

# #BEAT

FRIDAYS JUST GOT A WHOLE LOT BETTER 22.01.



## JOSEPH WASSWA

## LINKING UGANDA TO GERMANY

He went to Germany to study music. While there, he first felt lost, but later found himself when he mobilised fellow students into a cross-cultural music ensemble. Today, Joseph Wasswa is the proud founder of Himbisa Mukama (Praise the Lord), an inter-cultural musical initiative that promotes music and cultural understanding between Uganda and Germany. Complete with an affiliate ensemble, which blends western (classical) and African music, Wasswa and his team have traversed Germany and recently, Uganda, promoting inter-cultural music initiatives and supporting church music projects in his home area of Masaka, writes **Mathias Mazinga**

First, he thought he would become a priest. But his journey to priesthood was short-lived. Joseph Wasswa left Bukalasa Minor Seminary after only six years and joined Makerere University. Here, he enrolled for a bachelor's degree in music. He passed with a first class.

In 2007, Wasswa got a scholarship to pursue a master's degree in music at the University of Church Music, Regensburg, Germany. But then, something happened.

"While in Germany, I noted that some Germans had misconceptions about Uganda and Africa," he says. "I discovered, for instance, that many local people knew nothing about Uganda. They also did not believe an African could do anything remarkable."

This disheartened him: "I felt like returning home," he says.

The situation was worsened by the cold weather and his inability to speak German: "I wanted to cry."

Wasswa soon found out the reason for the cultural disconnect: "I realised that it was the lack of inter-cultural understanding between Europeans and Africans that led to misconceptions about each other," he says.

### Himbisa Mukama

To educate his German community about Uganda and its potential, in 2012, Wasswa mobilised fellow German students into a choir.

"I asked students to set up a platform for the integration of cultures." With endorsement from the university church, where he was an organist, he formed an 80-member choral ensemble and gave it a Kinyankore name, Himbisa Mukama (Praise the Lord).

Wasswa became the music director of the ensemble, which included a choir, orchestra and band. He re-arranged Ugandan church music pieces like *Rugayo*, *Himbisa Mukama*, *Agutamba* and *Natendanga Omukama* and fused

them with German music genre, producing a rich musical repertoire.

From the inception of this ensemble, Wasswa and his team traversed German cities, singing and playing African and Western music. His ensemble became popular and caught the eye of some prominent German politicians. They later formed a non-government organisation, Foerdereverein Fuer Musik und Kultur, Uganda e.V, to promote music and cross-cultural understanding.

### Changing lives

In 2012, Wasswa organised a concert with Himbisa Mukama choir at the Catholic Church of Dreifaltigkeit, Germany, to which local parishioners made financial contributions.

He used the proceeds to start a music school and cultural centre for needy children in Masaka and to renovate the pipe-organ at Kitovu Cathedral in Masaka.

In 2014, the ensemble held

another concert at Dreifaltigkeits Church.

This featured over 200 musicians from Himbisa Mukama and the Uganda Catholic Centenary Memorial Choir. It attracted over 1,500 people from German cities like Munich, Deggendorf, Passau, Kuemmersbruck, Lappersdorf and Berlin. Some of the money raised in this concert was used to support their NGO.

### Meeting the German Chancellor

In 2014, Wasswa met the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel.

"Merkel had read about me and my inter-cultural projects in the press. So, she invited me to a dialogue about international relations in Berlin. The convention was attended by presidents and dignitaries from countries like France and Canada. I talked about Africa, in particular the native Ugandan musical genres and cultures," he recalls.

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## PEOPLE

## He musically links Uganda, Germany

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The group has since become widely known and respected in different parts of the country.

Even before going to Germany, Wasswa proved his worth as a musician of international repute.

In 2005, as the East African Community looked for the bloc's anthem, Wasswa, then a student at Makerere, wrote an anthem, which was chosen as the best from Uganda.

The melody and lyrics of his anthem brought out most clearly the theme of East African unity and development as observed by Bakaye Lubega, Uganda's former principal cultural officer, now at the East African Community headquarters in Arusha. Although his anthem was not selected, Wasswa scooped the third prize at the regional level.

