

LECTURE

On the 15th August, 1957, Professor Melville Herskovits, Head of the Department of Anthropology, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, who was visiting South Africa, gave a lecture at the University under the joint auspices of the Society and of the University of the Witwatersrand. Members of the public were invited to attend, and an opportunity for members of the Committee to meet the lecturer was given at an informal gathering in the Staff Common Room after the lecture, the subject of which was "Music and the Arts in the Scientific Study of Man".

* * * * *

The Companhia de Diamantes de Angola (Diamang) have placed several recordings of African Music from Angola, the work of Senhor Pinha da Silva, Research Member of the African Music Society, at the disposal of the Lisbon Official Broadcasting Station which has featured several 15 minute programmes. The music has been widely appreciated by the Listening Audiences in Portugal.

* * * * *

The Rev. A. M. Jones gave a lecture on African Music to the Music Club of the Reading University on November 28th, 1957.

* * * * *

CORRECTION—Journal No. 3

On p. 32, in the article "A Hobbyist Looks at Zulu and Xhosa Songs" Professor Swartz refers to 'John Mseleku.' Mnumzana William J. Mseleku, who is a member of this Society, has asked us to point out the inadvertent error in his name.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From The Rev. DAVID HAWKINS, St. Paul's College, AWKA, Nigeria.

. . . May I congratulate you on the last issue of the Journal? I felt that some of the articles on African Music in Worship were unduly pessimistic, however.

I think it is true that there are real signs of development in Ibo Church Music since Wilberforce Echezona returned from England. Ten years ago it was almost impossible to find any young man who could produce an original Ibo tune—what passed for Ibo tunes in Choir competitions were usually jazzed up versions of English tunes (I recall a Benedictus to 'O sing to me, gypsy'); now there are a large number of people at work with greater or less success, and the singing Competitions which go through all the stages of Group Church Competitions through District to Archdeaconry Finals produce a large number of more or less Ibo tunes.

It was of course the usual story that the original ban on dancing (and I'm not suggesting it was altogether wrong) produced a generation of young men who lacked the background of their own music and so could not produce any original Ibo tunes. Now a new interest is aroused, and Echezona has played a very great part in this—thanks also to the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, who got him to put on a series of 13 illustrated talks and took him all over the country to get recordings he wanted.

One particular way in which we have experimented is by the use of an Antiphon in the Psalms. A great deal of Ibo music consists of a short verse sung by a leader with a short and constantly repeated refrain. In a Psalm a part of a verse which expresses the mood of the Psalm is chosen for the refrain and repeated after each half verse, e.g. in the Venite, for the first seven verses the refrain is "for he is the Lord our God" and for the remainder with a different tune and in a different mood "Harden not your hearts."

This method of course adds considerably to the length, and it may be that it is not the best arrangement for the Canticles, but it would enable the congregation to join in the singing of Psalms. Only the Cantor or choir would have to practise the verses, and the congregation would quickly pick up the chorus. Unfortunately Echezona has got distracted on to a lot of other things and the method has not yet been extended to the Psalms.

I have not yet been able to get Echezona—or Fela Sowande—to discuss the question of the modification of Nigerian music by European conventions. Whether it is a reaction from his first attitude, when his music appeared more European than Nigerian, I don't know, but Fela Sowande was very emphatic when I met him a few weeks ago on the importance of preserving 'pure' African music, but was not very consistent when I asked him about the retention of old methods of tone production. For one responsible for teacher training and the teaching of music in schools that is a central practical problem. From the point of view of European standards one would say that practically nothing was being done in the schools about Voice Production, but I am sure that in fact the experience of singing in parts and the emphasis on 'tone' and 'expression' in the judging of European hymn tunes in Singing Competitions has considerably modified the accepted standards of good singing in Ibo.

* * * * *

From Mrs. J. M. SHAFFER, M.M.C.C., Wembo Nyama, Belgian Congo.

"I just received my copy of the Journal and was most interested in reading the articles on church music in other areas and to find that most of the problems we have encountered here, are practically the same everywhere. I noticed that in the Separatist Churches there seems to be more willingness to sing African-composed music. It has been my feeling that as long as the missionaries remain the head of the African Church, there will be little chance for a major change in the use of African church music. As Christianity becomes more and more their own religion, and not just that of the white missionary, they will begin to express it in their own way. At least that is a hope."

* * * * *

ACCURATE MEASUREMENT OF PITCH IN SONGS

From Mr. CHARLES SEEGER, 1420 East Valley Road, Santa Barbara, California.

Members of the Society will be interested to hear of the original research work being done by one of our members in the United States of America, Mr. Charles Seeger, in the difficult field of the exact measurement of modality in musical performances by means of an electrical apparatus which he calls the "melograph".

The proper understanding of the modality of African music and the tolerances which must be allowed form an increasingly important part of musicological research on this continent and we wish Mr. Seeger every success in his experiments. An extended article on this subject has already been printed in the Journal of the International Folk Music Council, Vol. IX, 1957, which we recommend to our readers.

