

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*From* DR. O. W. SAMSON, Curator of the Horniman Museum and Library, London.

The world-wide collection of musical instruments, both ethnological and classical European, in the Horniman Museum is being re-arranged. Approximately 700 are now on display, and another 200 will be added next year. The remainder of the collection is available for examination by students and specialists.

The specimens are exhibited in typological series, the broad classification being idiophones, membranophones, aerophones, and chordophones. Each of these is sub-divided into more detailed groups: for example, cordophones are divided into musical bows and harps, zithers and dulcimers, lyres, lutes and guitars, and violins. There are in addition a number of small cases showing typical instruments of geographical areas, such as Africa, Oceania, China and Tibet.

Instruments from the museum collections have been used by the B.B.C. in television and sound programmes.

The museum is also starting a collection of gramophone records, and tape-recordings of music of instruments in the collections to be used for demonstrations and lectures.

The Saturday afternoon lecture series includes the subject of ethnographical, folk and classical music with demonstrations; a Wednesday evening series of concerts is being inaugurated. Both series include programmes of African music.

We will, of course, be very pleased to see any of your members who are in London.

*From* DR. ERNST EMSHEIMER, Musikhistoriska museet, Stockholm.

I am glad to hear that the first full-sized Journal of the African Music Society will be published shortly. I am convinced that all interested in the study of African music will welcome the Journal with the greatest satisfaction.

I am indeed ashamed at not being able to redeem my promise and send you a survey of the collection of African musical instruments in the Ethnographical Museum of Sweden. Several years ago I was made director of the Museum for the History of Music in Stockholm, but I have not yet had an opportunity to work with the African collections in the Ethnographical Museum. However, I have spoken to Dr. Söderberg who at present works at the latter museum. He promised to send you statistical data about African musical instruments in Sweden, and if possible, to give you later on a more detailed report of them for one of your future numbers of the Journal.

May I also mention that some time ago I published a short article in *Ethnos* (1953: 3-4, pp. 143-154) by the late Professor Tobias Norlind on "Die indonesische Gambus-Instrumente", which also touches upon African circumstances. I will send you a copy of this article under separate cover.

*From* DR. BERTIL SODERBERG, Statens Etnografiska Museum, Stockholm.

Complementing earlier correspondence I am now able to supply data on the number of African musical instruments thusfar catalogued in this Museum. Totalling 716, they are classified as follows:—

Idiophones . . . . .	372
Membranophones . . . . .	132
Chordophones . . . . .	79
Aerophones . . . . .	133
	716

The remainder is as yet unclassified. The MS. of Dr. Emsheimer, who started compiling the catalogue, runs up to 1936.

*From* PAUL COLLAER, Brussels.

I have the following short notes to send for your Journal:—

1. In 1953-54 Jean Noël Maquet undertook folk music investigation in the Southern Belgian Congo. Pende (Bapende) and Tchokwe peoples were studied. M. Maquet brought back valuable information, a rich variety of instruments and tape-recordings of fine quality.
2. M. Daniel Biebruyck, the ethnographer, is now in the Congo for the second time, to study the Leofa (Baleofa). From his previous investigation he has brought back recordings of epic songs and initiation rituals of the Baleofa. This material has proved most interesting.
3. The Musée Royal du Congo Belge is now organising a section on musicology. The aim is (i) scientific study of African music, (ii) to give lectures with musical examples for the public visiting the Museum.

From MICHAEL G. M. LANE, Jos, Nigeria.

I have just finished reading your very interesting lecture reported in the Royal African Society Journal, *African Affairs*. I was particularly interested to read your remarks regarding the micro-tonal aspect of African music. Having studied Eastern music in a small way while in Singapore, this tonal character sprang out even more acutely at me than it would have done to the normal diatonically trained ear. I have discussed or tried to discuss, and convince, several people in Nigeria that this atonal character is the heart of the melodic spontaneity, even when tunes that arrive therefrom appear to resemble our own. I fear I have had little success and have, nearly, always, been dubbed a pompous ass who is trying to blind with science. If only Sullivan could have known what he did when he gave the slightly cultured the right to say they liked a "great composer". Alas, Nigeria is full of Gilberts and Sullivans both on and off the stage, while the idea of going out in a little car with a camera and a recording machine is regarded as not merely eccentricity but lunacy!

