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**South Africa's Newest Sensation *Soweto Gospel Choir*
Follows European Tour with the Release of their US CD Debut
Voices From Heaven (Shanachie Entertainment)
& Blockbuster 35-City North American Tour Kicking off Jan. 2005**

Soweto Gospel Choir, the most exciting vocal group to emerge from South Africa since Ladysmith Black Mambazo, will bring their magnetic energy, joyful spirits and beautiful harmonies to American audiences in January 2005 with the release of their American debut, *Voices From Heaven*, on Shanachie Entertainment. They will further enchant live audiences with their potent and inspirational African Gospel music at venues throughout the US on their ambitious 35-city tour, which launches in January '05 and runs through March '05. Soweto Gospel Choir is the recipient of the *American Gospel Music Award's* "Best Gospel Choir 2003." They recently returned from a triumphant European tour in which they dazzled audiences at the prestigious Edinburgh Festival in Scotland as well as various concert halls and festivals throughout Europe, Australia and Africa. In November 2003, the Choir wowed fellow performers Peter Gabriel, Bono, The Eurythmics, Jimmy Cliff and Queen at the 46664 Concert in Capetown, organized by Nelson Mandela (taking its name from his prison number) to heighten awareness of the AIDS epidemic. In fact many of the international superstars kept the Choir onstage to back their own sets.

Soweto Gospel Choir's performances deliver a non-stop pageant of all types of inspirational material, punctuated by traditional dancing (an integral part of church worship in Africa) and energized numbers backed by a live band. An Edinburgh critic raves, "Nothing can really prepare you for the riot of exuberance and depth of emotion" while the West Australian touts, "Soweto Gospel Choir sings songs that are 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." Clearly, Soweto Gospel Choir is on its way to becoming the next great phenomenon in world music.

Soweto Gospel Choir is much more than simply a musical phenomenon. The post-apartheid economy of South Africa is marked by high unemployment and black townships such as Soweto have many residents living at a bare subsistent level. The choir recently created its own charity foundation in association with Nkosi's Haven (a Soweto-based AIDS-care project established by Gail Johnson, whose late son Nkosi, at age 11, gave a moving address to a United Nations international AIDS conference that was televised world-wide).

The charity called Nkosi's Haven/Vukani (meaning to arise, do something!!), raises funds for AIDS orphans establishments that receive no government or private funding. The choir has been able to raise a significant amount of money that has been used to donate food parcels and other essential goods to numerous needy organizations.

Musical Director of Soweto Gospel Choir, David Mulovhedzi, shares "As South African's we're in a position where we're working hard to help the helpless, especially children. When we perform around the world, we receive donations and when we return home, we use them to buy whatever those kids might need. We feed them and give them blankets. It's not a matter of simply dishing out money; the money's used to buy things they need.

Soweto Gospel Choir was created in 2002 by South African Executive Producer Beverly Bryer and notable choirmaster David Mulovhedzi. The two held auditions in Soweto to form an all-star "super-choir" and were able to create a powerful aggregation made up of the best singers from Mulovhedzi's own Holy Jerusalem Choir, as well as various Soweto churches and from the general public. Africa in general (and South Africa in particular) has a long and diverse history with gospel music. When Africans came into contact with European missionaries and churches, they quickly absorbed their religious music and blended it with local traditional music to come up with unique styles and repertoires of spiritual songs. South Africa has long been noted for powerful singers and a capella vocal traditions of great beauty. Adorned in traditional and beautifully colored South African garb, the choir has been known to win audiences with their exotic blend of South African spirituals, traditional Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho gospel songs which are interspersed with popular songs and folk anthems.

Soweto Gospel Choir's Shanachie debut, ***Voices From Heaven***, is a stunning recording that delivers the full range of the choir's talent. The sheer aural beauty of the voices, both in powerful solo segments and lush choral harmonies, makes a memorable impact. But there also is an unquantifiable quotient of spirit—the heartfelt, sincere joyousness that cannot be taught or simulated—that infuses the Choir's performances. It is this quality that enables them to make even very familiar material such as "Amazing Grace" or Jimmy Cliff's "Many Rivers To Cross" sound fresh. The Choir moves easily from the traditional a capella Mbube, popularized internationally by Ladysmith Black Mambazo to straightforward church hymns to rollicking "township jive"-inflected numbers with band backing. The most universal, direct and powerful instrument is the human voice and on ***Voices From Heaven*** Soweto Gospel Choir revels in this "first instrument" as the essence of human musical expression.

Don't miss the unique opportunity to experience Soweto Gospel Choir in motion on its first North American tour (see tour dates on the last page). The ambitious 35-city tour, which has been assembled by the Choir's booking agent, IMG Artists, has been met with great enthusiasm by concert presenters including the prestigious Carnegie Hall and numerous other performing arts venues throughout the continent. A number of performances have already sold-out, suggesting that Soweto Gospel Choir is on track to duplicate their extraordinary success in Europe where two sold-out shows at Royal Festival Hall marked their London debut. In the end, perhaps the choir's success should not be so surprising. In a contemporary landscape over-crowded with contrived pop confections and over-marketed synthetic music, the heartfelt, exuberant voices of Soweto Gospel Choir are filling an important void for audiences around the world. They are spreading a message of love, joy and hope to universal audiences regardless of their color, language or faith. It's a message and song for all.