

NOTES AND NEWS

A CHRISTMAS DANCE

Précis of article in the Catholic Herald. Fr. Giorgetti.

The Azande tribe of the Southern Sudan, like all primitive people, express their emotions by means of dancing. The attitude of the Catholic Church towards this manifestation is to make use of the dancing in so far as it can help Christian worship. Father Giorgetti, F.S.C.J., who has made a study of Zande dancing, recently devised a dance to be performed after Mass on Christmas Day to the accompaniment of drums and an accordion. This dance told the story of the consternation created in hell by the announcement of the birth of the Saviour and of the joy of the Zande and other tribes who come to pay homage to the Child Jesus.

More recently the original dance was converted into a ballet to the accompaniment of a band and accordion, and was watched by members of other tribes, Protestant Christians, Moslems and non-Christians from distant area. The ballet was performed on the feast of Corpus Christi, the finale being accompanied by the singing of an Eucharistic hymn.

Another dance was devised, to music based on themes of tribal songs, for performance on the feast of the Rosary before the statue of Our Lady, and to express the convert's feelings of filial love and veneration.

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FACILITIES FOR STUDY

The International Library of African Music will be glad to welcome students at the Library for short periods of study if they can make their own arrangements for accommodation in or near Johannesburg.

At the time of going to press Herr Henry Weman, organist of the Cathedral at Uppsala, Sweden, is studying recordings at the Library headquarters on behalf of the Swedish Missions of Africa.

Facilities similar to those placed at the disposal of Herr Weman will be gladly afforded to other members of the African Music Society.

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VISITORS

The headquarters of the Society and the Library have had the pleasure of welcoming visitors from many parts of the world during the year, amongst the countries represented being the United States, France, Sweden, Belgium and the United Kingdom, in addition to those from other African territories.

Visitors are always welcome at the Library and are invited to telephone the Hon. Secretary to arrange for their visit. The building is only twelve miles from the centre of Johannesburg towards the West Rand and can be reached in half an hour by car or electric train.

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JOHANNESBURG FESTIVAL OVERTURE

The special Overture composed by Sir William Walton for the Johannesburg Festival in October of this year, and performed for the first time by the Orchestra of the South African Broadcasting Corporation conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent, contained an African theme from Ruanda-Urundi, which was recorded by Hugh Tracey in 1952. It was *Nimuzé*, a song originally sung for the safety of the Omwami of Ruanda when he went overseas to Belgium to meet the King of the Belgians for the first time. This recording, among many others, had been sent to the composer by the Festival officials to demonstrate African musical idiom.

The item is published on Long Playing Record No. 6 of the Society's *Music of Africa Series* (Decca LF 1171).

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BROADCASTS FROM ENGLAND

During the year the B.B.C. in its Third Programme has broadcast a series of talks on "Aspects of Africa", ten of which concerned subjects of special interest to the African Music Society, as follows:—

Golden City Jazz: illustrated talk by *Todd Matchikize*, composer; music critic of *Drum* magazine, Johannesburg.

The Resilience of African Music: illustrated talk by *Hugh Tracey*, Director, International Library of African Music; co-founder and Hon. Secretary of African Music Society, former Regional Director for Natal, South African Broadcasting Corporation. Resident in Africa since 1921.

The Composer in Africa: a view of the possibility of incorporating African music into a European style, by *Hylton Edwards*, composer and critic.

Music in Rhodesia: an illustrated talk about some of the social stresses which find expression in music, by *Peter Fraenkel*, Assistant Broadcasting Officer, Central African Broadcasting Station, Lusaka. Resident in Africa since 1939.

Music in Rhodesia: a talk and performance of some of the music most popular among Africans, by *Alick Nkhata*, composer and musician; Programme Organizer at the Central African Broadcasting Station, Lusaka; formerly teacher at Labwa Mission; on ex-Askari bursary studied music under *Hugh Tracey* and travelled extensively in South and East Africa.

Kalela: a study of one of the most popular dance forms on the Copperbelt. First of three talks by *J. Clyde Mitchell*, D. Phil., Professor of African Studies, University College of Rhodesia & Nyasaland. Director, Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1952-55. Author of *The Yao Village*, Manchester University Press for Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, 1956. The *Growth of Towns in Northern Rhodesia*, a social analysis, second of three talks by *J. Clyde Mitchell*.

