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FORD'S THEATRE EDUCATION PRESENTS

16th Annual Lincoln Oratory Festival February 6 and 7, 2024 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

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

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Local elementary and middle school students will perform a selection of President Abraham Lincoln's speeches on the Ford's Theatre stage on February 6 and 7, 2024. This year marks the 16th year of this annual festival honoring our 16th president and powerful orators. Local students worked with Ford's Theatre Teaching Artists this academic year to expand their vocabulary, develop confidence and public speaking skills and build a comprehensive understanding of Abraham Lincoln's oration and impact, and the work of orators in United States history. This year's Teaching Artists were W. Ellington Felton, Mary Myers, ChelseaDee Harrison, Eliseo Valerio, Kirsten Noetzel and Heidi Fortune-Picker.

The **February 6** performance at 10:30 a.m. features third- through fifth-grade students from **Ludlow Taylor Elementary School** in Washington, D.C., **Glebe Elementary School** in Arlington, Virginia and **Haycock Elementary School** in Fairfax, Virginia. Students will perform speeches by Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and The Seneca Chiefs. Highlights include Abraham Lincoln's "A House Divided," "Second Inaugural Address" and "Address to the 166th Ohio Regiment," and "To George Washington" by The Seneca Chiefs.

The **February 7** performance at 10:30 a.m. includes sixth- through eighth-grade students from **Fairhill Elementary School** in Fairfax, Virginia, **Francis C. Hammond Middle School** in Alexandria, Virginia and **Kenmoor Middle School** in Landover, Maryland. Students will perform speeches by Abraham Lincoln, Eleanor Roosevelt, Chief Canasatego, Mary McLeod Bethune, Frederick Douglass and The Seneca Chiefs. Highlights include "The Gettysburg Address" by Abraham Lincoln, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" by Frederick Douglass, "Democracy for Me" by Mary McLeod Bethune and "I've Been to the Mountaintop" by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Tickets to performances can be reserved online ahead of time at www.fords.org/event/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 6 and 7. Interested media should contact Daniella Ignacio at dignacio@fords.org or press@fords.org.

"Each year, the Lincoln Oratory Festival is a highlight of our arts education programs, as classrooms across the Washington, D.C. metro area welcome our Ford's Theatre teaching artists into their school communities," said Ford's Theatre **Director of Education Tricia Patrick**. "Communication, collaboration and inspired creativity are at the forefront of this process."

Through this program, over the course of five classroom visits, students gain not only a historical perspective but also invaluable insights into the timeless principles of effective communication by applying Ford's Approach to Oratory. This year, the program connected with new first-time participants and welcomed back several return schools, highlighting the importance of speech and communication in the classroom and as a life skill.

"Learning from the masters of rhetoric equips students with the tools to harness the power of their own voices," Patrick continued. "We can't wait to see them living the legacy of Abraham Lincoln and make history on the Ford's Theatre stage."

Ford's Theatre recognizes the importance of civic engagement and connection to our local communities. Educator **Jon Baker**, whose Haycock Elementary School class is among the participants, was highlighted in a [recent Fairfax County school district newsletter](#). He says the program is invaluable.

"I must tell you how thrilled we are at Haycock to have been chosen to be a part of this amazing opportunity at the iconic Ford's Theatre!" Baker said. "The kids are really enjoying having [Teaching Artists ChelseaDee Harrison and Eliseo Valerio] come in and we feel fortunate to have them with us as teaching partners. Both are very positive and communicative."

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.

Ford's Theatre Society

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 theatre-going 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 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. For more information, visit www.fords.org.

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