

EXPERIENCE THE POWER
OF THE 2ND

A FIRST LOOK

THE FORD'S THEATRE LEGACY COMMISSIONS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

*A Designer of Note,
A Woman of Style*

AT 7:30 P.M.

By Charlayne Woodard
Directed by Delicia Turner Sonnenberg

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

SISTER X

AT 2:30 P.M.

By Nambi E. Kelley
Directed by Hana S. Sharif

THE
AMERICAN
FIVE

AT 7:30 P.M.

By Chess Jakobs
Directed by Aaron Posner



January 26-27, 2024

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Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie.

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**Large print playbills available.
Please ask an usher.**

Welcome

Welcome to Ford's Theatre and *The Ford's Theatre Legacy Commissions: A First Look*! We are pleased to provide you with a glimpse of new plays in development. This festival of free public readings extends our commitment to BIPOC artists and to sharing stories that we hope will expand the canon of historical drama in the American theatre. This initiative offers artists the opportunity to hone their skills and provides resources and support by means of workshops, collaborations, performance space, and dramaturgical support, allowing Ford's Theatre to serve as a national incubator for the development of powerful and enlightening theatre experiences.

In this second year of *A First Look*, we are honored to present the works of playwrights Chess Jakobs, Nambi E. Kelley and Charlayne Woodard. The works of these writers bring us stories of unparalleled resilience in the face of extraordinary challenges. From the story of Ann Lowe blazing the trail in fashion design, to a young mother's quest to share her life's story with Malcolm X, to present-day biases and racial discord inside a graduate classroom, we explore underrepresented historical figures and illuminate their contributions to American life.

This past year was a milestone one for The Ford's Theatre Legacy Commissions. The first commission to receive its world premiere on the Ford's stage, Pearl Cleage's *Something Moving: A Meditation on Maynard*, opened our 2023-2024 season. Additionally, at the University of California-Riverside, Rickerby Hinds further developed his adaptation of Henry "Box" Brown's work, *BLACKBOX*.

After experiencing *A First Look*, we invite you to return for this season's highly anticipated musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*—the rollicking, roof-raising, doo-wop musical about a timid florist and a certain carnivorous plant from outer space.

I want to thank you for celebrating new work with us and supporting The Ford's Theatre Legacy Commissions. And I hope to see you at our theatre again soon!

Sincerely,



Paul R. Tetreault
Director
Ford's Theatre Society

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at Ford's Theatre

Ford's Theatre is committed to creating an equitable, diverse, inclusive and accessible environment for all artists, staff, students, educators, scholars, theatregoers, tourists and volunteers working and visiting our campus and engaging virtually. With renewed commitment, we have reexamined our practices, reassessed our vision for the future and have taken forward steps for needed reinvention. We want to share the principles that continue to sustain and guide our institution:

Ford's Theatre Society condemns all forms of racism, white supremacy, hate speech, police brutality and acts of violence against Black, Indigenous, People of Color and members of the LGBTQ+ community. We wholeheartedly believe that Black lives matter and support the international cry for equity and social justice. Ford's Theatre Society is fully engaged and committed to dismantling racism, discrimination, exclusion and systemic and social oppression. We are actively working to be an anti-racist, equitable, diverse and inclusive institution.

Ford's Theatre Values

- **Courage:** Following Lincoln's example, we engage deeply with complex truths, explore new ideas and commit to evolving as an organization.
- **Empathy:** We cultivate the ability to see our shared humanity and act with compassion.
- **Equity:** We foster a community that amplifies underrepresented voices and provides equitable opportunities and access.
- **Inclusion:** We work to be an inclusive community based on respect. We celebrate commonalities and embrace differences.
- **Inspired Creativity:** We seek to inspire imagination and creative thinking as we collaborate with each other and our community.

Learn more about our EDI progress at bit.ly/FordsEDI.

Land Acknowledgment

Ford's Theatre sits on some of the original homelands of the Piscataway and Nacotchtank peoples, who long lived, farmed and worked on this land. Ford's Theatre Society honors the continued traditions of both peoples, many of whom continue to live in a homeland together.

Ford's Theatre Rules of Engagement

We are glad that you are joining us at Ford's Theatre today. This is an inclusive and interactive community. Whether you are here to visit our historic site or to see a show, we invite you to be your authentic self.

