ILAM'S ARCHIVAL REVITALISATION: THE PAST FIVE YEARS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY OF AFRICAN MUSIC

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English Abstract

The International Library for African Music (ILAM) was begun in 1954 by ethnomusicologist Hugh Tracey (1903–1977). Since 2007, an active set of projects in preservation and digitisation of both sound and photographic archives have meant that this highly important archive of traditional African music has been stabilized and conserved. New outreach education projects are helping distribute the wealth of the collection back to the African people. ILAM now has a more secure future and makes seminal contributions in the fields of research, publication and education for African music.

French Abstract

La Bibliothèque Internationale pour la Musique Africaine (ILAM) a été établie en 1954 par l'ethnomusicologue Hugh Tracey (1903–1977). Depuis 2007, un ensemble de projets actifs dans la préservation et la numérisation des archives sonores et photographiques, a eu comme résultat que ces archives très importantes de la musique traditionnelle africaine ont été stabilisées et conservées. De nouveaux projets d'éducation et de sensibilisation aident à distribuer la richesse de cette collection à la population africaine. ILAM a maintenant un avenir plus sûr et apporte une contribution fondamentale dans les domaines de la recherche, la publication et l'enseignement de la musique africaine.

German Abstract

Die *International Library for African Music* (ILAM) wurde im Jahr 1954 durch den Musikethnologen Hugh Tracey (1903–1977) gegründet. Seit 2007 laufende Projekte zur Bestandssicherung und Digitalisierung des Schall- und Fotoarchivs helfen, dieses überaus wichtige Archiv für traditionelle afrikanische Musik zu erhalten und in seiner Existenz zu stabilisieren. Neue, nach außen wirkende Bildungsprojekte tragen dazu bei, den Reichtum der Sammlung an die afrikanische Bevölkerung zurückzugeben. Durch seine nun gesicherte Zukunft kann ILAM für die afrikanische Musik grundlegende Beiträge in Forschung, Veröffentlichung und Bildung leisten.

Afrikaans Abstract

Die International Library of African Music (ILAM) is in 1954 deur die etnomusikoloog, Hugh Tracey (1903–1977), gestig. Aktiewe preserverings- en digitaliseringsprojekte van beide klank- en foto-argiewe sedert 2007, het tot gevolg gehad dat hierdie hoogs belangrike argief van tradisionele Afrikamusiek gestabiliseer en bewaar kon word. Nuwe ontwikkelings-uitreikprojekte dra daartoe

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by dat die rykdom van hierdie versameling teruggeploeg word aan Afrika. ILAM het tans 'n meer versekerde toekoms en lewer invloedryke bydraes op die gebied van navorsing, publikasie en opleiding in Afrikamusiek.

IsiXhosa Abstract

Ithala lehlabathi lomculo wase-Afrika, i- *International Library for African Music* (ILAM) laqalwa ngo-1954 yingcali yomculo weentlanga ngeentlanga, uHugh Tracey (1903–1977). Ukususela ngo-2007 umsebenzi wokulondoloza nokugcina ngekhompyutha isandi seengoma kwakunye neefoto uthetha ukuba le mbali ibalulekileyo kumculo we-Afrika wemveli iqiniselwe kwaye igcinwe ngononophelo. Iiprojekti ezintsha zokolulela isandla kwabanye abantu ziyanceda ekusasazeni le ndyebo kwabo bantu isuka kubo, ama-Afrika. Ngoku i-ILAM inekamva elingagunqgiyo kwaye inegalelo elibonakalayo kuphando, upapasho nemfundo ngomculo wase-Afrika.

The International Library for African Music (ILAM)[2] in Grahamstown, South Africa, has played an invaluable role in the collection and preservation of traditional African music and oral arts since its establishment in 1954. In the past five years, there has been a revitalisation of the archive with active digitisation projects and online accessibility.

