Press Release
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Note to Editors: High-resolution photos available at http://uniontheater.wisc.edu/press/index.html

20 YEARS OF FREEDOM: MUSIC OF THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

Two men: musicians, ambassadors and freedom fighters. Two instruments: strings and brass (plus a band). One night. Come to the Wisconsin Union Theater on Friday, March 6, 2015 for a night featuring Hugh Masekela and Vusi Mahlasela in Shannon Hall at 8 p.m. Purchase tickets online or call the Box Office at 608-265-ARTS (2787). Tickets can also be purchased at either Vilas Hall (entrance on East Campus Mall, 821 University Avenue) or the box office in the Wisconsin Union Theater. Ticket prices are as follows.

- General Public: $40, $36, $25
- Wisconsin Union Members & Non UW-Madison Students: $36, $32
- UW-Madison Faculty & Staff: $38, $34
- UW-Madison Student (with ID): $10

Until 1994, Apartheid forced systematic racial segregation on peoples in South Africa. The white Afrikaans National Party deprived black South Africans of their rights under a system of minority rule steeped in racism and brutality. Both Masekela and Mahlasela lived under and, with their music, fought against Apartheid.
Vusi Mahlasela still lives in Pretoria, South Africa where he was born, raised, and survived during Apartheid. A self-taught guitar player, Mahlasela built his first guitar from fishing line and a can of cooking oil. His music education consisted of listening to American records and South African and African recordings in pubs, as black South African music was banned from radio stations in the country.

After witnessing the 1976 Soweto Uprising, which resulted in the deaths of more than 200 black South Africans, Mahlasela used music as inspiration and a weapon against Apartheid. His musical career has evolved from his first band, made up of neighborhood friends, to various collaborations since his first album was released by Shifty Records/BMG at the end of Apartheid in South Africa. Mahlasela’s honors and awards include an honorary doctorate degree from Rhodes University, the National Order of Ikhamanga from South Africa’s President Jacob Zuma and a Lifetime Achievement award from the South African Music Awards. He played in Nelson Mandela’s inauguration.

“Since the release of that first album, Vusi has traveled the globe sharing his songs of truth and hope, and sharing his country’s past and promise for a better future,” according to Mahlasela’s website. His page goes on to describe the live recording of songs from the first 20 years of his career as “Joyful performances and the visceral sounds of an audience that’s hanging on every single note and already knows every single lyric by heart. It’s toe-tapping and heart-thumping. It’s Vusi singing to the people.”

Flugelhorn and trumpet player, bandleader, composer, singer, and political speaker Hugh Masekela’s interest in music took off when his father provided him with a trumpet when he was 14 and living in Witbank, South Africa. While Masekela left his home country when he was 21-years-old, he remained profoundly connected to his roots. He spent years in New York studying at the Manhattan School of Music and developing his own African – rather than American – jazz style in school and performance. His career eventually brought him to Los Angeles, leading him to perform with the likes of Janis Joplin, Otis Redding, and Jimi Hendrix, among others. In his multiple decades of performance, Masekela has released 40 albums and appeared on works from a wealth of jazz performers. Now almost 75-years-old, Masekela continues to tour around the globe. His awards and honors include The Order of Ikhamanga, and a Lifetime Achievement award from the World Music Expo in Copenhagen. He wrote Bring Him Back (Nelson Mandela), the hymn on the anti-Apartheid movement.

“My biggest obsession is to show Africans and the world who the people of Africa really are,” Masekela says on his website.
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