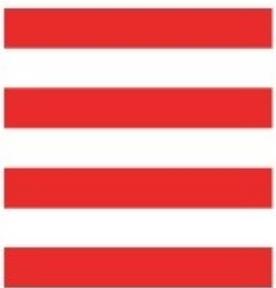


# FIVE PRESIDENTS

BY RICK CLEVELAND

AMERICAN  
**BLUES**  
THEATER



**BACKSTAGE** GUIDE

A publication of **COMMUNITY SERVICE** at  
**AMERICAN BLUES THEATER**

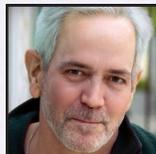
## BACKSTAGE CALLBOARD

### FIVE PRESIDENTS

By Rick Cleveland\*

Directed by Marty Higginbotham\*

### STARRING



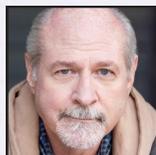
John Carter Brown



James Leaming\*



Martin L'Herault



Tom McElroy



Stephen Spencer



Denzel Tsopnang\*

There was only one day in history when all five of these U.S. Presidents were in the same room at the same time: the holding room prior to entering the memorial service for President Richard Nixon. *Five Presidents* is the presentation of this once-in-a-lifetime occurrence as imagined by *The West Wing* and *House of Cards* writer Rick Cleveland. "Smart and funny as a high-grade dramedy. Turning politics into entertainment is a specialty for Cleveland." - *The New York Times*.

\* Ensemble member or Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Note from Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside .....Page 4

About Playwright Rick Cleveland .....Page 5

About Director Marty Higginbotham .....Page 5

“The Backstory” with James Leaming and Denzel Tsopnang .....Page 6

Behind the Scenes with Lighting Designer Alexander Ridgers .....Page 7

About President Gerald Ford .....Pages 8-9

About President Jimmy Carter .....Pages 10-11

About President Ronald Reagan .....Pages 12-13

About President George H. W. Bush .....Pages 14-15

About President Bill Clinton .....Pages 16-17

Inside the Surprising Friendship Between George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton .....Pages 18-19

The Unlikely Friendship Between Justice Ginsburg and Justice Scalia .....Pages 20-21

About American Blues Theater .....Pages 22-23

## **BACKSTAGE** Contributors

Elyse Dolan  
Associate Producer  
American Blues Theater

with Gwendolyn Whiteside, James Leaming,  
Denzel Tsopnang, and Alexander Ridgers



## NOTE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **GWENDOLYN WHITESIDE**



Artistic Director  
Gwendolyn Whiteside

Welcome to the Chicago premiere of *Five Presidents* written by Ensemble member Rick Cleveland and directed by Ensemble member Marty Higginbotham. We're thrilled to have Rick's work return to our stage; his previous plays at Blues include *-Dogman's Last Stand* (our inaugural production in 1985), *Bad Moon*, and *Tom and Jerry*. Since then, Rick's career skyrocketed as an award-winning writer for "West Wing", "House of Cards", and many others (see full bio in program). It's only fitting to have his acerbic political wit return to Chicago.

Think back to your childhood. Did someone ever say – *you could grow up to become president someday!*? Maybe a well-intentioned grandparent or aunt who believed in you? A teacher? I recently made that innocuous remark to a 4th grader and was treated to a gruesome reenactment of the gag reflex. It was followed by such a violent rolling of eyes I worried the optic nerves were

going to snap. "Why would anyone want to be *that?!*" he questioned.

Smart kid – though not a new sentiment.

What should give us pause, however, is the child's age – 9 years old.

The next generation is watching. Hopefully, each generation improves upon the systems in place. A reasonable fear is the next generation might lack interest in tireless, thankless public service. However, I assure you there will always be someone willing to step into the position. The kid asked a profound question if you just change the emphasis to "why".

There have been 44 individuals serving 45 presidencies. Grover Cleveland (no relation to Rick) served 2 non-consecutive terms and is counted twice. Throughout the years, these presidents anchored different parties – Republican (19), Democratic (14), Democratic-Republican (4), Whig (4), Federalist (4), National Union (1), and "none" (1 - George Washington). Tonight, you're invited to watch 5 of these U.S. Presidents – each with personal policies, agendas, and favorite cocktails.

Rick Cleveland brilliantly dramatizes this imagined once-in-a-lifetime conversation. Written during #44's tenure, today's 2019 America represents a different political, ideological, and cultural awareness than even four years ago. Cleveland returned to the play with a sharpened pencil and tongue. While we celebrate this Chicago premiere, the manuscript has been a living document for Cleveland. Like the U.S. Constitution, it got amended. We are grateful to Rick for joining us through the rehearsal process!

To the parents of the 9 yr-old kid: leave your browser open to our community partner – *Chicago Votes* – a non-partisan, nonprofit organization that educates the next generation about politics and civic responsibility. Perhaps the question of "why" will evolve to "why not"? •

## ABOUT PLAYWRIGHT **RICK CLEVELAND**

**RICK CLEVELAND** is a playwright and an Emmy winning writer/producer whose television credits include *The West Wing*, *Six Feet Under*, *Mad Men*, *Nurse Jackie*, *House Of Cards*, *Archer*, *Legit*, and *Man In The High Castle*.

Rick performed his one man show *My Buddy Bill* at the Berkshire Theatre Festival, the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Victory Gardens Theater in Chicago, the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, and won the Best Solo Performance Award at the HBO Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen in 2006. He also performed the piece at the 92nd Street Y in New York City for a one hour Comedy Central special in 2007.

As a playwright Rick has earned playwriting grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Kennedy Center's Fund for New American Plays. Rick was invited to the National Playwrights' Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center twice, and is a Founding Ensemble member of American Blues Theater, as well as a Founding Member of the Ojai Playwrights Conference.