In his letter Mr. Seeger states that he would be giving two courses in ethnomusicology at the University of California in Los Angeles during July 1957, and that he hoped some of the students would learn to use the apparatus. He continues:—

"You will have received your copy of the Journal of the I.F.M.C. Vol. IX and will have read the brief report I prepared last summer only a month after receiving delivery of the apparatus. I must confess that I have the same kind of troubles that you do. I have more faith in the fundamental frequency analyser (the 'melograph') itself than I have of my apparatus of input—the turntables, tape recorder, and recordings. Test graphs show such imperfections as wobbles, excessive or insufficient speed, slipping pulleys (that make what we call 'wows' etc.) that I sometimes despair of ever giving the thing a really good chance. As to recordings, I find that many do not give a good graph, not because the higher partials are not filtered, but for other reasons such as hum in the electronic circuit, rumble of turntable, mouth too close to microphone, etc. that seem to cause impulses less than an octave from the fundamental frequency. Old aluminium discs and such supposedly 'high-fidelity' recording as that of Riverside's of the Child ballads make graphs strikingly alike. I tried Peter playing on his little Israeli flute (an entirely open end-flute, the sound made by the breath against the edge which is slightly sharpened). The record (Folkways) gives a pretty graph which I enclose. Live playing to a microphone leading direct to the analyser shows a smudgy graph when Peter stood very close. The graph gets better as he stands farther and farther away. This summer, with better acoustic control of the input, I expect to find out how to get the best input possible from recordings of various qualities.

As you can see from the preceding paragraph, I have spent very little time working with the device. I am, primarily, a theorist. So, naturally, the theoretical implications of even the bare minimum results (of which the IFMC report is a sample) have occupied most of my time during the past year. Before I spend much time working along such lines, I naturally find myself concerned with the reading of the graphs I have made. This has led to a rather drastic revision of my theory of the melodic line itself. For even the little I have done shows beyond possibility of doubt what I had already expected, viz.: vibrato and rubato are the rule and are continuous in most song. Furthermore, they overlap. That is, pitch-levels perceived by us as distinct entities may occur up to ten per second or more. With vibrato running on an average $5\frac{1}{2}$ — $8\frac{1}{2}$ and not seldom as slow as three or four and as fast as ten, our whole concept of music space and music time has to be revised. Distinct pitch levels that we are used to re-

garding as "notes" *do not begin and end when we think they do*. What we think is, of course, the thing we call music—not the acoustic reality but the musical reality. But I have found that what I think becomes sharpened and, in some ways changed, as I have been transcribing recordings of melodies over the last 20 years. Working with the "melograph" this music thinking becomes still more sharpened. It becomes more freed of "note-thinking" to a surprising extent, and I find myself hearing even our music more as it must sound to people totally devoid of contact with European music and its notation.

You have yourself, I am sure, experienced this. You hear a vibrato not altogether as "a note" but as a rapid ornamentation of a pitch line: you hear beats coming before and after strict *takt* and divisions of beats are more often uneven than even. I have been struggling with some of the notations Bartók has made of the very melismatic Serbo-Croatian traditional singing. He *notates* vibrato in an enormous number of cases—not with "tr" but with sixteenth and thirty-second-notes. To do so, I am convinced he played records at slow speeds. How slow, I do not know. He mentions doing so. But there is a danger of illusion here. At certain speeds, an unbroken (unarticulated) glide will sound articulated. And the articulation tends to conform to a scale, diatonic, chromatic, pentatonic etc. I am convinced that much of the music sound that we say we hear is not present in physical reality. Our ears are so trained to respond to notational concepts that we gratuitously distort the physical sound to conform to the tradition in which we are bred.

Further evidence in support of this theory is found in some interesting experiments conducted by Charles Shackford at Harvard a few years ago. By very accurate measurement in the physical laboratory he was able to prove that a string quartet of players from the Boston Symphony Orchestra varied their intonation of test intervals up to 25 cents in either direction *according to context*. We have long known that some deviation from equal temperament toward just intonation was employed by good string ensembles. But deviation up to 50 cents—a quarter tone, is something new. Of course, the right kind and amount of deviation in each individual case will be employed by the well-disciplined player. The players in this experiment showed that the belief that our European music does not use the intervals 4/7, 5/7, 7/10, 8/11 in just intonation seems to be shattered. As theoretical norms, they are not accepted. As aesthetic norms, they are required.

Now if such subtle and extensive deviation from "established norms" is traditional in European music, can we not expect that subtle and extensive deviations also are traditional in other musics? You may have noted such phenomena. And you have probably noted that the *manner* of the deviation is quite different from the best European practice. Even European (and American) folk song, when in what Miss Karpeles calls an "authentic" tradition, exhibits deviations from the approved *lieder*, or *bel canto*, manner. Our graphing techniques will eventually disclose these for all musics. Perhaps we shall be able to classify the music-families accordingly. For comparative studies will undoubtedly discover (1) the accepted theoretical norms and (2) the actual norms of the music reality. Interesting question! What are the criteria for the establishment of norms in a non-literate music?"

