

APOLLO

The Apollo Celebrates its 90th Anniversary with the Opening of The Apollo Stages at the Revitalized Victoria Theater

Two flexible studio theaters, lobby, exhibition space, and administrative offices will support increased artistic programs and community collaborations in The Apollo's first ever expansion

Programming in new theaters to include premieres of Apollo commissioned work by Grammy-Winning Jazz Artist Stefon Harris, Acclaimed Choreographer Dianne McIntyre, and Hip-Hop Duo Soul Science Lab

All Tickets for The First Season \$20

Harlem, NY–November 16, 2023 –The Apollo announced today that it will officially open the doors to The Apollo Stages at the revitalized Victoria Theater on Thursday, February 1—marking the first physical expansion in the institution's 90-year history. The 25,000-square-foot facility, designed by KGA (Kostow Greenwood Architects), includes two theaters, a central lobby and gallery space that serve as convening points for patrons, and administrative offices for Apollo staff, visiting artists, and artistic collaborators. The theaters and offices inhabit the third and fourth floors of the revitalized mixed-use Victoria Theater building just a few steps away from The Apollo's Historic Theater on 125th Street in Harlem. The expansion advances The Apollo's mission of supporting artists throughout their career and providing space to incubate, develop, and collaborate on new works that speak directly to the needs of the community.

“I cannot think of a more fitting way to usher in 90 years of The Apollo than with this exciting milestone—an expansion not just in terms of physical space, but of the stories we can tell, and the role we play in our community,” says **President and CEO Michelle Ebanks**. “The Apollo Stages at The Victoria allow us to further the ways we can support artists and organizations in Harlem and across New York while also increasing our programming and educational offerings and providing opportunities for the next generation of creatives of color. We cannot wait to welcome visitors from around the corner and around the globe.”

The new spaces will also serve as an incubation hub for *The Apollo New Works* initiative, which expands on The Apollo's mission to support the creation of new, multi-disciplinary work by emerging and established Black artists across the diaspora to the release. The Apollo will launch its first public performances on these stages on February 9, 2024, with *The Renaissance Mixtape* by the hip-hop duo Soul Science Lab. Thanks to generous support from The Jerome L. Greene Foundation, all tickets to Apollo-presented programming in the new space during its inaugural season will be no more than \$20 to ensure broad access.

The Apollo Stages at The Victoria Theater include two flexible studio theaters, The Jonelle Procopé Theater named after longtime former President Jonelle Procopé, with 99 seats, and Theater 1 with 199 seats. The non-profit institution will present a slate of vibrant artistic offerings, education programs, and community initiatives.

The first event in The Apollo's new spaces will be the exhibition *From The Victoria to The Village: A Visual History of Black Creative Spaces*, featuring works from photographer and gallerist Alex Harsley in The Apollo's Laura and Frank Baker Gallery on view February 1- April 30. *Soul Science Lab: The Renaissance Mixtape*, directed by Awoye Timpo and commissioned as part of *The Apollo New Works* initiative, runs February 9 -11 will kick things off in Theater 1, which seats 199. *The Renaissance Mixtape* is an immersive theatrical concert that uses elements of hip-hop culture and visual storytelling to sample some of the most poignant, poetic, and profound voices of the Harlem Renaissance and its contemporary impact. **Additional programs are listed below with more to be announced soon.**

“At the core of The Apollo's programming is our steadfast belief in the importance of establishing a new American performing arts canon for the 21st century—one that reflects the richness and complexity of our nation's creative legacy,” says **Executive Producer Kamilah Forbes**. “With the new theaters and spaces, we hope to support burgeoning artists and amplify new voices by supporting the creative process, fostering innovation, and providing space for experimentation.”

Emblematic of the institution's commitment to the Harlem community, The Apollo will also be opening the spaces up as a collective resource, granting subsidized access to local artists, artist collectives, and small to mid-sized arts organizations for rehearsals, workshops, and performances. Details on how to apply will be announced soon. These programs were made possible by a gift from the Howard Gilman Foundation.

“The Apollo Stages at The Victoria Theater, which began more than five years ago under the stewardship of Jonelle Procope—past President of The Apollo—and which is being carried over the finish line by Michelle Ebanks, is sure to reinforce The Apollo as the paradigm of Black creativity,” says **The Apollo's Chair of the Board, Charles E. Phillips**. “The tremendous work of this team has made significant progress on our Apollo Rising 2.0 Capital Campaign and in turn, the renovation of the Historic Theater and The Apollo Stages at The Victoria Theater. We are all deeply excited for this new chapter.”

