

## **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**

**Tuesday, February 14, 2017 at 8:00 pm**

This is the 695<sup>th</sup> concert in Koerner Hall

### **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**

**Msizi Shabalala**

**Thulani Shabalala**

**Sibongiseni Shabalala**

**Thamsanqa Shabalala**

**Albert Mazibuko**

**Abednego Mazibuko**

**Mfanafuthi Dlamini**

**Pius Shezi**

**Sabelo Mthembu**

## **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**

Nelson Mandela designated Ladysmith Black Mambazo “South Africa’s cultural ambassadors to the world.”

The group was founded in the early 1960s by Joseph Shabalala, then a young farm boy turned factory worker. Ladysmith is the name of Joseph’s hometown, a small farming area between Durban and Johannesburg; Black being a reference to the oxen, the strongest of all farm animals; and Mambazo, the Zulu word for chopping axe, a symbol of the group’s ability to “chop down” any singing rival who might challenge them.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo sings traditional music called isicathamiya (is-cot-a-ME-Ya), which developed in the mines of South Africa, where black workers were taken by rail to work far away from their homes and their families. Poorly housed and paid worse, the mine workers would entertain themselves after a six-day week by singing songs and, when the miners returned to the homelands, this musical tradition returned with them.

A radio broadcast in 1970 opened the door to the group’s first record contract – the beginning of an ambitious discography that currently includes more than 50 recordings, 15 Grammy Award nominations, and four Grammy Awards. During the rest of the 1970s, Ladysmith Black Mambazo established itself as the most successful singing group in South Africa and, in the mid-1980s, Paul Simon incorporated the group’s rich harmonies into his *Graceland* album – a landmark recording that was considered seminal in introducing world music to mainstream audiences. In addition to the work with Simon, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has recorded with numerous artists, including Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, Sarah McLachlan, Josh Groban, Emmylou Harris, Melissa Etheridge, and many others.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo carries a message of peace, love, and harmony as it travels the world year after year, bringing this message in song and dance to every theatre they perform in.

*Ladysmith Black Mambazo is making its Royal Conservatory debut tonight.*