

FILM REVIEW: 'The Obama Years: The Power of Words' Revisits President's Defining Moments



THE OBAMA YEARS: THE POWER OF WORDS

By Kam Williams
For The Skanner News

How many immortal speeches have been delivered by U.S. presidents and other American icons? Lincoln's "Four score and seven years ago" Gettysburg Address, FDR's "We have nothing to fear but fear itself," Eisenhower's beware of the "Military-Industrial Complex" farewell address, JFK's "Ask not what your country can do for you" inaugural address, Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech, and Reagan's "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall," are among the handful which have stood the test of time.

Barack Obama has ostensibly left behind not just one but a cornucopia of historic orations likely to be remembered for generations to come. That is the contention of "The Obama Years: The Power of Words," a riveting documentary which discusses, in non-partisan fashion, a plethora of his addresses for the ages.

Narrated by Jessie Williams of Grey's Anatomy, the movie features a mix of archival footage from speeches and in-depth analysis by experts. Among the luminaries sharing insights are Pulitzer Prize-winner Doris Kearns-Goodwin, Rice University Professor Douglas Brinkley and former Obama strategists David Axelrod and Jon Favreau.

The reverential biopic unfolds chronologically, starting with the keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic Convention which instantly turned a little-known State Senator from Illinois into an overnight sensation. Obama's next remarkable highlight arrived in March 2008 when he salvaged a floundering presidential campaign with a unifying reflection on race delivered at Philadelphia's Constitution Center.

Later that year in Denver, he was widely lauded for his stirring acceptance of the Democratic nomination on Aug. 28, the 45th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" March on Washington speech. Obama subsequently spoke very emotionally about the Trayvon Martin shooting, the Sandy Hook elementary school and Charleston church massacres, bringing the grieving Emanuel A.M.E. congregation to tears with an a capella rendition of Amazing Grace at the end of the eulogy.

Just as moving was the President's touchstone sermon commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March, uttered on location at the Edmund Pettus bridge, site of the infamous Bloody Sunday attack on protesters by Alabama State Police Officers for simply attempting to register to vote. For folks interested in lighter fare, there's Barack's stand-up routine at the 2011 White House Correspondents' Association dinner, where he roasted a red-faced Donald Trump about everything from hosting The Apprentice to spearheading the Birther movement.

A riveting retrospective revisiting an array of Barack Obama's defining moments!

Excellent ★★★★★
Unrated
Running time: 60 minutes
Distributor: The Smithsonian

The Obama Years will air on the Smithsonian Channel on:
March 18 @ 8 a.m. ET/PT
March 21 @ 5 p.m. ET/PT
(Check local listings)

To see a trailer visit: TheSkanner.com

An Opera in Jazz: Terence Blanchard's "Champion"

By K.P. Williams
NNPA

Pop, Rock, Jazz, and Classical. These are all separate genres of music. But what happens when you put two of them together? You get "opera in jazz" rather than "jazz opera," according to jazz musician and opera composer Terence Blanchard, who is the former Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance Artistic Director. Blanchard is also a jazz trumpeter from New Orleans who has over 20 albums to his credit, won three Grammy's and written music for many of Spike Lee's films. Blanchard just premiered his first opera, (the opera's second production run), "Champion," the story of former Welterweight Boxing Champion Emile Griffith and his life-defining fight with reigning Welterweight Champion Benny "The Kid" Paret.

In March 1962, Griffith and Paret went toe to toe in a fight that ended with Paret in a coma for ten days, then dying from injuries he sustained during the fight. In "Champion," we



TERENCE BLANCHARD

Jazz musician and opera composer Terence Blanchard is the former Thelonious Monk Institute of Jazz Performance Artistic Director.

and his story, compelled Blanchard to choose "Champion" as his first opera. The line, "I kill a man and most forgive me, I love a man and many say this makes me an evil person," fa-

"I kill a man and most forgive me, I love a man and many say this makes me an evil person"

-Welterweight Boxing Champion Emile Griffith

get inside the mind of a tortured man reliving the fight that forever changed his career, along with his public battle of being a bisexual man of color in the 60's. Being a big fan of boxing and hearing about the nature of Griffith

mously said by Griffith in the book, "A Man's World: The Double Life of Emile Griffith" by Donald McRae, is one of the lines that drew Blanchard to his story.

See CHAMPION on page 11

presenting

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WRITTEN BY MARCUS GARDLEY
DIRECTED BY JERRY FOSTER

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"Urges me with a desire to do even more"
"I was moved to tears"
"Very real and insightful"

SHOWTIMES The Week of
Friday, March 17 through
Thursday, March 23, 2017

THE RED TURTLE (LA TORTUE ROUGE) (PG) Fri-Thur: 2:55, 7:10	MOANA (PG) Fri-Thur: 12:15, 5:10
PASSENGERS (PG-13) Fri-Thur: 4:45, 9:35	ARRIVAL (PG-13) Fri-Thur: 2:40, 7:10
SING (PG) Fri-Thur: 11:55, 2:15, 4:35	PINK FLAMINGOS (NC-17) Fri-Thur: 9:45
FENCES (PG-13) Fri-Thur: 12:05, 6:55, 9:25	<i>\$4.00 adults, \$3.00 senior citizens (65+), \$3.00 for kids (12 & under)</i>

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Babysitting: Available for children 2 to 8 years old. Fri: shows after 3:30pm and before 8:00pm. Sat - Sun: all shows before 8:00pm. \$9.50 per child for the length of the movie. Call to reserve a spot, no drop ins.