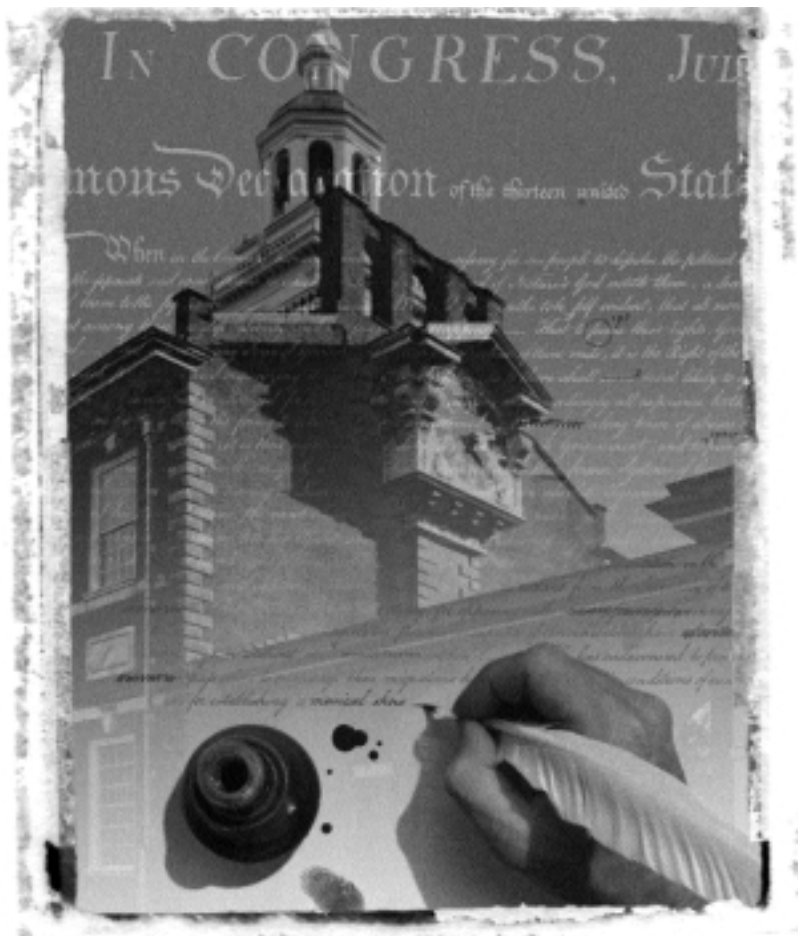


# P.L.A.Y.

(Performance = Literature + Art + You)

## Student Matinee Series



# 1776

America's Prize Winning Musical

Student Matinee  
2002/2003

Music and Lyrics by **Sherman Edwards**

Book by **Peter Stone**

Directed by **Mark Cuddy**

# SEASON



**Geva**  
Theatre  
Center

30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## Dear Educators,

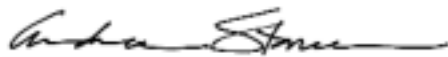
*“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”* Martin Luther King Jr.

As I go through my daily life I don't often stop to think about the history of our country and how it came to be. I get so caught up in my own goals and struggles that I don't always see myself as part of something bigger. Reading *1776* I was amazed by the men of the Second Continental Congress and how they strove to think of the greater good while at the same time trying to remain true to themselves and the people they represented. Looking at the amazing achievements of historical figures like John Adams, Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson it's hard for me to believe that they were actually real people.

That's what I love about *1776*. Sherman Edwards and Peter Stone bring these extraordinary men to life by showing us just how ordinary they were. *1776* gives us a unique perspective on an incredible moment of American History by showing us the arguments, disorganization and humanity that were all part of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Seeing the individual goals and struggles of these men against the backdrop of the greater good gives us the chance to relate to them as people and watch them become the historical figures they are today. To further enrich that experience, you will find in this guide a variety of resources including an interview with one of the actors from the show, set and costume renderings, suggested classroom activities and historical information.

