

NEWSLETTER
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2015



Together to
grow

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SAVE THE DATE: CALENDAR OF THE EVENTS FOR 2014-2015

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edited by the Organization

MUSIC AND DANCES OF MALAWI

by A. Pantaleoni

WALK
WITH
US



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Project "SPORT X CHANGE"

by T. Leone



“SPORTS IS A POSSIBLE RESOURCE OF INTERIOR IMPROVEMENT FOR EVERY INDIVIDUAL”

The educational and formative value of sports is a precise and constant goal for Africa Sottosopra. All the children of the world need to enrich their spirit and their souls with dreams, fantasy and creativity; they need sports play in order to grow healthy and to mature, to have a correct and adequate vision of life and of their relationship with others. Sports for change!

In 2012 the Italian Badminton Federation supplied us with a kit for a “mobile” badminton court plus all the playing equipment.

THE NTAWA PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS NOW PLAY BADMINTON!

In 2013 we formed a rugby team that is registered in the RFUM (Rugby Football Union of Malawi). All this was possible thanks to the tenacity and the initial goodwill of Chikondi and Cydrick, two students and rugby players of Thyolo Secondary School, who trained our Thyolo District students free of charge, and to the enthusiasm of their trainer Russell Suter, a teacher at St. Andrew’s High School, who is now our official point of reference for this activity.

Africa Sottosopra accepted this challenge and as a simple recreational activity it has become a real sports activity. Both a boys’ and a girls’ teams have been registered in the RFUM and two of our under 18 players were selected for the national team! All this was also possible thanks to the support of a prestigious Roman Rugby Club – CUS

Roma – who help us to make this wonderful dream more and more concrete.

An unexpected success and, for this reason, even more appreciated. “WE GROW STRONG” is Africa Sottosopra Rugby Team’s motto!





THE TWELVE BOREHOLES PROJECT

Boreholes – December 2014

edited by T. Leone



The “Boreholes Project” intends to guarantee the right to drinking water by drilling boreholes and building water supply systems such that can bring an improvement of the quality of life to the communities in the rural areas. The aim is to reduce child mortality caused by the use of infected water, to prevent diseases connected to the use of contaminated and stagnant water, to relieve the women from the burdensome duty of transporting water for long distances and to allow the communities the irrigation of their vegetable gardens, thus favouring agricultural production and thereby also improving the food supply.

The “Twelve Boreholes Project” envisages the drilling of 12 boreholes in 12 different villages in the Thyolo District, S/TA Nanseta.

The local committees, the Ntawa Teachers Committee and the the Village Development Committee, along with our Rome with You Committee have individuated the villages where the water emergency is highest and in December 2014 two boreholes were drilled in the villages of Sathawa and Chilambe.



THE MOTHER WHO TURNED TO DUST

by E. Metalli

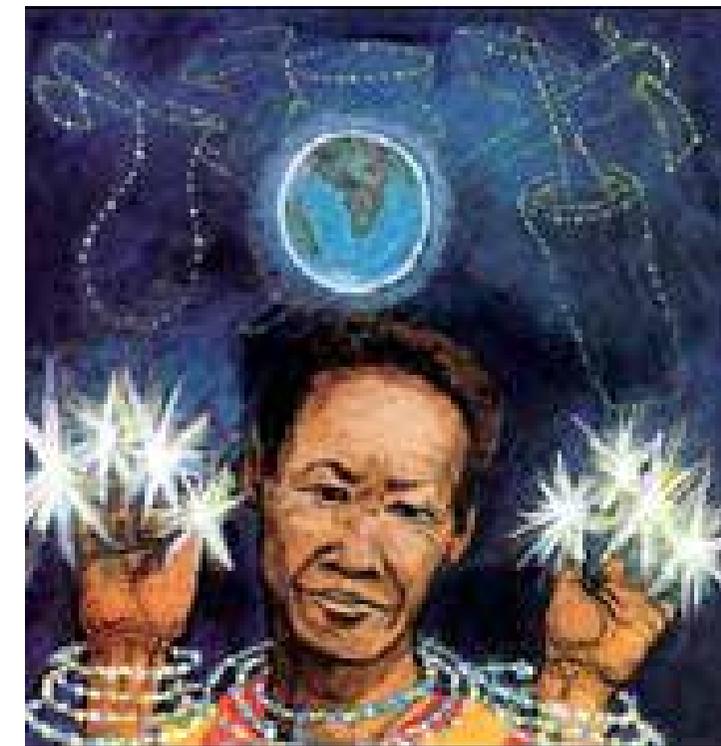
A fable dramatization workshop that has brought the Malawian experience of the 2014 Summer Camp to the Italian schools too.

