About Nobuntu

Nobuntu, the female a cappella quintet from the country of Zimbabwe in southern Africa, has drawn international acclaim for its inventive performances fusing traditional Zimbabwean songs with afro jazz and gospel. The ensemble's concerts are performed with pure voices, augmented by minimalistic percussion, traditional instruments such as the Mbira (thumb piano) and organic, authentic dance movements.

Nobuntu was nominated for Best Musician of the Year at the Zimbabwe International Women Awards in London in 2015 and in the last few seasons, the quintet has performed at festivals and concert halls in Italy, Austria, Germany, Belgium, the Czech Republic and throughout the African continent. The ensemble was a huge critical success at Trans-Vocal in Frankfurt and Voice Mania in Vienna. Their first tour to Canada in 2016 included performances in Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria. They made their first visit to the United States in 2017.

The word “nobuntu” is an African concept that values humbleness, love, purpose, unity and family from a woman's perspective. The ensemble represents a new generation of young African women singers who celebrate and preserve their culture, beauty and heritage through art. The ensemble's mission lies in the belief that music can be an important vehicle for change, one that transcends racial, tribal, religious, gender and economic boundaries.

About a cappella

In Italian, a cappella means “in chapel or choir style.” Cappella is the Italian word for “chapel”; the English word “chapel” is ultimately (if independently) derived from the medieval Latin word cappella, which is the source of the Italian cappella as well. Scholars once thought all “chapel style” music written before the 1600s was performed a cappella, but modern research has revealed that instruments might have doubled or substituted for some voices back then. Today a cappella describes a purely vocal performance.

Although a cappella is technically defined as singing without instrumental accompaniment, some groups use their voices to emulate instruments; others are more traditional and focus on harmonizing. A cappella styles range from gospel to contemporary music to barbershop quartets and choruses. Contemporary a cappella includes many vocal groups and bands who add vocal percussion or beatboxing to create a pop/rock/gospel sound, in some cases very similar to bands with instruments. Examples of such professional groups include Straight No Chaser, Pentatonix, and Rockapella.
Dear Students,

1. Why do you think music is a good way to celebrate a culture?
2. What is different about singing without instrumental accompaniment and singing with it?
3. Is there a place you can think of where lots of people sing a cappella? (Hint: you wash your hair there.)

What is expected of student audiences at the matinee:

- To facilitate starting the performance on time, get a drink of water and use the restroom before entering the seating area.
- Enter the auditorium quietly and take your seats immediately (note that all matinees have reserved seating).
- Show courtesy to the artists and other guests at all times.
- Demonstrate appreciation for the artists’ work by applauding.
- Refrain from making unnecessary noise or movements.
- Please eat lunch before or after the performance. Food is not allowed in the theatre.
- Use information learned from the pre-matinee discussion to enhance the performance experience.
- Please do not photograph or record the artists.

What your students can expect of their experience at the Mondavi Center:

A theatre is a charged space, full of energy and anticipation. When the house lights (the lights that illuminate the audience seating) go down, the excitement level goes up! Theatres are designed so that the voices of the singers and actors and the music of the musicians can be heard. But this also means that any sound in the audience, whispering, speaking and moving about, can be heard by other audience members and by the performers. Distractions like these disrupt everyone’s concentration and can spoil a performance.

The performers on stage show respect for their art form and for the audience by doing their very best work. By watching attentively the audience shows respect for the performers. Appreciation can be shown in many different ways, depending upon the art form and the culture(s) of the people in the audience. For instance, while the audience at a dance performance may sit quietly, other types of performances may invite audience participation.

Applause is the best way for audience members to share their enthusiasm and to show their appreciation for the performers. Applaud at the end of a performance! Sometimes the audience will clap during a performance, as after a featured solo. Audience members may feel like laughing if the action on stage is funny, crying if the action is sad, or sighing if something is seen or heard that is beautiful.