



Media Contact:
Lauren Beyea
Associate Director of Communications and Marketing
(202) 434-9543 lbeyea@fords.org

Ford's Theatre
511 Tenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004
www.fords.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 15, 2020

FORD'S THEATRE SOCIETY ANNOUNCES UPDATES TO 2020-2021 SEASON

Fall Production of Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful* Canceled

***A Christmas Carol* To Be Released as a Radio Play
Featuring Craig Wallace as Scrooge**

Revised Three-Play Spring Season Focuses on Civil Rights Icons:

***My Lord, What a Night*
By Deborah Brevoort
Directed by Sheldon Epps**

***The Mountaintop*
By Katori Hall**

***Necessary Sacrifices*
By Richard Helleisen
Directed by Psalmayene 24**

New Commissions of Plays by BIPOC Playwrights about BIPOC Figures in History

***Guys and Dolls* Postponed**

Virtual Programming Continues with *Cabinet Conversations*, Play Readings and Educational Distance-Learning Initiatives

Washington, D.C.—Ford's Theatre Director Paul R. Tetreault today announced updates to the Ford's Theatre 2020-2021 season, following a reevaluation amid the national reckoning for racial justice and the impacts of COVID-19 on live performances.

"The power of theatre lies in the stories it tells to the community it gathers," **Tetreault said.**

"Though Ford's Theatre remains closed, as we plan for the future, we are committed to using

our power to tell stories that speak to the present moment with courage, hope, inspiration, joy and healing. We must not let this tremendous moment of challenge be forgotten, and we dedicate ourselves and our creative voices to the movement for racial justice and efforts to dismantle white supremacy. I hope our revised 2020-2021 season is a reflection of those values and priorities.”

“The ‘Voice’ of the theatre is a powerful one,” said **Sheldon Epps, Ford’s Theatre Senior Artistic Advisor**. “It can be healing, illuminating, sometimes scolding, and often inspiring. At this moment in time, when our country is so much in need of healing in many ways, it is bold of Ford’s Theatre to go beyond words and actually take action by ‘reinventing’ the season to provide a source of that healing through the art of the theatre. That powerful voice will be heard through all of these plays—both those that exist and those that will emerge from a new commissioning program. These revelatory works will illuminate iconic figures in our history and have a great deal to say about where we have been, where we are now, and where we can go as a nation that is still working towards racial healing and equality on all levels. I am thrilled to be involved in this exciting journey!”

Based on guidelines from D.C. Health, in July the Theatre announced the cancelation of the fall production of **Horton Foote’s *The Trip to Bountiful***, which was to be directed by Michael Wilson and feature Nancy Robinette. The Theatre is also canceling in-person performances of ***A Christmas Carol***, which was scheduled for November and December. The Theatre plans to release a **radio version** of the play in December with **Craig Wallace returning as Scrooge**.

“It is with sorrow that we confirm the cancelation of in-person performances of *The Trip to Bountiful* and the annual tradition of *A Christmas Carol*,” **continued Tetreault**. “However, we are excited to announce that we will produce a radio play version of *Carol*. We hope this version will give families and their loved ones a new way to revisit the play’s timeless message of hope and charity.”

The Theatre also revised its spring season to focus on Civil Rights icons, with dates to be announced later this year. The previously scheduled production of ***Guys and Dolls* is postponed** to a future season.

The spring season will begin with the previously scheduled D.C.-premiere of a ***My Lord, What a Night***. **Written by Deborah Brevoort** and **directed by Sheldon Epps**, the play explores the real-life friendship of contralto Marian Anderson and physicist Albert Einstein during the lead-up to her history-changing concert at the Lincoln Memorial. **Felicia Curry** will play Anderson, **Christopher Bloch** will play Einstein and **Michael Russotto** will play Abraham Flexner.

Following *My Lord, What a Night*, the Theatre will produce **Katori Hall's *The Mountaintop***. *The Mountaintop* is a gripping reimagining of events the night before the assassination of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. **KenYatta Rogers** will play King and **Shannon Dorsey** will play Camae.

The spring season will end with a new production of ***Necessary Sacrifices***, **written by Richard Hellesten** and **directed by Psalmayene 24**. Premiered by Ford's in 2012, the play explores the two documented encounters between Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln during a period of national crisis. **Craig Wallace will play Douglass**.

"I am excited to join our craftspeople and audiences when we safely return to Ford's Theatre," said **Associate Artist Craig Wallace**. "This season's works are sure to stimulate conversation and debate as well as entertain. COVID-19 paused us, but did not stop us!"

In addition to the three on-stage productions, Ford's will launch **The Lincoln Legacy Commissions, commissioning five or more Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) playwrights** to write new works about BIPOC figures in history and the BIPOC experience in the United States.

