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Contact: Natalie Clarke (718) 703 2260

[nc.wicq@gmail.com](mailto:nc.wicq@gmail.com)

**THE APOLLO THEATER and TOOTS CRACKIN PRODUCTIONS**  
in association with **AARON DAVIS HALL HARLEM FILM FESTIVAL** present

**BEEN RICH ALL MY LIFE**

The new film featuring **THE SILVER BELLES** in  
**A TRIBUTE TO HARLEM'S LEGENDARY CHORUS DANCERS**

FEBRUARY 15, 2006 -NEW YORK – A special advance screening of **BEEN RICH ALL MY LIFE**, the new documentary by Sundance Award-winning director Heather MacDonald, is featured, prior to its summer release, in **A Tribute to Harlem's Legendary Chorus Dancers** at the Apollo Theater on Sunday, March 26 at 4:00 pm. The film follows the most unlikely troupe of tap dancers you're likely to meet - the Silver Belles - five former showgirls who danced at the Apollo and other of Harlem's legendary venues in the 1930s-40s. Now aged 84 to 96, they have been performing together to standing ovations from Aaron Davis to Carnegie Halls for the past 20 years, as sassy as they ever were.

The event also features a tap dance tribute to honor the Silver Belles and their peers, directed by Mercedes Ellington, with music by Bertha Hope and Jazzberry Jam! They are joined onstage by the ladies of the Silver Belles, and other of the original Apollo dancers. Tickets are \$30, \$18 and \$10; Preferred Seating, \$125 (includes VIP reception).

In 1934, the 125<sup>th</sup> Street Apollo Theater opened, presenting shows featuring the great band leaders and a chorus line of 16 of the most beautiful dancers in New York. While the headliners came and went, the chorus dancers rehearsed a new show each week, working 15-hour days. It is little remembered that these young women led the historic first strike by African American performers. They walked out of the Apollo one Saturday night in a successful bid for higher wages and established the American Guild of Variety Artists, for black and white performers nationwide.

While many have passed on, the Silver Belles have rich stories to tell about Harlem Renaissance history and its famous venues –the Cotton Club, Connie's Inn, Small's Paradise. They toured the world, were honored abroad, and danced on the first black USO tour (when they stole the "for colored only" signs off the trains they rode in America's Jim Crow south). When the big band era ended, and with it the need for show dancers, they went into other work, until they put their shoes back on in 1985. These remarkable women will disrupt any notions you have of old age.

*"I'm going to dance, dance, dance 'til I can't dance no more, and I'm going to live, live, live 'til I die"*  
– **Bertye Lou Wood, age 96**

*"Providing an inspiration for active retirement, the ex-Harlem Renaissance Chorus girls.... are still shaking booty while most of their contemporaries can only shuffle their walkers."*  
–**Dennis Harvey-Variety**

"I laughed and cried .... It's priceless!"  
–**Sue Simmons**  
co-anchor of "News Channel 4/Live At Five," and "News Channel 4 at 11 p.m."

**-more-**

**BEEN RICH ALL MY LIFE** a Toots Crackin Production, 2006, 81 min. Produced and directed by Heather Lyn MacDonald, featuring **Bertye Lou Wood, Cleo Hayes, Marion Coles, Elaine Ellis, Fay Ray** and **Geri Kennedy**. Edited by **BB Jorissen** and **Heather Lyn MacDonald**; Cinematography by **Heather Lyn MacDonald** and **Jon Miller**; Sound/Additional photography by **Orlando Richards**; Associate Producer, **Margaret Whitton**; Music Score by **Pete Whitman**.

BEEN RICH ALL MY LIFE – A Tribute to Harlem’s Legendary Chorus Dancers, at the Apollo Theater on Sunday, March 26 at 4:00 pm. Tickets are \$30, \$18, \$10-Senior, Child and Student with ID (plus \$2 facility fee) and can be purchased at Ticketmaster [www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com), 212 307 7171, or Apollo Theater Box Office, 253 W. 125<sup>th</sup> Street, 212 531 5305. For Preferred Seating tickets, \$125 tax deductible (includes VIP reception) call 212 252 2778).

For information or to view the trailer of **BEEN RICH ALL MY LIFE**, visit [www.tootscrackin.com/braml.htm](http://www.tootscrackin.com/braml.htm); or call 212-252-2778.

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