



RESOUND

A QUARTERLY OF THE

Archives of Traditional Music

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From the Director

Ruth M. Stone

As the gentle, warm fall days and cool nights replace the heat of summer, the Archives of Traditional Music comes alive with the special energy of the new academic year. New graduate assistants learn their tasks of processing field collections. Students fill the Listening Library every day as they tap its rich sound resources. Visitors from Malawi, Zimbabwe, The Soviet Union, twelve countries in West Africa, and the United States tour and learn about our sound and video recordings.

Friends of the Archives. Fall is the season when we ask each of you who value the Archives to affirm your interest with a donation to the Friends of the Archives. While we appreciate and can make fine use of large gifts, we are equally interested in the demonstration of support that each gift makes. Such support shows the people who fund us the breadth of our influence outside the University.

Support is especially important as Indiana University embarks on a major effort to increase both local and grant funding. President Thomas Ehrlich, in his second year of office, and the newly-appointed dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Morton Lowengrub, are committed to strengthening the Archives. They also expect that we will substantially increase our funding partnership with granting agencies and people who are part of our wider constituency.

We have begun a broad review of our policies and procedures at the Archives. We are examining each facet of our operation in preparation for a long range plan which will include a major initiative to increase not only grant sponsorship but funds to create a permanent endowment for the Archives. The Archives is an institution with many excellent and valuable assets that presently depends on the University for most of its support. We hope to raise its budget significantly through stronger University support and increased funding from outside the University.

If you feel the Archives of Traditional Music makes a

significant difference to our world, please take the time to let us know. Fill out the contribution form found in this issue. Send us whatever amount you can afford, but please respond at this critical time.

We want to hear from scholars who have used the Archives, collectors who have provided recordings, alumni who worked as assistants, students who benefited from our Listening Library, performers who get ideas from listening to recordings, and people who enjoy music from around the world. Please write us when you send your contribution and tell us why the Archives is important to you. In a future issue of *Resound*, we would like to feature some of your ideas about the role of the Archives in the lives of different people.

If you can also contribute even a small amount to the endowment we are starting, this money will be invested as seed money for building some financial security for the future. We will, through the Indiana University Foundation, create the first endowment that the Archives has ever had. We feel that this is the time to begin and we believe that there are those among our patrons and friends who are both willing and able to help. For each of you who are able to contribute \$500 (\$100 a year for the next five years or a one-time gift of \$500) to our endowment, we will include your name on a plaque of patrons to be installed in the Archives.

This is also the time of year to think of making another kind of gift to the Archives. Have you designated an institution to receive tapes that you still hold? Have you made the decision to put your tapes in a safe place with proper climate control and fire protection? Many of us delay depositing tapes because the documentation is not finished or we are still collecting and documenting fieldwork. The best policy, however, is to deposit tapes in a timely manner so that they do not deteriorate in quality. We can furnish you with working copies of the originals that can be used without fear of accidental damage or loss. While we like as much documentation as you can supply, we are happy to add more details at a later time when you finish word-for-word translations. Others are still publishing articles based on their tapes and do not want to deposit them in an archives, wishing to limit access. With the various options for deposit available, you can restrict the use of those tapes when they are

(continued)

deposited, and lessen or remove restrictions when you wish.

While we are on the subject of giving, I would also like to ask if you have thought of including the Archives of Traditional Music in your will. Bequests to the Archives, whether in money, property, stock, or recordings are wonderful tributes that will continue to give for many years. If you are so inclined, we will gladly speak with you about just how to make such a bequest.

We have launched a number of new initiatives at the Archives this fall that I would like to share with you.

ZIMBABWE COLLEGE OF MUSIC—The Archives of Traditional Music is working with the African Studies Program and the Ethnomusicology Program at Indiana University to establish a center for the study of Zimbabwean music at the Zimbabwe College of Music in Harare. Mitchel Strumpf, who will become the interim director, was at the Archives at the beginning of the fall term to become better acquainted with our facilities. The Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Fay Chung, and three of her assistants visited the Archives in late September to explore our facilities.

