

Wednesday, March 11, 2015, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Hugh Masekela & Vusi Mahlasela



### *20 Years of Freedom*

Hugh Masekela	<i>flugelhorn &amp; lead vocals</i>
Vusi Mahlasela	<i>guitar &amp; lead vocals</i>
Francis Fuster	<i>percussion</i>
Ian Herman	<i>drums</i>
Mongezi Ntaka	<i>guitar</i>
Randal Skippers	<i>keyboards</i>
Abednigo Sibongiseni Zulu	<i>bass guitar</i>

*The program will be announced from the stage.*

*Cal Performances' 2014–2015 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.*

**T**WO OF SOUTH AFRICA'S poets of freedom and renowned musical icons come together to honor 20 years since the start of democracy in South Africa and the official end of the apartheid régime. In a collaborative performance with members of each stars' band, Hugh Masekela and Vusi Mahlasela will pay tribute to the struggle and victory in *20 Years of Freedom*, playing some of the most famous protest music and many of their own hits, too. Both artists have been like-minded musical comrades at home in South Africa for years and have shared the stage on several occasions; however, this season marks the first time the two artists have toured together. The collaboration began in earnest in October 2014, when they opened Carnegie Hall's South Africa Festival, entitled *Ubuntu: Music and Arts of South Africa*, and welcomed special guests Dave Matthews and Somi to join the stage with them for several numbers. Mr. Masekela and Mr. Mahlasela retraced an outline of the history of the resistance to apartheid through some of the most memorable songs of the period, including Mr. Masekela's "Bring Back Nelson Mandela" and "Stimela," Mr. Mahlasela's "When You Come Back," and Johnny Klegg's "Asimbonanga." Perhaps the most emotional song of the evening was "Weeping," which contains the melody from "Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika" (the South African national anthem at a time when South Africans could not sing their own anthem under apartheid). The songs on this tour symbolize kindness, respect, unity, and, ultimately, forgiveness.



Legendary South African trumpeter **Hugh Masekela** is an innovator in the world music and jazz genres and continues to tour the world as a performer, composer, producer, and activist. This iconic artist is best known for his Grammy Award-nominated hit single "Grazing in the Grass," which sold over four 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 5, 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), Mr. Masekela began to play the trumpet. He was encouraged by anti-Apartheid activist Father Trevor Huddleston, who helped him acquire an instrument.

At Father Huddleston's request, Mr. Masekela then received tuition for trumpet playing from Uncle Sauda, who played for the Johannesburg "Native" Municipal Brass Band. Mr. Masekela soon mastered the trumpet and began to play with other aspiring musicians in the Huddleston Jazz Band—South Africa's first youth orchestra. Louis Armstrong sent the band a trumpet as a way of supporting their efforts. Mr. Masekela later secured a gig in the pit band for the musical *King Kong*. *King Kong* was South Africa's first blockbuster theatrical success, touring the country for a sold-out year with Miriam Makeba who would later become Mr. Masekela's wife. He later formed a band with Dollar Brand (later known as Abdullah Ibrahim) called the Jazz Epistles, which became the first African jazz group to record an LP and perform to record-breaking audiences in Johannesburg and Cape Town in late 1959 and early 1960. But life in South Africa was becoming unbearable under the strain of Apartheid oppression. After the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre, where 69 peacefully protesting Africans were brutally gunned down, the South African government banned gatherings of ten or more people. Mr. Masekela escaped South Africa with the help of Father Huddleston, who enlisted friends like Yehudi Menuhin and John Dankworth, both of whom helping get him admitted into London's

Guildhall School of Music. Later on, with the assistance of Miriam Makeba and Harry Belafonte, Mr. Masekela was accepted into the Manhattan School of Music in New York. His first night in New York found him in several jazz clubs, hearing Thelonious Monk and Dizzy Gillespie in one, Charlie Mingus and Max Roach at a second, and John Coltrane at a third. It was clear that New York would be the perfect place to pursue his jazz aspirations while studying classical trumpet at school during the day.

