



ANNUAL REPORT 2006

Foreword

The year 2006 saw the income of the Trust jump over US \$ 1 million. A substantive part of that amount can be contributed to the purchase of our own building: the Shan Cinema and Shan House Complex on Ngara Road, renamed the Sarakasi Dome and Sarakasi Base.

A special word of appreciation is most appropriate to thank the donors that contributed substantially, enabling the Trust to purchase its own home: The Royal Netherlands Embassy in Nairobi and John Mulder and Dick van Zuylen from Matching Mole (Mojo Concerts).

Funds from DOEN and Ford Foundation will be used to start, modestly, with the most needed renovations. Hopefully in 2007 additional funding will be realized to complete the renovation of the complex, providing all Sarakasi associates with training space, rehearsal space, office space, meeting space, radio station space, etc...: a home for the arts and culture in Nairobi.

2007 will also be the year in which we hope to establish our Ghetto Radio Station as a community radio station and possibly in a joint venture with Kenya's National Broadcaster: the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation. 2007 is also the year for the Sawa Sawa Festival, 2 days of music for all Kenyans, free of charge, at the Nairobi Arboretum and at Kasarani Stadium. 2007 will also be the year to further strengthen the legal and managerial framework of Sarakasi Trust, to enable the Trust to facilitate opportunities in the area of culture for development even more comprehensively and better.

A word of thanks also to the Trustees and the staff of the Trust; without your dedication and hard work, Sarakasi Trust would have never been able to realize the enormous growth it has experienced over the last 5 years, nor its significance within the Kenyan cultural scene and beyond.

Rudy van Dijck,
Chairman of the Trust

Artistes yearn for a creative space within which to perfect their art and a platform upon which they can express and showcase their skill. In Kenya such spaces and platforms weren't always easily accessible and particularly to the youth in low income neighborhoods. At least not until Sarakasi Trust's inception in 2001.

In a country where unemployment levels were soaring and access to basic education and its accompanying advantages was becoming harder for the poor, alternative methods of income generation were required. Sarakasi recognized this and followed through with the thought that one alternative was to be found in the performing arts.

The talent was already there and the only thing missing was the structure within which it could be nurtured; systems through which raw talent could be transformed into globally acceptable and eventually acclaimed cultural products.

Sarakasi Trust with the support of The Ford Foundation, the Netherlands Embassy in Nairobi, Stichting Doen and others provided this opportunity through its creative space and training at the Godown Arts Centre. Now jugglers, dancers, drummers, acrobats and others had a custom made practice space that they could access easily and at no cost. But their needs went beyond space; how were they to get to the practice venue? What were they to do for equipment? How could they support themselves in the long run?

The question of space answered, the Trust set out to provide the performers with more than basic skill sets. Sarakasi gave the artistes a transport stipend - to be able to make it to the training facility - and access to professional equipment and performance kits. Sarakasi also facilitated life skills workshops and social awareness programmes that allowed the artistes to be increasingly aware and involved with their communities.

Correspondence Address: Sarakasi Trust, P.O. Box 33339, 00600 Ngara, Nairobi, Kenya.

Office and Rehearsal Space Address: The Godown Arts-Center, Dunga Road, Nairobi, Kenya.

Tel/Fax: +254-20-559757 or +254-20-555894. Mobile: +254-722-811926 or +25-734-811926

E-mail: marion@sarakasi.co.ke ; Web-site: www.sarakasi.org



Finally Sarakasi connected them with international culture practitioners; exchange programmes through which they could raise their standards and enhance their repertoires. But most importantly, Sarakasi gave them the ultimate means of turning culture and the performing arts into a livelihood: opportunities and work contracts; paid concerts, in Kenya and abroad.

Training, equipment and exposure to global audiences and standards brought with it professionalism. Suddenly what had been touted as an alternative became the mainstream because Sarakasi as a nurturer of talent and the individuals it had supported were easily gaining international acclaim. With 27 training centres situated right in the heart of Nairobi's neighbourhoods, Sarakasi was paving the way for a new kind of role model: the performing artiste.

As the number of centres continues to grow, more and more youngsters are finding neighbours, friends and relatives who have made it in life through the performing arts and culture to look up to. With each passing year, with every new programme, Sarakasi Trust is not only nurturing dreams, it is turning them into reality.

Our Training and Capacity Building Programme

As we worked to achieve our goals of empowering young people through the performing arts, we set up a programme that would allow beginners, enthusiasts and professionals to access our training and capacity building initiatives.

The success of our programme became dependent on: the encouragement and development of indigenous and original performance and on ensuring equal opportunities are availed to all our artistes regardless of sex, religion or economic background. The Trust makes every effort towards enhancing the programme's sustainability by encouraging those who pass through it to be part of its future intellectual, physical, artistic and financial development.

Because the needs and abilities of our artistes were as varied as their levels of proficiency, we organised them within four levels.

