

NOTES AND NEWS

LORDS OF THE FOREST

The Gala Première of the film "Lords of the Forest", made in the Congo by the International Scientific Foundation of Belgium under the leadership of Prof. Louis van den Berghe, was presented at the 20th Century Theatre, Johannesburg, on the 1st August, 1960, by and for the Institute for the Study of Man in Africa. The Institute, under the chairmanship of Prof. P. V. Tobias, was founded recently to be a centre for both the investigation and dissemination of knowledge about man in Africa. *Address:* The Secretary, I.S.M.A., c/o Medical School, Hospital St., Johannesburg, South Africa.

The film itself was centred around the Ituri pygmies, and the animals of the forest in which they live. It was a unique and expertly filmed record of a little-known part of Africa.

The African music and sounds which were relayed in the foyer before the performance were provided by the International Library of African Music.

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SPIRIT OF AFRICA

Report from the S.A. Association of Arts, Windhoek, S.W. Africa . . .

"We had the unique opportunity of obtaining an Exhibition of young native art from French Equatorial Africa and the Belgian Congo of Brussels World Fair fame, at a time when our own hall was occupied. However the authorities came to our rescue, and we were able to stage this colourful and exciting display in the State Museum, with the Director, Prof. A. J. D. Meiring, opening it.

This first Exhibition of its type attracted *some 2,000 visitors*, at the same time providing good publicity for the new Museum. After hundreds of prints and Christmas Cards had been sold, a fresh supply had to be ordered from the African Music Society which had compiled the Exhibition, in order to satisfy the eager demands of the public. All the schools co-operated and sent students to view this Exhibition"

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Bantu stevedores at Port Elizabeth and East London are encouraged to sing while they work. They are employees of the South African Railways who are undergoing a course of training in the handling of goods to avoid damage. They are also given lessons in singing, health hygiene and safety rules. "It is a natural habit for the Bantu to sing while doing manual work and we are encouraging it," said a railway official according to "The Star's" representative at Port Elizabeth.

From *Bantu*, October, 1960.

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INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC COUNCIL

The I.F.M.C. will be holding its Fourteenth Annual Conference in Quebec from August 28th to September 3rd, 1961. The main themes of the Conference will be:-

1. Comparisons between the folk music (including dance) of the various national and racial groups of the Americas and the folk music of their respective homelands.
2. The present state of Amerindian folk music.
3. Folkmusical instruments of the Americas.

For further information apply to: Miss Renée Landry, Canadian Folk Music Society, National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, Canada, or to Miss Maud Karpeles, Secretary, International Folk Music Council, 35, Princess Court, Queensway, London W.2.

The dates of this conference have been arranged so as to enable members to attend the Congress of the International Musicological Society, which is to take place in New York from September 5th to 11th, 1961. Further particulars can be obtained from: The Secretary, American Musicological Society, 204 Hare Building, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 4, Pa., U.S.A.

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AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY ART

The first comprehensive study to be made of contemporary African painting and sculpture will be undertaken by Marshall W. Mount, Chairman of the Department of Art History at Finch College, New York, with the aid of a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, it was announced on January 16 by Dr. Roland R. De Marco, President of the College.

Mr. Mount and his wife plan to leave New York early in February to spend a year travelling through Africa south of the Sahara, studying, photographing and collecting contemporary painting and sculpture, and talking with artists and teachers. Among the countries they expect to visit are the Union of South Africa, Uganda, Rhodesia, the Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Ghana and the Ivory Coast. The project will take them to many of the major cities in these countries as well as into "the bush".

In discussing plans for the study, Mr. Mount pointed out that although interest in older, traditional African sculpture is at an all time high in the United States, little attention has been paid to the work being done at the present time. "In the past few years," Mr. Mount said, "Americans have become more and more aware of African tribal art—an art that sprang from social and aesthetic traditions sometimes

centuries old. But the traditions that were the powerful motivating forces behind African art are changing rapidly or disappearing entirely and are being replaced by new concepts and ideas. It is the purpose of this project to study the new art being created and the ways in which it reflects the social, political and economic upheavals taking place in Africa today."