Mr. 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. Mr. Masekela's music portrays the struggles and joys of living in South Africa, and voices protest against slavery and discrimination.

Mr. Masekela has collaborated with numerous artists in the United States, 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 Mr. Masekela to create a work for his world-famous Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Mr. Masekela also co-created the Broadway smash musical *Sarafina*, which introduced the sounds and passion of South African music to theater audiences worldwide.

Mr. Masekela's work as an activist raised international awareness of the South African government's restrictive Apartheid policies. In the 1980s Mr. Masekela's hit song, "Bring Him Back Home," became an anthem for the Free Nelson Mandela movement. In the 1990s, Mr. 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, Mr. 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. In 2010, he created *Songs of Migration*, a theatrical tribute to the great songs of migrants across the African continent that was staged at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg and featured Mr. Masekela as the Lead Storyteller. The piece was yet another facet of his continued efforts to protect and nurture South Africa's musical and cultural heritage, which was nearly snuffed out during the Apartheid era. It made its U.S. debut at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in October 2012.

In April 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, Mr. 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, Mr. Masekela and his son Sal Masekela (an ESPN Sportscaster) hosted a series of video documentaries entitled *Umlando: Through My Father's Eyes*. In February 2011, Mr. 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. February 2012 brought the release of Mr. Masekela's *Jabulani* on the Listen 2 Africa Series record label. From the Zulu word meaning "rejoice," *Jabulani* recalls several generations of music from wedding ceremonies in South Africa.

Twenty-five years after Mr. Masekela first collaborated with Mr. Simon on the *Graceland* album and tour, the two icons reunited on a Hyde Park Stage in July 2012. The anniversary celebration included the original *Graceland* band, as well as Ladysmith Black Mambazo and reggae star Jimmy Cliff.

The following year saw the launch of Mr. Masekela's own record label, House of Hugh Masekela. The first recording on this label is a four-CD box set *Friends*, which features Mr. Masekela and American pianist

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

Celebrating 50 years in the music industry and his 75th birthday, Mr. Masekela returned to the United States in March 2014 for a ten-city tour dedicated to the memory of Nelson Mandela. Jazz at Lincoln Center celebrated his 75th birthday with three nights of music from *Friends*, and he closed the tour on his actual birthday with Paul Simon at the Rose Theater. In the finale, Mr. Masekela performed “(Bring Back) Nelson Mandela,” which became the anthem in South Africa’s liberation struggle.

For the 2014–2015 season, Mr. Masekela pairs up with another pioneering South African freedom fighter and musical icon, Vusi Mahlasela, in a program called *20 Years of Freedom*. Celebrating the anniversary of the end of Apartheid, Mr. Masekela and Mr. Mahlasela opened the South Africa Festival at Carnegie Hall in New York.

Articulate and brilliantly musical in any number of genres, Mr. 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** grew up in the Mamelodi township, just outside of Pretoria, South Africa, where he still resides.

Aaron Farrington

As Mr. Mahlasela tells it, he grew up a happy kid and was blind to the injustices in his country. His grandmother operated a *shebeen* (pub) behind their home. Due to the cultural boycott inflicted by Apartheid, black South African music was hard to come by and was banned from being played on the radio, so people in the pub played American

records—James Brown, Motown, the Commodores—and whatever South African and African recordings they could find—Mahotella Queens, Mahlatini Queens, Miriam Makeba, Dark City Sisters, Fela Kuti. Young Mr. Mahlasela and his neighborhood friends formed a little band and started making music of their own, inspired by the recordings they heard wafting out of the *shebeen*. Mr. Mahlasela built his first guitar from fishing line and a cooking-oil can and taught himself how to play. In 1976, Mr. Mahlasela’s political education began as he witnessed the devastating massacre of more than 200 black South Africans in the Soweto Uprising. He responded through his music, inspiring other musicians and listeners around him.

