Fort McHenry News Release

Fort McHenry National

Monument & Historic Shrine

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National Park Service

U.S. Department of the Interior

Citizens Stand!: Battle for Baltimore 1814

The Bicentennial year of the National Anthem begins with the debut of “Citizens Stand!: Battle for Baltimore 1814” on April 26 at 2:00 p.m. at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine. This series of three short plays offers a refreshing and unique approach to the story of Baltimore’s defense in 1814 by focusing on the **civilian defense of the city** – how black, white, free and enslaved joined forces to repulse a common enemy. Experience the story of “The Star-Spangled Banner” through the eyes of Baltimore’s unsung heroes! Explore the role of women behind the front lines, see how Jewish and Quaker citizens reconciled their religious convictions with defending their homeland and find out what it meant to be enslaved in “the land of the free.”

A collaborative effort between the Baltimore School for the Arts, Maryland Historical Society, and the National Park Service at Fort McHenry, three short plays will focus on the human element behind “The Star-Spangled Banner.” This marks the seventh year that the Baltimore School for the Arts and Maryland Historical Society have teamed up to create historically inspired theater. Rare documents from the MdHS help playrights fill in the gaps that history books often leave out.

***Women of All Work*** by Norah Worthington

Working women and officers’ wives find themselves ordered to leave Fort McHenry as the British attack looms and preparations for the upcoming battle begin. Explore how women united together to contribute to the city’s defense. What would everyday people do if the British burned Baltimore?

***Loyalties Tested*** by Natalie Pilcher

Brothers and sisters, black and white, free and enslaved labored side by side to construct defenses outside the city. In this time of crisis, some fled but many remained. Who is obligated to defend the city? With the British offering freedom to slaves, who is truly fighting for “the land of the free?”

***The Common Defense*** by Paul Christensen

With British shells falling on Fort McHenry, citizens of Baltimore can feel the concussion and anxiously await the outcome. See how Jewish and Quaker citizens reconciled their religious convictions with their passionate desire to defend their homes.

Students developed the themes for the plays by conducting research at the Maryland Historical Society’s (MdHS) library under the guidance of Student Research Center Coordinator David Armenti. They then visited Fort McHenry NM&HS for inspiration. “Students really bring out the stories from the collection that will interest us today,” says BSA project coordinator Norah Worthington. “They find situations everyday people struggled with in the past and history stops being about names and dates. It starts being about the choices we all make in our own times.”

“This is the Year of the National Anthem” says Fort McHenry’s Ranger Vince, “these plays help visitors understand the people who made “The Star-Spangled Banner” possible.

Immediate

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page 2