

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

M. Daniélou writes as follows:

SOME REMARKS ON THE REVIEW OF THE MUSICAL ANTHOLOGY OF THE ORIENT IN THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC COUNCIL

The Musical Anthology of the Orient comes within the framework of a general Unesco scheme to promote better understanding between countries of the East and the West. This implies very obvious limitations which are bound to make it differ from documents of western ethnomusicological research. The purpose of the Anthology is to present to a large music-minded audience the higher forms of art-music—the music Orientals call “classical” by opposition to folk music—so as to prepare its place as a full and equal partner in the international musical life. Another series concerned with folk music is planned. It will be realized on different lines. The present series will by no means “inhibit the production of any similar series for at least ten years.” On the contrary all the cooperation of ethnomusicologists is expected for the production of the complementary folk music series precisely on the lines suggested by the *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*. The present anthology does not aim at being ethnomusicological. The methods of ethnology applied to high forms of sophisticated art do not appear quite satisfactory since they do not normally take into account the theory expressed in technical treatises and the classifications used by the oriental musicians. The very words “ethno musicology” infuriate eastern performers who point out that ethnological methods applied to the analysis of an average Opera performance give the most surprising results regarding western conceptions of interval, scale, rhythm and composition.

Our purpose has been to record *music*, the best music available, performed by the best professional musicians, and as far as possible unstained by modern trends and influences. The purpose of the notes is merely to give a minimum of indications that may be useful to situate the music in relation to eastern theories. The preparation of such notes which have to be very brief raises numerous problems of method, choice and susceptibilities and they are unavoidably insufficient from the point of view of a student of musicology? One of our main objects has been that they should be entirely acceptable to the performers. We have therefore mainly used the elements of analysis they themselves gave us even if this should appear inadequate from a Westerner’s point of view. The notes should be considered as part of our document not as an analysis according to present musicological methods.

It is by no means a difficult task to prepare an analysis of each recorded example according to established musicological methods. This can be done at home and comfortably by any student of musicology. In fact the musicologist can always do and will always do such an analysis according to his own research. The real problem is to provide him with the music. Elaborate analysis does not interest the general public and if done according to western methods is likely to be contradicted by the eastern musician. It was from the first excluded from our scheme. While readily acknowledging the very constructive value of the criticism made of my notes, I should like to clarify a few points.

I have chosen the Indian *râga* classification as a basis for comparative study of scales because it is the only systematic and coherent classification in existence and because it is not merely an abstract classification but is linked with aesthetic and emotional experience. The interpretation of Greek modes is not free from controversy and provides an oversimple structure. Comparisons with Indian scales or Greek scales do not imply Indian or Greek influence and I regret not to have made this clear. I often see the terms major or minor used with reference to Eastern scales and nobody seems to consider this as implying Western influence. I should rather object to terms such as “natural diatonic” particularly if the instruments are said to be tuned by fifths, since

such tuning do not lead to the natural diatonic except in the Western tempered conception of the scale which is not natural in any case.

The mouth organ is the main instrument used by some of the oldest primitive populations of South-East Asia. It is found among the wild tribes of Celebes and Borneo. It is the traditional instrument of the Laotians. Everything seems to indicate its very ancient use in that part of the world. Although its invention is attributed in early Chinese texts to the mythical emperor Nyu-Kwa, immediate successor of Fo-Hi, the first emperor (*circa* 3000 B.C.), the instrument was known in China as having been used by the "barbarians." Various types were brought from Southern Burma to the imperial court of China in the eighth century. The Director of the school of music of Peking some twenty years ago told me he considered the *chēng* as an instrument originating in South-East Asia. Absolute evidence is obviously lacking but probabilities seem strong.

The ancient and sacred orchestra in Laos, Cambodia and Thailand is traditionally without string instruments. These are never to be used when the music has a religious or ceremonial impact. The case is the same for village ceremonial music where only percussions may be used. The addition of strings render the orchestra profane and suitable only for concerts. The magicians' orchestra are a different thing, but they are low caste and apparently of a different origin.

In Laotian two-string fiddles the hair of the bow is caught between the strings so that it is impossible to play them independently.

The word *nai* covers a group of instruments of various dimensions found from Iran to Indonesia which are of the same family as the oboe. All have the same typical double reed held in the mouth. In the Laotian instrument similar to the one Curt Sachs call "Siamese oboe" the body of the instrument is similar to a flute.

The Skor thom is not exactly a timbale since it is cylindrical, but it is held vertically and its sound and use are those of a large timbale. I do not know what such an instrument should be called to render its character understandable to non-specialists.

Any musician living in the Far East learns quickly what the Chinese pentatonic is. It differs from the other forms of pentatonics existing in modal music. The growing influence of the simpler Chinese scale is one of the important events in the music of South Asia today. The other influence being that of the western scale and attempted polyphony, equally easily recognizable.

The instruments of the palace in Phnom Penh were retuned "in the European manner," i.e. according to diatonic principles (not in the tempered scale) by a conductor of the French navy band some thirty years ago, at the request of the sovereign and have continued in many cases to be tuned in the same manner.

In eastern music, except for the ancient palace music of China, absolute pitch does not exist. The tonic is usually meant by the first note of the scale. I see no reason not to call this note C for an easier classification of modes, even if in some cases this may mean the C of Mozart and not the modern High Pitch. It is no fault of mine if absolute pitch appears so important to western ears, mainly because the westerners insist on using an heptatonic notation and keyboard for a dodecaphonic equalized scale, which would logically require an hexatonic keyboard that would suppress all problems of transposition and the importance attached to pitch.