At Ford's Theatre:

- We are allowed to be human, in all the ways that make us unique.
- We are allowed to be human together. We encourage you to find moments of respectful connection and engagement with other members of the community.
- We are on common ground. We are all here to enjoy a shared experience and though our reactions and responses may vary, we will remain respectful.
- We are creating a live theatrical experience together; audible reactions and responses are welcome. The actors need you to engage with what you see but not to distract them from their performances.
- We also welcome the use of personal communication devices if they help you to better experience the show, but we encourage you to respect the actors' work and the other audience members around you. **Please note that the taking of photographs, video or sound recordings of the performance is not permitted.**

Let's create something beautiful together.



Become a volunteer usher!

Ford's Theatre is looking for people like you to help us welcome patrons to our shows!

Learn more about Volunteer Usher benefits and join us this season by visiting fords.org/work-with-us.

View from the stage of the President's Box at Ford's Theatre. ©Maxwell MacKenzie.

Ford's Theatre Underwriters

The Ford's Theatre Legacy Commissions: A First Look is made possible by generous corporate support from:

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Over the past decade, **Boeing** has invested approximately \$2 billion in communities around the globe. As part of our community engagement strategy, we support efforts that further STEM education for underserved students, assist military members, veterans, and their families, promote environmental stewardship, advance racial equity and provide for communities in need—including disaster recovery and relief. Boeing employees also share their time and skills through mentorships, community service projects and volunteerism with nonprofit organizations worldwide.

-Ziad Ojakli, Executive Vice President, Government Operations

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Lockheed Martin Corporation, headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, is a global security and aerospace company that employs approximately 116,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The company's vision for 21st Century Security centers on helping the U.S. and allies leverage emerging technologies and advanced capabilities to create a resilient, interoperable and connected network that deters threats.

-James D. Taiclet, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer

Additional Project Support

This project is supported in part by an award from the **National Endowment for the Arts**.



Up Next at Ford's: Winter/Spring 2024

Written Then, Spoken Now: African American Letters to Lincoln

February 2, 2024 at 7 p.m.

A Reading and Book Signing with Dr. Jonathan W. White, Dr. Edna Greene Medford and Denise J. Hart

Little Shop of Horrors

Book and Lyrics by Howard Ashman; Music by Alan Menken; Music Direction by William Yanesh; Choreographed by Ashleigh King; Directed by Kevin S. McAllister

March 15 – May 18, 2024

The 27th Annual Abraham Lincoln Institute Symposium

March 23, 2024 at 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

One Destiny

By Richard Helleesen; Directed by Mark Ramont

March 26 – May 18, 2024

Get tickets and learn more about upcoming productions and events at www.fords.org.



A Designer of Note, A Woman of Style

Charlayne Woodard (Playwright) is an American playwright and actress. Woodard's two-character play, *The Garden*, commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse, had productions in 2021 at both Baltimore Center Stage (summer) and La Jolla Playhouse (fall). Woodard's solo plays, which she has originated to great acclaim, include *Pretty Fire*, *Neat*, *In Real Life* and *The Night Watcher*. Her plays are published by Dramatists Play Service and performed at regional theatres around the country. Audio versions are available at Audible.com. As an actress, Woodard has extensive film, television and theatre credits, including playing the role of Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company (2007).

About the Play: *A Designer of Note, A Woman of Style* by Charlayne Woodard gives us a window into the life of fashion designer Ann Lowe. Ann Lowe designed dresses for high society women and movie stars before she was commissioned to design Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy's wedding dress. Her remarkable artistry set her apart from her male counterparts, but her achievements as a couturier and artist remained unknown for decades despite having stores on the fashion avenues of New York City. In a journey that begins in 1898 in Clayton, Alabama, Charlayne Woodard's work traces the remarkable life and artistry of a true original American designer.

In Charlayne's Own Words: Born in the late 1890s, in the Jim Crow South, Ann Lowe was a trailblazer in fashion design. From 1912 to 1981 Ann Lowe exercised her gift and followed her calling. She secured her place in history designing and creating, not only for herself, but primarily for the wealthy women of elite society who hired her—and who were determined to keep her “their little secret.”

The Plays (cont.)

I chose to write a play about this extraordinary woman because I must give credit where credit is due. As a creative, I know what it's like to follow your dream, in spite of numerous obstacles, foreseen and unforeseen. However, the story of Ann Lowe is a tale of perseverance, creative excellence—never giving in to victimhood. A single mom for most of her life, Ms. Lowe ran over hurdle after hurdle: Racism, sexism, financial instability, health issues. After discovering this “hidden figure,” and researching her life, I am empowered and inspired. I trust others will feel the same. Ann Lowe’s very unique story must no longer be “their little secret.”