We anticipate the arrival this year of Zimbabwean trainees who will become the director and archivist for the program. Indiana University faculty and graduate students will travel to Zimbabwe to research and record music and teach classes. In turn, a Zimbabwean master musician will come to Indiana to instruct students on the Bloomington campus.

VIDEO COLLECTION. With the completion of the video laboratory, funded in part through a grant from the Skaggs Foundation, we are launching the collection of video recordings as a significant part of the Archives. The richness of these recordings makes them valuable for studying dance, music sound, instrumental technique, costume and gesture simultaneously. Patricia Matusky Yamaguchi has deposited a major videotape collection, a study of performance in Malaysia. Another collection features music from Malawi deposited by Mitchel Strumpf. In a third collection, Adam Kendall has given us examples of sign language from Australia.

The laboratory provides multi-system capabilities so that we may accept tapes in PAL/SECAM as well as NTSC standard. We can process VHS as well as Beta and have recently located and purchased reel-to-reel recorders so that we might handle tapes that some of you might have from the early years of video recording. As with the deposit of audio collections, we provide gratis copies of original tapes to depositors.

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Marilyn B. Graf, Editor

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may be addressed to the editor.*

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Some New York Recording **Episodes, 1940-41** *Harold Courlander*

When the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music acquired papers, manuscripts, recordings and other effects from the George Herzog estate, I began to wonder whether certain of my own materials might turn up in the crates and cartons where these things had been stored. Some bits and pieces of work-in-progress, musical instruments and acetate disc recordings had been left with the Columbia University Archive of Primitive Music, which Herzog headed before moving to the Indiana Archives. Many of these items were eventually rediscovered at Indiana by Dr. Herzog and returned to me, though when I saw them again I realized they weren't going to be valuable to me or to posterity. But when Marilyn Graf was sorting out the mass of material from the Herzog estate she found some acetate discs I had recorded in 1940 and 1941, along with brief notes relating to them.

According to the data thus unearthed, the equipment I used at that time was a hand-wound 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ system custom built for the New York archive, though I have no personal recollection of this. Possibly it was the same machine that broke down in Cuba later on, and possibly the acetate blanks were from the same batch I used in Cuba, for they began to peel and crack while still in Herzog's possession. (Fortunately, the Indiana Archives of Traditional Music was able to copy portions of these 1940-41 discs on reel-to-reel tape.¹ It is possible, also, that a few aluminum disc copies made by Herzog still exist somewhere.)

The recordings themselves were made in New York City over a period of a few weeks or months. What I remember most vividly are not so much their contents as the people with whom I worked and, sometimes, the mini-adventures in which I became involved.

New York was always a treasury of recordable persons of various ethnic origins. When I didn't happen to be on a field trip somewhere I often worked with singers, drummers or informants from the Caribbean, Africa and elsewhere. Once, for example, when I was working on a book of East African tales I managed to locate a young Somali seaman named Mosa Mahamed who had jumped ship in New York. Not only was he eager to tell Somali stories, he was very pleased to learn that he would be paid for his time. Mosa came to my apartment on West 10th Street twice a week, and I was delighted with the stories he told.

Then one day he failed to appear, and I heard nothing from or about him for several weeks. Eventually I received a note from someone on Ellis Island, a letter written at Mosa's request. It seems he was on the Island awaiting deportation, and he wanted to know if I could do anything to help him out of his predicament. I went to the Manhattan office of the Immigration Department and talked to the man in charge of the case. He told me there was really nothing I could do. Many East African seamen had been jumping ship in New York, and orders had come down to find them and send them home. The man briefly described the circumstances surrounding Mosa's apprehension. An inspector had entered a small Brooklyn restaurant patronized by Somalis. He had a list in his hand and called out, "Is Mosa Mahamed here?" A melee erupted, with people trampling one another to get out the door or through the windows. It seems that most of them were named Mosa Mahamed, or something close to that, and almost all were illegals. *My* Mosa was one of those who didn't escape.