The Apollo will serve as the operator and manager for the theaters and cultural spaces located within the revitalized Victoria Theater. The Victoria, originally designed as a vaudeville house by Thomas W. Lamb in 1917, is an undertaking initiated by the State of New York in partnership with Empire State Development (ESD). As part of this project, the building also includes residential units, retail space, and a hotel, weaving itself into the economic fabric of Harlem and providing opportunities for local businesses while providing creative and community resources. To learn more about The Apollo Stages at The Victoria Theater, click [here](#).

In addition to the public spaces, both the third and fourth floors house administrative offices for up to 90 staff members and visitors with combined open floorplan and private offices, a staff kitchen and seating area, a conference room and gathering spaces.

The creation of The Apollo Stages at The Victoria Theater and support for its programming were made possible by the generosity of America's Cultural Treasures, a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors; Laura and Frank Baker; BNY Mellon; Booth Ferris Foundation; Howard Gilman Foundation; and The New York Community Trust – LuEsther T. Mertz Advised Fund.

ABOUT THE DESIGN

“The ambitious programming vision called for an efficient, versatile and beautiful new structure to serve patrons, artists, and staff,” explains Michael Kostow, Founding Principal of KGA (Kostow Greenwood Architects). “The design of the new public spaces provides transitional moments from entering the theater

and preparing to experience an event. The design of the flexible studio theaters registers the excitement and potential of live performance.”

Greeting visitors at the 125th Street entrance in Harlem is a restored marquee and façade announcing The Victoria. The entrance opens onto a restored lobby comprised of polished marble walls, intricate ornamentation, fluted columns, stately fireplace mantels, and arboretum-styled large mirrors. Past the entry corridor is a double-height lobby and wide staircase with marble balustrade, leading to the second floor, which hosts retail spaces. Just beyond the double height lobby, patrons are directed to The Laura and Frank Baker Gallery; along the way, they pass a display of salvaged artifacts from the Victoria Theater’s original auditorium, an homage to the past. The Laura and Frank Baker Gallery itself offers a communal space for audience members to gather before performances, complete with refreshments and rotating exhibitions.

The new 199- and 99-seat studio theaters, the latter named after past President Jonelle Procope, are designed for full theatrical productions, live music performances, film screenings, special events, and recordings. The theaters’ interiors follow a visual rhythm, with seats in bright, alternating colors. Both theaters are flat-floor venues with acoustically isolated slabs, resilient sprung dance floors and ceilings—as well as dressing rooms, chorus rooms, and wardrobe studios. Notably, The Apollo has introduced, across both theaters, a custom-built, retractable seating system to allow for multiple configurations, making it adaptable to the needs of performers and collaborators.

Esteemed design and installation firms Charcoal Blue and Flyleaf have spearheaded the creation of innovative designs and supervised the installation of the portal entrance to The Apollo Stages at The Victoria. The project involves integrating state-of-the-art AV components, incorporating Apollo-branded designs across different spaces, and implementing comprehensive wayfinding solutions to elevate the overall aesthetic and functionality, providing patrons with a seamless and captivating experience.

As The Apollo expands, it will also upgrade, beginning the first-ever renovation of the Historic Theater, which is slated to begin in summer 2024.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMS

The Apollo Stages at The Victoria Theater advance The Apollo's mission of supporting artists throughout their career and providing space to incubate, develop, and collaborate on new works, present performances from emerging and established artists, and provide arts education and community programs. Thanks to generous support from The Jerome L. Greene Foundation, all tickets to Apollo-presented programming in the new spaces during its inaugural season will be no more than \$20 to ensure broad access.

From The Victoria to The Village: A Visual History of Black Creative Spaces

Thursday, February 1, 2024 – Tuesday, April 30, 2024

Gallery Opening: 6:30pm

Talkback: 7:30pm

Tickets: Free with RSVP

From The Victoria to The Village: A Visual History of Black Creative Spaces in NYC offers a visual history of Black creative spaces in NYC starting with The 4th Street Photo Gallery’s Alex Harsley’s rare colored photographs of *The Jewel Box Review* at The Apollo in the 1950s, then moving downtown, and everywhere in between. The exhibition will showcase Black art collectives, individual artists at work in their studios, and the camaraderie of Black artists. Acclaimed photographer Dawoud Bey, Harsley’s mentee who began his career in Alex’s The 4th Street Photo Gallery, is an advisor on this project. A talkback following the opening will be facilitated by Halima Taha, author of *Collecting African American Art: Works on Paper and Canvas*.

