

Roundabout Theatre Company



The Chase Family Series Study Guide



music & lyrics by **Sherman Edwards** book by **Peter Stone**
based on a concept by **Sherman Edwards**
directed by **Scott Ellis**

STUDY GUIDE

written by

Margaret Salvante, Education Director and **Andrew Eggert**

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WHAT IS THE PLAY ABOUT?

I am well aware of the toil and blood and treasure it will cost us to maintain this declaration and support and defend these States. Yet through all the gloom I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is more than worth all the means, and that posterity will triumph in that day's transactions.

— *John Adams*

The hot summer of 1776 was full of struggle for a group of dedicated men gathered in the State House of Philadelphia. The problem? Whether it would be better to remain colonies of England, then the strongest empire in the world, or take a great risk and break off to form a new nation, committing high treason in the process. As Americans, we all know the ultimate decision that the Founding Fathers reached, but we often forget about the months of difficult debate that preceded the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The urgency of this debate and the human struggle endured by this group of visionary men are brought to life in the musical *1776*.

The story focuses on John Adams and his uphill battle to bring the vote for independence to the attention of the Congress. As we watch two opposing groups, the Loyalists and the Separatists, collide on the floor of the State House, we wonder how the debate will ever be resolved. Both sides know that something has to be done and fast because military conflict is already raging and American men are already dying. But with a haphazard army composed of untrained citizens pitted against the most powerful military force in the world, it's no wonder that the Loyalists look to

practicality. After all, no colony in the world had ever turned against the mighty force of the British Empire, and with bad news pouring in every day from Commander Washington, the Loyalists urge the Congress to reconcile with King George and return to the former benefits of harmony with England. However, the Separatists feel that the wounds are too deep; that the only hope for the future of the Colonies is a bold commitment, against all odds, to the cause of independence. Although as modern viewers we cheer for independence, there is really no clear "bad guy," making the debate even more intriguing.

In staging *1776*, Director Scott Ellis felt it was important to give full recognition to both points of view. But the show is about much more than the politics of the American Revolution. Ellis also wanted to emphasize the human component of the story: how each delegate was willing to suffer in order to reach for a higher cause. Through characters such as Abigail Adams and Caesar Rodney, *1776* emphasizes the personal sacrifices that extended outside the Congressional walls, and the painful ballad "Momma Look Sharp," sung from the perspective of a dying soldier, reminds us of the bloody consequences of revolution and that all Americans had to bear part of the burden in the struggle for freedom.

From the moment Thomas Jefferson presents his draft of the Declaration to Congress, the audience knows that the delegates will adopt the document. But, by showing the process by which the decision was reached, *1776* reminds us of the human conflict and remarkable controversy behind the creation of our nation's birth certificate.

WHO'S WHO

THE SEPARATISTS:

JOHN ADAMS, delegate from Massachusetts (played by Brent Spiner): At the very beginning of the show, we meet John Adams and learn of his frustrations. He is fed up with the British government and their taxation, yet the rest of Congress doesn't want to listen to him because he is "obnoxious and disliked." Ultimately, though, it is Adams' perseverance that brings the issue to the table; he guides the Congress through the process of drafting and debating the Declaration of Independence.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, delegate from Pennsylvania (played by Pat Hingle): The oldest member of the Congress, the distinguished Franklin serves as a source of wisdom and political savvy for the Separatists. At his suggestion, Richard Henry Lee travels home to Virginia to get the support of the Virginian state legislature for the cause of American independence.

THOMAS JEFFERSON, delegate from Virginia (played by Paul Michael Valley): Even though he is silent in the State House of Philadelphia, Jefferson is one of the most crucial players for independence, writing the draft of the Declaration of Independence that is presented to Second Continental Congress.

RICHARD HENRY LEE, delegate from Virginia (played by Merwin Foard): A member of one of the most influential Southern political families, Lee presents the resolution for independence to the Congress which leads to the drafting of the Declaration.

