

Abigail's star soars at national music fete as she meets President Uhuru Kenyatta

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President Uhuru Kenyatta with Aga Khan Academy's Dinisha D'Silva and Abigail Obiro at the Sagana State Lodge last weekend.

In summary

- Aga Khan Academy student wins hearts and souls with renditions from major musicals and Abba
- Abigail's winning ways began in 2016 when she scooped the folk song and set piece classes for the under 10 category

When President Uhuru Kenyatta stood to congratulate Abigail Obiero and her friend Dinisha D’Silva from the Aga Khan Academy Mombasa last Friday, the crowd at the Sagana State Lodge gave a standing ovation to a deserving performance.

“Good job. Great voices. This is one of my favourite songs,” said the President as he hugged the two little girls after they rendered *Do-Re-Mi* from the celebrated musical *Sound of Music*.

For Abigail, this was beyond her dreams. She emerged as a force to reckon with at the annual Kenya Music Festival, now in its 92nd edition.



Young Abigail Aketch Obiero won three classes at the just concluded 91st edition of the annual Kenya Music Festival in Kakamega. [George Orido, Standard]

Song and dance

“I was excited when I saw the President sing along because I knew we had made his day,” said the unassuming Abigail after the State Concert.

The event was a major morale booster for her singing, she said.

Earlier at the winners’ gala, tears of joy rolled down her cheeks as she stepped up to receive her trophy from fete Commissar Harrison Indimuli as her friends from her school cheered and broke into song and dance.

“I was overjoyed and humbled to learn that I was the best, I couldn’t control myself. The competition was tough,” Abigail said after posing for photos. She had earlier scooped the second position in operatic-class, receiving a standing ovation.

Abigail's winning ways started in 2016 at the Kasarani Indoor Arena where the 90th edition was held.

In that year, she took the folk song and set piece classes for the under 10 category, under the guidance of Philip Mbinji.

Last year, the talented Abigail won the Western folk song and the operatic class. She also took bronze in the set piece and came first in the duet and trio with Gabriella and Rowena.

In this year's fete, Abigail also combined vocals with Hilda Wambui, Gabriella Aching and Dinisha to scoop the best quartet with the piece *Chiquitita*.

"We all invested our time during school days and holidays.

"We were highly disciplined and focused on what we were being taught as a team to bring out the best because we had different voices to blend," said Abigail, reflecting on the training regime she and her colleagues have adopted over time.



President Uhuru Kenyatta hails Abigail Obiero with her colleague Dinisha D'Silva after they performed at Sagana State Lodge. [George Orido, Standard]

Abigail's triumph is not just another win to add to her collections.

Her natural voice has unparalleled tone. She captures the mood of the songs she sings with clarity of diction that makes the audience yearn for more.

Abigail, according to her teacher, is already a leader.

Her ability to critique other peer's voices and help them lift their standards is impressive.

She helped Jazmine Locklear win as she did with Elliana Maina and Levern Mungai who came out with some decent second positions in their categories of competition.

“Abigail has inspired many kids and many parents are encouraging their children to learn from her. She is one of the top Sopranos in the school,” says Mr Mbinji, who coaches the team and is also a celebrated musician in his own right.

Both of her parents were in Nyeri to support their daughter, just like many other parents from Aga Khan Academy Mombasa.

Parental support

“My mum ensured that I was always in the music room. My dad has always offered me moral support, encouragement and a world of advice. My siblings have always watched my performance and contributed to my success,” says Abigail.

Her parents’ presence in Nyeri, she says, gave her a lot of moral support and encouragement.

Abigail is already working on her first single and hopes to have an album soon.

“This is my dream. As a musician, I want to be appreciated when others sing and listen to my own composition just like I am doing now,” she says.

Abigail’s artistic star started shining while at Aga Khan Nursery participating in poetry and drama as Anita in the play *Am Going On An African Safari* in 2014.

With her friends, Abigail is giving back to society with the Aga Voices For Change that are involved in stocking books in schools in Mombasa’s informal settlements.

“I encourage my peers to pursue talent and to never give up,” she says.

Abigail is a living example of how the annual music fete is nurturing talents in schools and colleges across the country.
