

Zimbabwe's Black Umfolosi to perform songs, dances of Southern Africa April 11 in UCSD's Mandeville Auditorium

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ZIMBABWE'S BLACK UMFOLOSI TO PERFORM SONGS, DANCES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA APRIL 11 IN UCSD'S MANDEVILLE AUDITORIUM

Zimbabwe's Black Umfolosi will perform songs from Southern Africa and traditional Zulu war dances at 8 p.m. April 11 in Mandeville Auditorium at the University of California, San Diego.

Based in Bulawayo, the capital of the Ndebele-speaking region of Zimbabwe, Black Umfolosi achieved international recognition in 1990 with its album *Unity*, released on the World Circuit label. In 1993, the group released *Festival--Umdlalo* on World Circuit, and throughout the 1990s, the ensemble has been performing in major world cities.

Writes the Boston Herald: "The eight-member Black Umfolosi brought just such a naturalness and heartfelt directness to their World Music program, singing in pure sweet harmonies songs about love and hope, anger and loss."

The ensemble's program consists of two parts: *imbube* a capella, a serene style of singing found in South African townships, and an energetic performance of dances to the beat of drums, rattles, and whistling.

In the first half of the program, the singers, unaccompanied by instruments, intersperse Ndebele songs with occasional English lyrics with a repertoire including love songs, work songs, hymns of celebration and numbers dealing with racial harmony, conservation, and care for the disadvantaged. It is in keeping with the Ndebele tradition that the songs act as a kind of newspaper, reporting and commenting on contemporary events.

"Imbube is kin to doo-wop and hymn singing as well as to African vocal traditions," writes the New York Times. "Imbube is music in which a lead tenor shares a call-and-response with the ensemble's chordal riffs and refrains. The refrains drive the music like a breath-powered locomotive."

The locomotive energy gains steam in the second part of the program when Black Umfolosi performs dances from native African ceremonies. Dressed in traditional Zulu costumes and playing drums and rattles, with intermittent whistling, the ensemble's dances celebrate such activities as a successful hunt and warriors coming of age.

The group's traditional finale is the Gumboot dance, invented by miners in South Africa. The percussive sounds of clapping, slapping, and stomping of rubber boots build frenzy-- and humor--energetically accented by the verbal commentary of slogans and complaints about low wages and hard working conditions in the mines.

"This is a contemporary, flashy style, and the dancers went to town," writes the Boston Globe of the group's Gumboot finale.

Tickets for Black Umfolosi's April 11 performance at UCSD are \$16 general admission; \$14 for UCSD faculty, staff and senior citizens, and \$12 for students. Tickets are available at the UCSD Box Office, 534-6467, and at Ticketmaster outlets. For further information, call the UCSD University Events Office at 534-4090.

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