



Saturday, October 13, 2018, 8pm
Paramount Theatre, Oakland

Soweto Gospel Choir

Milton Ndlakuse *Music Director*
Vincent Jiyane *Choir Master*
Mulalo Mulovhedzi *General Manager*
Mary Mulovhedzi *Administrator*

Choir Members

Miriam Chapole
Mlungiseleni Jones
George Kaudi
Sibongile Makgathe
Victor Makhathini

Gugu Mbongwa
Mazwe Mhlongo
Siyabolela Mkefa
Original Msimango
Semangele Mongatane
Maserame Ndindwa

Sipho Ngcamu
Zanele Ngcamu
Linda Sambo
Phello Sejake
Portia Skosana

Touring Crew

Toni Rudov *Company Manger*
Maija Putans *Stage Manager*
Andrew Ride *Touring Lighting Designer/Operator*
Leon June JR *Touring Audio Designer/Operator*

Producers

Andrew Kay *International Producer*
Margot Teele and Toni Rudov *Associate Producers*
www.sowetogospelchoir.com

*This evening's program will be performed without an intermission
and will last approximately 90 minutes.*

*This performance is made possible, in part,
by Patron Sponsors Annette Campbell-White and Ruediger Naumann-Etienne.
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**A Message from the President
of the Republic of South Africa
to the Soweto Gospel Choir
for *Freedom*, the Mandela Centenary CD**

There are few things that uplift the soul more than the sound of voices in harmony. Song has been an integral and valued accompaniment to the struggle of the South African people to be free. It has mobilized, inspired, and comforted generations of freedom fighters. This album is a worthy tribute to the father of our nation Nelson Rohlhlahla Mandela, and a joyous celebration of the free and united nation that we have become.

The name Soweto Gospel Choir has become synonymous with excellence, in South Africa and beyond our shores. Formed to celebrate the unique and inspirational power of African Gospel music, this proudly South African ensemble continues to inspire generations of listeners with its stirring and uplifting music.

Music, wrote Plato, “gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, and life to everything.” These are such apt words when reflecting on this country’s history—at times tragic, at times exhilarating, and always deeply infused with the songs of freedom rendered by our people from generation to generation. There is no doubt that music has played an instrumental role in not just the anti-apartheid struggle, but also in chronicling our liberation.

To mark the centenary of our country’s founding father, President Nelson Mandela, the Soweto Gospel Choir has released *Freedom*, a collection of South Africa’s most famous struggle songs, bringing to these well-known melodies their own unique sound. One cannot but be moved by these soul-stirring melodies that tell our story as a country and as a nation.

I congratulate these great ambassadors for South Africa on this achievement; and am confident that like the albums that have gone before, this offering from the Soweto Gospel Choir will be in the pantheon of legendary South African music in the years to come.

—July 10, 2018

Cyril Ramaphosa

President of the Republic of South Africa

Introduction

The spectacular and colorful two-time Grammy Award-winning Soweto Gospel Choir return to North America with this special program celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Father of their rainbow nation, Nelson Mandela.

Hailing from the town of Soweto (South West Township), the birthplace of South Africa’s democratic movement’s struggle for freedom, the Soweto Gospel Choir is a multi-Grammy Award-winning ensemble that has thrilled audiences around the world with its stunning blend of African gospel, freedom songs, and international classics. This is a special appearance by a group of singers who performed for Nelson Mandela on many occasions during his life and sang at his state funeral at home in South Africa as well as at his commemorative service at Westminster Cathedral in London. Combining earthy rhythms and rich harmonies and sung in six of South Africa’s 11 official languages, tonight’s performance promises to be a moving experience that will uplift the soul.

CHOIR HISTORY

2002–06

Soweto Gospel Choir is formed in November, 2002.

In December 2002 the group’s first album, *Voices of Heaven*, is recorded. It reaches the No. 1 spot on *Billboard’s* World Music chart within three weeks of its release in the US.

In 2003 the choir wins its first honor, Australia’s Helpmann Award, for Best Contemporary Music Concert.