LEVEL ONE

This is the basic entry level for those joining Sarakasi through our outreach programmes in the neighbourhoods. Our trainers use informal training spaces to create an interest in the performing arts. The level of success they have achieved is seen by the increasing number of youthful enthusiasts who come to these presentations and express an interest in being part of our activities and possibly being turned into performers.

At this point, no auditions are necessary and all those willing to attend are encouraged to. It is at these informal venues that our Level Four trainers, Kenyan and international cultural and performing arts practitioners, guest speakers and trainers take the beginners through a series of practical workshops, demonstrations and lectures.

Beyond the hands-on assistance they receive, the beginners are also advised on the performance business and introduced to health and social education.

Within this period, Sarakasi Trust conducts regular reviews on each individual's performance and selects those who are proficient enough to join the second level of our training and capacity building programme. The movement from level one to level two can take anything from one year to four depending on an individual's talent and ability.

LEVEL TWO

This is the intermediate level to which an approximate number of 200 artistes are selected. These artistes form the core group of trainees hosted at our formal rehearsal space at the Godown Arts Centre where they continue with the development of their practical and personal skills under the guidance of our Level Four trainers, Kenyan and international lecturers and guest speakers.

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At this level, the trainees are encouraged to learn more about the performing arts both in its practice and theory locally and abroad. They are exposed to a variety of arts and experiences and introduced to interdisciplinary forms.

As a majority of them come from low income families and or are still in school, Sarakasi Trust commits to offering them reasonable financial support that will allow them attend practice sessions on a regular basis. It is at this point also that the artistes are encouraged to team up with other members of the training programme to form performance groups.

LEVEL THREE

The intense and tailored training at Level Two serves to transform the artiste into an arts practitioner capable of being a functional member of a professional group or a skilled solo performer.

These are the individuals who form Level Three - Advanced Performers - in our training and capacity development programme. Sarakasi Trust offers these practitioners training workshops aimed at boosting their professional standing and giving them skills to navigate the business end of the performance industry.

Most importantly, at this level the Trust acts as a not for profit impresario and artist manager. Sarakasi sources and facilitates employment contracts for these artistes from clients within Kenya and abroad. The Level Three artistes also continue to use the facilities at Sarakasi as both a staging area and rehearsal base for their shows.

LEVEL FOUR

This is the elite level to which a small group of artistes are selected. These are dedicated and highly trained artistic practitioners invited to pass on their skills and knowledge to the emerging ranks of future professionals.

From Kenya to the World

Casting glances at 2006, it becomes clear that Sarakasi Trust has continued to build lasting bridges with both local and global partners towards taking its model of Culture for Development to greater heights. Not only did we showcase Kenyan culture in an ever increasing number of platforms out there but we also collaborated with other practitioners and patrons of the arts to bring global cultural brands to Kenya.

The year kicked off with the North Sea Jazz concert held at the Kasarani Indoor Gymnasium on February 18th. This show was put together by Sarakasi in close partnership with North Sea Jazz/Mojo Concerts, Mundial Productions and Double 2 (all of Netherlands) and with generous support from the Nation Media Group of Kenya, KLM, Safari Park Hotel, Sports Stadia Management Board and others.

The concert, dubbed 'North Sea Jazz Salutes Nairobi', saw an eclectic gathering of local artistes such as Abbi and Kikwetu, Eric Wainaina, Yunasi, Suzzanna Owiyo, Mapacha Africa group, Four Winds Jazz Band and Harry Kimani on stage alongside Netherlands' own New Cool Collective. Eric Wainaina, Abbi and Kikwetu and Harry Kimani would later team up with the energetic Mighty King Kong to rock the designated Kenya stage at the North Sea Jazz festival in Rotterdam in July.

On the other hand, Suzzanna Owiyo teamed up with Princess Jully, Mercy Myra and Achieng Abura to form the vivacious Divas of the Nile act that accompanied by Nameless, Big Pin, D.J Space and the Rolling Spear acrobatic troupe (all of Kenya) performed at Festival Mundial in Tilburg, Netherlands on June the 15th and 16th courtesy of Sarakasi Trust.

If all this doesn't prove that Sarakasi Trust takes things beyond the one off concert and keeps giving then the post-show activities of the New Cool Collective band do. The band was brought to Kenya not only to perform at Kasarani but also to be a part of the cultural development, exchange and skills transfer pioneered by Sarakasi Trust and its partners. It is in this spirit then that New Cool Collective teamed up with Kenya's Michel Ongaro, Oneko Arika, the orutu player George Ochieng and the Mapacha Africa group to present a two day workshop for upcoming performing artistes in the slums of Kawangware.

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Even with such world class affiliations under our wings, we continued to search for other collaborations with the sole purpose of bringing more opportunities to our growing stable of performers. Presently, after sending a delegate on an exploratory meeting to both Mozambique and China, Sarakasi Trust intends to join and represent Kenya in Jeunesses Musicale International (JMI) in 2007. JMI is a worldwide non-profit network for youth and music created in Plaise des Beaux-Arts, Brussels in 1945. JMI shares our vision of enabling young people across all boundaries to develop through music and offers that invaluable platform for artistic exchange that we desire for our artistes.

