

REVIEWS

AFRICAN MUSIC, A PEOPLE'S ART by Francis Bebey, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, 1975, viii + 184 pp., illustrations, discography, notes. Translated from 'Musique de l'Afrique' (Horizons de France, Paris 1969) by Josephine Bennett.

This book is exactly what it says about itself in its introductory remarks: a handy and well meaning aid to laymen for the better appreciation of music in Africa. It is not a treatise of scientific demand, and must therefore not be charged for it. The author feels that African music has hitherto been described only in terms that have tended to imprison it inside the covers of scholarly volumes and magazines instead of making it accessible to all men. His idea of an initiation into traditional African music is to make amateurs explore for themselves this unknown and exciting world, pulsating with spiritual forces, inner truth, and happiness.

He therefore has recourse to mostly well known and approved generalizations, comparisons and illustrations. He rules out all forms of musical transcriptions which he looks upon as meaningless for the majority of his readers who cannot read music. What remains is a book subdivided and dealing in general terms with the following subjects: Expressions of Life, The African Musician, The Musical Instruments (Stringed, Wind and Air, Keyboard, Lithophones, Drums, The Human Voice), The Music, Selective Discography, Recent Recordings, Distributors, Notes.

What also remains is a small set of remarks towards the improvement of an otherwise highly conducive work:

It should at least tentatively cover all of the important stylistic areas of African music (East, Southeast, Southwest, South Africa, the Congo, Angola and Bushman music completely being neglected here).

It should at all events mention some of the influential works of scholars in African music science (outside the area of francophone writers).

It should give manifest evidence of the authentic origin of the pictorial illustrations used. It should spell the name of Dr. Hugh Tracey properly (see p. 174), this being the slightest reward he merits for his pioneering work in our field.

A.M. DAUER

AFRICAN HYMNODY IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF ITS DEVELOPMENT by A.M. Jones, Mambo Press, Gwelo, Rhodesia, 1976 (Mambo Occasional Papers – Misso-Pastoral Series No. 8), pp. 64, R\$0.65.

In this small book one of the foremost African musicologists is not only presenting the history of hymnody in sub-Saharan Africa, but is also expressing his view that African hymnody is superior to the continued use of European hymnody in African churches.

The book is divided into three chapters. The first deals with hymns in the early days of missionary activity, when it was assumed that the best type of hymnody would be a translation of European hymns into African languages. Major reasons for this view are the non-Christian associations connected with traditional African music, and the question of whether the quality of African music, in terms of the conventional criteria of professional Western musicians, would permit it to be considered suitable for Christian worship.

The second chapter presents several reasons for the growing dissatisfaction with European-based hymnody on the part of both missionaries and African converts. These include discrepancies between patterns of European music and African languages, the difficulties of teaching accidentals to people unaccustomed to changing keys, and the tendency of Africans to find the leader-response form the most natural and satisfactory. Jones concludes that the only real solution to such problems is encouragement of the African Christians to produce their own hymnody.