"The mission of Ford's Theatre is to celebrate the legacy of President Abraham Lincoln and explore the American experience," Tetreault said. "With our new spring season and our commissions, we journey from the Civil War to today, illuminating figures in American history who have fought in the ongoing struggle for racial justice and equity. While celebrating the work of these icons, these plays also recognize that this work is not finished, and that each of us must play a role in creating a just and peaceful nation for all."

The Ford's Theatre 2020-2021 season is sponsored by **Chevron**.

While the theatre remains closed for performances, the following virtual programming continues:

- Cabinet Conversations: bi-weekly live streamed discussions featuring historians, artists and leaders; <https://www.fords.org/visit/virtual-events-and-special-tours/cabinet-conversations/>
- Virtual Play Readings: monthly live streamed readings of plays exploring history and the American experience; <https://www.fords.org/performances/current-and-upcoming/virtual-play-reading-series/>
- Distance-Learning Programs: through live video-conferencing, students learn the story of President Lincoln's assassination and the world of Civil War Washington
<https://www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs/distance-learning/>

Updated Ford's Theatre 2020-2021 Season

A Christmas Carol

By Charles Dickens

Adapted and Directed by Michael Wilson

Featuring Craig Wallace as Scrooge

Released December 2020

Ford's Theatre will release a radio version of the play for patrons to listen to at home. Join the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future as they lead the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge on a journey of transformation and redemption. Craig Wallace returns for the fifth year to play Ebenezer Scrooge.

My Lord, What a Night

By Deborah Brevoort

Directed by Sheldon Epps

Dates to Be Announced

After performing in Princeton, New Jersey, acclaimed contralto Marian Anderson is denied lodging at the Nassau Inn because she is Black. Physicist Albert Einstein invites her to stay at his home, and the two form a profound friendship based on their love for music and their commitment to human rights. Based on true events, *My Lord, What a Night* takes us into Einstein's home and imagines the conversations and circumstances that led to Anderson's historic concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Ford's Senior Artistic Advisor Sheldon Epps (*Twelve Angry Men*) returns to direct Felicia Curry as Marian Anderson, Christopher Bloch as Albert Einstein and Michael Russotto as Abraham Flexner in this remarkable new play about courage, justice and our shared humanity.

The Mountaintop

By Katori Hall

Dates to Be Announced

A gripping reimagination of events the night before the assassination of the civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On April 3, 1968, after delivering one of his most memorable speeches,

an exhausted Dr. King retires to his room at the Lorraine Motel while a storm rages outside. When a mysterious stranger arrives with some surprising news, King is forced to confront his destiny and his legacy to his people. KenYatta Rogers plays King with Shannon Dorsey as Camae.

Necessary Sacrifices

By Richard Helleesen

Directed by Psalmayene 24

Dates to Be Announced

In his fourth commission for Ford's Theatre, playwright Richard Helleesen explores the two documented encounters between Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln during a period of national crisis. During the summers of 1863 and 1864, Douglass challenges Lincoln to use his power as president to bring truth to America's founding ideal that "all men are created equal." Psalmayene 24 makes his Ford's debut directing Craig Wallace as Douglass. Helleesen's previous works for Ford's Theatre include *One Destiny*, *Investigation: Detective McDevitt* and *The Road from Appomattox*, three gripping and insightful explorations of critical moments in Civil War history.

Ford's Theatre Society

One of the most visited sites in the nation's capital, Ford's Theatre reopened its doors in 1968, more than a hundred years after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Operated through a partnership between Ford's Theatre Society and the National Park Service, Ford's Theatre is the premier destination in the nation's capital to explore and celebrate Abraham Lincoln's life and legacy.

Ford's Theatre Society was founded under the guidance of executive producer **Frankie Hewitt**, who, during her 35-year tenure, established Ford's as a living, working theatre producing performances that highlighted the diversity of the American experience. Since the arrival of **Paul R. Tetreault** as Director, critics and the theatregoing public have recognized Ford's for the superior quality of its artistic programming. With works from the Tony-nominated *Come From Away* and the nationally acclaimed *Big River*, to the world premieres of *Meet John Doe*, *The Heavens Are Hung In Black*, *Liberty Smith*, *Necessary Sacrifices*, *The Widow Lincoln* and *The Guard*, Ford's Theatre is making its mark on the American theatre landscape. In the past decade, the mission of Ford's Theatre Society expanded to include education as a central pillar. This expansion led to the creation and construction of the Center for Education and Leadership, which opened in February 2012. Under the current leadership of Board of Trustees Chairman **Phebe N. Novakovic** and through the lens of Lincoln's leadership and legacy, Ford's today endeavors to advance Lincoln's "unfinished work" with programs and performances that cultivate empathy, encourage dialogue and bridge divides in American life.

For more information on Ford's Theatre and the Ford's Theatre Society, please visit www.fords.org.

Ford's Theatre on Twitter and Instagram: @fordstheatre
Ford's Theatre on Facebook: www.facebook.com/fordstheatre

###