

# APOLLO

## THEATER IN THE APOLLO'S NEW CULTURAL SPACE TO HONOR JONELLE PROCOPE

Located within The Apollo's Victoria Theater, the space will be named after the organization's President & CEO of two decades



Rendering of The Procope Theater at The Apollo's Victoria Theater. Rendering by Flyleaf Creative

**Harlem, NY** – March 28, 2023 – On Monday, March 27, The Apollo's Board Chair Charles E. Phillips announced that the 99-seat theater in The Apollo's new Victoria Theater—which marks the first major expansion in the organization's history—will be named after its current President & CEO Jonelle Procope in honor of her two decades as leader of the iconic cultural and civic non-profit dedicated to providing a platform for Black creativity. The new, 25,000 square foot facility is under renovation and will open later this year, adding two additional stages that will be operated by The Apollo and will welcome in artists, audiences, other cultural and civic organizations and creators, and students. The surprise announcement took place at a celebration in honor of Ms. Procope at the Ford Foundation following her announcement at the end of 2022 that she will step down as President later this year.

“Jonelle’s leadership of The Apollo has transformed The Apollo into an internationally recognized cultural institution, expanding it into the largest Black performing arts organizations discovering new talent and hosting established artists on the iconic Apollo stage,” said **Mr. Phillips**. “Throughout her tenure, The Apollo has also served as an anchor for the revitalization of the legendary 125<sup>th</sup> Street in Harlem and as a center for community and national discourse. So, it’s fitting that for years to come, as artists and audiences enter the theaters at the Victoria, they will be able to experience culture in a space that bears her name.”

“I’m honored that a space that will support creatives in our dynamic community will be named for me and my family,” said **Ms. Procope**. “The realization of a project of this magnitude has long been a strategic goal of The Apollo, and it will be incredible to see the impact this space will have on generations of artists and arts professionals to come.”

"Jonelle is a force, and for the past two decades has been a one-of-a-kind leader for a one-of-a-kind institution," said **Ford Foundation President Darren Walker**. “Her hard work and vision has elevated Harlem’s iconic Apollo Theater to new heights, and her contributions to our community and to the arts will leave an imprint for generations to come.”

The Victoria Theater was designed in 1917 and is located on 125<sup>th</sup> street a few steps east of The Apollo. Featuring two new flexible theaters—one with 99 seats and one with 199 seats—the new spaces will provide vibrant, year-round artistic offerings that build on the cultural heritage of Harlem and celebrate uptown’s enormous well of creativity, The Apollo’s Victoria Theater will allow the non-profit Apollo to expand the scope of its artistic, educational, and community programs. Located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors of the Victoria Theater Redevelopment Project, a public and private partnership, The Apollo’s Victoria Theater will reinforce The Apollo’s longstanding role as both a civic and cultural anchor for the Harlem community. The 25,000-square-foot facility, designed by Kostow Greenwood Architects, 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](#).

Since taking the helm of The Apollo, Ms. Procope strengthened 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 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 21<sup>st</sup>-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.

Ms. Procope has helped to make The Apollo one of the most important culture organizations in Harlem, New York, and the nation. Under her leadership, The Apollo has raised more than \$63 million for its capital campaign project and in collaboration with her leadership team, she has overseen the development of numerous initiatives including The Apollo’s first major commissioning program, *Apollo New Works*.

## **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](http://www.ApolloTheater.org).

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