



The Apollo Appoints Four New Members to its Board of Directors

Harlem, NY – (February 6, 2024) – The Apollo’s **Chairman, Charles Phillips**, and **President and Chief Executive Officer, Michelle Ebanks**, today announced that four new members were elected to the non-profit organization’s Board of Directors. Joining The Apollo board are **André Branch**, Senior Vice President and General Manager of M·A·C Cosmetics, North America at The Estée Lauder Companies; **Michelle Gadsden-Williams**, Managing Director and Global Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at BlackRock; **Aaron Holiday**, co-founder and Managing Partner at 645 Ventures; and **Carlos Whitaker**, Senior Managing Director at Blackstone. The new members join The Apollo’s board at a transitional moment for the organization as it embarks on its first major expansion with The Apollo Stages at The Victoria, designed by KGA (Kostow Greenwood Architects), and prepares to renovate the 90-year-old Historic Theater that has launched the careers of artists for nine decades. These changes will allow The Apollo to expand the scope and scale of its programs across four stages and create a sustainable model for world-class artistic expression and support of artists and the Harlem community for the next 90 years.

“The Apollo’s board of directors has been unwavering in supporting this important cultural and social treasure as it continues to grow and shape culture in Harlem, New York, and globally and build upon its role as the epicenter of Black culture and music. The board reflects the diversity of The Apollo’s staff and the Harlem community, and we are thrilled that André, Michelle, Aaron, and Carlos have joined to share their depth of knowledge and relationships as we launch an exciting new season of change and growth,” said Charles Phillips.

“I have had the opportunity to get to know, collaborate with, or simply admire the impact that André, Michelle, Aaron, and Carlos have had across industries, and I couldn’t be more excited for them to join The Apollo as we celebrate our 90th anniversary, expand onto new stages and renovate the historic theater, and create a sustainable model that will shepherd us through the next nine decades. This year is a milestone moment in The Apollo’s history, and with such a generous and dedicated board, the organization will continue to support the full scope of artists and our Harlem community, provide a vibrant platform for artistic and social engagement, and be able to experiment and find new ways to reach even more audiences,” said Michelle Ebanks.

About the New Board Members

André Branch is Senior Vice President and General Manager for M·A·C Cosmetics, North America at The Estée Lauder Companies. He is responsible for leading and accelerating the brand’s North America go-to-market strategy, maximizing growth potential, capturing new business opportunities, and driving differentiated, best-in-class experiences for all in-store and online channels. He is a member of the company’s North America Leadership Team, M·A·C Global Leadership Team and North America Region Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Leadership Taskforce. Mr. Branch has more than 25 years of executive, marketing and general management leadership experience across various industries, including Luxury Beauty, Consumer Packaged Goods, Luxury Spirits, and Private Equity. He is passionate about building and reinventing brands and has extensive experience managing P&Ls, generating top-line and bottom-line growth and leading transformation. Prior to joining M·A·C Cosmetics, he served as Senior Vice President, E-Commerce and Digital Operations at L’Oréal USA. He started his career with Deloitte & Touche, and after receiving his MBA from the University of Michigan, he held roles of increasing seniority at Kraft Foods, Diageo, L’Oréal, and The Nature’s Bounty Company.

Additionally, Mr. Branch is a member of the Executive Leadership Council, a non-profit that opens channels of opportunity and development for Black executives to positively impact business and society. He is also an independent board director for Signet Jewelers, a publicly traded company, and Partnership with Children, a New York City focused non-profit.

Michelle Gadsden-Williams is Managing Director of and Global Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion of BlackRock, where she is responsible for further strengthening and accelerating the company's efforts to foster an inclusive culture. Ms. Gadsden-Williams came to BlackRock with more than 30 years of experience as an advocate for equality within corporate America and a thought leader around diversity and inclusion. Prior to BlackRock, Ms. Gadsden-Williams was a Managing Director and Global Head of Diversity & Inclusion at Credit Suisse AG and Accenture.

