

REPORT FROM THE JEANES SCHOOL, LOWER KABETE, KENYA

REPORT ON TEACHERS VACATION COURSE IN MUSIC
22ND AUGUST TO 5TH SEPTEMBER, 1953

TRADITIONALLY, music has always held an important place in African society. Each event of any significance, in the life of the individual, the family, or the community, has had its particular music. It was therefore appropriate that music should be included in Jeanes School's activities, which are directed towards the development of the whole life of the community.

Thirty-one African Teachers attended the Course of whom two were women. They came from every part of Kenya from the Coast to Kisumu, and all of them were involved to a greater or lesser extent in the music of their own schools. Two European Education Officers were also present for part of the time and were of the greatest assistance in helping with the teaching. They were Miss A. F. G. Ratcliffe and Mr. J. Michael Popkin. Mr. Popkin is well known for his musical activities in the Colony, both in connection with schools and festivals and his contribution, based on his wide experience, was very valuable, not least his lecture on the making of bamboo flutes.

The co-operation of other organisations and institutions helped considerably in planning the Course. The British Council supplied books, records and films. Two other films were also obtained from the American Information Service. The Director of the East African Conservatoire of Music advised on the selection of teaching staff to help on the Course and it was through him that we were able to secure the help of Mrs. Stewart in the teaching of Rudiments, and Mrs. Firminger for Voice Production. The Conservatoire also lent copies of music as did the Master of Music at All Saints' Cathedral. Messrs. Gallo (Africa) were most helpful in the choice of records from the African Music Transcription Library, and lent records which were unobtainable locally. They also supplied copies of the catalogue of the Library's records, for members of the Course.

As far as possible the Course was orientated to the traditional music of the country and a study was made of the place of music in Africa, both in connection with work and leisure. It was felt that an attempt must be made to encourage members of the Course to write down their traditional songs and time was spent in the transcription of African airs in staff notation. A survey was also made of a wide variety of African instruments, found in Kenya and the neighbouring East African territories. The development of music in the contemporary situation in Africa was examined with special reference to music in schools and in worship. In this last connection considerable care was taken in the music for the service held each week in the school chapel.

It was recognised that much of the work of teaching music in schools would be concerned with class singing and the school choir. Two lectures were given on the subject of Choir Training supplemented by two others on Voice Production. Help was also given on the actual technique of conducting a choir. Coupled with this academic work, choir practice formed part of the daily routine, when the whole Course sang together.

It was estimated that most, if not all of the teachers attending the Course would possess a fairly thorough knowledge of Tonic Solfa but that few would have had the opportunity of learning much about staff notation. Until a knowledge of staff notation is acquired, the scope of music is so very restricted that one of the aims of the Course was to ensure that none should go away without a firm grasp of staff notation.

Some evenings during the Course were set aside for a series of gramophone recitals, during which a brief survey was made of the development of Music in the West from the 16th to the 20th centuries. It was clear that by the end of the series, the students recognised the changes that had taken place during the past four hundred years and it was interesting to note that their preference was clearly for music of the earlier centuries. Gramophone records were also used by Mr. Bisset of the School's staff, as illustrations to his introduction to Musical Appreciation.

Four films were shown during the Course. The first was "The Instruments of the Orchestra," obtained from the British Council. This is an excellent film in every way, showing very clearly both the composition of a modern orchestra and the importance of the various sections of it. Another good film was "The Voice of a Choir" which is the story of the Bach Choir of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The other films were a British ballet film and finally "Music in America."

During the second week of the Course a successful recital was given by the staff and students of the Course and the students acquitted themselves well in the singing of music which none of them had seen or heard some ten days previously. A section of the choir also sang from memory one of the works set for the Musical Festival this year. Those items in the programme sung by the Choir were:—

<i>Vali Kwanda</i>	. . .	A Nyanza song learnt from a member of the Course.
<i>A-Roving</i>	. . .	Sea Shanty arranged by Geoffrey Shaw (Curwen).
<i>Let's have a peal</i>	. . .	A nine-part canon (Oxford Song—Book II).
<i>Early one morning</i>	. . .	From the Musical Festival.
<i>Praise God Almighty</i>	. . .	A three-part canon (Oxford Book of Canons).
<i>Laudate nomen Domini</i>	. . .	Anthem by Christopher Tye (1953) (Novello).

The fact that there was only one African song in the programme raises the question of the encouragement of African music in this country. There is an urgent need of a Song Book of Traditional Airs, not only for use in schools but also for the development of music in the community as a whole. It is difficult to see how otherwise most of the folk music of this country will not disappear in a very short time.

If proof was needed, this short course in music here at Jeanes School has shown by the enthusiasm of all who took part in it that not only is there a strong tradition of music in Africa, but there is also a keenness to carry on and develop that tradition.