

# APOLLO

***100: THE APOLLO CELEBRATES ELLA***  
*A Blockbuster Concert Featuring  
a Distinguished Roster of Performers Celebrates  
Apollo Legend Ella Fitzgerald's Centennial Birthday*

Featuring **Patti Austin, Andra Day, Lizz Wright**  
and Just Added  
**Monica Mancini, Cassandra Wilson & Kevin Spacey**

Co-hosted by **David Alan Grier** and **Patti Austin**  
with the Legendary **Count Basie Orchestra**  
and a Special Performance by  
Howard University's Vocal Ensemble **Afro Blue**

*Saturday, October 22nd, - 8 p.m.*

**Harlem, NY, October 11, 2016** – This October, the Apollo Theater today announced some special additions to its lineup for ***100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella*** on **Saturday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> at 8 p.m.**, a special concert celebrating the centennial of Apollo Legend and the Queen of Jazz, Ella Fitzgerald. *100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella* will be hosted by **David Alan Grier** and **Patti Austin** and will feature performances by some of the greatest talents in music, theater and film including Ms. Austin, **Andra Day, Lizz Wright** and just added - **Cassandra Wilson, Monica Mancini** and **Kevin Spacey**. The concert will include musical backing by the legendary **Count Basie Orchestra**, led by **Scotty Barnhart**, and a special performance by Howard University's vocal ensemble **Afro Blue**.

*100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella* will honor the career of the “First Lady of Song” and her relationship to the Apollo Theater, where she won Amateur Night at the age of 17 and performed regularly throughout her storied career. This concert marks the inaugural performance of the Theater's celebration of the jazz icon's centennial, with events and performances through the spring of 2017.

Ella Fitzgerald was a regular performer at the Apollo Theater over the course of her illustrious career. Her relationship with the Theater began in the midst of the Harlem Renaissance, when she made her singing debut in the fall of 1934 as a nervous 17-year-old competing in the Amateur Night variety show. Apollo legend has it that she originally planned to dance, but made the last minute decision to sing after being intimidated by the competition. Ella was so nervous she improvised song lyrics by imitating its instruments—a technique that would become part of her signature repertoire, scatting. That night, she won the top Amateur Night title, making her the first

female performer to earn such a distinction. Soon after her win, she joined the Chick Webb Orchestra and began touring with the group throughout some of the city's most famous venues. In 2006, Ella Fitzgerald was inducted into the Apollo Walk of Fame in honor of her long history with the Theater, as well as her continued influence on the American music landscape.

“Long before anyone knew her as a powerhouse performer, Ella Fitzgerald made a name for herself at one of the earliest editions of *Amateur Night*,” said **Kamilah Forbes**, the Apollo Theater's Executive Producer. “Her innovations in vocal jazz that started on our stage exemplifies the Apollo's tradition of nurturing creativity and pushing artistic boundaries. For Ella's centennial birthday, we're thrilled to celebrate the Queen of Jazz, the timeless talent she represents, and the generations she has inspired.”

Music highlights for *100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella* include “A Ticket a Tasket,” “Blues in the Night,” “Miss Otis Regrets,” “You'll Have to Swing It” and more. The concert is produced in collaboration with seven-time GRAMMY® - winning producer **Gregg Field**, who at the age of 24 toured as the drummer for both Count Basie and Ella Fitzgerald. Field also produced the Emmy nominated PBS special “Great Performances: We Love Ella,” for Ella's 90th birthday.

This extraordinary concert is the first of the Theater's four events that will honor the “First Lady of Song's” centennial birthday. The Apollo's celebration of Ella will extend into Spring, 2017 with *Live Wire: Ella! A Centennial Celebration* a discussion commemorating Ella's legacy (*Thursday, March 23, 2017*); *Apollo Music Café: Ella Fitzgerald Tribute* an evening featuring contemporary jazz artists celebrating the songstress (*Friday, April 7, 2017*) and a special Jazz edition of *Amateur Night* celebrating the first female to win the Theater's signature program (*Wednesday, April 19, 2017*).

