



JUAKALI DRUMMERS



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African Musical Culture

African musical culture, in all its diversified regional forms, is a corpus of ancient traditions deep-rooted in a common element: rhythm.

In Africa, the practice of music has never been disjoined from its social role and its expressive meaning. Through music, legends are handed down, events are told, controversies are settled. Wherever African music migrated, it always produced new sprouts influencing nowadays great parts of the world (blues, jazz, reggae, samba, rap, etc.).

Recycling is part of African culture. People use most parts of an animal or of a plant to feed, to clothe, to hunt, to farm, as well as to adorn the body, to play music, to perform rites.

Traditional musical instruments are built with materials of common use in rural societies, be they sedentary or nomadic, hunters or breeders: wood, skins, guts, bones, bamboo, pumpkins, seeds and, in the more recent centuries, iron and other metals.

The aggressive penetration of new patterns of social and economic growth have produced degradation and misery in urban areas without the solidarity previously widespread in traditional society.

Music has a liberating and redeeming power. To the Nairobi street children, it may represent freedom from a life that they never chose.

Child in need project

The Children in Need Project is an AMREF pilot project which began in 1998 in the Dagoretti slums of Nairobi, Kenya, where around 130.000 street children live in extreme poverty. The project aims at reintegrating children into social life. Many are orphans due to AIDS, and are subject to hunger, diseases, violence, prostitution, drugs.

The Dagoretti Centre is headed by John Muiruri, a social worker who has been committed to rehabilitating street children for over twenty years. The activities in the Centre vary from medical assistance to providing food, from personal and family counselling to basic education, from the development of micro-credit projects to legal assistance and artistic/educational activities such as theatre, music, dance.



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The musical laboratory



In 2005, Fondation Dulcimer pour la Musique, committed to the promotion of innovative forms of musical education, and AMREF have started the present project for a musical laboratory.

Through music, the laboratory aims at attracting and motivating the kids, both in their individuality and as members of a community. It is a permanent music program inside the broader educational project of AMREF.

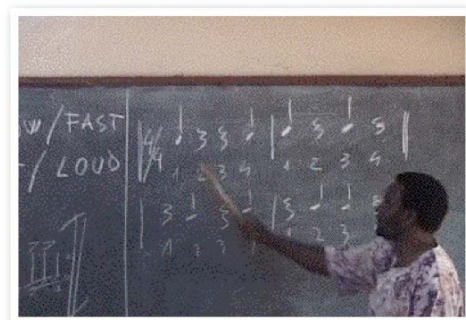
The laboratory is headed by musician/percussionist Giovanni Lo Cascio and by trained local social workers. The activities extend throughout the year and involve rhythm, singing, research on timbre and all other basic elements of music.

Most of the instruments used are inspired by the African tradition and are made of recycled materials.

The use of waste materials carries an ecological and functional value. A barrel can be drum, a pipe can be a flute and therefore are free from specific cultural references.

The rhythm played is of African origin but re-interpreted to suit the new instruments. All songs are created ad hoc and are inspired by African tradition.

The program was started in July 2005 based on a sequence of four workshops per year, headed by the project leader. Weekly training activities are carried out by local social workers. The workshops, that last two/three weeks each, have taken place with the participation of various Italian and Kenyan artists (musicians, singers, artisans, stage designers, actors). Nowadays the laboratory involve local teachers of traditional music and is linked to the Nairobi artistic scene.



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Juakali Drummers

Juakali Drummers is a group of 20 boys and girls of the Kawangware slums in Nairobi.

All musical instruments of the Juakali Drummers are home-made with waste or poor material and played with specific techniques developed in the workshops.

Juakali Drummers is today a street orchestra which includes membranophones, idiophones, chordophones and aerophones. It has started performing in Nairobi, both in the slums (Korogocho, Kawangware, Kibera) and in institutional contexts (United Nations, Embassies) and during cultural events.

The repertoire is original and all the lyrics are written in Swahili or Sheng (the local slang based on African and English words).

Through this musical experience the group is becoming conscious of its own value, offering an inspirational model for other kids who still live in the streets.

In 2008 a new group started, the Junior Juakali Drummers Group, made up of 23 boys and girls from 5 to 12 years old who are trained by some members of the Senior Juakali Drummers Group, under the supervision of the project leader.

