

# The Rainbow Bridge of Song

A choir, a community, and a village in Mozambique



## Siobhan Robinsong's Articles and Dispatches

Compiled by The Caia Connection

[www.caiaconnection.ca](http://www.caiaconnection.ca)

June 2025

## About Siobhan Robinsong

Siobhan grew up in a musical Irish family in Winnipeg, where she obtained a degree in psychology from the University of Manitoba. After working in adult education, she moved to Cortes Island, British Columbia, and in 1982 she co-founded Hollyhock, a leading holistic learning centre. In 1996, she started the Gettin' Higher Choir in Victoria, based on the belief that we are all singers, and that singing together in harmony is our birthright, a source of health and vitality, and a powerful way to create community. Denis Donnelly, former director of the Victoria Conservatory of Music, joined as co-director in 1998, and arranged many of the songs performed by the choir. As the choir grew to over 300 voices, Siobhan and Denis formed the immensely successful Community Choir Leadership Training program, mentoring a new generation of choir leaders across Canada, the United States, and beyond. Motivated to share the GHC's success in building community and good works through singing, they also started the Ubuntu Choirs Network (from the Zulu word "ubuntu", meaning "I am because we are"). In 2018, Siobhan and Denis passed the GHC banner to Cathy Baker and Dick Jackson, who continue the choir's spirit and vision.

## About This Collection

In 2020, Siobhan stepped down as president of The Caia Connection after 21 years of building a wonderful partnership between the Gettin' Higher Choir and the work of Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema in Kapasseni, Sena and nearby communities in Mozambique. The story of this work is told in the warm and evocative articles Siobhan contributed over many years to the newsletters of the Kapasseni Project and The Caia Connection. They show Siobhan's deep friendship and commitment to Joseph and Perpetua, and her creative, innovative, passionate leadership. We see how, through love, enthusiasm, and personal connection with the people in Mozambique, Siobhan inspired the Gettin' Higher Choir and the wider community to help Kapasseni rebuild. And throughout it all was Siobhan's constant focus on the future, through education and opportunities for young people, especially the girls.

Together with the choir's co-director Denis Donnelly, Siobhan brought to the annual fundraising concerts amazing and generous musical guests such as Ann Mortifee, Shari Ulrich, Coco Love Alcorn, Rick Scott, Nelly Furtado, Beth Nielsen Chapman, Teresa Doyle, Valdy, Susan Osborn, Gina Sala, and Soundings Vocal Ensemble. Over 26 years, the concerts and choir communities have raised more than \$1.5 million to help Kapasseni and the surrounding area.

As Siobhan saw for herself during each of her four visits to Mozambique, the results have been tremendous: a generation of healthy young people going from Grade 1 through to college and careers, a once devastated village that has become a thriving regional hub, and supporters in Victoria and across Canada who have seen that it is possible to have the biggest of impacts through open hearts and singing in harmony.

This storybook brings together Siobhan's articles, extracts from the newsletters along the way, and photos of the work in Mozambique, as well as posters and images from the fundraising concerts and other records of Siobhan's remarkable journey with Kapasseni. The rainbow bridge of song continues to shine brightly through the support of the Gettin' Higher Choir, Wavelengths Community Choir, supporters near and far, and most of all through the dedication of Perpetua Alfazema, the teams in Kapasseni and Sena, and the young people there who are working hard, learning, growing, and reaching for their dreams.

**Cover photo:** Soul sisters Siobhan and Perpetua in 2016 at the celebration in Kapasseni for the first students to graduate from post-secondary education and training programs.

# Contents

**Dry Your Tears, Africa** (June 2003): This was the title of a powerful song performed by the Gettin' Higher Choir at the 2003 fundraising concert "No Time Not To Love". As Siobhan prepares for her second trip to Kapasseni, she articulates both her deep sense of homecoming and her commitment to redressing injustices.

**Greetings** (November 2003): Back from her second trip to Kapasseni, Siobhan describes how education and nutrition have made the children bright, engaging, and playful.

**The Village Market** (November 2003): Siobhan relates Kapasseni's transformation, with Perpetua's help, from a "ramshackle collection of huts" to a thriving community and local economy.

**Agro-Forestry** (November 2003): Siobhan describes how, after many years of war and deforestation, the community had begun to replant the area with seedlings of trees that would provide mango, tangerine, coconut, cashew, prickly pear, passion fruit, avocado and pineapple.

**Dr Wingi Visits British Columbia** (May 2004): After meeting the Chief Medical Officer for Caia District, Siobhan learned about the toll taken by HIV/AIDS. She returned to Canada and helped Dr Wingi come to B.C. to study treatment methods at clinics in Vancouver. He also met the Kapasseni Project Committee and attended the choir's fundraising concert.

**Growing Awareness Of HIV/AIDS** (November 2004): With HIV/AIDS starting to reach Kapasseni, Siobhan describes how the project was helping the community to develop prevention plans, education, testing and counselling.

**Nights in Kapasseni** (December 2005): Siobhan describes how music, dance, and song play a key role in Kapasseni's resilience to great hardships. This led to our ongoing support for the traditional music program.

**Vitamins For Mozambique** (April 2005): A wonderful story about how Quest Vitamins unexpectedly donated a huge shipment of vitamins and nutritional drink powder, and how the team in Victoria overcame many obstacles to get the much needed products to the people in Mozambique.

**UBUNTU – a Village and a Choir** (May 2006): Siobhan explains the importance of the Zulu word ubuntu, "...a concept embedded in traditional African values of respect and compassion, interdependence, community, tolerance and appreciation of diversity, and an understanding that what defines us is achieved through our relationship with others."

**Kapasseni Homecoming** (June 2011): With Siobhan soon to be travelling back to Kapasseni for the third time, she talks about the people there, and eagerly looks forward to seeing for herself the results of many new initiatives.

**Siobhan's Sena Letter** (July 2011): After 12 days in Sena, Siobhan sends her first letter, full of details about Kuwangisana's work providing in-home care for people with AIDS, and their program for children and elders affected by the epidemic.

**Siobhan's Kapasseni Letter** (July 2011): In Kapasseni, Siobhan was met by children singing and drumming, and saw new food orchards, the grain grinding mill freeing women and girls from hours of hard labour, the school and pre-school, and, on a side trip to the high school in Murraca, she met the scholarship students full of hopes for continuing their education.

**Education For Life** (June 2012): Siobhan describes how, in Kapasseni and Sena, from pre-school to university, programs support boys and girls to develop their potential, to become future leaders of Mozambique, and to be citizens of the world.

**Small Miracles** (June 2013): Describes the amazing partnership between our communities in Canada and Mozambique, and how we are all part of the small miracles making it possible for young people to look forward to university, and for Perpetua's work in Sena providing HIV/AIDS education, prevention, and holistic support for orphans and the families who care for them.

**Another World Is Possible** (June 2014): Inspired by the educational achievements of the school children of Kapasseni, Siobhan sees that we are creating another world, "one that is not only possible but that is coming into being right now."

**Kapasseni Kids In Higher Education** (June 2015): Siobhan relates the huge increase in numbers of Kapasseni scholarship students, and the stories of several of the students now reaching their dreams to attend college and university.

**Faith In Life** (May 2016): Siobhan salutes Perpetua as a shining example of faith in life, as she cares for some of the world's poorest people while holding onto her belief that there is enough kindness, food, love, and generosity to go around.

**Another Journey to Kapasseni** (June 2017): Siobhan describes how, on her trip to Kapasseni the previous year, parents of Kapasseni students spoke passionately about wanting their children to be able to complete high school at home, instead of going away to boarding school. This led to community planning for what became the Distance Learning Centre.

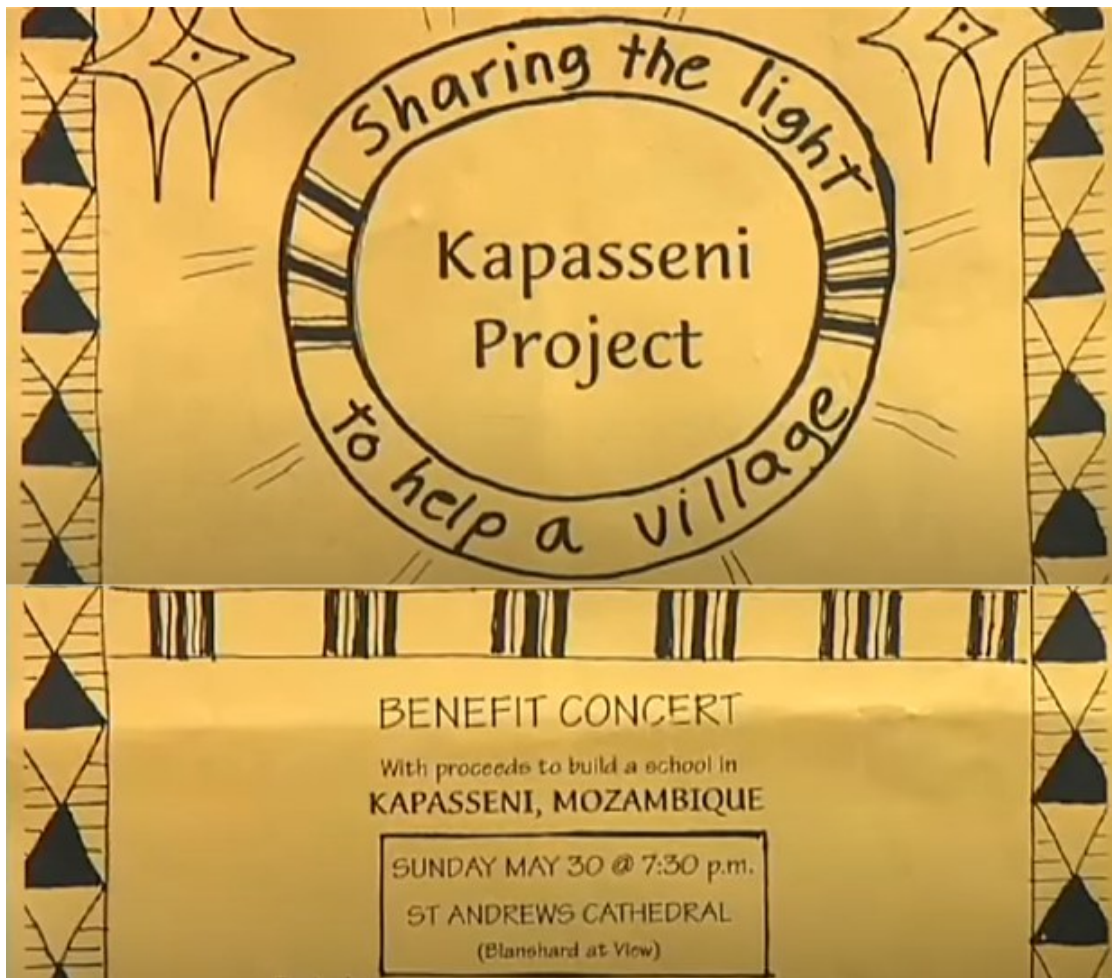
**Amazing Resilience** (June 2018): Siobhan notes that while bad news in the world can be overwhelming, there has been incredible progress in Kapasseni due to the extraordinary resilience of our friends in Mozambique and Perpetua Alfazema's driving force and inspiration.

**Message From Siobhan Robinsong** (2020): Siobhan announces that she is stepping down as president of the Caia Connection Board, and how happy she is to be succeeded by Sarah Petrescu, who had spent two weeks in Kapasseni in 2009 reporting on the work of Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema for Victoria's Times Colonist newspaper.

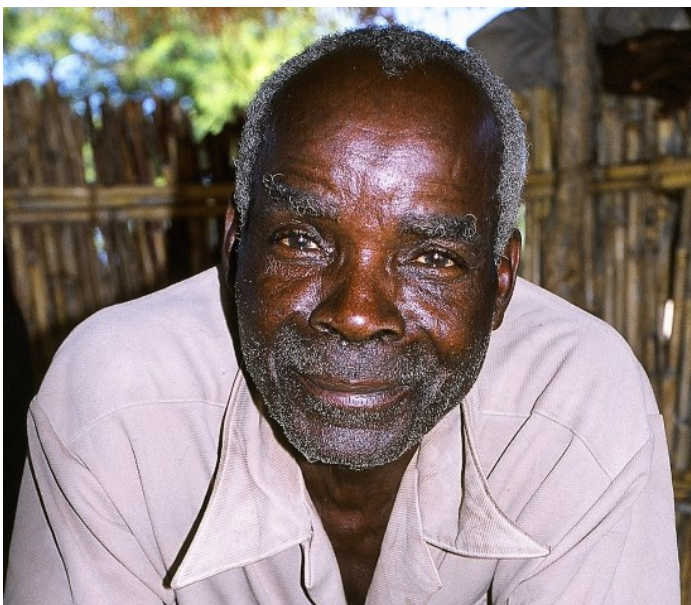
**Read on for stories, photos, concerts, and more!**



# First Fundraising Concert



The Getting' Higher Choir's 1999 inaugural fundraiser for Kapasseni, with special guests Ann Mortiffee and Perpetua's Mozambique choir, was themed "Sharing the Light." The poster was hand-drawn by Siobhan's friend and Gettin' Higher Choir member Heather Fox, who also crafted the designs on shirts worn by the Kapasseni students as their school uniforms. Heather's son Ben went with Siobhan to Kapasseni in 1999, taking photos and filming for producer Bill Weaver's award winning documentary [Journey to Kapasseni](#). Ben also filmed the 2011 followup, [Return to Kapasseni](#). Perpetua related that building that first little school rejuvenated the villagers' spirit of community, and Chief Francisco Simente said, "Kapasseni was once a dead village, but now it has come back to life".



In 1998 Chief Francisco Simente asked Joseph and Perpetua to help build a school in Kapasseni, so the children could have hope for the future.



Siobhan beams with joy after directing the 1999 concert. St. Andrew's Cathedral was full to capacity and over \$10,000 was raised to build the school.



# KAPASSENI CALLING

AN UPDATE FROM THE KAPASSENI PROJECT COMMITTEE

November 2000

## November 25 Film Preview: *Journey To Kapasseni*

In 1999 six Vancouver Islanders travelled across the world to Kapasseni, Mozambique to help build a school. Their remarkable journey was beautifully filmed by Ben Fox, and made into an evocative 50 minute documentary by Bill Weaver, in association with Vision TV and CIDA. It tells the story of the journey and how it affected the lives of the travellers. In addition, the evening will include an update and slides from this year's visit to Kapasseni, singing by members of the Gettin' Higher Choir and the Moja Africa Singers, refreshments and Mozambican crafts. Admission at the door is by donation (\$10/\$5 suggested), with proceeds to help Kapasseni's school. The evening starts at 7:30 pm on 25 November 2000, at the David Lam auditorium in UVic's MacLaurin Building. Come and meet us!!

