

# APOLLO

## Apollo Theater Spring 2020 Programming

**Season Highlights Include**  
**Grammy-Winning World Music Superstar Oumou Sangaré**  
**Presented by the Apollo's *Africa Now!* and the African Film Festival**  
**30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration;**  
**Screening of the Film *Shaft* Accompanied by**  
**Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber, Performing the Score Live;**  
**Elaine Welteroth and Harriette Cole as part of**  
**WOW (Women of the World); and**  
**Apollo favorites, including**  
***Amateur Night at the Apollo, Apollo Music Café, and Apollo Comedy Club***

Harlem, NY – (November 19, 2019) – Today, the iconic nonprofit Apollo Theater announced details of its spring 2020 season featuring genre-spanning performances—from music, dance, and theater to comedy and film screenings—that continue the theater's strong mission of articulating African American narratives through cultural programming. Season highlights include the Apollo's *Africa Now!* and **African Film Festival 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** presenting the legendary **Oumou Sangaré**; **Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber** performing Isaac Hayes' Academy Award-winning score *Shaft*, alongside a screening of the film; the Apollo Salon Series presentation of *A Time to Love*, a musical theater collaboration with National Black Theatre; and the signature series that brings patrons to the Apollo year-round, ***Amateur Night at the Apollo, Apollo Music Café, and Apollo Comedy Club***. Through its programming, educational, and community initiatives, the Apollo continues to advance its commitment to creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century performing arts canon, providing a home to artists and the community, while tackling important social issues for Harlem, New York, and the nation.

“From *Africa Now!* to the live score of *Shaft* by Burnt Sugar, and the ongoing *Uptown Hall* and *Live Wire* conversations, we look forward to the discussions and collaborations that will happen not only at the Apollo, but in the community at large as we continue to offer a home to artists and audiences to honor Harlem's rich history,” said **Kamilah Forbes**, Apollo Theater Executive Producer.

The Apollo, widely considered the epicenter of Black culture, kicks off the season with its annual MLK celebration, presented in partnership with WNYC. This year's free event, on January 12, is ***The Strategic King: MLK's Visionary Leadership***, part of Apollo Theater's *Uptown Hall* series. Moderated by WNYC's Peabody Award-winning host Brian Lehrer and *All Things Considered* host Jami Floyd, with WQXR's Terrance McKnight serving as Master of Ceremonies, *Apollo Uptown Hall – The Strategic King* will examine Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s immense skills as both a political and media strategist. A panel of activists, faith leaders, journalists, scholars, and more will discuss the tactics Dr. King and his colleagues used to influence legislation, engaged the media to build support for their cause, and what can be learned from their strategies that would further today's movements. For the first time the event will take place a

week before the King Holiday weekend and recorded in front of a live audience for future broadcast the following week on WNYC and public radio stations nationwide. Among the evening's panelists are former U.S. Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey, Color of Change President Rashad Robinson, *Washington Post* opinion writer Jonathan Capehart, visual artist Carrie Mae Weems, and others.

The following month, on Saturday, February 1, the Apollo will begin its celebration of Black History Month with ***Apollo Open House: Celebration of Cool***, a free event co-hosted by tour director Billy "Mr. Apollo" Mitchell and Jenna Flanagan, host of *MetroFocus*, as seen on THIRTEEN, WLIW21 and NJTV. Apollo Open House will feature live performances and multi-media presentations looking back on the Apollo's famed history and forward to the spring season and beyond to the opening of the theaters at the Victoria in the fall of 2020. This event will also include a preview of the PBS documentary *American Masters – Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool* before its PBS broadcast premiere on THIRTEEN, followed by a post-film panel with director Stanley Nelson, musician James Mtume and more names to be announced at a later date, moderated by NJTV News Correspondent/Anchor and WBGO reporter Michael Hill. With full access to the Miles Davis Estate, the film features never-before-seen footage, outtakes from recording sessions and rare photos, as well as luminaries such as Quincy Jones, Carlos Santana, Clive Davis, Wayne Shorter, and Ron Carter discussing the life and career of a true visionary and originator who defies categorization.