Rick was a commentator for NPR's "All Things Considered" and he received his MFA from the University of Iowa's Playwrights' Workshop. •



Playwright  
Rick Cleveland

## ABOUT DIRECTOR **MARTY HIGGINBOTHAM**



Director Marty Higginbotham

**MARTY HIGGINBOTHAM** is a proud Ensemble member of American Blues Theater. American Blues acting credits include: *Desire Under the Elms*, *Monsters*, *On the Waterfront*, *Tom and Jerry*, *The Homage that Follows*, *Stalag 17*, *Bus Stop*, *The Three Penny Opera*, *Working*, *The Trip to Bountiful*, *American Dead*, and *Oklahoma*; American Blues sound design/original score credits: *Monsters*, *Monsters II*, *Monsters III*, *Food from Trash*, *The Homage That Follows*, *The Million Bells of Ocean*, and *A Lie of the Mind*. Marty has also worked on and off stage at The Old Globe, The Prince Music Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Circle Theatre, and Organic Theater Company. Marty directed the original full production of *It's a Wonderful: A Live Radio Play* in 2004 and continued to helm the production up to 2008, moving with the Ensemble in 2009 to the Biograph, and remounting at the Greenhouse. Marty is also Founder and President of The Stage Channel, a video production company serving the Arts in Chicago and across the country since 2001. •

# "THE BACKSTORY" WITH ACTORS **JAMES LEAMING & DENZEL TSOPNANG**

American Blues Ensemble member James Leaming plays "Ronald Reagan" in *Five Presidents* and American Blues Artistic Affiliate Denzel Tsopnang plays "Agent Kirby". We asked both actors to share some lesser-known facts about themselves in "The Backstory".



Actor James Leaming

## **JAMES LEAMING**

**If I weren't an actor:** Mountain search & rescue/first responder/ski patrol. (I went to college pre-med and Colorado is my family home)

**Childhood nickname:** Doc

**Best career advice I've received:** Don't wrestle with pigs - you both get covered in crap and the pig likes it.

**Favorite part of the job:** The still moment in darkness, the breath of potential just before the play begins. Especially a premiere.

**Worst part of the job:** Memorizing the words.

**How I made my first dollar:** A bike shop in my father's garage.

**What I'd want for my last meal:** Barbecue and bourbon.

**Favorite item of clothing:** Comfortable shoes. (And my oldest Melanzana fleece hoodie.)

**If I could invent one thing:** A Peace Bomb.

**One of my hidden talents:** My internal compass.

## **DENZEL TSOPNANG**

**If I weren't an actor:** I'd be a Theatre Lit professor.

**Childhood nickname:** Denny Boy

**Best career advice I've received:** The show is never about you.

**Favorite part of the job:** I get to walk into a room and be vulnerable, silly and fall completely on my a\*\* with a bunch of people that are willing to do the exact same... for a living.

**Worst part of the job:** Sometime doing shows where you find yourself trying to be vulnerable, silly and willing to fail, in a room with people who don't make you comfortable doing so.

**How I made my first dollar:** Buying my neighbor cigarettes from down the street.

**What I'd want for my last meal:** My mom's smothered potatoes and grilled steak.

**Favorite item of clothing:** Either my new boots or my blue button down. Clothes are wonderful but they're just clothes and I'm likely to have a new favorite before the end of the month! Haha.

**If I could invent one thing:** A law that if any company puts you on hold for longer than 15 minutes, they have to pay the entirety of whatever bill you were calling to inquire about.

**One of my hidden talents:** I...I don't think I have one? Crap. I gotta get a hidden talent! •



Actor Denzel Tsopnang

# BEHIND THE SCENES WITH LIGHTING DESIGNER **ALEXANDER RIDGERS**

Lighting Designer Alexander Ridgers shares an explanation of his preliminary ideas for the lighting design of *Five Presidents*, including the lighting color arc that he is envisioning for this production.

Drawing from real research of the real room is what creates the “reality” of this space and how the light interacts with the architecture. The overcast day outside and presence of a cool exterior is an emotional idea relating to the feeling that the play creates.

At first glance, the room should feel real. It should feel as though it is being lit by the overhead can lights, a chandelier and light coming in from the overcast day outside. However as the action unfolds and tension builds, the light from the outside will slowly transform the room - desaturating the space and adding a colder atmosphere bringing the overcast day from the outside inside.

Light in space has relationship to the tension within the action. As the tension grows, the light and space becomes more desaturated, cooler and “overcast”. The idea of changing the space is subtle and grows over long periods of time within action.

The play begins here — the room is warm/soft white and lit to evoke a “real” conference room.



WHITE INTERIOR  
OVERCAST EXTERIOR

As tension begins — once Clinton enters the space/all 5 are present - the world slowly shifts. Desaturates?



DESATURATE  
Bring overcast inside.

As the play continues — the overcast nature of the exterior takes over the interior. The space also isolates and shrinks.



COOL > SHRINK SPACE  
Isolate people within space.

Note: the space itself shouldn't be washed in cool light like the above.

The chandeliers and “real” light within the room remains the same soft white, but the feeling and atmosphere should change (through other sources of light).

— Alexander Ridgers, August 2019 •

## ABOUT PRESIDENT GERALD FORD

Gerald Rudolph Ford Jr. (born Leslie Lynch King, Jr on July 14, 1913 — renamed after adoption) was an American politician who served as the 38th president of the United States from August 1974 to January 1977. Before his accession to the presidency, Ford served as the 40th vice president of the United States from December 1973 to August 1974. Ford is the only person to have served as both vice president and president without being elected to either office by the Electoral College.

Born in Omaha, Nebraska, and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Ford attended the University of Michigan and Yale Law School. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserve, serving from 1942 to 1946; he left as a lieutenant commander. Ford began his political career in 1949 as the U.S. representative from Michigan's 5th congressional district. He served in this capacity for 25 years, the final nine of them as the House Minority Leader.

In December 1973, two months after the resignation of Spiro Agnew, Ford became the first person appointed to the vice presidency under the terms of the 25th Amendment by President Richard Nixon. After the subsequent resignation of President Nixon in August 1974, Ford immediately assumed the presidency. His 895 day-long presidency is the shortest in U.S. history for any president who did not die in office.

As president, Ford signed the Helsinki Accords, which marked a move toward détente in the Cold War. With the collapse of South Vietnam nine months into his presidency, U.S. involvement in Vietnam essentially ended. Domestically, Ford presided over the worst economy in the four decades since the Great Depression, with growing inflation and a recession during his tenure.