One Show: Twice As Nice

Children deserve to have fun! That should have been the rallying call for the extravaganza that Sarakasi Trust and the Netherlands based Dubbelleuk Foundation put together through the heat and dust and then the wetness and the mud in the slums of Nairobi.

Dubbelleuk Foundation has over the last couple of years undertaken to relieve children from deprived backgrounds from the hardships synonymous with their lives by holding a special annual theatrical event in Bloemendaal, Netherlands. The vividly theatrical themed event brings these children together for a fun filled day to give them a pleasant memory that the harsh realities of an underprivileged life can never take away from them. It is no wonder then that at Dubbelleuk ('twice as nice') they say: Children Need to Smile!

Previously, Dubbelleuk used proceeds from their event and donations from their well wishers to reach out to institutions abroad that shared in their vision for supporting disadvantaged children. However, in 2005, they saw it fit to take their theatre event abroad. As part of their first international outing, they partnered with Sarakasi to pick 26 non-formal schools to which they could bring the 'twice as nice experience'. This was going to be a massive never-before-seen-in-Nairobi presentation and after intensive planning, it came to life on 30th October 2006.

After a dust raising launch at Kibera's Jeremic Academy, the show toured the slums of Nairobi: Mathare to Kawangware; Korogocho to Mukuru; Kayole to Ruai, over the next five days. More than 16,800 children from these slums were treated to the spectacular One Big Show creation featuring 40 Sarakasi artistes under the innovative artistry of our own choreographers. And all that spiced up with the street poetry of genge artistes Jua Cali and Pilipili.

The acrobats passed moves to the break-dancers, the ragga dancers and the traditional dancers seemed to outdo each other in raising the roof (or was it the open sky?) and all this time the Sarakasi drummers were pounding out a rhythmic frenzy. The jugglers turned the faces of the children into goggle-eyed glee that lasted all the way until the stilt-walkers passed through and turned those faces into starry-eyed marvel. In a big way you could see: 'I would love to be able to do that', written in most of the youngsters' eyes. Careers surely are born in the strangest of places!

Then the food was brought in. After all, what is a kids' party without the good food? Particularly for children who weren't growing up seeing much of it. Clearly a smile had been put on their faces. But it is the spirit and intensity of the moment that will, hopefully, live with them forever; become a part of their inerasable memories.

Beyond the shows and fun filled presentations in 2007, Sarakasi Trust is continuing the cooperation with Dubbelleuk Foundation with the intent of introducing acrobatics, dance and music training programmes in all the schools that the One Big Show visited with the help of Sarakasi trainers.

Ghetto Radio for Ghetto Voices

Anger, want, striving, that is the way of life in Africa's ghettos. But beneath that veneer of despondency lives hope. Hope lives in all the little spaces; the smiles, the rhythms of life, the voices. That hope though has no appeal to the

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boom-mike of the detached news hounds; it never rubs off onto the eyes of the world that is the lens of the news camera. A camera that only chooses to freeze-frame: hunger, poverty, disease. And when all the news is done, the ghetto story remains untold. The ghetto voice stays muted.

With the launch of Ghetto Radio, that voice will not remain muted for long. Ghetto Radio - a Netherlands based trust - aims to launch radio stations in Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal that will be programmed and managed by the youth in the local ghettos. Not only will it be targeted at the ghetto youth but it will be driven by them as they will decide the content of the news, talk shows, music and varied programming and all this without using inappropriate language, swear words and political bias.

Being urban and non-commercial in nature, the radio stations will offer the youth an unprecedented voice and eventually a better shot at life through the employment of culture and the arts.

Sarakasi Trust has partnered with Ghetto Radio Trust and is the facilitator of the Nairobi station. Sarakasi is well placed to be the local partner as we have created a presence and working relationship with the youths in Nairobi's slums. These youths form the core of our acrobatic, dance, drumming, singing, juggling and other troupes.

Having received a donation of a full broadcasting station from the Dutch Public Broadcaster and with a home at Sarakasi's new complex, in the Ngara area of the city, Ghetto Radio's Nairobi launch is imminent. The support of the Dutch Public Broadcaster means that technical equipment and know how will not be lacking at Ghetto Radio. This support will also present the youth with an opportunity for capacity building and travel to the Netherlands for workshops on radio management and presentation.

We at Sarakasi look forward to being part of an exciting new format that ensures that the voices of the ghetto are heard as they are told by the youth in those ghettos.

Positive or Not, the Show Must Go On

In July 2006, Angela the organizing secretary of Kenya Organization of Youths Living with HIV/AIDS (KOYLWA) was introduced to Sarakasi Trust at a youth conference in Nyeri. This encounter marked the beginning of Sarakasi's most remarkable social awareness meets culture for development engagements ever. By September of the same year, 15 young dancers had become active participants within Sarakasi's training programme and been put on participatory heights that social stigmatization would not have allowed in other social and professional spaces.