Credits:

Playwright.....Charlayne Woodard
DirectorDelicia Turner Sonnenberg
Dramaturg.....Sydné Mahone
Stage ManagerBrandon Prendergast

Time: 1917 to 1981.

Setting: Montgomery, Alabama; Tampa, Florida; New York City, New York.

The Plays (cont.)



Nambi E. Kelley (Playwright) is an actress and playwright with an extensive résumé in the United States and internationally. Most recently, she appeared in the lead role of Dominique Morisseau's *Pipeline* (City Theatre) and the Off-Broadway production of *Kunstler* (59E59). Her television credits include *Elementary*, *Person of Interest*, *Madam Secretary*, *Chicago PD* and *Chicago Justice*. Kelley is a former playwright-in-residence at the National Black Theatre and the Goodman Theatre. She is a former Dramatists Guild Fellow. Kelley was the recipient of the 2020 National New Play Network annual commission, the Prince Prize (2019) and a Dramatists Guild Foundation Writers Alliance Grant (2018-19). She was chosen by Toni Morrison to adapt Morrison's *Jazz*, which premiered at Baltimore Center Stage in 2017. Kelley's adaptation of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (Samuel French) premiered Off-Broadway at The Duke on 42nd Street (The Acting Company; AUDELCO Award for Best Play). She is currently developing a Broadway-aspiring play about Dr. Maya Angelou and is a writer on Showtime's *The Chi*.

About the Play: With *SISTER X*, Nambi E. Kelley has given us the story of Ameilia, a young mother and a social and political activist who seeks a meeting with Malcolm X during a time of social and political upheaval. Seeking guidance and answers, Ameilia reveals the haunting truth of her life. Kelley has written Ameilia's galvanizing story in verse, thus amplifying the voices of a generation of young women whose unique stories and perspectives have seldom come to light.

The Plays (cont.)

In Nambi's Own Words: The role of women in the Nation of Islam, as both a religious and political organization, has been muted. I began to search for who these women were and what their role in the movement was. The information available was scarce, but early on, I hit upon the stories of young women who had been impregnated by leaders of the movement. Excavating their specific stories gave me a focus that began my quest to hear their voices.

Credits:

Playwright..... Nambi E. Kelley
DirectorHana S. Sharif
Dramaturg..... Sydné Mahone
Stage Directions..... Kim Bey
Stage ManagerJoan Foster McCarty

Cast:

Ameilia Constance Swain

Time: December 1964; February 1965.

Setting: Ameilia's home with her husband and son; Malcolm X's office at Temple No. 7 in Harlem; The Audubon Ballroom.

The Plays (cont.)

THE AMERICAN FIVE



Chess Jakobs (Playwright) is a Black and Jewish American storyteller and historian. The author of *The American Five*, Chess's work seeks to engage storytelling as a form of historical preservation and cultural engagement. Chess is Associate Director and Dramaturg of *Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors* (Off-Broadway/New World Stages, 2023), and Writer/Co-Executive Producer of *Sister Nature: Women of Color in the Environmental Movement* (under development with People over Plastic). Theatrical credits include: *Steppenwolf: Downstate*; Indiana Rep: *A Christmas Carol*; Alliance: *Colossal*; Olney: *Fiddler on the Roof*. TV: BET, NBC, Bravo. Affiliations: Member of AEA, Associate Member of SDC and DG. Training: University of Michigan. Instagram: @chessjakobs. chessjakobs.com.

About the Play: *The American Five* offers an incisive look into a single, society-shifting moment in American history while turning our perspective toward a horizon of plurality. This play's kaleidoscope structure examines the multi-generational relationship of Black and Jewish Americans. When a perspective-challenging professor invokes the "Rules of Engagement" inside the classroom, tensions rise over a discussion about anti-Semitic headlines. A viable framework for understanding present political discord and social paradigms is found in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

In Chess's Own Words: What does it mean when the history that helps us achieve understanding often excludes critical moments and people? It means that historical giants such as Bayard Rustin, Stanley Levison, Clarence Jones and Coretta Scott King are left out of critical retellings of the March on Washington and the "I Have A Dream" speech. Through this play, I am inquiring into our collective perception of each other, our presumed alignment based on shared background and how identity manifests through us in how we speak, relate and dream. Where do we go when our plurality causes friction in a singular-driven world? How do we retain our individuality when communities are built through homogeneity? What can vulnerability and change do

The Plays (cont.)

for us when masculinity and tradition are insufficient to remain powerful? Why do race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, ability, sex and sexuality define us? Who is allowed to undefine themselves?