"The opportunity to study an art emerging from such a rapidly changing society is a rare one," Mr. Mount continued. "Perhaps never again will a people cover so great a gap in so short a period of time, and perhaps never again will we have a chance to study what happens to painting and sculpture in such a period of flux".

Mr. Mount received his B.A. and M.A. from Columbia University where he is currently working for his Ph.D. degree. He also studied at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts. He is a resident of Jersey City, New Jersey. His wife, Isabel Mount, who will assist him in the study, has a B.A. from Barnard College and is Assistant Manager of Public Relations at The American Museum of Natural History, American address: Finch College, 52E. 78 St., New York 21, N.Y., U.S.A.

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AFRICAN MUSIC IN LONDON

It is seldom a year goes past when Horniman's Museum does not have one or two lectures on African Music. The Museum has one of the finest collections of indigenous musical instruments from all over the world, and its curator, Dr. Samson, has a special interest in Africa. On Wednesday November 9, Kotey Tay, a Ghanaian master drummer, and author of the West African section of A. M. Jones's recent book, gave a very interesting talk illustrated, of course, with drumming, clapping and gong beating. The Ghana High Commission has now combined the various traditional music bodies which have formed among students into one organisation assisted by the Commission with Kotey Tay as the musical leader. The group gives displays all over London and in the provinces wherever there is an exhibition of Ghanaian handicrafts and culture. For Nigeria, the army was very successful in finding among the ranks at least eight accomplished *Atilugwu* dancers from the Eastern Region, who use ankle rattles and foot stamping as part of their percussion. The show was put on as part of the special Nigeria Night of the Royal Tattoo at Earls Court, and the group had also managed to get their own instruments to accompany them.

But perhaps the highlight for African music lovers was a very good lecture at Chatham House by Mr. A. R. Sibson, the Chairman of the Rhodesian Academy of Music. The lecture was sponsored by the Institute of Race Relations because the Director, Mr. Philip Mason, considered that the two subjects were connected. Mr. Sibson is not himself a musician but an engineer, but he is very interested in African music and thinks that it can make the greatest social link between the races in Rhodesia. In Rhodesia one must, he said, develop ways of life which are not intolerably incompatible to all races, and that these must be built not on race, but on comparable standards of ability and taste. While the West has built up its culture from hundreds of years of absorbing music, art and literature from other countries, Africa has largely been on the receiving end; this led to patronage, which was not a good foundation for mutual respect. Africans, he felt, could teach the West on two things. One was their great ability for sports and athletics, and the other was music and the arts. For this reason the Academy had begun courses for African musicians which would lead to better constructed indigenous instruments, and a sufficient knowledge of musical theory to be able to write down and orchestrate their music. Mr. Sibson feels that once the standards of music are made comparable, European musicians will become more interested, and the two styles of music can be blended into something uniquely Rhodesian . . . the perfect partnership. Mr. Sibson explained the enormous importance of music to the African; how it was the newspaper, and great social background of tribal life, and he also gave technical descriptions of the heptatonic scale, illustrating it with a delightful *mbira* made in an improved way at the African Music Society's headquarters in Johannesburg. He described the rhythm of African music as far more erudite than anything known in Europe, and believed that when it was made comprehensible it should earn the respect of the world.

Most of the information came out at question time, and some of us were left with the feeling that perhaps African music was going to be too much bent to conform to European tastes and standards. Prof. Margaret Reade's question about enrollment made us realise that no Europeans were on the course at present. Mr. Wilson-Fox asked about the potential ability of African musicians, and was told that it was equal to Europeans, and in rhythm, far ahead, but my question about the improvement of instruments brought out the reply that because of harmonic "limitations" in the African scales, the improved instruments were all being tuned to the European scale. It is the half tones in African harmony, giving the music a meaning akin to speech, which is basic to their music, and the speaker had himself said earlier that some European hymns or other simple tunes sounded like nonsense rhymes to African ears. With the harmony European-produced on Europeanised indigenous instruments, and the percussion magnificently African, there is no doubt that some very fine new music will result. But will it be altogether satisfactory for Africans? An artist who paints only with two colours can produce beautiful work; why then should a varying and shorter scale which fits the tonal languages not be satisfactory? Neither Chinese nor Indian music sounds particularly melodious to the uninitiated European ear, but it gives perfect satisfaction to Chinese and Indians. Miss Barbara Dodds of Kenya told the meeting that the Africans there are showing an enormous interest in their own music, improving the instruments themselves, and forming choirs and bands in many parts of the country. David Rycroft, an early member of the African Music Society, and formerly in charge of the cultural recreation of non-Europeans in Johannesburg,

