



**Apollo Theater Presents *Jazz and Spirit*
Featuring World Premiere of Apollo Commission
“The Cornel West Concerto” by GRAMMY Winner
Arturo O’Farrill and Dr. Cornel West**

**Curated by O’Farrill and Featuring Works for the
Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra, Choir, and Solo Trumpet,
Program Harnesses the Power of Activism and Jazz**

Saturday, May 21 at 8:00 p.m.

Harlem, NY, April 27, 2016 – The Apollo Theater will present *Jazz and Spirit*, an evening featuring new jazz works that explore the connections between jazz, spirituality, national politics, and activism on Saturday, May 21 at 8:00 p.m. Curated by GRAMMY Award-winning pianist and composer Arturo O’Farrill, the program features the musician’s second Apollo commission, “The Cornel West Concerto,” complemented by additional compositions that explore some of today’s most pressing social issues at the fore of the current American political dialogue. O’Farrill won a 2016 GRAMMY for his first Apollo commission, “The Afro Latin Jazz Suite,” a featured composition on his latest studio recording, *Cuba: The Conversation Continues*.

“The Cornel West Concerto” will have its world premiere in a one-night-only performance by Dr. West appearing with Arturo O’Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra. Inspired by Dr. West’s recent speeches at rallies in Seattle, Chicago, and New York, the piece is constructed around four essential themes from W.E.B. Du Bois’ seminal publication, *The Souls of Black Folk*: What does integrity do in the face of oppression? What does honesty do in the face of deception? What does decency do in the face of insult? How does virtue meet brute force?

The score of “The Cornel West Concerto” will accompany and punctuate Dr. West’s dialogue from his latest speeches as well as performance of his own spoken word improvisation.

“We are so proud to bring together the incomparable Arturo O’Farrill and Dr. Cornel West on our stage, and to celebrate the rich history of the jazz community’s deep political and social engagement,” said Mikki Shepard, the Apollo Theater’s Executive Producer. “From the days when the Apollo was one of the only places where Billie Holiday could perform ‘Strange Fruit,’ the Apollo, jazz, activism, and spirituality have been inextricably linked. It is important as part of our contemporary programming that we look to this legacy as we support artists in the creation of new works that speak to our present moment.”

“The Cornel West Concerto’ is about bringing attention through Dr. West’s brilliance and vision, coupled with the subversive power of the Afro Latin Big Band, to the power of revolutionary thought that demands we take stock of where we are as a country and demand better,” says Arturo O’Farrill, pianist/composer and Artistic Director of the Afro Latin Jazz Alliance. “We must pay tribute to the jazz greats like Coltrane, Holiday, Mingus, The Art Ensemble of Chicago, and carry on their legacy of bringing attention to the real issues of modern society through jazz music.”

The performance will also feature “A Still Small Voice,” a composition by O’Farrill for choir that confronts moral considerations inherent in the recent banking crisis and economic downturn. Inspired by a passage from 1 Kings in the Bible, the piece explores the fragility of human conscience.

O’Farrill’s “Trump, Untrump,” composed during a 2015 residency in Petersburg, NH, will be performed by the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra and alludes to current political dialogues surrounding Donald Trump. Drawing from the cyclical nature of human existence itself, the work ultimately offers a hopeful path forward.

Lastly, O’Farrill will perform “Oro, Incienso y Mirra,” a trumpet concerto by Chico O’Farrill that was originally recorded by Dizzy Gillespie.

Jazz and Spirit is the culmination of the Apollo Theater’s 2015-2016 season, which also featured the New York premiere of *Charlie Parker’s YARDBIRD*, the Apollo’s first opera presentation; the fourth annual *Africa Now!* concert celebrating the contemporary music scene across the continent; *The New Orleans Jazz Orchestra* in concert with Dee Dee Bridgewater and the Brass-A-Holics; *Breakin’ Convention*, an international festival of hip-hop dance theater; and the launch of the Apollo’s new series featuring emerging comics, *Apollo Comedy Club*.

