



JONELLE PROCOPE TO CONCLUDE TENURE AS PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE APOLLO IN JUNE 2023, MARKING TWO DECADES OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Bolstering the Apollo's Future, Procope and the Apollo Board Announce First Full-Scale Renovation and Upgrade of the Landmarked Building

\$63 Million Raised of \$70 Million Capital Campaign to Support Upgrades and Restoration, Including \$10 Million Grant from Governor Kathy Hochul and \$15.7 Million in Support from the City of New York

Harlem, NY – October 18, 2022 – **Jonelle Procope, President and CEO of the Apollo**, announced today that after two decades of leading the iconic cultural and civic non-profit dedicated to providing a platform for Black creativity, she will step down on June 30, 2023. Ms. Procope's leadership, first as a member of the board and then as president and CEO, has transformed a venue that was in disrepair into an internationally recognized cultural institution, expanding it into the largest African American performing arts presenting organization with one of the most diverse boards and audiences in the country. Throughout her tenure, the Apollo has also served as an anchor for the revitalization of legendary 125th Street in Harlem and as a center for community and national discourse.

To further solidify the foundation and future of the Apollo, Procope, Campaign Chair Dick Parsons and Apollo Board Chair Charles E. Phillips also announced today that it is approaching the completion of the institution's \$70 million capital campaign. To date, the Apollo has raised \$63 million, which includes a \$10 million grant from Governor Kathy Hochul and the State of New York, and \$15.7 million in support from the City of New York for the first full-scale renovation of the non-profit's landmarked home at 253 W. 125th Street.

Over the next nine months, Procope will continue to spearhead the Apollo Rising 2.0 campaign, the completion of the Apollo's Victoria Theater, and the Apollo's fall 2022 and spring 2023 seasons. She will work with the Apollo Board of Directors and senior leadership team to ensure a smooth transition to the next president and CEO. A search committee of the Apollo Board of Directors will launch a national search for Procope's successor this fall.

“For nearly nine decades, the Apollo has been a welcoming home for artists of color, a tireless advocate for Black culture and creativity, and a galvanizing force for the performing arts in New York and across the U.S. It has been an honor to lead this organization through two decades of outstanding performances, transformative educational programs, and civic advocacy,” said **Jonelle Procope**. “The Apollo is a powerful catalyst for progress and innovation, and as we near the completion of the capital campaign and begin restoration of the Historic Theater, it is the right time to welcome the next president who will lead the Apollo into the future.”

“On behalf of the Apollo, the Harlem community, and the people of New York, we are incredibly grateful to Governor Hochul, the State of New York, Mayor Adams, Borough President Mark Levine and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs for their generosity as we continue to enhance the Apollo experience for artists and audiences,” added Procope. “Their support will ensure that Harlem continues to be a premier arts and culture destination, solidifying the Apollo’s commitment to the community and continuing its mission to create a 21st-century performing arts canon.”

“The Apollo has long been a home for artistic innovation, a convener for public discourse, and a centerpiece of the Harlem community. Jonelle’s extraordinary vision and stewardship over the past 20 years has expanded the organization’s role as one of the nation’s greatest cultural institutions,” said **Apollo Board Chair Charles E. Phillips**. “Jonelle has led the Apollo through an unparalleled period of growth, forged partnerships globally, strengthened the Apollo’s finances, broadened a uniquely diverse audience, and navigated the institution through a challenging pandemic. She has also built a diverse board of business and civic leaders, philanthropists and stakeholders, and created an experienced leadership team that, along with my fellow board members, will continue to guide the organization as we prepare for the Apollo’s next leader.”

“On behalf of the Apollo Board of Directors, I’d like to express our deepest appreciation to Governor Hochul, Mayor Adams, and those in the City who are supporting the Apollo’s continued vitality and capital improvements. And a special thank you to the Apollo’s Chairman Emeritus, Richard D. Parsons, who was responsible for bringing Jonelle to the Apollo and continues to lead the capital campaign,” added Phillips.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM JONELLE PROCOPE’S TENURE

Since taking the helm of the Apollo, Ms. Procope turned around the struggling non-profit, strengthening the organization’s reputation as a cultural hub and beacon of Black creativity. Over the last 20 years, Ms. Procope transformed the Apollo by implementing a long-range plan for the restoration and expansion of the Historic Theater into a vibrant cultural and civic resource in Harlem. She has spearheaded the non-profit’s expansion of the Apollo to the Apollo’s Victoria Theater (opening in 2023), along with the forthcoming restoration of the Historic Theater, and in 2018, oversaw the completion of the Apollo’s comprehensive strategic planning process that led to a five-year implementation plan to transform the institution into a 21st-century performing arts center. In addition, she solidified the Apollo as a home for Black artists and as an anchor for the Harlem community. Her stewardship of the Apollo led to the Ford Foundation naming it one of America’s Cultural Treasures and to significant support from foundations, corporations, and individuals across the country. She leads a staff of 81 full-time employees, and built, deeply engaged, and partnered with the organization’s board of directors. Procope also served as an executive producer on the Emmy Award nominated documentary, *The Apollo* (HBO), and on the New York City Mayor’s Arts, Culture, and Tourism Advisory Council to help safely reopen New York’s beloved cultural sector.

Ms. Procope led a successful capital campaign (2008) to ensure the preservation of the historic Apollo and its legacy and built a strong and committed base of financial support. Under her leadership, the Apollo has focused on expanding its commitment to civic engagement, its dedication to education—prior to pandemic, the Apollo served more than 20,000 students, teachers, and families annually—and community programs, and its development of new strategic relationships with national and international cultural partners.