* * * * *

From Mr. H. J. ROBERTS, Principal of Munali Secondry School, Lusaka.

May I make a suggestion of what I consider to be one action that would have incalculable results which could be undertaken now. Wherever territorial Teacher Training Colleges exist written song books should be compiled. How effective would *any* music teacher be in any country of Europe who had not got his music books, or at bottom, his compilations of folk songs? He would be reduced to the situation of teaching ten, twelve or fourteen year olds either "Humpty Dumpty sat on the Wall", "A Bicycle made for two" or "Throw out the Life Line." Fortunately pioneers like Sandys and Cecil Sharp have been born for our benefit and so your children and mine can sing also "The Sand Day Carol" or "The Foggy Dew" both of which found birth some hundreds of miles from where any of them are schooled. Surely this kind of step is one that can be taken immediately. At Kitwe, Chalimbana, Livingstone and so on, why can't Bemba students make notes of Lozi, Ngoni and Tonga songs and take them away with them? There is no reason at all why after a two year course every student couldn't take with him forty songs all unfamiliar to his local children, all of them the pick of the traditional music of other Provinces. I refuse to be daunted by talk of eight tone and ten tone scales. I refuse to be convinced that any but the most difficult of songs aren't teachable to other tribes. It may be true that the Luvale wouldn't hear the finer points of the Ngoni music, they would nevertheless grasp more of it than they do of "Here we come gathering nuts in May" or even "O God our help in ages past."

* * * * *

From E. B. LUMBWE, Kasama L.E.A. School, P.O. Box 33, Kasama.

"I have been collecting Bemba Traditional Songs for over six years now. Part of my collection will, I hope, be a book entitled "Action Songs and Games for Schools". Part I of this book will be without and Part II will be with notation.

In this book I have classified the songs as follows: Mixed action songs and games; Boys' action songs; Girls' action songs; Games for Boys and Girls; Ceremonial Songs; and under General—in which will

appear all unclassified items akin to their Tribe which can only be properly known here by giving you a practical demonstration.

There are many reasons for making my collection, and primarily because there were lots of songs and games, which I sang when I was a child with my friends, and which you rarely hear sung nowadays and, yet, there are no new compositions.

I have successfully taught these in school, and surprisingly enough, all teachers are showing amazing interest in these because they have now realized how much we have lost. On the other hand the children may not show interest because of the precedence given to foreign songs by teachers who do not encourage the teaching of vernacular songs, because they looked upon them as having no value. Furthermore their Training Colleges did not then encourage them as they do now, ever since the Conference on Vernacular Teaching which was held in 1955 in this Territory, when the teaching of Traditional African Songs and games was officially recommended. Prior to this conference a certain amount of teaching was done in this field but it is not incorrect to say that the majority of Teachers looked upon them as inferior songs and so now you see the result, in that Teachers left their colleges with a heap of translated European Action Songs and Games which, though very well taught, did not appeal to the children so much as the traditional songs would; but, of course, they serve their purpose.

I feel that African Songs must surely be enjoyed by all African children, and they are. Their Bemba songs and games are not just songs and games to them, for you will appreciate the fact that they contain more than we think, for instance traditional customs, history, totems and enrichment of vocabulary, to mention but a few, in other words, they contain African Culture.

The teaching of modern Physical Training in schools is very much in conformity with traditional African games and songs. I have tried them myself for this purpose and have found them excellent. They contain just what modern physical training masters would need for Primary schools.

* * * * *

From THE REV. FATHER FILIBERTO GIORGETTI, V.F. Mission, Yambio, Southern Sudan.

The *Missa Zande* was sung in the vernacular at the V.F. Mission on the 7th October this year. It was performed by a whole assembly of people accompanied by drums and bugle.

Father Giorgetti is now writing a Zande Grammar for Italians including tonal indications.

The Society's Library has also received copies of the latest publications by Father Giorgetti of the Catholic Church, V.F.M. Mission (Equatoria Province), P.O. Yambio, Sudan, Africa. They include "Ninna Nanna Zandu", "Kundi Sa Natale", "Yambio Yambio" and "Missa Zanda", and are available for inspection by Members at the Society's Headquarters.

* * * * *

From THE REV. FATHER CH. v. RYTHOVEN, Lubushi Seminary, P.O. Kasama, Northern Rhodesia.

Father Ch. v. Rythoven was specially transferred to the Lubushi Seminary for the special study of African Music and to have Pupils directed in the right way for the Priesthood.

This School, the Lubushi Seminary, is devoted to the training of future African Priests and in other parts of Africa many of these Priests are working along the same lines on African Music.

Recently a new "tam tam" Mass was sung at Quagadougou Cathedral, composed by Father Robert Uedraege, an African, in Messis style, with drums and African instruments in the Church.
