

# The Building of a Small Digital Library:

## AIDS Songs of Northern Malawi



### **IAML**

*June 26, 2024*

*University of Stellenbosch*

*Stellenbosch, ZA*

### **Jake Schaub**

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*Nashville, Tennessee, USA*



**VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY**  
*Jean and Alexander Heard Libraries*

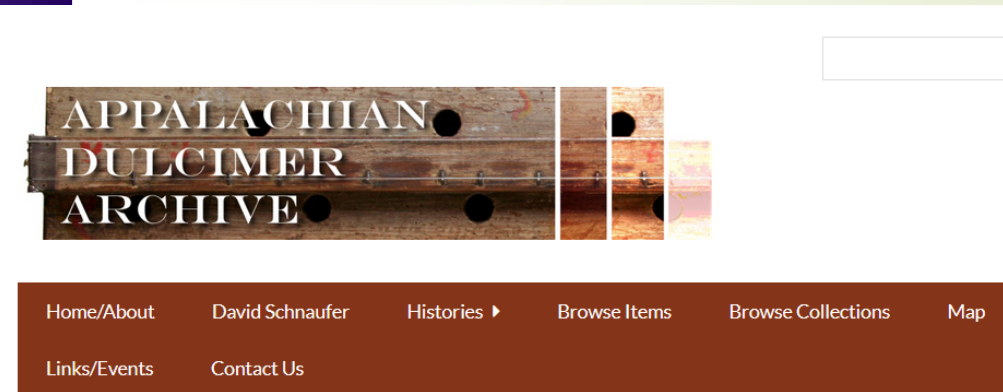
# Background: Small Collections

- Larger library initiatives
- Faculty research

- Global Music Archive
- Digital Collection of East African Recordings (2004-2010)
- Appalachian Dulcimer Archive
- Tanzanian journals (Dr. Gregory Barz) (1993-1994)



The screenshot shows the top section of the Global Music Archive website. It features a purple header with the text "global MUSIC ARCHIVE" in white and blue. Below the header is a green navigation bar with four links: "Home", "About the Archive", "Collections and Resources", and "Future Plans". Underneath the navigation bar is a section titled "Digital Collection of East African Recordings". This section includes three search buttons: "Browse by Category", "Basic Search", and "Advanced Search". Below the search buttons, it states "There are currently 1805 recordings represented in the Digital Collection of East African Recordings." At the bottom of this section, there is a row of category buttons: "Artist / Group", "Region", "District", "Language", "Ethnic Group", and "Musical Instrument". A small instruction "[Click on a button to browse the category]" is positioned above these buttons.



