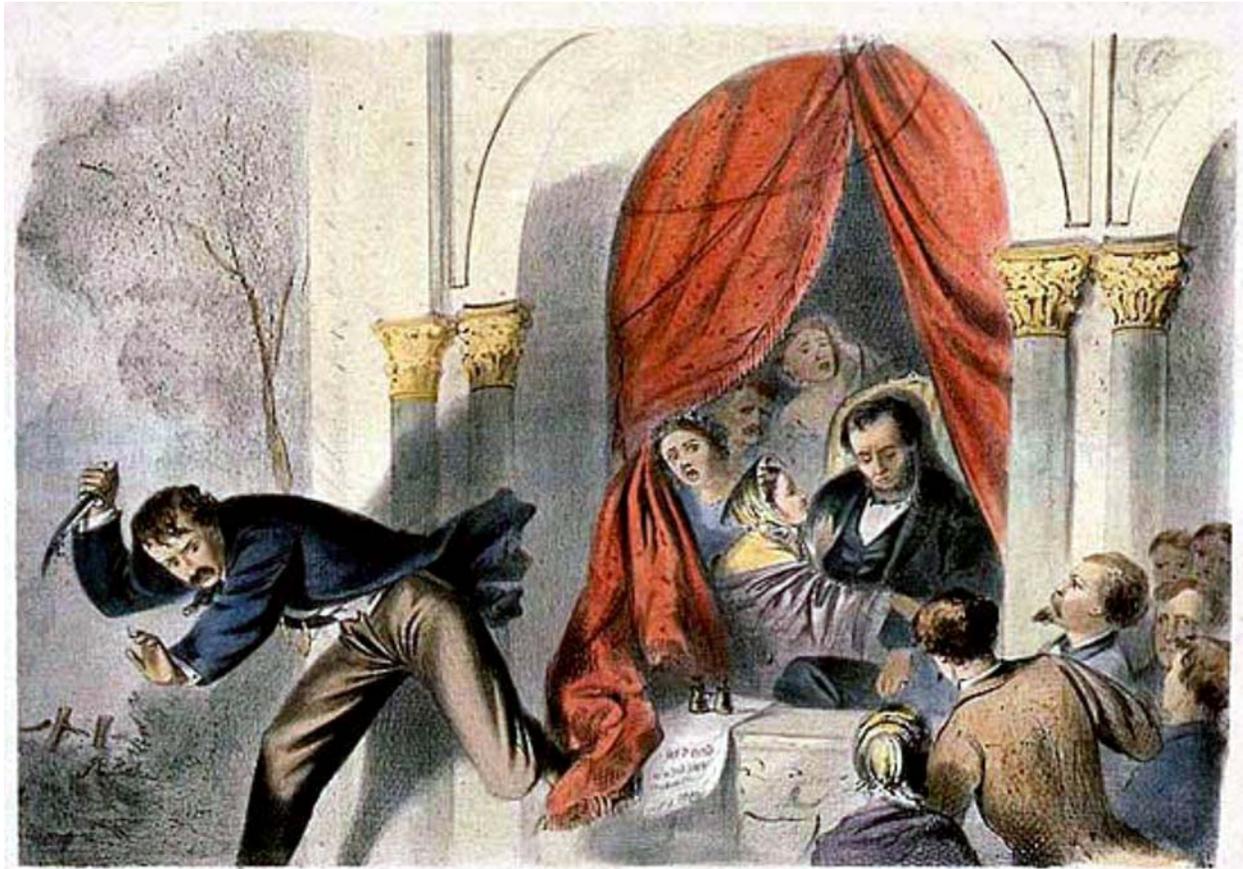


The Persistence of Dreams

Written and Directed by Erik Courtney



ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN.

AT FORD'S THEATRE WASHINGTON DC APRIL 14 1865.

