

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH DEBORAH RUTTER

SUBJECT: THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS WILL OUTLINE HER PLANS FOR THE CENTER'S FUTURE

MODERATOR: MYRON BELKIND, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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MYRON BELKIND: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome. My name is Myron Belkind. I'm an adjunct professor at the George Washington University School of Media and Public Affairs, a former international bureau chief with the Associated Press, and the 107th President of the National Press Club. The National Press Club is the world's leading professional organization for journalists committed to our profession's future through our programming with events such as this while fostering a free press worldwide. For more information about the National Press Club, please visit our website at press.org.

On behalf of our members worldwide, I'd like to welcome our speaker and those of you attending today's event. Our head table includes guests of our speaker as well as working journalists who are Club members. And so if you hear applause in our audience, I'd note that members of the general public are attending and so it's not necessarily evidence of a lack of journalistic objectivity if you hear that applause. I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. You can follow the action on Twitter using the hashtag NPCLunch. After our guest's speech concludes, we'll have a question and answer period. I will ask as many questions as time permits.

Now it's time to introduce our head table guests. I'd like each of you to stand briefly as your name is announced. And let me begin with, on your right, Jean Tai of Hexagon Newsletter and a Speakers Committee member. Elizabeth Smith Brownstein, a member of the Press Club's History and Heritage Committee, and a writer of our online newsletters *This Week in the National Press Club History*. Doris Margolis, President of

Editorial Associates and a member of the Speakers Committee. Yasmine El-Sabawi, multimedia journalist and Washington correspondent for the Kuwait News Agency. Nik Apostolides, Deputy CEO of the U.S. Capitol Visitors Center and co-organizer of this luncheon. Adrienne Arsht, leading arts philanthropist who serves on the Board of Trustees at the Kennedy Center and is a major funder, notably of the Adrienne Arsht, Musical Theater Fund at the Center. And she is a guest of our speaker. Jerry Zremski, the Buffalo News Washington Bureau Chief, Chairman of the Speakers Committee and a former President of the National Press Club.

Skipping over our speaker for a moment, Amy Henderson, historian emerita at the National Portrait Gallery and co-organizer of this luncheon. Thank you very much, Amy. And thank you, Nik. Helen Lee Henderson, an important philanthropist who serves on the Boards of both the Kennedy Center and the National Symphony Orchestra. She contributes to both through the HRH Foundation, named for her mother Helen Ruth Henderson. And she, too, is a guest of our speaker. Maria Russio, arts and culture correspondent for McClatchy Newspapers and correspondent for the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*. Mark Wino, senior associate editor for Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine and membership secretary of the National Press Club. Ken Melbourne, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the National Press Club, former Chair of the Broadcast Committee, and a retired staffer from the Associated Press Broadcast Division. And Michael Phelps, former publisher of the *Washington Examiner* and advisor to News Media Executives.

[applause]

The year before his death, President John F. Kennedy spoke on behalf of the National Cultural Center that would ultimately bear his name. "After the dust of centuries has passed," he said, "we too will be remembered, not for victories or defeats in battle or in politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit." This September, Deborah Rutter became President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the first woman to serve in that office, and the first to come from the world of orchestras.

She grew up in a family that loved music. Her father was a founder of the Los Angeles Master Chorale. Rutter began playing the violin as a child. And she said that "Playing the violin is how I found out who I was." Rutter comes to Washington from Chicago, where she was President of Chicago Symphony Orchestra Associations." She has said that she was drawn to the Kennedy Center because of the opportunity to use arts to affect the rest of the world.

She wants to develop greater collaborations with other arts and cultural organizations, including museums, theatres, and non-traditional groups. She said the Kennedy Center should have a seat at the table in dealing with challenging social and cultural issues.

Rutter is a prolific fundraiser, known for recruiting top talent and boosting outreach to new audiences. Here, she will serve as the Center's artistic and administrative

leader for theatre, dance, chamber music and jazz. She will also oversee the National Symphony Orchestra and the Washington National Opera. She will be inheriting an ambitious \$100 million dollar renovation that is expected to be completed on John F. Kennedy's 100th birthday in 2017. Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the new President of the Kennedy Center, Deborah Rutter.

[applause]

DEBORAH RUTTER: I think he said it all, so we're done now. [laughter] We can all have a nice afternoon. Thank you, Myron, for the invitation to be here. Thank you Nik, thank you Amy, for the opportunity to be here, and for your very generous words. you've done great research also, I understand.

