

ReSoXy

Resounding the Musical Heritage of the Xylophone Collection from RMCA

DURATION
01/05/2023 – 31/04/2026

BUDGET
€ 120 000

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

ReSoXy is a project that aims to reconstruct and recreate the musical practice of the Manza xylophone, a musical instrument owned and used by the customary chiefs and notables of the Azande populations in the north of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Regarded as rarity in the colonizer's field reports in the 1930s, these instruments in the collections of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren (RMCA) were acquired by Belgian collectors and ethnographers at the end of the 19th century, the start of colonisation, and have since become the silent witnesses of the declining cultural heritage. The project aims to configure 'the different same' for the instrument collection in order to rethink the contemporary meanings that have been irreversibly erased and reshaped by colonisation. We will focus on a triangular interdisciplinary methodology to restore the sound of the instrument collection using creative and participatory approaches, including musical experimentation (musical sampling, replica construction and historical sound recordings), participatory creative actions (co-creation and co-experimentation with source communities and diasporas, researchers, students and musicians in Europe), and ethnography (archival studies, interviews and field studies). As well as offering a new reading of these forgotten instruments, the project aims to have an impact on the academic world and the general public in terms of heritage preservation and restitution, decolonial and multicultural values, and musical creativity.



To achieve its objectives, ReSoXy proposes an innovative multidisciplinary methodology combining musical/artistic, ethnographic, technological, archival and restitution approaches. The musical gesture will be studied through various stages of artistic experimentation: the construction of sound replica installations, the sound sampling of the xylophone collection, and the design of an electronic sound system for playback. These stages will enable researchers to reconstruct the data from the musical, technical and acoustic perspectives of the collection. The creation of sound replicas is an original concept developed by the research team to make the original sounds of the xylophone collection resonate on replica instruments and is aimed at three major research tasks: 1) hypothesising about movement patterns,

body posture and xylophone playing techniques, 2) immaterial cultural restitution activities and 3) providing a practical experience for museum visitors in exhibitions and workshops. In addition, the use of a replica installation will prevent damage to the collections.

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The major impacts of this pilot project will be seen in the implementation of a management policy for the xylophone collection based on decolonial values, and the development of an innovative multidisciplinary methodology in the fields of ethnomusicology, artistic research, and intangible cultural restitution. The replica instruments will also have an impact on the non-academic public through the enhancement and exploitation of knowledge in two ways. Firstly, we will invite Congolese and Belgian musicians to discover the music and practice of the xylophones by giving demonstrations and creating music using the sound installation. Secondly, we will communicate the results of our research into musical practice - an abstract and tacit knowledge - to the public by encouraging visitors to play the installation and learn about music and xylophone techniques through videos and animations. This will be an interactive and effective approach to communicating research findings through practical experience.

Finally, we will exploit and enhance the scientific data - musical practice and musical gesture - obtained through musical analysis, artistic experimentation and ethnography by implementing the restitution and dissemination work modules. In other words, the scientific data will be applied in the process of reconnecting the collection with its source communities and revitalising a declining musical heritage.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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<https://www.africamuseum.be/en/staff/1166>

LINKS

https://www.africamuseum.be/en/staff/1166/project_detail_view?prid=749