

# APOLLO

## Apollo Theater Fall 2020 Programming

Virtual season highlights include Grammy Award Winner  
**WYCLEF JEAN**  
performing his 1997 solo debut album  
*THE CARNIVAL*  
presented in partnership with ADCOLOR

Plus, a special Live Wire about the Queen of Soul: Aretha Franklin, and more

“An Evening of Sound, Voice, Poetry, and Healing”  
co-production with

American Composers Orchestra, featuring works by composers

Joel Thompson, Carlos Simon, and Tania León,

An evening co-curated and directed by Jonathan McCrory

in partnership with National Black Theatre

announced for spring 2021

Harlem, NY – (August 18, 2020) – The Apollo Theater today announced details of its fall 2020 season, which will take place exclusively online on the [Apollo’s Digital Stage](#). The season features a broad range of free virtual events, including **Wyclef Jean** performing his Double Platinum album *The Carnival*; a special *Live Wire* conversation focused on the artistry of the Queen of Soul **Aretha Franklin**; and monthly Apollo music nights with independent musical artists through the *Apollo Music Café*, featuring artists **Stout, J. Hoard**, and **Madison McFerrin**. The season expands the nonprofit theater’s role as a partner, commissioner, and co-producer of programming that centers Black artists and voices from the African Diaspora. Looking ahead to the spring, the Apollo Theater and **American Composers Orchestra** will co-present “**An Evening of Sound, Voice, Poetry, and Healing**,” featuring three orchestral works, poetry, and rituals tracing the Black-American experience, including [The Seven Last Words of the Unarmed by Joel Thompson](#). In addition, the Apollo Film series will present a 30<sup>th</sup>-anniversary celebration of the cult classic *House Party*, and more.

Grammy-winning Haitian-American rapper, musician, and actor **Wyclef Jean** will kick off the season on **Wednesday, September 9 at 8:00pm EST** with a historic performance. Presented in partnership with ADCOLOR, the multi-instrumentalist will perform his iconic debut album, *Wyclef Jean Presents The Carnival* live on the Apollo’s Main Stage with no audience and minimal crew. The special concert will be streamed on the Apollo’s Digital Stage and ADCOLOR’s virtual event site, and will feature Wyclef’s revolutionary mix of Haitian creole, rap, world music, and pop. Nearly 25 years after the debut release, *The Carnival* continues to be a poignant example of Jean’s musicality and his influence on the music industry at-large.

“The Apollo Theater has been a beacon of Black creativity for more than eight decades and a safe haven for artists and audiences alike. It was essential for the Apollo that we create ways to continue to reach and engage our communities, from Harlem, NYC to those around the globe, and we have devised an exciting

digital season of programs even though our physical doors remain closed,” said **Apollo Theater President and CEO Jonelle Procope**.

“We are excited that Wyclef Jean is returning to the Apollo Stage, 24 years since his very first performance in 1996, to celebrate his boundary-pushing album, and we are inspired by all of the incredible artists who have worked with us over these past months to create a season that has reaffirmed our commitment to Black artists and audiences,” said **Apollo Theater Executive Producer Kamilah Forbes**. “In addition to the virtual events we present this fall, we look forward to partnering with American Composers Orchestra and Jonathan McCrory and the National Black Theatre to present timely orchestral and literary works from artists who reflect the rich diversity of our country and that are responsive and healing to our world today.”

The Apollo Theater has long history of advocating for the safety, dignity, and justice of Black people worldwide. This spring, in response to the continued demand for equality and the nation-wide reckoning with systemic racism, the Apollo Theater will partner with **American Composers Orchestra** to co-present “**An Evening of Sound, Voice, Poetry, and Healing**,” showcasing three musical works written to create space for remembrance, mourning, celebration, and reflection. Directed and co-curated by National Black Theatre Artistic Director **Jonathan McCrory**, with musical curation by ACO Artistic Director **Derek Bermel**, the evening will include New York premieres of *The Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* by **Joel Thompson** and *AMEN!* by **Carlos Simon** as well as *Reflections* by **Tania León**, which sets the poetry of Rita Dove. Featuring American Composers Orchestra and additional players from Black-led musical organizations, the performance will incorporate community and church choirs from the New York area along with spoken word and other rituals. The Apollo Theater and American Composers Orchestra are working together to ensure this one-night-only event will be presented following all state and local guidelines to ensure the health and well-being of the performers and audience. Additional details, including workshops and audience conversation events, will be announced at a later date.

