

JOSEPH CHUMA

# MY GUITAR AND TOURISM

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*From my fingers to the sound they create, let's connect. It's not just about singing or playing my guitar—it's about the meaningful interactions we share. Reading this book is a lasting connection with me.*



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## Preface

Joseph Chuma is more than just a guitarist; he is a storyteller, a bridge between cultures, and a beacon of joy through music. With every strum of his guitar, he weaves connections, drawing people together from all walks of life. His journey as a musician is not merely about creating beautiful melodies, but about touching hearts, uplifting spirits, and spreading smiles.

Born with an innate love for music, Joseph's path was shaped by both his unwavering determination and the deep connections he made with others through his art. From humble beginnings, he crafted his own guitar and learned to play, turning his passion into a life-changing journey. Along the way, he met travelers, locals, and strangers, each encounter inspiring him to grow, both as an artist and a person.

In this book, you'll journey with Joseph through his experiences, discovering how music has the power to break barriers, heal wounds, and bring people together. It's a story of resilience, transformation, and the universal language that unites us all—music.

As you read, let the words and melodies come to life, and feel the magic of Joseph's journey. His music isn't just heard—it's felt. And through these pages, you, too, are a part of the connection he's created. Welcome to the world of Joseph Chuma, where every note has a purpose, and every smile is a shared moment of joy. **Timothee Katende**

I

## WELCOME

*Welcome, travelers! As you explore the beauty and culture of this incredible guitarist, Joseph CHUMA, let his music add a touch of magic to your journey. The guitar's timeless melodies transcend borders, bringing people together. Whether you're by the sea, wandering through historic streets, or soaking in the local atmosphere, let the music be your companion and remember to smile. Enjoy this book, and let it be a part of your unforgettable adventure*





# 1

## Reason Behind

Turning a simple trip into a transformative experience has always been my priority. This passion began when I was 12 years old. I watched safari documentaries, and something within me connected deeply with the idea of exploring and discovering the beauty of nature. Eleven years later, I took my first step towards that dream. I was no longer just a tourist; I became an employee at a camp in the bush — Serenity Mara Legends Camp.

In 2012, I began playing guitar to connect with people, traveling to different places and bringing smiles to strangers along the way. Ten years later, after graduating with a degree in Electronics and Telecommunications, I sought a way to enhance my music. I applied for a scholarship in music and audio production, and was fortunate enough to receive an offer. I completed the courses, and during my travels to Kigali, I shared my music with passengers on buses. It was during this time that the director of the Kigali Films and Television School offered me a position.

My thirst for learning and growing led me to apply for another scholarship, this time in graphic design and photography. I

completed the courses and eventually became a teacher at the same school, sharing the knowledge I had gained.

But then, I asked myself, “Where is my guitar?” I remembered that my guitar was meant to travel with me around the world, bringing joy to many people along the way. As I pursued my studies, I also started learning new languages, including French, to further expand my understanding of the world.

When I first arrived in the bush as an employee, my role was to entertain guests with my music. Every time I played melodies, I noticed how they became intertwined with guests’ memories, making their adventures more vivid and unforgettable. My music had the power to evoke emotions and create lasting impressions.

The essence of my mission is simple: **keep smiling** while sharing stories, inviting participation, and creating an atmosphere where tourists feel special. This is the same joy I bring through my music.

When you visit Kenya, you might have a picture in mind of the Mara National Reserve, the Serengeti, and the incredible variety of wildlife. But what you might not expect is meeting a guitarist who will bring a daily smile to your journey, creating great memories along the way. Kenya’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, especially its musical traditions, will accompany you on this adventure. Let’s smile and discover this cultural aspect together.

Kenya boasts a vibrant musical heritage that reflects its many ethnic groups and cultural influences. From traditional songs to contemporary rhythms, Kenyan music is an essential part of its cultural identity. It’s an experience that’s as enriching as it is unforgettable.

