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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **FORD'S THEATRE PRESENTS**

### **15<sup>th</sup> Annual Lincoln Oratory Festival** **February 7 and 8, 2023** **10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.**

#### **556 Local Students Honor President Lincoln's Birthday** **by Performing Historic Speeches**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – More than 400 local elementary and middle school students will perform a selection of President Abraham Lincoln's speeches on the Ford's Theatre stage on February 7 and 8, 2023. The programs feature local students who have worked with Ford's Theatre Teaching Artists this academic year to expand their vocabulary, develop confidence and public speaking skills and build an understanding of Abraham Lincoln's oration and impact, as well as the work of other powerful orators in United States history. This year's Teaching Artists are **Ashley Buster, W. Ellington Felton, Heidi Fortune, Emmanuel Kyei-Baffour, Lauren Miller, Mary Myers, Eliseo Valerio** and **Kirsten Noetzel**.

The **February 7** performance at 10:30 a.m. features third- through fifth-grade students from **Bridges Public Charter School, Garrison Elementary, Kimball Elementary School, Ludlow Taylor Elementary School, Ben W. Murch Elementary School** and **Two Rivers Public Charter School (4<sup>th</sup> Street)** in Washington, D.C., **Robert R. Gray Elementary School** in Capital Heights, Maryland and **Glebe Elementary School** in Arlington, Virginia. Students will perform speeches including Abraham Lincoln's "Address to the 166th Ohio Regiment" and "House Divided" and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "To the Mountaintop."

The **February 8** performance at 10:30 a.m. includes fifth- through eighth-grade students from **Alice Deal Middle School** and **Two Rivers Public Charter School (Young)** in Washington, D.C., **Fairhill Elementary School** and **Mosaic Elementary School** in Fairfax, Virginia, **Francis C. Hammond Middle School** in Alexandria, Virginia and **Kenmoor Middle School** in Landover, Maryland. Students will

perform speeches including “The Gettysburg Address” by Abraham Lincoln, “What to the Slave is Your Fourth of July?” by Frederick Douglass and “Democracy for Me” by Mary McLeod Bethune.

Tickets to each performance may be reserved online ahead of time at <https://www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs/oratory/lincoln-oratory-festival/>. Day-of tickets are available on a first-come, first-served basis from the Ford’s Theatre box office.

**Limited space is available for media to attend the events on February 7 and 8. Interested media should contact Daniella Ignacio at [dignacio@fords.org](mailto:dignacio@fords.org).**

“After last year’s outdoor iteration of the Lincoln Oratory Festival at the Lincoln Memorial, we are thrilled to welcome D.C. area students back to our historic theatre to perform speeches from some of history’s most significant and impactful orators. Through this program, we offer students a creative opportunity to find their own power and confidence in public speaking by studying important speeches from history,” said **Ford’s Theatre Director of Education Tricia Patrick**. “Every year, we are continually inspired by the students’ interpretations of these speeches through their powerful performances and voices. These speeches help students understand the power of words to inspire us to act towards change, unite around a common cause and ensure our democracy thrives.”

Support for The Lincoln Oratory Festival program is provided by **Lincoln Oratory Residency and Festival Sponsor Bloomberg Philanthropies**. Both performances feature appearances by Bloomberg representatives who will discuss the personal and professional benefits of developing public speaking skills and share their own tips and tricks for mastering the art of oratory.

“Bloomberg Philanthropies is proud to support this incredible Ford’s Theatre program, which helps students develop crucial skills including public speaking and communicating effectively and passionately,” said **Josh Eastright, CEO of Bloomberg Industry Group**. “I wish I had a program like this when I was in school.”

Local schools or teachers interested in participating in future Lincoln Oratory Festivals should email the Ford’s Theatre Education department at [education@fords.org](mailto:education@fords.org).

### **Ford’s Theatre Society**

The Ford’s Theatre Society was founded under the guidance of executive producer Frankie Hewitt, who, during her 35-year tenure, established Ford’s as a living, working theatre producing performances that highlighted the diversity of the American experience. Since the arrival of Paul R. Tetreault as Director, critics and the theatregoing public have recognized Ford’s for the superior quality of its artistic programming. With works from the Tony-nominated *Come From Away* and nationally acclaimed *Big River* to the world premieres of *Meet John Doe*, *The Heavens Are Hung In Black*, *Liberty Smith*, *Necessary Sacrifices*, *The Widow Lincoln* and *The Guard*, Ford’s Theatre is making its mark on the American theatre landscape. For its accomplishments, the organization was honored in 2008 with the National Medal of

Lincoln Oratory Festival, [3](#)

Arts. For more information, visit [www.fords.org](http://www.fords.org). In the past decade, the mission of Ford's Theatre Society expanded to include education as a central pillar. This expansion led to the creation and construction of the Center for Education and Leadership, which opened in February 2012. Currently, under the leadership of Board Chairman Phebe N. Novakovic, Ford's Theatre Society is advancing the unfinished work of Abraham Lincoln by creating a vibrant, accessible Ford's Theatre campus that cultivates civic discourse, supports our nation's educators and engages the community with our history.

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**#FordsOratory**

**#FordsEdu**

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