

ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT – JAN UARY 15, 2009

# LIYANA 2009 USA TOUR

[WWW.LIYANATOUR.COM](http://WWW.LIYANATOUR.COM)



**TO PLACE A STORY ABOUT LIYANA'S 2009 USA TOUR**

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Prudence Mabhena ... the melody that came from her mouth was like aural honey. Marvelous Mbulo laid a wistful harmony over the top as delicately as a feather, and for a few minutes, the air seemed to freeze with the beauty being sung.

*SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, JANUARY 6, 2009*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED GROUP OF PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED  
KIDS FROM ZIMBABWE FULFILLS THEIR DREAM OF PERFORMING FOR  
U.S. AUDIENCES**

**Zimbabwean Band Teaches Us All About Transcending Physical and Artistic Barriers  
to Achieve Your Dreams**

NEW YORK, NY -- January 14, 2009 -- The John Lennon Educational Tour Bus in special partnership with the PG Family Foundation, is presenting the first-ever US tour of a group from Zimbabwe called Liyana (<http://www.liyanatour.com>), made up of 8 band members ranging in age from 17-23. They are the subject of a documentary that has just been picked up by HBO for distribution, but what makes them extraordinary besides their remarkable talent, is that each of them was born with severe physical disabilities. Many are orphans. All self-taught musicians, they met as students at King George VI school in Zimbabwe, where disabled children are thought to bring shame and ill fortune upon their families, are often marginalized, and even left to die. At KGVI, their mentor, Mrs. Inez Hussey shared a vision for the transformative role music can play in building self confidence and personal power. With her support, what started as a small classroom project to work with friends to write a song, has now become a world-class performing group. Liyana's lead singer, Prudence, believes that early musical experiences set them on a course to "Do Something Amazing" with their lives.

Watching Liyana perform is inspirational for the band's unique take on Afro-fusion music, and for its universal message, "Never give up believing in your ability to do amazing things, despite the challenges you face along the way."

Liyana are in Los Angeles right now performing at Disneyland, the NAMM show, the House of Blues and are working with many celebrities including Sheila E and The Black Eyed Peas' foundation ([www.peapodfoundation.org](http://www.peapodfoundation.org)). They will be in New York and New Jersey at the end of this month performing at various colleges and schools in the area. Please see their tour schedule at <http://www.liyanatour.com>.

They are truly an inspiration and a great story to start off the New Year.

To interview members of Liyana  
Inez Hussey, Director of KGVI School in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe  
Lesley Goldwasser *of the PG Family Foundation* (who initially discovered Liyana),  
Brian Rothschild, Executive Director of the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus,  
Participating Celebrities and Special Guests,

or

Attend performances, contact:

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## ABOUT THE BAND

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Liyana members met and began performing together in 2004 at the King George VI School for disabled children in Bulawayo. They are all self-taught musicians who make their own instruments, compose, and perform in five languages. Their message for anyone struggling to rise above imperfect circumstances: *“If we can do this, so can you.”*

In Zimbabwe, Liyana’s mission *“is to show parents that they should give their disabled children the chance to achieve,”* writes Inez Hussey, Director of the King George VI School, who will be lauded for her contributions to music education by Apple Corporation and by the National Association of Music Merchants during the Tour. *“Overseas, Liyana’s message is equally important: Don’t ever underestimate us. We can do it.”*

There are eight members of the Liyana band, fronted by two singers, Prudence and Marvelous, with a magical connection to each other and voices that mesh like butter. Others play marimba, African drums, shakers, and keyboards in songs that fuse cultural and musical genres including gospel, reggae, and traditional Zimbabwean Shona music, among others.

Their fantastic percussive and acoustic slant on Afro fusion was fresh and beguiling.  
Liyana is all the more remarkable given the fact that each member  
was born with impaired physical abilities. Liyana is a band to look out for!

**MUSIC CROSSROADS FESTIVAL 2006**

Liyana performs in Shona and Ndebele, as well as English, Dutch, German, Hebrew and Spanish. The band weaves all these elements into a fresh, bright sound that is all its own—energetic, vibrant and powerful—despite mostly congenital impairments ranging from spina bifida to cerebral palsy to the amputation of a leg as a result of a snake bite. One band member is totally deaf.

In 2006, LIYANA won the Crossroads Africa inter-regional music festival in Mozambique and went on to tour Sweden, Netherlands and Belgium.

Liyana is the subject of a new documentary, *Ithemba*, to be released, worldwide, late in 2009. The band has released a new CD that will be available for sale at selected concert venues on the 2009 USA Tour.

