

APOLLO EDUCATION

# LIVE WIRE

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**HOW I GOT OVER: THE SPIRIT OF GOSPEL MUSIC**

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A conversation with  
Judith Casselberry, Charrise Barron, Mellonee Burnim,  
Joyce Marie Jackson, Randal Jacobs, and Matthew D. Morrison

Performances by  
Marcelle Davies-Lashley, Jhetti, and Samuel Guillaume

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Sunday, December 10, 2017

3:00 p.m.

Apollo Theater



**Front Cover:** Mahalia Jackson; March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom 1957

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# LIVE WIRE: HOW I GOT OVER - THE SPIRIT OF GOSPEL MUSIC

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In 1963, when Mahalia Jackson sang “How I Got Over” before 250,000 protesters at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, she epitomized the sound and sentiment of Black Americans one hundred years after Emancipation. To sing of looking back to see “how I got over,” while protesting racial violence and social, civic, economic, and political oppression, both celebrated victories won and allowed all to envision current struggles in the past tense. Gospel is the good news. Look how far God has brought us. Look at where God will take us. On its face, the gospel song composed by Clara Ward in 1951, spoke to personal trials and tribulations overcome by the power of Jesus Christ. Black gospel music, however, has always occupied a space between the push to individualistic Christian salvation and community liberation in the context of an unjust society— a declaration of faith by the communal “I”.

From its incubation at the turn of the 20th century to its emergence as a genre in the 1930s, gospel was the sound of Black people on the move. People with purpose, vision, and a spirit of experimentation— clear on what they left behind, unsure of what lay ahead. Vision and experimentation have also proved controversial, as composers, musicians, singers, and audiences have blurred the bounds of sacred and secular by incorporating sounds, images, and technologies of each new era—from ragtime to hip hop, from churches to concert halls, from oral transmission to selling sheet music, from records to videos.

Today, we gather to chart key moments and themes in the development of gospel music. Rather than sacred purity, the convergence of sound and performance styles of gospel shows the degree to which a border between sacred and secular is illusory.

Scholars have noted that traditional African spiritual systems, from which many enslaved Africans in America came, had no word for religion—the spirit infused all of life. In many ways, the sound of gospel has held to that ancient ethos, infusing its spirit into countless musical and performance styles.

Judith Casselberry

December 2017

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## LIVE WIRE: HOW I GOT OVER - BIOGRAPHIES

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**Judith Casselberry** is an associate professor of Africana Studies at Bowdoin College, teaching courses on African American women's religious lives, music and spirituality in popular culture, music and social movements, and issues in Black intellectual thought. Her interest in African American religious and cultural studies, with particular attention to gender, guides her research agenda. Professor Casselberry received her

Bachelors of Music from Berklee College of Music; M.A. in ethnomusicology from Wesleyan University; and Ph.D. in African American Studies and Anthropology from Yale University. She has held visiting appointments at Barnard College, Vassar College, New York University, Princeton, and Harvard.

Casselberry's current ethnography, *The Labor of Faith: Gender and Power in Black Apostolic Pentecostalism* (Duke University Press, 2017), employs feminist labor theories to examine the spiritual, material, social, and organizational work of women in a New York-based Pentecostal denomination. She is co-editor with Elizabeth Pritchard of *Spirit on the Move: Black Women and Pentecostalism in Diaspora*. This collection of essays by leading scholars examines Black women's engagement with Pentecostalism in Mozambique, Ghana, Nigeria, Brazil, Haiti, Grenada, and the U.S. (forthcoming in Religious Cultures of African and African Diaspora People series with Duke University Press). She has contributed to numerous journals and edited volumes including *Transforming Anthropology: The Journal of Black Anthropologists*, *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, and *Black Perspectives*. In addition to research and publishing on organized Pentecostalism, she is working on a project examining the transnational Pentecostal roots of international music icon Grace Jones and their imprint on her performance aesthetics and identity.

Casselberry's interest in the links between lettered and performed scholarship comes from her career as an academic and performer. As a vocalist and guitarist, she currently performs with Toshi Reagon and BIGLovely, and has enjoyed a career as an international recording artist with Casselberry-DuPr e and JUCA. She has shared stages with Sweet Honey in the Rock, Odetta, Elvis Costello, Stevie Wonder, Etta James, and Mavis Staples among others. Casselberry served as consultant for *Radical Harmonies* (2002), a documentary about the women's music cultural movement, and for the award-winning PBS documentary by Yoruba Richen, *The New Black* (2013), which uncovers the complicated relationships between African American and LGBT civil rights movements and the black church and anti-gay Christian right wing. Follow her on Twitter: @jscasselberry

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## LIVE WIRE: HOW I GOT OVER - BIOGRAPHIES

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**Charrise Barron** is a Postdoctoral Associate in the Institute of Sacred Music at Yale University. She recently earned her Ph.D. from Harvard University in African and African American Studies, with a secondary concentration in music. She also holds a Master of Divinity *summa cum laude* from Yale Divinity School. Her seminar at Yale, entitled “Gospel Music in the Church and World,” analyzes the ways in which African American gospel has been produced and performed for both church and popular consumption. Previously, as a Riley Scholar-in-Music at Colorado College, she taught classes on gospel and black protest music. She has also guest lectured on African American religion and black popular music for several Harvard University courses. Barron is currently writing a book on contemporary African American gospel music. Her research, writing, and presentations have addressed a range of topics in African American music, religion, and history, as well as in African gospel and global Christian music. She is a Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) Doctoral Fellowship alumna, and a member of the Harvard University Society of Horizons Scholars. Beyond her academic work, Barron is an ordained Christian minister and gospel keyboardist, singer, and composer. She has performed and directed music programming in churches throughout the United States and abroad.



