

# APOLLO 85

## APOLLO THEATER'S 14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL SPRING GALA RAISES \$2 MILLION

The Gala Concert, Hosted by **Amanda Seales**, Included  
An appearance by **Otis Williams** and Musical Performances by **The Temptations**,  
**Estelle, Jose James, Liv Warfield, Morris Day and The Time, Black Violin**  
And **James Harkness** from The Cast of Broadway's *Ain't Too Proud: The Life & Times of The Temptations*

The Celebration Honored **Robert F. Smith** and **Vista Equity Partners** with  
The Corporate Award for Outstanding Leadership in  
Innovation, Diversity and Global Community

*Press images can be found [here](#). (Credit on all usage: **Shahar Azran**)*

**HARLEM, NY – June 11, 2019** – Last evening, the **Apollo Theater** celebrated its 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Spring Gala, raising over \$2 million for its year-round artistic and community programming initiatives. The concert portion of the evening was hosted by comedian **Amanda Seales**, and opened with a show-stopping musical performance by **Black Violin**. The celebrations continued with crowd-pleasing performances by **Estelle, Jose James, Liv Warfield, Morris Day and The Time, Kelvin Rolston, Jr., Caleb Hawley, Cheryl Pepsii Riley**, and **James Harkness** from the cast of Broadway's *Ain't Too Proud: The Life and Times of The Temptations*. The energy of **The Temptations** was in full force at the Theater, as founding member **Otis Williams** made a special appearance, and audiences were treated to a celebratory performance from the current touring version of the group: **Larry Braggs, Willie Green, Ron Tyson, Terry Weeks**. The Temptations were honored just days before with a place on the esteemed Apollo Walk of Fame.

The theme of the night was "Icons Revisited," and the performances paid tribute to legendary artists that are deeply embedded in the Theater's historic DNA; Bill Withers, Aretha Franklin, Donnie Hathaway and Billie Holiday, who was saluted with a moving performance of "Strange Fruit" by singer **John Holiday** (no relation).

Each year as part of its Spring Gala, the Apollo recognizes individuals and corporations for their outstanding contributions to the performing arts, community leadership, and philanthropic support of initiatives in the African American community. Last evening, the **2019 Corporate Award** was presented to **Robert F. Smith** and **Vista Equity Partners**. **Martin Taylor**, Principal at Vista Equity Group, accepted the award, expressing his respect for the Apollo Theater and its mission in lifting up future generations: "Stars are born and legends are made here." Smith, who recently relieved 400 students at Morehouse College from their loan debt, also spoke to audience in a video message, praising the Apollo for its legacy of community.

The Gala Concert was closed out by the **Apollo Mass Choir** under the direction of Tony Award® winner **Jason Michael Webb**.

The night continued until midnight with guests dancing and sipping cocktails provided by **Moet** and **Belvedere Vodka** at the event's festive after party. Held in an elegantly decorated tent created and designed by celebrated event designer and Apollo board member **Bronson van Wyck**, guests were

transported back in time to the year of The Apollo's founding. The tent was richly decorated in black, gold, and stage curtain red creating an elegant atmosphere that evoked the classic theater from yesteryear. In the center of the tent a gramophone rising over 15 feet tall served as a centerpiece paying homage to the countless legendary tunes that have been performed in The Apollo's hallowed hall.

Following its 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, the Apollo will continue its first phase in creating the Apollo Performing Arts Center, with the theaters at the Victoria. Scheduled to open in 2020, the project marks the first physical expansion in the theater's history. For more information about the theaters at the Victoria and the Apollo's mission to work with and support a greater number of emerging and established artists of color across disciplines, click [here](#).

**Gala Chairs:** Kimberley Hatchett and Karen H. Pavlin

**Honorary Chairs:** Laura and Richard D. Parsons, Anna Chapman and Ronald O. Perelman

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### **About the Apollo Theater**

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 special programs such as the blockbuster concert *Bruno Mars Live at the Apollo*, the world premiere theatrical reading of Ta-Nehisi Coates's National Book Award-winning *Between the World and Me, 100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella*, the annual Africa Now! Festival, and the recent New York premiere of the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*. The Apollo is a performing arts presenting organization that also produces festivals and large-scale dance and music works organized around a set of core initiatives that celebrate and extend the Apollo's legacy through a contemporary lens; global festivals including the Women of the World (WOW) Festival and *Breakin' Convention*; international and U.S.-based artist presentations focused on a specific theme; and Special Projects, multidisciplinary collaborations with partner organizations.

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 Michael Jackson, Ella Fitzgerald, Stevie Wonder, Billie Holiday, James Brown, D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Dave Chappelle, Machine Gun Kelly, Miri Ben Ari, Sarah Vaughan, Gladys Knight, and Luther Vandross; and the Apollo's forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy.

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