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Kora on buggy, The Gambia 2003. Photo Sarah McLaughlin

Sounds of Africa exhibition

Sounds of Africa, a display that opened at the British Library on 10 September 2005, explores African culture through music, literature and soundscapes. The exhibition uses roughly 100 sounds from the British Library's Sound Archive to challenge common perceptions of Africa by juxtaposing the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, the rural and the urban. *Sounds of Africa* forms part of the British Library's contribution to 'Africa05', the biggest celebration of African culture ever organised in Britain www.bbc.co.uk/bbcafrica/africa05

Part of the intention of the exhibition has been to encourage people to explore the geography of the British Library building. Casual visitors seldom make it above the upper ground floor café or the restaurant on level one, while readers are normally too busy rushing from one reading room to another to stop and look at the wonderful uses of light and shapes in the large front hall area. Placing elements of the African sound display on all levels may entice people to the further reaches. And wherever they land they will find Africa and sound, both aspects of the Library's collections that are perhaps less well known.

Sounds of Africa exhibition

How recording technology has been used to gather and disseminate the 'Sounds of Africa' is explored in the front hall of the Library on the upper ground floor. A century after the technology was invented, much of our knowledge of world cultures is based on field research using recordings. Furthermore, the music industry constantly invents new ways of disseminating its recordings (first via cylinders and discs, now via iPods and mobile phones), and at the flick of a switch we can hear almost any music, play, interview, or news item on the radio.

Visitors can discover more about the work of ethnographers – such as Sir Harry Johnston who recorded possibly the earliest audio interview, in 1904, with an African leader, President Arthur Barclay of Liberia, where amongst other things he talks about the rumoured presence of "cannibal tribes". On the other end of the historic spectrum we've included a recording on MiniDisc made by Sarah McLaughlin in the black of night in the Malian desert, with the tiny microphone placed out of the sand in Sarah's shoe. The section also highlights key moments in the publishing of African music both by the large international labels and by labels based in Africa. Visitors will learn, for example, that local companies, such as Ngoma, were already doing good business in the Congos in the 1940s. The radio has been central to dissemination of recordings and information in Africa. The final section in the front hall explores significant moments and aspects of African broadcasting from the saucepan radio popularised in Zambia in the 1940s to the targeting of community broadcasting such as ResonanceFM's 'Nostalgie ya Mboka' programme playing for London's large Congolese population.

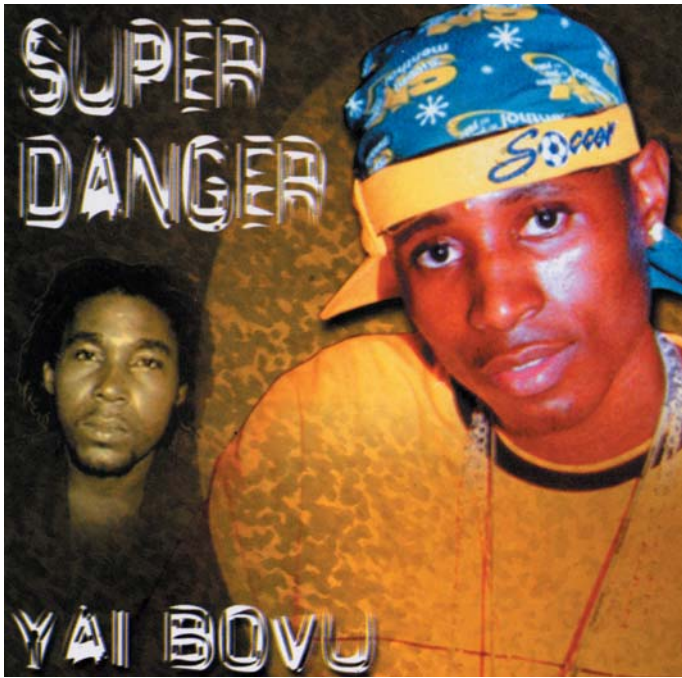
Level 1 has three separate music displays. Politics, belief and lifecycle events are presented as 'music and society'; three video extracts explore 'music and dance' – including a 1960s film made by Peggy Harper in Nigeria of Tiv women dancing - and the 'music tree' allows visitors to relax and browse through a selection of 'local and global flavours', ranging from a whispered song with *inanga* (zither) accompaniment from Burundi, to Senegalese rap group Djoloff with a song reflecting on Senegal's colonial past.