It is a pleasure and an honor for me to be here. When you don't live in Washington, D.C. this place, this place right here, not just Washington, D.C., but this place is a very famous sort of awe-inspiring place. So it is really a great honor for me to be here. And I am really grateful to my friends who are here from the Kennedy Center, and who care about the arts and our society. I want to say thank you to Adrienne and to Helen for being my stalwart. They're side by side great friends and a support.

I've been thinking a lot about storytelling recently. I'm not exactly sure why. But, as I think about it, there are some signposts, perhaps. This has been a year of major transition for me and my family. And, as one says farewell to one home, a community and the friends there, it leads you to reflect, to some degree, to commemorate your time there. Last spring I had many, many opportunities to share memories, tell stories, and laugh about shared history.

Also, in moving, you know the trauma of moving, you uncover all kinds of things. And we have come across countless boxes of memorabilia, some recent, some really ancient, all of which jogs one's memory over stories that are told, and some untold. Then, of course, my daughter, who has the same propensity to keep things that her mother has, has childhood storybooks, and they're plentiful, recalling for me, the moments of joy and intimacy and wonder in the telling and retelling of those wonderful stories. So perhaps this is why I have a preoccupation with storytelling right now.

Arriving in Washington has been an adventure for all of us, meeting new friends and colleagues, such as here today, connecting with old friends, which has been really wonderful for me, learning the system of how the city works, my daughter finding her new ways around her school. And for me, a new place to work. And let me tell you, that is a real study, figuring out how to get around there.

Again, stories are plentiful as I introduce myself, and hear about the history and the people of our new home. You might say, well that's what Washington, D.C. is all about. But I would say that this is what our world is all about, not just Washington but our world. It's about storytelling. Storytelling is the way we share who we are with others. It is a way to reveal oneself, to communicate feelings and ideas. With our stories

we share history, get to know one another. Storytelling connects us and represents the drawstrings of our lives.

All of us are storytellers in one form or another. Some of us are better or funnier than others. Some more colorful and creative. Others more liberal and concise. But we are all telling one story or another.

Just to make sure I was on the right track, I went to the ultimate source and typed in “definition of storytelling” on my internet browser. The result: “Storytelling is the conveying of events in words and images, often by improvisation or embellishment. Stories or narratives have been shared in every culture as a means of entertainment, education, cultural preservation, and instilling moral values.”

I didn’t have to look far to find out exactly what I was looking for, in terms of that definition. So, with this definition, it argues that journalists are true professional storytellers. Hopefully, without too much embellishment or improvisation. [laughter] Journalists provide the heroic role of documenting our collective lives, our shared history. You are the ones we engage with every day, or hopefully every day, every day, in my case. Your work provides the recorded history we reflect back on to understand who we are as a culture, what actions were taken, what decisions were made, what we have done as a result of those decisions, how we reached how the larger world has responded.

So I put forth to you that art is just another form of storytelling. It provides the narrative to our lives, a way of advancing as well as preserving our culture. A story as conveyed through artistic expression comes in varying forms. Sometimes it’s literal, sometimes it is obscure, or initially beyond understanding. It can be fun and entertaining, engrossing and provocative. No matter the medium or the actual story, it is always making one think and feel.

Theatre, opera, dance, music, film and the visual arts, all of these are telling us stories. Sure, often there is just pure entertainment to be enjoyed as well. Who doesn’t need that, maybe now more than ever? But an evening of so-called pure entertainment is likely also a time when other emotions and ideas are bubbling inside.

I saw *Evita* with my daughter and her friend just recently at the Opera House at Kennedy Center. And I think this is a perfect example of an evening where one begins by saying, “I’m going to hear a musical theatre work with great tunes, dancing, sets and costumes. It will be fun.” But the truth, yes, great music, wonderful actors, telling a story. What is that story about? The struggle of lower class to break out of its cycle of poverty, overwhelming narcissism, greed, consuming power, that brings down not just a woman and a family, but a whole country. Yes, *Evita* is a story about history, using the theatre to convey not just the details, but emotions, insights and values.

The performing arts highlight all of the emotions of our world, shine a spotlight on those topics, we sometimes dare not to debate, force us to experience feelings we may want to brush aside. The quiet of a darkened theatre allows us to enter a world

simultaneously shared with others in the audience, and yet experienced individually in our heart and our mind.

With *Evita*, we look back on an era of a country, its history. In the case of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, we are faced with the reality of life experienced by another part of our society. That epic play changed the way we talk about gay life and AIDS. While it was perhaps shocking when it premiered in its format, dialogue and frank treatment of the issues, it ultimately was one of the first and most important artistic expressions on that topic, using the theatre, again, as a way to explore social issues.

