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BOTSWANAN CHOIR & HACKNEY SINGERS DAZZLE AUDIENCE

Botswana's Sedibeng Choral Society inspired community choir Hackney Singers and the audience in a dazzling joint performance at a full St. John-at-Hackney on Friday 8 October. "The Hackney Singers were truly inspired to reach another level tonight by the Sedibeng Choral Society", said Mark Shanahan, Hackney Singers Musical Director. "To see the way they were inspired when they sang - especially during the encore - was just fantastic".

The Sedibeng Choral Society journeyed to Hackney as part of their first tour outside of Botswana to launch Mma Ramotswe's Cookbook, a spin-off from the BBC TV series the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency, for which Sedibeng provided music. Members of the choir stayed with Hackney Singers in Hackney, Stoke Newington, Waltham Forest and further afield. For many, it was their first trip outside Botswana.

They opened Friday night's musical extravaganza with a choreographed performance entitled 'Made in Botswana', featuring beautifully-sung traditional African music, dancing and drumming, injected with a unique sense of humour and fun that brought a bit of Botswana to Hackney. "It is not the first Hackney Singers event that I have attended, but it was my favourite – I loved it!" said Martina Breslin, from Canning Town, one of the 600/700 audience that attended. "I really enjoyed the Batswana performance. It was beautiful and I loved how animated they were. I loved that you did a piece together – there was an energy about it."

Sedibeng Choral Society received a five-minute standing ovation from the audience – a hard act for Hackney Singers to follow. However, buoyed by the energy of the Sedibeng performance and bolstered by the bold sounds of the internationally-renowned Onyx Brass, they rose to the occasion. "The Sedibeng Choral Society provided us with energy, movement and a really sincere performance", said Dan Ludford-Thomas, Hackney Singers Associate Conductor. "It inspired the Hackney Singers to go to an extra level tonight. It was thoroughly enjoyable and to see the two contrasts was amazing. I could hear the buzz behind me from the Sedibeng Choral Society appreciating the Hackney Singers performance."

Hackney Singers Répétiteur, Andrew Storey put in an impressive performance on the organ, keeping pace with the fast rhythms and complex arrangements as Hackney Singers sung John Rutter's 'Gloria' and Hubert Parry's 'I was glad'. He called the performance a "triumph" and "one of the best in the 20 years that I have been doing this".

Sedibeng Choral Society will now travel to Newcastle for the final leg of their European Tour, having already taken in Sweden, but they are keen to travel

again. "We want to perform in as many places as possible outside of our home country, because one's culture is more often appreciated outside of your country rather than inside", said Andy Batshogile, Sedibeng Choral Society's Founder and Conductor. "You only really realise how much your culture is worth if you send it outside and people love it."

Further travel appears likely as the choir's work is appreciated by all. "It was a fantastic performance tonight and we hope that events such as this will increase Botswana's exposure and encourage people to come to our country to see more of the Sedibeng choir, as well as all of the other attractions that we have to offer", said Botswana's Deputy High Commissioner, who was in the audience. "It has been a great experience to be here tonight. It has also been a great experience for the choir and I hope that we can set up other similar exchanges in order to promote what Botswana has to offer."

For more information, visit www.hackneysingers.org.uk.

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Notes for Editors

1. A number of high-resolution pictures of the performance are available upon request. Please contact Andy Brown using the details above.
2. A full-length feature about Sedibeng Choral Society's visit to London is available (free of charge) from Andy Brown, using the contact details above.
3. Hackney Singers is a large mixed choir with about 200 members. The choir is based in Hackney, with members drawn from all over London. The choir has been performing for over 25 years. The choir is a Registered Charity, No 294564. www.hackneysingers.org.uk
4. Sedibeng Choral Society is one of Botswana's most flourishing youth choirs and focuses on traditional African song, dance and choral music. As well as singing works such as Vivaldi's Glorai, Haydn's Creation and more, it has also recently performed the opera Pirates of Penzance. The Choral Society has also performed for organisations such as The British High Commission, PricewaterhouseCoopers, The Swedish Embassy and the Red Cross of Botswana. It will be the first time that the Choral Society has been to the UK and members will be staying with Hackney Singers. sedibengchoralsociety.blogspot.com

5. Onyx Brass Ensemble's five members hold permanent positions in The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the Orchestra of English National Opera, the English Chamber Orchestra and the Royal Ballet Sinfonia. The quintet will be expanded to eight for the 8 October performance. Onyx Brass Ensemble performs regularly on BBC Radios 2 and 3.
www.onyxbrass.co.uk

6. Mark Shanahan has been musical director of the Hackney Singers since 1998 and artistic director of the Forest Philharmonic since 1991. He has conducted at the English National Opera, Opera North and La Fenice Venice. Shanahan has recently been appointed an honorary Fellow of the Royal Northern College of Music.
<http://www.markshanahan.co.uk>.

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