## Mwawanga!!! (Hello)

Much has been accomplished in Kapasseni in the last two years. We know that many of you who have been aware of our project to help this Mozambican village may be wondering what has been happening. Others who are just finding out about the Kapasseni Project may be curious. So we put together this report, to tell you more about Kapasseni village, how this remarkable project got started, what we have been doing in partnership with our friends in Mozambique, and what our goals are for the next year. The pictures are from our trip to the village this year. So many diverse people and groups, in Canada and in Mozambique, have helped by praying and contributing time, skills, materials, facilities and funds. Thank you all so much, and God bless you.

— Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema and friends

## The School Built With Song

The Alfazemas promised to help, first with a school. Their community at Redeemer Lutheran Church rallied, and Perpetua's connection with Shivon Robinsong led to further support from the Gettin' Higher Choir and renowned singer Ann Mortifee. Their sold-out concert in 1999 at St. Andrew's Cathedral raised almost \$11,000, enough to build a temporary school and run it for a year.

Six people from Victoria travelled to Kapasseni with over a ton of school supplies and building materials. Though the country roads were considered impassable due to rains, they persevered and with assistance that seemed heaven-sent, they made their way to the remote village. The night they arrived, a drum sent out the message for a gathering, and the next day people came from all over the area. They happily organised into work parties, cleared land, and with great efficiency built Kapasseni Primary School in 2 days. Three teachers were hired, 150 children and 30 adults were enrolled, and school uniforms and bags were supplied.

Building the school rejuvenated the villagers' spirit of community, much to the joy of Chief Francisco Simente, who said: "*Kapasseni was once a dead village, but now it has come back to life*". 75% of Mozambicans are illiterate, and Kapasseni parents see in the school the promise of a brighter future for their children. The children are eager to learn.



## Woyaya – Heaven Knows Where We Are Going

On the bumpy road to Kapasseni in July 1999, when it looked like there were so many obstacles in the path, our people sang the South African song *Woyaya*, which has taken on very special meaning for us.

*We are going, heaven knows where we are going  
But we know within.*

*And we'll get there, heaven knows how we will get there  
But we know we will.*

*It will be hard we know, and the road will be muddy and rough  
But we'll get there, heaven knows how we will get there  
But we know we will.*

**2025 Note:** These extracts are from our first newsletter, as the project gained momentum after the 1999 fundraising concert and the journey to Kapasseni of Siobhan, Perpetua, Joseph and others to build the school. Choir members know the song well!



# KAPASSENI CALLING

AN UPDATE FROM THE KAPASSENI PROJECT COMMITTEE

June 2001

## **"Turn The World Around" Concert For Kapasseni On June 17**

At 7:30 on Sunday, June 17, our major fundraising event of the year will feature the dynamic harmonies of the 200 member Gettin' Higher Choir and special guests Virgo Rising, the wonderful four-woman Victoria group. There will also be Mozambican singing and dancing by the Moja Africa Singers. The concert will be held in beautiful St. Andrew's Cathedral, at View and Blanshard in downtown Victoria. Our last two concerts were sell-outs, with many having to be turned away, so get your tickets early this time! Tickets are \$12/\$10, available at Munro's Books, Koinonia Christian Books, Ivy's Bookshop, from choir members, and at the door. For information, call Perpetua Alfazema at 478-9571 or Sylvia Gledhill at 478-6922.



### **St. Andrew's Concert ... and CD !**

The *Turn The World Around* concert on June 17 was a wonderful, warm evening of music and song. \$11,910 was raised for Kapasseni Primary School. We greatly appreciate the Gettin' Higher Choir, Virgo Rising, and the Moja Africa Singers for their beautiful heartfelt performances, as well as all who attended and our hosts at St. Andrew's Cathedral. The concert was recorded by John Ellis, and a CD has been made. The CD will be available at the November 3 presentation at UVic, and can also be obtained from Denis Donnelly at 598-5186.





# KAPASSENI CALLING

AN UPDATE FROM THE KAPASSENI PROJECT COMMITTEE

May 2002



## ***"Something Opens Our Wings"*** **Concert For Kapasseni**

Our major fundraising event of the year will be held at 7:30 on Saturday, May 18 at the University Centre at UVic. The concert will feature the harmonies of the 300 member Gettin' Higher Choir, Mozambican singing and dancing by the Moja Africa Singers, and the Hermes String Quartet. Nelly Furtado will be our special guest host. A limited number of tickets (\$18/\$15) will be sold at the McPherson Theatre box office starting on May 4<sup>th</sup>. If you want to attend, we suggest that you get your tickets early, as they are likely to sell quickly.

## **Update Presentation** **Saturday, November 30**

Each year we report to our supporters about the progress made during the year. Our Fall event will be on November 30 in the David Lam Auditorium, UVic (MacLaurin Building) at 7:30 pm. Deborah Gruben, who accompanied Joseph and Perpetua to Kapasseni this summer, will share a slide and video presentation. Our MC will be Shivon Robinsong, co-director of the Gettin' Higher Choir. The evening will include singing by members of the choir, a performance by the Moja Africa Singers, refreshments and Mozambican crafts. Admission is by donation (\$10/\$5 suggested), with proceeds to Kapasseni School.

*At 6:30 there will be a pre-show screening of the acclaimed film "Journey To Kapasseni", about the project's beginnings.*

## ***"Something Opens Our Wings"*** Concert

Our fourth annual benefit concert was a huge success! The event was held on May 18 at the University Centre and featured Nelly Furtado as guest host. Special thanks to the Gettin' Higher Choir, the Moja Africa Singers, the Hermes String Quartet, and special guest musicians. We are very fortunate in having the support of such generous, talented performers who give so much of their time. Thanks to the many people who supported this concert, \$20,031 was raised. The sale of Kapasseni breakfast porridge proved very popular!



Kapasseni children in their school shirts bring a bucket of water for school breakfast program cooking. They help the school by collecting water and firewood for the breakfast program.



# KAPASSENI CALLING

AN UPDATE FROM THE KAPASSENI PROJECT COMMITTEE

November 2002

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Kapasseni girls wear the new school uniform, made locally through the sewing program; and Kapasseni's new health centre is being built.



# No Time Not to Love



5<sup>th</sup> Annual Benefit Concert for Kapasseni Village, Mozambique

FEATURING

**THE GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR**

**THE HERMES STRING QUARTET**

**THE KIDPOWER! CHORUS**

AND

**SOUNDINGS**

WITH SPECIAL GUEST



**ANN MORTIFEE**

ALIX GOOLDEN PERFORMANCE HALL  
907 PANDORA (AT QUADRA)

**SATURDAY JUNE 21, 7:30 pm & SUNDAY JUNE 22, 2 pm**

**TICKETS: \$20 (\$15 SENIORS/STUDENTS)**

AVAILABLE AT MUNRO'S BOOKS, IVY'S BOOKS (OAK BAY),  
JAMES BAY COFFEE AND BOOKS



CO-SPONSORED BY *hollyhock*



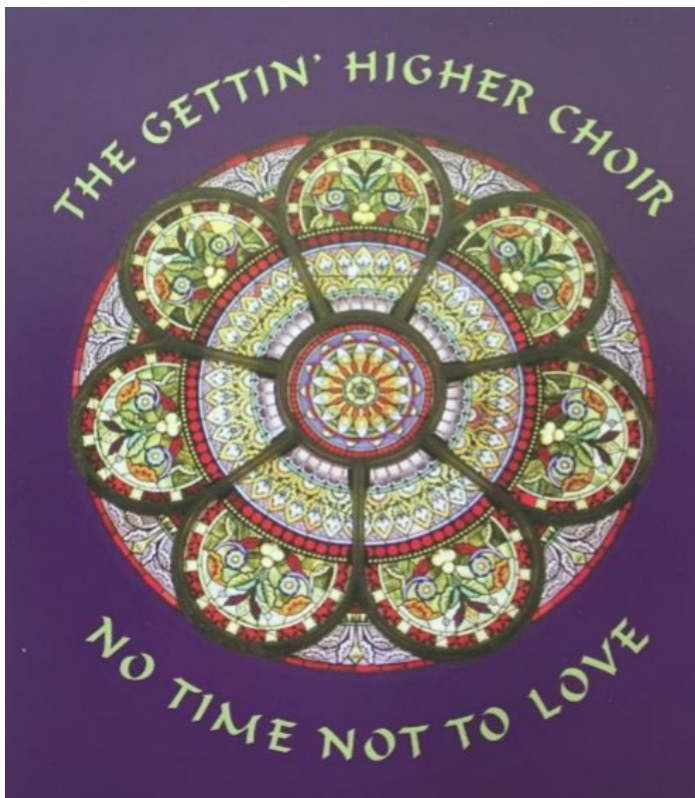
# KAPASSENI CALLING

AN UPDATE FROM THE KAPASSENI PROJECT COMMITTEE

Issue 6 June 2003

## **"No Time Not to Love"** **Two Concerts For Kapasseni**

Our major fundraising events of the year will be held at 7:30 PM on Saturday, June 21 and 2:00 PM on Sunday, June 22 at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall (at the corner of Pandora and Quadra downtown). The concerts will feature the Gettin' Higher Choir with The KidPower! Chorus, the Hermes String Quartet, and our special guest and long-time supporter Ann Mortifee. Also performing will be Soundings and Lynda Raino Dance. The theme of the concert is "songs to heal our world". It will feature original work by Ann Mortifee, Victoria composer Robert Anderson, Don Chambers, and our own GHC Co-Director Denis Donnelly. Tickets (\$20/\$15) will be on sale at Munro's Books, James Bay Coffee and Books, and Ivy's Books (on Oak Bay Avenue) starting on June 2. Don't miss this fabulous concert! Get your tickets early to avoid disappointment, as they are likely to sell very quickly.



## **Dry Your Tears, Africa**

from Shivon Robinsong, GHC Co-Director

There is a powerful song we will be singing in our June concerts – the theme from the film *Amistad*. Sung in the Mende language of West Africa, the song translates: *Dry your tears, Africa, your children are coming home, sing a song of celebration, we're coming home!* Anthropologists tell us that Africans are the common ancestors of all humanity. That may explain why I felt so immediately at home on my first visit to Kapasseni in 1999. Africa, our shared Motherland, is hurting these days. Her children are dying by the millions. Her grief is enormous. She needs our help. While they are starving, we in the west are drowning in affluence. For centuries, the excess of our European/North American lifestyle has been built on the colonization and exploitation of Africans and other people of colour the world over. This summer, I am returning to Kapasseni with Joseph and Perpetua. As I anticipate the journey, I feel the call of my ancestors. My European forebears urge me to do what I can to address this imbalance, to right the injustice. Reaching back to the start of human time, my African ancestors are calling me home.

## **"No Time Not to Love"** **Benefit Concerts... and Concert CD**

Thanks to the many people who supported our annual benefit concerts on June 21 and June 22, \$22,332 was raised for Kapasseni Primary School. We greatly appreciate the Gettin' Higher Choir, KidPower! Chorus, the Hermes String Quartet, and our long-time friend and supporter Ann Mortifee, for their wonderful heartfelt performances. A CD made from the performances will be available at the November 14 UVic presentation. The CD will also be available after November 14 from GHC co-director Denis Donnelly, telephone (250) 598-5186.





# KAPASSENI CALLING

AN UPDATE ON THE KAPASSENI PROJECT

Issue 8

November 2003

## Tales from Kapasseni – Slides and Stories – Friday, November 14

Come and hear exciting news about this year's trip to Kapasseni – November 14 at the David Lam Auditorium, UVic (McLaurin Building) at 7:30 pm. The evening will feature an exquisite slide show of evocative images by photographer Ben Fox, who accompanied Joseph and Perpetua to Kapasseni this summer. Our MC will be Shivon Robinsong, co-director of the Gettin' Higher Choir. Shivon has been saving her stories of the trip for this special presentation. This is your chance to find out what is going on in Kapasseni and to ask any questions. The evening will also include spirited African singing, refreshments, and sale of Mozambican crafts. Admission is by donation (\$10/\$5 suggested), with proceeds to the Kapasseni Project. Note: At 6:30 there will be a pre-show screening of the award-winning film "Journey To Kapasseni", about the project's beginnings in 1999.

## Greetings

My return to Kapasseni this July has left me more deeply connected and committed to our project than ever. In a world so full of devastation and heartbreak, particularly in Africa, Kapasseni is a place where life is definitely improving, in large part thanks to the efforts of our project community here in Victoria – and now also in St. Catharines, Ontario, where Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema and family are now pursuing their studies.

I think back to my first conversation with Joseph and Perpetua about their dream of a school for their village, nearly 5 years ago. They were so clear about it: **"Where there is no school, there is no hope. We will build a school there, and then there will be hope for the future."** The one-room schoolhouse of sticks and grass that we began with in 1999 is now a flourishing five classroom brick school, with a sixth room now being built. Over 300 children and 25 adults are enrolled.

But the most exciting difference I noticed was the brightness of the children. On my first visit in 1999, I found it almost impossible to connect with the kids – they were extremely shy, even fearful, and uninterested or incapable of much interaction with strangers from the outside world. The children of Kapasseni today are very different. They are playful and engaging, their minds obviously benefiting tremendously from the stimulation that education provides. In this newsletter, you will read of many other welcome developments in the village, but it is in this chance the children are being given to develop their potential, that I find the greatest hope.

Everywhere we went in Mozambique, we ran into people who had heard of Kapasseni. The story of the Mozambicans (Joseph and Perpetua) who got to Canada, and returned to their village to help them, is becoming a legend. We are all part of that legend. Together we will turn this world around.

— **Shivon Robinsong, Gettin' Higher Choir Co-Director**



During her visit to Kapasseni in 2003, Siobhan spent time with the students in Kapasseni Primary School. Here she shows them how Kapasseni and Victoria, B.C. are connected across the world.



Girls in uniform with plates on their backs for the porridge served by the school breakfast program.





## The Village Market

by Shivon Robinsong

I remember my dismay upon first arriving at Kapasseni in 1999. I was expecting some semblance of a “village”, but instead we found a collection of ramshackle huts, and nothing else. To call it a “village” was historically true – it had been a thriving village when Joseph Alfazema grew up there in the 1960s, before the long war years. And, “village”, I see now, was a vision of what it might become.

Fast forward to the summer of 2003. On the highest ground in the area, close to the chief’s compound where that first little school was built in 1999, now stands the village centre: the School, the Well, and the Health Post. And now also the village market. Here’s how it happened.

This year, instead of buying the year’s supply of corn for the breakfast program from a big supplier in town, Perpetua and Joseph put the word out locally that the school would buy corn on Wednesday, which would be a general “market day”. People were invited to bring whatever they had to sell, and to come prepared to shop!

