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Publication Date

2019

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Sounding the Transnational: Caribbean Jazz in Trinidad and Tobago

by

Jiselle Rouet

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Jocelyne Guilbault, Chair

Professor Daniel Fisher

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Summer 2019

Sounding the Transnational: Caribbean Jazz in Trinidad and Tobago

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Jiselle Rouet

Abstract

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by

Jiselle Rouet

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Jocelyne Guilbault, Chair

This dissertation engages the concept of transnationalism, a process usually defined by the permanent migration of people across the borders of nation-states, to highlight the complexities of the sound of Caribbean jazz in Trinidad and Tobago. This musical practice draws on an array of sounds that are distinctly local, yet certainly influenced by knowledge of and connections to the world at large. The sounds of Jamaica (reggae), Brazil (bossa nova), the United States (R&B, funk, disco) and India (sitar) amongst others can be heard and felt in the music. While the genre of jazz has largely been understood in reference to its origins in the United States, its dissemination across the world has become the focus of recent scholarly work. Jazz arrived in Trinidad and Tobago as early as the 1930s through film scores and radio broadcasts. However, the jazz emerging from Trinidad and Tobago today is quite distinct, sonically, from jazz in the United States.

Critically, in this dissertation, I ask in what ways might the study of sound help to re-conceptualize the process of transnationalism. By studying how sound is conceptualized, created, and disseminated, I examine issues of race, class, gender, labor, and the inequalities of power that are integral to understanding the concept of transnationalism in the Caribbean context. Drawing on archival work, I situate jazz within the context of Trinbagonian (Trinidadian and Tobagonian) history to show how the music first circulated. I engage the concept of sound beyond musical details to focus on processes of listening, observing, musical analysis and lived experience to demonstrate how issues of race, class, and power are at the core of how musicians negotiate the creation of their distinctive sounds. Through a collection of interviews, live performances and interactions with musicians, I situate biographically the experiences of seven Trinbagonian jazz musicians to show how their quests to learn and perform Caribbean jazz reflect larger transnational processes. Approaching Caribbean jazz as a sonic record for mapping transnational circulation illustrates how musicians in the global south collaborate and exchange influence outside of dominant frameworks that center the United States and Europe.

DEDICATION

To Geneviève, for rekindling the fire in my heart and giving me the strength to see this project to the end.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	1	
Dedication	i	
Table of Contents	ii	
List of Figures	iv	
Acknowledgements	vi	
<u>Part I:</u>	<u>Lived Experiences of Transnationalism</u>	1
Chapter One:	Introduction: Caribbean Jazz? Same seed...Different soil	1
	Situating The Caribbean	4
	Trinidad, or Trinidad and Tobago?	5
	Theoretical Framework	6
	Methodology	10
	Foreword: How to Write “I”?	14
	Ethnography At Home	16
	Chapter Outlines	18
Chapter Two:	Clive (Zanda) Alexander’s “Fancy Sailor”: History, Materiality, and the Colonial Subject	22
	The Early Years	
	Sojourn: London	27
	The Return: Trinidad and Other Travels	29
	Concluding Remarks	35
<u>Part II:</u>	<u>The Transnational at Home, Letters to...</u>	38
Chapter Three:	How to Woman: Vaughnette Bigford’s Journey to Jazz	39
	Letter to Miriam	41
	No Money, No Love: A Letter to Trinidadian girls	44
	Letter to My Readers	47
	Letter to Lady V	56
Chapter Four:	Music as Labor: Anthony Woodroffe Jr., the Sax Man	58
	Letter to Paul	59
	Letter to Nigel	63
	Reflections on Anthony: A Letter to My Readers	66

<u>Part III:</u>	<u>Things in Motion, Storytelling Trini Style</u>	70
Chapter Five:	Race, Cosmopolitanism, and Transnational Motions: The Story of Michael Low Chew Tung (Ming)	73
	A Trini is Never <i>just</i> a Trini	73
	Gears Man	77
	Quite-oh, Quite-oh From the Land of Calypso	81
	Conclusion	89
Chapter Six:	Race, Economics, and the Negotiation of Space in the Transnational Making of Caribbean Jazz: Chantal Esdelle’s story	90
	Education	90
	On Blackness	94
	Creating a Space for Caribbean Jazz	97
	Making an Album	101
	Conclusion	105
<u>Part IV:</u>	<u>The Places to Which we Belong On Locating Oneself in Diasporic Spaces</u>	106
Chapter Seven:	Inward Hunger: Race, Class, and Masculinity in the Negotiation of Self: David Bertrand’s Story	107
	Trinidad	108
	Palmyra and Other Places: New York	111
	Introducing <i>Palmyra</i> to the World	112
	Reflections on the Concert	113
	Releasing <i>Palmyra</i> : Production Strategies	115
	The Album	116
	Conclusion	118
Chapter Eight:	Trinidad is My Land: Navigating “Home” and “Foreign” in the Development of Musical Self: Etienne Charles’ story	120
	International Acclaim	120
	<i>Culture Shock</i>	121
	Dapper Style	123
	<i>Folklore</i>	125
	<i>Kaiso</i>	128
	Transnational Connections: <i>Creole Soul</i> , <i>San Jose Suite</i> , and <i>Carnival: The Sound of a People</i>	130
	Conclusion	133
<u>Conclusion</u>		134
<u>Works Cited</u>		136

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 2.1 Clive “Zanda” Alexander performing at Tobago Beach Jazz, April 2017
- Figure 2.2 The Dutchy Brothers Album Cover, “A Study in Rhythm”
- Figure 2.3 Sel Duncan and Orchestra, “Concert at the Hall”
- Figure 2.4 Transcription of “Mr. Walker,” The Mighty Sparrow
- Figure 2.5 Transcription of Clive Zanda’s arrangement of “Mr. Walker”
- Figure 2.6 Clive performing at the Ethnic Jazz Club, November 2016
- Figure 2.7 The Clive Zanda Method
- Figure 3.1 Vaughnette performing at the Point Fortin Borough Day Celebration, 2017
- Figure 3.2 Vaughnette wearing Zadd and Eastman at Jazz Artists on the Green 2017
- Figure 3.3 Transcription of KMC’s “Soul on Fire”
- Figure 3.4 Transcription of verse from “Soul on Fire” arra by the Vaughnette Bigford Band
- Figure 3.5 Transcription of Chorus of “Soul on Fire”
- Figure 3.6 Transcription of Erykah Badu’s “On and On”
- Figure 4.1 Anthony performing in the Vaughnette Bigford Band at Jazz Artists on the Greens, 2017
- Figure 4.2 Anthony doubling on flute for Élan Parlē at Jazz Artists on the Greens, 2017
- Figure 4.3 Anthony Woodroffe, Jr. and band performing at the Tobago Jazz Experience, 2017
- Figure 4.4 Anthony and his band performing with Ben Lowman at the Tobago Jazz Experience, 2017
- Figure 5.1 Michael Low Chew Tung
- Figure 5.2 Melodic line of introduction to “Port of Spain”
- Figure 5.3 Bridge from Chick Corea’s “Spain”
- Figure 5.4 Orisha Rhythm used in “Berimbe”
- Figure 5.5 Ming in Rehearsal with the Vaughnette Bigford Band
- Figure 5.6 Ming and some of his gear at Jazz Artists on the Greens 2017
- Figure 5.7 Ming with Charlie’s Roots while on tour
- Figure 5.8 Transcription of Bass and Drum rhythms in “Calypso Music”
- Figure 5.9 Transcription of David Rudder’s “Calypso Music”
- Figure 5.10 Transcription of “Calypso Music” as arranged by Michael Low Chew Tung
- Figure 6.1 Excerpt from “Final Farewell”
- Figure 6.2 Montuno used throughout “La Major De Mi”
- Figure 6.3 Chantal performing at the Ethnic Jazz Club
- Figure 6.4 Chantal Esdelle and Moyenne performing at the Normandy Hotel
- Figure 6.5 Clive Zanda and band at the Ethnic Jazz Club
- Figure 6.6 Audience at the Ethnic Jazz Club
- Figure 6.7 Rhyner’s Storage Unit
- Figure 7.1 Photo of David Bertrand
- Figure 7.2 David Bertrand Quartet performing at Cornelia Street Café
- Figure 7.3 Transcription of Terror Fabulous’ “Action”
- Figure 7.4 Transcription of David Bertrand’s “Fire Island”
- Figure 7.5 Bass line in “Wood Slave”
- Figure 7.6 The David Bertrand Quartet at Club Bonafide.

