

# **SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR**

**“(The choir) has a cornucopia of remarkable voices: sharp, sweet, kindly, raspy and incantatory leads above a magnificently velvety blend.....the music was both meticulous and unstoppable.....the songs were both spirited and spectacular”**

*Jon Pareles – The New York Times*

After astounding international success, a performance at Carnegie Hall that was sold out 6 months in advance and a phenomenal US tour, Soweto Gospel Choir finally came home to debut “ VOICES FROM HEAVEN “ on the South African stage for a limited concert series at the Johannesburg Civic Theatre in July of this year .

In their *Voices From Heaven* and *Blessed* concerts, Soweto Gospel Choir perform inspirational programmes that include traditional and popular African and international gospel and contemporary standards- with songs ranging from gospel hits Vuma, Modimo and Tsepa Thapelo to the South African classics Paradise Road, Asimbonanga and African Dream, as well as international spirituals Amazing Grace, Oh Happy Day and music by Otis Redding and Jimmy Cliff.

Expect earthy rhythms, rich harmonies, acapella numbers as well as accompaniment by an exciting 4 piece band and percussion section. Add to this, energetic dancing and vibrant, colourful costumes, and the mix is awesome. This young dynamic choir performs both traditional and contemporary music, adding its own unique feel and interpretation to both. The choir performs in 6 of South Africa’s 11 official languages.

When it comes to vocal talent, this continent, and more particularly this country, has spawned the most evocative sounds on earth and still produces the very best that the world has to offer in this art form. Soweto Gospel Choir is that very best.

**“..songs calculated to go straight to the heart, sung with that joyous sense of celebration and exuberance that only black South African choirs seem capable of achieving.”**

*West Australian, Perth*

This magnificent, 34 strong, choir, styled with a contemporary feel, leaves all who hear it stunned with emotion. It is small wonder that they are charting a meteoric rise to international fame. Those that saw the 46664 Concert in

Cape Town 2003, under the auspices of former President Nelson Mandela, will have witnessed Soweto Gospel Choir in action alongside other musical greats like Bono; Queen; Anastacia; Peter Gabriel; Jimmy Cliff; and the Eurythmics.

**“Everybody agrees the choir were absolutely stunning.....They are all true stars and were, for me, the best artists on the stage that night”**

***Spike Edney, International Musical Director“ 46664 Concert***

**“Soweto Gospel Choir is wonderful!! You have never seen or heard such infectious joy – guaranteed”**

***Brian May of Queen***

Formed only in November of 2002, by promoters/presenters Cheval Productions, in association with Executive Producer/Director Beverly Bryer and Musical Director David Mulovhedzi, Soweto Gospel Choir's three year existence has become an overnight, multi award-winning sensation. In 2003 they won a Helpmann Award, Australia's prestigious Performing Arts Award for “Best Contemporary Music Concert”. In May 2004 they won the 2003 American Gospel Music Award for “Best Choir”, in October they won the 2004 Gospel Music Award (also US based) for “Best International Choir”, and locally, their debut CD *Voices From Heaven* was nominated for a SAMA Award for “Best Traditional Gospel”. This CD has also garnered rave reviews, having reached the Number 1 spot on Billboard's World Music Chart, within three weeks of its US release, debuting at Number 3. Their new CD *Blessed* was released in July 2004, through Universal Music.

Wherever Soweto Gospel Choir has performed, be it Europe, Singapore, Australia, the UK or the US it has wowed audiences. At the Edinburgh Festival it was the top selling show, with a fully booked season and five star reviews. It was listed as the critics' choice in all major publications. In September 2004 Soweto Gospel Choir performed three concerts at the Royal Festival Hall in London, followed by a countrywide UK tour. In November/December of that year, the choir completed a sell-out tour of Spain, followed by performances in Berlin, Stuttgart and Hamburg. The choir completed a two-month, 39-city tour of the United States in April this year, with the majority of concerts (many at over 2,000-seater venues) sold out. Soweto Gospel Choir is already booked to return to the US in 2006 and 2007!

Most recently the choir performed in Athens and Spain, followed by a sell-out performance at St Paul's Cathedral, as part of this year's prestigious London Festival. They returned to New Zealand and Australia in August where they toured their new show *Blessed* extensively around both countries, to rave reviews and audience reaction.

The next highlight of their short career is a guest appearance with Diana Ross during her concerts in South Africa in November.

But no amount of glittering international recognition and praise has diverted Soweto Gospel Choir from the mission it holds close at heart. In 2003 the choir founded its own aids orphans foundation, Nkosi's Haven Vukani. With the plight of South Africa's sick and impoverished top of mind, their foundation supports families and organisations that receive little or no government support. These destitute families and children rely on Soweto Gospel Choir's 'Blessed' 'Voices from Heaven' to sing all over the world for very much more than their supper.

#### **WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT THE SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR**

**"As pure and true as the word of God"**

*Sunday Star Times, New Zealand (Feb 2003)*

**"It is rare to go to a concert knowing nothing about the artists or their music and come away feeling overwhelmed by the performance"**

*Christchurch Press, New Zealand (Feb 2003)*

**"There's simply no flaw here"**

*Evening News, Scotland (Aug 2003)*

**"Sheer jubilation...earthy and unrestrained...the rhythm of life"**

*Herald Sun, Melbourne (March 2003)*

**"You don't have to be a believer to be inspired by the Soweto Gospel Choir: an appreciation of superb singing is all that's required"**

*Sunday Herald, Scotland (Aug 2003)*

**"The Soweto Gospel Choir is truly inspirational, but that's not the reason they deserve five stars. Those are simply for a flawless performance"**

*The Scotsman (Aug 2003)*

**"Occasionally, a diamond of such brilliance is unearthed that you find yourself compelled to develop a near-fanatical enthusiasm for it"**

*Manchester News (Sept 2004)*

**"The Soweto Gospel Choir's performance has made me a true believer. I guess you could say I've been baptized by the power of perfect pitch, superior intonation and harmony clearly not of this world".**

*Times Dispatch, Richmond Virginia (Feb 2005)*

**“Soweto Gospel Choir gave a dazzling performance to mark their debut public appearance for South African audiences”**

***The Star, Johannesburg (July 2005)***

**“When they open their mouths, the sense of texture is flawless.....here is energy and passion in song”**

***Business Day, Johannesburg (July 2005)***

**“The show is hypnotic in its endless harmony and rhythm”**

***Taranaki Press, NZ (July 2005)***

**“To really capture the mood, I’m going to take a huge breath and gasp Wow! There can be very few superlatives left that I could add to the wealth of praise already heaped on this inspirational choir from South Africa”**

***The Press, Christchurch, NZ (July 2005)***

**“The Soweto Gospel Choir is a shout of joy, a towering onslaught of exuberance. The singers have a razor-sharp attack, phenomenal unity and a blazing, voluptuous sound”**

***Brisbane Courier Mail (Aug 2005)***

**“The choir’s talent is evident. It brings a slice of heaven every time it performs”**

***Sunday Herald Sun, Melbourne (Aug 2005)***

**“Hallelujah!”**

***The Australian (Aug 2005)***