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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Ladysmith Black Mambazo to perform

Summary:

(February 15, 2005)-It's been more than 15 years since Paul Simon made his initial trip to South Africa and met Joseph Shabalala and the other members of Ladysmith Black Mambazo in a recording studio in Johannesburg. Having listened to a cassette of their music sent by a DJ based in Los Angeles, Simon was captivated by the stirring sound of bass, alto and tenor harmonies. Simon incorporated the traditional sounds of black South Africa into the "Graceland" album, a project regarded by many as seminal to today's explosive interest in World Music.

The award winning group, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, will perform at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 5, in Edson Auditorium of the Student Center at the University of Minnesota, Morris. An a capella master class will be given by the group the same day from 3 to 4:15 p.m. in the Recital Hall of Humanities Fine Arts.

Their first album release for the United States, "Shaka Zulu," was produced by Simon and won the Grammy Award in 1987 for Best Traditional Folk Album. Since then they have been nominated for a Grammy Award six additional times, including a nomination in 2001 for the album "Live From Royal Albert Hall."

The traditional music sung by Ladysmith Black Mambazo is called Isicathamiya (Is-Cot-A-Me-Ya), born in the mines of South Africa. Black workers were taken by rail to work far away from their homes and their families. Poorly housed and paid worse, they would entertain themselves after a six-day 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 to not disturb the camp security guards.

The name Ladysmith Black Mambazo came about as a result of winning every singing competition in which the group entered. "Ladysmith" is the hometown of the Shabalala family "Black" makes reference to black oxen, considered to be the strongest on the farm. The Zulu word "Mambazo" refers to an ax - symbolic of the group's ability to "chop down" the competition. So good were they that after a time they were forbidden to enter the competitions but welcomed, of course, to entertain at them.

In addition to Paul Simon, the group has recorded with numerous artists from around the world: Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, The Wynans, Julia Fordham, George Clinton, Russell Watson, Ben Harper, Des'Re and others. Their film work includes a featured appearance in Michael Jackson's video "Moonwalker" and Spike Lee's "Do It A Cappella." Black Mambazo provided soundtrack material for Disney's "The Lion King Part II" as well as Eddie Murphy's "Coming To America," Marlon Brando's "A Dry White Season," and James Earl Jones' "Cry The Beloved Country." Their performance with Paul Simon on Sesame Street is legendary - one of the top three requested Sesame Street segments in history.

Primary funding for this series is provided by University of Minnesota, Morris students. The series is made possible by a grant provided by the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature. In

addition, this activity is sponsored in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

For ticket information, contact the Office of Student Activities, UMM, at 320-589-6080 or visit the Performing Arts Series web site at www.morris.umn.edu/stuorgs/CAC/Arts/.

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