



Singing for Life

HIV/AIDS and Music in Uganda

Gregory Barz

Foreword by Jim Wooten, *Nightline*, ABC News Senior Correspondent

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In music there is talking, but somehow in a different way. In music there is also drama.
So, you may sing about something and at the same time you are acting.
People can hear what you are saying and also see a picture, you see?
So they may think about what you are telling them when they actually see an example of it.
So people can catch stories and pick messages better than merely telling it to them.

—Walya Sulaiman, PADA
People Against AIDS Development Association
Iganga, Uganda

For Vincent, Godfrey, Noelina, and Patrick:
They say that some people walk along the paths in order to begin a journey.
Others create the paths and enjoy the journey home.

For Mona, Simon, and Lucy:
They say that some people journey in order to find themselves.
Others revel in the people they meet along the way.

Lyii woowe, we are invaded, yaaye, we struggle
 We wail, we do not know where to turn
 Hey, you there, listen to this lamentation sounding the warning
 Many are asleep and others are on beds
 They are not guilty of anything, but are victims of the disaster, the mass murder
 This word has a dangerous origin, all diseases are hidden within it
 This contagion destroyed the man with whom I struggled
 If it is a spell you could look for a "doctor"
 But, see here, your friend has become death and you cannot trust each other
 We no longer trust our God and there is nothing to do
 The one gone out to work cannot trust the one at home
 The keeper of the home just sits waiting for the disease to come home
 The hearts of children are afraid to be left alone as orphans
 If the disease begins in your womb, then you will bury them continuously
 When it begins in a family, it is like an ambush
 You cannot know who will be the one to get it today
 It begins slowly, gnawing away and shows up after three years
 It does not wait to grow but begins right away to grip you, alluding and hiding
 You cannot know those who are infected after a day, a week, or a month
 When it takes your lover your heart melts, you expect to leave life
 Many diseases come, and worry is the first
 Everywhere you go you picture yourself leaving your family
 Poverty is number two, you need to feed well, but body weaknesses
 come one by one
 Then you begin slimming immediately
 It shames us, my friends, to look at ourselves and wonder when we will die
 The one lying on the bed considers himself lucky and wonders why
 it still spares him
 But, we are all invaded by *mukenenya*, such a deadly disease
 There is no solution for us all, let us weep
 Nobody will be spared from the crying
 See the doctors, it causes them to decay helplessly
 The professors, ha! It does not even trust them
 Oh, this is terrible, why does it take the babies?
 For sure we are at a loss while it eats us to the last person
 We have come out today with medicine in our songs
 Listen, it means abstinence is the first medicine
 Listen, youth, never give away your life
 You who are still children, know that life is more important
 Be patient as you look for a trustworthy marriage partner
 Before you decide, go for the test
 If you are both healthy then be faithful to each other
 You will preserve your life for long
 People will wonder if that is the provision for your journey
 To survive *Slim*, stop lovemaking, do not try at all
 If you decide to have the pleasure, condoms are available so use them
 Use them like shoes

—Bright Women Actresses
 Bwaise, Uganda

FOREWORD

IN THESE PAGES there is a gathering of such rare and poetic wisdom that those unfamiliar with Africa, with its traditions, with its music or with its problems—specifically the overwhelming problem of HIV/AIDS—will take from their reading not merely new information (although there is a wealth of that) but the priceless gift of inspiration as well.

As the president of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, has urgently explained, the threat of the deadly virus to the people of his country and to the continent is so grave and so immediate that warnings must not simply be given, not simply announced, they must be shouted—and in this scholarly but noble collection and compilation of poetry, songs, and drama, ethnomusicologist Gregory Barz records many of the Ugandan voices now being raised across that nation. They are the voices of young women such as Aida Namulinda of the Bright Women Actresses, of Florence Kumunhyu of Maboni Nabanyi (a traditional healer or witch doctor), of Noelina Namukisa, and of scores of others, all of which amount to a collective shout being heard in their villages, in their towns, in their cities, in their schools, and in their churches. Together these voices form a choir which, in a way previously unexplored, is not only *singing for life* but *saving lives* as well by educating thousands who would otherwise be unaware of the elementary facts of HIV/AIDS, of how it is transmitted, of its effects on the body, and of how it is prevented.

