



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2003**

### **Introduction**

The Annual Report 2003 of the Sarakasi Trust provides an account of the activities and results achieved by the Trust in the second year of its operation, gives an overview of its financial situation as well as an outlook at future activities. The second operational year of the trust can best be characterized by terms as expansion, institutionalization and professionalisation with an explosion of activities, especially in areas as international cultural exchange and cultural awareness.

### **Objectives**

Sarakasi means acrobatics/circus in Kiswahili. Sarakasi Trust was formally established in December 2001 to respond to the need for further development and promotion of culture and art (in particular, but not exclusively, acrobatics, dance and music) in East Africa and beyond and, in this way, further the social and cultural development of society.

The objectives of the Sarakasi Trust are:

- to promote public awareness, appreciation and access to acrobatics, music and dance forms;
- to develop contemporary choreographic creation and support the presentation and diffusion of the widest variety of performance work;
- to support training, research and innovation in acrobatics, music, dance, physical theater and other forms of cultural expression and performing arts;
- to foster cultural exchange and cross disciplinary collaboration in the arts; and
- to support the infrastructures for the development of acrobatics, traditional and contemporary music, dance, new performances, etc.

### **Historical Development and Social Context**

Sarakasi originates from the Kenyan acrobatics and dance tradition. Music, dance and acrobatics have been rooted in the (East) African society; drums and various different dances traditionally played a major role in the cultural heritage of the people. Various groups of performers have over the years developed unique skills and a special style creating the fundamentals and origins of Sarakasi. Sarakasi provides a platform for development of the performing and visual arts. It supports performers and locally available talent in the widest sense by facilitating training and further development of related skills. Sarakasi represents performers on matters of common interest and brings together the performers as a self help group to boost their interests and to provide a mechanism for fair and sustainable relations between individual performers, the various groups and the performance opportunities.



Whereas Africa is often associated with negative impressions related to human suffering caused by armed conflicts, natural disasters, health and environmental problems, mismanagement and corruption; Sarakasi promotes the different side of the African continent and people: the beautiful, vibrant, energetic, talented and inspiring men, women and children and culture and the arts as an expression of live, hope and creativity. Sarakasi promotes acrobatics, music, dance, theater, etc. as a mechanism to achieve a better future through hard work, dedication and perseverance. Sarakasi's innovative approach further stimulates discussions on the arts, culture and development issues.

### **Scope of Activities**

Sarakasi is networked with numerous initiatives that aim to support positive developments among the deprived members of society, esp. street-children rehabilitation work. Sarakasi actively supports performers to take their social responsibility within their own society. To that effect, Sarakasi promotes establishment and formation of (especially female) groups of acrobats, dancers, musicians etc. (some consisting of ex hard core street-children from Nairobi) and trained by associated groups or individual performers. Sarakasi supports acrobatics, juggling, music, drum and dance training at various locations and at numerous (street-children) homes in Nairobi.

Sarakasi actively searches for local talent that shows interest and capabilities for further development and training in related arts. Sarakasi promotes further development of the art of acrobatics, dance, music, visual arts and physical theater by inviting trainers and experts from other parts of the world to visit (East) Africa and provide education and training in these arts. Furthermore, Sarakasi provides opportunities for performers for training and skills development elsewhere.

Various acrobats, music and dance groups as well as visual artist from (East) Africa associated with Sarakasi can be seen at the major podiums in (East) Africa, while many have performed with the support of the Sarakasi Trust, in Asia, Europe and the USA. Through performances these artists provide in their livelihoods and positively promote the African continent and its people. Especially shows and performances outside (East) Africa add to North-South and South-South promotion, respect and understanding for others, and widen the scope and support for a dialogue among civilizations, capacity building within local communities, support for local initiatives and social and cultural development of society. Sarakasi has close relations with Festival Mundial in The Netherlands and partners in Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Russia, UK, Italy, The Netherlands and USA. Impresarios, (world music) festivals and (contemporary) circuses in the UK, China, Canada, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy and France have linked up with Sarakasi for active collaboration.



