while his former *Cheers* costar Bebe Neuwirth began the role of Morticia in a musical version of *The Addams Family*. Even Pee-wee Herman (aka Paul Reubens), whose *Pee-wee's Playhouse* ran for five seasons on CBS, is expected to step his white shoes onto the Great White Way later this year.

The tie between stage and small screen has always been strong. Before her long run on *Murder, She Wrote*, Angela Lansbury—last year's Tony winner for *Blithe Spirit*—had already won four of the trophies. *The Good Wife*'s Christine Baranski, too, was a two-time Tony winner long before her scene-stealing sitcom turn on CBS' *Cybill*. *CSI: NY*'s Gary Sinise, a three-time Tony nominee, cofounded the Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago. And theater veteran Laura Linney, who this spring originated a role in the



Neil Patrick Harris hosted last year's Tony Awards.

play *Time Stands Still*, will appear this summer in her first regular series gig on Showtime's *The C Word*.

Recently the flow has increased in the other direction as well, with actors whose stars were born on the tube making their debuts on Broadway's boards. Johnny Galecki, first famous from the sitcom *Roseanne*, appeared on stage in *The Little Dog Laughed* just months before filming *The Big Bang Theory*'s pilot. In 2003, Melina Kanakaredes took on *Cabaret*'s leading role of Sally Bowles during the year between TV drama *Providence* and her new job on *CSI: NY*.

As Sirius XM Broadway host Seth Rudetsky explains, some envious Broadway snobs can be prone to carping about such West Coast stars invading their Times Square turf. "There can be a lot of prejudice against TV stars [in theater], because people think they're just there for the value of their names.

"But I'm not a purist about that kind of thing," Rudetsky says, pointing out shows like last fall's revival of *Bye Bye Birdie*, which despite excoriating reviews played to a perpetually packed house, thanks to the lasting appeal of former *Full House* star John Stamos.

"A good deal of the time, the TV stars end up being really good. And in the end, there is no definitive way to determine what is going to make a show run. But one of the best formulas is to bring in someone whom people are curious to see from TV. It really does guarantee a certain level of interest."

And just maybe, Tony gold.



**THE 64TH ANNUAL TONY AWARDS**

AIRS SUNDAY, JUNE 13, AT 8 P.M. ET/PT ON CBS.