

RECORD REVIEW

VERVE-FORECAST FVS-9510, SOUNDS OF AFRICA. One 12-inch Stereo L.P. from the A.B.C. News, Television Production, "Africa", edited by Andrew Tracey.

This is a selection from "the many hours of music" recorded by the "Africa Project" teams of the A.B.C. Television News. In June, 1966, they sent no less than "ten camera crews to Africa to make a full-length feature film covering every aspect of modern Africa — everything from politics to big-game. Eight months and more than a million dollars later they came back with probably the most fascinating and complete film coverage of a continent ever made." If this should hold true (the reviewer did not see this documentary film) we have to state that the musical documentation, in spite of the claims of the editor of the disc, is by no means representative. We accept the editors notice that there are gaps and "it would take many more years, and dollars, to do justice to the music alone" but still it is difficult to understand why such a poor record resulted when very rich material must have been presented to such a multi-team expedition in so many parts of the continent. (See editor's note.)

It is quite unintelligible why, for example, there are not only fragments but mini-fragments of music presented on this disc (which may have served their purpose in a film but not on a disc). There are many cuts of less than a minute duration. The Lagos Police band (with Scottish Bagpipes) is just striking up the tune "Scotland the Brave" and then turned off after only 20 seconds. A Congo Jazz band plays, what sounds like, the beginning and end of an item: 7 seconds in all. On the jacket we find there is an item of 2:35 kora music from Senegal which is broken up into three different cuts for no apparent reason.

Even if we admit that a representative selection of African Music on one 12-inch disc poses serious problems or, because we realise the difficulties of such a venture, it is difficult to understand why space is wasted with a few bars of the Lagos Police band, a bit of Church singing and such types of music which hardly serve to complete the picture of the immense variety of musical styles in Africa. There can be no objection against a representative selection of modern African Music as this would teach us a lot, but to squeeze a few pieces of this kind into a compilation of otherwise traditional indigenous music just to make it appear richer and more exhaustive is absurd.

It would be unjust not to mention that there are a few interesting items on the disc like the extract of Yoruba Folk Opera (Side 1, 1): The well recorded Fong Flutes from the Cameroons (Side 1, 6) which form a striking parallel to the horn ensembles of the Eastern Congo (and have their parallel in western Congolese vocal music too; thus posing the question: which came first?). The Xylophone orchestra from Moçambique (Side 2, 1). Cut off at 2.46 seconds, some fine recordings from Uganda (Side 2, 2-4); a fragment of an Ethiopian ballad-like song with the one-stringed *tcherewata* (a striking parallel to the music of the *maigwoye* or middle-playing singer of the Hausa) (Side 2, 5); and especially the rarely heard Sotho *lesiba* flute (Side 2, 7b).

Ed.: I had to make do with the sketchy sound material brought back by visually-oriented camera crews. A.T.N.T.

FAVORIT F35 102, VERKLINGENDE TROMMELN: Mit Max Lersch im unbekanntem Afrika.

One 12-inch mono disc of Austrian production. Distributed in Germany by Electrola Gesellschaft mbH, Maarweg 149, D-5 Köln-Braunsfeld.

This well recorded L.P. is also the product of a filming team in Africa. With less crew and less dollars they have also tried to give a representative picture of the variety of cultures and ways of life in Africa. The record is similar to the one reviewed above in that it also aims at giving an impression of the large musical styles of the continent.

This is done in quite a different form. The editor recorded his commentary on the disc, in German, which is a description of the country, places and people as well as the situation in which the music was recorded. Consequently the music is used as a background to the spoken word which, in this case, has the advantage of saving space. The musical examples are of sufficient length to be absorbed in their essence and to illustrate the narrative. This is not a record of African Music as such, but it is the narrative of a journey through the African Continent together with musical examples. This disc has rightly been recommended for use at schools and educational centres.

As the recordings are largely documentary one finds some unusual items on the disc, as, for example, portions of religious ceremonies which have so far been rarely, if at all, recorded in sound. It is these recordings which, although fragmentary, make the disc interesting. It even contains an example of Bushman language phrases. Geographically it covers the continent from Rabat to the Kalahari and from the Niger to Ethiopia.

PHILIPS P 08. 672 L, AFRIQUE. One 12-inch mono disc of the series "Voyages Autour du Monde". FF 19, 95.

Another large L.P. with music from many parts of the continent, music, however, of very mixed musical quality. The disc contains five items on one side and six on the other, which is quite reasonable and enables one to get a good impression of the individual musical recordings presented.

If it is conceded that modern forms of African Music deserve the interest of the musicologist we must accept the arrangements by de Paor of the songs from Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya which almost fill the

first side of the disc. The music is in no other way different from that which has been made known throughout the world by Keita Fodeba's "Ballets Africaines". In fact, on side two we find mainly music from the Senegal which seems to be performed by Fodeba's ensemble.

