

STEPHEN M. PONDE

In 1956 Stephen Magwa Ponde was asked to compose the music to some of the lyrics of a play which the students of Gokomere Secondary School were planning to perform. After classes Ponde wandered off into the bush and composed — without pencil and paper.

This was Stephen Ponde's first attempts at composing. Since then he has created a wealth of melodies and rhythms in the praise of God and as a service to the Christian community. The nineteen hymns on this record are only a portion of the composer's repertory; and only a few of his hymns have been written down in staff notation (*Misa Sande I, Ngwa inotevera Musi wo-Mweya I and II*, published by Mambo Press, Gwelo).

Born in 1932 in the Chilimanzi district in the Rhodesian Midlands, Stephen Magwa Ponde received most of his primary education at Serima Mission. He attended secondary school at Gokomere and trained as a teacher at the same place from 1956-57. He has been in the teaching profession ever since.

In 1961-62 Ponde assisted Father Joseph Lenherr, a musicologist, in a research into traditional Shona music. It was largely due to the encouragement of Fr. Lenherr that Stephen Ponde came to his own as a composer of African church music. He later attended a church music workshop at the Ecumenical Centre in Mindolo, Kitwe. In recognition of his outstanding achievements as composer of music from all parts of Africa elected him Vice President of the All-Africa Church Music Association in 1965.

The real "jury" of Ponde's compositions are, however, not the professional musicians or musicologists. His hymns are judged first and foremost by the congregation in which he worships and by the old and young people among whom he lives.

Within the span of a few years, Stephen Ponde's compositions have been carried into all corners of Rhodesia. The people have passed their verdict: They sing his hymns and love them."

Two minor observations may be added to this introduction. These hymns are not based upon traditional folk tunes so much as upon adaptations of folk styles which is perhaps more important. It is a factor which ensures easy participation by the congregation. The second point is that the quality of this work by Stephen Ponde will most certainly be acclaimed, not only by congregations, but by professional musicians and musicologists alike. The composer and his mentor, Father Joseph Lenherr, to be sincerely congratulated.

The record can be obtained direct from the publishers, Link Records, Box 7 Salisbury, Rhodesia, at the current local price for LP discs.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From: DAVID RYCROFT, School of Oriental and African Studies, London University.

At long last, academic musicology is taking some active notice of 'other peoples' music. Aspects of Indian, Middle Eastern, and possibly Chinese and Burmese musics will be on the curriculum — in a small way at first — as well as African: first as occasional courses, but later within the B. Mus.

Ethnomusicology is also gaining a small foothold within Anthropological studies here — so only at University College, London — where I at present deliver two lectures a year: one rather general appetite-whetting, one to first-year undergraduates, illustrated by sound-films, tapes etc., and one second-years who are specialising in Primitive Technology. Classification and recognition of instrument-types is the basic thing here, but I try to demonstrate clearly the fallacy of hoping to deal with instruments when they are divorced from their context and the intentions and musical values of their users. I hope the allocation of time to this subject may eventually be extended. They are talking about doing so, and having a paper set on the subject, within the Prim. Tech. syllabus.

An anthropology student at Oxford is doing her B. Litt. thesis on "Problems of ethnomusicology". She has been attending A. M. Jones' occasional course at SOAS also. Tony King is at present Research Fellow in African Music here, and will be taking on teaching shortly. He is likely to specialise on Nigerian music particularly. (My own curriculum is 'Zulu music and praise poetry' — apart from Degree and occasional language courses.)

The colloquia of the Ethnomusicology Panel of the Royal Anthropological Institute, held fortnightly, have been going well, with a regular attendance of about 20. The idea of dealing with specific applications of music, like narrative song, work-songs, etc., and comparing examples from various cultures, contributed by different collectors, was a new venture and seems popular, though it is often difficult to find any unity in the diversity presented.

