

APOLLO

The Apollo Theater Presents The New York Premiere of the
Genre-Defying Opera

We Shall Not Be Moved

From Composer **Daniel Bernard Roumain**, Librettist **Marc Bamuthi Joseph**
And Tony Award-winning Director/Choreographer **Bill T. Jones**,

Co-commissioned and co-produced with Opera Philadelphia and Hackney Empire

October 6th – 7th, 8 p.m.

We Shall Not Be Moved to be preceded by a Special Presentation of
Apollo Uptown Hall: Movement Required

Featuring Panelists:

Tamika D. Mallory, National Activist and Co-chair of the Women's March on Washington,
Iesha Sekou, CEO/Founder, Street Corner Resources, **Jason Osder**, Director of *Let The Fire Burn*
documentary, **Jennifer Jones-Austin**, CEO & Executive Director, Federation of Protestant Welfare
Agencies, **Marc Bamuthi Joseph**, *We Shall Not Be Moved* Librettist, **Michael O'Bryan**, Project
Manager of SMASH, and **Rachel Shapiro**, NYC's DOE Manhattan Borough Art Director

And an excerpt of the award-winning documentary *Let the Fire Burn*

September 30, 2017, 4:00p.m.

(Harlem, NY, August 31, 2017) – The Apollo Theater will present the New York premiere of the genre-defying opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*, inspired by the 1985 MOVE crisis in Philadelphia, where a standoff between police and a Black liberation group resulted in the deadly bombing of a residential neighborhood, on October 6th and 7th at 8 p.m. This powerfully-poetic, interdisciplinary new opera draws on the collective talents of composer **Daniel Bernard Roumain**, spoken word artist **Marc Bamuthi Joseph**, and celebrated director, choreographer, and dramaturge **Bill T. Jones**.

In a production that combines spoken word, contemporary dance, video projection, and classical, R&B and jazz singing to an original score, *We Shall Not Be Moved* tells the story of five North Philadelphia teens on the run, raising timely questions of national identity, gender identity, the insidious nature of racism, police presence in minority neighborhoods, and the failure of the urban American education system. The runaways—a group comprising of a 15-year-old African-American girl and her “family,” one of whom is

transgender—seek refuge in a condemned house at the site of West Philadelphia’s former MOVE compound, where they draw comfort and inspiration from the ghosts that haunt their new home, and come to consider their squatting not merely as self-preservation, but as an act of resistance. From this site, the teenagers engage in their own confrontation with a police officer in the shadow of one of the darkest points in Philadelphia’s history—the place where, on May 13, 1985, local police concluded a standoff with the radical MOVE group by dropping explosives onto the organization’s row-house headquarters, killing eleven African-American MOVE members, five of whom were children, and wiping out an entire residential neighborhood, leaving more than 250 people homeless.

The opera’s world premiere will occur in September at Opera Philadelphia’s O17 Festival, followed by its New York premiere at the Apollo in October, and will finish its run at the Hackney Empire in London. In conjunction with the opera’s run at the Apollo, the Theater will present a special iteration of *Apollo Uptown Hall: Movement Required on September 30th at 4 p.m.*, inspired by the themes of the production.

“It is an honor to be opening my first full season as the Apollo Theater’s Executive Producer with such a powerful and innovative new work, side by side with visionaries such as Bill T. Jones, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, and Daniel Bernard Roumain, who have so eloquently captured the essence of the social and political climate surrounding the 1985 MOVE bombing and have now crafted a perfectly relevant narrative that continues the conversation on today’s social issues,” said **Kamilah Forbes**, Apollo Theater’s Executive Producer. “As The Apollo expands its scope of programming, *We Shall Not Be Moved* embodies our commitment to bringing in original programming that is as diverse as our audiences and builds upon the Apollo’s rich legacy in contemporary ways.”

