Ladysmith Black Mambazo

Friday, March 13, 2009 at 11 a.m.
Zellerbach Hall, University of California, Berkeley
On **Friday, March 13, 2009, at 11 am**, your class will attend a performance of South Africa’s most renowned vocal group, **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**.

Founded in the early 1960s by South African visionary singer and activist Joseph Shabalala, Ladysmith Black Mambazo is considered a national treasure in their native country. The group has revolutionized traditional South African choral-group singing with their distinctive version of *isicathamiya* ([Is-cot-a-MEE-ya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isicathamiya)), which comes from the powerfully uplifting songs of Zulu mine workers popularized during the apartheid era.

**Using This Study Guide**
This study guide will help engage your students with the performance and enrich their field trip to Zellerbach Hall. Before coming to the performance, we encourage you to:

- Copy the student **resource sheet** on page 2 & 3 and hand it out to your students several days before the show.
- Discuss the information on pages 4-5 about the performance and the artists with your students.
- Read to your students from the **About the Art Form** on page 6 and About South Africa sections on page 8.
- Engage your students in two or more of the activities on pages 11-12.
- Reflect with your students by asking them **guiding questions**, which you can find on pages 2, 4, 6 & 8.
- Immerse students further into the art form by using the **glossary** and resource sections on pages 12-13.

**At the performance:**
Your students can actively participate during the performance by:

- **OBSERVING** how the performers work together and how their movement enhances the songs
- **LISTENING** to the harmonies, rhythms and lyrics of the songs
- **THINKING ABOUT** the freedom of expression that this art form allowed Black people living under apartheid
- **MARVELLING** at the sounds, sights, and performance skills experienced at the theater
- **REFLECTING** on the history and culture of South Africa

We look forward to seeing you at **SchoolTime**!
# Table of Contents

1. Theater Etiquette  
2. Student Resource Sheet  
3. About the Performance & Artists  
4. About the Art Form  
5. History of South Africa  
6. Learning Activities  
7. Glossary  
8. California State Standards

---

**About SchoolTime**
1 Theater Etiquette

Be prepared and arrive early. Ideally you should arrive at the theater 30 to 45 minutes before the show. Allow for travel time and parking, and plan to be in your seats at least 15 minutes before the performance begins.

Be aware and remain quiet. The theater is a “live” space—you can hear the performers easily, but they can also hear you, and you can hear other audience members, too! Even the smallest sounds, like rustling papers and whispering, can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to stay quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance without distractions. The international sign for “Quiet Please” is to silently raise your index finger to your lips.

Show appreciation by applauding. Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation. Performers return their appreciation for your attention by bowing to the audience at the end of the show. It is always appropriate to applaud at the end of a performance, and it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain comes down or the house lights come up.

Participate by responding to the action onstage. Sometimes during a performance, you may respond by laughing, crying or sighing. By all means, feel free to do so! Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form. For instance, an audience attending a string quartet performance will sit very quietly, while the audience at a gospel concert may be inspired to participate by clapping and shouting.

Concentrate to help the performers. These artists use concentration to focus their energy while on stage. If the audience is focused while watching the performance, they feel supported and are able to do their best work. They can feel that you are with them!

Please note: Backpacks and lunches are not permitted in the theater. Bags will be provided for lobby storage in the event that you bring these with you. There is absolutely no food or drink permitted in the seating areas. Recording devices of any kind, including cameras, cannot be used during performances. Please remember to turn off your cell phone.
Questions to Think About:
- What does the group’s name mean?
- What are the origins of isicathamiya and how did it get its name?
- What is apartheid and what effect did it have on the people of South Africa?

What You’ll See
Your class will attend a SchoolTime performance by Ladysmith Black Mambazo in Zellerbach Hall. This group of male singers combine the rhythms and harmonies of South Africa with the influences of Christian gospel music.