Made in association with:





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The first recreation of Abraham Lincoln's assassination ever to be filmed in the historic Ford's Theatre, **The Persistence of Dreams** is a four-minute real-time depiction of one of the most tragic events in American history. In addition to being the most historically accurate interpretation of the assassination to date, the story also explores the little known fact that Lincoln actually dreamt about his murder only a few days before it took place. The film debuts the use of Large Format Negative Repurposing (LFNR™), a post-production process that involves zooming into an IMAX negative to create shot coverage. Using LFNR, Director Erik Courtney follows the action in a way that leaves the audience feeling as if they were actually witnessing Lincoln's murder.

Director / Writer / Producer: Erik Courtney
Producer / Director of Photography: Ben Brunkhardt
Producer: Chip Bartlett
Production Design: Paul Falcon
Costume Design: Martha and Tim Timlin
Composer: Marcus Trumpp

Total Running Time: 4 Minutes
Original Format: 15/70mm (IMAX) film
Screening Format: 35mm, IMAX & HDCAM 24P
Genre: Historical Drama

Shot on location at Ford's Theatre, Washington D.C.
with the generous support and assistance of:

iWERKS Entertainment
Cintel International Ltd.
Kodak, Inc.,
Consolidated Film Industries
Large Format Cinema Association
Ford's Theatre
Filmworks F/X
U.S. Library of Congress
U.S. National Parks Service

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Story Synopsis

Three days before his death, Abraham Lincoln told a group of close friends about a haunting nightmare in which he was told that he had been assassinated. Lincoln's dream would prove to be prophetic on the night of April 14, 1865, five days after the end of the Civil War. While attending the popular comedy *Our American Cousin* with his wife and two young friends, Lincoln was shot in the back of the head by John Wilkes Booth, a Confederate sympathizer who also happened to be the nation's most famous actor. It is often referred to as the shot heard around the world.

Background

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln has captured the imagination of both historians and audiences alike for decades. From D.W. Griffith's first dramatic re-enactment of the assassination in his 1915 film *Birth of A Nation* to today's irreverent parodies on shows such as *The Simpsons*, Lincoln's murder and the story behind it continues to permeate popular culture.

Writer/Director Erik Courtney had long dreamed of filming the Lincoln assassination from the point of view of an audience member watching the dramatic, real-life tragedy unfold on the stage of Ford's Theatre. As a history buff, the chance to re-enact the event in as accurate a manner as possible would have been interesting in and of itself. However, for Courtney, the real appeal was in illustrating the dichotomy between what began as a light-hearted evening and its disintegration into turmoil.

Erik Courtney is very fortunate to be the first filmmaker ever allowed to recreate Lincoln's assassination in Ford's Theater. However, having been given only one day to complete the shoot, he needed to figure out a way to get the coverage he required in a relatively short amount of time. Looking for ideas, Courtney approached Ben Brunkhardt, a cinematographer with whom he had worked while attending UCLA. As it turned out, Brunkhardt was developing a new cinematographic process, which involved filming a scene with a 15/70 IMAX camera. Together they devised and implemented the exciting new cinematic technique.

Since many companies were attracted to the idea of recreating Lincoln's assassination at Ford's Theatre using this innovative new technique, Courtney and Brunkhardt were able to secure several corporate sponsors – large format camera maker iWERKS, development lab CFI, and film manufacturer Kodak. Without the generous support of these companies, the already ambitious production would have been insurmountable for an independent filmmaker. The most challenging part however, turned out to be finding a machine capable of zooming into a 15/70 negative to recompose and track motion since the filmmakers weren't even sure one existed. Fortunately, after an exhaustive search, Courtney identified a telecine system owned by the U.K.-based Cintel Corporation. Interestingly, Cintel had originally developed its large format telecine for the U.S Army, which used it



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to track missiles. Cintel agreed to allow their machine to be beta-tested for its 65mm commercial debut.

