

2013 GLOMUS

# Bringing International Library of African Music into the 21<sup>st</sup> century

By Inhwa So

# Hugh Tracey and History of ILAM

ILAM : a music archive expended upon Hugh Tracey(1903-1977)'s collection of sound recordings and photographs taken on 19 field trips throughout Southern and East Africa and the Congo.

His recording and research projects for almost fifty years since 1929 developed into the African Music Research Unit in 1947

The African Music Society in 1948

ILAM in 1954 in Roodepoort, near Johannesburg, with funding from a Nuffield Foundation grant matched by a contribution from the mining industry of Southern Africa.

# Hugh Tracey and History of ILAM

## **Hugh Tracey**

- a music collector and professional recorder
- a head of the Natal studios of SABC radio (1936-47)
- produced numerous records with Gallo Records

**To encourage respect for African music and perpetuation of its traditional styles, Hugh Tracey published two major LP series**

- the 210 LP Sound of Africa series : for educational purposes, most of which was originally published by ILAM between 1955 and 1963. The Series contains over 3100 items of music, almost all of which were recorded during 17 recording tours between 1948 and 1963. The published results cover regions throughout 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and include examples from 179 different language groups. The series remain central to the ILAM.
- the 25 LP Music of Africa series for general release with Decca Records in 1960s

# Hugh Tracey and History of ILAM

According to Andrew Tracey, the son of Hugh Tracey who became a director after Hugh Tracey in 1977,

"the overseas company which supported the library refused to continue with sponsorship because of apartheid at the time."

So, when Rhodes University came on board in 1978, Andrew Tracey moved the library to Grahamstown.

ILAM turned from a private research initiative into an academic research institute that is part of a higher education music faculty.

# Hugh Tracey and History of ILAM

Hugh Tracey's collection has been continuously reproduced.

In 1998 'Historical Recordings by Hugh Tracey' series was started to be published by producer Michael Baird in collaboration with Andrew Tracey. The 21 CD series under Baird's SWP Records label, an independent label based in the Netherlands, includes music of Hugh Tracey's collection that were not published before.

Other collections were added including Dave Dargie's Xhosa music, African Christian music and Jaco Kruger's Venda music.

With Andrew Tracey's retirement, Professor Diane Thram, who lectured ethnomusicology at Rhodes University from 1999, became a new director in 2006.

ILAM has a teaching and performance room, a library and exhibition room, and a recording studio. The staff includes a director, a secretary, three sound engineers and two librarians.

# Digitalization

The ILAM Digitization Project (ILAM.DIG) was started in 1999 with funding from the Norwegian Government (NORAD), via the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK).

In 2001 the project was assumed by the Smithsonian Institute in return for material for the Smithsonian Global Sound website([www.folkways.si.edu/find\\_recordings/ILAM.aspx](http://www.folkways.si.edu/find_recordings/ILAM.aspx)).

Grants: from the South African National Lotto, the South African National Research Foundation (2007, sound recording, ILAM/South Africa Music Archive Project Cataloguing and Digitizing Project, [www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/samap/category/collection/ilam](http://www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/samap/category/collection/ilam)),

the US-based Andrew W. Mellon Foundation(2008-2011), the Rand Merchant Bank's 'Expressions Fund' (2008-2009), National Heritage Council (2006-2010, photographic and film collections)

# Digitalization

One can explore them from the ILAM website [www.ru.ac.za/ilam](http://www.ru.ac.za/ilam) and can buy them in CD or MP3 formats by contacting the secretary by email.

Each entry gives users for free a 30 second audio clip to listen to and a complete meta-data record for the items in the database.

Photographs are sold through Ilam's e-commerce website hosted by Africa Media Online.

<http://www.ru.ac.za/ilam/>

# Research, Education & Publication

Hugh Tracey had a vision for research, education and publication.

“Hugh Tracey intended to document methodically all the musics of sub-Saharan Africa, to “form a basis of authentic data” from which to produce teaching materials, including a complete reference book.

Tracey wanted to “bring African music into the field of African education in its broadest sense”.

It was through recording, writing, codification and publication that Tracey believed Africans and “the outside world” would recognize “the genuineness” of indigenous African music.”

(Lambrechts, 2011)

# Research, Education & Publication

Since 2010, ILAM has been involved in the Red Location project, which seeks to document the music and stories of jazz musicians many of whom were active in the 1950s and 1960s from the Port Elizabeth area which is about two hour drive from Grahamstown.

# Research, Education & Publication

Hugh Tracey initiated “African Music Codification and Textbook Project” in 1969 to produce materials for the teaching of African music in schools throughout sub-Saharan Africa but it was not brought to fruition due to the inability to raise funds because of sanctions on the apartheid government.

In 2012, ILAM published Understanding African Music as a part of ILAM Music Heritage Project SA funded by the National Arts Council. The book was written by Mandy Carver, Director of Music at the Diocesan School for Girls in Grahamstown.

Another book designed for the music component of the Department of Education’s mandated creative arts curriculum for grades 7 and 8 will be coming out soon.

