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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Musica Dell'Africa Nera: Civiltà Musicali Subsahariane fra Tradizione e Modernità* by Leonardo D'Amico and Andrew L. Kaye

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work unfolds in increasingly deeper layers, diffracting as a stream of white light would upon passing through a diamond, or—more aptly—like divine light generating Kabbalistic *sefirot*. Both works innovatively connect prayer and performance with broader social dynamics, examining musical sound in several dimensions and problematizing its relationship to social structure. What remains when all is said and done are two distinctive pieces of Jewish music scholarship, skillfully grounded in ethnographic theory and rich with vibrant ethnographic material.

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Musica Dell'Africa Nera: Civiltà Musicali Subsahariane fra Tradizione e Modernità. Leonardo D'Amico and Andrew L. Kaye. Palermo: L'EPOS Societa Editrice. 503 pp., illustrations, bibliography, discography, index. Paper, 37,20 Euros.

Many students of music in sub-Saharan Africa, notably Kwabena Nketia, Alan Lomax and Gilbert Rouget, have shared the view that music cultures are linked by common features in that part of the continent. For the authors of this book, the existence of these links opens up the possibility of an overall approach to the study of music in this entire area. Since music in North Africa is largely Arabic and does not share these links, North Africa is left out of their study. The authors' intent was to "produce a first systematic study of the music of sub-Saharan Africa, that would constitute a synthesis of ethnomusicological research realized in this field, and make possible a

generic vision of the African musical universe" (15). To realize this vision, the authors pursued their inquiry along the lines of a largely forgotten comparative method which, indeed, is the only possible one in the framework of so vast an undertaking. The two authors each took a separate share of the common effort: D'Amico focused on musical traditions that evolved from a distant past to the present. His study forms the major first part of the book. Andrew Kaye is the author of a second part, in which he discusses music styles arising in Africa as a result of the meeting of European and African cultures from the second half of the nineteenth century to the present.

D'Amico begins with the rise of mankind which, by overwhelming scholarly consensus, took place in Africa. In this preliminary chapter, entitled "Africa Between History, Prehistory and Ethnohistory," the author covers African languages and the population movements that took place over the centuries. He then discusses early fallacies of the West exemplified in, for example, Kurt Sachs's evolutionism, Lowie's diffusionism, and Levy-Bruhl's "prelogism" of primitive man. There follows an overview of the expansion of Islam in Africa and the rise of Sudanese empires, of the early contacts of European navigators with Africans, and of the Atlantic slave trade, the African diaspora, and European colonialism.

The following chapter, "Traditional Music," is laid out in sections in which the word "music" is linked to diverse fields of inquiry; thus: Music and Culture; Music and Community; Music and Society, and so on. Other fields include Court, Oral Literature, Masks, Language, Form, Vocalization, Learning, Dance, Religion, Trance, and Politics. Although D'Amico does not expatiate on the criteria that guided him in the selection of these particular fields, it seems clear that most of them center on one or more features that are common to a number of social aggregates. Some are widespread throughout much of the continent. For instance, in "Music and Culture," the author writes that in Africa, music performance is deeply embedded in its cultural matrix and is indivisible from it. In his words, "music is a fundamental part of activities that would shed their value and significance if they were severed from it" (55). This functionality of music is amply illustrated by researchers, and has become something of an axiom in African music studies. The section "Music and Community" discusses the collective participation of audience in music-making events, including the relevant writings of Chernoff, Blacking, and Lomax.

In "Music and the Court" D'Amico speaks of praise songs and epic songs performed by singers who are also court historians and genealogists, and of musical instruments attached to sovereigns and their courts. These features variously prevail in the Sudanese kingdoms and among the Ashanti and Dagomba of Ghana, the Mossi of Burkina Faso, the Yoruba of Nigeria, and others. All this is discussed in much detail and includes social and historical backgrounds, event contexts, musical practices, and the musical instruments involved in them. It is not surprising that in marshaling such a massive array of facts, some

lapses remain unchecked. D'Amico writes that the Hausa received Islam from Muslim Arabs who ruled over them for centuries (86). Such rule never took place. Islamization in Hausaland came about in the context of far-flung trade connections, the establishment of Muslim trading colonies among the Hausa, and through the teachings of Muslim proselytizers, foreign as well as Hausa.

Musical instruments are discussed in a separate chapter in which the "functional, ritual, symbolic, esthetic and simply musical dimensions" are explored (213). Once again, D'Amico sets up fields of inquiry to which he links a great number of musical instruments. Starting with the lay perception of the drum as the "iconic symbol of Africa" in the West, the author writes that in sub-Saharan Africa, idiophones stand out as the most widespread instruments, rather than drums (213). One of them, the xylophone, is almost ubiquitous. D'Amico reviews the once much debated hypothesis of the xylophone's Southeast Asian origins and its diffusion in Africa.

In the first chapter of his presentation, Andrew Kaye writes of the fragmentary evidence of early contacts between African and European music cultures and their intensification up to the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 that ushered in the colonial era. Kaye's narrative covers the ensuing inroads of the West into African musical practices in three successive chapters. The first includes Africans' involvement in European music performance and their creation of blends of Western and African musical features. A second chapter covers the period between the two World Wars, which saw the beginnings of African-created musical styles. The last chapter concerns the diverse influences that pervaded the developing African urban music and the various styles that had developed in various parts of the continent, the rise of many musicians to international acclaim, and many other features. All are examined in the greatest detail and constitute a richly documented history of evolving trends across the breadth of this vast territory since the earliest contacts of the West with the peoples of Africa.

Not less commendable is D'Amico's effort at writing an organized compendium of much of what had been written on the music of sub-Saharan Africa and at gathering a vast number of observations, ideas, debates and arguments into a coherent exposition. By evidencing networks of cognate features, D'Amico traces a map of related traditions throughout much of the continent. Whether the totality of these networks constitutes the synthesis the authors sought to achieve may be open to debate. This work is unquestionably, however, the product of sustained analytical searching where every chapter and every section is a well-wrought essay supported by a seemingly inexhaustible wealth of ethnographic evidence. It provides the student of music of sub-Saharan Africa as well as the interested general reader with a guided overall view of this complex field.

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