Music of Uganda: a survey of a century of change, the first of three talks by *K. P. Wachsmann*, Ph.D., Curator, the Uganda Museum, Kampala; Director of the East African Music Scheme (Colonial Office Social Science Research Council) under which he has surveyed and recorded the music of the interlacustrine Bantu and other tribes of the region. Resident in Africa since 1938.

Harp Music of Uganda: second of three talks by *K. P. Wachsmann*.

Modern Trends in East African Music: last of three talks by *K. P. Wachsmann*

Art in Africa: reflections on past, present and future by *Melville J. Herskovits*, Professor of Anthropology and Director, Program of African Studies, Northwestern University, Illinois, and by *Frans M. Olbrechts*, Professor of Social Anthropology and the History of Primitive Art, University of Ghent; Directeur, Musée Royal du Congo Belge, Tervuren.

The series was organised, and in many cases, recorded in Africa, by *Miss Prudence Smith* of the Talks Department, B.B.C. The introductory talk was given by Lord Hailey.

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FIELD RESEARCH BY THE MUSICOLOGIST OF THE INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY OF AFRICAN MUSIC

Mr. John Blacking is at present studying the music of the Venda of the Northern Transvaal. He hopes to be able to live in the area until March, 1958, so that he can collect and write up much of the material while in the field.

He is learning to sing Venda songs and play their instruments, since this is one of the most satisfactory ways of gaining knowledge and understanding of their music. He aims to sample the music made by Venda people in all parts of Vendaland, as well as in Johannesburg and other towns.

In spite of many years' contact with Europeans the Venda have not abandoned their traditional music, and in fact the sound of drums may be heard every night even in the vicinity of Institutions where such things are sometimes officially discouraged. There are a number of Venda people who prefer a rather monotonous and insipid style of jive or a melancholy setting of sacred words to the vigour and colour of their own music, but one has the impression that they are in a minority. Even those who work in Johannesburg hire 'buses whenever there is a long weekend holiday, so that they can return to their homes—some 350 miles away—and dance *tsbikona*, their national reed-flute dance.

Some of the instruments described by Kirby in 1934 (*The Musical Instruments of the Native Races of South Africa*) are disappearing, while others are gaining popularity. For instance, the large *Mbilo mtondo* xylophone is rarely heard, while the *Mbila madeza* and *Mbila tshipai* (varieties of the Mbira, the so-called 'sansa') are played by a large number of young men and boys—especially the latter instrument, which appears to be influenced by or borrowed from the Shangaan-Tsonga people, who live around and amongst the Venda.

As an experiment in the practical application of the results of research, work is planned with the co-operation of the Vendaland Institute, Tshakhuma, on problems connected with the development of Venda traditional music. Traditional melodies and new melodies in traditional style will be elaborated by means of various contrapuntal devices and by the addition of "orchestration" employing all the novel sonorities offered by different Venda instruments.

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On the afternoon of Thursday, the 30th June, Dr. K. P. Wachsmann of Uganda gave a lecture on *Harp Songs from Uganda* at the Eighth Conference of the International Folk Council which was held at Oslo. It was illustrated by items recorded by the speaker.

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Mr. Michael Lane, a member of the Society and contributor to this Journal on subjects of Nigerian interest, has recently arrived in South Africa and has been co-opted as a member of the Executive Committee of the African Music Society.

GOLD COAST

Mr. A. A. Mensah, who has just completed five years' study at the Trinity College of Music in London, has been appointed Programme Organiser (Music) at the Broadcasting Studios, Accra.

He will be responsible for recording examples of Gold Coast indigenous music and co-ordinating this side of the work with the University College of the Gold Coast and Kumasi College of Technology and other interested bodies.

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FORTHCOMING EXHIBITION OF AFRICAN PAINTINGS

In our last edition of "African Music" Vol. 1, No. 2, we reported the staging by the Society of an exhibition of paintings collected from French Equatorial Africa, the Belgian Congo and Southern Rhodesia. This exhibition was so successful that the Hon. Secretary, during the course of a journey to Congo, French Equatorial Africa and the Federation this year, collected a representative selection of works from the four groups of artists, the Poto-Poto group of Brazzaville, the Desfossés and Moonens groups of Elisabethville, and the Cyrene School near Bulawayo. Eighty of these paintings have now been chosen for a pan-African Exhibition, and a special Committee has been formed to organise its staging and circulation.

