

Recording of the week: Dongo lamellophone and fireside chatting

This week's selection comes from Isobel Clouter, Curator of World & Traditional Music.

Here is an intimate [recording](#) made by one of our long time field recordists John Brearley. Travelling with his own violin to encourage a two-way flow of ideas, as suggested by anthropologist Alan Barnard, John Brearley sought out players of musical instruments and people who could perform healing dances and songs throughout Botswana, with positive results. John amassed a large and varied collection of music and interviews which illustrate the relationships he formed with the musicians that he recorded. The sound of the dongo (lamellophone) is but one part of a beautiful recording of the musician G/ashe G/ishe and his family chatting by the fireside.

[Dongo \(lamellophone\) and fireside chatting \(BL reference C65/60\)](#)



Dongo (lamellophone) of G/ashe G/ishe

John Brearley continues to record in Botswana. His collection is an ongoing work that began with his first trip to Botswana in July 1982 to investigate and record traditional music, and to observe to what extent the influence of radio and recorded music had interrupted the use of traditional instruments. In particular he wanted to hear the music of the Basarwa. (The countries in southern Africa use different names to refer to Bushmen populations. In Botswana the term employed most often is Basarwa). Over 1000 recordings from John Brearley's collection can be explored on [British Library Sounds](#).

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Recording of the week: Ethiopian Michael Jackson?

This week's selection comes from Dr Janet Topp Fargion, Lead Curator of World and Traditional Music.

This song was recorded in 1991 by ethnomusicologist Lesley Larkum at the Green Hotel, Mek'ele (Mekelle) in the northern Tigray region of Ethiopia. It represents one of those wonderful moments of ethnographic fieldwork when you come across something, not necessarily related to the focus of your work, but nevertheless captivating. It's times like those you are thankful for a sound recording device! Lesley was conducting research on Tigrinyan music during revolution. She had heard these two children singing in a bar a couple of nights beforehand and had asked them to return so she could record them. Sadly there's no photograph of them but as I listen, in my mind's eye I see a couple of youngsters with the voices, rhythm and exuberance of a young Michael Jackson.

[Children singing at the Green Hotel \(C600/15\)](#)



The [Lesley Larkum collection](#) of Ethiopian field recordings can be consulted at the British Library.

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Recording of the week: a Christmas story

This week's selection comes from Stephen Cleary, Lead Curator of Literary & Creative Recordings.

This seasonal offering comes from our [African Writers Club](#) collection and was recorded on 7 November 1966 in London on a Revox F36 tape machine. 'No Room at Solitaire' is a dramatization by Cosmo Pieterse of a short story by Richard Rive. It updates the nativity tale to Christmas Eve in northern Transvaal (now Limpopo), South Africa, in the era of apartheid. Contains strong language.

[A Christmas story \(C134/98\)](#)



Entabeni – Limpopo, South Africa by [FyreMael](#) via [Visualhunt.com](#) / [CC BY](#)

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Recording of the week: bringing Batwa voices back to life in Uganda

This week's selection comes from Dr Janet Topp Fargion, Lead Curator of World and Traditional Music.

Dr Peter Cooke has been researching music in Uganda since the 1960s. In 1968 he was in the Kisoro area in western Uganda where he recorded a few songs performed by members of the Batwa community. The recordings now form part of his collection at the British Library (BL reference: [C23](#)) and can be listened to on the [British Library Sounds](#) website.

In 1991, the Batwa in Uganda were evicted from their historic homelands and

their presence in the country was decimated. In 2006-7 Christopher Kidd, then an anthropology PhD candidate at the University of Glasgow who had been working amongst the Batwa communities, took the Cooke recordings back and played them to local colleagues at the offices of the [United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda](#). On hearing them, one of the staff members was able to identify his own grandfather, a man called Kiyovu, as the sole performer of these two songs. Furthermore, he reported that Kiyovu's only surviving son, Jeremiah Bunjagare, was still living in the area although he had been relocated, as part of a development project, to Gitebe beside Echuya Forest.

Dr Kidd went to Gitebe and played the recordings to Jeremiah. He immediately picked out his father's voice and was visibly emotional at hearing his father after all these years. With much pride he explained that the man they were listening to was a man who sat beside kings [Kiyovu was indeed a performer for Mwami Rubugiri, the king of Rwanda]. Later he danced to show his thanks for bringing his father back into his life. Dr Kidd reported: "Listening to these recordings was a time when Jeremiah and other Batwa remembered not their powerlessness but a time in which they 'sat beside kings' and were respected as a people and a culture."

[Urwabahizi_Innanga zither song performed by Kiyovu](#)



Jeremiah Bunjagare listening to recording of his father from 1968 – Photo Chris Kidd 2007

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[Recording of the week: Himba women's songs from Namibia](#)

This week's selection comes from Dr Janet Topp Fargion, Lead Curator of World and Traditional Music.

This is an 'ondjongo' song sung by a group of Himba women, recorded in 1998 by French ethnomusicologist Emmanuelle Olivier (BL reference [C1709](#)). The recording was made within the French-Namibian project "Living Music and Dance of Namibia" (1998-2000) directed by Minette Mans (University of Namibia), Emmanuelle Olivier (CNRS, France) and Hervé Rivière (CNRS, France).

[Ondjongo song sung by Himba women](#)



The Himba, from the northern part of Namibia, very close to the border with Angola, are well known for their elaborate hairstyles, using copious amounts of lush, orange ochre – which helps to protect them from the scorching sun. Hair cutting ceremonies are significant markers of life cycle events, being performed, for example, for naming ceremonies or in celebrations connected with girls' first menstruation and marriage.

(Photo: Emmanuelle Olivier, 1990)

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