

APOLLO 85

Apollo Theater Announces 85th Anniversary Programming

2019 Season Includes the New York Premiere of *Twisted Melodies*, a play that pays homage to soul legend Donny Hathaway; Kamasi Washington, Alice Smith, Dance Theatre of Harlem and the Return of Audience Favorites *Amateur Night at the Apollo*, *Apollo Music Café*, and *Apollo Comedy Club*; Cultural Festivals *Africa Now!* and *WOW - Women of the World Festival in Partnership with the WOW Foundation*

Harlem, NY – (January 23, 2019) To mark the Apollo Theater’s 85th anniversary, the Theater today announced additional programming in its Winter/Spring season, celebrating the iconic theater’s legacy as the epicenter of Black culture and expanding its role as a partner, commissioner, and co-producer of new and important works. Season highlights include a family show with **Dance Theater of Harlem**; the annual **Africa Now!**; **WOW – Women of the World Festival**; **Kamasi Washington**, in conjunction with *AFROPUNK*; the signature *Amateur Night at the Apollo*, with special \$8.50 tickets; *Apollo Music Café*; and *Apollo Comedy Club*; the spring season culminates with the New York premiere of *Twisted Melodies*, a soulful play that pays homage to the late singer Donny Hathaway in May. Apollo Theater’s programming continues to advance the nonprofit theater’s commitment to articulating and projecting the African American narrative through arts and culture, creating a 21st century performing arts cannon, and tackling important social issues for Harlem, New York, and the nation.

To celebrate the 85th anniversary season, the Apollo Theater will present an Open House on Saturday, February 2 at 2:00 p.m. **Apollo Open House**, free and open to the public, will be hosted by **Billy “Mr. Apollo” Mitchell** and will feature presentations by **Brad San Martin**, the Apollo’s Digital Archivist, and **Ted Fox** and **James Otis Smith**, the creators of the *Showtime at the Apollo* graphic novel. In addition to the presentations, there will be performances by **Rachel Kara Pérez**, **JSWISS**, **Jazzmobile** and the **Sugar Hill Children’s Museum of Art & Storytelling**. The Open House comes on the heels of the Apollo Performing Arts Center announcement last month, which begins its first phase with the opening of the theaters at the Victoria. Scheduled for fall 2020, this project marks the first physical expansion in the theater’s history. For more information about the theaters at the Victoria and the Apollo’s mission to work with and support a greater number of emerging and established artists of color across disciplines, click [here](#).

“From *Africa Now!* and *Amateur Night*, to the premiere of *Twisted Melodies*, and all the important work our education team is doing with teens and young adults, I am thrilled that our spring season continues to advance our mission and advocacy for African American and Harlem-based artists,” said **Kamilah Forbes**, Apollo Theater Executive Producer.

The season kicks off with the 85th season of Apollo’s famed *Amateur Night at the Apollo*, the original, large-scale talent show and one of the longest-running continuous events in New York City. The season

opener begins on February 20 and will feature special guest, R&B artist **Raheem DeVaughn**. Legends such as Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Luther Vandross, and D'Angelo have all rubbed the famed tree of hope before taking the stage. A brand-new line-up of contestants will compete for **an ultimate cash prize of \$20,000**. To celebrate the new season and the legends it helped propel, tickets for the February Amateur Night will be available for \$8.50, made possible with support from sponsor Coca-Cola.

Beginning February 21, the Apollo, in conjunction with AFROPUNK, will present *Race Music* weekend, a powerful event that will explore the intersection of music, film, and politics, using the approach of co-opting a concept meant to separate and transforming it to a call-to-arms that brings people together. The weekend will feature films curated by ImageNation Cinema Foundation with a special screening of *Mr. Soul!* presented in collaboration with Firelight Media. *Race Music* will culminate in a special performance by progressive musician Kamasi Washington on Saturday, February 23 at 8:00 p.m.

The third annual *WOW – Women of the World Festival* returns to the Apollo March 12 through 17, with a host of programming, including a special concert featuring Alice Smith on Friday, March 15 at 8:00 p.m. and a talk with Suze Orman on Saturday, March 16 at 8:00 p.m. The six-day event features performances, talks, mentoring sessions, and programs that celebrate the achievements of women and girls from all walks of life and all parts of the world. With more than 60 WOW Festivals on five continents, the event extends the Apollo's role as a cultural and civic anchor dedicated to providing forums for meaningful discussion and exchange of ideas. *WOW – Women of the World Festival* is presented in partnership with the WOW Foundation. WOW Festivals are presented by arrangement with Southbank Centre, London. Visit www.apollowow.com for more updates and more information.