For this purpose the African Music Society has co-operated with the Committees of the African Boys' and Girls' Clubs in Johannesburg. The main objective of the Exhibition will be to reveal African talent in all the major centres within Africa itself which rarely have the opportunity of seeing first class indigenous work, most of which is snapped up by private collectors and sent overseas.

If the Exhibition enjoys the same success as it has already experienced in Johannesburg the experiment will have proved well worth-while.

The three sponsors concerned hope to reimburse themselves for organising the Exhibition by publishing an excellent folio of approximately 12 fully coloured reproductions of selected pictures. Each reproduction in the Folio will be large enough to be taken out and framed, and should prove not only attractive for their own sake, but stimulating to all African artists throughout the continent.

Copies of the Folio will accompany the Exhibition wherever it is held and will be available for purchase.

Further details of the progress of the Exhibition will be published in the next edition of the Journal.

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The July number of *Africa*, Journal of the International African Institute, contains an article by Jean-Paul Lebeuf on the Poto-Poto School of Painting at Brazzaville. More will be heard of this group of painters, who will be fully represented in the Society's pan-African Exhibition next year (1957).

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A THORNY PROBLEM

Alexander Bland, writing in 'The Observer' (London) recently, discusses the difficulties of making a stage presentation of folk dancing. He writes:

"Primitive dancing is self-centred and expressive, the translation into muscular movement of the feelings of the individual. These may be "group feelings" but each person dances to express his own part in them. The group dances which result, and the formal patterns which arise in them, produce satisfaction to the performers; the audience (if any—ideally the whole group would participate) is of very secondary importance.

The movements of folk-dancing thus tend to be inward-facing circles or lines, with complicated manoeuvres which are often not visually very striking; the steps will be fun to do, but not (apart from that sort of pleasurable empathy by which the audience feels it is dancing itself) very beautiful or exciting to look at: the basic movements will be easy enough for the ordinary person to manage and to keep up for a decently long time.

Theatrical dancing, on the other hand (and the expression includes the temple dances of the East as well as the stage techniques of the West), is exactly the opposite. The exquisite movements which look so effective, and which express so subtle a design or emotion, are quite artificial and often unnatural and difficult. They are the result of long training, cannot conceivably be executed by an amateur, and can be sustained only for short periods. The movements are designed to be seen rather than danced, and the patterns must be all aimed in one direction.

Is it possible to devise a compromise between mystical folk-shuffling, which is often boring to watch in a theatre, and the frankly show-off capers of a row of chorus girls? It is always a tight-rope affair. The Yugoslav folk dance company a few seasons back achieved a fine balance, while the Russian Moiseyev troupe leaned towards the music-hall. The "Ballets Africains" ring more true, but Katherine Dunham's programme had more variety."

RESOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC COUNCIL

THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC COUNCIL, ASSEMBLED AT OSLO ON THE 30TH DAY OF JUNE, 1955:

BEING GRAVELY CONCERNED at the rapid disappearance of traditional songs, dances and instrumental music which is taking place in most countries of the world as a consequence of the sudden break in the continuity of the lives of those who have hitherto been the bearers of the tradition:

CONSIDERING that the rapid extension of education, the incursions of industrialism, and, above all, the spread of commercialised mechanical music are superimposing an alien culture on traditional modes of artistic expression; and that the present decline in the traditional practice of folk music arises not from unprejudiced choice but from the loss of confidence engendered by the unaccustomed ways of modern life:

BEING CONVINCED THAT folk music has a unique value in the life of to-day as (a) being in itself a complete and satisfying form of artistic expression as well as a basis for further musical development, (b) playing an important part in the scientific and historical study of the art of music and in the sociological study of mankind, and (c) forming a bond of union between the peoples of all countries at all levels of culture:

BELIEVING THAT, WHILE OUR MODERN civilisation is destroying folk music, it also has the power to revitalize it and to save it for posterity by means of mechanical recording and filming, provided that the work be done forthwith in the spirit of the injunction, '*Colligite quae superaverunt, ne pereant.*'

HAVE RESOLVED to bring to the notice of government, Unesco and other authoritative bodies the urgency and importance of preserving the folk music of their own countries: to suggest (1) that they should take immediate steps to ensure the recording and filming, under expert guidance, of all extant authentic folk music and (2) that they should treat the preservation and encouragement of folk culture as an indispensable adjunct to any campaign that may be undertaken against illiteracy.

