



ArtSmarts

2005-2006 Wells Fargo School Matinee Series

Ladysmith Black Mambazo

March 29, 2006 11:00am

Jackson Hall, Mondavi Center

Dear Teacher,

We hope you find this CueSheet helpful in preparing your students for the school matinee presentation of **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**. This guide, which is intended to be used in conjunction with the Multicultural Music curriculum guide, provides information about the Ladysmith Black Mambazo ensemble, South African music, plus a brief country profile. Also included in the guide is a review of audience etiquette.

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LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO



For more than 30 years, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has been the leading cultural export of South Africa. The world famous *a cappella* vocal ensemble mixes "township jive", beautiful and complex Zulu harmonies, energetic dancing, and a bit of American gospel influence into an infectious and joyous musical celebration. Twenty years ago, musician Paul Simon made his initial trip to South Africa and met founder **Joseph Shabalala** and the other members of Ladysmith Black Mambazo in a recording studio in Johannesburg. Simon incorporated the traditional sounds of black South Africa into the *Graceland* album, a project regarded by many as seminal to today's explosive interest in World Music. Over the years, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has recorded over 40 best-selling albums, selling over six million records at home and abroad, and has established itself as the number one record selling group from Africa.

The traditional music sung by Ladysmith Black Mambazo is called **Isicathamiya** (Is-Cot-A-Me-Ya). It was conceived 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, they would entertain themselves after a six-day week by singing songs into the early Sunday morning hours.

Cothoza Mfana or “tip toe guys” they called themselves, referring to the dance steps choreographed so as to not disturb the camp security guards. When miners returned to their homelands, this tradition returned with them. Competitive singing competitions ensued and are still held today in YMCA assembly halls and church basements throughout "Zululand”.

In the mid-fifties, Ladysmith Black Mambazo founder Joseph Shabalala moved from the family farm to the urban city of Durban in order to work in the factories. In his off hours, Shabalala sang with a few groups in Durban before he returned to his hometown of Ladysmith and began to assemble a group of his own. He recruited members of his immediate family: brothers Headman and Jockey, cousins Albert and Abednego Mazibuko, and other close friends to join. For its name, the group chose to pay tribute to their home town, *Ladysmith*, and to the spirit of competition: *Black* refers to the strapping black oxen, strongest on the farm, and *Mambazo* is the Zulu word for axe, symbolic of the group's ability to "chop down" the competition!

A radio broadcast in 1970 brought about the group’s first record contract. Their work with Paul Simon on the *Graceland* album attracted an international audience. Their first album release for the United States, *Shaka Zulu*, was produced by Simon and won the Grammy Award in 1987 for Best Traditional Folk Album. Since then they have been nominated for a Grammy Award eight additional times. In 2005 they were awarded their second Grammy Award for Best Traditional World Music Recording for the release *Raise Your Spirit Higher*. A documentary film about the group, *On Tip Toe: Gentle Steps to Freedom*, was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Short Documentary Film in 2001 as well as nominated for an Emmy Award in 2004 for Best Cultural Documentary on American television.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo has recorded with numerous artists from around the world besides Paul Simon. These include Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, The Wynans, Julia Fordham, George Clinton, Russell Watson, Ben Harper, Des'Re and others. Their film work includes a featured appearance in Michael Jackson's video *Moonwalker* and Spike Lee's *Do It A Cappella*. Ladysmith Black Mambazo provided soundtrack material for Disney's *The Lion King Part II* as well as Eddie Murphy's *Coming To America*, Marlon Brando's *A Dry White Season*, and James Earl Jones' *Cry The Beloved Country*. Their performance with Paul Simon on Sesame Street is legendary, and it is one of the top three requested Sesame Street segments in history!

Ladysmith Black Mambazo has also garnered drama credits. The group collaborated with the Steppenwolf Theater Company of Chicago in a play written about the apartheid era in South Africa. Premiering in Chicago in the spring of 1992, the play, *The Song of Jacob Zulu*, opened on Broadway in New York City in the spring of 1993 and was nominated for six Tony Awards, including Best Music for a Play. Ladysmith Black Mambazo also was honored with the prestigious Drama Desk Award for

Best Original Score. In 1995 Shabalala and Ladysmith Black Mambazo collaborated in the staging of *Nomathemba*, a musical based on the first song ever written by Shabalala. *Nomathemba* premiered in Chicago where once again the group received unanimous praise and was awarded Chicago Theater's highest honor for Original Musical Score. *Nomathemba* went on to perform runs at Washington D.C.'s Kennedy Center and Boston's Shubert Theatre.

