

# Africa comes to the Donau city

A report by Ms. Shiner

Our African Culture Day coordinated by Ms. Shiner brought Africa to our door today! As a whole school project, eight classes from keystage 1 and keystage 2 and teachers engaged in a rich discovery of African culture. Our workshops run by Jules Mekontchou (Afro dance trainer) involved half an hour sessions with a team of two professional dancers and two musicians from Cameroon, Senegal, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. Between 8.00 until 12.45 our eight classes experienced a diverse exploration of movement, rhythm, culture and creativity!

Our two qualified dance instructors offered two distinct styles of African dance: Afro beat and Afro Traditional. Sammy from Nigeria showed us cool hip-hop, and lively dance floor moves. Whilst Jules from Cameroon motivated and engaged the children in the earthy traditional dances of Africa. Both instructors showed humor and warmth, and kept the children moving to the powerful rhythms. Often giving positive feedback to all the pupils, of all ages and abilities. In fact they never seemed to run out of energy!

Slowly boys became warriors and girls became Afro queens, as they wore their specially created multi-coloured necklaces which had been inspired by tribal jewellery from the Maasai tribes of Kenya and tribes of Cameroon. These were worn with real pride and added to the celebration of identity.

Next stop was the drumming session. Here we heard the intense rhythm of the heart beat of Africa! The talking drum instructed by Assanne from Senegal meant each child got to play the Djembe! The energy created by each drum beat expanded and resonated around our lofty music room. Our sense of team spirit increased as we played in time with each other and we enjoyed repeating and learning the African chants!

Our musical journey continued with the N'goni with our instructor Adama of Burkina Faso. He also let us try out a range of shakers and thumb pianos. Finally we got to pluck the strings on a N'goni, which is a traditional African string instrument made out of a round gourd. We also found it fascinating to hear some stories about how life was growing up in an African village by the musician.

Finally after so many vivid impressions of African culture it was time to gather for the performance by our talented dancers and musicians. Listening to the sounds of the N'goni, and the loud beating of the Djembe was awesome! But then a surprise, our dancers appeared from under the stage wearing traditional costumes, complete with whirling grass skirts! The energy and vibrancy of Africa was unleashed upon the audience, until finally the children joined the dancers. Lion and dog felt a sense of well being after all that exercise, creativity and togetherness! This is certainly a day that we'll never forget- just moving to the spirit which is AFRICA!