

# Be-MUSIC

## A Plurivocal Access to Belgian Musical Heritage

**DURATION**  
 01/07/2023 – 30/06/2027

**BUDGET**  
 € 558 800

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The collections of musical instruments held by the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) and the Museum of Musical Instruments (RMAH-MIM) are of exceptional value, renowned for their history, diversity, quality, and quantity. The RMAC conserves 9110 instruments, mainly from Central Africa, but also from the Americas and Oceania. The RMAH-MIM has 11,400 instruments from every continent dating from the 19th century. The virtual merger of the two collections on a new multi-vocal digital platform will highlight this exceptional national heritage, increase its potential for enhancement and guarantee its sustainability. It will present the two FSI's as a joint centre of excellence for the study of musical instruments.

At present, the information available in the two collections is very diverse in nature (metadata, thesauri, photographs, audio material) and is produced in numerous formats, according to different standards and in different languages. The project will bring together this massive amount of information in a modern, highly dynamic search portal, thereby increasing accessibility to the available sources. The portal will be linked to crowdsourcing campaigns aimed at collecting valuable additional knowledge about musical instruments and musical traditions. Intellectual property rights will be researched and licensed where appropriate. The specific objectives of the project are geared towards scientific exploitation and enhancement, by updating and completing the existing (meta)data, thesaurus, and exchange standards, i.e., by facilitating research, access, interoperability and re-use of the collection and its (meta)data.

In recent years, online access to some musicological collections and archives has been made possible thanks to various digitisation and enhancement projects (DEKMMMA, CARMENTIS, MIMO, Europeana). The objectives of these projects have clearly been achieved, but the digital shift taken does not guarantee appropriate accessibility and full exploitation of the potential of our musical heritage. With a total of over 20,000 musical instruments, over 37,000 audio recordings, over 8,000 field photos, 3,000 hours of film, and numerous field notes and archival documents, these heritages require alternative and improved search capabilities to link datasets and improve their quality.

To do this, we will, firstly, harmonise existing data by matching the two institutions' thesauri of object names, and by comparing, exchanging, and adapting existing datasets relating to players (manufacturers, musicians, collectors, etc.). Secondly, we will release rights using a legally approved intellectual property rights framework. Thirdly, a citizen science tool will be set up for dissemination and exploitation. New data will be collected in the field to complete and enrich the metadata. Finally, a discovery platform will be built, to which the reworked content of the two institutions' collection management systems (The Museum System, Museum Plus) will be exported based on refined ingestion procedures.

In this way, the BE-MUSIC platform will be adapted to the standards of current web design technologies and will enable a differentiated search adapted to different users: for amateurs, professionals, children, academics and musicians, the platform will gradually be differentiated according to their needs. The accessibility and results of this research pave the way for increased interest in non-Western and popular music by a wider audience, as they answer long-standing musicological questions and make archives more attractive and accessible. Finally, crowdsourcing and citizen science are proven ways of enriching and analysing large datasets. We will therefore be investing in a crowdsourcing campaign to attract and engage a variety of relevant profiles to contribute to this project.



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In terms of impact, BE-MUSIC seeks to reach a national and international audience in scientific and academic circles, as well as a specialist audience, such as musicians, and a wider audience of aficionados, three different groups of people with specific interests, backgrounds, and intentions. In addition, the project aims to formulate a cutting-edge methodology, based on innovative practices, for conserving and opening musical heritage. The new BE-MUSIC platform will enable the public to discover the music of the last 110 years, with unique archives, musical extracts, collections of instruments and descriptions, to fully understand and immerse themselves in the richness and uniqueness of intangible heritage.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## LINKS

[https://www.africamuseum.be/en/staff/1166/project\\_detail\\_view?prjid=748](https://www.africamuseum.be/en/staff/1166/project_detail_view?prjid=748)