My own experiences with Africans who live with HIV or are dying with AIDS have persuaded me that, until a vaccine is developed or until antiretroviral drugs are available in large quantities to patients there, the focus of the continent's political, medical, and religious leadership ought to be on prevention, and the key to prevention is education—and education takes many forms. As Faustus Baziri, an AIDS activist, put it to Barz:

There are a lot of informations. But one of them is health education. We educate the community. We pass on the message. Music is an organized sound, eh? So, through this sound we send messages to people, and it is quite attractive. As they come to listen they learn.

And it is not only Ugandans who are listening. There will surely now be many others who *listen*, so to speak, to the lessons captured within these pages.

Jim Wooten

Nightline, ABC News

Author, *We Are All the Same: A Story of a Boy's*

Courage and a Mother's Love

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SINGING FOR LIFE IS A SONG OF PRAISE for the efforts of so many people who work tirelessly in the field of HIV/AIDS health-care education, care, and counseling in Uganda. Two individuals in particular—Noelina Namukisa, executive director of Meeting Point Kampala (MPKLA) and Vincent Wandera, director of Good Shepherd Support Action Centre Kampala (GOSSACE)—confirmed for me on countless occasions that “living positively” with HIV was not merely a goal, but rather a necessity in Uganda for survival and for moving forward. The compassion, love, and energy with which Noelina and Vincent engage the humanity of AIDS-related issues in rural and urban Ugandan communities among HIV-positive children and adults continue to move me deeply. Thus, it is to the tireless, ongoing work of providing care for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs) by Noelina and Vincent that I dedicate this study.

There are many others who assisted and guided the field research in Uganda that supports the data and ethnographic materials represented in this study. Centurio Balikoowa has been my colleague since I first stepped off the plane at the Entebbe Airport in the 1990s. Today he is a teacher, a friend, and a colleague. Stephen Bwoye was a student in the Department of Music, Dance, and Drama at Makerere University in Kampala when we first began working together. Bwoye was extremely helpful by providing translations from Luganda, Lusoga, and other languages of eastern Uganda. Composer and educator Justinian Tamusuza has been my host on several occasions in Uganda. His guidance has led me to many wonderful people without whom I would not have had the rich experiences I took in. Sylvia Tamusuza continues to inspire me with her work and her passion for Ugandan traditional expressive culture. Kitogo George Ndagwa, an impressive young musician, assisted me, leading me in many

new and unexpected directions. Chris Ssebunya Senyonjo Mubende, an education major at Makerere University, also provided cultural translations of many popular songs. Dr. Peter Mudiope and Dr. Alex Muganzi Muganga facilitated many of the interviews in rural villages, providing valuable medical information to villagers and me.

I am indebted to the support and assistance of John Turner, John Dick, Paul Epp, Lee Ann O'Neal, Jonathan Rodgers, Jack Rutledge, Jeff Sheehan, and Nathan Hoeft, all undergraduates at Vanderbilt University who assisted me with documentation and recording at various times in Uganda and in the United States. Patrick Anguzu and Noelina Namukisa of Meeting Point Kampala have become a part of my family, fostering and facilitating my efforts and championing this project from the beginning. Vincent Wandera and Godfrey Mukasa, also of GOSSACE, have moved beyond mere colleagues in their friendship and guidance of my efforts.

The field research that supports this study began in 1999 and continues to this day. The Uganda National Council for Science and Technology Research granted clearance for the ongoing project (UNCST File No. SS1368), as did the President's Office of the Republic of Uganda. Funding for the research was provided by two grants from the Vanderbilt University Research Council, from Mark Wait, dean of the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt University, and as a Senior Fulbright Research Fellow as part of the AIDS and AIDS-Related Research of the African Regional Research Program. Vanderbilt University also provided additional grants for two extensive research trips to Uganda. I am grateful for their continuing support of this project. Many of the ideas, especially those pertaining to memory, presented in this study draw on my experiences as a fellow in the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities at Vanderbilt University. I am grateful to my fellow "fellows," who encouraged, supported, and informed my work. While in Uganda I was an affiliate of the Makerere University Institute of Social Research (MISR), and I thank Patrick Mulindwa of MISR for facilitating many aspects of this productive affiliation. Dean Wait has been tireless in his enthusiasm for this project. He was one of the first people to "get" the importance and value of this project. His encouragement and support have allowed me to take this work in so many nuanced directions.