About Ladysmith Black Mambazo
Ladysmith Black Mambazo was started by Joseph Shabalala in 1964 after he heard music in a dream and wanted to recreate the harmonies he’d dreamt about. Joseph recruited his brothers, cousins and close friends, and the group named themselves Ladysmith Black Mambazo. “Ladysmith” is the family’s hometown, “Black” refers to the strongest farm animal, the black oxen, and “Mambazo,” is the Zulu word for axe because they chopped down all the competition and won every singing contest.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo has recorded over 40 albums with artists like Paul Simon, Stevie Wonder, Josh Groban, Sarah McLachlan and many others. Over the years four of Mr. Shabalala’s sons have joined the group and Mambazo continues to reach new audiences and spread messages of peace, love and harmony. Mr. Shabalala plans to start a school in South Africa where children can learn about South African traditional music and culture.

About the Music
Ladysmith Black Mambazo sing a capella choral music called Isicathamiya (is-cot-a-ME-ya). Performed mostly by Zulu men, Isicathamiya was created by South African mine workers who entertained themselves in their camps with songs and dances. The root word “cathama” means “to stalk like a cat” in Zulu since the performers danced
with light steps so they wouldn’t disturb the camp’s security guards. The miners brought isicathamiya back home with them and by the 1920s, it was so popular that towns regularly held group competitions.

In the 1980s isicathamiya became known worldwide through Ladysmith Black Mambazo’s recordings with Paul Simon. Today’s isicathamiya choirs have between 10 and 20 members. It is performed in three sections: alto (high voices), tenor (middle range voices) and bass (low voices). The group leader sings the lyrics solo while the choir adds contrasting harmonies, including ululations (long, mournful cries; howls, moans, wails and yowls) and clicks (made with the tongue and roof of the mouth.)

South African History

South Africa’s history was shaped by people from many different lands. Around 2,000 years ago the nomadic San (also known as the Bushman) came to the Cape of Good Hope which is on the Atlantic coast of South Africa. By the 1400s, Bantu tribes from the north settled most of the land, and today these tribes—including Zulus, Xhosas and Sothos—make up most of the population.

After The Cape of Good Hope spice route was “discovered” in 1498 by Vasco de Gama, Southern Africa became a popular stop for European crews. Dutch traders, called Boers, created a settlement at Capetown in the mid-1600s. The Boers pushed north destroying African tribes with violence and disease.

When Dutch power faded in the 1700s, the British took the opportunity to colonize another piece of Africa. Conflict arose between the British and Dutch-descended Boers, leading to a war in 1899. The British won, and the Union of South Africa was established in 1910. The British passed laws that limited black rights and brought about apartheid. Blacks were forced to live and work in separate areas from whites, which they protested by taking part in strikes, acts of civil disobedience and protest marches. Many were jailed, including African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela.

F.W. De Klerk came to power in 1989. He removed the apartheid laws, released political prisoners and reached out to form a multiracial government. In 1994, South Africa had its first election in which blacks could vote, and Nelson Mandela was elected president.

Throughout the cruel years of apartheid, South Africa’s black culture could not be silenced. Music played a big role in the freedom movement as artists such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo inspired their countrymen and the rest of the world with their distinctly South African harmonies.

Glossary

- a capella – using only voices
- apartheid – a policy of keeping people of different races apart
- choir – a group of singers, especially in a church
- civil disobedience – refusing to obey laws that are considered unfair
- colonize – when one country claims another territory by sending people to live there
- ensemble – a group of people performing together
- gospel – a genre of religious a cappella music created by slaves in the US that features call and response.
- harmony – the pleasing sound made when two or more notes are played at the same time.
- lyrics – the words of a song
- multiracial – representing various races
- nomadic – people who travel around without a fixed home
- rhythm – the combinations of long and short sounds that carry a sense of movement in time.
- solo – performed by one person
- traditional – based on customs and handed down from generation to generation
Ladysmith Black Mambazo

Ladysmith Black Mambazo shares a message of peace, love, and harmony. They perform *isicathamiya* (is-cot-a-me-ya), a blend of Christian gospel music and South African folk traditions. Created by South African Zulu people, this music features stirring bass, alto and tenor harmonies and a distinctive dance style.

In the late 1950s, Joseph Shabalala was a member of several musical groups in the city of Durban, but none of them captured the particular sound he was looking for. Frustrated, he created new groups when he returned to his home town of Ladysmith, but the sound still eluded him.