In addition to the increasing number of international tours and cultural exchanges, Sarakasi has developed the first (East) African web-site based database providing information to national and international podiums, impresario's and the general public on (East) African performers in the arts. Sarakasi has also established a free of charge, non-commercial, non for-profit and voluntary impresario facility for performers. Sarakasi is further closely associated with the development of the new center for performing and visual arts (The Godown) in the Nairobi Industrial Area and has established its offices at the Godown from where it provides free office space, rehearsal and performances space and related equipment to performers.

### **Specific Activities and Achievements in 2003**

Sarakasi Trust has become a household name in Kenya associated with international cultural exchange programmes. In 2003, over 200 Kenyan performers benefited from these exchanges. The trust enabled musicians, dancers, drummers, acrobats, visual artists, actors, filmmakers, journalists and other stakeholders in the area of culture and art to travel overseas to gain much needed international exposure and, of course, to enhance their economic position, where possible. A full list can be found on our website ([www.sarakasi.org](http://www.sarakasi.org)). Highlights include: participation of Mercy Myra and support act in Festival Les Nuits Atypique de Koudougou in Burkina Faso; various acrobat groups in the USA, Norway, Italy, The Netherlands, UK, Russia etc.; a large Kenyan presence at Festival Mundial in The Netherlands; Poxi Presha and Taffi dancers to Ziff, the international festival of the Dhow countries in Zanzibar; and, two large groups of dancers, musicians and acrobats in the UK (3 and 6 months).

The year started with Salto Jamboree acrobats travelling to the Golden Circus in Rome, Italy. The group performed their unique combination of acrobatics and contemporary dance and realized their potential as a most promising entertainment group.

From March 2003 various Kenyan acrobat groups (Mapapa Acrobats, Mombasa Acrobatic Group, Black Jambo, Mambo Africa) traveled to the USA for contracts with World Star International. Groups from Mombasa and Nairobi performed at Disney Land, Disney World, Bushgardens, Six Flags, San Diego Zoo etc. and established an excellent reputation for Kenyan performers in the USA. Also in March 2003, Circus Renz from The Netherlands invited the Black Warrior Acrobats to tour with them for 10 months. The group has since landed a follow up contract for a year with Circus Knie from Germany.

The same month, Sarakasi spearheaded the arrangements and organization of the Maboombboom Festival, a cultural festival that involved the participation of most cultural entities and stakeholders in Nairobi, including the film industry, the writer's fraternity, modeling and fashion designers, visual artists, the music industry, physical theatre and the Government of Kenya (Department of Culture). Sarakasi



organized three major events: a three stages show at the Carnivore grounds, a VIP dinner show at the Intercontinental Hotel and the finale of the festival with a free concert for thirty five thousand Kenyans at Uhuru Park. Over one hundred and fifty Kenyan groups/acts/performers/artists comprising of acrobats, musicians, drummers and dancers performed at the Sarakasi events, including, courtesy of Mundial Productions, Sena from Morocco/The Netherlands. The success of the Maboomboom festival is evidenced by the stakeholders' decision to make the Maboomboom Festival an annual event.

Within the creative boundaries of Sarakasi, the Africans Show was created: a twenty eight-persons group comprising of acrobats, dancers and drummers from Mighty Jambo, Kenge Kenge Orutu Systems, Jungle Cats, Simba Zambezi and individual drummers. The team created two excellent shows and were honored by the Kenyan government who appointed them Kenyan flag bearers for their tour to the UK (courtesy Bourne Leisure/Butlins, U.K and AG Studios, Russia) from May to November 2003. At the end of their tour, Simba Zambezi Acrobats were invited to perform at the Saratov Circus Festival in Russia. The group brought home the trophy for the most entertaining performance at the Festival.

