

Ladysmith Black Mambazo

Singing For Peace Around The World

SHORT BIOG:

5 Grammy Awards and 19 Grammy nominations!

For over 50 years, South Africa's Ladysmith Black Mambazo has warmed the hearts of audiences worldwide with their uplifting vocal harmonies, signature dance moves and charming onstage banter.

During the 1970's Ladysmith Black Mambazo established themselves as the most successful singing group in South Africa. In the mid-1980s, Paul Simon visited South Africa and incorporated the group's rich harmonies into the famous Graceland album (1986) – a landmark recording that was considered seminal in introducing world music to mainstream audiences.

With a deep respect for both their cultural and personal history, Ladysmith Black Mambazo is ever-evolving with an eye toward their long musical legacy.

Over the years, the original members have welcomed a younger generation in their mission, passing along the tradition of storytelling and spreading their message of peace, love, and harmony to millions of people. The newer members, in turn, have infused the group with their youthful energy and the promise of a bright future.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo carries a message of Peace, Love and Harmony as they travel the world year after year. They bring this message, in song and dance, to every theater they perform in.

BIOGRAPHY:

In 2018 Ladysmith Black Mambazo, South Africa's most famous and successful music group, was awarded its fifth Grammy Award, for the CD *Shaka Zulu Revisited* and got their 19th Grammy nomination for the album *Songs of Peace & Love for Kids & Parents Around The World*. Not just a CD title but a statement of the group's career mission. It was Nelson Mandela who designated Ladysmith Black Mambazo "South Africa's Cultural Ambassadors to the world." It is a moniker the group members hold close to their hearts. Nelson Mandela passed away December 2013 but the group has been celebrating Mandela's message of peace at every concert they perform.

The group was founded in the early 1960s by Joseph Shabalala, then a teenage farm boy living on the lands just outside the small town of Ladysmith, South Africa. Joseph incorporated the town into the name he would give his group to honor his family history. As well, the word Black is a reference to the black 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. So began the fifty plus year career of Ladysmith Black Mambazo. Their early ability won so many awards, at the local South African competitions, that by the end of the 1960's the group was banned from competing. However they were always invited to attend as entertainers.

A radio broadcast in 1970 opened the door to their first record contract – the beginning of an ambitious recording career that currently includes more than fifty albums, earning nineteen Grammy Award nominations and the five Grammy Award wins; *Shaka Zulu* (1987), *Raise Your Spirit Higher* (2004), *Ilembe* (2009), *Singing For Peace Around the World* (2013) and *Shaka Zulu Revisited* (2018). The 2017 album *Songs of Peace & Love for Kids & Parents Around The World* was also nominated for a Grammy. It is very important, to the group, that their message of peace and love be passed from generation to generation. By recording songs of peace that parents can teach their children, the group hopes to continue the message for decades to come.

Apartheid, the South African social system forced upon the country's black majority to keep the white minority government in power, was a dividing force in many ways. The musicians and artists of South Africa took two paths of resistance. Some sang songs with powerful messages of revolution against the horrors of apartheid. Others, like Ladysmith Black Mambazo, followed a path of peaceful protest. Joseph, following the ways of Martin Luther King Jr and Mahatma Gandhi, wrote songs of hope and peace. When Nelson Mandela was released from prison, in 1990, he called Ladysmith Black Mambazo's music as one of the powerful messages of peace he listened to while in jail. When Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1993, he called on Ladysmith Black Mambazo to join him in Norway and have them entertain at the ceremony.

The group sings from a traditional music called *isicathamiya* (is-cot-a-ME-Ya), which developed in the mines of South Africa. It was there that black workers were taken by rail to work far away from their homes and families. Poorly housed and paid worse, the mine workers would entertain themselves after a six-day week by singing songs into the wee hours on Sunday morning. When the miners returned to the homelands, this musical tradition returned with them.

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In addition to their work with Paul 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. They have provided music for many movies, have appeared on Broadway where they were nominated for a Tony Award and even had a documentary film, titled On Tip Toe: Gentle Steps to Freedom, the Story of Ladysmith Black Mambazo, nominated for an Academy Award.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo carries a message of Peace, Love and Harmony as they travel the world year after year. They bring this message, in song and dance, to every theater they perform in. We hope you will join them as they sing their message.

See more at www.mambazo.com