ILAM was founded by Hugh Tracey (1903–1977) in 1954 at Roodepoort, South Africa, located about 50 kilometres north east of Johannesberg. Tracey was also responsible for the nucleus of the library collection, which, at that point, consisted of 25 years of field recordings and research into African music. He endeavoured to bring to the attention of the world the importance of African music and the genius of African musicians in their own right. Funding from a Nuffield Foundation grant, matched by a contribution from the mining industry of Southern Africa, enabled Tracey to establish ILAM as an independent research centre, archive, and library intended to expand upon the work of the African Music Society, which he founded in 1948.[3]

Diane Thram, the current director, states it is the Library's desire to keep Hugh Tracey's legacy regarding African music alive. This is to be done by achieving the following objectives of: recording, documentation, and preservation; research; publications; education; and community outreach.[4] ILAM's work can thus be described as multifaceted and with a community focus. From ILAM's inception in 1954, the institution can be described as having a spirit of Ubuntu, the African philosophy that focuses on people's allegiances and relations with each other. Hugh Tracey's son Andrew Tracey has commented that his father was very focused on people; he was doing research and documentation for the African musicians. He said, 'When you sing you're not showing yourself off, you're showing the song off'.[5] Ellen Tise, the Senior Director of Library and Information Services at the University Stellenbosch, South Africa and the current International Federation of Library Assocations (IFLA) President, says it is imperative that Africa seeks solutions to alleviate the information famine and integrate Africa into the global economy

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2. http://www.ru.ac.za/ilam/

3. *International Library of African Music, 2009,* http://www.ru.ac.za/ilam/history/hughtraceyportrait (accessed June 9, 2010).

4. *Ibid.*

5. Christine Lucia. "Spirit of Africa: An Interview with Andrew Tracey," *SAMUS South African Society for Research in Music*, Vol. 26/27 (2006/2007), p. 139.

as a supplier and user of information and knowledge.[6] In this, ILAM has been active since 1954 in collecting, preserving, and organizing indigenous knowledge and making it accessible. This is particularly important because of the central role music plays in African oral culture.

In 1978, ILAM was moved to Rhodes University in Grahamstown. This move to a parent institution was necessitated due to the increasing difficulties of raising funds for ILAM to function under the Apartheid government. Over time, funds were raised and Tracey comments "Once I had found the funding for a new purpose-built building in 1990, ILAM's future at Rhodes and in South Africa seemed a little more secure".[7] The building included a studio, lecture venue, offices, library, a temperature and humidity-controlled storeroom and an outside performance amphitheatre. ILAM's focus turned more towards teaching, archival, and area study aspects of its work.

In 2006, Professor Diane Thram, who lectured in Ethnomusicology at Rhodes University, was appointed director of ILAM on the retirement of Professor Andrew Tracey. In the same year, the Rhodes University Music Librarian, Fiona Still-Drewett, was requested by the University authorities to make an assessment of the library. The report found that the ILAM collection was significant because many of the items are unique, rare, have great historical value, and are important for research and education. The report also found the collection needed to be preserved, correctly housed, and a database of holdings created. Digitisation of the sound recordings required completion while it was recommended the photographic collection, film collection, and some documents should also be digitised. ILAM has endured physical relocation a number of times and there has also been a high turnover, with mostly non-library qualified staff staffing the library; both the high-turnover and the staff quality have been detrimental to the collection. It was also found there was an impasse with regard to staffing of the library, backlogs of queries and processing of materials, little control for access and use of the materials, slow progress with the addition and updating of database records, and ad hoc control of temperature and humidity in the special storeroom since 2002. It was also noted that ILAM in general was understaffed and needed additional staff if the collections were to be adequately taken care of and to operate at maximum educational and research potential. It was recommended an urgent investigation be done to decide on which database best suited ILAM's needs. Thus there was much for the new director to contend with, in terms of decisions needing to be taken around the management of the ILAM collections.

ILAM began digitising sound materials as early as 1999 with the ILAM.Digitization Project (ILAM.DIG), done with Norwegian funding. In 2001, the project was funded by the Smithsonian Institute in return for material for the Smithsonian Global Sound website.

In 2007, work began with the cataloguing and digitising of songs from sub-Saharan Africa found on the recordings produced by Hugh Tracey from his field recordings. A detailed metadata file and a compressed 30-second sound clip are provided for each song. Funding was received from the South African National Research Foundation (NRF) for this ILAM-SAMAP (South Africa Music Archive Project[8]) cataloguing and digitising project. The work was done by a dedicated team of four, comprising a sound engineer and assistant, a resident ethnomusicologist, and a cataloguing librarian, along with eight

6. Ellen R. Tise, "The President's Page: Isolation And Information Famine Stifling Africa's Growth," *IFLA Journal*, Vol. 36/1 (2010), p. 5.