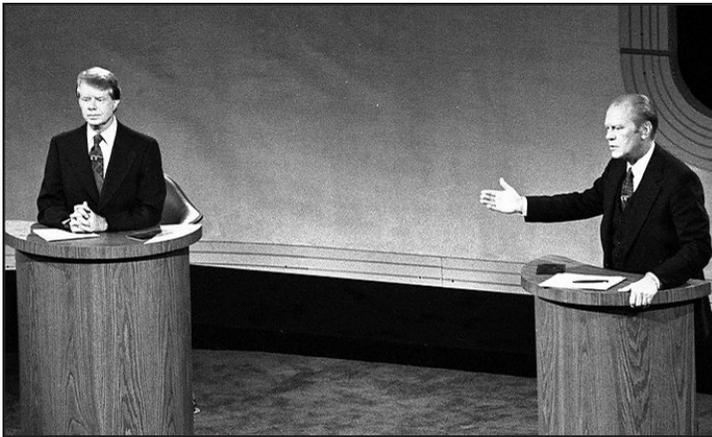
In one of his most controversial acts, he granted a presidential pardon to President Richard Nixon for his role in the Watergate scandal. In a televised broadcast to the nation, Ford explained that he felt the pardon was in the best interests of the country, and that the Nixon



President Gerald Ford



Richard Nixon, Pat Nixon, Betty Ford, and Gerald Ford after President Nixon nominated Ford to be Vice President (October 13, 1973)



Gerald Ford (right) and Jimmy Carter at a debate (1976)



Gerald Ford and his golden retriever, Liberty, in the Oval Office (1974)

family's situation "is a tragedy in which we all have played a part. It could go on and on and on, or someone must write the end to it. I have concluded that only I can do that, and if I can, I must."

Critics said a "corrupt bargain" had been struck between the men, speculating that Ford's pardon was granted in exchange for Nixon's resignation, which had elevated Ford to the presidency. In the months following the pardon, Ford often declined to mention President Nixon by name, referring to him in public as "my predecessor" or "the former president." After Ford left the White House in January 1977, he privately justified his pardon of Nixon by carrying in his wallet a portion of the text of *Burdick v. United States*, a 1915 U.S. Supreme Court decision which stated that a pardon indicated a presumption of guilt, and that acceptance of a pardon was tantamount to a confession of that guilt.

During Ford's presidency, foreign policy was characterized in procedural terms by the increased role Congress began to play, and by the corresponding curb on the powers of the President.

Ford was the target of two assassination attempts during his presidency. The first in Sacramento, California, on September 5, 1975 by Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a follower of Charles Manson, and the second in downtown San Francisco, Sara Jane Moore, just 17 days later.

In the Republican presidential primary campaign of 1976, Ford defeated former California Governor Ronald Reagan for the Republican nomination. He narrowly lost the presidential election to the Democratic challenger, former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter.

Following his years as president, Ford remained active in the Republican Party. His moderate views on various social issues increasingly put him at odds with conservative members of the party in the 1990s and early 2000s. After experiencing a series of health problems, he died at home on December 26, 2006 at age 93. •

## ABOUT PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER



President Jimmy Carter



Ronald Reagan, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Richard Nixon (October 12, 1981)

James Earl Carter Jr., born October 1, 1924, is an American politician and philanthropist who served as the 39th president of the United States from 1977 to 1981. A member of the Democratic Party, he previously served as a Georgia State Senator from 1963 to 1967 and as the 76th Governor of Georgia from 1971 to 1975. After his presidency, Carter has remained active in the private sector. In 2002, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in co-founding the Carter Center.

Raised in Plains, Georgia, Carter graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1946 with a Bachelor of Science degree and joined the United States Navy, where he served on submarines. After the death of his father in 1953, Carter left his naval career and returned home to Georgia to take up the reins of his family's peanut-growing business. Carter inherited little due to his father's forgiveness of debts and the division of the estate among the children. Nevertheless, his ambition to expand and grow the Carters' peanut business was fulfilled. During this period, Carter was motivated to oppose the political climate of racial segregation and support the growing civil rights movement. He became an activist within the Democratic Party.

From 1963 to 1967, Carter served in the Georgia State Senate, and in 1970, he was elected as Governor of Georgia, defeating former Governor Carl Sanders in the Democratic primary on an anti-segregation platform advocating affirmative action for ethnic minorities. Carter remained as governor until 1975. Despite being a dark-horse candidate who was little known outside of Georgia at the start of the campaign, Carter won the 1976 Democratic presidential nomination. In the general election, Carter ran as an outsider and narrowly defeated incumbent Republican President Gerald Ford. An evangelical Christian, Carter is credited with significantly moving the faith closer to the American mainstream.

On his second day in office, Carter pardoned all the Vietnam War draft evaders. During Carter's term as

president, two new cabinet-level departments, the Department of Energy and the Department of Education, were established. He established a national energy policy that included conservation, price control, and new technology. In foreign affairs, Carter pursued the Camp David Accords, the Panama Canal Treaties, the second round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II), and the return of the Panama Canal Zone to Panama. On the economic front, he confronted persistent stagflation, a combination of high inflation, high unemployment and slow growth.

The end of his presidential tenure was marked by the 1979 — 1981 Iran hostage crisis, the 1979 energy crisis, the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In response to the invasion, Carter escalated the Cold War when he ended détente, imposed a grain embargo against the Soviets, enunciated the Carter Doctrine, and led an international boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow.

In 1980, Carter faced a challenge from Senator Ted Kennedy in the primaries, but he won re-nomination at the 1980 Democratic National Convention. Carter lost the general election to Republican nominee Ronald Reagan in an electoral landslide.

