THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEW Episode: The White House 1600 Sessions Podcast "American Storyteller Bartlett Sher"

White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin Talks to Tony Award-Winning Director Bartlett Sher About the Portrayal of American History in Theater

August 17, 2022 (Washington, D.C.) – The White House Historical Association released a new episode of *The White House 1600 Sessions* podcast today, "American Storyteller Bartlett Sher," which explores how one of our nation's greatest storytellers uses theater to explain and illuminate stories of American history.

In this episode, Stewart McLaurin, president of the White House Historical Association, and Tony Award-winning director Bartlett Sher discuss the portrayal of the White House and iconic moments in history on the main stage.

"Here in Washington, on any given night, you have White House staff, members of Congress, policymakers, leaders in every sector, in a theater audience," said McLaurin. "What they're seeing has to have an impact on their thinking, and they apply these things to what they're going through in their own lives."

Sher details the process of putting together a story to share with others, and what audiences can take away from his productions.

"Looking for those stories which tell us something about who we are, especially American stories, and bringing them to audiences so they can read, reconsider them, look at them freshly, is one of the tasks of my work," said Sher. "It's one of the great accomplishments of my work when I can pull it off."

Next spring, Sher will direct a revival of the musical *Camelot* on Broadway, a collaboration with screenwriter Aaron Sorkin, with whom he most recently worked with on a stage adaptation of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy said *Camelot* was JFK's favorite musical, and after his death, the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Roundtable came to symbolize the Kennedy administration.

Sher says the new version of *Camelot* allows Sorkin "to intersect his ideas and interest in the roundtable and democracy, and the struggles of Arthur to make it a special new place" against the ideas of how to make a musical and how to ramp into songs.

When asked by McLaurin what it is like to have a president of the United States in the audience of a play, Sher recalled then-President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama seeing his 2009 revival of playwright August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* on Broadway, and called the moment "extraordinary."

"When presidents have this close relationship to the arts, it allows there to be better, deeper discourse," continued Sher. "I think it's more powerful, and I think it's really extraordinary."

Watch the full video of this podcast episode here.

The White House 1600 Sessions is available on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, and Stitcher.

To hear the full episode, visit https://www.whitehousehistory.org/the-white-house-1600-sessions.

For more information, please contact press@whha.org.

The White House 1600 Sessions
White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin is the host of "The White House "Looking for those stories which tell us something about who we are, especially American stories, and bringing them to audiences so they can read, reconsider them, look at them freshly is one of the tasks of my work. It's one of the great accomplishments of my work when I can pull it off. 1600 Sessions," the Association's official audio and video podcast devoted to exploring the history, cultural impact, untold stories, and personal accounts of America's most iconic residence and highest office.

About The White House Historical Association
The White House Historical Association was founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to support her vision to restore and preserve the Executive Mansion and its legacy for generations to come. Mrs. Kennedy sought to inspire Americans, especially children, to explore and engage with American history and its presidents. Supported entirely by private resources, the Association is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has contributed more than $100 million to the White House in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit WhiteHouseHistory.org.

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