

REVIEWS

CHURCH LAW AND BANTU MUSIC, by Stephen B. G. Mbunga, approx. 16 x 24 cms., 216 pp. plus XXXI; 1963. 22 Swiss francs (37 sh. or \$5.10): Nouvelle Revue de Science Missionnaire, Schöneck-Beckenried, Switzerland (for Southern Africa, payable at P.O. Box 622, Gwelo, S.R.).

It has been remarked that "among the encyclicals, acts and pronouncements of the last Popes no other ecclesiastical discipline whatsoever has been granted a more elaborate juridical status than Church Music, and that no other discipline whatever is more the butt of contradiction, pouting or indifference." (cf. *Revue Gregorienne*, August '57, and *World Mission*, fall '59). In this important work, the outcome of a thesis in Canon Law for the obtainment of a doctor's degree at the Propaganda University in Rome, the author places himself above polemics, takes us much further back than the last Popes, in fact as early as the Old Testament, to bring us almost to the latest pronouncements of Vatica II and demonstrate that indigenous, hence Bantu, music was in the mind of the legislators all the time, and that they translated their mind in more and more explicit forms and directives in our days.

His demonstration is replete with pertinent quotations very few of us could match; his compact, fourteen-page bibliography alone is a treasure-trove, specially with regards to African Music. No table of authors is given, but any reader who also happens to have written consistently about African music will, more likely than not, find himself quoted again and again, maybe to the point of even being annoyed by verbatim quotations often not acknowledged — oversights that can possibly be attributed to the complexity of the work in progress but which could as well carry the author into boiling waters. Otherwise, the work is solidly framed; of encyclopaedic value and application, although the author has focussed it on his native Tanganyika.

A *Preliminary Part, Ethnomusicology*, in three chapters, is particularly interesting as it places the author, who expresses the views of a qualified African, in a domain that hitherto has been explored almost exclusively by outsiders. Thus he writes: "From my experience at school during singing periods, how often were we furiously scolded by the European master because we could hardly catch some intervals of his music. Of course we find great difficulty in singing all the scales of the European, and would find it still more difficult to sing the scales of the Asiatics. Europeans find, too, that they cannot easily sing either African or Asiatic scales, as they do not correspond with the scales of the instruments which they are accustomed to hearing. . . . Their minds try to think of the notes which they hear as running in the scales which they already know, and if they find it impossible to do so they think our scale is out of tune. We do exactly the same when we sing foreign music." (pp. 29-30). And as a conclusion to this Preliminary Part he writes, "From the clamour of the Bantu themselves and of the Church the substitute of foreign religious music for a Bantu religious one is to be reconsidered and where necessary to be corrected. *The key to the dilemma is the Bantu himself (emphasis ours)*. Only that he needs help, the first a school for African music, the second should come from the canonists . . ." (p. 36).

Part One, Canon 1264 §1 forms the core of the thesis. One may be inclined to skip it, and if he does he will miss the historical background that lightens and enlightens it throughout, besides such insight and information that seldom find their way in musicology; for instance: "local Ordinaries have the duty to establish Scholae Cantorum" (p. 114), "candidates to the priesthood are to be given a good training in sacred music" (ibid); quoting the canonist Bouscaren, "Anything suggestive of a dancing measure is not necessary lascivious" (p. 119). His dissertation is convincing and with him we may conclude this Part One, saying, ". . . the law or canon on sacred music is neither doubtful nor obscure. Therefore (further) interpretation according to subsidiary rules is not required." (p. 121).

Part Two, Canon 1264 as applied to Bantu Music in the light of the latest ecclesiastical documents, is the longest in the work and the one that allows the author more freedom to sail his own ship. This he does with considerable skill and a cool head, having in mind one definite aim: to show "some practical corollaries and directives which can the more easily help the gifted African musicians in their attempts to fulfil the sincere desires of the Sovereign Pontiffs — to help our faithful by making them "sing" better their true religion — and to make them understand better the Divine Message through singing "African" Church music." (p. 125). But any African music student shall derive much profit all along these pages: practically all aspects of African music is passed in review, the shaft is mercilessly separated from the wheat, possible solutions are proposed, interesting suggestions abound. One may not always agree with the author on minor issues, but on the whole it is impossible to ignore these "corollaries and directives" without taking the risk of fumbling miserably. Space allows us to mention only a few: (a) *on the use of Latin*: "The Bantu have found in Latin a substitute for that mysterious, serious, unintelligible language officially used in the pagan cult when offered the sacrifice. Until to-day one can still observe the chief of the clan or the pagan priest stammer grave unintelligible words taken by the community to express something sublime in communication with the other world." (p. 128). (b) *on Gregorian chant*: having earlier stated the position thus, "The reaction of the Bantu to this music in general is quite satisfactory," (p. 19). he goes as far as saying that "the more closely a composition for Church approaches in its movements, inspiration and savour the Gregorian form, the more sacred and liturgical it becomes . . ." (p. 132) (c) *on a mis-interpretation of polyphony* in the musical laws of harmony in the Bantu and Western music: "There is a good deal of difference which can produce a strange and queer effect on the ear . . . so that one gets an impression of boisterous clamour and unnatural murmur or restraint." (p. 136). (d) *on adoption vs adaptation*: "When Bantu sacred music is adopted by the Church, it should be *an element added to what she already possesses and not a substitute for it*" (emphasis ours). (p. 144). (e) *on adaptations* which he favours with certain restrictions, "That should, however, not mean diminution. . . . Thus the Church should give aptly to the Bantu all the good already achieved in the West, and likewise communicate to the West all the good to be achieved from the Bantu." (p. 145).

