



**Media Contact:**

**Carly Cloud**

**Associate Director of Marketing & Communications**

[press@fords.org](mailto:press@fords.org)

**Ford's Theatre**

**511 Tenth Street, NW**

**Washington, D.C. 20004**

[www.fords.org](http://www.fords.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 6, 2026**

**Ford's Theatre Presents the 18th Annual Lincoln Oratory  
Residency and Festival**

**February 3–4, 2026**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — Ford's Theatre presented its **18th Annual Lincoln Oratory Residency and Festival** this week, featuring two days of student performances that highlighted the enduring power of historic speech and the legacy of President Abraham Lincoln. The festival, supported by presenting sponsor **Bloomberg Philanthropies**, brought together students, educators and families for a culminating showcase of classroom-based instruction and live oratory.

The annual festival, held in conjunction with Lincoln's birthday, included scheduled performances from students from eight classrooms who delivered carefully prepared orations drawn from American history. Speeches represented figures including **Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Chief Seattle, Mary McLeod Bethune** and **Ruby Bridges**, offering audiences insight into pivotal moments and voices from across the nation's past.

Performances included students from **Friendship Southeast Academy, Lee Montessori Elementary School** and **Mary McLeod Bethune Day Academy** on February 3, followed by **Browne Education Campus** and **Ludlow Taylor Elementary School** on February 4.

Scheduled to perform but unable to attend due to weather-related school district delays: **Fairhill Elementary School, Haycock Elementary School, East Silver Spring Elementary School** and **Francis Hammond Middle School**.

The festival culminated weeks of classroom preparation through Ford's Theatre's Lincoln Oratory Residency, an education initiative that brought professional Teaching Artists **W. Ellington Felton, ChelseaDee Harrison, Max Johnson, Mary Myers and Kirsten Noetzel** into participating schools for five in-class sessions. Through the residency, students examined historical context while developing communication skills using **Ford's Approach to Oratory**, a methodology that emphasizes clarity, persuasion and expressive delivery.

"We are extremely proud of the participating classrooms and their school communities. We extend our sincere gratitude to the teaching artists and classroom teachers whose collaboration, flexibility and creativity made these residencies possible and prepared our young performers for the stage," said **Tricia Patrick**, Irani Foundation Director of Education. The 2026 program included both first-time participants and returning partner schools, reflecting sustained interest in the study of speech and civic discourse as foundational educational tools. The 2026 program included both first-time participants and returning partner schools, reflecting sustained interest in the study of speech and civic discourse as foundational educational tools.

Support for the Lincoln Oratory Residency and Festival was provided by **Festival Sponsor Bloomberg Philanthropies**.

"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."

Bloomberg representatives also addressed audiences during the festival, discussing the personal and professional benefits of developing public speaking skills and sharing strategies for mastering the art of oratory.

Through student performances and in-school instruction, the Lincoln Oratory Residency and Festival advanced Ford's Theatre's mission to engage young people with history and strengthen democratic ideals through education and performance.

### **Ford's Theatre Society**

One of the most visited sites in the nation's capital, Ford's Theatre reopened its doors in 1968, more than a hundred years after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Operated through a partnership between Ford's Theatre Society and the National Park Service, Ford's Theatre is the premier destination in the Washington, D.C. to explore and celebrate Abraham Lincoln's life and legacy.

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 the 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*, *The Guard*, *Something Moving* and *The American Five*, Ford's Theatre is making its mark on the American theatre landscape. Under the current leadership of Board of Trustees Chairman **Phebe N. Novakovic** and through the lens of Lincoln's leadership and legacy, Ford's Theatre endeavors today to advance Lincoln's "unfinished work" with programs and performances that cultivate empathy, encourage dialogue and bridge divides in American life. For more information on Ford's Theatre and the Ford's Theatre Society, please visit [www.fords.org](http://www.fords.org).

###

**Ford's Theatre on Instagram: @fordstheatre**

**Ford's Theatre on Facebook: @fordstheatre**

**Ford's Theatre on TikTok: @fordstheatredc**

**Ford's Education on Twitter: @fordsedu**

**Website: [www.fords.org](http://www.fords.org)**