I want to strongly urge you to attend our teacher workshop on **Thursday May 1<sup>st</sup> from 4-5:30pm** at Geva Theatre Center. We will be bringing together some of the artists who created the show to speak first hand about their intentions and experiences with the production.

Sincerely,



Andrea Stoner  
Associate Director of Education  
(585) 232-1366 x3058

*“I have come to the conclusion that one useless man is called a disgrace - that two are called a law-firm - and that three or more become a Congress.”* John Adams

### Table of Contents

Synopsis . . . . .	3
About the Playwright and Composer . . . . .	3
Interview with Skip Greer, Actor . . . . .	4
Biographies . . . . .	5
The Triangle Trade . . . . .	6
The American Experience . . . . .	7
Set & Costume Designs . . . . .	8-9
Glossary . . . . .	10
Tell Us What You Think . . . . .	10
Resources . . . . .	11

### Cast of Characters

John Hancock

Dr. Josiah Bartlett

John Adams

Stephen Hopkins

Roger Sherman

Lewis Morris

Robert Livingston

Reverend John Witherspoon

Benjamin Franklin

John Dickinson

James Wilson

Caesar Rodney

Colonel Thomas McKean

George Read

Samuel Chase

Richard Henry Lee

Thomas Jefferson

Joseph Hewes

Edward Rutledge

Dr. Lyman Hall

Charles Thomson

Andrew McNair

Abigail Adams

Martha Jefferson

A Leather Apron

A Painter

A Courier

## Synopsis

*1776* is the dramatization of the numerous difficulties that the disorganized and under-financed Continental Congress had while creating a document many of us take for granted.

John Adams, the Massachusetts delegate to the Congress, wants to break away from the British crown. Like many of his fellow colonists, he resents the numerous taxes of the monarchy, and the paucity of colonists' rights. Unfortunately, he has a reputation as a blow-hard, and is not liked by many of his fellow delegates. Meanwhile, though independence has not been declared, George Washington is preparing to face the British with an army in a state of disarray that rivals that of the Congress itself – time is running out, and something must be done.

Benjamin Franklin and Adams convince the more popular Virginia delegate Richard Lee to propose independence. The plan is opposed by several, but most vocally by John Dickinson of Pennsylvania who prefers the security and protection the British crown offers his property. As a vote is underway on the matter, Dickinson insists that the vote in favor of independence must be unanimous. The vote is postponed to buy time – Franklin and Adams don't think a unanimous vote will pass – and so that an official declaration of independence can be drafted. After some deliberation, Thomas Jefferson reluctantly accepts the honor of being the declaration's author.

The congress quibbles over many small details in the wording of Jefferson's draft, but the greatest problem arises with the southern colonies' objection to the elimination of slavery. To gain the unanimous vote of the South, the passage to eliminate slavery is scratched out. The unanimous vote is attained, and the colonies are unified against Britain in time to support Washington's army. The result, as they say, is history.

### About the Playwright and Composer

*Peter Stone (Book)*: Peter Stone is a veteran writer for film, stage and screen, having won major awards for all mediums. He is most recently known as the book-writer for the 1997 musical *Titanic*.

Stone was born in 1930. He grew up in Los Angeles, where his father was a film producer. After college, he began working as a writer for television in the fifties. His first large-scale successes were with the movies *Charade* (1963) and *Father Goose* (Academy Award, best screenplay, 1964). *1776* was Stone's first stage success, winning a Tony for Best Musical in 1969.

*Sherman Edwards (Music and Lyrics)*: Edwards was born in 1919. As an undergraduate, he attended NYU where he studied history, later teaching high school history. He was a talented musician who worked with Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey. He also wrote many successful popular songs. *1776* was his only stage creation, and it combined his interests in history and music. Sherman died in 1981.