So think about *Swan Lake*. Reflect on *The Rite of Spring*. Consider Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*, which I love so much. All are stories to be told, using the performing arts to communicate beauty, perspective, thoughtfulness, spirituality. They also challenge us, as we sit in that darkened theatre, to understand ourselves, consider our society and our environment. My argument, art is certainly for art's sake. I really agree with that statement. And I support all who utter it. But I also fervently believe in the concept of art for life's sake, that we cannot live or share this world without art.

Art is the way we tell the stories of our lives, to offer commentary on the world we live in, to provide a sanctuary for personal, spiritual reflection, an opportunity to state more boldly those ideas that may feel too difficult, too dangerous for whatever reason, too personal or socially challenging. Or, better yet, the joy and the exaltation of life.

The examples of Bach and Stravinsky, Andrew Lloyd Webber, or Tony Kushner, perhaps seem rather obvious as a way of demonstrating the role and importance of art and storytelling. But I want to tell you, now, of quite a different example. When we announced in Chicago that Riccardo Muti would become our tenth music director, he surprised us-- not for the first nor the last time, I should say, by announcing at his introductory press conference that he wanted to take the orchestra to all parts of Chicago, especially those without access to music, even to prisons.

He and I spoke often of his interest in sharing the resources, the music-making of the orchestra, in community. But prisons was a bit of a surprise to us. Our team took the challenge. And, after some consideration, developed a really special program. We chose to go to a juvenile detention center to work with young women in partnership with Story Catchers Theatre. Every week, every week, two members of our chorus go to the Illinois State Detention Center in Warrenville, working side by side with theatre teaching artists, developing stories and lyrics written by the girls, the inmates themselves. Their stories. Stories that are hard to tell. Stories hard to hear.

After four months of preparation like this, the CSO composer in residence also goes to the center for residency and works on developing songs with the girls. They write the tunes, and she helps orchestrate it. She arranges those songs for instruments, instruments who are then performed by the members of the CSO and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, who ultimately perform with the girls their original musical theatre piece.

The performance is for the other girls in the center and all of their families. An incredibly powerful experience, telling the stories that are often untold, hidden, locked away. You can imagine the powerful emotions that fill the library of that detention center. I've experienced it a couple of times as a guest. Some of those families have never heard their daughter or sister or niece or granddaughter communicate so directly. They didn't know that she had the power to share that story which is untold, and therefore, unknown. That hour of performance changed the lives of those girls, those families, for me, forever. That's what I mean by art for life's sake.

[applause]

Thank you. The follow-up activity that includes Riccardo Muti usually takes place before or after those four to six months. I must say, I was rather skeptical about his participation before I first went to Warrenville with him. He requested a piano and the two singers, the choristers who go there, which was really good, because they didn't know him, but they knew the singers well.

Twice each year he does this. He goes and spends about 90 minutes with about two dozen girls from the center. And you probably think this is just as crazy as I did. But, in fact, performing opera arias with the women that they knew so well was offering a mirror for these girls' lives, and an inspiration. Where else do you hear stories of anger, fear, deception, family strife, betrayal, love and possible feats of courage? Opera.

[laughter]

Somehow Muti knew that. And he knew exactly how to convey that to them, to have someone of that renown care about two dozen girls in a detention center in a small town in Illinois, imagine what that means. And imagine how that is so affirming in their lives. Art for life's sake.

At the Kennedy Center, we overflow in the sharing and telling of stories. You probably know all of the programs. And so many of you I've met here today have told me about how you attend programs at the Kennedy Center. But I suspect there are a number of programs that you don't know about, because I didn't know about them much. And I'm paying pretty close attention. And, until I got here, I didn't know about them.

So in addition to the daily free Millennium Stage performances, the six productions of the Washington National Opera, the nearly 30 weeks of subscriptions and pop concerts of the National Symphony Orchestra, the annual International Festivals, the extraordinary range of ballet offerings, cutting-edge dance and theatre programs, blockbuster musical theatre offerings, we present and produce so much at the Kennedy Center.

But we also have perhaps the most extensive local and national educational offerings in the country. I'm particularly interested in this for some personal reasons that Myron already told you about, but I'm still going to say them if it's okay.

So, standing before you is the product of primarily a public school education. And, in the third grade, my elementary school teacher opened the classroom cabinet and said, “What instrument will you play?” not, “Do you want to play?” But, “What will you play?” And I am here today because I had the opportunity to find myself through music. He got the story right, didn’t he?

MYRON BELKIND: I try to be correct.