The immigration officer seemed sympathetic about Mosa, however, and he gave me a pass to visit Ellis Island and spend some time with him. The next day I made the trip. Once there, I was presented with several Mosa Mahameds before I found the right one. I explained that I couldn't do anything to prevent his being sent home, but I gave him some money, which cheered him up. Though I had no recorder, he dragged me to a relatively quiet corner where he insisted on telling me some more Somali tales, which I had to take down with pencil and paper. It was the last time I saw him.

Most of my recording at that time had to do with Caribbean, principally Haitian, traditions. Even in those days there were quite a few Haitians in New York. My friend Wilfred Beauchamp was one of my principal informants. Every now and then he brought new Haitian informants to my apartment, and occasionally an African. One of Beauchamp's African discoveries was a Senegalese named Sobihass Tore. Tore had worked for Ringling Brothers, and had arrived in New York with a consignment of newly-acquired circus animals. The animals debarked in the usual way, in crates, but Tore slid down a mooring rope and merged as quickly as possible into the Harlem scene.

When Beauchamp brought Tore to me, this former animal attendant adopted us as his countrymen because we both, in varying degrees, spoke French. The first time

we met we just talked, but Tore promised to come back to record. Faithful to his word, he arrived the next Saturday morning. We started with a cup of coffee, and I slowly worked my way around to Senegalese songs, tales and other traditions. Things were going well until the wari (munkalla) board I'd brought from Haiti caught his eye. He became very enthusiastic and demanded that we play a quick game. We had some problems at first with the rules. Senegalese rules were different from what I'd learned in Haiti. We ended up playing Senegalese style. Every time he made a move he punctuated it with a guttural "Yeh!" I interpreted this to mean something like, "Beat that!" When the first game was finished he set up the board for a second round, and after that a third. Our three hour session ended without any recording. When he left he said, "Countryman, you make my heart full. Next time I will give you some good songs and stories."

The next Saturday he came earlier than we had arranged. Again, over coffee, I tried to steer us into the recording process, but he went for the wari board immediately. Once more we passed our three hours moving wari beans. I began to be concerned and mentioned to him that we'd soon have to get down to work, and his response was, "Yes, yes, countryman, my heart is full." When we met the following week I had the coffee already poured so as to save time. He said, "Today we will play quickly while we drink our coffee, then I will sing to the machine." It sounded promising, but when the coffee was gone he set up the board again and the playing went on. Eventually I came to understand that his main purpose in riding the subway from Harlem to Greenwich Village was to play wari. I decided that if there was to be any recording with Tore it would have to be under different circumstances, perhaps in his own living quarters.

So one day, without having preannounced my intention, I went to visit Tore. He lived in a dismal Harlem tenement and with his wife (or female companion) occupied a room about ten feet square. The sole piece of furniture was an iron double bed on which his wife was lying. On this particular day it was shoved against the wall, and on the floor space that remained Tore was processing a skin for a drumhead. He said that back home skins for drumheads were treated with peanut oil to soften them. He'd gotten the skin from a local Harlem butcher shop but could not find any peanut oil, so he had substituted a large jar of peanut butter. At the time of my arrival he was sliding around in his bare feet on the peanut butter-smeared skin, kneading the oil into it. (He also seemed to be kneading a good part of the floor.) His wife had no possibility of getting out of bed without joining him in the peanut butter. I stayed only a few minutes, huddled against the wall. When I left he promised to talk and sing to the recording machine in the near future. I don't remember if he actually did, though I know I did get much information from him which I set down with pencil and paper.

Beauchamp brought me numerous Haitians. I've forgotten most of their names, but I particularly remember Lydia Augustin, a small but formidable woman from l'Asile. She was a fine story teller and knew countless songs. Sometimes I had nine or ten Haitians present at a recording session. If Beauchamp was narrating no one hesitated to interrupt him, but if it was

Lydia Augustin who was talking no one made a sound. I also remember Alphonse Cimber, who was a promising drummer. Though he was a complete Haitian in most respects, he didn't know some of the Vodoun drum rhythms, and he sometimes came to my place separately from the others so I could help him with what I happened to know. (Later on he became a professional Afro-Haitian drummer and played in a few stage and film productions.) Eventually my supply of acetate blanks gave out. This was critical, because in 1940 and 1941 it was difficult, if not impossible, to acquire recording discs. In desperation I cut out the bottom of a rather heavy-gauge plastic hat box, trimmed it to size and recorded on that. It seemed to work rather well, but I can't remember anyone ever commenting on this brilliant improvisation.

