

African Arts Safari

Summer 2015



Wow What's this?

November 2014 saw the start of the re painting of the inside of the hall. This brilliant mural still in development shows members of SOSA-XA! Sounds of Southern Africa in Sheffield being led by the late Mandla Sibanda



Under the guidance of Creative director Leroy Sibanda and the enthusiastic support from Charlie Banda, Bekithemba Sibanda and the Sunduza team there have increasingly been more events at the previously rather neglected Open Air Es'pakeni Theatre.

More funding was provided through Philip Weiss visit in January 2015 to refurbish the offices. The main rooms all recieved a major uplift through the replacement of all the broken glass windows, the refurbishment of the steel doors so they are now secure and the repainting of the offices. A new office desk and chairs were also provided as well as a small generator.

The City Council were persuaded by the team to grade and place a car park in front of the hall to ease access by visitors and Council recently reconnected the mains water supply in anticipation of even greater use and proper management of the facility.

Congratulations to Leroy Sibanda for his organising skills and entrepreneurial spirit that has been pushing well and seen Sunduza dance theatre develop special dance projects around the Wozana dance in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and National Arts Council. Workshops have continued throughout the year in several provinces of Zimbabwe. These are supported by tutorials with teachers and the sale of a training video Leroy Sibanda shot and edited.

Congratulations also to the whole Sunduza team for performing and working under tough economic conditions and keeping the whole project alive and spinning.

In the Open Air

January 2015 saw the Open Air theatre being transformed for the first time into a recording studio. The building revealed its inner power. Its exceptional but simple design allows for a great acoustic.



Members of Sunduza: Simba Sagide, Bekithemba Sibanda, Baphi Mdladla and Gugu Ndlovu take a break during recording for the new CD, Open Air.



Matata- the footballers kick off the show at the Amasiko expo 2014

The producer, Philip Weiss, also felt it offered an opportunity to capture the real sounds of the *isicatamiya* performance style.

Very often “imbube” groups will go into a studio and come out after many hours with a sanitised version of the music. The result are recordings that all sound pretty similar and in the protected studio environment they lose that essence of the perfect harmonic character only achieved on a live stage with all the steps, pulsating rhythms and movement of the environment in which the music was created. It was never really intended for a carpeted studio.

There are problems recording outside. First people’s generators start at 6.00p.m. when the local electricity gets switched off. Luckily at quiet times distant car noises are not picked up but you do get the occasional bird joining in the chorus. Does it matter? We think not. The drive and energy resulting just soars through every track and of course with permission of the crows you can always re-take the recording. It really brings that spirit of Africa alive. Though the music has been remastered in Sheffield during the year the quality cannot be faulted and we look forward to its imminent release. It captures the character of the Open Air Theatre which is for hire using modern digital technologies some of which are experimental- but is that not what music is about? Bring in the new I say. Is it not time the environment of Africa was brought into the studio as indeed has been achieved in Mali, Congo and other centres where exciting experiments have taken place outside a formal studio?.

Its also new for Sunduza for the new line up promotes different people as lead singers these include Charlie Banda (Simon’s son), Bekithemba Sibanda and Baphi Mdladla(-Fafasa) whom the group welcome back to Sunduza after a long absence.

We think Simon Banda and Mandla Sibanda would both be hugely excited by the developments in Pumula.



Eager kids await the next event and the screening of Singing for Change at the Amasiko Expo 2014



I assure you I can keep all these men in their place- Gugu Ndlovu.



A dangerous man Mkux!



Yeah he got the groove



And Gugu Ndlovu and Khalipani Ndlovu clearly got the groove.



And we got the groove!



Mkux, Zenzo, Khalipani, Gugu and Peter take a break

See you in Kampala!-Uganda

Yes seriously! With help from Sunduza's producer and SE-MEA, Amasiko shared an exhibition space with Amasiko Lemvelo making a big splash at the Bayimba Cultural centre event in Kampala- at the DOADOA East African Performing Arts Market, held this year in Jinja.