- Figure 8.1 Orisha Rhythm used as ostinato in “Culture Shock”
- Figure 8.2 Album cover of *Folklore*
- Figure 8.3 Etienne in one of his signature suits on the set of “Cup of Joe” with Joel Villafana
- Figure 8.4 Transcription of the introduction to “Douens”
- Figure 8.5 Mode used in “Dance with the La Diabliesse”
- Figure 8.6 Transcription of the Introduction to the Mighty Sparrow’s “Ten to One is Murder”
- Figure 8.7 Introductory Hit (Ten to One is Murder arr. Etienne Charles)
- Figure 8.8 Refrain (Ten to One is Murder arr. Etienne Charles)
- Figure 8.9 Typical chord progression often used for calypso
- Figure 8.10 Album cover of *San Jose Suite*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to begin by thanking the musicians featured in this project for opening their hearts and lives to me, and for trusting me to share their stories with the world. Without your support, participation and kindness, this project would never have become so vibrant. Mr. Zanda, Vaughnette, Anthony, Ming, Chantal, David, Etienne. Thank you for everything. I also want to specially thank Nigel Campbell for his friendship, advice, and for willingly sharing his incredible knowledge of the music scene in Trinidad. Much of this work is indebted to your wisdom and guidance. A big thank you also goes to the photographers who have allowed permissions for the reproduction of some of their works. In particular, I want to thank Maria Nunes for her photographs of Chantal Esdelle, and I want to acknowledge the work of Laura Ferreira that has been made available for publicity on Etienne Charles' website.

At the University of California Berkeley, I am thankful to the many professors who walked with me through this journey. Bonnie Wade, and T. Carlis Roberts were particularly supportive and encouraging in my early years in the program and have continued to be supportive of all of my endeavors. Ben Brinner's deep readings of my work, and his continuous interest in my scholarship and well-being were much needed and appreciated. Thank you for always helping out, in various capacities. I am particularly grateful to Steve Feld for his Anthropology of Sound seminar in 2012 that provided much of the impetus for the ways in which I challenge the study of sound in this work. Travis Jackson, at the University of Chicago, played a fundamental role in sharpening my knowledge of jazz scholarship. I am thankful for the opportunity to have worked with him and for his continued support.

Jocelyne Guilbault: my advisor, mentor, friend. From the very beginning you believed in me. You always encouraged me to be myself—even when “being me” felt at odds with being an academic. Thank you for continuously reminding me of the value of my own experiences. Thank you, also, for supporting me through this journey of writing a rather radical dissertation—one that breaks all the “rules” and makes very loud political statements. I will always deeply value and cherish your intellectual and emotional support.

Thank you to Myra Melford and Daniel Fisher for being a part of my dissertation committee. I am grateful to Myra for her excitement about my project and for the countless hours we spent in her office listening to, and discussing Caribbean jazz. Thank you for sharing your knowledge of jazz with me and for continuously asking pertinent questions. Danny, thank you for your wonderfully abstract ways of thinking that always breathe fresh life into how I grapple with texts and my writing. It has been an absolute joy to work with you, and I am so grateful for your enthusiasm and support with this project.

The villages: It took several proverbial villages to support me through this process of not only writing, but surviving a PhD program. I have always been blessed with strong support systems and for that I am forever grateful. My Berkeley family: Nour, Daniel, John Walsh, Nadia, Nell, Margaret, Melanie, Jamie, Beezer, Jon, Rebecca, Jacob, Kendra Salois, Carla, Inderjit. I love you all so, very much. My Trinidad village: Kejan, Raymond, Angelia, thank you for your help on many occasions with time-sensitive information. Special thanks to my team of Trini supporters who urged me to continue during the most difficult times. To Wade, Annalize, and Ritwik, your

company and our shared struggles while writing made this journey more tolerable. Thank you for writing alongside me and for being my de facto writing group.

I also want to give thanks to my parents Mona and Ulric Warner. Mom, you have always been my number one supporter. There was never a clearer expression of this than when you stayed with us for an entire month after Geneviève's birth to make sure that I got back to writing, and that I would see this project through to the end. Not everyone can speak about a mother who would give so much of herself to her children. I love you. Thank you to both you and dad for the incredible emotional support during the most difficult year of my life.

Last but not least, to François-Henry. The love of my life. This PhD is yours as much as it is mine. You have held me, picked me up, loved and supported me through all of the ups and downs. Thank you for always reminding me of my inner strength, and for sharing yours with me when I had none to give. Thank you for pushing me, or standing back—just always knowing what I need. It is because of your love and your inner light that I grew, bloomed, and conquered this difficult task. I love you ...

PART I

Lived Experiences of Transnationalism

Introduction

Caribbean Jazz?: Same seed...Different soil...

In Trinidad and Tobago, the term “Caribbean jazz” is understood to represent a particular sound and sentiment. However, to those unfamiliar with the music, the term raises many questions. Most prominently perhaps, readers may question in what ways the music relates to the genre of jazz as it has originated from the United States. Is Caribbean jazz another facet of Latin Jazz? How is it classified or differentiated? Although the term Caribbean jazz in Trinidad is often used interchangeably with other terms such as Calypso jazz, Pan jazz, and Kaiso jazz, I use the term Caribbean jazz as a rubric under which the various styles of jazz performed in Trinidad and Tobago may be organized. As musician Michael Low Chew Tung explained, “These terms have different meanings based on who is using them and the context within which they are using them.”

In trying to accurately reflect the views of the musicians with whom I worked, I see the term Caribbean jazz as an inclusive term that is able to account for the diverse musical styles from which local (Trinbagonian) musicians draw. Though it has emerged from African-American jazz just as Latin Jazz has, Caribbean jazz is distinguished in each country by the incorporation of various local musical styles and instruments. Jazz musicians in Trinidad and Tobago often fuse styles from local musics such as calypso, the Orisha tradition and chutney as well as other East Indian musical practices. As such, the music varies from musician to musician and is largely a reflection of personal stylistic preferences.

As a result of the various influences on this music, to use the term “genre” would seem insufficient as this music does not fit neatly into any prescribed categories of rhythm, stylistic components, nor specific instrumentations. Musicians in Trinidad and Tobago speak about this musical practice as jazz because it draws from the African American tradition of straight-ahead jazz, employing techniques of improvisation. I resist the label of genre not only because of the stylistic fluidity of this music, but because to do so would insist upon a demonstration of all the ways in which this music qualifies as “real jazz.”

In his discussion of genre discourses, Fabian Holt argues, “Dominant genre discourses enforce core-boundary distinctions that define a core or essence of the genre and involve exclusion and marginalization (Holt 2008: 42).” To speak of Caribbean jazz, however, it is imperative to acknowledge these very exclusions and marginalizations brought forth by using the term “jazz.” The aim of this dissertation is not to place Caribbean jazz in opposition to straight-ahead jazz of the United States. Rather, the goal is to show how the distinct musical practices of Caribbean jazz have emerged out of the complex transnational relationships that govern interactions between a country of the periphery and countries of the center. To use the qualifier, jazz, is to immediately enter into the discourse on jazz studies within which I must situate this scholarly work.

Despite much academic interest in other musical genres in the Caribbean, interest in jazz has been rather scarce. In the past decade there has been growing journalistic interest emerging in the form of blogs, newspaper articles and most notably the fairly recent magazine “Jazz in the Islands” (edited by Nigel Campbell). However, only one scholar, Warren R. Pinckney, has done academic work on Caribbean jazz in the English-speaking islands. Focusing on the islands of Barbados, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Bermuda and Puerto Rico (Pinckney 1989, 1992, 1994, 2000),

Pinckney provides a foundation for Caribbean jazz scholarship by documenting the histories and unfolding of jazz in these various islands. More critically, however, Pinckney's scholarship suggests the crucial transnational processes at work in Caribbean jazz through the influence of musical genres such as calypso. Furthermore, Pinckney has highlighted the importance of the Caribbean jazz aesthetic created through the musicians' focus on mood, style, location, and audience demographics. Notwithstanding these contributions, Pinckney's work only begins the critical work of investigating Caribbean jazz, creating the need for more research that will provide more intricate contextualization and nuance in discussions of the musical practice.

