★ 1776 ★

ABOUT THE SHOW

Composer and lyricist Sherman Edwards conceived the musical *1776* in 1959 while residing in Parsippany, New Jersey. A former schoolteacher, his passion for history inspired him to write a musical about the signing of the Declaration of Independence. At first struggling to find collaborators on the project, Edwards dedicated several years to researching the American Revolution and writing both the music and original libretto. His research began at the Morristown Public Library, the Pennsylvania Historical Societies' libraries, and the Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Division of the New York Public Library.

Edwards soon gained the interest of producer Stuart Ostrow and writer Peter Stone, who became his collaborators on *1776*. Between Edwards and Stone's research and Stone's rewriting of the script, the two created a concise narrative that delved into the personal characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the men engaged in heated debate about independence during the sweltering June and July of 1776.

1776 premiered on Broadway on March 16, 1969, at the 46th Street Theatre (now the Richard Rodgers Theatre). An unexpected success, the musical earned critical acclaim and was nominated for six Tony Awards, winning three, including Best Musical. In 1971, the Broadway production was invited by President Richard Nixon to give a special performance at the White House. It was the first Broadway musical to be performed in its entirety at the White House. The original production closed on February 19, 1972, after 1,217 performances. That same year, *1776* was adapted for the screen, with most of the original Broadway cast reprising their roles.

The Original Broadway Cast of *1776*
Photo by Martha Swope

Ken Howard, Howard Da Silva & William Daniels in *1776*
Photo by Martha Swope

SHERMAN EDWARDS

Born in New York, Sherman Edwards pursued a career in American history education after studying at New York University and Cornell University. Prior to *1776*, his diverse interests led him to work as a jazz pianist, performing with legendary musicians like Louis Armstrong, as well as a songwriter in New York City's legendary Brill Building in the 1950s. *1776* would be his only musical produced on Broadway.

"1776 was conceived as entertainment. But if it is indeed entertaining, it is, I believe, more than the songs and the jokes and the theatricality that make it so—it is the surprise of discovering that our Founding Fathers were men of flesh and blood and not cardboard."

—Peter Stone

"The events of July 4, 1776, mean more to us during these troubled times than most of us could ever imagine...What of the similarities between those times and these (states rights versus federal rights; property rights versus human rights; privileged rights versus civil rights) and the differences (if any)?"

—Peter Stone

Production photos of *1776* courtesy of The New York Public Library Digital Collections

THE FOUNDING FATHERS

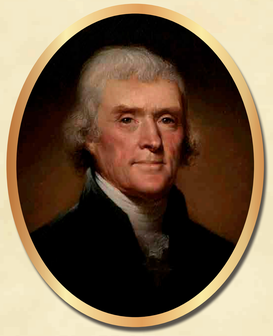
A total of 56 Founding Fathers were involved in the creation of the Declaration of Independence. In the musical *1776*, 21 of those Founding Fathers are depicted:

JOHN ADAMS
(1735–1826)
- Representing Massachusetts
- Age in 1776: 40
- Profession: Lawyer

JOHN DICKINSON
(1732–1808)
- Representing Pennsylvania
- Age in 1776: 44
- Profession: Plantation Owner, Lawyer

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
(1706–1790)
- Representing Pennsylvania
- Age in 1776: 70
- Profession: Printer, Scientist, Author

JOHN HANCOCK
(1737–1793)
- President of the Second Continental Congress
- Age in 1776: 39
- Profession: Merchant, Shipping Magnate



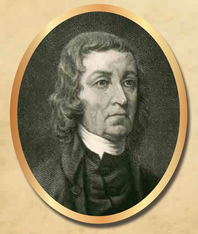
THOMAS JEFFERSON
(1743–1826)
- Representing Virginia
- Age in 1776: 33
- Profession: Lawyer, Plantation Owner, Scientist

RICHARD HENRY LEE
(1732–1794)
- Representing Virginia
- Age in 1776: 44
- Profession: Plantation Owner, Merchant

ROBERT LIVINGSTON
(1746–1813)
- Representing New York
- Age in 1776: 30
- Profession: Lawyer

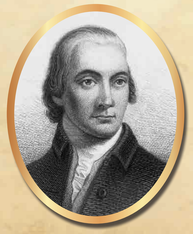
EDWARD RUTLEDGE
(1749–1800)
- Representing South Carolina
- Age in 1776: 26
- Profession: Lawyer, Plantation Owner

ROGER SHERMAN
(1721–1793)
- Representing Connecticut
- Age in 1776: 55
- Profession: Lawyer



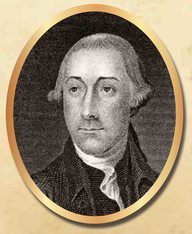
DR. JOSIAH BARTLETT
New Hampshire

SAMUEL CHASE
Maryland

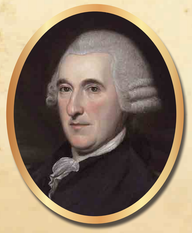


DR. LYMAN HALL
Georgia

STEPHEN HOPKINS
Rhode Island



JOSEPH HEWES
North Carolina



THOMAS McKEAN
Delaware

LEWIS MORRIS
New York

GEORGE READ
Delaware

CAESAR RODNEY
Delaware

CHARLES THOMSON
Secretary of the Continental Congress

JAMES WILSON
Pennsylvania

JOHN WITHERSPOON
New Jersey