For Sarakasi the partnership with KOYLWA was multi pronged - from our early days, we had been involved in various social awareness and community development projects at divergent levels but working with KOYLWA presented an opportunity to not only have a vehicle for empowering the youth but also a tool for combating HIV/AIDS and the stigma that our society attaches to it.

KOYLWA a community based organization with members as young as high school going age was registered in 2001 as a source of fellow feeling to young people living with HIV/AIDS.

Its members meet at Red Rose Nursery school in Kibera every Saturday to discuss and establish ways through which they can continue to live positively. As its founders like to put it: the average person on being diagnosed positive slips into a phase of denial. In situations where effective counselling is available they move into a level of acceptance. The ultimate justification for KOYLWA's existence is thus framed in the manner of a question: After acceptance then what?

And the answer they say lies in finding skills for living and as skills for living go, dance would prove to be one of them. So in came the collaboration with Sarakasi. KOYLWA's entry point into Sarakasi's training programme was through a subtle yet effective acceptance scenario. As part of the Trust's regular sensitisation and edutainment presentations, the youths from KOYLWA were invited to hold talks on HIV/AIDS awareness with Sarakasi artistes.

At the end of a well received and seemingly effective workshop the trainers from KOYLWA revealed themselves to be HIV positive. Their healthy appearances and positive approach to life was probably the biggest lesson of their training: that

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there is life beyond HIV infection.

As Angela Njogu would have it, HIV/AIDS is not a profession. KOYLWA is committed to a greater involvement of young people living with HIV/AIDS in all worthwhile activities, experiences and life's pursuits.

The days when a HIV/AIDS diagnosis was a death sentence are long gone. With the increasing availability of information on the causes of infection and the ways with which to protect yourself if not infected and sustain yourself if infected, many myths about HIV/AIDS have been shattered and the doors to acceptance of the infected opened.

In reality then HIV/AIDS infection has ceased to be a way of life defined by an impending death into a challenge that we all have to face and deal with through acceptance.

According to Javan, KOYLWA's training and communications officer, the collaboration with Sarakasi has been effective as a tool for combating stigmatization. As he puts it, coming to Sarakasi's dance training was, for some of KOYLWA's members, like a public declaration of their positive status.

They were aware of their positive status but up to that point they had only shared it with others who they knew to be living with the virus and were wary of engaging others for fear of being discriminated. That they found themselves accepted and appreciated, solely for their individuality and talent, at Sarakasi is a pointer to the value of information and awareness training as part of the movement towards social acceptance and embracement of people infected with HIV.

Better than A Guitar

Sometime in 2005, world renowned athlete Paul Tergat made a visit to Gatina Primary School in Nairobi's Kawangware area. This time though a truck-load of journalists accompanied him, he appeared in his capacity as an ambassador for the World Food Programme.

In between the speeches and the distribution of food a group of seven old time friends gave a scintillating performance as they crooned to the accompaniment of a curiously shaped instrument.

'It sounds a lot better than the guitar,' One guest observed. Maybe that instrument did sound better than a guitar because a few months later those fellows had recorded a CD. The curious instrument was an adeudeu and those seven friends were members of the Mapacha Africa Group.

The rise of Mapacha Africa Group seems almost surreal, at least from the moment they performed at Gatina primary in Kawangware slums to the day of their album release a year later at the urbane Alliance Francaise. Talking to them reveals a classic rags-to-evident-good-fortune story that spans close to two decades. According to Joel Ouma Wanjala, the group's leader, Mapacha was formed in 1989 when he and his friends were in primary school in western Kenya.

Back in those years, as the group's founder members narrate, their inspiration came from the old men they saw sitting at the village square an adeudeu between each pair of feet and a pot of traditional liquor between them all. Intrigued by its sound the three young boys set out to teach themselves how to make the stringed instrument and eventually, how to play it. With time, dedication and practice they graduated from a lower string of expertise to a higher one increasing the number of strings as they mastered the instrument.

Then time and circumstance conspired to separate them when in 1995 Joel had to find himself in Nairobi in pursuit of a livelihood. In the mean time his partners continued to perfect their beat and teach others which saw the group grow its talent and broaden its repertoire. For ten years they battled the grind of the village dance until Joel finding himself

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adequately settled in Nairobi's Kawangware area invited his peers to the city.

The year 2005, was the year of the regrouping, what had started out as a trio of dabblers had now grown into a septet of formidable players. They settled in one house, Joel's, practicing and looking for a way out.

They found it sooner rather than later after the performance at Gatina. The solidity and energy of their performance caught the interest of Sarakasi Trust who invited them to the North Sea Jazz concert at Kasarani in February 2006.

After the concert they took part in the New Cool Collective band's training workshop and were later invited to a private Sarakasi dinner show where they performed from one encore to the next. Finally the world had stopped to listen to Mapacha's thrilling rendition of the traditional Teso - their community - sound. Mapacha had restored their ancestors to their rightful place on the silver lined clouds from where they sit smiling down from behind the bridges of golden adeudeus.

