

WESTAFRIKA: MUSIKGESCHICHTE IN BILDERN, by Gerhard Kubik, VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, Leipzig, 1989, Band I, Musikethnologie, Lieferung 11, ed. Werner Bachmann, 222pp, illustrations, appendix, bibliography.

This volume on West Africa is the fourth in the well known series *Musikgeschichte in Bildern* (Illustrated Music History) that is devoted to Africa. With only a last volume on Southern Africa lacking to complete the series, this splendid publication by Gerhard Kubik (with individual contributions by Danhin Amagbenyō, Wolfgang Bender, Lucy Durán, Veit Erlmann, Artur Simon, Azuku Tuburu and Moses Yotamu) makes the *Musikgeschichte in Bildern* the most exhaustive work on African history to date.

Like the earlier volumes on North, Central and East Africa, *Westafrika* is divided into two parts, an Introduction of 41 pages and the main body of the book with the illustrations and extensive commentaries. The Introduction itself has four sections. In the first section Kubik offers a broad historical survey of West Africa, while in the second section the reader is made familiar with the major West African ethnic and linguistic areas, based respectively on George Peter Murdock's and Joseph Greenberg's classifications. Although neither model is entirely satisfactory, as Kubik concedes, they do provide a reliable grid for guiding the reader through an exceedingly complex subject. More importantly, they remind us of the fact that in Africa the linguistic record and musical history frequently, although by no means necessarily, overlap. Thus the genesis of the Bantu languages in the Benue-Cross River region of Eastern Nigeria and their subsequent diffusion throughout Central, Eastern and Southern Africa are generally considered to be key factors in African musical history, ones that make it plausible to speak of West African 'roots' of all musics in Bantu speaking areas of East and Central Africa.

In the third section of the Introduction Kubik discusses the historical evidence available to music historians working in West Africa, arguing that the quantity and quality of sources are far more significant than is generally assumed. They range from artefacts, iconographic material, written sources and oral traditions to sound recordings, film and video. In their totality, they constitute a rich storehouse of information that, as more and more data is accumulated and interpreted, will eventually demolish all views of African performance practices as surviving, static expressions of early man and his music.

Finally in the fourth section Kubik proposes nine zones and their musical characteristics into which West Africa may conveniently be divided. These nine zones are:

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| I. | Central Cameroon | VI. | Ewe and Akan peoples |
| II. | Biafra | VII. | The Volta region |
| III. | Adamawa and Central Sudan | VIII. | Liberia and Sierra Leone |
| IV. | Benin/Yoruba | IX. | The Atlantic region |
| V. | The Fon kingdom of Dahomey | | |

Although established on the basis of ethnographic, linguistic and musical data, these zones, as Kubik is careful to point out, do not constitute areas with clearly discernible boundaries. They mark, first and foremost, the focal points chosen for the purpose of Kubik's book and in part also reflect the main areas of fieldwork of Kubik and his co-authors. Whatever the merits of such a regional classification may be, the Introduction as a whole represents a major attempt at providing the foundations for a musical history of West Africa.

The main body of the book is a stupendously rich documentation of some 150 pages, densely packed with ethnographic detail and more than 200 mostly black-and-white glossy photographs. Kubik devotes about equal space to each of his nine zones, most of the materials presented having been obtained during his own fieldtrips. As is to be expected in an area of such vast expanse and cultural diversity, the range of topics discussed in the main part of the book is enormous.

The accounts of early European travellers figure prominently as do detailed descriptions of performances and instrumental playing techniques. There are also fascinating accounts of modern Yoruba musical theatre as well as careful biographical portraits of individual performers. Brass bands in Sierra Leone are discussed alongside colonial postcards of *kora* players and the labels of Decca records of Krio music.

A small appendix and a massive bibliography complete this remarkable book. *Westafrika* does not claim to represent West African musical history from a single vantage point, nor does it organise its many narratives and episodes around a single theoretical model. In the possibly best tradition of empirical research in Africa, Kubik offers, with a great deal of circumspection and imagination, perspectives and materials from which others may and will construct their own accounts of one of the world's most extraordinary regions of musical creativity.

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EXTENSIONEN AFRIKANISCHER KULTUREN IN BRASILIEN, by Gerhard Kubik, Alano, Edition Herodot, Aachen, 1991, German text.

During the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries a massive influx took place of Africans into the Americas. In South and Central America the agents of the slave trade were the Spanish and especially the Portuguese. When we come to compare British North America with Portuguese Brazil the contrast is startling. While the settlers of the Carolinas and the British West Indies made few concessions to the traditions and cultures of their slaves, black or white, the more accommodating though sometimes no less cruel Portuguese made a point of retaining a classification of their slaves which contributed to the retention of African speech, customs and music both domestically and on the plantations. This served principally as a kind of trade-mark when it came to sale and the allocation of tasks, but it also emphasised rather than discounted their roots.