Librettist, arts activist, and spoken word artist **Marc Bamuthi Joseph**, describes his relationship to the opera and the acute relevance of its topic 30 plus years later:

“In the same way that we all inherit the legacy of systemic pathologies in our country, the main characters – including the police officer who serves as both antagonist and protagonist – are also part of that legacy, and they mine the specific history of the MOVE organization and the MOVE bombing as a foundational point. We focus on how the legacy of the MOVE ideologies and of this extrajudicial violence shows up today all over the country – and acutely in the city of Philadelphia.”

Driven by the *We Shall Not Be Moved* opera’s themes, the *Apollo Uptown Hall: Movement Required* will feature an excerpt of the award-winning documentary *Let the Fire Burn*, which covers one of the most tumultuous and largely-forgotten clashes between government and citizens in modern American history. A panel discussion focusing on some of today’s most prevalent problems in America, including tensions between law enforcement and community relations, as well as the lack of youth and family services, will follow, featuring speakers **Tamika D. Mallory**, National Activist and Co-chair of the Women’s March on Washington, **Iesha Sekou**, CEO/Founder, Street Corner Resources, **Jason Osder**, Director of *Let The Fire Burn* documentary, **Jennifer Jones-Austin**, CEO & Executive Director, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, **Marc Bamuthi Joseph**, *We Shall Not Be Moved* Librettist, **Michael O’Bryan**, Project Manager of SMASH, and **Rachel Shapiro**, NYC’s DOE Manhattan Borough Art Director. The panel will be co-moderated by **Imhotep Gary Byrd** from New York City’s WBAI-FM and **Solomon Jones** from Philadelphia’s WURD-FM.

***We Shall Not Be Moved* at the Apollo Theater**

Music by Daniel Bernard Roumain

Libretto by Marc Bamuthi Joseph

Director, choreographer and dramaturge: Bill T. Jones

The Apollo Theater, 253 West 125th Street
October 6th & 7th, at 8p.m.

Cast:

Un/Sung: Lauren Whitehead

Glenda: Kirstin Chávez

John Blue: John Holiday

John Little: Daniel Shirley

John Mack: Adam Richardson

John Henry: Aubrey Allicock

OGs: Michael Bishop, Duane Lee Holland, Jr., Tendayi Kuumba, Caci Cole Pritchett

Creative team:

Conductor: Viswa Subbaraman

Set design: Matt Saunders

Costume design: Liz Prince

Lighting design: Robert Wierzel

Projection design: Jorge Cousineau

Sound design: Robert Kaplowitz

Assistant director: Seth Hoff

Assistant choreographer: Raphael Xavier

We Shall Not Be Moved, is the second co-production in the Apollo Theater's multi-year partnership with Opera Philadelphia that will continue the staging of contemporary operas at the Apollo in future seasons. Last season marked the first collaboration performance of the acclaimed opera *YARDBIRD*, by composer **Daniel Schnyder** and librettist **Bridgette A. Wimberly**.

TICKET INFO

Tickets for *We Shall Not Be Moved* are \$28.50, \$53.50 and \$78.50 and are available at the Apollo Theater Box Office: (212) 531-5305, 253 West 125th Street, and Ticketmaster at 1-800-745-3000 or www.ticketmaster.com. Tickets are on sale now.

Apollo Uptown Hall is free. Pre-registration is strongly recommended. To register, visit www.apollotheater.org Entry is not guaranteed.

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SUPPORT

We Shall Not Be Moved at the Apollo Theater is sponsored by Merrill Lynch.

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ABOUT THE APOLLO THEATER

The legendary Apollo Theater—the soul of American culture—plays a vital role in cultivating emerging artists 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, spoken word, and more. This includes *100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella* blockbuster concert, the annual Africa Now! Festival, and the recent New York premiere of the opera *Charlie Parker’s YARDBIRD*. The Apollo is a performing arts presenting organization that also produces festivals and large-scale dance and music works organized around a set of core initiatives that celebrate and extend 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 collaborations 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.

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For more information, please contact:

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