Credits:

Playwright.....Chess Jakobs
Director.....Aaron Posner
Dramaturg.....José Carrasquillo
Stage Directions.....Kim Bey
Stage Manager.....Craig A. Horness

Cast:

Stanley Levison/President Kennedy/Nice Jewish Boy.....Yoni Bronstein
Bayard Rustin.....John Floyd
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.....Jay Frisby
Clarence Jones/Black Nationalist/Wailing Man.....Noah Keyishian
Coretta Scott King/Evelyn Lincoln/
Wailing Woman/Black Nationalist.....Fatima Quander

Time and Place: 1956-1963.

WARNING: The photographing, videotaping and sound-recording of any performance is prohibited by law and union regulations. Please turn off all wireless phones, pagers and chiming watches prior to the beginning of the performance.

The actors and stage managers in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.

Ford's Theatre is a member of the League of Resident Theatres, The Dramatists Guild and National Alliance for Musical Theatre.

Staff for A First Look

Lighting Designer.....C.C. Gould
Production Assistants.....Jessica Hagy, Kyla S. Mermejo-Varga,
Safiya Muthaliff



The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.



The technicians at Ford's Theatre are represented by Locals 22, 772 and 798, IATSE, AFL-CIO, the professional union of theatrical technicians.



The directors are members of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, an independent national labor union.

Education at Ford's Theatre



Students visit the historic Ford's Theatre and Museum. Photo by Gary Erskine.

Ford's Education—History Comes To Life for Every Generation

Ford's Theatre Society's education programs engage learners of all ages in connecting the past with the present, developing their voices and building the skills needed to participate as responsible citizens in our democracy. Learning how history informs and impacts today, and the role of the individual in crafting our collective future, is woven into the fabric of our programs.

In continuing to explore Lincoln's legacy, we examine the power of public speaking, and we cultivate a culture where listening to viewpoints familiar and new allows us to expand our understanding about the world.

Field Trips to Ford's Theatre

Ford's Theatre Society's Education Department welcomes students and teachers to take part in our in-person and virtual learning opportunities this season! To ensure local student accessibility to our nation's historical and cultural heritage, Ford's education programs are offered for free to Washington, D.C. public and charter schools and to Virginia and Maryland Title I schools with free bus transportation for those within the Capital Beltway. Schedule your school's historic site visit today and inquire about a guided tour by a member of our education staff.

Ford's Theatre education programs are supported by Cornelia T. Bailey Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, BP America, D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, The Hearst Foundations, National Park Service, Verdun Perry, PwC, Southern Company and Visa Inc. with additional support from United Airlines.

Education at Ford's Theatre

Teacher Professional Development

Applications are now open for our Teacher Professional Development opportunities at Ford's Theatre!

Our programs are designed to keep pace with the ever-changing classroom landscape. Immerse yourself in innovative, place-based learning experiences that bring history, social studies and English Language Arts learning to life.

- **Civil War Washington, July 7–12, 2024:** In this institute, connect with peers to illuminate new perspectives and under-told stories, explore historic sites and collect a wealth of resources. Gain tools to help students grapple with histories whose legacies matter today.
- **Set In Stone, July 21–26, 2024:** Our monument landscape is changing. Examine how people have sculpted the narrative of United States history through monuments and memorials in our nation's capital.
- **National Oratory Fellows:** A new cohort of fellows begins the August prior to each school year, becoming part of a national network of supportive and like-minded educators. Drawing on Abraham Lincoln's legacy and example as a powerful orator, you will work closely with our teaching artists and staff to learn the art and science behind compelling and effective public speaking.

Save the Date for Ford's Annual Oratory Festival

February 6–7, 2024

There is nothing quite like listening to young people who have harnessed the power of public speaking, sharing powerful words from great orators like Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mary McLeod Bethune and others. In collaboration with Teaching Artists, local students hone their oratory skills using the Ford's Approach—a method that seamlessly blends theatrical techniques, public speaking and ensemble-building skills. This unique method empowers each student's voice to shine brilliantly in unison with their peers.

On February 6 and 7, 2024, D.C.-metro area classrooms will come to Ford's Theatre to delight and inspire audiences in our annual Oratory Festival performances bringing historical speeches to life. This free event is open to friends, family and community members.

Visit the Teaching and Learning page on www.fords.org or email us at education@fords.org for information on any of our offerings.

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The Board of Trustees of Ford's Theatre Society is the governing body with complete responsibility for the Society and all interests pertaining thereto.

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The Abraham Lincoln National Council raises awareness locally, nationally and internationally about the historic, artistic and cultural importance of Ford's Theatre.

