

My apology to Hugh Masekela: He and Larry Willis gave the performance of a lifetime at the Dakota

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.



I take great pride in being a journalist.

I recognize the true honor bestowed upon me. I strive every day to be truthful, thoughtful and accurate and maintain the public's trust. It's a weighty job. Yes, in the past I have erred. I've left off a period at the end of a sentence here or there. I have missed a word that should have been capitalized – forgot to add an apostrophe ... nothing major, but errors nonetheless. It happens with every writer. You beat yourself up over it, maybe say a foul word (or few), but you move on.

In all my years as a journalist, I've never had to write a retraction – until now. Hugh Masekela, I owe you an apology.

I recently interviewed jazz great, Hugh Masekela over the telephone. Prior to the interview, I had very (I mean *very*) little knowledge of this great treasure. I was given the assignment to do an advance write-up of his Dakota Jazz Club performance, so I did some cursory research (Google, YouTube) and thought, OK, I have everything I need to conduct the interview.

I mean I was impressed with his 1968 Grammy for Best Contemporary Pop Performance – Instrumental for the song, "Grazin' in the Grass." I faintly remember hearing it a time or two. I remember liking it. I read of his political activities to end apartheid in his native South Africa. Again, I was impressed with his work, but I'll be honest; I wasn't seeing much there story-wise other than another old timer coming to town to play some stale, dull version of jazz that I was sure would have me board to tears.

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