On Saturday, April 13 the Apollo will present *Africa Now! – Dancehall*, its annual concert celebrating the best of today's African contemporary music and spotlighting how the music of the diaspora has impacted the continent of Africa. The dance hall theme will feature contemporary African musicians who have been influenced by the traditions of reggae, dancehall, and soca, including Patoranking (Nigeria), Buffalo Souljah (South African/Zimbabwe), Seyi Shay (Nigeria) and Kaleta, and the Super Yamba Band (Benin/Brooklyn). The weekend will also include a film series in partnership with the New York African Film Festival, late-night performances, and DJ sets in the Apollo Music Café, continuing the Apollo's mission to serve as a partner in the articulation and projection of the African American narrative and its role in the development of American and global culture, advancing its impact worldwide.

The *Apollo Theater Salon Series* returns in April to present *WiLDFLOWER*, a work-in-progress being developed as part of National Black Theater's Soul L.A.B. Residency and the Apollo, which began in 2016 to support innovative artists and new projects. With book, music, and lyrics by Jason Michael Webb and Lelund Durond Thompson, *WiLDFLOWER* will be workshopped at the Apollo for three days, culminating in two staged readings on Friday, April 26 and Saturday, April 27 at 7:30 p.m.

The spring season will culminate with *Twisted Melodies*, written and performed by Kelvin Roston, Jr. and directed by Derrick Sanders. The intimate one-man theater production highlights the life, artistry, and struggles of 1970s soul singer and composer Donny Hathaway. The show, running Thursday, May 30 through Sunday, June 2, premieres on the iconic stage 45 years after Hathaway himself last performed on it, providing an additional opportunity to celebrate African American arts and culture and serve as a cultural resource for the community. *Twisted Melodies* is co-presented with *Baltimore Center Stage* and *Mosaic Theater*.

Celebrating the theater's comedic roots, *The Apollo Comedy Club*, presented in partnership with the legendary Bob Sumner (producer of Def Comedy Jam, creator of LaffMobb on Aspire), features the best up-and-coming talent in comedy today with more than 15 comedians, including JoJo Collins, Cookie Hull, Edgar Rivera, and others. The comedy shows precedes the Apollo's weekend music series, *The Apollo Music Café*, extending the theater's late-night offerings.

Presenting new artists on the Apollo's intimate Soundstage, *The Apollo Music Café* returns monthly on Fridays and Saturdays to feature over a dozen forward-thinking, innovative artists and diverse performances across genres, from R&B, hip-hop, soul, and jazz to pop, funk, and rock. Highlights include *Harlem to Hollywood* featuring Malik Yoba on Feb. 8 and special performances by Young Paris, Butterscotch, and more.

The Apollo's robust year-round education and community programs continue this spring with Apollo's *Uptown Hall* and Livewire gatherings and discussions that tackle key issues of our day. The theater will also present a special Family Showtime event with Dance Theatre of Harlem, celebrating their 50th anniversary on Sunday, February 16 at 1:00 p.m. with a special presentation of its legendary lecture demonstration originally created by Arthur Mitchell.

COMPLETE 85TH ANNIVERSARY SPRING SEASON:

Apollo Open House

Saturday, February 2 at 2:00 p.m.

Free and open to the public, the Apollo Open House will be hosted by Billy "Mr. Apollo" Mitchell and will feature presentations by **Brad San Martin**, the Apollo's Digital Archivist, and Ted Fox and James Otis Smith, the creators of the *Showtime at the Apollo* graphic novel. In addition to the presentations, there will be performances by Rachel Kara Pérez, JSWISS, Jazzmobile, and the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling.

Apollo Theater and AFROPUNK Present Race Music Weekend

Thursday, February 21 at 6:30 p.m.

Live Wire: Mr. Soul!

Free – Visit www.ApolloTheater.org to RSVP

Saturday, February 23 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Soundstage

Race Music Films Curated by ImageNation Cinema Foundation

Free – Visit www.ApolloTheater.org for a complete line-up of film screenings and to RSVP

Saturday, February 23 at 8:00 p.m.

Kamasi Washington

Kamasi Washington, who is considered this generation's torchbearer for progressive, improvisational music, and his 10-piece band, The Next Step, take audiences on adventurous odysseys that cross musical genres from jazz, to hip-hop, classical and R&B music.

