

American Minnesota Orchestra to tour SA for Madiba's centenary celebrations

The American Minnesota Orchestra and Classical Movements will go on a five-city South African tour in August 2018 in celebration of what would have been Nelson Mandela's 100th birthday.

Conducted by Minnesota Orchestra Music director Osmo Vänskä, the tour marks the first-ever visit to South Africa by a professional US orchestra.

The tour aims to showcase music from South African, American and European musical traditions, and will draw together South African and American performers and a mix of music, offering musical exchanges with student groups and large-scale performances in colleges, city halls and churches.



A highlight of the tour will be a piece specially commissioned as a tribute to Madiba by Classical Movements. Composer Bongani Ndodana-Breen is writing the tribute, titled *Harmonia Ubuntu*, which will also feature soprano Goitsewang Onicah Lehobye.

The piece will be performed at concerts in Minnesota in July, after which Vänskä and the Orchestra will travel to South Africa to perform in Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria and Johannesburg, as well as at the historic Regina Mundi Roman Catholic Church in Soweto.

Speaking about their reason for travelling to South Africa, Minnesota Orchestra President and CEO Kevin Smith said, “We recently became the first American orchestra to tour Cuba following a 2014 thaw in diplomatic relations. The experience was so uplifting and enlightening for us that we decided to forge similar cultural exchanges with other countries. Our music director Osmo Vänskä had performed with the South African National Youth Orchestra in Cape Town and Soweto in 2014, and the moving experience of that event persuaded us to tour South Africa next.”

Said Vänskä, “Music plays a central role in South African culture today, both choral music and a growing orchestral tradition, and we are excited to experience and be part of this movement.”

The Minnesota Chorale will join the tour for performances of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in Johannesburg and Soweto, singing beside local Gauteng Choristers and soprano Goitsewang Oniccah Lehobye, mezzo Minette du Toit-Pearce, tenor Siyabonga Maqungo and bass-baritone Njabulo Madlala.

The musical tribute to Mandela forms part of nearly 50 projects planned by the Nelson Mandela Foundation to commemorate the Mandela legacy. The chief executive of the Nelson Mandela Foundation Sello Hatang said, “Madiba’s centenary is about helping build a values-based society. Music has over the years played a key role in helping deliver democracy in South Africa. We hope that this initiative will play a role in highlighting the plight of the poor and the marginalized, and thereby build an equal society.”

Classical Movements president Neeta Helms said, “After working in South Africa since 1994, Classical Movements is very grateful that one of the top orchestras in the United States will make this historic, first-ever tour to South Africa. It is an enormous undertaking and a statement of the importance of Africa and the growth of orchestral music in this most choral of countries. This dynamic and visionary Orchestra is exactly the right musical ambassador to pave the way for others to follow.”

Ticket prices range from R100 to R600 and bookings for Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria concerts can be done through Computicket at www.computicket.com/music. For tickets to the Cape Town concert, please email tickets@classicalmovements.com.

For more information, visit www.minnesotaorchestra.org/satour.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>