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**Governor Ed Rendell Launches Celebrating 1776! with a High School Production of
1776: The Musical to Mark America's 250th Anniversary**

Founding partners include Temple University, Comcast NBCUniversal, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the City of Philadelphia and the School District of Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA, PA – June 2, 2026 – Celebrating 1776!, a new organization founded by Governor Ed Rendell, explores the Declaration of Independence’s principles of freedom and democracy through education and the performing arts. As the nation marks America’s 250th anniversary this summer, the organization will launch its first slate of programs and activities designed to highlight the significance of this milestone and to introduce new audiences to the ideas, debates and decisions that shaped the nation, told through the talents of local high school students.

Students from the School District of Philadelphia and surrounding communities will commemorate the 250th anniversary through performances of *1776: The Musical*, the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical, later adapted into a popular film, that dramatizes the debates among representatives of the 13 Colonies as they worked toward adopting the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia. Through this production, students will bring to life the stories, decisions and personalities behind the founding of the United States for audiences throughout the summer.

“We believe this production of 1776 is vitally important because it can give over one hundred of the best and brightest high school students meaningful insight into the challenges and complexities that shaped our nation. In turn, they will help share that understanding with thousands of other families and students,” said Governor Rendell. *“We’re thrilled that our partners have joined with us in this initiative.”*

“With the challenges confronting our democracy in 2026, understanding our nation’s humble beginnings and the fight for freedom has never been more important,” said Speaker of the House Joanna McCClinton, D-Phila/Delaware. *“I’m proud to support Celebrating 1776! and the students who will make our nation’s history come alive for audiences across Philadelphia.”*

1776: The Musical highlights the discussion, compromise and conviction that helped shape the nation’s founding. Its themes remain especially timely today: a 2025 Cato Institute poll found that 53% of Americans do not know why the Founders declared independence.

“Philadelphia is the birthplace of American democracy, but this summer, that story will be told by a new generation of young people coming fully into their own voices through the arts,” said Mayor Cherelle L. Parker. *“I want to thank Governor Ed Rendell for once again stepping forward for this city and helping create a vision that will leave a lasting impression. To have students from CAPA and other area high schools performing 1776: The Musical on the Avenue of the Arts, in the very city where these events actually happened, is exactly the kind of partnership between education, leadership and the arts that makes Philadelphia so special.”*

“The School District of Philadelphia is thrilled that our students are participating in 1776: The Musical as the country celebrates its 250th anniversary,” said Dr. Tony Watlington, Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia. *“Productions like this give students a powerful opportunity to engage with America’s history while building confidence, creativity and a deeper appreciation for the arts. This will help our young people connect learning, culture and civic understanding in meaningful ways.”*

“Temple University is proud to serve as a founding partner for Celebrating 1776!, an important effort to elevate the story of our nation’s founding and the enduring principles of American democracy,” said Temple President John Fry. *“As Philadelphia prepares to welcome the nation during this milestone year, we all share a responsibility to ensure our young people understand both our history and the civic ideals that continue to shape our future. I applaud Governor Ed Rendell for his vision in launching this organization and creating an opportunity for education, reflection and celebration.”*

“Comcast NBCUniversal is proud to support Celebrating 1776!,” said Dalila-Wilson Scott, EVP and Chief Impact & Inclusion Officer, Comcast Corporation and President, Comcast NBCUniversal Foundation. *“1776: The Musical connects students to ideas and events that shaped our country while commemorating Philadelphia’s unique legacy and creating meaningful experiences for audiences across the city.”*

Student actors, crew members and musicians auditioned in April for roles in approximately 50 performances scheduled from June through August 2026. *1776: The Musical* will be presented at Philadelphia’s High School for the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA), located at Broad and Washington near the southern end of the City’s refreshed Avenue of the Arts corridor. Beyond CAPA’s stage, students will perform vignettes from the musical at locations throughout Philadelphia’s historic district, entertaining residents and visitors expected in Philadelphia for the many major events taking place this summer. Karen Corbin serves as executive producer, and Phillip Brown serves as executive producer and director.

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About Celebrating 1776!

Celebrating 1776! is a performing arts and education initiative dedicated to bringing the history and ideals of the American Revolution to life for contemporary audiences. Through student-led productions and

community engagement, the organization fosters deeper understanding of the founding principles of the United States. To learn more, visit Celebrating1776.org.

1776: The Musical is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). This production is licensed by MTI, and all authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.

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