

FOR RELEASE UPON DELIVERY  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1965 -- 7:00 p.m.

REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON  
DEDICATION OF STAGE - EAST ROOM

Friends:

This House has known music since President John Adams entertained his guests with a musical evening. The floor of this room has felt the feet of great dancers of long ago like Fanny Ellsler, who was called "the divine" by her thousands of admirers.

Near the spot where I am standing, President and Mrs. Lincoln saw splendid actors of their day and President Buchanan was host to entire companies of opera stars. In the time of President Theodore Roosevelt these very walls vibrated to the magic of Enrico Caruso and to the power of Paderewski.

So you can see there have long been ties between the White House and the performing arts.

Most of us who have lived in this House have contributed, each in his way, to the growing interest of the American people in the arts. None more devotedly than the President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. None more brilliantly than President and Mrs. Kennedy.

Within this year the first spade of dirt was turned for a great cultural center for all our nation. Within this month the Congress passed the bill to provide a National Arts and Humanities Foundation so that the arts and the humanities can develop in a systematic and progressive manner in the years to come.

Tonight in this room, where so many great artists of the past have been honored and where so many artists of today do us the honor to appear, we are met to dedicate a new stage. Not the first. That honor, I am told, goes to young Tad Lincoln who had his own theatre -- complete with stage -- on the floor above.

How fortunate we are to have this proper platform for the performing arts in the White House ... a proscenium graced by beauty as well as designed for usefulness by the genius of Mr. Jo Mielziner.

This stage marks only the latest of many Rebekah Harkness contributions to the richness of today's American cultural scene. We are grateful to Mrs. Harkness for the stage and for lending us her ballet company to be the first to perform upon it.

We are also grateful to those of you here this evening who have performed in this room before. We hope many of you can return to enchant audiences of the future in this new setting, as you have those of the past.

####