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P 5
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ifeas

Institut für
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Afrikastudien

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University of Cologne

The revitalization of the African sound archive beyond postcolonial nationhood

The International Library of African Music (ILAM) is located in South Africa and it is the largest sound archive of African music in the continent. From the 1920s to the 1970s, Hugh Tracey, his son, Andrew, and numerous “others” recorded more than fourteen thousand songs from fifteen countries in sub-Saharan Africa. ILAM covers a wide range of African musical styles – ranging from South Africa to Sudan. Since 2011, the author has conducted repatriation and revitalization projects of ILAM’s recordings in southern Africa (Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa) resulting in multiple publications (peer review articles, albums and documentaries) including his book ‘Tracing the mbira sound archive in Zimbabwe’ published by Routledge in 2018.

This lecture examines the digital return of ILAM’s mbira sound archive through the author, African scholars, and mbira teachers in southern Africa. Particularly, this type of revitalization project examines the scholarly and collaborative outcomes from the interaction between ILAM (as a hub for African music studies) and the African academia during the revitalization project. In the second part of this lecture, there will be a reconsideration on how the cultural diversity of ILAM’s recordings transcend the African continent becoming a source of global interaction with multiple actors (musicians, migrant communities, DJs, music archivists, etc.) in European cities.

Luis Gimenez Amoros is a Humboldt postdoctoral fellow at the Global South Studies Center located at the University of Cologne. Previously, he has been an Ethnomusicology lecturer at the University of Cologne (Germany), Universidade Federal da Bahia (Brazil), Rhodes University (South Africa), Sultan Idris University (Malaysia), and a Mellon postdoctoral fellow at Center for Humanities research. His academic research focuses on music and refugees in the Sahara Desert (doctoral dissertation), sound repatriation and revitalization of historical recordings from African sound archives, and the historical circulation of Iberian music within an Afro-Asian context and in Latin America. His publications include the monograph ‘Tracing the Mbira Sound Archive in Zimbabwe’ (Routledge, 2018) and the awarded album series ‘The Unknown Spanish Levant’ (recorded in Egypt, Brazil, Mexico, Malaysia, South Africa, Germany, Turkey and Spain). [<https://luisgimenezamoros.com/>]

African sound
archive, ILAM,
December 2016.
Photo: Luis
Gimenez Amoros

Institutskolloquium Wintersemester 2024/25 Leitung: Matthias Krings

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