

LES INSTRUMENTS DE MUSIQUE AU NIGER

Communication présentée par M. Tolia Nikiprowetsky à la Conférence "East and West in Music" (Jerusalem, about 1963) with 19 photographs.

DARK MUSIC

Paper presented to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, Session 1962-63, by David Rycroft. pp. 24, with maps, illustrations and transcriptions.

Two interesting transcripts of papers read before two conferences as far apart as Jerusalem and Manchester, England, have come our way. Both are equally welcome, the one for the new information it contains about instruments which are Saharan rather than sub-Saharan and the other for the re-statement of many of the characteristics of living music in Africa.

The division so frequently made between sub-Saharan and supra-Saharan cultures is clearly demonstrated in M. Nikiprowetsky's paper which is printed in both English and French with excellent illustrations. That this division of cultures is no recent recent invention has been demonstrated by botanical archaeologists who have shown that sub-Saharan ancient vegetation belongs to the same category as South American flora, whereas Saharan fossils all belong to the North American varieties. Not that for a moment we are suggesting any direct connection between floral and aural phenomena. But a cursory glance at the photographs immediately shows which side of the line the instruments of the Niger belong. Drums, one string fiddles, oboes and flutes appear to predominate among the Sudanic speaking peoples whose style of music suggests attachment to the Arab rather than the Negroid world.

David Rycroft's able survey is concerned primarily with demonstrating that the study of African musics provides important information for other disciplines as well now that the science of sound recording on tape has been perfected. Mr. Rycroft who is a member of the A.M.S. is well known to readers of this Journal.

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MUSICAL COLONIALISM

In *Africa Report* for January 1963, Alan P. Merriam, the Music Editor, reviews three commercially published records of South African "Town music". He opens his review with this statement:

"There is more to the study of African music in South Africa than the traditional music of the Zulu and other tribes. Especially in the urban areas, a new popular music has been developing, made up of elements of the traditional combined with Western popular jazz forms.

This music has been little-studied by the experts."

Who these experts may be is not stated.

As a jazz man he is naturally biased towards those aspects of music with which he himself is most associated, and rejoices whenever a piece of music displays the familiar tricks of American jazz. One item he commends because it is "the best and most jazz-like piece on the record"; and another because it is "the most professionally jazz-like piece". His claims that the kind of music which is extensively produced through popular demand in Johannesburg is "new", that it "has been little studied by the experts", and that it does not seem "that anyone has done justice to what is a living, pulsating, swinging music, full of drive and joy" can hardly be substantiated. Had he consulted the extensive catalogues of the many gramophone companies in South Africa several of which have been in existence for over thirty years propagating by all means at their disposal, competitions, concerts, prizes, music bursaries and free instruments, in addition to recording contracts, advanced fees and, in one or two cases, pensions for

disabled musicians, he could not have suggested as he does in his review, that the general attitude towards South African "town music" is hostile. "There are those who frown on this kind of music" he writes "but I am not among them". "Music changes," he pontificates, "people produce the sounds they like, and nothing can stop them". If only he knew how those changes had been made over the years and who had helped the African musicians to produce "the sounds they like" and the ones that pay, the many philanthropists, the clergy, the Welfare Societies, the Youth Clubs, the Musicians and Artists Associations, the Theatrical Producers and Dramatists, as well as the gramophone companies,* he could not have allowed himself the luxury of patronising their efforts as if it had been left solely to the perspicacity of an ethno-musicologist to discover the virtues of this "new" music for the first time. Nor would he have laid himself open to correction on the question of what is and what is not traditional in the music of the many peoples of South Africa, for example, by suggesting that zithers, harps and lyres were the natural instruments of the Sotho.

It is good to hear that Mr. Merriam appreciates South African "town music" and that the jazz element which has been injected into it is not found lacking. So, to invert his opening sentences — There is more to the study of African music in South Africa than the popular musics of the town dance bands especially in the rural areas where new music is constantly being developed and from which South African "town music" derives most of its drive and joy.

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FOLCLORE MUSICAL DE ANGOLA

Angola Folk Music

Collection of Magnetic Tapes and Discs

Vol. I. Povo Quioco. Chokwe People. Lisboa 1961.

After many years of devoted research into the folk music of Angola, the Cultural services of the Companhia de Diamantes de Angola have published their first volume of transcriptions taken from the text of songs recorded on magnetic tape. This volume reflects only the work done by them on the music of the Chokwe Tribe. Much additional work both in the field and at their Museum at Dondo in North Eastern Angola has already been undertaken and will form the subject of additional volumes.

The present publication on which every care and thought has been expended is printed in both Portuguese and English in approximately Medium Quarto size (11½ x 16") with 60 illustrations, several of them in full colour. There are also maps of the region with full particulars concerning the locality of each recording and other details.

The whole work is accompanied by copies of the magnetic tapes themselves taken from the master tapes now stored at the headquarters of the Companhia de Diamantes at Lisbon.

The quality of both tapes and transcriptions deserves the highest praise, and reflects not only the devoted and continuous work on the part of the field staff but in still greater degree the foresight and generosity of the person behind the whole research, Dr. Júlio de Vilhena, one of the Directors of the Company.

This Journal would like to be able to comment in detail both on the music collected and the descriptions provided as soon as this can be undertaken by a qualified authority. In the meanwhile from what we have already heard of the music and seen of the accompanying detail we can state that without question this publication far exceeds in all round quality anything which has so far been published on the folk music of a single region. The Directors of the Companhia de Diamantes and their research team are to be congratulated most sincerely. If only other great industrial organisations would

* See "African Music from the point of view of the Record Industry" page 41.