On the day of the market, there was an exciting buzz in the air. Perpetua had a gaggle of teenage girls working hard packaging beads, displaying clothes brought from Canada, deep frying mouth-watering doughnuts, cutting lengths of brightly coloured fabric, and making little piles of dried fish and onions, spread out on grass mats.

Starting at the first light, people arrived from all directions bearing loads of corn for sale. Deals were made, cash was traded for corn, and then the shopping began! Perpetua is a brilliant business woman, and a natural in community economics. The money spent on the year’s supply of corn was put into the Kapasseni community, and re-circulated again that same day, with ample opportunities for people to buy their essentials locally. All proceeds from the goods Perpetua had brought went back to the project’s budget. A number of other people also sold produce, and went home with money in their pockets.

There had not been a market in about 30 years, since before the wars. By the end of the day people had decided to make every Saturday “Market Day”. Now, Kapasseni feels like a real village.

## Agro-Forestry

by Shivon Robinsong

Joseph Alfazema tells us that the land around Kapasseni was once a forest, thick with all kinds of trees, with many uses – some bearing fruit or nuts, others excellent for building, or firewood, some with medicinal uses. But during the war years, forests all over Mozambique were burned, in an effort to flush out the guerrilla fighters.

Some attempts over the past few years to plant food bearing trees have been made, though not many trees have survived. This year, we brought in 450 seedlings – mango, tangerine, coconut, cashew, prickly pear, passion fruit, avocado and pineapple. What fun it was first to find these seedlings. There are no commercial nurseries, so it is a matter of finding enterprising people who have been raising these trees from seed. One woman proudly showed us her collection of around 100 young trees, raised in 1 kg sugar bags, and beamed with pleasure when we asked if she would sell us the entire lot. With delight, we spied a pile of sprouted coconuts for sale at a market place in Beira. Benjamin, one of our hard-working project helpers in Beira, found the rest of the trees and then organized for wooden boxes to be specially built to transport them.

Some trees planted last year were eaten by marauding goats, so this year, a huge orchard was cleared and fenced, in preparation for the trees’ arrival. We hired two enthusiastic and knowledgeable young men to plant the trees and take ongoing care of them.

This year’s tree-planting was funded by a grant from the Harmony Foundation and a cash gift presented to Shivon at the June concert, “in lieu of flowers”, by the Gettin’ Higher Choir. What we got going this year was more an orchard than a re-forestation – but it is a start, as was the sticks-and-grass school four years ago. We are hoping that much will be learned this year about tree care, that can be built on in future years.

We have a much larger sum (\$4,500) set aside to expand the program. This includes a gift of money provided by Denis Donnelly from funds collected in memory of his former wife Becky Bernson, who died in February 2000 (Becky was a fine musician and a strong environmental advocate). It would be great to have someone with experience in and passion for re-forestation to enter the picture in the next year. If you or someone you know would be interested, please get in touch with us!



Perpetua with one of the rapidly growing cashew bushes in Kapasseni’s orchard garden. These gardens are an important source of healthy local food.



# KAPASSENI CALLING

AN UPDATE ON THE KAPASSENI PROJECT

Issue 9

May 2004

## "Common Ground"

### Two Fundraising Concerts For Kapasseni

Our major fundraising events of the year will be held at 7:30 on Saturday, June 19 and 2:00 on Sunday, June 20 at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall in Victoria (Pandora at Quadra, downtown). The 300 member Gettin' Higher Choir, led by Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly, will be joined by special guest Teresa Doyle from PEI. Teresa has toured extensively in North America and the British Isles, and has performed with the legendary Irish band The Chieftains. Her recordings and performance of beautifully-crafted Celtic music and jazz have met with critical acclaim. See <http://www.bedlamrecords.com>. The concert will also feature Soundings, a 26-voice vocal ensemble directed by Denis Donnelly.

The theme of the concert is "common ground". The program will celebrate the relationships between African and Celtic music, between choral and jazz vocal styles, between the east coast of Canada and the west coast, and between the people of our privileged society and the people of one of the world's poorest countries. Tickets (\$20/\$15) will be on sale at Munro's Books, James Bay Coffee and Books, and Ivy's Books (in Oak Bay) starting on June 1. Our five previous fundraisers for Kapasseni have all been sell-outs, so get your tickets early!!



## Dr Wingi Visits British Columbia

by Shivon Robinsong

During our visit to Kapasseni last July we met Dr Olivier Wingi, the Chief Medical Officer for the district of Caia, the nearest town. Dr Wingi and several of his team from Caia drove into Kapasseni to inspect the newly finished Health Centre and to see what was needed to get it up and running. Originally from the Congo in central Africa, Dr Wingi speaks French. My high school French was pretty rusty, but compared to my command of Portuguese, the official language of Mozambique, I felt positively fluent en Francais!

We struck up a friendship, and he spoke to us of the desperate AIDS situation in Caia, a town of 90,000 located on the main north-south road between Malawi and South Africa. Dr Wingi spoke of his huge frustration at not being able to get the drugs that prevent transmission of HIV/AIDS from mothers to newborn babies, and of the lack of resources to care for the 5,000 AIDS orphans in the town. We formed a pact, agreeing that he would watch over our Kapasseni Health Centre, and I would do what I could to help him find medicines and help for the orphans of Caia. Dr Wingi was true to his word, and thanks to his efforts, the clinic was up and running within a few months, staffed with an RN and two midwives, and powered with solar panels for light and refrigeration.

After hearing that Caia would get an HIV/AIDS clinic next September, Dr Wingi needed to go abroad to learn about testing and treatment methods. He approached me about sponsoring him to come and study in Canada. After many emails back and forth, Dr Wingi arrived on May 14 and will be in British Columbia for 6 weeks, to study the treatment of HIV/AIDS at several clinics in Vancouver. He will also spend some time in Victoria, meeting with the Kapasseni Committee, and will attend the June fundraising concerts by the Gettin' Higher Choir. We will hold discussions on ways to help Caia with AIDS orphan care. We are grateful to Dr Wingi for the help he has given our Kapasseni Health Centre, and look forward to hosting him during his visit to British Columbia.



**Top:** Gina Sineya, a dedicated grade 4 student.

**Left:** Kapasseni Chief Francisco Simente wearing his Gettin' Higher Choir shirt. Perpetua says it is his favourite shirt!





## Kapasseni Update & Fundraising Events On November 27 and November 28

- **Saturday Evening, 7:30, Nov. 27, Isabelle Reader Theatre, Langford** – This evening of information and entertainment will feature Pearson College Choir, guest musicians, and a beautiful collection of images filmed last year in Kapasseni by photographer Ben Fox. Tickets \$10.00 from Kapasseni Committee members or call 478-4149. FMI, Carol Kerr 478-9296.
- **Sunday Evening, 7:30, Nov. 28, David Lam Auditorium, UVic** – Shivon Robinsong will MC an evening featuring Ben Fox's new video and the powerful CBC film *The Value of Life - AIDS in Africa Revisited* – about the unrelenting mission of Stephen Lewis, UN special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa. **At 6:30** we'll have a pre-show screening of *Journey to Kapasseni*, about building the first school in 1999. Admission is free, but donations to the Kapasseni Project are greatly appreciated.

**Both events will have presentations from special guests from Mozambique: Pedro Corrente, Manuel Miandica, and Samson Saeni. There will be sales of Mozambican crafts, CDs of valimba music, and "Kapasseni Breakfast" porridge from the school breakfast program recipe. We'll also sing some favourite African songs. Thanks to all our supporters. There is much to be done, so come and be updated, entertained and informed about future plans!**

## Growing Awareness of HIV/AIDS

by Shivon Robinsong

Hearing of the millions affected with HIV/AIDS in Africa, the countless orphans and child-led households, those dying agonizing deaths without palliative care, there is a tendency to want to shut out the news, which can seem too devastating for anyone to make a difference. And yet, I've learned over the past five years of working with the Kapasseni Project that by simply saying "Yes" to the call to get involved, we can indeed make a positive difference in people's lives on the other side of the world.

When I first visited Kapasseni in 1999, HIV/AIDS did not seem to be an issue in this isolated village. Now, Kapasseni is on the map. It has a growing reputation, even in the city of Beira, as a happening place. A school, health centre, jobs for teachers, nurses, builders, a new market place – all have created optimism and hope. But this success has also made the people more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Just 70 kilometres away, in Caia, a truck-stop town on the main route from Malawi to South Africa, the rate of infection is estimated to be around 26%. With increased traffic to and from Kapasseni, we must make HIV/AIDS awareness a top priority, or all our assistance of the past five years could become meaningless.

Dr Olivier Wingi, Chief Medical Officer for Caia District, emphasized this on his visit to Victoria last June. With the help of Elena Kanigan, who volunteered as HIV/AIDS advisor to the project, we outlined a proposal for an HIV/AIDS prevention plan for Kapasseni, including education, testing and counselling. The Alfazemas took this draft to Kapasseni in July, and it served as the basis for a discussion in the village and the development of a more comprehensive proposal. An HIV/AIDS awareness committee was formed, made up of elders, health care workers, and other villagers, adopting the motto: "*Tipulumuse Manugo Athu*", meaning "Save Our Bodies".

Stephen Lewis, the UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, is very clear that "*unless there is recognition that women are most vulnerable ... and you do something about social and cultural equality for women, you're never going to defeat this pandemic*". In light of this, we will continue to seek ways to encourage and enable girls to stay in school. By responding to the Kapasseni women's request for a corn grinding machine, we will be relieving many girls of the burden of spending hours each day pounding the family's grains, and enabling them to stay in school longer.

We are also raising funds to support the villagers' HIV/AIDS prevention efforts.

In the face of this overwhelming crisis threatening the whole continent of Africa, what else can we do but reach out, say "Yes", and bring hope and caring to one small village that has touched our hearts.



The new Kapasseni health centre is providing community health services to hundreds of local people.



Siobhan and HIV/AIDS educator Manuel Miandica outside the housing being built for nurses running the health centre.



## **"Into the Heart of the Sangoma"**

### **Ann Mortifee CD Launch Concerts!**

Our long-time supporter Ann Mortifee will perform for our major fundraising events of the year, at 7:30 Saturday, April 16 and 2:00 Sunday, April 17 at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall (at Pandora and Quadra, downtown). This will be a CD launch concert for Ann's new CD, *Into the Heart of the Sangoma*, her first in 11 years. Ann will appear with a world-class band featuring Miles Black on piano, Pepe Danza on percussion, and Ed Henderson on guitar. The 300 member Gettin' Higher Choir will provide back-up vocals. Tickets (\$30/\$25) are on sale at Munro's Books, James Bay Coffee and Books, and Ivy's Books (on Oak Bay Avenue). People outside Victoria can call Gloria (250) 995-8731 to reserve tickets. We are counting on you to help us sell-out, so please tell your friends! See [www.annmortifee.com](http://www.annmortifee.com) for the concert poster, as well as music, poetry, articles, and other info about Ann.

## **Nights in Kapasseni**

by Shivon Robinsong

Although it is two-and-a-half years since my last visit to Kapasseni, I have only to put on my Valimba CD to remember villagers' immense capacity for enthusiastic community dance, song and laughter. The valimba band, brought for the occasion of our visit from a neighbouring village, would play from sundown late into the dark night, with only the light of the moon and stars, and the gleaming eyes and smiles of the ecstatic dancers.

A traditional instrument with variations in many countries of Africa, the valimba is made from strips of rough hewn wood arranged over hollowed gourds. It has a delightful melodious tone. Three players strike keys with mallets, playing complex melodies and rhythms with amazing dexterity. They are accompanied by percussionists on drums and/or tin-can shakers. The overall effect is completely energizing and infectious – hence the huge circle dance that erupts around the players, lasting for hours into the night, and involving villagers of all ages.

In the midst of hardship unimaginable to the affluent world, the people of Kapasseni keep their spirits surviving and thriving through this cultural practice. Now that the school children are learning to speak and sing in Portuguese, it is important that they continue to value and learn their traditional music and dance. And so a traditional music program has begun at Kapasseni School as an extracurricular activity.

Recordings of these memorable valimba sessions, done by Carol Newell in 1999 and myself in 2003, are on a CD called *VALIMBA! Nights in Kapasseni*, a unique gift for any lover of music and dance. Proceeds from sales went first to build instruments for the school (valimba, drums and shakers), and now to pay two teachers a salary for instruction in traditional music and dance.

The 2005 concert raised \$25,514 for Kapasseni. The choir members, instead of giving their directors flowers, took a collection and donated \$1,646 to fund scholarships.

## **Vitamins For Mozambique**

by Shivon Robinsong

Last November, we unexpectedly received an offer from Quest Vitamins of a huge donation of much-needed supplements for Mozambique – enough multi-vitamins and calcium-magnesium drink powder to fill a shipping container, with a wholesale value of \$153,000! These products would be especially beneficial for young mothers and for people with HIV/AIDS. This was a one-time opportunity, which came about when products became redundant in the corporate merger of Jamieson and Quest. But the catch was, they needed to be moved from Quest's warehouse within a week. We would have to move quickly if we were to accept this donation. It was one of those offers too good to refuse, but we had not been planning for anything like this, and what kind of logistical and bureaucratic hoops – and additional costs – would we have to deal with to get all the paperwork in order and the shipment sent to Mozambique?

Carol Kerr, of the Kapasseni Project Committee, immediately set to work on shipping research, and determined that it would take at least \$6,000 to ship this load to Mozambique. This was a real set-back. The Kapasseni Project coffers were nearly empty, and every dollar was already spoken for. And if we couldn't find the shipping money, we would have to turn down the donation. I shared the dilemma at the Gettin' Higher Choir practice that week, and was overjoyed when a few people came to me privately with very generous offers – enough to cover not only the cost of ocean shipping, but also road transport in Mozambique.

With that considerable hurdle overcome, Carol started to make arrangements for shipping, only to meet another obstacle. Before the shipment could leave Canada, and for it to clear customs in Mozambique, we would need a "predeclaration number" from the Ministry of Health in Maputo. As anyone who has dealt long-distance with African bureaucracies knows, this would be no small task. We had to let Quest know that there was no way we could meet their condition of removing the shipment from the warehouse in time. They came through for us again, and Donna Herringer, General Manager, somehow found a way to store the shipment, agreeing to give us all the time we needed to make arrangements.

For the past three months, Carol Kerr has been unflagging in her persistence, with countless faxes, emails and phone calls, and working with Pedro Corrente in Mozambique (Pedro visited Victoria in November). It has paid off, and we are now delighted to report that the precious cargo of vitamins and supplements is on its way! It will arrive in Beira in April and be trucked to the town of Caia, where it will be shared among the eight health centres in the District, including Kapasseni.