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## ABOUT THE MUSICIANS



**Prudence Mabhena** lost her legs at age 11 and has only modest use of one hand, but she energizes the hall with a voice that is clear, strong, and beautiful. On the faster, hipper numbers, she rocks in her wheelchair and with a smile as beautiful as any you've ever seen, explores the full range and depth of her voice. She enunciates clearly, every word of every song, making it easy for an audience to hear the messages and music that have inspired reviewers around the world to say that Prudence reminds them of recently deceased South African folksinger/advocate, Miriam Makeba.

**Tapiwa Nyengera** sings back-up, plays keyboard and is the front man. He is a passionate and eloquent voice for the contribution the disabled could make to Africa. He has spina bifida.

**Energy Maburutse** is first marimba player and back-up vocalist, and the band's resident jokester. From the Honde Valley near Mozambique, he has Brittle Bone Syndrome.

**Honest Mupatse**, on tenor marimba, hails from Rusape. He has hemophilia.

**Marvelous Mbulo**, sings lead and back up.  
He hails from Chegutu and lives with muscular dystrophy.

**Vusani Vuma**, bass marimba player, is from Bulawayo.  
He has spent much of his life in silence.

**Goodwell Nzou**, plays traditional drums and percussion and sings back-up. He is an orphan from Guruve, bitten by a snake when he was 11, causing his leg to be amputated.

**Farai Mabhande**, an orphan from Bulawayo, who suffers from arthrogryphosis, plays lead keyboard.

**'Our success has earned us respect we never thought possible,  
as many disabled people are treated poorly.**

**Music has brought us joy, given us sense of purpose.**

**We hope our tour will bring people together - across world cultures- to  
experience and share a love for music.'**

**ABOUT THE TOUR**

"Music is the universal language. This is exactly what John envisioned – young people all over the world communicating and coming together through music. Liyana is an inspiration to us all and its members are a testament to the amazing power of music and how it can transform and enrich all of our lives."

**YOKO ONO LENNON**

**OVERVIEW BY VENUE AND DATE**

**BENEFIT  
FOR  
LIYANA  
Featuring  
Superstar  
David Broza**

| DATE/TIME   | VENUE/<br>CAPACITY/<br>DURATION  | THEME                       |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>January 26</b><br><br><b>Concert 7 PM</b><br><br><b>School Visit<br/>2 -4 PM</b> | Congregation<br>Rodeph<br>Sholom | CELEBRATE<br>WORLD<br>MUSIC |
|   | Sanctuary                        |                             |
|   | One 90 minute<br>Concert         | PUBLIC<br>CONCERT           |
|   | Seats 1000                       |                             |

**CONCERT  
FOR  
HARLEM  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS**  
  
Featuring  
*'Invisible  
Sun'* by  
photographer  
Bobby Sager  
&  
David Broza,  
International  
Singer/Song  
writer

| DATE/TIME  | VENUE/<br>CAPACITY/<br>DURATION   | THEME  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>January 27</b><br><br><b>10:30 AM</b><br><b>1:00 PM</b><br><b>3:15 PM</b> | Teachers<br>College<br>Columbia U   | MUSIC AS A<br>UNIVERSAL<br>LANGUAGE              |
|  | Two– 50 minute<br>concerts for<br>500 Harlem-base<br>public school<br>students                        |  |
|  | One 20 minute<br>post-concert<br>Q/A for disabled<br>students that<br>will see the<br>concert online. | 100 SEATS PER<br>CONCET OPEN<br>TO THE<br>PUBLIC |
|  | Seats 1200 total  |  |

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**CONCERT FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS** with premiere of Liyana's new video **DIVERSITY**

| DATE/TIME CONTACT            | VENUE/ CAPACITY/ DURATION                                  | THEME   |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>January 28</b><br>1:20 PM | Riverdale Country Prep School<br><br>One 40 minute concert | One World<br><br><i>We are all very much the same. Let's get together and feel alright.</i> |

**PUBLIC CONCERT** with premiere of Liyana's new video **DIVERSITY**

| DATE/TIME                    | VENUE/ CAPACITY DURATION                             | THEME   |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>January 29</b><br>4:30 PM | Rutgers-Newark<br><br>One Concert – Up to 75 minutes | Traditional Concert<br>Liyana Live<br><br><b>PUBLIC CONCERT</b> |

**EVENTS FOR DISABLED CHILDREN**  
Features student-led press conference

| DATE/TIME  | VENUE/ CAPACITY DURATION   | THEMES         |
|--|--|----------------|
| <b>January 30</b><br><br>10 AM - 2 PM<br><br><b>Residency Program and (adapted) Concerts</b> | PG Chambers School<br><br>Multi Purpose Room<br><br>Numerous Concerts For small Groups Of Kids | Never Give Up! |

**BENEFIT FOR LIYANA**  
  
**SOLD OUT**

| DATE/TIME                        | VENUE/ CAPACITY DURATION  | THEME  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>January 31</b><br><br>3:30 PM | Roxbury Arts Center<br><br>60 Minute Concert<br><br>Reception follows | Traditional Concert<br>Liyana Live<br><br><b>PUBLIC CONCERT SOLD OUT</b> |

