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The Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, together with members of the African and African-American communities, is presenting a set of distinctive performances in February to celebrate the arts of the African Diaspora.

Taking of Our Place Center Stage: The African Diaspora in Harmony is a series of performances highlighting the varied arts from across the African cultural existence. This month the Ordway, 345 Washington St., St. Paul, as a part of the Target World Music and Dance Series presents hip-hop powerhouse Rennie Harris Puremovement (Feb. 7 at 7:30 p.m.) and 2014 Grammy Award-winners Ladysmith Black Mambazo (Feb. 9 at 7:30 p.m.).

Critically acclaimed, Rennie Harris' bold, original hip-hop work encompasses rich and diverse African-American traditions of the past while simultaneously presenting the voice of a new generation. Rennie Harris, a Philadelphia native, founded her group more than 20 years ago based on the belief that hip-hop is the most important original expression of a new generation, with the unique ability to express universal themes that extend beyond racial, religious, and economic boundaries.

For more than 50 years, the voices of Ladysmith Black Mambazo have married the intricate rhythms and harmonies of their native South African musical traditions to the sounds and sentiments of Christian gospel music. The result is a musical and spiritual alchemy that has touched a worldwide audience representing every corner of the religious, cultural and ethnic landscape.

Ladysmith Black Mambazo, a male choral group from South Africa, was formed in 1960 by Joseph Shabalala has recorded over 50 albums since their first recording in 1973 in South Africa.

The group was invited to sing by Nelson Mandela when he received his Nobel Prize in 1993 and when he was inaugurated as president of South Africa in 1994.

In the mid-1980s, Paul Simon visited South Africa and incorporated Black Mambazo's rich tenor/alto/bass harmonies into his "Graceland" album—a landmark 1986 recording that was considered seminal in introducing world music to mainstream audiences. In addition to the

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group's collaboration with Simon, Ladysmith Black Mambazo has recorded with numerous artists around the world, including Stevie Wonder, Dolly Parton, Sarah McLachlan, Josh Groban, Melissa Etheridge and others.

Last week, Ladysmith Black Mambazo tied with the Gipsy Kings for a Grammy win in the Best World Music Album category at the 56th Grammy Awards. This was the group's fourth Grammy win.

"The Ordway's World Music and Dance series is a completely unique program in the Twin Cities. We take the time to really search for and gather talent from different pockets of the world to help celebrate the art and culture from that area," said Dayna Martinez, director of the Ordway's World Music and Dance. "February encompasses a variety of musical and dance performances that highlight everything from a cappella to hip-hop and Latin dance."

Tickets for each performance are \$28 and can be purchased online at www.ordway.org or by calling the Ordway at (651) 224-4222.

The Ordway is widely recognized as one of the nation's leading nonprofit performing arts centers. The Ordway also sponsors the Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists, a professionally guided academic and artistic environment that trains aspiring pre-professional performing artists. Together with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Minnesota Opera and the Schubert Club, the Ordway is a member of the Arts Partnership and serves as the principal venue for their performances.