spoke of the great rhythm and power of Zulu and Matabele music where foot stamping took the place of drums. Mr. Philip Mason thanked the speaker, who was heartily applauded, and he summed up by saying that the Academy had two difficult obstacles to overcome in this worthwhile project. One was to achieve a synthesis which was fair to both musical cultures, and the other was to persuade Europeans in Rhodesia to respect it. Everyone at the meeting agreed with the speaker that a genuine cultural link could be the strongest in the chain of the much desired partnership in Rhodesia, but that neither the European nor the African personality must be submerged.

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FOUNDERS DAY IN GHANA

I was lucky this year to arrive in Accra in time for the 1960 Founder's Day Gala Performance of Drama, Drumming and Dancing in the grounds of Christiansborg Castle.

The show was presented by the Arts Council, in a superb setting of floodlit trees with the sounds of the sea behind the castle. It was of course intended to honour the President but he had that very day flown to America to attend the United Nations. But there was a large and important audience to watch one of the best displays of traditional music I have seen. The show began with a play "*Agoraso Me bo*", a mystical fantasy beautifully acted and produced. Music and dance of course were part of the play with a chorus, drummers, and Samuel Asare playing a delightful mournful flute. Then we saw the *Agbekor* Dance by Philip Gbeho's Research Group. It is the classic war dance of the Ewe people with the double gong, magnificent drumming, and the virile dancing in which every muscle, particularly of the back and shoulders, follows every contrapuntal beat of the drums. Philip Gbeho was directing and occasionally taking a turn at the master drum. After this a Kumasi group gave us some of the charming dances of Ashanti beginning with the *Adowa* which is said to be modelled on the graceful movements of the antelope. The dancers were beautifully dressed girls with handkerchiefs. We also saw the *Sikyi* dance, and the *Asokore Manpong* with its rich rhythmic patterns. Finally, the charming *Dampom*, a danced love story. The show ended with another dance-play of the *Yewe* cult with the typical virile dancing, given by Philip Gbeho and his group.

The Ghana Arts Council, and especially Philip Gbeho, are to be congratulated for keeping the traditional music so much alive, and for such splendid production.

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CELEBRATION DANCING IN NIGERIA

I was in Nigeria for the Independence celebrations and was sorry to miss the best displays of dancing which were, I believe, in the Eastern Region. Princess Alexandra saw these, but did not attend any of the other displays, either in Ibadan or Lagos, which was a great pity for she may well have left these regions thinking that they had no traditional dancing or music of any consequence. The truth is very much otherwise. Hubert Ogunde's magnificent Independence play or satire, "Song of Nigeria" was performed on the Racecourse in Lagos to an astonishing audience of nearly thirty thousand people. It was performed at night with arc lights on the performers and microphones set so that the vast audience could hear the words. There were of course delightful Yoruba drum and dance sequences, and some excellent humorous acting. But the highlight of the evening was at the end, when all Hubert Ogunde's fans (almost the entire audience) flocked onto the course to surround him and his players.

There were displays of traditional dances in Lagos and in Ibadan, perhaps the most notable being the *Ugbegun Ishan* acrobatic dancers from Benin (Fig. 1). They came on accompanied by drummers and two fiauists, the latter being the conductors. As the flute guided them, the dancers whirled round in the air near the ground without touching down, to the great delight of the audience. There were the delightful girl dancers of Ekiti in the Ondo Province, with scarves round their waists and fire-brands, balancing pots on their heads, one of them with a high plant growing in it. The Itsekiris were there (Figs. 2 and 3), the men in straw hats and the women in coral headdresses, and various humorous masks, depicting men dressed as women, tumblers, and a dozen more.