**Paucity: smallness**

**Quibble: a petty argument**

**The Stamp Act of 1765 required that every piece of paper sold in the colonies – from pamphlets to playing cards – have a revenue stamp on it. This revenue stamp could only be obtained by paying tax on the paper item. The colonists found this system unfair since the stamps were expensive, so they sought to have the Stamp Act repealed. More than two centuries after the passage of the Stamp Act, however, taxes are still a major preoccupation (and frustration) for many people in the United States. Evaluate the following kinds of taxes, balancing their fairness with the degree of revenue they bring in: income, import/export, gasoline, cigarette, sales, property, school, entertainment and hospitality.**

*“We’ve spawned a new race here – rougher, simpler, more violent, more enterprising and less refined – we’re a new nationality, Mr. Dickinson – we require a new nation.”*

Benjamin Franklin

## Interview with Skip Greer (John Hancock)

*What kind of research have you done in preparation for your role in 1776?*

The research has been one of the true early joys of this project. I have read two Hancock biographies - Harlow Unger's *John Hancock: Merchant Prince and American Patriot* and William Fowler Jr.'s *The Baron of Beacon Hill*. Both books provided great insights into the American Revolution, as well as into Hancock's own life. I've also repeatedly listened to the original Broadway soundtrack, and paved my way through books on life in the American colonies in the 1700s. Much of what I read surprised me. Many of the images from the revolution that are locked into my mind from childhood are either incorrect or simply too shallow in depth to be helpful.

*You just finished directing a play (Lobby Hero) for Geva. Is it difficult to be an actor after you've been a director?*

Not at all. I find that directing and acting (and teaching, actually) work hand in hand. Each task stimulates the other. As a director, I work diligently to understand the actor's process and to try to ask the right questions to assist the actor in unlocking a role. As the actor, I try to remember that my job is as an equal collaborator with the director, and I need to bring fresh ideas and perspectives into rehearsals. I cannot rely on the director to have all the answers. My hope is that understanding each job can help me to better facilitate the rehearsal process -- be it from the actor's or the director's perspective.

*Are you nervous about taking on your first musical role?*

Well, in truth, it's not actually my first singing role. I played the Duke in a production of *Big River* about a dozen or so years ago. And to be fair, I don't have much singing to do in this one. Just a little chorus work. Certainly I'm a little nervous -- because of the respect I have for the remarkable talent level in this cast. I don't want to let anybody down. The nerves are set at ease though by the joy of being a part of a chorus. The few times I have had the opportunity to sing with a group have been so moving that I'm relishing the chance to do it again. Life feels elevated when singing with a group of people. Troubles just seem to melt away in the harmony and the teamwork. Sounds sophomoric, but it's absolutely true for me.

*1776 has been produced by many companies over the years and has even been made into a film. Do you feel the weight of previous performers or productions?*

Not really. Everybody will have a different take on each role. They'll simply do it differently. Not better or worse necessarily, just differently. I think that is partly why we re -- imagine and re -- explore classics -- the search for equally valid interpretations of the work. How could anyone tackle Shakespeare or Miller if they were intimidated by the weight of previous performances? Sure, learn from those who have been there before, but then take your own shots. I say bring it on.

*Is there anything that you are particularly looking forward to in this rehearsal or performance process?*

You bet. I have many old friends in this cast who have appeared at Geva before -- David Silberman, Christopher Gurr, Tim Ocel and Remi Sandri to name a few. I look forward to playing with them again, laughing with them again and whacking them occasionally with Hancock's fly swatter.