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EXTRACT FROM REPORT OF THE FIRST INTER-AFRICA CONFERENCE OF THE C.C.T.A. (SOCIAL SCIENCES) held at Bukavu, Belgian Congo, in August-September, 1955.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO AFRICAN ARTISTS AND CRAFTSMEN.

The Conference Notes

that, in many instances, certain living artists and craftsmen are the last exponents of their art or craft, the intrinsic qualities of their work being unanimously recognised both for its historic and technical importance,

Recommends

that adequate means should be provided by the Government to protect and encourage such artists and craftsmen, with the object of maintaining the quality and continuity of African skills, and

Suggests that consideration should be given to the possibility of

1. introducing competitions and exhibitions to stimulate the efforts of those concerned by awarding prizes and, eventually, fellowships;
2. exempting approved artists and craftsmen from certain duties (such as the obligatory cultivation of crops or participation in the allocation of allotments);
3. developing and co-ordinating in an economically sound manner certain forms of home craft such as basketwork, weaving, embroidery and pottery;
4. bringing together in co-operative societies different categories of artists and craftsmen of recognised merit;
5. collecting into both central and local museums representative examples of traditional and modern arts and crafts with the object of making them available for inspection by a large African public, thus ensuring the recognition of genuine African cultural values;
6. creating a certain number of fellowships enabling the best qualified artists to improve their talents and to widen their horizon in one or other of the studios and schools of art already existing in other African countries;
7. offering to African artists and craftsmen opportunities to contribute to the work of decorating certain monuments and public buildings and using decorative designs of African origin for that work.

STUDY OF AFRICAN ART

The Conference Notes

the important place occupied by African art in the history of universal art and

Recommends

that the study of the different forms of African artistic expression

1. Should be placed on the programme of universities and other institutions of higher learning in Europe as well as in Africa;
2. should be subjected in these establishments, and in specialised museums, to strict scientific investigation.

*ENCOURAGEMENT OF AFRICAN MUSIC***The Conference Notes**

the acknowledged importance of African music as a means of community and self-expression, as a creator of social sanctions and *esprit de corps*,

also **Notes** the increasing demand for suitable music for broadcasting African programmes and **Recommendations**

that special measures, both direct and indirect, should now be taken for the encouragement and growth of African origin, by the appointment of specialist officers and-or the establishment of bureaux for its collection, classification and practical application.

*TRANSLATION OF AFRICAN SONGS***The Conference Recommendations**

that local bureaux should be established for the translation into French or English of African recorded songs and other matter.

Both records and radio programmes cross administrative boundaries and translation of material would greatly assist radio personnel and publishers of gramophone records to ensure that the canons of good taste in published items are properly observed.

*ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE ART AND PRACTICE OF DANCING***The Conference Notes**

the inherent interest on the part of most African people in the art of dancing and its use as an effective emotional outlet and as an enjoyable social recreation and

Recommendations

that every encouragement be given:

- (a) to the study of the art of African derived dancing as a recreation; and
 - (b) to the appropriate adaptation and promotion of such dances within industrial and urban communities by such means as the erection of dance arenas, the recognition of teams of dancers (in the same way as football teams are recognised) and by encouraging the designing and adaptation of dance costume, taking into account the limited supplies of traditional materials now available.
- Ethnographic films.

The Conference **Draws the Attention** of relevant Research Institutions and Information Departments of Member Governments to the following points concerning cinematographic films of African ethnographic interest:

- (a) the need to conserve and to catalogue all ethnographic films without delay in order to avoid the destruction of irreplaceable documents (a centralisation of these documents might be considered in co-operation with the various ethnographic film committees already in existence, or to be set up);
- (b) the need to encourage the making of genuine ethnographic films by urging research workers themselves to make films during their periods of field work and providing them with the means for so doing;
- (c) the making of documentary films in Africa should be submitted to strict control in order to prevent the distortion of the truth for the benefit of commercial aims.

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Joseph Kiwele, compositeur du *Salve Regina* accompagné de tambours, et de la *Missa Katanga*, de la Mission St. Jean à Elisabethville, est actuellement en Belgique où il fera un séjour de six mois au Conservatoire de Liège aux frais du Gouvernement. Le talent exceptionnel de Joseph Kiwele lui a gagné cet honneur et l'occasion de perfectionner sa formation musicale.

