The International Library of African Music (I. L. A. M.) came into being in 1953 as a direct outcome of the preliminary discoveries and research work of Hugh Tracey, its Director. Six years previously, in 1947, he had established the African Music Society, and it was considered essential that practical work on collecting the music of Africa should be undertaken by a properly constituted body. The International Library was, therefore, registered as a nonprofit organization and set up its headquarters 12 miles outside the city of Johannesburg in the buildings previously used by Mr. Tracey during his preparatory work to this end.

After many years of private study Mr. Tracey obtained the support of Mr. Eric Gallo of Johannesburg in undertaking a preliminary survey of the music of African territories from the Sudan southwards. This occupied six years, from 1947 to 1953, much of which Mr. Tracey spent in the field, and which enabled him, when the time came, to call for the necessary financial support upon practical knowledge of the situation over a large proportion of the African continent.

The Nuffield Foundation and the Mining Industries of southern Africa between them made a start possible, and at once the Library began to publish the results of its work in the form of pressed phonograph discs, under the title of "The Sound of Africa" Series. Eighty long-playing (12") discs have been published so far.

A considerable body of recorded matter is also housed in the Reference Library section, the product of work which had its beginnings in the 1920's. Over 170 tribes are represented. Most of the early recordings are technically inadequate for modern reproduction but are invaluable as reference data.

Much work remains to be done in the Reference Library itself, where the collection has far outstripped the financial capacity of the organization to complete the analysis of all the recordings it houses, the bulk of which is music collected by the Director from 1928 onwards.

Classification System Now in Use:

In the early days of the African Music Society, no adequate classification system was available in Africa. Consequently, the Director devised a decimal classification which has so far proved adequate for the Library's relatively wide African experience in this field. The classification system is based upon the use of a printed four-color card index in which all items are identified by language, by type of material, by instruments, and numerically by published number. The details printed on the cards make complete identification possible for future students.

1. Language (White cards):

After many years of experience it was found that musical changes invariably followed linguistic ones. It was decided, therefore, to base the linguistic classification upon the work of recognized experts in this study, and the first lists of languages were specially compiled for the Library by the University of the Witwatersrand. Subsequent development has made it possible to follow the classification undertaken by the International African Institute without in any way detracting from the value of the original arrangement. The decimal system adopted is based upon the use of a figure for the language district, followed by numerals indicating the group or cluster of the language and finally the dialect. This system offers no difficulties to anyone familiar with the complex African
linguistic position and pinpoints the source of every musical item of authentic origin. The system also has the advantage of dovetailing into the work of recognized African linguists and can continue to be guided by their findings.

2. Types (Yellow cards):
   A second decimal classification was devised to discriminate between items by their function in society. Thus musical items associated with all stages of life in an African setting are adequately listed.

3. Musical Instruments (Red cards):
   The third decimal classification deals with the various kinds of musical instruments set out after the original classification of Dr. Curt Sachs into four sections: Chordophones, Aerophones, Idiophones, and Membranophones. Here again the detail is such that any student would find no difficulty in relating the Library's system to any similarly devised scheme.

4. Numerical (Blue cards):
   The fourth card index is intended to enable the student to file his collection numerically or, if he wishes, alphabetically, without having to write or type out an additional catalogue in book form. It also serves as a detailed guide to the physical presence or absence of records on the collector's shelves and their contents. This four-color card index has proved invaluable in the Library's work and provides a sound basis for future study at universities, teacher training colleges, and other institutions which offer courses in African studies.

Maintenance and Use:

The Budget of the Library is mostly dependent upon grants, both on account of the fact that the demand for African recordings by Africans themselves, who possess few phonographs for their reproduction, is quite inadequate to cover Library costs in the discovery, recording, and reproduction of discs, and from the fragmentation of African languages which limits the circulation of music to within relatively small tribal units. Although the overall collection demonstrates most clearly the outlines of an established and general African musical culture, the isolationism of the individual dialects restricts African musical horizons to within strict parochial limits.

As mentioned before, the Nuffield Foundation and various generous benefactors in Africa have so far provided the funds. Future financial aid is at the present moment [May, 1961] a serious pre-occupation. The sale of records accounts for approximately a quarter to one-third of Library revenue.

The collection is housed in a special building which was erected by Mr. Eric Gallo during the period of close co-operation with Mr. Tracey. The I. L. A. M. now rents this building from Mr. Gallo's phonograph record company, which also undertakes to press the Library's recordings at favorable prices, having the most modern and efficient equipment to do so within a few yards of the Library itself.

Naturally, as with so many institutions, the available space is already proving inadequate, and any future development will have to be met with new wings to the present building.

The staff has varied during the years with the available funds at the Library's disposal. At present a minimum staff is employed, including, in addition to the Director, a Library Manager, a Shorthand Typist/Secretary, a Recording Engineer, and three African assistants. Translators are engaged wherever possible in the field.

A small amount of the Library's collection has been sponsored in part by the territories in which the collections have been made. It is hoped to follow up this possibility as the work of acquiring knowledge of African personality through their music and other arts is now recognized as a valuable branch of humanitarian studies.

Owing to the great distances involved and the possible damage to recordings, there is little possibility of an effective exchange system being put into operation at present. Adequate financial support would, however, make such a scheme practical.

The Library, together with the African Music Society, publishes an annual Journal under the title African Music, seven editions of which have already appeared.

Correspondence with the Library should be addressed to:

The Director,
International Library of African Music,
P.O. Box 138,
Roodepoort,
Transvaal,
SOUTH AFRICA.

It will be noted that although the headquarters of the I. L. A. M. are situated in South Africa on account of its developed technical resources which the operation of printing and the processing and pressing of phonograph records demands, the Library itself is a continent-wide organization with no political affiliations, and is concerned with the musics of all Africa south of the Sahara.

HUGH TRACEY is the Director of the International Library of African Music.