Soweto Gospel Choir – Songs of the Free

WED, NOV 14, 2018 | 7:30 PM | OVERTURE HALL

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ABOUT SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR

With the release of Soweto Gospel Choir’s first recording, *Voices from Heaven*, in 2004 and its first international tour, the Choir exploded onto the international concert stage, playing prestigious venues on three continents. 2005’s *Blessed* earned the Choir their first Grammy Award which was followed by 2007’s *African Spirit*, which led to a second Grammy for the Choir. The choir also released a CD and DVD called *Live at the Nelson Mandela Theatre* in 2008 and in 2009. Soweto Gospel Choir became the first South African artist to perform at the Academy Awards, when they sang “Down To Earth,” the Peter Gabriel/Thomas Newman Oscar-nominated song, with John Legend. In 2010, the Choir released its Grammy nominated recording *Gracie* and they collaborated with U2 for ESPN’s promotional campaign for the 2010 FIFA World Cup earning a sports Emmy for “Outstanding Music Composition/Direction/Lyrics.” 2013 saw the release of *Divine Decade- Soweto Gospel Choir & Friends* and commemorated the Choir’s 10th anniversary. It was a star-studded occasion being joined in celebration by the likes of Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Johnny Clegg among others.

In 2014, Soweto Gospel Choir was invited to perform at the Memorial Service for Nelson Mandela at Westminster Abbey. The Choir was also selected to sing at the memorial service for Winnie Madikizela-Mandela in 2018. In the spring they also performed with Chance the Rapper at his sold-out concert at The Dome in South Africa.

Soweto Gospel Choir’s story is the best of many worlds—great music, great achievements and recognition but also great contribution through its inspiring charity, Nikosi’s Haven Vukani, which assists the victims of AIDS and their families in South Africa. The Choir’s greatest achievement of all may be the fact that it has raised over $1,500,000 for its charity. To date, over 9,000 children have been fed through registered organizations being supported by Vukani. Children’s school fees have been paid, orphans school uniforms have been purchased and appliances have been given in order to ease the load of women running soup kitchens to ensure that children receive at least two nutritional meals a day. Some of the additional resources the Choir has provided include security, electrical installations, plumbing, wheel chairs and school supplies.

On September 14th, Multi Grammy Award and Emmy winning Soweto Gospel Choir released its highly anticipated sixth Shanachie Entertainment recording *Freedom*, a riveting collection of freedom songs from South Africa and beyond, marking the Centennial of Nelson Mandela’s birth. The depth and the scope of the music on *Freedom* speaks to Soweto Gospel Choir’s extraordinary range and ability to make it uniquely its own with the exhilarating and joyous fashion they have come to be celebrated for. It is fitting that this new recording falls on Nelson Mandela’s Centennial. Soweto Gospel Choir Music Director Diniloxolo Ndlakuse shares, “The significance of Nelson Mandela’s 100th commemoration to South Africans is, firstly and foremost a reminder of the role played by Nelson Mandela in moving South Africa from a position of being an undemocratic, oppressive society to one of a peaceful co-existence for all racial groups. Mandela represents love, peace, forgiveness and strength to the choir. He is a symbol of inspiration to the Choir.”

Soweto Gospel Choir sings in six of South Africa’s eleven official languages on *Freedom* but mostly in Zulu or Sotho, as well as English. The first single “Umbombela” which means “train song,” a composition that speaks of the travails experienced by black South Africans during the apartheid era, when migrant workers were forced to travel long distances away from their families in order to meet the harsh economic and political demands made by the government.

Soweto Gospel Choir’s universal message of love, unity and hope, along with its captivating melodic and harmonic wonder, mesmerizing showmanship and awe-inspiring performances, has made believers of millions of fans around the world. Since the Choir emerged on the global music scene in 2002, it has received the kind of accolades most groups only dream of.
ABOUT SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR cont.

The acclaimed South African World Music sensation has earned two Grammy Awards®, scored two #1 Billboard World Music Chart albums and has earned the distinction as the only South African music act to ever perform at the Oscars. The Choir’s effortless, divine talent and beauty has afforded the opportunity to collaborate with such notable artists as Bono and U2, Peter Gabriel, Robert Plant, Aretha Franklin, Pharrell Williams, Stevie Wonder & Kirk Franklin among others. Not many artists can count as their supporters the likes of the late Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (the official patron of the Choir) and the current President of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, who wrote a note of appreciation included in the album.

The Choir’s presence on the international music scene is not regarded lightly by its Musical Director, Diniloxolo Ndlakuse, who concludes, “It means a great deal as a choir that we get to share our dance, our diverse cultures and faiths and our love for God to the world. We hope to bring about a better understanding of South Africa by telling a story of where we come from, where we are and where we hope to be as a democratic nation.”

The critically acclaimed Choir known for their inspirational, moving live performances, kicked off a Blockbuster 50+ cities North American Tour on October 4 in Santa Barbara, CA and wraps on December 19 in West Palm Beach, FL.

“Meticulous and unstoppable... spirited and spectacular.” - The New York Times

“Soweto Gospel Choir makes our world seem beautifully small...” - Oprah Magazine.

“Joyful, spiritual vision with a global perspective...fresh and vibrant”- USA Today

For media inquiries and review copies contact: Lucy.sabini@lucia mediagroup.com - 917-864-0060

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