DEBORAH RUTTER: That teacher and that public school gave me the first tools and the curiosity and the passion to find myself, to write my story here in the arts. I believe fervently that every child, every individual in this country deserves to find themselves, whether it is in the academics, athletics, or the arts. Arts education has been diminished to such a degree that generations now have lost the opportunity for even a basic education in the arts in their school day.

Arts organizations across the country are desperately working to supplement programs that do exist. But there are just truly insufficient resources to ensure that all children have that experience in the classroom. The work we do through the Kennedy Center’s Education Department supports teachers, students and families in their discovery of themselves through the arts. And I’m enormously proud of these programs.

As I said, I didn’t know all of them before I came to the Kennedy Center. And I’m still getting to know all of them, because they’re so multitudinous. But I’d like to share just some of the ones that I do know about with you now. Did you know that the Kennedy Center spends more than \$1 million dollars annually on its work with schools in the District of Columbia, and in this local region, through such programs as the D.C. Partnerships Schools, the NSO in your Neighborhoods, Get on the Bus, and My Ticks? Did you know that more than 35,000 teachers participated in 730 professional learning programs provided by the Kennedy Center? We’re teaching teachers, not just how to teach the arts, but how to use arts in the classroom to teach other subjects, such as math and science and history.

Did you know that the Center provides lesson plans, audio and video podcasts, student interactive games, and the how-tos for teachers to use the arts in their classroom, and that in this past year, more than 8 million interactions through the Kennedy Center website, and through the K through 12 area of iTunes took place? Eight million. There is a need. There is a hunger for this.

Did you know that in 2014, over 35,000 students with disabilities from across the United States participated in programs at the Kennedy Center? Did you know that the Kennedy Center worked directly with 657-- 657-- not 658, Darryl, 657 college and university theatre departments across the United States, as a part of our American College Theatre Festival?

Through its education efforts, the Kennedy Center directly-- directly touches 11 million people every year. This excludes the two million who come to events and

performances and visit the Kennedy Center each year, and the eight million who watch the Kennedy Center Honors and all of the other broadcasts. Eleven million through these education programs.

The Kennedy Center Education Department has done a remarkable, creative program, crafting age-specific targeted programs for young people, often without getting much recognition for that work. In the past ten years, the Kennedy Center has commissioned or co-commissioned 36 new works for young audiences, new theatre, addressing issues that children are experiencing.

We have countless stories of alumni participating in various types of programs, pre-professional training programs, whether it's instrumental or theatre. And they go off and do great things. You find them in opera houses, in orchestras. They win awards. They're in the greatest shows on television, performing and writing. What an achievement.

The Kennedy Center's Education Programs are delivering on a promise, a promise to excite young audiences, to support teachers, and perhaps most importantly, to encourage young aspiring artists. Additionally, we provide thousands of patrons access to free performances. That's the access that we believe in. In other words, we want to support this storytelling of the future, and the future of art, for life's sake.

In our next decade, I expect to grow on the achievements of our last 40 years of programming and service. As you heard a little bit about already, we have a new expansion of the Kennedy Center which will open in less than three years. The new spaces that we will find in that expansion will be for creating and experiencing the performing arts which will further our promise of keeping artists central to our cultural dialogue, and break down the boundaries between artist and audience.

We hope to cultivate a sense of discovery and stimulate investment in creation and innovation, risk-taking and adventure. We break ground on this new campus south of the existing Center on December 4-- note that day-- December 4 of this year, nearly 50 years to the day when the ground was broken on the Kennedy Center. What an auspicious day.

A new generation, a new era, but remaining true to the remarkable individual for whom the memorial was created. President Kennedy is quoted so often. And he had so many quotes to share that were meaningful. To further the appreciation of culture among all the people. To increase respect for the creative individual. To widen participation by all the processes and fulfillments of art. This is one of the fascinating challenges of these days.

What drew me to come to the Kennedy Center was not just the vastness of the program offerings, but the platform for the role of the arts and culture in our nation and society. I believe that storytelling of our lives will happen with passion and creativity of

artists and the audiences who engage with them. We will seek to fulfill President Kennedy's noble mission, one story at a time. Thank you.

[applause]

MYRON BELKIND: Just picking up on your last comment, how do you feel the Kennedy Center can improve its ability to live up to such a noble and grand vision outlined in many of the quotes by John F. Kennedy?

DEBORAH RUTTER: The work that we undertake at the Kennedy Center and as arts administrators and artists around the country, is one that takes passion, drive, and belief. And the good news is, is that there are people like our patrons who are here, who've joined us-- And Adrienne and Helen, all of you who care, that we can get this work done. But it cannot be done easily. It cannot be done in a gratuitous way. We have to recognize and believe, like missionaries, that art is really important in our lives.