# Research, Education & Publication

The Symposium on Ethnomusicology and publication of the Symposium Papers was initiated in 1980 and has continued through the 19th Symposium which was held jointly with the South African Musicology Society (SAMUS) in 2005 in Capetown.

At this meeting the members of the Symposium on Ethnomusicology and SAMUS voted to join forces to form one society.

Since then, SAMUS deals both musicology and ethnomusicology.

# Research, Education & Publication

For “the spread of information through the publication of the results of all work on African music”,

Hugh Tracey began to publish the annual African Music in 1954 when ILAM was established.

The journal continued to be published till 1999.

Then, as a part of The ILAM.DIG project funded by the South African National Lotto, African Music was re-launched in 2007 when CD compilation began to be included.

# Outreach Program

In 1947, it was stated that a major aim of Tracey's African Music Society was to serve the identified need 'to get the African music back to the people'.

-From Minutes of the Preliminary Meeting of the Proposed African Music Society in 1947

-The intention for Hugh Tracey's recordings and research to benefit African communities is almost a constant theme, confirmed and continued by Andrew Tracey and Diane Thram.

# Outreach Program

Digitalization of collection does not give an easy access to the music to many of the poor who don't have an access to internet.

Also, according to South African law, the legal copyright to recordings was originally owned by Hugh Tracey and had since been assigned to Rhodes University.

Royalty from the sales of the music files and CDs often fails to find a suitable recipient in the region where music was collected.

# Outreach Program

Current community outreach activities include regular free concerts featuring community musicians,

ILAM tours and workshops on African music,

and opportunities for local musicians in producing recordings using ILAM's studio.

# Criticism

## 1. How is Hugh Tracey viewed?

According to Anthony Trowbridge, one of authors to begin uncompleted biographies of Tracey,

“Tracey found his objectives misinterpreted and opposed for all the wrong reasons, mostly political. The extreme ‘right wing’ thought he was promoting Black Consciousness, while the ‘left wing’ considered him to be supporting the government’s policies of ethnicity.

Meanwhile the black intellectual imagined that he wanted to push them back into tribalism,

and some clerics thought he was flirting with the devil.

Finally, no overseas institution wanted to be seen supporting anything South African.” (Trowbridge 1985: 9)

# Criticism

## 2. Hugh Tracey's recordings (Lobley, 2010)

- "The relatively decontextualised field recordings"

Tracey believed that a musicological focus on recording and analyzing music as an abstract system should be the starting point for African music as well as Western music. Andrew Tracey explains this saying "If you record in the context of a social event, you don't get a clean recording. Anthropologists in particular tend to want the *event*, and the music is secondary. But what Dad wanted was the *music*, and the event to him was secondary."

- Filming : ILAM had not been able to afford filming and Hugh Tracey decided not to film, which can be regarded a big loss.

- Brevity : Tracey's fieldwork visits were wide but brief because of financial limitations. It reflects the fact that he considered his work to be a general preliminary survey designed to gather evidence to prove the need for further in-depth work, which is still valid in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# Suggestion

1. International Collaboration: Considering that Hugh Tracey's the Sound of Africa Series covers 179 different language groups, international collaboration is needed for better use of them. Project proposals are welcomed for research initiatives and/or production of educational materials using the recordings and other related materials in the ILAM archive.

2. New Vision: "We have to acknowledge the vision of the founder. However, it doesn't mean that the identity of ILAM should be around the founder. That was not his intention. Everything must be around African music. We should focus more on the collection than on the collector. His name is not as important as his work, his collection. Hugh Tracey was also a man of his time. Time is changing and the direction of ILAM could also change. We should continue to collect today's music in Africa. That may have been exactly what Hugh Tracey thought." Elijah Madiba (Sound Engineer)

# References

Thram, Diane. 2007. From the Editor, *African Music* 8, 1: 4-5.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2012. Foreword, *Understanding of African Music* by Mandy Carver, 7. ILAM: Grahamstown.

Lambrechts, Lizabe. 2011. The Music Archive as a Methodological Conduit of a 'Western-ness'. Paper presented at the South African Society for Research in Music, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.  
<http://kaganof.com/kagablog/2011/07/15/lizabe-lambrechts-the-music-archive-as-a-methodological-conduit-of-%E2%80%98westernness%E2%80%99/>

Lobley, Noel. 2010. The Social Biography of Ethnomusicological Field Recordings: Eliciting Responses to Hugh Tracey's *The Sound of Africa* Series, PhD Dissertation: University of Oxford.

# References

Tracey, Hugh. 1969. Codification of African Music and Textbook Project: a Primer of Practical Suggestion for Field Research (written with G. Kubik and A.N.T. Tracey).  
Roodeport: ILAM

Trowbridge, A. 1985. Profile: Hugh Travers Tracey, *African Insight* 15, 1: 4-9.

<http://www.ru.ac.za/ilam/>

Interview with Elijah Madiba (2012.12.26)

Minutes of the Preliminary Meeting of the Proposed African Music Society, convened by Mrs Hoernle and Hugh Tracey, 1947.