

European tonal structure in singing with a resultant hybrid that makes the worst of both worlds. While school-recordings are easy to obtain, they should, except where the children are too young to be "contaminated", be regarded with suspicion.

To produce collections of songs and a theory of music for schools based on their own interpretation (or misinterpretation) of traditional works, is to move within a circle of doubtful validity. The process may be justified by educationalists on the grounds that the complex structure of much African music is beyond the ability of modern schoolchildren (though illiterate herdboys sing it). "Simplified readers", restricted to a pupil's vocabulary range are common educational practice, though children are warned that they are not the "real thing". There is a possible case for "simplified music", i.e. in which "ornamentation" of which only a professional musician is capable is omitted. One cannot, however, construct a "Theory and Practice of the English Language" from the 2,000 root words of the General Service List, and a similar task in music using comparable material cannot be contrived without distortion. What Mr. Mbabi-Katana has in fact produced is not an "Introduction to East African Music" but an introduction to African Music that has been simplified to fit into a European mould.

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'MUSIQUE DE L'AFRIQUE' by FRANÇOIS BEBEY. Edition HORIZONS DE FRANCE — 19 × 22 cm., 208 pp., 97 illustrations and four line drawings, with a 17 cm. L.P. record. No price, no address of editor given.

This is obviously an unusual book, by a Cameroonesse novelist-essayist-poet-linguist-composer whose peer it would be difficult to find for, being an African, this makes all the difference. Given such assets on the author's side, this beautifully produced and presented folk work falls short of what could — and should — have been expected from him; it becomes barely more than an 'introduction' to African Music, a kind of musical *apéritif*. If this was the sole purpose the author had in mind in writing it, one must concede he has done exceedingly well in whetting one's appetite for much more, for a full course, for a copious repast.

The author aims at the general reader, and thus much of the subject matter will be familiar to the student of African music. However there is considerably more, for even the familiar is replete with insights that only a gifted African scholar could divulge with such an undeniable authority; insights which lend the key to a number of questions that often baffle an outsider — especially when the author deals with music as the expression of African life; the African musician; the African human voice; African music at large — and he does it with a mastery of the language that will appeal to both the casual reader and the hard-to-please musician. These same insights will be precious also to the ethnologist, the more so that the author takes advantage of the cultures — French and English — he has acquired not to look down on his own people but to bring them up, without fuss but no less forcibly, where they rightly belong in the large family of our complex human race; and by the same process, African music is brilliantly vindicated.

But more was expected because, paradoxically, we are already given so much in the short compass of text offered. In a book of 208 pages, there are 97 illustrations — 40 of them full-page, 20 two-third, 37 half-page — the majority of them artistically flawless, all relevant to the text; but 51 of them, including the kodachrome front cover and the attractive back cover, are introduced with only a romantic caption and without any geographical or topical data, making it a frequent cause of frustration to be at a loss among the immense variety of musical instruments, costumes of dancers, or performing ethnic groups in Africa above the equator. Then, if to over 75 pages of illustrations we add some 40 pages devoted to a 'selective discography' — an analytic, comprehensive and well-balanced repertory of L.P. records chosen for their documentary and artistic values — we are left with less than one hundred pages of text proper. This text, running along with the illustrations, is divided into three short chapters: music as an expression of life, the musician, music at large; and a longer chapter on musical instruments, rich in precise and topical information but limited to short descriptions only. Dance is frequently referred to all along the work, but only as a matter of course. Only two musical examples — seven notes in all — are given, lost in the text.

In sum, one feels that the author had the tools and the credentials to produce a major work badly needed if one is to stop turning around, or often groping in the dark, inside the temple; one feels that only an accredited African mentor of Mr. Bebey's calibre could do this. But we have been denied such a work, and we shall feel frustrated so long as we are not able to share with him the still vast amount of knowledge that, almost teasingly, he has kept in store.

DR. THE REVEREND BROTHER BASIL, S.C.

FOLK SONG STYLE AND CULTURE, by ALAN LOMAX, with contributions by the Cantometrics staff and with the editorial assistance of EDWIN E. ERICKSON, Washington, D.C., American Association for the Advancement of Science "Publication No. 88", 1969. Pp. xx, 363, with 76 tables, 75 charts and graphs, 3 appendices, bibliography, list of sources, index.