## Kenyan Music Traditions and Genres

### Benga:

- **Origin:** Luo people of western Kenya.
- **Characteristics:** Known for its upbeat rhythm, prominent guitar riffs, and fast-paced tempo, Benga is an energetic genre that captures the vibrant spirit of Kenyan culture.
- **Notable Artists:** Daniel Owino Misiiani, often referred to as the “King of Benga,” remains one of the most iconic figures in the genre.

### Taarab:

- **Origin:** Coastal regions of Kenya, influenced heavily by Arab and Swahili cultures.
- **Characteristics:** Taarab is a fusion of African, Arabic, Indian, and Persian musical elements. It features poetic lyrics that often explore themes of love, sorrow, and societal issues.
- **Notable Artists:** Siti binti Saad and Zuhura Swaleh are celebrated figures who helped shape the genre.

### **Isukuti:**

- **Origin:** Luhya people of western Kenya.
- **Characteristics:** Isukuti music is a lively, rhythmic genre that revolves around drumming, dancing, and singing. It is typically performed during ceremonies, celebrations, and community gatherings.
- **Instruments:** The Isukuti drum, along with shakers and whistles, form the backbone of this genre's distinctive sound.

### **Mugithi:**

- **Origin:** Kikuyu people.
- **Characteristics:** Mugithi is a one-man guitar performance style often accompanied by storytelling through song. The songs are typically humorous, satirical, or reflective of social issues.
- **Notable Artists:** Mike Rua and Salim Junior are two of the leading voices in the Mugithi genre.

### **Mwomboko:**

- **Origin:** Kikuyu people.
- **Characteristics:** Mwomboko is dance music performed during celebrations and social gatherings. Its infectious rhythms get people moving, creating an atmosphere of joy and camaraderie.
- **Instruments:** The genre features a blend of accordions, traditional drums, and guitars.

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# Traditional Instruments

### Nyatiti:

- **Origin:** Luo people.
- **Description:** The Nyatiti is an eight-string lyre traditionally played by men. It plays a central role in storytelling and the celebration of significant life events.
- **Cultural Role:** This instrument is often used to accompany songs that tell stories, legends, and praise songs.

### Orutu:

- **Origin:** Luo people.
- **Description:** The Orutu is a one-string fiddle that produces a distinctive, resonant sound. It is commonly used in traditional dances and songs.
- **Usage:** The Orutu is often played during celebrations and storytelling sessions, enhancing the atmosphere with its unique tone.

### **Kodo:**

- **Origin:** Coastal regions.
- **Description:** The Kodo is a type of drum central to Taarab music. It is typically played with hands or sticks and often comes in pairs.
- **Characteristics:** The deep, rhythmic sound of the Kodo adds layers of complexity to Taarab's emotional storytelling.

### **Litungu:**

- **Origin:** Luhya people.
- **Description:** A seven-stringed instrument resembling a small harp, the Litungu is a significant part of Luhya culture.
- **Cultural Role:** It is used to accompany traditional dances and ceremonies, providing melodic support to vocal performances.

### **Kayamba:**

- **Description:** A traditional shaker made from reeds, filled with seeds.
- **Usage:** The Kayamba provides rhythmic accompaniment in various forms of traditional music and dance, adding texture and pace to the performance.

## Modern Influences and Fusion

### **Afro-Fusion:**

- **Characteristics:** Afro-Fusion blends traditional Kenyan music with contemporary genres like jazz, hip-hop, and reggae, creating a vibrant fusion of old and new sounds.
- **Notable Artists:** Eric Wainaina and Sauti Sol are two artists who have brought Afro-Fusion to the global stage, blending musical styles while staying true to their African roots.

### **Kapuka/Gengetone:**

- **Characteristics:** Popular among Kenya's youth, Kapuka and Gengetone are genres marked by upbeat, danceable rhythms and catchy, energetic beats. These genres often feature lyrics about everyday life, youth culture, and social issues.
- **Notable Artists:** Jua Cali, a pioneer of Gengetone, alongside modern Gengetone groups like Ethic Entertainment, has made this genre a mainstay in Kenyan music.

