

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE AND THE APOLLO ANNOUNCE TRANSCENDENT
RENEWAL OF THE GATHERING: A COLLECTIVE SONIC RING SHOUT**



VIEW TRAILER [HERE](#)

Creative Concept and Direction by National Black Theatre's Executive Artistic Director, Jonathan McCrory

This performance is co-produced by National Black Theatre and The Apollo in association with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Saturday, June 1, 2024 | 7:30pm | Opera House at the Kennedy Center

For tickets and additional information:

<https://www.kennedy-center.org/whats-on/explore-by-genre/classical-music/2023-2024/the-gathering/>

New York, NY (April 11, 2024) - Join Nona Hendryx, Abby Dobson, Toshi Reagon, Joel Thompson, Carlos Simon, Courtney Bryan, Troy Anthony and more as they take you on a sonic quest to The Gathering. With virtual host Mahogany L. Browne as our guide—along with the American Composers

Orchestra and NEWorks Voices of Inspiration—this experience is meant to be *our* space to collectively center the social impact issue of our time to awaken joy as a source of *liberation*, and to find *love* as our form of possibility and resistance.

Through orchestral, choral, gospel and soul choral music, this one-night-only event is the signature celebration for the Kennedy Center’s Conflux partnership with National Black Theatre (NBT) running **May 26 - June 2, 2024**. The Gathering: A Collective Sonic Ring Shout will take us on a sonic quest produced by **National Black Theatre & The Apollo**. Taking place in the Opera House at the Kennedy Center, The Gathering will center the soul of Black folks and the heart of America’s brilliant and bitter present. With Creative Concept and Direction by NBT’s Executive Artistic Director, **Jonathan McCrory**, and featuring 80 members of the **American Composers Orchestra**, conducted by **Chelsea Tipton, II** and 48 members of **NEWorks Voices of Inspiration** chorale under the leadership of **Nolan Williams, Jr.**, this night will feature the DC premiere of “Seven Last Words of the Unarmed” by **Joel Thompson** alongside **Carlos Simon’s** “Amen!” and **Courtney Bryan’s** “Sanctum.” In conjunction with these pieces, the night has been curated in the African tradition of call and response to include original works by genre-defying Black artists such as **Abby Dobson, Toshi Reagon, Troy Anthony, and Nona Hendryx**.

The Gathering: A Collective Sonic Ring Shout was originally performed to a sold out audience at The Apollo in Harlem, New York 2022.

“Technology, along with social media have not just invited, but commanded the world to join the on-going conversation about American police brutality and our nation’s flawed criminal justice system. For generations, we’ve borne the brunt of America’s unrelenting ways and in response NBT has continually answered this call by empowering artists, fostering community, prioritized advocacy and have created a space for a spectrum of voices to be heard. The Gathering is the coming together of all of these elements. What Jonathan McCrory has conceived is nothing short of a miracle; a sonic and spiritual salve to help our communities and our country to see itself healed and whole. Much gratitude to our long-time collaborators and neighbors at The Apollo and Art For Justice for joining us as partners to bring this powerful work to Kennedy Center.”

Sade Lythcott, CEO of National Black Theatre

“The Ring Shout is historically an open space to grieve, awaken joy as a source of liberation, and use love as a form of resistance. The Gathering embodies that through all of the distinct and moving pieces of the evening, which at times may be emotionally difficult as we confront the horrors of injustice we’ve had to walk through,” **said Apollo Executive Producer Kamilah Forbes**. “But The Gathering also allows us to lean into a journey of the spirit that will leave audiences feeling healed and rejuvenated for the future. I’m thrilled that The Kennedy Center offers another chance for viewers to engage with this vital production.”

From May 26 - June 2, experience a week of family-friendly programming curated by National Black Theatre to provide a central space for folk to be in dialogue with each other and to unearth the compounded/dynamic narratives that rest in the Black Diaspora existence in America. Seeking to uplift the need for narrative change surrounding Black Culture, NBT has curated a roster of dynamic programming that includes performances, social practice demonstrations, classes and discussions throughout the week. All programming will take place on the Kennedy Center campus to help inform, inspire and engage our community in civic and creative discourse. This all leads up to the signature event happening June 1, 2024, The Gathering: A Collective Sonic Ring Shout.

Schedule of Events

May 26 - "Dance Sanctuary" Movement

May 27 - June 2 - Quilt Making Art Installation & Workshop

May 27 - June 2 - "An Acknowledgement to Foggy Bottoms" installation by Mahogany L. Browne

May 30 - The Gathering: Carving The Path from Activism to Liberation (Panel Discussion)

May 31 - The Gathering: "Traditional" Ring Shout curated by Rashida Bumbray

June 1 - The Gathering: A Collective Sonic Ring Shout Performance

June 2 - The Gathering: Learn To Love Yourself: Silent Disco and Portrait Series

All events and artists are subject to change without prior notice.

