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Contact: William C. Martin
media@NTD.org

A Story of inspiration, democracy in action and the transformation of Deaf education in America: the National Theatre of the Deaf and Connecticut's Old State House present *Journeys of Identity*

Hartford, CT – *Journeys of Identity*, a new play by Garrett Zuercher, brings to life the story of Thomas Gallaudet, founder of the nation's first school for the Deaf, Laurent Clerc, its first teacher and Alice Cogswell, its first student as they struggle to overcome the obstacles and prejudices faced by Deaf Americans in 1817. *Journeys of Identity* will premiere at Connecticut's Old State House on October 14, 15 and 17. This new play chronicles the creation of American Sign Language and the American School for the Deaf – events that transformed the nation's attitudes on Deafness and education in the U.S.

Journeys of Identity has been written to be performed in the unique award-winning style of theatre created by the National Theatre of the Deaf where every word is seen and heard by the entire audience. Thursday, October 14 has been designated American School for the Deaf Day by Governor M. Jodi Rell. The first general public performance will be on Friday, October 15 at 9:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m., followed by a 1 p.m. Sunday matinee and 4 p.m. afternoon performance on October 17. There is a special discount ticket price of \$8 for students and seniors while general admission is \$15 and includes a tour of the Old State House. Tickets can be purchased at The Bushnell box office by calling (860) 987-5900. Groups of 10 or more should call 860-236-4193. For more information visit www.ctoldstatehouse.org.

As the seat of Connecticut State government for most of the 19th century, the Old State House provided the backdrop for discourse on issues of the day, and historic acts that helped shape the state and set examples of democracy in action for the nation to follow. Two such examples: Governor Oliver Wolcott's 1818 proclamation that forever changed the conversation about Deafness and Deaf education in America, and the Connecticut General Assembly's 1819 legislation that offered the first public support of its kind to what we now know as the American School for the Deaf, (to learn more about The American School for the Deaf visit their website at www.asd-1817.org).

The same spirit of discourse, inspiring acts of citizenship and communities coming together to create change lives on at Connecticut's Old State House even today. Each year, visitors come from across the state, across the nation, and around the world to explore the evolution of "government by the people" from the 17th century to present day and discover how citizens just like them have used their democratic voices throughout history to solve problems, create change and improve the world around them.

Often these lessons are taught through unexpected collaborations, such as the upcoming world premiere of the National Theatre of the Deaf production of *Journeys of Identity* at the Old State House. "Never before has the story of Thomas Gallaudet, Alice Cogswell and Laurent Clerc been both spoken and signed so vibrantly and in a place so closely connected to it," said Bill Bevacqua, Director of Communications, "Since its days as our state capitol, Connecticut's Old State House has stood as a symbol that people united in a common purpose can overcome differences in background, ideology and even language to serve the public good. The birth of ASD and American Sign Language is an amazing example of that, and we are proud to have story told once again within our walls."

This uniquely collaborative event came to life when NTD asked Deaf playwright Garrett Zuercher to pen a script about Gallaudet and the 1818 Wolcott proclamation as requested by the Old State House. Next NTD returned to the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center for a residency this May and from the development that occurred at The O'Neill, the show is now ready to go on. (to learn more about the company visit its web site at www.ntd.org)

Located in Hartford, Connecticut's Old State House invites visitors of all ages to reawaken their own civic engagement and awareness through authentic, educational and inspiring visitor experiences. The building served as the Constitution State's original state capitol from 1796 to 1878. It serves today as a physical and virtual classroom, teaching lessons of citizenship past and present and enriching Connecticut's communities as a laboratory where people of all ages can interact and discover that their voices matter, and that words, ideas, persuasion and debate really can change minds – and quite possibly, the world.

Educational and community programming for Connecticut's Old State House is managed for the Connecticut General Assembly by the Connecticut Public Affairs Network, Inc., a nonprofit company founded to provide comprehensive and unbiased educational programming and outreach on state government, civics and citizenship. For more information, visit Connecticut's Old State House online at www.ctoldstatehouse.org.

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