

# APOLLO

## MICHELLE EBANKS APPOINTED NEXT PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE APOLLO, THE LARGEST AFRICAN AMERICAN PERFORMING ARTS ORGANIZATION IN THE NATION

### EBANKS TO EXPAND MODERNIZATION OF APOLLO FACILITIES AND PROGRAM

**Harlem, NY** – June 6, 2023 – **The Apollo** announced today the appointment of **Michelle Ebanks** as the next President and CEO of the nation’s foremost African American performing arts center dedicated to Black arts and culture. Ms. Ebanks has extensive leadership experience in media, entertainment, and live events. She previously served as CEO of Essence Communications, overseeing the nation’s leading media and communications company dedicated to African American women, including *Essence* magazine, the preeminent lifestyle magazine for African American women; Essence.com, the award-winning, daily online destination for African American women; and the internationally renowned Essence Festival of Culture, one of the largest annual live music events in the world.

Ms. Ebanks joins The Apollo—the largest African American performing arts center in the nation—at a pivotal time for the iconic organization. In addition to its new Victoria Theaters that will open later this year, The Apollo will shortly commence the first full-scale renovation of its landmarked Historic Theater and complete its \$80M Apollo Rising 2.0 capital campaign. Ms. Ebanks succeeds **Jonelle Procope**, who over the last two decades transformed The Apollo into an internationally recognized cultural and civic non-profit institution.

“Michelle brings to The Apollo a deep understanding in creating exciting cultural experiences for a diverse range of communities, including overseeing some of the most popular live events in the nation. At a time when performing arts organizations are looking at how best to provide opportunities for audiences who are both hungry for in-person experiences and ways to participate with programming digitally, Michelle’s depth of knowledge will lead The Apollo to its next level of engagement with artists, audiences, and partners throughout New York, nationally and internationally,” said **Apollo Board Chair Charles E. Phillips**. “Michelle joins The Apollo at a time of strength, forged by Jonelle and her team over the last two decades into one of the nation’s greatest cultural institutions.”

“I’m thrilled to be joining the iconic Apollo at such an important time in its trajectory. The Apollo continues to have such a profound impact on Black culture—and American culture—locally, nationally and internationally,” said **Michelle Ebanks**. “It is such an exciting time as it expands its physical footprint, doubles down on supporting artists at every stage in their careers, collaborates with partners across Harlem and the world, and offers a platform for the voices of African American artists across the diaspora.”

“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**. “I am excited to see the innovative and forward-thinking ideas that Michelle will bring to The Apollo, and I am confident it will thrive under her leadership.”

Michelle Ebanks was President of Essence Communications Inc., where she was responsible for advancing Time Inc.'s businesses within the nation's fastest growing population segments: African Americans and Hispanics. As President of Essence Communications Inc., Ms. Ebanks led the number one media and communications company dedicated to African American women. Comprised of media and entertainment properties with total brand reach of 12 million including *Essence* magazine; ESSENCE.com; and the internationally renowned Essence Festival of Culture, one of the largest annual live events in the world attracting more than 540,000 attendees to New Orleans, Louisiana. Ms. Ebanks began her career at Time Inc. as the general manager and financial director for *Money* magazine. Subsequently, she was a vice-president in Time Inc.'s corporate division, where she led the acquisition of ESSENCE. Prior to joining Time Inc., she served as corporate business manager for Condé Nast's 13 titles.

### **About The Apollo**

The legendary Apollo—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. In 2023, The Apollo will open The Apollo's Victoria Theater, which will include two new theater spaces, and begin the renovation of its Historic Theater, marking the first ever expansion and renovation of The Apollo in its nearly 90-year history. Read more about the project here: [www.apollotheater.org/renovation-restoration-and-transformation/](http://www.apollotheater.org/renovation-restoration-and-transformation/)

With music at its core, The Apollo's programming extends to dance, theater, spoken word, and more. This includes the world premieres of *The Blues and Its People* and 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 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, 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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### **For more information, please contact:**

Fatima Jones / Sydney Edwards  
The Apollo  
[Press@apollotheater.org](mailto:Press@apollotheater.org)

Josh Balber / Destanie Martin-Johnson  
Resnicow and Associates  
[Jbalber@resnicow.com](mailto:Jbalber@resnicow.com) / [Dmartin-johnson@resnicow.com](mailto:Dmartin-johnson@resnicow.com)  
212-671-5175 / 5172