

NOTES AND NEWS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF YORUBA CHURCH MUSIC

From the beginning, the Catholic Church in Nigeria has sung in the vernaculars, but using European melodies and stanza forms. In 1947, Joseph Ojo of Oye-Ekiti started a development of truly Yoruba music and poetic forms for use in religious drama. At that time it was not possible to get priests or people to accept such music inside the churches. The recent liturgy reforms in the Catholic Church have jolted them out of this position and the introduction of vernacular into all rites of the Church has opened their minds to reality. Even so, the better educated Nigerians, including priests, claimed till recently that the people would not accept truly Yoruba music and poetry in the churches. Father Michael Sanusi tried for some years to combine Yoruba vernacular and Gregorian chant, but finding this could not be done without violating the natural tone patterns of the words, finally began to work with the Europeanised Yoruba type of music and poetry developed by the Anglicans, such as T. K. Phillips. Joseph Ojo also composed many hymns partly Europeanised in form and these were introduced into the churches and became widely popular.

In 1965 a committee of African priests and laymen with two missionaries was formed to develop vernacular music in the Yoruba area of Nigeria. Two years of careful work were spent on preparing diocesan festivals. At a final inter-diocesan festival in November, 1967, there were over 100 entries and three days were spent on judging them. A fair proportion of entries integrated deeply traditional forms of Yoruba music and poetry with biblical and liturgical themes. In this festival, Joseph Ojo won first prize for a chant with a naming ceremony. The festival sparked off a great surge of enthusiasm for Yoruba Church music in this part of Nigeria. Much of the music produced is poor in liturgical form and content, and poor also in Yoruba form, imagery and music. Most of it was composed by educated people, who would never be recognised as poet-musicians of merit in the community at large. So far there has been no real effort to work with recognised poet-musicians except in Inishan where Father Mark Schlitz, a White Father, is engaged on this type of work.

At present the most popular composers are Joseph Ojo, Chief J. F. Odunjo and the Major Seminarians of Ibadan working under the inspiration of Reverend Thomas Ilesanmi. The latter group has produced several records of religious music. As many of the members will soon be priests, the importance of this development can be understood. I hope that one or more members of this group will be able to do serious study of African music, to give a competent and critical control to future development. And I hope that these seminarians and future priests will see the need to work with competent musicians and poets recognised by the Yoruba community.

There are stirrings in other parts of Nigeria but not to the extent or force of the Yoruba area. There has been some development of Hausa music but as Hausa is a "lingua franca" rather than a "language of the heart" for most Christians, development will have special difficulties. A music festival is being organised at Jos, and I hope that this will spark off creative development in this heartland of many Nigerian musics.

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COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

A new "College of Art and Design", part of a national plan for developing technological self-sufficiency, is planned to open as part of the Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka, Zambia, in March, 1970. Quote from Mr. Valentine Musakanya, Minister of State for Technical Education and Vocational Training: "The forthcoming school of art and design . . . is not an isolated project but comes within the overall plan, as I consider art and design to be the handmaiden of technology as well as an end in itself. If Zambia is to have a flourishing artistic tradition it will be born out of the work of future Zambian artists, stylists, designers, potters, weavers, and so on, rather than from poking about in the villages looking for the remnants of an artistic past which was not very vigorous in the first place." The college will also offer musical training based on Western instruments which Mr. Musakanya sees as *fundamental to the understanding and subsequent development of Zambian music*. Mr. Musakanya himself plays the violin, but prefers to listen to pop on hi-fi. (EDITOR: Italics ours).

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CONSULTATION ON AFRICAN CHURCH MUSIC

The bi-annual Consultation on African church music was held by the Christian Academy at Roodekrans, near Johannesburg, South Africa on the 16-17 July, 1969, to discuss the development of music in the African church in South Africa. The established churches were represented: Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, etc. Much of the discussion centred around bringing more traditional African music and dance into the church, and although the parent churches often look askance at them, much attention