In 2012, Carter surpassed Herbert Hoover as the longest-retired president in U.S. history, and in 2017 became the first president to live to the 40th anniversary of his inauguration. He is currently the oldest and earliest-serving of all living U.S. presidents. In 2019, Carter surpassed George H. W. Bush as the longest-lived American president in U.S. history. In 1982, he established the Carter Center to promote and expand human rights. He has traveled extensively to conduct peace negotiations, monitor elections, and advance disease prevention and eradication in developing nations. Carter is considered a key figure in the Habitat for Humanity charity. He has written over 30 books ranging from memoirs and politics to poetry and inspiration. •



Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn (January 20, 1981)



Jimmy Carter with his daughter, Amy, in the White House (February 22, 1977)

## ABOUT PRESIDENT **RONALD REAGAN**

Ronald Wilson Reagan, born February 6, 1911, was an American politician and film actor who served as the 40th president of the United States from 1981 to 1989. Prior to his presidency, he was a Hollywood actor and union leader before serving as the 33rd governor of California from 1967 to 1975.

Reagan was raised in a poor family in the small towns of northern Illinois. He graduated from Eureka College in 1932 and worked as a sports announcer on several regional radio stations. After moving to California in 1937, he found work as an actor and starred in a few major productions. Reagan was twice elected President of the Screen Actors Guild—the labor union for actors—where he worked to root out Communist influence. In the 1950s, he moved into television and was a motivational speaker at General Electric factories. Reagan had been a Democrat until 1962, when he became a conservative and switched to the Republican Party.

In 1964, Reagan's speech, "A Time for Choosing", supported Barry Goldwater's foundering presidential campaign and earned him national attention as a new conservative spokesman. Building a network of supporters, he was elected governor of California in 1966. As governor, Reagan raised taxes, turned a state budget deficit to a surplus, challenged the protesters at the University of California, ordered in National Guardtroops during a period of protest movements in 1969, and was re-elected in 1970. He twice ran unsuccessfully for the Republican presidential nomination, in 1968 and 1976.

Four years later in 1980, he won the nomination and then defeated incumbent president Jimmy Carter. Reagan faced former vice president Walter Mondale when he ran for re-election in 1984, and defeated him, winning the most electoral votes of any U.S. president, 525, or 97.6% of the 538 votes in the Electoral College.



President Ronald Reagan



Prince Charles, Princess Diana, Nancy Reagan, and Ronald Reagan (1985)

Soon after taking office, Reagan began implementing sweeping new political and economic initiatives. His supply-side economic policies, dubbed "Reaganomics", advocated tax rate reduction to spur economic growth, economic deregulation, and reduction in government spending. In his first term he survived an assassination attempt, spurred the War on Drugs, and fought public sector labor. Over his two terms, the economy saw a reduction of inflation from 12.5% to 4.4%, and an average annual growth of real GDP of 3.4%. Reagan enacted cuts in domestic discretionary spending, cut taxes, and increased military spending which contributed to increased federal outlays overall, even after adjustment for inflation. Foreign affairs dominated his second term, including ending the Cold War, the bombing of Libya, the Iran–Iraq War, and the Iran–Contra affair.

In June 1987, four years after he publicly described the Soviet Union as an "evil empire", Reagan challenged Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall!", during a speech at the Brandenburg Gate. He transitioned Cold War policy from détente to rollback by escalating an arms race with the USSR while engaging in talks with Gorbachev. The talks culminated in the INF Treaty, which shrank both countries' nuclear arsenals. Reagan began his presidency during the decline of the Soviet Union, and the Berlin Wall fell just ten months after the end of his term. Germany reunified the following year, and on December 26, 1991 (nearly three years after he left office), the Soviet Union collapsed.

When Reagan left office in 1989, he held an approval rating of 68%, matching those of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and later Bill Clinton, as the highest ratings for departing presidents in the modern era. He was the first president since Dwight D. Eisenhower to serve two full terms, after a succession of five prior presidents did not. Although he had planned an active post-presidency, Reagan disclosed in November 1994 that he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease earlier that year. Afterward, his informal public appearances became more infrequent as the disease progressed. He died at home on June 5, 2004. His tenure constituted a realignment toward conservative policies in the United States, and he is an icon among conservatives. •

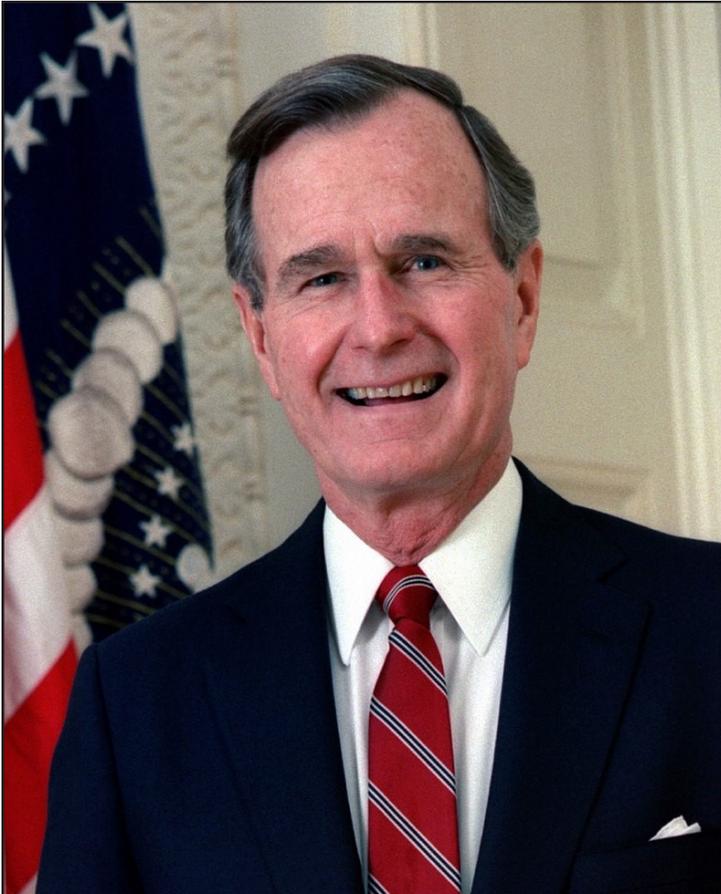


President Reagan giving a speech at the Berlin Wall, Brandenburg Gate challenging Gorbachev to "tear down this wall!" (June 12, 1987)



George H. W. Bush presenting Reagan with the Presidential Medal of Freedom at the White House (1993)

## ABOUT PRESIDENT **GEORGE H. W. BUSH**



President George H. W. Bush



President Reagan and Vice President Bush in the Oval Office (July 20, 1984)

George Herbert Walker Bush, born June 12, 1924, was an American politician who served as the 41st president of the United States from 1989 to 1993 and the 43rd vice president from 1981 to 1989. A member of the Republican Party, Bush also served in the U.S. House of Representatives, as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, and as Director of Central Intelligence. Until his son George W. Bush became the 43rd president in 2001, he was usually known as George Bush.