And the throbbing of the adeudeu reaches out to the world from the vantage point of their seven track debut album titled Angalia. This was all made possible in May 2006 when they were invited to Nanyuki's Beware studio for their first recording session ever. Sarakasi facilitated this and took care of their travel, recording and accommodation expenses. In a few days and after a marathon recording session they had an album with savage string riffs that would make Jimi Hendrix strum an ode to repatriation.

Another Album Out

After the great success of acapella group Cheche's CD launch in 2005 under the Sawa Sawa Fair Trade Music Label, 2006 saw a new release but this time from the solo crooner Harry Kimani. The Sawa Sawa Fair Trade Music Label is an initiative of Sarakasi Trust in collaboration with Mundial Productions and with the help and support of Double 2 Productions in the Netherlands. The label aims at creating access to global markets by artistes from developing countries and boosting their economic well being by offering a deal in which the artistes begin to receive their earnings from the very first CD sold.

Cheche's album was the first to be released with a launch in November 2005 and this was followed by Harry Kimani's sophomore recording, Tuishi Mi Nawe which was recorded, mixed and mastered at the prestigious Wisseloord Studios in the Netherlands.

Harry Kimani's album, officially launched at the Alliance Francaise in Nairobi on November 24th 2006 was clearly a successful attempt at outdoing himself in his celebrated debut, **Unborn**. That he achieved after months of self imposed vocal exercise and a highly skilled recording, mixing, mastering and re-mastering to achieve that mature sound and quality production that makes Tuishi Mi Nawe a must-listen.

The album begins with a patriotic tribute to the motherland in a stirring rendition of Kenya's National Anthem then delves straight into matters of the heart with powerful delivery - lyrically, instrumentally and arrangement wise.

Nakuwaza and Confused are candid declarations of affection with the accompaniment of a smooth violin, gentle piano and Kimani's familiar strumming of the guitar. Man from the Ghetto talks about the powere of true love as experienced between lovers from divergent economic backgrounds whose burning affection for each other prevails in diverse conditions.

The piano and guitar make a comeback in Tuishi Mi Nawe, the title track, whose lyrics and instrumentation are equally captivating if not hypnotic. The listener finds him/herself accompanying Kimani in his quest to win the heart of a woman who has recently stolen his own heart. The top contender for Kenya's king of Rhythm and Blues title is at the top of his game as each word, each note comes packed with feeling, emotion and expression.

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True to his style and background, Harry Kimani also delivers soulful kikuyu ballads as can be heard in Kairitu Gakwa. The album also contains the popular classic numbers Haiya, Waithera and Nakupenda.

It becomes difficult, almost impossible, not to be filled with admiration and respect for an individual whose music is an expression of the metamorphosis he has undergone since he debuted a few years back to much public acclaim in Kenya.

After capturing the hearts of Kenyan fans, Kimani was put on the path to international acclaim when he met the multi platinum selling Dutch band BLØF in October 2003. The band, having been invited to Kenya by Sarakasi Trust and Plan International, became so impressed by Harry's performance and vocal prowess at their show in Embu that they couldn't resist the urge to get into the studio and merge vocals with him. The end result was the song Yele which is nothing less than a musical bridge between the finest European rock and African ballads.

It is the warm reception that Yele received which led to BLØF's global search for collaborations under the banner of the Umoja Project. They went on to record and perform with Femi Kuti of Nigeria, Cristina Branco of Portugal, the Kodo drummers of Japan and Omar Faruk of Turkey among others.

The end product of these collaborations was an album titled Umoja that went on to become a runaway success in terms of album sales and won international acclaim. In the end BLØF put together a string of shows and a filming of the Umoja Project in the Netherlands in August 2006 to which Harry was invited. The filming was done at the Luxor Theatre in Rotterdam with Harry stealing the hearts of many fans and performing live on stage with BLØF.

The film from the Umoja Project becomes available in 2007. The main focus for both film and album is bringing World Music to the people and using it to promote world peace and coexistence by transcending borders, colour and race through culture.

If the events in Rotterdam are anything to go by, Harry Kimani is on his way to greater things. He has not only managed to endear himself to local fans but also struck on the right formula for capturing international audiences.

Cultural Safaris and Skills Exchange

At Sarakasi 2006 was an eventful year in the field of cultural safaris and our skills exchange programme. Not only did our artistes travel far and wide benefiting from varied opportunities to work with more experienced culture practitioners worldwide but we also brought some of these experienced performers and trainers home.

The year was kicked off by the Sarakasi African Show that saw 27 Kenyan artistes tour the USA. Made possible by Capitol Entertainment the show had Sarakasi artistes Jungle Kids, Cheche group and 3 Sarakasi dancers traversing continental USA staging thrilling shows. Though the contracts were intended to stretch from January to March, the Jungle Kids acrobatic troupe proved themselves such a top-bill act that they got an extension and remain on tour in the States.