With the combination of people's generosity, flexibility, hard work and persistence, the vision of getting this gift of nutrition through to Caia and Kapasseni is being realized. Our special thanks to Quest Vitamins, a company with a big heart, to Lucretia Schanfarber, who made the connection and cheered us on, and to those who so generously donated the funds needed for shipping.





## UBUNTU – “I Am Because We Are”

### Two Fundraising Concerts For Kapasseni and Caia

The 350-member Gettin' Higher Choir will perform at our major fundraising events of the year, at 7:30 on Friday and Saturday evenings, June 2 and June 3, at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall (at Pandora and Quadra, downtown). This will be a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration for the GHC, featuring many of the wonderful songs they and their audiences have loved over the years. Our long-time supporter Ann Mortifee and world renowned flautist Paul Horn will make special guest appearances. Concert proceeds will assist the Kapasseni Project and "Ray Of Hope House" for AIDS orphans in the town of Caia. **Tickets (\$20/\$15) are at Munro's Books, James Bay Coffee and Books, and Ivy's Books (in Oak Bay).** People outside Victoria can call Gloria at (250) 995-8731 to reserve tickets. We are counting on you to help us sell-out, so please tell your family and friends! You can see the poster at <http://www.crucible.ca/ghc/ubuntu.pdf>

## UBUNTU – a Village and a Choir

by Shivon Robinsong

There is an ancient Zulu word that I love – “ubuntu” – which declares that “a person is a person through other persons”, or “I am because we are.” Ubuntu is a concept embedded in traditional African values of respect and compassion, interdependence, community, tolerance and appreciation of diversity, and an understanding that what defines us is achieved through our relationship with others. The more I reflect on this concept, the more I see that if positive change is to occur, it will be through the quality of the relationships we have with each other.

When the GHC sang at Victoria's FolkFest in 1998, we met the Mozambique Choir, led by Perpetua Alfazema. I was drawn to this warm and engaging group of Africans, and we enjoyed sharing songs and stories. Perpetua asked if the GHC would join them in a benefit concert to help build a school in their former village of Kapasseni. With Ann Mortifee, we filled St. Andrew's Cathedral, and raised \$10,000. I went to Kapasseni with the Alfazemas in 1999, and in the simple miracle of two cultures working together to build a school and a future for the children, I experienced ubuntu spirit and its power to heal the world.

Since then, I have been solidly committed to an ongoing relationship with the Alfazemas and with Kapasseni. 2006 marks our eighth year of concerts for Kapasseni. It has become a tradition we are proud of, one that helps define who we are as a choir and as individuals. I am continually delighted by the creative generosity of choir members seeking to help Kapasseni. At times choir practice feels more like a marketplace, with members selling cards, CDs, and other items at the break, with all proceeds to Kapasseni. When \$7,500 was needed to ship a huge donation of vitamins to Mozambique, the entire cost was raised in one night at choir! Last December, choir members raised almost \$10,000 for food seeds. And when one choir member, faced with the progressive loss of her own eyesight, asked questions about eye health in Kapasseni, the Eye Care Program was started, and funded mostly by choir members.

What has been accomplished by the choir with the Kapasseni Project has drawn great interest and has inspired a movement of what we call Ubuntu Choirs – choirs based on inclusion, interdependence, generosity, and social engagement. We have formed the UBUNTU Choirs Society to support the growth of these choirs and facilitate their charitable work.

So much has grown out of that first meeting with Joseph and Perpetua. Their steady, joy-filled commitment to Kapasseni has been a great source of inspiration for me and for the choir. Their vision has expanded from its initial focus on Kapasseni, and now includes the nearby towns of Sena and Caia, where the ravages of AIDS must be addressed. With the Alfazemas now returning to Mozambique, we will continue to support their work, feeling blessed by our connection with these wonderful friends, and blessed by the opportunity to have learned about ubuntu from such fine teachers.



## From Our Friend, Ann Mortifee

I am absolutely thrilled to be joining with the Gettin' Higher Choir and all the magnificent folk who once again will join together to give our hearts and voices to raise money, love and energy for the people of Mozambique. It is a joy and a blessing to be involved for the fifth time in this marvellous work. I was telling Paul Horn, who will be playing with us, about all that has been created through our partnership with the Kapasseni Project. Paul was deeply moved by the love and devotion of so many people, as is everyone who hears of what we have accomplished with our friends across the sea. I so look forward to being with you all again. Makhosi.

Many thanks to Ann Mortifee, Paul Horn, the Gettin' Higher Choir, and all who attended their June concerts. \$27,987 was raised for the Kapasseni Project and the Ray of Hope Project.





# KAPASSENI CALLING



ISSUE 15

AN UPDATE ON THE KAPASSENI PROJECT

May 2007

**June 15 and 16th THE GETTIN HIGHER CHOIR**, directed by Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly presents "*Shine All Your Light*", the 9th annual benefit concerts for Kapasseni, Mozambique. This year's concert will feature acclaimed songwriter and performer **BETH NIELSEN CHAPMAN**. Beth is without a doubt one of the finest, and certainly one of the most internationally influential, songwriters of our time. She will be singing solo as well as with the choir in arrangements of her songs by choir co-director Denis Donnelly. Proceeds to support the Kapasseni Project and Kuwangisana Project. Tickets \$20 and \$15. For more information call Gloria 995-8731. Both concerts will be at 7:30 pm at the Alix Goolden Hall, 907 Pandora St. Victoria, BC.

## Building Better Lives Through Music

by Perpetua Alfazema

The valimba championship is very exciting! The valimba group is flourishing and has won our local and district championship for valimba groups and dancers. We are extremely proud of our wonderful group's achievement! Braz Parafino, the instructor, teaches music to forty students three days a week in Kapasseni and three days a week at Kuwangisana in Sena. The provincial valimba championship is next – here we come!

The funds sent from Victoria's Gettin' Higher Choir and from Tina Filipino's Letz Sing choirs were used to pay for a beautiful valimba, two drums, six drumsticks and shakers. Everything was made by local people. During the rehearsals and teaching here at Kuwangisana, the valimba attracts so many people, both young and old. People come to join in the singing and dancing, and some just come to watch. When the valimba plays, it seems like the whole of Mozambique is here in Sena.

Not only does the music make Sena and Kapasseni known, but it also helps our special needs orphans, who are dealing with trauma, find healing. We have a very special girl who is recuperating from trauma through music. Zefa is 12 years old. When she first came to the program she was anti-social, angry, constantly crying, and withdrawn. However, she has found her place through music. She plays shakers and she is now the lead singer. We often see children like Zefa being transformed through music each day.

Another group that is also benefiting from the music program are people living with HIV/AIDS and those suffering from chronic diseases. When the clients are brought to us, most of them are bedridden. We work very hard to get them on anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment. With the sound of the valimba at Kuwangisana, we are elated to see recovering clients slowly join in the dancing circle and start to sing the traditional songs.

**2025 note:** This article and the photos are included to complement Siobhan's 2005 article about the importance of valimba music in the community. Siobhan has always been a strong advocate for the Traditional Music Program.

Thanks to the Gettin' Higher Choir and special guest Beth Nielsen Chapman for their wonderful June benefit concert. Almost \$25,000 was raised for the Kapasseni Project and the home-based care project at Kuwangisana. The choir also gave Kuwangisana \$4,444 from a draw for two gift baskets, and choir members took a special collection among themselves and contributed \$1,552 for Kapasseni scholarships.

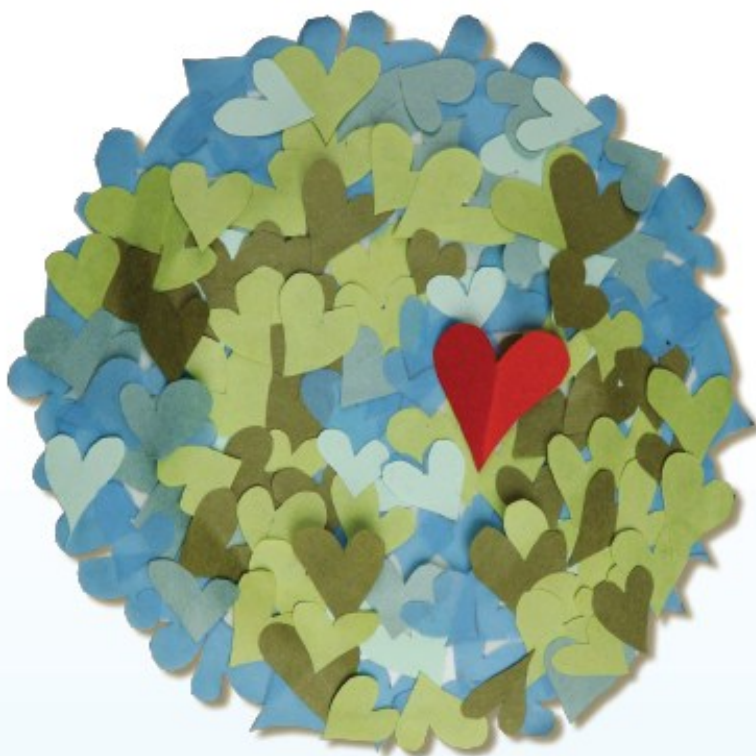


10  
FRIDAY & SATURDAY, JUNE 13 & 14, 2008, 7:30 PM ♥ ALIX GOOLDEN PERFORMANCE HALL,  
907 PANDORA ▲ TICKETS \$20 OR \$15 STUDENTS/SENIORS ♥ AVAILABLE AT MUNRO'S BOOKS  
IVY'S BOOKS ♥ AND JAMES BAY COFFEE & BOOKS ▲ FOR OUT OF TOWN TICKETS CONTACT  
GLORIA AT 250.995.8731 OR GLORIA@GETTINHIGHERCHOIR.CA

TENTH ANNUAL BENEFIT CONCERTS FOR KAPASSENI MOZAMBIQUE

# THE GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR JUNE 13 & 14

CO-DIRECTORS SHIVON ROBINSON & DENIS DONNELLY



WITH SPECIAL GUEST SUSAN OSBORN

SONGS  
FOR A PLANET  
YOU GOTTA  
LOVE







# KAPASSENI CALLING



ISSUE 16

AN UPDATE ON THE KAPASSENI PROJECT

June 2008

## TENTH ANNUAL BENEFIT CONCERT FOR KAPASSENI, MOZAMBIQUE 'Concert For A Planet You Gotta Love'

### GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR

Directed by Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly  
With Special Guest SUSAN OSBORN

Friday and Saturday, June 13 & 14, 7:30pm

Alix Gooldeen Performance Hall, 907 Pandora

The choir will sing songs from six continents, in five languages, that express our love for the Earth.

Tickets \$20 and \$15 students/seniors. On sale at Munro's Books, Ivy's Bookshop and James Bay Coffee and Books.

For out-of-town tickets call Gloria at (250) 995-8731

or email [gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca](mailto:gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca)



## Letter From Scholarship Students

We are Kapasseni students who are studying in higher grades in Murraca with the support of the Kapasseni Project. We would like to thank the Kapasseni Project for honouring and helping us in our studies throughout these years. We would like to ask the project to continue with this support and we would like to study further and if possible go to university through your help. This is the list of the students from Kapasseni and their respective class and what they want to be when they grow up.

Antonio Vaz Quembo - Grade 10, Pilot

Quembo Eusebio Quembo - Grade 9, Pilot

Temotio Lucas Tomas Chonze - Grade 10, Doctor

Emilio Fransisco Semente - Grade 7, Driver

Amois Elias Fransisco - Grade 8, Teacher

Maria Paulo Armando - Grade 8, Nurse

Samuel Mirione Semente - Grade 6, Teacher

Isabel Elidia Costa - Grade 7, Nurse

Elias Paulino Bulane - Grade 6, Teacher

Dolice Fransisco Daio - Grade 7, Teacher

Abdul Albino Ernesto - Grade 6, Nurse

Regina Antonio - Grade 6, Teacher

Manuel Januario - Grade 8, Teacher

Rosa Santo - Grade 6, Teacher

Chate Joao Berro - Grade 7, Teacher



Kapasseni children celebrate on Revolution Day, with flags of Mozambique and Canada flying together in the square.

The women of Kapasseni requested help to obtain a corn grinding machine, which would provide an important source of village income and free girls from hours of arduous labour preventing them from completing schoolwork. After several years of fundraising, an especially generous donation specifically for this purpose allowed us to purchase the equipment and build a facility to house it.







# KAPASSENI CALLING



ISSUE 19

AN UPDATE ON THE KAPASSENI PROJECT

June 2009

## 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Gettin' Higher Choir Benefit Concerts for Kapasseni

### Woyaya – Dreaming in Four-Part Harmony

Join the 300-member Gettin' Higher Choir and special guest Valdy at 7:30 Friday, June 12 and 7:30 Saturday, June 13 in the Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora Ave, Victoria. Tickets are at Munro's Books, Ivy's Books, Dig This in Broadmead and James Bay Coffee and Books, and from choir members. \$20 adults, \$15 seniors and students. For out of town tickets, contact [gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca](mailto:gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca). Our friends and project founders Perpetua and Joseph Alfazema will be attending the concerts and would love to see and thank you in person for your support for their work in Mozambique.

**THE GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR**  
Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly, co-directors

**WOYAYA**  
DREAMING IN FOUR-PART HARMONY

Friday, June 12, 7:30 pm  
Saturday, June 13, 7:30 pm

Alix Goolden  
Performance Hall  
907 Pandora

**\$20 - \$15** seniors/students  
Tickets on sale at  
Munro's Books, James Bay Coffee and Books  
Ivy's Books, and Dig This (Broadmead)  
[WWW.GETTINHIGHERCHOIR.CA](http://WWW.GETTINHIGHERCHOIR.CA)

With Special Guest  
**VALDY**

**BENEFIT CONCERTS FOR KAPASSENI, MOZAMBIQUE**



Thanks to the Gettin' Higher Choir, special guest Valdy, and all who attended their June benefit concerts. Almost \$20,000 was raised, and shared between the Kapasseni Project and the Kuwangisana home-based care project.





# KAPASSENI CALLING



ISSUE 21

AN UPDATE ON THE KAPASSENI PROJECT

May 2010

## 12<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL BENEFIT CONCERT FOR MOZAMBIQUE - *The Golden Apples of the Sun*

The GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR directed by Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly will perform our 12<sup>th</sup> annual benefit concert on Friday and Saturday, June 4 & 5 - 7:30pm at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora Street in Victoria. The choir will be joined by special guest Gina Sala, an enchanting singer of international renown. Net concert proceeds will go to the Kapasseni Project and the Kuwangisana Project. Greetings from Kapasseni will be brought personally by Perpetua Alfazema! Our last few concerts have sold out, so get your tickets early. Tickets are \$20/\$15, on sale at Munro's Books, Ivy's Bookshop, James Bay Coffee and Books, Larsen Music and Dig This (Broadmead). For more information and for out-of-town tickets, contact Gloria at (250) 995-8731 or [gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca](mailto:gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca)



Thanks to the Gettin' Higher Choir and Gina Sala for a fabulous concert in June that raised over \$10,000 for the Kapasseni community. Choir members also took up a collection among themselves, and instead of buying flowers for their directors, Siobhan and Denis, the money provided for scholarships supporting Kapasseni school graduates as they continue their studies at the Murraca boarding school.



