



Mikki Shepard, Executive Producer of the Apollo Theater, to Step Down in June 2016

Harlem, NY – September 24, 2015 – The Apollo Theater today announced that Mikki Shepard, Executive Producer of the Apollo, will be stepping down in June 2016. Since joining the Apollo a decade ago, Ms. Shepard has worked jointly with Jonelle Procope, the theater's President and CEO, in leading the Apollo through an unprecedented period of growth of its operations, programming, and resources. Together they have reinvigorated the nonprofit Apollo into a major presenting and commissioning institution serving local, national, and international audiences.

Ms. Shepard has spearheaded the development of the Apollo's artistic vision encompassing the mounting of major new productions and commissions, the setting up of international partnerships, and the creation of programs that support emerging artists across a range of disciplines, all rooted in the theater's legacy of championing groundbreaking artists. She also oversees the institution's development and marketing departments.

Under her leadership, the Apollo developed a series of annual and year-round programs encompassing music, dance, theater, performance art, spoken word, and civic engagement. This has included such large-scale contemporary commissions, productions, and festivals as Get on the Good Foot, a James Brown dance celebration, the Women of the World (WOW) Festival, and the international hip-hop dance theater festival, Breakin' Convention. Programming partnerships were established, under her direction, with the Kennedy Center, the World Music Institute, Southbank Centre and Sadler's Wells (London), Gotham Chamber Opera, and Harlem Stage, among others. She also led new works incubation initiatives and commissioned emerging and established music and dance artists.

Ms. Shepard has worked closely with Ms. Procope and Apollo leadership in conceptualizing and implementing major institution-building initiatives. This has included the development of a new organizational infrastructure to enhance operations and audience engagement. They also worked closely on the 21st Century Campaign, and the Apollo's 75th anniversary celebration.

"Mikki has been a terrific partner in making the Apollo a vibrant, multidimensional arts center and thriving organization," stated Ms. Procope. "Her work has extended its legacy to serve contemporary artists and new audiences while helping us build the organizational and financial strategies needed to provide sustainable operations. On behalf of the board and staff of the Apollo, and the artists and audiences we serve, I'd like to thank her for all of her contributions."

"The Apollo continues to be such an important cultural and social force for our community and the country that it's difficult to leave," stated Ms. Shepard. "I am thankful for what we have been able to achieve and know that we have a strong team in place to continue this important work."

After leaving the Apollo next June, Ms. Shepard will work on a number of projects that draw upon her extensive professional experience and leadership in the arts. This includes serving as an advisor on the development of organizational strategies that foster innovative programming, institutional development, and sustainable operations; and speaking engagements and writing books for professionals in the field.

Prior to joining to the Apollo, Ms. Shepard led a consulting firm advising foundations, including the Ford Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Trust, and the Heinz Endowments, and numerous arts organization throughout the United States. She was also the director of the Arts and Humanities at the Rockefeller Foundation, founder and executive/artistic director of 651Arts, and produced over 25 events for the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM). Ms. Shepard is currently chairman of the board of the Mertz Gilmore Foundation.

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. Recent highlights have included James Brown: Get on the Good Foot, which will begin an international tour in 2015, the Africa Now! Festival, and Apollo Club Harlem. The Apollo is a presenting organization that also produces festivals, large-scale dance, and music work. The Apollo's vision is global and includes touring and a digital media presence. The Apollo's work is organized around a set of core initiatives: Apollo Music (African American and culturally diverse artists); Signature programs (Amateur Night, Salon Series, and the Apollo Music Café); Legacy Series (work that celebrates and extends our legacy in a more contemporary way); Global Festival (international and U.S. based artists presentations focused under a specific theme); 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 Lauryn Hill, Machine Gun Kelly, Unlocking the Truth, Miri Ben Ari, D'Angelo, 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 nonprofit organization and currently in the midst of fundraising for its 21st Century Apollo Campaign, created 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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