

WAKAYIMA'S CHOIR IS A HIT

By Ernest Bazanye



The mouse led the way through a series of pathways and alleys and Wakayima followed. “Where are we going?” he would ask, and Kamese would always just say, “We are almost there,” and then they would end up scurrying along for another ten minutes.

Finally Wakayima asked, “Seriously, where are we going?”

“We’re here!” said Kamese. And he pointed his nose at a group of teenagers sitting on the veranda of a dusty shop-front. “My cousin lives in there, behind the sacks of bushera and sugar. He is the one who told me about this place.”

“And you have not told him what I told you? Never live in the same building as the food. Do you hate your cousin? Do you want him to get exterminated?”

“I told him last week, but he’s an idiot. He said he was going to move, and then he moved into the shop next door. But that is not why I brought you here. Listen to this.”

Wakayima listened.

The teenagers had a blue metal box the size of a little potato next to them. They were chatting and joking around the box. Meanwhile, next to the box was a mobile phone. One of the teenagers picked up the phone and tapped it a couple of times. Then he put it down. And all of a sudden the box made a bleeeeeeeeeping sound.

Then it made another bleeping sound.

Then it exploded into a series of banging, booming, tweeting, growling sounds.

The teenagers all started dancing along in glee. Wakayima looked down to see that Kamese was dancing as well. “You hear that? It’s amazing isn’t it? It is called Dancehall music! Best thing the humans have ever made except for sugar!”

In the midst of the banging and booming sounds Wakayima could hear voices speaking words like, “Booyaka!” and “Ya Ear Dat!” and “Ya Down Now!” and other things which made no sense to him and yet he was sure that, being a Ugandan hare, he understood all Ugandan languages.

“It’s not a language. It is called lyrics,” said Kamese, still dancing furiously.

Wakayima had to admit— it sounded very catchy, even though all the human voices were really bad. One was roaring like a lion that was trying to cough out a bone stuck in its throat. Another sounded like a weaverbird that a python had half swallowed that was still screaming angrily from inside the snake’s mouth. Yet another one was like a buffalo snoring.

But it was so much fun that the dancing teenagers did not even notice the hare and mouse dancing in the shadows along with them.

Suddenly Wakayima stopped dancing. “I have an idea!” he said. He looked at Kamese. “You remember when you asked me to show you how I disguise myself into a human being?”

Wakayima, in his full disguise as a human student, looking every inch like the boy they call Wakzi, knocked on the door of the staff room.

“Come in. Hi Wakayima,” said Teacher Murungi. She was alone in the staff room at the time and she lit up when she saw him. It looked as if she was feeling down and could use some company. “By the way, how come your name is Wakayima? That is a very rare name. It actually means ‘hare’. Don’t tell me your grandparents named you after a hare,” She laughed. “I’m just kidding. Come in.”

Wakayima stepped in, thinking, if she finds my name weird, wait till she hears who I have come in with.

“Teacher Murungi, I would like you to meet someone,” he said.

Into the room, behind Wakayima strode a short light-skinned young man. He was wearing sunglasses, and a fake gold necklace hung down his T-shirt, which was coloured in the rasta colours. He had a few dreads hanging out of his hat.

“Wagwan, Teacher Murungi,” he said.
“Nuff respect to the teachers! Nuff respect!”

“This is Producer Kamese,” Wakayima introduced him. “I don’t know if his parents named him after a mouse, but that is what he is called.”



“Good evening, Producer Kamese,” Teacher Murugi offered a handshake. Producer Kamese, who was really short, reached up a fist to bump her hand.

“So, how can I help you, gentlemen?” she asked.

“Actually, it is us who are here to help you,” said Wakayima. “Teacher Murungi, the choir sucks! I know that as a teacher you are not supposed to say such things about your students, but it is true. The kids who signed up for the choir sing so badly that badness looked at other badness and said, very badly, that this singing was bad.”

Teacher Murungi, sighed wearily. “No, we just need some training. The children just need to find their strengths, that is all.”

Wakayima grinned. “That is exactly what I was thinking. I am so clever, Teacher Murungi. Maybe that is why they call me Wakayima. Not because I am some sort of hare, of course.”

He continued, hoping that that was enough to throw her off track. “So I brought in Producer Kamese. He is a music producer. He is from the dancehall studio around Kamwokya where they make ragga hits. He is here to help the choir make school ragga songs.”



“I have heard some of your new choir members,” Kamese said. “One of them sounds like a hippo yawning. Another one sounds like a rooster laughing at a hilarious joke. Another one sounds like a jackal having an argument with its spouse. These kids have potential to make a great dancehall hit!”

Teacher Murungi looked at Kamese. Then at Wakayima. Then back at Kamese. Then back at Wakayima.

“Looks like we have a new choir leader,” she said. “Welcome to Tropical Hills Academy, Producer Kamese.”

To be honest, the students never expected to be called for choir practice so soon. Everyone knew that they sucked. Even the ones who could sing had decided to sing as badly as they could, just for the fun of it, because that was what everyone else was doing. Nobody took it seriously, so they really had not expected to be called to choir practice.

Everyone was a little bit confused, except Sheba. Sheba was quite excited. “I hope I get to do a solo part,” she said to Akello, her voice filled with excitement.