Africa Now! Dancehall Line-Up

Presented in partnership with World Music Institute

Featuring: Patoranking, Buffalo Souljah, Seyi Shay and Kaleta and the Super Yamba Band

Saturday, April 13, 8:00 p.m.

This year's annual concert celebrates not only the best of today's African music scene but spotlights how the music of the diaspora has impacted the continent. In April 1980, reggae music icon, Bob Marley and The Wailers, traveled at their own expense to celebrate and perform at the independence ceremony of the newly formed African nation, Zimbabwe. Since then the musical connection between the Caribbean and Africa has only grown. This season's *Africa Now!* nods to this exchange with the theme, *Dancehall*, and will feature contemporary African musicians who have been strongly influenced by the musical traditions of reggae, dancehall and soca.

Apollo Music Café Celebrates Africa Now!: Tosin and Allinor
Friday, April 12, 10:00 p.m.

Vocalist and percussionist Tosin writes and sings in Yoruba, Pidgin English, and English. Joining him on stage, Allinor has always been influenced by the music of his Ghanaian upbringing as well as his deep roots in spiritual music. Blending western blues, highlife and reggae with traditional music, he creates a soul stirring, mood setting style of melodic rhythms.

Africa Now! Films Curated by African Film Festival
Saturday, April 13, 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Free

Apollo Music Café Africa Now! After Party: Young Paris
Saturday, April 13, 11:00 p.m.

The *Africa Now!* weekend culminates with an energy-filled after party, directly following the mainstage show, featuring Roc Nation artist Young Paris.

Dance Theatre of Harlem's 50th Anniversary
Sunday, February 16 at 1:00 p.m.

In celebration of its 50th Anniversary, Dance Theatre of Harlem returns to the Apollo for a very special family time presentation of its legendary lecture demonstration originally created by Arthur Mitchell. Narrated by DTH Resident Choreographer Robert Garland and performed by members of the DTH Company and School, the distinctively Harlem focused program gives young people and adults an opportunity to look into what it takes to become a ballet dancer and features excerpted performances of Darrell Grand Moultrie's Harlem on My Mind, Arthur Mitchell's Tones and Robert Garland's Return set to the music of James Brown.

Live Wire Line-Up

Tuesday, March 12 at 7:00 p.m. – *Legendary: Nikki Giovanni in Conversation with Johnnetta B. Cole*
Monday, April 1 at 6:30 p.m. – *A Cultural History of Tap*
Monday, May 13 at 6:30 p.m. – *Everything is Everything, the Music of Donny Hathaway*
Tuesday, June 18 at 6:30 p.m.– *Mighty Real: Beyond the Ball*

Amateur at the Apollo Spring Line-Up

Wednesday, February 20 at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, March 13 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, April 20 at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, May 1 at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, June 19 at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, June 26 at 7:30 p.m.

Apollo Comedy Club Spring Line-Up, Featuring DJ Qool Marv

Doors at 9:00 p.m., show at 10:00 p.m.
Thursday, February 7 – *Host Drew Fraser with Rey Gibbs, Correy Bell, and Shuler King*
Thursday, March 14 – *Host Mugga with JoJo Collins, Calise Hawkins, and Barbara Carlyle*
Thursday, April 11 – *Host A.G. White with Cookie Hull, Jason Weems, and Kris Atkins*
Thursday, May 2 – *Host Kool Bubba Ice with Aminah Imani, Daniel Tirado, and Edgar Rivera*
Thursday, June 13 – *Host Kenny Williams with Hassan Oliver, Phil Hunt, and Rita Brent*

Apollo Music Café Spring Line-Up

Doors at 9:00 p.m., show at 10:00 p.m., unless noted

Harlem to Hollywood Featuring Malik Yoba, directed by Kevin Ramsey

Friday, February 8

Through storytelling and music, Malik Yoba's *Harlem To Hollywood* brings audiences up close and personal into the life of one of Hollywood's most enduring talents over the last 25 years.

Tamika Lawrence and Bel-Ami

Saturday, February 9

Tamika Lawrence and Bel-Ami join forces for an evening that moves from R&B to Betty Davis-style soul/rock. Although she is known for her Broadway Credits, Tamika's music is multifaceted as it is a blend of rock and vibe-soul. The second-half of the evening is headlined by Bel-Ami – an artist whose music is filled with hope and empowerment.

Apollo Music Café Celebrates Africa Now: Tosin and Allinor

Friday, April 12

Vocalist and percussionist Tosin writes and sings in Yoruba, Pidgin English and English. Joining him on stage, Allinor has always been influenced by the music of his Ghanaian upbringing as well as his deep roots in spiritual music. Blending western blues, highlife and reggae with traditional music, he creates a soul stirring, mood setting style of melodic rhythms.