Last year, Wasswa established a partnership with the Uganda Catholic Centenary Memorial Choir and organised a concert with Himbisa Mukama choir in Germany. Wasswa later organised a two-week musical tour of Himbisa Mukama in Uganda. The choir held concerts with Cacemcho at Pope Paul Memorial Hotel, Ndeeba on August 30 and at Mariaflo Hotel, Masaka on September 6, 2015.

## MUSIC SCHOOL

Wasswa plans to set up a modern music school in Masaka.

"We acquired land at Bwala in Masaka and construction of the school will start soon. The school will also teach international languages like German, Italian and French.

"We conceived the idea after realising that many young Ugandans lacked the opportunity to develop their talents. Today, musicians are well-paid. This intangible wealth should be open to everyone," he said.

## Who is Wasswa?

Wasswa was born on October 30, 1985 to Charles Matovu Kabulassoke (RIP), who was a local council chairman of Nnyendo-Ssenyange division in Masaka.

He attended Nyendo Public School and Bukalasa Minor Seminary (1998 -2004), where he was introduced to the piano by Fr. Dr. Joseph

He later went to Makerere University for his Bachelor of Music Degree (2005-2007) and graduated with a first

Wasswa conducting the choir



Wasswa (second right) with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel (centre)

class degree.

In 2007, Wasswa won a scholarship to pursue a master's degree at the University of Church Music, Regensburg, Germany. This is the university where Pope Benedict lectured before he became Pontiff.

Wasswa is currently doing another master's degree (in cultural sciences, politics and

ethnology) at Regensburg University.

Asked whether he intends to settle in Uganda, Wasswa said: "I am the bridge between Uganda and Germany. If this common cause requires me to settle back home, I will do that. I want to dedicate the knowledge and experience that I have acquired to Uganda. I would not have come to such an idea if I was not born in this country."



## IN WASSWA'S WORDS

## Recent Uganda tour

Unlike in Germany, our concerts in Uganda had a low turn up. We were disappointed.

If 63 Germans invest time and money to organise concerts which should benefit the country and nobody turns up, this raises concern.

Time-keeping was poor, yet in Germany, it is money. The German visitors also tested the evils of deceit, bribery and corruption. We paid artistes to perform with us, but they did not turn up. This broke the hearts of the Germans. And those who appeared left yet, they had demanded to be paid before performing.

However, there were some silver linings. The project was in one way or another successful. The Germans liked the hospitality of Ugandans. The tours around the country were good, irrespective of the bad roads.

## His world view

I subscribe to the view of Klaus P. Hansen, a scientist and ethnologist, who said that before people are born, they don't know their tribe, nationality, gender or colour. So, any of these should not be the reason for us to side-line and hate each other."

## Music roots

I believe I inherited the love for music from my father.

He was a choir conductor at St. Joseph's Choir, Nnyendo, before he joined politics. Music led to my diversity in reasoning and having broad ideas.

## WHAT OTHERS SAY

## Raymond Ssendi, music educationist

Wasswa is a passionate musician, who invests in music education.



## Jude Luwaga, musician

Wasswa is zealous and creative. If he decides to do something, he will not rest until it is done. I am not surprised he brought a German ensemble to Uganda.



## Fr. Dr. Joseph Namukangula, Wasswa's music teacher

Wasswa had unrivalled love for the piano and choral conducting. I have listened to some of the local Ugandan hymns and I believe he is one of the greatest musicians of today.



## Andrew Kagumba, ethnomusicologist

When we were at Makerere, he would spend most of his time practising on the piano.



## Margaret Namagembe, choral conductor

Wasswa is a talented organist and choral conductor with the commitment to popularising classical music. He is also a nationalist with deep love for Uganda and her people.



## OUT &amp; ABOUT

Your complete guide to the week ahead, what to do and where to go. Do you want to go for dinner? Or catch a live band? Or maybe just have a quiet evening with a friend; your weekend starts right here.