'Word' is the medium through which African culture and politics are explored on the second level. This section presents an insight into the work of a selection of African poets, dramatists, novelists and performers of

epic. The artists represented come from many parts of the continent, and these recordings, like their work, take many forms: extracts from novels and plays, poetry, orature (poetry or tales that are orally transmitted rather than written down) as well as interviews and commentary. The voices of the four African winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature – Wole Soyinka, Najib Mahfuz, Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee – are included here. Literature and politics frequently engage with each other in Africa, and the boundary between the two can be blurred. Presenting something of a flavour of politics in Africa in the second half of the twentieth century, Sthembile Mlangeni, a South African praise poet, hails the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela following the country's first democratic elections in 1994; Mandela himself speaks some 30 years earlier, on the eve of his incarceration, of the fight against apartheid in a speech with words so carefully placed they could easily be interpreted as poetry; Innocent Banda reads some of his poetry addressing issues of oppression in post-colonial Malawi. In other extracts Kwame Nkrumah hails the independence of Ghana in 1957, and Graca Machel addresses the politics of women's solidarity in the 1980s.

Level 3 presents African soundscapes in four sections covering sounds & nature, sounds & society, sounds & music and 'soundscape composition'. Using recordings of rural and city scapes, visitors can listen to the very intimate sound of a cheetah sleeping (recorded by Chris Watson); to muezzins using the acoustics of a highway underpass in Cairo to practice the power of voice projection (recorded by Rob Mullender); or to Bayaka girls providing their song with accompaniment by beating the surface of the water in a river. The 'soundscape composition' allows the listener to appreciate the concept that all the sounds of the world can have a musical quality. Recordings of the musical sounds of the environment, now removed from the source through the act of recording, are re-presented as instruments or voices in a soundscape composition.

This is the first time that Africa has formed the focus of a British Library exhibition and it's only the second time we've mounted a sound-only display. The Sound Archive's collections of African music and wildlife recordings are some of the largest in the world and this exhibition shows them off in a very contemporary way. The exhibition runs until 6 November.



Local production by GMC Wasanii Promoters of «bongo flava» group Super Danger from Dar es Salaam

Janet went to Zanzibar in early July for several reasons but the primary attraction was the East African Music Producers Expo organised as part of the Zanzibar International Film Festival. ZIFF has gone from strength to strength over the 8 years since its inception. A whole week is filled with back to back showings of films and performances of live music. Local people are dancing on the streets with the many visitors from just about every country. I wanted to purchase local music for the collections as part of our 2005 Africa focus.

I found a very different scene from the laid back, empty, difficult to get to Zanzibar of 10 years back. Perhaps most interestingly is that back then you would hear almost no music other than *taarab* (the Arab-influenced orchestral music) – in concerts, on the radio, in restaurants. Heading out into the suburbs of Zanzibar town you'd hear *kidumbak* (a more African sounding form of *taarab*) and *beni* (a style derived from colonial brass bands) at weddings. Almost no dance music (*muziki wa densi*) from the mainland and very little Anglo-American pop music (though of course most young people knew Bob Marley's 'Get up, Stand up'). There were no recording facilities on the island and very few on the mainland either, so not

much local music was being disseminated. The main *taarab* orchestras would record for Sauti ya Tanzania, Zanzibar (the national and only radio station) and their music filled the airwaves from morning til night. So-called 'recording studios' would set up at *taarab* concerts and make extremely poor quality live recordings that would be run off on cassette and sold in shops around the town.

Now the big sounds are 'Zenji flava' and 'Bongo flava' – rap and hip hop from Zanzibar and the Tanzanian mainland respectively, 'bongo' being the local nickname for Dar es Salaam. This music appears to have replaced *taarab* as the ubiquitous Zanzibar sound. CDs are sold on every street corner, many of them recorded and produced locally. The East African Music Producers Expo was meant to showcase this new music industry but in reality very little of it results in official publications and sales. This all needs further research but it seems that once a song is recorded in a studio it makes its way to a 'recording shop', which nowadays are little more than one man and a computer. Customers pay a fraction of the official CD price for a custom made compilation of their favourite tracks bashed out from mp3 files. A copyright law is under development for Zanzibar, but so far has not been implemented. It will be interesting to see how the dissemination of music is affected by the legislation when it finally comes in. Many people will bemoan the demise of *taarab* music. But Zenji flava appears to be the new *taarab*, with similar functions and social concerns, even if the music is all drum machines and synthesisers. I'm looking forward to finding out more about these new developments in my next trips over the next 6 months. (Research funded by the British Academy.)