The idea of staging “The Mother Who Turned to Dust” was born with this aim. It is one of the African folk tales collected by Nelson Mandela in his book “Madiba Magic. Nelson Mandela’s Favourite Stories for Children”, and it is dramatized with a group of pupils of “G. B. Grassi” Secondary School in Fiumicino: to transfer the theatre journey experienced in Malawi with the Summer Camp children to the Italian schools too. Thus so as sensitization on one side and the Organization’s activity on the other side can have a continuity, reflecting one another. The workshop presented by Africa Sottosopra is included in the Intercultural Project and it did not only involve the 17 children who actually carried out the staging, but it gave life to a virtuous process of transversal collaboration among different parts of school members. This was possible thanks to Roberta Marfurt, Silvia De Paolis and Tiziana Leone, three tireless teachers who took care of the organization: it included not only building the scenes and creating the costumes, but also helping the children in the reading and comprehension of the text and supporting them where the role of a teacher ends and that of a “master” begins. The beneficiaries of this work were not only the parents, but also the other teachers, school children (some of the latter also prepared a presentation of Nelson Mandela in English) and some primary school classes, giving a further sense of continuity.

Initially the reaction of the children who participated to the dramatization workshop was curiosi-

ty which then turned into lively interest and participation. They wanted to be very well prepared and create a good impression because they felt at the center of a collective event. The same attitude observed in the Malawian children! Even they represented the fables performing for the village dwellers (parents, friends, the Village Chief, teachers, etc.), and they put the same effort and determination in their experience.

We probably had more difficulty in Italy: nowadays people have lost the habit of reading out loud (just as they’ve lost the habit of learning by heart), which was and still is useful in listening and relating to others on different levels. In order to speak out loud (acting, cheering, narrating) it is necessary to know your own voice. It may seem banal but often people realize that they have difficulty in or the incapacity of managing the most common means of communication that we have. Children, who are flexible due to their age and



their genuine innocence, fling themselves into the experience and reserve some incredible surprises. All of them.

Even those who had some uncertainty in reading, those who were hesitant, those who seemed unable to make it, all showed great capacities and determination, obtaining the audience's applause and their own satisfaction which was visible in their eyes, in their smiles, in gestures of simple everyday happiness.

N. Mandela e
K. Makaka Phiri

LA MADRE CHE DIVENNE POLVERE

Progetto Intercultura - settore solidarietà

Laboratorio di drammatizzazione della fiaba

proposto dall'associazione

Africasottosopra onlus

a cura di
Emiliano Metalli

con i ragazzi

Alessia, Diego, Giorgia, Leonardo, Alessio, Lucas,
Valentina, Maria, Chiara, Davide, Samuel, Livia, Ylenia,
Maurizio, Michele, Camilla, Martina, Gaia, Leonardo

con la collaborazione delle Professoresse

Roberta Marfurt, Silvia De Paolis e Tiziana Leone

*Ci sarà inoltre un mercatino di artigianato, di vintage, di dolci
e la pesca di beneficenza a favore del progetto*

MAISoli,

100 sacchi di mais per 100 famiglie

19 dicembre ore 11.30

per la scuola secondaria e le classi 5 della primaria di Via Varsavia

22 dicembre ore 9.30

per le classi della primaria di Via del Serbatoio

THE BOOK OF FABLES

As a testimony to the Malawian experience of dramatization of a fable during the 2014 SUMMER CAMP "The Book of Fables" was born: it's a collection of photos and texts that tell about what was done with the children of Ntawa step by step.

It can be yours with a small contribution! If you are interested write to us and we can give you all the necessary information: africasottosopra@gmail.com



IMPRESSIONS OF A JOURNEY Malawi 2007 and 2010



Malawi, my experience.

I went to Malawi with the Africa Sottosopra Organization in 2007. During our stay in the Thyolo District the Organization inaugurated two boreholes and took care, as usual, of the orphan care nursery school they founded and they still assist. In order to give a personal professional contribution, as a doctor I asked if I could visit and register all the children. I found all the typical pathologies of those African countries: Malaria, TBC, gastroenteritis, malnutrition, etc., but no limb malformations. In occasion of my second journey to Malawi, I understood the reason for which I had found no limb malformation was probably because the children affected with some kind of physical malformation were hidden by their families due to false beliefs and superstitions.