At St. Anne's School there was a display by the school girls of Cameroons dancing, and a Yoruba play, and finally in Ibadan there was a grand Masquerade at the new stadium. From early morning the masks paraded through the town on the way to the stadium followed by big crowds and each with their own drummers. The *Egungun* cult (ancestor worship) masks were many and colourful, led by the Olori-Alagba of Ibadan, and they were soon followed by the Ifa Priests display, the Sango worshippers, and the Hunters' display. In the afternoon the tall *Igunnu* masks appeared like six foot elongated tents hung with coloured ribbons, and they were followed by the *Oloriko* masks in brilliant velvet gowns wearing headdresses studded with pieces of looking glass. No such display is complete without the *Agere* stilt dancers (Fig. 4), who were performing as well in various parts of the town. Then came the spectacle beloved of Yoruba audiences, the "Magics" (Fig. 5) Here Dr. 7.7.Chandos in a gay waistcoat, with a group of players wearing everything from lounge suits to full evening dress, pulled large snakes out of small boxes, shot people and "revived" them, pulled chains between their noses and mouths, walked about with their hats burning flames, and otherwise delighted and thrilled their audience.

These cults now survive more as a spectacle and a masquerade, and their religious followers are dwindling, but they are still a great part of Ibadan's colourful tradition. Certainly no rejoicings could take place without their appearance.

The new independent Nigeria is clearly determined to keep alive the indigenous music and dance of the people.

Nigerian Musical Instruments

Another event during the recent celebrations of Nigeria's independence was a demonstration of musical instruments arranged by the Lagos branch of the Nigerian Arts Council. It was an open air show at the Museum, and began with a talk about the place of the drums by that great exponent of African music, His Highness the Timi of Ede. With his group, he demonstrated the talking drums (Fig. 6) and the intricacies of rhythm. He was followed by the Kalabari Group from the River Provinces of Eastern Nigeria. They had slit drums, double gongs mounted on a resonator, and a number of *kuku*, which are green mud pots made over heated moulds of different sizes, and filled with differing amounts of water. The sound produced was very pleasant and melodious. The Itsekiri Group from Warri followed and was delightful with the mother drum, gong and four other smaller drums accompanying the shirted men and the ladies with their handkerchiefs. The Hausa Group from the North was very interesting. The melody was the typical wailing northern music from *goges* (one-stringed fiddles made of calabashes), and the percussion was inverted calabashes hit with small metal sticks and fingers ringed with metal. The music was genuine and traditional, but the dancing was not, and resembled the sort of thing one sees in a Physical Training College. The most exciting number was, as I expected, from that land of percussion, the Ibo country. They had two drums on stands, a xylophone, a *ngelenga* drum (used we were told for transmitting messages), rattles, and bamboo sticks beaten on hardwood slats. The music was extremely stimulating and the dancers quite magnificent. They have the ability to shiver through their entire bodies, so that they seemed to shimmer as they danced. I think the Ibo people lead Nigeria in the matter of rhythm, and Sammy Akpabot, now head of the Music Department of the N.B.C. in Eastern Nigeria, will be a big influence in keeping this music alive. He plans to improve the instruments so that they can give a better range.

The last item was an "Afro-Skiffle Group" from Ibadan over which it is best to draw a veil. It was a most horrible example of blending the worst elements in two totally different musical cultures, an insult to traditional music and also to jazz.

MERCEDES MACKAY.

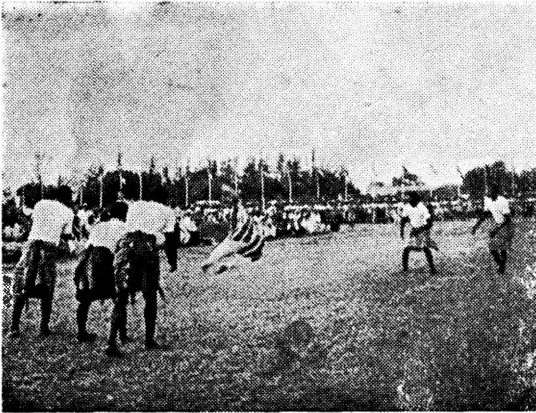


Fig. 1. *Ugbegun Ishan* acrobatic dance with flautists.



Fig. 2. *Itsekiri* dancers.



Fig. 3. *Isekiri* dancers.



Fig. 4. *Agere* stilt dancer.

