

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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