

SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR – ABRIDGED BIOGRAPHY

- Soweto Gospel Choir was formed in November, 2002
- In December, 2002 their first album “Voices from Heaven” was recorded and went on to reach the No. 1 spot on Billboard’s World Music Chart within 3 weeks of its release in the US
- In 2003 the choir won its first award, a Helpmann Award, Australia’s prestigious Performing Arts Award, for “Best Contemporary Music Concert”
- This success was followed when they won a 2003 American Gospel Music Award for “Best Choir”
- In the same year, they won a “Gospel Music Award” (US based) for “Best International Choir”
- They performed for President Bill Clinton at a corporate function in Little Rock, Arkansas
- In October 2006, the choir performed as invited guests for their Patron, Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s 75th Birthday Celebrations, in front of an illustrious audience which included former President Nelson Mandela, Mrs Zanele Mbeki, Tokyo Sexwale, Samuel L Jackson, Alfre Woodard and Carlos Santana
- They featured on a guest appearance with Diana Ross, Deborah Cox and Danny K for the “Unite of the Stars” Gala Banquet in South Africa in November 2006
- They were invited guests on NBC’s “Today Show” as well as on “Late Night with Conan O’Brien”
- The choir have also made a guest appearance on ‘The Tonight Show with Jay Leno’
- In December 2006 they performed at Sun City, South Africa, for Oprah Winfrey and 200 of her V.I.P. guests, including Mariah Carey, Mary J Blige, Tina Turner, Patti LaBelle, Sydney Poitier and Quincy Jones
- On 11 February 2007, Soweto Gospel Choir received its greatest accolade, a Grammy Award for their second CD “Blessed”, in the category “Best Traditional World Music”
- At the same time, they were nominated for the 26th International Reggae and World Music Awards, held at the Apollo Theatre, Harlem, on 5 May, in the category “Contribution to World Music”, alongside Jimmy Cliff, Salif Keita, Youssou N’Dour and Ziggy Marley
- In May 2007, the choir won a SAMA Award (South African Music Association Award) in the Category “Best Live Performance DVD”
- In June 2007 Soweto Gospel Choir was the support act for the Red Hot Chilli Peppers at their concerts in Germany
- To add to their string of national and international awards, in November 2007 Soweto Gospel Choir won a Metro FM Music Award for Best Gospel Album for “African Spirit”, based on nominations submitted by the radio station’s listeners, and the public
- In February 2008, the choir was awarded a second Grammy Award for their third album “African Spirit”, in the “Best Traditional World Music” category
- Also in February 2008, the choir was honoured with the PanSALB Award for Multilingualism and Nation Building, for “Album of the Decade”
- They performed with Celine Dion during her “Taking Chances” tour of South Africa
- The choir has had the honour of performing with gospel legends Bebe Winans and Kirk Franklin
- While in New Orleans, they recorded a track with rock legend Robert Plant, which was included on a Fats Domino tribute album, with proceeds going to the victims of Hurricane Katrina
- Their 46664 London performance of “Weeping”, with Josh Groban and Vusi Mahlasela, is featured on Josh’s latest album “Collection”
- The choir has toured the world extensively, performing at prestigious venues like Carnegie Hall, Sydney Opera House, the Nelson Mandela Theatre and Royal Festival Hall in London
- They have performed at high profile festivals such as the Edinburgh Festival, the Adelaide Festival, the Hong Kong Festival, and the London Festival, always to huge acclaim

