

55th International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA) Annual Conference- Valencia, Spain September 23-26 2024

Safeguarding Sri Lanka's Musical Heritage: Restoration and Digitization of W. B. Makulloluwa's Historical Field Recordings

Kamani Samarasinghe

University of the Visual & Performing Arts, Sri Lanka

kamani@vpa.ac.lk

Renowned musicologist William Banda (W. B.) Makulloluwa (1922–1984) played a pivotal role in safeguarding Sri Lanka's rich folk music traditions. Recognizing the intrinsic value of village songs and the traditional Sinhalese singing style embedded within local communities, Makulloluwa traversed villages, meticulously documenting captivating melodic patterns that resonated with the hearts of the inhabitants. This paper focuses on the restoration and preservation efforts directed towards an obscure collection of Makulloluwa's field recordings. Collaborating with the National Archives Sri Lanka, the author meticulously restored spool tape recordings and digitized the soundtracks. Each tape underwent thorough examination, cleaning, and documentation, accompanied by the photographing of tape containers and associated notes. Upon successful digitization, the recordings were systematically catalogued, encapsulating a diverse array of songs and music. The collection includes Veddas' Music, lullabies, songs from the Catholic population, instrumental music, and compositions from folk rituals.

Keywords: Folk Music Sri Lanka, Historical Field Recording, Safeguarding Music, Sri Lanka's Music Heritage, W. B. Makulloluwa