In April an unlikely collaboration was initiated that saw Sarakasi Trust work with the Kenyan and Chinese Ministries of Culture to facilitate the travel of seven acrobats to the Wuqiao Acrobatic Art School in the Hebei province of China. This project, while still at the early stages and discussions remaining ongoing as regards to the extent of our participation, is undoubtedly yet another great opportunity to be a part of Kenya's cultural renaissance through facilitating high-class training and opportunities in the performing arts.

April continued to be an exciting month; late that month the acrobatic group Rolling Spears from Sarakasi flew to the intensive performance space that is Festival Mundial on Tour in the Netherlands. They would remain there till mid June. Meanwhile at our practice space at the Godown Arts' Centre, Nairobi the Xplore! Exchange programme kicked off. Xplore!

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is an exchange programme in cooperation with Fonty School of Performing Arts, Netherlands in partnership with Sarakasi Trust and Mundial Productions. This has seen the two way traffic of trainers and students between Kenya and the Netherlands as they work towards a performance product that bears a vibrant and modern Africa identity.

In the meantime one of our most enduring partnerships continued apace; on April 27 the Mighty Jambo troupe returned to the UK to be once again an integral part of the Butlins family. The Butlins tour has become a regular fixture in our annual schedule and it runs from April to November as part of the Butlins' Holiday Resorts entertainment programme. That we keep getting invited means that we are good at what we do, at least the holiday makers continue to say we are.

Then there was the Italian connection. April saw the Super Mambo, acrobats travel to Italy to become part of an exciting travelling circus co-created by Sarakasi Trust and Arcipelago Circo Teatro of Italy. This circus that has been touring since 2003 teamed up Super Mambo with a French-Congolese crooner to form an act dubbed Creatures and set out on a tour that would prove to be the most rewarding six months of their lives.

Super Mambo's trip seems to have heralded all good things Italian. In late May the acrobatic troupe known as Afro Jambo Jeegz from Sarakasi were to find themselves in Italy too. They had linked up with the Artisti Festival in Italy and would remain there till August. But even before they could say pasta, they were joined in Italy by another Sarakasi troupe, Nafsi Africa Acrobats and Dancers. Nafsi Africa landed in Italy as part of a different initiative - theirs being a promotional peace tour supported by Amani, Italy and Africa Peace Point, Kenya.

The month of June saw us put together a workshop that would allow our artistes to appreciate culture and the arts as an industry and thus a viable source of livelihood for its practitioners. They were also advised on the performance and recording elements of the entertainment business. Most importantly, though, they were guided through the mine field that is contracts, intellectual property rights and management agents. June was also the month that saw the Divas of the Nile, Nameless, Big Pin, DJ Space and one dancer represent the Kenyan urban space at Festival Mundial in Tilburg, Netherlands.

July dawned as the month of the Kenyan stage with Eric Wainaina, Abbi and Kikwetu, Harry Kimani and Mighty King Kong taking control of our own Kenya designated stage at North Sea Jazz, Rotterdam. This was obviously an exciting follow up to their riveting performances earlier on in the year at the North Sea Jazz preview show in Nairobi. Meanwhile, in Nairobi, the world class juggler Ricardo Rouchi was juggling time, space and talent as he work-shopped our jugglers for two weeks.

In August we hosted three students from Schools without Borders, Canada who got to work together with Sarakasi artistes as part of our skills exchange programme. We also, working together with the Associazione Veronica Sachi - Avss (Italy), organised a clowning workshop in the low income neighbourhood of Kayole. For this workshop a group of clowns from Italy partnered with Sarakasi's own Moto Moto acrobats.

August was also the time when an association with the Great Rift Valley Trust initiated the previous year continued to be celebrated at Kuki Gallman's world famous conservancy in Laikipia. Our choreographers with the assistance of Italy's studio Festi led the Sarakasi dancers and drummers through yet another breathtaking performance set against the sites and sounds of the Laikipia plateau.

September 2006 saw us organize a three week workshop with an established Dutch Juggler, Arthur Kenti. His training programme took him right down to our outreach centres in the neighbourhoods where he tutored and inspired aspiring jugglers. He also conducted training for 85 of our professional jugglers. During the same month, the much anticipated album, Angalia, from the Mapacha African Group was unveiled. September also saw the launch of Ghetto Radio Trust in The Netherlands an event that was graced by Kenyan hip hop artists Moses 'Blaze' Mbasu, Robert 'Roba' Matumbia, Angela 'Angel' Wainaina, Dan Okongo and Tom 'Jalupo' Mboya.

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Office and Rehearsal Space Address: The Godown Arts-Center, Dunga Road, Nairobi, Kenya.

Tel/Fax: +254-20-559757 or +254-20-555894. Mobile: +254-722-811926 or +25-734-811926

E-mail: marion@sarakasi.co.ke ; Web-site: www.sarakasi.org



In October, Sarakasi Trust in conjunction with the Norwegian Institute of Concerts facilitated a Norwegian schools' tour by four Kenyan artistes. The Norwegian Institute of Concerts is a government department that facilitates live performances for all Norwegian school children with the aim of exposing them to different cultures. Kenya's Iddi Achieng, Amani, Kanda King and Sarakasi drummer Ted Walukwe were joined by Morten, a celebrated Norwegian guitarist to tour 45 different schools in Norway. The production, dubbed Msafiri was billed as a dynamic contrast of African traditional music and dance, modern Kenyan hip hop and Norwegian music.