CAESAR RODNEY, delegate from Delaware (played by Michael McCormick): Although dangerously ill, Rodney is so committed that he is willing to make the dangerous commute back to Philadelphia to cast the deciding vote.

THE LOYALISTS:

JOHN DICKINSON, delegate from Pennsylvania (played by Michael Cumpsty): Even though he comes from the same state as Benjamin Franklin, Dickinson holds the opposite opinion on the issue of independence and remains firmly against separation to the end.

GEORGE READ, delegate from Delaware (played by Kevin Ligon): Although the other two representatives from Delaware favor independence, Read holds out in opposition.

EDWARD RUTLEDGE, delegate from South Carolina (played by Gregg Edelman): A champion of states' rights, he is concerned with the future of South Carolina and is wary of separation from Britain for this reason.

FEATURED PLAYERS:

ABIGAIL ADAMS (played by Linda Emond): Even though John Adams' wife is living at home in Massachusetts, she often appears in his mind as a source of advice and support through all of the struggle.

MARTHA JEFFERSON (played by Lauren Ward): She is brought to Philadelphia by Adams and Franklin to serve as inspiration for her husband.

JOHN HANCOCK, president of the Congress (played by Richard Poe): Although personally in favor of independence, Hancock serves his duties as president and mediator of the Congress, remaining unbiased.

A COURIER (played by Dashiell Eaves): He delivers news from George Washington, commander of the army, to the delegates.

– See *Who's Who* on the last page



American painter John Turnbull captures the famous moment

HISTORY COMES TO LIFE

We met in Stuart [Ostrow]'s office in the Paramount Building. Sherman [Edwards], who was a very brusque man, walked in, sat down at the piano, and in this rotten singing voice sang "Sit Down, John." And the minute I heard that, I knew I wanted to do it. Because in that song is the entire fabric and level of the show: You are involved with people whom we'd never dealt with before except as cardboard figures. This room had flies, it was hot, and these men were not perfect. There's more information about the Continental Congress in the opening song than I learned in all my years at school.

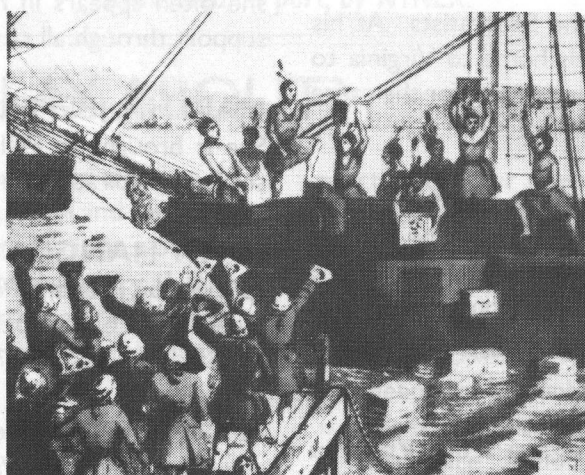
— Peter Stone

Although originally skeptical, when Stone heard the opening number of *1776*, he knew it was a script he wanted to write. In his story, he downplays historical fact in order to concentrate on characters, relationships, and situations. But in order to fully understand the immediacy of the play's conflict, it is important to review the events that led up to the formation of the Second Continental Congress.

Even though tension between Britain and the American Colonies had been stewing for some time, it was the French and Indian War that finally set the process of separation in motion. Defending the Colonies from attack by the French was costly, requiring a major military commitment by the Empire. When the conflict finally ended in 1763, the British tax payers believed that the Colonists owed them, and the British Parliament imposed a series of retribution taxes on Americans during the 1760s, including those on sugar, stamps, and finally tea.

