



## NEWS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 3, 2013

- WHAT:** Ladysmith Black Mambazo  
**WHEN:** Wednesday, January 30, 1213, 7:30 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Fine Arts Center Concert Hall  
University of Massachusetts Amherst  
**TICKETS:** Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go online to <http://www.fineartscenter.com/>  
**IMAGES:** To download images relating to this press release please go online to <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/article/Images>

#### LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO BRINGS ITS LUSH, TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RHYTHMS AND MELODIES TO THE UMASS FAC

For over forty years, the voices of Ladysmith Black Mambazo have married the intricate rhythms and harmonies of their native South African musical traditions to the sounds and sentiments of Christian gospel music. The result is a musical and spiritual alchemy that has touched a worldwide audience representing every corner of the religious, cultural and ethnic landscape. Their musical efforts over the past four decades have garnered praise and accolades within the recording industry, but also solidified their identity as a cultural force to be reckoned with. On Wednesday, January 30, Ladysmith Black Mambazo will bring their intoxicating mix of African and gospel melodies and rhythms to the UMass FAC Concert Hall. Ticket holders are invited to a pre-concert talk conducted by New England Public Radio host Kari Njiri at 6:30 p.m. in the University Club.

Assembled in the early 1960s, in Durban South Africa, by Joseph Shabalala (still currently leading the group) – then a young farmboy turned factory worker – Joseph 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 competitions – although they were welcomed to participate strictly as entertainers.

The group's path had a specific direction: “To bring this gospel of loving one another all over the world,” Joseph says. However, he’s quick to point out that the message is not specific to any one religious orientation. “Without hearing the lyrics, this

music gets into the blood, because it comes from the blood," he says. "It evokes enthusiasm and excitement, regardless of what you follow spiritually."

A radio broadcast in 1970 opened the door to their first record contract – 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 a 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 Black Mambazo's rich tenor/alto/bass harmonies into his "Graceland" album – a landmark 1986 recording that was considered seminal in introducing world music to mainstream audiences. "Graceland" won many awards, including the Grammy Award for Best Album of the Year. A year later, Simon produced Black Mambazo's first U.S. release, "Shaka Zulu," which won the Grammy Award, in 1988, for Best Traditional Folk Album. Since then, and in total, the group has received fifteen Grammy Award Nominations and three Grammy Award wins, including one in 2009.

In addition to their work with Paul Simon, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has recorded with numerous artists from around the world, including Stevie Wonder, Josh Groban, Dolly Parton, Ben Harper, and many others. Their 2006 CD, "Long Walk To Freedom" had guest singers join them, such as Sarah McLachlan, Natalie Merchant, Melissa Etheridge, Emmylou Harris, Taj Mahal and others. Their film work includes an appearance in Michael Jackson's Moonwalker video and Spike Lee's "Do It A Cappella." They provided soundtrack material for Disney's "The Lion King, Part II" as well as Eddie Murphy's "Coming To America," Clint Eastwood's "Invictus," Marlon Brando's "A Dry White Season," Sean Connery's "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen" and James Earl Jones' "Cry The Beloved Country." 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 is also well known for its Life Savers candy commercials as well as adverts with Heinz Beans. Their performance with Paul Simon on Sesame Street is legendary and is one of the top three requested Sesame Street segments in history.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo has been invited to perform at many special occasions. By special invitation from South African President Nelson Mandela, they performed for the Queen of England and the Royal Family at the Royal Albert Hall in London. The group has also performed at two Nobel Peace Prize Ceremonies, a concert for Pope John Paul II in Rome, the South African Presidential inaugurations, the 1996 Summer Olympics and many other special events. In the summer of 2002, Black Mambazo was again asked to represent their nation in London at a celebration for Queen Elizabeth's 50th Anniversary as Monarch. They shared the stage with Paul McCartney, Rod Stewart, Eric Clapton, Joe Cocker and Phil Collins.

Just when one think the group should be slowing down they are entering what should be the busiest years of their career since "Graceland." They have six new recording projects they are readying for release, a new concert DVD and a Children's project. They have long wished to release a trilogy of CD's that sing of their life experiences in South Africa called "Our South African Life." Volume One, coming out January, 2011 is "Songs From A Zulu Farm." This wonderful recording is important to the group members because the older members of the group were born and raised on

the farms outside of Ladysmith. It is a collection of original and traditional songs that sing of life on the farm. This release will coincide with a world tour that brings them to the USA in early 2011, Europe in May-June 2011 and other places to be announced later in the year.

No, time is not slowing down for the group. As Joseph Shabalala says, "We are teachers. We travel the world spreading our message of Peace, Love and Harmony. What could be better or more important than that."

Tickets for Ladysmith Black Mambazo's performance at the FAC Concert Hall are \$40, \$35, and \$15; Five College, GCC, STCC students and youth 17 and under are \$10. For tickets call the Box Office at 545-2511, toll-free at 800-999-UMAS, or purchase online at [fineartscenter.com](http://fineartscenter.com). The performance is sponsored by *The Republican* MassLive.com, *El Sol Latino*, WGBY, and New England Public Radio.

Ticket holders are invited to a pre-concert Fireside Chat on the night of the show by New England Public Radio *Jazz Safari* host Kari Njiiri at 6:30 p.m. at the University Club.

#### **PHOTOS**

Hi-res photos available for download: <https://fac.umass.edu/Online/article/Images>.

#### **PRESS PASSES**

Limited press passes are available. Please contact Shawn Farley at 413-545-4159 or [sfarley@admin.umass.edu](mailto:sfarley@admin.umass.edu).

#### **ABOUT THE FAC**

The Fine Arts Center, located on the UMass Amherst campus, is a presenter of music, dance, theater and the visual arts, bringing hundreds of outstanding and provocative artists to the Pioneer Valley for over 35 years.

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