I watched a woman weaving a piece of cloth the other day in Jos environs, only two miles from the centre of the town; as she pushed the weave backwards and forwards she hummed a little tune that her mother had taught her in time to her actions. The weaver's rhythm, as you know, has a particular little pause, or halt, just before the second thrust of the cross piece and the little song went:—

Ay ay—ugh—toha

Ay ay—ugh—tece

alternately. I understand the words are meaningless and only serve to express the monotony of the rhythm, but the final "teeee" can express so many things! Even fury with a husband who condemns her to do this thing all day!

From DOUGLAS CLEVERDON, Features Department, B.B.C.

During the last three years the B.B.C. Features Department has produced for the Third Programme: *African Rhythms by the Rev. A. M. Jones*: consisting of two programmes (60 minutes and 45 minutes respectively) in which A. M. Jones analysed the constituent elements of some African rhythms as exemplified in the music of Northern Rhodesia and the surrounding areas. These two programmes (like A. M. Jones' earlier series of three programmes on "African Music in Northern Rhodesia", broadcast in 1949) aroused considerable interest among Third Programme listeners; they have been re-broadcast since their first production in March, 1953, and will be broadcast again during the winter.

*South from Sabara*: The Music of French Colonial Africa: prepared by André Schaeffner and Gilbert Rouget: the programme compiled and narrated by Alan Lomax. Third Programme, March 24th, 1952.

From DR. H. HICKMANN, Membre de l'Institut d'Égypte.

. . . I am awaiting with the greatest impatience the arrival of the Society's Journal. . . . I should very much like to give you one or two articles for one of the forthcoming issues. . . . Please do keep some space for an article on the origin and usage of drums in the form of a small barrel in Egypt in the time of the Pharaohs as well as for one on the survival of music of that time in African music. . . .

#### NOTE ON STICK AND MIRROR DANCES

I am at present working on a study of Pharaonic dancing and am trying to reconstitute a dance which is represented in the tomb of Mereouka, at Saqqarah. It is a dance in the honour of goddess Hathor, patroness of love and music, dance and fertility. The female dancers hold in one hand percussion sticks (*planchettes entrechoquées*) and in the other hand, a mirror. The sticks are shaped in the form of a human arm and hand. The dancers beat them one against the other, and it would seem that they endeavour to reflect the action in the mirror. The goddess Hathor is usually presented in the form of a cow's head.

I am searching for similar dances, modern or ancient, and wonder if some mirror dances have ever existed somewhere in the world which could be compared to the mirror dances of the Old Kingdom, and which would perhaps give an idea of the characteristics of these dances. . . .

I seize this opportunity to send you under separate cover, two of my new off-prints, one of which being a study on the Egyptian harps and the other on the pharaonic dance. Precisely because of this work, I wish to ask you some information. I would like to know if you could quote, amongst all the African dances which you have observed, a dance in which the performers use mirrors. I am tracing a Pharaonic dance where young female dancers are seen using mirrors in their performance and I would like to know if any reminiscences still exist in the folk dances of to-day.

From H. PEPPER, Institut d'Études Centrafricaines, Brazzaville, A.E.F.

Je suis rentré mercredi à Brazzaville d'une longue tournée de trois mois au Gabon durant laquelle j'ai procédé à de nombreux enregistrements dans les régions de l'Estuaire (chez les Pongwe de Libreville) de l'Ogooue Maritime (chez les Galoa, les Nkomé et les Adouma) de la Ngounié (chez les Bapounou) du Woleu Ntem (chez les Fang).

Cette mission a également fourni à l'ouvrage que je rédige actuellement, les éléments d'informations qui me faisaient défaut sur ce territoire.

