
REVIEWS

AFRICAN MUSIC, A PEOPLE'S ART by Francis Bebey, George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, 1975, viii + 184 pp., illustrations, discography, notes. Translated from 'Musique de l'Afrique' (Horizons de France, Paris 1969) by Josephine Bennett.

This book is exactly what it says about itself in its introductory remarks: a handy and well meaning aid to laymen for the better appreciation of music in Africa. It is not a treatise of scientific demand, and must therefore not be charged for it. The author feels that African music has hitherto been described only in terms that have tended to imprison it inside the covers of scholarly volumes and magazines instead of making it accessible to all men. His idea of an initiation into traditional African music is to make amateurs explore for themselves this unknown and exciting world, pulsating with spiritual forces, inner truth, and happiness.

He therefore has recourse to mostly well known and approved generalizations, comparisons and illustrations. He rules out all forms of musical transcriptions which he looks upon as meaningless for the majority of his readers who cannot read music. What remains is a book subdivided and dealing in general terms with the following subjects: Expressions of Life, The African Musician, The Musical Instruments (Stringed, Wind and Air, Keyboard, Lithophones, Drums, The Human Voice), The Music, Selective Discography, Recent Recordings, Distributors, Notes.

What also remains is a small set of remarks towards the improvement of an otherwise highly conducive work:

It should at least tentatively cover all of the important stylistic areas of African music (East, Southeast, Southwest, South Africa, the Congo, Angola and Bushman music completely being neglected here).

It should at all events mention some of the influential works of scholars in African music science (outside the area of francophone writers).

It should give manifest evidence of the authentic origin of the pictorial illustrations used. It should spell the name of Dr. Hugh Tracey properly (see p. 174), this being the slightest reward he merits for his pioneering work in our field.

A.M. DAUER

AFRICAN HYMNODY IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF ITS DEVELOPMENT by A.M. Jones, Mambo Press, Gwelo, Rhodesia, 1976 (Mambo Occasional Papers – Misso-Pastoral Series No. 8), pp. 64, R\$0.65.

In this small book one of the foremost African musicologists is not only presenting the history of hymnody in sub-Saharan Africa, but is also expressing his view that African hymnody is superior to the continued use of European hymnody in African churches.

The book is divided into three chapters. The first deals with hymns in the early days of missionary activity, when it was assumed that the best type of hymnody would be a translation of European hymns into African languages. Major reasons for this view are the non-Christian associations connected with traditional African music, and the question of whether the quality of African music, in terms of the conventional criteria of professional Western musicians, would permit it to be considered suitable for Christian worship.

The second chapter presents several reasons for the growing dissatisfaction with European-based hymnody on the part of both missionaries and African converts. These include discrepancies between patterns of European music and African languages, the difficulties of teaching accidentals to people unaccustomed to changing keys, and the tendency of Africans to find the leader-response form the most natural and satisfactory. Jones concludes that the only real solution to such problems is encouragement of the African Christians to produce their own hymnody.

The last chapter is a survey of the various areas where attempts have been made to develop African hymnody. The Church of Scotland in Nyasaland (Malawi) appears to be the first, since they encouraged use of African tunes from the beginning of their work at the end of the last century. Later a few hymns of African origin were included in various hymnbooks, mostly in South Africa and Nigeria. More recently the Roman Catholic Church has actively encouraged African composers to prepare liturgical music, and the All-Africa Church Music Association, although now defunct, is seen as having been instrumental in encouraging African composers of many denominations. The survey covers material through 1969.

Jones does not refer to the importance of developments outside the activities of church musicians themselves. It might have been helpful to point out that the official abandonment of the Latin Mass by the Roman Catholic Church gave a significant stimulus to development of liturgical music in the African idiom. The growth of African nationalism has also played a more significant part than Jones has attributed to it. Another development, perhaps omitted because of modesty, is that Jones' analysis of African rhythms has helped Africans and non-Africans alike to see the intrinsic artistry in African music.

Two features of this book give it a unique and important place in the literature on church music in Africa. In the first place, the author himself was a pioneer in the use of African music in the church, and he gives extensive descriptions of his own early efforts. A second important feature is that the book appears to have been written for the utilization of African Christians, presumably to encourage them to develop their own hymnody.

The writing style is clear and free of academic jargon, and has adequate documentation of numerous references to other authors. The non-African reader might need supplementary background, since the book assumes some knowledge of what are and are not characteristics of African music. A minor error occurs on page 55, where a reference to *Africa Praise* should read: "pages 299-303".

All in all, this book provides an excellent and useful summary of much previously obscure material.

JOHN E. KAEMMER

IBIBIO MUSIC IN NIGERIAN CULTURE by Samuel Ekpe Akpabot, Michigan State University Press, 1975, pp. 102, \$7.50.

Akpabot's book is difficult to review because as you read through it you can never be sure about what is his own observation and what is the fruit of somebody else's research.

I did not trust my eyes when I opened on page 5 and found a well-known illustration taken from my article on Azande harp music (*African Music*, Vol. III, no. 3, 1964, pp. 43, 47, 57) showing the mnemonic pattern *Wili pai sa sunge* which my little friend Samuel Ouzana used for tuning his *kundi* harp. Akpabot does not acknowledge the source, and I presume he also did not send a cheque to Ouzana (c/o Mission Catholique Zemio, Central African Republic).

The main chapters of his book deal with the following topics: "The Ibibios and their origin", "Ibibio musical instruments and their functions" (here he distinguishes "Instruments with melodic functions" and "Instruments with rhythmic functions"), "Masquerade music" (*Ekpo*, *Ekpe* and *Obon*), "Orchestras with special functions" (*Uta*, *Oko* and *Ikon*), "Music of social control" (*Mbopo*, *Ebre* and other women's societies), "Choral patterns" (*Mkpok Eto*, *Adiagha Mma*) and "Ibibio instrumental rhythms".

At the start the author tells readers that "This is a study of Ibibio music as seen through the eyes of an Ibibio" (p. 9) and writes "A cardinal rule was to bypass European musical concepts and avoid any interviews and performances that were obviously not authentic" (p. XXIII). But on page 13 he writes that "A xylophone with only four slabs tuned to the notes, C, D, D sharp, E was found". On page 14 he says that "all the other xylophones examined were tuned to the pentatonic scale". (Incidentally, where on earth is there anything like *the* pentatonic scale?) On page 63 he talks about a "strict organum style" of "harmonies in Ibibio music" and so on. Throughout the book he uses Western musical terminology and persistently compares Ibibio musical traits with