



My Inner Mozart

By Simon Dinkala

My day working as a locally engaged development officer for CIDA at the Embassy of Canada in Kinshasa begins at 7:30 a.m. and finishes at 4:00 p.m. At 4:01 p.m., I begin a second day of work that often has an unpredictable ending.

In 2006, I established a small business that now occupies much of my free time. I named it Dicrabe, a homage to my nickname as a youth. My friends used to call me this because Nkala—my family name with the first syllable removed—means “crab” in Kikongo, the language spoken in the northwestern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The company occupies three small buildings and primarily makes feed for swine, taking the residue of palm nuts used for making oil and pressing it into pellets. Local farmers bring in the used palm nuts; we grind them for a small fee, then return the finished product to the farmers for their livestock. We also make and sell salted dried fish, fresh products such as fish and meat, and blocks of ice.

More recently, inspired by my love of music, I have added a very different function to Dicrabe: a recording studio for local artists. The studio has all of the equipment necessary to produce quality recordings, as well as two professional sound engineers, one of whom is teaching me how to play the guitar.

The studio has in turn inspired me. At 57, I have become a musician. I spend many hours writing and revising lyrics, singing, listening to my recordings and re-recording, until I am satisfied with my performance.

I am currently working on two albums, both of which carry strong messages. The first, entitled *Nza tubula Nzango*, has six songs in Kikongo that speak of my region’s culture. It is a call to people to work hard and stop abusive behaviours, such



Simon Dinkala has been inspired by his new recording studio and is working on two albums.

as the consumption of drugs and alcohol, theft and the destruction of the environment. There are also messages related to AIDS, studies and respecting the common good and the rights of others.

I am also working with a group of dancers and community theatre actors to record videos to promote my songs, as well as a new dance I created called NZANGO.

The second album, called *Simon Dinkala, alinga Savoka*, includes 10 songs in French and Lingala (a language spoken mainly in Kinshasa) and covers various subjects, including the daily aspects of Congolese life and morality.

This new pastime eats up much of my free time: recording music and running my small business is hard work. Yet it is also rewarding, even if I rarely rest my head on my pillow before midnight.

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