This first journey cast the basis of my second journey in 2010 and it made me understand that being able to do something for Malawi bore durable fruits for that Population.

I went to Malawi in April 2010. This time I was in Lilongwe, the capital city, with an orthopaedist colleague, a nurse who was a long time assistant to my colleague, an anaesthetist and a neurologist who had worked in that hospital for a year, sent by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the International Co-operation project.

Due to volunteer collaborations my orthopaedist colleague was in contact with the Medical Officer (M.O.) there who was in charge of assisting children with orthopaedic pathologies. In most African countries a Medical Officer is an intermediate professional figure between a doctor and a nurse. These professionals are normally involved with specific pathologies in which they achieve a noteworthy experience and they substitute doctors adequately where necessary. They are rather frequent profes-

sional figures in African countries (both English speaking and French speaking), due to the lack of Universities and doctors. In Malawi there is actually a school for these professionals and it is so prestigious that youngsters from bordering countries also come to attend it.

Knowing of our arrival, the day after our arrival the M. O. presented some clinical cases he'd chosen for us to examine in the government hospital. We visited tens of children, adolescents and a few adults. Once we selected the cases that needed to be operated we drew up the operating list for the following day. They were all cases of upper or lower limb malformations - there were several foot malformations. The surgical activity that an M. O. is allowed in a public hospital is only one day a week, in this case it was on Tuesdays. Therefore that day we went to the hospital and we operated the cases that we had examined the previous day.

We'd brought some surgical material and instruments from Italy but we hadn't foreseen everything in detail. For example, I didn't manage to get an operating suit (shirt and trousers) and I had to wear a pair of trousers that had been used earlier on by someone else in another operating theatre.....

The surgical instruments that we had brought and the ones we found there were sufficient for the patients. In the whole, the surgical division is quite well equipped.

The wards come short of expectation.....so say the least. Beds without sheets, patients lying on the floor in the corridors, etc.

What was a pleasant surprise to me was to hear the M. O. explaining to a nurse the various passages that I was carrying out while operating and he listed all the anatomical formations that I handled with the surgical instruments, thus showing a perfect knowledge of the anatomy and of the surgical passages of the operation. A respectable orthopaedic surgeon!

To think that he has no University degree, as would be in the western world.....

The last “clubfoot” operation was carried out by the M. O. and I was very happy to assist him.

The other pleasant surprise was to find out that the anaesthetist was a M. O. who worked with great professionalism for the entire morning, thus leaving the anaesthetist colleague who’d come with us from Rome totally inactive and probably also a bit disappointed because he did not give his contribution. However, he managed to work in the following days. Whoever goes to Africa as a volunteer feels joy and satisfaction in what he manages to do. After all “Africa blues” or “mal d’Afrique” is partly this. Those who have had similar experiences know it well.

The M. O. had proposed us to amputate the leg of a 16 year old girl who had an “ankylosis” knee bend and had to walk on her knees. We disagreed with that with a long discussion proposing an alternative and more advantageous solution for the girl. (If there’s one operation that a surgeon tries to avoid doing that’s an amputation, specially on such a young girl!). We operated her by extending the knee and blocking it surgically, so that the limb was in

extension and she was able to touch the ground with her foot with the help of an orthopaedic or raised shoe, since that leg was shorter than the other. In a second moment a limb lengthening operation could be carried out. The knee had recuperated its normal physiological articulation and that’s why we blocked it in extension. She could therefore use her leg and not a prosthesis. The M. O. who wanted to amputate didn’t make that decision out of spite, of course, but simply because his background and knowledge were limited. However, he was very good in what he had been taught.

Doctors who go to Africa as volunteers or co-operators should mainly aim at this: teaching and updating. During our stay, which lasted a couple of weeks, we were involved with operations even in a Christian South Korean Mission which had a very well equipped and organized hospital, both in the surgical block and in the wards.

In Malawi and in Africa, both private and public health care is paid for. Needless to say, our work was totally free – we actually paid our own air fares and our stay in a Protestant American Mission that was equipped like an American University Cam-

pus. There was an operating theatre, out patients’ studios and a radiology department there too, but the operating theatre had no equipment which was expected to arrive from America.

