



South African Trumpet Legend Hugh Masekela

Celebrates His 70th Year with New CD and U.S. Appearances

Phola, his 35th as a Leader
set for March 16th National Release

An icon in jazz and a hero in his homeland, South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela is in classic form on **Phola**, his 35th recording as a leader and second for the Four Quarters label. Produced by the talented multi-instrumentalist Erik Paliani, it features Masekela's fluid, warm-toned flugelhorn work and distinctive vocals on a collection of relaxed, engaging vehicles that blend aspects of jazz, R&B, Afro-beat and township music. From buoyant instrumentals like "Mwanayu Wakula" and the grooving "Moz" (a number ever bit as catchy as his 1968 breakthrough hit "Grazing in the Grass"), to stirring vocal numbers like "Ghana," "Bring It Back Home" and the autobiographical "Sonnyboy," Masekela delivers with old school charm and youthful enthusiasm on **Phola** (a South African term meaning to get well, to heal, to relax and chill).

He follows the release of this engaging CD with gala appearances in the United States, including the San Francisco Jazz Festival (April 24th), Houston International Festival (April 25th) and New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival (April 26th).

As a revered artist who has worked with several renowned producers over the past 45 years, Masekela was pleased to work with young producer Paliani on **Phola**. "After I heard work he had done with other people's music, including Zama Jobe's first CD and Mavo Solomon's CD as well as hearing his guitar playing behind other artists on live gigs, I was convinced that Erik was the right person to ask for help in finding what I was hearing for this project," says Hugh. "Erik and his collaborator Ezra Erasmus were focused on creating a calm musical atmosphere with unlimited space. They are both master craftsmen who possess an outrageous sense of humor. They are also scholars of every kind of music imaginable and they work with the utmost respect and dedication to the music."

Hugh adds, "Erik and Ezra strove to accompany my performances without imposing their own visions of what it should be like. The quality I tried to convey was simplicity, accessibility, honesty, transparency, good playing and uncomplicated awareness-conveyance."

Together they convey a buoyant township quality on the charming 12/8 groover "Malungelo" and "Ghana," in which Masekela sings about how he met his wife Elinam, revealing the influence of such engaging singers as Harry Belafonte and Salif Keita. He explains that "Weather" is about pollution, climate change, profit and greed, instead of a safe earth in other words, destruction of the ecology. The autobiographical "Sonnyboy" however, begs parents to help their children follow their muse and not prevent them from pursuing the careers they choose. Hugh's longtime associate Stewart Levine (a business partner and producer going back to the "Grazing in the Grass" days) appears as a special guest playing clarinet on the polyrhythmic funk instrumental "Moz."

Masekela's vocal delivery on "Hunger" is particularly emotional. "It's about hunger and strife in the world, especially Africa," he says. "It's also about lying politicians and their empty promises, how Africa was hijacked by dishonest leaders and how voters are forgotten after elections. It's a plea to return to old values and respect for elders." He explains that "Bring It Back Home" is about politicians having to return to care for the people who put them in power instead of self-fulfillment, greed, deceit.

Yet another typically grooving, politically-charged offering from South Africa's elder statesman of jazz, **Phola** is a rhythmic-melodic manifesto that provides plenty of food for thought as it compels listeners to dance.

Born on April 4, 1939 in Witbank, South Africa, Masekela began singing and playing piano as a child but he picked up trumpet at age 14 after seeing the Hollywood film *Young Man With A Horn*, in which actor Kirk Douglas portrayed the legendary American jazz trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke. After being given a trumpet by Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, the anti-apartheid chaplain at St. Peters Secondary School, young Hugh immersed himself in the 78 RPM recordings of such American jazz stars as Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Chick Webb, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins, Cab Calloway, Fats Waller, Sarah Vaughan, Louis Jordan, Billie Holiday and Charlie Christian. By his late teens he began patterning himself after bebop trumpeters like Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Clifford Brown and Kenny Dorham while also absorbing the influence of Oscar Peterson, Dave Brubeck, Paul Desmond, Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan, Chet Baker, Bud Powell, John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Horace Silver, Art Blakey, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard and Chet Baker.

After learning the rudiments of trumpet playing, Masekela joined the Huddleston Jazz Band, South Africa's very first youth orchestra. He went on to play in other dance bands led by the likes of Zakes Nkosi, Ntemi Piliso, Elijah Nkwanyana and Kippie Moeketsi, then by 1956 he joined Alfred Herbert's African Jazz Revue. At the end of 1959, he formed the Jazz Epistles with pianist Dollar Brand (later known as Abdullah Ibrahim) and began the first African jazz group to record an LP. By 1960, Masekela escaped the Apartheid state of South Africa and

relocated in London, where he studied at the prestigious Guildhall School of Music. Two years later he released his first album as a leader, *Trumpet Africaine*, on the Mercury Records label.

In 1964, Masekela married South African singer Miriam Makeba and the following year he recorded his breakthrough album *The Americanization of Ooga Booga*. By 1966, the trumpeter relocated to Los Angeles and recorded *The Emancipation of Hugh Masekela*, the title of which may have been a sly reference to his divorce that year from Makeba. The massive success of his 1968 radioplay hit "Grazing in the Grass," which sold over four million copies worldwide, made Masekela an international star. By 1970, Masekela and his business partner/producer Stewart Levine formed Chisa Records, a Motown subsidiary which featured the recordings of Masekela as well as The Crusaders, Letta Mbulu and Monk Montgomery. There were about seven releases in the Chisa series, including Masekela's own *Reconstruction* in 1970 and *Hugh Masekela and the Union of South Africa* in 1971, before the label folded. Masekela and Levine moved their operation to Blue Thumb Records (1972-74), where the trumpeter began to dig deeper into his African jazz heritage, as heard on 1972's *Home Is Where The Music Is*, featuring African reedman Dudu Pukwana, 1973's *Masekela Introducing Hedzoleh Sounds* and 1974's Afro-beat flavored *I Am Not Afraid*.

Masekela continued to generate hits through the '70s and in the early '80s released some strong albums for Britain's Jive Records label, including 1984's *Techno-Bush*. He later conceived with playwright and songwriter Mbongeni Ngema the musical *Sarafina*, which found great success on Broadway in 1988. After being recruited for Paul Simon's *Graceland* tour, which included a number of prominent African musicians including Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Miriam Makeba, Masekela returned home to South Africa following the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990. He released a string of engaging Afrobeat and township style recordings through the decade, including 1992's *Beatin' Around de Bush*, 1994's *Reconstruction*, 1998's *Black to the Future* and 1999's *Note of Life*. He scored successes in subsequent years with 2002's *Time* on Columbia, 2005's *Revival* on Heads Up and 2007's *Live at the Market Theatre*, his debut for Four Quarters.

www.fourquartersent.com

For press inquiries contact:

Don Lucoff / DL Media

don@jazzpublicity.com

(610) 667-0501

124 N Highland Ave.

Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004

www.jazzpublicity.com