This success is followed with another honor when the choir wins a 2003 American Gospel Music Award for Best Choir.

That same year, the group wins the coveted American Gospel Music Award for Best International Choir.

The choir performs for President Bill Clinton at a corporate function in Little Rock, Arkansas.

In October 2006, the choir appears as invited guests for patron Archbishop Desmond Tutu's 75th birthday celebrations, before of an illustrious audience that includes former President Nelson Mandela, Zanele Mbeki, Tokyo Sexwale, Samuel L Jackson, Alfre Woodard, and Carlos Santana.

The Soweto Gospel Choir makes a guest appearance with Diana Ross, Deborah Cox, and Danny K for the "Unite of the Stars" Gala Banquet in South Africa in November 2006.

The singers are guests on NBC's *Today Show* as well as on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*.

The choir also makes guest appearances on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*.

In December 2006 the group performs at Sun City, South Africa, for Oprah Winfrey and 200 of her VIP guests, including Mariah Carey, Mary J. Blige, Tina Turner, Patti Labelle, Sydney Poitier, and Quincy Jones

2007-08

On February 11, 2007 Soweto Gospel Choir receives a Grammy Award for its second CD, *Blessed*, in the Best Traditional World Music category.

At the same time, the choir is nominated for honors at the 26th International Reggae and World Music Awards, held at the Apollo Theater, Harlem, on May 5, in the Contribution to World Music category, alongside Jimmy Cliff, Salif Keita, Youssou N'Dour, and Ziggy Marley.

In May 2007 the choir wins a SAMA (South African Music Association) Award in the Best Live Performance DVD category.

In June 2007 the Soweto Gospel Choir is the warmup act for the Red Hot Chili Peppers at concerts in Germany.

In November 2007 Soweto Gospel Choir wins a Metro FM Music Award for Best Gospel Album for *African Spirit*, based on nominations submitted by the radio station's listeners, and the public.

In February 2008, the choir receives a second Grammy, for *African Spirit*, in the Best Traditional World Music category.

Also in February 2008, the choir is honored with the PanSALB Award for Multilingualism and Nation Building for Album of the Decade.

The choir performs with Celine Dion during her *Taking Chances* tour of South Africa.

The choir has the honor of performing with gospel legends Bebe Winans and Kirk Franklin.

In New Orleans, the singers record a track with rock legend Robert Plant, which is included on a Fats Domino tribute album, with proceeds benefiting the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

A London performance of "Weeping," with Josh Groban and Vusi Mahlasela, is featured on Groban's latest album, *Collection*.

The choir tours the world extensively, performing at prestigious venues including Carnegie Hall, Sydney Opera House, Nelson Mandela Theatre, and Royal Festival Hall in London.

The choir performs at high-profile festivals such as the Edinburgh Festival, the Adelaide Festival, the Hong Kong Festival, and the London Festival, always to huge acclaim.

Soweto Gospel Choir receives its third Grammy nomination in December 2008, this time in the Best Contemporary World Music category, for *Live at the Nelson Mandela Theatre*.

The song "Down To Earth" from the blockbuster *Wall-E* movie, the group's collaboration with Peter Gabriel, wins a Grammy in the Best Movie Song category.

In February 2009, the singers become the first South African artists to perform at the Academy Awards, when they sing "Down To Earth," the Gabriel/Newman Oscar-nominated song, with John Legend.

2009-10

In March 2009, the artists are nominated for three SAMAs for their *Live at the Nelson Mandela Theatre* CD and DVD, winning the award for Best Duo or Group.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

In May 2009, the choir is invited to perform at the inauguration of South Africa's new president.

In November, members of the Soweto Gospel Choir are flown to Los Angeles to take part in a major Pepsi advertising campaign, alongside Akon and Keri Hilson.

The choir is one of three featured African groups featured at the FIFA World Cup Draw held in Cape Town in December 2009.

In April 2010 Soweto Gospel Choir is honored with the inaugural International Achievement Award at the South African Music Awards held in Sun City.