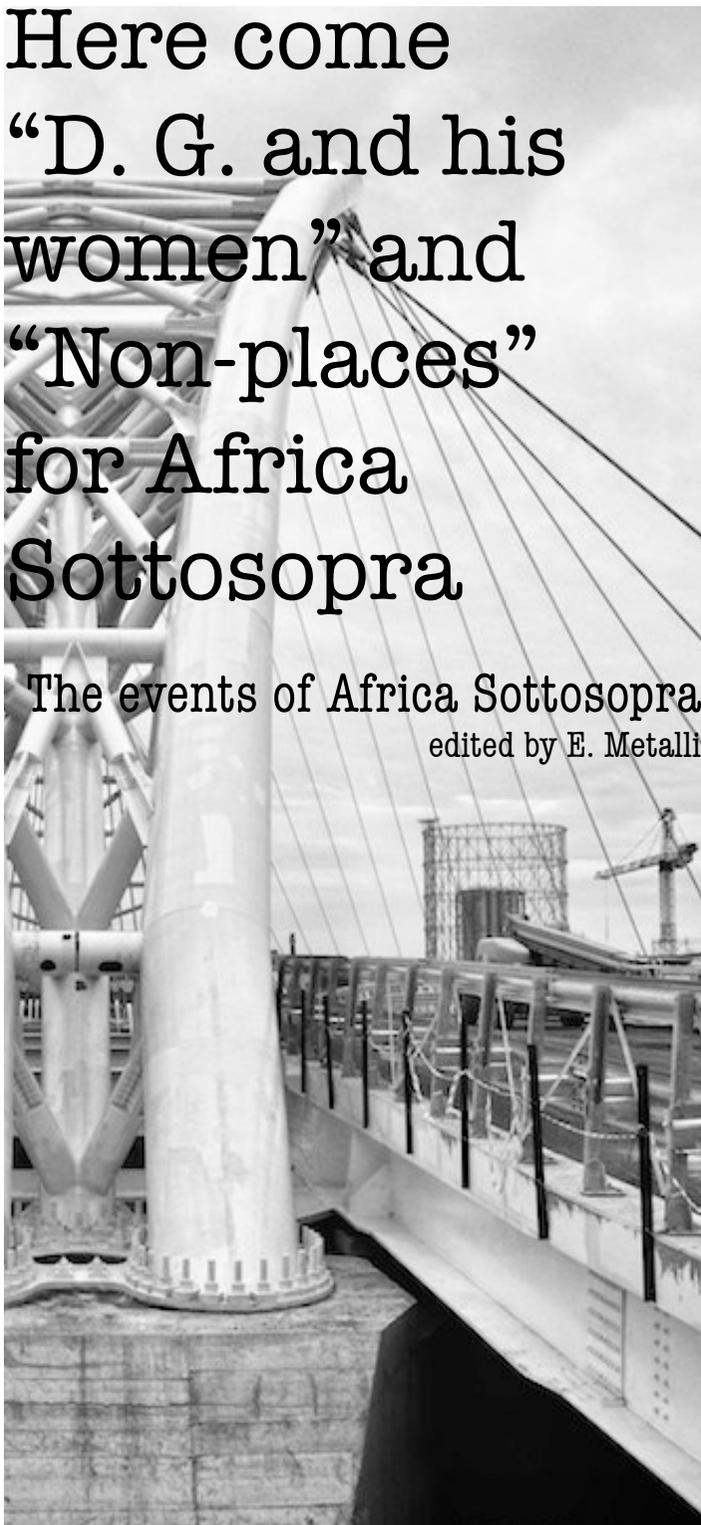
It was a wonderful experience that enriched me very much and, as many people say, ”I received much more that I gave”.

By the way, in Italy I would never have worn dirty operating trousers that had been worn by someone else unknown to me – not even if I were well paid in a private clinic.....!

Zikomo Malawi!!!!

