

## Recording of the week: Akabira for flute ensemble

*This week's selection comes from Tom Miles, Metadata Manager and Curator of [Europeana Music](#).*

This song, "Akabira", was recorded by Klaus Wachsmann in Kasule, Uganda, in 1954. Nshegu is the name given to an ensemble of flute players: the five members of the ensemble (pictured) each play an end-blown, composite cone-flute with a single note (some flutes have more than one note). By playing in a particular order, the nshegu players are able to create a vibrant, complex web of sound.

[Akabira for flute ensemble](#)



Toro Flute Set, Kasule, Uganda, 6 July 1954

This is just one of over 1500 of Wachsmann's recordings which are available on [British Library Sounds](#).

Follow [@tommilesz](#), [@BL\\_WorldTrad](#) and [@EuropeanaMusic](#) for all the latest news.

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## By preserving our sound heritage now, in the future we can recreate the past

Sound recordings freeze moments in time: music or theatrical performances, the words spoken by the famous or in everyday speech, or the sounds of our environment. When played back, they allow us to understand, to experience, to be immersed in – to *relive* – those moments.

Yet preserving sound recordings and making them accessible is a huge challenge, not least because sound recordings can rapidly decay and as technology marches forward, formats quickly become unplayable.



Many thousands of archived magnetic tapes urgently need digitising

The British Library's *Save Our Sounds* programme received a tremendous boost when in 2015 a £9.5 million grant was earmarked by the National Lottery. After months of preparation and assessment, prioritising the most significant at-risk sounds collections around the UK and building a network of 10 collaborating institutions, our ambitious project called *Unlocking Our Sound Heritage* is launched today.

*Unlocking Our Sound Heritage* builds on the generous support of other donors and funders, meaning that the total project funding of £18.8 million is now in place. The funding enables the formation of the first ever UK-wide network of ten sound preservation centres. This network will now come together with the British Library to save almost half a million rare and unique recordings.

The funding allows the British Library to lead this major preservation and access project, sharing skills and supporting the ten centres across the UK in order to preserve their own unique and rare regional sounds and make them more accessible to the public.

The Library and its ten partners will invest in a schedule of public engagement activities, including well-being workshops, learning events for families, and tours, events and exhibitions. A vital element of the project will be a new website for listeners to explore a wide selection of recordings. This website is scheduled to go live in 2019.



Cleaning a shellac disc before digitisation in the British Library's sound studios

Dr Sue Davies, Project Manager at the British Library commented:

"This project has been a long time in development and, over the last 18 months, we have laid good foundations for the next five years. I am excited to be part of this HLF funded project which will make a huge difference to the care of and use of audio archives across the UK. I am particularly looking forward to working with the ten institutional partners, sharing our skills and making it easier for a wide range of people to engage with recorded sound."

*Unlocking Our Sound Heritage* has been made possible thanks to the generous support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Foyle Foundation, Headley Trust, the British Library Trust and the American Trust for the British Library and other kind donors.

The ten centres that will soon begin work on preserving their regional sounds are: National Museums Northern Ireland, Archives + with Manchester City Council, Norfolk Record Office, National Library of Scotland, University of Leicester, The Keep in Brighton with the University of Sussex, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, National Library of Wales, London Metropolitan Archives, and Bristol Culture.

Richard Ranft, Head of Sound and Vision

More information:

[Save our Sounds](#)

[Unlocking our Sound Heritage press release 12/04/17](#)

[£9.5m boost from Heritage Lottery Fund for our Save our Sounds campaign](#)

[Save our Sounds: 15 years to save the UK's sound collections](#)

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## Recording of the week: Kébendo Jazz

*This week's selection was prepared by Dr Graeme Counsel, the archivist for the Syliphone record label digitisation project funded by the Endangered Archives Programme.*

Kébendo Jazz were one of Guinea's greatest orchestras, super-stars when many groups, such as Bembeya Jazz, were still in their infancy. Adapted from an ancient Mandé song, this recording from circa 1971 is an alternate version to that which appears on [Syliphone SLP 25](#). The song celebrates Guinea's grande artistes, with a reminder to "do what you have to do and do not worry about the hour of your death".

[Soumba performed by Kébendo Jazz](#)



This example is part of a large collection of [Syliphone record label recordings](#) from the Radio Télévision Guinée archives, created in the Republic of Guinea under the Presidency of Sékou Touré (1958-1984) following independence from France. The collection was digitised as part of the [Endangered Archives Programme \(EAP\)](#) project whose work contributes to the preservation of archival material that is in danger of destruction, neglect or physical deterioration world-wide.

Follow [@abl\\_eap](#), [@BL\\_WorldTrad](#) and [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

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## Recording of the week: Silversmithing – 2D to 3D

*This week's selection comes from Liz Wright, National Life Stories Project Interviewer.*

Rod Kelly is a silversmith who specialises in the technique of chasing to create low relief decoration on the surface of silver vessels, which he often raises (hammers from sheet metal) himself. Rod depicts images from nature with a fluidity of line that seems effortless, but the process of decorating a three-dimensional object, based on a two-dimensional design, can be painstaking. In this clip, he describes the nerve-wracking process of composing a design on a silver form.

[Rod Kelly\\_the nerve-wracking art of silversmithing](#)



Wolfers c.1895 (Rijksmuseum)

Silver vase, Philippe

Visit [Crafts](#) on British Library Sounds to hear more from British artisans working with studio crafts such as pottery, metalwork, jewellery and book arts.

Follow [@BL\\_OralHistory](#) and [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

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**[Recording of the week: Toscanini](#)**

## conducts Elgar

*This week's selection comes from Kevin Lemonnier, Preservation Audio Engineer.*

This is the only known recording in existence of Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957) conducting the BBC Symphony Orchestra performing Elgar's Introduction and Allegro Op. 47. The performance took place during the 1937 London Music Festival and was privately recorded off broadcast, onto a lacquer disc, by audio engineer [Kenneth H. Leech](#) (1892-1995).

[Toscanini conducting Elgar's Introduction and Allegro Op. 47](#)





Portrait of the composer Arturo Toscanini c.1926 (J. Paul Getty Museum)

The audio quality is rather poor due to wear and shrinkage of the cellulose nitrate but it still reveals a driving performance from the Italian master.

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