

“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.

E. DEY

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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.

SCHWANN AMS 12,017, *Geistliche Gesänge aus Dahomey* (Christian Songs from Dahomey), a 7" 33½ r.p.m. mono record, cost DM 8,- presents Christianized Hanyā songs from Dahomey.

Hanyā is a type of Dahomean folk song found at Abomey, the former royal residence. In fact, the listener will be reminded of the singing published years ago on Contrepoint M.C. 20,093, "Dahomey, Musique des Princes, Fête des Tohossou", and it becomes evident that the musical style of the Schwann Dahomean record is not folk but courtly ceremonial. This Hanyā singing was discovered by the Rev. Gauthier in the years after World War II and first introduced into church processions. This was such a success that another missionary, the Rev. Malo, introduced it into the actual church service. Native priests have since made a large collection of Hanyā songs of which some hundreds are now used in the church. On the record there are five songs sung by a female soloist and women's choir with rattle and bell (I cannot hear the "toba" or *mbira* mentioned on the jacket). There is a general introduction in German on the jacket while the contents of each song are explained in French on the record.

SCHWANN AMS 12,018, *Geistliche Gesänge der Mossi, Voltarepublik* (Christian Songs of the Mossi).

Sung by the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, recorded at the Sisters' monastery at Manga in 1960. A 7" 33½ r.p.m. mono disc of good sound quality. Price DM 8,-.

The sleeve notes give a brief introduction to the contents of the songs, in German. The songs were created by Sister Ann and her Congregation; they are improvised both in words and tunes, growing out of the deep prayer mood of the singers. There is antiphony: a duet (Sister Ann and an assistant) and choir. The organum-like part-singing with much drone and parallel fourths is striking. The singing is accompanied by two lively drums, a *Denré* and a *Lunga*. There is no trace of European influence, and the whole performance sounds as spontaneous as those on the previous discs.

Next follow the recordings with music which is traditional or folk-style but which show the hand of the arranger.

Firstly there are CALIG CAL 17,750, "Psalmodie Bassa", and CAL 17,751, "Missa Bassa", two 7" 45 r.p.m. mono records for DM 8,- each.

There are sleeve notes with German translations of the song texts. Father Luitfrid Marfurt OSB (who also wrote "Musik in Afrika", Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, München, 1957) was the first to have a number of psalms translated into the languages of the Cameroons to be combined with traditional local music. The native Abbé Aloys Lihan is a most active musician and introduced tribal music into the church of Duala. He also directs the performances on the records. All the songs are composed in the typical African antiphonal style with a male soloist and mixed chorus. The instrumental accompaniment consists of hand-bells, xylophones and *mbira*, rattles and drums. While the first two items on CAL 17,750 (side 1) sound traditional, the arranger's hand can be felt in the choral sections and instrumental parts of the rest of the compositions and particularly in the "Aleluia" on CAL 17,751 which, from beginning to end, is a fixed composition. Thus on this record we find various stages of arrangement, from adding Christian texts to traditional music to newly composed music.

SCHWANN AMS 15,024, "Missa Shona", performed by the choir of the Bondolfi Mission under the direction of the composer, Stefan Magwa Ponde, a 7" 45 r.p.m. mono record for DM 8,-.

It presents a mass and a communion hymn of the Shona of Rhodesia, with sleeve notes giving the texts both in Shona and German. The music is wholly composed but based on the traditional Shona musical style, yet much less sophisticated and closer to indigenous styles than described in the following. There again is a soloist with mixed chorus in response. The rattle and drum, with their unvaried rhythmic formulas, appear rather dull and lifeless. In the solo part of the communion hymn there are occasional reminiscences of a liturgical recitative style.

On CHRISTOPHORUS CLP 75,484, a 10" 33½ r.p.m. mono record, cost DM 15,- music from Equatorial Africa, composed or arranged by Eliane Barat (I could not find out whether the composer is African or French). The performance is directed by Paul Zurfluh (which I take to be a European name; it is indeed deplorable that in some instances so little information about the composers and conductors is given! For this record of refined modern African music we would be grateful to have more information!). The sleeve notes are in German. On side 1 there is a "Missa des Piroguiers", a "Mass of the Banda Boatmen", a highly sophisticated composition by Eliane Barat for solo voices, choir ("The Little Singers of St. Laurent"), orgue, and a talking slit-drum. It is said that the composer of the mass used the characteristic motives of traditional Banda paddling songs. A most remarkable use is made of the Linga or talking drum which, in portions of repeated ostinati, drums sentences like, "We pray to God", "God is there for everybody", "God is within us", etc. and blends perfectly with the rest of the music. This mass is quite an impressive composition although it sounds more European than any of the music already mentioned. It needs careful analysis to identify any African melodic strains or passages of African style part-singing. Moreover, the music is performed by well-trained soloists (the baritone must be a professional concert singer) and choir. On side 2 there are "Chöre aus Äquatorialafrika" (Choral Songs from Equatorial Africa), six folk songs collected by Eliane Barat at various places and in several languages (Banzan, Banda, Vili, Fang). It is, however, an understatement to say that these songs are transcriptions of original folk songs, as maintained on the jacket. In fact, the originals are transformed into pieces of refined vocal music. They are performed by the same vocalists as the Mass and are accompanied by a