Soul Science Lab: The Renaissance Mixtape

Apollo New Works World Premiere

Friday, February 9, 2024 | 8:00 PM

Saturday, February 10, 2024 | 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM

Sunday February 11, 2024 | 3:00 PM

Tickets: \$20

This immersive multimedia theatrical concert weaves elements of hip-hop culture, original music, and narrative text to follow the story of two young artists who use music, images and choreography to reflect on compelling aspects of the Harlem Renaissance that parallel their contemporary experience.

Apollo New Works is generously supported by the Ford Foundation with additional funding from The Mellon Foundation and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. *The Renaissance Mixtape* is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.

Stefon Harris & Blackout

Sunday, February 18, 2024 | 4:00 PM & 8:00pm

Apollo New Works World Premiere

Tickets: \$20

Join vibraphonist, educator, four-time Grammy nominee and *Apollo New Works* artist Stefon Harris and his quintet Blackout in this special concert. The performances will feature an exploration of improvisational techniques featuring Stefon's innovative new app that gives artificial intelligence the ability to improvise unpredictable harmony in tandem with artist-created melody and rhythm, resulting in a unique collaboration between software and human.

Stefon Harris & Blackout is a part of The Apollo's New Works initiative and Winter 2024 season and is generously supported by the Ford Foundation with additional funding from The Mellon Foundation and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

The Melt Goes On Forever: The Life & Times of David Hammons

Film Screening & Talkback

Thursday, February 22, 2024 | 7:30pm

Tickets: \$15

Dive into the world of art and activism through the extraordinary journey of visual artist, David Hammons. *The Melt Goes On Forever: The Life & Times of David Hammons* (2022) is a groundbreaking documentary that chronicles the singular career of the elusive African-American artist from Watts rebellion era '60s L.A. to global art world prominence today. Hammons' category-defying practice – rooted in a deep critique of American society and the elite art world – is in the words of one art critic “an invitation to confront the fissures between races” as the artist seeks to challenge normative ideas of culture to envision a new one for the 21st century. Following the screening will be a talkback with filmmakers Judd Tully and Harold Crooks and Apollo New Works artist Alex Harsley whose work will be on display in The Apollo's Laura and Frank Baker Gallery.

DIANNE McINTYRE Group: *In the Same Tongue*

Friday, April 12, 2024, 8:00 PM

Saturday, April 13, 2024, 2:00 PM & 8:00 PM

Sunday, April 14, 2024, 3:00 PM

Apollo New Works New York Premiere

Tickets: \$20

In the Same Tongue (2023) unites a vigorous company of dancers and musicians to explore how dance and music “speak” to each other. It is a vibrant movement, sound, and language-based work, by legendary choreographer Dianne McIntyre with original music by celebrated composer Diedre Murray, and poetry by Obie award-winning playwright Ntozake Shange, this work incorporates live music and dynamic vignettes to reveal how language creates worlds of beauty, alienation, harmony, tension, or peace.

In the Same Tongue is a part of The Apollo’s New Works initiative and Winter 2024 season. Apollo New Works is generously supported by the Ford Foundation with additional funding from Mellon Foundation and Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

The Apollo's 2023-2024 season is made possible by leadership support from Coca-Cola, Citi, Sherman Fairchild Foundation, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Jerome L. Greene Foundation Fund in The New York Community Trust, and Mellon Foundation. Public support for The Apollo is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Programs at The Apollo's Victoria Theater are made possible in part by generous support from Booth Ferris Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Jerome L. Greene Foundation Fund in The New York Community Trust, and The New York Community Trust - LuEsther T. Mertz Advised Fund.

ABOUT THE SIGNATURE SEAT CAMPAIGN

In celebration of The Apollo’s 90th anniversary and the opening of The Apollo Stages at The Victoria Theater, the *Signature Seat Campaign* is an opportunity for supporters to become a part of the organization’s history and invest in The Apollo as a hub for Black creativity and imagination. The initiative will raise funds to further expand The Apollo’s artistic programs, allowing the institution to work with emerging and established artists from Harlem and around the globe. Participants will receive a custom plaque affixed to a seat in Theater 1, serving as a tangible reminder to future audiences of their dedication to the arts and The Apollo’s legacy. To learn more, visit apollotheater.org/signature-seat.

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 *[at] The Intersection Arts and Ideas Festival*, *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.

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