“I wouldn’t be surprised,” said Akello. “The way things are going.”

“Is this for real?” Kwezi asked Roger as they huddled around Class Zero. “I really like Teacher Murungi, but now I am scared of her.”

“Why would you be scared?” asked Roger.

“I think she is going to punish us for singing so badly,” he said. “We were horrible last time.”

“Well, if she is, I’m glad we got so many people to sign up,” said Roger. “They can’t arrest us all.”

But when Teacher Murungi approached the front of the class, she did not seem angry. She looked quite the opposite. “Hi everyone, I’m so glad to see you all, here. Hope you are all excited!”

“Doesn’t sound like punishment to me,” said Roger.

Kwezi still wasn’t sure. “Maybe she has found an exciting punishment. Why did I let Akzi talk me into signing that paper when I knew I can’t sing?”

“And who is that next to her?” Roger asked, as Kamese, with his sunglasses and bling, stepped up and stood next to Teacher Murungi.

“I’m sure you are all wondering who this is,” the teacher said. “Well, choir, I’d like to introduce you to your new Choir Leader, Producer Kamese! Give him a hand.”

Producer Kamese was small but he somehow managed to seem huge because of the force of his orders, and how fast he moved and how he shouted at everybody.

“You! All of you in that corner, stand up. Straight back! Good! The one on the side, what is your name? No, don’t say it, sing it. Good. Can you pronounce the word ‘Booyaka’? Say, ‘Booyaka!’ Not like that. You are saying ‘bowyucker.’ I want to hear ‘Booyaka!’ Everybody say ‘Booyaka!’ I want to hear it! I can’t hear you! Again! Louder! Good! Good! You, you, you, you and you! In the front. You are the best Booyakalists and are going to be the Booyaka line. Now, you, you, you and you. I want to hear you count to five. Starting... now! Good! I don’t need to hear any more. Your job is to say ‘One time’, ‘two time’ and finally ‘tree time’. I don’t want to hear anyone saying ‘three time’. It is ‘Tree time’. It is what? Good.”

Producer Kamese was full of energy and he bustled around the class, pulling and pushing kids into different little groups, making orders and often shaking his head when they were not performed properly, then nodding his head when they were done perfectly.

In what seemed like no time at all, the choir was fully assembled and they were ready to give the final go at the school anthem. Or rather, the new version of the school anthem. The school anthem dancehall remix.



“Teacher Murungi, a hand please?” said Producer Kamese to the bemused Teacher Murungi who had spent the whole time quiet as a mouse, ironically, just watching and enjoying the whole process. Now Kamese was looking at her, and pointing towards the chair she was sitting on.

“Oh! I’m sorry. Please, go ahead, be my guest. It would be an honour,” and she got up off her teacher’s seat, pushed it to him and watched as he climbed on to it.

He was really short. This was the only way he could make sure the whole choir saw him.

He reached out his hand. Teacher Murungi handed him a ruler. And now he was ready to conduct the choir.

He pointed at the roof, and slowly lowered the ruler, then, suddenly, he swished and swung the ruler like a warrior wielding a sword, and the choir began.

“Tropical Hills Academy!

One time,

Tropical Hills Academy,

Two Time,

Tropical Hills Academy,

Tree time,

Tropica-tropica-tro-tro-tro-Boooyaka!

Tropical Hills Academy! We are the best! All of the rest, are taking a rest.

In education, recreation, any situation, in all of the nation,

Tropical Hills Academy? We are the best

Tropical Hills Academy!

One time,
Tropical Hills Academy,
Two Time,
Tropical Hills Academy,
Tree time,
Tropica-tropica-tro-tro-tro-Boooyaka!
All the Science, Maths, and Language,
All of the subjects we can manage,
Teachers are ready,
Students are ready,
Support staff are ready,
All of us are ready
One Time,
Two time,
Tree time,
BoooyakaBoooyakaBoooyaka!"

And at this point the ruler pointed at the boys in the back who had just began breaking their voices. All this time they had been barking like hoarse dogs to provide a beat. But as soon as they saw the point of the ruler they fell quiet.

Kamese twirled the ruler and finally brought it up to Sheba.

It was time for her solo part. It was her time to shine.

She stepped to the front of the choir and belted out as loud as she could,

Now, I know this is written words so you are not able to actually hear the song, but I need you to use your imagination so that you can understand just how dope this song was. Imagine it in your mind. As you read it, imagine the lyrics in the catchiest, dopest rhythm and melody you can, so you can get it. This song was not just a school anthem, it was a hit. The next week when the choir performed it at assembly, even Mr Pampers tried to dance. After the choir performed it at the monthly Open Day, the parents even got together and put up the money to make a music video and record the song for radio.

Have you imagined a song that good? Try harder. The one you have imagined is fine, but this one was better. Try a bit. Add some more bass. Make sure that the “booyaka” is really punchy. That’s it! That is the song.

The new school anthem for Tropical Hills Academy.

What comes next for Wakayima, Roger and the gang at Tropical Hills? Their adventures are not over yet. There is more to come. Hope you are ready for the next story!

The adventures of the cheeky, cunning hare that sneaks into the human school continue with a fresh story each week. Thanks to the Kuonyesha Art Fund for supporting this!