The event is held to raise awareness of performing arts within the continent and support three days of training activities for local artists and exchange between the countries involved. Both Philip Weiss and Leroy Sibanda are planning to take the entire troupe across Africa next year and offer their own unique arts workshops alongside Sunduza. Leroy Sibanda travelled 2900 kms by bus all the way to Jinja to the great delight of Faisal Kiwewa the festival director. He also travelled back by bus all in order to prove that touring Africa for a big group is possible at low cost- and they can arrive on time. That's about the same as travelling two thirds of the way across the USA and back again for the return journey. The event was fantastic and attended by various festival directors from Africa and consultants in the arts including several African focus projects.

In his summing up the Festival Director , Faisal Kiwewa praised Leroy Sibanda for his passion and determination to reach Kampala despite a three day bus strike in Dar Es Salaam. He noted not all local artists registered had even travelled the forty kilometres for the free three day event.



Leroy Sibanda, Creative Director for Amasiko Lemvelo Learning Trust "discovers" at least one Source of the River Nile at the exit from Lake Victoria near Jinja in Uganda.(see above)

He also crossed the Equator twice in a round circuit of Uganda. (right)





Leroy discussing community arts developments with members of the Bayimba Cultural Centre cooperative- a broad church of individual groups who get great benefits from working through the centre on group and individual projects. They include musicians, poets, actors and photographers.

Philip Weiss- above- supporting the display of recently released archive videos of material from Sunduza in Bulawayo and SO-SA-XA! in Sheffield including Sunduza's new album with Janet Wood. SEMEA donated a portable display stand linking the project in Bulawayo to the idea of a "team building "Africa Challenge" in Culture.



Blackie Mukasa -local tour operator-ends his ten day tour with Leroy Sibanda intact at the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre in Entebbe.

We thank both Faisal Kiwewa, the Festival Director for DOADOA for inviting us to join in the project in 2015 and next year 2016 and look forward to working with both himself and the coordinator, Herman Kabubi for all their work. We also have to thank our new safari operator, Blackie Mukasa with whom we made a surprise and unexpected tour for ten days around Uganda. Philip Weiss, a specialist in geography education, was on a mission to also collect more materials for his education work in Zimbabwe. Instead of driving ourselves we were most fortunate in meeting Blackie Mukasa who had served for many years on the education team of the Uganda Wildlife Education Centre. He offered to take a our Amasiko/SEMEA team to the major centres. These included a visit to the Bwindi Impenetrable Rain Forest to track one of the rare Gorilla groups and to the Tropical Rain forest research station.

minds with his wonderful insights into animal behaviour. We look forward to working with him again and his programme at www.wilddiscoveriessafaris.com. Contact us directly if you wish to join us on SEMEA next trip in 2016 its going to run between the last week of April and the third week of May and we can send more details.



This was followed by a route that took us through the Albertine Rift valley and the Queen Elizabeth National Park and up through the many Katwe Explosion Craters (opposite). This was clear evidence of the violent geological past along the Rift Valley. Finally we arrived at Murchison Falls National Park plunging from the main river before entering the next stage of the Nile journey Northwards. We thank Blackie Mukasa for his engaging repartee and great efforts to cover such a vast area. He filled our



In the footsteps of Sir Roger Murchison, former president of the Royal Geographical Society after whom the falls are still named! Respect to that!

Discovering Uganda

It is easy to forget that though SEMEA is an arts organisation we have a strong sense of “place” and “space”. Each arts community works in an environment and their productions reflect the social and other issues and music and dances from that environment. Culture and environment cannot be divided. Thus both Philip Weiss and Leroy Sibanda share a passion for environmental issues. This has over many years expressed itself through teaching about the environment and authoring books and films supporting environmental education.