Meanwhile, that October, the year long Xplore program kept its stride. This time round Sarakasi Trust and the Fonty School of Performing Arts partnered to bring a talented Ghanaian choreographer Sarah Naa-Ayeley Okine Okine, to oversee a dance workshop in Nairobi. Later on in the month two Sarakasi Trust representatives visited China to explore two separate partnerships: a project Assistant went to the annual general meeting of Jeunesses Musicale International in Beijing while

one of the directors of Sarakasi Trust visited Hebei province's Wujiao Acrobatic Art School.

The year ended with an impressive array of shows, workshops and training programmes. Sarakasi drummers Oneko Arika and Michelle Ongaro went out to Bologna Italy for a drumming performance that was a part of the Studio Festi show. Back home we held a show and workshop on stilt walking in conjunction with Alliance Francaise featuring Les Trois Points de Suspension, a stilt walking group from France. We also held a two week yoga workshop with the Acro Yoga practitioners from the USA that engaged local participants. And finally, to crown an eventful year, we put together the Sarakasi Trust fun day in Korogocho to bring good cheer right to the heart of the 26 outreach centers and the communities we work with.

Sarakasi Trust's Hospital Project

'This programme should be encouraged in all hospitals 'cause it really speeds up the healing process of the children…makes them active… they are not bored.' That is just one the many encouraging comments that we have received from parents, guardians and children who have experienced out hospital project.

The Sarakasi Trust Hospital Project was started in September 2006 with help and support from Terres des Hommes, a Dutch charity and a Dutch horticultural firm, United Flower Organisation. At present we are running a pilot project at the St. Anne's childrens ward of the Mater Hospital in Nairobi. In the meantime we are holding discussions with administrative and health officials in other hospitals, such as Kenyatta National Hospital, where we hope to extend our programme into in 2007.

At the Mater Hospital, we have been well received by the hospital personnel, who we work closely with and by the invalid children as well as their parents and guardians. The children we work with vary in age; from infants to fourteen year olds. They have also been hospitalised with varied ailments ranging from chronic illness, heart surgery, and short illness to minor surgery.

We hold two sessions every week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, our aim being to distract the children from the monotonous experience that ward life can become. We achieve this by engaging the children, most of who are accompanied by their parents or guardians in fun activities such as arts, crafts, puzzles and interactive games. All this serves to make their hospital stay bearable as the children get a moment in which they can focus on something else other than the discomfort of their illness. It also gives the parents and guardians a feeling of encouragement and the realisation that someone else is thinking and cares for them at that sad moment of their child's illness.

As our project continues to grow in the coming year, we intend to incorporate more fun-filled and educational activities such as puppetry, story telling and clowning into our programming.

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Skills for Life

At Sarakasi Trust our model for culture for development straddles every aspect of life. We go beyond the world class acrobatics, dance and music training and exchange programmes and commit ourselves to the social and economic development of our artistes. Our spirited endeavour remains set on providing them with skill sets and information that will catalyse their long term social and economic transformation.

In 2006, our life skills workshops were aimed at awareness in four basic areas: health and wellness; finance and money management; legal issues and cultural transitions.

Within the health and wellness category we ran two programmes: a partnership with Kenya Organisation of Youth Living with HIV/AIDS (KOYLWA), and a contract with a theatre for development group called Safe Ghetto to present their highly effective and interactive educational play to our members. In addition to these we held workshops on drug use and abuse.

In the area of finance we held a two week workshop that focused on contractual obligations and the place of the performing artiste in the concert pay chain.

Towards approaching legal issues, we asked Kituo cha Sheria -the legal advice centre- to present a workshop on civil liberties and human rights as well as inform the artistes on which channels for legal recourse are available to them in their private as well as public lives. To build on this presentation we are discussing the possibilities of a long term partnership with the centre towards providing legal resources to our artistes due to the fact that a significant majority of them cannot afford lawyers.

The cultural transitions workshop was made possible by the St. John church in Korogocho and brought together all the children in Sarakasi's extensive training program. Children from 26 outreach centres around Nairobi were brought together to share their skills and to display what they had achieved in both the social and moral realms as well as in practical and performance skills development in over one year of training.

As it becomes evident, at Sarakasi Trust we choose to lay emphasis on character and self worth because those are the attributes that will serve our artistes in their continuing journey out of abject poverty. After all, it is one thing to harness your talent and take control of your body but taking control of your mind allows you to use your talent for the good of your own world and that of others.