As a result I didn't manage to buy as much east African music on local labels as I'd hoped to. But I did bring back what I could of CDs produced by Zanzibar's most prolific new label Heartbeat Music; mainland *taarab* made available through GMC Wasanii Promoters; and 2 publications from the Music Crossroads Southern Africa project of Jeunesses Musicales International, the world's biggest youth music network (see <http://www.jmi.net/activities/crossroads>).

Janet Topp Fargion

WOMAD 2004 was the test bed for the Sound Archive's use of hard disc recorders in the field which produce higher quality recordings at 48khz and 24bit. This year we decided to build on that success by expanding the team and bringing a DV-CAM recorder with us to document some of the workshops which are greeted with such enthusiasm from audiences so keen to understand more about the music being performed.

Here in the World and Traditional Music section our interest in exploring the documentation of world music events with digital video has come as a response to increased use of digital video in ethnographic documentation. Clearly some types (e.g. dance) or certain aspects (e.g. audience response) of performance can best be captured on video. Recent collections added to the archive here have included visual

reference material such as in the 'Traditional Music of India' project <http://www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/wtmcollections.html#india>

Our efforts were rewarded with a truly wonderful visual display from among others the Korean drumming ensemble, Dulsori and their beautiful ribbon dances ; striking costumes of the Kathakali dance-drama troupe ; and the enthusiastic participation of audiences who filled the workshops to bursting.

The result was a truly memorable WOMAD which I would like to congratulate the WOMAD team for, especially as this year's festival came hot on the heels of the 'Africa calling' festival in the Eden project.