Then, in 1964, Joseph heard the musical style he’d been looking for in a dream. “A dream came to me. I always hear the harmony from that dream, and I said ‘This is...”
the harmony that I want, and I can teach it to my guys,” recalls Joseph of his inspiration to form Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

Joseph recruited brothers Headman and Jockey, cousins Albert and Abednego Mazibuko and other close friends. He taught the group the harmonies from his dreams, and with time and patience, Joseph’s work began to reveal the rich and colorful sounds of his dreams.

Singing in English, French, Zulu and various African dialects, Ladysmith Black Mambazo is the number-one African vocal ensemble with over 40 albums, many of which achieved gold or platinum status. Working with renowned artists like Paul Simon, Stevie Wonder, Ben Harper and Sarah McLachlan, the group continues to reach new audiences and bring South African culture to the world through music.

By expressing their culture once suppressed under apartheid, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has been hailed as a South African National Treasure.

**Meaning in a Name**

“Ladysmith” is the hometown of the Shabalala family; “Black” refers to black oxen, considered to be the strongest on the farm. The Zulu word “Mambazo” means “axe”—symbolic of the group’s ability to “chop down” the competition. Ladysmith Black Mambazo was so good the group won every singing competition they entered. Ultimately, they were forbidden compete, although they were welcomed to perform.

Joseph teaches young children the traditions he learned and plans to establish South Africa’s first academy for indigenous music and culture. Over the years, four of Joseph’s sons have joined the group—the next Mambazo generation.
Guiding Questions:

♦ Name three things that describe the music of isicathamiya.
♦ How did this art form get started and how did it get its name?
♦ Who popularized isicathamiya worldwide?

The traditional music sung by Ladysmith Black Mambazo—Isicathamiya (Is-cot-a-MEE-ya)—originated in the mines of South Africa.

Isicathamiya describes a capella (vocal) choral music that is primarily performed by Zulu men in South Africa. At least a dozen music and dance styles, ranging from war dances to wedding music to political protest songs, fall into this category. The Zulu root word cathama means to stalk like a cat and describes the intricate dance choreography associated with the music. The English translation of the word—“to tip-toe or act carefully”—refers to the artists’ need to curb the more aggressive performance style of traditional Zulu dancing, which involved stamping the feet. Instead, performers use light steps that follow the contours of the singing.

Modern isicathamiya choirs include between 10 and 20 members. The leader starts a song with a solo introduction. The choir is typically divided into three parts: alto (high voices), tenor (middle range voices) and bass (low voices). The group leader sings solo lines while the choir sustains contrasting harmonies, including ululations (long, mournful cries; howls, moans, wails and yowls) and clicks (sounds created from the tongue and throat).
History

After World War I (1918) isicathamiya became closely linked to the Zulu working class. These workers used isicathamiya as a recreational activity, developing weekly competitions in which groups of men with kinship and regional ties were judged on the basis of their singing and dancing skills. They competed for money, animals or anything of value.

Isicathamiya was further popularized during apartheid. During the 1920s and 30s, economic conditions associated with a resource-based economy led to black mine workers living in company hostels far from home. Poorly housed and paid, they entertained themselves after a six-day work week by singing songs into the wee hours every Sunday morning. Cothoza Mfana, they called themselves, “tip-toe guys,” referring to the dance steps choreographed so as not to disturb the camp security guards.

When miners returned to their homelands, the music went with them. They started a fierce but social competition that became the highlight of everyone’s social calendar. The winners were awarded a goat and other valuable prizes and, of course, the adoration of their fans. Today, these competitions continue in YMCA assembly halls and church basements.

Competing groups were judged on collective appearance as well as performance. Although the style of dance and other components evolved over time with the adoption of popular Western dances and instruments, one thing remained the same—winning the various competitions meant prestige. In a social environment tainted by apartheid, opportunities for advancement and economic success were limited. These competitions offered one of the only chances for popular recognition and achievement.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo got its start by winning these competitions. Their greatest innovation to the art form was to modify the dance choreography making their movements softer and more reflective of the rolling lyrics. Other noteworthy changes introduced by Joseph Shabalala include pairing isicathamiya with upbeat instrumental mbaqanga (township jive) and a greater emphasis on traditional gospel music than most South African choirs.

