



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2002**

### **Introduction**

The Annual Report 2002 of the Sarakasi Trust aims to provide an account of the activities and results achieved by the Trust in the first year of its operation, provides an overview of its financial situation as well as an outlook at future activities. While various donors provided funding for specific activities of the Trust during the year, in June 2002 Sarakasi Trust received a grant from Ford Foundation, enabling a more systematic and planned approach towards meeting the objectives of the Trust.

### **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. 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 performance work;
- to support training, research and innovation in acrobatics, music, dance and physical theater;
- 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.

Sarakasi aims to promote its objectives in (East) Africa and beyond and, in this way, further the social and cultural development of society.

### **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

---

SARAKASI TRUST P.O. Box 249, 00621 Village Market, Nairobi, Kenya;

Web-site: [www.sarakasi.org](http://www.sarakasi.org) Tel. 0722-361284 E-mail: [Sarakasi@nbi.ispkenya.com](mailto:Sarakasi@nbi.ispkenya.com)

Bank Details: Sarakasi Trust, USD Account (012) 402009840, KSh Account (012) 234667501

Kenya Commercial Bank, UN Gigiri, P.O. Box 39402, Nairobi, Kenya; Swift Code KCB LKENX



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 the arts as an expression of life, 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 promoted establishment and formation of a female group of acrobats, (ex hard core street-children from Nairobi) the first of its kind, trained by an associated group of acrobats. Sarakasi supports acrobatics, juggling, music, drum and dance training at various 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 some 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, China, The Netherlands and USA. Impresarios, festivals and circuses in the UK, Canada, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands and France have recently linked up with Sarakasi to explore further collaboration. Sarakasi, in cooperation with several partners, including the Italian Institute of Culture, the European Commission and the Dutch government is embarking on an ambitious project to create a contemporary circus production in Kenya for diffusion in Europe and the rest of the world.



In addition to the increasing number of international tours, Sarakasi is developing 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 related arts. Furthermore, Sarakasi hopes to establish appropriate mechanisms with locally available audio-visual studios to enable local talent to record their artistic expressions in a qualitative and financially acceptable and viable way. The unavailability of locally available equipment for this purpose is of concern and Sarakasi hopes to assist in strengthening the locally available capacity for audio-visual recording. Sarakasi has established a free of charge, non-commercial, non-for-profit and voluntary impresario facility for performers. Sarakasi is also associated with the development of the new center for performing and visual arts (The Godown) in the Nairobi Industrial Area and will provide free office space, rehearsal space and equipment to performers.

### **Specific Activities and Achievements in 2002**

The year started with a tour of Nicky's African Showballet (7 Kenyan female dancers) to Cirque d'Hiver in Roermond, The Netherlands. The group was selected after various training sessions and workshops by choreographer and dancer Nicole Op het Veld from The Netherlands, received additional intensive training and finally performed with great success, adapted traditional Kenyan dances in a traditional circus arena.

Preparations with Mundial Production from The Netherlands, various Kenyan government entities and performers started early 2002 to realize a serious, first ever East African representation (103 participants) at the prestigious Festival Mundial in Tilburg, The Netherlands. Sarakasi organized funding and logistics for music groups Zannaziki (with Mercy Myra) and Mighty King Kong; acrobats groups Black Jambo and Imani Girls; traditional dance and percussion group Taffi Dancers and Percussion; visual artist Tabitha Wa-Thuku and Wanjohi; a sound engineer, various journalists and stakeholders in the arts and cultural scene in Kenya, as well as Burundi drum sensation, the Burundi Drummers and Ugandan Cultural Troupe Kayda to participate in the tour to The Netherlands. The international exposure, increased self-esteem and much desired possibility for realistic self-assessment for the performers were supplemented by an enthusiastic and receptive audience at the Festival and opened the door for more intensive cooperation between the Trust and Mundial Production and its sister Festival, Les Nuits Atypiques de Koudougou in Burkina Faso. A separate report on the involvement in the 2002 Festival Mundial is available from the Trust.

Sarakasi Trust organized three concerts with the Kenyan musicians and acrobats that traveled to The Netherlands as a prelude to the Festival at Carnivore and Ngong Racecourse. The concerts were rather poorly attended and at an equally poorly visited press conference, called for to bring to the attention of Kenyan media the scope and importance of the cultural tour, it could only be concluded that the only way was up for Kenyan music, dance and acrobats and culture in general.



Throughout 2002, associated performers with Sarakasi Trust started or intensified their co-operation and training and education projects with street-children and youngsters in general in Kenya with support from the Trust and well-wishers. Music, dance and especially acrobatics proved to be excellent mechanisms to get and keep street boys and girls out of the streets and in the street-children rehabilitation agencies and homes. Beautiful example of the success are the Black Jambo acrobats who were rewarded with a tour to Mundial in 2002 together with the ex hardcore street-girls that they trained at Imani Street-children Rehabilitation Agency: the Imani Girls. The initiative was given much publicity in The Netherlands and generated much needed additional funding for the Street-children issue and Imani in particular in The Netherlands.