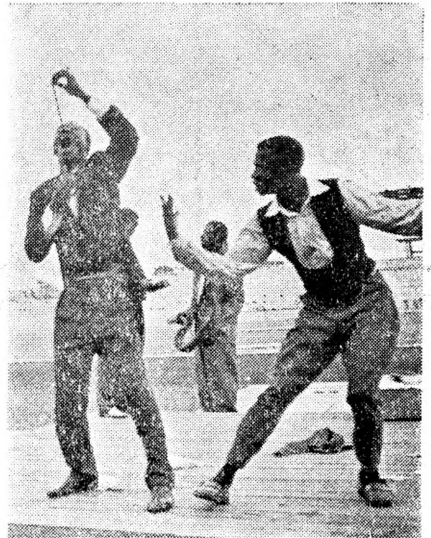


Fig. 5. Dr. 7.7. Chandos and the "Magics".

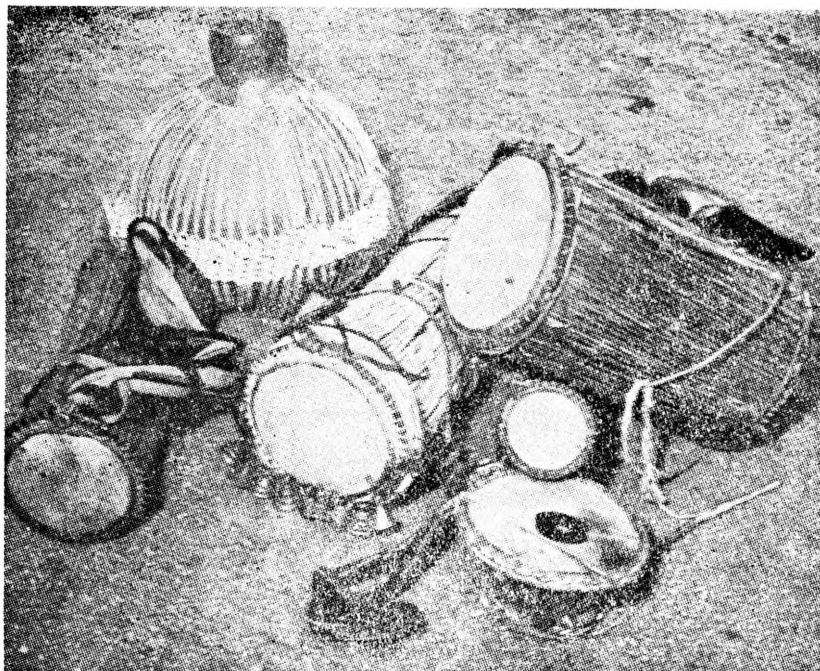


Fig. 6. Yoruba talking drums.

REPORT OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE AFRICAN MUSIC SOCIETY

PRESENT: Mr. H. Steafel (In the chair).
75 Members and friends.
Col. H. W. Boardman (Hon. Treasurer).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Miss J. Pim.
Mr. A. D. Viney.
Mrs. Waters.
Mrs. Hunt.
Mr. G. Relly.
Mr. C. R. Savory.
Mr. H. T. Tracey.

TRIBUTE TO DR. A. W. HOERNLÉ:

The Chairman stated that since the last Annual General Meeting the Society had suffered a great loss with the death of Dr. A. W. Hoernlé. Dr. Hoernlé, he stated had been a foundation member of the Society and it was in fact she who had encouraged Mr. Tracey to form the Society and had assisted him with suggestions as to the way in which the Society should be established and operated; it was, therefore, obvious that only Mr. Tracey knew the full extent of her support and it was regretted that he was not present to tell the meeting of her early association with the Society.

The Chairman spoke of Dr. Hoernlé's great knowledge of Africans and her humane attitude towards them which was enhanced by her very practical mind which was always directed towards the wise and fundamental actions to be taken to educate Europeans and Africans in their knowledge of each other. He pointed out that as the Society became established it was Mrs. Hoernlé and others who supported its extension into the Library of African Music. Her connections with the University of the Witwatersrand and other institutions were invaluable and she spoke with such knowledge and authority that her support influenced and gained help from many sources. Before and even during her illness she used to come to the