All ticket prices are subject to change based on demand. Purchase early to lock in prices and the best seats!

This performance is co-produced by National Black Theatre and The Apollo in association with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and is an external rental presented in coordination with the Kennedy Center Campus Rental Office

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About National Black Theatre

NATIONAL BLACK THEATRE (NBT) is a Tony and Emmy Award-nominated institution founded in 1968 by the late visionary artist Dr. Barbara Ann Teer. The nation's first revenue-generating Black arts complex, NBT is the longest-running Black theatre in New York City, one of the oldest theatres founded and consistently operated by a woman of color in the nation, and has been included in the permanent collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. NBT's core mission is to produce transformational theatre that helps to shift the inaccuracies around African Americans' cultural identity by telling authentic stories of Black lives. As an alternative learning environment, NBT uses theatre arts as a means to educate, enrich, entertain, empower and inform the national conscience around current social issues impacting our communities. Under the leadership of Sade Lythcott, CEO, and Jonathan McCrory, Executive Artistic Director, NBT helps re-shape a more inclusive American theatre field by providing an artistically rigorous and culturally

sensitive space for artists of color to experiment, develop and present new work. NBT has worked with trailblazing artists from Nona Hendrix to Jeremy O. Harris, and most recently, has helped launch the careers of Dominique Morisseau, Radha Blank, Mfoniso Udofia, Saheem Ali, Lee Edward Colston II, and

Ebony Noelle Golden. NBT's cultural production remains unparalleled as they incubated Obie Award-winning companies like The Movement Theatre Company and Harlem9's 48 Hours. NBT welcomes more than 90,000 visitors annually, has produced 300+ original works, has won countless awards such as 2 Obie awards, 58 AUDELCO Awards, and a CEBA Award of Merit, and has been nominated for multiple Drama Desk awards. Located in the heart of Harlem, NBT is embarking on a historic major capital redevelopment project that will transform the current property into a 21st-century

destination for Black culture through theatre. They're supported by grants from Booth Ferris Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Ford Foundation, New York Community Trust, Shubert Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Jerome Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone Development Corporation, City Council of New York, City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, New York State Council on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, and private donations. Visit nationalblacktheatre.org or follow NBT on Facebook (@NationalBlackTheatre) and Twitter/Instagram (@NatBlackTheatre).

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 2024, The Apollo opened The Apollo Stages

at the Victoria Theater, marking the first ever expansion and renovation of The Apollo in its nearly 90-year history. The Apollo also has plans to renovate its Historic Theater. For more information about The Apollo, visit www.ApolloTheater.org.

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 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, Jazmine Sullivan, 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.

About American Composers Orchestra

In 1977, a collective of fearless New York City musicians came together to form the American Composers Orchestra (ACO), an ensemble dedicated to the creation, celebration, performance, and promotion of orchestral music by American composers. Over more than 40 years, ACO has blossomed into a national institution that not only cultivates and develops the careers of living composers, but also provides composers a direct pipeline to partnerships with many of America's major symphony orchestras.

In addition to its annual season, presented by Carnegie Hall since 1987, the ACO serves as a New York City hub where the most forward-thinking experimental American musicians come together to hone and realize new art. ACO produces national educational programs for all ages, and composer advancement programs to foster a community of creators, audience, performers, collaborators, and funders – all dedicated to American composition. To date, ACO has performed music by 800 American composers, including over 350 world premieres and newly commissioned works.

ACO's EarShot is the first ongoing, systematic program for developing relationships between composers and orchestras on the national level. EarShot ensures a vibrant musical future by investing in creativity today and has served over 350 composers since inception, who have since won every major composition award, including the Pulitzer, GRAMMY, Grawemeyer, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and Rome Prizes.

ACO has received numerous awards for its work, and ASCAP has awarded ACO its annual prize for adventurous programming 35 times, singling out ACO as "the orchestra that has done the most for new American music in the United States." Learn more at www.americancomposers.org.

National Black Theatre Press Contacts

Edwin Tetteh Jr - edwin@thechambergroup.com

Samuel Koepenick - samuel@thechambergroup.com

Desmond Sam - desmond@thechambergroup.com

The Apollo Press Contact

Sydney Edwards - press@apollotheater.org

American Composers Orchestra Press Contact

Katy Salomon - katy@primoartists.com