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|   | DATE/TIME                                    | VENUE/<br>CAPACITY<br>DURATION                                  | THEME   |
|---|--|---|---|
| <b>BENEFIT<br/>FOR<br/>LIYANA<br/>Featuring<br/>Community<br/>Jam with<br/>Liyana</b> | <b>February<br/>1</b><br><br><i>4 PM til</i> | Madiba<br><br>Community<br>celebration<br>followed by<br>dinner | Good Bye Party<br><br><b>THIS EVENT IS NOT<br/>CONFIRMED.</b> |
|   |  |   | <b>PUBLIC<br/>EVENT</b>                                       |
|   |  |   |   |

|   | DATE/TIME                                    | VENUE/<br>CAPACITY<br>DURATION           | THEME                                    |
|---|--|--|--|
| <b>CONCERT<br/>FOR<br/>NEWARK<br/>PUBLIC<br/>SCHOOLS</b><br><br>Celebrity<br>Guest<br>Pending | <b>February<br/>2</b><br><br><b>12:30 PM</b> | NJPAC<br><br>50 minutes<br><br>Seats 500 | Afro-Fusion Music<br>(Arts-in-Education) |
|   |  |  |  |
|   |  |  |  |

To interview members of the band, their teacher Inez Hussey,  
 Lesley Goldwasser *of the PG Family Foundation* (who initially discovered Liyana),  
 Brian Rothschild, Executive Director of the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus,  
 Participating Celebrities and Special Guest

or

Attend performances, contact:

Laura Johnson

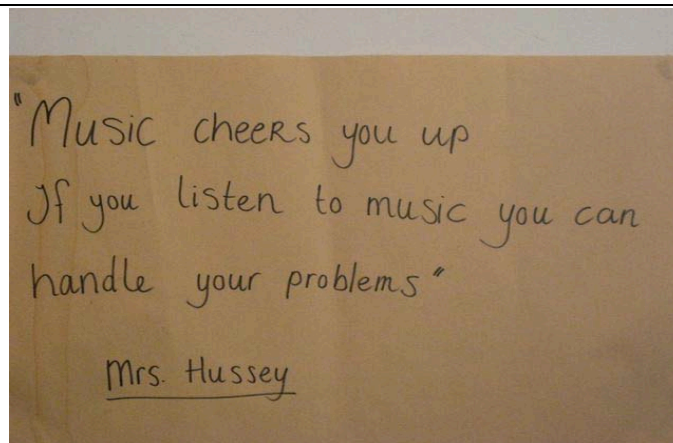
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Last year, I spent four months at home in Zimbabwe. Near the end of the trip, a family friend asked us to accompany her to a local school, "King George VI", attended by students who are physically impaired, but mentally able, to hear the music of a student band. I knew the school well but was unaware, that a group of talented student-musicians had created a band called "Liyana". They were now writing their own brand of world-fusion music. My friend said hearing them, was something I would never forget. *She was right.*

So one afternoon, six of us gathered in a classroom at the KGVI School. A hand written sign taped on the wall with the words "*Music cheers you up. If you listen to music you can handle your problems*". Prudence, the lead singer, led as through a 90 minute concert as Master of Ceremonies. She introduced members of the band and then quickly opened our hearts to a new kind of music that incorporated the three languages of my youth: English, Shona, and Ndbele. Prudence's voice soared up and over the instrumentalists, moving us deeply and taking all of us beyond the difficult reality of their lives, and the lives of all Zimbabweans. For me, Prudence and Liyana became the medium for a musical message greater than any of us.

It was hard to know what to say when they finished singing, except to ask them to play more. After two encores, we thanked them profusely for sharing their musical talents and then asked if there was anything that they needed or wanted. I expected them to ask for a new set of drums or a sound system.

One gentle voice spoke, "*We want to come to America*". With the ice broken, the entire band voiced great enthusiasm for the idea.

The most important thought on my mind when I left them that day was *not* about the world seeing them but about them seeing the world. Then again, I am excited at the idea of a wider audience experiencing their music first-hand, as we did that afternoon in Zimbabwe.

My friend said hearing Liyana, was something I would never forget. She was right.  
For me, Liyana became the medium for a musical message greater than any of us.

Lesley Goldwasser, PG Family Foundation, New York City/September 2008

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*‘I’m not a disabled singer, says Prudence Mabhena. I am a singer who is disabled. I want people to know that disability does not mean inability. I plan to do something amazing with my life.’* While once abandoned by her family, over the past few years she has performed widely, and in 2006, led Liyana to win the International Crossroads competition in Europe. When she is not performing, Prudence teaches music.