Widely considered a cornerstone of Black culture, the Apollo continues to provide a home to artists, even amid the global health crisis. Following the announcement of *Apollo New Works* earlier this year, the Apollo’s first-ever major commissioning initiative dedicated to the creation of a diverse 21<sup>st</sup>-century performing arts canon, the Theater will continue to support the first cohort of artists with a number of digital workshops, including a weeklong residency for **Soul Science Lab** to develop its commissioned project, *The Renaissance Mixtape*. The work, a millennial take on iconic figures and philosophies of the Harlem Renaissance era 100 years later, sheds new light and explores its continued relevance in a society still plagued by the same racial and social issues that gave birth to one of history’s most epic artistic ages. The digital residencies will continue with Jon Boogz and Lil Buck working with director and scholar Talvin Wilks on the development of their *Apollo New Works* commissions. Digital residencies are not open to the public.

In October, the Apollo continues its support of emerging musical artists through its monthly *Apollo Music Café*, which will feature artists such as **Stout, J. Hoard**, and **Madison McFerrin**. This fall, *Apollo Music Café* artists will record their performances on the Apollo Theater’s Sound Stage for streaming on the Apollo Digital Stage.

The Apollo Theater brings back its innovative series *Apollo Film Presents: ImageNation’s Cocktails & Sol Cinema* on **Thursday, November 19 at 7:00pm EST**. Presented quarterly, the series features independent films primarily directed by people of color that explore the history, examine social issues, and highlight the humanity of Pan-African people in the genres of drama, science fiction, animation, comedy, documentary, experimental, and emerging media. Please check [www.ApolloTheater.org](http://www.ApolloTheater.org) for updates.

A cultural anchor in Harlem and New York City, the Apollo continues its role as a catalyst for social engagement through community and education offerings. On **Tuesday, September 29 at 6:30pm EST** the Apollo Theater Education Department will welcome author **Nic Stone** to the Apollo Digital Stage, in

conversation with Angie Thomas (“The Hate U Give”) about the sequel to her bestseller “Dear Martin,” “Dear Justyce,” which takes an unflinching look into the flawed practices and silenced voices in the American juvenile justice system.

The Theater kicks off *Live Wire* conversations—the popular free series that honors iconic individuals who have impacted Apollo history—on **Tuesday, December 15 at 6:30pm EST**, when it takes a deep dive into the artistry of the Queen of Soul and Apollo regular, **Aretha Franklin**. The conversation will feature discussions from leading cultural critics that will provide an opportunity to learn more about the still-understudied subject of Franklin's artistry.

On **Sunday, December 26 at 7:00pm EST**, the Apollo Theater will celebrate its annual **Kwanzaa Celebration** featuring the renowned New York-based dance company Abdel Salaam's **Forces of Nature Dance Theatre** and guest performances. Since 2006, the Apollo has presented this annual performance to celebrate Kwanzaa during the seven-day holiday. This year, Forces of Nature Dance Theatre will produce a unique digital event of dance and music honoring the principles of Kwanzaa.

On **Sunday, January 18 at 3:00pm EST**, the Apollo will once again collaborate with WNYC on the annual *Uptown Hall* Martin Luther King Jr. program. This year's program, titled *Apollo Uptown Hall: MLK and the Fierce Urgency of Now*, will unpack the implications of the 2020 U.S. presidential election through the prisms of civil rights and modern day social justice movements, and will examine the Black community's historic and adversarial relationship with law enforcement and Western medicine institutions. This event will also feature performances that amplify these themes.