CARMELO FONTANAZZA, doctor





Here come “D. G. and his women” and “Non-places” for Africa Sottosopra

The events of Africa Sottosopra
edited by E. Metalli

“D. G. and his women”

In January the “Uscita Artisti” Workshop will present a show entitled “ D. G. and his women”, a free and funny transcription of the myth of Don Giovanni – (Don Juan). The idea, which was born casually (during the correction of a theatre booklet text), finds a perfect setting, considering the high number of women in theatre workshops. Starting therefore from Don Juan, an aged seducer, who returns to Rome after many years along with his loyal Leporello, as if he were the center of the erotic desires of many and different types of women. Although following the story of the libertine and his adventures as it has been passed on to us, actually staggered by episodes of meta-theatre, the scene is mainly filled up with many women yearning (some more and some less) for Don Juan’s attentions, but all involved in comical, grotesque and paradoxical situations of yesterday and of today.

“Non-places”

Furthermore, in the foyer of the theatre there will be an exposition of V. Benenati’s photographs called “Non-places”, along with information desks concerning the Organization and plenty of Malawian handicrafts, as usual!

The evening dedicated to Africa Sottosopra will be Friday 23rd January at the Piccolo Teatro Garbatella (Via I. Persico, 80/A).

For information and bookings please contact:

africasottosopra@gmail.com

Il Laboratorio teatrale "Uscita Artisti"
presenta

D.G. E LE SUE DONNE

Scritto e diretto da
E. Metalli & J. Saltallà

Interpretato da

Annarita Valentini	Franca Di Mario
Guido dell'Osa	Ada Pizzolorusso
Filippo Raspagliosi	Daniela Giovannangeli
Amalia Sabene	Raffaella Tomassetti
Letizia Lopez	Claudia Bonifacino
Loretta Svaluto Moreolo	Anna Menniello
Luisa Correnti	Martina Venanzi
Sonia de Sisti	Maria Antonietta Pelosi
Andrea Andreuzzi	Anita Ermini
Laura Valentini	Ilaria Nardoni

con il gruppo dei "Comici"

Giancarlo Sari
Maida De Martino
Stefania Paloni
Anna Vivolo
Simona Zappulla

Il ricavato della serata sarà devoluto
ai progetti di sviluppo in Malawi realizzati da

Africa Sottosopra Onlus
www.africasottosopra.com

23 gennaio 2015 ore 20.45

Piccolo Teatro Garbatella Via Ignazio Persico, 80/A





JANUARY

Friday 23rd

**Theatre play "D.G. and his women"
Photograph exposition "Non-places"**

FEBRUARY

Tuesday 17th

Great Carnival party

A walk through Rome - women of Rome

MARCH

Sunday 29th

Easter market

1st meeting for the presentation of the journey

APRIL

Sunday 19th

2nd meeting for presentation of journey

MAY

Cocktail party and concert

Tuesday 26th

3rd meeting for presentation of journey

Malawian curios' market and school fundraising fairs

JUNE

Theatre play "Il provino" - "Lab Uscita Artisti"

Tuesday 23rd

4th meeting for presentation of journey

JULY

Journey to Malawi and summer camp 2015

The events with no date are still being organized: we will update you as soon as possible!

Let's discover MALAWI

edited by the Organization



Malawi is a small country in the heart of sub-Saharan Africa. A third of its territory is occupied by the great Lake Malawi which extends for 600 km in length and 80 km in width.

We are at the beginning of the Rift Valley, the deep crack that crosses the eastern African plate up to the Red Sea; geological events gave rise to depressions and elevations in the earth's crust, producing strange and wonderful landscapes: mountain ranges cut by deep defiles and covered by thick forests where streams and waterfalls flow; a lake amongst the deepest in the world bordered by giant papyrus and coconut palm trees.

For the visitor arriving in Malawi for the first time it is inevitable to be captured by the magnificent beauty of its nature and the friendliness of its people. However, the great astonishment for such a fascinating corner of the world slowly leaves room to a pain that is almost physical, that one feels in touching with hand how much the fundamental rights of every human being are still denied today. Colonialism exploited the natural and human resources of Malawi without worrying about casting the bases for a possible future, diverging the richness and capitals towards Europe. Today this country is one of the poorest in the African continent, excluded from the world economic scene, strangled by foreign debt, hungered by famine and mangled by AIDS.

It is an extremely poor country with a GDP amongst the lowest in the world. In the last ten years, along with the endemic diseases like malaria, bilharzia, and intestinal infections, AIDS appeared and has decimated the population in the age range between twenty and forty. There is a very high percentage of HIV positive born babies and a very

high number of orphans who the villages can no longer receive and support.