Above: Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema at home in Sena, Mozambique.

Left: Former student, Juanita, has been trained by Kuwangisana and is in charge of the orphan program in Kapasseni. Juanita went to Murraca High School and is a great role model for the local girls to stay in school.





# KAPASSENI CALLING



ISSUE 23

AN UPDATE ON THE KAPASSENI PROJECT

June 2011



## "One World" Concert for Mozambique, June 10 and June 11

**THE GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR**, directed by **Shivon Robinsong & Denis Donnelly**, present the 13th annual concert for Mozambique, on Friday June 10 & Saturday June 11, 2011 at 7:30 at the Alix Goolden Hall, 907 Pandora Avenue in Victoria. Special guest Kinobe, from Uganda, is a gifted multi-instrumentalist, vocalist and composer, who uses songs and stories from his homeland to create peace and to champion a better future for children everywhere. [www.kinobemusic.com](http://www.kinobemusic.com)

**TICKETS** \$20 (\$15 for seniors & students) are available at Munro's Books, James Bay Coffee & Books, Ivy's Books in Oak Bay, and Dig This in Broadmead Centre. For out-of-town tickets contact Gloria at (250) 995-8731 or [gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca](mailto:gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca)

**Get a special gift basket draw ticket at either concert to help with the video production!**

## Kapasseni Homecoming

by Shivon Robinsong

On June 21, I will fly across the world to Mozambique for the third time. Kapasseni is dear to my heart, and returning there will be like a homecoming. In 1999, a group of us went over with Perpetua and Joseph, laden with school supplies and money for tools and building materials. We were going to help the villagers build a school. The people had only recently returned after a civil war ravaged the land. Everything had been destroyed. The village chief made building a school the first priority, to give the community hope for the future.

In 2003 I went back to see the progress, and I wrote: *"The most exciting difference I noticed was the brightness of the children. On my first visit in 1999, I found it almost impossible to connect with the kids – they were extremely shy, even fearful, and uninterested or incapable of much interaction with strangers from the outside world. The children of Kapasseni today are very different. They are playful and engaging, their minds obviously benefiting tremendously from the stimulation that education provides. In this newsletter, you will read of many other welcome developments in the village, but it is in this chance the children are being given to develop their potential, that I find the greatest hope."*

Now, eight years later, I'm going back again – eager to see all that has happened in Kapasseni and surrounding areas in Caia District.

How are the fruit and nut trees faring that were planted in 2003? How has the presence of a grain grinding mill altered the life of the villagers, particularly that of the teenage girls who used to spend approximately four hours a day pounding grain for the family? What bustling programs take place in that community centre that Perpetua built in Sena with funds from two of our GHC concerts?

Most of all, I'm looking forward to meeting students who are now about to graduate from high school. What do they remember of that day in 1999 when they lined up to receive their bright red school t-shirt and school bag stuffed with supplies for that first day in the temporary one-room school house with the grass roof? How have they managed to stay in school against so many odds – especially the girls? What are their hopes and dreams beyond graduation?

I am delighted that Ben Fox is coming again too. In 1999 and 2003 he documented life in Kapasseni so powerfully with still photos and video. Ben and I look forward to bringing back images and stories to connect you visually to all that has been accomplished through your generosity over the years.





# Siobhan's Sena Letter, July 2011

Dear friends, family and choir community,

Here is my first installment of news from the front. I have been here in Sena twelve days now, absorbed in the work of Kuwangisana, providing in-home care for people with AIDS, and a wonderful, innovative program for hundreds of children and elders affected by the epidemic.

The day often begins with a meeting of one group or other, under a huge shade tree in the Kuwangisana compound. The professional staff of 30; the activists (community volunteers); the grandparents (older men and women activists). I have been invited to lead singing at each of these gatherings, and what enthusiastic singers they are, picking up the songs in no time!

In addition to the programs taking place at the Kuwangisana Centre, there are many outreach programs, to people in various stages of HIV/AIDS, and to the families caring for the orphans, making sure they are coping, that they are receiving the various kinds of support available.

Most mornings, Ben Fox and I set out with a few of the staff, to witness a different aspect of the project. It is moving beyond words. And the people's gratitude is enormous. It is thanks to Kuwangisana that many of them are alive, receiving the ARV drugs (anti retro viral), along with the counseling, and food aid that makes the treatment effective.

My favourite place to be is at Seven Hills Academy. For those of you familiar with The Power of Hope, you could think of this as a 10 hectare permanent PoH site, although it is not residential. All the orphans of Sena are cared for in the homes of extended family. Yet still, when the Alfazemas moved here six years ago, they found that many of the orphans and vulnerable children were severely traumatized from being surrounded by so much disease and death.

While many of the children attend public school, many others have lacked the life skills needed to cope in such a setting. Perpetua secured a ten hectare plot of land high on a plateau above the town, a magical feeling place above all the noise and bustle, with views out over the Zambezi River, and surrounded by seven mountains. It is here that a healing village is being built, hand-made brick by brick, program by program.

A pre-school takes in children aged 4 - 6, and in a very gentle loving environment, prepares them for entry to a school environment, so that when they graduate and go to the public school, they are ahead of their peers and well able to cope. Children of all ages come to Seven Hills after school each day, and it's easy to see why. A cook house is in full production all day, with several huge pots cooking over open fires- morning porridge, rice and beans in the afternoon, sometimes a treat of hippo or crocodile meat, donated by a local big game hunting lodge.

A valimba band is set up under a spacious grass-roofed shelter, and Braz Parafino, fabulous player and teacher, has valimba bands of all ages going, complete with dancers.

I remember a phone conversation with Perpetua shortly after she moved to Sena from Victoria. I asked her how she coped with all the heartbreak, how did the children cope with their grief. Her immediate answer was, with music. It is the music that heals us all, she said. The traditional music program is still central to this healing village.

There is a crafts building, where the traditional arts of pottery and basket weaving are taught by the elders, skills that would previously have been handed down parent to child. And speaking of elders, there is a place for them too at Seven Hills. A group of grandparents who have lost their children to the AIDS epidemic, find their healing in coming together here, teaching traditional skills and value to the children.

The largest building of all is the library. The walls are all up, and this week the roof rafters are being added. This will be an amazing addition to the town. The public schools are notoriously lacking books, and there is no public library even in the city of Beira. Children learn to read exclusively from what the teacher writes on the blackboard. Once the building is completed, the shelves will be stocked with the hundreds of books that came over with the Alfazemas from St. Catherine's, Ontario. Many were donated by the Portuguese community there. But there is lots of room for expansion. This library will be an extraordinary addition to the whole Caia District.

When I first took in the sight of all these buildings at Academia Sette Montagnes, I was puzzled. It had been my understanding that the US funding of Kuwangisana did not cover buildings. I wasn't aware of any other major donors. I knew our GHC concerts had funded the Kuwangisana facility in town, and an additional collection among the choir members covered the installation of the doors and windows for this beautiful and well used structure. But where did the funds come for the library, the classrooms, the new guest houses in the works, and all the ancillary buildings at Seven Hills? Perpetua smiled her enigmatic smile when I asked her, and said, "where do you think, from the Gettin' Higher Choir of course!"

It was then that I uncovered more of Perpetua's genius in community building, and in manifestation! The piles of building materials that I saw all over the property, mountains of stones, sand, and red clay bricks, have all been gathered and carried long distances on the top of heads by the people of Sena, young and old, men and women. Sette Montagnes is being built by the townspeople, their contribution to this wonderful place of nourishment and healing for all, encouraged by the knowledge that each year a sum of money arrives from Victoria to buy things like roofing, cement, and to pay the skilled workers hired to work with them. The presence of this amazing facility, and a stellar staff, makes Kuwangisana very attractive to other donors, most of whom don't want to build infrastructure, preferring to fund programs and services. Now that's leverage!

We will be visiting Kapasseni this coming weekend, so I will fill you in on that in my next letter. We have met the high school students from Kapasseni who are on scholarship at Murraca boarding school, and I will include news of them in next letter too. My love to you all, and gratitude for being with me on this journey.

Shivon

# Siobhan's Kapasseni Letter, July 2011



Dear family and friends

This is my last day in Sena. Tomorrow we will drive back to Beira, and I'll fly out to Johannesburg, then to London, where I'll make a side trip to Ireland for a week, and then home. There is so much to share with you! Here is my second installment, this one about our first trip in to Kapasseni, two weeks ago. (We went back again last weekend for some additional filming.)

The drive in to Kapasseni is 23 km from Sena, along the same "road" in off the main road, that we had travelled in 1999. It takes about an hour, over a dirt road used more by foot and bicycle than by car. In fact, bicycles, a rare sight in 1999, are everywhere here these days. Oh, such beautiful countryside! Fields of grasses, bananas, corn. Mud huts with thatched roofs everywhere, neatly swept compounds, chickens and pigeons clucking and cooing, and children smiling and waving at us. More goats than I remember, and in many of the compounds, stacks of recently harvested sesame.

When we were here in 1999 and 2003, the cash crop was cotton. We asked questions, and learned that when the new cotton crop was a foot high, a man would show up with pesticide for the farmers to apply to their crop, barefoot, without any protective clothing. Concerned for their health, and the health of the land, we began a conversation at that time about looking for alternative cash crops to cotton. We visited the Beira office of an American NGO, Food for the Hungry, who recommended sesame.

So now, I am delighted to learn that most farmers have made the switch, and its working out great! Sesame grows very well in the Kapasseni area, with no pesticides needed, and there is a strong market for it. It seems to be an ideal crop, well suited to the soil and drought resistant. The families process the harvest, selling the sacks of seeds for a considerably better price than they used to get for the cotton.

Another change I notice is goats, lots and lots of goats. On our last trip here in 2003, we launched a goat program, gifting seven families with a pair of goats, on the understanding that they would let them breed, and pass on the first male and female to another family, who would do the same. Seemed like a good idea, and the goats were eagerly received. However they were short lived, and soon ended up in the stew pot, we heard later. But somehow, perhaps because of a little more prosperity from the sale of sesame, many families now own goats, which are very well suited to the area, with plenty of grassland for them to graze on, and a great source of meat.

As we got closer to Kapasseni, the smiles and waves got more enthusiastic. And then we heard singing and music. What a warm welcome! A huge crowd of children were on the roadside, quite a way out of the village, singing and drumming us in. At first I couldn't see the drums, then noticed lengths of 3 inch plastic pipe, covered with a scrap of plastic, held between the thighs of the little drummer boys, and played with great gusto and unfailing rhythm. The songs were all variations on the theme of "Welcome Dona Shivon, Welcome Ben, we are happy to see you here, to show you our beautiful school and all that has happened here". We were greeted by one of the teachers, and led the procession back to the village. It was very moving as you can imagine! Just when I was wondering where Perpetua was, she appeared out of the bush driving her bright red ATV, looking like a super-hero action doll, wheeling in front of us as the lead float in the parade. When we arrived at the village, the paths were lined with recently white-washed stones – the red carpet, African style.

Perpetua led us on a tour of the village, a tour that took two hours – so much to see! First to the site of the original one room school, where we paid our respects to the ceremonial tree that had been planted by the old chief. It has now grown into a beautiful mature tree, branching out in all directions, like the Kapasseni Project itself.



Happy children run and play before school starts. They have had their breakfast and can begin their classes. The lessons focus on literacy skills in Portuguese which is the official language in Mozambique. Other subjects include math, social studies, health, sewing and PE. There is also a school garden and traditional music program.



## Siobhan's Kapasseni Letter, July 2011 (continued)



The grain grinding mill is a key feature in the village. From early morning, and throughout the day, women pour in to Kapasseni from all directions, bearing loads of corn on their heads, and line up outside the mill, as one by one their grain gets ground to a fine flour. This is a major social event – they usually arrive in pairs or a group of three, having walked maybe a few kilometres with neighbours, and sit and visit until it's their turn. School girls will leave their corn in to be ground, and pick it up after class. The roar of the generator and the mill is a daily fact of life, except on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, but the benefits clearly outweigh this intrusion. A major obstacle for girls staying in school has been removed.

The tour continues – the teachers' houses are all in one area, a separate house for headmaster Chico Fulango and his family. He has been here eight years, and is clearly part of the community and happy to be here. Three more houses are attached in a row, and four larger ones more suitable for families have just been completed.

A new pre-school is nearing completion. This was built with a donation made by the family of GHC alto Jan Greer when she died a few years ago, and will soon be dedicated in her name. Perpetua is passionate about early childhood education, and is already seeing the benefits from several pre-schools she has started in Sena and surrounding areas, for children aged 3-5. When these kids from very impoverished homes enter Grade One at public school, they are clearly more ready to learn and feel success from the start.

And of course, we see the Kapasseni School itself, Grades one to seven, with 450 kids over two shifts, and the little kitchen hut that churns out vast amounts of nutritious porridge every day, and a second meal of rice and beans. But there is no school today! The visitors from Victoria have arrived, and it's a day long party, with full on valimba band, singing and dancing, and a big feast!

We sit down in a circle with the Community Development Committee, made up of elders from Kapasseni and surrounding villages – Murrema, Muesi, Zambezia – all within walking distance, and enjoying the amenities now available in Kapasseni.

Each one expresses deep gratitude to the people of Victoria for all that has been made possible, mentioning the wells, the school, the health centre, the grinding machine, the scholarships to Murraca High School. I commend them for their leadership in building such strong community participation and support, and tell them what a pleasure and honour it has been to work in partnership with such a motivated, hard working community, to bring it back to life.

We stay four days, and it is such a joy for me to recognize old friends, to see the bright eager faces of the young people whose lives have been transformed by the blessing of education on a full stomach. We sing together, a lot. In fact they are voracious in their appetite for new songs, and so quick at picking them up, from the tiniest kids on up. It has been a challenge for me to think of songs that will work. I know nothing in their language of Sena, but they quickly grasp songs in any African language. Singing in harmony, or even in rounds, is very foreign to them. Call and response, clapping, repeating over and over, faster and faster, playing with dynamics, these are all second nature to them.

