

Dulcimer
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AMREF
Italia
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JUAKALI DRUMMERS



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Introduction

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 kids, it may represent freedom from a life that they never chose.

Children in need program

The Children in Need Program is an AMREF pilot project which began in 1998 in the Dagoretti slums of Nairobi, Kenya, where around 130.000 street kids 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 kids 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.

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.



JUAKALI DRUMMERS

The 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-interpeted 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. To date, four workshops have taken place with the participation of foreign musicians.





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 and played with specific techniques developed in the workshops.

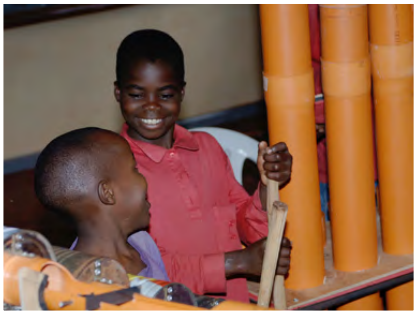
Juakali Drummers is today a street orchestra which includes membranophones, idiophones, chordophones and aerophones. It has started performing in Nairobi, both in the slums and in institutional contexts.

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.

JUAKALI DRUMMERS

The name Juakali



Juakali, the name chosen by the kids 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 represents the final effort of the music educational program. The performance will bring on stage the extraordinary global rhythm of the group, the songs, the dance, the home made instruments. The debut is foreseen in December 2007 with shows in Kenya and in Italy; co-operation with schools in educational activities is also foreseen.

The music show is presently at a developmental stage. It will tell the life, troubles and dreams of a street kid. The discovery of music allows him to see the world with different eyes.

The rhythm will be its pulsing heart. The lyrics will make people reflect, the music will lead them to dancing, the instruments will show that everything can be played.

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

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

JUAKALI DRUMMERS

Photographic album



JUAKALI DRUMMERS



JUAKALI DRUMMERS

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Rome, June 2006

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