

# A BIOGRAPHY OF KENYAN MUSICIANS

---

VOLUME 1



# A Biography of Kenyan Musicians

## Volume 1

## CONTENTS

Foreword.....	iii
Introduction .....	v
<b>Chapter 1: Mary Atieno Ominde, H.S.C.</b>	
<i>Elizabeth Andang'o</i> .....	1
<b>Chapter 2: Arthur Mudogo Kemoli, O.G.W.</b>	
<i>Atoh Fred Ochieng'</i> .....	23
<b>Chapter 3: Joseph Ngala, H.S.C.</b>	
<i>Mumbua Kioko/Peter Wanjohi, H.S.C.</i> .....	41
<b>Chapter 4: Paul Mwachupa Mazera</b>	
<i>Caleb Chrispo Okumu &amp; Dr. Donald Ondiek Otoy</i> .....	61
<b>Chapter 5: George Ramogi</b>	
<i>Rose Anyango Omolo-Ongati</i> .....	69
<b>Chapter 6: Habel Kifoto, H.S.C.</b>	
<i>Melitus Wanyama</i> .....	89
<b>Chapter 7: Joseph Kamaru, H.S.C.</b>	
<i>Timothy Njora</i> .....	103
<b>Chapter 8: George Mukabi</b>	
<i>Donald Ondieki Otoy</i> .....	119
<b>Chapter 9: Gabriel Omolo</b>	
<i>Caleb Chrispo Okumu</i> .....	127
<b>Chapter 10: Kakai Kilonzo</b>	
<i>John Katuli</i> .....	137
<b>Chapter 11: Daniel Owino Misiani</b>	
<i>Humphrey Ojwang</i> .....	153
<b>Chapter 12: Thomas Wasonga Ogola, O.G.W., S.S.</b>	
<i>Melitus Wanyama &amp; Dr. Rose Anyango Omolo-Ongati</i> .....	175

## CHAPTER SIX

### HABEL KIFOTO (1949—)



Habel Kifoto was born to Jackson Kifoto and Roselyne Kifoto on the 29th of February, 1949, in Taita-Taveta District of Coast Province, Kenya. His father worked in Bura with the East African Railways Company. He attended Wumari Mleghwa Primary School from 1955 to 1958 before moving to Dembwa Intermediate School from 1959 to 1962. Thereafter, he attended City High School in Nairobi from 1963 to 1966. He successfully completed his secondary education and attained Division Three in Cambridge School Certificate (Ordinary Level Examinations).

Without the knowledge of his parents he started playing music in some bands based in Nairobi between 1962 and 1965. Notable among the bands were Sparkling Teenagers Club and Railway Twisters. In 1967, while playing for Small World Band, he got employed by the Ministry of Power and Communication as a clerical officer. As a member of the Sparkling Teenagers Club, he specialized in a cappella music. Later, he joined the Railway Twisters Band where he played the drums. He also learnt to play the lead guitar, keyboard, tenor saxophone and Alto saxophone.

In 1970, Kifoto was recruited into the Kenya Army – 7 KAR at Gilgil, where he joined the then Army Music Band called The Strollers Band.

Together with other members of Strollers, he formed The Maroon Commandos Band which still exists and continues to perform today. Kifoto was transferred to Langata Barracks in Nairobi in 1973, but he continued to perform with the Maroon Commandos Band. The band became very popular through constant annual performances at the Nairobi Agricultural Show. It was occasionally hired to perform at social, cultural and State functions such as weddings and national holidays. The money earned from such performances was put on a savings account to cater for the welfare of the band members and for other expenses of the band. However, according to Kifoto, (*Personal interview, 12/11/2009*), the band is today still treated as part of the Kenya Army and highly supported materially and financially by Government funds.

After serving in the Kenya Army for 32 years, Kifoto retired in 2002 having risen up to the rank of Senior Sergeant. During his career he served in various capacities. Since 1979 he has been a member of the London based Performing Rights Society (P.R.S.). He became a member of Music Copyright Society of Kenya (M.C.S.K.) in 1987. Between 1987 and 1997 he served as the director of M.C.S.K. Currently he is the director and chairman of M.C.S.K.

Okumu (1998) observes that by 1998, members of the Maroon Commandos, sponsored by Department of Defence and based at the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Lang'ata Barracks were as follows: Habel Kifoto (Lead guitar and vocals), Paul Mwandembo (Rhythm guitar and vocals), Albert Tuesday Oguro (Rhythm guitar), Thomas Mutuku (Drums), Mathias Ngereri (Bass guitar), James Onyango (Saxophone and vocals), David Kombo and Mick Karanja (Vocals), Festo Riziki (Drums and Keyboard), and John Ogega and Amos (Lead guitar). Okumu believes that the members' diverse cultural origins influenced the diverse styles of the Maroon Commandos Band.

Kifoto further recounted how in 1972, the band was hit by a major hitch that threatened its survival (*Personal interview, 23/1/2010*). It was involved in a tragic road accident on June 25<sup>th</sup> 1972 in which one member, Peter

Masheti, perished. The band was travelling from Nakuru to Nairobi for a performance. Kifoto said that the accident could have occurred because the truck they were travelling in slid and lost control. As they travelled, it was drizzling. Their equipment was also badly damaged, but the band managed to recollect and resume operation by December, 1972.

According to Wesang'ula (2010), between mid- seventies and mid-eighties,

*The Kenyan music scene was awash with several other bands that were making the kind of music people wanted to listen to. They included DDC Milimani, Hodi Boys, Les Mangelepa and Them Mashrooms. Most of these bands split into different factions and eventually disappeared from the music scene. Even the most loyal fans lost touch with them. In some cases, rivalry among band members took centre stage and contributed to the split. However, Maroon Commandos soldiered on.*

In this regard, Sgt. David Kombo quoted in Wesang'ula (2010) observes that the band members had been through a lot together and they had a bond that couldn't be broken easily. The most important aspect that had enabled it to survive that long was discipline. Without it they would not have gone far. Wesang'ula (*Ibid*) further argues that to succeed in music, a lot more than discipline needs to come into play before the final product is realized. Kombo further explains that in Maroon Commandos, all members work on compositions, a technique known as collective/communal composition that is a practice emanating from African music philosophy of sharing. This makes all the band members to own both the process and the product and reduces the wrangles of ownership of a song. He says that: "I believe our message is unique. We speak to the hearts of everyone, and our message is relevant." The following discussion and interpretation of Kifoto's main works proves Kombo's point right.

