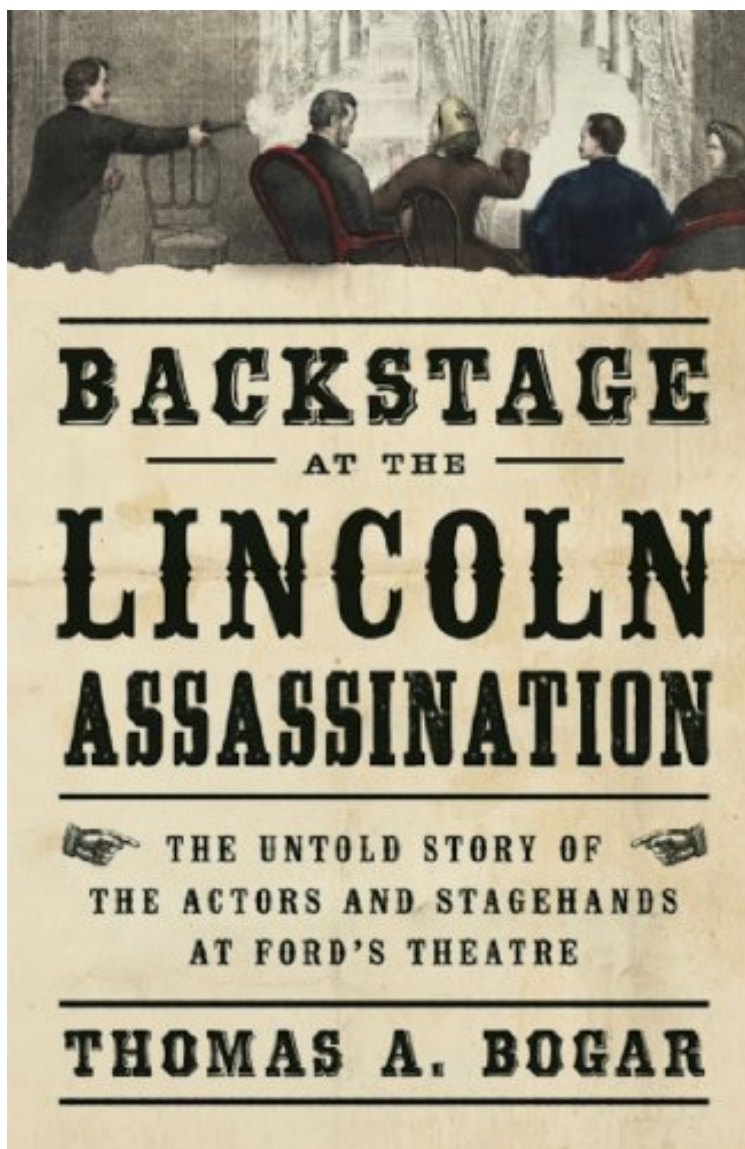


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## Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination: The Untold Story of the Actors and Stagehands at Ford's Theatre

*Thomas A. Bogar*

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**Thomas A. Bogar : Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination: The Untold Story of the Actors and Stagehands at Ford's Theatre** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination: The Untold Story of the Actors and Stagehands at Ford's Theatre:

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. A Must for Assassination BuffsBy Child of HerodotusThis book

is perhaps the most unique account of the Lincoln assassination that I've ever read. It traces the lives of all the actors, managers and stagehands who worked at Ford's Theatre the fateful night of April 14 and views the tragedy through their eyes. For the most part, these were quite ordinary people (their profession as thespians aside) caught up in the maelstrom of an extraordinary historical event. Almost all are forgotten today, with the possible exceptions of Laura Keane (perhaps the best known actress of her day), Harry Hawk (the actor on stage when Booth fired his fatal shot) and Edman Spangler (stagehand sent to prison as one of Booth's accomplices), but the author tracks down each one of them, skillfully weaving their personal stories into the great drama of the assassination. On many levels this book is a revelation. Many of those who entertained Lincoln that evening actually had secessionist sympathies, and the author rightfully questions whether there were those in the cast and crew who may have known that something momentous was going to happen that evening, albeit a kidnapping attempt rather than murder. He also gives us an overview of the theatrical stock company system of the Civil War era and a synopsis of the plot of *Our American Cousin*. For obvious reasons, he focuses a great deal of his attention on the case against Spangler and the reader is left sympathizing with this poor illiterate man who may have known about Booth's kidnapping scheme but was probably just as shocked by the murder as anyone else. Also touching are the efforts made on Spangler's behalf by his boss, John T. Ford, who paid for his defense attorney, and then worked to get him pardoned by President Johnson. Anyone who wants a fresh look at this forever fascinating topic should purchase this book.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. An Interesting and Fresh Perspective By Andy Glass

