“Understanding African Music is a splendid volume of musical treasures from cultures and countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The book successfully accomplishes its aim to orient readers to the vast expanse of music and musicians, to ways of thinking and behaving musically and to the human capacity for cultural-artistic-social expression. There are critical lessons to be learned about African music and culture through the activities carefully framed by the author in the reading and listening that leads to them. There is nothing like it in the field. It is a textbook, a guide to deep listening, a study of the innovative musical ways of the human mind and body. The book is a shining realization of ILAM’s hope to fulfill Hugh Tracey’s 1960s vision for repatriating the music he recorded to its communities of origin by creating textbooks designed to teach African music in the schools.” — Patricia Shehan Campbell, University of Washington, Seattle

“There is nothing like it in the field.”

“This in depth, beautifully illustrated exposition of the music practices and thinking of sub-Saharan Africa will be a rich resource. Mandy Carver has assimilated and presented the cultural material in accessible language and presents an impressive selection of recordings from across the continent, drawn from ILAM’s collection of field recordings. — Emily Akuno, The Kenya Polytechnic University College, Nairobi

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This book is intended to give the African music recorded by ILAM’s founder Hugh Tracey back to learners throughout South Africa through the schools by publishing a textbook that teaches using African music. The bulk of the audio tracks on the CD that accompanies this book are from ILAM field recordings made in Southern Africa. Also included are several video clips produced by ILAM to illustrate certain lessons.

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Hugh Tracey and the International Library of African Music

This exhibition catalogue features superb quality ethnographic photographs from Hugh Tracey’s photo collection taken during his field excursions throughout sub Saharan Africa (1930s-60s) and articles relating to the Tracey legacy for African music. For Future Generations presents a richly illustrated portion of the manuscript of Hugh Tracey’s 1932 scientific research report to the Carnegie Foundation, an article by Andrew Tracey relating to the 20 instruments chosen from the 350 in the Tracey collection to be featured in the exhibit, with an image of each instrument and a CD with a Hugh Tracey field recording of each of the 20 instruments being played. It also includes informative articles on Hugh Tracey’s research techniques and legacy by Diane Thram and Noel Lobley, a tribute to Hugh Tracey by Gerhard Kubik, a tribute to Andrew Tracey by Christopher Ballantine, and a touching memoir of Hugh Tracey written by his son Andrew.

Cost of book and CD:
R300 (RSA); $45 (US); €35 (EU); £30 (UK)
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The Music of Africa Series was produced by Hugh Tracey in the early 1960s as an off-shoot of his 218 LP Sound of Africa Series, in order to present African music to a general audience. ILAM has re-issued, without modifications, the original 25 LP series in CD format (The numbering, cover images and liner notes of the original LPs has been retained).

Hugh Tracey presented the music on these albums according to instrument type, geographic region, and in the case of Princess Magogo, to feature an exceptional musician. The original LPs are true collector’s items. Enjoy the storytelling of African folktales by Hugh Tracey himself on Music of Africa 17, 33, 34, & 35.
Historical Recordings by Hugh Tracey is a new series, not a re-release of previous LP albums on cd. It also includes many tracks never published before, and all previously released items can be heard in their unexpurgated entirety for the first time.

The series is a reappraisal of Hugh Tracey's lifework, finding itself somewhere in between his more populist Music of Africa series of 25 LPs and his more academic Sound of Africa series of 218 LPs. In this series we are able to present many of the foremost musicians of the 20th century from this part of Africa, and that is a gift. It is especially a gift to the peoples involved, for the legacy as played by their forebears belongs to them.

Michael Baird 2006

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