The series of talks at the Africa Centre this term has been very well attended, averaging about 60, and has covered a wide range of material from many different angles. Andrew and Paul Tracey gave the first one in this series, just before they left for the U.S.A., and it was an outstanding success, combining accurate information with entertainment in the true Tracey manner! Dr. Brian Wood's 'Flutes and other instruments of Nigeria' was presented by means of colour slides of music-making, with the sound on tape, and samples of some instruments. (He is a medical doctor and amateur flautist who spent time in Nigeria.) Jeremy Montagu brought a large collection of instruments for his talk, and demonstrated them, plus tape and record examples. He is now secretary of the Galpin Society, since Eric Halfpenny has taken on the editorship of the Journal. Clausen gave an anthropology-orientated account

music in the New Hebrides, with many suggestive parallels with Africa in some respects, illustrated by his excellent sound-film on Malekula, and slides and tapes. My own two talks used sound-film of Zulu and Swazi music-making, including the Swazi Umlanga, a 'royal' wedding, and bow-playing, etc., and the Zulu First-fruits at Elandskop, and Magogo in action, as well as town music-making in Durban. Victoria Kingsley demonstrated Brazilian drumming and singing (herself), from her experience out there, and played further recorded examples.

It is hoped that it will be possible to continue with further series of this kind. The Africa Centre is an excellent building for the purpose.

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From: MRS. MARGOT DIAS, Centro de Estudos de Anthropologia Cultural, Lisbon, Portugal.

With great pleasure I have read in the last number of "African Music" the letters of Gerhard Kubik. I am especially interested in his fieldwork in the north of Moçambique, because, as we told you on our visit in 1959, my husband and I undertook ethnological fieldwork in 1957 and 1958 in the north of Moçambique among the WaMakonde.

Our special task was to make a monography of the people, though, as the time was very short, the musical section could not occupy a very large part. However, I made many hours of interesting tape recordings from which I will publish some examples when the Volume 5 of our monography appears. The first and second volumes went recently to press; the third one we are working on, and the fourth about folk-tales and language and will be appearing shortly. Only the last volume about the art of the WaMakonde people will need another year or so, because in the meanwhile, I have accepted other obligations, as for instance, the study of the musical instruments of Moçambique which I have now finished. I am glad to be able to include the interesting case of the trough-xylophone which Kubik found near Mecanhelas. I regret not knowing the north-western part of Moçambique and I look forward with great interest to the results Gerhard Kubik will publish about this region.

Concerning the extreme north-east, the area of the WaMakonde, in contrast to Kubik, I have found the mbira instruments, certain differences from the Rhodesian types, as for example the typical pitch, the lack of a hole in the sound-board which is always a simple board and not bell-shaped, the two bridges mostly of wood, etc. You will find the descriptions in the study of the musical instruments which I will send you as soon as it is printed.

I am awaiting with expectation the results of the research made by Herhard Kubik in Moçambique, because I believe that with his experience and background in this special field he will give a great impulse to the knowledge of the people of Moçambique.

With best regards and expressing my satisfaction about the existence of the African Music Society.

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From MEKI ZEWI, Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria.

I am working on experimental African writing with different approaches to idiom and instrumentation. I have just finished a public concert of some of my compositions which are indigenous in idiom or instrumentation. The instruments I have written for include the Thumb piano (*malimba*) which you now produce in your workshop in standard form. I have also written for the Hourglass/Talking drum, in combination with the thumb piano or the western grand piano. I have just completed Book I of a Serenade Suite for piano, voice and some combinations of Nigerian instruments—there are 6 songs in the book, but I've not given a performance yet. I hope your Society will be interested in what I am doing and if you can introduce me to any publishers who can handle my compositions, I will be very grateful.

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From Miss MARJORIE DAVIDSON, Chalambana P.B.E.1., Lusaka, Zambia.

Further to my comments on "Mangoli" in the last Journal, I find that the word should be "Mingoli", and that it means "gramophone"! This may indicate that it is an attempt to copy harmonies heard on the gramophone. At the moment, however, I believe that it is genuinely traditional, in spite of the name, but I hope to explore the matter further. I was told that it is sung by the older women in pounding songs.

I have come across a similar kind of free counterpoint among the Bemba. They call it "Ukuspikula ulwimbo". When I first heard it sung by two of our women students I told them that the harmonies were wrong! I am accustomed to the Bemba singing in parallel thirds, so when I heard a fifth I was astonished.

They assured me that this is genuine traditional practice and it seems the words "Ukuspikula Ulwimbo" mean "a winding in and out song" and this is precisely what happens. Each part has its individual interest and although the main progression is still in thirds, there are also fourths and fifths and sometimes the parts cross.

I hope to make further enquiries about this but, in the meantime, I should be very glad to know if other readers have met with this type of thing.

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