Looking forward to spring, the Apollo Theater is planning to present a number of hybrid in-person and digital events, including the return of its hallmark program *Amateur Night at the Apollo*. In February, Apollo will also celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cult classic film *House Party*, with a special screening, conversations, and live performances to be announced. The Theater will again be a part of the bi-annual Women of the World Festival (WOW), which will span four days in March 2021, featuring socially distanced performances, a youth summit, and a full day of conversations and workshops that will also be available digitally.

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

### **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 the world premiere of the theatrical adaptation of Master Artist-in-Residence 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 Theater 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 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 Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, H.E.R., D'Angelo, Lauryn Hill,

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](http://www.ApolloTheater.org).

## **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*

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*Coca-Cola is the sponsor of Amateur Night at the Apollo. The Apollo Theater presentation of The Seven Last Words of the Unarmed is generously supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Leadership support for the Apollo New Works initiative provided by the Ford Foundation*

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## **CALENDAR OF APOLLO THEATER'S 2020 FALL SEASON:**

All programming will stream free of charge on the [Apollo Digital Stage](http://www.apollotheater.org). As a non-profit organization, the Apollo depends on the generous funding from donors, foundations, and the community at-large. Please consider donating to the Apollo Theater in support of these free virtual programs. To do so, please click <https://www.apollotheater.org/donate>.

### **Wyclef Jean Live at the Apollo, in partnership with ADCOLOR**

Wednesday, September 9 at 8:00pm EST

The Apollo Theater's fall 2020 season opens with a special virtual concert featuring Grammy Award-winning artist Wyclef Jean. The iconic theater has teamed up with ADCOLOR, the premier organization dedicated to celebrating and promoting diverse professionals in the creative industries, for this historic performance that will bring the legendary Apollo experience to audiences everywhere. The concert will be streamed live from the Apollo stage and mark Wyclef's first-ever, complete performance of his Grammy-nominated, Double Platinum album, *The Carnival*. The virtual concert, free of charge, will serve as the Apollo's season opener as well as ADCOLOR's annual After Dark concert.

### **Apollo Education: "Dear Justyce" Featuring Author Nic Stone in Conversation with Angie Thomas**

Tuesday, September 29 at 6:30pm EST

Recommended age group: High school & up

In this highly anticipated sequel to her *New York Times* bestseller "Dear Martin," author Nic Stone delivers an unflinching look into the flawed practices and silenced voices in the American juvenile justice system, focusing on an incarcerated teen, Quan, who writes letters to Justyce about his experiences in the American juvenile justice system. Stone will read excerpts from her book and discuss her writing with author Angie Thomas ("The Hate U Give") on the day of the book's release.

### **Apollo Music Café: STOUT**

Saturday, October 3 at 9:00pm EST

An artist whose name evokes strength and power, Stout commands a stage with shape-shifting vocals that can turn a whisper into a roar. Whether performing solo or with a band, Stout masters her own electrifying language of sound, music, and technology. Stout has performed for audiences around the world and shared

stages with Alicia Keys, Stevie Wonder, Paul Simon, Carlos Santana, Missy Elliot, Gwen Stefani, Usher, Lenny Kravitz, John Mayer, and more.

**Apollo Music Café: J. Hoard**

Saturday, November 7 at 9:00pm EST

If anyone were to lead a music revolution, it would be the New York-based singer and songwriter known as J. Hoard. He is the former vocalist of the legendary curated hip-hop jam The Lesson in the Lower East Side and has become a staple in the urban and traditional music scenes. Praised by *Downbeat* magazine, J. Hoard's compositions easily shift in genre and communicate his love of the Black Church and allure of the Great White Way. His songwriting and performance credits include Chance the Rapper, hip-hop royalty Jean Grae & Quelle Chris, and a host of jazz/experimental artists such as Sonnymoon, Javier Santiago, and Meshell Ndegeocello.