## **Kifoto's Works**

Themes in most of his works are centered on male-female relationships, family life, societal virtues and vices in general, and other topical issues. Kifoto maintains that characters in his music are fictional. Today, in Kenya, hardly a day ends without his music being played in one or more radio stations. He mainly composed his music in his native language, Dawida, and in Kiswahili.

### **Works Composed in Kiswahili**

#### **(i) *Tucheze Sambale (Let us Dance Sambale)***

This music praises the distinctive Maroon Commandos' music and dance style. It is popularly known as *Sambale*. The song invites people of all ages, young and old, to listen and dance to the Maroon Commandos' music because, *ni muziki taratibu na kuucheza ni rahisi*, meaning the music is well composed, entertaining and easy to dance to. It is arguable that the purpose of this song is to popularize and market the Maroon Commandos' music to the public.

#### **(ii) *Dada Mdaku (The Female Gossip)***

In this song Kifoto advises a fictional girl to behave well. He discourages her from gossiping and encourages her to settle down and get married instead of moving from one home to another peddling lies and rumours.

#### **(iii) *Dawa Nimwone Hani (I wish to see Hani)***

In this song, the term *hani* refers to 'honey' and the composer uses it metaphorically in reference to his lover. Once again, in this song and many others by Kifoto, *hani*, is an imaginary character. Kifoto confesses that "All characters I use in my songs are just possible characters in different real life situations. They do not actually exist." (*Habel Kifoto, Personal Interview, 12/11/2009*).

Taking the place of the first person, Kifoto explains that he once had a lover with whom they bore children. However, since they parted they never met again. He consoles himself through a Kiswalili proverb: *milima haikutani lakini wanadamu hukutana*, which means that 'mountains never meet but human beings meet'. He therefore hopes that one day he will meet his lover.

The theme of this song closely relates with the song *Kristina* where Kifoto longs to meet his long time lover called Kristina whom he had not met for quite a long time. He starts the song by calling out with nostalgia: *Kristina dada, uko wapi? Nakutafuta sikuoni*, meaning, 'Kristina, where are you? I am looking for you but I cannot find you'. He goes on to say that despite his failure to see her, luck had been on his side and he had received the letter Kristina sent him. Therefore, he eagerly looks forward to meeting her. His strong wish to meet Kristina is explained in a part of the refrain phrase that *ningekuwa na uwezo, ningekutumia nauli ya ndege. Ili ufike haraka*, meaning 'if he were able he would have sent Kristina air fare so she reaches him very fast'.

#### (iv) *Wazazi Wako Wamenikataa (Your Parents Have Rejected Me)*

This music is a lamentation by a certain lady who explains that in as much as she is willing to get married to her boyfriend; his parents are not in favour of her marriage to him. The song is a pointer to the fact that occasionally, in our communities; cases arise where parents intervene in marriage decisions of their children. Although Kifoto does not offer a possible solution in this song, the implication the song paints is that such interventions are not fair to those who intend to get married.

#### (v) *Riziki (Luck)*

The song, *Riziki*, is a form of advice to the youth and everybody else to be patient in life. Kifoto observes that every person has their own luck in life which may be realised at its own opportune and unique time. He points out

that life is a struggle and for people to succeed, they have to be persistent in their pursuit for their goal. He discourages stealing and robbery and reiterates that property got in that manner does not have God's blessings and it does not last. He further advises that one can create wealth through careful planning and investing little by little (*haba na haba hujaza kibaba*). He also advises that people should not be jealous of other people's success but instead, they should concentrate on following up their luck by working hard, hence the words *kazana bwana, na mwisho utafanikiwa. Riziki haivutwi na kamba*, (work hard and in the end you will be successful. Luck cannot be forced).

The songs *Waona Kijijo* (You are jealous) and *Hasira ni Hasara* (Anger is Loss) are thematically related to *Riziki*. In *Waona Kijijo* the composer highlights the negative results of jealousy and cautions people against engaging in or listening to gossip or rumours. *Hasira ni Hasara* is a popular Kiswahili saying that literally means 'anger leads to loss'. In the song, *Hasira ni Hasara*, Kifoto says that gossip can easily break up families and therefore one should not listen to any.

**(vi) *Pokea Salamu* (Receive greetings)**

In this song, Kifoto sends greetings and good wishes to his wife and children at home presumably from his place of work. The music is very lively and naturally calls for vigorous dancing hence eliciting a jovial mood.

**(vii) *Uvivu Mbaya* (Laziness is bad)**

Here Kifoto lauds the importance of education as the foundation and key to human development. He also strongly emphasizes the fact that laziness in any profession or undertaking is the main cause of poverty and hunger. This message comes out strongly at the beginning of the song where he states thus *Uvivu adui mkubwa wa ujenzi wa taifa; kwani ndicho kiini hasa kisababishacho njaa*, which translates to: 'Laziness is a major enemy of nation building. It is the main cause of hunger'. This song will be discussed later in this paper.

## Works Composed in Dawida Language

### (i) *Charonyi ni Wasi (The Journey is Tough)*

This song in Kiswahili, means '*Safari ni Tabu*'. It is a story giving a difference of lifestyles in urban and rural areas, especially during the time of recording this song (Personal interview, 12th November, 2009). Life in his rural area was cheap because commodities like wild green vegetables were easily found for free while in urban areas one had to pay money to get everything including water. *Charonyi ni Wasi* is a form of advice by Kifoto to his listeners encouraging them not to be obsessed with moving from rural to urban areas in search of green pastures – which do not actually exist. Life in the rural areas is cheap and more comfortable. The song will also be discussed in detail later in this paper.

### (ii) *Sighenyi Sheshe (I don't Like Gossip)*

The song is about ladies, from an imaginary village, in the Taita community who were obsessed with spreading gossip and witch-hunt such that at the end, their images were tainted to the extent of discouraging men from marrying them. The song advises them to change their behaviour in order to be successful in life.