*Skip Greer*

**George Washington, Benedict Arnold, Thomas Paine, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were rebels. Debate the correctness of their cause.**

**Delegates**

**New Hampshire**  
Dr. Josiah Bartlett

**Massachusetts**  
John Adams

**Rhode Island**  
Stephen Hopkins

**Connecticut**  
Roger Sherman

**New York**  
Lewis Morris  
Robert Livingston

**New Jersey**  
Reverend John  
Witherspoon

**Pennsylvania**  
Benjamin Franklin  
John Dickinson  
James Wilson

**Delaware**  
Caesar Rodney  
Colonel Thomas  
McKean  
George Read

**Maryland**  
Samuel Chase

**Virginia**  
Richard Henry Lee  
Thomas Jefferson

**North Carolina**  
Joseph Hewes

**South Carolina**  
Edward Rutledge

**Georgia**  
Dr. Lyman Hall

**Biographies**

**John Adams (1735-1826):** After graduating from Harvard, Adams studied law while he taught grammar school in Worchester, Massachusetts. He returned to his hometown of Braintree and was admitted to the Boston bar. In 1764, he married Abigail Smith (1744-1818). Their son, John Quincy Adams, was the sixth president of the United States. John Adams came to political prominence in pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts through his writings in opposition to the Stamp Act. In 1770, Adams defended the British soldiers accused of murder in the Boston Massacre. He was part of the Massachusetts delegation to the First and Second Continental Congresses. In 1777, Adams served with Benjamin Franklin as a joint commissioner to France. In 1785, he became the first U.S. minister to the British court. In the presidential election of 1789, Adams received the second largest number of electoral votes, becoming vice president to George Washington. He served eight years in this role. He became the nation's second president in 1796 and served one term and was succeeded by his vice president, Thomas Jefferson. He and Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826, within hours of each other.

**John Dickinson (1732-1808):** Dickinson, who was born in Maryland, studied law in London and practiced law in Philadelphia. He represented Pennsylvania in the Stamp Act Congress of 1765 and drafted its declaration of rights and grievances. He wrote the widely read "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania, to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies," which appeared in many colonial newspapers and helped turn colonial sentiment against the Townshend Acts. From 1774-1776 he was a Pennsylvania delegate to the Continental Congress and drafted a "Declaration Setting Forth the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms." He also helped to write the first draft of the Articles of Confederation. Dickinson was a Delaware delegate to the Federal Constitutional Convention of 1787.

**Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790):** Arguably the 18<sup>th</sup> century's most famous American, Franklin was born in Boston. In 1718, he was apprenticed to his brother's print shop and began writing pieces satirizing the Boston establishment. He moved to Philadelphia, continuing to work as a printer, published a newspaper - *The Philadelphia Gazette*, began writing *Poor Richard's Almanck* and did most of the public printing for the province. He became the clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly, postmaster of Philadelphia, established partnerships with printers from Nova Scotia to Antigua and operated a bookstore. He made extensive contributions to Pennsylvania by establishing a number of community organizations and a college which later became the University of Pennsylvania. Franklin's scientific work led him to experiment with electricity and invent bifocal eyeglasses, the lightning rod and the Franklin stove. He became the leading American spokesman in England. In 1775 he became a member of the Second Continental Congress, helping to draft the Declaration of Independence. In 1776, he was appointed minister to France and negotiated assistance agreements from that country during the Revolutionary War. He returned home in 1785 and was elected president of Pennsylvania. At the age of 81, he served on the Federal Constitutional Convention of 1787.

**Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826):** Born in Virginia, Jefferson attended private schools before graduating from the College of William and Mary. He later studied law and was admitted to the Virginia bar, becoming a successful lawyer. Jefferson used his wide knowledge of European history and political philosophy to argue the cause of American independence in his writings, most notably in his "A Summary View of the Rights of British America." After serving as a member of the Second Continental Congress, he was in the Virginia legislature until his election as governor in 1779, a post he filled until 1781. He again served in the Continental Congress from 1783-1784, and was minister to France from 1784-1789. Jefferson was George Washington's Secretary of State from 1790-1793. In 1796, he was elected vice president to John Adams. He became the nation's third president and served two terms from 1801-1809. Not only an extraordinary political thinker, Jefferson's broad knowledge extended to architecture, scientific experimentation and invention, and the advances of agriculture. In his last public act, he founded the University of Virginia.