Bush postponed his university studies after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, enlisted in the Navy on his 18th birthday, and became one of its youngest aviators. He served until September 1945, and then attended Yale University, graduating in 1948. He moved his family to West Texas where he entered the oil business and became a millionaire by the age of 40 in 1964.

After founding his own oil company, Bush was defeated in his first run for the United States Senate in 1964, but won election to the House of Representatives from Texas's 7th congressional district in 1966. He was reelected in 1968 but was defeated for election to the Senate in 1970. In 1971, President Richard Nixon appointed Bush as Ambassador to the United Nations, and he became Chairman of the Republican National Committee in 1973. The following year, President Gerald Ford appointed him Chief of the Liaison Office in China and later made him the Director of Central Intelligence.

Bush ran for president in 1980, but was defeated in the Republican primary by Ronald Reagan. He was then elected vice president in 1980 and 1984 as Reagan's running mate. During his eight-year tenure as vice president, Bush headed task forces on deregulation and the War on Drugs.

In 1988, Bush defeated Democratic opponent Michael Dukakis, becoming the first incumbent vice president to

be elected president in 152 years. Foreign policy drove the Bush presidency; military operations were conducted in Panama and the Persian Gulf, the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, and the Soviet Union dissolved two years later. Bush also signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which created a trade bloc consisting of the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Domestically, Bush reneged on a 1988 campaign promise by signing a bill that increased taxes.

He lost the 1992 presidential election to Democrat Bill Clinton following an economic recession and the decreased importance of foreign policy in a post-Cold War political climate.

After leaving office in 1993, Bush was active in humanitarian activities; he often worked alongside Clinton, his former opponent. With George W. Bush's victory in the 2000 presidential election, Bush and his son became the second father-son pair to serve as president (following John Adams and John Quincy Adams).

He died on November 30, 2018 at age 94. At the time of his death, he was the longest-lived president in U.S. history, a record that has since been surpassed by Jimmy Carter. •



George H. W. Bush (right) with his son, George W. Bush, outside the White House (April 29, 1992)



George H. W. Bush, Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter in the Oval Office at the White House (January 7, 2009)

## ABOUT PRESIDENT **BILL CLINTON**

William Jefferson Clinton (born William Jefferson Blythe III on August 19, 1946) is an American politician who served as the 42nd president of the United States from 1993 to 2001. Prior to the presidency, he was the governor of Arkansas from 1979 to 1981, and again from 1983 to 1992, and the attorney general of Arkansas from 1977 to 1979. A member of the Democratic Party, Clinton was ideologically a New Democrat, and many of his policies reflected a centrist "Third Way" political philosophy.

Clinton was born and raised in Arkansas and attended Georgetown University, University College, Oxford, and Yale Law School. He met Hillary Rodham at Yale and married her in 1975. After graduating, Clinton returned to Arkansas and won election as the Attorney General of Arkansas, serving from 1977 to 1979. As Governor of Arkansas, he overhauled the state's education system and served as chairman of the National Governors Association. Clinton was elected president in 1992, defeating incumbent Republican opponent George H. W. Bush. At age 46, he became the third-youngest president and the first from the Baby Boomer generation.

Clinton presided over the longest period of peacetime economic expansion in American history. He signed into law the North American Free Trade Agreement but failed to pass his plan for national health care reform. In the 1994 elections, the Republican Party won unified control of the Congress for the first time in 40 years.

In 1996, Clinton became the first Democrat since Franklin D. Roosevelt to be elected to a second full term. He passed welfare reform and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, as well as financial deregulation measures, including the Gramm–Leach–Bliley Act and the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000.

In 1998, Clinton was impeached by the House of



President Bill Clinton



Hillary Clinton, Chelsea Clinton, Bill Clinton, and their dog, Buddy (1998)



Bill & Hillary Clinton, George H. W. & Barbara Bush, Ronald & Nancy Reagan, Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter, and Gerald & Betty Ford at Richard Nixon's funeral (April 22, 1994 - the day that *Five Presidents* takes place)



Chelsea Clinton, Bill Clinton, and Hillary Clinton (January 20, 1997)

Representatives for perjury and obstruction of justice following allegations that he committed perjury and obstructed justice to conceal an affair that he had with Monica Lewinsky, a 22-year old White House Intern. Clinton was acquitted by the Senate in 1999 and completed his term in office. He is only the second U.S. president—following Andrew Johnson 131 years earlier—to ever be impeached.

During the last three years of Clinton's presidency, the Congressional Budget Office reported a budget surplus, the first such surplus since 1969. In foreign policy, Clinton ordered U.S. military intervention in the Bosnian and Kosovowars, signed the Iraq Liberation Act in opposition to Saddam Hussein, participated in the 2000 Camp David Summit to advance the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, and assisted the Northern Ireland peace process.

Clinton left office with the highest end-of-office approval rating of any U.S. president since World War II, and has continually scored high in the historical rankings of U.S. presidents, consistently placing in the top third. Since leaving office, he has been involved in public speaking and humanitarian work. He created the William J. Clinton Foundation to address international causes such as the prevention of AIDS and global warming.

He has remained active in politics by campaigning for Democratic candidates, including the presidential campaigns of his wife and Barack Obama. In 2004, Clinton published his autobiography, *My Life*. In 2009, he was named the United Nations Special Envoy to Haiti and after the 2010 Haiti earthquake, he teamed with George W. Bush to form the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund. In addition, he secured the release of two American journalists imprisoned by North Korea, visiting the capital Pyongyang and negotiating their release with Kim Jong-il. •

# INSIDE THE SURPRISING FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN GEORGE H. W. BUSH AND BILL CLINTON

In *Five Presidents*, there is some tension between President George H. W. Bush and the newly inaugurated President Bill Clinton, but later in life, they became unlikely friends. This article is an excerpt from *The Presidents Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity* by Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy.