### (iii) *Leo ni Harusi (Today is the Wedding Day)*

The song is about a man and his fiancée. The two are just about to get married so the man is telling the lady that the day has come for their wedding. For that matter, he advises his fiancé to bid farewell to her father and mother, aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers and all friends during the wedding day.

### *Ni Wapo (He is Mine)*

This is a song about a man and woman in love. After about three years the man proposes marriage and the girl suggests that they should both meet her parents. When the man visits her parents, the man is asked many questions. Question number one is: "What is the level of your education? Two: "What

is your profession?" The man says: "I did not read much but I play my guitar to earn a living." The old man tells his daughter to forget about marrying that man because his job is not prestigious. In response, the girl tells her parents that she is not going to change her decision to marry the man of her choice in whatever circumstances – and so the chorus: *Ni wapo*, that is, 'he is mine'. It is arguable that Kifoto, in this song, highlights the fact that society often despises musicians. Music is not as a respectable profession. However, Kofoto's view is that love between a man and a woman who intend to get married often supersedes what other people think and say. Many a time they disregard what is said or recommended and go ahead to get married (*Habel Kifoto, Personal Interview, 12/11/2009*).

### **Translation and Discussion of Two Major Works by Habel Kifoto**

In this section two works, one in Kiswahili and the other in Dawida language, by Kifoto are discussed. The importance of themes in the chosen songs to humanity formed the main basis of their choice for discussion. Furthermore, the choice is also based on the fact that Kifoto composed his music mainly in the two languages. Brief synopses of the two songs have already been given in the previous section of this paper. In this section, an attempt is made towards the provision of a textual analysis.

#### **(a) *Uvivu Mbaya* (Laziness is Bad)**

This song encourages hard work and discourages laziness. Kifoto says that hard work is the key to nation-building and it should be encouraged across the board from white collar jobs, blue collar jobs to academics. In the translation that follows, the composer urges the clerk, his child and his brother to report at their place of work; the office, the school and farm very early in the morning. The song also stresses the fact that education is central to nation-building and development.

## **Kiswahili**

*Uvivu adui mkubwa*

*Wa ujenzi wa taifa*

*Kwani ndicho kiini hasa*

*Kisababishacho njaa*

*Ewe ndugu yanguwe*

*Amka kumekucha*

*Kamata jembe na panga*

*Uende shamba*

*Hata wewe mwanagu*

*Amka kumekucha*

*Kwani hizi ndizo saa*

*Za kwenda shule*

*Hata wewe karani*

*Amka kumekucha*

*Kwani hizi ndizo saa*

*Za kwenda kazi*

*Uvivu ndio adui*

*Ya ujenzi wa taifa*

*Jiepushe na uvivu*

*Tujenge taifa*

*Ndugu yangu kumekucha*

*Amka twende shamba*

*Jiepushe na uvivu*

*Tujenge taifa*

## **English**

Laziness is the main enemy

Of nation building

Because it is the main nucleus

That causes famine

My brother

Wake up, it is dawn

Get hold of a hoe and a machete

Go to the farm

Even you my child

Wake up, it is dawn

Because this is the time

To go to school

Even you clerk

Wake up, it is dawn

Because this is the time

To report on duty

Laziness in the enemy

Of nation building

Avoid laziness

So that we build the nation

My brother, it is dawn

Wake up; let us go to the farm

Avoid laziness

Let us build the nation

<i>Mwanagu kumekucha</i>	My child, it is dawn
<i>Amka uende shule</i>	Wake up and go to school
<i>Elimu ndio msingi</i>	Education is the foundation
<i>Wa maendeleo</i>	Of development
<i>Karani kumekucha</i>	Clerk, it is dawn
<i>Amka uende kazi</i>	Wake up and go on duty
<i>Jiepushe na uvivu</i>	Avoid laziness
<i>Tujenge taifa</i>	Let us build the nation
<i>Uvivu ndio adui</i>	Laziness is the enemy
<i>Ya maendeleo</i>	Of development

**(b) Charonyi ni Wasi**

This song was selected for further discussion because of its popularity to the Kenyan listener to date. It is regularly aired in several Kenyan radio stations. In this regard, David Kibe, a contemporary of Kifoto and a key pioneer member of Maroon Commandoes observes:

*One of the great ironies was that even as the band pushed for Kiswahili, it was the Taita song, Charonyi ni Wasi (author's emphasis) by Kifoto that became its ticket to fame as a recording band (Sunday Nation Review, 27/3/2010: 28)*

In addition to the above, it is arguable that people like the song because of its interesting melody, a naturally flowing Dawida language speech rhythm and an innovative binary structure embedded in the larger ternary form. It is also important to note that in its deeper meaning, the song discourages rural-urban migration and suggests that rural life is cheaper and less hectic than urban life. The song underscores the fact that in the urban setting, literally, everything from water, flour to green vegetables has to be bought. Arguably, the opposite of this applies to rural life where it is possible to cultivate cash

crops and food crops. Therefore, the song, indirectly, advocates for the 'go back to the farm' strategy for survival. This information may be useful to most of today's youth and other people who tend to think that all good jobs and quality life are found in the cities. These messages are explicit in the meaning to meaning translation of the song from *Taita (Dawida)* language to English as follows:

<b>Taita</b>	<b>English</b>
<i>Wadawida ee</i>	Wataita ee.
<i>Wadawida damroghua mwasinda</i>	The Taita, we greet you. How are you?
<i>Isi aha dekoo mana</i>	We, here are doing fine
<i>Ndedimanyagha inyo cha mzinyi</i>	We don't know how you are doing?
<i>Dekakireti ee</i>	We are far from home
<i>Dekakireti ela msediliwe</i>	Although we are far, don't forget us!
<i>Ilagho ibaha nechinibinana</i>	The important thing is that we are all in good health
<i>Nikikuandikiagha barua</i>	We will keep in touch through letter writing
<i>Aha charonyi ni wasi</i>	Out here we have problems
<i>Vilambo vose ni igome</i>	Anything we need requires money.
<i>Kukekunda mufu ni igome</i>	If you need flour, you require money
<i>Kukekunda munavu ni igome</i>	If you need vegetables ( <i>kunde</i> ) you require money
<i>Machi genywa ni igome</i>	Even drinking water requires money
<i>Kila kilambo ni igome</i>	Everything you need requires money

