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.

**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 Hellesen; 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.

**2020-2021 Season at Ford’s Theatre**

**Radio Play Listeners**

29,141

**Viewers of a Virtual Performance of One Destiny**

12,684

**Virtual Play Reading Viewers**

11,715

**Local Artists Hired**

24

**100%**

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

**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.
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

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.

In a year that has been defined by the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, 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.