



Soweto Gospel Choir

Music Directors

David Mulovhedzi (1948-2009), Diniloxolo Ndlakuse, Kevin Williams

Performers

Jeho Fata, Phili Faya, Shimmy Jiyane, Bongani Khumalo, Thembisa Khuzwayo, Lebo Mahlatji, Sibongile Makgathe, Lucas Mello, Lungisani Mhlongo, Mandla Modawu, Original Msimango, Mulalo Mulovhedzi, Melusi Ndawonde, Maserame Ndindwa, Diniloxolo Ndlakuse, Gregory Ndou, Sipho Ngcamu, Zanele Ngcamu, Linda Nxumalo, Sipokazi Nxumalo, Rebecca Nyamane, Linda Sambo, Portia Skosana, Kevin Williams

Producer **Andrew Kay**

Executive Producer/Director **Beverly Bryer**

Associate Producers **Margot Teele & Toni Rudof**

Company Manager **Jimmy Mulovhedzi**

Choreographer/Choir Master **Shimmy Jiyane**

Costume Designer **Lyn Leventhorpe**

Record Producer **Diniloxolo Ndlakuse & various (Divine Decade)**

Tour Manager **Tessa Kay**

Production/Lighting **Tyrone White**

Stage Manager **Maija Putans**

PROGRAM

There will be an intermission.

Sunday, February 16 at 7 PM

Zellerbach Theatre

PROGRAM NOTES

"Hiyo Mthate," traditional

"Ziyama'umelusi," traditional

"Kae Le Kae," traditional arr: V. Jiyane/F. Sidumo

"Libala Kuye," traditional arrs: V. Shabalala/V. Madondo/L. Mhlongo

"Emlanjeni/Yelele," traditional arr: J. Mulovhedzi

"Asimbonanga/Biko," J. Clegg/P. Gabriel

"Avulekile Amasango/One Love," A Shabalala/B. Marley

"Calvary," traditional arr: B. Ncube

"Bridge Over Troubled Water," P. Simon/A. Garfunkel

"Meadowlands," S Vilakazi

"Put Your Hand in the Hand" medley, G. McLellan/M. Dawson/S. Ford

"Nomalanga," M. Shabalala

Dance, traditional

"Lizalis'indingalako/Thina Sizwe," traditional

"Shosholoza," traditional arr: L. Bok/V. Msimango

"Many Rivers to Cross/Swing Low," J. Cliff/traditional arr: J. Mulovhedzi

"Njalo," traditional

"Shosholoza," traditional arr: L. Bok/V. Msimango

"Arms of An Angel," S. Maclachlan

"Ziphinkomo," C. Semenya

"Eli," Z. Bala/ V. Shabalala/S. Nxumalo/R. Nyamane

"Pata Pata," Makeba/Ragovoy

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

CHOIR DIRECTORS

Beverly Bryer (Executive Producer, Director) has been involved in the entertainment industry for over 25 years, working with some of South Africa's premier recording artists before moving on to become Managing Director of one of the country's most successful music publishing companies. In 1985, she moved to Australia where she worked as Publicist/Event Coordinator for concert/theatre promoter Paul Dainty. On her return to South Africa, she joined Big Concerts, the country's top concert promotions company, as Media Coordinator. In 1997, Bryer produced a dance show called *African Moves*, which was invited to perform at the Melbourne International Festival, followed by a tour of Australia where it performed to full houses. In 2002, Bryer formed her own company, Eventsco, and was approached by Australian producers/promoters Andrew Kay, Clifford Hocking and David Vigo to form an African gospel choir, now known as the Soweto Gospel Choir. Her position as Executive Producer/Director includes producing, directing, managing, marketing and publishing for the choir in South Africa in association with the Australian producers.

