

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Masekela Langage (1969 / New Production – 2016)

Choreography: Alvin Ailey
Restaged by: Masazumi Chaya
Music: Hugh Masekela
Costumes: A. Christina Giannini
Lighting: Chenault Spence
Scenic Design: William Hammond

Masekela Langage, a rarely-seen Ailey masterpiece, is set in a shebeen (a South African beer house) and danced to the driving score of South African jazz composer and trumpeter Hugh Masekela. Ailey's choreography speaks of passivity, militancy, despair, and defiance in a searing portrait of oppression during the apartheid era, drawing parallels between events in South Africa and the race-induced violence in Chicago during the 1960s.

The work premiered during Ailey's first season at BAM in 1969, and fittingly was revived for Ailey's return to BAM during the Company's 50th anniversary in 2008.

"It is a truly fine work that shows Ailey's gift for transmuting emotional drama into movement with pitch-perfect timing and theatrical flair."

The New York Times

"...a sensitive evocation of the music of the renowned South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela and a searing portrait of black South Africans."

The New York Times

"The anger of *Masekela Langage* takes the Ailey dancers beyond and out of their extraordinary physicality—which in and of itself is enough to mesmerize anyone."

The Miami Herald

"*Masekela Langage* remains timely and eloquent."

The New York Times

"Perhaps the most pleasurable surprise of all was that *Masekela Langage* does not look dated, and may have actually grown in its expressive power over the years."

Dance Magazine



AAADT in Alvin Ailey's *Masekela Langage*. Photo by Paul Kolnik.



Hugh Masekela. Photo Copyright Griot GmbH & Brett Rubin.

Hugh Masekela

Hugh Masekela is a world-renowned flugelhornist, trumpeter, bandleader, composer, singer, and defiant political voice who remains deeply connected at home, 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*, written by Todd Matshikiza, 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 30 years in exile from the land of his birth. On arrival in New York he enrolled at the Manhattan School of Music.

Under the tutelage of Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong, Hugh 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*. In 1967 Hugh performed at the Monterey Pop Festival alongside Janis Joplin, Otis Redding, Ravi Shankar, The Who, and Jimi Hendrix. In 1968, his instrumental single ‘*Grazin’ in the Grass*’ went to Number One on the American pop charts and was a worldwide smash, elevating Hugh onto the international stage.

Masekela alternated between America and Africa, cutting a successful pop/dance album with Herb Alpert in the late '70s. During the '80s, Masekela returned to South Africa. He visited Zimbabwe and Botswana, and recorded two albums with the Kalahari Band that once more merged jazz-rock, funk, and pop. Masekela was part of Paul Simon's Graceland tour in the mid-'80s, while he continued recording and produced sessions by Makeba. Starting in the mid-'90s, Masekela began releasing a stream of albums and collections that showed his versatility and growth in South African jazz. In June 2010 he opened the *FIFA Soccer World Cup Kick-Off Concert* to a global audience and performed at the event's Opening Ceremony in Soweto's Soccer City. In 2010, President Zuma honoured him with the highest order in South Africa: The Order of Ikhamanga, and 2011 saw Masekela receive a Lifetime Achievement award at the WOMEX World Music Expo in Copenhagen.

The US Virgin Islands proclaimed ‘Hugh Masekela Day’ in March 2011, not long after Hugh joined U2 on stage during the Johannesburg leg of their 360 World Tour. “My biggest obsession is to show Africans and the world who the people of Africa really are,” Masekela confides – and it's this commitment to his home continent that has propelled him forward since he first began playing the trumpet. In 2015 he received his fourth honorary doctorate degree, from Rhodes University, and was celebrated at the Jazz FM Awards with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Mr. Masekela was invited to The White House by President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama on April 30, 2016 to perform for International Jazz Day alongside Aretha Franklin, Herbie Hancock, Trombone Shorty, Buddy Guy, and more.

This production of *Masekela Langage* was made possible with major support from American Express.

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Masekela Langage was originally commissioned by Connecticut College American Dance Festival
I with additional funds provided by Ford Foundation.

Masekela Langage **Music Credit Information**

Song: Fuzz

Music composed by Hugh Masekela

Song: Morolo

Music composed by Hugh Masekela

Song: Babajula Bonke

Music composed by Hugh Masekela

Song: Mace & Grenades

Music composed by Hugh Masekela

Song: Epilogue - Sobukwe

Music composed by Hugh Masekela