First heard worldwide by Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Paul Simon in the 1980s, isicathamiya has become internationally celebrated as one of South Africa’s most vibrant and distinct traditions.

The classic song Mbube (also known as “In the Jungle”) originated as isicathamiya. It was originally performed by Solomon Linda and his Evening Birds.
South Africa’s history is marked by different groups of settlers who brought their various cultures, languages and traditions to the country. Although the nomadic San (also known as Bushmen) have been in Southern Africa since possibly 100,000 B.C., they didn’t reach the Cape of Good Hope—the southernmost point of the continent—until about 2000 years ago. By the 15th century, Bantu tribes migrating from the north settled most of the arable land. These two groups make up the majority of the present population, encompassing Zulu (21%), Xhosa (17%) and Sotho (15%) peoples.

Tswana, Venda, Ndebele, Swasi, Pedi and others are minority groups. Additionally, the province of Natal is home to about one million Indians whose ancestors came to South Africa to work on sugarcane plantations. The European population in South Africa amounts to 8%, mostly descendants of Dutch, German or French immigrants. They are called Afrikaners and speak Afrikaans, which is closely related to the Dutch language.

Southern Africa became a popular stop for European crews after Vasco de Gama opened the Cape of Good Hope spice route in 1498. By the mid-17th century, scurvy and shipwreck caused Dutch traders to attempt a permanent settlement in Table Bay on the site of present-day Capetown. The mostly Dutch burghers, called Boers, pushed slowly north, decimating the African tribes with violence and disease. Towards the end of the 18th century, with Dutch power fading, Britain saw an opportunity to colonize another piece of Africa. The next hundred years saw consistent claiming of land and subjugation of the inhabitants under both British and Boer rule. Although slavery was abolished in 1833, the division of labor on the basis of color served whites all too well for any real attempt at change.
Upheaval in Southern Africa was not only generated by white invaders. The difaqne ("forced migration" in Sotho) or mfeqane ("the crushing" in Zulu), a campaign masterminded by the Zulu chief Shaka, caused immense upheaval and suffering, leading to some tribes wiped out, others enslaved and some forced to migrate to other territories. Fighting among tribes, the Boers, and the British continued through the 19th century.

The decisive Anglo-Boer war in 1899 was finally won by the British, and the Union of South Africa was established in 1910. A series of racist legislation was passed that restricted black rights and laid the foundation for apartheid.

Under apartheid, everyone was classified by race. Race determined where someone could live, work, pray and learn. Apartheid over-emphasized the differences among the various ethnic groups, mainly between whites and non-whites, but also for example between Xhosas and Zulus, to turn them against each other rather than against the government. Blacks were divided into one of ten arbitrary tribal groups, then forcibly dispossessed and confined to so-called “Homelands” causing intense, widespread suffering. Many black families tried to return to the squatter camps in the cities, called Townships, from which they had been evicted. Black resistance developed in the form of strikes, acts of public disobedience and protest marches. These efforts were supported by international opinion from the early 1960s after 69 protesters were killed in Sharpeville, and African National Congress (ANC) leaders, including Nelson Mandela, were jailed.

Violent responses to black protest increased commitment to a revolutionary struggle. The United Nations finally imposed economic and political sanctions, which began to take effect in 1990 and finally led to the collapse of the country’s economy.
The sanctions worked! The reformist F. W. De Klerk came to power, and virtually all apartheid regulations were repealed. Political prisoners were released and negotiations began towards forming a multiracial government. Free elections in 1994 resulted in a decisive victory for the ANC and Nelson Mandela became president.

Although South Africa is home to a great diversity of cultures, most were suppressed during the apartheid years when day-to-day practices of traditional and contemporary cultures were ignored, trivialized or destroyed. Music played an important role in the freedom movement, and artists such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Miriam Makeba and Vusi Mahlasela have managed to bring South African sounds to a wide Western audience, both during and after apartheid.

