

APOLLO

**THE APOLLO AND NEW BLACK FEST PRESENT
18 SHORT PLAYS TO REFLECT ON
THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE, PAST AND PRESENT
LIVE AND IN-PERSON ON
APRIL 22ND-25TH**

**Works presented as part of Apollo's First-Ever Major Commissioning Initiative,
Apollo New Works**

Harlem, NY – (April 18, 2022) – This month marks the launch of **New Black Fest** at the **Apollo**, a festival celebrating contemporary Black playwrights from across the nation. On April 22, 23, and 25 at 7pm, audiences will have the opportunity to see **original works by 18 playwrights, each commissioned by the Apollo and New Black Fest co-founder Keith Josef Adkins**. These commissions focus on how the artists of the Harlem Renaissance responded to their historical landscape, as well as how contemporary creatives are dealing with today's issues in their own work. The festival also marks the first public presentation from the non-profit theater's **Apollo New Works** initiative, a groundbreaking series of commissions dedicated to the creation of a diverse, 21st-century American performing arts canon. **Tickets for each evening are \$25.**

The New Black Fest was founded in 2010 as a means to celebrate, advocate for, and showcase diverse and provocative work of Black theater artists from across the African Diaspora. Each evening will consist of six ten-minute readings. This year's participating playwrights include **Lee Edward Colston II, Lady Dane Figueroa Edidi, James Ijames, Eric Micha Holmes, James Scruggs, Zora Howard, Lisa Rosetta Strum, Dahlak Brathwaite, Kareem Lucas, Donja R. Love, Lauren Whitehead, Dennis A. Allen II, Liza Jessie Peterson, Chisa Hutchinson, Michael Bradford, France-Luce Benson, Christina Anderson, and Mfoniso Udofia.**

“The Apollo has long been committed to presenting new works and partnering with organizations that share our core values to engage with our community and leverage the Apollo's platform to give opportunities to emerging artists. We're thrilled to be working with Keith Josef Adkins on the New Black Fest this year and are eager to share the projects that have grown out of Apollo New Works,” said **Executive Producer of the Apollo, Kamilah Forbes.**

Part of the weekend's programming is a free panel discussion on Saturday, April 23 at 3pm, featuring community activist **Robyne Walker-Murphy** in conversation with award-winning playwright and screenwriter **Zora Howard** and multidisciplinary artist and Associate Director of Harlem Stage **Carl Hancock Rux**. During this discussion, Walker-Murphy will explore the impact and transformative power of Black artists.

TICKET INFO

Tickets for each evening of the New Black Festival at the Apollo are \$25 at www.ApolloTheater.org and in-person at the Apollo Box Office. Patrons needing additional assistance purchasing tickets should contact the Apollo Box Office at access@apollotheater.org or (212) 531-5305.

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

The health and safety of our audiences, artists, and staff is the Apollo's top priority. Please note that all attendees must present a government-issued picture ID prior to entry and show a completed vaccination

card authorized by the FDA or WHO against COVID-19 (dated at least 14 days before the show). Proof of vaccination can be displayed on smartphones. Proof of vaccination may also include a CDC Vaccination Card (or photo), NYC Vaccination Record, or an official immunization record from outside New York City or the United States. Photo ID for children under 12 will not be required if they are accompanied by parents/guardians with government-issued photo ID. All attendees are required to wear masks inside the theater. For a complete list of the Apollo's COVID-19 safety protocols, please visit www.ApolloTheater.org.

KEITH JOSEF ADKINS is a playwright, screenwriter, and artistic director—as well as co-founder, artistic director, and long-time curator of the New Black Fest. His works include *Sweet Home* (MPAACT Theater, Chicago); *Sugar and Needles* (Epic Theater); *The Final Days of Negro-ville*; *The Dangerous*, a commission at The Public Theater; *Safe House*, a commission honoring August Wilson @ Alliance Theater (Goodman Theater New Stages); and *The Last Saint on Sugar Hill* (MPAACT Theater). He has been the recipient of numerous awards, including a Gateway Commission from Obie Award-winning Epic Theater, Contemporary Theatre/Hansberry Project Commission, and a New Professional Theater Playwright Award. Additionally, Keith is a 2015 Helen Merrill Playwright Award recipient, a 2016 NYFA Playwriting Finalist, and a 2014 Teer Spirit Award recipient. Keith has numerous credits across television and film, including a writing credit on the CW hit “Girlfriends,” as well as CBS’s “The Good Fight.”

ABOUT THE APOLLO:

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 the world premiere of the theatrical adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* and the New York premiere of the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*; special programs such as the blockbuster concert *Bruno Mars Live at the Apollo*; *100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella*; and the annual *Africa Now! Festival*. The non-profit Apollo Theater is a performing arts presenter, commissioner, and collaborator that also produces festivals, large-scale dance and musical works organized around a set of core initiatives that celebrate and extend the Apollo's legacy through a contemporary lens, including the *Women of the World (WOW) Festival* as well as other multidisciplinary collaborations with partner organizations.

Since introducing the first *Amateur Night* contests in 1934, the Apollo 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 Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, H.E.R., D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Machine Gun Kelly, and Miri Ben Ari; and the Apollo's forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy. For more information about the Apollo, visit www.ApolloTheater.org.

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