Large Format Negative Repurposing (LFNR™)

Developed by cinematographer Ben Brunkhardt, LFNR involves shooting a scene originating on the 65mm/15-perf negative (15/70) format and repurposing it for other mediums such as 35mm film or HDTV. Using this process, the filmmaker is able to recompose the 15/70 negative in telecine utilizing both the pan-and-scan (X and Y planar) and zoom (Z planar) functions so the image can be manipulated into medium shots, close-ups, and/or simulated tracking/booming shots. Due to the high resolution of 15/70 film, a subject in the frame can be zoomed into many times before grain is noticeable in the negative.

Historical Accuracy

In addition to being the first recreation of President Lincoln's assassination to be filmed at Ford's Theatre, *The Persistence of Dreams* is also the most historically accurate recreation to date. Courtney consulted with the nation's top experts on the Lincoln assassination, such as Richard Sloan, Harold Holzer, and Ed Steers who have each written extensively on the subject. Mike Kaufman, author of the recently published book *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies*, even gave Courtney new information about the assassination that is not yet public.

Directing Narrative Film on 65mm

In addition to the LFNR version of *The Persistence of Dreams*, an IMAX version will premiere at the 2005 Large Format Cinema Association Conference. One of the reasons why narrative films are so rarely shot on 65mm film is the fact that even the slightest gesture can be exaggerated out of proportion when projected onto an eighty-foot screen. Keeping this in mind, Courtney had to be careful to make sure that all extras were aware of their physical movements and performance styles so that they would also be credible in the IMAX version of the film.

Since Courtney wanted to keep the camera rolling for the entire duration of the scene (the entire short), and since the cost of using 65mm film necessitated doing only a few takes, Courtney decided to use classically trained theater actors who were used to performing their roles on stage without interruption. With a wealth of top-notch local actors to choose from, many of the actors cast in *The Persistence of Dreams* had themselves performed in plays at Ford's Theatre, as well as the Kennedy Center, Arena Stage, and Folger Shakespeare Theater.



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The Jump

Actor Sean Hagan practiced at the gym with Stunt Coordinator Bill Leaman for several weeks in order to safely recreate Booth's twelve-foot jump from the Presidential state box. However, since the real Booth broke his leg during the jump as a result of catching his boot spur on the Treasury Guard Flag, Costume Designer Martha Timlin built several customized safety features into Hagan's costume. To avoid Booth's fate, Timlin substituted Hagan's boot spurs with shaved-down Japanese Yen, which were guaranteed to look authentic from the camera, but posed no harm to the actor. Specially designed soles were also placed in Hagan's boots to cushion his fall.

Mirror Images

In order to meet the strict requirements of filming at a National Historic Site, the production could not use the state box on the right side of the stage – where President Lincoln was actually shot – as it contained authentic relics from the assassination. Fortunately, the opposite side of the stage was identical. To solve this problem, Courtney and D.P. Ben Brunkhardt chose to film into a mirror. Together, large format camera company iWERKS and Camera Asst. Fred Wiegel engineered a front-surfaced mirror and mounting rig that stabilizes a reversed image. In order to ensure the film's authenticity, this meant everything from Booth's shooting hand to Lincoln's mole needed to be reversed.

Production Design

Although the scenery for *Our American Cousin* was recreated with great attention to detail when Ford's Theatre became a museum in 1965, much of this scenery was discarded when it was later resurrected as a working theater. In order to recreate it, Production Designer Paul Falcon and his team hand-painted several twenty-foot flats to match the 1865 photos taken just after the tragedy. In addition, fire extinguishers, electrical outlets, and emergency exit signs were all disguised or removed to take the theater back to how it looked in 1865. Every detail from the instruments in the orchestra pit to the stars on the flags decorating the Presidential state box was exhaustively researched to match the relics as much as possible.