*Ni wasi ni wasi ni wasi*

It is just problems everywhere

*Ni wasi ni wasi ni wasi*

It is just problems everywhere

### **Conclusion**

From the foregoing, Kifoto's contribution to popular music is in terms of ideas, style, advice, entertainment, and band management techniques cannot be underestimated. No wonder after his retirement from the army in 2002 he was elected to chair the Kenya Music Copyright Society (K.M.C.S.), a post he holds to date. It is evident that themes in his music are anchored on very pertinent topical issues that affect the youth, adults, male-female relationships, job-seekers, nation-building challenges, hard work, general development issues and positive thinking towards life. He has been decorated by His Excellency, President Mwai Kibaki, with Head of State Commendation for his contribution to the development of music in Kenya. Kifoto's experience and ideas are an invaluable resource to upcoming and practicing popular musicians.

### **Refer**

Okum

Study

Univer

Person

Sound

and M

Wesan

Lifesty

Kariuk

In Sun

Limite

References

Okumu, C. C. (1998). *The Development of Popular Music in Kenya: A Study of Kiswahili Songs in Nairobi.* Unpublished MA Thesis, Kenyatta University.

Personal Interview with Habel Kifoto on 12th November, 2009, Nairobi.

Soundafrica Ltd. (2008). Kenya Classics CD: Greatest Hits by Habel Kifoto and Maroon Commandos. Nairobi.

Wesang'ula, D. (2010) 'Maroon Comandos March to 40.' In Sunday Nation, Lifestyle. 31st January, 2010. Nairobi: Nation Media Group Limited.

Kariuki, J. (2010) *'The cultural War that Dealt Kenyan Music a Body Blow.'* In Sunday Nation, Review, 27th March, 2010. Nairobi: Nation Media Group Limited.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### THOMAS WASONGA OGOLA, *O.G.W. S.S.* (1954—)



Thomas Wasonga Ogola was born in 1954, at Kampi Ya Moto which is situated near Kabarak University around Nakuru Town in Kenya. His late father, Paul Ogola Wanamanda, worked as headman or supervisor at a white settler's sisal farm at Kampi Ya Moto. Wasonga is a third born in a family of three boys and four girls. When he was a year old, his

father resigned and went to settle in Central Nyanza, Siaya District in the present day Ugenya District. Here, he settled down as a small-scale farmer. In 1961, Thomas joined standard one in Mbosie Primary School in Ugenya. He sometimes took private tuition from his elder brother. This saw him being promoted to standard four in 1962 at the age of eight years. At this tender age, he demonstrated acting skills when he acted in a play called Cinderella based on the English text book series with which they were taught from Standard Three.

"Latin language sounded very nice to me especially when it was sung. Today, I can remember many songs and the melodies of the sung Catholic Mass in those days," Wasonga explains with nostalgia. At this moment his music talent was not clearly manifested. At school he participated in singing classes just as a choir member. He remembers and acknowledges the inspiration by

his teacher, Adriano Oloo Waganda, who trained the school choir to sing religious songs and folk songs.

In 1963, Wasonga joined standard five in Sigomre Primary School and continued participating in the school choir as a singer. In 1965, he sat for his Certificate of Primary Education (C.P.E.) and passed. Supported by his elder brother who had just got a job at Kenya Ports Authority (K.P.A.), he moved to Mombasa in 1967 and joined Mombasa Christian Industrial Training Centre where he sat for the Kenya Junior Secondary Education Examination in 1969. Among the subjects he did were technical subjects like General Fitting and Machine Operation. During his time at the training centre, his music activity was limited to Catholic Church choir membership without any leadership roles.

Between 1970 and 1972 he attended Mombasa Polytechnic where he took a course in Mechanical Engineering, Grade Two Certificate. Thereafter, he was employed at Brollo Engineering works in Mombasa in 1973 for two months after which he was taken ill for almost two years. When he recovered towards the end of 1974, he joined St. Mary's Catholic Church Choir at Changamwe in Mombasa as a Chorister. The choir trainer at that time was Mr. Paul Shauritanga and his wife who were from Tanzania. Whenever these two were absent, Wasonga would volunteer to assist in training the choir.

In 1975, he applied and was admitted to pursue a two year course leading to a Certificate in Primary Teacher Training Education at Kericho Teachers' Training College. His music tutors were Mr. Gerishon Manani and Mr. Ondeng'. Apart from participating in the College Choir, he was a Young Catholics Association (Y.C.A.) leader. He started to develop interest in the composition, teaching and performance of religious music. When he completed his teacher training course in 1977, he was posted to Sigomre Primary School in Ugenya, his home area.

In 1979, he was requested by the local District Development Officer, Trufosa Onyango, to compose a patriotic song for St. Michael Catholic Church in preparation for a performance at a public Presidential rally, which never materialized. The song he composed was entitled *Kenya Yetu Nchi Yangu* (Our Kenya, My Country).

In 1980, he sought transfer to Mombasa District so that he could get a better chance to advance in music studies through private tuition. He was granted his request and immediately transferred to Mombasa. In Mombasa, he joined the Mombasa Teachers' Choir, which comprised Secondary and Primary school teachers. In 1982, he composed the song *Twajivunia Nchi ya Kenya* (We appreciate Kenya) and revised his earlier song, *Kenya Yetu Nchi Nzuri* (Our Kenya is a good country). This was done in preparation for a performance at a Presidential rally in Mombasa. The songs were performed when the former President of Kenya, Daniel arap Moi, went to Mombasa to officially open the Kenya Pipeline Company. It was here that Wasonga's talent and skill of training and conducting mass choirs was noticed by both the Ministry of Education officials and the Public Administration officials. As a result, he was assessed and promoted on merit to Approved Teacher status. He was also appointed a head teacher.

Wasonga's supremacy as a mass choir trainer saw him transferred to the Ministry of Education headquarters in Nairobi from where he coordinated music performances by Educational Institutions in Kenya, especially for Presidential functions. Due to his competence in composing and performing patriotic and political songs during Presidential functions, his services were transferred to the Office of the President and later to the Permanent Presidential Music Commission where he currently works as a Senior Programmes Officer.