Jimmy Mashudu Mulovhedzi (Company Manager) was born and raised in Soweto, South Africa and is the son of Soweto Gospel Choir's co-founder, the late David Mulovhedzi. Mulovhedzi started singing in his father's church choir, the Holy Jerusalem Choir at age 13. Under his father's guidance, he became a polished song writer, arranger, producer and choreographer. He has collaborated with many artists and songwriters such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Benjamin Dube, American Gospel icon Rev. James Cleveland and The Mighty Clouds of Joy, to name just a few. His talent and dedication to music was always noticed and appreciated by the choir's executive producer and director, Beverly Bryer who also mentored him in entertainment management. In 2005, Mulovhedzi formed Memeza Africa, a musical project aimed at reducing the HIV/AIDS stigma. The project became an international success and has toured Canada, Scotland and Austria. In 2009, Mulovhedzi was appointed as the choir's Company Manager and he is now following his father's legacy. Apart from music, Mulovhedzi is an IT administrator, industrial psychologist and a certified HIV/AIDS counselor. He is also the director of Edzimbuku, a non-government organization which runs a successful AIDS project in South Africa. He is dedicated to making a change in his community.

CHOIR LEADERS

Shimmy Jiyane (Choreographer, Choir Master, Tenor, Dancer, Founding Member) has wanted to dance as long as he can remember. He realized his dream with performances in shows with the fabulous Tina Turner and South African stars like Vicki Samson, and choreographers Adele Blank, David Matamela and Debbie Rakusin. In 1997, he became a member of Vusa Dance Company's African Moves which performed at the Melbourne International Festival and went on a nationwide tour of Australia the following year. Jiyane now choreographs and performs and was nominated for a FNB Vita Award. His past work with the gospel group Joyous Celebration moved him into improving his vocal capacities. Jiyane has been choreographing for Soweto Gospel Choir for many years and his imagination combined with his knowledge of African dance has played an integral part in the success of the choir's performances. Although initially brought into the choir as a dancer, Jiyane has become a lead tenor with a hauntingly sweet voice.

Vusimuzi Shabalala (Musical Director, Tenor, Keyboards) was born in Madadeni in Newcastle, Natal as one of five brothers brought up in a Christian family, all singers. He started playing organ in his church and after completing his matric, he studied music and piano for two years at Fuba Music School. In 2001, Shabalala travelled to Boston to play piano for a month before returning to South Africa to form a group called Mecca Sounds of Praise. He held the position of voice trainer and musical director under Peter Mbuli. Shabalala has worked with local gospel star Benjamin Dube, as well as the Grace Choir, Thembinkosi Booi and Lundi Tyamara.

Diniloxolo Ndlakuse (Musical Director, Tenor, Keyboards) was born in Soweto and started singing in church at the age of six. At age eight, he started playing his father's melodica and his love of music has grown ever since. After completing his schooling, he studied music at Eastside College for two years where he learned about the history of South African music and its people. He also studied subjects like music form, ear training, keyboard technique, piano and theory. Ndlakuse became a band leader, composer and arranger of the college ensembles. At the same time, he was attending church in Soweto where he was the choir's composer, vocal arranger and conductor. He has worked with famous gospel artists like Lundi, Deborah Frazer and Fohloza and has performed with Umoja and Johnny Clegg. Ndlakuse joined the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2006.

Mazwe Mhlongo (Associate Choreographer and Choir Master, Bass, Dancer, Founding Member) comes from a family of performers. His father was a well-known comedian and actor, having performed on both stage and screen in South Africa. Originally from Kwamashu in Natal, Mhlongo first performed with the Bafana Dance Group which won a Shell Road to Fame competition in 1987. As a child dancer, he joined Mbongeni Ngema's European tour of *Sarafina*. In 1993, Mhlongo toured Germany with *Skulu Musical Show* as well as with *Ipi n'Tombi* and the musical show *Bergville Stories*. Mhlongo has been a member of Soweto Gospel Choir since 2002 and has contributed to its success, both musically and choreographically.

THE CHOIR

Eli Amor (Tenor, Rhythm, Lead Guitar) has been performing professionally since the age of 12. Born in Zimbabwe, he moved to Johannesburg in 1998. A guitarist of note, he has performed with African stalwarts such as Oliver Mtukudzi, Angelique Kidjo, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Tshepo Tshola and many others. In 2005, he performed with Sliq Angel opening for John Legend in Cape Town. He has been featured on BBC Radio, and performed two songs on the British television show *Wild at Heart* with his band Sahara. He joined Soweto Gospel Choir in 2007 and has travelled the world with them.

Miriam Chapole (Soprano, Founding Member) was born in Soweto and has been a member of the renowned Holy Jerusalem Choir for almost five years. Singing gospel is both a love and a calling for Chapole. She leads the choir at her church in Soweto as well. Chapole performed with the choir at the corporate farewell to Nelson Mandela and at Sun City for the Miss World Pageant.

