



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lincoln Theatre Walk of Fame to Induct the Three Visionaries Responsible for Its Rebirth

Ceremony to Honor 2018 Inductees Michael B. Coleman, Bill Conner, and Larry James on July 28

Presented by **State Auto Insurance Companies**, a Lincoln Theatre Walk of Fame induction ceremony will be held on Saturday, July 28, at 7pm, to memorialize the three visionaries responsible for the historic Lincoln Theatre's rescue, renovation, and 2009 reopening—Michael B. Coleman, Bill Conner, and Larry James.

Opened in 1928, the historic Lincoln Theatre was once the cornerstone of a flourishing African-American business and entertainment district during the 1930s and '40s, hosting performances from legends such as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, James Brown, Miles Davis, Etta James, and Columbus native Nancy Wilson.

In the 1960s and '70s, construction of the I-70 and I-71 highways, integration, and the growing popularity of the automobile prompted a migration to suburban living, and the Lincoln Theatre was forced to close its doors. Over the next three decades, the vacant theatre suffered a great deal of damage to its rare, Egyptian Revival-style design, as unrealized exposure to the elements through its damaged roof caused extensive harm to the theatre.

In 2000, the newly-elected Coleman administration announced that the district would be revitalized, and in 2002, that a fully renovated Lincoln Theatre would be the foundation of the neighborhood's revival. In 2006, Coleman recruited community leaders Larry James and Bill Conner to helm the historic theatre's 18-month, \$13.9 million renovation.

Through the limitless vision and tireless leadership of Coleman, Conner, and James, the Lincoln Theatre reopened in May 2009 as a multi-use, state-of-the-art urban performing arts and education center that once again displays its stunning Egyptian Revival-style interior design in full glory. Not only does the Lincoln's successful rebirth preserve a local landmark in African-American and jazz history, it is also one of the few surviving commercial buildings from a period of unequalled African-American cultural, social, and economic strength in Columbus.

What had once almost vanished from Columbus' landscape is today is a thriving, bustling community centerpiece once again. The Lincoln Theatre has reclaimed her place.

The 2018 Lincoln Theatre Walk of Fame induction ceremony will be held at the Lincoln Theatre (769 E. Long St.) on Saturday, July 28, at 7pm. The ceremony will include multi-genre tributes to the three inductees and performances from a variety of local artists, then move outdoors to reveal the new stars on the Walk of Fame. The event is free and open to the public.

Michael B. Coleman

Currently a partner in Ice Miller's Public Affairs and Government Law Group, Coleman served as Mayor of Columbus from 2000-15. He was the longest-serving mayor in Columbus history and the longest-serving incumbent African-American mayor among major US cities. Prior to that, Coleman was a partner with the law firm of Schottenstein Zox & Dunn LLP (which combined with Ice Miller in 2012). He also served as City Council President for the City of Columbus from 1997-99, and as a member of City Council from 1992-99. Early in his career, Coleman was an Assistant Attorney General for the State of Ohio.

Bill Conner

Conner served as president and CEO of the Columbus Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA) from 2002-16. Under his leadership, CAPA not only became a staple of the central Ohio arts community, but also began serving other local performing arts organizations through his innovative shared service business model, an arts strategy that continues to garner nationwide attention today. Conner was a founding member of the Columbus Cultural Leadership Consortium (CCLC), a revolutionary collaboration of Columbus arts organizations formed in 2006, and served as its first treasurer. He passed away in 2016.

Larry James

Managing partner at Crabbe Brown & James, LLP, Larry James was a founding member of the Lincoln Theatre Association, serving as board president since its inception in 2013. He is a life member of the Sixth Circuit Judicial Conference, and has served as general counsel of the National Fraternal Order of Police since 2001. He is also co-founder of the African-American Leadership Academy, a member of the board of trustees of Kenyon College, and served 16 years as the president of the King Arts Complex.

History of the Lincoln Theatre

The historic Lincoln Theatre, located in the King-Lincoln District on downtown Columbus' near east side, was once the cornerstone of a flourishing African-American business and entertainment district. In the 1930s and '40s, the African-American-owned businesses which lined Long Street and Mount Vernon Avenue included banks, real estate and insurance companies, drugstores, clubs, movie houses, and even a pair of undertakers. It became known as the "Million Dollar Block," because a single dollar could literally be passed back and forth a million times in the course of one day.

