



**Peter Meineck**  
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### **Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar Topics 2020-21**

#### **General audience talk topics:**

##### **Topic 1: Classics in the Modern World**

What value is there in the works of ancient Greece, Rome, and the Mediterranean World for society today? While we know the influences they had on societies across the world, how do they affect us today and in what ways can they be applied to better understand and even advance our own cultures? In this illustrated talk Professor Meineck will describe several programs he has directed where ancient drama, literature and artefacts have been used in an applied way to the benefit of different communities. These include award winning work with the American veteran community that highlighted issues of combat trauma, homecoming, women in the military and military ethics, programs with the international refugee community, and new deployments of this material that brought focus to modern contemporary issues at places such as the Bush and Obama White Houses, Pentagon Command Staff, Supreme Court and United States Congress.

##### **Topic 2: The Neuroscience of the Ancient Mind: What Modern Science Can Reveal About Antiquity**

The study of the human mind as advanced by the inter-related fields of neuroscience, cognitive theory, psychology, biology and philosophy has made great advances in recent decades and is now starting to be applied to how people thought in the ancient world. Now instead of perceiving ancient artifacts as distant objects to observe in a glass case at a museum we can engage with them as the living remnants of an ancient thought process. In this talk with practical demonstrations, Professor Meineck will show how modern studies and theories of cognition have been applied to antiquity and the experience of the ancient theatre in particular and how we can better understand the function of the ancient sanctuary, the tragic mask, movement and music and why Plato, Aristotle and Isocrates all wrote that the theatre has the power "to move the soul".

### **Topic 3: How to Build a Democracy – The Athenian Revolution That Changed the World**

Why did the Athenians invent democracy, which at the time was an incredibly radical system of government, and why was it so successful? In this illustrated talk, Professor Peter Meineck will trace the thrilling events of the rise of Athenian democracy through the eyes of the great warrior-poet, Aeschylus, one of the most famous Greek tragic playwrights and an Athenian soldier who fought the Persians at the Battle of Marathon. The earliest use of the word democracy is found in one of his plays from the Greek *demos* (people of the districts) and *kratos* (power). Democracy was a brand-new concept but where did it come from? For nearly 40 years prior to its first incarnation Athens had been ruled by one tyrannical family and prior to that by a small group of powerful aristocrats, then the Spartans invaded and tried to install their own puppet tyrant. Suddenly, and seemingly out of nowhere, the Athenians poured into their capital city to protect their independence and in this spontaneous moment the seeds of democracy were born. American democracy stands in a direct line of influence from ancient Athens, what can we learn from the ancient Athenians about the meaning and value of democracy to us today and how it can be best developed and protected?

**Equipment:** I will need a projector and in a large space a microphone. I will place my talks on power point on a zip drive and also have them on my computer.

#### **Topics for classroom visits and workshops**

I am happy to speak with relevant people at the individual schools to brainstorm feasible and mutually interesting ideas for discussion **on classics, ancient history, theatre and drama, public programming, Athenian democracy, arts administration, fundraising, veteran programming.**

**Option 1: New research on the Greek theatre.** Here I can show students the exciting new archaeological research being carried out on the Theatre of Dionysos in Athens (projector needed)

**Option 2: A discussion on ancient democracy** and the inter-related roles of the theatre and military.

**Option 3: Practical Greek Drama.** I can take a particular Greek play or plays the class may be studying and analyze it with the students from a performance perspective.

**Option 4: Public arts and humanities programs.** Here I can describe and discuss developing public programs using humanities and the arts.

**Option 5. Workshop on the ancient mask.** A participatory workshop on the tragic mask for up to 30 drama students.

**Option 6. Workshop on ancient drama.** A participatory workshop for up to 30 students (drama or mixed humanities/drama) on a scene from ancient drama.

**Option 7. Speaking Shakespeare Workshop.** A workshop aimed at up to 30 Drama/English students on performing Shakespeare based on my 30 years of professional directing and producing classical drama.

**Option 8. A community workshop** with on and off campus members of the veteran community exploring the themes in ancient drama that relate to veterans today. Venue will need to recruit 4 -8 local veterans to participate.