If the French and Indian War was the catalyst behind the conflict, the Tea Act, imposed in 1773, was the turning point. This act undermined American merchants and upset the American people, who boycotted British tea throughout the Colonies. The famous Boston Tea Party occurred on December 16, 1773, when Colonialists disguised as Mohawk Indians threw the entire cargo of a ship overboard. In retaliation, Parliament passed the Intolerable Acts of 1774 at the suggestion of the king, depriving Americans of more political and economic control. King George III wrote to his prime minister at the time: "The die is now cast. The Colonies must either submit or triumph." But the Colonies were not ready to submit, and knowing that there is strength in numbers, Virginia, the largest colony, passed a resolution that an attack on one colony was as attack on all. It was finally the Massachusetts House that pushed for the First Continental Congress in the city of Philadelphia in September,

1774, so the Colonies would be able to discuss their problems and form collective decisions. At the convention, the delegates authorized a new boycott of British goods, named George Washington commander of the army, and determined that they would continue to meet until the conflict was resolved.



The Boston Tea Party

The situation went from bad to worse when in April, 1775 the British attacked in the battles of Lexington and Concord. In May, representatives were once again in the State House of Philadelphia, hoping to resolve the problem. They sent an Olive Branch petition to King George in July, hoping that "the former harmony between her [Britain] and these Colonies may be restored." The king was not moved by their plea, declaring the American Colonies in a state of rebellion. The final push for independence came from the

remarkable pamphlet *Common Sense*, published by the philosopher Thomas Paine in the beginning of 1776. This document stirred new passion for revolution among Americans with its proclamation: "Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'Tis time to part.'"

TIME LINE

- **February 10, 1763:** The Peace of Paris ends the French and Indian War.
- **April 27, 1773:** Tea Act imposed by British.
- **December 16, 1773:** Boston Tea Party.
- **March 31, 1774:** King George passes the first of the Intolerable Acts.
- **September 5, 1774:** First Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia.
- **April, 1775:** The battles of Lexington and Concord; the revolution begins.

COLONIAL LIFE

When discussing *1776* with the cast, Director Scott Ellis remarked that he was impressed with the enormous amount these men had been able to accomplish in spite of the many obstacles of their day. Many were young, and yet they built businesses, established reputations, and then completely uprooted themselves in order to forge a new nation. They each had to travel hundreds of miles by horse or oxen to get to Philadelphia, and the trip took days or even weeks to complete. Sometimes safe roads hadn't been built yet, especially in the South, and crossing major rivers was difficult or impossible. But even after the delegates convened, the obstacles didn't disappear. The men had to live months at a time away from their families, and all communication was extremely difficult. The average person only lived to be 45 years old in the late 18th Century, making the delegates' sacrifice ever more remarkable.

Life was particularly hard for women. Gender roles were strictly defined in the era, and the women living at home were expected to fulfill all of the domestic roles of the household. Although some couples married out of love, most marriages were formed for convenience: so that someone would be at

home while the man pursued his life of politics, commerce, and war. In the event of death, remarriage was frequent, since it was impossible to function normally in society without a spouse. For women, society in the 1700s was rigidly structured and they were not granted many rights, yet their personal sacrifices were just as important in the creation of our nation.

Hardest of all was the life of the earliest African Americans. Where the signers of the Declaration were insightful and rigorous in their desire to ensure freedom for the citizens of the new nation, their vision did not extend to all of its residents. Slavery was an accepted financial institution at the time of the Second Continental Congress, and although Jefferson originally attempted to end the slave trade, his motives are not clear

because he never emancipated those slaves he personally owned. Yet in spite of being indentured, African Americans still made many important contributions to American culture and history, including poet Phillis Wheatley and mathematician Benjamin Banneker, who constructed the first clock built in the American Colonies. Many slaves aided the military effort as well, with more than 5000 African American soldiers fighting against the British.



A typical colonial family at home in 1775

- **May 10, 1775:** The Second Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia.
- **June 17, 1775:** The Battle of Bunker Hill, a costly victory for the British.
- **July 8, 1775:** Olive Branch petition to King George III.
- **August 23, 1775:** King George proclaims the American Colonies in rebellion.
- **January, 1776:** Thomas Paine publishes *Common Sense*.
- **July 4, 1776:** The Declaration of Independence is passed and America is born!