## Wasonga's Works and Style

Although his musical career was largely inspired by religious songs, and although he composed other genre of songs like wedding songs and topical songs such as *Kuutunza Mazingira* (Conservation of the Environment) and *Ukimwi Upo Tujihadhari* (AIDS is a reality, Lets be Careful), he was largely known for the composition of patriotic and political songs.

In his patriotic and political songs, Wasonga explores six distinct themes namely:

- (i) Jamhuri (independence), Uhuru (freedom) and Madaraka (self governance)- celebrating the fact that Kenya is an independent state and lauding those who fought for independence. He also celebrates the fact that Kenyans are enjoying their freedom. Examples of his songs that fall under this category are: *Heko Jamhuri, Kupigania Uhuru Kenya, Kenya Jamhuri, Tunafurahia Madaraka, Jamhuri ya Kenya, Uhuru Wetu Kenya* etc.
- (ii) Praise of President Moi, his leadership style, his contribution and policies. Examples of his songs that fall in this category are: *Tawala Kenya, Tumpongeze Raisi Moi, Tunapongeza Kazi Yake, etc.*
- (iii) Praise and advocacy for and of KANU as the ruling party. An example of his song that fall in this category is: *Tuna pongeza chama cha Kanu,*
- (iv) Advocacy and propagation of the Nyayo philosophy of peace, love and unity. Examples of his songs that fall in this category are: *Enzi ya Nyayo, Nyayo Filosofia.*
- (v) "Harambee" a slogan in which he urges Kenyans to acquire the spirit of pulling together their strengths and resources. Examples of his songs that fall in this category are: *Harambee mwito wetu, Wanainchi tuna jikumu*
- (vi) Praise of the country (Kenya) and her key personalities, their

philosophies, achievements, contributions and policies. Most of his songs fall under this theme namely: *Kenya yetu nchi nzuri, Tushangilie Kenya, Twaipenda Kenya, Twajivunia nchi ya Kenya, Mungu ibariki Kenya, Wanainchi tuna jukumu, Nimeshaapa kulinda Kenya, etc.*

In terms of form and structural organisation, Wasonga's songs fall under responsorial structure which exhibit a call and response style in form of a distinct solo voice and a chorus interacting in performance to realise a complete melodic statement. The resultant melodic statement therefore consists of a question and answer. This structural organisation enhanced participation by the mass. Question and answer is a basic interactive philosophy of African music that provides group energy or solidarity for an individual to emerge. It also makes music a communal intercourse and discourse.

Two different species of the responsorial structure exhibited in Wasonga's songs are:

(a) Response repetition

(b) Refrain repetition

These are presented using music illustrations as shown below:

**(a) Response Repetition**

In response repetition structure, the chorus responds to the solo statement with short phrase or word.

Two types of this structure are exhibited in Wasonga's songs:

- (i) The chorus answer consists of a short phrase or word followed by a longer one. In some cases, the first short phrase or word answer pauses on a restless suspended melodic question, while the second longer part of the answer gives a feeling of completeness or finality.

- (ii) The chorus answer has a standard phrase either short or long maintained throughout a section or duration of the song.

**(b) Refrain repetition**

In this structure the chorus has a refrain which is continuously repeated after the soloist's call. In this case, the chorus statement is longer than the solo call. Sometimes the text of the chorus statement may change but the melody/rhythm remains the same.

Wasonga uses a mixture of the two structures in one song. An example is his song *Tushangilie Kenya* (let praise Kenya) where he uses the two types of response repetition structures as follows:

**Section A:**

**Solo State**

*Tushangilie*

*Tunayo ipe*

*Kenya inch*

**Translatio**

Let as prai

We love ...

Kenya the r

This song is

the big div

species (i).

(our people

(ii).

**Section B:**

**Solo:** *Kenya  
na milele*

**Response:**

**Translatio**

**Solo:** *Kenya*

**Response:**

This sectio

species (ii).

before the c

**Section A:**

**Solo Statement**

**Chorus Answer**

*Tushangilie Kenya taifa letu tukufu, Kenya*

*Tunayo ipenda..... Daimaaaaa (sustained)*

*Kenya inchi tunayoipenda..... Daima (short)*

**Translation:**

Let us praise Kenya our great nation, Kenya that

We love ..... Forever (sustained)

Kenya the nation that we love..... Forever!

This song is in a quasi rondo ABCBA or modified ternary form if we examine the big divisions of sections. The A section exhibits a response repetition species (i). This is followed by *cue soloist* singing the words 'Wenzangu' (our people) to welcome the B section which is in response repetition species (ii).

**Section B:**

**Solo:** *Kenya kipenzi changu nchi yenye upendo hatuta acha Kenya daima na milele*

**Response:** *Kenya kipenzi chetu, Hatutaiacha milele daima.*

**Translation:**

**Solo:** Kenya my love a country of love, we will not leave Kenya forever

**Response:** We will not leave Kenya my love forever.

This section is followed by the C section which is in Response repetition species (ii). In this section the solo overlaps the chorus answer and comes in before the chorus ends as follows:

## Section C:

### Solo Statement

*Eh sita iacha Kenya nchi yangu*

*Na niki enda ngambo nita rudi*

### Translation:

Eh! I will not leave Kenya my country

Even if I travel abroad I will always come back

The cue solo '*Wenzangu, Wenzangu*' (our people, our people) is then sung to usher in a repeat of the B section. After this repeat then there is a return to the A section which also marks the end of the song.

The change over to the different sections is marked by the technique known as *cue soloing* inserted at the end of the solo part before the chorus comes in. This serves as a connecting link used for cueing in the chorus often after the solo part. In this song Wasonga uses the word *Wenzangu* (our people) to cue in the chorus and to recap the A section.