Jabulile Dladla (Alto, Percussionist, Narrator, Founding Member) was born in Umbali Unit 18, a large location in Pietermaritzburg, and is a member of the Apostolic Church. She started singing while still at school and then joined the group Die Bafanas, based in Durban. It was as a member of this group that Dladla realized she had a talent and decided to move to Johannesburg to further her career. Once there, she met various

artists and directors and joined Lubikha Community Theatre. She has since backed many local stars including Busi Mhlongo and Jeff Maluleke, and has furthered her career by studying drama at the renowned Market Theatre. As well as singing in the choir, she plays percussion, another of her many talents.

Sibusiso Dube (Bass) comes from the famous Alexandra Township where he started singing and dancing during elementary school. He furthered his career working with the famous recording artist and producer Chicco Twala. Dube joined the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2008.

Jehoschefatt Fata (Soprano, Dancer, Narrator, Founding Member) was born in a small town called Alice, in the Eastern Cape. Fata was determined to study speech, drama and voice in the city of Johannesburg. Her talent was quickly spotted and her first show *Street-Sisters* won an award at the Grahamstown Festival and toured Europe. She performed in the hit show *Umoja* for many of the local performances, but gospel music has always been her first love and the Soweto Gospel Choir is the perfect platform for her talents.

Philisiwe Faya (Alto, Narrator) grew up in Durban and joined an award-winning gospel group called Fakaza in 2002. She was working as a receptionist at Ama Two One Record Company in 2003 when she signed as an artist to join Afro Pop group Pettite under Epettite Records as the lead singer and songwriter for the album. Faya joined the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2005, which has given her a chance to explore her talents further and to travel while at the same time furthering her music studies.

Mlungiseleni Jones (Tenor, Dancer) grew up in Soweto and began his artistic career in 1990 working with well-known director Duma Ka Ndlovu. He was featured in Ka Ndlovu's long-running TV series "Muvhango". He toured Switzerland with *Namao The Journey*, and has worked with the musical projects *Memeza* and *Umoja*. He joined the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2008 and is loving every minute of it.

George Kaudi (Tenor, Narrator), like many Soweto Gospel Choir members, started singing from an early age at Children of God Ministries under the leadership of Apostle Motsepe. He then joined music groups Immortal and Isabelo. When the industry realized his talent Kaudi started appearing in music videos of gospel stars like Deborah Fraser and Mashia Moyo. He then went onto work with Johnny Clegg and, after performing for stars like Oprah Winfrey, Quincy Jones, and Mariah Carey, he was invited along with the Soweto Gospel Choir to perform with Bebe Wynans. Kaudi has collaborated with musicians of the caliber of Vusi Mahlasela, Shwi and Cassette. He has traveled to Portugal, Australia and Hong Kong with the Soweto Gospel Choir and enjoys every minute of touring with the choir.

Thembisa Khuzwayo (Soprano, Dancer, Founding Member) grew up in Ladysmith, Kwazulu Natal. She studied at Durban's Inanda Seminary and obtained a diploma in Speech and Drama at the Soyikwa Institute of African Theatre. She studied dance at Sylvia Glasser's dance school Moving into Dance Mophatong, and obtained a diploma in the theory and practice of dance teaching. She has performed locally in the musical *Umoja* and with top South African musicians such as Busi Mhlongo, Philip Tabane and Yvonne Chaka-Chaka, and has toured Europe extensively. She loves working with the Soweto Gospel Choir and believes it is one of her greatest blessings.

Bongani Kumalo (Tenor, Founding Member) was born in Johannesburg and started singing at the age of 13 at Alexandra High School. Three years later, he was upgraded to the position of choir conductor. At age 18, he joined the well-known group Amakhono Wesintu as a singer and traditional dancer, on regular performances around Alexandra Township. Kumalo is currently conductor at the Old Apostle Church. He has been a valued member of the Soweto Gospel Choir since it started in November 2002.

Bongani Mabaso (Tenor) was born in Ladysmith, Kwa Zulu Natal and grew up singing in the local church and school choirs. After his schooling, he moved to Johannesburg where he met many jazz legends namely Sophie Mcgina, Dolly Rathebe and Mara Louw at Dorkay House where he performed with the Junior Manhattan Brothers. He had the honor of performing for President Thabo Mbeki at Gallagher Estate. Mabaso performed with Johnny Clegg in Portugal and the UK and has backed many gospel stars. Recently, he got the opportunity to take part in the South African movie production *Drum* starring Taye Diggs and other American stars.

