



Alhambra | Ballroom Harlem

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History of the Harlem Alhambra

- Built in 1905 as a Vaudeville Theater with 1,650 seats
- Became a major cultural center in Harlem
- Hosted iconic performances during the Harlem Renaissance and jazz era
- Reopened in 2003 as the Alhambra Ballroom, used for weddings, parties, and events

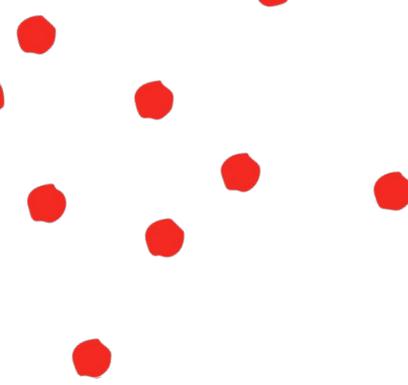


Cultural Significance

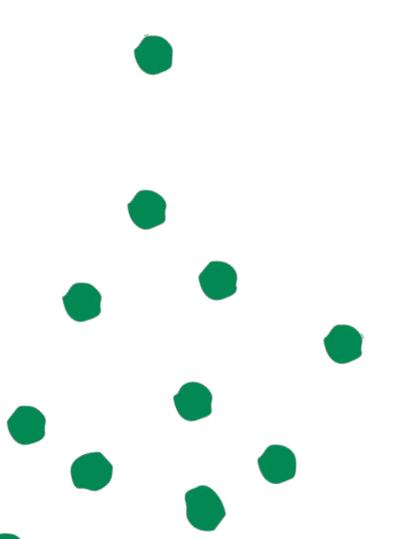
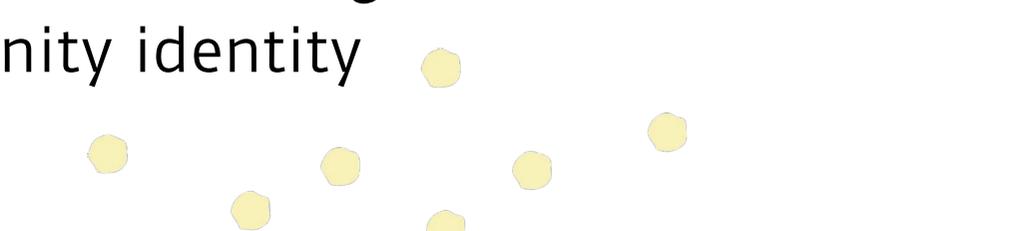
Beyond its fame as a venue for jazz legends, the Harlem Alhambra also played a key role in advancing Black theatrical arts during the Harlem Renaissance. In the late 1920s, it hosted the Alhambra Players, also known as the All-Star Colored Civic Repertory Company

- Stage for legends such as Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, Jelly Roll Morton, and Duke Ellington





What is at Stake

- Risk of erasing Harlem's cultural memory if neglected
 - Gentrification and commercialization could overshadow its historical meaning
 - Loss of a landmark tied to African American heritage and community identity
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Radical Preservation of the Alhambra

- Goes beyond restoring the building's physical structure
- Preserves memory, stories, and cultural impact
- Honors Harlem's community, leadership, and heritage
- Ensures the space continues as a living site of culture, not just a historic shell



Conclusion

- Radical preservation of the Harlem Alhambra means protecting the stories of the musicians, actors, and community who shaped it. Encourages creative reuse that honors its past—concerts, exhibits, or performances that echo its historical purpose. That it can serve as a teaching space where younger generations learn about Harlem's role in shaping American music, theater, and culture. Lastly it can acknowledge how Black cultural spaces were often ignored or undervalued in mainstream narratives and ensures they remain visible and honored.