## **Gospel Music:**

- **Characteristics:** Gospel music holds significant importance in Kenya, reflecting the country's religious diversity and faith-based communities.
- **Notable Artists:** Emmy Kosgei and Rufftone are some of the leading figures in Kenya's gospel music scene, using their platforms to inspire and uplift through faith-based melodies.



## Dance and Performance

Dance is an integral part of Kenyan music, with each ethnic group contributing its own distinct styles, movements, and rhythms. These dances are more than just performances; they are expressions of identity, culture, and community. Whether it's the vigorous, communal dances of the Kikuyu, the graceful movements of the Swahili coastal dancers, or the spirited rhythms of the Luhya people, dance forms an essential part of Kenya's rich musical heritage.

Kenyan music tradition is a vibrant tapestry woven from diverse sounds, instruments, and cultural expressions. From the infectious energy of Benga, with its fast-paced tempos and catchy guitar riffs, to the soulful, poetic melodies of Taarab, each genre reflects the unique history and traditions of the various ethnic groups across the country. Together, they create a rich and diverse musical landscape that honors the past while embracing contemporary influences.

By preserving these musical traditions, Kenya continues to celebrate its cultural diversity and the stories that have been passed down through generations. Yet, the music is not static

— it evolves, blending the old with the new, creating a dynamic and ever-changing musical identity.

### *Music and Tourism: A Harmonious Connection*

Music and tourism are two of the most powerful experiences in life. They have the ability to move us, inspire us, and create connections with people and cultures from all corners of the globe. Through my travels, I've come to see how the power of music can enhance the travel experience, enriching both the traveler and the local communities they encounter.

In my book, *My Guitar and Tourism*, I share my personal journey of exploring the world with a guitar in hand. It's a journey that has allowed me to connect with strangers, share my music, and bring smiles to countless faces along the way. Music has opened doors and created memories that transcend borders, reminding us that we are all united by the universal language of melody.

This book is a reflection of how combining the love for travel with the joy of music has not only enriched my life but has also created lasting connections with those I've met. As you read, I invite you to explore the world through the lens of music and tourism, and to discover how these two powerful forces can intertwine to create unforgettable experiences.



My journey with the guitar began in the most unexpected way. Music has always been a part of my life since I was five years old. Though we didn't have fancy instruments or music schools, the spirit of our community was alive with the sounds of traditional songs and dances. As a child, I was captivated by the rhythms of the drums and the melodies of the local tunes. But it wasn't until the day I first saw a guitar that my life changed forever.

One sunny afternoon, a traveler came to visit our home. He carried a guitar — an instrument I had never seen before. As he played, I was mesmerized by the beautiful sound it produced. The way his fingers moved across the strings, creating melodies that seemed to speak directly to my soul, left an indelible mark on me. That night, I couldn't stop thinking about the guitar. I knew then that I had to learn to play it.

Owning a guitar felt like a distant dream, given our family's modest means. But my desire to learn was relentless. Whenever the traveler visited, I would ask him to teach me a few chords. He was kind enough to show me the basics, and I began practicing on a makeshift guitar I crafted from a piece of wood and some

old fishing line. It wasn't perfect, but it was a start.

Every day after school, I would practice on my homemade guitar. My fingers often hurt, and the sound was far from the rich tones of a real guitar, but I didn't give up. I learned to mimic the chords and strumming patterns I had seen. My family and friends were incredibly supportive, and their encouragement kept me going.

After months of saving and with a bit of help from my parents, I was able to buy my first real acoustic guitar from a small shop in the nearest town. It was a simple, second-hand guitar, but to me, it was a treasure. Holding it for the first time filled me with a rush of excitement and gratitude. I spent hours each day practicing, honing my skills, and learning new songs.

As I grew more proficient, I began experimenting with different styles and genres. I played traditional songs, pop, rock — anything that inspired me. The guitar became an extension of my voice, a way to express my emotions and tell my stories. I started performing at local events, sharing my music with my community. The joy and connection I felt during these performances were indescribable.



My passion for the guitar opened up new opportunities and began to shape my perspective on music. I soon realized that music could be more than just a personal joy; it could be a powerful tool to uplift and inspire others. With this in mind, I started teaching children in my community, hoping to ignite the same passion in them that I had discovered. This led to the dream of building a School of Music and Art for Orphans—a place where underprivileged children could find hope and express themselves through music and art.