## The Triangle Trade

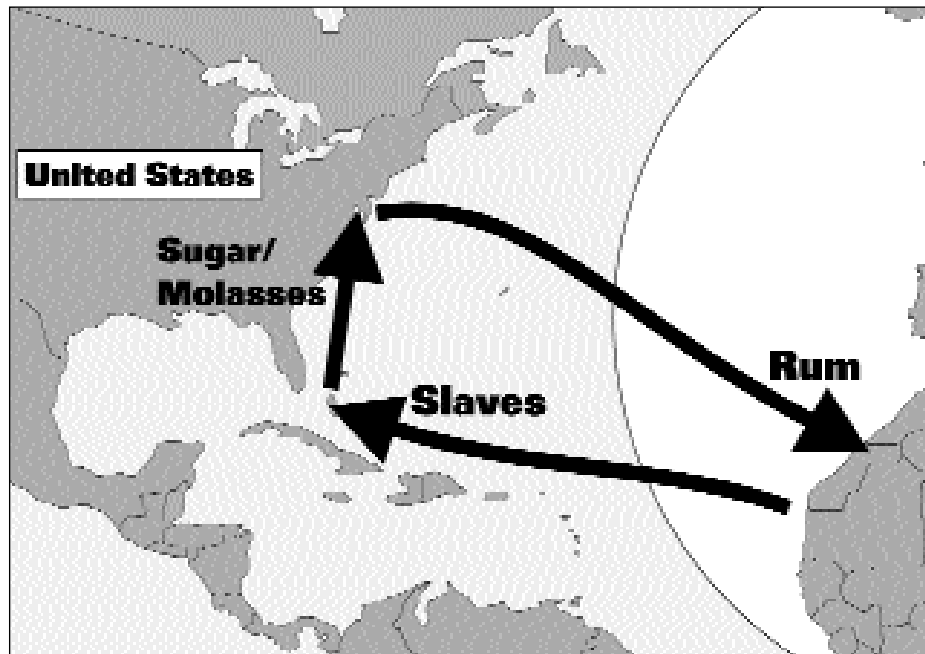
In 1776, Edward Rutledge argues that slavery is a way of life in the South. He also puts forth his belief that slaves are property, not people. He claims the North is being hypocritical and describes how the Northern colonies participate in the slave trade in the song “Molasses and Rum.” Rutledge is referring to what has become known as the “triangle trade.”

The triangle started with slaves being shipped from Africa to the Caribbean and Southern colonies and later, states. They would, in turn, ship molasses and sugar northward, to the Northern colonies of the United States. These colonies would then process the molasses and sugar into rum. They would send the rum to Africa and the cycle would begin again.

There is an alternative version of the triangle. This triangle, instead of shipping the rum directly to Africa, would send the rum along with various raw materials to England. There they would manufacture the materials into finished goods, which were then shipped to Africa. The slaves would go to the Caribbean and Southern colonies from there.

England depended on this triangle. It needed the raw materials the American colonies could provide in order to keep making their manufactured goods. The slaves were needed in order to keep the raw materials coming. Many people think that the English, Dutch, Spanish and other colonizing countries forced the Africans into slavery. Slavery was already a common practice in Africa and many Africans grew rich by selling their countrymen to white traders.

The slave trade began in earnest in the 1500’s and continued until the American Civil War, which lasted from 1861-1865. It is estimated that eight-15 million Africans were transported for slavery during that time.