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

Thursday, November 19 at 7:00pm EST

Check [www.ApolloTheater.org](http://www.ApolloTheater.org) for updates on the film selection

ImageNation, an innovative Harlem-based company, partners with the Apollo to present quarterly socials featuring premier and advance screenings of Pan-African films, preceded by a reception with a live DJ/performance, followed by a talkback. The series will feature films, primarily directed by people of color, that explore the history, examine social issues, and highlight the humanity of Pan-African people in the genres of drama, science fiction, animation, comedy, documentary, experimental, and emerging media. Film to be announced at a later date.

**Apollo Music Café: Madison McFerrin**

Saturday, December 5 at 9:00pm EST

A chameleon of song and voice, Madison McFerrin has found her place as a storyteller and musician. With handclaps, loops, and finger-snaps, she weaves a warm, rich, colorful fabric of sound that often culminates into an orchestra of one. Questlove dubbed Madison's style as "soul-apella." *The New York Times* remarked that she "shows wonderful vocal dexterity, deftly swerving from sharp, clearly enunciated staccato bursts to fluttery, free-form melismata." Beyond the stage, Madison's one-of-a-kind vocals can be heard in episodes of Comedy Central's "Broad City" and HBO's "Random Acts of Flyness."

**Live Wire: Aretha!**

December 15 at 6:30pm EST

Live Wire takes a deep dive into the artistry of Aretha Franklin with a conversation featuring leading culture writers and scholars. The discussion will provide an opportunity to learn more about the still understudied subject of Franklin's musicianship

**Kwanzaa Celebration**

Sunday, December 27 at 7:00pm EST

Featuring Abdel Salaam's Forces of Nature Dance Theatre

Hosted by Imhotep Gary Byrd

The Apollo Theater celebrates its annual Kwanzaa Celebration featuring the renowned New York-based dance company Abdel Salaam's Forces of Nature Dance Theatre and guest performances. Since 2006, the Apollo has presented this annual show to honor this holiday tradition on one of the days 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.

**Apollo and WNYC Apollo Uptown Hall: MLK and the Fierce Urgency of Now**

Co-presented by the March on Washington Film Festival

January 18, 2021 at 3:00pm EST

Hosted by WNYC's Peabody Award-winning host of *The Brian Lehrer Show*, Brian Lehrer, and Jami Floyd, host of *All Things Considered*, this annual gathering convenes artists and activists, journalists and change makers to deeply engage with Dr. King's legacy and how his actions and teachings speak to and inform the social justice matters of our own time. This year's event, *MLK and the Fierce Urgency of Now*, will unpack the implications of the 2020 U.S. presidential election through the prisms of civil rights and modern day social justice movements. The discussion will examine the Black community's historic and adversarial relationship with law enforcement and Western medicine institutions. This event will also feature performances that amplify these themes.

**"An Evening of Sound, Voice, Poetry, and Healing"**

Presented spring 2021

Co-presented by the Apollo Theater & American Composers Orchestra

George Manahan, conductor and music director

Tania León, conductor

Jonathan McCrory, director

Program to include:

Tania León (text by Rita Dove): *Reflections* for soprano and chamber ensemble

Carlos Simon: *AMEN!* (New York Premiere)

Joel Thompson: *The Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* (New York Premiere)

"An Evening of Sound, Voice, Poetry, and Healing," showcasing three musical works written to create space for remembrance, mourning, celebration, and reflection. Directed and co-curated by National Black Theatre Artistic Director **Jonathan McCrory**, with musical curation by ACO Artistic Director **Derek Bermel**, the evening will include New York premieres of *The Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* by **Joel Thompson** and *AMEN!* by **Carlos Simon** as well as *Reflections* by **Tania León**, which sets the poetry of Rita Dove. Featuring American Composers Orchestra and additional players from Black-led musical organizations, the performance will incorporate community and church choirs from the New York area along with spoken word and other rituals

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