Ms. Procope has solidified the Apollo as a civic thought leader and a convener for public discourse in Harlem, New York, and the nation. In collaboration with her leadership team, she has overseen the

development of new initiatives including the Apollo's first major commissioning program, *Apollo New Works*; the Walk of Fame under the iconic Apollo marquee, which celebrates legendary artists who have performed on the world-famous Apollo stage; *Uptown Hall*, which brings together the local community and people from across New York to address key issues affecting the country and the world; and the free *Live Wire* series that explores the Apollo's history and its connection to today's pressing issues in music, art, and culture.

Ms. Procope has been profiled in *The New York Times* Public Lives column, which recognized individuals who have distinguished themselves by their significant contributions to New York City, named as one of *Portfolio* magazine's "73 Biggest Brains in Business," profiled in *Ebony Magazine*, and honored by *The New York Daily News* as one of the "100 Women Who Shape Our City." In addition to the Apollo Theater Board, Ms. Procope is a member of the boards of the 125th Street Business Improvement District, the Gracie Mansion Conservancy, NYC & Company, SiriusXM, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. She also serves on the NYC Landmarks50 Advisory Committee. In 2021, Ms. Procope was featured on [Forbes' "50 over 50" Vision list](#), which highlighted "exceptional women who are shaping the future of science, technology and art." In 2022, Ms. Procope was awarded an honorary doctorate from her alma mater, Howard University, in acknowledgement of her humanitarian and philanthropic contributions to society. Prior to becoming President and CEO of the Apollo in 2003, Procope served on the Apollo's Board of Directors for four years. Before assuming her role as president and CEO of the Apollo, Ms. Procope held a variety of senior positions in entertainment law and media-related corporate affairs and management. She began her legal career as an associate attorney at the law firm of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom.

About the Apollo Rising 2.0 Capital Campaign

As of September 2022, the Apollo has raised **\$63 million of the \$70-million campaign**, which includes funding for the first full-scale renovation and upgrade of the 108-year-old landmarked building, financial support for the Apollo's Victoria Theater—the institution's first physical expansion in its 88-year history—and support for the growth of the Apollo's artistic programming as it continues to provide a home for artists of color, creating an expanded 21st-century American performing arts canon, and providing additional educational and community programming in Harlem and the Tri-state area.

The renovation of the Historic Theater will improve public areas and audience comfort, enhance artists' accommodations, and preserve and update the iconic exterior of the building. The project is currently in the pre-construction phase with the goal of beginning construction in spring 2024. The first cultural programs in the renovated theater are anticipated to take place in spring 2025.

Every aspect of the Historic Theater will be updated to allow for more versatility. The restoration, being led by Byer Blinder Belle Architects + Planners, with theater, acoustics, and digital consultants Charcoal Blue, will include:

- An expanded lobby with a newly designed café and bar that will be open to the public throughout the day, creating a community hub for use by all
- The restoration of a built-in orchestra pit
- Added and upgraded seating in the theater
- An upgraded HVAC system providing additional energy efficiency
- New lighting and audio systems that enrich the experiences of artists and audiences
- An enhanced Soundstage for performances
- Enhanced restroom facilities

The non-profit institution's \$70-million Apollo Rising 2.0 Capital Campaign supports these capital renovations, which are made possible by the State's investment, as well as support from the City, which includes funding from the City Council, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, and Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine. Additional support was received from the Empire State Development Corporation (ESD), Regional Economic Development Council (REDC), and Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone (UMEZ). Additional contributions from the Apollo's dedicated Board of Directors, including current Board Chair Charles E. Phillips and Board Chair Emeritus Richard "Dick" Parsons; philanthropists Frank and Laura Baker, Leonard and Judy Lauder, Ronald and Jo Carole Lauder, JoAnn Price, and Patricia Miller Zollar and Al Zollar; and many generous foundations and corporations, including BNY Mellon, Hobson/Lucas Family Foundation, and the previously announced \$5 million from Sirius XM Radio Inc.

"The world-famous Apollo theater has long been a pillar of the cultural life of Harlem and our entire city, a place where generations of Black artists got their first shot at Amateur Night, and where the marquee continues to broadcast the names of the most extraordinary performers," said **NYC Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, Laurie Cumbo**. "Jonelle Procope has been an incredible steward of this storied institution, and we've been proud to support her expansive vision for making the Apollo a welcoming home for artists, for audiences, and for the City of New York for generations to come. We thank her for her years of leadership and service to our cultural community."

While undergoing renovations and restorations of the historic building, the Apollo continues its work on the Victoria Theater. Scheduled to open for performances in fall 2023 as part of the Victoria Theater Redevelopment Project, a public and private partnership, the Apollo's Victoria Theater enhances the Apollo's longstanding role as an anchor for the Harlem community. The 25,000-square-foot facility, designed by Kostow Greenwood Architects, enables the Apollo to expand its vibrant, year-round artistic, educational, and community programs that build on the cultural heritage of Harlem and celebrate uptown's enormous well of creativity. It will also provide access to professional-quality theater space for local artists, artist collectives, and small and mid-size Harlem and NYC-based arts organizations for the development and presentation of new work. To learn more about the Apollo's Victoria Theater, click [here](#). Additional details about inaugural programming in the Apollo's Victoria Theater will be announced at a later date.

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 and 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, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, 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.

###

For more information, please contact:

Fatima Jones / Sydney Edwards
Senior Director of Marketing and Communications / Public Relations Manager
Press@apollotheater.org

Josh Balber / Destanie Martin-Johnson
Resnicow and Associates
Jbalber@resnicow.com / Dmartin-johnson@resnicow.com
212-671-5175 / 5172