Also in April, the choir is invited to perform at the opening ceremony of the 2010 World Trade Expo, held in Shanghai, as the African representative.

The choir collaborates with U2, as the featured South African artists, on the songs "Streets Have No Name," "Magnificent," and "Boots" for ESPN's promotional campaign for the 2010 Football World Cup. The campaign pays dividends as, along with ESPN and U2, Soweto Gospel Choir receives a Sports Emmy Award as winners in the Outstanding Music Composition/Direction/Lyrics category in May 2011.

The choir is also featured in several prestigious magazines and books, including in *Time* magazine and in Andrew Zuckerman's *Music*, alongside such music heavyweights as Russell Simmons, Herbie Hancock, Ozzy Osborne, John Legend, and Mark Knopfler.

The group performs at the FIFA World Cup Kick-Off Concert in Soweto, the night before the opening of the World Cup in June, with an international and African line-up including the Black-Eyed Peas, Shakira, Angélique Kidjo, and John Legend.

In December 2010 Soweto Gospel Choir wins its fourth Grammy nomination, in the Best Traditional World Music category, for its album *Grace*. The choir is featured alongside the London Philharmonic Orchestra in the song "Baba Yetu" and on the album *Calling All Dawns*, both of which win Grammys in February 2011.

2011–12

From May to July 2011 members of the choir tour Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji, winning rave reviews, while others perform in Guadeloupe, French Caribbean.

In July 2011 18 choir members perform in Maastricht, Holland, with classical violinist Andre Rieu. They join the Harlem Gospel Choir on stage for a first-time collaboration.

Soweto Gospel Choir joins Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his guests for the archbishop's birthday celebration, held in Cape Town in October 2011. They perform at the launch of Tutu's new book, and back Bono on "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" as a surprise for the archbishop. They also sing with other artists at both the cathedral service and at the private luncheon for their patron.

The choir performs with leading South African artists at the ANC Centenary Celebrations in Bloemfontein in January 2012.

In June 2012 Soweto Gospel Choir is invited by South African sensation Zahara to perform with her and special guest Leroy Bell as part of two sold-out concerts that are filmed for Zahara's forthcoming DVD.

In 2012 the choir performs in South Africa with Andre Rieu and Johnny Clegg.

In December Soweto Gospel Choir is nominated for its second Kora (All-Africa) Award.

2013–14

In March 2013, the choir's fifth album, *Soweto Gospel Choir & Friends – Divine Decade*, is released as a celebration of the choir's 10th anniversary. The group is joined on the album by guest artists including local icons Zahara, The Soil, HHP, Elvis Blue, Corlea, Yvonne Chaka Chaka with Ladysmith Black Mambazo, and Johnny Clegg, as well as international artists Joepraize from Nigeria, Eric Wainaina from Kenya, Paul Ruske from New Zealand, Robert Plant, and U2.

Also in March, the choir returns to Australia and New Zealand to perform at WOMAD, cul-

minating in a sold-out concert at the Sydney Opera House.

In May 2013, Soweto Gospel Choir is nominated for a SAMA in the Best Collaboration category for its collaboration with Zahara on the song “Bambelele.”

Later that month, the choir travels to Addis Ababa to perform at the African Union’s 50th Celebrations, along with guest artists Papa Wemba, Salif Keita, and Judith Sephuma.

In July, they perform for the first time, and to rave reviews, at the Montreal Jazz Festival.

In October 2013, Soweto Gospel Choir is nominated for a Crown Gospel Award in the Best Gospel Group category.

In December 2013, Soweto Gospel Choir teams with Woolworths for a Youtube video tribute to Nelson Mandela, as part of a flash-mob event, with the song “Asimbonanga.” The film clip goes viral and receives over three million hits during its first week of release. To date, the clip has received over five million hits; the choir’s Youtube version of “Amazing Grace” has received over nine million hits.

In February 2014 the choir performs with President Bill Clinton and Morgan Freeman at the Nelson Mandela Tribute event in New York, a fundraiser for the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory.