We wonder whether these pseudo-folk arrangements are not primarily made for the non-African auditorium. Nevertheless the existence of this type of music cannot be ignored and there can be no doubt that its careful study would bring to light some interesting results. It offers the opportunity to study musical acculturation problems in *statu nascendi*, and it also enables the musicologist to study the changes that have already taken place in this field since the origin of European influenced African Music. This is more interesting since the original indigenous styles are still in existence and largely documented on tapes or records and can thus be consulted for comparison. One must indeed remind the respective institution and sound Archives not to omit from the collection the current styles of music as otherwise big gaps can result which sooner or later will give every reason to deplore the neglect.

CHRITOPHORUS CLP 75 483, MAKADANGANGA. One 10-inch mono disc. Available from Christophorus-Verlag Herder, Herman-Herder-Strasse 4, i.B. D78 Freiburg West Germany. Price DM 16,—.

Boris Konietzko, a dealer in African Arts and Artefacts, has spent many years travelling in Africa. During these years he has learned to understand many African languages and has recorded African music of every description. This Christophorus record is an impressive example of how a representative selection of African Music from the Congo and West Africa, can be successfully edited, from the collection of a single person, onto a 10-inch disc.

The 13 items on the disc are all very interesting and of a sufficient length. There is a song sung by Bena Kosh women from the Kasai at a woman's delivery of a child, a circumcision song of the Warega, Luba wedding music, a spider story of the Bena Kosh, a ceremonial Hausa dance in praise of a sultan, a girls' dance of the Yoruba, the dance of a Malinke Moslem priest, a thanksgiving dance of Peul woman, etc.

The recording quality is good. This disc is highly recommended to students of African Music.

HARMONIA MUNDI HMO 30.733, MUSIQUES AFRICAINES: CHANTS ET DANSES DE CENTRAFRIQUE. One 12-inch mono disc of good sound quality. Available from Harmonia Mundi, S.A. Capital 280.000, F-04 Saint Michel de Provence, France.

This disc of regional documentations is recorded by Simka Arom during research carried out for the Département des Arts et traditions Populaires of the Musée Boganda of Bangui. Arom's article "Creating a wider Interest in Traditional Music" (proceedings of a conference held in Berlin in co-operation with the International Music Council, 12th to the 17th of June, 1967, by the International Institute for comparative music research and Documentation, Berlin) shows that remarkable activity in the musical sphere has developed in the Musée Boganda. Documentation on tapes of the traditional forms of music has made laudable progress. The record reviewed here is the first commercially available disc resulting from the Bangui collections.

The explanatory notes are very brief giving only the type of song, the language and the title (as for instance, "Complainte Ngbaka 'Siti oh'"). This is a very serious omission which to some extent diminishes the value of the disc.

The tribes represented are the Ngbaka, Sabanga, Dendi, Dakpa, Gbannu, Lito, Runga, and the Ba-Benzele pygmies. The musical styles are fairly well known from earlier records like Herbert Pepper's (Still Unique) "Anthologie de la Vie Africaine" (Ducretet Thomson 320c 126/127/128), "Musique Pygmées et Musique Nègre" (Barclay 86.019), "Musique Bantou d'Afrique Equatoriale Française" (Boite à musique LD 324), "Music of Equatorial Africa" (Folkways P402) and some earlier French 78 r.p.m. records, while in the Barenreiter UNESCO collection there is even a whole 12-inch L.P. with music of the Ba-Benzele as a fine musical monograph (BM 30 L 2303). Here is a fair amount of material from one area, however large, which will almost provoke comparison to the related recordings.

The record contains examples of sufficient length which are strictly authentic traditional forms of Equatorial African music.

MUSIQUE DE TOUS LES TEMPS 44/45: MUSIQUES AFRICAINES: Book with 7-inch 45 r.p.m. disc. Published by Harmonia Mundi Company.

"Musiques Africaines" forms volume 44 45 (February-April, 1967) of the periodical "Musique de tous les temps". The book, written in France, is profusely illustrated with examples of African sculpture and has a map of West Africa on the inside dust cover.

A poem by Leopold Sédar Senghor is followed by a brief article on African Culture by Ch. Wentick, an introduction to African Music (10 pp.) by Lawrence Barony, an analytical study of the Duala drum language by Marius Schneider (6 pp. plus 22 musical transcriptions) and . . . Simkha Arom's commentary notes to the music of the accompanying disc which is a selection of the recordings contained on the 12-inch disc reviewed above. Thus, to know more about the music on the large disc one is forced to buy the small one with the book. This has, nevertheless, the additional bonus of Schneider's interesting article which shows that the drum music of the Duala is an instrumental reproduction of their tonal language.

W.L.