



Saturday, March 1, 2025, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Ladysmith Black Mambazo

Thulani Shabalala (32nd year with group)  
Sibongiseni Shabalala (32nd year)  
Thamsanqa Shabalala (32nd year)  
Abednego Mazibuko (51st)  
Msizi Shabalala (27th)  
Mfanafuthi Dlamini (16th)  
Pius Shezi (11th)  
Sabelo Mthembu (8th)  
Babuyile Shabalala (new member)  
Gagamela Shabalala (new member)

*We would like to thank our founder and spiritual leader,  
Joseph Shabalala (1940–2020). He remains with us always.*

*This evening's program will be announced from the stage.  
The performance will include one intermission and last approximately one hour and 45 minutes.*

*Cal Performances is committed to fostering a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment for all—  
one that honors our venues as places of respite, openness, and respect.  
Please see the Community Agreements section on our Policies page for more information.*

Let us tell you a story. An impossible to believe but true story. Once upon a time, there was a teenage boy working on his family farm in apartheid South Africa. The year was 1960. This boy loved to sing; in fact, he loved to sing so much that he allowed himself an impossible dream. In his dream, he created a group of singers made up of family members, to sing traditional South African songs. Together, they would perform all over South Africa and become the greatest singing ensemble his country would ever know. How could such a dream come to a young farm boy in a country rife with hardship, violence, and social upheaval?

Well, Joseph Shabalala was that young farm boy and his dream would become **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**. The group would not only conquer all of South Africa but would also become a worldwide phenomenon, winning more Grammy Awards (five) and receiving more Grammy nominations (19) than any world music group in the history of recorded music.

During the dark years of South African Apartheid, Ladysmith Black Mambazo followed a path of peaceful protest with its songs of hope and love. When Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990, he said that Ladysmith Black Mambazo's music was a powerful message of peace that he listened to while in jail. When Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993, he asked the group to join him at the cere-

mony. It was Mandela who called Ladysmith Black Mambazo "South Africa's Cultural Ambassadors to the World."

The group sings a traditional music style called *isicathamiya* (iss-ee-kah-duh-MEE-uh), which developed in the mines of South Africa. It was there that black workers were taken, far away from their homes and families. Poorly housed and paid, the workers would entertain themselves, after a six-day work week, by singing songs late on Saturday nights and into the wee hours on Sundays. When the miners returned to their homes, this musical tradition returned with them.

In the mid-1980s, American singer/songwriter Paul Simon famously visited South Africa and incorporated the group's rich harmonies into his renowned *Graceland* album—a landmark recording considered seminal in introducing world music to mainstream audiences. This brought the group to the attention of music lovers all over the world, the beginning of a global musical career that shows no sign of ending.

After leading his group for more than 50 years, and approaching his 75th birthday, Joseph Shabalala retired in 2014, handing the leadership to his three sons, Thulani, Sibongiseni, and Thamsanqa Shabalala. Having joined their father's group in 1993, their many years of training had prepared them in ways no others could be trained. Now, carrying their father's dream into the future, the Shabalala family continues to guide the group's success for all the world to hear.