Lighting

Courtney felt strongly about preserving the soft lighting of a nineteenth-century gas lit theatre. However, because the ultimate goal was to zoom into the negative for shot recomposition, significant depth of field was required. Since zooming into the negative required a very large shot, Brunkhardt had to light the set so that people who were 80 feet away from the camera were just as clearly lit as people who were 20 feet away. This required a great deal of creativity since there were very few places to hide lights since the frame was so large.



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Sound Design

Due to the fact that 65mm cameras are significantly louder than other film cameras, production sound is almost never used. To resolve this problem, the camera was wrapped in furniture blankets and an optical flat was used on the lens. In addition, all actors with dialogue were wired with separate wireless microphones, each going into its own channel or mixed live, in order to create the most options and the best quality sound in post-production.

Costume Design

Costume Designers Martha and Tim Timlin are experts in Civil War era costuming with credits that include the film *Washington Square*, which is considered by many enthusiasts to be the most accurately costumed Civil War era film to date. As the Wardrobe Masters at the Washington Opera House, the Timlins accessed an impressive variety of costumes for the film for the mere cost of dry cleaning fees. While Courtney chose to use Civil War re-enactors as extras because of their familiarity with the mannerisms and social norms of the day, this turned out to be the best production option as well since all the extras owned their own hand-made costumes.

Makeup

Since the actors were cast months in advance, all of the men were able to grow their hair and beards to suit the fashions of the time. Jeffrey DeMunn's makeup was done by Frank Rogers who has done makeup for Lincolns in a number of films and television productions. However, Rogers remarked that DeMunn's unique bone structure, cheeks, and eyes made him incredibly well suited to play Lincoln.

Trivia

- On the night he murdered Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth was considered to be the most famous actor in America. Had Lincoln turned around just before he was shot, he would have recognized his assassin as one of his favorite actors. The Lincolns even had a photo of him in their family album.
- To drown out the sound of his Derringer and confuse the audience, Booth chose the funniest line in *Our American Cousin* – a line sure to draw belly laughs – to fire his gun.
- Although Lincoln was tormented by nightmares of his own assassination, he refused to listen to his wife's pleas for increased security, illustrating how desperately he wanted to believe that the war was behind him.
- The only man to attempt to stop Booth from escaping Ford's Theatre was Lincoln's guest, Major Henry Rathbone. Interestingly, nearly twenty years later, Rathbone murdered his wife and children. He attempted to commit suicide, but survived and was committed to an asylum for the criminally insane.



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Cast

Abraham Lincoln	Jeffrey DeMunn
Mary Lincoln	Rosemary Knower
John Wilkes Booth	Sean Hagan
Asa Trenchard	Michael Skinner
Mrs. Mountchessington	Jane Beard
Augusta Mountchessington	Jenna Sokolowski
Laura Keene	Tamara Johnson
Clara Harris	Susan Lynskey
Major Henry Rathbone	Cameron McNary
Dr. Charles Leale	James O. Dunn
Dr. Charles Taft	Steven Carpenter
Dr. Albert King	James Konicek

Select Cast Bios

Jeffrey DeMunn – Abraham Lincoln:

A classically trained actor whose versatility and pliability allow him to play roles running the gamut from weak to menacing, DeMunn established himself throughout the 1970s and 80s in such plays as Trevor Griffiths' *Comedians* (1976), and *K2* (1982), for which he was nominated for a Tony Award. He made his motion picture debut opposite Ellen Burstyn in *Resurrection* (1980). DeMunn went on to play numerous supporting roles including Harry Houdini in *Ragtime* (1981) and the District Attorney in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994). He was nominated in 1995 for an Emmy for his performance as Andrei Chikatilo in *Citizen X*. In 2005, he co-starred in the HBO mini-series *Empire Falls*.