Through the ages, the Presidents Club has seen its share of rivalries, alliances, even some true friendships. But no relationship is quite like the bond between George H. W. Bush and the man who defeated him in 1992. The connection surprised both men, and astonished many of their longtime aides. Bush would go so far as to suggest more than once that he might be the father that the Bill Clinton had always lacked—a notion that the younger man did not dispute. And if the closeness of the relationship surprised people, so did its origin: it was Bush's actual son who made it happen.

Fifty-eight minutes after midnight on December 26, 2004, a tremor erupted thirty miles below the surface in waters off the coast of Sumatra. When the waves came ashore hours later, parts of towns and cities—and their residents—along the coasts of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand were swept away.

The tsunami left more than 165,000 dead, tens of thousands missing, and millions homeless. The sheer number of corpses choked morgues and medical facilities and raised fears of famine and disease. Millions of dollars in aid pledges poured in from all over the world, including more than \$350 million from the U.S. government. Back in Washington, George W. Bush and his advisors searched for an appropriate way to coordinate and direct the outpouring of aid from private sources, which would quickly dwarf anything governments could bring to bear. It was the president who came up with the idea of asking his two predecessors to work together. Both were proven fundraisers in very different realms and both had world-class Rolodexes.

Bush and Clinton were described many times as the Oscar and Felix of American politics, one proper and prudent, the other all appetite and instinct. Clinton's presidency tested the question of whether you could run the country like a series of all-night bull sessions while one of Bush's favorite questions—what if we do nothing?—defined the best and worst of his presidency. Their hard-fought 1992 campaign had left scars. Clinton, then forty-six, made repeated reference to Bush's age, and called the incumbent president "old." Bush had called Clinton a "bozo," and at one point suggested that his dog knew more about foreign policy than Clinton did. Bush assumed he was going to win right up to the end and when he lost,



Bill Clinton, George H. W. Bush, and Jimmy Carter in September 1993

took the defeat hard.

But Bush the younger had good reason to think, ten years on, that the scars had healed. It helped that both men were now former presidents. At the opening of the Clinton library in Little Rock in November 2004, the elder Bush delivered gracious remarks about Clinton that delighted the huge crowd gathered in a driving rainstorm. "It has to be said that Bill Clinton was one of the most gifted American political figures in modern times. Believe me, I learned that the hard way. He made it look too easy and oh, how I hated him for that." Inside the museum, the two paired off: while touring the modern, glass-wrapped facility that overlooks the Arkansas River, Bush and Clinton got lost in conversation and fell far behind the main party of dignitaries. Bush 41 peered at one point outside a window and asked Clinton what he was going to do with all the empty property that lay fallow to the east of the library. When Clinton seemed uncertain, Bush urged him to think about making it his gravesite; and to decide soon, so that he could oversee arrangements for the media and crowds. It's the kind of thing a president has to think about—or be reminded to think about by another president: your death, your funeral, your burial ground, is also a very public matter.

Within days after the Tsunami hit, 41 and 42 were in the West Wing with 43, getting their orders for what was

supposed to be a fairly narrow assignment: tour the region, ask local governments for advice about how to target and deliver private aid, and then come back to the United States and get busy raising money. The White House put an Air Force Boeing 757 and a small team of State Department handlers at their disposal.

The two men worked virtually nonstop on their four-day swing through the region. Each man was greeted like a pasha at every stop, but in some places the crowds leaned toward the younger man. “If you’ve ever had an ego problem” Bush said later, “don’t travel with President Clinton to the Maldives. It was like traveling with a rock star: ‘Get out of the way, will you? Clinton’s coming.’ It was terrible.” Along the way, they rediscovered that they had been allies before they had become rivals: Clinton backed Bush early in his presidency on a variety of controversial education initiatives when other Democrats declined to help; Clinton recalled that Bush had hosted his family at Kennebunkport in the early 1980s and how, on one occasion, when three-year-old Chelsea explained that she had to go to the bathroom, Bush took the little girl by the hand and led her to the nearest loo. In midair, each man insisted the other guy take the lone bed. Bush slept in the state room while Clinton stayed up all night playing cards with Bush aide Jean Becker.

Clinton told friends that Bush made the alliance work, because the older man had to swallow his pride and embrace a former opponent. “He deserves far more credit

than I do,” said Clinton. But it is also important to remember that post-presidencies have their own challenges; finding something appropriately challenging can be difficult. Raising money for a natural disaster was a job that approached in scale the size of things that used to keep them both up late at night. “You feel like you’re doing something bigger than your own political lives,” Bush said, “or bigger than your own self.”

Once back in the States, the two men became an item. The club had, in its sixty-year history, no precedent for this public display of affection. They greeted fans together at the Super Bowl in January and they played golf with Greg Norman in a rainy charity tournament in March; the next day, Clinton checked himself into a New York hospital to remove scar tissue and fluid from around his left lung, and within hours his predecessor was on the phone checking up on him. How do you feel? What do your doctors say? Are you sore? How much can you exercise? Are you using your treadmill? Dr. Bush was back on the case a few weeks later when the White House asked 42 and 41 (as well as President Carter, who declined) to join Bush 43 on the Air Force One flight to Rome for the funeral of Pope John Paul II. The senior Bush told Clinton not to worry, the pace would be manageable and, besides, there would be a doctor on board at all times. When Clinton told his own skeptical physicians he was making an overseas trip so soon after major surgery, he explained that his friend in Maine said everything would be okay.

The rest of the Bush family looked on with amusement. Barbara Bush began referring to the two men as “the odd couple.” Jeb Bush, the Florida governor, announced that he was going to refer to Clinton as “Bro.” And at the white-tie Gridiron Dinner in Washington that spring, Bush 43 joked about how Clinton, recovering from the March surgery, “woke up surrounded by his loved ones: Hillary, Chelsea . . . my Dad.”

