

For Immediate Release

**TOWN HALL AND (LE) POISSON ROUGE PRESENT ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING JAZZ EVENTS OF THE YEAR!**

**THE JAZZ EPISTLES: ABDULLAH IBRAHIM & EKAYA AND HUGH MASEKELA IN CONCERT**

**SOUTH AFRICAN JAZZ PIONEERS REUNITE IN FREEDOM TO TELL THE ALMOST FORGOTTEN STORY OF SOUTH AFRICA'S MOST IMPORTANT JAZZ COLLECTIVE**

**PERFORMING TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 56 YEARS, THIS TRIUMPHANT PROJECT MAKES ITS NORTH AMERICAN DEBUT AT TOWN HALL ON SOUTH AFRICAN FREEDOM DAY, APRIL 27, 2017**



New York, NY (February 23, 2017) – **Town Hall** and **(Le) Poisson Rouge** are proud to present **the Jazz Epistles**, featuring **Abdullah Ibrahim** and **Hugh Masekela** live in New York City for the first time on **South African Freedom Day**, April 27th. Half a century after recording South Africa's landmark jazz album, *Jazz Epistle, Verse 1*, these original bebop legends reunite for a rare performance at Town Hall at 123 W 43<sup>rd</sup> Street.

The Jazz Epistles album is **the “Holy Grail” recording** in South African jazz history, yet the world was not aware of its pivotal importance, until now.

In 1959, South Africa's top musicians —**Hugh Masekela** on trumpet, **Abdullah Ibrahim** on piano, **Jonas Gwangwa** on trombone, **Kippie Moeketsi** on alto saxophone, **Johnny Gertze** on bass, and **Makaya Ntshoko** on drums — created “the first all-black modern South African jazz recording.” (Gwen Ansell, author of *Soweto Blues*). It was revolutionary for the time period, yet its modern sounds and controversial nature made it a commercial flop — only 500 LPs were originally printed. The apartheid government, which viewed jazz as an inherent threat to authority, forced its brilliant musicians into exile. Thus, the Jazz Epistles disbanded and the music was buried and almost lost. For decades, due to the hostile circumstances of the time period, very little of this rich cultural history has been documented.

Remarkably, Ibrahim and Masekela achieved massive success on their own terms overseas in exile. Ibrahim settled in Europe and Masekela in the States. They became symbols of the Pan-African movement, each writing popular anti-apartheid freedom songs and creating formidable discographies.

Now, half a century later, these two giants reunite for the first time in concert. They not only revisit a critical chapter from their youth, but also pay tribute to one of the most important jazz sessions to occur on South African soil.

**This unique performance will be captured by WBGO for *Jazz Night in America*, carried on NPR stations nationwide, and *The Checkout* hosted by Simon Rentner.**

**This concert is produced by The Town Hall and (Le) Poisson Rouge, in partnership with WBGO, South African Tourism, and South African Airways.**

Tickets for this event are from \$37 to \$127 (VIP, includes reception with the artists) and are available for sale via [The Town Hall](#) or [\(Le\) Poisson Rouge](#) box offices. Please visit [TheTownHall.org](#) or [LPR.com](#) for additional information.

Lineup:

Abdullah Ibrahim – piano

Hugh Masekela – flugelhorn, trumpet, vocals

Noah Jackson – bass, cello

Will Terrill – drums

Cleave Guyton Jr. – alto saxophone, flute, clarinet, piccolo

Lance Bryant – tenor saxophone

Andrae Murchison – trombone, trumpet

Marshall McDonald – baritone saxophone

***Praise for the Jazz Epistles:***

“South Africa's Mozart.”

– Nelson Mandela about **Abdullah Ibrahim**

“**Hugh Masekela** is still one of the most thrilling live performers around.”

– *Rolling Stone*

“This story hasn't been written yet. It's a hidden history and it's waiting to be told.”