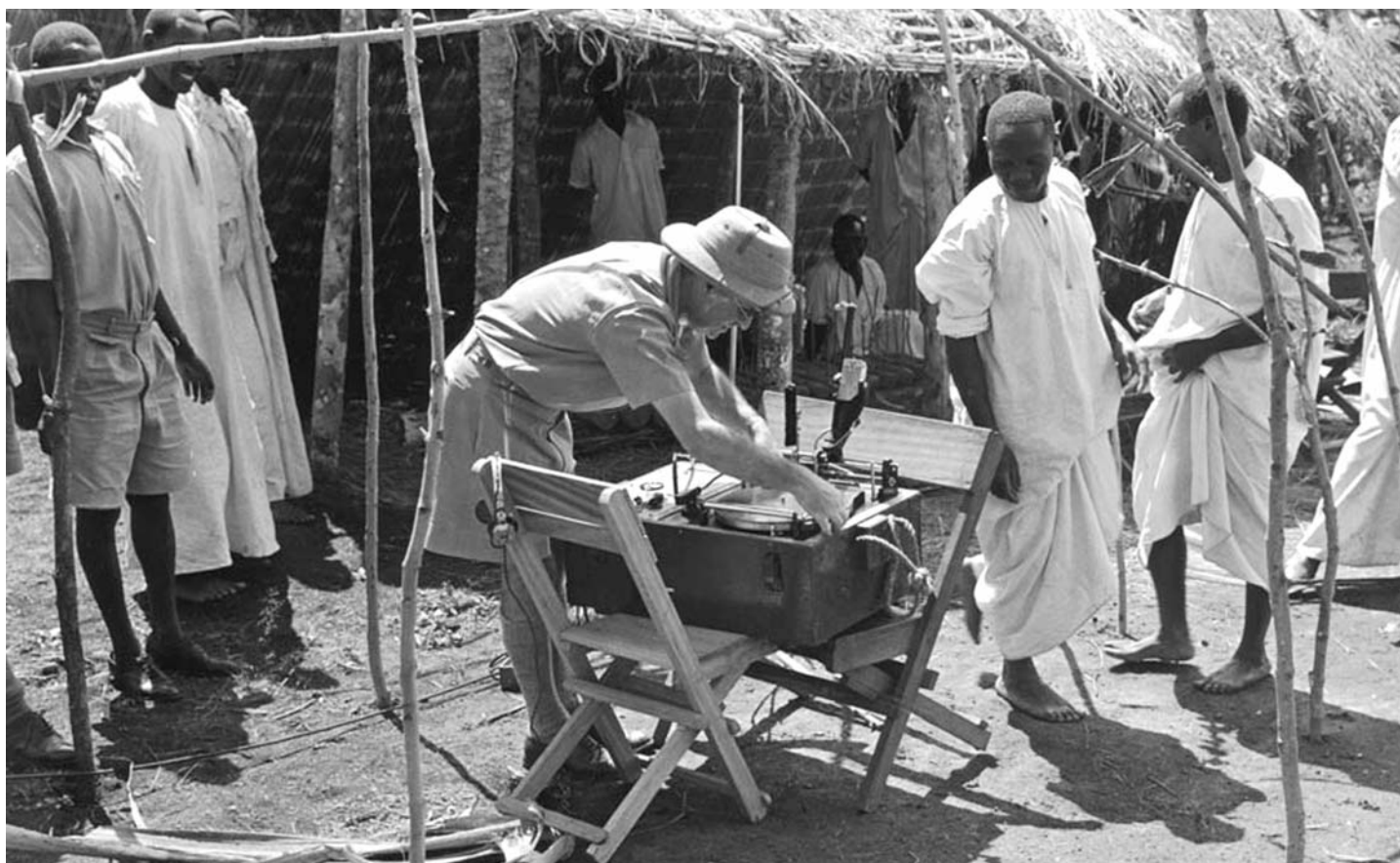
Isobel Clouter

New donations of published and unpublished recordings

- C1164 – 16 MiniDiscs of Tajik music – Federico Spinetti
- C1165 – 11 DATs recorded in the Shetlands – Meghan Forsyth
- C1162 – Venezuelan music recorded in the early 1970s – David Toop
- Additions to C1137 – 14 DATs of Kazakh music – Saida Daukeyeva
- Additions to C1020 – 6 DATs recorded in Ghana – James Burns
- Additions to C1033 – 12 cassettes recorded in Somerset – Jackie Patten
- Additions to C203 – 17 DATs and 60 hours of Wav file recording made at WOMAD
- Additions to C1093 – 14 MiniDiscs of 'Nostalgie ya M'boka' ResonanceFM programmes from Vincent Luttmann
- 110 Congolese LPs donated by Vincent Luttmann
- 300 17 cm 45 rpm discs from Kenya
- 10 78rpm discs of African and Asian music donated by Peter Metcalfe
- 45 VCDs – Uyghur music from Xinjiang bought for us by Dr Rachel Harris
- 30 CDs – Iranian music from the Mahoor Institute, Teheran
- 100 cassettes and VCDs of Sindhi music from Pakistan
- 18 CDs from Tanzania
- Latest new releases distributed by Harmonia Mundi distribution

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Klaus Wachsmann in Uganda, 1949. Courtesy of Philipp Wachsmann

As mentioned in IMC #27, one of the content packages we are working on for our Archival Sound Recordings project – making recordings accessible to higher education institutions – is Klaus Wachsmann's collection of Ugandan recordings. Carolyn Pugh has been working on the collection and writes this short article largely based on the interview of Klaus Wachsmann made by Lucy Durán on 1 December 1983 (C4/66-7). Any quotes are transcribed from this interview unless otherwise stated.

Klaus Wachsmann (1907-1984) is widely considered the "foremost pioneering scholar in African music" (Sue Carole De Vale "Intrusions": A Remembrance of Klaus Wachsmann (1907-1984)" *Ethnomusicology* Vol.29 No.2, pp.273-282, 1985). He was born and educated in Germany (studying musicology and comparative musicology with Blume, Schering, Hornbostel and Sachs) at the University of Berlin, but due to his Jewish heritage had to continue his education outside of Germany, doing a PhD at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland (with G.K. Fellerer). Following his ground-breaking PhD thesis in Middle Eastern pre-Gregorian chant, Wachsmann was keen to pursue a career in ethnomusicology. Professor Westermann (then director of the archives at the University of Berlin) made enquiries into music

research possibilities in Uganda on his behalf. Thanks, in part, to the progressive governor in Uganda at that time, Sir Philip Mitchell, this became the route Wachsmann chose, coming in 1935 to SOAS for a year's study in phonetics and Bantu languages, in particular Luganda and Kiswahili, with a grant from the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning.