Vusumuzi Madondo (Bass, Founding Member) was born in Ladysmith. Madondo first arrived in Soweto in 1996 with the specific aim of working with a gospel choir. After many disappointments, this versatile singer finally attracted attention with the Soweto Gospel Choir and his hopes are now bright for the future. His magnificent bass voice is his greatest talent.

Warren Mahlangu (Bass, Dancer, Percussionist) grew up in Alexandra Township. He has always been passionate about the performing arts, working as a dancer, singer and drummer. At age 16, he joined Amakhono Wesintu as a dancer and singer. He has participated in dance workshops with the renowned South African dance company Moving Into Dance Mophatong. Mahlangu was featured on the National Aids Day song with Tu Nokwe and DJ Mphulo, amongst others. He joined the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2005 and hopes to develop his professional career further with the choir.

Lebogang Mahlatji (Tenor, Bass Guitar) comes from Alexandra Township in Johannesburg. He studied music for four years at Central Johannesburg College and has performed with popular artists such as Sipokazi, Zuluboy, Khethi and L8 Antique. He joined the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2008 as a bass guitarist, and has become one of the male tenor voices in the choir.

Sibongile Makgathe (Alto, Founding Member) started singing at the age of 13 in the church choir and was introduced to the world of professional music in 1989 as a backing vocalist. She was a founding member of the well-known gospel group, Joyous Celebration before joining the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2002. She has worked with many of the great names of African music, including Miriam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Sibongile Khumalo, Gloria Bosman, Angelique Kidjo. Makgathe toured with Michael Jackson and was involved with the award-winning actor/director, John Kani in the musical play *The Lion the Lamb*.

Victor Makhathini (Tenor) comes from Kwa-Zulu Natal. As a boy, he sang in both the Zion Church Choir and the Boys' Choir and later formed a group called New Generation. He has since worked with several well-known artists and been involved with various ministries, working with the praise and worship teams. He has worked with Theminkosi Booi and The Prison Worship, a project of Forward in Faith Ministries. Makhathini recorded a solo album project called *Victor M*. He joined the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2007 and has performed with them in Ghana, Australia, Hong Kong and South Korea.

Jeanette Mazibuko (Alto) was born in Soweto and is another performer who started her career with the well-known youth development organization Thabisong Youth Club. No stranger to international performance, she has performed in France, Spain and India, as well as around South Africa. She participated in the Masakhane Arts and Culture Youth Development Project. Mazibuko aims to develop her talents as a singer and is inspired by gospel and traditional music.

Gugu Mbongwa (Alto, Dancer) comes from Pietermaritzburg, Kwa Zulu Natal. She started her performance career in 1997 with a community arts group called Die Bafanas. She performed professionally in 2001 in the show *Let Justice Be* which won an FNB Vita Award. Her big breakthrough came when she was cast in the lead for the Gibson Kente musical *How Long*. In 2003, she worked with another South African musical theatre legend Duma Ka Ndlovu in a play called *The Journey* with which she toured Switzerland. She went on to perform in Mbongeni Ngema's musical *Shaka Zulu*. Clearly a well-rounded artist, she toured Germany running dance workshops and works part-time as an aerobics instructor for the Soyikwa Institute of Arts.

Lungisani Mhlongo (Tenor) was born in Kwa-Zulu Natal. His musical inspiration is Thulani Mthethwa of Pietermaritzburg Choral Society. Mhlongo has collaborated with many local jazz and blues veterans, including the late Sophie Mgcina and Dolly Rathebe. As a member of the Junior Manhattan Brothers, he discovered the music of the 50s and the group was featured in the film *Drum*. Mhlongo studied at the Ishashalazi Drama College, has performed at The Windybrow theatre and is an award-winning poet. When not on tour with the choir, he works for a number of shelters including the Rosca Children's Shelter and Nkosi's Haven, volunteers as a sport and recreation manager and teaches basic music and drama skills. A career highlight was performing with Tshepo Thsola & Deborah Fraser in London as part of the South African Freedom Day celebrations.