**Mellonee Burnim** is professor emerita in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, and past Director of the Archives of African American Music and Culture at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her tenure at Indiana included appointments as Director of the Ethnomusicology Institute and as adjunct professor and chairperson in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies. She is a Distinguished Alumnus of the University of North Texas and was selected as the first Distinguished Faculty Fellow in Ethnomusicology and Ritual Studies at the Yale Institute for Sacred Music in 2004. In 2001, Burnim was selected as a Ford Foundation womanist scholar at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta.

As an ethnomusicologist with a specialization in African American religious music, Burnim has done fieldwork and led workshops on African American religious music across the United States, as well as in Cuba and Malawi. Founding Director of the Indiana University African American Choral Ensemble at Indiana University in 1975, she has also served as Minister of Music in churches of various denominations, including Fairview United

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## LIVE WIRE: HOW I GOT OVER - BIOGRAPHIES

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Methodist Church in Bloomington, a position she has held for the past fifteen years. She is co-editor of *African American Music: An Introduction*, now in its second edition (Routledge 2015), and *Issues in African American Music: Race, Power, Gender and Representation* (Routledge 2016).



**Joyce Marie Jackson** is a professor in the Department of Geography and Anthropology, former Director of African and African American Studies, and affiliate faculty of Women's and Gender Studies at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. She earned her Ph.D. from Indiana University, Bloomington in folklore and ethnomusicology. Her key research interests center on African and African diaspora performance-centered studies, sacred and secular rituals, cultural and community sustainability, and women's agency. Jackson's ethnographic work has spanned the areas of gospel music's changing nature, rural roots of jazz, New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians, Baptist Easter Rock ritual, Trinidadian and Haitian carnivalesque performance identities, and S n galese women's healing rituals. She has served as Interim Director of the Louisiana/Caribbean Studies Program and is currently Director of the LSU Academic Program Abroad to Haiti (Jacmel). She has authored many scholarly articles and book chapters, as well as *Life in the Village: A Cultural Memory of the Fazendeville Community*, curated many exhibits including *New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians: Exploring a Community Tradition from an Insider's View* for the Smithsonian Institution and has recently produced a documentary film titled, *Easter Rock*, which was selected and featured in the *Ethnografilm Festival* in Paris, France (2016). Finally, she has received many distinguished national awards including the National Academy of Arts and Sciences Award, Rockefeller Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship.



**Sir Jacobs** is a writer, artistic director, and performance artist whose performed and exhibited at the Studio Museum of Harlem (2010), Detroit Institute of Art (2013), and MOMA PS1 (2016).

His life's work consists of being a historical storyteller of glamour, style, and art through the lens and voice of Melanin Efficient cultures around the world.

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## LIVE WIRE: HOW I GOT OVER - BIOGRAPHIES

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He currently divides his time between Harlem and Berlin as he contributes regularly to *The Tenth Magazine* and guest lectures at various institutions such as Barnard College and Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

Jacobs' most recent book, *A Common Thread*, is a portrait series of the American flag photographed alongside the likely descendants of those that sewed it, can be found at Printed Matter.



**Matthew D. Morrison**, a native of Charlotte, North Carolina, is an Assistant Professor in the Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Matthew holds a Ph.D. in Musicology from Columbia University, an M.A. in Musicology from The Catholic University of America, and was a Presidential music scholar at Morehouse College, where he studied violin and conducting. Prior to

his appointment, Matthew was a Postdoctoral Faculty Fellow through NYU's Office of the Provost, and he has served as adjunct faculty at Vassar College, as well as Dean of Faculty for the W. E. B. Du Bois Scholars Institute housed at Princeton University. Matthew has been a research fellow with the *Modern Moves* research project at King's College, London, funded by the European Research Council Advanced Grant, and has held fellowships from the American Musicological Society, Mellon Foundation, the Library of Congress, and the Tanglewood Music Center. Matthew is also a consultant, contractor, and curator for diverse performances featuring musicians of color.

Matthew has served as Editor-in-Chief of the peer-reviewed music journal, *Current Musicology*, where he published a special issue on *Race, Sound, and Performance* (Spring 2012), featuring an interdisciplinary group of scholars writing about the import of sound and music in society. His published work has appeared in publications such as the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, the *Grove Dictionary of American Music*, and on Oxford University Press' online music blog. Matthew's current book project is titled, *Blacksound: Making Race and Identity in American Popular Music*.