Wachsmann and his wife went to Uganda as guests of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1937, in order to work on a "free assignment in the border field of music and languages" and with the promise of recording equipment to be sent over from Germany shortly. When war broke out however, it was clear that this would not arrive but Klaus had anyhow by then taken up a position in the Education Office of the Protestant Missions in Uganda. Klaus described these years (up until 1947) as "a blessing in disguise" as he was able to travel all over the country visiting village schools as an educator, building up a great rapport with hundreds of people, which helped him enormously when he came to make his recordings later on. Also during this time, Wachsmann met and travelled with Margaret Trowell (co-author of *Tribal Crafts of Uganda*, OUP, 1953) who was instrumental in the creation of the Uganda Museum in Kampala and Wachsmann's post as curator there. This came about after the war, when...

"...there was tremendous optimism that things could be done to remedy educational disadvantages... The British Government was commissioned and quite a large fund was allocated by the Colonial Welfare and Development Fund for an institution that would reinforce pride in people's own identity and at the same time convince them that they were all members of the family of man. A museum was deemed a good idea for this."

Having accepted the invitation to be curator of the museum (on the condition that he could make music recordings of culture groups from all over the country), Wachsmann received his first recording equipment, in 1948 with the assistance of a grant from the Social Science Research Council, and was finally able to start recording.

"In those days the equipment was described as portable – it was the so-called admiralty set - you needed a few sailors to carry it! The equipment weighed half a tonne. You needed the actual turntable, mixing unit, amplifier, frequency generator, four heavy-duty batteries and the discs – so we went on safari like that!"

Between 1949-50, Wachsmann made 610 recordings using this precarious machinery, but the recordings are of remarkably good quality, which is certainly to the credit of Wachsmann himself. (Listen to an extract from this part of the interview with Klaus and a recording made on the equipment in the Sounds of Africa exhibition currently open in the public areas of the BL building until 6 November.)

At some point after 1950, another grant from the Social Science Research Council made it possible for Klaus to obtain a Leever's Rich tape recorder (the only battery operated machine at the time). The grant also covered the costs of a fulltime engineer making his 1954 recording trip, with "a British machine, American mics and a fulltime recording engineer, a different life altogether!" During this year he made 928 recordings on 7" tapes recording at 15 ips.

In terms of the collection's place in history, there had been some other recordings made in Uganda previous to Wachsmann. In 1901, Sir Harry Johnston recorded some wax cylinders (see C107) and according to Wachsmann there was also a missionary who had a cylinder machine, recording the trumpet sets of the Nyoro around the same time. Between 1913 and 1930 there are no known Ugandan recordings. In the 1930s

Odéon made some 30 records in Kampala which are documented in local literature but apart from these there were not any known recordings made until Wachsmann's ones in 1948. Of these, those of the Kabaka are certainly the first ever made of this historically important and fascinating group.

His collection of over 1500 recordings (deposited in the British Library Sound Archive by Wachsmann in the early 1960s) is the most comprehensive collection of Ugandan music ever made. It covers 26 different culture groups (out of a possible 37) from across Uganda as well as venturing over lake Victoria into Tanzania to record 2 tapes there. Despite the incredible number and variety of recordings, Wachsmann was quick to criticise his "many omissions" particularly of xylophone recordings, due mainly to the fact that he had employed many xylophone players at the Uganda Museum as attendants and so "they played every day under my nose" but not often into his microphones! But such a 'living museum' was itself an innovation, still emulated around the world today.

Wachsmann was innovative in other ways too. He was probably the first ethnomusicologist to make analytical recordings, using the technology to assist with transcription and analysis. It seemed obvious to him to do this. Furthermore, he was not exclusive in his definition of music. His collection includes praise songs which originally he had considered as narration. He also recorded some epics "but I didn't realise what they were [at the time]."

Also of particular interest is the perhaps rather unknown fact that Wachsmann had a close relationship with the Sound Archive (then the British Institute of Recorded Sound) back in the 1950s. This was following his time in Uganda but before he took up teaching posts at UCLA and Northwestern over in the US. In 1958 he was officially invited to "advise and assist in the cataloguing of folk music at the BIRS" on a part time basis. In the same year he also held the position of Honorary Adviser on Folk Music (and related matters) at which time the BIRS was hoping to "build up a comprehensive collection of ethnomusicological records, international in scope, both published and private". Thus the birth and initial guidance of the World and Traditional Music section, as well as his hugely important collection within it, can be accredited in part to the late and very great Klaus Wachsmann.

Carolyn Pugh