The cooperation between Sarakasi Trust and Mundial Productions from The Netherlands led to a large delegation from Kenya to Festival Mundial, sponsored by Ford Foundation and KLM East Africa: Cheche Group, Kikwetu, Eric Wainaina, Gidi Gidi Maji Maji, Mercy Myra, Harry Kimani, K-South, Imani Boys Acrobats, Salto Jamboree Acrobats; several visual artist and other Kenyan stakeholders in the area of culture including journalists, producers, a sound engineer and government officials (including the Hon. Minister of Culture). Mercy Myra, K-South and Harry Kimani participated in a special programme with the Rock Academy in Tilburg which resulted in a joint performance with local students at the closing weekend of the festival. Mercy Myra and K-South had a video clip made, courtesy of Sarakasi Trust and Mundial Productions. Mundial Productions also co-produced a CD for Mercy. The sensational performances of the Kenyan groups and clear appreciation from large audiences highlighted the importance of international exposure for Kenyan talent.

Further cooperation with Mundial Productions resulted in the invitation for Mercy Myra to record a track and make a video with the Dutch pop group The Poema's in September 2003. All proceeds of this project that was co-funded by MEMISA benefited Hiv/AIDS projects in Kenya. Mercy traveled to the Netherlands again in November for five concerts to accompany the launch of the CD and the project in the Netherlands.

In October, the famous Dutch pop band Blof visited Kenya for a concert to highlight the plight for clean water as part of a campaign for Plan International. Sarakasi Trust and Plan Kenya organized the local tour, which included a concert in Nairobi for the Dutch community and a (first ever!) concert for fifteen thousand people in Embu. Blof performed and recorded together with local Kenyan artist Harry Kimani,



who is to perform with Blof in The Netherlands in 2004 and will appear on their new CD. Sarakasi added a Kenyan touch to the Embu concert by inviting 12 Kenyan acts to join the show (Mighty King Kong, Roughtone, Mr. Googs and Vinnie Banton and Nameless, among others).

In November 2003, the Trust's continued collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute, the Arcipelago Circo Teatro Group and Pantakin from Venice, Italy and with additional sponsoring from the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Nairobi and the European Commission resulted in the creation of a modern circus show called Creatures. In Creatures, an Italian clown teams up with acrobats from the Mombasa Gymnastic Acrobats, musicians from Twinroots and singer Achieng Abura for an incredible innovative show which was credited as the best show ever produced or seen in Kenya and which clearly highlighted the local available talent. The show will tour seven countries in Europe in 2004 with a special premiere at the Biennale in Venice, Italy.

The rapid growth of the activities under the Trust called for institutional strengthening and further professionalization. A grant from the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Nairobi in November 2003 as well as funding from Stichting Doen from The Netherlands enabled the Trust to strengthen its institutional set-up and provided funding for office (including furniture) and rehearsal space at the new Godown Art Center. From that date on, Sarakasi has rented rehearsal space at the Godown in order to provide performers free rehearsal space as well as a chance to meet and practice together so they can learn from each-other in such a way as to enhance their performing abilities. To provide just one example: Sarakasi invited Kilimanjaro Acrobats from Mombasa to teach their Nairobi colleagues the Pagan (Chinese pole), a technique up to then in Kenya only seen at the coast.

In close cooperation with the Kenyan government and with funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Nairobi, Sarakasi Trust closed the year 2003 with three, free music, dance and acrobat concerts in three major Kenyan cities as part of a Government venture to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Kenya's Independence. Showcasing more than 200 artists from the three cities on various stages at an evening concert in Nairobi, at the public beach in Mombasa and at Kisumu sports grounds, the festivals attracted huge crowds (over 135,000 people visited the concerts) and strengthened our cooperation with the artists and the Government.

As a continuation from 2002 and with support from the Trust and many well-wishers, including MOV and Lambertusschool Someren, Stichting Parkingboyz Nairobi, Bouwploeg Mundial among others, associated groups with Sarakasi Trust continued training and educational projects for street-children in Kenya. The success of the training-programmes is best evidenced by the acrobat group Imani Boys (from the Imani Streetchildren Rehabilitation Agency) who traveled to The Netherlands to take part in the prestigious Festival Mundial 2003. These ex hard core street children performed at various school functions



in The Netherlands and generated much publicity for the plight of the street children.

