

History at Ford's Theatre

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

The Ford's Theatre campus was closed to the public in mid-March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. All on-site programs were halted or pivoted to virtual experiences for the remainder of the season.

Historic Site

Ford's Theatre welcomed **175,131** visitors to the historic site in the first six and a half months of last season.



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

Virtual Abraham Lincoln Institute Symposium

From June 8 – August 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 virtual program had **9,922** online viewers.

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

43,473 users visited the Ford's Theatre education pages. This is a 46% increase in users compared to last year. These pages contain historic resources; articles discussing President Lincoln, his legacy and the Civil War; lesson plans for teachers; and student learning activities.

9,063 resources were downloaded from the site.

Assassination Pages

133,328 users made use of the assassination pages on the Ford's Theatre website (with **376,507** page views). These resources utilize constructivist learning principles by encouraging visitors 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

25,589 users (with **70,643** page views) to explore personal responses to Lincoln's untimely death.

www.rememberinglincoln.fords.org

Reaching People through Social Media

Ford's Theatre Society reached more than **64,000** people digitally through our social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Ford's Theatre's New Interpretive Plan

In partnership with the National Park Service, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and consultant Kate Haley Goldman, Ford's Theatre Society completed a new comprehensive interpretive plan for the historic site, providing clear guidelines about what stories we tell and how, across the institution. Over the next several years, we will use this document as a foundation for plans to renovate the Ford's Theatre Museum. This document will also provide the foundation for aligning the historical stories we tell with the physical space on the site, along with future exhibits and educational programs that will enhance the visitor experience.



Gettysburg Address exhibit at the Ford's Theatre Museum.
Photo © Maxwell MacKenzie.

Cabinet Conversations



In response to the closure of our site, Ford's developed online programming exploring Lincoln, the Civil War, and topics relevant to the events of today. This included our new streaming series titled *Cabinet Conversations*, composed of live online interviews with historians, artists, politicians and other thought leaders to connect lessons of the Civil War, Lincoln's presidency, and the arts and education to our contemporary life.

21,616 people participated in and/or viewed these public programs.



All past *Cabinet Conversations* can be viewed at: www.fords.org/visit/virtual-events-and-special-tours/cabinet-conversations/

Cabinet Conversations Topics

- May 2020** *Creativity, History and Leadership:* Director Paul R. Tetreault interviewed historian and author James Swanson.
- June 2020** *Characterizing Lincoln/Historical Drama: Writing, Preserving, Presenting:* Playwright Richard Hellesen and actors David Selby and Craig Wallace discussed interpreting history through dramatic writing and actor portrayal.
- June 2020** *Memorializing the Civil War:* Dr. Hilary Green and Kevin Levin joined us to explore how we remember and memorialize the Civil War.
- July 2020** *Lessons in Leadership:* Business leaders Carly Fiorina and Sheila Johnson discussed leadership in times of crisis.
- July 2020** *A Reckoning for Confederate Memorials:* Mayor Mitch Landrieu, Eugene Robinson and Kevin Levin discussed a modern-day perspective on and reckoning for Confederate monuments.
- August 2020** *Speak Your Truth:* A conversation on the Representation of Black Voices in the National Story with author Clint Smith and historian Sharita Thompson.
- August 2020** *Remembering the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom:* A discussion between Edith Lee-Payne and Dr. George Derek Musgrove, moderated by Dr. Jonathan W. White.



Increasing Accessibility with Ford's for Me



Photo by Gary Erskine.

In February, Ford's Theatre hosted its third sensory-friendly museum event, a program developed for individuals on the autism spectrum or with cognitive and developmental disabilities. The historic site opened early for guests to freely explore both the museum and historic theatre. The event included hands-on activities in the lobby, a take-a-break space in the backstage area and a story-time session in the theatre. We strive to make Ford's Theatre a more accessible place for all to experience, learn and enjoy.

Virtual Investigation: Detective McDevitt

Written by Richard Hellesen; Directed by Mark Ramont



Photo of Eric M. Messner by Gary Erskine.

In this year when many are seeking virtual programming, Ford's Theatre was able to offer 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.

2,343 people participated in this virtual program.