

## A.M.S. EXHIBITION OF AFRICAN PAINTINGS

The Society has long been interested in the development of painting as a new art amongst Africans. Until recently the only indigenous picture making was in the form of murals of which perhaps the best examples are to be found in the northern Congo and in South Africa.

It was with great satisfaction some years ago that we noted the establishment of three or four schools or groups of painters in widely separated regions—Uganda, French Equatorial Africa, Belgian Congo and Southern Rhodesia. The groups which have become most significant from a creative point of view have undoubtedly been those where the white mentor has succeeded in evoking the artistic and pattern making talent of his group rather than in teaching art technique from the European standpoint.

Two years ago, the Society acquired over 70 representative pictures from the two groups of painters at Brazzaville and Elizabethville and with the co-operation of two Johannesburg Clubs for African boys and girls, framed and equipped the pictures for permanent exhibition around the country. Up till that moment few people in the southern end of the Continent had had the opportunity of seeing any representative collections of original African paintings, the public having to be content and not very impressed with 'schooled' paintings in styles adopted directly from Europeans. The impact of the present exhibition has been most encouraging, with constantly favourable reactions of surprise, delight and admiration for the work of these African pioneers, most of whom are young men under the age of 25.

The exhibition has already been shown in these towns . . . Salisbury, Bulawayo, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Kimberley, Luanshya, Nchanga and Livingstone. It is due to be shown also in several towns in the Cape Province, including Port Elizabeth and East London and enquiries have already been received for its staging both in America and Malaya as well.

The Committee of the African Music Society is prepared to consider applications from responsible bodies for their inclusion in the rota of the Exhibition's itinerary and details of the conditions under which it can be loaned, may be obtained from the Honorary Secretary.

One of the pictures of a market scene painted by a Brazzaville painter, Bandila, has been excellently reproduced in full colour and is available from the Society (10/6d. plus postage) size 12" x 14".

The following extract from our correspondence gives typical response to the exhibition . . . .  
 ". . . . Judging from comments drawn from a cross section of the Africans who attended the exhibition it is interesting to note the following:—

- (1) A genuine interest and admiration of the work.
- (2) Particular interest because it was by African artists.
- (3) Amazement at the skill of the "finger painter".
- (4) Suggestion that younger men should be given the opportunity to study the art, should they show aptitude.
- (5) Again an African teacher be engaged to teach the children in Welfare a 'lost art' ". . .

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## MUSIC FESTIVALS IN AFRICA

### NOTES FOR THE GUIDANCE OF ADJUDICATORS

These notes are not for the expert. It sometimes happens however that people with little or no experience in adjudication find themselves involved in judging at a local festival, for the simple reason that there is no qualified person in the district. It is for such that these suggestions are made. They may also be of assistance to choirmasters since they show the kind of criterion by which an adjudicator makes his judgements.

An adjudicator can do much to help or hinder the success of a Music Festival. Some adjudicators have a happy way of putting competitors at their ease and enabling them not only to enjoy themselves but also to sing better because of this. A word to the competing choirs before they sing is not out of place since this may help to create a spirit of festivity and to remove any sense of the occasion being rather like an examination. At a recent Festival in Nairobi, the winning choir mounted the platform in a body to receive their trophy and sang again their African song in triumph, and the losers for sheer gaiety joined in the clapping accompaniment of the song. That is the sign of a successful occasion.

Audience reaction should never be allowed to influence the adjudicator's better judgement since the popularity of any particular performance may be due to a number of reasons completely unrelated to music. The leader of the song may be something of a comedian, there may be a member of the choir who is very tall or very short, and so on, and it is the duty of the adjudicator to ensure that musical considerations come first.

When an adjudicator is uncertain of his own judgement in musical matters, two heads are probably better than one. A large number of adjudicators however will only make things difficult, and the greater the number, the less likelihood there is of justice being done.

It is always a source of encouragement to choirmasters and their choirs alike if the adjudicator explains the reasons for the decisions he has made, giving praise where praise is due and showing how faults can be avoided. This provides a golden opportunity to help choirmasters in their work and they are often most receptive on occasions such as these.

Since it is the adjudicator who is finally responsible for judging which is the best performance he must know what to look for. It is of course the total effect which is important, but such an effect is only achieved if the choirmaster has borne in mind certain factors when training his choir. The main points to observe are given below. At most Music Festivals in Africa, both African and European music is sung and these are dealt with separately.

### 1. CHOICE OF SONG

The song should be authentic, that is, it should be a genuine traditional African song. The fact that a song is sung to African words may mean nothing. African words are sometimes set to a borrowed or original tune in Western style.

Very often the song will be sung in a vernacular which will be understood by only a section of the audience; consequently it should rely much more on melody and rhythm for its interest than on the text. It goes without saying that a copy of the words together with a translation, should be given to the adjudicator before the performance. It is unlikely that there will be a copy of the music of an African song available.

### 2. TREATMENT OF SONG

In most cases, the best way to sing an African song is to do so in the traditional style. This will generally be in unison with a leader and chorus. Occasionally the chorus may sing in organum, that is in parallel fourths or fifths.

A few choirmasters with exceptional gifts are able to harmonise African songs without spoiling the original character of the song, but the pitfalls in the path of harmonisation are so many that it is only just those few who avoid them.

There are some delightful African songs which are too short for performance at a Festival. It is sometimes possible to join two or three such songs together. Mention was made of this in the *Journal of African Music*, Volume I, No. 2 of 1955. The text of the songs should obviously deal with the same or similar topics. On the other hand it is best if the melodies show some contrast in colour. Ternary form is a possibility. The first song 'A' is followed by another 'B', after which the first song is repeated in the order A - B - A.

A traditional instrumental accompaniment or interlude can add considerable interest.

### 3. RHYTHM

Strength and interest of rhythm is one of the characteristics of African music and this should be maintained throughout the performance. Complexity of rhythm is often a fair guide to the authenticity of an African song.

### 4. DICTION

The words of the song should be distinct.

### 5. TONE

Credit should be given for quality of tone. Two extremes should be avoided—shouting and timidity. It will be found that the choir trained in breath control will almost certainly produce the best tone.