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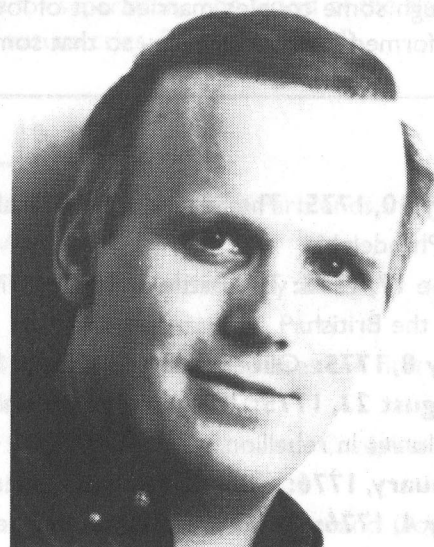
THE COLLABORATORS

SHERMAN EDWARDS (Music & Lyrics): Originally a high school history teacher, Edwards started his career in music by composing pop songs like “Wonderful, Wonderful” for Johnny Mathis and “Johnny Get Angry,” Joanie Sommers’ greatest hit. In the early 60s, the idea struck him to write a musical about the Founding Fathers. “This was love,” Stuart Ostrow, the original producer of *1776*, recalls. “Sherman was mesmerized by those people. He spent more time in Philadelphia than you can imagine, reading, studying.” After almost nine years of research and composition, the show finally opened on Broadway to rave reviews on March 16, 1969, going on to win the Tony award over *Hair* and *Promises, Promises*. *1776* was the only musical Edwards ever completed, although at the time of his death in 1981, he was working on another history-based show: this time about the pharaohs.



PETER STONE (Book): Originally thinking that the musical “seemed to be the most unlikely idea in a long time,” Stone agreed to write the book of *1776*, and the show went on to win both the Tony and NY Drama Critics Circle Awards for Best Musical. He has won Tonys for his work on *Woman of the Year* and recently for the book of the musical *Titanic*. Additional Broadway credits include the musicals *The Will Rogers Follies*, *My One and Only*, *Sugar*, *Two by Two*, and the play *Full Circle*. Stone has also written more than two dozen screenplays, winning an Academy Award for *Father Goose*. Among his other films are *Charade*, a screen adaptation of *1776*, *The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3*, *Mirage*, *Arabesque*, *Sweet Charity*, *Skin Game*, *Who’s Killing the Great Chefs of Europe?*, and most recently, *Just Cause*. Having also won an Emmy for an episode of the television program *The Defenders*, Stone is the only writer to have won a Tony, Oscar, and Emmy. Stone commented of *1776*: “Nothing occupies a space in my life like this show. I feel very close to it.”

SCOTT ELLIS (Director): Scott Ellis is uniquely qualified to be directing the first Broadway revival of *1776*: it was the very first musical he saw on Broadway, and he made his professional debut as the Courier. Ellis is the resident director of the Roundabout Theatre, and *1776* is his sixth show with the company. He recently staged a successful revival of *She Loves Me*, receiving a Tony nomination and Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Director. Other credits include: *Company*, *Picnic*, and *A Month in the Country* (Roundabout); *Dark Rapture*, *The World Goes ‘Round: The Music of Kander and Ebb*, and *Flora, the Red Menace* (Off-Broadway); *I 10 in the Shade* and *A Little Night Music* (NYC Opera). He was most recently represented on Broadway by the Kander and Ebb musical, *Steel Pier*.



COLLABORATION: THE MAKING OF A MUSICAL

Whenever I'm doing a musical I want to do a play, and whenever I'm doing a play I want to do a musical. I love both of them. I approach both of them the same way. A musical is more complicated in the sense that it is a larger collaboration, and there are so many other things that become involved. It is a different way of working, but you ask the same questions. You approach the characters the same way. That does not change. It's just the shell around it, the mechanics of it all, making sure that that all works is much more difficult in a musical.