The group has been invited to perform at many special occasions. At the special invitation of President Mandela, Ladysmith Black Mambazo 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 recent performance for the Pope in Rome, South African Presidential inaugurations, the 1996 Summer Olympics, a Muhammad Ali television special, many music award shows from around the world, and many other special events. In the summer of 2004, Ladysmith Black Mambazo was again asked to represent their nation in London for a celebration for Queen Elizabeth II's 50th Anniversary as Monarch. Dubbed "The Party at the Palace", Ladysmith Black Mambazo joined with Eric Clapton, Rod Stewart, Joe Cocker, Phil Collins and Sir Paul McCartney on McCartney's songs "Hey Jude" and "All You Need Is Love".

Today, Ladysmith Black Mambazo continues to travel the world, meeting new friends and reaching new audiences. Meanwhile, traditional life in South Africa continues to change. Cable television, MTV, and other international influences are taking its toll on tradition, and Shabalala sees the wonder and the peril in this progress. The Mambazo Foundation for South African Music & Culture was founded by Joseph Shabalala to promote fund raising efforts to devise an academic syllabus to teach South African students about their indigenous culture. In fact, over the past several years, with the retirement of several members of the group, Shabalala has enlisted the talents of four sons—the next Mambazo generation—all pledged to promoting the musical tradition.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo's new album *Long Walk to Freedom* was released on January 24, 2006. The album is a collection of twelve new recordings of classic Ladysmith Black Mambazo songs, featuring guest vocal performances by some of the most progressive voices of the contemporary pop music scene: Melissa Etheridge, Emmylou Harris, Taj Mahal, Joe McBride, Sarah McLachlan, Natalie Merchant and Zap Mama. Also appearing on the guest roster is a virtual who's who of South African artists: Lucky Dube, Bhekumunzi Luthuli, Vusi Mahlasela, Hugh Masekela, Nokukhanya, Phuezkhemisi, and Thandiswa.

Joseph Shabalala's appointment as an associate professor of ethno-musicology at the University of Natal as well as a recent teaching position with University of California in Los Angeles has given him a taste of the life of a scholar. "It's just like performing", says Shabalala, "You work all day, correcting the mistakes, encouraging the young ones to be confident in their action. And if they do

not succeed I always criticize myself. I am their teacher. They are willing to learn. But it is up to me to see they learn correctly".

LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO MEMBERS

Joseph Shabalala (lead vocals)
Albert Mazibuko
Sibongiseni Shabalala
Thamsanqa Shabalala
Thulani Shabalala
Msizi Shabalala
Jockey Shabalala
Abednego Mazibuk
Russel Mthembu
Jabulani Dubazana

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Below is a selected listing of Ladysmith Black Mambazo albums drawn from nearly 40 releases. Many more have been recorded for Gallo (in South Africa) and Warner Brothers in the United States. Gallo titles have been licensed to Shanachie Records in the United States.

Shaka Zulu (Warner Brothers, 1987)
Journey of Dreams (Warner Brothers, 1988)
Two Worlds One Heart (Warner Brothers, 1990)
Liph' Iquiniso (Shanachie, 1994)
Thuthukani Ngoxolo (Shanachie, 1996)
Heavenly (Shanachie, 1997)
The Star and the Wiseman (Flame Tree, 1998)
Live at The Royal Albert Hall (Shanachie, 1999)
In Harmony (Polygram International, 2000)
Chillout Sessions (Wrasse Records, 2002)
Raise Your Spirit Higher: Wenyukela (Heads Up, 2004)
No Boundaries (Heads Up, 2005)
Long Walk To Freedom (Heads Up, 2006)

Learn more about Ladysmith Black Mambazo on their web site: www.mambazo.com

SOUTH AFRICAN MUSIC

South Africa is distinguished by having Africa's most complex musical history, the greatest profusion of styles and the most intensively developed recording industry. The country's popular music has huge regional and stylistic variations but shares a strong vocal focus—if there is a defining South African sound it is the Zulu a cappella harmonies of Ladysmith Black Mambazo. South African pop has been long and deeply influenced by Europe and the United States, yet it has a character that is utterly distinct, both from those models and from the music you will hear anywhere else on the continent, even from nearby parts of central Africa.

Zulu A Cappella: In the 1920s, as an industrial economy began to develop in Natal, a cappella vocal styles became closely identified with the area's emerging Zulu working class, newly forged as rural migrants found employment in mines and factories. Forced in most cases to leave their families behind and live in all-male hostels, they developed a weekend social life based on vocal and dance group competitions, staged within and between hostels, and judged by elaborate rules and standards. By the late 1930s, a cappella competitions were a characteristic of Zulu hostels throughout industrial Natal and had also spread to Zulus working in Johannesburg.

In 1939, **Solomon Linda's Original Evening Birds** ... began recording for Gallo's Singer label. Their evocative rendering of Linda's song "Mbube" (The Lion) proved to be a commercial milestone. "Mbube" was probably the first African recording to sell 100,000 copies and it later provided the basis for two American number one hit records, "Wimoweh" by the Weavers in 1951 and "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" by the Tokens in 1961.