To this day, South Africa still suffers the consequences of apartheid. But despite the scars of the past and the enormous challenges ahead, South Africa today is immeasurably more optimistic and relaxed. The international community has embraced South Africa’s and the ANC’s apparently sincere desire to create a racially equal nation. It will be a long time before the black majority gains a significant economic benefit from their freedom, as economic inequality remains an overwhelming problem. However, there are huge expectations for South Africa.
Learning Activities

Pre-performance Activities
Guiding students through these standards-based activities before they come to the theater is an effective way to engage your students in the performance and connect the performance to core subject areas such as literacy, social studies, and the arts.

Music (Grades 1-6)
Listening Exercise
Choose a Ladysmith Black Mambazo CD to listen to as a class, or find one of the groups’ clips from YouTube. Have students write about the song/s they hear. You can use the following prompts help get them get started:

• What do you think the song is about? Why?
• What mood or sentiment is communicated through the rhythms of the song?
• Select two songs to compare and contrast. How are they similar? What are the differences?
• If they watch a video clip ask them to reflect on the performers’ movements and gestures.

Music & Movement (Grades 1-8)
Mirror & Echo
A close-working ensemble, the members of Ladysmith Black Mambazo use unison, echo, and call and response vocals and movement when performing isicathamiya. This activity will introduce your students to some of the performance elements they will see at the SchoolTime show.

Part One: Mirroring with sound
• Have students get into pairs and choose who will be person A and who will be person B.
• With the students facing each other, ask A to begin making big, slow movements mostly with their arms and upper bodies.
• B will be A’s mirror image, trying to imitate their exact movement
 (Teachers: It’s best if you model this with a partner before students do it.)
• Once the students are mirroring each other well, ask A to experiment with levels and include their legs and lower body in their movements.
• After a few minutes, ask B to lead while A follows.
• When you rotate leaders again, have A move while making a continuous sound.
B should mirror both movement and sound.
• When they rotate again, challenge students to replace a sound with a sung or hummed tune.
Part Two: Call & Response
In their pairs, students can also experiment with call & response.
- Have A lead with a sound or melody and movement and B respond with their own melody and movement inspired by, but slightly different from what A does.
- Rotate so B leads.

Part Three: Echoing movement and sound
- Have each pair of students join another pair
- Ask them to choose one person in their group who will lead the other three.
- Have the leader make big, slow movements again while humming or singing a tune, and stop after about 5 seconds.
- Once the leader stops, the followers should echo the leader’s movement and melody.
- Immediately after they echo, the leader should create a new movement and melody.
- Have students repeat this several times and then rotate so that each student gets to lead.

Post-show Activities
Reflecting on the performance allows students to use their critical thinking skills as they analyze and evaluate what they’ve observed during the performance. Student reflection also helps teachers assess what students are taking in, and what they aren’t noticing. Social Studies & English Language Arts (Grades 1-12)

Ladysmith Black Mambazo Interview
- Ask students: If you could interview a member of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, what would you want to know?
- Invite students to create a list of at least 10 questions to ask the group. Have them think back to the show; Are there things they didn’t understand or want to know more about?
- Take a moment to have students share their questions and brainstorm some possible answers.
- This can lead to a mini-research project in which students use the library or the Internet to find out more about South African culture.

Resources
Web resources
http://www.mambazo.com/
http://www.sAfrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/culture/music.htm

Ladysmith Black Mambazo Discography
Long Walk to Freedom (2006)
In Harmony (1999)
The Star and the Wiseman (1998)
Thuthukani Ngoxolo (1996)

Videos
Ladysmith Black Mambazo - In Harmony: Live at the Royal Albert Hall (Shanachie, 1999)
Ladysmith Black Mambazo - On Tip Toe [New Video Group, 2004]
Live at Montreux (Eagle Rock Entertainment, 2005)
Ladysmith Black Mambazo CD reviews:
Some Strings Attached
Ecstatic Voices
8 Glossary

a cappella – a style of singing without instrumental accompaniment. A cappella singers must have excellent pitch, the ability to sustain a note, and be able to sing contrasting harmony with other singers.

apartheid – an Afrikaans word which essentially means segregation. The long-term foundation of South African race relations until the 1990s. Whites and non-whites (e.g. Africans, Indians and those of mixed race) were kept separate. Among other rules, Africans were prohibited from most land ownership, freedom of speech, and organization.