— Scott Ellis

The Declaration of Independence resulted from an intense collaboration by over 50 people, but the staging of the musical *1776* involved teamwork on an even grander scale. Getting the show onto the stage began with the tireless dedication of one man, Sherman Edwards, who worked for almost a decade writing the score. Established author Peter Stone then sat down and wrote the book, giving the show “suspense, forward motion and, most important, wit,” according to the show’s original producer, Stuart Ostrow.

To stage the first Broadway revival of *1776*, Roundabout Theatre Company assembled a mass of artists and administrators to bring the work to life, including the director, musical director, choreographer, scenic designer, lighting designer, costume designer and hair designer -- not to mention a cast of 27, a full stage crew, and an entire office staff to coordinate and publicize the production.

Director: Like the glue holding the show together, it is the director who brings a single vision to the production. He works closely with each of the other designers and performers to create one cohesive show that tells a story.

Musical Director: The musical director works with the actors on songs, coaching the style and technique of their

performance, which involves a lot more than singing. It is also his job to guide the sound of the orchestra.

Choreographer: Even a show without big dance numbers needs careful attention to the movement of the performers during songs. The choreographer carefully directs the performers in the way they move so that each motion emphasizes the emotions of the characters.

Scenic Designer: It is the scenic designer’s responsibility to design a single set that can move and change to suggest the show’s many diverse locations. For *1776*, designer Tony Walton wanted to create a set that would blend the State House in Philadelphia with the famous John Trumbull painting of the signing.

Lighting Designer: With modern technology, the lighting designer does so much more than merely ensuring that the actors can be seen. Using hundreds of lighting instruments, the designer can create different shades and textures that work with the set and further elicit the emotions of a scene.

Costume Designer/Hair Designer: These two work closely with each performer, perfecting the actors’ physical appearance to create historically accurate characters while maximizing the illusion of theater.

Who's Who continued from second page— OTHER DELEGATES FEATURED IN THE MUSICAL:

DR. JOSIAH BARTLETT, delegate from New Hampshire (played by Michael X. Martin)

SAMUEL CHASE, delegate from Maryland (played by Ric Stoneback)

DR. LYMAN HALL, delegate from Georgia (played by Robert Westenberg)

JOSEPH HEWES, delegate from North Carolina (played by David Lowenstein)

STEPHEN HOPKINS, delegate from Rhode Island (played by Tom Aldredge)

ROBERT LIVINGSTON, delegate from New York (played by Daniel Marcus)

COL. THOMAS MCKEAN, delegate from Delaware (played by Bill Nolte)

LEWIS MORRIS, delegate from New York (played by Tom Riis Farrell)

ROGER SHERMAN, delegate from Connecticut (played by John Herrera)

JAMES WILSON, delegate from Pennsylvania (played by Michael Winther)

REV. JONATHAN WITHERSPOON, delegate from New Jersey (played by Jerry Lanning)

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS:

ANDREW MCNAIR, Congressional custodian (played by Macintyre Dixon)

CHARLES THOMPSON, Congressional secretary (played by Guy Paul)

A PAINTER (played by Ben Sheaffer)

A LEATHER APRON (played by Joseph Cassidy)

GEMIS NOSES
COG'LNOMAS WCKEM
BOBEKT GIANCATION
STEPHEN HOBPING
JOSEPH NEMER
DR TAVIN HATT
ZANAS CHAZA
DR JOSIAH HANSON

A GEATHNER ABBON
A BANTLER ABBON
CHARGES THOMPSON
ANDREW NCHIAN
SCOTT BELLER
ROGER SHANWAN
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Welcome to The Chase Family Series at Roundabout!

Your family subscription includes:

- a study guide for you to review as a family before coming to the theatre;
- admittance to our pre-show reception for family subscribers only, scheduled to take place before the show in the lobby;
- participation in a post-performance discussion with members of the cast.

Remember to come **Saturday, July 26, 1997 at 1:00 PM** to enjoy refreshments and participate in a discussion with our Education Director before seeing the show. Please note that all discussions are reserved for young subscribers and their adult guests.

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The Chase Manhattan Bank for its generous support of this important program.*

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