

The second monograph is an interesting introduction to the concept of scales in African music, bringing forth some interesting new ways of looking at tonal material in African music. It is a very general introduction to the consideration of African scales and yet it seems that just this kind of clear first step to the subject might be very much appreciated also in English. The possible inherent weakness that might exist in such an approach as a result of trying to cover too broad an area of Africa is overcome by Kubik's insistence on placing it all within a tight theoretical framework. He draws examples from various parts of Africa, but always fits them into a clear theoretical structure. His discussion of the influence of the concepts of consonance is interesting. But perhaps most interesting is the concept of the elastic scales and the elastic blocks of tonality. It is a fascinating concept, too difficult and complex to go into in detail here. It deals primarily with the internal logic of what appears to the Western observer a disregard of African musicians for precise intonation. Certain groups of pitches can be altered in a tuning structure without necessarily modifying all of the pitches of the scale.

The discussion of equidistance in African scales is equally fascinating and yet this seems such a complex and many sided subject that certainly an entire monograph could be devoted to this alone since there are so many misconceptions arising out of the use of the term and all of its possible cultural implications. Kubik heads straight into the argument and gives several indications of what is clearly an African tendency toward equidistance. Although it perhaps may appear unnecessary to do so, it seems important still to emphasize that such a concept in African music would of necessity come from a different theoretical basis than that which is familiar to most Western observers.

ROBERT GARFIAS

"STEP IT DOWN. GAMES, PLAYS, SONGS AND STORIES FROM THE AFRO-AMERICAN HERITAGE", by BESSIE JONES and BESS LOMAX HOWES. Harper and Row, New York, 1972. pp. 233, with numerous musical scores.

This is a splendid work which does equal credit to both its joint authors — Mrs. Bessie Jones, whose vitality, memory, wisdom and enthusiasm are apparent on every page, and Mrs. Bess Lomax Howes, whose ability to describe so vividly what she saw is equally clear, not to mention her talent for participation in the songs, games and dances, as well as in the spirit of the thing. Between them they have made perfect collaborators. Bessie Jones has found her 'Boswell'.

The book is intended as an instruction book for the children of this and future generations so that they can share in some of the fun and games which have stood the test of time. It is set out under nine headings: 1) Baby games and plays; 2) Clapping plays; 3) Jumps and skips; 4) Singing plays; 5) Ring plays; 6) Dances; 7) House plays and Home amusements; 8) Outdoor games and 9) Songs and stories.

Although the authors are able to indicate the source of many of the games and plays, the origin of the rest are open to speculation. On looking them through, I estimate that about thirty-five are entirely Negro (Black American) or are so influenced by them that their probable origin is beyond detection; twenty are clearly White American; eleven are credited to British tradition and four appear to be African. This tally of seventy items shows the kind of amalgam which is the present day heritage of Bessie Jones' repertoire, or that part of it which Bess Howes has captured in print.

It is remarkable how many items originated in England and have been handed on through the medium of Negro mothers and children. It surely indicates the sincerity of the rapport between black and white families of early settlers and the plantation employers and employees of the sea islands living side by side that, between them, the Anglo-American heritage of children's games was so successfully absorbed and perpetuated by those of African parentage. They must have been an essential part of family activities in which all shared, an aspect which is not always remembered.

Many of the games and plays (here used in the sense of 'playing' rather than stage 'plays') form a part of my own childish background in a Devonshire village in England and were an essential part of the children's parties I attended.

The introduction by Bess Lomax Howes is a gem of writing, demonstrating the depth of her total recognition and understanding of the many art forms described. She always gives credit to Bessie Jones whose warm and kindly personality evolves constantly throughout the work.

It is a worthy addition to the long list of the Lomax family researches into the social artistry and music of America and Europe. No doubt had the African languages survived, and not been lost en route, it would have reflected still more of the games and plays which still exist on the other side of the Atlantic. but are reflected in spirit and dance movement rather than in the words themselves.

The notes to parents and teachers, who, the authors hope, will make good use of the examples described, is a masterpiece of sound advice ending with:

"Enjoy yourself. This is a beautiful and democratic tradition, full of joy and the juices of life. Don't be too solemn, or too organised; these are for *play*",

and, I may add, a fine example to students and research workers in folk music and traditions anywhere.

HUGH TRACEY