And candidly, that's why we need these opportunities to talk about it. And you need people like Riccardo Muti to speak so eloquently, and to give so generously. As I think about my time here in Washington, I really want to support the programs that you've heard me speak about, in terms of offering access. But, more so, opportunity to participate in the arts. And so this expansion project is a really big piece of that.

Without even realizing the opportunity initially, we have, in discussing this project, really come to understand the value of having freeform spaces, where artists and those of us who aspire to be artists, or appreciate the art of the creators, will have a better contact with one another. And so this space, the new expansion, will be about connecting people to the art and to the artists even more than they have, to break down the barrier that sort of exists between where we sit in the audience and where they stand or sit and perform.

And yet, we'll have the traditional spaces, as well as the new and informal spaces. So we'll be able to celebrate all of it. But it's about providing access and opportunity to participate. And that takes mission and the work of all of us.

MYRON BELKIND: Thank you. Are there any types of programs or concerts or performances that you'd like to see more of at the Kennedy Center?

DEBORAH RUTTER: Thank you to the people who are writing these good questions for me. [laughter] I grew up loving-- you heard me say that I love the *St. Matthew Passion* of Bach. I also love Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. But I'm also compelled by the work that's being created today. And I think that we need to have more work that's being created by artists today.

So one of the great things is that we have *The Little Dancer*, which is a production, a musical theatre production that will be opening soon at the Kennedy Center. And it is about artists who are creating today. I think we need to expand on that. I

think we need to have other types of creative artists. I think we need to take a few more risks, push the envelope, bring our audiences along, to understand and appreciate that.

I keep being told that Washington, D.C. is much more conservative in their tastes. But I'm going to push you on that. [laughter] And hope that you'll follow along, that we will promise to be trustworthy guides in that process. But let's have a journey. You know, Beethoven wrote some pretty experimental work. And it was very experimental at the time. So, let's find who those artists are of our day.

MYRON BELKIND: Thank you. What is the future of the Washington National Opera?

DEBORAH RUTTER: Well, the Washington National Opera is really old. It's been around a lot longer than the Kennedy Center has. So it's really about nurturing and encouraging and continuing to develop it as an artistic ensemble, an artistic organization. You can't ever stop supporting the growth of artists. This is-- You can never say, "Oh well, you know, that orchestra is a really great orchestra. Or that opera company has done everything." It is a constant support. You need to offer opportunities, stretch, grow. And we will continue to stretch and grow. And the success and future of the Washington National Opera is great.

[applause]

DEBORAH RUTTER: Thank you.

MYRON BELKIND: Some of these questions might have an obvious answer, but we'd like to hear it from you. And so I ask, will ballet and dance continue to have a strong place in the Kennedy Center's programming? Why or why not?

DEBORAH RUTTER: The real attraction to an individual who has spent 36 years going to multiple performances of an orchestra every week is that I get to do all of this other stuff as well. And ballet and dance are just as important in our work. I think that, in fact, being in a place where we have all of these art forms under one roof, and actually, the opportunity to look outside to the rest of the country, to see what other art forms are not yet fully represented in the Kennedy Center, is really important. It's fun. It's exciting to have all of these art forms. And they build and grow because of the synergy of being there in one place. So I think that is an obvious question, but I'm happy to answer it.

MYRON BELKIND: Are you happy with the National Symphony? What will it take for the National Symphony to take the leap into the top level of American orchestras?

DEBORAH RUTTER: Well, just as I said about the opera, is also true for the orchestra. You know, the word "maestro" actually means "teacher." We think of it as an honorific, like "sir" in the music world. But, what it really means is "teacher." And every

orchestra needs to be motivated, led, guided by teachers. And they often need different kinds of teachers. One teacher will offer one kind of-- It's like having the science teacher and the math teacher, etcetera.

Christoph Eschenbach is an extraordinary musician. We need to continue to help elevate the music making, the quality of opportunity for music making, and the experiences, both for the audience and the orchestra. It's really important for you to know that being an audience member is as important to the ongoing success of an artistic ensemble, whether it's the opera or the dance or ballet or the orchestra, as it is to be great performers on the stage, because it is about the relationship between the performers and the audience. You can feel it. I can feel you. You feel what's going on in the audience. And so your role as audience members are as important for the development of an artistic ensemble as anything else. So, I need you help by being a part of our community that supports and nurtures this orchestra as it continues to grow as well.

MYRON BELKIND: Orchestras in Minnesota and Atlanta have, in recent years, been beset with labor strife. Do you have any worries about that happening in Washington?