lively drum. By and large, this is an impressive record with modern African musical art rather than music for everyday use.

As such it reminds me strongly of the "*Missa Luba*" of the "*Troubadours du Roi Baudouin*" (on Philips 428,138 PE) which according to the sleeve notes is "a mass in pure Congolese style without any influence of European music". The "*Troubadours*" are well enough known to make it quite clear that the mass may be based on traditional musical elements of the Luba but in fact is a very artistic composition performed by an extremely well-trained choir of world fame. No composer is mentioned and it is claimed that "the music was not written. The whole mass is the result of general co-operation and of a spontaneous inspiration." It would be interesting to know how this worked in practice. Listening to the record gives the impression of a well-balanced and well-worked composition which makes it difficult to believe that improvisation should have played such an important part in the creation of the work. It seems rather a counterpart to Barat's composition. In both cases we would like to know more about the composers or the origin of the works.

The records reviewed here give a fascinating impression of the great variety of musical styles and forms in recent African church music from folk to art music and concert styles.

PHILIPS (Dutch) stereo 840,254 BY, "*Missa Kwango*", performed by "*Les Petits Chanteurs-Danseurs de Kenge*" (West Congo) and directed by Pater Bernard van den Boom, SVD. A 12" L.P. cost DM 25,-.

From the English sleeve we learn that Pater van den Boom formed the choir in October, 1964, and that the choir "is made up of between 65 and 70 African schoolboys most of whom live outside Kenge in villages and are, therefore, in constant contact with their own tribes and tribal traditions." From them the Pater learned native tunes, songs in Kipelende, Kiyaka and Kikongo. These tunes he worked into the "*Missa Kwango*" and some church songs presented on side 1 of the record. On side 2 the Pater's arrangements of local folk songs (with original texts) can be heard.

In other words, the "*Missa*" is not a native creation but the Dutch Pater's, based on native songs. All songs — including the Mass, the church songs and the folk songs — are sung in simple homophonic style with little variation, and accompanied by drums, rattle and partly by guitar, or by accordeon. Thus the arrangements are simple and monotonous. There is some arranged antiphony. The songs seem to cover a wide range of styles: traditional ceremonial songs, story songs, dance songs and even modern songs (e.g. "*Marguerite*").

The choir is well-trained and it "has proved in several public performances, for instance in Leopoldville, that it is not only an excellent choir but also a first-rate dance group." The record is interesting in comparison with the other discs reviewed.

WOLFGANG LAADE.

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The Editor acknowledges receipt of the following books and records which we were unable to review in this year's issue. Reviews will be included in our next publication:

- Swahili — English Dictionary by Charles W. Rechenbach.
Catholic University of America Press, 1967.
- Angola Folk - Music, II. Chokwe People. Lunda District.
Campanhia de Diamantes de Angola.
- A Collection of Magnetic Tapes and Discs.

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NOTES AND NEWS

S.A.F.M.A. CONCERT, 6th APRIL, 1967

On the 6th April, 1967, SAFMA (The South African Folk Music Association), held a concert at the Selborne Hall, Johannesburg, in aid of the Library and recognition of Dr. Tracey's work.

All the singers taking part gave their services free of charge, and this spontaneous and generous gesture on the part of SAFMA and the singers is much appreciated by Dr. Tracey. The concert proved successful and a total of R500 was collected. The African Music Library displayed books and records in the foyer of the Selborne Hall for public interest.

The cheque for R500 was handed over to Dr. Tracey by the Chairman of SAFMA, Mr. Ray Sher, at the Folk Village week-end, held at the "Roger Brew's Holiday Camp."

The "African Music Society" warmly applauds this fine gesture made by SAFMA, and congratulates them on their many efforts, for furthering and stimulating the interests of folk music in South Africa.