

REAL ESTATE

BIG DEAL

A Home to Sing About

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TIMOTHY BLAKE NELSON — the character actor, playwright and director — provided the voice of a cockroach living in a Manhattan apartment in the 1996 MTV musical film “Joe’s Apartment.” But if he has any singing cockroaches in his new penthouse, he will have no one to blame but himself.

Mr. Nelson recently paid \$4.95 million for unfinished space atop a 16-story prewar co-op at 245 West 104th Street on the corner of Broadway. He will now have to rebuild the space, and install fresh interior walls and a fancy kitchen, to turn it into a brand new apartment.

The penthouse includes 3,700 square feet of living space, surrounded by 2,000 square feet of wraparound terrace, with partial views of the Hudson River and Central Park.

According to the building’s certificate of occupancy, the space was previously occupied by four apartments, two maid’s rooms and a storage room. **The listing by Deanna Kory, a senior vice president at the Corcoran Group, notes that “there are currently six full baths to work with and plumbing in five locations for potential kitchen areas.”**

The total price may be a new high for a co-op on the Upper West Side north of 96th Street. Jonathan J. Miller, an appraiser and the president of Miller Samuel Inc., said it was a “new benchmark” for co-ops in the area, though Ms. Kory, previously the sales director for the new Ariel condominiums, twin towers on West 99th Street and Broadway, said a penthouse there was listed for \$7 million.

Mr. Nelson directed the 2001 movie “O,” a version of Shakespeare’s Othello that takes place at a South Carolina high school, and in recent years he has appeared in the movies “Holes,” “Syriana” and “Meet the Fockers.” His wife, Lisa Benavides, is an actress and acting teacher.

Public records show that Mr. Nelson and Ms. Benavides currently own a three-bedroom co-op on the 12th floor of 37 Riverside Drive at West 76th Street. It went on the market a few weeks ago, with an asking price of \$5.7 million in a listing that notes its “amazing” views and a renovated chef’s kitchen, according to William Postrion, the Prudential Douglas Elliman broker who represented them in the purchase on West 104th Street.

From the street, the Riverside Drive building, built in 1925, has a traditional facade, but with a pastiche of old and new windows. The 12th-floor apartment has the new windows, large picture windows with sweeping views.