The Theater continues to expand its cinematic offerings through its ***Apollo Film*** series with a screening of the 1971 film *Shaft*, accompanied by a live performance of Isaac Hayes' Academy Award-winning score by **Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber** on Saturday, February 29. Greg Tate, cultural critic and the founder/conductor of Burnt Sugar, will lead the group as it plays along with the film and delivers a Burnt Sugar improvisational twist. The "jam army" freely juggles a wide swath of the experimental soul-jazz-hip-hop-and-rock spectrum. To add to the atmosphere, the audience will be encouraged to wear their best Black Power-inspired fashion, building on *Shaft* and the host of 70s films that captured the style that continues to influence fashion today. On Thursday, February 20 and Thursday, May 21 ***Apollo Film Presents: ImageNation's Cocktails & Cinema*** returns, featuring films and media that showcase the global Black experience. Films will be announced at a later date. The Apollo's Black History Month activities are supported by the National Endowment of the Arts.

The Apollo Theater has served as the New York City host of the WOW - Women of the World Festival every other year since 2015. This year, as part of Women's History Month, the Apollo will host a special WOW event, a conversation between author and former *Teen Vogue* Editor **Elaine Welteroth** and author, editor and motivational speaker, presentation coach and former Editor in Chief for *Ebony Magazine* **Harriette Cole**. The two will discuss Welteroth's first book "More than Enough," which was published by Viking Press this past summer, and the importance of mentorship among women. The event will take place on March 14 and is presented in collaboration with Women of the World Festival and in partnership with the UN Commission on Women.

On Saturday, April 4 the Apollo's ***Africa Now!*** and **African Film Festival 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** will present the Grammy Award winner **Oumou Sangaré**. The annual concert celebrating the best of today's African contemporary music and spotlighting its ongoing impact around the world will highlight the Malian singer, who has been referred to as "The Songbird of Wassoulou." Sangaré has performed in front of thousands of people the world over and was featured in the 2008 documentary film *Throw Down Your Heart*. She has also collaborated with artists as diverse as Bela Fleck, Herbie Hancock, Seal, P!nk, and Jeff Beck. For her Apollo debut, Sangaré will perform music that spans traditional Malian sounds to contemporary music coming out of Africa and across the globe.

The ***Apollo Theater Salon Series*** returns in April to present *A Time to Love*, a musical theater work-in-progress being developed in partnership with National Black Theatre. Written by NBT's CEO Sade

Lythcott, the musical is a tale of love in the midst of social unrest, set against the backdrop of national protests around the decay of civility, idealism, and street loyalty.

A cultural anchor in Harlem and New York City, the Apollo continues to be a catalyst for social engagement through its community and education offerings. This season, the institution will continue to offer its free *Live Wire* conversations, the Theater's popular series that honors iconic artists who have impacted the arts and culture. *Live Wire* discussions in 2020 include *Bad Mother\*%#!* | *Black Music on the Big Screen* featuring Greg Tate, founder and musical director of Burnt Sugar; *Aretha!*, a discussion that will honor the legacy of the great Aretha Franklin led by writer and cultural critic Emily Lordi; *Dancing in the Streets – Rhythm Rebels*, that will consider the history and larger cultural context of social dance in Black and Latinx communities; and a special *Live Wire* in June to mark celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of artist and activist Hazel Scott.

The Apollo Young Producers, a collective comprised of Apollo Theater Academy alumni who create and develop events to connect young artists to the Apollo, will continue to present events throughout the year, including a WOW: Teen Summit in March that will explore the impact of young women in politics on both a local and global scale. Additional education offerings will include Apollo Theater Academy Career Panels, part of the institution's career development programming for teens and adults; and its ongoing School Day Live performances, which extend the Apollo experience to new generations of theatre-goers, while providing exciting opportunities to learn about the arts, history, and culture.

The Apollo's famed *Amateur Night at the Apollo*, the original, large-scale talent show and one of the longest-running continuous events in New York City, returns to Harlem for its 86<sup>th</sup> season. In addition to launching *Amateur Night Japan* in 2019, the first international licensing partnership for the program, *Amateur Night at the Apollo* also recently welcomed its newest "Set It Off Man," Greginald Spencer, who returns for his first full season in February. Artists such as Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Luther Vandross, Lauryn Hill, D'Angelo, and H.E.R. have all rubbed the famed tree of hope before taking the stage. This year's line-up of contestants will compete for an ultimate cash prize of \$20,000. Coca-Cola is the sponsor of *Amateur Night at the Apollo*.

