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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts presents South Africa's
Ladysmith Black Mambazo (Jan. 31) and Soweto Gospel Choir (Feb. 16)**

*World-renowned Grammy® Award-winning ensembles continue the Annenberg
Center's African Roots series with uplifting world music*

PHILADELPHIA — Bringing two evenings of thrilling, uplifting and soul-stirring live music from South Africa to West Philadelphia, the **Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts** continues its African Roots series this winter with two Grammy® Award-winning acts: **Ladysmith Black Mambazo** (Jan. 31), the undisputed kings of South African a cappella; and **Soweto Gospel Choir** (Feb. 16), an iconic fusion of South African gospel, reggae and pop.

Celebrating more than 50 years of joyous music that marries South African musical traditions with the sounds of Christian gospel music, **Ladysmith Black Mambazo** has created a musical and spiritual alchemy that has touched a worldwide audience representing every corner of the religious, cultural and ethnic landscape. Perhaps best known for their collaborations with Paul Simon, Ladysmith has also worked with Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, Sarah McLachlan, Josh Groban, Emmylou Harris, Melissa Etheridge and many others. The ensemble's upcoming album, *Always With Us* (Jan. 15, 2014), pays tribute to Nellie Shabalala, the late wife of Ladysmith founder/leader Joseph Shabalala.

Founded in 2002, **Soweto Gospel Choir** has collaborated, recorded and performed with artists including Bono and U2, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Robert Plant, Celine Dion, Peter Gabriel and many more. The ensemble has performed for President Bill Clinton and Oprah Winfrey as well as their spiritual fathers, Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Soweto Gospel Choir's sensory-arresting performances have been described as "a cornucopia of remarkable voices: sharp, sweet, kindly, raspy and incantatory leads above a magnificently velvety blend" (*The New York Times*).

The Annenberg Center's 13-14 season continues in the new year with **Rasta Thomas' Bad Boys of Dance** (Feb. 20-22), **Celtic Nights** (March 15), **BODYTRAFFIC** (April 3-5), **Malavika Sarukkai** (April 12) and **MOMIX** (May 8-11). For more information and a full season listing, visit annenbergcenter.org.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Ladysmith Black Mambazo

Friday, January 31, 8 PM

\$60-\$80 (Prices are subject to change)

Soweto Gospel Choir

Sunday, February 16, 7 PM

(pre-show performance by the New Spirit of Penn Gospel Choir, time TBD)

\$20-\$70 (Prices are subject to change)

Tickets to Ladysmith Black Mambazo and the Soweto Gospel Choir are available by calling 215.898.3900, visiting annenbergcenter.org or stopping by the Box Office at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 3680 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA 19104.

ABOUT LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO

Assembled in the early 1960s in South Africa by Joseph Shabalala, the group took the name Ladysmith Black Mambazo (Ladysmith being the name of Shabalala's rural hometown; Black being a reference to oxen, the strongest of all farm animals; and Mambazo being the Zulu word for axe, a symbol of the group's ability to "chop down" any singing rival who might challenge them).

The group borrows heavily from a traditional music called isicathamiya, 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 into the wee hours on Sunday morning. When the miners returned to the homelands, this musical tradition returned with them.

In the mid-1980s, Paul Simon visited South Africa and incorporated Black Mambazo's rich tenor/alto/bass harmonies into his *Graceland* album, a landmark 1986 recording that was considered seminal in introducing world music to mainstream audiences. A year later, Simon produced Black Mambazo's first U.S. release, *Shaka Zulu*, which won a Grammy® Award in 1988. Since then, the group has been awarded two more Grammy® Awards and has been nominated 15 times, including for *Songs from a Zulu Farm*.

In addition to their work with Paul Simon, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has recorded with numerous artists from around the world, including Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, Sarah McLachlan, Josh Groban, Emmylou Harris, Melissa Etheridge and many others. Their film work includes a featured appearance in Michael Jackson's "Moonwalker" video and Spike Lee's *Do It A Cappella*. They've provided soundtrack material for many films including *The Lion King, Part II, Coming to America, A Dry White Season, The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen, Cry The Beloved Country* and *Invictus*. A film documentary titled *On Tip Toe: Gentle Steps to Freedom, the story of Ladysmith Black Mambazo* was nominated for an Academy® Award.

ABOUT SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR

Soweto Gospel Choir's first album, *Voices of Heaven*, reached the No. 1 spot on Billboard's World Music Chart within three weeks of its U.S. release. The choir has performed with Diana Ross, Celine Dion, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, on NBC's *Today* show, on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* and many more; as well as for President Bill Clinton (2006), Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, Samuel L. Jackson, Carlos Santana, Oprah Winfrey, Mariah Carey, Patti Labelle, Quincy Jones and many others.

The choir's collaboration with Peter Gabriel, "Down to Earth," from the film *Wall-E*, garnered the ensemble a Grammy® Award for Best Movie Song in 2009; also that year, the choir became the first South African artist group to perform at the Academy® Awards.

The ensemble's numerous awards include: "Best Traditional World Music," Grammy® Awards, 2007-08; "Best Contemporary Music Concert," Helpmann Awards, 2003; "Best Choir" and "Best International Choir," American Gospel Music Awards, 2003; "Best Live Performance DVD," South African Music Association Awards, 2007; and "Best Gospel Album," Metro FM Music Awards, 2007; among many others.

ABOUT THE ANNENBERG CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts has been the region's leading multi-disciplinary performance venue for theatre, dance, jazz, world music, new music and children's programming since its inception in 1971. The Annenberg Center's curatorial vision emphasizes four primary values: artistic integrity, cultural diversity, curatorial balance and a willingness to take risks. By presenting world-renowned and cutting edge artists and companies that express adventuresome perspectives on contemporary issues, timeless ideas and diverse cultures, the Annenberg Center promotes critical thinking and dialogue among its audiences, creating a uniquely rewarding arts experience.

The Annenberg Center has achieved national recognition for its outstanding Dance Celebration series (presented in partnership with Philadelphia's Dance Affiliates), touring theatre series, and for its superior offerings for children, including both its Student Discovery Series and the acclaimed 30-year Philadelphia International Children's Festival, the oldest festival of its kind in the United States.

Generous support for the 13/14 Annenberg Center season is provided by The William Penn Foundation, The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Philadelphia Cultural Fund, The Philadelphia Foundation, PNC, The Philadelphia Phillies, The National Endowment for the Arts and The University of Pennsylvania as well as many individual donors. The Sheraton University City is the exclusive hotel sponsor.

Soweto Gospel Choir's tour is sponsored by South African Airways.

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To request interviews, photos and more information, please contact:
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