

AFRICAN MUSIC

JOURNAL OF THE AFRICAN MUSIC SOCIETY

VOLUME 1

1955

NUMBER 2

EDITORIAL

ONE of the more interesting developments connected with African recreational life during the year has been the increasing recognition which is being given to the work of African artists. In this new medium where one might expect an overwhelmingly European bias the reverse is, in fact, proving to be the case. There are, of course, the common run of street painters who make endless repetitive sketches for sale to travellers, whose work falls into the dull category of curio merchandise. Seldom do any of these pictures display the smallest glimmer of African artistry.

The groups of serious painters, on the other hand, which have made their appearance during the last few years have been increasingly successful by sheer artistic merit and originality. Guided by sensitive white artists who have been content to encourage rather than to teach, the young African painters have already made their mark well beyond their territorial borders. In particular we must mention the groups of painters at Brazzaville and Elisabethville, where a Belgian and two Frenchmen have each, in their own way, brought out a facet of African artistry which is vital, uninhibited and genuine.

The impression made upon Europeans who visited the Society's recent Exhibition in Johannesburg was most gratifying. The pictures spoke clearly and unmistakably for themselves to sensitive persons of all races and raised a chorus of gratitude and pleasure—gratitude to the groups of artists who show that African artistic work can still be original and genuine in a world where imitation of Europeans has been in vogue too long, and pleasure that the subject matter of their pictures can be so gay, decorative and inventive.

It must reinforce the conviction that, in all African arts which fall within the educational field, the operative factor is contained in the Latin root of the word "educare" to lead out, or educe from latent or potential existence.

What has long been the highest potential in the field of African music, an ability to create truly African patterns of considerable merit, has now been strikingly demonstrated by these men in the younger African medium of painting.

Our congratulations to artists and mentors alike.

THE EDITOR.