J'espère le calme de mon bureau retrouvé, pouvoir vous consacrer davantage de temps, surtout en ce qui concerne les enregistrements promis que je m'excuse de n'avoir pu encore vous envoyer.

From Dr. J. K. Louw, Mkhoma, Nyasaland.

At last I believe I have struck something which will enable me to contribute something a bit more positive to the work of the African Music Society.

As you will notice from my address, I am now no longer in Blantyre. I have been transferred back to the William Murray Institute, which is a teacher training college of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission at Mkhoma. When I left the Blantyre Secondary School, their African Music Society was quite a flourishing little club. I had ceased to be the chairman. African boys had taken over themselves and they continued enthusiastically with the collection of African music, and had come to the stage where they were beginning to get keen about collecting instruments and bring to the school those they could play themselves. At our African Music evenings in the school, the Tonga xylophone provided many very enjoyable moments.

Coming to Mkhoma at first seemed to provide less chance for work in this direction. However, our teacher training syllabus provides for three teaching periods a week in a so-called "Special Subject," to run over two school years, with the same class. I suggested African music as a special subject for one group, and this suggestion was accepted enthusiastically by the Education Department. It is very likely, therefore, that as soon as I am able to present anything worth while, I shall be able to get financial support from the Department for this course.

In brief, I plan to suggest including the following in the course :

- (a) The collection of African music by the students (and, of course, its performance).
- (b) The collection of African musical instruments, to be played by the students (possibly also instructed by African musicians).
- (c) African musicians from close by, and also if discovered in areas further away, to be brought in to the school to perform to the students, but also to give them a chance to hear others and also to hear records from our library. (This, I hope, may develop into short vacation classes).
- (d) Talks to our students about music (a course such as you followed in *Ngoma*).
- (e) The building up of a record library, even though it must be very small to begin with.
- (f) The composing of African music by students themselves.
- (g) The encouragement of really musical people that may be discovered by the students.
- (h) This may lead to the discovering (or composing) of more suitable music to be used at worship, and I strongly hope that something may develop which can eventually take the place of the very unsuitable hymn books used here at the moment.

I had to take the opportunity when it presented itself, and I plunged into it quite conscious of my own limitations. If you have any suggestions to make in connection with this scheme, I should be most grateful to you, if you can find the time to write.

I am looking forward very much to the possibility of developing something of value at this school, and I am glad to say that at the last meetings of both our Mission Council and our Presbytery, it became clear that the need was felt for something very different from the hymn books we are at present using in our worship. Presbytery has decided to appoint a committee, not with a view to revising the hymn book—of this I have had enough for life—but with a view to finding suitable African music. Such a course at a musical centre to be developed at a college seems to me to have more possibilities than perhaps anything else we are able to do at the moment.

From PHILIP GBEHO, Achimota School, Gold Coast.

I arrived here in September of 1952 and have since continued to practise and encourage the teaching of indigenous music and culture. I broadcast and take part in the performance of it in public, and schools and various organisations invite me to lecture to them on the subject. I seriously attack the propagators of the idea that our music is primitive, fit only for the devil. I warn the Missionaries to stop preaching that gospel, else there will be a conflict between us and they will regret it in the end. Strangely enough they are not opposed to me, but they want me to advise and help them to organise it in schools. I have broken the backbone of the prejudice behind our music. School children now practise it regularly as part of their education in music. I am certain we shall win one day. I am employed in Achimota where I teach it side by side with Western music. I prepare boys for the School Certificate Music and Higher School Certificate Music including theory, harmony, etc. I am also part-time tutor in African Music for the Extra-Mural studies in the University of the Gold Coast.