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The Juakali Drummers also participated in the Exchange Program with Projeto Axé, promoted and financed by Fondation Alta Mane. Projeto Axé is a pedagogical project based on Art-education, created in 1990 in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. It aims at the social reintegration of the abandoned children of the favelas. The young members of the two projects performed together in Kenya and Brazil sharing their common African roots.

The name Juakali

Juakali, the name chosen by the children for the group, is a Swahili word that means “burning sun”. It also means hard work and it is the name of the largest market of recycled materials in Nairobi.

In this market, waste produced in the urban area are reinvented by crafty artisans who produce lamps, trunks, pots, shoes and other objects of daily use. The price of these products is low but the crowd is large. Customers are the poor and the very poor who live in the Nairobi slums.

The music show

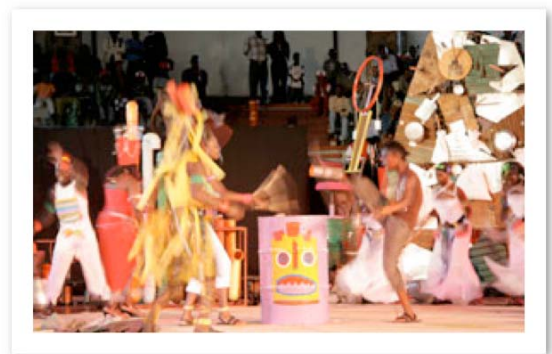
The show **“Ngoma Mtaani”**, that in Swahili means “Rhythm from the slum” debuted at “Bomas of Kenya” in August 2008. After many replicas in Kenya, the show will premier in Perugia at the Umbria Jazz Festival 2009. The participation of the Juakali Drummers at Umbria Jazz as “Artists in residence” is supported by Fondation Alta Mane.

“Ngoma Mtaani” is the accomplishment of an educational training which lasted three years. The performance brings on stage the extraordinary global rhythm of the group, the songs, the dance, the home made instruments. The show tells the life, the problems and the dreams of a street child. The discovery of music allows him to see the world with different eyes.

The rhythm is its pulsing heart. The lyrics make people reflect, the music invites to dance, the instruments demonstrate that everything can be played.

In the show, children play a great variety of home-made instruments: tuned tubes, tight strings, plastic and metal barrels, pipes, whistling corrugated, bells, etc.

The music show addresses all abandoned children in the world, those who do not know of this humiliated childhood but are willing to understand, all the children who never have to live with such harsh realities but need to grow with a deeper sense of solidarity.



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Photographic album



patrick

Evans

Nico

Albert

Joseph

Michael

Ruth

Roselynn

Elisabeth

Joshua

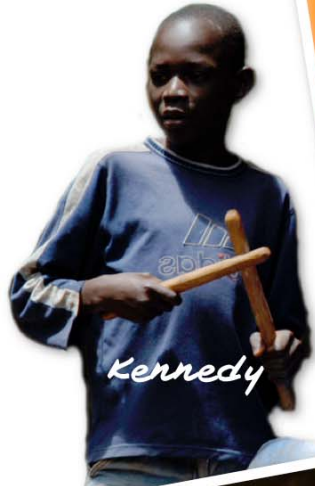
JUAKALI DRUMMERS



Martin



Peter



Kennedy



Magdalene



Freshah Elisabeth Baryl



Joel



Paul Taphet Giovanni Samuel Isabel



Eunice

JUAKALI DRUMMERS

Child in Need Project

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DULCIMER Fondation pour la Musique

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Fondation ALTA MANE

www.altamane.org

PHOTOGRAPHS

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GRAPHICS

Studio Pinguino
www.studiopinguino.it

Rome, April 2009

Juakali Drummers Project

Project Leader

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Social Workers - AMREF

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Isabel Gitu
Paul Njeroge

Artists - Collaborators

Gabriella Aiello
Sergio Chiesura
Umberto Vitiello
Cristina Aubry
Mario Crispi
Carmen Giardina
Sandro Scarmiglia
Margherita Marchionni

Local Artists - Friends of the Project

Ayub Ogada
Eric Wainaina

Juakali Drummers

Joshua Shitilu
Kennedy Opiyo
Peter Njeru
Baryl Omondi
Patrick Njiru
Ruth Atieno
Joshua Mureithi
Elisabeth Nyawere
Magdalene Wambui
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