However, in contrast with the scarcity of scholarly resources on jazz in the English-speaking Caribbean, much work has been conducted on jazz in other parts of the world. For example, as early as the 1970s, scholars began to examine the impact of jazz in Britain (Carr 1973; Godbolt 1984), and the Soviet Union (Starr 1983; Feigin 1985). These works have played a critical role in redefining the discourse on the genre, leading scholars to cover a diverse scope of theoretical issues such as globalization (Atkins 2003), empowerment and resistance (Heffley 2005; Moore 2007; Gebhardt and Whyton 2015), circulation (Fernandez 2006; Jones 2001; McKay 2005; Lomanno 2012), race and the politics of representation (Godbolt 1984; Gabbard 1995; Harris 2000; McGraw 2012), and gender (Johnson 2000; Moore 2007; Muller and Benjamin 2011; Lomanno 2012).

The growing discourse has largely resulted from a reconfiguration of Jazz Studies. Roger Dean's *New Structures in Jazz and Improvised Music* (1992), is one of the earliest works that implores jazz scholars to look beyond the United States as *the* terrain of study and furthermore laments the lack of non-U.S. scholars represented in the jazz canon. Adding further nuance to the discourse on jazz, Krin Gabbard's *Jazz Among the Discourses* critically examines the history of the methodologies used by various scholars (Gabbard 1995; Radano 2003). Gabbard aims not only to investigate the ways that jazz has been analyzed and represented, but more importantly to question how and why these methodological approaches have come to be constitutive of a jazz canon deemed legitimate within music scholarship. Thus, Gabbard and the contributors to this volume seek to present an interdisciplinary approach that moves beyond tropes of authenticity, the reification of "great figures" of jazz, and significantly, the bifurcation of racial discourse on jazz as "white-against-black" (Ibid., 17).

Gabbard's collection ushered in a critical moment in Jazz Studies that called for greater reflexivity and a reassessment of the politics of representation. Heralded by the New Jazz Studies and further mobilized by the global turn, scholars such as Bruce Johnson (2000) and Andrew Jones (2001) have explored jazz in Australia and China respectively, through the lens of modernity. Johnson explores the entanglements between jazz, gender and the Australian quest for modernity, thus intervening as one of the earliest works on jazz outside the United States to place gender as a central concern. In contrast, Andrew Jones explores the role of media technologies in relation to the circulation of popular musics in China's quest for modernity during the Chinese Jazz Age (1920s). In addition, the contributors to *Jazz Planet*, edited by E. Taylor Atkins, explore how jazz acts as an agent of globalization in various countries throughout the world (2003). This publication is notable because it aims to challenge the notions of unidirectional flows of information that frequently arise in conceptions of jazz as an American music.

Edited collections such as those by Pickhan and Ritter (2010) and Gebhardt and Whyton (2015) explore the ways in which the performance of jazz in various locales has allowed for the creation of alternative social spaces. While *Jazz Behind the Iron Curtain* (Pickhan and Ritter

2010) focuses on the performance of jazz in the Soviet Union as a way of challenging the power of the state, *The Cultural Politics of Jazz Collectives* highlights the various efforts of unified groups of musicians to (re)claim and negotiate spaces, often against nationalist cultural politics. Other scholars such as Rebecca Anne Curtis (2010) have focused on spatiality by looking at the ways jazz festivals have created a tourist industry even in geographically remote areas.

Through the lens of cosmopolitanism, Steven Feld (2012) explores jazz in Accra, Ghana. In this study Feld aims to rethink the notion of cosmopolitanism from a perspective that privileges individuals of higher social status to one that refers to multiple senses of knowing through traveling as much as by staying in one location. Through a rather contrasting approach, Andrew McGraw (2012) examines the intersections between Indonesian jazz, nationalism and cosmopolitanism. McGraw demonstrates the manner in which the cosmopolitanism of jazz in Indonesia was very much influenced by the New Order's political manifesto thus reflecting a distinct neoliberal sensibility, or elite cosmopolitanism.

These works illustrate the multitude of new theoretical and methodological approaches informing jazz studies. While there has been a general movement away from speaking about jazz in terms of "us/them," many of the works on jazz outside the United States still show the importance of situating jazz elsewhere within the greater context of the political, and racial tensions surrounding jazz in the U.S. Additionally, these works have provided critical interventions into the jazz canon, importantly moving away from the reification of great figures, and further addressing the local politics of difference.

This dissertation draws on the important contributions of these works to the study of jazz around the globe. And yet, it is quite distinct from them. While the aforementioned studies have challenged the boundaries of scholarship on jazz, they have largely been concerned with "objects" of study. In this work, one such "object" I utilize is that of creating historical context through the use of chronological timeline. This technique has been employed by scholars such as Moore (2007), Fernandez (2006), Godbolt (1984), and Roberts (1999) in order to situate the development of the practice of jazz in various non-western locales. This dissertation, however, is not only based on historiography. While it does in fact provide a rich history of Trinidad and Tobago, it also employs the strategy of biography—and yet, the biographies do not necessarily unfold chronologically as do the biographies in Ansell's *Soweto Blues* (2004), or John Shand's work on jazz in Australia (Shand 2009). The biographies in this dissertation take detours. They do not unfold linearly.

Other "objects" of study featured in discourses on jazz in non-western countries include the analyses of various collectives, festivals, and institutions. Whereas collected editions such as those edited by Cerchiari et al. (2012), Gebhardt and Whyton (2015), and Toynbee et al. (2014) approach the study of jazz outside the United States through focusing on various music scenes and locations, this dissertation, though situated largely in Trinidad and Tobago, takes readers on a journey through multiple spaces and places. Furthermore, although several works have addressed non-western jazz within the context of national borders (Johnson 2000; Godbolt 1984; Feigin 1985; Moore 2007; Ballantine 1991, 2012; Ostendorf 2001), this work aligns more closely with works such as those by Feld (2012), McKay (2005), and Muller and Benjamin (2011) that pay particular attention to the ways that jazz is inherently transnational—by questioning *how* individual musicians have experienced jazz.

This project aligns perhaps most closely with Steve Feld's *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra* by weaving together several kinds of writing: biography, creative writing, ethnography, and even memoir. What unites this work as one conceptual piece, however, and governs its

distinct form and style, is my conception of jazz and Caribbean jazz as inherently transnational. Scholar Rashida K. Braggs has done similar critical work in conceiving of jazz as transnational in her text entitled *Jazz Diasporas* (Braggs: 2016). But what distinguishes this work from Braggs' scholarship is the particular lens through which we approach our studies. While Braggs enters into the discourse from the critical angle of Performance Studies, exploring performances as a critical theme and method, my dissertation uses the concept of transnationalism as a lens of analysis. That is to say, this dissertation focuses on the *process* of creating music (Caribbean jazz), rather than specifically the who, what, where.

By positing jazz as inherently transnational, this work is able to resist the impulse to discuss Caribbean jazz according to the kinds of structuring and objectifying that Fabian Holt speaks of in relation to genre labeling (Holt 2007). Therefore, instead of conceiving of Caribbean jazz as a distinct genre, I treat it as a musical practice—one that is constantly in the *process* of negotiation, reconfiguration, and in continuous transnational exchange.

Situating the Caribbean

What is the Caribbean that musicians refer to when they speak of Caribbean jazz? Or rather, whose Caribbean? The word Caribbean holds much ambiguity. It means different things to different people at different times. As a geographical concept defined by those countries of or related to the Caribbean Sea, the Caribbean consists not only of the archipelago of islands from Cuba moving south toward Trinidad and Tobago. Instead, it also includes Central American countries such as Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. Additionally, it should encompass South American countries such as Venezuela, Colombia and parts of Brazil.

Despite this, the geographical outlines of the Caribbean provide only one perspective through which the region could be defined. Scholar Norman Girvan argues that there are at least four ways through which the Caribbean may be defined. He states:

First is the Caribbean as the *island chain* lying in the Caribbean Sea. Second is the Caribbean as *basin*, comprising the countries lying in and around the Caribbean Sea. Third is the Caribbean as an *ethno-historic zone*, comprising the islands and the adjacent coastal communities in South and Central America sharing a similar history, culture and ethnicity. The fourth, and most recent, is the idea of the Caribbean as a *transnational community* that embraces the Caribbean diaspora overseas (Girvan 2000: 31).