In July 2002 Kenge Kenge Orutu Systems and acrobat group Kenya Boys carried the Sarakasi flag at ZIFF, the International Film Festival in Zanzibar (Festival of the Dhow Countries). The support to bring two Kenyan groups to ZIFF was much appreciated by the festival management and audiences alike and it is expected that more intense cooperation between ZIFF and Sarakasi will be realized in the future.

Sarakasi Trust was officially launched at the French Cultural Center in August 2002 and a few hundred people saw performances from various music and acrobatic groups including some street-children performances.

August and September became audition months, with a dozen workshops and auditions by and for UK, Russia, Italian and Netherlands festival and circus organizers/managers and impresarios. The results and appreciation from the overseas professionals was overwhelming and a great number of groups was (pre)selected. Of particular importance was the conception of the idea to create a contemporary new circus production in Kenya using as much as possible Kenyan performers (acrobats, musicians, visual artists, street-children, dancers and drummers) to be supplemented by foreign performers who possess specific skills that are not readily available in Kenya yet (trapeze). Full cooperation from Arcipelago Teatro Group, Italian Institute of Culture, Netherlands Embassy, KLM and the Biennale de Venetia was assured rapidly and a proposal drafted to obtain additional funding from the European Commission to realize this ambitious project. Also noteworthy are the expert led training sessions (courtesy Alexander Grimailo, AG Studios, Moscow) in plastics and clowning that took place in these months, providing new and additional skills to Kenyan performers, much to their appreciation and satisfaction of the Russian trainers. The visit of two UK impresarios led to an invitation for 28 performers (acrobats, musicians/drummers and dancers) to tour the UK in 2003 for 4-6 months. And Mundial managers pre-selected some 70 Kenyan performers during the music auditions that grew into absolute musts for Kenyan performers.

Dancer Lailah Masiga was supported by the Trust for a Dance Workshop in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso and dancer Isaac Karanja was offered the same possibility by the Trust for a dance stage at the Academy for Dance in Sweden.



Initial contacts with the Yuhan School of Acrobatics were made, but concrete follow-up from our Chinese counterparts was not forthcoming in 2002, but can hopefully be realized in 2003.

Meanwhile Sarakasi Trust approved a logo, popularized it by printing t-shirts for performers, discussed an award and developed a job-description for a project support officer as the work associated with the management of the trust became too great a burden on the volunteer trustees. A project support officer (Mr. Peter Sunday Nyiero was appointed in October 2002). Other developments were initial discussions on establishment of criteria for funding (the Trust is bombarded with requests), a publication on the History of Performing Arts in Kenya, co-operation with Action for Music on copyrights and legal issues in general for performers, discussion on an East African Acrobat and Music Festival (to celebrate 40 years of Kenya's cultural independence) and development of proper web-site in cooperation with Phat and Nairobi. The last two issues, Festival and web-site would take up most of the time of the Trustees in the last months of 2002.

Sarakasi felt that it would be appropriate to conduct workshops in co-operation with InCA in advance of tours for performers that are expected to go on cultural exchanges and tours overseas, to overcome direct cultural differences and misunderstandings and advocate wise management of funds, contracts etc. Initial workshops were held for groups travelling to Burkina Faso and Italy. The positive feedback made Sarakasi decide to make the pre-tour workshop a pre-requisite for each performer traveling overseas through involvement of the Trust.

The Trust decided to promote its visibility by buying into a performance at the SAND Festival (Theater Company) and was proud to note much publicity and attention of a large crowd, including many street-children at the free performance at Uhuru Park in September 2002.

The Trust agreed to purchase two empty containers in The Netherlands on an experimental basis in an attempt to fill these quickly with equipment for acrobats and musicians and ship them to Kenya. The containers were filled within 36 hours with 100 percent donated gymnastic and music equipment and shipped so quickly that they arrived in Mombasa before the regular paperwork could be completed in Kenya to ensure duty free passage based on donations overseas. The equipment will go a long way in creating the necessary facilities for training and further development of music and acrobatics in Kenya in the new visual and performing arts center that will be established under the auspices of Ford Foundation in the Nairobi Industrial area (the Godown).

Sarakasi conducted a well attended first stakeholders meeting in the (old) Godown in October 2002 and discussed and explained its further planned course of action to performers, musicians, acrobats etc. Public relations were further supported by well appreciated and attended performances by associated groups at the UN Day, at the UN Gigiri complex.

