

OSBORN AWARD 1958

Through the continued generosity of the Dr. Tom Osborn Memorial Foundation, the Society has again this year been enabled to make Osborn Awards for the best recordings of the year.

The standard of performance of the recordings put forward from which the Committee made their choice was not quite as high as in previous years. Some of the tribes from which recordings were taken are not considered to be in the top flight of Africa's folk musicians. However, the awards were well merited and the selected items will be appearing shortly on a 12 inch long playing record for public release.

Details of the items for which Osborn Awards have been distributed are as follows:-

SOUTHERN RHODESIA

1. "Musengu" A song for the Mondoro Ancestral Rites, with three 'hand-pianos' *Matebe dza Mondoro*, and one drum, *Marwmb wa Mondoro*.

By Murira (Leader), Madzikuminga (Bass part), Musengedza (Higher part) and Madera (pegged bowl drum). At Mkota, Mtoko District, Southern Rhodesia. *Sena/Tonga Tribe*. 3m. 06s.

This example of semi-religious music which is associated with their local tribal belief in the *Mondoro* spirits, is typical of the style of music to be found in the Mtoko region, not only among the Sena/Tonga tribe but among the Korekore sub-tribes as well. Several players of the *Matebe* (so called Hand-pianos) have been famous folk musicians, the most renowned in living memory having been Kadori and his brother Kaninungu.

The instrument is heptatonic and has a range of over three octaves from 79 vs. to 688 vs. with 26 reeds which are plucked downwards with the tips of the thumbs and, in the case of the few outside notes on either side, upwards with the tips of the first fingers. The body of the instrument is of wood, rectangular and hollowed out from one end like a bell. An external resonator is also used, usually a gourd, to which several metal or shell buzzers are attached.

The name *Matebe* indicates the unusually low range of this member of the Mbira family of instruments and the three parts which are not easily distinguished from each other, being of similar timbre, can be heard as they are introduced, the leader starting the tune and the second coming in fifteen seconds later, with the bass part player 12 seconds after him. The yodelling is common to most Southern Rhodesian *mbira* tunes where there are few set words to the lyric.

The tuning of the central octave was 158, 172, 190, 208, 228, 248, 280, 316 vs.

2. "Karekare Maporisa" 'A Policeman's Journey'.

Story with *Kalimba* Mbira by Stephen Runeso Gumbo. Zaka District. Southern Rhodesia. Karanga/Duma Tribe.

10m. 34s.

The art of public entertainment in African villages has been the special concern of hundreds of gifted minstrels who used to walk from one district to another receiving hospitality and small gifts in return for their amusing and stimulating company. There are few of them left and Gumbo, who also calls himself Maridzembira, the player of the Mbira, still carries on the tradition with a large repertoire of amusing songs and stories of which this is one.

In it he tells about an occasion when the two policemen, one white riding a horse, and the other, a local Karanga man, riding a bicycle, go on a tour of inspection of their district. The white, English, policeman on his horse soon leaves the plodding bicyclist far behind. For each of them the teller of the story has a little tune . . . the trot and canter of the horse, and the heavy grind of the bicycle. The black policeman loses all touch with his officer and so carries on alone. At a village he finds a small girl who evades answering his questions as her parents are out at a party in another village. Eventually, he finds a number of dogs which have not been registered and had their dog tax paid for them. He arrests the owner taking him off to the magistrate. The tune for the walk back to the district office now appears followed by the scene in the court, a fine is imposed and the story ends with a tune for the culprit as he goes off dragging his feet along the path in the hope of borrowing the money for his fine from some relative.

The little instrument used by the player is not the traditional one of the region, the Njari, but one he bought from a Nyasa.

It is a *Kalimba* and, in fact, is short of one note, the tuning of the central octave being 212, missing (c.234), 260, 288, 316, 340, 380, 424 vs.

3. "Tauro wasiye mwana". 'The rabbit has left its child'.

Dance tune for the Gororombe Dance. With a set of end blown pipes, rattle, drums and voices, by young Tonga men and girls. At Mkota, Mtoko District, Southern Rhodesia. *Sena/Tonga Tribe*.

3m. 30s.

Dancing is the great passion of the young in most African villages. Fashions in dancing gradually change as in other countries and often spread from one district to another. The Gororombe dance appears to have spread northwards from the southern regions of Southern Rhodesia during the last 20 to 30 years. Here in the Mtoko District it has been given the accompaniment of pipes, each dancer holding 2 or 3 pipes tied together. There are four sets from treble to bass, the two higher, *Katero* and *Jbauriro* having three pipes each, and the tenor and bass, *Dendera* and *Madobi* having two each.

The four drums played by three men are of different sizes in order to produce distinctive pitches of sound. Two were conical pegged drums, *Mutumba* and *Miningo karipi-karipi*, and the other two were cylindrical *Jenje* and *Usindi*. The player of *Jenje* used his heel, pressing it onto the membrane of the drum as it lay on the ground in order to raise and lower the pitch. This can be distinctly heard in the recording.