As Girvan suggests, geographical boundaries do little work in explaining the complex relationships between these countries. In order to speak of the Caribbean, we must first begin with the acknowledgement of the long-lasting effects of colonialism on the nature, scope, and duration of interactions that have shaped this modern-day geographical area.

To understand the history and culture of the island of St. Lucia, for example, is to be familiar with the phrase, “Seven times British, seven times French.” In a similar vein, to understand the history, culture, and musical practices of Trinidad and Tobago is to be familiar with the country's interesting colonial past. Upon (re)discovery in 1498, Trinidad became a Spanish colony until 1797 when it was captured by the British. Yet in spite of the rule of these

particular colonial powers, Trinidad (and Tobago) was heavily influenced by a large, prominent population of French plantation owners escaping the impacts of the French Revolution.¹

I provide this brief history not specifically to give background on Trinidad and Tobago, but because to highlight this history is to show that rule by one colonial power did not preclude various kinds of connections with colonies of other monarchies. This also helps to establish a lineage of networks that surpass the assumed or perceived divide of linguistics as determined by colonial rule. It is precisely these types of connections that Shalini Puri aims to highlight in *Marginal Migrations* (2003). The contributors to this edited volume demonstrate various types of social, economic and political connections between countries of the margins, and particularly countries of the Caribbean.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I conceive of the Caribbean as defined by the geographical borders of the Caribbean Sea. I engage such a broad understanding of the term because, despite the tendency of Trinbagonians to often only privilege the Anglophone islands when conceptualizing the region, the music referenced by Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad and Tobago proves to reach far beyond the confines of linguistics and national borders. By conceptualizing the Caribbean in this way, I am also able to speak about the influences of Latin Jazz, as well as the music and musicians from Cuba, Haiti, and Martinique and Guadeloupe.

Trinidad, or Trinidad and Tobago?

It is no secret that Tobagonians have long felt like second class citizens in all matters related to the twin-island nation. As the smaller of the two islands with an economy largely dependent on tourism, Tobago is, through no fault of its own, financially indebted to Trinidad. This tense relationship has been manifested in various social contexts in which Tobago is portrayed as the unfortunate step-sibling of Trinidad.

Although it is customary for people to identify which island specifically they are from when asked, in this dissertation I try to take great care in how I refer to the country. For clarification I thus use the names of the islands as follows. To refer to the country within an international context, I state Trinidad and Tobago. However, I use the phrase “Caribbean jazz in Trinidad” frequently because Trinidad happens to be the island where the jazz scene is most active. In a similar vein, I use the term Trinbagonian to refer to people of the country of Trinidad and Tobago in general. When referring to the musicians with whom I worked, however, I speak of them as Trinidadian musicians because they all originate from the island of Trinidad.

Theoretical Framework

Transnationalism

Transnationalism, in this dissertation, refers to the ongoing processes of exchange, movement, and circulation that occur *trans*—across, beyond, or in spite of—the borders of nation-states. It is a process, as I will demonstrate, that is simultaneously cultural, economic, and

¹ For more reference on the French influence in Trinidad, see Brereton (2008).

political. In this project, I examine the ways in which the circulation and performance of Caribbean jazz (as live music and as tangible objects) highlight inequalities of power, race, class and gender occurring in transnational relationships between the Caribbean and various over-developed nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom. This project therefore also questions the means through which Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad and Tobago have negotiated multiple senses of agency, despite inequalities of power.

Transnationalism, a process defined by travel across the borders of nation-states, experienced a theoretical revival in the 1990s in the field of Migration Studies as a response to the anxieties surrounding the increasing presence of global capitalism. Scholars such as Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton were interested in finding new ways to understand the process of migration that accounted for the relationship of migrants between home and host countries (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1994). However, the term was previously used primarily in the context of political economy to address the flow of capital in relation to transnational, multinational companies (Gill and Law 1989; Helleiner 1989). Although scholars in the fields of Sociology and Migration Studies have succeeded in recovering the term from a purely political economic context and in highlighting the sociality of transnationalism, their foci have still largely centered on the political and economic effects of migration on the social lives of various peoples and communities. While the political, economic, and social (Portes et al 1999) aspects of transnationalism continue indeed to be of great importance in scholarship on migration studies, scholars such as Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) suggest that culture and religion also play a crucial role in understandings of the concept.

One important intervention to the disjuncture between political economy and the socio-cultural in transnational theory is by Aihwa Ong (1999), who insists that the study of the social and cultural must be thought of as coterminous with the economic. While many scholars privilege the political and economic over the socio-cultural practices emerging as distinct from but related to migration, others such as Hannerz (1996), Appadurai (1996) and Palumbo-Liu and Gumbrecht (1997) have argued about the need to pay attention to the importance of culture in shaping transnational social spaces. These highly influential works have filled a critical lacuna in the literature. However, these scholars have been critiqued for not grounding these works empirically, and therefore not engaging the politics of difference. Heeding such observations from Ong (1999), Canon (2005) and Moore (2007), this dissertation emerges as a series of biographies of Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad and Tobago as a means of demonstrating how lived, situated experiences enable differently informed understandings of the concept of transnationalism. These musicians' biographies have allowed me to engage the politics of difference while also acknowledging the structural issues emerging from transnational processes.

Although Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton have addressed the relationships between home and host societies emerging from transnational studies, Al-Ali and Koser (2002) and Aksoy and Robbins (2000) have troubled the notion of "home" for migrants. D. Alissa Trotz (2006) further destabilizes this binary by looking instead at alternative types of sustained relationships that occur between different diasporic groups instead of a relationship between home and host. One of the underlying issues emerging throughout this dissertation is the problematizing of the concept of home. By examining how seven Trinbagonian musicians engage with the musical practice of Caribbean jazz, I show that understandings of "home" are not singular, but are rather multifaceted and are largely informed by the intricacies of race, gender, and family dynamics. Furthermore, I deconstruct the binary of "home and away" by

demonstrating through the analysis of the sound of Caribbean jazz how the transnational is imminently local (Mains 2004).

In addition to the discrepancies in ideas surrounding the direction and nature of transnational flows, sociologists Portes et al. (1999) insist that for activities to be considered transnational they must be regular and sustained. However, these scholars also suggest, distinctly from Glick-Schiller et al., that the individual is the most viable point of departure for research, rather than the community. Drawing on the works of scholars such as Appadurai (1986), Averill (1994) and Guilbault (1996), this study focuses not only on the movement of people through migration, but also on their transient movement and the movement of cultural objects. What different kinds of knowledges emerge from studying the temporary though sustained travels performed by growing numbers of musicians? This dissertation aims to show how and why temporary travel has become a necessity for some Caribbean jazz musicians who simply cannot travel otherwise, and how, in so doing they are able to forge various types of transnational relationships. I will also examine the various types of socialities emerging from the engagement with cultural objects such as records, CDs, instruments and magazines to illustrate how the circulation of objects, like the movement of people, is also shaped by the issues of power and inequity that characterize transnational processes.

What role does temporality play in transnational exchanges? Ruben Gowricharn, in his critique of transnationalism, argues that too much emphasis has been placed on first generation migrants and as such, the transnational activities of second-generation immigrants have been largely ignored (Gowricharn 2006). What emerges from Gowricharn's work, however, is the need to conceive of transnationalism not merely as a phenomenon of the present moment, but as a process that is constituted by histories of the past and constitutive of future exchanges. I begin this study by interrogating the histories of jazz in Trinidad and Tobago as a means of understanding the complexities of transnational exchanges in the past that shape the types of transnational relationships that exist today.

This research builds upon the work of postcolonial scholar Shalini Puri by highlighting the importance of intraregional flows in conceptualizing transnationalism in the Caribbean (Puri 2003). My goal is therefore to show how transnationalism operates not just from centers to peripheries, but also, critically, from margins to margins. This study will also demonstrate the ways in which transnational relationships almost never consist of one direct movement between two points. In fact, this dissertation will show the multiple and divergent paths that arise in transnational exchanges as a result of issues of race, class, gender, and power. Thus, while Caribbean jazz, to the unfamiliar observer, might appear to be directly related to jazz in the United States, this dissertation will show how jazz traveled and continues to travel to Trinidad through other critical points of influence such as the United Kingdom (center), and Cuba (periphery).

Most critically, this project on Caribbean jazz will explore the ways in which the study of sound provides nuances to the concept of transnationalism that may not have been voiced in previous studies. What does it mean to interrogate the process of transnationalism by studying sound?

