

History at Ford's Theatre

Reimagining and reinvigorating the way our patrons and the D.C. metro community engage with history both in person and online.

The Ford's Theatre campus was closed for the majority of 2021 as a result of the pandemic. We pivoted on site programs to virtual experiences until it was safe to reopen our site with limited capacities. Additionally, Ford's developed new virtual content exploring Lincoln, the Civil War, Ford's Theatre history and topics relevant to the events of today to be presented in live virtual learning sessions and online resources available for the general public.

Historic Site

Ford's Theatre safely reopened the Theatre and Museum with limited capacities during summer 2021, welcoming **41,142** historic site visitors.



View from the stage of Ford's Theatre. Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie.

Safety On Site

Ford's Theatre followed CDC and local guidelines to ensure the health and safety of patrons, artists and staff while visiting the Ford's Theatre historic site in person. To ensure and prioritize everyone's safety, Ford's made many updates to the site and operating procedures. Since we reopened, all visitors age 3+ are required to wear face coverings during all daytime visits and performances. Ford's Theatre has taken these important steps to ensure all our visitors, staff and artists have a safe and enjoyable experience on site.

Digital History Resources

Ford's Theatre maintains a robust online presence to extend learning resources to classrooms and online learners from across the country.

Education Pages

46,749 users visited the "For Teachers" pages of our website. These pages contain lesson plans for teachers, student learning activities, descriptions of Ford's Theatre programs for teachers and students and links to other resources. Teachers downloaded lessons from the site **8,602** times.

www.fords.org/for-teachers

Assassination Pages

170,349 users visited the assassination pages on the website (with **550,547** page views). This is a 28% increase in users and a 46% increase in page views compared to last year. This online exhibit encourages learners of all ages to trace the story of Lincoln's assassination on their own – from the genesis of the conspiracy to the event's impact on Lincoln's legacy.

www.fords.org/lincolns-assassination

Remembering Lincoln

This primary source learning site welcomed **29,451** users (with **75,332** page views) to explore personal responses to Lincoln's untimely death from around the United States.

rememberinglincoln.fords.org

Reaching People through Social Media

Ford's Theatre Society reached more than **66,000** people digitally through our social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Abraham Lincoln Institute Symposium

From March 22 – May 3, the Abraham Lincoln Institute and Ford's Theatre Society presented our annual speaker symposium featuring historians and authors as a virtual series. Speakers focused on the life, career and legacy of President Abraham Lincoln and were streamed live on the Ford's Theatre website, Facebook Live, YouTube and Twitter.

This program had **8,965** online viewers.



Cabinet Conversations



We piloted a new streaming series, Cabinet Conversations, composed of live online interviews with historians, humanitarians, artists, politicians and thought leaders to talk about Lincoln, his leadership, how we remember him today and what that means for how we navigate through the current period of national and global uncertainty. With each conversation we touched on the future of the arts, civics and history and connected the lessons learned from the past with contemporary life. **39,412** people viewed these free programs.

Featured 2021 Cabinet Conversations Topics

In September 2020, we hosted a discussion about voting rights between *Washington Post* columnist Jonathan Capehart, former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and former Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele. Our guests explored the ideas of how this important expression of democracy has evolved over time and the struggles that continue today.



In October 2020, during our discussion *A Hearty Laugh Relieves Me*, humorist Mark Russell, former Congressman Joe Crowley and retired news anchor Gordon Peterson talked about political humor during contentious times.

In November 2020, in *Let's Talk Turkey!*, we discussed Abraham Lincoln and Thanksgiving Traditions with farmer Wellie Jackson, Lina Mann of the White House Historical Association and Janet Scanlon of the Willard Hotel.

In March 2021, former U.S. Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis, former U.S. Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson and philanthropist David M. Rubenstein spoke about Lincoln, his leadership and the impact of his legacy on leadership today.

In March 2021, our guests Martha S. Jones of Johns Hopkins University and Tamika Y. Nunley of Cornell University discussed Black women who were pioneers in making historic change from the Civil War to today, and how important their narratives are to understanding our full history.



In June 2021, we spoke with Judy and Dennis Shepard to discuss LGBTQ+ activism and healing. Mr. and Mrs. Shepard's history and experience in working towards a more equitable society for all after the death of their son, Matthew Shepard, highlighted how inspiring and impactful the work of an individual can be.

Staff Training with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience



International Coalition of
SITES of CONSCIENCE

Over the past year, Ford's Theatre Society ramped up our institutional capacity-building to establish and sustain an inclusive workplace culture and empower front-line staff to confidently engage with visitors – in person or online – about the highly charged themes of political violence associated with our site. As part of this grant-funded initiative, we partnered with the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), a worldwide network of over 300 members in 65 countries from historic sites, place-based museums or memorials that prevent the erasure of memory and seek to ensure a more just and humane future.

Through our work with ICSC, we held trainings in dialogic interpretation and truth as defined through the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a means for engaging visitors with contested histories. The important lessons learned through this work will inform what stories we tell and how we tell them as a part of our new interpretive plan.

Virtual Investigation: Detective McDevitt



Chris Stinson at Detective McDevitt.

Ford's Theatre offered an online version of our historic walking tour where audience members follow an actor playing the real-life Detective James McDevitt as he investigates the Lincoln assassination conspiracy. Written by Richard Hellesten, and directed by Mark Ramont, **3,686** people participated in this virtual program.