



(LYRCD 7338)

AFRICAN RHYTHMS AND INSTRUMENTS

Congo Brazzaville-Chad-Cameroon-Sudan Zambia-Tanzania-Kenya-Zimbabwe

The First Pan-African Cultural Festival (Algiers, July 21-August 1, 1969) was a momentous cultural meeting, and also a vital occasion for political confrontation. The purpose for this manifestation was, in fact, primarily political, especially within the complex game of relationships between the various African states and their relative regimes and within the prospective of the various modalities by which the transitional process from colonialization to autonomy is taking effect - or struggling to take effect.

The resounding, spectacular addition of music, dance, theater and cinema performances, which the Festival organizers created around the specifically political symposium, the central nucleus of the Algiers meeting, was not for promotional or advertising purposes. On the contrary, they were the necessary complement to the political debates, insofar as these artistic events underlined the idea of unity, which exists between culture and politics, and that the way towards autonomy from the residual colonial yoke must necessarily experience the decisive and conclusive moment of cultural freedom - following that of political and economic independence. From the point of view of the Algiers Symposium the process of African independence must tend toward the complete conquest (or better still, re-conquest) of cultural identity, without which political and economic autonomy cannot, in reality, have any real significance.

What one hears in the recordings made in the El-Anasser Stadium and in the city squares of Algiers is not “ethnic” material, but rather, the testimony of what the African nations cultural identity within a thoroughly political prospective. Certainly many selections are also living ethno phonic material, but it would be incorrect to consider them only in this light.

For the Algiers Festival was meant to be something absolutely different from a “folk” festival; thus the listener must here extricate himself from the narrow and at times mystifying dimensions of folklore.

Certainly no recording whatsoever can substitute the emotions offered by actual participation at the Festival, deprived as a recorded document is of the inevitable fusion of movement, costumes, gestures, colors, and the crowd itself. Without the visual aspect the extraordinary performances we can hear on these discs do, in fact, lose much of their communicative force. It is our conviction, though, that their testimonial value justifies their publication.

In these three albums dedicated to the First Pan-African Cultural Festival of Algiers are included the participation of the following African nations:

Volume 1 - Mali, Niger, Ghana, Nigeria, Upper Volta, Senegal, Liberia.

Volume 2- Congo (Brazzaville), Chad, Cameroon, Sudan, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Zapu (Zimbabwe Liberation Movement)

Volume 3 - Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya.

AFRICA - Volume 2

The second volume of this anthology of African music comprises further documents recorded during the Algiers Cultural Festival and is part of three albums dedicated to the musical expression of various African nations who were present at Algiers.

The first side of this recording brings together several countries from the equatorial zone (Congo), the Guinean area (Cameroon) and an area of transition between Islamic and Black Africa (Chad and Sudan), Side 2, on the other hand, represents the countries and peoples of Eastern Africa (Tanzania and Kenya) and the South-East (Zambia and Zimbabwe).

Particularly interesting are the recorded documents of Zimbabwe, presented by the Zapu group, a revolutionary movement for the liberation of Rhodesia.

The listener will recognize without difficulty the obvious differences, especially in the use of percussion instruments, between the performances on Side 1 (and the entire contents of Vol. 1 of this anthology) and Side 2, evidence that the music of Eastern and southeastern Africa, especially as regards rhythm and timbre, is much less sophisticated.

The balafon (xylophone), which also appears in Vol. 1, is of particular importance in this volume.

Wind instruments are however less important, particularly in the Sudanese area (where there is a strong influence of Arab culture). Particularly interesting is the elegant horn (Tanzania) documented on track 9.

A. CONGO (People's Republic)

Formerly the French Middle Congo (overseas Territory, the People's Republic of the Congo straddles the Equator' complete independence was proclaimed on August 15, 1960. It covers an area of 132,046 sq. mi., and has a population of 850,000. Its capital in Brazzaville (140,000 inhabitants).

Sharing the Bantu culture of Equatorial Africa, the Congo is represented here with a piece of notable interest because of its musical characteristics and its instrumental components. Here, in fact, is an example of music performed not only on the xylophone but also with two zither-harps (mvet). The mvet belongs to a group of stringed instruments common to both Africa and Asia. The zither-harp of the Congo (and neighboring Gabon) consists of a long tube on which is applied resonators (one or two gourds). The chords are obtained by lifting the skin of the tube, which is then cut lengthwise. A central bridge raises the chords (usually two or three). It is possible to relate this instrument with the valiha of Madagascar, which in turn bears relationship with the large family of stringed instruments to be found in southern and southeastern Asia.

B. CHAD

A former French Overseas Territory in Equatorial Africa, Chad has an area of 495,753 sq. mi. and a population of 3,400,000, with its capital in Fort Lamy (150,000 inhabitants). Located in the center of the African continent, Chad is populated by numerous and varied ethnic groups that testify to how this territory, situated between the Sahara and the Equatorial forest, has, in the past, been the theater of many human migrations. The example included in this album belongs to the musical traditions of the Sara-Kaba peoples. Once again we find the xylophone (kundu), this time a portable model, suspended from the neck with a strap, two voice-carriers or horn trumpets, and a drum. Rattles attached to the legs of the dancers contribute to the rhythm and at intervals one can hear the voices of the dancers.