– Sazi Dlamini, ethnomusicologist, University of KwaZulu-Natal

“At a time when apartheid itself was very backward looking, you had a collection of black musicians who were saying very defiantly: We are here, we are modern-city people, there is no way you are going to exclude us from modern life. And that is the beautiful undertone in that music.”

– Gwen Ansell, author, *Soweto Blues—Jazz, Popular Music & Politics in South Africa*

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**Event Details:**

The Jazz Epistles Featuring Abdullah Ibrahim & Ekaya and Hugh Masekela

Presented by Town Hall and LPR

Thursday, April 27, 2017

7:30pm doors | 8pm show

\$37 - \$127

Tickets available from [Ticketmaster](#)

**Venue Address:**

123 W 43<sup>rd</sup> Street New York, NY 10036

**About Abdullah Ibrahim**

Abdullah Ibrahim is South Africa's most distinguished pianist and a world-respected master musician. Formerly known as Dollar Brand — a nickname he earned for his spirited efforts to buy American LPs, which could be found for one dollar — he took the name Abdullah Ibrahim in 1968 when he converted to Islam. Alongside Hugh Masekela, he performed and recorded with South Africa's first premiere jazz group, the Jazz Epistles. When the apartheid clampdown came, he became one of the most successful, and — with some 100 albums — prolific, musicians in the exodus. In 1963 while in exile in Europe, Ibrahim was heard by Duke Ellington at the Africana Club. Ellington was so impressed that he arranged a recording session for Ibrahim and his trio. The resulting album, *Duke Ellington Presents the Dollar Brand Trio*, was released on the Reprise label later that year. He continued to be supported by Ellington following the album's release. Under the urging of Ellington, he came to New York in 1965 and performed at the Newport Festival with the Ellington Orchestra, at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Museum of Modern Art, The Village Vanguard, and many college venues. He briefly returned to Cape Town in 1973, which resulted in the recording of the legendary "Mannenburg" and "Soweto". Those songs became anthems of the uprisings in the Soweto townships, expressing the anguish of his people under the oppression of apartheid. Ibrahim went into exile again in '76 vowing not to return until South Africa and his people were free. He would not return until 1990. For more than a quarter-century, Ibrahim has toured the world extensively, giving sold-out performances with renowned artists like Max Roach, Carlos Ward, and Randy Weston. Even today Ibrahim remains at his zenith, a musician and tireless initiator of new projects.

**About Hugh Masekela**

Hugh Masekela is a world-renowned flugelhornist, trumpeter, bandleader, composer, singer and defiant political voice who remains deeply connected at home in South Africa, while his international career sparkles. Masekela began to hone his now signature Afro-Jazz sound in the late 1950s during a period of intense creative collaboration, most notably performing in the 1959 musical *King Kong*, and, soon thereafter, as a member of the now legendary South African group, the Jazz Epistles. In 1960, at the age of 21, he left South Africa to begin what would be a 30-year exile from the land of his birth. On arrival in New York he enrolled at the Manhattan School of Music. This coincided with a golden era of jazz music and the young Masekela immersed himself in the New York jazz scene where nightly he watched greats like Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, Charlie Mingus and Max Roach. Under the tutelage of Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong, Masekela was encouraged to develop his own unique style, feeding off African rather than American influences — his debut album, released in 1963, was entitled *Trumpet Africaine*. His subsequent solo career has spanned five decades, during which time he has released over 40 albums (and been featured on countless more) and has worked

with such diverse artists as Harry Belafonte, Dizzy Gillespie, Fela Kuti, Paul Simon, Stevie Wonder and Miriam Makeba. In 1990 Masekela returned home, following the unbanning of the ANC and the release of Nelson Mandela — an event anticipated in Hugh’s anti-apartheid anthem “Bring Home Nelson Mandela”(1986) which had been a rallying cry around the world. Masekela is currently using his global reach to spread the word about heritage restoration efforts in Africa, a topic that remains very close to his heart. It’s this commitment to his home continent that has propelled him forward since he first began playing the trumpet.

**PRESS INQUIRIES:**

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