

Ayaan Allarakhia: Academy student sharing his voice to inspire others

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Since he was four-years old, Ayaan Allarakhia has had a passion for music that has shaped his whole life. Over the years, the 14-year-old Grade 9 student at the Aga Khan Academy (AKA) in Mombasa, Kenya has developed and strengthened his musical and performance skills. Now, after writing and releasing his own song and music video, Ayaan is on a mission to spread his love for music to all.

Born and raised in Mombasa, Kenya, Ayaan, whose stage name is “Soul Prince”, sees music not only as a source of entertainment but as an essential part of everyone’s lives through different aspects. Ayaan especially admires the power music holds as it can strengthen relations amongst people and allow for an appreciation of various cultures.

“Music plays a vital role in my emotional, intellectual and physical life. It impacts the way I work, relax, behave and feel. Music also helps me bond with others in the sense that it helps me interact with other musicians around the world who share equivalent interests as me. Something I especially love about music is its power and how it can change the minds of millions if it’s addressed correctly in a rightful manner, and the power it has over one’s emotions.”

Gifted a toy piano by his parents for his fourth birthday, Ayaan has since continued and expanded his passion for music. Through the support of his teachers, classmates and school leadership at AKA Mombasa, Ayaan has performed at numerous school events, including a [TEDx Talk](#) at the Academy where he performed his original piece, *I Take a Vow*.

Ayaan said this support is also extended through the Academy's music classes, resources and opportunities provided. Through this, he has been able to access different instruments and participate in music-related extracurricular activities and competitions, such as the Kenya Music Festival, in which he has won on numerous occasions. According to Ayaan, all of this has benefitted him as he progresses in the Academy's International Baccalaureate (IB) programme and his school workload increases.

“The Academy has assisted me in many ways since I started music. Firstly, the Academy gave me a lot of different opportunities to perform at school assemblies and other events and share my ambition with others, which is to inspire the youth to participate in music activities. This also gave me the confidence I needed to express myself in front of large groups of people. And since managing my time and my school workload are some major challenges I face, I feel like my music career is still supported by the Academy offering music classes as a subject. Through this, I gain a lot of musical knowledge and learn about different music theories, which help me in understanding and building new tunes.”

Michael Lizotte, the Academy's music director who joined this past August, said he has been able to sense Ayaan's passion for music since the day he met him.

“When Ayaan first arrived in my Grade 9 music class, I remember hearing his lovely tenor voice and nice low range, which almost made me feel like I was listening to the famous singer, songwriter and musician Roy Orbison,” Michael said. “Ayaan is very inquisitive with anything about music, and we often meet to discuss styles, progressions, production and presentation. Ayaan really goes out well beyond classroom work and knows music will be part of his life's work as he continues to study, learn and share.”

This was all just the beginning of Ayaan's music career. In October 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic was, and still is, impacting numerous lives and causing hardships in Kenya, Ayaan wrote and released his first-ever Kiswahili song called Unaweza, or “You can”. The song was accompanied by a [music video](#) as well, which has over 12,000 views on YouTube and was shot on the 18-acre campus of the Academy featuring teachers and students from the Academy.

“Because of the global pandemic, many people around the world are facing major problems socially, economically and mentally,” Ayaan said. “My target audience was the people in Kenya as a lot of people here were suffering economically and mentally. Therefore, I wanted people to know that this pandemic is just a passing cloud and to remind people that we can stay strong during this trying time.”

Since the release of Unaweza, Ayaan said he has received many positive responses, giving him the boost to pursue additional music projects and write more songs, which he said will be released soon. For his future, Ayaan hopes to continue broadening his music career and share his love for music with others.

“In the future, I hope to continue being a singer a songwriter, while also inspiring and encouraging people around the world to pursue music. My dream is to have everyone around the world engage with music, and share their emotions, culture and identity through music.”