

“THE LION ON THE PATH AND OTHER AFRICAN STORIES”, told by HUGH TRACEY. Illustrated by ERIC BYRD. Music transcribed by ANDREW TRACEY. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967. 18/- 127 pp.

This is a collection of 25 short stories gathered, set down and now re-told by Dr. Tracey. Twenty-three of these brief tales originate from Rhodesia and are translated from the Shona language; one is a rendering, in blank verse, of a Zulu legend and one comes from the Transkei.

The translations must be seen as attempts to preserve the oral tradition of the African storyteller — and indeed they come into their own splendidly, when read aloud, the sounds evoke vivid mental pictures, not without the occasionally gruesome touch. In the tale of the Grandmother and the Crocodile, inevitably the grandmother comes off second best, in fact the crocodile “ate her all up” — a process conjured up all too clearly by a repeated, “Chwa, chwa, chwa, chwa” — the perfect evocation of a juicy crunch.

The memory is repeatedly stirred by echoes of other tales, other mythologies. Thus the account of why Rabbit has a short tail has a touch of “Just-So” about it. “Kamiyo of the River”, the Transkeian story is a variation on the theme of Pygmalion and Galatea, while the Zulu legend “Chief above and Chief below”, has something of the Pied Piper in it. There are water sprites and wily baboons, rabbit outwits lion and is in turn brought low by that repository of all wisdom, the tortoise. Animals and humans move on the same plane, communicating freely and the spirit of Aesop is not far off.

Dr. Tracey provides an informative Foreword and some useful hints on pronunciation. The illustrations by Eric Byrd are lively and delightful. Readers concerned with African music will be interested in the melodies accompanying many of the stories, which have been transcribed by Andrew Tracey.

The stories will delight both the young and the young-at-heart, but it would be a mistake to regard it as a book for children only.

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RECORD REVIEW

CHURCH MUSIC FROM AFRICA ON EUROPEAN RECORDS.

In the last few years three German companies have published a number of records of non-European Christian music. The companies who have produced these records are publishers of Christian literature and music; the records can be ordered from them direct:

CALIG Verlag GMBH., 8 München 19, Postfach 146, West Germany.

CHRISTOPHORUS-Verlag, Herder GMBH., 78 Freiburg/Breisgau, Herman-Herder-Strasse 4, West Germany.

L. SCHWANN Verlag, 4 Düsseldorf 1, Postfach 7640, West Germany.

All of the discs are mono recordings.

Most of the musical recordings of the non-European programmes of these publishers have come from Africa. They can be classified in three groups: (1) Traditional music with Christian texts. (2) Traditional music which has been arranged. (3) New compositions of concert-like type.

CHRISTOPHORUS CLP 73,327. Christi Geburt in der Liturgie der Äthiopier (The Birth of Christ in the Liturgy of the Ethiopians). 10" 33½ r.p.m. mono record. Price: DM 15,-.

This record presents extracts of the Christmas Mass of the Catholics of the Ethiopian Church. It is sung by P. Augustinos da Hebo, with the choir of the Papal Ethiopian College, Vatican City, and contains all the important parts of the liturgy sung *a capella*. A Christmas hymn is added in which sistrum and drum accompany the vocal music. This record is of great documentary value as this type of music has never before been published on record. Explanations and song texts are given in German.

An interesting cross-section of Christian folk music from West and Central Africa is published on CHRISTOPHORUS CLP 75,466, “Twenda Na Jesu”, Gesänge aus den christlichen Missionen Afrikas (Songs from the Christian Missions in Africa). The 10" 33½ r.p.m. mono record contains 16 items recorded by Boris Konietzko during field-work in Africa. There are explanations in German on the jacket and brief spoken introductions in German. Konietzko presents with this record a wide variety of traditional African musical forms, ranging from solo/ostinato-choral-response of the Fang (bands 1 and 2), to solo/ostinato+drone-choral-response of the Songe (band 8), singing in thirds, from the Southern Cameroons (band 14) to Pende polyphony (band 7) and also including American Negro Spirituals with underlaid African texts (bands 5 and 6) as well as European hymn tunes with African words (bands 10-12). Thus the record comprises a valuable selection of Christian African songs of the unsophisticated type as sung by the average African Christian. Corresponding to the great variety of tribes represented, there is a wide variety of musical styles.

It may be mentioned here that the same company has produced CHRISTOPHORUS CLP 75,483, “Makadanganga”, a 10" 33½ r.p.m. mono disc with field recordings of the same collector from West and Central Africa containing again a variety of interesting musical styles. Both records cost DM 15,- each.