DEBORAH RUTTER: Well, after six weeks on the job, I'm an expert on everything. [laughter] One of the first things I have wanted to do is to get to know all of the people in the building, including the performers, whether in the NSO or the Opera House Orchestra. And it is vital to have an open, honest dialogue around the hopes and aspirations, realities, and future plans for your institution. We don't all always agree with one another. And I'm not saying that about the Kennedy Center. I'm saying that generally about performers and those of us who support the performers.

But, if we have open dialogue, honest, supportive communication, you can work through problems. And sometimes you have those moments where you hit heads. But the idea is, if you talk enough, if you communicate, if you mostly listen and listen for understanding, you can get through that. And so I'm expecting that we will listen for understanding within all of the parties at the Kennedy Center.

MYRON BELKIND: The audience for classic music and the other arts featured at the Kennedy Center is an old one. What are your ideas about attracting younger audiences to the Kennedy Center?

DEBORAH RUTTER: It's amazing how the same question has been asked for 36 years. [laughter] And I only say 36 years because before that, I wasn't aware of those questions being asked. But, for the last 36 years, people have been asking the same question. So either we are Dorian Gray, and we're getting younger, and we're still the same audience, or people are still coming. And people are still coming. Think about how many people are coming to performances all the time.

The biggest issue that we have is that there are so many opportunities to engage in so many different types of art forms. It used to be that there were only a few, that there

were only a few theatres, there was only an orchestra, or one or the other in a city. And now, there is such proliferation, there is so much diversity of music and creative performing arts taking places in our lives, that we who may have used to attend all 30 subscription concerts have too many opportunities. And we're spreading ourselves thin.

So I actually believe it's about growing audiences, not just about younger audiences. You do have to worry about who's in the pipeline. Are there future audiences coming to whatever it is that you do? And, you need to build that through access, participation, exposure, arts education in school. But it's the audiences are not necessarily getting older. In fact, in Chicago, the audiences, in the time that I was there, went from an average age of 63 to 49.

So it's about how you talk about it, how welcoming you are, what the experience is like, what the experiences outside of the performance space, as well as inside the performance space, how the artists communicate with the audience, how you respond and have a dynamic relationship with audience. The audience is there.

I read a really wonderful, wonderful statement that was in a review of a concert recently. And it was a young woman who had never been to a concert before. And she made the statement that said, "It's much better to go to a live performance because, in the live performance, you have all the other people, and you're having that experience together." And that's the point.

We can always listen at home or in our headset or another place. But it's about the shared experience of the live performance that is irreplaceable. And everybody knows that in the end. So I think it's about making sure we provide the invitation to participation, and that the experiences as present day and important to audiences.

MYRON BELKIND: Do you plan any outreach for elderly adults in such institutions as nursing homes or senior retirement homes?

DEBORAH RUTTER: This is actually one of the unsung, untold stories of what institutions like ours are doing. Because sometimes, good news doesn't get out. This is a great opportunity for me to make a pitch. For good news doesn't always get told. But going into place where the individuals don't have the ability to get out into a concert hall or a performance space is really important. It's also really important, sometimes, to provide the transportation to come in for those free programmings, the programs that do exist. And it's really important for us to honor those who have been attending for many years and then, for whatever reason, can't attend longer, any longer.

As I look at all of the programs that we have to offer, I am looking at where we may have gaps, or where we may have an over-investment. And I look to calibrate those, so that we serve the very-- the broad continuum, from the first person who can fall in love with an art form at the youngest age, to that individual who may need it more than those of us who can walk into a performance space, to celebrate their life and their love with the performing arts.

MYRON BELKIND: How will the Kennedy Center use its future outdoor video wall that is part of the planned extension by architect Stephen Holl?

DEBORAH RUTTER: Stay tuned. No, that's not a good enough answer. [laughter] This is-- One of the great things about the work that we're doing with Stephen Holl Architects is that they are really pushing us to imagine the things that we haven't yet necessarily dreamed of. And certainly, there are some great examples of simulcasts from inside theatres to outside walls like the one that is being designed.

But I have, in talking to my colleagues on the Artistic Programming Staff at the Kennedy Center, have a lot of really exciting ideas about all kinds of things that can be filmed up there, or opportunities for improvisational dance in front of beautiful backdrops, or opportunities for performances to take place that are sort of spontaneous, as well as the ones that might be a film series or a simulcast from the theatre or a rebroadcast of a program. But it gives us huge flexibility to do all kinds of new things. It's really exciting.

MYRON BELKIND: What's the future of the Millennium Stage?