Siyabolela Mkefa (Bass) (stage name C'ya) has been involved in the South African and international music scene for many years. From humble beginnings singing in Soweto's Welizibuko Primary School Choir, he has gone on to perform in the Australian edition of Disney's *The Lion King* and has sung alongside such greats as Sibongile Khumalo, Vuyo Mokoena and Hugh Masekela. In the mid-90s, he was part of the Eastern Cape gospel ensemble, Lord Comforters. C'ya's big break came in 1998 when the chance presented itself to perform in the star-studded musical, *Milestone*, which premiered at the Grahamstown Arts Festival featuring the cream of South African musical talent in the form of Jeffrey Mofokeng, jazz diva Sibongile Khumalo, jazz genius Themba Mkhize, theatre guru Nomsa Manaka and award-winning jazz singer Gloria Bosman. C'ya is currently a member of the Soweto Gospel Choir.

Thabang Mkhwanazi (Bass, Dancer, Percussionist) is a dancer, actor and singer. He started in 1996 working with Oupa Malatjie. Mkhwanazi worked with well-known musician and cultural activist Tu Nokwe as a dancer for four years and also with Nhlanhla Mahlangu as a singer. He is a choreographer for the group Tswelopele and he recently joined the Soweto Gospel Choir.

Thandi Mnduzulwane (Soprano) was born in Soweto and started exploring her gift for singing in church. She joined the high school choir and received a certificate in a talent contest for vocals. The following year, she choreographed for a dance group which won an award for African and Modern Dance. She studied contemporary music at Allenby Campus where she majored in vocals. While at Allenby, she wrote her first song which was chosen to open the launch of a contemporary music class in 1998. Mnduzulwane continued to sing for church choirs, singing solos and back-up vocals. In 1999, she recorded her first album with Base 2 Base which received good airplay on Metro FM. She is still striving to be the best she can be on this journey of life and finds it goes well while focused on God.

Mandlenkosi Modawu (Bass, Drummer) was born in Pretoria in 1978 and grew up in Witbank, Mpumalanga. He began singing at eight years old in Sunday School at the Church Apostolic Faith Mission. At age 11, he helped form a youth choir called The Angels and went on to teach himself to play drums. He then became the drummer, singer and music director for the Faith Tabernacle Church. He has worked with artists locally in jazz, Afropop and gospel music. In 2003, Modawu registered with the Central Johannesburg College to study popular music with a major in drumming. In the same year, he met Lucas Bok who recommended that he join the Soweto Gospel Choir. He believes working with the Soweto Gospel Choir is a blessing and a once in a lifetime experience.

Phumlani Msibi (Tenor) comes from Kwa Zulu Natal and started singing when he was seven years old. He was encouraged by his parents who also sing, and he grew up singing in church and school choirs. He was a member of the Abequlusi Community Choir as a tenor soloist. While at school, Msibi also participated in Latin American and ballroom dancing. In 2004, he started studying sound engineering at Gallo Studios which he continues today. Msibi looks forward to further studies in music to advance his career.

Original Msimango (Bass, Dancer, Percussionist, Founding Member) has performed extensively throughout South Africa and internationally, representing the country in Leipzig Germany with some distinction. In 1999, he performed with African Rhythms around Europe and this group won a gold medal at the International Des Pyreenes Festival. He has travelled to Belgium, Spain and France and in December 2001, he was selected as one of four members to represent South Africa in an exchange with Japan in the Peace Boat, which travelled to Taiwan, Kobe, Brunei, Seychelles, Singapore, Kenya and Madagascar. Early in 2002, his group was again invited to the Des Pyreenes Festival in Europe and they won the award as the best group for the second time.

Nersia Mtshali (Soprano, Dancer) was born in Mpumalanga, Amersfoort. She recently moved to Sengoane, Soweto to live with her mother. Mtshali completed her matric in 1998 and her dream was to become a radiographer. She was inspired by African dance and singing, so she joined the Vuka Lova Arts & Cultural Group. In 2002, she met choreographer S'bonile Ngubane from African Footprint who took her to Korea and Japan working as an entertainer during the Soccer World Cup. In 2006, she joined the Soweto Gospel Choir. She is a devoted Christian.

