



0433 – TRANSCRIPTION – James Isabirye

The Tube fiddle is an instrument which is played by many ethnic societies of Uganda. It is played by the Baganda people, it is played by the Basoga, it is played by the Bagisu, it is played by the Acholi people, it is played by the Banyankore, and I think it one string instrument which cuts across the country and indeed other societies of Africa.

There is a tendency for Scholars may be to liken it to the violin perhaps because of the sound quality ( it produces), but it is very interesting how one string can speak a lot to give certain messages to people.

I just want to start by saying something very brief about the way it is constructed. It is made of a tin shaped resonance box, or sound box which is made from.. in most societies from a tree which in our local language ( Lusoga) is called ***Lusambya***. ***Lusambya*** is a tree of the *Macamia* species. Though other trees can be used to make the box, the ***Lusambya*** has been proven to make the most durable and best sound producing box. The main use of the sound box is to amplifies the sound which produced by the string. There is a sound table, which is made from animal skin. The best skin according to a good number of makers I've talked to is that of sheep. It is soft and can transmit the sound

very well and other say the goat skin is very good and in some hunting communities, the used skins of the wild animals they hunt.

The skin is fixed firmly on to the box and it can be fastened using some nail shaped pieces of wood which can be seen inside and they are used to fasten the skin on to the sound box. The pieces of wood are firm enough and they don't lose their size when they are fixed, they stay in their position and I do not know if there is another mechanical reason which the African scientists found out that they decided to use the sticks. It is possibly due to the fact that they are most seen and available.

It is also made of this handle which is some kind of hard wood which. This wood is called *Enzo, Enzo (Luganda). Enzo* when they are many but the generic name is *Nzo*. It is hard wood and it can be depended on even if you wanted to break it and also even after putting the hole through this wood especially to fix the peg, the wood will not break at the top here. So it necessarily has to be some hard wood in order to resist the boring of the hole. If it were weak, it would keep breaking at the top and that means the instrument maker would get frustrated. There is some kind of fur which is got from the tassel of a sheep or goat, the tail of a cow some times to dress up the instrument. To decorate it. I can't imagine a tube fiddle without a dressing.

A tube fiddle has a bridge which is made from some spongy materials to transmit sound from the string onto the sound table from where it is transmitted into the resonance chamber of the sound box. This spongy material can be got from papyrus or a maize plant after it has dried. It is soft and the stem can be used for making the bridge.

The tube fiddle in Busoga it is called *Endingidi*, in Acholi it is called *Arigirigi* and I learnt from one Acholi friend who also told me that it is called *Arigirigi* because of the *rigirigi* mode of sound production, as you rub the bow on the string. I may not explain how it made there but it also made of some hard wood. On this one there is *Nzo* and both the peg and the handle are both made of *Nzo*.

The string is rubbed using some other string that is tied on a bow. So this part of the instrument is a bow. And when you rub it on the string it make it to vibrate and you have to rub the bow in some stick stuff and here you get the sup of *Muwafu* tree. *Muwafu* tree normally grows to a big size and there are some small fruits that are edible and inside those fruits there are very very hard seeds I do not know may be one time I might be able to show it ( the fruit and the hard seed), but *Muwafu* tree grows to a big size and you get that sticky stuff which is called resin and you put t on the box so that whenever you find the string on the bow becoming slippery then you rub it in the resin to make it sticky so that you rub the string, the friction enhances the production of sound.

The process of making a tube fiddle can take, goes through stages. Of course you cut the tree down and depending on how soon you would like to have the instrument you can cut the tree into smaller pieces and after that you shape them according to the size of the tube fiddle you want to make and after that you go through the process of putting holes, making them hollow so that there is a cavity in there which acts as the resonance chamber and then after that you fix the sound table. Put the skin in water, make it soft enough, like a piece of paper and then you fix it here and you pull it very hard. When you put the skin in water, it becomes easy for you to stretch it because it needs to be ... the tension of this is very important because if it is not well pulled it will not do a good job of receiving and transmitting sound into the amplification cavity. So after putting this, then you just make a hole here, fix the handle, put a hole through the handle, put a peg, fix a string. Traditionally the strings are got from tendon, some of them are got from sisal but of late the are got from nylon or the wire used for fishing.