

African songs and dances

In Africa, drums and percussion instruments, like xylophones and shakers, are often used to accompany songs.

A Ugandan Lullaby

Mwana wa Nnyabo (My Dear Mother's Child)

Mwa-na wa nnyabo weesirikire,
Kye nnaalyako nja kuterekera
Baa Baa akaliga Kaa nywa taaba
Baa baa akaliga Kaa nywa taaba



The image shows a musical score for the lullaby 'Mwana wa Nnyabo'. It consists of three staves of music in G major and 6/8 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The second staff begins with a fermata over the first note. The third staff begins with a fermata over the first note. The lyrics are: Mwa-na wa nnyabo, wee-si-ri-ki-re; Kye-rnaa-lya-ko; nja ku-te-re-ke-ra; Baa baa, a-ka-li-ga, kaa-nywa taa-ba; Baa, baa, a-ka-li-ga, kaa-nywa taa-ba.

Kenyan Song

Wakyumwa Katambanga (Early Sunday Morning)

Kikamba (A Bantu language)

English

Wakyumwa katambanga
Musumbi na muka na kana koo kanini
Mooki kwitu tukethanie namo-ka
Methia ndekw'o kana kanini kasya
"Ethiwa ndekw'o tukoonana ingi uni"

One early Sunday morning
The King and his wife and little child
Visited to greet us
But they didn't find me
The little child said
"If he is not in we will call back
tomorrow"

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Wakyumwa Katambanga'. It is written in 2/4 time and consists of four systems of piano accompaniment. Each system has a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The first system has a melody in the treble staff starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, and then a whole note G5. The bass staff has a simple accompaniment. The second system continues the melody in the treble staff with eighth notes. The third system shows a change in the melody. The fourth system concludes with a few notes in the treble staff and a whole note in the bass staff.

A Kenyan Chant

This is a chant rather than a song. But you could add your own tune if you liked.

Swahili

English

Ukuti

The Leaf

Ukuti, Ukuti

The leaf, the leaf

Wa mnazi, Wa mnazi

Of the coconut tree, of the coconut tree

Ukipata Upepo

When the wind blows against it

Watete.. Watete.. Watetemeka..

It shakes... It shakes... It shakes...

This song has a dance which accompanies it. All stand in a circle and hold hands. Move to the right slowly for the first two lines then speed up and start running for “Ukipata Upepo “ – “When the wind blows against it”. On the last “Watetemeka” all fall to the ground!

More!

Visit the Singing Playground website.

http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/microsites/1513_singing_playground/index.html

Dan Jones has collected playground songs from all over the world and collated them. You can hear them on the website. There is also a wonderful painting including all the songs that is on display at the Museum of Childhood in London. If you are ever in London, or if you live there, why not go on a group trip to see it?