7. Lucia, "Sprit of Africa", p. 141.

8. http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/samap/

part-time student helpers receiving NRF student assistantships. Project management was done cooperatively between the director of SAMAP/DISA (Digital Imaging South Africa[9]), the director of ILAM, and with hands-on assistance from senior staff of Library Services at Rhodes University.[10] Many valuable lessons were learnt through the project and due to hard work and overall good project management the project successfully delivered with a total of 4,200 digitised items with metadata, and internet access to a primary source of African musical heritage.[11]

Work also began in 2007 on the ILAM Photographic Cataloguing and Preservation Project, aimed at preserving and digitising ILAM's photographic and film collections. Africa Media Online, together with the ILAM Director, were awarded a South African National Heritage Council grant to begin work. ILAM houses up to 8,000 images and a selection of the most usable images was made and key-worded using the African Archival Thesaurus. One thousand images are available online on ILAM's website via a link to the Africa Media Online's e-commerce web site.[12] The benefits for ILAM is that they get an online system which runs on their own website in which they can manage their photographic collection, have people come to visit and even to purchase use rights to that collection in a secure environment which keeps ILAM in control, but also gives access to others.[13]

In 2008, the Rand Merchant Bank Expressions Fund awarded funding to support a 24-month project aimed at completing the cataloguing and digitising of Hugh Tracey's original field recordings. Work on this project commenced and was not without problems. Elijah Madiba, the Sound Engineer, explained that the time required to catalogue and digitise the collection was considerable because of the recordings' fragile condition, the difficulty in re-spooling them, and the frequent need to stop and mend or splice the magnetic tape. ILAM only has one work station in which to carry out this meticulous work, which also slows the process.

More recently ILAM was awarded a grant from the Mellon Foundation of R1.9 million ($250 000) to fund a three year project. The project began in May 2008 and was aimed at accomplishing three main goals: to catalogue and archive ILAM's print holdings, including books, journals, and ephemera such as Hugh Tracey's field-trip diaries, correspondence, lecture notes and radio show scripts; to index, catalogue and digitise the Andrew Tracey collection of field recordings of various types of *mbira* music; and to index, catalogue and digitise the Dave Dargie collection of field recordings of Xhosa and Zulu vocal music and other various types of music from South Africa and Namibia. The digital sound files, along with metadata captured for each item, will be transferred to the ILAM server where access from the ILAM On-line Sound Archive will be possible. The grant also enabled the hiring of a librarian/archivist and library assistant who will be responsible for processing the print holdings. Data is stored on the RU Library Millennium server and access is via a link from the ILAM website to the Rhodes University OPAC.[14]

9. http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/

10. *International Library of African Music, 2009*

11. Gwenda Thomas,. "SA Access to Music Project & ILAM, the inVisible & unWritten Rules of Project Management." World Library & Information Congress/IFLA Conference, Durban, South Africa, 2007.

12. *International Library of African Music, 2009*. This can be found online at http://ilam.africamediaonline.com/page/aboutus.

13. African Media Online. *African Digitisation Project.* 2007. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdSrZMKkrn8 (accessed June 21, 2010).

14. *International Library of African Music, 2009*

ILAM aims to complete digitisation of the collections by 2011. Digitisation allows for extending the life of recordings and also increases access, and directly promotes interest and research of African music on a national and global level. ILAM is also involved at an international level with its collaborative project with the African Studies Center at the University of Michigan and the Vienna Phonogram Archive to conserve and disseminate the Kubik Collection of field recordings of African Music.[15]

Also included in the archival revitalization of ILAM was the development of an informative, attractive, and interactive website that markets ILAM's indigenous knowledge, and the educational component, services, and products of ILAM. The website is continually updated, and has links to a video presentation and a radio show.

Another aspect of ILAM's revitalisation was the rebirth of the journal *African Music* after a hiatus of 7 years, with the publication of Vol. 8, No. 1 (2007) under the editorship of the current director of ILAM. Professor Diane Thram commented in her editorial of the re-launched journal, "It is the only journal devoted to African music published in the world, and as such there is urgent need for its continuation. . . . As from its inception, its intention is to increase understanding of African music in all its forms."[16] The journal has an editorial board and all papers are peer-reviewed. Thram comments "it is always challenging to find quality material, but I think the international community is delighted the journal is being published again. Especially Africanist ethnomusicologists who find the journal useful for teaching African music courses and teaching research in African music, to show the type of work that researchers have done over the years. We are striving to make it in tune with current research on African music and the Diaspora."[17] In 2010, the digital database, JSTORE, made available the earlier volumes (1 through 7, 1954–1999). Thram commented that clearly scholarship of African music is flourishing and *African Music* is looking forward to increasing its readership whilst developing its scope.[18]