DEBORAH RUTTER: Well, that's a really great question. The Millennium Stage is 14-plus years old now. And it was new and innovative. And, when I heard that it was being announced, I thought, "How in the world are they going to have 365 days of performances?" And, lo and behold, they have 365 days of performances. It's really impressive. And you can see it on the moment, in the moment, or you can see it on our website. So that's really great.

But, as with anything that's innovative and new, as is with art forms that are hundreds of years old, it needs to continue to grow and evolve. And we don't have any specific plans. It will still-- We will still always offer that programming, that free programming, every single day. But, as we have a new expansion to the south campus, we're likely to have new formats for the Millennium Stage as well.

MYRON BELKIND: Today is the last day of Hispanic Heritage Month. Yet the Kennedy Center Honors has only recognized four Hispanics in its history and none this year, according to this questioner. How do you feel about the recognition of diversity in the Honors?

DEBORAH RUTTER: As much as I would like to recognize that the Honors is probably the most known event that takes place at the Kennedy Center, at least around the country, throughout the country and the world, I would like to reinforce also the fact that we do so much programming at the Kennedy Center. And I was trying to share just a tidbit of that with you here today. And the programming that we offer is so diverse. And I-- And it's even greater than I ever knew, as somebody who I thought was paying attention to what was going on in the arts, especially in the Nation's Capital.

But it is a very symbolic thing to receive a Kennedy Center Honor. And that's why the process was changed a couple of years ago. And an artistic committee that is highly revered and recognized for its role in the arts, its diversity in its art form, and its diversity in background.

I think that we can continue to refine that process. And, while certainly we don't want to be dealing with quotas, or have to do this, or must do that, I believe that the symbolic nature of the Honors is really important. And I look to continuing that, and strengthening that into the future.

MYRON BELKIND: Do you feel that cultural diplomacy is a tool that could be utilized more effectively? And if so, then what role do you envision the Kennedy Center playing in this international arena?

DEBORAH RUTTER: Ultimately, first of all, I think you all have heard me say that the arts are a way of communicating with one another in a way that words can't. And so I think that the performing arts and art, the visual arts are a way for us to understand one another in ways that politicians, elected officials, individuals and groups who have strong positions may not be able to do so well.

When you sit side by side, and you make music together, or you perform together in a theatre group, you build a rapport and a relationship that transcends any kind of conversation that you actually can ever have. So I think cultural diplomacy is really vital for us to explore and for those of us who are in this world, for us to push forward and to support even greater than, perhaps already has.

I have had a really fabulous opportunity to tour with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra around the world. And we have used a program that we call Citizen Musician as an opportunity to provide a forum for bringing people together, to go into nursing homes, to go into rehabilitation centers, orphanages, to help young musicians aspire and train to become performers as well.

And those perhaps are the most meaningful experiences that I had in all those years of touring and traveling to the great places with great concert halls around the world. So I really believe that cultural diplomacy maybe is not the right word for us to use, but as an act of giving back to think about citizenry and sharing artistry.

And I think that, if we can be a role model in offering that, the NSO did this for a number of years through the American Residency Program. And they would go to those states that don't have as much music or a large orchestra and those kinds of programs, and they would go out-- The musicians would fan out into the state and go into schools, and community centers, and libraries, and offer their programming. That is some of the most exciting ways in which artists can share their art with others. And I'd love to have us take an even greater role in doing that.

MYRON BELKIND: Of course, one of the central missions of any arts executives these days is fundraising. Do you find the fundraising environment more challenging in Washington than in Chicago? And what is your central pitch to prospective donors? [laughter] You have a big audience. [laughter]

DEBORAH RUTTER: Sign on the dotted line. First of all, every city likes to think that it's easier to raise money somewhere else. So in Chicago, they said, "Oh, it must have been so much easier to raise money in Seattle, because all those high tech people, and they have all that new wealth." And in Seattle, they said, "Oh, well you come from Los Angeles. And it's so large." Every city thinks the same. And Washington says the same. "Oh, Chicago, they're so philanthropic."

And they are. And so is Washington, D.C. And every city is ultimately very philanthropic, to the degree that they can give. In the case of the Kennedy Center, we actually reach across the country and around the world, which gives us a really great opportunity, because of our international programming, and the reach of our performances.

The most important pitch is the one I just gave you, I believe, which is that art is for life's sake. And without it, our lives are nothing. They are nowhere near as interesting. It isn't a way in which we can communicate and share and come together. So in the end, it's about finding people who love the arts, who give back, who believe in sharing, and who want to share their passion just as much as we who are administrators love to share the passion.