Acrobat group Salto Jamboree traveled to Italy for a month with the Golden Circus in Rome and



Mercy Myra traveled with band to Burkina Faso (Festival Les Nuits Atypiques de Koudougou; courtesy Prins Claus Fonds) ending the year with two very successful tours, wider exposure for Sarakasi and East African performers and some decent income generation for the performers. A highly expected tour of Black Jambo to Russia could not take place due to visa problems after the unfortunate Theater incident in the Russian capital.

A number of the above activities were reported on in various media (Sarakasi and associated groups even featured in a Discovery Channel production) a selection of which is available from the trust or can be obtained through [www.sarakasi.org](http://www.sarakasi.org).

### **Management Structure**

Sarakasi Trust is managed by 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. A project support office supports the day-to-day activities of the Trust.

The Board of Trustees met eight times in 2002. The Trustees elected Mr. Rudy van Dijck, the founder as Chairman of the Trust; Ms. Joyce Munga as its Treasurer and Ms. Margareth Gichui as its Secretary. The other Trustees are Mr. Wouter Jan Verwiel, Ms. Mumbi Kaigwa, Mr. Nasir Karmali and Mr. Peter Githua.

### **Finances**

The Sarakasi Trust opened two bank accounts for its financial operations in May 2002. In 2002, Sarakasi Trust generated an income of **US \$ 152,508.36** through donations from Ford Foundation (US \$ 90,000 for period 1 June 2002 – 31 May 2004), KLM East Africa, Netherlands Embassy Nairobi, Cordaid (Oxfam), International Christian Support Fund, Mundial Productions, “Bouwploeg Mundial”, Prins Claus Fonds, The Italian Institute of Culture, Sinjoor-Anvers, and others. The funds were disbursed as summarized below:

International Exchanges	US \$ 77,077.97
Project Management and Implementation	US \$ 8,281.21
Communication and Promotion	US \$ 6,565.71
Studio and Office Facilities	US \$ 1,051.13
Furniture and Equipment	0
Miscellaneous Account	US \$ 9,529.35



**Total** **US \$ 102,506.37**

Consequently, the surplus in the Sarakasi Accounts is **US \$ 50,002.00**

It should be noted that the high amount under International Exchanges is related to direct support from donor organisations for certain international tours and exchange programmes and activities as outlined above. The amounts for Studio and Office Facilities as well as Furniture and Equipment are expected to increase significantly in 2003 when the long-awaited office and rehearsal space will become available in the Godown, the new performing and visual art centre in Nairobi. It should further be noted that the Sarakasi (miscellaneous) account has been used as a conduit for channelling funds from donors for direct projects, where these beneficiaries did not possess bank accounts or any other way to receive funds (Imani Street-children Rehabilitation Agency: donations for paint, watertank, music, acrobatic and dance training etc.). This practice will be discontinued as far as possible in 2003, although it should be noted that many associated groups with Sarakasi typically do not have any access to regular financial structures (bank accounts), hence, most likely, the unavoidable continuation of some of these instances in the future. In addition, it should be noted that the expenditures under the Sarakasi accounts have generated additional financial transactions that benefited those associated with Sarakasi: Mundial Productions as well as all other (international) venues which provided performance opportunities to those associated with Sarakasi in 2002 normally provide full accommodation, licenses, permits, insurance, etc. and, of course, fees to the performers. The estimated amount of these benefits is totalling approx. US \$ 500,000 for 2002.

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

As outlined in our original concept paper, for 2003, Sarakasi is planning a major Music and Acrobats Festival, with a free show at Uhuru Park to give as many performers as possible a chance to perform for a major audience and to give the Kenyan people a chance to come, watch, listen to and admire their cultural heroes. Sarakasi would also like to expand its basis at the Kenyan coast and elsewhere in the country (if possible with a tour bus to bring the artists to the wananchi (= people) before venturing into Uganda and Tanzania later in 2003. Similar expended relationships are to be fostered with the Kenyan government and the Nairobi City Council, as well as with other organisations

in areas of copyright, contract rights, recording, impresarios, etc. Additional emphasis will be put on a non-commercial impresario facility and expanded database for anybody who wants to be associated with it. The new web-site is expected to go a long way in facilitating these processes, as is the realisation of the official office and rehearsal space for the Trust and the associated performers. This will give additional impetus and possibilities for the provision of training facilities and equipment to performers. And with additional numbers of performers assisted in their aspirations, it is expected that increasing numbers of performers will train and educate the less fortunate and/or youngsters in society



in cultural and artistic skills.

The avalanche of activities initiated and undertaken in 2002 clearly underlined the need for a rapid further professionalisation of the Trust. Sarakasi Trust needs a professional full time project manager to deal with the management of the Trust, oversight of the day-to-day activities as well as the development of future activities and proposals for consideration by donors and stakeholders. However, all this will not be possible to realise without new and additional financial resources. Let's hope it will be possible to strengthen institutional relationships and generate indeed the much desired additional funding for activities for 2003 and beyond.