Following on from the archival activity around the cataloguing and the digitisation of the collection, the question arose what next? Thram herself presented a paper titled 'After Digitization, What Next? Suggested Guidelines for the Sale, Reproduction and Repatriation of Digital Heritage' at the *First International Conference on African Digital Libraries and Archives*, 1–3 July 2009, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This paper reported on the scope and outcomes of a workshop held at ILAM in December 2008. The workshop investigated the challenges, benefits, and ethics of digitising collections of cultural heritage materials. ILAM was considered the ideal host for the workshop since it constituted a success story in the landscape of South African digitisation projects, many of which have met financial and political challenges. Justifications of digitisation usually posit universal benefit, via preservation for posterity and accessibility via the Internet. However, in many African countries, given low bandwidth and sparse Internet connectivity, this justification is questionable. Thus, the guidelines are particularly apt in assuring ethical standards are maintained while dissemination of the cultural heritage via the internet and other electronic media such as CDs, DVDs and MP3s, brings benefit to its communities of origin

15. Diane Thram, "News from ILAM." *African Music Journal of the International Library of African Music*, Vol. 8/3 (2009), p. 181.

16. Diane Thram, "From the editor." *African Music Journal of the International Library of African Music*, Vol. 8/ 1 (2007), p. 4.

17. Diane Thram (Director of ILAM), in discussion with author, 2010.

18. Diane Thram, "From the editor." *African Music Journal of the International Library of African Music*, Vol. 8 no. 2 2008: pg. 4–5.

and to creators.[19] The successful 2008 workshop is another indicator of the rekindling of archival responsibilities at ILAM.

Some funds are generated for ILAM by e-commerce via online options to purchase music and images and via direct orders to ILAM for services and products. Thram stated 'McConnachie's copyright thesis proved that it is not financially viable to try and return royalties, the small amount of royalties we do accrue, to families or survivors of the musicians on the recordings because those musicians are mostly deceased and trying to trace their relatives is extremely expensive and time consuming. By the time you have covered the costs, there is nothing left in royalties to give to them".[20] Other ways of giving back needed to be found for repatriation. Much earlier Hugh Tracey had identified this need and Thram comments, "he always understood he was recording African music for future generations of Africans and the way he saw it to give back was to develop text books to be used in schools throughout Africa."[21] However projects were hampered due to international funders boycotting Apartheid South Africa. Recently, with Tracey's vision in mind, ILAM, under the directorship of Thram, has sourced funding from the South African National Arts Council for the ILAM Music Heritage Projects SA. Lesson plans using ILAM recordings and images will be developed into textbooks and a pilot project will run in selected schools. Once the material has proved effective, the textbooks will be distributed countrywide for the schools' Arts and Culture curriculum. Materials will be developed for specific geographic regions, and there is potential for this repatriation to be carried further into sub-Saharan Africa. The project is presently underway in 2010 with a R500 000 grant which is to run for a year. Thram commented on the project, "We feel that one of the more effective ways to give the music back is through the schools because it is getting to the younger generation of African children".[22]

ILAM's archival revitalisation is broad in scope and also includes the growing ethnomusicology programs under the auspices of Rhodes University Department of Music and Musicology. Presently there are 55 registered undergraduate students and 2 postgraduate students.

One of Thram's ongoing aims is to raise ILAM's profile as a research institute via promotion of research initiatives. To this end she has supervised masters students in research projects directly related to ILAM. Presently, ILAM has a funded research project called the ILAM Red Location History Project, an oral history and sound project documenting the history of jazz in the New Brighton and Red Location townships of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. Funded research projects are aimed at involving ethnomusicology students in the research process. ILAM is essentially an historical archive but the Director also feels it is important to research, record, and incorporate new musical traditions into the collection. To this end, Dr Watkins, an ethnomusicologist previously employed at ILAM has been doing research on Kwaito and Hip Hop in the Eastern Cape.

19. Diane Thram, "After Digitisation, What Next? Suggested Guidelines for the Sale, Reproduction and Repatriation of Digital Heritage." *Ist International Conference on African Digital Libraries and Archives,* 1–3 July 2009, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

20. Diane Thram (Director of ILAM), in discussion with author, 2010.. She refers to the thesis by Boudina McConnachie, "Legal access to our musical history: an investigation into the copyright implications of archived musical recordings held at the International Library of African Music (ILAM) in South Africa", M.Mus (Music & Musicology) Thesis, Rhodes University, 2009.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

that Thram comments it seems appropriate for ethnomusicologists who are doing research in South Africa to deposit their field recordings at ILAM.[23]