Mary Mulovhedzi (Soprano, Dancer) was born in Soweto in 1980. She started singing in church at the age of eight and joined The Holy Jerusalem Choir when she was only 13. She has been singing gospel since then, having entertained Nelson Mandela, the Chinese Prime Minister, Michael Jackson and many others as part of that choir. She is a multi-talented dancer and percussionist as well having a strong soprano vocal range.

Mulalo Mulovhedzi (Bass, Dancer, Founding Member) had a grandfather who was a pastor and a father who was a choir master, so it was preordained that he would follow into the church choir. Mulovhedzi lives in Chiawelo, Soweto with his family and has performed with the Holy Jerusalem Choir for many important celebrities around South Africa, including former President Nelson Mandela. His talents also include dancing and drumming.

Bongani Ncube (Bass Guitarist, Tenor) comes from Soweto and hopes to touch many souls with songs of joy, peace and harmony through his music. He has been working professionally in the music business for five years and has proven to be a multitasking artist. He plays acoustic and electric bass, drums and is an alto and tenor vocalist. Ncube has worked with many well-known South African artists, like Khaya Mahlangu, Deborah Fraser and Kelli Khumalo, to name a few. He also has a strong interest in fine art and spends his spare time drawing and painting.

Melusi Ndawonde (Tenor, Dance, Founding Member) was born in Ladysmith, Kwa Zulu Natal. He developed his love of music and dance and started his singing career as a prominent member of the school choir. He toured with the Thabisong Youth Club doing what he loves most, singing and dancing, and has been a member of Soweto Gospel Choir since its inception in 2002, touring with them worldwide.

Maserame Ndinwa (Alto, Founding Member) started singing at the age of 16 at the Abundant Life Bible Church. In 1997, the church was invited to perform in New York and this fantastic experience led to her being appointed to lead singer. In 2001, she went to Johannesburg to attend Wits College to study as a sound engineer, but lack of finance found her unable to follow that dream. Her voice, however, is her trademark and she was spotted by leading local gospel singer Vicky Vilakazi who invited her to perform. Always eager to further her studies, she enrolled for a course in Drama and Dance at the Bavukile Cultural Centre in Klerksdorp.

Gregory Ndou (Bass, Founding Member) was born and raised in Soweto to a religious Christian family. Ndou has a history of helping others. He is a member of a mediation service in his home town which helps youngsters in the community by listening to their problems and arranging food, clothing and accommodation as well as trying to build recreational facilities. Ndou is a member of the Holy Jerusalem Choir and has completed a Conflict Skills Management program. He also performed for the former President Nelson Mandela at the first 46664 concert in Cape Town sharing the stage with artists such as Bono and Peter Gabriel.

Sipho Ngcamu (Percussionist, Dancer, Tenor, Narrator, Founding Member) was born in Soweto and didn't realize he had a talent for song and dance until age 18. It was only when he joined a gospel choir in his community that he realized he needed to learn traditional dance and how to play African drums. He has performed with South African musician Condry Ziqubu, entertained former President Nelson Mandela and President Thabo Mbeki, and has been on stage at the Miss World competition held at Sun City.

Zanele Ngcamu (Soprano) was born in Soweto and raised in a Christian family of artists. She started singing in church, Apostolic Faith Mission (Naledi) and then professionally in high school. After finishing school, Ngcamu worked with well-known South African artists, such as Benjamin Dube and Mzwakhe Mbuli and sang with a group called Grace. She is currently studying a correspondence course with UNISA for a Human Resource Management diploma. She is young, energetic, driven and a devoted Christian who one day hopes to be a successful businesswoman.

Phumla Nkhumeleni (Alto) was born in Soweto and showed an aptitude for music before she could even talk. At the age of 11, she was singing in a church choir and in early 2002, she ventured into choral music. She was fortunate to be given the opportunity to sing with the Holy Jerusalem Choir, from which she was recruited to join the internationally performing choir Memeza. David Mulovhedzi, the late co-founder of Soweto Gospel Choir recognized her blossoming talent and invited her to audition for the Soweto Gospel Choir and she has not looked back since.

Linda Nxumalo (Tenor, Dancer, Founding Member) has found determination to be the key to his success as he has tried to use song and dance to pull himself out of poverty. Born in Soweto, he joined the Thabisong Youth Club to keep off the streets and showed a natural talent for both song and dance. This talent and determination allowed him to perform in France, Spain and Belgium as well at many centers in South Africa, but he is determined to make enough money to go to college one day.