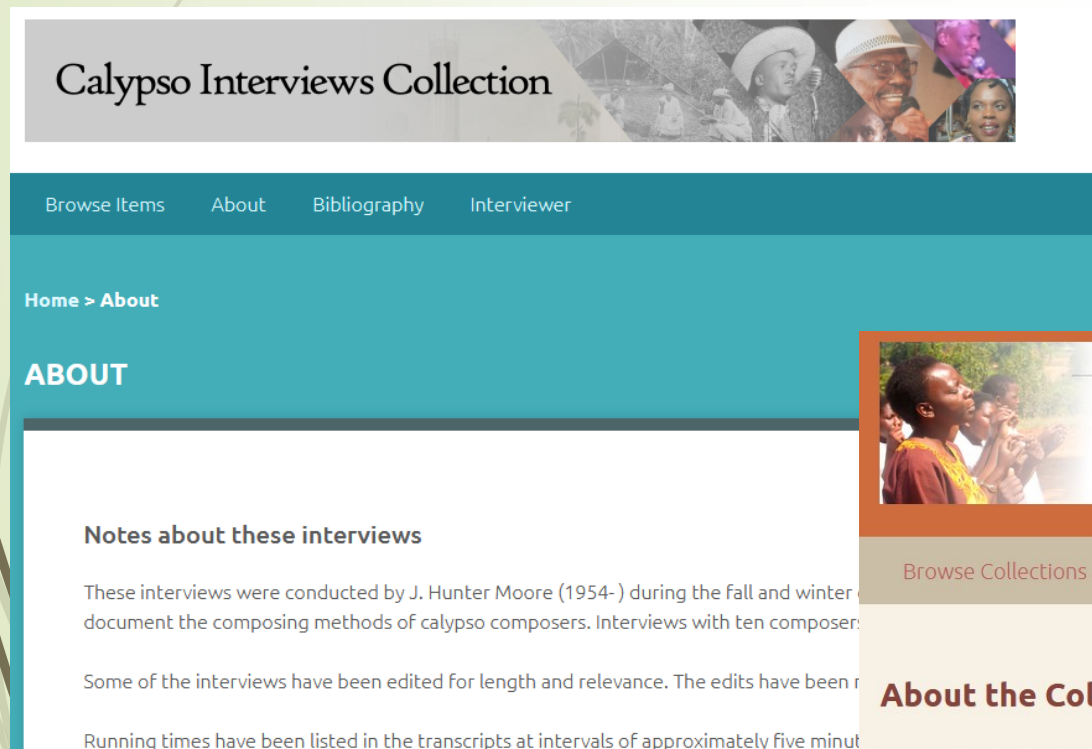
The screenshot shows the top section of the Appalachian Dulcimer Archive website. It features a header with a background image of a dulcimer and the text "APPALACHIAN DULCIMER ARCHIVE" in white. Below the header is a dark brown navigation bar with several links: "Home/About", "David Schnauffer", "Histories", "Browse Items", "Browse Collections", "Map", "Links/Events", and "Contact Us".

A synthesis of a 19th-century folk tradition and 21st-century technology, the Appalachian Dulcimer Archive was launched at the [Anne Potter Wilson Music Library](#) at [Vanderbilt University](#). Initially conceived more than ten years earlier by David Schnauffer, instructor of dulcimer at the [Blair School of Music](#), the database was designed as a "sound museum," exhibiting playable sound files on historic handmade dulcimers. As well, systematic documentation of these historical instruments has been presented.

# Background: Small Collections

## ► Graduate student projects

- Ugandan music industry—Interviews (John Turner)
- AIDS, Music and Activism in Uganda (John Dick, Jr.)
- Calypso Interviews collection (J. Hunter Moore)
- AIDS Songs of Northern Malawi (Jonah Eller-Isaacs)



Calypso Interviews Collection

[Browse Items](#) [About](#) [Bibliography](#) [Interviewer](#)

Home > About

## ABOUT

### Notes about these interviews

These interviews were conducted by J. Hunter Moore (1954-) during the fall and winter of 2004. The interviews document the composing methods of calypso composers. Interviews with ten composers were conducted.

Some of the interviews have been edited for length and relevance. The edits have been noted in the transcripts.

Running times have been listed in the transcripts at intervals of approximately five minutes.



AIDS Songs of Northern Malawi

[Browse Collections](#) [Browse Items](#) [Global Music Archive](#)

