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## **P.O.V.'s "Wrestling With Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner" Special Broadcast Wednesday, Dec. 12 at 9 PM on PBS**

*"You leave [Sundance] wishing that more of the movies . . . shared [Tony Kushner's] humor, ambition, vision and dazzling braininess." — David Ansen, Newsweek.com*

### ***MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET***

**Airdate:** A special broadcast presentation of P.O.V.'s **Wrestling With Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner** airs nationally on **Wednesday, Dec. 12, 2007** at 9 p.m. on PBS. (Check local listings.)

**Description:** Tony Kushner, whose epochal "Angels in America" won a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award, has emerged as one of the country's leading playwrights—and one of its fiercest moral critics. In the film **Wrestling With Angels: Playwright Tony Kushner**, Oscar-winning director Freida Lee Mock (P.O.V.'s "Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision") followed Kushner for three tumultuous years, from Sept. 11, 2001 to the 2004 presidential election, to delve into the passions that keep him reaching for the great American play. Actresses Marcia Gay Harden, Meryl Streep, Tonya Pinkins and Emma Thompson, directors Mike Nichols and George C. Wolfe, and writer/artist Maurice Sendak are seen collaborating with Kushner on such landmark works as "Angels in America," "Caroline, or Change" and "Homebody/Kabul." In addition, Kushner goes home to Lake Charles, La., where he grew up, and discusses the painful process of "coming out" to his family.

**P.O.V.:** The **P.O.V.** series (a cinema term for "point of view") celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> year on PBS in 2007 and was recently honored with a Special Emmy Award for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking. It is American television's longest-running independent documentary series. P.O.V. is broadcast Tuesdays on PBS from June through September, with primetime specials in the fall and winter.

**Filmmaker's Statement:** "The time frame of **Wrestling With Angels**, during which I essentially stalked him all over the country, were immensely active for Kushner with the production of new plays, books, master classes and community work," says Mock. "These activities are the building-blocks through which the audience will come, I hope, to understand not only Kushner's artistry, but the creative process in general, and the difference one artist can make in inspiring us to engage the moral and political issues of our times."

**Filmmaker's Bio:** Freida Lee Mock (director/writer/producer) is an Academy and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker who received the Oscar for the feature documentary "Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision," which premiered on P.O.V. in 1996. She followed this with the feature documentary "Return With Honor," about American fighter pilots surviving as POWs in North Vietnam for almost nine years. The film was presented theatrically by Tom Hanks and Playtone after its Sundance premiere. She has been nominated for an Oscar for the short documentaries "Sing!," "Rose Kennedy: A Life to Remember," "Never Give Up," and "To Live or Let Die." She graduated in history from University of California at Berkeley

and attended UC Berkeley's Hastings College of Law. Mock, who was born in San Francisco and raised in Ojai, Calif., lives in Santa Monica.

Mock is currently developing three documentaries on music: "Manzanar and Maestro Kent Nagano" recalls the internment of the renowned conductor's parents at the Manzanar War Relocation Center in California during World War II and explores the challenges to our civil liberties post-9/11 through music, spoken words and an original symphonic score. "Sing Opera!" looks at how children learn and love to sing opera, based on the new family opera "Keepers of the Night" that premiered in Los Angeles this summer. "Food for Love – China and the Music of the West" spotlights China's breakthrough in the classical music world and the renaissance of western music in that country over the last 20 years.

**Tony Kushner:** Tony Kushner was born in New York in 1956. When he was two his parents, both professional musicians, moved to Lake Charles, La., where his father took charge of the family lumber business while continuing to work as a musician. Kushner studied medieval history at Columbia and received a master's degree in theater directing from New York University.

His first play, "A Bright Room Called Day" is set in the Weimar Republic right before the rise of Hitler. His plays include "Hydriotaphia, or the Death of Dr. Browne"; "Angels in America, Parts One and Two"; "Slavs!"; "Homebody/Kabul" and "Caroline, or Change." His series of five short plays include "East Coast Ode to Howard Jarvis" and "G. David Schine in Hell." He was recently commissioned by the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis to write a new play. Tentatively titled "The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures," it will premiere at the Guthrie in 2009.