Once a month, the Theater celebrates its comedic roots with the *Apollo Comedy Club*, presented in partnership with the legendary Bob Sumner—producer of Def Comedy Jam, and the creator of Laff Mobb on Aspire TV. *Apollo Comedy Club* features the best up-and-coming talent in comedy today with more than 15 comedians this season. Full details and line up to be announced at a later date.

The Apollo continues its longtime support of up-and-coming musical artists through its monthly *Apollo Music Café*, which takes place on Friday and Saturday nights at 10:00 p.m. on the Apollo Soundstage. This fall, *Apollo Music Café* will feature more than a dozen forward-thinking, innovative artists performing across genres, from R&B, hip-hop, soul, and jazz to pop, funk, and rock.

While spring 2020 programming will take the stage at the Apollo's landmark home, the institution continues to develop the theaters at the Victoria, marking the first physical expansion in the Apollo's history and the first phase in the expansion to the Apollo Performing Arts Center. 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](#).

\*\*A complete calendar listing of spring 2020 programming is available on the following page. \*\*

### **TICKET INFO**

Tickets for *Apollo Comedy Club* and *Apollo Music Café* are available now at the Apollo Theater Box Office: (212) 531-5305, 253 West 125<sup>th</sup> Street, and Ticketmaster at 1-800-745-3000 or [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com). Please check [www.apollotheater.org](http://www.apollotheater.org) for updates on ticket availability to additional 2020 spring season programming.

## **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, 100: The Apollo Celebrates Ella*, the annual *Africa Now! Festival*, the New York premiere of the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*, and the world premiere of *Between the World and Me*. 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 D’Angelo, Lauryn Hill, H.E.R., Machine Gun Kelly, Miri Ben Ari, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, and Stevie Wonder; and the Apollo’s forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy.

## **Support**

*The Apollo's season is made possible by leadership support from Coca-Cola, Citi, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, and the Jerome L. Greene Arts Access Fund in the New York Community Trust*

*Public support for the Apollo Theater is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.*

###

## **CALENDAR OF APOLLO THEATER’S SPRING 2020 SEASON:**

### **Uptown Hall – The Strategic King: MLK’s Visionary Leadership**

Sunday, January 12 at 3:00 p.m.

Free with RSVP

Moderated by WNYC’s Peabody Award-winning host Brian Lehrer and local *All Things Considered* host Jami Floyd, with WQXR’s Terrance McKnight serving as Master of Ceremonies, *Apollo Uptown Hall - The Strategic King: MLK’s Visionary Leadership* will examine Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s immense skills as both a political and media strategist. A panel of activists, faith leaders, journalists, scholars, and more will discuss the tactics Dr. King and his colleagues used to influence legislation, engaged the media to build support for their cause, and what can be learned from their strategies that would further today’s movements. For the first time the event will take place in front of a live Apollo audience on January 12, a week before

the King Holiday weekend, and recorded by WNYC's award-winning producers for future broadcast on WNYC and public radio stations' airwaves nationwide and internationally via the internet on and around the January 20 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

Panelists include journalist, educator, and author Herb Boyd; author Taylor Branch; Reverend Canon Kelly Brown Douglas; *Washington Post* opinion writer Jonathan Capehart; national youth director for National Action Network Mary-Pat Hector; Harvard professor of history, race, and public policy Khalil Gibran Muhammad; poet, playwright, and performance artist Jessica Care Moore; Color of Change President Rashad Robinson; former South Carolina State Representative Bakari Sellers; visual artist Carrie Mae Weems; and United States Poet Laureate in 2012 and 2013 Natasha Trethewey.

**Apollo Open House: Celebration of Cool**

Saturday, February 1 at 2:00 p.m.

Free with RSVP

Free and open to the public, the Apollo Open House is co-sponsored by THIRTEEN and Firelight Media, with support from WBGO-FM. Co-hosted by tour director, Billy "Mr. Apollo" Mitchell, and Jenna Flanagan, host of *MetroFocus*, as seen on THIRTEEN, WLIW21 and NJTV. ***Open House: Celebration of Cool*** will feature live performances and multi-media presentations looking back on the Apollo's famed history and future. This event will also include a preview of the PBS documentary *American Masters – Miles Davis: Birth of the Cool* before its PBS broadcast premiere on THIRTEEN, followed by a post-film panel with director Stanley Nelson, musician James Mtume and more names to be announced at a later date, moderated by NJTV News Correspondent/Anchor and WBGO reporter Michael Hill. With full access to the Miles Davis Estate, the film will feature never-before-seen footage, outtakes from recording sessions and rare photos, as well as luminaries such as Quincy Jones, Carlos Santana, Clive Davis, Wayne Shorter, and Ron Carter discussing the life and career of a true visionary and originator who defies categorization.

