

May, 3, 1985

Dear Jack,

It was good talking with you the other day, we are enclosing a copy of the concept for APOLLO. It's a rough draft, we feel that the show becomes more important if we include some topical drama along with the music and humor.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

*all our best
Bernice & Bob*

"APOLLO"

Concept for the theatre:

A musical spanning 50 years at "THE APOLLO" theatre, from opening night, 1935 to opening night 1985. The show is narrated from the point of view of the APOLLO theatre by a powerful male performer, he is the APOLLO. The narrator introduces the show, and the performers as they appear in their particular time period, performing the material they are famous for. The narrator accompanies them back stage, and through him the audience is familiarized with the lives and careers of the performers that appeared at the APOLLO and later went on to become famous.

On Stage; The show is an exciting musical with strong performers recreating the material the stars of each era made famous. A dynamic chorus of singer-dancers rounds out each performance.

Back Stage; The show becomes a chronicle of each particular time. There are humorous moments, dramatic incidents, discussions about music, the condition of the theatre in general and the current world events. Through the narrator the audience learns of the influence the APOLLO theatre has had on the careers of the performers that played on it's stage.

The Set; The Stage of the APOLLO, revolving to the back stage of the theatre, the dressing rooms, etc.

The Cast; The narrator, a strong male, actor, singer, dancer.
Five black performers.
A chorus of six singer-dancers.

Music; Original music for the narrator, the title song for the APOLLO theatre, and the music of the time for the performers.

"APOLLO"

ACT 1

- SCENE 1; 1935, the opening night of the APOLLO theatre, the narrator introduces the show, the show consists of the actual performers appearing in that year.
- SCENE 2; The same night, back stage, the performers are discussing their performances, the theatre in general and the depression.
- SCENE 3; 1939, on stage, the performers of that year are introduced by the narrator.
- SCENE 4; The same night, back stage, the topic most talked about; the war in europe, the effect it will have on the theatre.
- SCENE 5; 1941, back stage, the prime concern is the war the U.S.A. has just entered, still, they discuss the current theatrical season and the music of the time.
- SCENE 6; The same night, on stage, the show featuring the performers of that year.

"APOLLO"

ACT 11

- SCENE 1; 1947; the stage show of that year, introduced by the narrator.
- SCENE 2; Same night back stage, the performers are more aggressive in their discussions, still, there is humor and theatre talk.
- SCENE 3; 1955; stage show of that year, revolving to back stage, the topics of discussion pertinent to that particular night.
- SCENE 4; 1964, back stage, the end of the Kennedy era.
- SCENE 5; 1985; back stage, the reopening of the APOLLO, an important night, the narrator does a song about the changes in theatre, music and life in the 50 years: of the APOLLO.
- SCENE 6; Same night, on stage, the show. Close with the APOLLO theme song, a large chorus number featuring the narrator.

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May 20

Dear Jack -

Neither Benny nor I can ever remember him appearing at The Apollo, though God knows he's been there many times.

Maynard Ferguson appeared there with Charlie Barnett in 1946-7. I'm quite sure that Mildred Bailey sang there with Red Norvo's band, and that practically everybody in show business was on stage for various benefits.

Best luck on the project. My autobiography comes out in October (Simon & Schuster) and The Apollo figures in it, as does The Lafayette + Harlem Opera House.

Would love to see you in June.

Best
Jim

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May 24 -

Dear Jack,

Benny did out in with
Count Basie's band at The Apollo
in the late Thirties and says that
there are pictures of him playing and
jamming with Basie, Lester Young,
and Buck Clayton. Sorry I didn't
know this when I wrote you.

But he and his band never
played there

All the best

John