A Brief Study in Sound

18th November, 2016: Clive Zanda in Concert at the Ethnic Jazz Club, Cornelio Street Woodbrook

Below the sounds of the introductory ostinato one can hear the audience chattering excitedly. This is the first time in many months that Clive Zanda is featured in a show. As the bass and drum players vamp the intro, Clive walks in dressed in his customary dashiki for performance and joins in on keys. After Clive has a few moments to settle into the groove, the pan player enters with the main refrain of the tune, "Carnival Come Down." When they hit the chorus, I'm drawn to the counterpoint going on between the keyboard and the bass. As Russell walks the bass calypso style, Clive counters it with a three-note descending chromatic line relishing in the short but poignant dissonances created by their conversation. Clive leads the band in a way that allows space for interaction between the musicians. There is feedback from the microphone and he pauses his improv to let the swell of the noise pass. He takes this as an opportunity to vamp and diminuendo, reducing his comping to a two-chord ostinato. Russell picks up the walking bass again but the vamp remains light and introspective giving the music a chance to breathe.

As the audience waits to see where Clive takes the vamp, the moment is suddenly shattered by the blaring of a police siren. This short sonic intrusion suddenly jolts me back to my current physical reality - sitting in the open-air main room of the Ethnic Jazz Club, a house in residential Woodbrook that has been converted into a music venue. But Clive does not miss a beat. As soon as the siren is over, he immediately echoes the rhythmic pattern of the siren on the keyboard and the audience erupts in scandalous laughter. This episode catapults the band into the closing section.

As the scholarly approach of studying sound grows momentum, there is a certain discord I experience engaging with works classified as Sound Studies. I turn to the three collections that have become the seminal texts that scholars interested in studying sound refer to: *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2012); *The Sound Studies Reader* (2013) and *Keywords in Sound* (2015). I still cannot find what I am looking for. I search the internet to find the words to describe what I am struggling to express. Finally, I find it, in the words of Gustavus Stadler who, speaking about these collections, writes:

Encountering the three books at once, I found it hard not to hear the implicit message that no sound-related topics other than black music have anything to do with race. At the same time, the mere inclusion of work on black music in these books, without any larger theory of race and sound or wider critical framing, risks reproducing the dubious politics of white Euro-Americans' long historical fascination with black voices.²

That not every scholar's theoretical work will revolve around the study of race and other differently abled bodies is clear. However, the lack of deeper engagement with such an absence within such critical collections is in itself a reproduction of structural inequality. That it takes the

² Stadler (2015)

quoting of a passage written by a white, male scholar to highlight what I know and understand too well is ironic and, again, a reproduction of structural inequality.³

In this dissertation, I work against these inequalities by engaging the study of sound as an extension of the study of the lived, situated body. Drawing on the scholarship of Alejandro Madrid and Robin D. Moore (2013) and Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier (2013), I pay attention not only to *how* sound is produced in terms of musical elements. More importantly, I focus on *what* is required for particular bodies to produce sound. In other words, I do not envision the creation of sound, or the process of sounding as a given. Instead, I argue that the process of creating sound is deeply shaped by the body as it is perceived in the world and as it perceives itself in the world.⁴

By studying the *what*, or the conditions necessary for the production of Caribbean jazz by musicians in Trinidad and Tobago, I examine the how the politics of race, class, gender and nationality impact upon a musicians' ability to engage with this musical practice. In so doing, I extend the study of sound to encompass more than a study of musical elements into a larger enquiry of what the process of sounding can reveal about the concept of transnationalism through themes such as space, place, interaction, elements of style, and temporality.

In the ethnographic excerpt above, I begin by describing the background sounds of the audience chattering while the performance begins. This might appear to be a somewhat insignificant happening in relation to the entire ethnographic excerpt, yet I hold it with great importance. The chatter of the audience signals, within the Trinbagonian context, that the event is taking place in a less formal setting. This event does not carry with it the customary pomp and circumstance of the concert hall setting, and quite conversely alerts us that this is a rather interactive setting where the collective voice of the audience is valued as part of the creative process.

Space and place are integral to this sonic mapping because as the ethnographic excerpt later details, the event is happening at a house in the residential part of Woodbrook that has been converted into a jazz venue. What does this conversion of "private" space into "public" venue say about the types of performing venues one might find jazz musicians in Trinidad and Tobago? Do jazz clubs exist? How many? These questions also incite us to consider what the needs were of the musicians that necessitated such conversion of space. Given the intimate setting of a house, why have the event organizers chosen to use amplification and what might the microphone feedback describe to us about the logistics of the location? The context of this space (house qua jazz venue) and place (residential Woodbrook, in the capital of Trinidad) prompts a larger discussion surrounding the issue of what sort of cultural space is occupied by jazz, an imported musical practice, in Trinidad and Tobago.

To study sound, however, does not mean to forego musical elements. When I speak about the counterpoint between the piano and the bass guitar, I am not merely interested in musical influences or stylistic elements of the music. I think about Clive's use of counterpoint as a story about how a man who never learned to read Western classical notation was and continues to be highly influenced by the work of Johann Sebastian Bach. Clive's study of J.S. Bach's music goes

³ While there are important works contributed to the sound studies canon by black scholars such as Eidsheim (2015), Alexander Weheliye (2005), Henriques (2011), the works primarily referenced as those of sound studies are predominantly those of white men.

⁴ See Csordas (1994) and Csordas (2008).

beyond a mere stating of his exceptional listening skills to detail the fervent culture of record listening amongst West Indians between the 1930s and the 1960s. It is not a story about *what* records Clive listened to, but a story of *how* Clive was able to listen to such records at a time and place where costs were prohibitive and access was highly limited and restricted.

Other kinds of work can be accomplished through musical analysis, however. Clive's relishing in the dissonances created between himself and the bass player do work in placing him temporally. Unlike other Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad and Tobago, Clive revels in the stylistic and tonal language of free jazz. Although his music certainly carries with it the "danceability" of Caribbean jazz, as Nigel Campbell describes it, Clive frequently superimposes other modes while performing, creating jarring dissonances not frequently heard locally. To understand this, however, is to understand that Clive lived in the United Kingdom during the 1950s and 1960s and was influenced by musicians he both heard *and* met such as Ahmad Jamal, Yusef Lateef, and McCoy Tyner. Why was Clive in the United Kingdom at this time? Was he studying music and did he perform with these musicians? To assume the previous questions would require a denial of the politics of Clive's body. However, by placing the circumstances of his body at the center of this inquiry, I instead ask questions surrounding the circumstances governing how and why a black man from Trinidad and Tobago might be living in the United Kingdom in the 1950s.

In this study on Caribbean jazz in Trinidad and Tobago, I lead readers through a process of listening to sound, and I analyze *how* and *why* musicians create sound, in order to provide nuance to the concept of transnationalism. Yet in the process of leading through listening to sound, I challenge the ways that scholarship has been inclined to portray the processes of sounding and listening with inconsequence. As I explore what it means to theorize through sound in this dissertation, I am also doing the work of trying to reconcile theory and practice by grounding this work in the lived experiences of Trinbagonian musicians and all the beauty and complexities that come with these diverse perspectives.

Methodology

Biographical Approach

How does one tell the story of a musical practice that defies any strict genre classification and holds different meanings to different people at different times and places? More critically, how does one address the notion of transnationalism as it pertains to the musical practice of Caribbean jazz? Using the technique of biographical approach, this dissertation unfolds as a series of seven contrasting biographies. However, although it draws heavily on material from interviews, it is an ethnographic project that also relies on observations of performances and rehearsals in addition to analysis of musical elements and various types of archival data.

One of the primary scholarly debates on the concept of transnationalism surrounds the lack of agreement on what level the concept must be studied. While some scholars such as Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt (1999) argue that the individual is the most critical point of departure for study, other scholars argue for focus on communities or small groups (Gowricharn 2009; Appadurai 1996), religious formations (Basch et al 1995), ideological movements (Stephens 1998) and the nation-state (Kearney 1995). While each of these approaches have their merits, the use of biography in this dissertation serves to highlight the complexities at work in

transnational processes. In other words, I examine how the musical practice of Caribbean jazz speaks to and complicates understandings of issues such as race, class, power, gender, and nationality as they pertain to the concept of transnationalism. Therefore, I not only show how these issues impact upon people's abilities to move or travel transnationally, but also how they impact upon musicians' capabilities to access, interpret, and converse with information, materials and musics that circulate transnationally.