The aksak rhythms, a term which, I believe, was first brought into general use by the regretted Brailoiu, are unknown to eastern theory, as well I believe as to western musical theory. The term is not acceptable to eastern theorists and musicians. I therefore prefer to avoid it.

The difference between "learned" or "art" music and folk music, the establishment of which is the main purpose of the present anthology, is obvious to any student of Iranian or Indian music. "Learned" music (a term somewhat wrongly translated from the French "*musique savante*") refers to music based on written theory and studied in music schools or from specialized teachers. A short introduction to a record is not the

place where one can attempt to explain this obvious difference that exists in the East as in the West.

Regarding development by tetrachords, basis of Iranian musical art and in which it differs from Indian music, I should like to refer to the treatises on musical theory of Avicenna, Safi ud Din, al Farabi, etc., as well as to all the more recent treatises in Arabic and Persian, used in all schools of music in the Arab and Iranian worlds.

I regret I had to give a photographic reproduction of the Persian texts because of lack of printing facilities in Persian characters. It is not in our line of thought that these should necessarily be transliterated. I have not seen Schubert's Lieder transliterated in the Arabic script for the use of Middle East amateurs, and we desire to maintain a strict cultural neutrality.

All of our recordings have been done with the help of the local music specialists and traditional musicians. We happen to have recorded most of the elder musicians of Iran (two of them have since died of old age) and also their pupils. If we sometimes preferred the performance of the pupils, this was done in agreement with the teachers. The reasons were often purely technical (lack of teeth of the older flutist, etc.). In any case the fact that a musician is old does not at all imply that he may be more strictly traditional. The question is viewed from a different angle in the fields of art and of folk music.

I should like to repeat that our aim is to give to people interested in music an opportunity to listen to and to appreciate works of art and by no means to reduce the musical art of Asia to the subject matter of ethnic studies. I hope that seen from this angle the weakness and the "slipshodness in documentation" of my notes may be better understood.

ALAIN DANIELOU

Readers will welcome M. Daniélou's statement on the intentions of those responsible for *A Musical Anthology of the Orient*. No one would expect technical details in notes for the audience of "music-minded" persons to which he refers. On the other hand, in preparing notes for just such an audience, it is surely necessary to exercise the greatest care and discretion. Let me in turn clarify a few points. M. Daniélou is right to object to my use of the term "natural diatonic"; it was inaccurate. Concerning mouth-organs: I am in entire agreement with the suggestion that the instrument is "ancient" in South-East Asia. In denying that the Chinese "took" it from Laos, however, I am not placing much trust either in Fu Hsi's sister, Nü Kua (ox-headed, serpent-tailed), who made the Jew's harp and the free-reed, or in Ancient Sui, who made the mouth-organ, as evidence of "Chinese" origin. I have in mind first, references to mouth-organs in the *Book of Songs* (*Shih Ching*), a collection dating in part from the eighth century B.C. and as a whole from before the fifth century B.C., and secondly, the fact that at the time when the legends of Nü Kua and Sui first appear (fifth to third century B.C.) the southern limit of "Chinese" territory scarcely extended south of the Yangtze River. Eberhard has suggested that the rise of high civilization in the Yellow River basin took place in a region of cultural and ethnic overlap. It is probable that there was an Austro-Asiatic element in this region at the turn of the third millennium B.C.; but at that time the "Chinese" as we know them did not exist. The presence of mouth-organs in designs on Dong-so'n bronze drums, in the Pyū orchestra of the eighth century A.D., or in present day South-East Asia, does not necessarily imply that the Chinese imported the mouth-organ; it only shows that the mouth-organ is not restricted to the Chinese.

In Chinese spike tube-lutes, as in Laotian fiddles, the hair of the bow passes between the two strings; the bow cannot be separated from the fiddle without taking a string off or untying the bow. This does not, however, prevent one string being played at a time. Regarding double-reed pipes, a distinction should be maintained between pipes with a cylindrical or slightly tapering bore, and pipes with a rapidly expanding bore. The former behave as stopped pipes, the latter as "oboes." For M. Daniélou's purpose, however, the distinction is perhaps unimportant.

I still dislike the reference to the "Chinese" scale, as if a pentatonic scale of major-second + minor-third tetrachords cannot occur without "Chinese influence." In the matter of *aksak* rhythms, I was not criticizing M. Daniélou for failing to use this term, but for failing to draw attention to the phenomenon, and indeed ignoring it in transcriptions. In what sense irregular rhythms can be said to be unknown to Eastern musical theory, I do not understand. M. Daniélou himself displayed irregular along with regular rhythms in his synopsis of the *tālās* of Northern Indian music, and both types of rhythm were set out and sharply distinguished, on an earlier occasion, by Al-Fārābi.

As to reproducing Persian texts, whether as photographs or type-set, this seems to me of no help whatsoever to the western "music-minded" listener, and in no way calculated to promote better understanding. I suggest, impenitently, that M. Daniélou's performers are largely the popular young performers of the Radio, but I concede that for his purpose they may be adequate. His gibe about not reducing the musical art of Asia "to the subject matter of ethnic studies" is misplaced. None of my criticisms can fairly be interpreted as indicative of a wish to do anything of the kind. I happen to believe that standards of scholarship should not be abandoned in work intended for popular consumption. How fascinating and valuable M. Daniélou's notes would have been had he done precisely what he suggests in his second paragraph: had he consistently "used mainly the elements of analysis they themselves gave us."

A Persian friend draws my attention to the mode *Bhatriyari* (Iran II, Side II, 5) which should be *Bakhtiyari*.*

LAURENCE PICKEN

* Detailed reviews of individual discs from the *Anthology* will be found in *Ethnomusicology*, 6, 239 (1962).