## EVENTS

## FRIDAY, 22

- Absolute Fridays, Sky Lounge, 7:00pm
- Naughty Fridays, Legends Rugby Club, 7:00pm
- Radioactive Fridays with DJ Aludah, CityVille Bukoto, 7:00pm
- The Freedom Band, Sheraton Hotel Kampala, 7:30pm
- Indian Night Buffet every Friday, Kampala Casino, 8:00pm
- Janzi Band, the Pyramids-Casino & Restaurant, 9:00pm
- African Night, Big Mike Cocktail Bar, Acacia Avenue Kololo, 9:00pm
- Johnnie Walker Fridays, Liquid Silk, 9:00pm

## SATURDAY, 23

- iHoops Basketball Tournament (Under 20 matches), YMCA Wandegeya, 9:00am to 7:00pm
- Kadanke Grand Final, Hotel Africana, 10:00am
- Footloose Saturdays, Venom, 7:00pm
- Ballistic Night, Legends Rugby Club, 7:00pm
- Stampede Night with DJ Jimmy, CityVille Bukoto, 7:00pm
- Band Nite, Liquid Silk, 9:00pm

## SUNDAY, 24

- Sunday Y' Abafumbo Ey' Enjajwulo, Bible House Gardens Bombo Road, 8:00am to 5:00pm
- DJ Tony Playing the Latest Music, City Ville Bukoto, 7:00pm

## MONDAY, 25

- Campus Madness, V Pub Lounge, 7:00pm
- Oldies Night, Kati Kati African Restaurant, 7:00pm
- Quiz Night, V Pub Lounge, 8:00pm
- Jam session, National Theatre, 8:00pm to 10:00pm

## TUESDAY, 26

- Jam 2016 Gospel Musical and dance performances, Church of the Resurrection, Bugolobi, 1:00pm
- Bashment Night, Legends Rugby Club, 7:00pm

## WEDNESDAY, 27

- Old Skool HipHop Night, V Pub Lounge, Lugogo Mall, 6:00pm
- Janzi Band, Zone 7 Mbuya, 7:00pm
- Back to the Future Wednesdays, CityVille, Bukoto, 7:00pm
- Comedy Show by Comedy Files,

Theatre La Bonita, 7:00pm

- Rock n Rolex, Legends Rugby Club, 7:00pm

## THURSDAY, 28

- Band Thursdays, CityVille, Bukoto, 6:00pm
- Lillian and Sundowners Live Performance, Big Mike's, 6:00pm
- Colour of the Skin: Honey movie, Alliance Francaise Kampala, 7:00pm
- Comedy by Fun Factory, National Theatre, 7:30pm
- ThrowBack Thursdays, Legends Rugby Club, 8:00pm
- African Jazz Night every Thursdays, Kampala Casino, 8:00pm
- Tusker Thursdays, Liquid Silk, 9:00pm

## THEATRE

National Theatre, Dewinton Road Kampala

- Musical drama by Clever's Origin Staff, 2:00pm to 5:00pm, Saturday

Theatre La Bonita, Colville Street, Kampala

- HAA!! KINO KIKI!!! New drama by Ebonies, 7:00 pm, from Friday January 22 to Sunday January 24

## CINEMA

## CINEMA MAGIC, NAALYA

- Star Wars: Episode VII-The Force Awakens (3D), (PG-13), Action/Adventure, 2:35pm, 4:40pm
- The Revenant (2D), (PG-13), Adventure/Drama/Thriller, 12:00pm, 2:00pm, 4:45pm
- Daddy's Home (2D), (PG-13), Comedy, 4:30pm, 9:00pm
- Alvin and The Chipmunks: The Road Chip (2D), (PG-13), Animation/ Adventure/comedy, 3:30pm, 6:10pm
- Ride Along 2 (2D), (PG-13), Action/Comedy, 7:30pm, 9:30pm
- The Big Short (2D), (PG-13), Drama/Comedy, 5:00pm
- Creed (2D), (PG-13), Drama/Sport, 11:30PM
- The 5th Wave (2D), (PG-13), Action, Adventure, Sci-Fi, 7:15pm, 9:30pm
- The Good Dinosaur (3D) , (PG), Animation/Adventure/Comedy, 10:45am (weekend), 12:30pm, 1:45pm
- Peanuts (3D), (PG), Animation/Adventure/Comedy, 10:10am (weekend)



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SHOWTIMES: 4:30pm, 9:00pm

Now Showing

DADDY'S HOME

SHOWTIMES: 7:15pm, 9:30pm

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