### **What does the USA Tour mean to the band, Liyana. And what does it mean to our school KGVI, and to our Country, Zimbabwe?**

***For the band, Liyana,** going to the USA was the ultimate destination. It is where everything happens. So many people have made promises to the band over the years and the fact that this promise was kept is very important. It restores their faith not just in themselves but in other people. They all have personal hopes for the tour but even if their ultimate dreams don’t come true, to be able to say that they toured the States. That is an achievement!*

***For our school, KGVI,** this tour is the only light at the end of our very dark tunnel. . All we can do from day to day is survive. Life is bleak and the idea of our band going to represent us in the USA gives us such hope and encouragement.*

***For our County, Zimbabwe,** I think it is important that we can show people in America that we have not all given up. Life goes on with enthusiasm. We are disabled and we come from one of the poorest countries in the world. But look what we have achieved! What a message we bring.*

**Comments by Inez Hussey, Director of KGVI School, Mentor to Liyana (Fall 2008)**

**Ms. Inez Hussey, Director of KGVI School and Mentor to Liyana, was presented with special awards during the Liyana 2009 USA Tour for her exemplary work in advocating for the value of music education, by the Apple Education Program @ MacWorld, and by the National Association of Music Merchants.**

## Venues and Sponsors

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Liyana was brought to America through a partnership between NY-based PG Family Foundation, and the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus. The USA 2009 Tour has inspired additional support from many donor partners and venues across the county, including those sources listed below.

### **Trade and Corporate Support**

Apple Corporation  
Aeropostale, Inc  
Digital Media Academy  
Disneyland  
Harlem Hospital Center  
Madiba Restaurant  
National Association of Music Merchants

### **Arts and Advocacy Community**

Roxbury Arts Center  
Center for Race and Culture  
Lafayette Inspirational Gospel Ensemble  
Melissa Walker and Jazz House Kids  
John Lennon Educational Tour Bus  
Arts Integration Institute at Towson University  
Center for Arts Education Research at Teachers College

### **Higher Education**

Columbia University  
Rutgers University-Newark  
Stanford University  
Teachers College, Columbia University

### **Major Institutions**

Grammy Museum  
House of Blues  
New Jersey Performing Arts Center

### **Private and Independent Schools**

Riverdale Country School  
Park School of Baltimore  
P.G. Chambers School

### **Faith-based Support**

Congregation Rodeph Shalom  
Riverside Church  
Memorial Baptist Church in Harlem  
Lafayette Presbyterian Church in Fort Greene

### **Individuals and Philanthropic Foundations**

Shelley and David Lasker  
Linda Mirels  
MCJ/Amelior Foundation  
Diane and Joseph Steinberg Foundation  
Lesley Goldwasser and Jonathan Plutzik --- PG Family Foundation  
The Sager Family Traveling Foundation and Roadshow



### **LIYANA TOUR EXECUTIVE PRODUCER**

**The PG Family Foundation (PGFDN)** is a 501-c-3 organization with a special commitment to venture philanthropy, and a mission focused on Education, the Arts, Health, and Human Services. Led by Jonathan Plutzik, retired Vice-Chairman of Credit Suisse First Boston, and Wall Street Executive Lesley Goldwasser, recipient of a 2007 Leadership Award from the National Organization for Women, PGFDN collaborates on projects of critical import to underserved and marginalized communities, domestically and internationally. PGFDN has recently been recognized for its groundbreaking Zara's Center program in Zimbabwe that provides respite care and education to children and families impacted by AIDS. For more information, contact: Deborah Briggs, Executive Director, PG Family Foundation: [dbriggs@pgfdn.com](mailto:dbriggs@pgfdn.com)

### **LIYANA TOUR CO-PRODUCER AND PRESENTER**

**The John Lennon Educational Tour Bus** is a non-profit state-of-the-art mobile Pro Audio and HD video recording facility that provides hands-on experiences for students. The Bus provides tours and workshops at as wide range of venues: for schools, retailers, festivals, on tours with headlining artists, and at major industry conferences. As a 501(c)(3) venture, the Bus is made possible through the generosity of sponsors including Maxell Corporation, Apple, NAMM, Roland, Sony, Godin Guitars, Edirol by Roland, Ableton, Sibelius, Mackie, Digital Media Academy, Crate, Ampeg, Audio-Technica, Apogee, Sonicbids, Digidesign, Aphex Systems, Musician's Friend, Neutrik, Glyph Technologies, Noise Industries, Disc Makers, Smart Technologies, Bogen Imaging, IK Multimedia, McDSP, Music Player Network, Propellerhead, Abaltat, OurStage, Gretsch Drums and Boss. The John Lennon Educational Tour Bus is made possible by an agreement with Yoko Ono Lennon. For more information, contact: Brian Rothschild, Executive Director: [brian@jlsc.com](mailto:brian@jlsc.com)

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