The Gold Coast Government is taking an interest in the preservation of our music and culture. The Prime Minister and his Secretary are both my greatest friends ; we were in Achimota together as students. The Prime Minister is going to build a National Theatre very soon and that I think is a chance for the survival of our music and culture. The Africans' craving for only what is European is an attitude I deplore. Mind, I am not ignorant of the beauty of Western music. My fellow students and teachers at college in London often wondered why a competent student of Western music should spend so much time discussing the "Tom-Tom". Yes, the answer is that they are musically one-track minded ! I succeeded in my third year at Trinity College, and now have my G.T.C.L., L.R.A.M., and L.T.C.L. : I am going to direct all these towards the development of our own music.

I am very busy now teaching African music and Western music in the form of choirs, orchestras, violin and piano, etc. There is too much to do !

From DR. JOHN T. CARRINGTON, Ecole Grenfell, B.M.S., Yalamba, Basoko, Province Orientale, Belgian Congo.

I should like to thank you very much for so kindly sending me the last two numbers of the *Newsletter* which I have found most interesting. The article by Monsieur Auguste Verbeken in No. 6 (September, 1953) gave me a long-sought opportunity of getting into touch with this veteran of drum-language research and I have written to him, hoping to begin regular correspondence with him. Before reading your letter I had no chance of getting his address.

In a class on native folk-lore with some of my students last year I came across a most interesting case of a small fruit-whistle being used to accompany prayers to a spirit regarded as presiding over hunting parties in the forest. This I should like to follow up and find out how far the whistled notes correspond with the tonal values of linguistic elements in the prayers. I suspect that they are closely related—but this needs verification. Unfortunately, the most obvious man to help me in this task failed to get through his teacher's exams at Christmas and so is not feeling very well-disposed toward me at the moment.

I am engaged on preparing a syllabus for our school in music. We have to follow the programme laid down by the State for primary schools and so it must inevitably be European in approach. But your example in Ngoma has made me very unsatisfied with anything that is not African and I am trying to bring in African music as we know it here wherever possible. I am still trying hard to get our teachers to build up songs in true African manner. As you know from what I have already published, our melodies are very closely allied to tonal patterns and should not be difficult to build up. Whenever I venture to use a song of my own composition it invariably meets with great approval, but our young men teachers are rather ashamed of trying, I fear. They think that such things separate them from the European ways of life.

From A. P. ATKINS, Indaleni, Near Richmond, Natal.

I have recently come from England to work in an Art School which has been started at Indaleni. In addition to the Art School there is a Training College and High School here. It is surprising that the interest in and desire for music on the part of the students is finding its expression solely in the performance of popular dance music. I am wondering what kind of help the African Music Society can offer in such a case.

There seems to be a great need, which is being felt in many places in the world for a reorientation of the individual. "Cultural" activities in the first place can perhaps effect a therapy and later something more positive. In England the gulf between the specialist in "art" and the general public is great—here it seems to be much less. The reaction of some of the students to a play for instance makes me remember what I have read about Elizabethan England—when the actors spoke to the audience and they were all part of the same play. I am only qualified to talk about painting and sculpture but from the point of view I've mentioned these things cannot be treated in isolation. I feel if a direction was set many people more qualified in music than I am would join in.

In the first instance what I thought about doing was:

- (1) Trying to make musical instruments as the craft part of the art course. (There are mostly Zulu students here).
- (2) Trying to get one or two plays going in which music was used as part of the narrative and action.

I would be glad of any suggestions and help. Is there anybody living near here, known to the African Music Society, who would help?

Are there any records of African traditional music which we could borrow?

Are there any films which show musicians performing on their instruments?

From THE REV. H. H. BLOOMFIELD, Barbados.

Many thanks, both for your letter and the most interesting literature about the African Music Society. I congratulate you and your workers most heartily—I had no idea such an excellent society existed!

I believe that sporadic attempts have been made to collect some of the old folk-songs of Barbados, but I, personally, have never heard any. Attention is mainly given to "steel bands" and "calypsos"—very debased. The general tendency throughout the Caribbean is for West Indians to ape their American Negro cousins. Alas! The West Indian "music" broadcast regularly from "Trinidad Re-diffusion and Golden Network" is too appalling to describe. I hope Africans will be discouraged from learning to play the saxophone!