The rattle, *Hosbo*, was a simple tin with wild canna seed inside.

NYASALAND

4. "Mkwaze mmodzi". 'Can I give cattle?'

Topical song to the Sansi (mbira) by Gezani Mwale. Bimpi Village, Dowa District, Central Nyasaland. *Nyanja/Cbewa Tribe*.

2m. 44s.

The opening words of the song were "Mkwaze mmodzi mperekere ngombe ranga mkafa mkapita naye manda?" "Can I give cattle to my wife, for when I am dead I shall go together with her to the grave".

Much of the folk philosophy of the countryside is to be found in the simple songs of solo singers such as this Chewa man from the central province of Nyasaland.

His small eight note instrument of the Mbira family is called *Sansi*, and it has a long bell shaped wooden body (13 inches by 4½ inches), a shape common only to this region. It is similar to the smaller varieties of Mbira found in the lower Zambezi valley also called *Sansi*, from which the generic name of '*Sansa*' for the whole family of such instruments was wrongly derived in the time of David Livingstone.

The tuning of this small pentatonic *Sansi* was as follows having two notes below the tonic (202) 154, 172, 202, 232, 264, 308, 344, 404 vs.

5. "Mkazi wa molomo". 'The talkative Woman'.

Xylophone tunes by Lonesi Chewane and Joni Hetara on a Magogodo loose note xylophone, at Katunga's village, Chikwawa District, Southern Nyasaland.

Nyanja/Manganja Tribe.

2m. 48s.

Xylophones of one kind or another are fairly commonly distributed throughout Africa wherever there are the right kinds of trees with which to make the notes. Most of them are crudely constructed of rough logs which are placed across two supporting bars such as banana stalks. The xylophone featured in this recording had ten notes tuned to a pentatonic scale and was played by two young men from opposite sides. No attempt had been made to avoid the notes from jumping out of place when struck and it was the duty of each musician to push displaced notes back into place again while playing.

One player sets up a continuous ground while the other performs the melody. As there are no words set to these tunes played by the Manganja the melodic line may vary according to the whim of the performers. To facilitate the playing of certain tunes, the players will alter the sequence of notes, though normally they are set out in correct order of pitch.

The tuning was 212, 240, 288, 312, 384, 424, 480, 576, 624, 832 vs.

6. "Lila-Lila". 'Cry, cry!'

Self delectative song to the Bangwa Board Zither, by Thawani Mware.

Nyanja/Chewa Tribe.

2m. 47s.

The Bangwa board zither was, until recently, the most popular instrument of Nyasaland, most adult males being able to perform upon it with skill. The instrument being slight in tone is ideal for quiet solo playing in the evenings and a large proportion of the songs which are set to the Bangwa are personal laments or statements intended for the delectation of the performer himself and not for an audience beyond his immediate friends or family sitting with him in the hut.

The subject of this song reflects the matrilineal nature of the Chewa society, where the woman and especially the sister is the head of the family, and the relationship between a brother and sister is of the greatest importance.

A certain woman about whom he sings was in trouble and had been brought before the court. She sings to her brother to come and help her out of her difficulties.

The Bangwa board zither is a simple instrument, usually a short length of board or sometimes a raft of reeds, along which seven strings (or one continuous string in seven loops) are stretched with two small tuning bridges at end of each segment. It usually requires an external resonator to increase the volume of sound. The player strums across the face of the strings with his right hand while the left opens or mutes them, thus making it possible to play various chords or to pick out melodies limited by the scale of the open strings.

7. "Dzombe rija", 'My Grasshopper'.

Humorous song to the Karigo one stringed lute by Muzizi Mware from Visanzi, Kotakota District, Central Nyasaland.

Nyanja/Chewa Tribe.

2m. 45s.

The Karigo, one stringed lute or fiddle, appears to be related to the same type of instrument common in the Nile basin, particularly in Uganda and in the vicinity of the great lakes in that region. It is normally not found further south than Nyasaland. Simply constructed from a pear-shaped hollowed block of wood about seven inches in diameter with a membrane pinned over the open end, it has an arm, pierced through two holes in the body, which holds both ends of the stretched string, a small bridge being located on the membrane. Tuning of the one fundamental note is achieved both by a normal peg and also by a straining string which can be easily adjusted for fine tuning. The Karigo is played with a short sisal bow and in order to protect the sine from which the string is made a length of palm leaf is bound around the string at the point where the friction of the bow is employed.

The instrument is tucked under the arm and the one string is stopped by the backs of the fingers of the left hand.

The performer, a man in his fifties, sings "Where does that grasshopper of mine sleep? I won't eat until everyone helps me to catch it."

8. "Nga-nga-nga ndareka". 'Lift and drop'.

Dance tune for the Likhuba Dance, with 9 Tuned drums, rattles, sticks and clapping.

Drums played by Bauleni Zhuau, at Malindi, Port Herald District, Southern Nyasaland.