This is a refreshing book, and for many workers in the field it will come as a confirmation of their endeavours (it is ingratiating to find the gigantic work accomplished by the director of the International Library of Music and his team duly and conveniently acknowledged); for many others it will be an incentive to further research and practical work in the right direction. It is an assessment of the work of the pioneers and of the accomplishments of the workers of to-day, but it is a brilliant vindication as well. It is the conviction of this reviewer that it will mark a turning point in the field of African church music more especially; that its norms will become the trends in the renovation of what for too long could only be called "music in decay" (Hugh Tracey), when it always has had the necessary active elements to make its valuable contribution by right to the adornment of the temple of God. For, what the author says of the original use of Bantu instruments can be applied with no less accuracy to sacred music then and now, "For the Bantu no musical instrument was profane, that is, not initiated in the service of the gods, or religious services, godless, irreligious etc." (p. 167). Whether singing, or drumming, or dancing, the African is still religiously motivated whenever he wants to serve God *in spirit and in truth*. That he has to translate his motivation in forms acceptable to the tenets of the faith and morality which call for universal respect and adherence will now on remain his responsibility: as Dr. Mbunga repeats several times, after several writers before him, the educated Bantu is the key to his dilemma.

Dr. The Rev. Brother Basil

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.

follow their example what remarkable progress could be made in the future study and practise of music in Africa.

In their opening introductory notes the editors make this statement.

“The Cultural Services of the Companhia de Diamantes de Angola have the honour and pleasure of placing at the disposition of the studious the present volume, which accompanies the magnetic tapes relating to the folk-music of the Chokwes, who live in the Lovu region. Both this documentary and the collection of recordings to which it refers are merely the first of a series which the Services named above propose to distribute in order to make known the music, not only of the Chokwes, but also of the other peoples who live in the Lunda, Upper-Zambese, and Upper and Lower-Cuando regions of the Overseas Province of Angola.

The feelings of satisfaction and honour to which we referred above are based on the hard work that an undertaking of this nature represents for all concerned, beginning, evidently, with that carried out in the bush in collecting the songs and registering the words.

Detailed elements of that work are given in the first part of the present volume and for the reasons there stated; but we cannot omit to mention here the name of the Head of the Dundo Museum Folk Music Collecting Mission, who during the last ten years has carried out this arduous mission through innumerable difficulties, such as journeys made in distant regions, over bad ground, unfavourable conditions found in campin sites, the difficulty of uniting all the necessary elements for the successful conclusion of a task requiring so much time and patience. We refer to Manuel Pinho da Silva. Without the love for his work, of which he gave proof in this mission, and the physical strength which he spent generously, the Dundo Museum would have been unable to contribute in the way it is doing today to the spreading of the folk-music of the regions mentioned. We wish to refer also to the collaboration given by his wife, who accompanied him in these voyages.”

We feel sure that every member of the African Music Society would like to add their congratulations to all concerned in this work, who have been content to work quietly for many years on end without publicity or outside recognition. It must be most satisfactory to them to see their work handsomely published in this dual form, on tape and in print.

H.T.T.

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TO BE PUBLISHED SHORTLY

AFRICAN MUSIC; A BRIEFLY ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY, compiled by Darius L. Thieme, Library of Congress, Reference Dept. Music Division, 1963. XXVI, 55p., map, author, tribal, and linguistic-area indexes. Includes 513 articles in 144 periodicals and serials, and 84 books, and covers the period (generally) 1950-1963. Available from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20540, at 45 cents (U.S.A.) a copy.