So my greatest hits have been Olayo (thanks Maggie!), Baba Lagumbala, Aye Mojinumba (thanks Betsy and Maggie), Jambo, Babethandaza (this was requested by an 11 year old, who remembered fragments of it from 8 years ago!!). Something about that song makes them want to sing it endlessly, so we play with that, we take it on the road, singing as we walk, then run in one rhythm, clapping, find our way under a big shady tree, and then get very slow and quiet. For a moment I think we're done, but no, thirty or so pairs of eyes are all looking expectantly at me, pleading for more, more! When I am all sung out, I ask them to sing to me, and then one of the older girls will launch into one of their numbers, which usually involves dancing as well, and we're good for another half hour. As you can probably tell, I am hopelessly in love with these kids, not just in Kapasseni, but here in my neighbourhood in Sena, and up at Sette Montagnes (where I am off to shortly, for a farewell feast!).

One other thing... we went to Murraca, the boarding high school where fourteen of our Kapasseni kids are on scholarship in Grades 9 - 12. We met with them all, six girls and eight boys, and they told us of their hopes for continuing their education. They all expressed the desire to go on to university, to become teachers, doctors and nurses, engineers, an agriculture specialist, and one policewoman. They love being in school, and see it as the path to a better life. They are all lovely, bright young people, full of appreciation for the help they are being given. I look forward to showing you photos of them.

Now I must bring this episode to a close, and get on with the day. My love to you all, and never ending gratitude for your generous support of this most worthwhile endeavour.

Shivon

## An Invitation from Shivon Robinsong

It all began in 1999 with a friendship between two Victoria choirs. The Gettin' Higher Choir repertoire at that time was mostly South African freedom songs. The Mozambique Choir was started by Perpetua and Joseph Alfazema with other Mozambican families, to keep their language and culture alive for their children and to share it with the community. Together we staged a joint benefit concert with Ann Mortifee as our special guest. We raised \$10,000 to build a one-room school in the village of Kapasseni. From that beginning, seeds of hope have taken root, grown up strong, and spread branches across the whole district of Caia.

After my first visit to Kapasseni to help build the school, I've been back twice, most recently this July. I was thoroughly impressed and delighted by the progress that I saw, both in Kapasseni, and in the work of Kuwangisana, the organization founded by the Alfazemas in 2005 that addresses the HIV/AIDS needs of the larger surrounding area. Your generous support over the years has worked miracles. Together, we have built infrastructure that has leveraged major funding from the US to build capacity and cutting edge programs. Kuwangisana is a model of holistic care for the most vulnerable in a country torn apart by poverty and disease.

I was heartwarmed beyond words to see the difference in the peoples' lives made possible by all this cooperation. It reminds me of a choir — all the sections singing their parts, listening to each other, and in the whole blend of harmonies creating a beauty together that none of us could have done on our own.



Presents

## KAPASSENI AND BEYOND

*Film, photos and fundraising. Stories and images from Mozambique*  
with Shivon Robinsong, Ben Fox & special guest Perpetua Alfazema

**SUNDAY NOVEMBER 27, 7 pm**

at The Victoria Truth Centre, 1201 Fort Street, Victoria, BC



**7pm** pre-show screening of the film  
*Journey to Kapasseni* (from the 1999 visit)

**8pm** launch of the new film  
*Return to Kapasseni* (from the July 2011 visit)



Come and hear about people and communities transformed with education, orphan support, and home-based care for HIV/AIDS patients.

**Admission by donation**

tax receipts issued for donations of \$20 or more



[www.caiaconnection.org](http://www.caiaconnection.org)  
[email.caiaconnection@gmail.com](mailto:email.caiaconnection@gmail.com)

The Caia Connection is a Canadian registered charity # 818683146RR0001





# THE GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR

Co-directed by Shivon Robinsong & Denis Donnelly

## *When I Sing*



WITH SPECIAL GUESTS

Shivon Robinsong

**SOUNDINGS**

Denis Donnelly



DIRECTED BY DENIS DONNELLY





## Education For Life by Shivon Robinsong

On June 8 and 9, the Gettin' Higher Choir will present our 14<sup>th</sup> annual benefit concerts for Mozambique. What started in 1999 in the small village of Kapasseni has taken root and branched out to serve a much wider population throughout Caia District and beyond.

The school in Kapasseni is now part of the public school system, with all teachers paid for by the government. Enrolment is around 450 students in grades 1 to 7. The breakfast program that we started is now run entirely by the community, with ingredients provided by the World Food Program.

We continue to fund extra-curricular programs in traditional music and dance in Kapasseni, Sena and Chemba, and we have just commissioned a set of instruments to be made for our fourth orphan care centre, in the town of Caia. There is something amazingly joyful and healing in the sound of the *valimba* and accompanying rhythm instruments, which are always accompanied by lots of singing and dancing. While children are becoming educated in the ways of the larger world, it is vitally important that they also grow up knowing and appreciating the beauty and power in their own culture.

We are now providing scholarships for a total of 24 students from Kapasseni School – 10 girls and 14 boys – to attend the boarding high school at Murraca, about 35 kilometres away from home. When I met with some of them last summer, I was incredibly moved to see the nearly grown-up versions of those little children we had encountered in 1999 on our first journey to Kapasseni, who were so excited then to be enrolled in that first school made of sticks and grass. Now, seeing their intelligent, eager faces, and hearing them share their dreams of going on with their education – to become doctor, nurse, teacher, pilot, policewoman – I could see the Alfazema's dream of building that first school coming to fruition. I well remember Joseph saying, "Where there is no school, there is no hope. Now there is a school, there is hope for the future."

Quembo and Antonio, two boys from Kapasseni who graduated from Murraca in November, are now employed by Kuwangisana while they make applications to university for next year. We would like to be able to help them with partial scholarships.

A new pre-school has recently opened in Kapasseni, funded by family and friends of the late Jan Grier, a Gettin' Higher Choir alto singer who wished to be remembered through this legacy. Perpetua feels very strongly about early childhood education, as she has observed that when children get an early start, they are more likely to stay in school.

And, at Kuwangisana's *Seven Hills Academy* in Sena, there is a new public library built with funds from our choir's concerts last year. It has over 8,700 books that came over in a container from St. Catherine's, Ontario when the Alfazemas moved back to Mozambique in 2006. Many were donated by the Portuguese community there.

## "When I Sing" Fundraising Concerts for Mozambique, June 9 and June 10

**THE GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR**, directed by Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly, presents their 14<sup>th</sup> annual benefit for Mozambique, Friday June 9 and Saturday June 10, at 7:30 at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora Ave in Victoria.

Special guests **SOUNDINGS** are one of Victoria's most eclectic and accomplished vocal ensembles.

Tickets \$20 (\$15 seniors & students) are available at Munro's Books, James Bay Coffee & Books, Ivy's Books in Oak Bay, and Dig This in Broadmead Centre. For out-of-town tickets contact Gloria at (250) 995-8731 or [gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca](mailto:gloria@gettinhigherchoir.ca)

**Net concert proceeds will go to The Caia Connection**

The library was recently inaugurated by officials from the major city of Beira, who declared it the best library in the entire province of Sofala. The whole community, including students from the public schools in the area, as well as those taking distance learning university courses, now have access to a wide selection of reference books – an unheard of luxury in most of the country!

Our overarching theme is Education For Life. From pre-school to university, we focus our efforts on supporting education of boys and girls to develop their potential, to become future leaders of Mozambique, and to be citizens of the world. Proceeds from our upcoming concerts will support this work, as we sing into being that other world we know is possible.



Children attending Kuwangisana's orphan's program have a supportive place to play and learn. They have been through a lot in their young lives and need the extra care and support these programs are providing.



# THE GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR

Co-directed by Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly

## ACROSS THE UNIVERSE

### Two Benefit Concerts for Mozambique

[www.caiaconnection.com](http://www.caiaconnection.com)

Friday, June 14  
at 7:30 PM

Saturday, June 15  
at 7:30 PM

Alix Goolden Performance Hall  
907 Pandora (Victoria Conservatory of Music)

\$25 – \$20 students/seniors

On sale at Munro's Books, Ivy's Books,  
James Bay Coffee & Books and Dig This (Broadmead Village)

For tickets online, go to [gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://gettinhigherchoir.ca)  
For out of town tickets contact Gloria at (250) 995-8731  
[www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca)



Guest Artist

**Beth Nielsen Chapman**



ISSUE 5

JUNE 2013



### **Across The Universe — Benefit Concerts for Mozambique**

Nashville-based Grammy nominee Beth Nielsen Chapman is returning to Victoria to lend her voice to the Gettin' Higher Choir's fifteenth annual benefit concerts for children in Mozambique on June 14 and June 15. The concerts will take us on a journey from the jungles of central Africa to the outer limits of space, and will cater to the whole family, as Beth is famed for her powerful and moving lyrics in songs for all age groups. Her music has topped the charts with songs written for such well-known performers as Bonnie Raitt, Bette Midler and Elton John. She was nominated for a Grammy award for her song "This Kiss," recorded by Faith Hill. "It's an honour and a thrill to be performing again with the Gettin' Higher Choir," says Beth. You can listen to one of the songs the choir will be singing with Beth at this link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R83YpbWNBtQ>

The concerts are at 7:30 pm on Friday, **June 14** and Saturday, **June 15** at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora in Victoria. Tickets are \$25 (\$20 for seniors/students), available at Munro's Books, Ivy's Book Shop, James Bay Coffee & Books, Dig This, Broadmead, and from choir members. Tickets and the poster are also available on-line at [www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca)

**Net concert proceeds will go to The Caia Connection**

## **Small Miracles**

by Shivon Robinsong

The recent flow of Chris Hadfield's incredibly beautiful photos of Earth, taken from the International Space Station, remind us all that we really are living in one world with no boundary lines. I like to lie in bed at night and think of our friends in Mozambique, way on the other side of the globe. There is an undeniable bond that has formed between the people there – in Kapasseni village and the nearby towns of Sena, Caia and Chemba – and probably an equal number of us here in Victoria and surrounding areas.

How we have affected each others' lives over the past 15 years! Here in Victoria, we have shifted from the old feelings of hopelessness about global poverty to a sense of dynamic engagement and genuine relationship, as we work to make a positive contribution to one place in Africa. And over in Mozambique, the knowledge people there have that there is a community in Canada that cares about them enough to give a hand up is making all the difference, inspiring great local leadership and initiative.

Together, through an amazing partnership between our two communities, we are witnessing all sorts of small miracles. Small miracle, that in the poorest part of one of the poorest countries in the world, half a world away, children are attending school, knowing that if they work hard, they will be encouraged and supported to continue their education through high school and even on to university. Small miracle that, against all kinds of gender barriers, four bright and determined girls from the tiny village of Kapasseni are in their final year of high school and looking forward to starting university next year. As for Kapasseni boys, there is now one in first year university, one in teachers' college, and one in a mechanics course. Knowing their backgrounds and the odds against them, this is highly significant. What seemed impossible is now possible. Small miracle, that just outside the dusty town of Sena, on the grounds of Seven Hills Academy, is the best library in the province of Sofala, stocked with over 8,000 books transported there in a container from

Canada, and staffed by local volunteers who have been trained in the running of a library.

Small miracle, that even after the completion of a major three-year funding grant, the Kuwangisana project founded in 2006 by Perpetua Alfazema continues on, providing such essential services as HIV/AIDS education and prevention, and holistic support for orphans and the families who care for them. And the presence of the valimba and related instruments in each of the four villages/towns where Kuwangisana works, along with ongoing instruction and practice in the traditional music and dance, continues to be a powerful source of joy and healing for children and adults alike.

The director of Kuwangisana, Gabriel Miandica, wrote to us to say: "During her visit to our project, the First Lady of Sofala Province told us how impressed she was with Kuwangisana, and she has recently called to inform us that she will be visiting again soon and bringing a TV crew to do a documentary for national television. Kuwangisana has become a model for quality care and is recognized for its good work in the community."

We are all part of keeping those miracles happening. Thank you for your continued generosity towards Kuwangisana, through your donations to The Caia Connection.

*Shivon Robinsong co-directs the Gettin' Higher Choir, and chairs The Caia Connection board. Shivon has been to Mozambique three times. Her 2011 visit is shown in the documentary [Return To Kapasseni](#).*

Thank-you to the Gettin' Higher Choir and Beth Nielsen Chapman, whose wonderful concerts last June raised \$16,093 for Kuwangisana. Members of the GHC, the High Noon Choir, and Letz Sing Choirs also took up collections among themselves and donated \$11,362 for scholarships. Many thanks to all of our supporters. Each donation, small or large, helps work miracles in the lives of Kapasseni students who are nurturing their dreams.



Two Benefit Concerts for Mozambique

# THE GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR

co-directed by Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly



Friday, June 13  
at 7:30 PM

Saturday, June 14  
at 7:30 PM

Alix Goolden  
Performance Hall  
907 Pandora  
(Victoria Conservatory of Music)

\$25 – \$20 students/seniors

On sale at Munro's Books, Ivy's Books,  
James Bay Coffee & Books  
and Dig This (Broadmead Village)

For tickets online,  
go to [gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://gettinhigherchoir.ca)

[www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca)  
[www.caiacconnection.com](http://www.caiacconnection.com)



Guest Artist

**Shari Ulrich**



ISSUE 6

JUNE 2014

**The Gettin' Higher Choir, directed by Shivon Robinsong and Denis Donnelly, present  
Two Benefit Concerts for Mozambique with special guest Shari Ulrich**



The concerts are Friday, **June 13** and Saturday, **June 14** 7:30 pm at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora in Victoria. Tickets are \$25 (\$20 seniors/students) available at Munro's Books, Ivy's Book Shop, James Bay Coffee & Books, Dig This (Broadmead), and from choir members. Tickets and the poster are also available on-line at: [www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca)



## Another World Is Possible

by Shivon Robinsong

*"Another world is not only possible, she's on the way and, on a quiet day, if you listen very carefully you can hear her breathe."*

These words of Indian activist and writer Arundhati Roy certainly ring true for the school children of Kapasseni, and particularly for the girls. In a country with a literacy rate of around 50 percent, and extreme gender inequality, there are now 11 girls and 22 boys from Kapasseni attending Murraca High School on scholarships provided by donors from Victoria. Furthermore, there are now three girls (Isabel, Chadi and Louisa) and four boys (Antonio, Amos, Khembo and Manuel Jose) attending college and university.

Because of your generous donations last year, we were able to pay the tuition for all these children, as well as room and board for all those at the high school. The older girls provide role models for the younger ones, and parents are starting to support the idea that girls can continue with their education rather than stay home and work for the family.

In 1999, these children started in the temporary school we built that year with funds from a concert by the Gettin' Higher Choir, the Mozambique Choir, and Ann Mortifee. Back then, we had an intention to support the children to go as far as they could with their education. Now we have unprecedented numbers attending high school, college, and university, and we hope the numbers continue to rise each year. This means the need for our scholarship funds will keep increasing – which is exactly what we have hoped for.