The technique of biography has experienced a revived interest in the field of ethnomusicology. Most notable and influential to this dissertation are the works of Steve Feld, *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five Musical Years in Ghana* (2012), and Jocelyne Guilbault's *Roy Cape: A Life on the Calypso and Soca Bandstand* (2014). In particular, these works have deeply influenced me to question which musicians would play a critical role in this study. Guilbault's focus on Roy Cape, a bandleader, is in immediate defiance of the canonic norm to reify "great figures," usually lead singers on the front stage. Furthermore, Guilbault's "experiment in storytelling" and her engaging of multiple and different kinds of voices were particularly influential upon my own process biographical writing (Ibid., 2014: 7). Through the notion of cosmopolitanism from below, Feld highlights the work of musicians for whom the notion of cosmopolitanism often excludes. These two works have urged me to consider issues such as social status, gender, and particularly reflexivity in conveying these musicians' stories.

Deeply considering such issues, this work features musicians from a variety of backgrounds in terms of age, gender, race, class and profession. The musicians selected for this dissertation have not been chosen on the basis of financial success, nor on quantity of musical output. Rather, they have been chosen because of their central roles in the contemporary Caribbean jazz scene in Trinidad and Tobago. They are the musicians who, when one speaks of Caribbean jazz in Trinidad, are currently always referenced and who have been the most active performers between the years 2004 to the present.

Ethnographic Approach

The ethnographic material collected for this dissertation consists of a combination of archival work, interviews, observations and attendance at performances and rehearsals. My fieldwork was primarily conducted in Trinidad and Tobago from September 2016 to July 2017. Although most of the research for this dissertation was conducted on the island of Trinidad, Tobago played an important role as the site for the annual Tobago Jazz Experience.⁵ Additionally, in August 2016, I visited Brooklyn, New York for a period of one week during which I interviewed jazz flautist David Bertrand and attended the premier of music for his forthcoming album *Palmyra and Other Places*.

I had hoped for my time in Trinidad to be highly participatory however, I learned within the first month of research that unlike jazz scenes elsewhere in the world, Trinidad's jazz scene did not have a very active culture of jam sessions. In fact, I found that jazz musicians mostly converged for rehearsals for gigs or upcoming projects. This also made my goal of having listening sessions with the musicians relatively impossible. I had hoped that I would be able to have at least two listening sessions with the musicians in smaller groups during which we would listen to jazz from the United States and jazz from Trinidad. Such a session, I thought, would encourage dialogue about jazz to help me gain a better sense of what kinds of influences the

⁵ The music festival began in 2004.

musicians were drawing from. However, given that many of the musicians with whom I worked had full time jobs that were not related to performing Caribbean jazz, it was not surprising that any free time that was not already scheduled for performing or rehearsal was strictly reserved for family. Despite this, I was able to listen to music with some participants, and for those with whom I could not, we spoke at length about their various influences.

The bulk of the archival data consisted of newspaper materials dating from the 1920s to the present which were sourced at the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago. By examining the newspaper articles on Caribbean jazz, I was able to gain an understanding of the development of the Trinbagonian jazz scene (1930s to present), and also its representation in public discourse. This material helped me situate Caribbean jazz musicians not only within a local context, but also through an observation of the kinds of transnational connections that may have been fostered in relation to the performance of jazz. Additionally, I examined LPs from the private collections of local Trinidadians as sources of archival data which provided me with information such as timelines, repertoires, musical collaborations and recording practices. I strategically began my fieldwork with the examination of these resources as a means of allowing myself time to build relationships with the musicians before delving into the intricacies of interviewing.

While the majority of the musicians I worked with are based in Trinidad, two musicians, Etienne Charles and David Bertrand, are based in the United States where they live and work. I was able to meet with Etienne several times while he was in Trinidad undertaking various projects. However, I traveled to Brooklyn to see David specifically because I could not guarantee with any certainty that he would be in Trinidad at any point during my fieldwork. Thanks to my long-standing friendship with both musicians, I was able to easily conduct follow up interviews with both via Skype, FaceTime, and even WhatsApp messenger. While I would not have used such methods for all participants, I believed my relationship with these two U.S. based musicians to be sufficiently strong to enable the kind of intimacies experienced in face to face conversation even through these media.

David Bertrand completed his Master's Degree in Jazz Performance at the Aaron Copland School of Music in 2011 and successfully attained an "exceptional talent" visa to continue his work in the United States. His recent album launch has been followed by growing institutional support of his work, including his role as a faculty member of the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music's Music Partners program. Etienne Charles, a recent Guggenheim recipient, has gained recognition throughout the United States for his innovations in putting American jazz in dialogue with Caribbean musics. Working with both of these musicians was instrumental in providing insight into how transnational processes inform Caribbean jazz within the Caribbean diaspora in the United States. Through my work with them, I was better able to assess how and by what means these musicians have gained performance opportunities, and negotiated identity and labor practices through sound outside of Trinidad.

In Trinidad, I worked with Clive (Zanda) Alexander who is viewed as an elder of jazz in Trinidad and Tobago. I had hoped to have another musician of his generation with whom I could provide a contrasting biography. Although the constraints of time, finances and personal safety did not allow for this, I found my work with Mr. Zanda to be incredibly rich. Mr. Zanda's stories were not only his. They were the stories of many other musicians of his generation. His long experience provided me with a detailed history of Caribbean jazz as experienced in Trinidad and Tobago. I also worked with Tony Paul (Anthony Woodroffe) and Ming (Michael Low Chew Tung) who are two of the many musicians instrumental to the growth of the Caribbean jazz scene in the country. Even though Caribbean jazz in Trinidad and Tobago is mostly performed by male

musicians, I found it imperative to include the voices of Vaughnette Bigford and Chantal Esdelle, two of the most prominent women in the Caribbean jazz scene, who provided much needed contrasting perspectives on Caribbean jazz in Trinidad and Tobago.

It was crucial for the musicians to feel at ease with me before I could begin the interviews because I needed to understand what precisely made each of their musical outputs so different from one another. I would need to ask difficult questions about their personal lives to get to the heart of the various influences on their musics. It was not simply a matter of creating a timeline of their lives. I needed to understand whether or how issues of race, nationality, gender and class affected their ability to contribute to and partake in this musical practice. Through my long friendship with David Bertrand, Anthony Woodroffe, and Etienne Charles, I was warmly welcomed by the other musicians once I had proven myself to be dedicated to “the cause.” One important aspect of building trust with the musicians was the consent form which I provided to them upon our first official meeting. It was mostly received with shock. Shock because nobody had ever presented them with such a detailed consent form in which intentions were clearly stated. Many of the participants thanked me for doing this, and for taking the time to answer any questions they may have had. Aside from interviewing musicians, I also spent time engaging with local jazz aficionados and event promoters. These interactions proved crucial to gain perspectives that highlighted economic, infrastructural, and aesthetic issues that perhaps may not have surfaced in great detail with the musicians.

The material gathered from interviews with these musicians was placed in dialogue with my observations of rehearsals and performances. One of my assumptions before beginning fieldwork was that the musical sets changed from performance to performance. I had hoped that attending rehearsals would allow me to experience some of the creative processes as they unfolded—perhaps how different tunes were put together, who contributed to their arrangements, how musicians of various backgrounds and trainings collaborated together. What I learned however, was that it was common practice for the bands to use the same repertoire for the entire season, with one or two substitutions. At first, I was shocked. When I asked Ming about it he explained that it was for the same reasons that the jam session culture is nonexistent—people have to “make ends meet” and that performing music was not a significant means of earning income in Trinidad. Because of their full-time careers, many musicians simply do not have the time to have extensive rehearsals.

In spite of this, the rehearsals for specific projects were by no means devoid of creativity, energy, or excitement. Attending the rehearsals allowed me to gain a better sense of the dynamics at play in the various bands. This proved particularly important for addressing the issue of gender dynamics in relation to the two bands run by women (Chantal and Vaughnette). The rehearsals also allowed me to become intimately familiar with the music. By listening to their musics frequently, I was able to pick up on more and more musical and cultural references with each hearing. My proximity to the musicians in rehearsals also gave me the opportunity to observe the kinds of technologies used (instruments, recording equipment, sound technologies, lighting etc.). In a country where luxury goods are frequently sold at exorbitant figures above market price, the acquisition of a new instrument or piece of equipment is not without an intricate story of how it was procured. Therefore, far from being simply a matter of financial ability, the acquisition of technological equipment by Trinidadian musicians tells the story of the intersections of race, class, and power at work in transnational processes of exchange and circulation that are under-acknowledged within the larger purview of transnational exchanges.