Mr. Mahlasela began to write songs of justice, freedom, revolution, love, peace, and life. He joined a poetry group, the Ancestors of Africa, and also joined the Congress of South African Writers, a group of like-minded artists and writers, including Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer, who paid for Mr. Mahlasela’s first guitar lessons. At this point, his political activism truly began. For the “crime” of writing songs of freedom and human dignity, Mr. Mahlasela was held in solitary confinement; he was harassed by the police repeatedly. Many of his friends fled the country. Through this struggle, his songwriting became not only prolific but also healing for himself and for his listeners. And as Ms. Gordimer so vividly put it, “Mr. Mahlasela sings as a bird does, in total response to being alive.” He simply became known as “The Voice.”

At the fall of Apartheid, Mr. Mahlasela was signed to Shifty/BMG records and finally recorded his first album, a collection of songs he had been writing his whole life. On the title track, “When You Come Back,” he sings to his friends and the political exiles who had left the country, telling them that “we will ring the bells and beat the drums when you come back,” and calls for humanity, asking that we “give something to the world and not just take from it.”

This song and its altruistic message rang loud in cars, at parties, and in the homes of both blacks and whites. It truly became an anthem. In 1994, Mr. Mahlasela was proud and very humbled to perform this song at Nelson Mandela's presidential inauguration. "The Voice" was soon heard all over the world. Since the release of that first album, Mr. Mahlasela has traveled the globe sharing his songs of truth and hope, and sharing his country's past and promise for a better future. Americans first caught a glimpse of him in the 2002 documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* that chronicles the strength of music during the struggle against Apartheid. Shortly after the film's debut, fellow South African Dave Matthews signed Mr. Mahlasela to his label, ATO Records, and released *The Voice*, a collection of songs from Mr. Mahlasela's South African releases. *Guiding Star* and 2011's *Say Africa*, produced by Taj Mahal, soon followed. His albums have received wide critical acclaim, and celebrated musicians have taken note of his powerful voice and message. As the *Los Angeles Times* put it, Mr. Mahlasela is a "rare and mesmerizing musical mind...with a voice that seems to have few limits."

Mr. Mahlasela has shared the stage with the Dave Matthews Band, Sting, Josh Groban, Paul Simon, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Hugh Masekela, Angélique Kidjo, Béla Fleck, Ray LaMontagne, Amos Lee, and many others. He has also performed at two TED conferences, the Skoll World Forum, the Elders' annual meeting, Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday, Mandela Day, and many more. But perhaps his biggest gig was in 2010, when he helped ring in the World Cup in South Africa, at Orlando Stadium in Soweto; "When You Come Back" also served as the theme song for ITV's World Cup coverage in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mahlasela was humbled this spring to receive an honorary doctorate degree from the prestigious Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa; a few weeks later, on Freedom Day, South Africa's President Jacob Zuma awarded Mr. Mahlasela with the National Order of Ikhamanga, recognizing him for "drawing attention to the injustices that isolated South Africa from the global community during the Apartheid years."

This past year, the South African Music Awards chose to honor Mr. Mahlasela with a Lifetime Achievement award to recognize his accomplishments both at home and abroad. The honor made the troubadour take a look back and realize that in what felt like a blink of the eye, it had been 20 years since the release of "When You Come Back." In celebration, he got the band together, put on a big show at the Lyric Theatre in Johannesburg, and recorded it. The result, *Sing to the People*, on ATO Records, includes songs from throughout the first 20 years of his career. The album contains joyful performances and the visceral sounds of an audience that is hanging on every note and already knows every lyric by heart. It is toe-tapping and heart-thumping. It is Mr. Mahlasela singing to the people.

*Tour Production & Road Management*  
Rapelang Eugene Leeuw

*North American Agency for Hugh Masekela*  
Opus 3 Artists  
470 Park Avenue South  
New York, New York 10016  
[www.opus3artists.com](http://www.opus3artists.com)

*North American Agency for Vusi Mahlasela*  
International Music Network  
278 Main Street  
Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930  
[www.imnworld.com](http://www.imnworld.com)