The Original Evening Birds exerted a vast stylistic influence as dozens of imitators sprang up in the wake of their success, thus setting the scene for the next stage in the long history of Western-influenced Zulu music. **Mbube** became the generic term for a new vocal style that incorporated Linda's main innovations: uniforms for the group, highly polished but softly executed dance routines and—most importantly—the use of a high-voiced lead set against four-part harmony where the ratio of the bass voices to the other parts was increased to two or three. These characteristics were at the heart of the music through the late 1940s as mbube evolved into the **isikhwela jo** or "bombing" style—so named because of its strident, almost shouted harmonies—and into the 1960s when a far smoother approach became popular.

By the mid-1950s, the pan-tribal audience that had once purchased substantial quantities of mbube and isikhwela jo recordings by groups such as the Morning Stars and the Natal Champions had fallen away and interest in Zulu a cappella reverted to the hostels. Then, in the 1960s, the audience broadened once again following the establishment of **Radio Zulu** which gave extensive exposure to

Zulu a cappella and could be heard throughout Natal as well as in large areas of the Transvaal and Orange Free State.

But it was...producer West Nkosi's signing of another group of Radio Zulu veterans, Joseph Shabalala's **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**, that transformed the status of Zulu a cappella...In 1973, Ladysmith Black Mambazo released their first album, *Amabutho*, the first African LP to achieve official Gold Record status (sales of 25,000)...These days, Ladysmith Black Mambazo is a top festival band worldwide...Their line-up has varied from seven to thirteen voices, and the increasingly rich harmonies have been combined with ever more softly modulated dynamics, and, recently, gospel material, but the underlying framework remains much the same as that originated by Solomon Linda back in the 1930s.

Article excerpted from "South Africa: Popular Music" by Rob Allingham (*World Music: The Rough Guide, Africa, Europe and the Middle East*. 1999: 638-645).

SOUTH AFRICA



Full country name: The Republic of South Africa

Area: 476,217 square miles

Population: 43.8 million

Capital City: Pretoria (official); Bloemfontein (judicial) and Cape Town (legislative)

People: 77% black, 10% white (60% of whites are of Afrikaaner descent, most of the rest are of British descent), 8% mixed race, 2.5% of Indian or Asian descent

Language: Afrikaans, English, Sotho, South Ndebele, Swati, Xhosa, Tswana, and Zulu

Religion: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and traditional religions

Government: republic and independent member of the British Commonwealth

Head of State: President Thabo Mbeki

Head of Government: Prime Minister Jacob Zuma

Major Industries: Mining, finance, insurance, food processing

Major Trading Partners: USA, UK, Germany, Japan, Italy

Map and statistics taken from the *Lonely Planet Guide to Africa*:
http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/africa/south_africa/

THINK ABOUT IT!

Talking with your teacher, friends and family about a performance after attending the theater is part of the experience. When you share what you saw and felt, you learn more about the performance. You can now compare ideas and ask questions and find out how to learn even more. Here are some questions to think about:

1. How would you describe the Ladysmith Black Mambazo performance to a friend?
2. What feelings did you have while you listened to the music?
3. What did you like best and why? Was the program different from what you expected?
How?
4. Did you have a favorite selection? A least favorite? Explain.
5. Do your parents or grandparents have an ancestral music and dance culture? Please describe!

This CueSheet was written by Anett Jessop, Graduate Researcher, Davis Humanities Institute.

ATTENDING THE THEATER

What is expected of student audiences at the matinee:

- * Enter the auditorium quietly and take seats immediately;
- * Show courtesy to the artist and other guests at all times;
- * Demonstrate appreciation for the artist's work by applauding at the appropriate times;
- * Refrain from making unnecessary noise or movements;
- * Please eat lunch before or after the performance to avoid disruption;
- * Please turn off cell phones and pagers;
- * Flash photography is strictly prohibited;
- * Relate any information acquired from the pre-matinee discussion to the new information gained from the matinee.

What you can expect of your experience in a performing arts theater:

A theater is a charged space, full of energy and anticipation. When the house lights (the lights that illuminate the audience seating) go down, the excitement level goes up! Theaters are designed so that the voices of the singers and actors and the music of the musicians can be heard. But this also means that any sound in the audience: whispering, rustling of papers, speaking and moving about, can be heard by other audience members and by the performers. Distractions like these upset everyone's concentration and can spoil a performance.

The performers on stage show respect for their art form and for the audience by doing their very best possible work. The audience shows respect for the performers by watching attentively. Applause is the best way for audience members to share their enthusiasm and to show their appreciation for the performers. Applaud at the end of a performance! Sometimes the audience will clap during a performance, such as after a featured solo. Audience members may feel like laughing if the action on stage is funny, crying if the action is sad, or sighing if something is seen or heard that is beautiful. Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form and the culture(s) of the people in the audience. While the audience at a dance performance will sit quietly, other types of performance invite audience participation.