

KILBOURN CONCERT SERIES

# LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO

Sunday, March 23, 2025

Kilbourn Hall

3:00 PM



**EASTMAN**  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### Ladysmith Black Mambazo

Over Sixty Years Later The Impossible Dream Continues

Let us tell you a story. An impossible to believe, yet, true story. Once upon a time there was a teenage boy working on his family farm in apartheid South Africa. The year was 1960. This boy loved to sing, in fact he loved to sing so much that he allowed himself an impossible dream. In his dream he would create a group of singers, from his family members, to sing traditional South African songs. His group would perform all over South Africa and they would become the greatest music group his country would ever know. How could such a dream come to a young farm boy in a country rife with hardship, violence and trouble? Well, Joseph Shabalala was this young farm boy and his dream would become **Ladysmith Black Mambazo**.



The year 2025 marks the 65th anniversary of Joseph Shabalala forming Ladysmith Black Mambazo. His group would not only conquer all of South Africa, but would become a worldwide phenomenon, winning more GRAMMY Awards (Five), and receiving more GRAMMY Award nominations (Nineteen), than any World Music group in the history of recorded music.

During the dark years of South African Apartheid, Ladysmith Black Mambazo followed a path of peaceful protest through songs of hope and love. When Nelson Mandela was released from prison, in 1990, he said that Ladysmith Black Mambazo's music was a powerful message of peace that he listened to while in jail. When Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, in 1993, he asked the group to join him at the ceremony. It was Mandela who called Ladysmith Black Mambazo "South Africa's Cultural Ambassadors to the World."

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

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In the mid-1980s, American singer/songwriter Paul Simon famously visited South Africa and incorporated the group's rich harmonies into his renowned Graceland album – a landmark recording considered seminal in introducing World Music to mainstream audiences. This brought the group to the attention of music lovers all over the world, the beginning of a global musical career that shows no sign of ending.

After leading his group for over fifty years and approaching his seventy-fifth birthday, Joseph Shabalala retired in 2014, handing the leadership to his three sons, Thulani, Sibongiseni and Thamsanqa Shabalala. Having joined their father's group in 1993, their many years of training had prepared them in ways no others could be trained. Now, carrying their father's dream into the future, the Shabalala Family continues the group's success for the world to hear.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo is Thulani Shabalala, Sibongiseni Shabalala, Thamsanqa Shabalala, Msizi Shabalala, Albert Mazibuko, Abednego Mazibuko, Mfanafuthi Dlamini, Pius Shezi and Sabelo Mthembu.

## UPCOMING EASTMAN SERIES CONCERTS

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Tickets for all series concerts can be purchased at [EastmanTheatre.org](http://EastmanTheatre.org)

### FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

#### **Eastman Virtuosi**

Kilbourn Hall

Saturday, March 29, 2025 at 7:30 PM

### EASTMAN RANLET SERIES

#### **Ying Quartet and Kiera Duffy, soprano**

Kilbourn Hall

Sunday, March 30, 2025 at 3:00 PM

The Ying Quartet occupies a position of unique prominence in the classical music world, combining communicative performances with a fearlessly imaginative view of chamber music in today's world. As quartet-in-residence at the Eastman School of Music, the ensemble performs three Eastman-Ranlet Series concerts during the season.

*We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the "Great Hill People" and "Keepers of the Western Door" of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.*



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