Although the exchange programmes to the UK and The Netherlands were a great success, the Trust encountered an unexpected problem when four performers from two different groups decided to stay behind in The Netherlands and UK. Efforts to establish the whereabouts of these runaways have been unsuccessful, so far. This prompted the Trust to suspend cooperation with these groups from which performers did not return to Kenya. In addition, the Trust decided to intensify the obligatory workshops for those who travel overseas on a cultural exchange ticket, in particular with regards to issues associated with illegal immigration and related matters. It further decided to almost fully withhold the income performers earn overseas until they return to the country. Discussions are still ongoing with government officials about additional measures to minimize the chances of a repeat.

The main remedy against the 'disappearing performers issue' is of course the development of a healthy performers/entertainers industry in (East) Africa in which performers feel that the recognition they deserve is also enabling them to have the necessary economic means and ability to dedicate ample time to their art. In that context, it is worth mentioning that when clear economic gains for performers could be realized through international contracts, the trust has started to withhold a five percent fee to offset overhead costs for the Trust. In this way, the Trust implements a major issue for donors and sponsors of the Trust, who pursue the enhancement of the Trust's own financial situation and independence through a partial cost recovery system.

A rather disappointing issue for the Trust in 2003 has been the delay of a shipment of training materials donated to Sarakasi Trust by different organizations and individuals from The Netherlands. The two containers with music and acrobatic training materials have been stuck in a warehouse in Mombasa, awaiting the necessary storage waivers by the government of Kenya.

In 2003, the Trust made a big step ahead in the implementation of its promotional strategy and outreach to local and international donors, sponsors, partners and other stakeholders. With the support of Oostrom Productions, Cordaid, Mundial Productions, BNN, The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Nairobi and Ford Foundation three public relation and information tools of excellent quality have been developed. An audio CD, to be used only for promotional purposes, with tracks of a selection of Kenyan music will be released shortly in combination with a CD-ROM with relevant information about Sarakasi Trust. Secondly, a fifteen minutes documentary about the Trust has already been aired and has proven to be a very powerful communication tool for the Trust. Finally, the establishment of a state of the art web-site has also contributed greatly to the remarkable fast rise of the Trust. The Sarakasi website has been uploaded with a new design and an innovative website management program, enabling authorized staff to work on line to improve the website content on a day to day basis. Earlier on in 2003, Sarakasi Trust featured in



documentaries on Nairobi from Discovery Channel and BNN. Sarakasi had its share of attention in the local and international written media, including an article in Sokoni Magazine that carried the story on the success of the Trust in its August edition.

### Management Structure

The Board of the Sarakasi Trust consists of 7 trustees who are all deeply embedded in (East) African society and its social and cultural life. The Trustees manage the Trust on a voluntary, non-commercial and free of charge basis. The Board of Trustees met seven times in 2002. The Board will further review expansion of its membership in early 2004 to strengthen its legal capacity. It is envisaged that a revision of the present legal framework of the Trust may be required to deal with the increased responsibilities that Sarakasi has been entrusted with.

A project support officer was recruited in 2002 to support the day-to-day activities of the Trust. Mid 2003, a full time finance and administrative officer was engaged to deal with the increasing financial responsibilities. Late 2003, the Sarakasi team was further complemented by a full time artist liaison and event coordination officer. Early 2004, a full time managerial position will be created to deal with the need for further professionalisation of the Trust.