Although there has been a great increase in the number of Caribbean jazz events in Trinidad and Tobago in the past decade, this study focuses primarily on performances involving the aforementioned musicians. In addition to attending two larger festivals such as the Tobago Jazz Experience, and Jazz Artists on the Greens, I also attended shows in Trinidad featuring bands such as Élan Parlē led by Ming, Chantal Esdelle's Imbizo Moyenne at the Ethnic Jazz Club, Vaughnette Bigford and Band, and major performances featuring Clive Zanda, Anthony Woodroffe, and Etienne Charles.

Live performances were essential to this study. Apart from being able to see the musicians bring the music to life under the pressures of live performance, these shows helped me better understand the role audience engagement played in the bands musical programming. Though seemingly a distant issue from the theoretical framework of transnationalism, I found that the transnational experiences of the audience played an equally important role in the types of songs, pieces, and musical styles from which the musicians drew. As much as this musical practice was impacted upon by international forces, it was similarly shaped by local aesthetics. My attendance at performances also allowed me to see the hardships faced by musicians whether related to poor audience turnout, a bad sound system or lack of audio engineer, or lack of payment for services.

With the permission of my participants, I made sound recordings and took photographs at both rehearsals and live performances. All photographs used in this project have been taken by the author, unless otherwise noted. When necessary, I used video to capture valuable moments in which my participants engaged me in pedagogical exercises. For example, in my final interview with Mr. Zanda, I used a video camera to capture him sitting at a Bosendorfer baby grand piano at the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA) while he explained to me his compositional process. The sound recordings I made of rehearsals and performances were particularly valuable because even though many of the musicians have released albums, this was not the case for all. Some, such as Mr. Zanda, have not produced an album in many years. Other musicians said they were not specifically driven to produce albums.

All musical transcriptions throughout this dissertation have been done by the author. They serve as a vital analytical tool in counterpoint with the biographies, explaining many significant musical elements that guide the work of the musicians.

Foreword: How to write "I"?

As I sit writing this dissertation I am at a struggle with words. I know that this is a battle faced by all, if not most students who are at this stage of writing. But I find my struggle deeply entrenched in the politics of my body and how my particular body and bodies like mine are expected to write such words. Part of this is the paralysis of fear. Fear to write in this document, my document. That which has silently devoured many a melanin-kissed body. I am afraid. I am angry. I am emotionally exhausted. And I think about the fact that there has never been a time in my life that I have hated the color of my skin more than the duration of this journey.

Yet I am here. And when I was told that I was only here because I'm a Trinidadian, I worked harder. And harder. And still, it was never enough. Because I am every black person who ever stepped into academia. Who will never be enough no matter how hard we work, how kind we are, or how much critical theory we know. Once upon a time I thought I could work hard enough to change the system and make this a better place for people who look like me. I will

never admit defeat because to write this text is to feed the soul of another black body that is similarly struggling through this process.

I reflect on the previous paragraph and I cringe every time I see the word “I.” It haunts me. It sticks out like a sore thumb. Yet, I feel obligated to write “I” because the language of academia is one that has historically silenced difference. To examine the canonical writings of any field is to examine the works of the “Great White Men” who have paved the way for scholarly thinking. And while no one can deny the importance of these works, I feel empty, hollow, when I read. Nonetheless, we are taught that for our work to be recognized academically, we *must* pay homage to these works. To prove that we, too, are in the know. There is immense value in this double-edged sword. Because what is more impressive than a black woman from the Caribbean spouting a critique of Adorno? As important as this process is, it forces us to erase bits of ourselves. To engage scholastically, has become synonymous with removing the “I” in the quest for objectivity. I have become so removed that I now struggle to find me, and to “appropriately” place the “I” as I write this text.

How to write “I”? And *why* write “I”? I write “I” because I am a black biracial immigrant woman in the United States of America. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, there has been growing critical discourse both within and outside of academia on the issues of racial inequality. Despite this, any graduate student of color could easily elaborate on the ways in which academia separates itself from these issues. Simply put . . . racism is something that happens to poor black people. Certainly not black graduate students. Or black scholars. It is a distant, ethnographic project. Not happening right within our departments. But racism is silent and swift. And unsuspecting. And unexpected.

I write “I” because of the pain I feel in trying to find my voice when, for six years, I have seldom heard or read others like mine. I write “I” in full recognition of the *need* for me to engage more voices of scholars of color not just in this dissertation but as a practice of self-care for “us.” And I do not bemoan this absence with the intent of placing blame on any persons, or institutions. Rather, I write “I” to give voice to myself, and to graduate students like me, because we lose and have lost ourselves in the process of trying to excel within a system that is inherently built for us to fail. The odds are ever against us.

I write “I” and place “I” so strongly here because I am free to do so now, in ways that others like me may not be. But the “I” that I write, is “we.” In this dissertation, I place myself because I need not to be erased. We need not to be erased. And placing ourselves is critical theoretical *and* emotional work that must be done and recognized in order to address questions like: how did I get here? What kinds of work did it take for this black body to accomplish this research? Where does this process leave me as a scholar, and my field of study, and future scholars who look like me? Because the truth is that in order to think critically, as people of color, we cannot divorce theory from practice, or discourse from how our bodies experience the world. So, I write “I” on behalf of we . . .

The history of imperial encounter is narrated by silence. The colonizer is the agent of silencing, for it is from the power to silence that the power to colonize and to subjugate eventually comes. For the colonized the anxiety of loss, of ending in silence, is overwhelming, even when it enters resistance, far more often as discourse than as action. –Philip V. Bohlman (2016: 173)

Placing “I”

A long time ago, thirteen years to be precise, I left Trinidad and Tobago to pursue a dream of becoming a concert pianist. While that often feels like many lifetimes ago, this dissertation is dedicated to the Trinbagonians who, like me, have big big dreams and who face the daily struggle of making them a reality. It is dedicated to the musicians who continue to persevere and create in a society that is still learning to adequately value (and compensate) the labor of artistic expression. This work comes from an intensely complicated relationship with the country in which I was born, Trinidad and Tobago. It is at once a celebration of the beauty and ingenuity of our musical creativity, and at the same time a painful lament on the struggles faced by Trinbagonians in daily life. It is especially a struggle for me to write, as I cope with my own feelings of anger, love, disappointment, and excitement toward Trinidad and Tobago.

Some would ask, “plain talk, bad manners,” who are you to refer to Trinbagonians as “we”? After all, I have spent the last thirteen years entrenched in the culture of the United States and have become accustomed to life in a different world. How can I say “we” when, furthermore, I have left the field of performance and entered into academia which now posits my “we” as the object of study? I have no doubt that my “we” will always come from a different vantage point, and will never represent the views of all Trinbagonians. I cannot and do not attempt to. However, my “we” comes from wanting to tell the world about “us” after I have learned how to do so in “their” language. My “we” is a story of how Trinbagonians persevere and find our own rhythm to “chip” (dance) to in the most mundane and unwelcoming circumstances. My “we” is the rediscovery of me, no matter where I am.

*I went away looking for another home
I try to run away, run way from my destiny
In another world, a world that was strange to me
I try to change myself, change my identity
But strong is the power of love, the power of freedom
The power black music fills my heart yeah
I forward to stay.*

*I went away, I leave and I forward home
I forward to stay, I must see meh way*

- Andre Tanker, Forward Home

Ethnography at Home

One of the central issues arising from this dissertation is the questioning of the concept of home. What, precisely, is home? For whom, when, and how is home constructed? Writing this dissertation is contingent upon me positioning myself within the context of this work. And while this work is not in any way intended to be autobiographical, there are multiple aspects of my interactions with the musicians in this dissertation that require me to situate myself.

I have understood home to be multiple places, sentiments, and sensory references. I was born and raised in Maracas Saint Joseph, northern Trinidad and Tobago. I grew up surrounded by music. Not in the sense of having a musical family, but through listening to the music my parents had collected in their travels. My parents, wanting to provide my brother and me with opportunities they could not have as children, enriched our lives through music lessons on the piano, steel pan, and other instruments. Music became my obsession. It was my night and day and the thing that allowed me to dream of a world outside of a small island, of alternate realities, of ways to speak without ever uttering a word.

