

Recording of the week: Parental warning

This week's selection comes from Andrea Zarza, Curator of World and Traditional Music.

Ethnomusicologist Bryony Harris (née Pearson) spent 2002 doing field work in Uganda to record the drumming styles of the Busoga and Buganda as part of research for her dissertation "Towards a notation for African dance drumming, focusing on the Baganda and Basoga of Uganda". The recording featured this week [collection [C1079](#)] was part of that research and in a recent e-mail exchange, she gave us some more insight into its making –

"This is such a rich layering of instruments and textures. It was a very humbling experience to attempt to learn something of the history, tradition and drumming technique in a snapshot of time. I arrived with my western preconceptions, a 20 year old English girl trained in western music, but completely out of my depth with the complexities of this traditional music.



This recording is of the Kalalu village 'Balongo' group of musicians. Kalalu is a very rural village, a bumpy bicycle ride from Jinja in Busoga, where some of the children were fascinated / scared of my white skin. They were very welcoming but keen to be paid for their expertise – and rightly so, in hindsight. As it was something I hadn't really budgeted for however, we got the group to play together for my recording by arranging to produce a cassette for them. The market for cassettes was still going strong in 2002 Uganda as they were cheap to produce and buy. We took photographs of them in their blue t-shirt uniform and they decided on their best songs."

According to the catalogue entry, based on the recordist's notes, the song warns parents of the dangers of cursing their children stating they will be affected and face trouble in the future. For such a serious warning, it is a joyful song featuring the following instruments: endere (flutes), ndingidi (string fiddle), nkwanzi (panpipes), embaire (small xylophone), ensaasi (flat metal shaker), endumi (small drum), engabe (long drum), tameraibuga / irongo drum.

[Abazaire Abatukolima – 'Parents Cursing their Children'](#)

Upon re-listening to the recording, Bryony reflected –

"The quality of the song is judged by the lyrics and the singer – the competence of the musicians is taken for granted. I think I did move around with my microphone a little during the recording, as you can hear different instruments stronger at different points. Thoughts that return to me on listening to it again: Firstly – where is the beat? The need to focus on the shaker to hear it – but then the drums always put me off when they enter! I was trying to focus my learning on the drums, but they were so different to

any West African rhythms I'd played previously. Seeing the drums signal the dancers to change their amazing rapid hip movements. Where does the cycle of notes start? How do they know where to come in? The phenomenal speed of the interlocking xylophone, where different patterns spring out at you the more you listen. The cyclical nature of the melody and the variety in texture and colour. This music, which is made of fairly simple, repetitive parts is elusive. The more you listen the more there is to hear."

Follow [@BL_WorldTrad](#) and [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

[Recording of the week: the Woodlark](#)

This week's selection comes from Richard Ranft, Head of Sound and Vision.

Between February to June on southern and south-eastern English heathlands you may be lucky enough to hear a Woodlark singing. The bird emits a cascade of sweet liquid warbles, often in a large circular display flight some 50-100 metres up in the air above its territory. On windy sunny days in early spring, as we have now, its beautiful notes come and go out of hearing range when heard from a distance, giving the heathland habitat an ethereal quality.

Song of a Woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), recorded by Lawrence Shove in 1960s



Woodlark and Crested lark (On top: Woodlark; below: Crested lark) from *Nederlandsche vogelen* (Dutch birds) by Nozeman and Sepp (1770-1829)

Many more recordings of British wildlife can be found on [British Library Sounds](#). To learn more about how and why birds communicate, visit our recently revamped [Language of Birds](#) online resource.

Follow [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

[Recording of the week: when is a word not a word?](#)

This week's selection comes from Jonnie Robinson, Lead Curator of Spoken English.

The [Evolving English: WordBank](#) is extremely positive evidence of the robust nature of our native dialects, as demonstrated by this speaker's use of the verb puggle [= 'to prod, poke about in e.g. a hole to clear obstruction']. As a young, female, middle-class speaker she doesn't conform to the usual dialect stereotype and she also comes from the south of England, where the apparent demise of local speech forms is most frequently asserted. Nonetheless she expertly describes and defines a word recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'English regional (chiefly south-east)'. Puggle also features in the 6-volume English Dialect Dictionary, the most comprehensive record of 18th and 19th century English regional vocabulary, where it's attested in Hertfordshire and Essex.

 Puggle – as defined in Vol. 4 of the English Dialect Dictionary (1898)

[To have a puggle](#)

As a dialectologist I'm also particularly interested by her observation that 'I always thought it was a real word and it turns out it's not'. This, sadly, is frequently the fate of dialect vocabulary, but I hope she and other users of perfectly valid local forms are reassured to know that the validity of puggle is acknowledged by authoritative dictionaries and that it has been around in the Home Counties for at least 150 years and clearly still survives in the 21st century – no doubt alongside other supposedly 'long-lost' southern dialect words.

Follow [@soundarchive](#) for all the latest news.

[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.

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](#)