



Ladysmith Black Mambazo

PROGRAM

There will be an intermission.

Friday, January 31 at 8 PM

Zellerbach Theatre

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

In 2013, **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**, led by founder and leader Joseph Shabalala, celebrated over 50 years of joyous and uplifting music that marries the intricate rhythms and harmonies of their native South African musical traditions to the sounds and sentiments of Christian gospel music. In those years, the a cappella vocal group has created a musical and spiritual alchemy that has touched a worldwide audience representing every corner of the religious, cultural and ethnic landscape. Their musical efforts have garnered praise and accolades within the recording industry, and have also solidified their identity as a cultural force to be reckoned with.

Assembled in the early 1960s in South Africa by Shabalala, then a young farmboy turned factory worker, the group took the name Ladysmith Black Mambazo—Ladysmith being the name of Shabalala's rural hometown, Black being a reference to oxen, the strongest of all farm animals, and Mambazo being the Zulu word for axe, a symbol of the group's ability to "chop down" any singing rival who might challenge them. Their collective voices were so tight and their harmonies so polished that they were eventually banned from vocal competitions—although they were welcome to participate strictly as entertainers.

A radio broadcast in 1970 opened the door to their first record contract and the beginning of an ambitious discography that currently includes more than fifty recordings. Their philosophy in the studio was and continues to be just as much about preservation of musical heritage as it is about entertainment. The group borrows heavily from traditional music called isicathamiya (is-cot-a-ME-Ya), which developed in the mines of South Africa, where black workers were taken by rail to work far away from their homes and their families. Poorly housed and paid worse, the mine workers would entertain themselves after a six-day week by singing songs into the wee hours on Sunday morning. When the miners returned to the homelands, this musical tradition returned with them.

In the mid-1980s, Paul Simon visited South Africa and incorporated Ladysmith Black Mambazo's rich tenor/alto/bass harmonies into his *Graceland* album, a landmark 1986 recording that is considered seminal in introducing world music to mainstream audiences. A year later, Simon produced Ladysmith Black Mambazo's first U.S. release, *Shaka Zulu*, which won a Grammy® Award in 1988. Since then, the group has been awarded two more Grammy® Awards and has been nominated a total of fifteen times including a nomination for their recent CD release, *Songs From A Zulu Farm*.

In addition to their work with Paul Simon, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has recorded with numerous artists from around the world, including Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, Sarah McLachlan, Josh Groban, Emmylou Harris, Melissa Etheridge and many others. Their film work includes a featured appearance in Michael Jackson's *Moonwalker* video and Spike Lee's film *Do It A Cappella*. They've provided soundtrack material for Disney's *The Lion King, Part II* as well as well known movies such as *Coming To America*, *A Dry White Season*, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*, *Cry The Beloved Country* and *Invictus*. A film documentary titled *On Tip Toe: Gentle Steps to Freedom*, the story of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, was nominated for an Academy® Award.

The group's recent CD, *Songs From A Zulu Farm*, is a collection of traditional tunes from their youth in South Africa. The CD recreates the idyllic world in which the members once lived. Ladysmith Black Mambazo will be releasing a children's CD called *Stories and Songs From A Zulu Farm*, in which they've created a narrative story to join with their recent songs for children to better understand life on a Zulu farm. This will be their first children's CD since the 1990's. They also released a live CD called *Singing For Peace Around The World* in early 2013. Later, they will release a new traditional Zulu CD in 2014 and an all English American Gospel recording with a famous American singer.