

Theatre at Ford's Theatre

Broadening our theatrical offerings and deepening the ways we use art as a catalyst for connection and learning.

The pandemic presented us with new and exciting opportunities for our 2020-2021 virtual, artistic season.



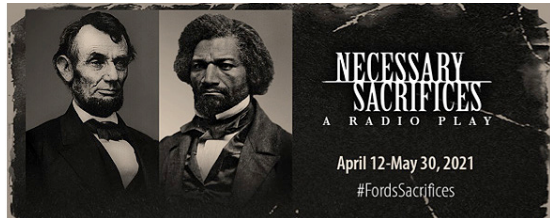
Photo of Craig Wallace by Scott Suchman.

HOLIDAY 2020

A Christmas Carol: A Radio Play

By Charles Dickens; Adapted and Directed by Michael Wilson

In partnership with WAMU 88.5 FM, Washington, D.C.'s NPR news station, Ford's Theatre presented a one-hour radio play adaptation of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* in December. The production was made available free and on-demand nationwide and WAMU broadcast the play on Christmas day. The broadcast was also picked up by twelve other radio stations across the country.



SPRING 2021

Necessary Sacrifices

By Richard Helleesen; Directed by Psalmayene 24

Ford's Theatre produced an audio drama adaptation of *Necessary Sacrifices*, which explored the two documented encounters between Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln during a period of national crisis. The radio play was available for free and on-demand through the Ford's website. WPFW 89.3 FM, Pacifica radio in the nation's capital, was our media partner for this production, and they broadcast the play in April. WPFW also broadcast the production on other Pacifica radio stations nationwide in April and May.



Justine "Icy" Moral (Spirit of Christmas Past) records audio in a backstage dressing room at Ford's Theatre. Pictured on video screen, Production Stage Manager Brandon Prendergast. Photo by Sarah R. Hewitt.

2020-2021 Season at Ford's Theatre

29,141

Radio Play Listeners

12,684

Viewers of a Virtual Performance of *One Destiny*

11,715

Virtual Play Reading Viewers

24

Local Artists Hired

100%

of our actors were local to the D.C. area



Photo of Michael Bunce and Stephen F. Schmidt by Gary Erskine.

SPRING 2021

One Destiny

By Richard Helleesen; Directed by Mark Ramont

In fall 2020, Ford's Theatre filmed our live historical production, *One Destiny*, which tells the story of Lincoln's assassination through the eyes of two men who were present that night, actor Harry Hawk and Ford's Theatre co-owner Harry Ford. This one-act play was made available for free in spring on our website and on-demand for students, teachers and history enthusiasts from across the country.



2020-2021

Ford's Theatre Virtual Play Reading Series

Ford's offered a virtual play reading series supporting local artists while bringing artistic programming to the general public. Performances were recorded and available for four days following the live event. This season we produced virtual readings of *Intimate Apparel* by Lynn Nottage, *Steel Magnolias* by Robert Harling and *Fireflies* by Donja R. Love.

Critical Acclaim

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Though it was made this year because of the necessities cause by closed theatres, it's a solid and efficient retelling of the Dickens tale so well done, there may be demand for its own revival in future years, long after the pandemic has passed.

-Broadway World review for *A Christmas Carol: A Radio Play*

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Craig Wallace in recording booth at Ford's. Photo by Sarah R. Hewitt.

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The most important reason to watch *One Destiny* is the fact that this isn't a Zoom presentation. This is as close to live theatre as you're going to get for a while. The filmed version by Chiet Productions as edited by James Gardiner fully captures the theatrical experience as if you were watching the show in person... Ford's Theatre is providing theatre junkies and everyone else a huge service by making *One Destiny* available to everyone. One booming "Mr. Hawk!" -from Stephen F. Schmidt and you're in."

-Broadway World review for *One Destiny*

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Ford's Theatre Legacy Commissions

Launched in 2020, Ford's committed to an unprecedented artistic initiative. At a time when our nation was facing a long-overdue reckoning on our racial history, Ford's Theatre forged partnerships with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) playwrights at the forefront of defining the future of the American Theatre.

The *Ford's Theatre Legacy Commissions* will explore historical figures and illuminate stories that might not be as well known in the racial struggle for equality and civil rights. The Commissions will speak to the moment while giving voice to underrepresented stories and forgotten or unknown heroes. The initiative will serve as an artistic incubator and amplifier for underrepresented BIPOC American stories and will expand the canon of American historical drama. The Commissions process will include extensive development including first readings, developmental workshops and world-premiere productions within the next decade.

We are planning on a minimum of five commissions over the next several years. The first five playwrights selected for this important initiative are Pearl Cleage, Rickerby Hinds, Nambi Kelley, Dominic Taylor and Charlayne Woodard.

www.fords.org/performances/the-fords-theatre-legacy-commissions

Sheldon Epps joins Ford's Theatre as Senior Artistic Advisor

In August 2020, Ford's Theatre named Sheldon Epps as our new Senior Artistic Advisor. Epps stepped into this new role as Ford's reevaluated its season amid the national reckoning for racial justice and the impacts of COVID-19 on live performances. Sheldon Epps was Artistic Director of the renowned Pasadena Playhouse for 20 years (1997-2017) and now serves the theatre as Artistic Director Emeritus.



Photo of Sheldon Epps by Jim Cox.

New Rules of Engagement at Ford's Theatre

As we have begun to emerge from a challenging period in our history, Ford's has introduced the new Ford's Theatre Rules of Engagement.

These rules were inspired by Dominique Morisseau's Playwrights Rules of Engagement, in which she wanted to ensure that every theatregoer felt at home while attending the theatre. We at Ford's, similarly, want to create a welcoming environment as we all begin to make our way back into the theatre. More information on our new rules for engagement can be found on the Ford's Theatre blog.

www.fords.org/blog/post/making-theatre-during-a-pandemic-the-new-rules-of-engagement-at-ford-s-theatre/



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Workshops

Ford's Theatre partnered with Ascension Worldwide, a minority-owned local firm that specializes in helping organizations identify the current state of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), to develop a strategic path forward that is inclusive of all voices within the organization. This year Ascension completed a comprehensive organization-wide assessment on past and current EDI work and practices by surveying, holding focus groups and holding interviews across our organization. In preparation for our return to producing live theatre, the artistic/production department completed a four-day training that included sessions on recognizing unconscious bias, microaggressions and resolving conflicts. We also dedicated a portion of the first rehearsal for each production to EDI training for the entire Company of artists, crew and staff. Ford's Theatre is committed to creating an equitable, diverse and inclusive environment for all artists, staff, students, educators, scholars, theatregoers, tourists and volunteers visiting and working on our campus and virtually.