Teaming up as they did in the middle of an ugly political era, the odd couple was a hit with the public. It had been a long time since Americans had actually seen politicians of different parties work together to achieve anything—much less two presidents—and then invite the rest of the country to join in the effort. Both men knew they were modeling an alternative method, in an age of partisan political cagefights. “I think people see George and me” Clinton observed, “and they say, ‘That is the way our country ought to work.’”●



George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton in January 2005

# THE UNLIKELY FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN JUSTICE GINSBURG & JUSTICE SCALIA

Another relationship that crossed ideological lines in Washington D.C. was the unlikely friendship between Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Justice Antonin Scalia. The below article by Irin Carmon—co-author of *Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg*—takes a look at the famous Supreme Court friendship.

The question comes every time. “Excuse me, but there’s something I don’t understand about Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg,” someone will ask my co-author and me at each event since we published *Notorious RBG*, a lighthearted biography of the justice. “How could she possibly be friends with Scalia?”

Now that Senate Republicans have vowed, mere hours after the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, to block any Obama nominee to replace him, it’s worth considering the answer.

Nino and RBG, the court’s most famous odd couple friendship, the subject of the recent comic opera “Scalia/Ginsburg,” stood as an example of warmth and professionalism across traditional divides. For Ginsburg, who has been outnumbered throughout her career, it was also about making the institution work, no matter their disagreements.

Sure, the two justices, friends since the 1980s, had some things in common. They shared a love of opera. They came from outer-borough New York City. Before they were two of the nine, they were contemporaries as law professors and served together on the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. But the reserved Clinton appointee and the bombastic Reagan pick had vastly different views on the constitution and the role of the court.

Had Scalia been a justice when Ginsburg was arguing women’s rights cases before the court throughout the 1970s, he certainly would have voted against her. He wrote the solo dissent to her majority in *U.S. v. Virginia*, the opinion that ended women’s exclusion from the Virginia Military Institute, and formed the capstone of her lifelong fight for gender equality. “This is not the interpretation of a Constitution,” Scalia complained, “but the creation of one.” Scalia bitterly opposed the Supreme Court’s gradual recognition of rights for gays and lesbians; Ginsburg was the first justice to preside over a same-sex marriage. Scalia referred to the Voting Rights Act, the law protecting ballot access for the historically disenfranchised, as one of several “racial entitlements” that Congress would be hard-pressed to end; Ginsburg



The Supreme Court Building

ferociously dissented when the court gutted it.

And yet. One former clerk told us Scalia was Ginsburg’s favored souvenir shopping buddy when they traveled together. On a trip to India, they famously rode an elephant, with Scalia sitting up front. What about feminism? “It had to do with the distribution of weight,” Ginsburg deadpanned slyly. They shared New Year’s Eves with their families and friends: “Scalia kills it and Marty [Ginsburg] cooks it,” recalled one guest, former Bush solicitor general Theodore Olson. “I never heard them talk about anything political or ideological, because there would be no point,” Ginsburg’s grandson, Paul Spera, told us. In 2010, when Chief Justice Roberts announced Marty’s death from the bench, Scalia wiped tears from his eyes.

“If you can’t disagree ardently with your colleagues about some issues of law and yet personally still be friends, get another job, for Pete’s sake,” is how Scalia once described their lifetime appointments. “As annoyed as you might be about his zinging dissent, he’s so utterly charming, so amusing, so sometimes outrageous, you can’t help but say, ‘I’m glad that he’s my friend or he’s my colleague,’” Ginsburg said. Sometimes, she said, she had to pinch herself to not laugh in the courtroom when Scalia said something audacious.

Even in that VMI case, Ginsburg was grateful for how Scalia disagreed: giving her a copy of his dissent as soon as possible, so she could properly respond. “He absolutely ruined my weekend, but my opinion is ever so much better because of his stinging dissent,” she said. Whether or not it was how Scalia saw it, for Ginsburg their public friendship also made a statement about the court as an institution: that it was strengthened by respectful debate, that it could work no matter how polarized its members were.

Ironically, Scalia’s death has laid bare just how endangered such comity now is in Washington. And Ginsburg, for one, has acknowledged it. When I interviewed the justice last year, I asked her about the court chipping away at the major civil rights legislation of the last century. She responded by talking about another branch of government, Congress. Specifically: its inability to act as it did after the court’s decision in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear*, when legislators took up her dissent’s call to fix what Ginsburg saw as a grievous injustice to women denied fair pay.

“At the moment, our Congress is not functioning very well,” she told me, and laughed. She added, “The current Congress is not equipped really to do anything. So the kind of result that we got in the *Ledbetter* case is not easily achieved today. Someday, we will go back to having the kind of legislature that we should, where members, whatever party they belong to, want to make the thing work and cooperate with each other to see that that will happen. I mean, it was that way in 1992 when I was nominated for this good job. There were only three negative votes. And my hope and expectation is that we will get back to that kind of bipartisan spirit.”

Friendship across ideological lines may not technically be a thing of the past. After all, Ginsburg’s younger colleague Justice Elena Kagan gamely took up arms to hunt with Scalia after Republican senators challenged her on guns during her confirmation process. But judging from the political deadlock that has already emerged around Scalia’s replacement, threatening the very functioning of the court, that bipartisan spirit is long gone. •



Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Justice Antonin Scalia

# ABOUT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

## AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

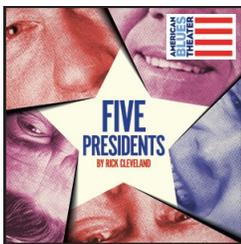
Winner of American Theatre Wing’s prestigious National Theatre Company Award, American Blues Theater is a premier arts organization with an intimate environment that patrons, artists, and all Chicagoans call home. American Blues Theater explores the American identity through the plays it produces and communities it serves.

Our diverse and multi-generational 35-member Ensemble has nearly 600 combined years of collaboration on stage. As of 2018, our theater and artists have 204 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and 38 Black Theater Alliance Awards. Our artists are honored with Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards, and numerous other accolades.