- Soweto Gospel Choir received its third Grammy nomination in December 2008, this time in the category Best Contemporary World Music, for their album, "Live at the Nelson Mandela Theatre"
- The song "Down To Earth" from the blockbuster Wall-E movie, their collaboration with Peter Gabriel, won a Grammy in the Best Movie Song category
- In February 2009, the choir became the first South African artist to perform at the Academy Awards, when they sang "Down To Earth", the Gabriel/Newman Oscar-nominated song, with John Legend.
- During the same period, their newest album "Grace" charted in the top 10 of Billboard's World Music charts
- In March 2009, they were nominated for three SAMAs (South African Music Awards), for their cd and dvd, "Live At the Nelson Mandela Theatre", winning the Award for "Best Duo or Group"
- In May 2009, the choir was invited to perform at the Inauguration Ceremony of South Africa's new President
- In November, members of Soweto Gospel Choir were flown to Los Angeles to take part in a major Pepsi advertising campaign, alongside Akon and Keri Hilson
- The choir was one of three featured African artists for the FIFA World Cup Draw held in Cape Town in December 2009
- In April 2010, Soweto Gospel Choir was honoured with the inaugural International Achievement Award, at the South African Music Awards held at Sun City.
- Also in April, the choir was invited to perform at the Opening Ceremony of the 2010 World Trade Expo, held in Shanghai, as the African representative.
- The choir has collaborated with U2, as the featured South African artist, on the songs "Streets Have No Name", "Magnificent" and "Boots" for ESPN's promotional campaign for the 2010 World Cup.
- They performed during the FIFA World Cup Kick-Off Concert in Soweto, the night before the opening of the World Cup in June, with a select international and African line-up including the Black-Eyed Peas, Shakira, Angelique Kidjo and John Legend.
- The choir is an Ambassador for Nelson Mandela's 46664 campaign and has performed at the Cape Town, Johannesburg, London and New York concerts with artists such as Peter Gabriel, Bono, Queen, Jimmy Cliff, Johnny Clegg, Eddie Grant Amy Winehouse, Queen Latifah, Wyclef Jean, Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder
- They have been featured in Time Magazine and are one of the selected international artists included in Andrew Zukerman's "Music", as part of a series of photographic books that includes the best seller "Wisdom".
- They are UN Envoys for Africa and recorded and performed with seven other top African artists including Angelique Kidjo, Baba Maal, Eric Wainaina, Mingas, Oliver Mtukudzi, Yvonne Chaka Chaka and HHP as part of the UN MDG "Goals Away" campaign, during the World Cup. The choir is also an Ambassador for the 1Goal campaign, which advocates education for all, and for SHOUT which advocates Anti Crime
- Soweto Gospel Choir has founded its own AIDS orphans foundation, Nkosi's Haven Vukani, to assist organisations that receive little or no funding. To date, the choir has collected over R 4million for their foundation. In South Africa, the choir performs for a variety of charitable organisations.

WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ABOUT SOWETO GOSPEL CHOIR

"There is simply no flaw here"

Evening News, Scotland

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

Business Day, Johannesburg

"The public will be blown away"

Daily Sun, Johannesburg

“These absolutely thrilling singers need nothing but their voices to make dazzling music”
Billboard

“Simply the best”
The Star Tonight, Johannesburg

“This is a tour de musical force.... Soweto Gospel Choir is a slice of musical heaven”
Australian Stage, Melbourne

“A singularly joyful sound”
O Magazine, USA

“Occasionally, a diamond of such brilliance is unearthed that you find yourself compelled to develop a near-fanatical enthusiasm for it”
Manchester News

“The crowd was held in sway by the sheen and spectacle of a masterful performance”
Seattle News”

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

“I was left awestruck by the choir’s majestic and moving performance. There is no equal to their passion and power”
Three Weeks, Edinburgh

“Soweto Gospel Choir mesmerised the captive audience”
The Sowetan, Johannesburg

“A really spectacular 65 minutes”
The Herald, Scotland

“...the cascade of incredible colour and talent make this the most uplifting show in town”
The Big Issue, Edinburgh

“In all, this choir takes choral singing to new levels and are a must-see, whatever age or musical taste”
Edinburgh Festivals, Scotland

Soweto Gospel Choir and The Bala Brothers:

“The overall atmosphere casts a spell, with the ultra professional performers conveying a real sense of spontaneity”
Express, London

“This was always going to be an unforgettable performance! The collaboration creates a sound so unique, so powerful and so moving, that they rightly deserve their standing ovation.....South Africa’s ‘vocal dream team’”.
The New Current, Edinburgh

Latest Album “Grace” reviews:

“Soweto Gospel Choir’s latest album “Grace”, is easily as exuberant and inspired as any of its past efforts. The aptly titled 19-song set is a creative blending of traditional South African gospel numbers with elegantly conceived arrangements of contemporary tunes. The choir’s performance is a sustained display of individual and ensemble virtuosity, underwritten by its deep spiritual sensibility.”

Billboard, February 2010

“Beautiful voices, pristine musical arrangements and tremendous instrumentation permeate the 19 tunes on Grace. These singers bring real grace, human and divine, to this elegant, soulful album”.

Arkansas Gazette, February 2010

“If you have only 1 hour and 10 minutes, feed your soul with “Grace”. The 26 member troupe proves that joy is nondenominational”

The Oprah Magazine, USA, January 2010

“The 19 selection CD is certainly another award winning album. The harmony is almost perfect – if there is such a thing”.

“Baltimore Times, February 2010