With your support, and the efforts of these amazing young people, together we are creating another world, one that is not only possible but that is coming into being right now!

Thank you to the Gettin' Higher Choir and Shari Ulrich, whose wonderful concerts last June raised \$17,901 for Kuwangisana. Members of the GHC, the High Noon Choir, and Letz Sing Choirs also took up collections among themselves and donated \$6,745 for scholarships. Many thanks to all of our supporters. Each donation, small or large, helps work miracles in the lives of Kapasseni students who are nurturing their dreams.



In 2011 Shivon went to the high school in Murraca and met with the students from Kapasseni. She found them all deeply in love with learning and with bright dreams of going on to university.

Kuwangisana set up the first community library in the town of Sena. The library is used by young people studying, older people who are continuing their learning, and by groups in the community. Librarian Mateus Sifa is shown here.



# GETTIN' HIGHER CHOIR



CO DIRECTED BY:  
SHIVON ROBINSON & DENIS DONNELLY

• GUEST ARTIST •

 RICK SCOTT 



17th Annual  
Benefit Concerts  
For Mozambique

[www.CAIACONNECTION.com](http://www.CAIACONNECTION.com)

ALIX GOOLDEN PERFORMANCE HALL  
(Victoria Conservatory of Music) 907 PANDORA, VICTORIA

Friday, June 12th 7:30 PM  
Saturday, June 13th 7:30 PM

\$25 - \$20 students/seniors

**TICKETS ON SALE AT:** Munro's Books, Ivy's Books,  
James Bay Coffee and Books & Dig This (Broadmead Village)

**FOR TICKETS ON-LINE:**

[www.GETTINHIGHERCHOIR.ca](http://www.GETTINHIGHERCHOIR.ca)





ISSUE 7

JUNE 2015



### The Gettin' Higher Choir Presents Two Benefit Concerts for Mozambique with Special Guest Rick Scott

With 18 albums, Rick Scott's lively concerts combining humour and poignant commentary have earned him a following around the world. The 300-member choir is directed by Shivon Robinsong & Denis Donnelly. The concerts are Friday, **June 12** & Saturday, **June 13** 7:30 pm at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora in Victoria. Tickets are \$25 (\$20 student & senior) at Munro's Books, Ivy's Bookshop, James Bay Coffee & Books, Dig This (Broadmead), & from choir members. Tickets & concert poster are also on-line at: [www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca)

**Net concert proceeds will go to The Caia Connection**



## Kapasseni Kids In Higher Education

by Shivon Robinsong

This year we are thrilled to announce that there has been a huge increase in Kapasseni scholarship students – we are now supporting the education of 69 children! Of these, 17 girls and 42 boys are at high school in Murraca, while 6 boys and 4 girls are attending post-secondary institutions. A newly formed committee in Sena works alongside us to identify the students, get them enrolled, support their adjustment, act as advisors, and account for the funds. The parents are also very involved in decision making.

This is a much larger financial commitment for The Caia Connection than previous years, and we are very pleased that enough donations have come in to help these students with registration, tuition, books, a computer, exam and practicum costs, and housing. Antonio, now in his third year studying geography at the University of Beira, intends to become a teacher. There are 4 girls and 5 boys attending Instituto Superior Politécnico in Chimoio. The five who will graduate in 2016, will get experience working at Kuwangisana during their summer break this year: Chade and Luisa in HR management, Isabel and Amos in Public Administration, and Quembo in Accounting. These young people know the community, the customs, the local language and will be a huge asset to the work being done.

Two of the girls at college, Maria and Luisa, took time off to have babies, but were encouraged by their parents to return to their studies while the babies stay home with their grandparents. This kind of parental support is sign of a significant shift in how girls have been traditionally viewed in rural Mozambique. Girls and their parents are realizing that they have options, and now these young women will be able to mentor the younger girls at Murraca High School through their example. Education of girls is proven to be the best way to lift families out of poverty. Thank you for your generous donations to the scholarship program!

**Our Special Thanks** – Thank you to the Gettin' Higher Choir and Rick Scott, whose wonderful concerts last June raised \$25,015 for Kuwangisana. Members of the GHC, the High Noon Choir, and Letz Sing Choirs also took collections among themselves and donated \$10,710 for scholarships. Many thanks to all of our supporters. Each donation, small or large, helps the people and students in need.



Perpetua is shown here in the middle (back row, purple shirt) with Kapasseni students from Murraca High School in 2014, after providing them with school supplies for the next term.



Regina Antonio Luis is a Grade 11 student at Murraca High School. Regina has struggled with her health but she is very serious about her education. She plans to be a teacher.





## 20th ANNIVERSARY CONCERTS

FUNDRAISING FOR MOZAMBIQUE'S CAIA CONNECTION

# *the* Gettin' Higher Choir

with special guest *Ann Mortiffee*

**Friday, June 10 & Saturday, June 11**

7:30PM EACH NIGHT, ALIX GOOLDEN HALL, 907 PANDORA

Co-directed by Shivon Robinson & Denis Donnelly

TICKETS \$30 general or \$25 students/seniors, available at [www.GettinHigherChoir.ca](http://www.GettinHigherChoir.ca)

*Munro's Books, Ivy's Bookshop, James Bay Coffee & Books, & 'Dig This (Broadmead)*

SPONSORED BY Hollyhock & Rocketday Arts





ISSUE 8

MAY 2016

**The Gettin' Higher Choir Presents the Twentieth Anniversary Benefit Concerts for Mozambique**  
**with Special Guest Ann Mortifee, and Ed Henderson (guitar), Bill Sample (piano), Finn Manniche (cello), and Lanny Pollet (flute)**



The 300-member choir is directed by Shivon Robinson & Denis Donnelly. The concerts are Friday, **June 10** and Saturday, **June 11** at 7:30 pm at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora Avenue in Victoria.

**Tickets are \$30 (\$25 students & seniors)** and are available at Munro's Books downtown, Ivy's Book Shop in Oak Bay, James Bay Coffee & Books, Dig This (Broadmead), and on-line at: [www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca)

*"The Gettin' Higher Choir is an amazing, energetic phenomenon. Hundreds of people who love to sing and who seek community are drawn toward the choir like bees toward nectar. The joy and enthusiasm that is generated when they sing is absolutely magnificent. Shivon and Denis, both consummate facilitators, have created a marvellous template for community choir. In this world where harmony is of the utmost importance, what better way to foster the best qualities of the human spirit than to lift our voices together in beauty, passion and grace. The Gettin' Higher Choir does all of this and more." – Ann Mortifee, singer-song-writer, author, and Order of Canada member (<http://annmortifee.com>)*

**Faith In Life by Shivon Robinsong**

We recently heard that Perpetua Alfazema has been chosen for a *Faith in Life* award by Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, her Canadian home base. They are flying her back from Mozambique to receive the honour on May 26. This will be a much needed break for Perpetua, and a chance to spend time with her family in Edmonton. It will also allow her to come to Victoria for our concerts in June before she heads back to continue her work in Africa.

Perpetua is indeed a shining example of someone full of faith in life! Living with and caring for the needs of some of the world's poorest people, Perpetua holds onto her belief that there is enough kindness, enough food, enough love, and enough generosity to go around. And with this faith shining out of her, she inspires us all to dig deeper, to give more generously, and to be with her in her determination to bring hope and new life to the people of the Caia District in Mozambique.

I am excited to be returning to Kapasseni again this summer. I will get to witness all the projects that you have contributed to over the past twenty years, and bring back news from the field about the school children, the college graduates, the library, the award-winning valimba music and dance ensembles, the plans for a high school to be built in Kapasseni, and more. Thank you all for being with us on this deeply gratifying journey. Perpetua's faith in life is contagious – and it is the antidote to despair.

I am also excited that the choir will once again be singing with Ann Mortifee. Ann joined us for our first fundraiser in 1999, which raised enough to build a school in Kapasseni. The students now attending high school and university all got their start at that little school.



**Our Special Thanks** – Thank you to the Gettin' Higher Choir and Ann Mortifee, whose wonderful concerts last June raised \$28,130 for Kuwangisana. Members of the GHC, the High Noon Choir, and Letz Sing Choirs also took collections among themselves and donated \$10,565 for scholarships. Many thanks to all of our supporters. Each donation, small or large, helps the people and students in need.



# Gettin' Higher Choir

TWO  
BENEFIT  
CONCERTS  
FOR MOZAMBIQUE

Co-directed by  
Siobhan Robinsong  
and Denis Donnelly

Guest artist: Coco Love Alcorn



FRIDAY, JUNE 9TH 7:30PM  
SATURDAY, JUNE 10TH 7:30PM

Alix Gooldeen Performance Hall  
907 Pandora, Victoria

**\$25 - \$20 students & seniors**  
Box Office: 900 Johnson St  
250.386.5311

Tickets also on sale at Munro's Books, Ivy's Books, James Bay  
Coffee and Books, Dig This in Broadmead Village, or online at:







ISSUE 9

JUNE 2017



### Gettin' Higher Choir 21<sup>st</sup> Benefit Concerts for Mozambique with Special Guest Coco Love Alcorn

The 300-member Gettin' Higher Choir is directed by Soibhan Robinsong & Denis Donnelly. Their guest, Coco, is a delightful performer, joyful and genuine, soulful and compelling. Coco sings a combination of jazz, pop, R&B and folk. Coco's voice has been hailed as extraordinary, beautiful and stunning. Her playful, witty character, love of improvising, and her willingness to engage with the audience have made Coco a presence on the Canadian music scene. The concerts are Friday, **June 9** and Saturday, **June 10** at 7:30 pm at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall, 907 Pandora Avenue in Victoria. **Tickets are \$25 (\$20 for students & seniors)** and are available at Munro's Books downtown, Ivy's Book Shop in Oak Bay, James Bay Coffee & Books, Dig This (Broadmead), and online at [www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca) Get your tickets soon — this will be a fabulous concert!

### Another Journey to Kapasseni by Siobhan Robinsong

Last summer I made my fourth trip to Mozambique to see for myself what was going on with the projects we had been supporting. Each day spent in the country was fully organized, visiting Kapasseni students in their various schools, as well as having meetings with parents, community chiefs, and district officials. An uncomfortable reality was becoming evident — there could be no high school in Kapasseni. Villages in rural Mozambique have only elementary schools.

Towards the end of my visit, there was a three-day Celebration of Education held in the village to honour the first group of Kapasseni kids graduating from college — 3 boys and 3 girls. Thousands of people came from all over the area to join in the celebration, including parents and children of all ages, chiefs from other villages, and the Governor of the Caia District.

There were many passionate speeches from parents insisting that their children be able to continue their education without having to leave home. The officials heard their pleas, and after much debate as to how it could happen, a plan was underway to have a solar powered distance learning high school in Kapasseni that would be open to children from many villages all around. To see an issue like this get resolved within a few days of meetings was very impressive, and showed me how deeply functional this community is. I witnessed a lot of eloquence, passion, respectful listening, problem solving, and a real desire to move forward.

Of course the plan also rests on our ability to send funds from Canada to build this "Community Learning Centre", as they have named it. And for our help, the people there are deeply grateful. I came away knowing that in our support of this little corner of the world, we are in partnership with as fine a community of parents as I have ever met, helping them to secure a better future for their children. Thank you for being with *The Caia Connection* on this journey!

Thanks to the Gettin' Higher Choir & Coco Love Alcorn, whose concerts last June raised \$15,855 for Kuwangisana. Members of the GHC and the High Noon Choir also took collections among themselves and donated \$4,675 for scholarships to enable Kapasseni children to continue to high school and to post-secondary education.



With support from *The Caia Connection*, Kuwangisana is making a difference in the lives of many young women by encouraging girls to get an education. Graduates then become inspirations and role models for the younger girls in the community.



Our scholarships are supporting these dedicated health science students from Kapasseni who are studying in the coastal city of Beira. There are 2 girls, Regina and Chica, and 8 boys — Abel, Aibo, Domingos, Manuel, Mateus, Marcos, Paulino, & Jeremias. They have successfully completed two practicums, and will soon do one more, in an area near the national capital, Maputo.





The Gettin' Higher Choir's  
20th Annual Benefit Concerts for Mozambique

# The Song Will Never End

With special guests  
**Denis Donnelly and Friends**  
with appearances by Lanny Pilet, Tull Porter, Oliver Swain,  
Kim Willoughby and an ensemble from Soundings

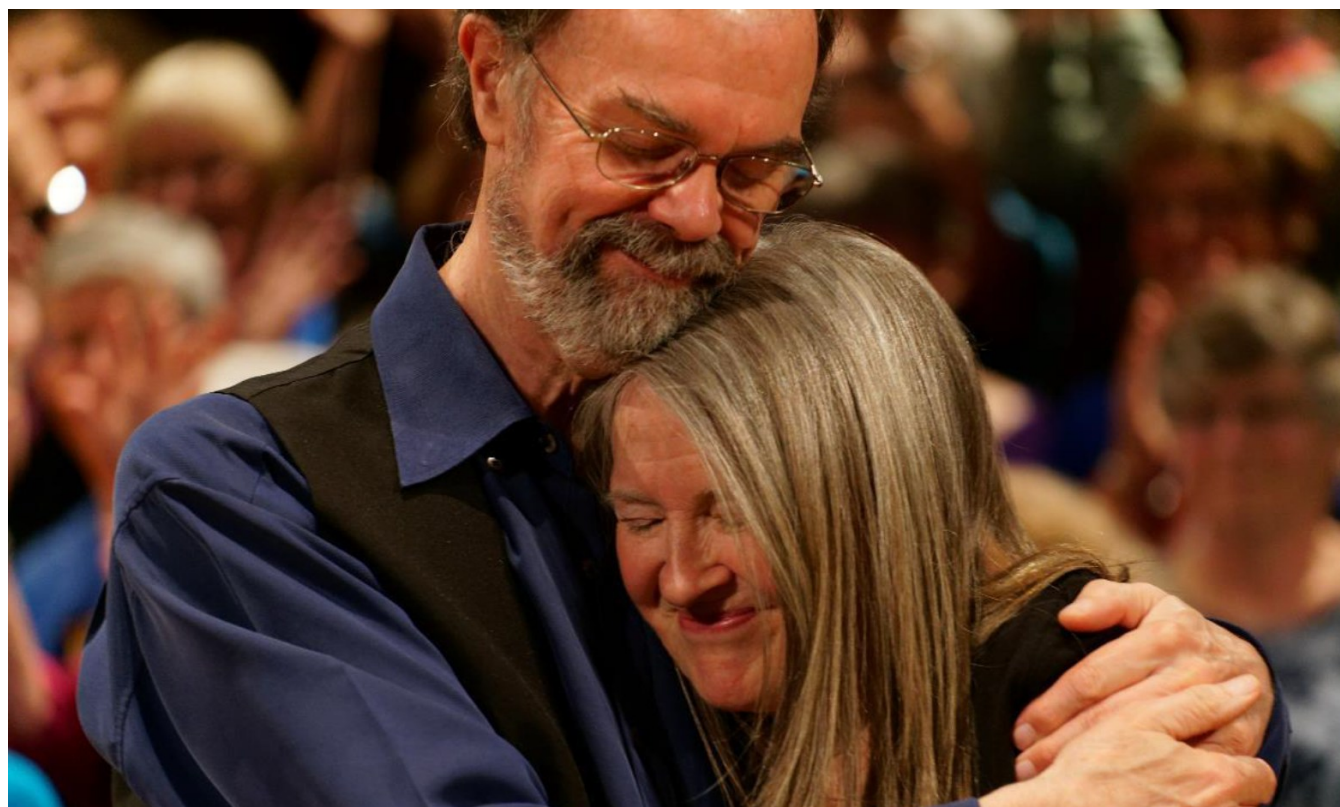


A SPECIAL GUEST APPEARANCE BY  
**Ann Mortifee**

Directed by Denis Donnelly,  
Cathy Baker, Dick Jackson and  
Founding Director Siobhan Robinson.