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## LIVE WIRE: HOW I GOT OVER - THE SPIRIT OF GOSPEL MUSIC

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**Image:** Clara Ward and The Famous Ward Singers; Apollo Colorized Photo Archives



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# LIVE WIRE: HOW I GOT OVER - LISTENING STATION

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Scan the QR code to hear selections from today's playlist on Spotify

***Fifty Miles of Elbow Room***

Rev. F.W. McGee

***Is My Living in Vain?***

The Clark Sisters

***Oh Happy Day***

The Edwin Hawkins Singers

***Precious Lord***

Mahalia Jackson

***Stomp (Remix)***

God's Property from Kirk Franklin's Nu Nation

***Total Praise***

Richard Smallwood

***Try Jesus***

The Roberta Martin Singers

***Up Above My Head***

Sister Rosetta Tharpe

***You Brought the Sunshine***

The Clark Sisters



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# APOLLO THEATER: UPCOMING EVENTS

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## **Holiday Joy: A Gospel Celebration**

Saturday, December 16 at 8PM

*Featuring: Yolanda Adams,  
Donnie McClurkin, and The Greater Allen  
Cathedral Choir; Hosted By Liz Black*

The Apollo stage is set for a night of soul stirring Holiday gospel music featuring multi-platinum superstar and five-time Grammy Award-winner Yolanda Adams (“Open My Heart”, “The Battle is the Lord’s”) with Grammy Award-winner Donnie McClurkin (“We Fall Down,” “Stand”). With their stunning voices, dazzling energy and unshakable faith, Yolanda Adams and Donnie McClurkin promise to lift your Holiday spirits and bless your Christmas season.

Use the code **LWJOY** and save 20% on tickets!

## **Kwanzaa Celebration: Regeneration Night**

Saturday, December 30

2PM & 7:30 PM

*Featuring Abel R. Salaam’s Forces of Nature  
Dance Theatre*

Since 2006, the Apollo has established an annual show to celebrate this holiday tradition on one day of the Kwanzaa holiday. The Apollo’s celebration is a joyful evening of dance and music honoring the principles of Kwanzaa—family, community, and culture.



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# LIVE WIRE: UPCOMING EVENTS

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## COMING FEBRUARY 2018

### **On the Record: Black Music and the Civil Rights Movement**

Tuesday, February 6, 2018 at 6:30 PM

Join us for this discussion on the history of Black music, and Black-owned record companies' relationship to equality and civil rights.

Moderated by **Jason King**, journalist, musician, DJ and Associate Professor and founding faculty member at New York University's Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music.

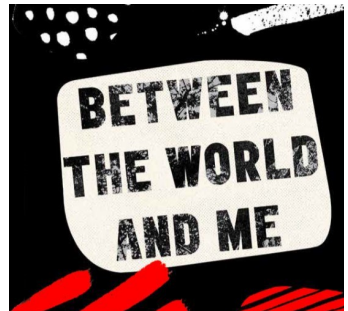


## COMING MARCH 2018

### **Between the World and Me**

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates' "Between the World and Me," offers a powerful framework for understanding our nation's history, the idea of race, and current crisis.

Live Wire will present a conversation with the creative team behind the Apollo Theater's theatrical performance of Coates' "Between the World and Me," ahead of the premiere of the production on April 2 and April 3, 2018.



For more information visit [www.apollotheater.org](http://www.apollotheater.org)

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## ABOUT THE APOLLO THEATER

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The Apollo is a national treasure that has had significant impact on the development of American culture and its popularity around the world. Since introducing the first Amateur Night contests in 1934, the Apollo Theater has played a major role in cultivating artists and in the emergence of innovative musical genres including jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues, soul, and hip-hop. Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, Sammy Davis, Jr., James Brown, Michael Jackson, Bill Cosby, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill, and countless others began their road to stardom on the Apollo's stage. Based on its cultural significance and architecture, the Apollo Theater received state and city landmark designation in 1983 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. [www.apollotheater.org](http://www.apollotheater.org)

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## APOLLO EDUCATION PROGRAM

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The Apollo Theater Education Program extends the Apollo's commitment to enhancing the life of the community. The Education Program focuses on four distinct areas of learning and engagement: residencies, workshops and tours for schools; curriculum materials aligned to state and national learning standards and study guides derived from the Theater's history; career development for teens and adults through the Apollo Theater Academy; and discussions and lectures for the public that highlight the history of the Apollo and its impact on American art, culture and entertainment.

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## LIVE WIRE

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Produced by the Apollo Theater Education Program, *Apollo Live Wire* is a discussion series that focuses on the arts, culture, entertainment and other topics pertinent to the legacy of the Apollo Theater.



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[Podcasts of Career Panels and Live Wire: mixcloud.com/ApolloEd/](https://www.mixcloud.com/ApolloEd/)

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Generous support from Apollo EmpowerHer, Conscious Kids Inc., Con Edison, Ella Fitzgerald Charitable Foundation, Insuperity, The Reginald F. Lewis Foundation, Ellis L. Phillips Foundation, Pinkerton Foundation, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.