### Finances

In 2003, Sarakasi Trust generated an income of **US \$ 463,426.00** through donations, grants and for services from Ford Foundation, Stichting DOEN, Royal Netherlands Embassy Nairobi, Cordaid (Oxfam), Mundial Productions, The Italian Institute of Culture, Butlins and Bourne Leisure and others (see [www.sarakasi.org](http://www.sarakasi.org) for full list). The funds were disbursed as summarized below:

<b>Income (for activities in 2003 - 2006)</b>	<b>US \$ 463,426</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>	
• Personnel/Project Management Component	US \$ 22,310
• (International) Cultural Exchanges/Capacity Building/Training/Skills Development	US \$ 340,577
• Premises and Equipment Component	US \$ 37,345
• Communication and Promotion Component	US \$ 9,715
• Miscellaneous Component	US \$ 7,995
<b>Total</b>	<b>US \$ 417,942</b>

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Consequently, the total balance in the Sarakasi Accounts at 31 December 2003 was **US \$ 98,631** being US \$ 45,484 balance for the year 2003 plus US \$ 53,147 bank balance brought forward from year 2002. The total balance is supported by the following 3 components:

• Cash at Bank as at 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2003	US \$	100,692
• Debtors	US \$	14,698
• Creditors	US \$	(16,759)
<b>Total</b>	<b>US \$</b>	<b>98,631</b>

### **A Look at the Future**

In 2003, Sarakasi Trust concentrated much of its activities on international cultural exchanges. Now that the Trust has established access to rehearsal (and office) space at the Godown, Sarakasi is planning to invite more local and international trainers to East Africa to provide training in all related arts. Contacts have already been established with the National French Circus School, the Shanghai Circus School, Russian and Italian modern circus trainers, as well as with a professor in film art and techniques, two choreographers to train stage performance and choreography, a sports teacher to provide workshops in minimising sports injuries, a clown to teach clowning techniques and street theatre, an Indian dance teacher and various musicians to give workshops in writing music and playing local instruments, among others.

Sarakasi will continue emphasising the importance of international cultural exchange programmes. In co-operation with Mundial Productions and others, several performers will participate in exchange programmes, while counterparts from overseas will be invited to Kenya to provide opportunities for exposure and facilitate learning from each other's culture.

The unavailability or expensive access for musicians to equipment and audio-visual studio capacity is of concern and Sarakasi would like to assist in strengthening the locally available capacity for audio-visual recording. The same applies for the availability to affordable stages, sound and light systems. Sarakasi will work towards economically affordable access for all musicians to a basic but quality infrastructure. The Trust intends to establish its own Sarakasi Fair Trade music label enabling local talent to record their artistic expressions in a qualitative and financially acceptable and viable way. To that extend Sarakasi, assisted by Mundial Productions, will venture into the world of distribution of music, copy-rights, contract rights, etc.

Sarakasi intends to solidify its excellent existing relationships with partners in Kenya and



overseas. A strategic agreement will be developed with Mundial Productions. Maboomboom will bring about further co-operation with and among Kenyan stakeholders. Extended co-operation with ZIFF in Zanzibar, the Arcipelago Circo Teatro Group, Pantakin and the Italian Cultural Institute, Butlins and all our other partners mentioned in this annual report is a priority. There are new and promising contacts with the Canadian Cirque du Soleil and Vietnam to name just a few that warrant increased attention. In 2004, Sarakasi will also venture into Uganda and Tanzania, where our co-operation and involvement has been requested.

The relationship with donors, sponsors and partners is very important for the Trust. Further professionalisation in project implementation as well as fundraising will be required. In that regard, a general manager is expected to be on board early 2004. It will further be necessary to train the existing Sarakasi staff in computer technology, management etc. to cope with the demands of the fast growing Trust.

Sarakasi will continue working with street-children, children living under difficult circumstances and the homes in providing training in acrobatics, dancing and drumming, in that way offering the children hope and opportunities for a better future. Sarakasi intends to bring the music to the children by inviting more musicians to conduct workshops in, for instance, rapping, singing and use of instruments. To that extend, Sarakasi intends to expand its contacts with the (street-)children homes to reach out to even more children.

However, all this will not be possible to realise without new and additional financial resources. We hope it will be possible to strengthen institutional relationships with various donors and in that way generate indeed the much desired additional funding for the activities in 2004 and beyond.

Thank you all for your support to the Trust in 2003 and we are looking forward to our continued and strengthened collaboration in 2004.

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