

4. REPORT: ISME CONFERENCE: MEXICO CITY, SEPT 1975

Having attended the first International conference on Music and Communication and sat in on part of the seminar on Research into Musical Behaviour and Music Education in Different Cultures (with research delegates from seventeen countries) I was impressed by the final "findings" of this august body because they might well have been the "findings" of the Canadian Folk Music Society, had they had the time to come up with them! As such I thought that the society would be interested to read a brief account of some of the "findings", particularly in view of the fact that we hope shortly to plan a week-end get-together to discuss and re-evaluate what we mean by "folk music" in this present day and age.

Dr. Barbara Smith from Hawaii, stressing the value of inter-cultural music, suggested that those working in a

country other than their own, should "learn" and not "impose" because there is no guarantee that something which works musically in one's country will work, or should be expected to work, in another country; and it is much better to do nothing, musically, than impose your music and probably ruin the folk music culture of another country. A Japanese crescendo is different from a Filipino crescendo and we should learn to recognise the value of each cultural difference. This we cannot do unless we are aware of our own culture and she suggested that all school curricula, (musically), should be related to our own culture.

Dr. David Sell from New Zealand pointed out that in this connection it was only within the last twenty years that it had been understood and appreciated that the Maoris had their own music which was quite different from the European music which had been imposed upon them. 'It is now recognised', he said, 'that one of the Maori's cultural strengths lies in music, a different music certainly, but one which grows out of their own life and culture'.

Folk music helps one to be aware of the close relation between language and melody, for language affects the pattern or beat just as different modes or scales affect the character of a melody. If you change the stress you change the music, for a people's thinking process is based on language.

We need to be aware of, and value, these cultural differences of stress and mode and not expect them to work for us in our cultural pattern. (An example of stress differences is found in Kodaly's Sight reading exercises used in many schools teaching the Kodaly method. These exercises, because they are based on Hungarian folk songs, present unusual accent patterns for Canadians whose music is based on the language pattern and stress of English or French).

Dr. Sergeant from England was concerned with young people and music. He felt that they did not dislike what he called "high art" and "folk music" but were put off because both tended to be associated with old associations. Therefore we have to concern ourselves with finding new associations for both these types of music. His definitions were interesting; "high art" music, was composed music, which was worth while for its own sake; "folk music" was good, but instinctive music, and "pop music" he described as "a way of sexual behaviour" rather than "music". He also noted that in primitive society music was part of its social pattern and behaviour. With changes in education, these patterns and behaviours changed and music too was similarly affected. He suggested that Beethoven was "folk" in his time in the sense that his music was based on the life of the German people.

In discussion it was elicited that there could be no highly specialised music 'on its own'; that it grew out of, and was supported by, primitive and folk music, which was always the music of participation and part of life. Further, it was felt that music needs to be experienced, as pop music is experienced, and that music as an art apart from life, tends to become artificial and lack appeal.

It was agreed that both creativity and tradition were a necessary part of music, for music reflects the character of a society and yet it is always saying something new. Again and again the group returned to the value of understanding one's own musical roots and culture before one is capable of moving into the intercultural musical world. The stumbling block according to Prof. Jenson from Denmark is the "mass media" and I close this article with his final comment: "we must teach our children that the mass media is the enemy of music and that listening children must realize that they are being betrayed!" (by "mass media" he indicated "Musiak" and "senseless noise").

Barbara Cass-Beggs

What follows is one slightly abridged response to the question "Argue the case for a new definition of Folkmusic", posed to a folklore class at the Notre Dame Secretarial College in Montreal.

Editor