For over thirty years, American Blues has created essential productions and live theatrical experiences for Chicagoland. Their best known production is Chicago’s holiday tradition *It’s a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!* that has entertained over 50,000 patrons since 2002! Terry Teachout of *The Wall Street Journal* wrote American Blues is “exceptional” and the company “feels like home.” Chris Jones of *Chicago Tribune* claimed Blues is “strikingly honest [with] deep emotional souls.”

In addition to first-class theater, American Blues Theater believes it is an honor and duty to serve the community. They provide an integrated arts education program to Chicago Public Schools that serves approximately 3,000 students annually. They hold “Pediatric Previews” which donates a portion of box office sales to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. They donate thousands of complimentary tickets to underserved communities. They provide community engagement events for patrons following Sunday matinee performance, including curated discussions with Northwestern University psychologists. As a Blue Star Theater, they honor military service and first-responders through various initiatives. Former President of Illinois Labor History Society, Larry Spivak wrote, “American Blues is a dynamic force in Chicago – connecting culture, art, history, and politics into a holistic, aesthetic experience.” •

### SEASON 34 “Then & Now”



by Rick Cleveland\*

Directed by  
Marty Higginbotham\*

Sept 6 - Oct 19, 2019

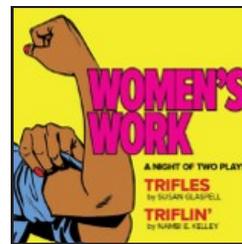


from Frank Capra’s film

Directed by  
Gwendolyn Whiteside\*

Music direction by  
Michael Mahler\*

Nov 14, ‘19 - Jan 4, ‘20



*TRIFLES*  
by Susan Glaspell  
*TRIFLIN’*  
by Nambi E. Kelley\*

Directed by  
Lili-Anne Brown

Jan 31 - Feb 29, 2020



by Billie Joe Armstrong,  
Michael Mayer, & Green Day

Directed by  
Jess McLeod

Music direction by  
Michael Mahler\*

June 26 - Aug 15, 2020

\*Ensemble member of American Blues Theater

# ABOUT **AMERICAN BLUES THEATER**

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE THEATER**

### **PERFORMANCE VENUE**

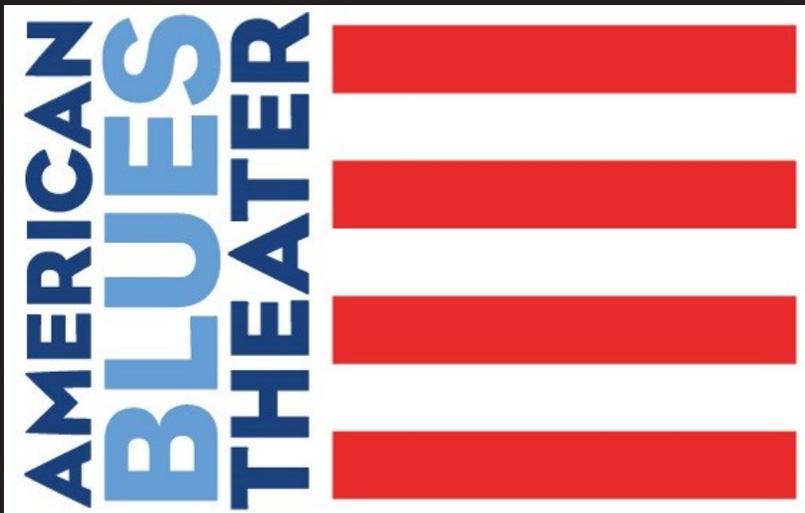
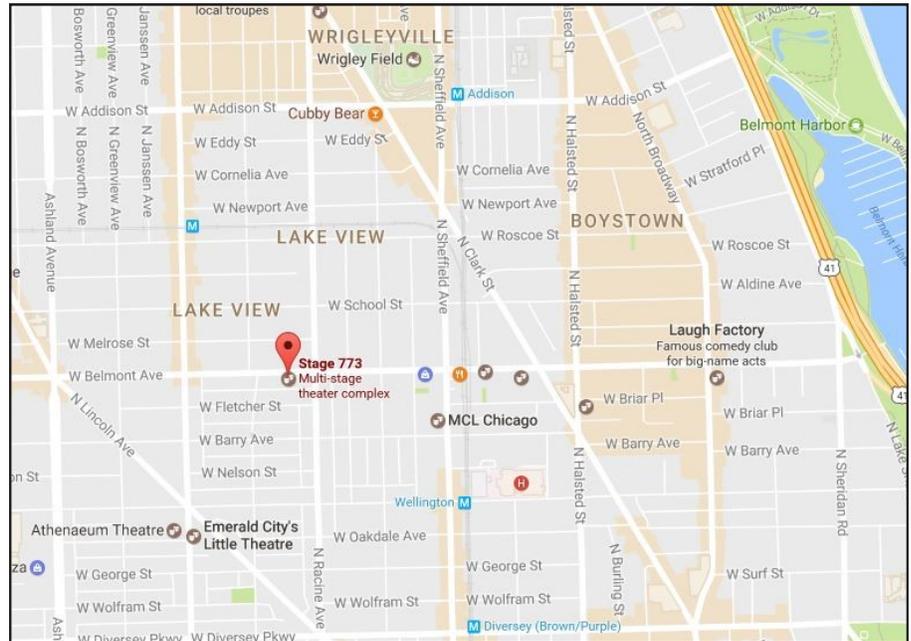
Stage 773  
1225 W Belmont Ave  
Chicago, IL 60657

### **BOX OFFICE**

(773) 654-3103

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

[AmericanBluesTheater.com](http://AmericanBluesTheater.com)



American Blues Theater is supported in part by The Davee Foundation, The MacArthur Funds for Arts & Culture at Prince, the Shubert Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, Angell Foundation, Illinois Arts Council Agency, Anixter Foundation, Actors' Equity Foundation, Northern Trust, Eurex, Benjamin Rosenthal Foundation, Seyfarth Shaw LLP, and the Chip Pringle Fund. ComEd is the 2019-2020 Season Lighting Sponsor.