



## PRESS RELEASE

### The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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#### Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library

#### Author Talk and Film:

**Susan Quinn**

*Furious Improvisation: How the WPA and a Cast of Thousands  
Made High Art out of Desperate Times*

HYDE PARK, NY -- The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum is pleased to announce that **Susan Quinn**, author of *Furious Improvisation: How the WPA and a Cast of Thousands Made High Art out of Desperate Times*, will speak at the Henry A. Wallace Visitor and Education Center on Sunday, October 26 at 2:00 p.m. Following the talk, Ms. Quinn will be available to sign copies of her book.

*Furious Improvisation* is a vivid portrait of the turbulent 1930s and the Roosevelt Administration as seen through the Federal Theater Project. Under the direction of Hallie Flanagan, formerly of the Vassar Experimental Theatre in Poughkeepsie, New York, the Federal Theater Project was a small but highly visible part of the vast New Deal program known as the Works Projects Administration. The Federal Theater Project provided jobs for thousands of unemployed theater workers, actors, writers, directors and designers nurturing many talents, including Orson Welles, John Houseman, Arthur Miller and Richard Wright. At the same time, it exposed a new audience of hundreds of thousands to live theatre for the first time, and invented a documentary theater form called the Living Newspaper. In 1939, the Federal Theater Project became one of the first targets of the newly-formed House Un-American Activities Committee, whose members used unreliable witnesses to demonstrate that it was infested with Communists.

Quinn will augment this book talk with a screening of rare archival clips she discovered in the National Archives in Washington. The clips animate the story of The Federal Theatre, where controversial plays like *Voodoo Macbeth* (directed by Orson Welles) and the *Cradle Will Rock* tore up the stage in the mid-1930s by challenging politicians, defying segregation and spotlighting injustice. The clip reel includes stunning live footage of back stage preparations and onstage moments, including a vivid Technicolor segment from the final days of the Project, taken in San Francisco during the Golden Gate International Exposition of 1939.

Susan Quinn is the author of two award-winning biographies, about Marie Curie and Karen Horney, as well as *Human Trials*, which tells the story of developing a drug for a difficult disease. She has written articles for the *New York Times Magazine* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. Quinn has served as the Chair of PEN New England, a branch of the writers' organization PEN International. She is an accomplished flutist, and continues to participate in chamber groups on a regular basis. Quinn is married to a psychoanalyst, Daniel Jacobs and has two children and four grandchildren. She lives in Brookline, Massachusetts just outside of Boston.

Copies of Ms. Quinn's book will be available for sale after the talk. There is no charge for this program. Please contact Cliff Laube at (845) 486-7745 or email [clifford.laube@nara.gov](mailto:clifford.laube@nara.gov) with questions about the event.

The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum is dedicated to preserving historical material and providing innovative educational programs, community events, and public outreach. It is one of twelve presidential libraries administered by the National Archives and Records Administration. For information about the FDR Presidential Library call (800) 337-8474 or visit [www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu).

Historic Hyde Park is a group of government and private non-profit organizations based in Hyde Park, New York. Each has a unique mission, but all are united in their dedication to extending the legacy of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt to new generations. HHP

includes the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, the Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, the Eleanor Roosevelt Center at Val-Kill, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, and Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site. For more information about HHP visit [www.HistoricHydePark.org](http://www.HistoricHydePark.org).

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