Michelle has acquired a multitude of community service awards and accolades for her work as a diversity leader. In 2023, she was recognized by the Global Diversity Leadership organization with the Top DEI Global Champions Award and an honoree at the inaugural Global Chief Diversity Honors Awards by Black Enterprise. Michelle has also been recognized by Market Media with the Financial Services Excellence in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Award, Diversity Women Elite 100 and Black Enterprise as one of the Top Executives in Corporate Diversity for 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017. The Reverend Al Sharpton recognized Michelle as a 2016 honoree at the National Action Network "Woman of Power" Luncheon, she was an honoree at the Black Institute Awards Gala in NYC and a 2015 Ebony Magazine Power 100 honoree. Her other notable tributes include: being named the 2010 recipient of the Maya Way Award for Diversity Leadership by the incomparable Dr. Maya Angelou, receiving the 2008 Harvard Black Men's Forum Businesswoman of the Year Award, accepting the Rainbow Push Coalition's Bridge Builder Award by the honorable Reverend Jesse L. Jackson and also being recognized with an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree from Kean University for her outstanding personal and professional accomplishments in the field of diversity and inclusion. In 2013 Michelle was appointed as a member of the Global Advisory Council on Gender Parity for the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Michelle is a member of the Executive Leadership Council and currently serves on the board of trustees for WNET in New York City. She earned a B.S. in Marketing, a B.A. in Communications from Kean College of New Jersey and an M.S. in Organizational Dynamics from the University of Pennsylvania.

Aaron Holiday is the co-founder and Managing Partner at 645 Ventures. Mr. Holiday led 645 Ventures investments in several breakout successes including Goldbelly, Iterable, FiscalNote (NYSE: NOTE), Squire, Nanit, Resident/Nectar Sleep, Fly Labs (acquired by Google), Source3 (acquired by Facebook), Spiketrap (acquired by Reddit), and several other category-defining companies. Prior to 645 Ventures, Mr. Holiday worked at Goldman Sachs and GFI Group. As the first Managing Entrepreneurial Officer at Cornell Tech, he worked in tandem with Greg Pass (former Chief Technology Officer of Twitter) and guided complex technology startups toward commercial success. He is on the governing board of Cornell Tech and a current member of the metro chapter of Young Presidents Organization (YPO), a global leadership community of chief executives driven by the shared belief that the world needs better leaders.

Carlos Whitaker is a Senior Managing Director with Blackstone Credit & Insurance and serves as President of Blackstone Private Credit Fund (BCRED) and the Blackstone Secured Lending Fund (NYSE: BXSL), where he oversees management, business development, and performance of these investment vehicles. Since its inception, BCRED has been one of the market's most prolific investors, having completed some of the largest private credit transactions in the industry. Before joining Blackstone, Mr. Whitaker was at Credit Suisse, where he was a Managing Director and held senior executive roles in the global markets division, including Head of New York Advisory Sales and Co-Head of Europe, Middle East, & Africa Advisory Sales. While at Credit Suisse, he served as Co-Chair of the Black Talent Advancement Council to develop and execute strategies to expand the pipeline of diverse talent. *Savoy Magazine* recognized him as one of the Top 100 Most Influential Blacks in Corporate America in 2014 and 2018, and

the Council of Urban Professionals recognized him as a CUP Finance Catalyst in 2019. He is also a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Mr. Whitaker received a Bachelor of Arts from the Plan II Honors Program, a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting, and a Master of Professional Accounting from the University of Texas at Austin, where he graduated with honors. He is a member of the McCombs School of Business Advisory Council at the University of Texas at Austin and sits on the board of New York for McCombs.

Mr. Branch, Ms. Gadsden-Williams, Mr. Holiday, and Mr. Whitaker join the current Apollo Board of Directors that includes Charles E. Phillips (Chairman), Richard D. Parsons (Chairman Emeritus), Ronald O. Perelman (Vice Chairman), Patricia M. Zollar (Vice Chairwoman), Willie E. Woods (Treasurer), Daisey M. Holmes (Secretary), Tina R. Davis, Derek Jones, Kwanza Jones, Robert K. Kraft, Carolyn Minick Mason, Kevin Morrison, Racquel Oden, Karen L. Pavlin, JoAnn H. Price, Howard Schiffman, Bronson van Wyck, Dawanna Williams, Pharrell Williams, and Nat Zilkha. Quincy Jones and Leslie M. Uggams are Directors Emeritus.

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. 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.

###

For more information, please contact:

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

Fatima Jones / Sydney Edwards
Chief Marketing and Communications Officer / Public Relations Manager
Press@apollotheater.org