Alan Lomax has managed to analyse the singing styles of the world, and to find reflected in them the cultural patterns of mankind. It is a breathtaking effort backed by a prestigious wing of the intellectual community, and in time it may lead to a great contribution to the humanities.

The book itself is a fascinating, tedious mixture of precise general insights and unscientific method, insufferable jargon and evocative descriptions. The amount of material is immense, and the energy required to handle it must have been phenomenal. The results are unfortunately weakened by a surprisingly narrow bias to the research and an inflated, evangelical presentation that doubles the length of the book. It is nonetheless a fresh breeze across the field of music and should be required reading for anyone interested in folk music, art music of the cultures of the world.

The basic premise of the research is that how we sing is one of the least individual aspects of our personality. We sing in common with the rest of our community, sharing a style that expresses social norms in an extremely formalised and restricted way. Lomax says a lonely man sings to put himself in contact with his own kind of people, not to reinforce the separateness of his identity.

It follows from this that song style varies as culture varies. It changes with the way subsistence is procured, with the way society is organised politically and socially, with the way men relate to women, and perhaps with the way children are reared. It is tied to the phenomenon of social consensus so firmly, in his view, that the analysis of one or two examples of a particular style within a culture will not be contradicted by further sampling of the same style.

Lomax follows his idea through a sampling of well over two hundred of the world's cultures. In the process, he *airs some interesting thoughts*. Song, he tells us, is socially louder than speech. It makes its statement with much more force because it has much more focus: every aspect of sung sound is repeated again and again during a song, without many variations.

He points out that ordinary people, not musicians, accept or reject a song style on behalf of their society. The analysis of song style is properly done on a general level that differentiates factors which any member of the society can hear. This is the level established by the descriptive guide Lomax has developed, with Victor Grauer, as the chief tool for their research.

This guide is the main tool of the Cantometrics Project. It breaks singing down into 37 aspects, only 11 of which require more than a layman's ear or training in music. The degree to which each aspect is present in a musical sample is measured on a rough, subjective scale which can be handled by the general listener. We cannot fault the logical outline of his approach. His results are doubtful at best, however, due to a fundamental bias in method.

Freshness of approach is part of the fascination of the book. Its tediousness derives from the continual exuberant rephrasing of the main discovery; that song style varies in ways predictable by other facets of the culture.

The most serious criticism of the Cantometrics research is that it is culturally biased. Lomax has sought "to provide descriptive techniques for the speedy characterisation and classification of (song) patterns" (p. 8). He has persuaded us that the average ear in a society judges song style, not that of the professional musician or critic. His method, however, is to use average *Western* ears, whether the music is Western or not, and a Western view of style, whether it is relevant or not.

An obviously Western way of viewing style is Lomax's assumption that loud beats outline rhythmic organisation (pp. 52-54). This is not true of the drumming of India, nor of Africa (both are used as examples). One can only conclude that some of the "data" now stored in the Cantometrics computer is simply unreal, because no one can evaluate the rhythm of a musical sample if he does not understand its organisation.

Field recordings of songs are the source material for the Cantometrics project. They are almost entirely the work of male researchers. Women's song is therefore not adequately represented, since it is not as accessible to a man as it would be to a woman. This is a weakness in the raw data that is not discussed by Lomax, and it is a very real problem.

One of the Cantometrics findings, for example, is that people whose political organisation and subsistence economy are more simple are also people whose song texts are less wordy. This is said to reflect the lesser need in simpler societies for lengthy instruction in the day-to-day conduct of simpler tasks. Robert Kokombo<sup>1</sup>, however, makes it quite clear that of the six song types used among his people, those which are the exclusive property of women are much more wordy than those which are the exclusive property of men, or which belong in mixed company. We cannot imagine that the Ila and Tonga groups of the Zambezi valley are unique in this respect.

The many defects of this book are but the opposite side of the idealism, energy and vision which brought such a huge undertaking to its present stage (the Cantometrics project is still going on, and includes a promising approach to the study of dance). The research is unacceptable on a scientific basis, but welcome none the less as a fresh contribution of considerable force.

HEWITT PANTALEONI<sup>2</sup>

1. "Some types of African songs and how they are made", in *African music in Northern Rhodesia and some other places* by A. M. Jones (Rhodes-Livingstone Museum) Livingstone N. Rhodesia: 1958), 14-20.

2. Editor: This has been condensed from a more extensive essay review.