### **About the Artists**

**David Alan Grier** has earned many accolades and awards throughout the years for a stellar career that spans across multiple mediums. The three-time Tony and GRAMMY® Award nominee studied Shakespeare at Yale University where he received his MFA from the Yale School of Drama. He went on to build a diverse resume with countless credits in television, film, theater and comedy under his belt. Most notably, he was an integral cast member of the classic hit variety television show *In Living Color* and was named among Comedy Central's list of Top 100 Greatest Stand-Ups. He has appeared on Broadway in the Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* in 2012, alongside Audra McDonald, and was nominated for a Tony Award and a Grammy for that role. In fall 2015, he adopted a role in NBC comedy series *The Carmichael Show*, which will return for its third season this spring. Shortly after this debut, he appeared as the Cowardly Lion in NBC's live performance of *The Wiz Live!*, for which he earned two Image Awards and two Critics' Choice Awards nominations.

GRAMMY® award-winning singer and Harlem native **Patti Austin**, whose unique sound crosses all musical genres, has released an incredible 17 solo albums and a string of hit singles (like the R&B classic “Baby Come To Me”) over the course of her 60 plus years in the entertainment business. In striking similarity to Ella Fitzgerald, Austin is an Apollo legend in her own right and her storied career also began on the Apollo stage when at the age of four she performed on *Amateur Night*. She signed a contract with RCA Records shortly after and went on to become a mainstay on Billboard's jazz and r&b charts, respectively.

Considered one of the premiere voices in jazz music, **Cassandra Wilson** is a world renowned vocalist, songwriter and producer celebrated for her rich, dusky sound, improvisational and interpretive gifts. A two time GRAMMY® winner and *Down Beat* magazine's Jazz Vocalist of the Year for three consecutive years, Wilson has been hailed as "America's best singer" and "the true heir of Billie Holiday and Sarah Vaughn" by *TIME* magazine. Making her name in the 1980s as a founding member of Steve Coleman's free-ranging M-Base Collective, Wilson's breakthrough 1993 album *Blue Light Until Dawn* was a prime collection of originals and songs by Robert Johnson, Mitchell, Hank Williams and Van Morrison. She won a GRAMMY for 1996's *New Moon Daughter*, and the following year sang on the recording and tour of Wynton Marsalis' Pulitzer Prize-winning oratorio *Blood on the Fields*.

Citing Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Dinah Washington, as her musical influences, soul music chanteuse **Andra Day** is considered soul music's brightest new star, having been nominated for two GRAMMY® Awards this year for her debut album *Cheers to the Fall* and her hit single, "Rise Up." Already in her career, the singer has performed at the White House, at the 2016 Democratic National Convention and appeared alongside Stevie Wonder in an Apple TV commercial singing Wonder's song, "Someday at Christmas." In late 2015, she embarked on her first national tour when she opened up for rock legend Lenny Kravitz. This Fall, Day will headline her first national tour with the appropriately, named, *Cheers to the Fall* Tour.

Known for her vocal blend of R&B, jazz, blues and gospel, *The New York Times* calls **Lizz Wright** "a smoky-voiced goddess." Wright has been mesmerizing music fans worldwide ever since she appeared on the late pianist and composer Joe Sample's 2002 disc, *The Pecan Tree*. The following year, she gained even wider recognition for her critically acclaimed debut record, *Salt* on Verve Records. Produced by the legendary Tommy LiPuma – best known for his award-winning work with George Benson, Diana Krall, and Natalie Cole – the album helped introduce her as one of the most fascinating female vocalists of her generation as it raced to number two on the charts. After a move to Concord, she released *Freedom & Surrender*, her fifth album, in 2015.

Two time Academy award-winning actor, director, producer, and singer **Kevin Spacey** catapulted to international stardom with films such as *LA Confidential*, *The Usual Suspects* and *American Beauty*. Even more diverse roles followed, and his turn to TV acting in 2013 garnered across-the-board acclaim, as he began inhabiting the character Frank Underwood on Netflix' first original, multi-award winning drama series *House of Cards*. In addition to film acting, Spacey has earned acclaim for his work as a film producer and director, and is a well-respected theatre actor who served as Artistic Director of London's legendary Old Vic theatre for 11 years. He earned a Grammy nomination for the soundtrack to his second film as director, *Beyond The Sea*, portraying legendary singer/actor Bobby Darin, and performing all the musical numbers. Spacey's most recently performed at PBS' "Billy Joel: The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize", and in "Tony Bennett Celebrates 90: The Best Is Yet To Come" airing in December on NBC.

