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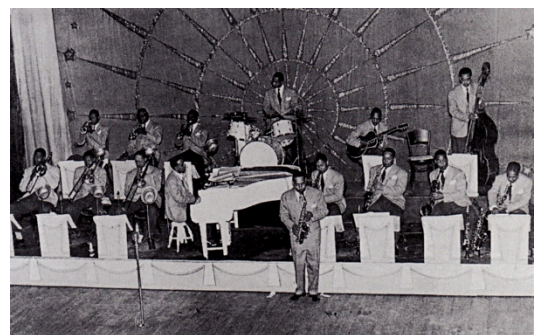
Writing for the Humanities and Arts

Prof. Yolanda Brener

The Apollo Theater is a major historical landmark for Harlem, NY. It was built from 1913-1914 by George Keister and officially opened in March of 1914. Being built during the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance it became a major symbol for African Americans that migrated from the south to New York City specifically. The Apollo Theater helped with the popularity burst of jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues and soul. The Apollo Theater opened its door in 1914 and it was first a burlesque venue, that only allowed white patrons, owned by Jules Hurtig and Harry Seamon but that only lasted till 1933 when it temporarily closed down due a campaign by former mayor Fiorella La Guardia that was against burlesque shows. In 1934 the venue was owned by Sidney Cohen, who opened the Apollo Theater doors to African Americans and ever since became a significant venue for African American performers and impacted the Harlem Renaissance.



On January 26 1934, the Apollo Theater reopens after their closing with the showcase “Jazz a la Carte” headlined by Benny Carter and his Orchestra along alongside other jazz artists. Making them the first African Americans to perform at the Apollo Theater, but not the only ones. Many other African Americans artists performed at the Apollo Theater after that it became a significant



Benny Carter Band—Apollo Theatre (Harlem)

venue for all African American artists around the country to come and perform. Having Benny Carter be the first African American artist to perform especially on an opening night after the closing in 1933 paves the way for many other artists like him. The Apollo Theater started off as a segregated racist venue that did not let African Americans attend or perform at all and was only used for white patrons. After the closing in 1933, Cohens decided to change it up and let African Americans perform since the public's attention switched from burlesque, which the Apollo Theater originally promoted, to Black culture such as Jazz, Soul, R&B, gospel and many other genres. Letting Benny Carter perform at a popular venue during the 30s has a huge significance in the African American community. Showing that they're allowed to showcase their art, talent, music etc during a time period where it wasn't allowed for them.

After Benny Carter, many other African Americans performed and it became important



and historical to African American culture. It allowed them to promote their talent and culture and have people learn about it along with enjoying it. Especially during a time period where almost everyone and everywhere was racist, the Apollo Theater remained to

let African

Americans perform and use the venue and help promote their culture, spread their music, genres and help rising stars. This impacted the Harlem Renaissance because of the way the Apollo Theater called so many people's attention due to the artists



performing, aka African Americans. To understand how popular and important the Apollo Theater was musicians like Aretha Franklin, Duke Ellington, James Brown, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong and many more.

The Apollo Theatre has become a staple to multiple communities. It's helped and inspired so many communities till this day after several years. Before writing this, I didn't know much about the Apollo Theatre or even knew what it was until I started taking the bus from Queens to Harlem and from there it caught my attention. Doing this paper helped me learn more about the history of a theater I always pass by and it's significance to this neighborhood and the community it helps the most.

Works Cited

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