Although my Haitians had come from widely diverse social (and therefore cultural) strata—some had never witnessed a Vodoun service, for example—they gradually developed a sense of community among themselves that they would not have felt in Haiti. In time they thought of themselves as a *groupe folklorique* and began talking about performing for money. They found an inexpensive place to rehearse in Harlem, and as I imagined she would, Lydia emerged as the leader. But even she couldn't prevent the rehearsals from devoting half the time to singing and dancing and the other half to acrimonious argumentation.

Now that they were an organized group they expected me to do something that would provide monetary returns for their efforts. Sometimes I was able to use one or two of them to demonstrate Haitian dances in connection with lectures, but the monetary returns were slight. I also was able to get them into some so-called calypso festivals, for which they received nothing. One of the older men, whose name eludes me, decided to go it alone at the Apollo Theater on amateur night. He was not greatly appreciated and was booed (also forcibly escorted) off the stage (continuing to sing, I was told, until he was well back into the wings).

At some point the group declared that they were ready to make an album of records and asked me to make the arrangements. After considerable prodding, I went to the Reeves Sound Studio, and to the best of my recollection I spoke to Mr. Reeves himself.² I told him about the group and said that to my knowledge no commercial Haitian records existed. If I made the group sound a bit more exotic than it was, it was only because I didn't want to leave empty-handed. To my surprise, Reeves was greatly interested and said he would pay \$300 for eight or ten songs, enough to fill a 78 rpm album. The group was ecstatic, and I agreed to go with them to the recording session. Lydia Augustin decreed that once in the studio the Haitians would only speak Creole (for psychological reasons) and that, if necessary, I would be the official "translator." The recording session went off well. Reeves declared he was delighted. (The album came out a few months later under the General Records label.)

There remained only the ritual of dividing the \$300 in cash that had been handed to Lydia. I suggested that we go to the nearest Automat and do the dividing over a cup of coffee. Once inside, I said I would get the coffee while they found a table and figured out how much each person's equal share would amount to. (I liked the idea of not being present while they argued, though it was a

simple matter of dividing the total amount received by the nine persons in the group.) I began taking cups, one at a time, from the dispenser shelf, placing them under the coffee spout and placing a nickel in the appropriate slot. It was very routine and I became aware of the slight delay between the placing of the nickel and the emergence of the coffee. I became so sure of myself that sometimes I inserted the nickel first and then put the cup in place. I had one more cup to go and inserted the nickel. Suddenly I realized there were no more cups available on the shelf. I looked frantically to one side, then the other. I saw an empty cup sitting on a lower shelf, grabbed it and slid it under my spout just in time. Then I heard a kind of howl and realized that it came from the man standing next to me. The cup I had grabbed was his. He had just placed it under his own spout and inserted his nickel. His coffee began to flow. Instinctively he cupped his hands under the flowing hot coffee. Again he made howl-like sounds. I couldn't think of anything to do but say "sorry" and place a nickel in front of him, after which I retreated hurriedly to the table where the Haitians were sitting and arguing. But they had figured out how the money should be divided, and after drinking our coffee we dispersed.

