

NOTES AND NEWS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF YORUBA CHURCH MUSIC

From the beginning, the Catholic Church in Nigeria has sung in the vernaculars, but using European melodies and stanza forms. In 1947, Joseph Ojo of Oye-Ekiti started a development of truly Yoruba music and poetic forms for use in religious drama. At that time it was not possible to get priests or people to accept such music inside the churches. The recent liturgy reforms in the Catholic Church have jolted them out of this position and the introduction of vernacular into all rites of the Church has opened their minds to reality. Even so, the better educated Nigerians, including priests, claimed till recently that the people would not accept truly Yoruba music and poetry in the churches. Father Michael Sanusi tried for some years to combine Yoruba vernacular and Gregorian chant, but finding this could not be done without violating the natural tone patterns of the words, finally began to work with the Europeanised Yoruba type of music and poetry developed by the Anglicans, such as T. K. Phillips. Joseph Ojo also composed many hymns partly Europeanised in form and these were introduced into the churches and became widely popular.

In 1965 a committee of African priests and laymen with two missionaries was formed to develop vernacular music in the Yoruba area of Nigeria. Two years of careful work were spent on preparing diocesan festivals. At a final inter-diocesan festival in November, 1967, there were over 100 entries and three days were spent on judging them. A fair proportion of entries integrated deeply traditional forms of Yoruba music and poetry with biblical and liturgical themes. In this festival, Joseph Ojo won first prize for a chant with a naming ceremony. The festival sparked off a great surge of enthusiasm for Yoruba Church music in this part of Nigeria. Much of the music produced is poor in liturgical form and content, and poor also in Yoruba form, imagery and music. Most of it was composed by educated people, who would never be recognised as poet-musicians of merit in the community at large. So far there has been no real effort to work with recognised poet-musicians except in Inishan where Father Mark Schlitz, a White Father, is engaged on this type of work.

At present the most popular composers are Joseph Ojo, Chief J. F. Odunjo and the Major Seminarians of Ibadan working under the inspiration of Reverend Thomas Ilesanmi. The latter group has produced several records of religious music. As many of the members will soon be priests, the importance of this development can be understood. I hope that one or more members of this group will be able to do serious study of African music, to give a competent and critical control to future development. And I hope that these seminarians and future priests will see the need to work with competent musicians and poets recognised by the Yoruba community.

There are stirrings in other parts of Nigeria but not to the extent or force of the Yoruba area. There has been some development of Hausa music but as Hausa is a "lingua franca" rather than a "language of the heart" for most Christians, development will have special difficulties. A music festival is being organised at Jos, and I hope that this will spark off creative development in this heartland of many Nigerian musics.

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COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

A new "College of Art and Design", part of a national plan for developing technological self-sufficiency, is planned to open as part of the Evelyn Hone College in Lusaka, Zambia, in March, 1970. Quote from Mr. Valentine Musakanya, Minister of State for Technical Education and Vocational Training: "The forthcoming school of art and design . . . is not an isolated project but comes within the overall plan, as I consider art and design to be the handmaiden of technology as well as an end in itself. If Zambia is to have a flourishing artistic tradition it will be born out of the work of future Zambian artists, stylists, designers, potters, weavers, and so on, rather than from poking about in the villages looking for the remnants of an artistic past which was not very vigorous in the first place." The college will also offer musical training based on Western instruments which Mr. Musakanya sees as *fundamental to the understanding and subsequent development of Zambian music*. Mr. Musakanya himself plays the violin, but prefers to listen to pop on hi-fi. (EDITOR: Italics ours).

From "Horizon", November, 1969.

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CONSULTATION ON AFRICAN CHURCH MUSIC

The bi-annual Consultation on African church music was held by the Christian Academy at Roodekrans, near Johannesburg, South Africa on the 16-17 July, 1969, to discuss the development of music in the African church in South Africa. The established churches were represented: Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, etc. Much of the discussion centred around bringing more traditional African music and dance into the church, and although the parent churches often look askance at them, much attention

was paid to the way in which the separatist churches, of which there are nearly three thousand in South Africa, make use of traditional elements of singing, dancing, costume, beliefs, etc. There is a feeling that the established churches are losing members because they are not lively enough, not African enough. The question is how far they can now go in re-Africanisation without their congregations, who were largely raised in the western christian ethos (which includes such concepts as the "sanctity of immobility") suspecting that they are "going over to the separatists".

