

# AFRICAN MUSIC

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### EDITORIAL

This year, after twenty eight years alone in the field, *African Music* welcomes the advent of our first colleague, *African Musicology*, a new annual journal devoted to African music studies. The editorial committee consists of Paul Kavyu, Henry Anyumba Owuor, Gerhard Kubik, George Kakoma and George Zake, and it is to be published by the Institute of African Studies, under the directorship of George W. Mathu, University of Nairobi, P.O. Box 30197, Nairobi, Kenya. The University of Nairobi is to be congratulated as the first African university to take this step forward in such an important African field.

I am sure that subscribers to this Journal will also wish the best of success to Mathu and *African Musicology*, with the hope that it will be able to further the process of "discovering the disciplines and foundations of African artistry for future generations to build on". This is an aim to which the editors and contributors to *African Music* have been dedicated since the first appearance in 1948 of the African Music Society's Newsletter, the forerunner of *African Music*, and which we hold to in spite of the increasingly difficult conditions in this unfortunate southern part of the Continent.

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We have changed the type-style of this year's journal, as you will see. In an attempt to reduce costs, this entire journal was typeset at the International Library of African Music by our editorial staff of one, on an IBM Selectric Composer machine, and then litho printed. Our teething problems in using this new method have unfortunately delayed the appearance of this number. Hence, as we have done twice in the past, we now combine two nominal years, 1975 and 1976, under one issue number. The next issue, that is Vol. VI, No. 1, should appear during 1977.

THE EDITOR

In this number we introduce our first Guest Editorial, which we hope will become a permanent feature of *African Music*.

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### African Musicological Investigation in a Culture Conscious Era

The first World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Senegal, in 1966 was probably the culminating point of a trend towards cultural pride and self assertion by the black man. Political movements towards independence from colonial tutelage by African and black West Indian countries, the postulation of *Negritude* by African and Afro-American writers and philosophers, the rise of "Black Power" and its concomitant demand for the true emancipation of the Black peoples of the United States of America – these, among others, had been the prelude to the 1966 global assemblage of artists from all over the black world. Other marathon events, such as the Pan-African Festival of Culture held in Algiers in 1969 and the forthcoming Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture to be hosted by Nigeria, have come about as a natural development of the cultural awareness which has firmly gripped the black man all over the world.

Prior to this renaissance the African suffered immensely from a cultural inferiority complex even to the point of abandoning not only his traditional mode of dress but also his African foods and drinks for European substitutes, and "educated" women bleached their skins and straightened their hair with hot combs in an attempt to look like caucasians.

The education of the African was geared towards the Western European system not only in methodology but also in content and subject matter. Emphasis was placed on studies in the fields of Engineering, Medicine and Law to the neglect of the creative and performing arts which were, at any rate, not considered worthy of any serious pursuit by anyone of some intelligence. It was not until the beginning of the current cultural awareness that changes have been made (in some countries) to make the education of Africans more relevant to their background, culture and environment. The total achievement of this objective, however, if at all possible, still lies a very long way in the future.

It is no wonder then that any investigation into the traditional cultural practices of Africans was – and to a very large extent still is – undertaken exclusively by Europeans. Research into African music has been no exception. Some of these European enthusiasts have stumbled onto African music through other disciplines or sometimes even by the happenstance of finding themselves in Africa as missionaries, doctors, administrative officers, explorers or mere adventurers. The approach to the subject of African music emanates also from varied perspectives: some come with pre-conceived ideas into which African music must be made to fit, some dabble into African music as a way out having failed to make a success in the practice of the music of their own culture or to make a significant contribution in the scholarship

of it, and yet some consciously or otherwise approach things African with condescension.

Nonetheless some of the best work in African musicological investigation has been carried out by such pioneers as Curt Sachs, Erich von Hornbostel, Hugh Tracey, Percival Kirby, Alan Merriam and A.M. Jones, to name a few. Many more recent scholars have followed the footsteps of these pioneers, but only very few of these have been African. In an era of cultural awareness in which he now takes pride in his traditional cultural practices the African schooled in musicology is probably the one best equipped to discover the underlying principles behind his musical practice and disseminate these to others – including fellow Africans. There have not been many Africans involved in African musicology for the single reason that very few of them have been through the mill of scholarly training and discipline, equipped with the necessary tools (including language) for such undertakings. A Ghanaian school led by Nketia, Amu, Mensah and Gbeho is emerging; Nigerian writers have included Fela Sowande, Akin Euba and Mosun Omibiyi. With the establishment of departments of music in African universities, it is to be hoped that more Africans will be involved in musicological research as the years go by.

Even among all investigators, black and white, there has been a preponderance of the anthropological approach to the study of African music, where the emphasis is on the social function of music with a thorough description of the exotic rituals with which music is associated and a (sometimes) ultrascientific description of African indigenous musical instruments. Doubtless there is (even now, still) need for good relevant background information concerning the music and those who produce it, the customs and traditions out of which it grows, and the culture of which it is an integral part.

More should be done, however, to find out also the original theories behind African traditional musical organisation, before those theories are completely swept away from contemporary practice by forces of change. African musicological research should at this stage go beyond mere anthropological and sociological information: it should now embark on a musicological (theoretical) analysis to discover and explain *what* the African does musically instead, merely, of *why* he does it. The little study that has been done in this field has been rudimentary if not superficial. In an era of cultural self-pride, the African scholar should now look seriously at his music with the aim of discovering by deductive and inductive means, and establishing at the highest level, the form and structure of traditional African music, its melodic peculiarities and scale patterns, principles of traditional African harmony, rhythmic organisation, theories of instrumentation and general aesthetic criteria. Only then can our output in musicological research in contemporary Africa be in keeping with our new-found cultural awareness and pride in the good qualities of our past and present traditions.

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