

# PAPER MILL PLAYHOUSE

## AUDIO DESCRIPTION NOTES

### 1776

These description notes were prepared by Elizabeth Hunt and will be shared in advance of scheduled audio-described performances.

Welcome to Paper Mill Playhouse's audio described performance of *1776*! The first act will run for approximately one hour and thirty minutes, followed by a twenty-minute intermission.

---

At the top of the show, it is May 8, 1776, and the Second Continental Congress, convening in Philadelphia at present-day Independence Hall, proceeds with its business. We are introduced to **John Adams**, played by Will Blum. He is a white man of medium height in his early 40s who carries a walking stick. He has medium length light brown hair tied in a ponytail with a blue ribbon. He wears a dull burnt orange, knee length coat with eight dark brass buttons going down the front, and two on the cuff of each sleeve. The jacket matches his breeches that go down to his knees, with white stockings underneath and brown leather buckled shoes. He also wears a dark navy-blue vest with a rustic gold floral pattern and trim along the edges, and a white shirt with jabots underneath.

The chamber of the Continental Congress is angled so that the back corner faces the audience center. The corners on the far left and right sides have two large oak doors. Next to the left door is a tall coat rack with two hats. There are two large windows on the left wall and two large windows suspended on the right wall with a tally board in between. In each corner, there is sconce lighting.

The tally board has three columns labeled at the top. It reads from left to right: "Yea", "Abstain", and "Nay". In the center column under "Abstain", lists abbreviations of the thirteen original colonies on their own individual markers. To the left of the tally board is a leaflet calendar with the date "May 8". To the right of the tally board is a thermostat. In front of the tally board is a large rectangular wooden table. A long wooden bench with a back is at the front of the table. In the middle of the room, there are four smaller wooden tables with sage green tablecloths. The tables are dispersed throughout the room and other wooden chairs along with wooden benches.

In the midst of the debates with the other delegates, John reads the latest letter to his wife Abigail, who speaks to him in his imagination. **Abigail Adams** is played by Elena Shaddow. She is a white woman in her mid-40s, approximately 5'5" with dark brown hair and brown

eyes. She wears a pale pink colonial gown with a floral pattern and burgundy lace trim. The gown parts at the waist revealing a burgundy petticoat.

We then follow John outside the Congress to a mall. There is a back wooden paneled wall with horizontal slits going across the top and bottom panels. The middle panels have no slits and are fully wooden. On the left there is a wooden bench with a back and arms that seats two. On the far left slightly behind the bench is a small cherry blossom tree.

It is here John Adams meets PA delegate **Benjamin Franklin** played by John Treacy Egan. He is a white man appearing in his 60s, approximately 6'0" tall with medium length, wispy gray hair that falls slightly below his shoulder. He has a receding hairline that goes back past his forehead. He also wears a pair of wire rimmed glasses and walks with a cane. He wears a red jacket with brass buttons down the front. The jacket matches his breeches that go down to his knees, with white stockings underneath and brown buckled shoes. He also wears a yellow, gold diamond pattern vest with buttons down the middle. Beneath the vest is a white shirt with jabots.

They are then met by VA delegate, **Richard Henry Lee** played by Bryant Martin. He is a white man in his late 30s, approximately 6'1" tall with dark brown hair tied back in a ponytail and hazel eyes. He wears a velvet coat that is a brighter shade of orange than Adams and has lapels and a collar. There are no buttons on the cuffs of the sleeves, rather they are folded once over with a fabric trim on the edges. His vest is slightly too big for his frame and has red lace vertical stripes with an olive green and light brown paisley pattern in between the stripes. He wears a white shirt with jabots underneath. His pants are a very dark green and are tucked into black leather knee high boots. He also sports a tricorn (three-pointed) hat with gold lace trim along the edges and black leather gloves. The tricorn hat is a hat shaped like a triangle. One point faces the front while the other two face the back.

Weeks later, on June 7, 1776, the delegates reconvene in the chamber of the Continental Congress. We are then formally introduced to SC delegate, **Edward Rutledge** played by Jonathan Young. He is a white man in his mid to late 20s, approximately 6'1" tall with a white powdered wig styled with curls and tied back into a ponytail. He wears a velvet, powder blue jacket with matching breeches. Layered under the jacket is a light gold colored vest with a blue, silver, and violet floral pattern. Under the vest is a white shirt with jabots. He wears white stockings with black leather buckled shoes. Rutledge, the youngest member of the Continental Congress, is an ominous presence with a serpent-like quality.