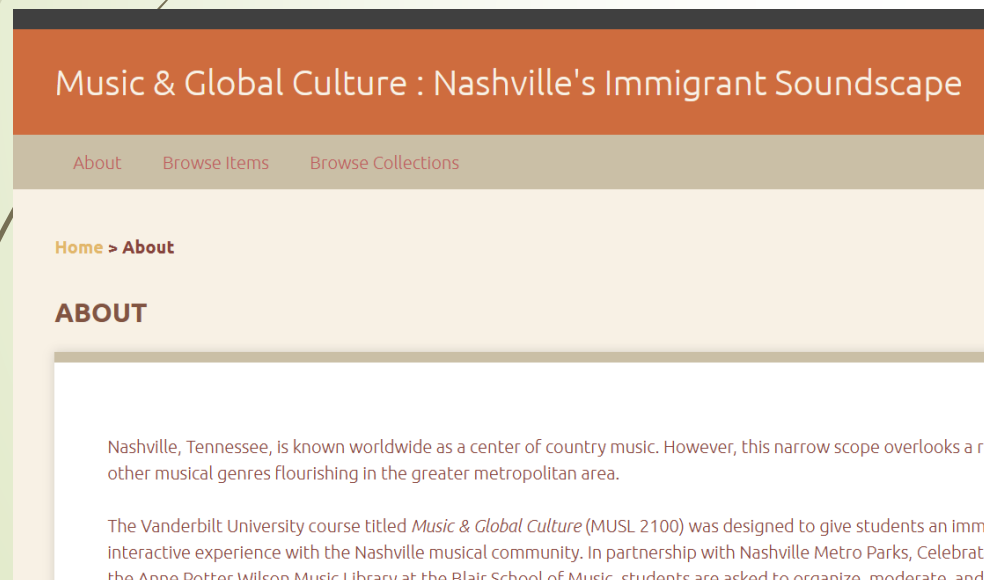
## About the Collection

Recorded by Jonah Eller-Isaacs (then a graduate student at Vanderbilt University) in Northern Malawi in the 2000s, the AIDS

# Background: Small Collections

- ▶ Course projects
- ▶ Other sources

- Music and Global Culture (MUSL 2100)
- Peter Redvers-Lee Blues Interviews (1988-1991)



The screenshot shows a website interface. At the top, there is a dark orange header with the text "Music & Global Culture : Nashville's Immigrant Soundscape". Below the header is a navigation bar with links for "About", "Browse Items", and "Browse Collections". The main content area has a breadcrumb trail "Home > About" and a section titled "ABOUT". The text under "ABOUT" reads: "Nashville, Tennessee, is known worldwide as a center of country music. However, this narrow scope overlooks a rich other musical genres flourishing in the greater metropolitan area." Below this, there is a paragraph: "The Vanderbilt University course titled *Music & Global Culture* (MUSL 2100) was designed to give students an immersive interactive experience with the Nashville musical community. In partnership with Nashville Metro Parks, Celebrate the Anne Potter Wilson Music Library at the Blair School of Music, students are asked to organize, moderate, and a





# This particular collection...

## ➤ ***AIDS Songs of Northern Malawi***

- Contact made in early 2019, database online by mid-2020
- Jonah Eller-Isaacs
  - Fulbright work in Northern Malawi in 2004 on AIDS and traditional song forms
- Many other original print documents related to this collection had already been lost years before in a flood.
- 17 minidisks (10 original + 7 backup copies), 2 CD-Rs, and various related text files had survived

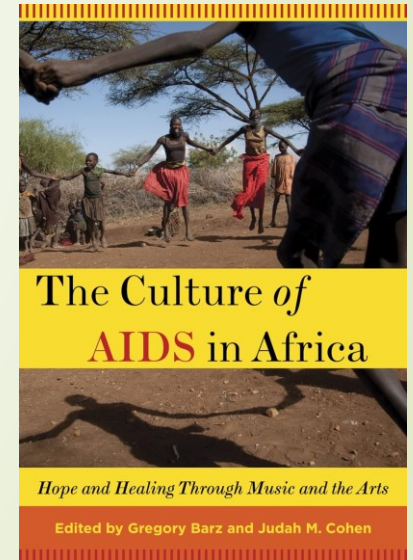
# This particular collection...

- **AIDS Songs of Northern Malawi**
- 17 minidiscs (10 original + 7 backup copies), 2 CD-Rs, and various related text files had survived



# This particular collection...

- ▶ ***AIDS Songs of Northern Malawi***
- ▶ 17 minidisks (10 original + 7 backup copies), 2 CD-Rs, and various related text files had survived
- ▶ Source material for:
  - ▶ Minnesota Public Radio show segment, 2006
  - ▶ Eller-Isaacs, Jonah. "Singing in the shadow of death : African musicians respond to a pandemic with songs of sorrow, resistance, advocacy, and hope." In: *The Culture of AIDS in Africa : Hope and Healing through Music and the Arts*. Edited by Gregory Barz and Judah M. Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011