alto - mid range singing voice; just below the highest voice, soprano.

bantu – a member of a large group of peoples, over 500 tribes including Kikuyu, Xhosa and Zulu, living in equatorial and southern Africa.

bass - the lowest male singing voice, below baritone

choir - a group of people singing in different harmonies

choreography - the art of composing dances and the planning and arranging of movements, steps, and patterns of dancers.

dialects - a regional or social variation of a language

ensemble - a group of performers playing or singing together

folk music - musical art form based on a people's traditional beliefs, myths, tales, and practices

gospel music - Christian inspired music based on American folk music, marked by strong rhythms, detailed refrains, and incorporates elements of spirituals, blues, and jazz

harmony - the simultaneous sounding of two or more tones, especially when it is pleasing to the ear.

hostels - an inexpensive lodging, usually for young travelers

inequality - lack of equality, as of opportunity, treatment, or status

jive – (also known as Township Jive) a musical form that arose in the late 1950's. Jive is/was an immensely popular dance music, closely related to mbqanga, with an insistent pulse and regular embellishments on guitar and bass.

kinship - the connection between people based on blood ties, marriage or adoption

legislation - the act of making or enacting laws

majority - the largest party or group that makes up more than half of the total number

minority - a smaller party or group that is less than half the total number

mbqanga - from the Zulu word for African maize bread. A dance music that evolved in South African townships and became broadly popular in the 1960’s and 70s.

protest - to express and demonstrate the belief that something is wrong and needs to be changed.

racism - hatred or intolerance of another race or other races

settler - a person who comes to a new country or area to live but maintains their own cultural practices.

solo - performing alone

tenor - a high male voice between alto and baritone

townships - urban residential areas that housed African workers disenfranchised by the Homelands Act of 1950.

ubuntu – a Zulu word, literally meaning ‘humanness.” A social and spiritual philosophy that defines the individual as a component of a greater [inclusive] whole, and stresses consciousness, unity, concern and respect for others. (ubuntu stands in opposition to the concept of apartheid.)

Zulu - the largest ethnic group in South Africa.
Music Grades K-12

1.0 Artistic Perception
Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to music

Students listen to, analyze, and describe music and other aural information, using the terminology of music.

2.0 Creative Expression
Creating, performing, and participating in music
Students apply vocal and instrumental musical skills in performing a varied repertoire of music. They compose and arrange music and improvise melodies, variations, and accompaniments, using digital/electronic technology when appropriate.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context
Understanding the Historical Contributions and Cultural Dimensions of Music
Students analyze the role of music in past and present cultures throughout the world, noting cultural diversity as it relates to music, musicians, and composers.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing
Responding to, analyzing, and making judgments about works of music
Students critically assess and derive meaning from works of music and the performance of musicians according to the elements of music, aesthetic qualities, and human responses.

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications
Connecting and applying what is learned in music to learning in other art forms and subject areas and to careers
Students apply what they learn in music across subject areas. They develop competencies and creative skills in problem solving, communication, and management of time and resources that contribute to lifelong learning and career skills. They also learn about careers in and related to music.
About Cal Performances and *SchoolTime*

The mission of Cal Performances is to inspire, nurture and sustain a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Cal Performances, the performing arts presenter of the University of California, Berkeley, fulfills this mission by presenting, producing and commissioning outstanding artists, both renowned and emerging, to serve the University and the broader public through performances and education and community programs. In 2005/06 Cal Performances celebrated 100 years on the UC Berkeley Campus.

Our *SchoolTime* program cultivates an early appreciation for and understanding of the performing arts amongst our youngest audiences, with hour-long, daytime performances by the same world-class artists who perform as part of the main season. *SchoolTime* has become an integral part of the academic year for teachers and students throughout the Bay Area.

**Cal Performances Education and Community Programs Sponsors**

This Cal Performances SchoolTime Study Guide was written, edited and designed by Laura Abrams, Rica Anderson, Nicole Anthony, and Duncan Pieter Allard. Copyright © 2009 Cal Performances