Alix Gooden Hall, 907 Pandora Ave,  
Friday, June 15, 2018, at 7:30pm  
Saturday, June 16, 2018, at 7:30pm  
\$25 - \$20 students & seniors

Box Office: 900 Johnson Street, 250.388.5311  
Tickets also available until June 14 at Ivy's Books,  
Munro's Books, James Bay Coffee & Books,  
Dig This (Broadmead)







ISSUE 10

JUNE 2018



## The Song Will Never End

### Annual Benefit Concert for Mozambique, June 15 & 16, Alix Goolden Hall

The Gettin' Higher Choir presents a special tribute honouring **Denis Donnelly** and his lifelong commitment to music as a songwriter, musician, arranger, choir leader, composer, and for his directorship of the Victoria Conservatory of Music. The concert also acknowledges the choir's founder, Siobhan Robinsong, as she and Denis pass the reins to new GHC directors Cathy Baker and Dick Jackson. Siobhan's passionate commitment to the belief that every person has a right to sing has nurtured this choir to grow into the wonderful community it is today. The choir is thrilled **Ann Mortifee** will be a guest. Join us for this special concert and opportunity to recognise Denis and Siobhan. **Tickets are \$25 (\$20 for students & seniors)**, available from Munro's Books, Ivy's Book Shop in Oak Bay, James Bay Coffee & Books, Dig This (Broadmead), choir members, and online: [www.ticketfly.com/event/1703453-song-will-never-end-evening-victoria](http://www.ticketfly.com/event/1703453-song-will-never-end-evening-victoria)



## Amazing Resilience by Siobhan Robinsong

With so much bad news in the world, it's hard to know how to respond or how to even begin to make a difference. That is why I have loved being a part of the Kapasseni Project and Caia Connection these past 20 years. Our friends in Mozambique have extraordinary resilience that keeps them moving forward no matter what. Perpetua Alfazema is a driving force behind all of this – an amazing source of inspiration for all of us on both sides of the world, from Victoria to Caia District.

Looking back on the past year as we write this newsletter, I'm thrilled to see happy faces of school children in their smart uniforms (made in the Gloria Hansen Sewing Centre), and the 10 young men and women dressed in white uniforms, studying medicine in Beira. The dream that began last year, of having a high school in Kapasseni, is now underway, despite a cyclone taking down the new building last November. And the moringa business continues to move forward, having survived several years of drought. The drought is over now, and the miraculous nutritious trees are flourishing once again.

Dreams are alive and well in Kapasseni, and great progress is being made. Keep in mind that this is all happening in one of the world's poorest developing countries. If you have ever wondered what you could do about the inequality in the world, a generous donation to The Caia Connection would be a great way to make a real difference. The money we raise at our choir concerts, and the many additional donations, large and small, are an essential part of what turns dreams into reality. Thanks for being with us on this journey.

**Thanks to the Gettin' Higher Choir!** Their concerts last June raised \$12,517 for Kuwangisana and \$2,345 for the Denis Donnelly and Siobhan Robinsong Distance Learning Centre, which is the new distance high school in Kapasseni. Members of the GHC and the High Noon Choir also took collections among themselves and donated \$3,620 for scholarships to enable Kapasseni children to continue to go to high school and on to post-secondary education.



Regina Antonio, from Kapasseni, is a second year nursing student focusing on midwifery. Perpetua reports that Regina has made the most amazing transformation from very shy girl to confident young woman, and that she will be a wonderful nurse.

The sewing centre In Sena honours Gloria Hansen, longtime choir member and treasurer for *The Caia Connection*. The centre provides life skills training and empowerment for girls and women.





ISSUE 11

JUNE 2019

## Songs of Hope, Songs of Home

### Annual Benefit Concert for Mozambique, 7:30 pm June 15, Alix Goolden Hall

The Gettin' Higher Choir presents its 23<sup>rd</sup> benefit concert for Mozambique on Saturday, June 15 at the Alix Goolden Performance Hall in Victoria. The concert will feature guest artist soul-folk singer Samara Jade, and the choir will also present selections from its wide repertoire, from African folksongs to Leonard Cohen, contemporary folk to Verdi. This is the first Mozambique fundraiser for co-directors Dick Jackson and Cathy Baker, who are proud to continue the choir's support for Mozambique. As Dick said, "The choir's longstanding relationship with The Caia Connection gives us a powerful sense of what is happening in Mozambique, and the opportunity to help where we can. Our hearts go out to our friends in Mozambique who have faced so much. By coming together for this benefit concert, we hope to do our small part to let them know they are not alone." Tickets are \$25 (\$15 for students), available at Alix Goolden Hall Box Office, Munro's Books, Ivy's Book Shop in Oak Bay, James Bay Coffee & Books, Dig This (Broadmead), Alexander Mackie Lodge (Langford), and online at [ticketfly.com](http://ticketfly.com). All concert proceeds are for The Caia Connection.



## In Loving Memory of Joseph Alfazema

On May 11, 2019, The Caia Connection lost a founding member and pillar of work and inspiration. Joseph passed away peacefully with his family by his side in Edmonton, after battling prostate cancer. He was 68.

Born in Kapasseni when the country was under Portuguese rule, Joseph fled to Kenya on foot during the independence war. He came to Victoria as a refugee in 1984, sponsored Perpetua to join him, and they had three children – Mazalari, Rafael, and Sara. In 1998, the family returned to Kapasseni and saw the devastation of war – a lack of food, roads, schools, hospitals, and churches. Seeing the suffering, and grateful for assistance they received as refugees, the Alfazemas came back to Victoria, started the Kapasseni Project, and partnered with Redeemer Lutheran Church and the Gettin' Higher Choir to raise funds for Kapasseni.

The first benefit concert raised \$10,000, which was enough to build a school. Each year since, concerts have raised funds for education, health, hospice, HIV education, food security, music, and families in poverty. In 2006 Joseph became a Lutheran pastor, and provided spiritual support and leadership for many struggling people. Recently, he and Perpetua returned to Canada with four adopted children – Tumayeni, Pinto, Sara, and Perpetua.

One of Joseph's final wishes was for an expansion of the Seven Mountains school that Kuwangisana built 15 years ago for traumatized children in the town of Sena, where many families were affected by HIV/AIDS. School days start with drumming, dancing, singing, and meals provided by grandmothers. It is so popular that the classrooms are bursting at the seams and more need to be built. May Joseph's love and dedication continue to inspire us all.

**Top photo:** In the film [Journey To Kapasseni](#) (2000), Joseph relates how, on the last night of his family's visit in 1998, the chief said, "Could you go and ask friends in Canada to help us to have a school here? Because we need a school for the kids."

**Bottom photo:** Joseph in Sena in 2009, with Victor, an orphan who went to Kuwangisana for the breakfast program and was also cared for by Joseph and Perpetua in their home.

**2025 note:** Perpetua reports that Victor grew up and now lives in Caia with his wife and children.







ISSUE 12

JUNE 2020



## Connecting Through Song

**Zoom Concert for Mozambique, 7:00 pm on Saturday June 27**

The Gettin' Higher Choir & Wavelengths Community Choir present their annual concert for Mozambique, featuring guests [Joe Jencks](#), [Ann Mortifee](#), and [Shari Ulrich](#). The choirs will present songs ranging from neo-folk to Canadian classic rock, from Ukraine to Africa. GHC co-directors Dick Jackson and Cathy Baker, and Wavelengths director Denis Donnelly, organized the concert to continue over 20 years of fundraising for Mozambique. To attend the concert, [click this link to register](#), make sure you have Zoom installed on your device, and follow instructions to be emailed on concert day. Instead of buying tickets, please make a donation to The Caia Connection. If you go through [Canada Helps](#), every dollar raised in June can help us win a \$20,000 bonus!



## Message From Siobhan Robinsong

I am very pleased to announce that Sarah Petrescu has been elected as the new president of The Caia Connection board. Sarah has been a board member for the past three years. Her connection with us goes way back to 2009. As a young journalist with the Times Colonist newspaper she spent two weeks in Kapasseni village learning upfront how the work of Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema, with help from friends in Canada, was transforming this small village, and especially the lives of young girls and boys so eager for education. After 11 years as president of this wonderful organization, I'm delighted to pass the torch to Sarah. I will remain as a board member, happy to continue serving in any way I can. It has been such a pleasure to be part of this dedicated and caring group, working so well in partnership with our friends in Mozambique.



Perpetua Alfazema and Siobhan Robinsong celebrate in Kapasseni village with Amos, Quembo, Antonio, Chade, Luisa and Isabel, who are the first students to graduate from post-secondary programs.



**Ann Mortifee** is our very special long-time supporter. In 1999 Ann headlined our concert to fund the first school to be built in Kapasseni. She returned to support us in 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2016 and 2018 –so this year's fundraiser marks her eighth appearance as our guest. Born on a farm in Zululand, South Africa, Ann has written, "There are so many of us who feel a deep sense of joy and fulfillment to know that our efforts together are bearing such wonderful fruit, in a small village tucked away in Mozambique."

The 2020 online concert was one of our most successful ever, raising \$23,107. This supported scholarships, construction of the Distance Learning Centre, and the traditional music program for the orphans at Seven Mountains school in Sena. Many thanks to all of our supporters.



# Siobhan's Love Continues To Inspire



In 2018 Siobhan Robinsong and Denis Donnelly joyfully handed leadership of the Gettin' Higher Choir to co-directors Cathy Baker and Dick Jackson. Denis went on to form Wavelengths Community Choir. Denis, Cathy, and Dick and their choirs have continued to hold annual fundraising concerts for The Caia Connection and Perpetua's work in Mozambique. And support continues to be provided by Letz Sing choir in the Comox Valley and the Lewes Library reading group in Sussex. The rainbow bridge of song is strong!

**The Gettin' Higher Choir**  
Directed by  
Cathy Baker & Dick Jackson

**Songs of Hope  
Songs of Home**  
With Special  
Guest Artist  
Samara Jacle

**A BENEFIT CONCERT  
FOR MOZAMBIQUE**  
through The Caia Connection

Featuring an uplifting repertoire, from  
African folksongs to Leonard Cohen; from  
contemporary folk to an opera chorus by  
Verdi and a 1990's musical

Samara weaves  
a unique  
tapestry of  
folk, jazz,  
blues, and  
world-fusion

**7:30 PM SATURDAY JUNE 15, 2019**  
ALIX GOLDEN PERFORMANCE HALL  
907 PANDORA AVENUE, VICTORIA  
\$25 - \$15 STUDENTS

Box Office 900 Johnson Street 250.386.5311  
Tickets also available at Ivy's Books, Munro's Books,  
James Bay Coffee & Books, Dig This (Broadmead),  
Alexander Mackie Lodge (Langford), and ticketfly.com

The GHC is a non-auditioned community choir—  
Come sing with us in James Bay and Langford!

[www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca)

**Online Benefit Concert for Mozambique**  
June 27, 2020 at 7:00pm Pacific Time With Guest Artists: Joe Jencks  
Register: [www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca) Ann Mortiffee  
Shari Ulrich

**Connecting Through Song**  
The Gettin' Higher Choir & Wavelengths  
community choir

**The Gettin' Higher Choir** with special guest  
**Bruce Cockburn**  
and musicians from the Caia district of Mozambique present

**VOICES RISING**  
an online benefit concert for The Caia Connection

**Saturday  
June 19, 2021  
7pm PDT**  
Zoom and  
YouTube Live

Registration and Information: [www.gettinhigherchoir.ca](http://www.gettinhigherchoir.ca)



# Siobhan's songs continue, and the work continues

An All-Beatles Choral Celebration

## the LOVE you Make

Wavelengths Community Choir  
Denis Donnelly, Director

Accompanied by a string quartet in partnership with University of Victoria's *Quartet Fest West*  
Special guest: Kim Willoughby

**Saturday, June 29, 7:30 PM**  
**Sunday, June 30, 2:00 PM**

**\$35 plus applicable fees**  
All proceeds support our ongoing projects in Mozambique

**Mary Winspear Centre | 250-656-0275**  
2243 Beacon Ave, Sidney, BC



## The Gettin' Higher Choir

Directed by Cathy Baker & Dick Jackson

### AN EVENING WITH MAMUSE AND THE GHC

our 25th fundraiser for Mozambique through The Caia Connection

Alix Goolden Performance Hall, Victoria BC  
**FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2024 7:00-9:30PM**



## The Gettin' Higher Choir

Directed by Cathy Baker & Dick Jackson

### Singing Soul Connection

with special guests  
**Backyard Boulevard**  
featuring local songwriters  
Susan Ellenton & Robert Anderson

A Benefit Concert for Mozambique, through The Caia Connection

Alix Goolden Performance Hall, Victoria BC  
**Sunday, June 11, 2023 at 2:30PM**



The Gettin' Higher Choir & Wavelengths Community Choir  
directed by Cathy Baker and Dick Jackson & directed by Denis Donnelly

come together to present a concert in celebration of  
of the vision and achievement of  
**Siobhan Robinsong**  
and supporting Kapasseni



Featuring special guest **Ann Mortifce**  
with a livestream of **Valimba musicians** from Kapasseni, Mozambique

**TICKETS**  
\$35 standard  
or  
\$15 supported by the community  
\$35 supporting the community

**Sunday, June 29 2:00 PM**  
Farquhar Auditorium, UVic

UVic Ticket Centre  
250.721.8480





# Thank You, Dona Siobhan!



Kapasseni's hope for the future (2003 photo)