Sipokazi Nxumalo (Alto, Narrator, Founding Member) is a young extrovert who auditioned for *Popstars* and attended the workshop Siya Phezulu. Nxumalo has won many school and church choir competitions and her determination to be a professional singer is only matched by her passion for education and her beliefs. She plans to go to university to study for a Bachelor of Commerce to support her while she pursues her dream of being a professional singer. Gospel and traditional music are the genres she enjoys most. She is a devoted Christian who believes her God-given talent will take her far in life.

Rebecca Nyamane (Alto) began singing at the age of three when she was in the hospital for six months. The patients would always have a little prayer before they went to bed and she would volunteer to start a song. At the age of eight, she went to live with her aunt in the Western Cape. The family members were devout Christians and attended church every week, where Nyamane would lead the choir. Now, she works with the Conquerors Through Christ Ministries Church in Pretoria where many musical workshops are held. In the late 90s, Nyamane joined the Student Christian Fellowship at her high school and learned drama, African dance and gospel music. She has entered competitions and performed at musical festivals. Nyamane helped form the gospel group Nuwave which performed at the Arts and Culture festivals at the State Theatre in Pretoria, where she was awarded a certificate for best singer of the year.

Fanizile Nzuzi (Bass) comes from Ladysmith in Kwa Zulu Natal and joined the Sunday school choir at the age of nine. At an early age, he moved to Gauteng seeking greener pastures. He met jazz legends like Dorothy Masuka and Abigail Khubeka at the historic Dorkay House music development centre in downtown Johannesburg and went on to perform as part of the Junior Manhattan Brothers. Nzuzi has worked as backing vocalist for many popular performers, notably Johnny Clegg, and many other top gospel artists. He has performed in the UK and Europe with the Soweto Gospel Choir which he feels has brought even more passion to his music.

Ntombehlubi Rala-Rala (Alto, Dancer) comes from Port Elizabeth, South Africa and has always been a very ambitious young woman. She grew up with a yearning for the arts and started working as a promoter while still in high school during school holidays. Rala-Rala studied dance choreography at Rhodes University and has sung in church choirs and musical groups. She joined the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2009.

Linda Sambo (Soprano) was born in Soweto and grew up in a family church where her grandfather was a pastor. This influence led her to start her singing career in the Holy Jerusalem Choir, with which she had the opportunity to perform for Nelson Mandela at Sun City. Sambo has since performed at many public concerts in the past few years and she scored a coup by joining the Soweto Gospel Choir.

Fikile Sidumo (Alto, Narrator, Founding Member) was born in Alexandra Township and started singing at the age of nine at the Apostolic Church, where she is still a teacher and conductor. She has worked with many groups in Johannesburg including Amakhono Wesintu as a singer and dancer. Sidumo has performed with the legendary musical playwright Gibson Kente and the Uthingo Ladies Acapella Group. As an actor and singer, she possesses a unique depth and strength in her vocal range.

Mxolisi Sithole (Tenor, Dancer, Percussionist) was growing up in Soweto when he developed an active involvement and love for the arts. He was a member of Thabisong Youth Club, a non-profit youth organization which has nurtured many performing artists. He was able to tour nationally and internationally as a performer with Thabisong. Sithole was also a member of *Umoja*, a well-known South African dance musical which has been touring the world for many years.

Portia Skosana (Soprano, Narrator) started singing at the age of 10 and joined a youth choir called Sweet Waters. She then joined Extravagance, the Massed Choir of Witbank. Skosana was invited to join the Soweto Gospel Choir and has since travelled with them throughout the world.

Kevin Williams (Tenor, Lead Guitar) was introduced to music at the age of nine by his family which is musically oriented. He was taught how to play drums and bass guitar by family members and then began to play music full time in local church choirs. His dedication to music led him to teach music to youngsters in the local church and run musical workshops at the age of 15. After completing high school, he enrolled for a Music Degree at the University of Natal where he majored in vocals. Williams has worked as a vocal arranger/producer and composer for recording artists and musicians. He joined the Soweto Gospel Choir in 2006 and is excited to be part of a group that is taking gospel music around the world. Williams comes from Pietermaritzburg in Kwa Zulu Natal.