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OSBORN AWARDS

Owing to the small number of entries of adequate qualifications received during the year, the Osborn Awards for 1956 have been held over for the time being and will be presented as soon as entries justify recognition from this generous source, the Tom Osborn Memorial. The Society confidently expects that the delay will only be temporary and that the increase in interest which is being stimulated by the International Library of African Music in recordings of original African compositions of all kinds will soon bring in further entries for this competition.

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COWELL AWARD FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF AFRICAN MUSIC

Although most responsible authorities in all African territories have been notified of the terms of the Cowell Award, which offers a generous prize for the African man or woman who is considered to have done most during the previous year for the cause of African music and arts, insufficient recommendations have been received at the time of going to press. The first Awards, therefore, will be made in 1957.

The Society would welcome detailed recommendations as specified in "African Music" (Journal No. 2, p. 63) and the Circular on the subject, as soon as possible.
Please write for further details to the Hon. Secretary.

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AN ARTIST IN INTERIOR DECORATION

From JOHAN L. LOUW, Dowa, Nyasaland.

The group of students who were following the course in connection with African music visited the house of a woman who had become quite well known for her decorative and floral designs all round the walls. We counted eleven different colours used inside the house. Some of these could not very well be used outside since they faded when exposed to the light of the sun. For these she had used various plants or their fruits. Most of her colours, however, were different types of soil. She had kept her eyes open and whenever she had seen soil of a colour she thought she might use she had remembered it and gone to fetch it or sent for it when she needed it. A neighbour had been digging a pit. She had noticed the colour of the soil that came out of the bottom of the pit and had collected some. On another occasion she had sent a man on a bicycle to fetch some soil from a place about 15 or 20 miles away. She had noticed the colour of the soil when she had visited that area some time before.

On one occasion we invited this woman to come into the school, and it was then that she answered the students' questions about the different colours and where she had found her materials. Upon further questioning she admitted that she had been interested in making designs like these on the wall of the house and elsewhere ever since she had been quite a small child. Whenever she wanted to work out some patterns she wished to use in decorating a house, she would start on some part of the back wall outside the house. She would often erase her first attempt, and only after she had worked out the pattern to her satisfaction would she start inside the house—or outside too, for that matter—where the decoration was needed. Young people who were about to be married often invited her to do the interior decoration of the walls of their new house. She got paid for this.

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AN ATTEMPT TO INSTITUTE A COURSE IN AFRICAN MUSIC

From JOHAN K. LOUW, Dowa, Nyasaland.

When I was at Mkhoma, the head station of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Nyasaland, during the years 1953, to 1955, I suggested to the Department of Education that as one of the so-called "Special Studies" a course in African Music should be taught. The syllabus I suggested was approved. I made some use of Mr. Hugh Tracey's book *Ngoma*, but a major part of the course was aimed at finding and getting to know African musicians, their music and their instruments. The course was optional and it was attended by about eighty enthusiastic students. I was surprised to find how soon we discovered old men who made and played their own instruments and had their own music. The class was divided into groups of two, and each couple undertook to take one artist as their subject of study. We got photographs taken when the old men came to visit us, and each couple was to make their own notebook into which they would put their photographs, write something about the life-story of their subject, something about his musical history and his instruments, and copy down the words of his songs and any interesting information about them.

Some of the students began making their own instruments and also collected some instruments for the school. One of the most encouraging results of the course was the fact that one student who went out as a teacher the next year immediately got his own school interested in African music. He plays some instruments himself. He is able to make some, and it appears that his father is a fairly good musician. His scholars have taken an interest and are making and playing African instruments in the school.

When I left Mkhoma for the work at the Junior Secondary school at Kongwe in the Dowa District, a new member of the staff at the teacher training centre at Mkhoma continued the course. At Kongwe there is the opportunity to create interest in African music through a course, such as at Mkhoma, but by means of a school society such as was started at the Blantyre Secondary School some years ago. One of the features of that Society was that every member had to collect a certain number of songs every year instead of paying a subscription. We are looking forward very much to the day when we shall be able to put into the hands of scholars improve instruments such as the *bangwe*, kalimba and xylophone, which Msaho hopes to produce.