His adaptations include Corneille's "The Illusion"; Ansky's "The Dybbuk"; Brecht's "The Good Person of Szechuan"; Goethe's "Stella"; and the English-language libretti for two operas: Krasa's "Brundibar" and Martinu's "Comedy on the Bridge."

Besides the Pulitzer, Kushner has received numerous awards including the Spirit of Justice Award from the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAAD) and the Award of Courage from AMFAR, and a Cultural Achievement Award from the National Foundation for Jewish Culture.

**Length:** 116:46

**Awards & Festivals:**

World Premiere, Sundance Film Festival, January 2006  
Cleveland International Film Festival, Director's Spotlight Award, March 2006  
Sarasota International Film Festival, April 2006  
Full Frame Film Festival, April 2006  
Toronto Jewish Film Festival, May 2006  
Seattle International Film Festival, *Lena Sharpe Women in Cinema Award*, June 2006  
Nantucket International Film Festival, June 2006  
Provincetown Film Festival, June 2006  
San Francisco Frameline International Film Festival, June 2006  
Los Angeles Gala Premiere, Outfest Festival, July 2006  
Munich International Film Festival, July 2006  
San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, August 2006  
Austin Film Festival, October 2006

**Credits:**

Director/writer/producer:	Freida Lee Mock
Executive Producer:	Terry Sanders
Cinematography:	Eddie Marritz, Don Lenzer, Bestor Cram, Terry Sanders
Editor:	Anne Stein
Original Music:	Jeanine Tesori

P.O.V. Web: The **Wrestling With Angels** companion Web site, [www.pbs.org/pov/tonykushner](http://www.pbs.org/pov/tonykushner), launches Dec. 4 and offers a streaming video trailer of the film, an interview with filmmaker Freida Lee Mock (video, podcast and text); a list of related Web sites, organizations and books; a discussion guide, classroom activity, and special features:

Additional Video: Watch extra video not included in the film, including an extended clip from Kushner's commencement speech at Vassar College, a conversation with drama students at Northwestern University and more outtakes from the "TimesTalk" panel featuring Kushner, former *New York Times* theater critic Frank Rich, and playwrights Larry Kramer, Terrence McNally and Paul Rudnick.

Book Excerpt: Read essays from Kushner's book *Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness*.

Outreach: P.O.V. is working with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in **Wrestling With Angels**. For a list of upcoming screening and discussion events, go to: [http://www.amdoc.org/outreach\\_news.php](http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_news.php)

P.O.V. also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop a facilitation guide with discussion questions and background information to help event organizers carry out discussions around the film's content. Cari Ladd has created the lesson plan. In addition, the American Library Association and P.O.V. have created a multimedia resource list of related fiction and nonfiction books and videos that further explore the issues. The materials are available free of charge at: [www.amdoc.org/outreach](http://www.amdoc.org/outreach).

Pressroom: Visit P.O.V.'s pressroom, [www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom), for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

P.O.V.: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and celebrating its 20th season on PBS in 2007, the award-winning P.O.V. series is the longest-running showcase on television to feature the work of America's best contemporary-issue independent filmmakers. P.O.V. has brought more than 250 documentaries to millions nationwide, and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *P.O.V.'s Borders*. Since 1988, P.O.V. has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information about P.O.V is available at [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

Major funding for P.O.V. is provided by PBS, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Educational Foundation of America, the Ford Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts, and public television viewers. Funding for P.O.V.'s *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting with additional support from JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the official sponsor of P.O.V.'s 20th Anniversary Campaign. P.O.V. is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston, and Thirteen/WNET New York.

**DVD REQUESTS: Please note that broadcast versions of the films are available upon request, as the films may be edited to comply with new FCC regulations.**

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