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The Board of Governors explores the legacy of President Abraham Lincoln and supports the celebration of the American experience through theatre and education. The Board of Governors comprises corporations and associations who advance the mission of Ford's Theatre through a variety of activities, including production underwriting, education program underwriting and general operating support.

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A Special Thanks

Ford's Theatre Society is grateful for all the individuals, foundations and government entities who support our mission. Through their ongoing contributions, Ford's is able to explore Lincoln's legacy and celebrate the American experience through theatre and education.

Visit www.fords.org/join-and-give/impact to see who has helped Ford's Theatre make a lasting impact.

Ford's Theatre Advisory Council

The Ford's Theatre Advisory Council is composed of nationally recognized historians, writers and professionals who share a love of President Abraham Lincoln and the values he exemplified in his life and presidency. These accomplished individuals provide insight, expertise and invaluable suggestions to the leadership of Ford's Theatre as we continually seek to improve the excellence of our programming.

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Audience Services

Historic Site Visits

A visit to Ford's Theatre traces the story of Abraham Lincoln's presidency, assassination and legacy. Whether for a brief visit or for the full experience, Ford's will deepen your appreciation and understanding of America's 16th president. Admission is free; advance tickets have a convenience fee. The Ford's Theatre campus traditionally includes:

- **Museum:** Learn about Lincoln's presidency from his inauguration to his arrival at Ford's Theatre the night of April 14, 1865. See artifacts related to his presidency and assassination.
- **Theatre:** See the recreated historic theatre and learn the key facts of the assassination from National Park Service Rangers.
- **Petersen House:** Explore Lincoln's final moments in the house where Lincoln died.
- **Center for Education and Leadership:** See the Aftermath Exhibits exploring what happened following Lincoln's assassination, the hunt for John Wilkes Booth and the lasting impact of Lincoln's legacy.

Our visitation schedule varies. Parts of the campus may not be available at the time of your visit.

Box Office Hours

- When there is an evening performance: 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
- When there is no evening performance: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- When there is a *History on Foot* walking tour: 8:30 a.m. until the tour begins.

Groups

Groups (10 or more people) save on mainstage performance tickets, have priority access to the best seats in the house and have flexible payment options. Contact groups@fords.org or (202) 638-2367.

Accessibility



Accessible seating is offered in both the rear orchestra and the balcony sections.



An audio-enhancement system is available for all performances. Devices are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Please check with an usher.

Upcoming in Accessibility



Audio-described performances of *Little Shop of Horrors* are scheduled for April 9 at 7:30 p.m. and April 27 at 2 p.m.



A sign-interpreted performance of *Little Shop of Horrors* is scheduled for April 11 at 7:30 p.m.



Little Shop of Horrors will have a sensory-friendly performance on Saturday, May 4, 2024 at 2 p.m.

Learn more about accessible performances at bit.ly/fords-accessibility. Ford's Theatre accessibility programs are supported by the Liberty Mutual Foundation.

Staff

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Deputy Director and
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 Manager of Arts Education..... Ashley Gunter
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 Arts Education and Outreach Coordinator..... Jack Pritt
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 Heidi Fortune Picker, ChelseaDee Harrison,
 Tyler Herman, Tamekia Jackson,
 Chelsea Mayo, Lauren Miller,
 Mary Myers, Kirsten Noetzel,
 Victoria Reinsel, Eliseo Valerio
 Education Program Artists..... Jonathan Atkinson, Michael Glenn,
 Joe Mallon, Eric M. Messner, Chris Stinson

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PRODUCTION

Production Supervisor..... Carey Lawless
 Head Carpenter..... Andrew Fox
 Head Flyman..... Mark Size
 Props Head..... C. Marlow Seyffert
 Costume Manager/Design Assistant..... Veronica Stevens
 Costume Design Assistant..... Idara Ikpe
 Wardrobe Supervisor..... Constance Harris
 Hair and Make-Up Supervisor..... Danna Rosedahl
 Head Electrician..... C.C. Gould
 Sound Engineer..... Brian Keating
 Assistant Stagehands..... Dre Jones, Lawrence Rascoop,
 Autumn Smith
 Resident Production Stage Manager..... Brandon Prendergast
 Production Assistants..... Kyla S. Mermejo-Varga, Safiya Muthaliff

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Book and Lyrics by Howard Ashman; Music by Alan Menken; Music Direction by William Yanesh;
Choreographed by Ashleigh King; Directed by Kevin S. McAllister



March 15-May 18, 2024

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Artwork based off of photo of Derrick Truby and Chani Wereley by Scott Suchman.