Rosemary Knower – Mary Todd Lincoln:

Rosemary has appeared in all of John Waters' films since *Hairspray*, including the most recent *Dirty Shame*. TV credits include Gary Gilmore's Aunt Ida in *Shot in the Heart*, directed by Anieszka Holland, *Homicide*, and *America's Most Wanted*. She has played Mary Lincoln four times, most notably in *Gods and Generals* and Catherine Filloux's award-winning play *Mary and Myra* at the Contemporary American Theatre Festival. She is a company member at Everyman Theatre in Baltimore and appears frequently at other regional theatres including The Kennedy Center and Arena Stage, where she is an Artistic Associate.



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Sean Hagan – John Wilkes Booth:

Sean received his B.A. in English Literature from Georgetown University. His fascination with Shakespeare began when he mounted the Tempest independently of the University Drama society - it was the first and only outdoor Shakespeare production in Georgetown's history. During his year abroad at Oxford University, Sean performed in five shows with some of England's top actors and directors. Sean also received his MFA in Classical Acting from the Shakespeare Theater's Academy for Classical Acting. Sean recently completed The Rebel Angel, a full-length stage play that tracks the parallel lives of John Wilkes Booth and Abraham Lincoln leading up to the assassination.

Crew Bios

Erik Courtney – Writer / Director / Producer:

Born in Miami, Erik worked as a network engineer until the age of 24. He then moved to New York City to attend Columbia University where he received a B.A in Film Studies. While there, Erik founded Columbia University Film Productions, a student club that remains the primary way for undergraduates to learn film production. After graduating from Columbia in May 2000, Erik moved to Los Angeles to attend UCLA's Graduate School of Film and Television. In the spring of 2002, after having pitched his first script to executives at James Cameron's Lightstorm Entertainment, Erik was offered a position in feature development. In July 2003, Erik left to pursue a career as a writer/director.

Ben Brunkhardt – Producer / Director of Photography:

Ben grew up in Kansas City, Missouri until the age of 18 when he moved to Los Angeles to attend the University of Southern California's School of Cinema/Television. Aside from photographing numerous short films at USC, Ben teamed up with Sony's High Definition Division to be their cinematographer on a project in which Sony used their new technology to transfer the final digital project to 35mm film. Ben then traveled to Cannes Film Festival in 1997 where Sony showcased their first HDCAM camcorder to the industry. Ben then worked as a freelance cinematographer for two years before he enrolled in UCLA to earn his Masters of Fine Arts in Cinematography.

Chip Bartlett - Producer:

Chip Bartlett grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area before moving to Los Angeles in 1992 to attend the University of Southern California. After graduation, Chip worked in news and sports in the Bay Area and Los Angeles before deciding to move into film and television production. Chip spent the next 4 years working at Warner Bros., Dreamworks and Paramount working primarily with writers and producers on various television and film projects. Recently, Chip co-wrote and produced the short film Coffee, Grip Gloves and Deception.



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Paul Falcon – Production Designer:

Paul Falcon is a well-respected Washington, DC theatrical set designer. His credits include *Othello*, starring Patrick Stewart, and a number of other productions at the Kennedy Center.

Martha and Tim Timlin – Costume Designers:

Martha and Tim Timlin are currently the Wardrobe Supervisors for The Washington National Opera at The John F. Kennedy Center in Washington DC. They have designed several independent films, and have supervised and worked on numerous Broadway shows, television series, and major motion pictures, including *Forrest Gump*, and the highly regarded period film *Washington Square*.

Marcus Trumpp – Composer:

Marcus Trumpp, originally from Stuttgart, Germany, attended the prestigious film scoring program at the University of Southern California for film music composition in 1999. There he studied under industry legends Elmer Bernstein, David Raksin, Leonard Rosenman, and Christopher Young. In 2000, Marcus participated in the acclaimed ASCAP film-scoring workshop where he got his first chance to work with Hollywood's finest musicians. Since then, he has worked as a composer and orchestrator on a large variety of projects including *Wes Craven's Cursed*, *I, Robot*, *Hellboy*, *Alien vs. Predator*, and *Hollywood Homicide*.