

NEWS RELEASE

UMass Amherst Fine Arts Center

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 10, 2008

**WHAT: Fine Arts Center Presents Soweto Gospel Choir
Wednesday, December 3, 7:30 PM
Fine Arts Center Concert Hall**

**IMAGES: To download images relating to this press release please go online to
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Soweto Gospel Choir to Perform at the Fine Arts Center of the University of Massachusetts

AMHERST – November 10, 2008 – When it comes to vocal talent, Africa, and more particularly South Africa, 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. The Soweto Gospel Choir will be performing at the UMass Fine Arts Center Concert Hall on Wednesday, December 3 at 7:30 P.M. There will be a pre-performance discussion by Professor Olabode Omojola 6:45 – 7:15 PM in the University Gallery.

In conjunction with the performance of the Soweto Gospel Choir, the Fine Arts Center is conducting its Arts Give Back program. In the spirit of the holiday season, patrons are asked to bring a new, unwrapped toy, game, winter clothing item, or non-perishable food item to donate to families through the Amherst and Northampton Survival Centers. Visit www.thensc.org and www.people.umass.edu/support/asc/ for a list of needed items.

Expect earthy rhythms, rich harmonies, a *cappella* numbers as well as accompaniment by an exciting four-piece band and percussion section. Add to this, energetic dancing and vibrant, colorful 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 six of South Africa's 11 official languages.

This magnificent 52-strong choir, styled with a contemporary feel, leaves all who hear it stunned with emotion. It is no small wonder that they are charting a meteoric rise to

international fame. Those who 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.

Wherever Soweto Gospel Choir has performed, be it Europe, Singapore, Australia, the UK or the United States, 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 the 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 2005, with the majority of concerts sold-out.

On October 7 of last year, the choir performed as invited guests for 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.

Another exciting and memorable occasion for the choir was at Sun City on New Year's Eve, where they performed for Oprah Winfrey and 200 of her V.I.P. guests including Mariah Carey, Mary J. Blige, Tina Turner, Patti LaBelle, Sidney Poitier and Quincy Jones.

On February 11, 2007, the Soweto Gospel Choir received probably its greatest accolade, a Grammy Award for the CD *Blessed* in the category "Best Traditional World Music." They were also nominated for the 26th International Reggae and World Music Awards, held at the Apollo Theatre, Harlem, on May 5, in the category "Contribution to World Music" alongside Jimmy Cliff, Salif Keita, Youssou N'Dour and Ziggy Marley. In April 2007, the choir won a 2006 SAMA in the Category "Best Live Performance DVD" and in November they added to their string of awards by winning the 2007 Metro FM Award for Best Gospel Album for their latest album *African Spirit*. On December 9, they were nominated for a second Grammy Award in the Best Traditional World Music Album, for *African Spirit*.

The appearance of the Soweto Gospel Choir is sponsored by Hasbro Games and WEIB 106.3 FM. Tickets are \$35, \$30, and \$15; Five College/GCC students and youth 17 and under are \$15. Tickets are available at the Fine Arts Center Box Office, 545-2511 or 800-999-UMAS or online at www.fineartscenter.com.

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