C. CAMEROON

Cameroon, which embraces the larger part of the former German protectorate of Cameroon was occupied by France and Britain in 1916 and placed under trusteeship in 1919. France passed a statute in 1958 conferring internal autonomy on the French trusteeship as a step toward complete independence, which took effect January 1, 1960. It has an area of 183, 581 sq. mi. and a population of 4,400,000. Its capital is Yaounde, with 100,000 inhabitants.

Cameroon was represented in Algiers by is “Ensemble National” which is formed by groups of dancers and musicians from various provinces of the country, each of which is an expression of high-level authenticity. The first piece is performed by a set of drums made of horizontal wood; a vertical drum made of skins and held between the legs, and rattles. The second piece comprises a different instrumental group in which the xylophone predominates. This particular instrument is very simply constructed (pieces of wood placed directly against two tree trunks on the ground), and performed by three players. The drum is used very discreetly, and male voices are heard in antiphony to each other.

D. SUDAN

The Republic of Sudan was a former Anglo-Egyptian condominium (since 1899) and was proclaimed a Republic on Jan. 1, 1956. It area covers 967,500 sq. mi. with a population of 15,600,000. Khartoum is its capital. The people of Sudan are sharply divided by7 their cultural differences: the population consists of Arabs, Negroes and Nubians of mixed Arab and Negro blood, the Arabs and Nubians being Mohammedans.

The two pieces included here are the expression of the Negro people. The first is an instrumental group consisting of drums played with sticks, rattles and with male voices.

The second consists entirely of “corporal” instruments: feet stamping and rattles (applied to the dancers' legs), with occasional voices of the dancers. The resulting rhythm is fascinating, as is also demonstrated by the enthusiastic participation of the audience, which fills the El Anasser Stadium (one can hear, as during other pieces of this anthology, both the clapping of hands and the shouted “you-you” of the women)

E. ZAMBIA

The Republic of Zambia is the former British Protectorate of Northern Rhodesia, which gained its independence in 1964.

Its territory covers 290,586 sq. mi. with a population of almost 4 million inhabitants. Its capital is Lusaka (pop. 250,000). With Zambia, this anthology moves to South Central Africa. This move is also evident in the music, for while still in the cultural area of the Bantus, music here reveals stylistic characteristics based on different structures. In the first piece mixed alternating voices are rhythmically supported by a set of vertical drums and a double-headed drum, which is carried on the shoulders (the former played with the hands the latter with sticks).

The second piece, in which the voices remain of primary importance, is rhythmically sustained by a set of three drums held between the legs, and the use of rattles.

F. TANZANIA

A former British colony, the Republic of Tanganyika in East Africa and the Republic of Zanzibar, a large island in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Tanganyika, joined in a single republic, Tanzania, on April 26, 1964. Its area covers 363,708 sq. mi. with a population of 12 million. Capital: Dar es Salaam.

The instruments comprising the first piece include the xylophone, percussion and a giant horn, which emits two notes.

The second piece is an authentic ballet, constructed of more or less traditional musical and choreographic elements and with a political significance. Its purpose, in fact, is to depict the struggle for liberation of the African peoples from colonial domination. Of particular interest is the onomatopoeic effect (gun-shots) in several of the rhythmic parts, produced by percussion instruments. The xylophone is also employed here.

G. KENYA

Kenya, former British Colony and Protectorate which became independent in 1963 (following a long, anti-colonial struggle), covers an area of 224,960 sq. mi., and has a population of 11 million. Capital. Nairobi. Like Tanzania, Kenya also belongs to the cultural area of Eastern Africa.

The piece included here is a war dance in which the rhythm is cadenced by vertical drums, held between the dancers' legs. One also hears a whistle and the occasional intervention of the dancers' voices.

H. ZAPU (Zimbabwe)

Zapu is the name of the Liberation Movement of Rhodesia, a country (at the time of this writing) still dominated by whites. The Zapu troupe initiates its performance with the national anthem (Zimbabwe) and follows, in both documents included here, with political songs. Zimbabwe is the African (Bantu) name for Rhodesia.

Tracks:

1. Congo Brazzaville: Xylophone/Harps... - 5:20
2. Chad: Xylophone/Percussion/Voice Carriers... - 5:38
3. Camaroon: Percussion and Rattles - 2:50
4. Camaroon: Xylophone/Drum/Rattles/Male... - 5:07
5. Sudan: Percussion/Rattles/Male Voices - 4:19
6. Sudan: Foot Stamping/Rattles/Voices - 2:34
7. Zambia: Percussion/Mixed Voices - 4:33
8. Zambia: Percussion (3 Drums) /Rattles... - 3:19
9. Tanzania: Giant Horn/Xylophone/Percussion - 2:18
10. Tanzania: "The Liberation of Africa"... - 4:12

11. Kenya: Percussion/Voices/Whistle - 2:02
12. Zapu (Zimbabwe): Voices/Percussion - 3:22
13. Zapu (Zimbabwe): Voices/Clapping... - 4:16

Credits:

Originally produced and released by Albatross Recordings, Editoriale Sceascia s.a.s.

Milan Italy

Recorded live by Roberto Leydi.



Lyrichord Discs Inc.

PO Box 1977 Old Chelsea Station

New York, NY 10011 Ph: 212 404 8290 Fax: 212 404 8291

email: nick@lyrichord.com Web: www.lyrichord.com

© and (P) Lyrichord Discs Inc. These texts (including images) are published under copyright by Lyrichord Discs Inc. All rights are reserved.
The texts, and the music associated, with them, may only be republished, duplicated or sold, with written permission from Lyrichord Discs Inc.