Nyanja/Manganja Tribe.

Sets of tuned drums are not common in southern Africa although sometimes found among the Hima peoples of the Nile basin. In the case, the set of seven conical drums was set out with each drum leaning onto a cross bar, with the membranes facing the single player. The drums were tuned by means of a black paste made from the seeds of the castor oil plant. The addition of wax or paste lowers the note, the removal of quite a small amount appreciably raising the pitch. Thus the drums can be tuned with reasonable accuracy.

Soon after the tune began, the drummer was not satisfied with the pitch of one or two of his drums and he stopped playing, quickly adjusted the amount of paste on each, tested them for pitch and then went on playing with his curved drumsticks. When setting up the set of drums, more paste than is necessary is affixed to the head, and gradually reduced until the correct pitch of each drum is obtained. Paste is not left on the drums after playing as it would rot the ox hide, they say. It is carefully removed with a small wooden scapel or spoon-like tool and the drums are only re-tuned when dancing is about to start.

The dance is well performed by young girls who stand in a row or semi-circle near the drums. Each girl comes out in turn into the centre of the ring and does a clever rhythmic routine ending with a sharp pelvic jerk. As one girl finishes another immediately takes her place.

PORTUGUESE EAST AFRICA

9. "Mwadzi itira" 'She has done it herself'.

Self delectative song to the Mbira dza WaNda., by Josephu Ngonyama Shumba, from the

Gogoyo Village, Sipungabera District, Portuguese East Africa.

Ndaa Tribe.

3m. 02s.

This 27 note instrument is tuned to a hexatonic scale in common with all Ndaa instruments of this family. The resonating body onto which the metal tongues are attached is bell shaped and the player used an additional external gourd resonator to enlarge the sound.

This item is representative of many such songs sung by a man softly to himself in the quiet of his hut at night, the musicians of the Ndaa tribe being noted for their Mbira playing. They live in the south-eastern corner of Southern Rhodesia and in the adjoining regions of Mocimbeque territory (Portuguese East Africa). The burden of his song is about the necessity for his wife to consult him before the undertook some new action. Banda, he says, of one of the villagers, is an undesirable person and they would like to put a charm on his doorstep to let him know that they would be happier if he did not live in the same village.

SWAZILAND

10. "Ngoneni ngoneni bakithi". 'What have I done?'

Topical song to the Makweyana braced musical bow, by Rosalina Ndhlole and Juana Nkosi, at Mataffin, Nelspruit District, Transvaal, South Africa.
Swazi Tribe.

2m. 44s.

The musical bow is commonly found in those Territories where timber is scarce and consequently only small musical instruments can be manufactured by the country folk. Some varieties of musical bow are frequently, as in this case, about the same size as the local hunting bow, the string being strained back towards the bow by a wire or cord in order to divide it into two segments each producing its fundamental note when struck with a light stick. The pitch of the two notes on this instrument were 190 and 220 vs. giving an interval between them of approximately two and a half semitones.

The two Swazi women performers were friends living in adjacent huts and constantly played and sang together in the evenings.

11. "Indlaliso". 'Games'.

Chants to accompany military drill or games "Tiga", by Swazi men of the Lindimbi age group, at Entonjeni, Pigg's Peak District, Northern Swaziland.
Swazi Tribe.

2m. 30s.

It appears to have been a Swazi custom among the fighting regiments to perform a number of routine steps set to song or chants as a kind of danced drill. In this way the men kept themselves fit and learnt to act in perfect unison. In after life, the drill songs of the regiment to which they belonged were treasured memories and bound the companions of the age-group together until old age. This recording gives a brief extract of one performance, each change of chant being accompanied by a change of action, leaping, stamping, moving into file, and so on. The men taking part all appeared to be between the ages of 18 and 30 years. Entonjeni where the recording was made was the old royal kraal of the Swazi Paramount Chief and founder of the Swazi tribe, Umswati, before he moved his main headquarters further south to a site near Mbabane. The hill nearby is still used as a burial ground of some of the members of the royal lineage.

—Copies of this L.P. recording can be obtained through the African Music Society.

BEQUEST OF I.L.A.M. LONG PLAYING RECORDS

Through the generosity of Mr. Harry Oppenheimer, who is a Life Member of the African Music Society, a number of Universities and other Institutions have been presented with representative collections of the Library's recent recordings, where they will be used especially for anthropological, linguistic and musicological studies.

Among those to whom sets of 48 long playing (12") records have been sent are:—

- University of Oxford (The Pitt Rivers Museum).
- University of Manchester.
- University of London. (The London School of Oriental and African Studies).
- The International Folk Music Council.
- The British Institute of Recorded Sound.
- The University of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.
- The Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.
- The Rhodes-Livingstone Museum.
- University of Cape Town.
- University of Fort Hare.
- University of Natal.
- Potchefstroom University.
- Pretoria University.
- Rhodes University.
- University of the Witwatersrand.