**Monica Mancini**, the daughter of famed film composer Henry Mancini and notable studio singer Ginny O'Conner Mancini, has carved out an impressive career of her own as a concert performer, appearing with major symphony orchestras worldwide, including the Chicago Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Seattle Symphony and the London Metropolitan Orchestra. She is a two-time

GRAMMY® nominee whose program often includes the classic songs "The Shadow of Your Smile," "Moment to Moment," "Moon River," "Soldier in the Rain," "Alfie," "Charade," "Days of Wine and Roses" and "Over the Rainbow."

### **Apollo 2016-17 Season at a Glance**

*100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella* is one of many highlights in the Apollo Theater's 2016-2017 season. Additional events include, ***Hendrix in Harlem***, a celebration of Apollo Legend Jimi Hendrix featuring a diverse group of performers to reimagine the late artist's celebrated body of work; the return of the new holiday classic ***The First Noel***, presented in collaboration with the Classical Theatre of Harlem, which will make an unprecedented move to the Theater's Mainstage; ***WOW – Woman of the World Festival***, featuring a celebration of the life, music, and legacy of jazz master and civil rights activist Abbey Lincoln; ***Unapologetically Black: AFROPUNK's Race Music***, a partnership with international cultural movement AFROPUNK paying homage to black protest music; and the return of the Theater's signature programs ***Amateur Night***, ***Apollo Music Café***, ***Apollo Comedy Club***, as well as free, ongoing Education and Community Outreach programs.

*Tickets for 100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella are \$35- \$95. Tickets will be available at The Apollo Theater Box Office: (212) 531-5305, 253 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, and Ticketmaster at 1-800-745-3000, [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com).*

### **Apollo Theater Information**

Box Office Hours:

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri – 10:00 am - 6:00 pm

Wednesday – 10:00 am - 8:30 pm

Saturday – 12:00 pm - 6:00pm

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## **About the Apollo Theater**

The legendary Apollo Theater—the soul of American culture—plays a vital role in cultivating emerging talents and launching legends. Since its founding, the Apollo has served as a center of innovation and a creative catalyst for Harlem, the city of New York, and the world.

With music at its core, the Apollo’s programming extends to dance, theater, performance art, spoken word initiatives, and more. This includes the October 2014 premiere and 2015 international tour of the dance celebration project *James Brown: Get on the Good Foot*, the annual *Africa Now! Festival*, *Apollo Club Harlem*, and the recent New York premiere of the opera *Charlie Parker’s YARDBIRD*. The Apollo is a presenting organization that also produces festivals, large-scale dance and music works organized around a set of core initiatives: Apollo Music Signature Programs—*Amateur Night*, *Salon Series*, *Apollo Music Café*; Legacy Series— work that celebrates and extends the Apollo’s legacy through a contemporary lens; Global Festivals including the *Women of the World (WOW) Festival* and *Breakin’ Convention*, international and U.S.-based artist presentations focused on a specific theme; and Special Projects, multidisciplinary work with partner organizations.

Since introducing the first Amateur Night contests in 1934, the Apollo Theater has served as a testing ground for new artists working across a variety of art forms, and has ushered in the emergence of many new musical genres—including jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues, soul, and hip hop. Among the countless legendary performers who launched their careers at the Apollo are D’Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Machine Gun Kelly, Miri Ben Ari, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Michael Jackson, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, and Stevie Wonder; and the Apollo’s forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy.

The Apollo Theater is a not-for-profit organization with the mission to extend the institution’s role in fostering artistic innovation and in building appreciation of American culture around the world. For more information, visit [www.apollotheater.org](http://www.apollotheater.org).

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### **For more information, please contact:**

Nina Flowers  
Director of PR and Communications  
212-531-5334  
[nina.flowers@apollotheater.org](mailto:nina.flowers@apollotheater.org)

Isabel Sinistore  
Resnicow and Associates  
212-671-5175  
[isinistore@resnicow.com](mailto:isinistore@resnicow.com)

Whitney Wei  
Resnicow and Associates  
212-671-5179  
[wwei@resnicow.com](mailto:wwei@resnicow.com)