Changing Lives

Sarakasi validates you to officialdom, Julius observes. From April 27th to June 21st last year he was in the Netherlands as part of the seven member Rolling Spears acrobatic troupe that toured with Festival Mundial. Hailing from the low income neighborhood of Korogocho he has learnt to feel like a second class citizen to whom obvious rights are denied. So when Sarakasi made it possible for him to acquire a passport he danced a jig. Then he was put on a plane- his very first plane ride- and on his way to Europe. Through Sarakasi, he found himself in Europe being paid to do what he always wanted to do: acrobatics.

Since their formation in 2000, Rolling Spears have witnessed a significant change in their fortunes. Their inspiration in those days was the Black Jambo acrobatic troupe whose members lived down an alley or two from them and who seemed to be earning a decent living from the performing arts. It is the same Black Jambo performers who would later introduce Rolling Spears to the creative hub that is Sarakasi and put them on the pathway to hope and a future of self sustenance through the performing arts.

~~Listening to their stories, you realize that they have joined the ranks of the chosen few; the select ones who have got the~~

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chance to raise themselves at least a notch above the vagaries of the ghetto. The many times lucky who have been through all of the ghettos pitfalls and kept landing on their feet. They are talented no doubt and they have worked hard, but in the ghetto all that comes to nought when you cannot find your lucky break. Luck is the last crutch that the hope of those who play fair in the ghetto clings to; for Rolling Spears, luck wore the face of Sarakasi.

A New Home for Sarakasi

It is finally here, our own dedicated training, performance and office space. Our sojourn at the Godown Arts Centre was a rewarding experience. Sarakasi was significantly involved in the conceptualisation and realisation of that vibrant and creative space and we contributed heavily towards making it a landmark on Nairobi's Cultural landscape.

We have grown with the Godown, grown so much to a point of being victims of our own success. Our rapid growth has seen us stretch the main rehearsal space to the limit and gradually exert unreasonable pressure on other users of its facilities. We have to move. Our new home at Shan Cinema - renamed The Sarakasi Dome - is right in the heart of our outreach community yet within reach of all our supporters and patrons.

Positioned in the Ngara neighbourhood of the city, The Dome offers a fascinating view of the Central Business District on one side and the sprawling extents of the Eastlands, from where the majority of our practitioners hail, on the other. It is served by a reliable public transport network and is easily accessible to those using private means.

Beyond being accessible, the Dome presents numerous structural advantages that will prove ideal for the development of a lively acrobatics, dance and physical theatre training programme and the hosting of live performances. Originally designed and used as a movie theatre, the Dome offers excellent acoustics but most importantly it is easy to customise and make structural changes to it that will allow the accommodation of the ever growing and diversifying needs of our artistes.

For instance, we will now be able to make significant progress in aerial acrobatics as the roof structure and the amphitheatre set up will support all the structures we will need for that.

The fact that the Dome has an annexe with office spaces and a shop means that we will be able to grow our administrative and commercial options and also enhance our existing partnerships. As a case in point, the Ghetto Radio Station will be housed in one of the offices and the Sawa Sawa music label can now have a dedicated shop making the music easily accessible to the general public.

For all intents and purposes, the Dome is home.

Corporate Governance

The specific objectives of the organization over 2006 had been to strengthen institutional infrastructure to keep pace with the exponential growth that the trust experienced in the preceding years.

The day to day running of the Trust is made possible by the maintenance of a professional management team. This team was, over 2006, steered by a business manager, a programming and logistics director and an outreach director.

The key functions above were supported by two programme assistants, a receptionist/ secretary (who also provide bookkeeping and accounting support to the Business manager) and a team of programme co-coordinators who have acquired immense experience in the management and execution of dance, music and acrobatic programmes over the years they have continued to be involved with the trust. The coordinators team includes a coordinator and an assistant coordinator for dance as well as a coordinator and assistant coordinator for acrobatics.

~~The management team also oversees and is aided by a team of auxiliary staff that provides the trust with cleaning,~~

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maintenance and messenger support with the driver acting as a project assistant in certain programmes.

As we continue with our efforts to strengthen our institutional infrastructure, we have seen the need to upgrade our legal status. Since our formation in 2001, with the registration of a Trust Deed with the Registrar of Documents, we have operated as a simple trust. We are in the process of changing this through the incorporation/ registration of our trustees which will in effect make Sarakasi a corporate entity recognised in law.

Also with the increasing need to access funds from divergent sources we are in the process of forming an NGO called Sarakasi which will be registered with the NGO Council of Kenya.

As the scope and nature of our activities grows we have also found ways to be involved in new ventures without moving away from our core mandate. A case in point will be the formation of Ghetto Radio Ltd a private company limited by shares that will be owned by Sarakasi Trust and Ghetto Radio, Netherlands. This will be used as a vehicle for operating the proposed Ghetto Radio Station. Also for purposes of steering the North Sea Jazz, Nairobi edition, we are working on the formation of North Sea Jazz Ltd in Kenya.

Towards enhancing optimal management of our financial resources the Trust has its books audited annually by independent and external auditors. We have also lodged an application with the Kenya Revenue Authority for a tax exemption certificate that will allow us to cut our costs especially while sourcing equipment for our training programmes.