**What was the status of slavery in the United States in 1775? Which of the 13 colonies were slave states?**

**Landownership in England differed from landownership in the colonies. Land was more available in the colonies, so more colonists were landowners – in England, only one in 10 people owned land, but in New England, nine out of 10 people were landowners. In what ways might this difference have contributed to rebellious sentiments on the part of the colonist?**

*Graphic courtesy of Chris Holden*

*“I don’t like it at all, Mr Jefferson - to us in South Carolina, black slavery is our peculiar institution and a cherished way-of-life.”*

Edward Rutledge

## The American Experience

Over the years there have been many compelling images that have stirred the nation and invoked patriotism. The Trumbull painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the “I Want You” World War I recruiting poster and the monument to Iwo Jima from World War II are all icons of the American experience. Each piece is an example of patriotic art and is an interpretation rather than an actual representation of a moment in history.

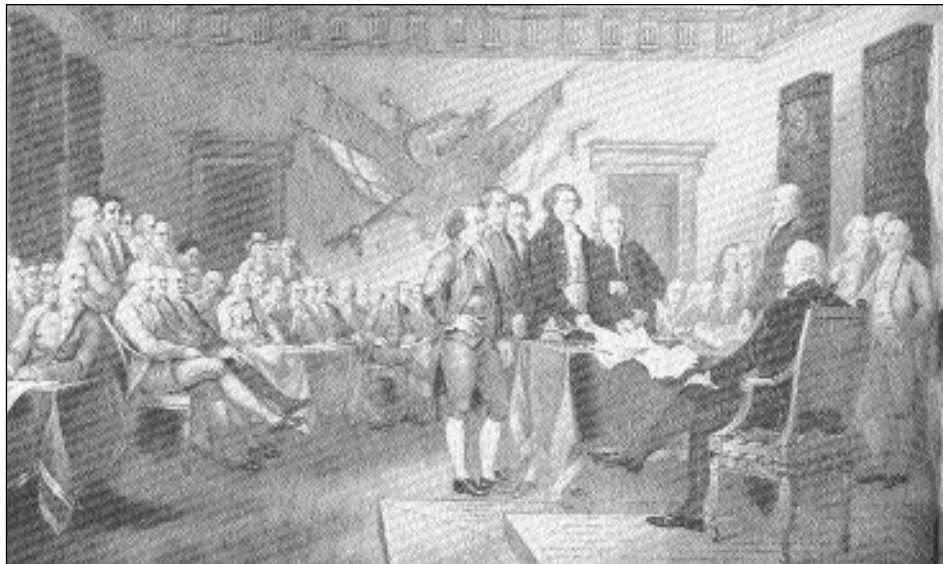
Like these works of art, *1776* alters certain facts in recreating the journey of the Second Continental Congress. There are many films, plays and books that fictionalize events in order to retell a story from a personal perspective. This can make history more accessible and allow us to better relate to the struggles, sacrifices and victories of the past. However the question can be raised: Does the fact that these are recreations and not authentic representations make them any less powerful?

It seems that patriotic art and historical dramatizations are able to communicate more than just facts, they also communicate the feeling of the time. These images and stories carry with them a sense of the past that speaks to us in the present because of the way they have been personalized by their creators. Those creations have since helped to define who we are as a nation. As Picasso once said, art is a lie that tells the truth. In this case that truth is expressed in everything from “American Gothic” to the National Anthem.

Nevertheless, the actual instances that have been captured - Neil Armstrong’s first step on the moon or the flag raising by fire fighters at ground zero - have the strength to move us in a different way. They allow us to see the events as they really happened. These images are important not only in recording our past but also in inspiring us to move towards the future.

All of these expressions of patriotism enable us to connect to history by providing a path for us to follow. Sharing the experiences of those who lived before us can give us a better sense of where we came from and where we’re going. Looking back at an actual event or retelling a historical moment from a personal perspective can effectively bring the past to life in the present. Either path leads us on a journey through the American Experience.

