

BIO:

Vusi Mahlasela, is simply known as “The Voice” in his home-country, South Africa, celebrated for his distinct, powerful voice and his poetic, optimistic lyrics. His songs of hope connect Apartheid-scarred South Africa with its promise for a better future. Raised in the Mamelodi Township, where he still resides, Vusi became a singer-songwriter and poet-activist at an early age teaching himself how to play guitar and later joining the Congress of South African Writers. After his popular debut on BMG Africa, *When You come Back*, Vusi was asked to perform at Mandela’s inauguration in 1994. Vusi is now an ambassador to Mandela’s HIV/AIDS initiative, 46664.

After world-wide touring and international acclaim, Americans first caught a glimpse of Vusi in the lauded documentary film *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony*, and the accompanying soundtrack. After the release of the film, long-time admirer and fellow South African, Dave Matthews, signed Vusi to his own ATO Records label and released *The Voice* (2003), a collection of the best songs from Vusi’s catalog. In 2007, ATO released his latest album, *Guiding Star*, his first full-length release in the States. *Guiding Star* features musical guests Vusi has met along the way: Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Dave Matthews, Jem, Derek Trucks, Xavier Rudd and more.

Recently, Vusi performed at Nelson Mandela’s 90th Birthday celebration in Hyde Park, London. Over 50,000 people gathered for the event to raise awareness for Mandela’s 46664. Vusi also performed with Paul Simon for a week of shows in New York and toured with banjoist Bela Fleck this past spring. In the midst of a busy international touring schedule, Vusi remains dedicated to his social activism and partnerships with non-profits, including his own Vusi Mahlasela Music Development Foundation (www.VMMDF.org), committed to the promotion of and preservation of African music.; OXFAM; The Acumen Fund; The African Leadership Academy, the ONE campaign and more.

One of the hardest things to learn as a musician is when to not only recognize inspiration, but when to trust and follow it. Over a musically and socially consequential career, South African singer-songwriter and poet-activist Vusi Mahlasela has successfully followed his muse. That trust in his gift is at the root of his latest album, *Guiding Star*, which features guest musicians and friends, including: Dave Matthews, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Jem, Derek Trucks and more.

Key Quotes:

“optimistic and soulful, delivered with an intensity that captures the attention and embraces the heart” - LA Times

*“If Mahlasela embodies his country’s spirit, there is plenty of cause for hope.”
-London TIMES*

“His tender and strong voice is ours, South Africa’s. He sings our changes, our achievements as a free people, and our personal joys and sorrows. Guiding Star is a fresh advance in the beauty and sincerity of his art.”

-Nadine Gordimer

"He was a voice during the revolution, a voice of hope, like a Woody Guthrie or Bob Dylan of South Africa, and he still is."

- Dave Matthews

"Vusi sings as a bird does: in total response to being alive. He is a national treasure."

-Nadine Gordimer

"The angelic voice of an Angelic man."

-Natalie Merchant

"A haunting testimony to mankind's cultural cradle, Africa."

-GQ