**Live Wire – Bad Mother\*% ^#! | Black Music on the Big Screen**

Tuesday, February 18 at 6:30 p.m.

Free with RSVP

Greg Tate, founder and musical director of Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber, guides audiences inconsideration on Isaac Hayes' timeless soundtrack for the 1972 film *Shaft* and other classics from the era when soul and R&B took over the movie screen.

**Apollo Film Presents: ImageNation's Cocktails & Cinema**

Thursday, February 20 at 6:30 p.m.

Tickets start at \$25

ImageNation, an innovative Harlem-based company, partners with the Apollo to present quarterly socials featuring premier and advance screenings that highlight the global Black experience, preceded by a reception with a live DJ/performance, followed by a talkback. Film to be announced.

**Apollo Film Presents: Shaft, with Live Music from Burnt Sugar, the Arkestra Chamber**

Saturday, February 29 at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets start at \$29

The Apollo will screen the original 1971 film *Shaft*, accompanied by the live music performance of the score by Burnt Sugar the Arkestra Chamber. Greg Tate, cultural critic and the founder/conductor of Burnt Sugar will lead a live scoring of the film that will showcase the funk and sensuality of Isaac Hayes' score while teasing out the experimental potential of its seductive, frothy themes. The title song "Theme from Shaft," easily ranks among the most memorable feature film themes of the past four decades. It shot to

number one on the Billboard Top 40, and the score as a whole won numerous awards, including four Grammys and two Oscar nominations, for which Hayes won Best Original Song at the Academy Awards. To add to the atmosphere, the audience will be encouraged to wear their best Black Power-inspired fashion, building on *Shaft* and the host of 70s films that captured the style that continues to influence fashion today.

**WOW – Women of the World Festival Teen Summit**

Saturday, March 14 at 12:00 p.m.

Free with RSVP

This year's WOW: Teen Summit seeks to explore the impact of young women in politics both on a local and global scale. Girls and women around the world have a long-standing history of leading the charge on issues of gender politics, sparking movements, and inciting governmental changes in policy. Today, young people are establishing a firmer hold in the political realm, ensuring that women's rights are on the forefront of decision-makers minds and inspiring new movements in the process. Through performances and panel discussions, the teen summit will dissect gender politics and the role of women of color within it, while opening up a dialogue that encourages a call to action.

**WOW: Elaine Welteroth and Harriette Cole**

Saturday, March 14 at 7:00 p.m.

Free with RSVP

Elaine Welteroth is a New York Times bestselling author, award-winning journalist, and the former Editor-in-Chief of *Teen Vogue*. Throughout her magazine career, Welteroth broke new ground as the youngest person and the second African American to hold this title in Condé Nast's 107-year history. Under her leadership, the magazine notably increased coverage of news and politics, encouraging readers to become civically engaged, specifically during the 2016 U.S. presidential election. She's now a leading expert, advocate, and voice for the next generation of change-makers. Welteroth's first book, "More Than Enough," was published by Viking Press this past summer.

Ms. Welteroth will be in conversation with Harriette Cole. Ms. Cole is a best-selling author, editor, motivational speaker, and presentation coach. The former editor-in-chief of *Ebony* magazine is the author of seven lifestyle books. Cole has coached a broad range of entertainers, including Mary J. Blige, Alicia Keys, Saweetie, and Lil Tjay; corporations including BET Networks, Bank of America, and Digitas, as well as educational institutions such as Hunter College. Presented in partnership with WOW - Women of the World Festival.

**Apollo Live Wire: Aretha!**

Tuesday, March 24 at 6:30 p.m.

Free with RSVP

*Live Wire* honors the legacy of the great Aretha Franklin in a discussion led by writer and cultural critic Emily Lordi.

**The Apollo Theater *Africa Now!* and African Film Festival 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration present Oumou Sangaré**

Saturday, April 4 at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets start at \$30

The annual concert, a highlight of the Apollo's season, celebrates not only the best of today's African music scene but spotlights how the music of the diaspora has impacted the continent. In 2020, the Apollo is

partnering with the African Film Festival, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary, to present a performance by the legendary Grammy Award-winning Malian Wassoulou musician Oumou Sangaré.