Another one of Wasonga's songs in which he uses a mixed responsorial structure is *Tawala Kenya*. This song exhibits a modified ternary form ABA. The A section is in Refrain repetition structure as follows:

### Solo call

*Tawala Kenya Tawala  
Tawala Kenya Tawala*

*Una ongoza viema*

### Translation:

Rule Kenya, rule

### Chorus Answer

*Mimi ni mwana Kenya  
daima*

*Mimi ni mwana Kenya  
daima.*

I am a Kenyan forever

I am a Kenyan forever

### Chorus statement

*Tawala Kenya Tawala, Raisi Moi*

*Una ongoza viema, Raisi Moi una  
ongoza viema.*

Rule Kenya rule, President Moi rule  
Kenya

You are ruling the citizens well      You are ruling the citizens well  
 President Moi, you are ruling well

The B section of this song exhibits the response repetition species (ii) where the chorus answer has a standard phrase either short or long maintained throughout a section or whole duration of the song as follows:

**Solo Statement**

**Chorus Answer**

*Moi ongoza Kenya*

*Tawala Kenya Tawala, Raisi wetu  
 Tawala Kenya Tawala*

*Baba unapenda amani*

*Tawala Kenya Tawala, Raisi wetu  
 Tawala Kenya Tawala*

*Kweli Kenya ina amani*

*Tawala Kenya Tawala, Raisi wetu  
 Tawala Kenya Tawala*

**Translation:**

Moi lead Kenya

Rule Kenya rule, our president rule  
 Kenya

You love peace our father

Rule Kenya rule, our president rule  
 Kenya

Kenya is truly peaceful

Rule Kenya rule, our president rule  
 Kenya

This section is then followed by a return to A section.

In the above two responsorial structures, the soloist can sing a short melodic figure like in the song *Tushangilie Kenya* or just sound some vocables e.g. *oh, ah, eh* at the end of the solo part before the chorus comes in, a technique referred to as cue soloing.

In the two species of responsorial structure discussed above, one section sometimes starts before the other section completes its part causing an overlap. From the analysis of Wasonga's, songs above, the overlapping occurs in two different ways.

1. the chorus enters before or on the last word/notes/syllable of the solo section.
2. the soloist takes his/her cue while the chorus is still on e.g. *Tawala Kenya* section B.

In both cases, the overlapping is partial and not full. The degree and nature of overlapping depends on the points of entry. If the soloist takes his/her cue when the chorus has up to half, a full bar or more to go, then the overlapping is said to be a full one. But if he/she takes his/her cue on the last note of the chorus, or thereabouts, a partial overlapping occurs.

### **Rhythmic Structure**

Most of Wasonga's songs exhibit cultural rhythms mainly from the Luo community specifically the Luo *nyono* cultural rhythm in 4/4 time even though there are a few of his songs which are in rhumba style. This makes the songs danceable. Wasonga varies rhythms in his songs through change of the responsorial structures. His songs do not exhibit any change of tempo, time signature, or Key signature. Rarely does he modulate to other keys.

Performance of these songs involved some body movements to enhance the entertainment value, making the rhumba and cultural rhythms mainly from the Luo community more popular in this context. Most of the songs are organised in simple time signatures mostly simple duple and simple quadruple as evidenced by the following examples: 2/2 time – *Nimeshaapa Kulinda Kenya*; 4/4 time – *Jamhuri ya Kenya*, *Tawala Kenya*, *Kenya yetu*; 2/4 *Tushangilie Kenya*; 6/8 *Uhuru wetu Kenya*.

### **Melodic structure**

Most of Wasonga's songs do not exceed the range of an octave. The widest melodic range he uses is a 10<sup>th</sup> or compound third as is evidenced by the following examples of his songs: *Nimeshaapa Kilinda Kenya*, *Tushangilie Kenya* have a melodic range of a 10<sup>th</sup>; *Jamhuri ya Kenya*, *Tawala Kenya*,

and *Uhuru Wetu Kenya* have a melodic range of an octave while *Kenya Yetu* has a melodic range of a 7<sup>th</sup>. What could be seen as a limiting melodic range was purposely used to allow for participation by mass. The choice of the melodic range was informed by performers singing capability since the songs were not written for virtuosi singers. The most important aspect in the performance of these songs was communicative value of the songs. Because of this, Wasonga limited the melodic range to the vocal capability of the human members so as not to strain and camouflage the message which was paramount in this case.

It is also worthy of mention that Wasonga preferred using a tenor solo. This is because he was used to being the soloist of his songs and he is a tenor. His songs consist of regular phrases of two bars by two to form four bar sentence or a straight four bar phrase with an antecedent and consequent construction. Unity and coherence is achieved through repetition of either melodic or rhythmic elements or both, while contrast is achieved through rhythmic and pitch variations of phrases and sentences. Repetitions are either successive or may be separated by deviations to contrasting material as in the case of his song *Tushangilie Kenya* (see analysis above).

The text of his patriotic and political songs is Kiswahili. Kiswahili is the national language in Kenya (*lingua Franca*) understood by most Kenyans. Composing the songs in Kiswahili therefore meant that the songs can be consumed by majority of the Kenyan audience.

### **Key and scale**

All patriotic and political songs composed by Wasonga are in major Key with the key of G major and C major being the predominantly used keys. Most of these songs begin and end in the same key. The songs exhibit the use of diatonic scale. Instances of a change of the tonal center (modulation) are rare in his patriotic and political songs.

Among the many songs he composed, especially in the 24-year reign of President Daniel arap Moi, were:

Twaipenda Kenya (2008), Pendo (1995), Siku ya Harusi (1978), Heko Jamhuri (1983), Tawala Kenya (1979), Tunapongeza chama KANU (1990), Enzi ya Nyayo (1988), Kupigania Uhuru Kenya (1999), Twajivunia nchi ya Kenya (1983), Tumsifu Mungu (1989), Mungu Ibariki Kenya (1986), Jina la Mungu (1991), Wananchi Tuna Jukumu (1989), Tujiunge na Ushirika (1993), Kenya Yetu Nchi Nzuri (1979), Jawar Wapako (1978), Jokatakatifu (1977), Ubatizo Golo Richo (1977), Goluru Chiwo (1978), Richona (1978), Tutoe Sadaka (1972), Ukimwi Upo Tujihadhari (2000), Girl Guide Movement (1986), Nimeshaapa (1994), Wananchi Tuna Jukumu (1987), Nyayo Filosofia (1984), Enzi ya Nyayo (1988), Umoja Wetu (1990), Tuishangilie Kenya (1985), Tunafurahia Madaraka (1996), Kenya Jamhuri (1992), Harambee Mwito Wetu (1998), Njoooni Maonyesho (1997), Tumpongeze Rais Moi (1986), Tunapongeza Kazi Yake (1987), Bidii Za Wanakenya (1993), Tangu Uhuru (1994), Mwaka Tumeingia (1995).

