

BOOK REVIEWS

ETHNO-MUSICOLOGY, by DR. JAAP KUNST. Published by Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague. Price 20/-.

The second, enlarged edition of "Musicologica" is most welcome. In addition to the excellent text and illustrations of the first, there is a comprehensive list of recordings of exotic music (p. 30 ff.), a Bibliography of over two thousand entries, and an admirable index in three parts.

The only complaints which one can possibly have of such a book arise mainly from personal preference. One would like to read, for instance, a paragraph advocating the general adoption of Schaeffner's precise, two-fold classification of musical instruments, which is perhaps the most logical that has yet been devised: it adheres to the basic principle that all musical instruments are either 'extensions of the body' or 'extensions of the voice'. Membranophones and Chordophones are classed together, since the criterion of classification is the nature of the vibrating material, and in each of these cases the material is a stretched solid.

It is perhaps a pity that so much space has been devoted to a discussion of the Origins of Music (p. 46 ff.), a matter of speculation which can hardly be included in the realms of musical science, and can surely never be proven. An investigation such as that into the non-musical origins of music (treated briefly on p. 42 ff.) is entirely worthwhile, since it is possible to investigate the value of these hypotheses by observation and analysis of contemporary social events; even if the reason for a certain musical form is not known by members of a society, it may be discovered in some myth or religious ceremony.

"Ethno-musicology" is an indispensable work of reference for any serious student. The Bibliography alone would commend it: we know of no other general bibliography on the subject which can begin to compete with that which Dr. Kunst has compiled. It is moreover an eminently readable introduction for anyone who is at all interested in exotic music.

J. B.

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PROBLÈMES D'AFRIQUE CENTRALE, No. 26, 4e Trim., 1954—Numéro consacré à la Musique Nègre.

It is good to see an entire number of an important African Journal devoted to the subject of African Music.

In the first article, M. Paul Collaer gives a brief resumé of a few general features of the Music of Central Africa: he claims that African music is composed collectively:—

"Bien entendu, il faut éviter de confondre la composition musicale, activité intellectuelle lorsqu'il s'agit d'écrire sur du papier un ensemble de combinaisons sonores, avec l'invention d'un chant né de la collaboration de milliers d'individus sous l'empire d'une nécessité expressive commune". (p. 267).

There is considerable evidence of individual Africans composing songs, which in certain cases are adopted by other members of the tribe; it is hard, therefore, to see how African music is fundamentally any more or less an individual effort than a great amount of European music: European composers are surely affected by their surroundings as much as Africans. Of course African compositions are not written down, except by those who have acquired a knowledge of European notation, but they are worked out carefully. Of the five transcriptions which M. Collaer gives, three are composed by individuals, and two by a small group of individuals; and of the compositions of Katsuba Mwangolo even his own tribesmen say that he has developed a highly original style of his own.

Elsewhere M. Collaer writes:—

"Il est urgent de procéder à l'enregistrement sur place de toutes les musiques traditionnelles qui subsistent encore." (p. 268).

While one must agree with this statement, one hopes that this is not meant to imply that only the traditional music is worthy of our attention. Besides, what is truly traditional music? Is Arabian-influenced African music any more or less traditional than European-influenced African music? Traditional music is that which is handed down orally. Surely it is the duty of the musical scientist to pay equal attention to all African music, influenced or not? In fact it is likely that European research workers will learn much more about Africans and their music by studying the way in which they adapt to their own uses what is to Europeans a more familiar musical idiom: certainly no African makes European-influenced music in an European manner.

At the beginning of the second article, "The Problem of the Future of Bantu Music in the Congo", Mr. Hugh Tracey bears out the point (p. 272) that the music of mixed origin is "readjusting itself to the inherent taste and preferences of the people." As tribal society breaks up so does its music, since the two phenomena are inextricably connected; the process is inevitable, and the very fact that music moves along with social change emphasizes its importance in the lives of Africans in the Congo. As societies regain their equilibrium, so will the music: but this process can be greatly assisted by the encouragement of the best creative African musicians, who may otherwise be persuaded to despise their own art. Mr.