**What are some of the reasons that countries and colonies seek independence? Are any of these reasons more important than others? Think about some of the “hot spots” around the world where people are currently seeking independence from a controlling government. What issues underlie these conflicts? Are they similar to the issues that led the American colonists to revolt against the English government? How?**



*Painting of the Committee of Congress presenting the Declaration of Independence to the President of Congress by John Trumbull*

*“Some men are patriots... some men are anarchists... some, even, are internationalists, but you sir, you are merely an agitator, disturbing the peace...”*

John Dickinson

## From the Set and Costume Designer, G.W. Mercier

Designing *1776* sent me into the landscape of American history and questions of national identity: What does it mean to be an American? Two-hundred-and-twenty-seven years later we are asking the same questions forged by people seeking independence throughout the colonies. People just like you and me.

Because the time and place are specific, (Philadelphia from May to July), I took a trip to Independence Hall in Philadelphia and was trapped in that city for four days as the biggest snowstorm of the winter swept up the New England coast. The adventure aspect affected the mood of people in the city because being powerless united us. I was one of the last people admitted into Independence Hall before it was closed for several days and was allowed to sit quietly and get lost in my imagination because the tour schedule was unworkable. I was transported to the Second Continental Congress and the heat of summer despite the swirling whiteness outside the windows. Amazed by how small the chamber is in relationship to the enormity of what occurred, I was delighted by the many details of the time period reproduced in the room. The only actual object was John Hancock's presidential chair.

The challenge of designing sets and costumes for the musical *1776* is balancing theatricality with reality. There are several locations in the musical, an imagined character as well as an escalation of time. The director Mark Cuddy and I decided to create a sense of place with unfettered details, which implies the fragmentation of the story, leaving the audience to connect the dots. In a sense, it is physically embodying the fragmentation of the congress.

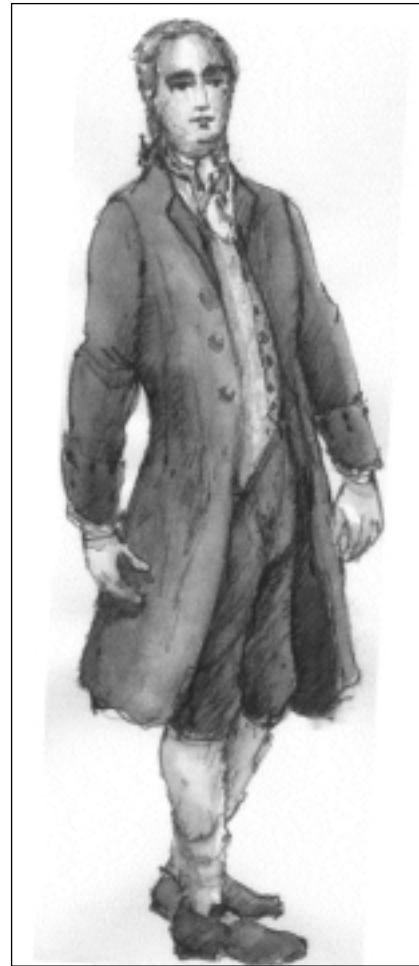
The costume palate and texture for these aristocrats sweeps from the sober practical Northern colonies to decorative South. Americans were challenged to find ways to define themselves and separate from the English dominance. It was an exciting time of change. I was interested in the reality of these clothes and tried not to lose that, while supporting the delight and poetry of the music. These are real men and women putting their life on the line for something they believed in. The mere fact of conspiring in that room could mean their death. I attempted to create clothes that could imply this sober reality and also the soaring hope of people reaching for change. I reminded myself that these people could have been me.

