



THIS WAS AN EXCITING
GLOBAL EXCHANGE, OF
CULTURE AND IDEAS!

As a Ghanaian- British creative, it was an honor to be invited by Dr. Auma Obama to work with Sauti Kuu. It was a very refreshing and powerful experience to be a part of the legacy, of an organisation that goes above and beyond to empower children and young adults to strive to be the future leaders of the nation.

In August 2019, for one week I worked with 100 children aged 6-18 at Sauti Kuu at the summer retreat f, utilising Shakespeare and drama to reinforce the Sauti Kuu mantra of “Strong Voices.” Through bringing their voices and perspectives to Shakespeare’s most extreme characters, the children I worked with explored how empathy and cultural relativity can be used to help an individual makes the best and most informed choices for their lives.

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The week consisted of staff, volunteers, and children all attending a morning fitness class, that included boxing, netball, basketball, football, and yoga. This fitness class was every morning and children were split into groups and did all exercises on rotation. I have never experienced anything like this before, in the sense that it was actually enjoyable to do an hour and a half of fitness training at the crack of dawn, I actually looked forward to it! This was a fabulous experience, we were supporting and cheering each other on, as we went through our daily exercises. This daily practice centered us, and enabled us all to get closer and get to know each other, and become part of the Sauti Kuu family. It’s important to have that connection especially when working creatively, it allows a platform for vulnerability and exploration.

After the children had breakfast, drama rotation groups began with the children being split into age groups, they attended two 1 hour workshops hosted by each teaching artist. There were workshops that focused on dance, stage combat, iambic pentameter, storytelling, theatre games, and trust exercises. My workshop focused on dance in Shakespearean time and we explored how the participants could utilize their own cultural dances to enhance scenes. The remaining hours of the week were dedicated to each teaching artist working with their core group on Shakespeare scene or a choral monologue. I worked with children aged 8- 12 on a monologue from Troilus and Cressida about time. Sauti Kuu staff and volunteers coordinated groups and ensure that the programme ran smoothly. There was always a Sauti Kuu team member at hand to not only translate but also inspire and reassure children. If it wasn't for the astuteness, warmth, and openness of the Sauti Kuu team, my workshop, my time working at Sauti Kuu would not have been such a success as it was. The children felt supported and therefore took their creativity to phenomenal heights. They utilized Shakespeare's monologues to devise a piece that incorporated movement and performed mainly in Luo and Swahili. It was very lyrical, symbolic and emphasised the role time plays in our lives. It's not about how much time we have but what we do with the time we are given.

History was made! On Saturday 17th August 100 children performed the works of William Shakespeare in Luo and Swahili, for the first time to the community of Alego Nyangoma, Siaya County, Western Kenya. We achieved cultural cohesion and highlighted that regardless of your background, art always unites people together. The show was a tremendous success and was certainly an exciting, memorable experience for all involved.

Sauti Kuu provides a wonderful, space for children to explore the full extent of their imaginations and often be surprised at their strengths. We all worked wonderfully together, ensuring that the children, learned the importance of creative thinking and imagination. Every day Sauti Kuu ended the day by us all coming together, sharing what we had learned, playing games, and singing and dancing with each other. I ALWAYS felt a part of the Sauti Kuu family and recognized that it wasn't the case that the children were learning from me, I was learning from them. Like with any creative process it takes time, dedication, and patience. Sometimes things go wrong, sometimes you won't get something right, straight away. However, NONE of the children, staff, and volunteers at Sauti Kuu gave up at the first hurdle, we worked through any challenges that were present to achieve a unique and magical experience, for everyone!