Although Wasonga composed many songs as listed above, some were more prominent than others. Among the most regularly performed songs, especially in the Moi era (1978 - 2002) were *Heko Jamhuri* and *Tawala Kenya*. It is noteworthy that to date the song *Heko Jamhuri* is still performed largely because of its patriotic significance to all Kenyans irrespective of age and political stand. Arguably, its neutral lyrics transcend boundaries of any political inclination. The song contains historical information about Kenya's independence and its freedom from the colonial powers. Furthermore, it encourages all citizens to move with speed in embracing development initiatives in all sectors such as education, agriculture, industry and health.

Concl

All Wa  
arguabl  
life exp  
structur  
has mo  
exposu  
design  
the Mo  
and Ur  
numbe  
compo  
pieces  
Excell  
Grand  
of mus

Refer

Thom  
10/9/2

## Conclusion

All Wasonga's songs were composed for choral music performance. It is arguable that his inclination towards this genre was informed by his early life experiences and involvement in school and church choirs. All his music structures are generally in responsorial style. In most cases the solo part has more text than the response. It is very possible that Wasonga's previous exposure to folk music performance would have had an influence in the design of his music. Although Wasonga composed most of his songs during the Moi era for purposes of popularizing Moi's philosophy of Peace, Love and Unity (popularly known to Kenyans as the *Nyayo* Philosophy), a good number of his songs are based on religious themes and topical issues. He composed mainly in Kiswahili language. However, he also composed a few pieces in his mother tongue, *Dho-luo*. Wasonga has been decorated by His Excellency the President with silver Star (S.S.) of Kenya and Order of the Grand Warrior of Kenya (O.G.W.) for his contribution to the development of music in Kenya.

## Reference

Thomas Ogola Wasonga (2009) Personal Interview with the author on 10/9/2009 in Nairobi.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: SONGS COMPOSED BY WASONGA

#### (a) TUMSIFU MUNGU MWEMA: COMPOSED BY T. WASONGA – 1989

1. Tumsifu mungu mwema aliye mwumba wetu.  
Kwa maana viumbe vyote vinatoka – kwake
2. Kaumba ulimwengu pamoja na mali yote  
Matendo yake Mungu ni makubwa kwetu X 2

**RESPONSE:** Astahili enzi utukufu na heshima  
Mwenyenzi Baba Mungu Mwumba Mola wetu.

3. Kapenda mwanadamu kwa moyo wake wote  
Kaumba binadamu kwa mfano wake (X2)
4. Na sisi watu wake wa humu nchini Kenya  
Twasifu Baba Mungu kwa upendo wake (X2)
5. Katupa nchi nzuri inayopendeza Kenya  
Na tena ametunza nchi yetu vyema (X2)
6. Twaomba ewe mola uzidi kulinda Kenya  
Kwa kuwa nguvu zote na uwezo ni zako (X2)
7. Bariki nchi zote ee Baba uliye mwema  
Kwa maana were ndiwe tegemeo letu (X2)
8. Tumsifu Baba mungu, tumsifu Baba Mungu  
Bariki Kenya nchi yetu: Tuzidi kuishi kwa amani (X2)  
Tujenge Kenya nchi yetu, Tuishi kwa furaha tele (X2)

Ee Baba a..... a.....

9. (a) Kwa mambo ya machafuko: Twaomba Baba utukinge  
Ee Mola -a – a
- (b) Kwa mambo ya ukabila: Twaomba Baba utukinge

Ee Mola - a - a

- (c) Kwa mambo yaliochafu : Twaomba Baba utukinge  
Ee Mola - a - a-
- (d) Kwa mambo yenye uchoyo: Twaomba Baba utukinge  
Ee Mola - a - a -
- (e) Kwa mambo mabaya yote : Twaomba Baba utukinge

Astahili enzi utukufu na heshima

Mwenyezi Baba Mungu mwumba Mola wetu (X3)

**(b). KENYA YETU NCHI NZURI: Composed by T. Wasonga (1979)**

1. (i) Solo: Kenya yetu nchi nzuri : Nchi yako, nchi yangu  
Solo: Mwito wetu Harambee : Ndugu.  
Tujenge Kenya : Nchi yako, nchi yangu  
Twaipenda daima.
- (ii) Solo: Mwzangu mwananchi : Tuunganeni mkono,  
Tulijenge taifa.  
Solo: Sote tuna wajibu : Ndugu.  
Kuijenga Kenya : Nchi yako, nchi yangu,  
Twaipenda daima.
- (iii) Solo: Viongozi wetu wote : Muwaongeze watu  
wetu  
Kwa amani daima.  
Solo: Mmepwea uwezo : Ndugu  
Ya kuisimamia : Nakulinda haki yetu  
Kwa amani daima.
- (iv) Solo: Ndugu zetu wanajesi : Muilinde nchi yetu

- |    |                                      |   |
|----|--------------------------------------|---|
|    | Solo: Msimame imara                  | Siku zote daima.<br>Ndugu                 |
|    | Tuilinde Kenya:                      | Nchi yako, nchi yangu<br>Twaipenda daima. |
| 2. | Solo: Ndugu zetu tufanye<br>Harambee | Tulijenge taifa                           |
|    | Akina mama tufanye<br>Harambee       | Tulijenge taifa                           |
|    | Akina baba tufanye<br>Harambee       | Tulijenge taifa (X2)                      |

Nchi yako nchi yangu twaipenda daima

Tuunganeni mkono tulijenge taifa. Tulijenge taifa

**(c) PENDO: Composed by T. WASONGA (1990)**

1. Tunatoa shukrani kwa Mungu Baba Mwenyezi kwa kuitunza  
Nchi yetu Kenya: Kwa upendo.
2. Kwa sababu ya upendo twafurahia amani na Kenya yetu  
Inazidi sana: Kwenda mbele.
3. Tena kwa upendo huo ushirikiano tunao pamoja tunajenga  
Kenya yetu: Kwa upendo.
4. Na tusipokuwa na upendo tutaharibu amani kwa sababu pendo  
Ndilo neon: Lake mungu.