The Ogden Theatre and Ballroom opened on Thanksgiving Day 1928 as a mixed-use facility, featuring four street-level storefronts, a modest, second-floor ballroom, third-floor offices, and of course, the main-floor theater. Not long after the theatre's celebrated opening, a precocious, three-year-old Sammy Davis, Jr. spontaneously debuted his talents on the Ogden stage, the first performance in a career which would span more than 60 years.

After a number of management changes, the theater received some minor refurbishments in 1938 and was renamed the Lincoln Theater. The second floor of the theatre became Club Lincoln. In its heyday, jazz and big band music would regularly have the joint jumpin'. Many jazz greats appeared on the stages of both the theater and the club, including Madame Rose Brown, Harry Edison, Tiny Bradshaw, Stomp Gordon, Hank Marr, and Rusty Bryant, along with legends such as Count Basie, Duke Ellington, James Brown, Miles Davis, Etta James, and Columbus native Nancy Wilson.

In the 1960s and 70s, construction of the I-70 and I-71 highways divided the east side community from downtown. With this construction, integration, and the growing popularity of the automobile, nearly two-thirds of the neighborhood migrated to the suburbs and the Lincoln Theatre was forced to close its doors.

Over the next three decades, the vacant theatre suffered a great deal of damage. While the ballroom continued to host private functions and community events, unrealized exposure to the elements caused extensive harm to the theatre itself, and the community rallied to rescue the once-proud historical building.

In 1978, the Lincoln Theatre Restoration Project Committee determined the building was still structurally solid and capable of being renovated; however, the 80-member group was unable to garner the needed financial resources.

The theatre faced demolition in 1991, but was saved with the completion of mandatory repairs to the outer building—a new roof, repaired masonry, and improvements to the marquee and entrance. The Lincoln Theatre was officially added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992, pronouncing it a cultural resource worthy of preservation, but once again, efforts gradually faded.

In 2000, the newly-elected mayoral administration announced that the King-Lincoln District would be revitalized. After years of careful planning with residents and businesses, Mayor Michael Coleman declared in 2002 that a fully-renovated Lincoln Theatre would be the cornerstone of his plans for the neighborhood's revival.

The City of Columbus purchased the property and pledged \$4 million dollars toward the project, and in 2006, the Franklin County Commissioners matched the city's funding. The two were then joined by a number of visionary and generous corporations offering further funding support, as well as the Columbus Association for the Performing Arts whose historic renovation expertise is nationally renowned. With these dedicated constituents in place, renovation of the Lincoln Theatre commenced in January 2008.

After undergoing a \$13.5 million, 18-month renovation, the Lincoln reopened in May 2009 as a multi-use, state-of-the-art performing arts and education center serving the diversity of the central Ohio community. Today, the Lincoln is a bustling hub of activity 365 days a year, hosting performances, rehearsals, and classes in the performing arts, as well as a wide variety of community events such as film festivals, meetings, and receptions.

www.LincolnTheatreColumbus.com

CALENDAR LISTING

**The Lincoln Theatre Association presents the 2018 WALK OF FAME INDUCTION CEREMONY
Saturday, July 28, 7 pm
Lincoln Theatre (769 E. Long St.)**

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Support for the Lincoln Theatre's 2017-18 season is provided in part by the Greater Columbus Arts Council, the City of Columbus, Franklin County, and the Ohio Arts Council to encourage economic growth, educational excellence, and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans.

About the Lincoln Theatre

First opened in 1928, the Lincoln Theatre is a landmark in African-American and jazz history. After undergoing a \$13.5 million renovation funded by a partnership of public and private support, the Lincoln reopened in May 2009 as a multi-use, state-of-the-art performing arts and education center serving the diversity of the central Ohio community. The Lincoln is a bustling hub of activity 365 days a year hosting performances, rehearsals, and classes in the performing arts, as well as a wide variety of community events such as film festivals, meetings, and receptions.

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