Apollo Music Café Africa Now After Party: Young Paris

Saturday, April 13 at 11:00 p.m.

The *Africa Now!* weekend culminates with an energy-filled after party, directly following the mainstage show, featuring Roc Nation artist Young Paris.

Apollo Music Café Celebrates WOW – Women of the World Festival: Butterscotch

Saturday, March 16

Butterscotch, hailed as the world's first female beatboxing champions, has created a unique style. While she beatboxes, she sings and plays either guitar or piano, performing her own compositions and jazz standards.

Apollo Music Café Celebrates WOW – Women of the World Festival: Kimberly Nichole

Curated by Jodine Dorce

Saturday, March 16

This special event is an album release for Kimberly Nichole's latest project, *The West Coast Seattle Girl*. Kimberly has shared the stage with such artists as Slash (Guns N Roses), Living Colour, Alice Smith, Janelle Monae, Nona Hendryx (Labelle), Aloe Blacc, Bilal, Joe Walsh (The Eagles) and Jon Bon Jovi.

John Holiday

Friday, May 3

Returning to the Apollo after his break-out performance as John Blue in last season's world-premiere opera production of Daniel Roumain and Marc Bamuti Joseph's, *We Shall Not Be Moved*, John Holiday headlines this intimate café performance with a set that connects the African American musical traditions of jazz, R&B, and gospel with opera.

Alicia Olatuja

Saturday, May 4

Alicia Olatuja has been astounding audiences with her exquisite vocals, artistic versatility, and captivating demeanor.

Aaron Marcellus
Curated by Dwight Jordan
Friday, June 14

Aaron Marcellus is a dancer, musician and actor whose smooth, soaring vocals make the perfect elixir for a night of mahogany soul. Marcellus has performed in shows around the world including STOMP, NBC's "Next Caller" and "American Idol."

Darien Dean
Curated by InJoy Productions
Saturday, June 15, 10:00 p.m.

Darien Dean is an MC and soul singer whose musical style earned him a coveted spotlight at the 2010 Soul Beach Music Festival in Aruba, opening for Mary J. Blige. Since then he has shared stages with soul super heavyweights including: Kem, Anthony Hamilton, Raheem DeVaughn, Jazmine Sullivan and many more.

TICKET INFO

Tickets for *Amateur Night at the Apollo*, *Apollo Comedy Club*, *Apollo Music Café*, Kamasi Washington, Alice Smith, and *Twisted Melodies* are available now at the Apollo Theater Box Office: (212) 531-5305, 253 West 125th Street, and Ticketmaster at 1-800-745-3000 or www.ticketmaster.com. Please check www.apollotheater.org for updates on ticket availability to additional 85th Anniversary season programming.

ABOUT WOW – WOMEN OF THE WORLD FESTIVAL

WOW was founded in 2010 by Jude Kelly, then Artistic Director of Southbank Centre, London. In 2018 she founded The WOW Foundation to further build, convene, and sustain the WOW global movement that believes a gender equal world is possible and desirable. There are now over 60 festivals on 5 continents.

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 special programs such as the blockbuster concert *Bruno Mars Live at the Apollo*, the world premiere theatrical reading of Ta-Nehisi Coates's National Book Award-winning *Between the World and Me*, *100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella*, the annual Africa Now! Festival, and the recent New York premiere of the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*. 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 Michael Jackson, Ella Fitzgerald, Stevie Wonder, Billie Holiday, James Brown, D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Dave Chappelle, Machine Gun Kelly, Miri Ben Ari, Sarah Vaughan, Gladys Knight, and Luther Vandross; and the Apollo's forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy. For more information visit <https://www.apollotheater.org/>

SUPPORT

The Apollo's season is made possible by leadership support from Coca-Cola, Citi, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation and the Jerome L. Greene Foundation.

Public support for the Apollo Theater is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Follow the Apollo Theater

[Facebook.com/apollotheater](https://www.facebook.com/apollotheater)

[Twitter.com/apollotheater](https://twitter.com/apollotheater)

[YouTube.com/apollotheater](https://www.youtube.com/apollotheater)

[Instagram.com/apollotheater](https://www.instagram.com/apollotheater)

For more information, please contact:

press@apollotheater.org

Josh Balber / Julie Danni

Resnicow and Associates

JBalber@resnicow.com / JDanni@resnicow.com

212-671-5175 / 212-671-5173