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 indispensible 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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PROBLEMÈS 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 Mwongolo 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 traditionelles 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.

Tracey stresses the importance of the role of the genuinely talented African musician; and his assessment of the average musical ability of African tribes (p. 275) suggests that Africans are not more inherently musical than any other people, as has sometimes been asserted. Another interesting point is the connection suggested between the music of a people and their local ecology.

Dr. J. M. Habig's article, "La valeur du Rythme dans la Musique Bantoue", is a panegyric of the primitive. The writer appears to be preoccupied with the rhythmical qualities of African music, by which he means drumming rather than handclapping or any other sort of rhythm: African music, he maintains, is a product of the equatorial forest necessary for the manufacture of rhythmic instruments. He is likely to be challenged upon his statement that "la cadence bantoue n'a jamais été utilisée . . . comme divertissement . . . la musique bantoue est un message." (p. 282). In the International Library of African Music there are scores of recordings of music played simply for the amusement of the performer, quite apart from the story-songs which are often designed solely for entertainment. (Robert Gay, in his article on African forms found in American-negro music, p. 316 ff., omits this important branch from his list of eight fundamental types of African music).

The articles by M. Herbert Pepper ("Essai de Definition d'une Grammaire Musicale Noire") and M. Jean-Noel Maquet ("La Musique chez les Bapende") are of considerable value to musicological research—though it should be pointed out that the former deals only with the music of the Babembe and not with African music in general, as is stated in the English summary at the end.

One notices with some misgiving the following remark in M. Maquet's article:—

"La gamme du *madimba* présente donc une indéniable parenté avec la nôtre . . . " (p. 301).

The intervals of Maquet's *madimba* No. 1 (17-note xylophone), reading from the highest to the lowest note, are as follows:— (figures in cents according to M. van Esbroeck)

186, 164, 171, 170, 167, 173, 169, 175, 175, 161, 174, 155, 50, 265, 175, 190.

These surely bear little resemblance to the intervals of an European scale. Eleven out of the sixteen intervals (eleven out of 14, if one excludes the anomalous intervals of 50 and 265 cents) are between 160 and 175 cents. This recalls the Chopi xylophones (1), where an attempt is made to produce an equal-stepped heptatonic scale, the ideal interval of which would be 171.43 cents (2). Even more significant is M. Maquet's statement that the Bapende tune their xylophones three notes at a time, reminiscent of Ganda methods of tuning an equal-stepped pentatonic scale, described by Dr. K. P. Wachsmann (3). Another interesting point is that true octaves occur only twice in the scales of M. Maquet's *madimba* Nos. 1 and 3, and not at all in No. 2.

M. Maquet's article is full of interesting facts and well illustrated with photographs and transcriptions. Particularly commendable is the description of the *gibinji* mbira: the notes played by the left and right hands are indicated, so that the resulting transcription would make sense to any mbira player who understood notation. Unfortunately the exact pitches of the notes have not been given, and we have to be content with a subjective indication of approximately equivalent European intervals. The same criticism must be levelled at M. Pepper's article, otherwise well documented and interesting. One would like to see some tablature-like indication of the pitch accompanying all transcriptions of African instrumental music.

The articles draw attention to several specific subjects for more detailed research: of these the following promise the most interesting information:—

(i) Methods of Musical Composition amongst African peoples.
(ii) African music as a product of local ecology—a study in the distribution of musical styles and their environment.
(iii) An enquiry into the marked musical ability and the lack of it within two different tribes.
(iv) A study of the adaptation of European instruments and musical style to indigenous African characteristics.

J. B.

NOTES:—

(1). See "Chopi Musicians. Their Music, Poetry and Instruments", by H. T. Tracey; especially pages 118-142.

(2). The ideal equal-stepped, tempered heptatonic scale would run:— (figures in cents) 0, 171.43, 342.86, 514.29, 685.72, 857.15, 1028.58, 1200.01. This can easily be confused with an European scale. But note the neutral third (342.86), the flattened fifth and sharpened fourth (685.72 and 514.29); also the similarity between this ideal scale and that given by M. van Esbroeck for Maquet's *madimba* No. I:— (figures in cents)

"De do4 à do3:
0(1200) 1014 850 679 509 320 169 0
De do3 à do2:
0(1200) 1025 850 689 515 360 310 35
De do2 à la 1:
35 1060 870."

(3). See "An Equal-stepped tuning in a Ganda Harp", by K. P. Wachsmann, in *Nature*, Jan. 7th, 1950, p. 40 ff.