



## VILLAGE RECORDING

*Rob joins a Steven and Stephanie in the studio*

the principle songwriter for several groups.

When we first met in 2019, we collaborated on creating a theme song for a conference we were both attending. Steven did most of the lyric; I played bass and produced the final recording.

Steven's songs are deeply rooted in Scripture and his Christian faith. They are regularly sung in churches throughout the region.

Stephanie is a colleague with Artists in Christian Testimony (ACTi) who mentors creatives in Tanzania. We have worked on three previous projects together in West Africa. She has known Steven for years and lives nearby. She and I had been coteaching in Mwanza (about two hours away by car), then went to Bunda to visit Steven in his studio.

About a year ago, Steven secured a donation to build this state of the art recording studio in the village where he lives. Some folks from Inspiro, an organization I frequently partner with, brought the equipment and supervised building all of the studio peripherals, such as sound proofing and bass traps. With

this studio space, Steven can produce music for the groups he writes for.

At least in theory. By his report, Steven has struggled to learn the software side of recording; prior to this, he had others to handle the tech for him.

That's why they asked me to join them. Steven's studio is powered by Logic Pro software. Logic has a steep learning curve, but is incredibly powerful. I've used it as my primary software for more than 20 years, so I came to visit the studio in Bunda and smooth out some of the steep parts.

Stephanie, Steven, and I worked on two significant recording projects together.

We worked first with a choral group. They had prepared ten songs, all written by Steven, with arrangements mostly done. We tracked the singers, and I showed them mixing tricks.

Second, we recorded songs Steven had composed for a traditional ensemble. The traditional group normally played live, so the method used by the

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I love audio production. I love sitting at the desk with headphones on my ears just being there when the music happens. I love bringing out the best in the artists I work with... the look on their faces when they hear themselves in the playback and realize that they've captured something magical. While I love to be the one producing the recordings, I recognize that any ministry I can do will be amplified as I train others to do it as well. For part of my time in Tanzania, I got to work with Steven Chuchu and Stephanie Biggs at their studio.

Steven is a prolific singer/songwriter based in Bunda, Tanzania. Before meeting him, I was told that he writes material used by several ensembles. Let me put that another way: he is so prolific as a songwriter that he is

**Above: Us in the studio. Left to right: Rob, Stephanie, Steven.**

**Below: Panorama of the studio space as a singer warms up to sing her part.**



choir of taking turns overdubbing tracks would be unnatural to them. They did a lot of improvising with each other and needed to be able to see, hear, and even move around each other to play their best. I set up to the studio to get a maximum amount of separation between the performers while still keeping their live improvisational feel. Most of the microphones were handheld; we followed the musicians around the studio as they danced and marched.

When we weren't actively tracking songs, I showed them how better to use the program for tracking and mixing the songs: effects chains, which plug-ins to use where, how to create "rooms" for ambience and bus tracks to the room. I also gave them a crash course in mastering, showing the process I use to master tracks and whole albums.

The hope now is that Steven and Stephanie will use this crash course in recording software to complete these projects as well as others they have in their work queue. I will continue to consult on the work from a distance as needed and may return to Tanzania for a future trip in a year or so, Lord willing.

Check out some of Steven's music videos on his YouTube channel here:

<https://tinyurl.com/StevenChuchuYouTube>

An interview with Steven about his ministry:

<https://tinyurl.com/ChuchuInterview>



Above Left: Tracking singers.

Below Left: Tracking the traditional ensemble.



## NEXT: MONGOLIA!

By the time you receive this newsletter, I'll be on my way to Mongolia. I've been intrigued by the musical culture of the region since I first heard Huun-Huur-Tu's *Orphan's Lament* album more than 20 years ago.

Last year, I met a Lutheran church planter based in a remote part of the country. He'd been teaching his congregants to play guitars and pianos, but recognized that bringing European music to the Mongolian church would not be nearly as worshipful as locally created music. Was there a way to encourage the creation of new songs in a Mongolian style? I offered my services.

What was initially planned as a week with a single church has become something denomination wide, with workshops in several locations across the country. I'm going to be there for a nearly a month. And, Lord willing, this could be the beginning of something big.

I'm excited and I'm terrified. These emotions are physiologically the same.

Please keep this trip in your prayers. Pray for the right people to come to the workshops. Pray for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Pray for our wisdom and health in leading these events.

### ABOUT US

Rob serves as LBT's Scripture Engagement Coordinator and a specialist in Ethnodoxology.

Eshinee is LBT's Innovation Manager, providing a central point of contact for employees seeking innovative strategies, resources, or support.

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