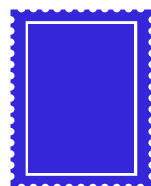


# Meet Makobi!



Jambo! (Hello!)

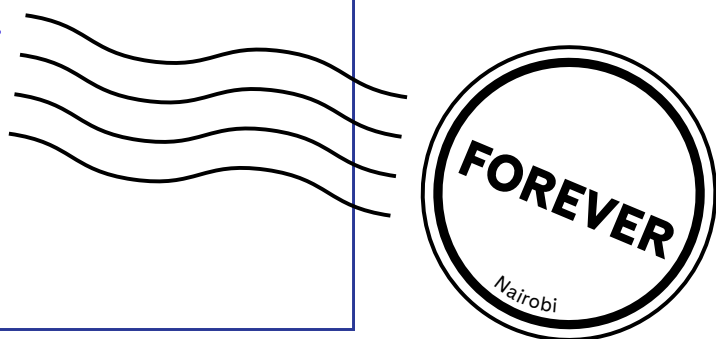
My name is Sylvester Makobi, but my friends call me Makobi! I am from Nairobi, Kenya, and I was born into a musical family. Similar to many Kenyans, I grew up speaking three languages. Kenya has more than 50 different languages, and I learned songs from many of these languages from my family and when I was singing in the Kenyan Boys Choir. I am looking forward to sharing some of the songs with you! A fun fact about me is that I sang and danced with the Kenyan Boys Choir at President Barack Obama's first inauguration.



Musical Explorers  
c/o Carnegie Hall  
881 Seventh Avenue  
New York, NY 10019

Asante (Thank you),

Makobi



## We asked Makobi ...

### Where did you grow up and what language did you speak at home?

Growing up, I moved around the country quite a bit. I attended primary school in Nyeri, went to Kiambu for high school and later Vihiga, then moved to Nairobi (the capital) after graduating. I grew up speaking KiSwahili, Gĩkũyũ, and English at home. In addition to these three languages, I speak some Italian, German, and French.

### What food do you enjoy?

The signature food in my culture is ugali (made from maize meal) and sukuma wiki (kale or collard greens) cooked with onion, tomato, and other spices. Sukuma wiki literally means "push the week" because it is an affordable meal for most Kenyan families. Most people have it with a protein which can be beef, fish, or chicken. I love it with fish.

### How did you become a musician?

Being from a musical family, there was music almost every evening. Before I even started speaking, I was surrounded by music. My family would sing in the evenings, after dinner, and my mother was even a choir director at an elementary school. When I was around seven, my mother was singing in the church choir for a wedding. I remember going up to the loft and starting to sing along. My first instruments were the conga drums, which I learned by observing my elder brother play in church. I now play nyatiti (medium-sized, eight-stringed lyre), ohangla drums, kīgamba (leg rattle), chivoti (bamboo flute), obokano (large-sized, eight-stringed lyre), and intermediate piano. Performing music from Kenya keeps me connected with my culture, and it exposes me to various languages!