Tickets for *Jazz and Spirit* begin at \$35 and are available at apollotheater.org or by calling (800) 745-3000.

Citi is a proud sponsor of the Apollo.

Generous support from the Howard Gilman Foundation and New York State Council on the Arts.

The Apollo’s 2015-2016 season is made possible by leadership support from Citi, Coca-Cola, Troy and Keisha Dixon, Ford Foundation, The Howard Gilman Foundation, Robert K. Kraft, The Reginald F. Lewis Foundation, Merrill Lynch, The Parsons Family Foundation, the Ronald O. Perelman Family Foundation, JoAnn Price, Earl W. and Amanda Stafford, Time Warner Inc., the Reginald Van Lee Fund for New Works, the Apollo Board of Directors, and many other generous donors.

Public support 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.

About Arturo O’Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra

GRAMMY Award winning pianist, composer, and educator Arturo O’Farrill—leader of the "first family of Afro-Cuban Jazz" (*New York Times*)—was born in Mexico and grew up in New York City. Son of the late, great composer Chico O’Farrill, Arturo was educated at Manhattan School of Music, Brooklyn College Conservatory, and the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College. He played piano in Carla Bley’s Big Band from 1979 through 1983 and earned a reputation as a soloist in groups led by Dizzy Gillespie, Steve Turre, Freddy Cole, Lester Bowie, Wynton Marsalis, and Harry Belafonte. In 2002, he established the GRAMMY®-winning Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra in order to bring the vital musical traditions of Afro Latin jazz to a wider general audience, and to greatly expand the contemporary Latin jazz big band repertoire through commissions to artists across a wide stylistic and geographic range.

An acclaimed composer with a groundbreaking and forward-looking perspective, Mr. O’Farrill has received commissions from Meet the Composer, the Big Apple Circus, the Philadelphia Music Project, Symphony Space, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and the Apollo Theater. He has also composed music for films, including *Hollywoodland* and *iSalud!*. His debut album with the Orchestra, *Una Noche Inolvidable*, earned a GRAMMY® Award nomination in 2006 and the Orchestra’s second album, *Song for Chico* (ZOHO), earned a GRAMMY® Award for "Best Latin Jazz Album" in 2009. In February 2011, Mr. O’Farrill and the ALJO released their third GRAMMY®-nominated album, *40 Acres and a Burro* (ZOHO). In 2011, O’Farrill released his first solo album, *The Noguchi Sessions* (ZOHO). On May 6, 2014, O’Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra released *The Offense of the Drum* (Motéma Music), which won a GRAMMY® for "Best Latin Jazz Album." O’Farrill’s latest recording, *Cuba: The Conversation Continues*, captures the miraculous historical moment of President Obama restoring full diplomatic relations with Cuba. The album features some of today’s foremost Cuba-based and American composers working together in Abdala Studios, (Havana, Cuba) recording an album of a lifetime. The album’s “The Afro Latin Jazz Suite” has won the GRAMMY® Award for “Best Instrumental Composition.”

Arturo O’Farrill is an artist in residence at Harlem School of the Arts and Casita Maria Center for Arts & Culture, and on the faculty of Brooklyn College and the Manhattan School of Music. He’s currently collaborating with director Moisés Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project on an Afro Cuban version of Bizet’s opera, *Carmen*. He is also a member of the Board of Governors of the New York Chapter of NARAS, and is a Steinway Artist.

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. This includes the October 2014 premiere and 2015 international tour of the dance celebration project *James Brown: Get on the Good Foot*, the annual *Africa Now! Festival*, *Apollo Club Harlem*, and the recent New York premiere of the

opera *Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD*. The Apollo is a presenting organization that also produces festivals and large-scale dance and music works organized around a set of core initiatives: Apollo Music Signature Programs—*Amateur Night*, *Salon Series*, *Apollo Music Café*; Legacy Series—work that celebrates and extends 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 work 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, Machine Gun Kelly, Miri Ben-Ari, 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 with the mission 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.

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