Soweto Gospel Choir is invited to perform at the Memorial Service for Nelson Mandela at Westminster Abbey on March 3. At this historic occasion, the service was attended by notables including Archbishop Tutu, Prime Minister David Cameron, Prince Harry, The Lord Mayor of London, the Mandela family, and many others.

In April 2014, the choir is nominated for its sixth South African Music Award (SAMA) in the Best Contemporary Faith Album category. The group performed at the SAMAs with Rebecca Malope and Judith Sephuma.

In September 2014, members of the choir perform with the London African Gospel Choir, in front of 13,000 people at a corporate event at the O2 arena in London.

In December 2014 the choir ends an exciting year by performing at the homecoming welcome ceremony for the newly crowned Miss World, South Africa’s Rolene Strauss.

2015–16

The choir launches 2015 with a performance at the Glo-CAF Awards in Lagos, Nigeria, on January 8. These are Africa’s premier awards and for the event, the choir collaborates with top artists from the continent, including Hugh Masekela, with the concert broadcast to millions around the world.

In April, Soweto Gospel Choir male members record with this year’s Grammy Award-winning flutist, Wouter Kellerman, in a memorable rendition of Vivaldi’s “Winter.”

In July, the group collaborates with Peter Gabriel in a UN Global Goals media campaign and on a track on Gabriel’s forthcoming album.

In September the choir performs for and with Pharrell Williams during his tour of South Africa as an ambassador for Woolworths’ “Are You With Us” social development campaign.

In December choir members sing for Prince Harry and distinguished guests including Graca Machel, Ahmed Kathrada and the US Ambassador at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, at an event to honor Madiba and his legacy, during Prince Harry’s visit to South Africa.

In April 2016, SGC performs for Ambassador Andrew Young and the Mayor of Atlanta at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, honoring the ambassador’s contribution to the ending of the apartheid era.

In May, the choir wins the award for Best Gospel Group at the Inaugural Tower Music Africa Gospel Awards.

In July, the choir is featured as a special guest for Johnny Clegg concerts at Montecasino, performing with Coegg and artists Ross Learmonth, Francois Van Coke, and Sipho Mabuse.

In the same month, members are invited to honor racing icon Gugu Zulu at his Memorial Service at Kyalami Race Track.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

In October, the choir performs as the opening act with Nigerian hit maker Korede Bello, as well as with African superstar Wizkid at the 2016 MTV Africa Music Awards.

In November, one group from the choir performs as a special guest artist at the 2016 All Africa Music Awards in Lagos, while another group performs at the EU 2016 World Forum for Democracy's opening ceremony in Strasbourg.

2017

Soweto Gospel Choir's recording of "Amazing Grace" is included in the critically acclaimed South African movie *Beyond the River*, released in April 2017.

The choir performs 11 concerts as guests on Johnny Clegg's 2017 Farewell Tour, alongside other artists who have been part of Clegg's 30-year career. They also take part in a private tribute honoring this much-lauded musician.

In November 2017 the singers are invited to collaborate with the final five contestants of *South Africa Idols 13*. The response to the choir's performance is so great that the musicians are invited for a return performance with the two finalists at the Carnival City finale.

2018

In January, the choir receives a nomination for the Ubuntu Arts and Cultural Diplomacy Award (Youth) alongside celebrity chef Siba Mtongana and fashion designer Laduma Ngxokolo. This award, a DIRCO initiative, is for an individual or organization that has promoted a positive image of South Africa globally. Nominees in the Veterans Award category were Johnny Clegg, John Kani, and Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

On April 11, the Soweto Gospel Choir is honored to sing at the memorial service for Winnie Madikizela-Mandela at the FNB Stadium. The choir has been a favorite of the Mandela family since its formation and this is an uplifting opportunity to grieve for and pay tribute to this much-loved woman.

At the end of April, the choir enjoys a totally different experience when the singers collaborate with three-time Grammy winner Chance the Rapper at his sold-out concert at the Dome. This unexpected partnership results in over 1,000 rave reviews on social media.

In May 2018 the choir records its new album, *Freedom*, featuring Struggle songs, a tribute to the life of Nelson Mandela.

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