And there's nothing so rewarding as seeing young people participating in the arts, or seeing something that you didn't know could happen, happen, whether it's on a dance stage, or in the opera, or with an orchestra. It's an incredibly rewarding act to give, to give to whatever you care about. But, when you're giving to create art that is then shared with so many others, it's not just about your own pleasure, but it's about sharing that pleasure with so many others. It's an extraordinary feeling.

MYRON BELKIND: How much interaction have you had so far with figures in the Obama administration and on Capitol Hill? And how interested are they in the Kennedy Center's mission?

DEBORAH RUTTER: I think it was the first week on the job that I went to visit with Valerie Jarrett. And she has attended several activities with us. And she and her team have interacted with us quite actively. I've been on the Hill a number of times already. In fact, this afternoon, I have a meeting with the Secretary of Education. It's important for me to have a relationship with everybody here, and to make a personal contact, and make a personal invitation, even though there's active participation at the Kennedy Center through performances and events.

And we are really indebted to the Obamas for their commitment, their ongoing commitment to the Kennedy Center, and participation in so many ways. And this

weekend, we have the Mark Twain Prize. And we'll have interaction with the Bidens. So I'm feeling really good about it. Thank you.

MYRON BELKIND: What would be your best advice to young women arts administrators who one day want to run an arts organization as you have done?

DEBORAH RUTTER: Nothing worth working for is worth it if you don't put in lots of energy, lots of commitment, lots of sweat. I have dedicated my life to this work. And it has reaped dividends beyond what I could ever have hoped for. It is work that requires a true commitment, because it is not easy work. It looks glamorous. It sounds interesting. But it-- You don't get as many rewards as you think you get along the way. But those stories, the young women in the detention center, the joy of walking into a theatre and seeing hundreds of people enjoying something, and you wonder, "Where did all these people come from? Isn't this great?" The joy of sharing, is the motivation that takes you through every day. You just have to keep your nose up and keep going, because you do feel like you're changing people's lives for the good. And that's the greatest reward that we could ever have for the hard work that it takes to do this.

MYRON BELKIND: So far, what has surprised you the most about Washington in general, and the Kennedy Center in particular?

DEBORAH RUTTER: [laughter] Well, you know, when you don't live here, and you only come to visit for work, you don't know how beautiful the city is. You see the monuments. You see the museums. You see the Kennedy Center. You know about the river. You don't know how beautiful it is. And this city is so beautiful. And people are so welcoming. And I don't mean that to sound like it's a bad surprise. But I just didn't know for sure until I got here. And it is-- it is really, really a special place.

That said, it's really hard to find your way around the Kennedy Center. [laughter] You know, those-- those long hallways with the red, that's only the beginning of what it's like to work there. And I can't tell you how many times I've found myself in the wrong place without the wrong access code. So it's still a little bit of an adventure for me.

MYRON BELKIND: We're almost out of time. But before asking the last question, we have a couple of housekeeping matters to take care of. First of all, I'd like to remind you about our upcoming events and speakers. Next Monday, October 20th, we will have Thomas Perez, the Secretary of Labor. And the next day, on October 21, we'll have Bob Bowersby, Commissioner of the Big 10 Conference. And on November 7th, a few days from November 11th, Veterans Day, we will have Robert McDonald, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Next I'd like to present our guest with the traditional National Press Club mug, as this is her debut at the National Press Club. It'll be her first. But I hope you will come back to receive more as you give us progress reports.

DEBORAH RUTTER: Thank you.

MYRON BELKIND: And the progress I'm sure you will do.

[applause]

DEBORAH RUTTER: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[applause]

MYRON BELKIND: For our last question, we've had a few questioners ask the following. The statue, the bust of JFK in the Kennedy Center hallway, many feel, makes him look like he's had really bad skin. [laughter] Is there anything you can do about that? [laughter]

DEBORAH RUTTER: You're supposed to give me good ones. He has the craggy good looks. And I think that's how we're going to leave it.

[applause]

MYRON BELKIND: I was going to say, how about a round of applause for our speaker, but you did it spontaneously.

[applause]

MYRON BELKIND: Thank you all for coming today. I'd also like to thank, once again, Amy and Nik for organizing this lunch. I give you credit for the intro. And I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff including its Journalism Institute and Broadcast Center for also facilitating and organizing today's event. And finally, here is a reminder that you can find more information about the National Press Club, including upcoming luncheons that we are just now finalizing for the rest of the year, on our website. And, if you'd like to get a copy of today's program, as I'm sure many of you do, please check out our website at WWW.PRESS.ORG.

Thank you all. Thank you again to our guest of honor. [gavel] We are adjourned.

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