One morning Beauchamp unexpectedly appeared at my apartment at an early hour, though we had no appointment. I can't say for sure if the year was 1940 or 1941, but I know the date was December 31st, as the events I recount confirm. He had a big problem, he said, and he was counting on me to help. First, he asked for the loan of my Rada drums, which was no problem for me. Beyond that, it seems, he had a distant relative named Marie Dessalines who owned a storefront church establishment in Harlem. He had difficulty describing exactly what kind of church it was, but there was to be a special Haitian New Year's Eve service there that night. Marie Dessalines was Haitian by descent, but she had lived most of her life in New York. Exactly what kind of Haitian service was she putting on? Beauchamp wasn't sure, but she needed three Haitian drummers, including him. I asked if he'd gotten in touch with Cimber. He said yes, but Cimber wanted too much money. He had a second drummer, however, a Congolese named Joseph Lengo. I inquired whether Lengo could beat Haitian rhythms. He said he would show him how. I suggested that maybe he could find his third drummer somewhere. He said he'd tried, but now he was asking me to be the third drummer. I thought the idea was ridiculous and told him I wasn't a drummer. He said, "You know all the beats. You showed Cimber how to play." I denied it and protested, but nothing helped. At last I agreed, though with profound misgivings. I don't know how I allowed myself to be committed, for I had numerous other things I could do on New Year's Eve. Besides, the whole idea was preposterous—a Haitian, a Congolese, and a white American drumming together in a Harlem storefront church.

That evening I met Beauchamp on a Harlem street corner. With him was Joseph Lengo, and the two of them were carrying my drums. We walked several blocks to Marie Dessalines' establishment. Her plate glass window was covered with crudely printed signs advertising both salvation and the cures and remedies to be found in her shop—herbs, lotions and mystical objects of many kinds

to restore virility, counteract conjuring, and so on. We passed through the shop and then through a curtained doorway over which was painted, "The saints await you here, Amen." Marie Dessalines met us beyond the curtain in her chapel. She seemed delighted at the appearance of her three Haitian drummers. I spoke a few words of Haitian Creole to her, which she obviously didn't understand, and Beauchamp said that she didn't speak any Creole. Privately I asked him what she knew about Vodoun. He said he hadn't ever been in her establishment before and didn't really know.

About twenty people were sitting on benches waiting for things to start. Marie Dessalines went to the pulpit, announced that the Haitian drummers had arrived, and said we would begin as soon as Adele (who ran a beauty parlor a few doors away) made her appearance. Meanwhile she called attention to the treasury of mysterious Haitian remedies that could be purchased in the front shop. In a few minutes Sister Adele arrived, a very large woman dressed immaculately in white. As soon as Marie Dessalines introduced her, promising a few words of spiritual guidance for the coming year, Sister Adele launched into a fiery sermon whose content I have long since forgotten. Most of the congregation seemed only mildly interested. A man on the front bench divided his attention between Sister Adele and his newspaper. Only one old lady was responsive. She jumped around quite a bit and clapped her hands, sometimes calling out, "Right, Lord!" or "True, so true!" When Sister Adele finished, Marie Dessalines introduced the Reverend Stephen Broko from Guyana (then British Guiana), who sermonized on the Gospel of Saint John the Evangelist. Still the congregation was quiet, even a little restive.

Then Sister Adele announced from the pulpit that we would hear a few words of inspiration from Brother John Lansbro, a well-known Harlem undertaker. She said, "Brother John will address us on the science of numbers." Instantly the atmosphere became charged. Virtually everyone present pulled out a pencil and notebook. As Brother John spoke they took notes. Any number or combination of numbers that he mentioned was written down, and several members did not wait for him to finish but rushed off with their notebooks clutched in their hands.

That was the climax of the first part of the New Year's Eve service. Marie Dessalines announced that after a short intermission the second part, the secret Haitian spirit rites, would begin in the lower room (i.e., the cellar). About a dozen members descended the stairs, the rest probably deterred by a conspicuous contribution box at the entrance with a sign that read, "Give for the good will of the Haitian spirits." By the time Beauchamp, Lengo and I got down there the members were sitting on the floor in a semicircle around Marie Dessalines. She also was sitting on the floor in what I took to be her concept of a trance.

