

and football clubs alike replaced the old Beni competition; and Beni itself survived in the form known as *Mganda* in Malawi and on the Tanzanian Coast because it was felt to belong to the local culture despite a relative lack of economic development. In these places it is no longer favoured because of its European characteristics.

Professor Ranger is afraid of being accused of triviality and impressionism. He certainly avoids the first charge by presenting us with a very plausible explanation of the origin and demise of Beni. As he himself notes, he has found it difficult to avoid being impressionistic. He covers a vast geographical area and treats what is a highly complex subject. In general he groups his scattered pieces of information about Beni very skilfully under various headings, and makes what could have been a boring book into something entertaining and informative. One regrets that there is no extended study of the content of Beni sung texts, and that we do not have descriptions of the working of a Beni *ngoma* in a given social situation, in the manner of Clyde Mitchell's *Kalela Dance*. But this is not really sociology; it is panoramic social history.

AYLWARD SHORTER

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*Ed:* In the same manner as we printed a composite of opinion on Rev. Dr. A.M. Jones' work *Studies in African Music* in Vol. II, no. 2, we now do the same for Prof. J.H. Nketia's new book *The Music of Africa*, which is likely to play as important a part in the teaching of African music. We regret that two original reviews from African musicologists were not received in time. They will be published in the next number.

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THE MUSIC OF AFRICA by J.H. Kwabena Nketia, (Gollancz) London, 1975, pp. x+278, £4.00, copyright 1974 by W.W. Norton Inc.

J.H. Kwabena Nketia's *The Music of Africa* is an introduction designed for the general reader and the college student. Prof. Nketia was born in Ghana: he is Director of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana in Legon and a regular member of the Department of Music at UCLA, and his numerous books and articles have earned him recognition as the leading scholar in the field of African music.

His book is heavily biased towards the music of West Africa; but although he generally ignores the music of southern African societies because he argues, rather curiously, that it 'belongs to stylistic families outside Africa' (p. 3), he does give a few examples of and references to music from other parts of Africa, and especially Tanzania . . .

For those who want to know more about African music as an art form and as a means of expressing African attitudes and ways of thinking about the world . . . Nketia's introduction is rather short on information about African concepts of sonic organisation, but it is as good as anything currently available, and it could be improved if the publishers were to provide a demonstration tape or record of at least the music given in transcription in the text. . .

Prof. Nketia relies chiefly on staff notation to convey some idea of the musical structures even to those who have not heard a performance live or on record. He also describes the role of music in community life, the recruitment of performing groups and training of musicians, the different social processes that generate and constrain musical creation, and the interrelationships of music and dance and of melody and speech. He does not forget, as do some anthropologists, that his main concern is with the special world of music: 'the functional use of song in social life or its value as source material should not make us overlook the importance of the musical content of the songs' (p. 205).

Minor criticisms of the book are that many of the captions do not indicate the sources of the photographs, though their position in the text sometimes suggests a context, and that in Chapters 15 and 16, on Rhythm in vocal music and Speech and melody, it would have been useful to have had specific references to publications on other African musical traditions where the same or similar principles have been observed. Also, on pp. 113 ff., different scales are shown without any indication of their distribution in Africa or reference to their use in specific recordings. The chapter on rhythm could have been less confusing if there were examples of the different types and a

more detailed exposition of the rationale of the author's terminology and system of classification.

Although I appreciate that Prof. Nketia was writing primarily for an audience acquainted with the European musical tradition, and that the summary of characteristics of many different musics presents special problems of classification, nevertheless I would have liked greater use of African categories and attitudes in the presentation of material. For instance, museum terminology (idiophones, membranophones, etc.) tells us nothing about the symbolic or musical significance of different instruments, and I suspect that in African societies there are other divisions that cut more meaningfully across these sterile categories. European classifications of African scales and modes are not as interesting as the African conceptions of what constitutes a fixed store of tones and how it is fixed from one generation to another. African modes may be specified by the naming of tones, sometimes in hierarchies of melodic importance, or they may be implicit in the systematic use of different modes according to social context. Moreover, the selection of particular modes and melodies may be influenced by broader tonal considerations, which in turn may be suggested by the form and content of patterns of body movement.

In spite of these reservations, I hope that this book will be read wherever music is taught in the United Kingdom, and that it will stimulate students to listen to and find out more about African music. When, as I hope, it runs into a second edition, perhaps Prof. Nketia will be encouraged to give more emphasis to *African* concepts of music-making and will explain, for example, how poly-rhythmic techniques are not merely a musical gimmick, but part of a system of expression that is meant to enhance the quality of human experience and to establish special relationships between people and with the world of nature.

'The cultivation of musical life in traditional African societies . . . is promoted through active participation in group life, rather than through the creation of special musical institutions. This is what forms music making in Africa into a community experience, for the continuity of musical traditions depends to some extent on both individual and collective effort' (p. 50). We might add to Prof. Nketia's words that in Africa the continuity and vitality of truly corporate life are assured by the regular performance of dance and music. The causes of the sickness that currently afflicts the United Kingdom are not economic, but social; and Africa has much to teach us about the vital role that dance and music can play in the development of human intelligence and sensitivity and in the healing of a sick, divided society.

JOHN BLACKING

Reprinted from the *Times Literary Supplement* (August 15th, 1975, p. P17) by kind permission of the Editor. This review formed part of a joint review with two other books – *African Sanctus* by David Fanshawe, which will not be reviewed in *African Music*, and *African Music: A People's Art*, by Francis Bebev, reviewed in this number.

Professor Nketia has written yet another book on African music. Hitherto he has been concerned with his own people – the Akan of Ghana. This time the title of the book casts his net far wider, to embrace the whole of sub-Saharan Africa.

For the Western reader, a book written by an African musician about his own music is bound to be of special interest, for only an African knows and feels the inner aesthetics of his own music, and since African music differs so fundamentally from our Western system, this subjective aspect is one which an outsider cannot know from his necessarily objective approach to the music.

The Preface tells us this book is intended for the student and for the general reader. Indeed, to cover the whole of sub-Saharan Africa in 245 pages, seeing that every one of the 2,000 odd tribes has its own expression of that music, means that this modest book can only be a very generalised survey.

Its contents cover the social and cultural background of African music: musical instruments – based on the usual four categories – idiophones, membranophones, aerophones and chordophones: the structures of the music – embracing instrumental ensembles, melody and polyphony, and rhythm. There follow discussions on Speech and Melody, Music and Dance, and African musical conventions. There are about thirty-eight pictures, three maps, a short discography and a useful bibliography.

Unfortunately, Professor Nketia adopts a highly analytical and desiccated approach liberally sprinkled with the catch-phrase jargon of anthropology. One gets tired of 'contexts' – 'children