# Malawi: Contents

- ▶ Audio recordings
  - ▶ Music
    - ▶ AIDS songs by various groups (chiChewa or chiTumbuka)
    - ▶ Popular music
    - ▶ Traditional non-AIDS-themed music (chiefly Vimbuza recordings)
    - ▶ “Soundscapes”—Ambient sounds of a location
  - ▶ Spoken word
    - ▶ AIDS-themed poetry
    - ▶ 1 recorded play, dialogue skits
    - ▶ Interviews



# Malawi: Contents

- ▶ Digital photos (on CD-R)
  - ▶ 2 copies of photos from Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and Malawi
  - ▶ 1 copy of the Malawi photos (and their new numbering) inaccessible
- ▶ Photo index file with captions (using the new numbering)
- ▶ Original chiChewa and chiTumbuka texts with English translations by Albert “Chimwe” Chimwemwe Nyirongo
- ▶ Digitized signed contract with Minnesota Public Radio



# Software

- Options
  - Locally developed database?
  - JSTOR Commons (text)/Aviary (media)
  - Omeka
    - Already used for other projects in the Music Library and at Vanderbilt at large





# Omeka

- Omeka Classic
- Omeka S
- Omeka.net



omeka

- Good for collections of both media and print
- Good for “telling a story”
- We opted for Omeka.net due to the software support factor
- However, for collections that need to be more restricted, local instances of Omeka Classic or Omeka S may be better options



# Omeka features

- ▶ File formats accepted
- ▶ Metadata
  - ▶ Collection- and item-level
  - ▶ General metadata based on Dublin Core
  - ▶ Additional metadata fields available for specific item types
  - ▶ Customizable item types
  - ▶ Tags
- ▶ Exhibits feature
  - ▶ We did not use, but could be useful