These questions and others are discussed in the report on the consultation issued by the Christian Academy. The texts of six lectures are given and there are three particularly useful study documents at the end, on a centre for training African church musicians, co-operation of hymn-book committees, and development of church music in South Africa.

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UGANDA NATIONAL CRAFTS SCHEME

Extract from letter from Mr. Owen Barton of the Ministry of Culture and Community Development, P.O. Box 7136, Kampala, Uganda:

"The National Crafts Scheme was established for the purpose of finding a sales outlet for the crafts which the people of rural Uganda are able to produce. We are not making any articles ourselves. The cultural background of Uganda is fairly rich, but many of the skills were either dormant or dying and the scheme has stimulated the production of articles such as all kinds of musical instruments, drums, arms and artifacts of all kinds. It has been our job at the Ministry of Culture to avoid the production of poor quality crafts for the sake of a quick return and of course, to keep away from "airport junk" type of items. This scheme has been successful and had resulted in an improvement in the standards of living of quite substantial numbers of people."

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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY SEMINAR IN AFRICA

A promising new development in American studies of African music was initiated recently when a six-week "Seminar in African Music and Art" organised by Manhattanville and Briarville Colleges, New York State, was held in West Africa in July-August 1969, led by Prof. Nicholas England, Hewitt Pantaleoni (whose article appears in this issue) and Mr. Seth Ladzekpo. The places visited were Dakar, Abidjan, Anyako (Ghana) and Lagos, in order to observe *and perform* music under the guidance of local musicians in each region. Some of the seminarists had already studied drumming under Mr. Ladzekpo of Anyako, Ghana, and were thus able to profit from direct participation in the original music and observation of its proper social context. Dr. Pantaleoni's article in the present issue is at least partly the outcome of this welcome and more practical approach to the study of African music. It is to be hoped that other foreign colleges will continue to encourage their students to gain that personal involvement with African music which has been responsible for a large proportion of if not all the most valuable contributions so far.

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XYLOPHONES IN THE SUDAN

Interesting details of the construction of a *Rongo* xylophone in the Sudan has been sent us by Mr. David Evans who, for many years, was a member of the Sudan Political Service.

The extract he sends is taken from the *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. XXVIII, 1947 (pp. 179-181) and was written by Faustino Roro Kamitin, who is a member of the Gbaya tribe and son of the hereditary maker of the *rongo* for his clan.

What is particularly interesting is the similarity of manufacture of the Gbaya xylophone in some respects with that of the Chopi of southern Mozambique. The use of the wax of the ground bee, as opposed to that of the tree or rock bees; the nasalising membranes on the side of the resonators; and the accompaniment of the xylophone music by rattles and drums.

The extract is as follows . . .

"The *rongo* is a kind of musical instrument with ten wooden slats and ten hollow gourds attached to a flat board half a foot broad by three feet long, and having a semi-circular rod joined by string to both edges of the flat board. The instrument is hung from the neck by a string when being played.

The *rongo* is made from either ebony or a special hard dried wood fetched from the forest, which is carved into a keyboard of ten pieces with varying tones. After they have been carefully carved and tuned, they are fitted over the gourds, which are got by first sowing the seeds during the rains. These gourds, which are of a special kind (*karaka rongo*), and are used only for this purpose, are sown near trees, where the stems, after growing, creep up and yield gourds, which are cut down and taken to the nearest stream or waterpool, where they are left for a week or so, then taken out, cleaned, and hollowed out, and left ready to fit to the slats at any available time.

Next comes the wax for sticking the hollow gourds on to the flat board on which the slats are arranged. This wax is fetched from the forest from special ground bees (*uru*), by digging them out and obtaining the wax. The honey is used as food; then the wax is made into the sticking substance for the *rongo*. Thus is obtained the sticking substance; now comes the stuff which is spread over the tiny holes at each point