*Chorus:*

Pendo tunahimi za

Pendo tulidumishe

Pendo ni neon muhimu la msingi kwa amani (X2)

- a.
5. (a) Pendo halitaki ugomvi: tunahimiza  
 (b) Pendo halitaki fitima: tulidumishe  
 (c) Pendo halina utaguzi: tunahimiza  
 (d) Pendo halina ukabila: tulidumishe  
 (e) Pendo ni chanzo cha umoja: tunahimiza  
 (f) Pendo huchukia mabaya: tulidumishe  
 (g) Pendo ni neon muhimu la msingi kwa amani

*Chorus (X2)*

6. Tunatoa shukrani kwa Mungu Baba Mwenyezi kwa kuitunza.  
 Nchi yetu Kenya kwa upendo.
7. Kwa sababu ya upendo twafurahia amani na Kenya yetu inazidi  
 Sana: kwenda mbele.

*Chorus:*

Pendo tunahimiza

Pendo tulidumishe

Pendo ni neon muhimu la msingi kwa amani (X2)

**(d). RAIS MOI TAWALA KENYA: Composed by T. Wasonga (1979)**

<b>Solo</b>	<b>Response</b>
1. Tawala Kenya tawala:	Tawala Kenya tawala Rais Moi tawala Kenya tawala
2. Unaongoza vyema	Unaongoza vyema Rais Moi unaongoza vyema
3. Peleka Kenya mbele:	Peleka Kenya mbele Rais wetu peleka Kenya mbele
4. Tunamsifu Moi:	Tunamsifu Moi Rais wetu tunamsifu sana
5. Rais Moi Baba Taifa Kenya, Ongoza Kenya nchi yetu:	Ee baba tawala

	Ee ongoza Kenya nchi yetu:	Ee baba tawala	(e) T 1.
6.	Tangu uliposhika uongozi Kenya, umoja umeongezeka Ee umoka umeongezeka	Ee baba tawala Ee baba tawala	2.
7.	Juhudi zako za kuleta amani, Dunia yote ya pongeza: Ee dunia yote yapongeza:	Ee baba tawala Ee baba tawala	3.
8.	Tuna imani na uongozi wako, Rais wetu mpendwa: Moi Rais wetu mpendwa:	Ee baba tawala Ee baba tawala	4.
9.	Moi ongoza Kenya	Tawala Kenya tawala Rais Wetu tawala Kenya tawala	5.
10.	Baba unapenda amani: Kweli Kenya ina amani:	Tawala Kenya tawala Rais wetu tawala Kenya tawala	6.
11.	Sote twakuunga mkono: Sisi sote tunyuma yako:	Tawala Kenya tawala Rais wetu tawala Kenya tawala	(i)
12.	Kweli Kenya yaenda mbio: Kwa uongozi wako wema	Tawala Kenya tawala Rais wetu tawala Kenya tawala	(ii)
13.	Mungu saidia Rais wetu: Azidi kutuongoza vyema:	Tawala Kenya tawala Rais wetu tawala Kenya tawala	(iii)
14.	Tawala Kenya tawala:	Tawala Kenya tawala Rais Moi tawala Kenya tawala	7.(i)
15.	Unaongoza vyema:	Unaongoza vyema Rais Moi unaongoza vyema	

(e) TUISHANGILIE KENYA : Composed by T. Wasonga (1985)

1. Solo: Tuishangilie Kenya Taifa letu tukufu  
Kenya tunayoipenda (Response: Daima)  
Kenya nchi tunayoipenda (X2) (Response: Daima)
2. Solo: Twajivunia sana tukijiita wakenya  
Nchi yenye Baraka (Response: Daima)  
Kenya nchi yenye Baraka (X2) (Response: Daima)
3. Solo: Kenya makao yetu ni nchi ya usalama  
Kamwe hatutaiacha (Response: Daima)  
Kamwe Kenya Hatutaicha (X2) (Response: Daima)
4. Solo: Anayependa Kenya ni Yule mwenye kutenda  
Haki kwa watu wote (Response: Daima)  
Mtu mwenye kutenda haki (X2) (Response: Daima)
5. Solo: Na ukipenda Kenya ujitengane na mambo  
Yenye kuvunja amani (Response: Daima)  
Hatutaki matata Kenya (X2) (Response: Daima)
6. Solo: Wenzangu: Response: Kenya kipenzi chetu,  
Hatuitaiacha milele daima (X2)
- (i) Solo: Kenya kipenzi chetu nchi yenye upendo,  
Hatutaacha Kenya daima na milele.
- (ii) Solo: Na tumeapa sote wananchi wa Kenya  
Kitimikia Kenya daima na milele.
- (iii) Solo: Kenya ni mama yetu tena ni baba yetu  
Hatutaacha Kenya daima na milele.
- 7.(i) Solo: Ee sitaiacha Kenya nchi yangu  
Resp: Mimi ni mwana Kenya daima.  
Solo: Nanikienda ngambo nitarudi (Response: Mimi.....)

- (ii) Sitadanganywa Kamwe na wageni (Response: Mimi.....)  
 Wala sitapotoshwa na wabaya: (Response: Mimi.....)

8. Solo: Wenzangu-u-u wenzangu  
 Resp. Kenya kipenzi chetu hatutaiacha milele daima X 2

(Kumaliza rudia kifungo cha kwanza mara moja tu.)

APPENDIX B: PHOTOGRAPHS



The National Mass Choir presented by Wasonga at Nyayo National Stadium on Moi Day – 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1988



**Wasonga conducting Kisumu Municipal Choir in 2007**



**Wasonga conducting Mombasa Teachers' choir at Mombasa Stadium during a state function in 1984**



**Wasonga performing with Abagusii Otenyo traditional dancers**



**Wasonga leading the Ministry of Education choir**