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All photographs included in this text (unless otherwise noted) are by Jonathan Rodgers, a student of mine at Vanderbilt who traveled with me one summer to Uganda as a research assistant. I continue to be moved by Jonathan's artistry. He very quietly worked in the background, approaching his own understanding of the very desperate situations we encountered. His images are profound and they tell their own stories. I am honored to have them in this book and hope they help to communicate something of the beauty of everyday life in Uganda to the reader.

Jim Roberts engineered and mastered the compact disc accompanying this book at Kalimba Studio in Nashville. Jim's sense of humor—in addition to his engagement of the sound materials and his unending patience—made the recording production experience meaningful.

Mona Christenson Barz has provided an endless reserve of support for (and patience with) this project—support in the form of her ongoing encouragement for me to engage these issues to whatever extreme I felt necessary, and patience when losing touch with me for weeks on end during trips to Africa. Her participation in the field research during one of my extended periods in Uganda was truly a blessing, as was the presence of my children—Simon and Lucy. The time we spent together in Uganda presented many opportunities and opened communities to me in unexpected ways while providing a much-needed perspective on the complexities of everyday life in the field.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE TEXT

ACHAP	African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships (Botswana)
AIC	AIDS Information Center
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ANC	Antenatal Clinic Attenders
ARVs	Antiretroviral drugs
AWOFS	AIDS Widow Orphans Family Support, Nsambya Hospital, Kampala
BAPET	Bwakeddempulira AIDS Patients Educational Team
BUDEA	Buwolomera Development Association
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CDC	Centers for Disease Control
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FSW	Female Sex Worker
GOSSACE	Good Shepherd Support Action Centre
GPA	Global Programme on AIDS
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDAAC	Integrated Development Activities and AIDS Concern, Iganga
IMAU	Islamic Medical Association of Uganda
IGA	Income-Generating Activity
LC	Local Counsel
MPK	Meeting Point Kampala
MTCT	Mother-to-Child Transmission
MUDINET	Mukono District Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS
NACWOLA	National Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM	National Resistance Movement
PADA	People with AIDS Development Association, Iganga
PHA	
(or PHAs)	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PLI	Philly Lutaaya Initiative
PLWHA	
(PLWHAs)	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PMTC	Parent of Mother to Child Transmission
PTC	Post Test Club
PWA	Person with AIDS (older term than PLWHA)
SIDA	<i>Syndrome immuno-déficitaire acquis</i> (French translation for "AIDS")
TASGA	Tokamalirawo AIDS Support Group Awareness
TASO	The AIDS Support Organization
TB	Tuberculosis
TFD	Theatre for Development
THETA	Traditional and Modern Health Practitioners Together Against AIDS and Other Diseases
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
UNASO	Uganda Network of AIDS Service Organisations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VCT	Volunteer Counseling and Testing
VOLSET	Voluntary Service Trust Team
WHO	World Health Organization

RECORDED SELECTIONS ON THE COMPACT DISC

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LUGANDA (oluGanda, sometimes spelled LuGanda) is a Bantu language native to the Buganda people and belongs to the Nyoro-Ganda linguistic Bantu family, according to Malcolm Guthrie's linguistic classification scheme (1967–71). It is generally spoken and understood north of Lake Victoria's northwestern shore in Uganda's Buganda Province. Luganda, while not an official language of state, is spoken widely in many outlying areas of Uganda.

The Luganda alphabet is composed of twenty-four letters:

seventeen consonants: b, p, v, f, m, d, t, l, r, n, z, s, j, c, g, k, ŋ

five vowels: a, e, i, o, u

two semi-vowels: w, y

Since ŋ consonant does not appear on standard computer keyboards, it is frequently replaced by the letter combination ng'. (The apostrophe is frequently left off in contemporary orthography, leading to confusion with the distinct and different sound arising from the letter combination ng.) The letter combination ny is also treated as a unique consonant.