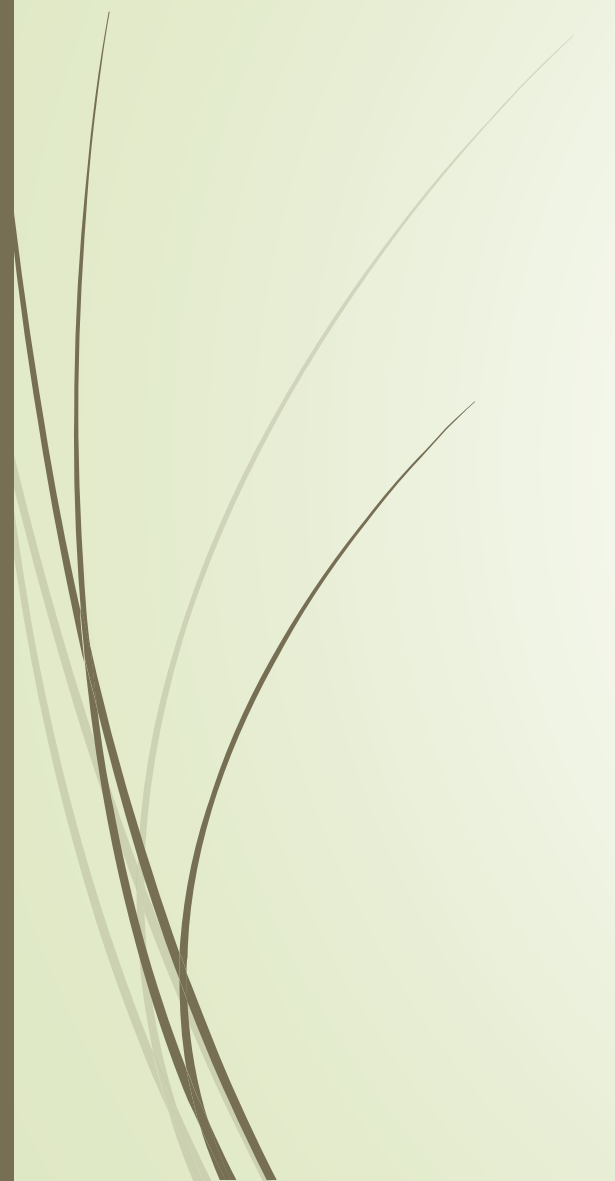


# Staffing/Involved parties

- Donor: Jonah Eller-Isaacs
- Facilitator: Holling Smith-Borne (Director, Wilson Music Library)
- Digitization/Ripping: Michael Jones (Wilson Music Library staff)
- Metadata/Upload (Audio): Jake Schaub (Wilson Music Library staff)
  - Created metadata structure, input descriptions, uploaded media files
- Graduate Intern: Owen Stewart-Robertson
  - Helped in identifying and describing mystery photographs and uploading the data into Omeka



# Field trip into the collection





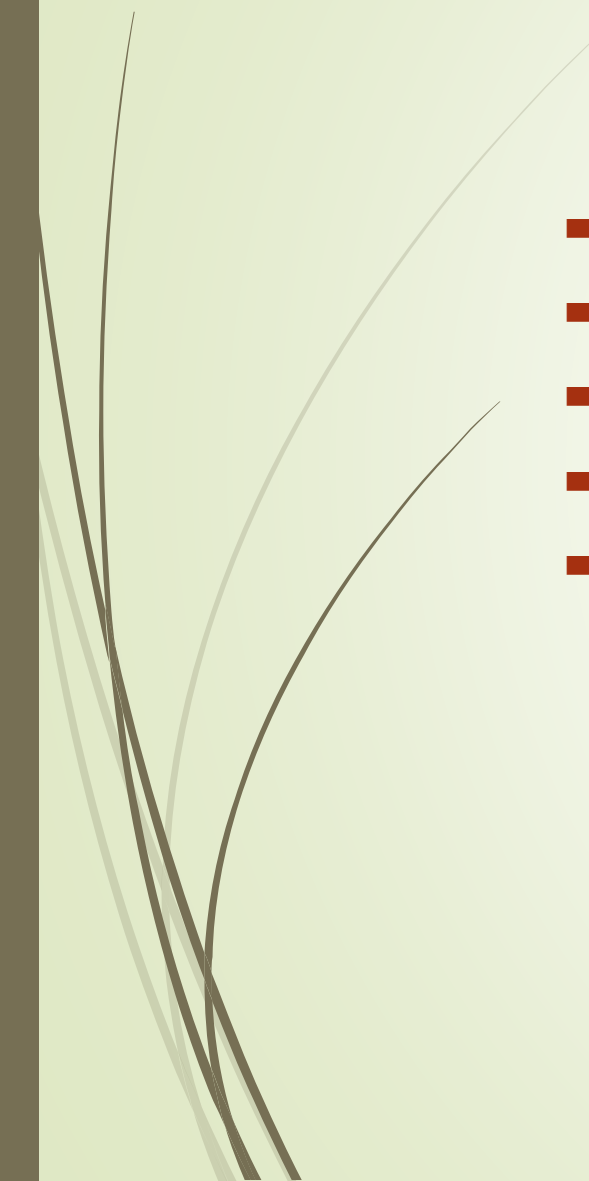
# Issues



- ▶ Incomplete or damaged data
- ▶ How to incorporate resources in the collection that do not coincide with the larger narrative?
- ▶ Cultural context, but connecting to Western audience
- ▶ Permissions
- ▶ Long-term maintenance



# Recommendations

- Good communication with the donor
  - Permissions
  - Keep things simple
  - Be true to the nature of the resource, but mindful of one's audience
  - Cultural sensitivity for some collections
- 





# Questions?

- ▶ Jake Schaub (Vanderbilt University)
  - ▶ [jake.schaub@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jake.schaub@vanderbilt.edu)
- ▶ AIDS Songs of Northern Malawi
  - ▶ <https://aidsinmalawi.omeka.net/>