We had a small, a medium-sized and a large drum as required for Vodoun rites. Since I was most familiar with the small-drum beats I chose that drum for myself. Beauchamp reached for the maman drum, the largest, but Lengo said he wanted that one and Beauchamp should play the medium-sized one. Beauchamp said, "No, you play the middle one. You don't know the beat for the big one." Lengo said, "You Haitians think you

know more than Africans. Where do you think your drumming comes from, anyway?" Beauchamp said, "Okay, take the large one. But you have to beat the way I tell you." Lengo said, "Play, play. Don't tell me how to beat." Beauchamp said to me, "Beat something for the Rada Dance." I began, and thought the sound was passable. In a moment Beauchamp joined in on his middle-sized drum, and it all fit together nicely. Marie Dessalines started to sway from side to side in her trance. At that point Lengo began to play some rhythm I'd never heard before. It didn't seem to have anything to do with what Beauchamp and I were playing. Nevertheless Marie Dessalines' swaying became more agitated.

Suddenly Beauchamp stopped and said to Lengo, "No, not like that. Do it like this." He beat a brief passage for Lengo. Lengo said, "Are you trying to tell me how to beat?" Beauchamp said, "Maybe you beat all right for Africa, but not for Haiti. Play like I told you." While they argued, Marie Dessalines stopped swaying and sat motionless. Beauchamp pulled the large drum away from Lengo and gave him the middle one, saying "Now do it this way," and played a brief passage. We started again. Marie Dessalines began swaying once more and was just reaching a point of frenzy when Lengo stopped drumming. He said to Beauchamp, "You're doing it wrong. You're supposed to beat 'Ta ta ta, katap! Ta ta ta katap!'" Beauchamp and I stopped. Beauchamp said to Lengo, "I'm doing the right Haitian beat. That's the way it goes. You're the one that's not doing it right." They argued. Again Marie Dessalines had to stop her agitated movements and wait.

Eventually we started again. This time, conscious that she must get it done quickly, Marie Dessalines jumped to her feet, whirled around a few times, staggered back and forth, rolled her eyes and fell to the floor in her personalized enactment of a possession by some Haitian loa (deity). A young woman (I assumed she was Marie's daughter) came forward and announced that the service was over, that Marie Dessalines had been entered by a spirit. With Marie still lying on the floor the spectators filed up the stairs. As they left, the young woman reminded them of the Haitian herbs and lotions available in the front shop. I followed the departing members, and Beauchamp and Lengo came after me, still arguing. Lengo wanted to know where his five dollars was, and Beauchamp said he'd get it for him the next day.

Beauchamp walked me to the subway, obviously embarrassed. As we parted I asked him, "Is she really your relative, Wilfred?" He said, "Well, someone told me that, but I think she must be a Puerto Rican."

The events I've described are just as I recall them, and I've done my best not to embellish anything. As I mentioned earlier, I remember the people more clearly than whatever they may have narrated or sung for me, and some of them remained my friends for a long time. Various old tapes and notes remind me that I continued to record in New York in the late 1940s and 1950s, with only a few breaks for field trips and other special projects, working with Haitians and others from the Caribbean, Africans, and on one extended occasion with a group of Indonesians stranded in the United States because of the Dutch "police action" then taking place in their homeland. Although the Indonesian tapes have long since disappeared, many of the narrations they contained

survive in printed form in a small book I had published in 1950.³ Also a number of reel-to-reel recordings of that period, containing exegeses and interpretations of Haitian Vodoun rites and traditions eventually found a home at the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music.⁴

NOTES

¹ Archives accession number 84-1434-F.

² I knew of the Reeves Sound Studio only through some negotiations George Herzog had had with them on behalf of his Archive of Primitive Music. He hoped to release a series of

limited edition albums of field recordings in the Archive's keeping. The first album was of selections from my Haiti recordings, made in the late 1930s. This album, produced by the Reeves Sound Studio, actually appeared—as I recall, there were one hundred copies—but to my knowledge was never distributed. Eighty-five of these albums were found with George Herzog's papers. A copy of the four-disc set—*Music of Haiti: Secular and Cult Songs and Dances Recorded on the Island of Haiti*, Archive of Primitive Music, Columbia University, Series One—is under Archives' accession number 54-305-F/C.

³ *Kantchil's Lime Pit and Other Stories from Indonesia*, New York, Harcourt Brace, 1950.

⁴ Archives accession number 84-1435-F.

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