**Dickinson invokes the images of Hastings, the Magna Carta, Strongbow and Lionhearted, Drake and Marlborough, the Tudors, the Stuarts and the Plantagenets when reminding the Congress of the power of its ties to England. Identify these references.**

*"Would you forsake Hastings and Magna  
Carta, Strongbow and Lionhearted, Drake and  
Marlborough, Tudors, Stuarts, and  
Plantagenets? For what, sir? For you?"*

John Dickinson

## Renderings from the Designer



*Costume rendering of John Hancock, top left; Thomas Jefferson, top right. Photo of set model, right. Courtesy of G.W. Mercier.*



*"Don't you see that any colony who opposes Independence will be forced to fight on the side of England - that we'll be setting brother against brother - that our new nation will carry as its emblem the mark of Cain?"* John Hancock

## Glossary

---

Annihilation - *complete destruction*

Antagonizing - *to arouse hostility*

Brethren - *brothers*

Courteously - *politely*

Demigod - *an inferior, minor god*

Dissipation - *wasteful expenditure or consumption*

Extravagance - *excessive expense and luxury*

Felicity - *happiness.*

Hypocrisy - *the act or fact of pretending to have beliefs, feelings, or good qualities that one does not really have*

Intolerable - *unbearable*

Nonentity - *a person of no importance*

Posterity - *generations which will follow*

Reconciliation - *bringing together of two enemies, so that they become friends*

Subordination - *to put in a lower rank*

Treasonous - *betraying your country*

Torpid - *inactive*

Tyranny - *cruel rule by an undemocratic government or ruler*

**We use the word revolution in many contexts – think of the Industrial Revolution, for example, or the technological revolution. In reality, though, what makes a revolution a revolution? What distinguishes a revolution from mere widespread change? Brainstorm and list the criteria for a revolution, and define it in political, economic and social terms.**

## Tell Us What You Think

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We love to get letters from students about the plays they see at Geva. Tell us what you thought of the play, the production, the direction, the acting. Selected student responses are posted on our website, [www.gevatheatre.org](http://www.gevatheatre.org). Send your letters to Andrea Stoner, Associate Director of Education, c/o Geva Theatre Center, 75 Woodbury Boulevard, Rochester, NY 14607, or email them to [astoner@gevatheatre.org](mailto:astoner@gevatheatre.org).

- How did the production elements – lights, costumes, set, sound – support or detract from the play? What would you have done differently? Why?
- What was useful in this study guide? Did any of this guide help you understand or enjoy the play?
- Did you have a favorite scene or moment in the play? Which was it and why?
- In your opinion, what is *1776* about? Would you recommend it to someone who hasn't seen it?

*“What’s so terrible about being called an Englishman? The English don’t seem to mind.”*

John Dickinson

## Staff

**Skip Greer**  
Director of  
Education

**Andrea Stoner**  
Associate Director  
of Education

**Shawnda Urie**  
Education and  
Outreach  
Administrator

**Arthur Brown**  
Conservatory  
Associate Artist

**Christopher Gurr**  
Actor/Director  
Associate Artist

**Marge Betley**  
Literary Manager

**April Donahower**  
Dramaturgy Fellow

**Mark Cuddy**  
Artistic Director

**John Quinlivan**  
Managing Director

**Nan Hildebrandt**  
Executive Director

## Resources For Students

*If You Were There in 1776* by Barbara Brenner, Bradbury, 1994.

*Slavery and Freedom in the Age of the American Revolution* by Ira Berlin and Ronald Hoffman, University of Illinois Press, 1986.

[www.ushistory.org/declaration/signers](http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/signers) - A page that has short biographies on every signer of the Declaration of Independence.

## Resources For Teachers

*The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* by Carl Becker, Vintage Books, 1958.

*Founding Brothers* by Joseph Ellis, Vintage Books, 2002.

*Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* by Bernard Bailyn, Harvard University Press, 1967.

*John Adams* by David McCullough, Touchstone Books, 2002.

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*"Never was such a valuable possession so stupidly  
and recklessly managed than this entire continent by  
the British Crown."*

Benjamin Franklin

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was written by  
both Geva  
Theatre Center  
and Music  
Theatre  
International**

**Geva Theatre Center presents the  
World Premiere Production of**



**SEPTEMBER  
SHOES**

**By José Cruz González**

**Directed by Michael John Garcés**

**June 3<sup>rd</sup> - June 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Recommended for ages 15 and up.**

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