My journey with the guitar stands as a testament to the power of determination, community support, and the transformative potential of music. From creating a homemade guitar to performing and teaching, my love for this instrument has only grown. Now, I look to the future with excitement, eager for the many melodies and stories yet to be created.

When I arrived in the Maasai Mara, I embraced a new life, a new community, and the vibrant culture of the Maasai people. The majority of the people there were Maasai, and I decided to learn from them and, in turn, share my music with them. My

journey began with a performance at one of the camps in the Mara—Serenity Mara Legends Camp. I had heard so much about the Maasai people: their rich traditions, deep connection to the land, and vibrant culture. As a guitarist and cultural enthusiast, I was eager to experience this firsthand and share my music.

Upon arriving in the Mara, I was welcomed with open arms. The Maasai are known for their legendary hospitality, and they did not disappoint. They welcomed me into their homes, shared their food, stories, and traditions, making me feel like a part of their community from the very start. The sight of their colorful shukas and the sounds of their traditional songs and chants filled the air, weaving a beautiful tapestry of culture.

One evening, I decided to take out my guitar and play for my hosts. I wasn't sure how they would react, as the guitar was a foreign instrument to them. But as soon as I began strumming the strings, I saw their eyes light up with curiosity and excitement. The music seemed to transcend the barriers of language and culture, creating an immediate and profound connection.

Through these musical exchanges, I gained a deeper understanding and appreciation for Maasai culture. Their profound respect for nature, their strong sense of community, and their dedication to preserving their traditions left a lasting impact on me.

My friendship with the Maasai people continues to flourish. I regularly return to their village to perform, learn, and collaborate with them on cultural projects aimed at promoting and preserving our respective musical traditions. Our bond has shown me the importance of cultural exchange and the beauty of embracing diversity.

## Face to Face with the Wild: A Cheetah's Lesson in Courage

The golden sun was sinking below the endless plains of the Masai Mara as we gathered for a sundowner. The air was warm, carrying the earthy scent of the African wilderness. With a cold drink in hand and the sound of distant hyenas calling in the background, it felt like the perfect evening—until something unexpected happened.

As I stood near our safari vehicle, taking in the beauty of the moment, I noticed movement in the tall grass a few meters away. At first, I thought it was just another antelope passing through. But as the figure moved closer, my heart nearly stopped. A cheetah.

It walked with the effortless grace that only a predator possesses, its sleek, spotted coat blending perfectly with the golden grass. My instincts screamed at me to step back, to run, to do anything but stand still—but I knew better. Running would be a mistake. Instead, I took a slow breath, my pulse pounding in my ears.

The cheetah wasn't charging, nor did it seem threatened. It was just... curious. And then, in the most surreal moment of my life, it came right up to me. My body tensed as it brushed against my leg, my mind racing between fear and fascination. Then, just as quickly as it had come, the cheetah turned, spraying a light mist on the ground beside me—marking its territory.

That was when I knew. I wasn't prey. I wasn't a threat. I was simply a visitor in its world.

The cheetah lingered for a moment, then gracefully strode back into the grass, disappearing as if it had never been there. I let out a breath I hadn't realized I was holding, my fear melting into something else respect.



## About Me

My name is Joseph Chuma, also known as Mwenyemali Chuma Fiston, and here begins our memorable smile. As you read this book, hold onto that smile and pass it along—everyone reading must smile and share it with the next person.

A seasoned guitarist, tired of seeing those around him without smiles, sets out on a journey to touch their hearts. Along the way, he meets tourists from diverse backgrounds, each encounter sparking new inspiration for his music, leading to a profound transformation in his life and career.

Through his guitar, he discovers the power to connect with others. The tourists he meets each carry their own stories and struggles, and through his music, he helps them in unexpected ways.

A group of tourists, from different cultures, embarks on a musical journey. They form an impromptu band with a local guitarist they meet during their travels, discovering the universal language of music while overcoming personal and cultural differences.

