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## Kennedy Center trivia



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Have you ever wondered what secrets lie in the walls of the Kennedy Center? What whimsical discoveries can be found in our national cultural center?

For over 50 years the Kennedy Center has been known for its world-class performances, engaging education initiatives, and incredible programming. What is lesser known are the intriguing historical and architectural facts that make the Kennedy Center such a unique institution.

Here are some things you may not know about the Kennedy Center:

**The Kennedy Center Grand Foyer is so large that the Washington Monument can fit laid on its side!**



At 618 feet long and 63 feet tall, the Grand Foyer was considered one of the largest rooms in the world when the Center opened in 1971.

It's so large in fact that the tallest architectural structure in Washington, D.C., the Washington Monument, could fit inside the Grand Foyer, even leaving 75 feet to spare. Additionally, the Grand Foyer has a volume large enough to hold 11 million gallons of water—the same as 16 Olympic swimming pools!

**The Kennedy Center contains multitudes of foreign gifts, made to honor President Kennedy's legacy.**



The Opera House stage curtain, a magnificent red-and-gold drapery gifted from Japan, is so large that the weavers of the fabric in the Nishijin district of Kyoto built the world's largest Jacquard machine to

create it. This specialty machine is three times the size of its peers and has 3,600 individual needles.

But it isn't just specially made textiles that were gifted to the Kennedy Center. Several of the sparkling chandeliers adorning the building are from all over the globe, including the Opera House chandelier gifted in 1969 by the people of Austria and the Swedish Orrefors crystal chandeliers that illuminate the Grand Foyer. Even the material of the building itself was a gift—3,700 tons of marble from Italy. As an institution, we are a mosaic of worldwide culture and a beautiful symbol of our commitment to international diplomacy.

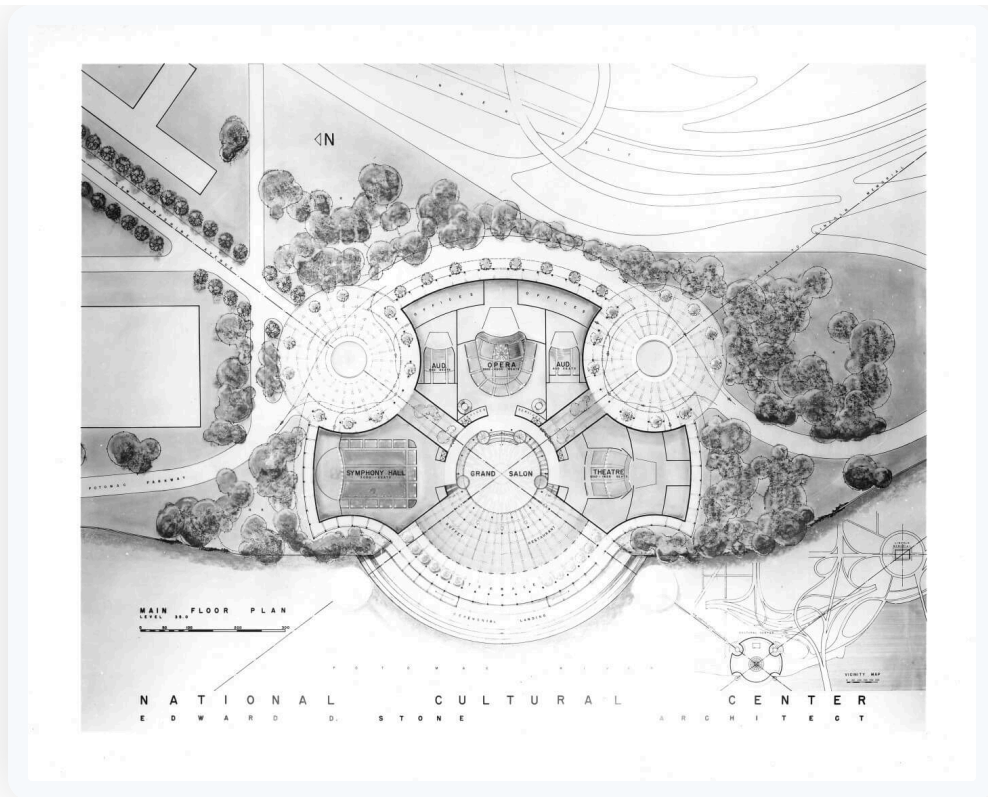
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**The Kennedy Center was originally planned to be round!**



Before its construction began in 1964, the original plan for the Center was a rounded building protruding over the Potomac River. Architect Edward Durell Stone planned for the living memorial to be rounded, a design that bore a resemblance to the Watergate Complex today. But due to cost, the design was changed to be the rectangular monument we now recognize as our national cultural center.

### **The Golden Shovel**



In December 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson broke ground on the Kennedy Center for the first time using a storied golden shovel. The same shovel was used to break ground at the Lincoln Memorial in 1914, the amphitheater at Arlington Cemetery in 1915, and the Jefferson Memorial in 1938. Fifty years after the Center's groundbreaking, Chairman David M. Rubenstein used the same shovel in the groundbreaking ceremony of the REACH in 2014.



Next time you come to the Kennedy Center for a performance, take a look around and see what you might not have noticed before! For more Kennedy Center trivia, you can take a [free tour](#) of the Kennedy Center with our Kennedy Center Friends volunteers.

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