PA delegate **John Dickinson** enters the chamber with a few more delegates. John Dickinson is played by Edward Watts. He is a white male in his early 50s, approximately 6'3" with long, light dark blond hair tied back in a low ponytail. He wears a powder blue collared jacket with matching breeches. The hem going down along the front opening of the jacket has a long gray and blue striped fabric. Layered under the jacket is a silver diamond patterned vest over his

white shirt and jabots. He wears white stockings with black leather, buckled shoes. He is sharp-tongued and a touch detestable.

We also meet the President of Congress, **John Hancock** played by James Moyer. John is a white man in his early 50s, approximately 6'2" tall with a gray periwig styled with two prominent curls on each side of his head. The rest of the hair is pulled back into a neat low ponytail. He wears a brown velvet jacket with dull gold buttons and matching breeches. Layered under the jacket is a pastel red, paisley patterned vest with gold trim. Underneath is a white shirt with jabots. He wears white stockings with brown leather buckled shoes.

Benjamin Franklin enters with the other delegates wearing a gray knit sock on his right foot. His big toe has been affected by the gout, so he walks with a limp and uses a walking stick. He will be resting this foot on a small cushioned foot stool for a majority of this scene.

It is important to note that delegates from the southern colonies (North and South Carolina, Georgia and Virginia) can be found seated around tables in the rear left corner of the chamber. Delegates from the middle colonies (Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania) are seated at tables in the center of the chamber in front of John Hancock's desk. Delegates from the northern colonies (New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire) are seated around tables on the right side of the chamber, with John Adams from Massachusetts slightly separated from the others on the far right side.

In addition, many of the Southern delegates wear clothing made from finer fabrics (finer silks rather than wool cloth). The men who wear periwigs and finer coats are worn by the more conservative members of congress and are an indication of their high social status, wealth and fashion.

John Adams proposes that Congress draft a Declaration of Independence to build support abroad for the cause. The task of writing the document is appointed to VA delegate, **Thomas Jefferson** played by Michael Burrell. Jefferson is a white male in his 30s and is approximately 6'1" tall. He has brown eyes and long ginger hair tied back in a ponytail. He wears an indigo-colored jacket with matching knee-high breeches. The jacket has lapels and a collar. There are gold colored fabric embellishments along the button clasps going down the center part of the jacket and the button clasps along the cuffs. Layered under the jacket is a pale white and violet, floral pattern vest with a white shirt with jabots underneath. Beneath his breeches are white stockings and black leather buckled shoes.

To break Jefferson's writer's block, Adams and Franklin summon Jefferson's wife, Martha, played by Liz Leclerc, who arrives and meets the trio in Jefferson's bedroom. The same wooden paneled wall from the mall serves as the back wall. There is a full-sized bed on the left with a white bed skirt, cream colored bed cover, a mustard yellow bed scarf folded at the foot of the bed and a matching pillow at the head. The headboard is of mahogany wood with two posters. A small wooden table and chair is in the center of the room. There is a white

tablecloth with tassels along the trim draped over the table. There is a white feathered quill, brass ink jar, and writing set atop the table. A small candelabra with three white wick candles is suspended from the ceiling.

**Martha Jefferson** is a white woman in her 20s, approximately 5'5" tall with ginger hair pulled back in a styled and curled updo. Martha wears a light buttery yellow colonial gown with pale blue vertical stripes. The sleeves are elbow length with a white lace trim draped off the cuffs. There are five bows going down the center of the bodice, all varying in size, with the largest bow at the top and the smallest at the bottom. Martha's cape is a light velvet texture, and is the same colored pale blue as the stripes on her dress. There are two layers of fabric that drape off the shoulders, a hood, gold trim along the edge of the cuffs, and a gold clasp at the waist.

The next day, Adams and Franklin meet with Martha on High Street and have a conversation about her and Thomas's relationship. High Street has the same wooden paneled wall from the mall and Jefferson's room as the back wall. A rectangular well is on the left side. It is approximately twelve inches high with wooden horizontal panels along the sides. There are two wooden posts on the back corners. The post on the left has a hook with a rope hung over. The other post has an empty hook with some weeding around it. There is a small pine tree to the left of the well. There is a dark gray, metal street lamp on the far right.

We then jump to June 22, 1776, when the delegates meet again in the chamber of the Continental Congress. A dispatch from George Washington, commander of the Continental Army, arrives by a **Courier** played by Praise Oranika. The Courier is a young black man in his 20s, approximately 6'2" tall. He has short black hair covered by a worn and weathered tricorne leather hat. It is fraying all over with patches of brown showing beneath the black outer texture. He wears a bright royal blue colonial army jacket with white fabric sewn along the cuff of the sleeves and down the edges of the center opening of the jacket. The white appears weathered, worn, and slightly dirty. There are dull gold buttons along the front. A mustard yellow cravat is tied in a simple knot around his neck. He wears dirt-covered, fatigued light brown breeches and brown knee-high leather boots.