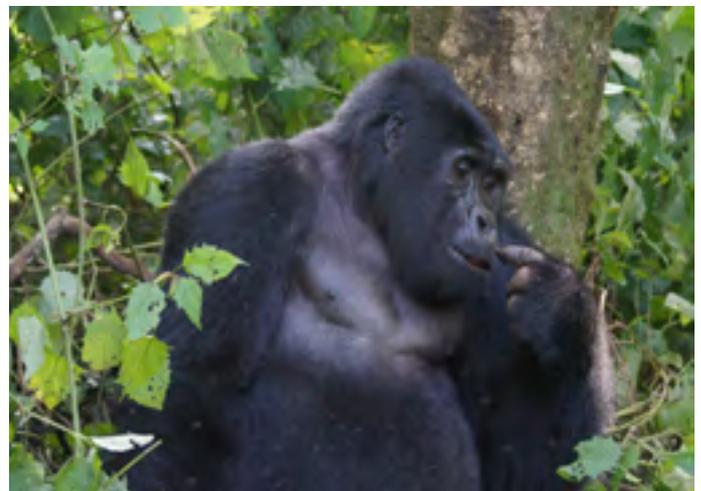
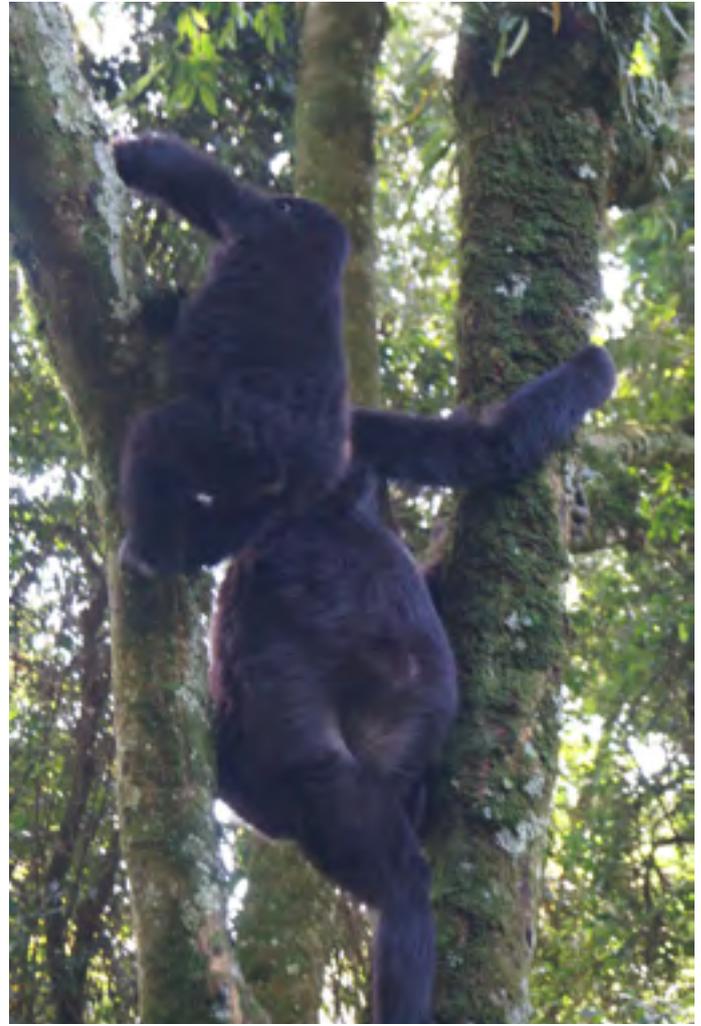
Currently in Sheffield we are concerned with issues of urban regeneration and the role culture continues to play in the regeneration of cities and in the education process. Bulawayo and Kampala face similar issues to Sheffield in the redevelopment of cities after industrial dislocation and urban expansion and change.

Uganda is a most densely populated country with over 23 million people concentrated on the shores of Lake Victoria. They push right up the slopes of every cultivable every mountain. The volcanic soils are hugely fertile and because of high rainfall and temperatures the Eastern region can support at least two growing seasons a year. The biodiversity is immense. We alone spotted over 52 species of birds.

Little wonder though it has taken the creation of National Parks to protect the Gorilla at Bwindi and the tree climbing lions and bountiful prey in the Ishasha Wilderness area.

Bwindi- the home of the Mountain gorillas is only 330sqkm-their last refuge on the planet alongside the nearby Virunga Volcanoes. They are surrounded by rural population densities that exceed 400 people per sq.km compare that to about 11 people in rural Zimbabwe.

Tree climbing lions in Ishasha-so no easy escape



Only about 700 gorillas remain and are subject to poaching for bush meat, human disease, pressure from regional agricultural activities, and forest removal on the fringe of their habitat. The Conservation effort is vital and Uganda has limited resources to achieve this.

Published by Southern E Media Education & Arts (SEMEA), Sorby House, 42 Spital Hill, Sheffield S4 7LG email: arts@semea.org.uk
www.semea.org.uk
Skype: Manhanga
Tel: +44(0)1142437899
+44(0)7430070946

