Cal Performances Presents

Wednesday, February 6, 2008, 8pm
Zellerbach Hall

Hugh Masekela’s Chissa All-Stars

Hugh Masekela  flugelhorn, vocals, band leader
Francis M.E. Fuster  percussion
Sello Montwedi  drums
John Blackie Selohwane  guitar
Arthur Tshabalala  keyboards, vocals
Abednigo “Fana” Zulu  bass, vocals
Ngenkhaya “Khaya” Mahlangu  saxophone, vocals
Tshepo Mngoma  violin
Themba Elliot Mokoena  second guitar
Sibongile Khumalo  lead & backing vocals
Nakosinathi “Nathi” Gcabshe  lead & backing vocals
George Cruze  tour manager

Cal Performances’ 2007–2008 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo Bank.
Hugh Masekela

Ever since the day in 1954 when Archbishop Trevor Huddleston gave him his trumpet, Hugh Masekela has played music that closely reflects his beginnings as a little boy in Witbank. The street songs, church songs, migrant labor work songs, political protest songs and the sounds of the wide cross-section of ethnic culture South Africa possesses from Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi, Khoi-sa, Griqua, Sotho and Tswana peoples of the south, southeast, central and western regions to the Ndebele, Tsonga, Venda and Pedi provinces of the north and northwest.

The urban sounds of the townships, the influences of the various Great man of the Maharani Broth-ers, Dorothy Masuka, the Dark City Sisters, the Mahotella Queens and Mahlathini, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Miriam Makeba, Spokes Mashiyane, Lemmy Mabaso, Elijah Nkwanyana, Kippie Mokeetsi, Mackay Daveshe—all these form an intrinsic part of his musical roots, intertwined with vivid portraits of the struggles and the sorrows, the joys and passions of his country.

After Huddleston asked Uncle Saude, the leader of the Johannesburg “Native” Municipal Brass Band, to teach Hugh the rudiments of trumpet-playing, he quickly proceeded to master the instrument. Hugh’s initial inspiration was the film Young Man with a Horn, in which Kirk Douglas portrayed the great American jazz trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke. Soon, some of his music-loving schoolmates also became interested in playing instruments, leading to the formation of the Huddleston Jazz Band, South Africa’s very first youth orchestra, at St. Peters Secondary School, where the anti-apartheid priest was chaplain.

Huddleston was deported by the racist government of the time for his emancipation militancy, and when Hugh kept on badgering him to help him leave the oppressive country for music education opportunities abroad, the priest worked very hard to get him to England. After playing in dance bands led by Zakes Nkosi, Ntemi Piliso, Elijah Nkwanyana and Kippie Mokeetsi, Hugh joined the star-studded African Jazz Revenue in 1956. Following a Manhattan Brothers tour of the country in 1958, he played in the orchestra for Todd Matshikiza’s musical, King Kong, with Jonas Gwangwa and some of the aforementioned musicians. King Kong was South Africa’s first blockbuster theatrical success, touring the country for a sold-out year with Miriam Makeba and the Manhattan Brothers’ Nathan Mdledle in the lead roles. The musical later spent two years on London’s West End. At the end of 1959, Abdullah Ibrahim, Kippie, Jonas, Makhaya Ntshoko, Johnny Gertz and Hugh formed the Jazz Epistles, the first African group to record an LP, and performed to record-breaking audiences in Johannesburg and Cape Town.

After the March 21, 1960, Sharpeville Massacre, in which 69 Africans peacefully protest ing the pass laws, along with thousands of their fellow comrades, were mercilessly mowed down, the ensuing national outrage caused the government to proclaim a state of emergency and the banning of gatherings by more than 10 people. As the brutality of the apartheid state increased, Hugh finally left the country with the help of Trevor Huddleston and his friends Yehudi Menuhin and Johnny Dankworth, who got him admitted into London’s Guildhall School of Music. Miriam Makeba, who was already enjoying major success in the United States, Harry Belafonte, Dizzy Gillespie and John McVegan later helped him to get admission to the Manhattan School of Music in New York.

Hugh finally met Louis Armstrong, who had sent the Huddleston Band a trumpet after Huddleston told the trumpet king about the band he helped start back in Cape Town. Louis told Hugh to give the trumpet to Miriam Makeba: “Tell her to give it to the best trumpet player in South Africa.” Hugh did, and she eventually gave it to Miriam Makeba, who was then a star of the South African jazz world. The trumpet later passed into the hands of Miriam Makeba’s son, Themba, who is now a star of the South African jazz world.

Hugh returned home to South Africa after five years in London, with the help of Trevor Huddleston and his friends Dr. Khabi Mngona and Dr. Mathew Phiri. In 1966, he formed the Jazz Epistles with Miriam Makeba and Fela Kuti, and the band quickly became one of the most popular in South Africa. The band’s first album, “The Jazz Epistles: Vol. 1,” was released in 1967, and the band’s success continued with albums such as “The Jazz Epistles: Vol. 2” and “The Jazz Epistles: Vol. 3.”

Hugh’s first major success in the United States came in 1969 with his album “Live at the Monterey Pop Festival,” which featured the hit song “Grazing in the Grass.” This album later became a best-seller and helped to establish Hugh Masekela as a major force in the world of jazz.

Hugh’s career in the United States has been marked by numerous awards and honors, including a Grammy Award for his album “Live at the Monterey Pop Festival.” He has also been recognized for his contributions to the South African struggle against apartheid, and was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1994 by the British government.

Hugh Masekela has been a leading figure in the world of jazz and African music for over 50 years, and his influence continues to be felt around the world. His music has been featured in numerous films and television shows, and he has collaborated with some of the greatest musicians of our time. Despite the challenges he has faced, Hugh Masekela remains a inspiration to musicians and music lovers everywhere.

Chissa All-Stars

Long before the term “world music” was coined, South African born trumpeter and flugelhornist Hugh Masekela was ingeniously fusing his own vibrant post-bop style with R&B, pop and African rhythms. In 1968, Masekela became an overnight sensation with his irresistible instrumental hit “Grazing in the Grass.” With its breezy horn lines and catchy, percussive rhythms, the song topped the Billboard charts, earned a Grammy nomination—eventually selling four million copies worldwide. Since then, Masekela has recorded with a broad spectrum of artists from Fela Kuti and Harry Belafonte to Herb Alpert and The Byrds. In the 1980s, he toured with Paul Simon in support of the acclaimed album Graceland, which also featured South African artists Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Masekela’s ex-wife, Miriam Makeba.

In addition to Hugh’s extensive career as one of Africa’s most beloved performers, he is also the founder and co-owner of Chissa Records—South Africa’s first and only black-owned record label. As a result, he has helped to promote and preserve South African music and culture.

For this very special tour, Hugh supplements his regular group with renowned South African classical and Afro-pop diva Sibongile Khumalo and Afro-jazz performer and producer Khaya Mahlangu—as well as a few others from the label’s impressive roster—to comprise his fiery “Chissa All-Stars” ensemble.

Ranging from the traditional Township jazz and mbanganga of Soweto, through classic Afro-pop, and onward to the urban kwai music of modern Johannesburg, the music of the Chissa All-Stars showcases South Africa’s ever-rich cultural, political and musical journey.