



HUGH MASEKELA & **VUSI MAHLASELA**

20 Years of Freedom

PROGRAM

There will be no intermission.



Saturday, February 21 at 8 PM

Zellerbach Theatre

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Hugh Masekela

Legendary South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela is an innovator in the world music and jazz scene and continues to tour the world as a performer, composer, producer and activist. This iconic artist is best known for his Grammy®-nominated hit single, *Grazing in the Grass*, which sold over 4 million copies in 1968 and made him an international star. He later played an integral role in Paul Simon's tour behind the classic album *Graceland*, which was one of the first pop records to introduce African music to a broader public.

Hugh Ramopolo Masekela was born on April 4, 1939 in Witbank, near Johannesburg. Masekela showed musical ability from a young age and began playing piano as a child. Inspired by the movie *Young Man with a Horn* (in which Kirk Douglas plays a character modeled after American jazz trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke), Masekela began to play the trumpet. He was encouraged by anti-apartheid activist Father Trevor Huddleston, who helped him acquire an instrument.

Masekela was deeply affected by his life experiences and consequently made music that reflected his experiences in the harsh political climate of South Africa during the 1950s and 1960s. Masekela's music portrays the struggles and joys of living in South Africa, and voices protest against slavery and discrimination.

Masekela has collaborated with numerous artists in the USA, Africa and Europe including Miriam Makeba, Dizzy Gillespie, Harry Belafonte, Herb Alpert, Fela Kuti (in Nigeria) and Franco (in the Congo). Renowned choreographer Alvin Ailey chose a piece by Masekela to create a work for his world famous Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Masekela also co-created the Broadway smash musical *Sarafina* that introduced the sounds and passion of South African music to theatre audiences worldwide.

Masekela's work as an activist raised international awareness of the South African government's restrictive Apartheid policies. In the 1980s, Masekela's hit song, *Bring Him Back Home*, became an anthem for the Free Nelson Mandela movement. In the 1990's, Masekela finally returned home to South Africa and renewed the musical ties to his homeland and the sounds and rhythms of Central and West Africa, in particular the mbaqanga style. In 2004, he released his autobiography, *Still Grazing: The Musical Journey of Hugh Masekela*, a stunning memoir that is both heartbreaking and hilarious.

In 2009, Masekela celebrated his 70th birthday by releasing the CD *Phola* (meaning "to get well, to heal") and with a highly acclaimed performance with the London Symphony Orchestra. In 2010, he received The Order of Ikhamanga from South African President Jacob Zuma, his nation's highest civilian honor. When South Africa hosted the 2010 World Cup, Masekela performed at the opening ceremony concert, broadcast worldwide for millions of people, and played his infectious and celebratory *Grazing in the Grass*. As part of ESPN's coverage of the World Cup, Masekela and his son Sal (who is an ESPN Sportscaster) hosted a series of video documentaries entitled *Umlando—Through My Father's Eyes*. In 2011, Masekela joined the rock band U2 on stage in Johannesburg to a crowd of almost 100,000, the biggest concert the band has ever played.

April 30, 2012 marked the first International Day of Jazz, produced by the Thelonius Monk Institute and featuring concerts in Paris, New York and New Orleans. The concert at the UN General Assembly featured a who's who of jazz giants such as Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and Wynton Marsalis. Masekela had the honor of participating both in Paris and New York and his blistering performance of *Grazin'* featured none other than Stevie Wonder on the harmonica.

In 2013, the first recording under Masekela's own record label, House of Masekela, was the four-CD box set *Friends* featuring Masekela and American pianist Larry Willis performing

American song and classic jazz standards. Also released in 2013 was *Playing@work* featuring his longtime band members: bassist Fana Zulu, keyboardist Randal Skippers, guitarist Cameron Ward and drummer Lee-Roy Sauls.

Celebrating 50 years in the music industry and his 75th Birthday, Masekela returned to the US in 2014 for a 10 city tour, dedicated to the memory of Nelson Mandela.

Articulate and brilliantly musical in any number of genres, Hugh Masekela has been a defining force in world music, the preservation of South Africa's musical heritage, the safety and well-being of its poorest citizens as well as the struggle for freedom and human rights both in Africa, and around the world.

Vusi Mahlasela

Vusi Mahlasela, is simply known as 'The Voice' in his home-country of South Africa and is celebrated for his distinct, powerful voice and his poetic, optimistic lyrics. His songs of hope connect Apartheid-scarred South Africa with its promise for a better future. Raised in the Mamelodi Township, where he still resides, Mahlasela became a singer-songwriter and poet-activist at an early age, teaching himself how to play guitar and later joining the Congress of South African Writers. After his popular debut on BMG Africa, *When You Come Back*, Mahlasela was asked to perform at Nelson Mandela's inauguration in 1994 and continues to spread Mandela's message as an official ambassador to Mandela's HIV/AIDS initiative, 46664.

After world-wide touring and international acclaim, Americans first caught a glimpse of Mahlasela in the documentary film *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*, and the accompanying soundtrack. After the release of the film, long-time admirer and fellow South African, Dave Matthews, signed Mahlasela to his own ATO Records label and released *The Voice* (2003), a collection of the best songs from Mahlasela's catalog. In 2007, ATO released his latest album, *Guiding Star*, his first full-length release in the States. ATO Records released the highly anticipated follow-up record to *Guiding Star* on January 18, 2011. The new album, *Say Africa*, produced by Taj Mahal and recorded at Dave Matthews' studio in Charlottesville, VA, captures Mahlasela's hope for the future of Africa: "Let all those who share in Mandela's greatest wish—to one day see an Africa that is at peace with herself—SAY AFRICA."

After recording the album in the States, Mahlasela returned to his home in South Africa and was honored to help ring in the World Cup at FIFA's Kick Off Concert at Orlando Stadium. The concert was broadcast internationally to an estimated one billion viewers. Following his performance, he proudly introduced fellow South African, Archbishop Desmond Tutu on stage. Mahlasela's song *When You Come Back* was ITV's official theme song for the World Cup in the UK. Other recent highlights include performing at Mandela Day to honor Mandela's birthday, touring with Béla Fleck behind the release of his Grammy®-winning album *Throw Down Your Heart*, which features a live track from Mahlasela and Fleck, two appearances at the TED conference and performing with Paul Simon.

In the midst of a busy international touring schedule, Mahlasela remains dedicated to his social activism and partnerships with non-profits, including his own Vusi Mahlasela Music Development Foundation, committed to the promotion of and preservation of African music. Other organizations that he actively supports are OXFAM, The Acumen Fund, The African Leadership Academy and the ONE campaign.

Over a musically and socially consequential career, South African singer-songwriter and poet-activist Vusi Mahlasela has successfully followed his muse and continued to give back to his country. As he puts it, he knows that "musicians have to be like watchdogs, just by seeing and speaking out, directly to the youth as well, because we need some kind of Cultural Revolution to remove ignorance."