AMATEUR NIGHT AT THE APOLLO

2015 SEASON

Apollo Theater Appoints New *Amateur Night* Music Director

Theater’s Signature Show in Support of Emerging Talent Begins 2015 Season Under Music Direction of Michael Mitchell

February 18th Opening Night to Feature Special Guest Artist R&B Singer Jazmine Sullivan

*Wednesday, February 18th at 7:30pm*

(Harlem, NY - January 20, 2015) - On Wednesday, February 18th, *Amateur Night at the Apollo* returns with a new music director, Michael Mitchell, marking the 81st year of the weekly live show. *Amateur Night* will also kick off the season with special musical guest, multi-Grammy nominated R&B singer/songwriter Jazmine Sullivan and new contestants vying for the chance to win the title of Super Top Dog and the grand prize of $10,000. Sponsored by Coca-Cola, the Theater’s signature show, *Amateur Night* has played a major role in the cultivation of artists and in the emergence of innovative musical genres including jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues, soul, and hip-hop. An important resource for discovering new talent, the show has recently expanded to include a new theme song, composed in 2014; *Amateur Night Digital*, an app that allows fans to track the progress of contestants; and the program’s first trans-Atlantic competition, in London in 2012. *Amateur Night* has long been revered by artists as a transformative experience where up-and-coming talent hone their craft, and where audience response can help make or break a career.

The show’s new Music Director, Michael Mitchell has an array of musical credits under his belt including Associate Conductor for the smash Broadway hit, *Motown the Musical*. Throughout his career, Mitchell has worked with a diverse group of artists including Wayne Brady, Kid Cudi, Michael J. Fox, Bob Mintzer, Hinton Battle, Joan Jett, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Billy Porter, LaChanze, Capathia Jenkins, Lillias White, Joan Osborne, Christian McBride, The Boys
and Girls Choir of Harlem Alumni Ensemble, and many others. As music director, Mitchell will lead the Amateur Night at the Apollo house band. Mr. Mitchell will also provide guidance and support to contestants during rehearsal, along with Amateur Night Producer Marion J. Caffey.

“We are thrilled to welcome Michael Mitchell to our Amateur Night team,” said Amateur Night Producer Marion J. Caffey. “Mitchell’s experience and creativity as a music director will help ensure that Amateur Night continues to be one of New York’s most popular live entertainment experiences and that it remains an important launching pad and defining experience for emerging artists.”

“I am always amazed at the talent that graces the Apollo stage, from the 5-year-olds to the 85-year-olds - all with the same hopes and dreams,” said Michael Mitchell. “I am honored to be able to be a catalyst to help the contestants achieve, grow, and learn from their Apollo experience.”

Amateur Night Opening Night, on February 18th, will be hosted by comedian Capone and will feature staples like C.P. Lacey in the role of the “Executioner” (the character who sweeps “booed” contestants off the stage), Joe Gray the “Set It Off Man,” and the Apollo’s Amateur Night house band led by new music director, Michael Mitchell. The evening will also feature special guest artist R&B singer/songwriter Jazmine Sullivan.

After a four-year hiatus, Jazmine Sullivan recently released her highly anticipated third studio album, Reality Show (RCA Records), featuring the emotive new single “Forever Don’t Last.” The multi-Grammy-nominated artist, who has built a massive following with her soulful voice and catchy lyrics, is no stranger to the Apollo stage. At the tender age of 11, Sullivan performed on the popular television show Showtime at the Apollo. Now, the Philly native is back as an established artist with three albums under her belt. Jazmine’s debut album Fearless, featured the chart-topping hit singles “Need You Bad” and “Bust Your Windows,” and earned her an amazing seven Grammy nominations including Best New Artist. Jazmine’s second album, Love Me Back, garnered her eighth Grammy nomination.

Since introducing the first Amateur contests in 1934, Amateur Night has been the launching pad for some of the biggest artists in the world including D’Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Michael Jackson, James Brown, and Ella Fitzgerald who won the very first year. Now, 81 years later Amateur Night continues to be a primary source for discovering new talent and spotlighting up-and-coming artists including Machine Gun Kelly, Sung Lee, NUMBERS, Matthew Hashimoto, Moses Harper, Matthew Whitaker, and Nathan Foley.

Ticket Information
Ticket prices for Amateur Night begin at $20 and are available at The Apollo Theater Box Office: (212) 531-5305, 253 West 125th Street. Ticketmaster at 1-800-745-3000 or www.ticketmaster.com. Amateur Night’s 2015 Season runs from February 18th through November 25th on Wednesday nights at 7:30pm.

Box Office Hours
Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri – 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Wednesday – 10:00 am - 8:30 pm
Saturday – 12:00 pm - 6:00pm

About Michael O. Mitchell
Michael Mitchell is an accomplished musician with an eclectic style of playing pulling from his classical training, gospel roots, love of jazz, and gift from God. Mitchell is a graduate of DePauw University and has an extensive music career working on and off Broadway. Most recently he was the Associate Conductor for the Broadway smash hit Motown: The Musical. He has also
performed keys and organ in Broadway hits such as *Memphis, Nice Work If You Can Get It,* and *Baby It’s You.* As an arranger Mitchell has contributed to important events such as the Winter Olympic Games. He has worked with industry heavy weights including Wayne Brady, Matthew Broderick, Joseph Joubert, Lillias White, LaChanze, and Ted Neely. Mitchell’s television and national tour credits include: PBS/HDNet’s *3 Mo’ Divas,* *The Today Show,* and *Good Morning America.*

**About Jazmine Sullivan**
In 2008, Jazmine Sullivan released her debut album *Fearless,* which featured the chart-topping, hit singles “Need You Bad” and “Bust Your Windows,” and earned the Philly native an amazing seven Grammy nominations including Best New Artist. Jazmine released her second album, the critically acclaimed *Love Me Back* in 2010, of which the Associated Press declared as “something amazing” and consequently garnered her an eighth Grammy nomination. The recipient of Billboard’s Rising Star Award, Jazmine released her highly-anticipated third album, *Reality Show* on RCA Records on January 13, 2015.

**About the Apollo Theater**
The legendary Apollo Theater—the soul of American culture—plays a vital role in cultivating emerging talents 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, performance art, spoken word initiatives, and more. Recent highlights have included *James Brown: Get on the Good Foot,* which will begin an international tour in 2015, the *Africa Now!* Festival, and *Apollo Club Harlem.* Since introducing the first Amateur Night contests in 1934, the Apollo Theater 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 Lauryn Hill, Machine Gun Kelly, Miri Ben Ari, D’Angelo, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Michael Jackson, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, and Stevie Wonder; and the Apollo’s forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy.

The Apollo Theater is a not-for-profit organization and currently in the midst of fundraising for its 21st Century Apollo Campaign, created to extend the institution’s role in fostering artistic innovation and in building appreciation of American culture around the world.
For more information, visit [www.apollotheater.org](http://www.apollotheater.org).

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Lead annual support is also provided by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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