Successful procurement of funding by the Director, particularly the Mellon grant in 2008, has allowed for timely and better management of the library at ILAM. Qualified staffing who follow professional protocols of cataloguing and archiving can only benefit the collection and future users. By using the Greenstone Database ILAM adheres to international archival practices. In addition, the Guidelines of the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASAA) are followed for the sound digitising processes.[24] Thus ILAM is endeavouring to conform to international standards. To ensure access, ILAM purchased a Millennium licence to have the book and document collections accessible via a direct link on the RU Library OPAC. Access to photo and sound collections are via online searches on the ILAM website. ILAM has digitised 20,000 songs, and presently, as at mid-May 2010, 13,266 songs are available online with metadata. Of the 11,000 digitised images, 1,000 publishable images are available via the link to African Media Online for view and e-commerce purchase.[25] ILAM's clients include musicians, researchers, and anyone with an interest in African music from across the globe. Rare traditional and popular tunes of previous eras are being introduced to a new generation, examples recorded in Southern Africa include *Rumba Africa* recorded in 1940 (by the Merry Blackbirds Rumba Orchestra) and *God Save Africa* (*Mfuma Chindekeni Africa*) recorded in 1950.[26]

During 2009, ILAM's print collection was under threat of relocation to the main University library as part of a proposal from the Rhodes University Library Review. However, the ILAM Director managed to persuade the ILAM Advisory Board and key people on the Library Review Panel of the value of the library and that it should stay with the collection. Thram states, "the books are part of the integrity and character of ILAM".

Another important collection at ILAM is the African music instrument collection of 324 instruments, owned by the Tracey family and presently displayed and stored at ILAM. Currently, ILAM is working towards the proper conservation of the collection. "Professional evaluation of the conservation needs of the collection has been done, and it is planned that a funding proposal be written for the future conservation and housing of the collection. Housing will entail temperature and humidity control, and will necessitate building extensions at ILAM."[27]

Integral to the archival revitalisation at ILAM over the last five years has been various aspects of outreach. Traditional music-making is encouraged and promoted by the holding of ILAM Outreach Concerts, of which there has been an average of four a year over the last three years.[28] The concerts feature local township artists, are announced to the community, and are free. Outreach is also done in the community through the Sakhuluntu Culture group, where music and dance is taught. ILAM has also, over the

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *ILAM ,Africa Media Online.* http://ilam.africamediaonline.com/page/aboutus (accessed June 20 , 2010).

26. Khanyi Ndabeni, 'African Music Library Goes Digital,' *EP Herald* (Port Elizabeth, South Africa) 11 June 2009.

27. Diane Thram (Director of ILAM), in discussion with author, 2010.

28. Still-Drewett, Fiona. "ILAM 'Library Report' February 2006." Commissioned by the Rhodes University ILAM Report Committee, Grahamstown, South Africa, 2006.

years, been a meeting point and haven for local Grahamstown musicians and artists who feel supported by the ILAM staff. Another aspect of revitalisation is the professional services offered to the community by the ILAM Sound Studio.[29] Work is presently being done by the ILAM Director on a major travelling museum exhibit featuring Hugh Tracey's legacy and the library's current work. The exhibit is to be mounted at the Wits University Origins Centre from 11 October 2010 to 9 January 2011, after which it will be exhibited at the Albany Museum in Grahamstown. There is interest in the exhibit, which is being designed for travel, so it is likely to go to other parts of the world.[30]

In conclusion, the intensity of archival activity at ILAM in the last 5 years has been remarkable and has put ILAM at the forefront of archival practice not only in South Africa but also in Africa as a whole. Numerous cataloguing and digitisation projects have successfully developed and flourished at ILAM under the directorship of Thram who has pragmatically and successfully sourced funding, created partnerships, and delivered effective project management. This has resulted in most of the collections now being searchable online from the ILAM website. Thus Thram, following on from the legacies of both Hugh and Andrew Tracey, has played a pivotal role in steering ILAM into a more secure future, better able to achieve the role of research, publication, and education regarding African music. Future challenges facing ILAM include adequate funding and staffing, which are necessary to the growth of research projects, education outreach projects, and fieldwork research into sub-Saharan Africa. There is also a challenge to ensure ongoing archiving and access of all resources in a secure environment (both physical and digital), and the promotion of indigenous knowledge sharing and repatriation of African music via sustainable projects.

29. *International Library of African Music, 2009*
30. Diane Thram (Director of ILAM), in discussion with author, 2010.