Of all the reading I've done on Lincoln or his assassination, none of the books covered the people in the theater that awful night. When I saw this title, it intrigued me. I wondered, then, what about those people? How did this event affect them, their lives and futures. Bogar delivers that story in a well paced and easy to read way. The book presents the story from the perspective of the theater company, from preparing for their performance to the aftermath of the Lincoln assassination. It made me also think about situations in our times, when shooters walk into a place and wreak havoc, how do the survivors move forward and what happens to their lives? A very interesting and fresh perspective on this episode in history, and very glad I picked this one up.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A genuinely unique examination of Lincoln's assassination and the individuals involved By C. Crane

Thomas Bogar accomplished what many others have not managed to do: he presented a truly unique examination of Lincoln's assassination. I truly enjoyed reading *Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination* after having read nearly twenty books which cover an assortment of topics related to the assassination. Over the years I have frequently wondered what happened to the actors, stagehands, and theatre owners after Lincoln was assassinated on April 14, 1865 (particularly since many of them were arrested in the aftermath) and Bogar did a wonderful job of telling their side of the story. I would easily recommend this to anyone who is interested in Lincoln's assassination and the numerous characters involved, however, it would probably help if the reader had a little more than a vague idea of the events surrounding Lincoln's death at the hands of John Wilkes Booth simply because a little background information might make it easier to follow along with the book. That being said, I sincerely enjoyed Bogar's book and the unique approach it took to an assassination that has been written about hundreds--if not thousands--of times.

April 14, 1865. A famous actor pulls a trigger in the presidential balcony, leaps to the stage and escapes, as the president lies fatally wounded. In the panic that follows, forty-six terrified people scatter in and around Ford's Theater as soldiers take up stations by the doors and the audience surges into the streets chanting, "Burn the place down!" This is the untold story of Lincoln's assassination: the forty-six stage hands, actors, and theater workers on hand for the bewildering events in the theater that night, and what each of them witnessed in the chaos-streaked hours before John Wilkes Booth was discovered to be the culprit. In *Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination*, historian Thomas A. Bogar delves into previously unpublished sources to tell the story of Lincoln's assassination from behind the curtain, and the tale is shocking. Police rounded up and arrested dozens of innocent people, wasting time that allowed the real culprit to get further away. Some closely connected to John Wilkes Booth were not even questioned, while innocent witnesses were relentlessly pursued. Booth was more connected with the production than you might have known—learn how he knew each member of the cast and crew, which was a hotbed of secessionist resentment. *Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination* also tells the story of what happened to each of these witnesses to history, after the investigation was over—how each one lived their lives after seeing one of America's greatest presidents shot dead without warning. *Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination* is an exquisitely detailed look at this famous event from an entirely new angle. It is must reading for anyone fascinated with the saga of Lincoln's life and the Civil War era.

"Dr. Bogar's scholarship is original and impeccable. With stunning clarity, this vivid narrative shines a light into the shadows and behind the scenes of the most resonant crime in American history. *Backstage at the Lincoln Assassination* is an indispensable resource for understanding the width, breadth and scope of the tragedy at Ford's Theatre." ---Erik Jendresen, writer/producer of *Killing Lincoln* and *Band of Brothers*

About the Author

Thomas A. Bogar taught theater for forty years, most recently at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia and Hood College in Frederick, Maryland. He is the author of *John E. Owens, American Presidents Attend the Theatre*. R. C. Bray is an

Audie and AudioFile Earphones Award-winning narrator. An accomplished producer and voice-over artist, his voice can be heard in countless TV and radio commercials. He lives in New England with his wife and three children.