**Apollo Salon Series: *A Time to Love***

Monday, April 27 – Saturday, May 2

Written by Sade Lythcott

In partnership with National Black Theater

Tickets are \$20

Set against the backdrop of national protests around the decay of civility, idealism, and street loyalty, *A Time to Love* is an ageless musical tale of love in the midst of social unrest. Caught between two worlds, Aisha and Junior try to shake off the restraints of their family legacy and family sins that threatens their relationship. With whispers of their past predicting doom and street life prophesying their future, Aisha & Junior strive to find peace in all of the tumult around them and fight for their time to love.

**Apollo Live Wire: *Dancing in the Streets – Rhythm Rebels***

Thursday, April 20 at 6:30 p.m.

Free with RSVP

*Dancing in the Streets* considers the history and larger cultural context of social dance in Black and Latinx communities.

**Apollo Film Presents: *ImageNation's Cocktails & Cinema***

Thursday, May 21 at 6:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$25

ImageNation, an innovative Harlem-based company, partners with the Apollo to present quarterly socials featuring premier and advance screenings that highlight the global Black experience, preceded by a reception with a live DJ/performance, followed by a talkback. Film to be announced.

**Apollo Live Wire: Centennial Celebration of Hazel Scott**

Monday, June 15 at 6:30 p.m.

Free with RSVP

The Apollo will honor the artistry, musicianship, and activism of Hazel Scott on the 100th anniversary of her birth.

**Amateur Night at the Apollo Spring Dates:**

All shows at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets start at \$24

Wednesday, February 19

Wednesday, February 26

Wednesday, March 4

Wednesday, March 11

Wednesday, March 18

Wednesday, March 25

Wednesday, April 1

Wednesday, April 8

Wednesday, April 15

Wednesday, April 22

Wednesday, April 29

Wednesday, May 6  
Wednesday, May 13  
Wednesday, May 20  
Wednesday, May 27  
Wednesday, June 3  
Wednesday, June 10  
Wednesday, June 17  
Wednesday, June 24

*Amateur Night at the Apollo* is sponsored by Coca-Cola.

**Apollo Comedy Club Spring Dates**

Doors at 9:00 p.m., show at 10:00 p.m.  
Tickets start at \$22

Thursday, January 9 – **Corey Manning, Chocolat Chi, Craig McLaren, Hosted by Timmy Hall**  
Thursday, February 6 – **Rob Love, Coby Jackk, Stiletto, Hosted by Just Nesh**  
Thursday, March 5 – **Coco Fresh, Lamarr Todd, Mickey Housley, Hosted by Fig**  
Thursday, April 2 – **Think Floyd, Derrick OC Reid, Shanelle Renee, Hosted by Mike Brooks**  
Thursday, May 7 – **Keith Ruffin, Jr., Brian Tucker, Hosted by Mark Viera**  
Thursday, June 4 – **Ronnie Jordan, G Levi, Big Eli, Hosted by Rita Brent**

**Apollo Music Café Spring Line-Up**

Doors at 9:00 p.m., show at 10:00 p.m.  
Tickets start at \$22

Friday, January 10 – **Yoli Zama**  
Saturday, January 11 – **Tony Tixier**  
Friday, February 7 – **Pitch Slapped**  
Saturday, February 8 – **Rue Brown**  
Friday, March 6 – **Broadway Uptown: Lelund Durond & Jason Michael Webb**  
Saturday, March 7 – **Storm Marrero**  
Friday, April 3 – **Africa Now! Natu & DJ Sabine Blaizin**  
Saturday, April 4 – **Africa Now! After Party**  
Friday, May 8 – **Jared Wayne Gladly**  
Saturday, May 9 – **The Ron Grant Songbook**  
Friday, June 5 – **Christian McBride Big Band & Friends**  
Saturday, June 6 – **Christian McBride Big Band & Friends**

**For more information, please contact:**

Josh Balber / Julie Danni  
Resnicow and Associates  
[JBalber@resnicow.com](mailto:JBalber@resnicow.com) / [JDanni@resnicow.com](mailto:JDanni@resnicow.com)  
212-671-5175/5173

[press@apollotheater.org](mailto:press@apollotheater.org)