In the years 2003 – 2004 one of the most serious famines of the century struck the Sahel area and central and southern Africa, bringing most countries to their knees. Amongst these were Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia, lacking food reserves necessary to satisfy the demand of maize, the basis of the daily diet.

Meeting with this reality of Africa was the challenge to attempt a concrete path of solidarity with its inhabitants, to plan a more human economy and to give value to thought and tenderness.



MUSIC AND DANCES OF MALAWI

by A. Pantaleoni



As is renowned, music has a fundamental role in everyday life in Africa and Malawi is no exception. You dance and sing in every occasion - or rather, there are songs and dances for every occasion.

Malawi is formed by many ethnic groups and each one has its own dance with relevant music. Since ancient days the first dances and songs were mainly performed during ritual ceremonies, namely puberty initiations, weddings, funerals and installations of new chiefs, and all the dances and songs have the aim to mediate with the ancestral world of spirits – the basis of the traditional creed. You dance and sing to celebrate a good harvest, to welcome appreciated guests or to celebrate the end of a drought, to ask for the ancestors' intervention in case of calamities (eg. an epidemic, a drought, etc.). It's all music with a pounding, relentless rhythm mainly based on drums, whistles and rattles. The latter are either made of emptied pumpkins filled with stones and played by shaking them, or dried mango seeds that are tied in rows around the dancers' ankles and they sound as the dancers move their feet. All these music types are accompanied by signing and hand clapping. Most of the dancers in traditional dancing are men while the women sing and clap their hands. Signing is so innate that it is normal to hear natural and spontaneous choirs break out to fill the African days and nights. Background vocal support to a main melody comes naturally to most people and nobody's shy or ashamed of dancing or singing – from the small child who can barely walk to the eldest people.

As I was saying before, each ethnic group has its own dance and music and in the case of Thyolo District the major ethnic group are the Lomwe, whose typical music and dance is called "tchopa" – a sacrificial dance. Just like most of the traditional dances, even "tchopa" was and still is performed during ceremonies to thank



the ancestors or ask for their assistance, depending on the situation.

There is however a dance that is performed throughout all of Malawi and it is called “Gule Wamkulu” which means the Great Dance. This dance is performed by men who belong to a secret society and nobody really knows who they are because they wear masks and animal skins or rags during their performances. They are people surrounded by mystery and sometimes women and children run to hide in their homes when they see a “nyau” arriving (this is the name of Gule Wamkulu dancers). In effect they do look quite frightening and you never know if they are bearers of good or bad news. “Nyaus” are always called by the Village Chief in person in occasion of various rituals. Gule Wamkulu is part of the legacy of royal ritual inherited from the Chewa past (the Chewa are the major ethnic group in Malawi – hence the name of the language “Chichewa” meaning language of the Chewa).

Malawian music has developed bearing in mind this basis. Seeing that Malawi has been a crossroad of cultures during and after colonialism and during World War II, there has been an exchange and fusion of music genres. Many Malawians traveled abroad to work in the mines (mainly in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique) and during World War II they fought for the Europeans in other parts of Africa, bringing their music to those lands and coming home with the music they had met in their journeys. This brought to a fusion of traditional and tribal rhythms with African, American and British genres giving rise to a genre called “kwela”. With the coming of “kwela” the musical instruments used also increased with the addition of guitars and/or banjos and “tin whistles” or “pennywhistles” - a kind of flute made of tin or bamboo. It is not renowned but “kwela” music actually originated in Malawi and was then exported to South Africa by Malawian emigrants going to work in the mines. Kwela music has a swingy rhythm with the almost melancholic melody of the tin



whistle balanced by the rhythmic accompaniment of the guitar or banjo.

In the 80's another genre of music arrived in that part of Africa – it came from the Republic of Congo and had great success in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa. “Kwasa kwasa” (this is the name of that music) is another fusion of rhythms - Cuban rumba and traditional African, resulting in a punctuated and lively rhythm where normally the guitar plays on the upbeat. The instruments used by kwasa kwasa bands are guitar, bass (very loud – almost dominant), drums and voices. The dance that accompanies this music requires a noteworthy nimbleness and a great sense of rhythm, of course, because it's a series of sinuous and jerky pelvic movements. It has an irresistible rhythm and the songs can last 9/10 minutes and more!

These two genres have influenced the music that many bands still play in Malawi, including the bands formed by young boys who create and make their own instruments, but who manage to achieve incredibly captivating sounds.

Obviously jazz, R & B, gospel, reggae and hip-hop are all very appreciated and performed in Malawi, but the roots of most of Malawian music are in traditional music which has never been set aside, especially in the rural areas where drums and voices never lack.

A life without music is unthinkable for an African and Africa without music is just as unthinkable. A continent where singing, dancing and playing a musical instrument are necessary and natural activities, apart from being pleasant. Malawi is music.

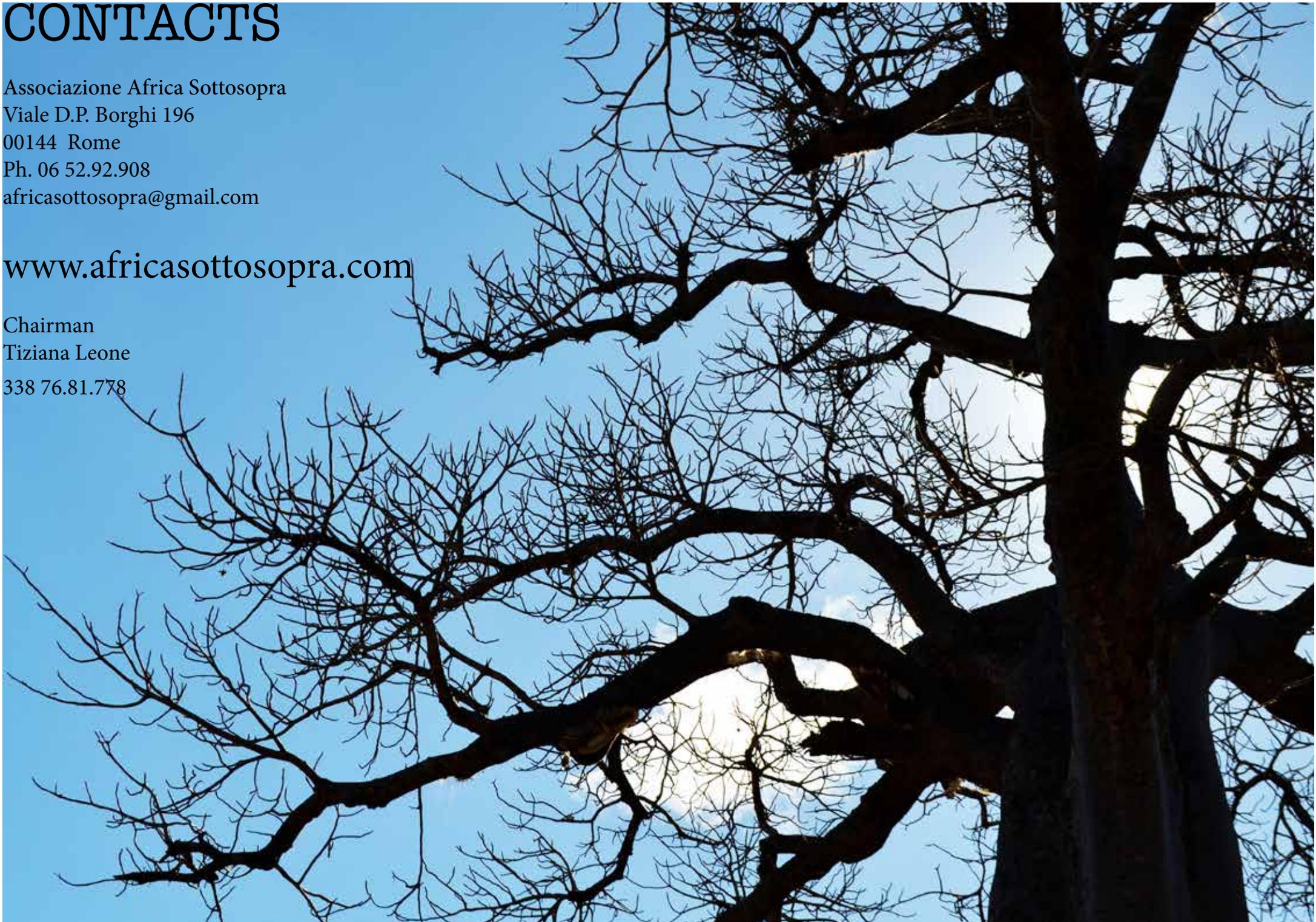


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