Within a few years I became heavily involved with the youth orchestra in Trinidad and several major ensembles. It was through my involvement with the youth orchestra that I became friends with David Bertrand, Anthony Woodroffe, and Etienne Charles all of whom I have known for over twenty years as of 2019. Although Etienne stopped playing with the orchestra from a very early age to focus on jazz, he supported me in multiple ways in my pursuit of a Bachelor's degree in music and remains an important figure in my musical journey. My relationship with David Bertrand and Anthony Woodroffe became particularly close upon my assuming of the role of concert master with the youth orchestra. It was a position that required me to engage with all members of the orchestra in a way that I had not had the opportunity to do previously. My friendship with these musicians proved invaluable to me because there were few Trinidadians then that I could look to who also wanted to pursue music professionally.

Home, to me, also manifests itself intralocally through my strong relationships with my extended family. Sometimes, "home" for me is at a cousin's house in Debe, or an aunt's house in San Juan. It means a place of repose. A place to recollect oneself. My parents grew up in the small southern town of La Brea. Both from large families, several of their siblings still live in southern Trinidad to this day. This connection to La Brea played a vital role in building upon my relationship with Vaughnette Bigford specifically, who is also from this tight knit community.

However, the concept of home for me, a Caribbean woman, also often transcends the boundaries of nation-state. Like many families in southern Trinidad, the story of my paternal family is the story of travel. Our story has been traced as far back as slavery but our present connections run particularly strong with the Browns and Scotts of Grenada. This kind of deep history has been a source of pride for most West Indians because not only does it allow us to show where we come from, but it enables deep ties of kinship when two strangers can identify such a linkage between them. Within my first day of meeting Clive Alexander we both spoke of our family ties to Grenada and shared family name, the Browns. While neither of us are certain whether we are related, this practice of naming allowed us to create a form of kinship between us that I believe helped our relationship to develop in a deeper way from the onset of our interactions.

I present these stories of my relationships with the musicians to demonstrate that my process of conducting "ethnography at home" was not one without complexities. As a result of the personal yet different nature of many of these relationships, I do my best to take extreme care in the way that I represent the musicians. Yet I cannot promise objectivity. I cannot promise this because to do this work and to engage in this process of writing this dissertation in a way that speaks "our" truth is to be always aware of what it means for my body to conduct this work. And so, I attempt objectivity, but promise truth, acknowledgement and understanding of the various bodies, personalities, and spirits that have enabled this work to come to fruition.

Chapter Outlines

The chapters of the dissertation are as much a metaphor for circulation as they detail some of the key themes arising from this sonic approach to transnationalism. Each chapter features the biography of a Trinidadian jazz musician thereby allowing me to approach these themes in a way that voices difference, but also temporality. While the biographies are united by thematic content, the voices in the chapters will engage in a kind of contrapuntal exchange, sometimes appearing in transformation, in inversion or often, in opposition as countersubjects.

Part I, Chapter Two, Clive (Zanda) Alexander's "Fancy Sailor": History, Materiality and the Colonial Subject, takes its title from an original composition by Clive Alexander, illustrating the centrality of calypso to his music. This chapter, which features Clive, provides the historical context of jazz in Trinidad and Tobago and provides background on the kinds of issues faced by musicians pursuing jazz locally. It shows how the story of jazz in Trinidad and Tobago is deeply embedded in various kinds of transnational exchanges whether related to the circulation of material goods, the movement of people, or the expansion of colonial powers into the Caribbean. By telling Clive's story, I am also able to give voice to other elders of the jazz scene who have since passed on, or who were unable to share their stories.

In Part II, "The Transnational at Home," I interrogate the concept of "home" for musicians Vaughnette Bigford and Anthony Woodroffe. Both musicians returned to Trinidad after pursuing the study of jazz abroad. Though they returned home for different reasons, I address the ways in which their understandings of home have shaped their musics in different ways. These chapters examine how, why, and what it takes for Trinidadian musicians to travel transnationally, whether permanently or temporarily. It explores the politics of border crossing, but just as importantly addresses how the transnational is imminently local. The chapters thus show that despite calling Trinidad and Tobago "home," both Vaughnette and Anthony have complex and varied relationships with the country – "home" can simultaneously be the source of artistic inspiration and yet, it is an incredibly difficult place to navigate as a musician. I demonstrate these contradictions by highlighting issues faced by Vaughnette and Anthony, respectively, in terms of race, gender and labor. Vaughnette has been labeled locally as the leading lady of jazz in the country. She is sought out for jazz events not only because of her skills as a musician, but also because of her charisma, energizing stage presence and the relationship she has built with her fan base. She is an incredibly important and visible local icon. Anthony is similarly hailed one of the leading jazz musicians in the country because of his skill and versatility. "The Sax Man," as he is often called, has a rather different story to tell from the other musicians as he is one of few musicians locally to earn an income solely through their musical craft.

Part III, "Things in Motion" focuses on musicians on Michael "Ming" Low Chew Tung and Chantal Esdelle, and the intricacies of circulation and motion in relation to Caribbean jazz. I examine issues that arise in relation to the concepts of labor, education and value systems and how these two musicians have had to negotiate the transnational in their pursuit of various career goals. The two chapters in this section also explore how these musicians highlight larger transnational processes at work in relation to the use of technology and the creation of space. Ming, a self-taught musician and the only Caribbean jazz musician in the country of Chinese descent currently, plays a vital role in the Caribbean jazz community in Trinidad. He is one of

the few jazz musicians who has been able to provide sound recording technologies to the community. His knowledge of music production and distribution of Caribbean jazz is invaluable in providing perspective on how the use of various technologies by musicians are dependent on, and yet immediately shaped by the nature of transnational processes between countries of the “center” and countries of the peripheries. Chantal Esdelle provides a vital counterpoint to Ming’s story. Chantal is noteworthy for her continuous efforts to engage with musicians from other islands. Notably, Chantal has forged multiple connections with jazz musicians from Cuba, notwithstanding the difficulties of circulation and communication between the two countries. Furthermore, Chantal’s music engages deeply with a Pan-African aesthetic, as evident in her 2013 album, *Imbizo Moyenne*, for which she produced the tribute song, “Haiti” after the devastating earthquake of 2010.

The final section, Part IV, “The Places to Which we Belong,” explores the lives of two expatriate musicians: Etienne Charles and David Bertrand. While Etienne Charles has resided in the U.S. for the majority of his professional life, David Bertrand began his career in the U.S. at a much later moment. Driven by a lifelong desire to study music at the tertiary level, David began his Master’s Degree in Jazz Performance after a lengthy career of teaching English in Trinidad. After receiving a Bachelor’s degree in Jazz Studies at Florida State University, Etienne completed a Master’s Degree in Jazz Studies at the Juilliard School. Chapters seven and eight therefore engage the concept of the transnational through the lens of “double consciousness.” A term coined by W.E.B. DuBois, double consciousness is a term used to describe the feeling of having one’s identity defined by multiple, differing lived experiences.⁶ Thus, for these two musicians it is the sense of feeling Trinidadian, yet existing and being, presently, within a distinctly American lifestyle. David and Etienne, though deeply engaged in forms of double consciousness, have entirely distinct musical styles. In these two chapters, I examine the ways in which both musicians’ musics have been shaped by their experiences as black immigrants in the United States. By looking at the musicians with whom they collaborate, in addition to the kinds of transnational ties they maintain with Trinidad and Tobago, I show how the aesthetics of style for both musicians are contingent on diasporic experiences that cannot be thought of as homogeneous, though deeply rooted in Trinbagonian sensibilities. These chapters, though looking outward to Trinbagonian musicians in the United States, offer a counterpoint with the theme of chapters three and four. Thus, while these chapters explore the experiences of two musicians based abroad, they simultaneously address the reciprocal nature between being “away” yet intrinsically tethered to notions of home.

⁶ DuBois (1903)

Clive (Zanda) Alexander’s “Fancy Sailor”: History, Materiality, and the Colonial Subject

Where or how does one begin to tell the story of jazz in Trinidad? This chapter, “Fancy Sailor,” takes its name in reference to the most well-known of pianist Clive “Zanda” Alexander’s Kaiso jazz compositions. Sailor mas (masquerade) was introduced to Trinidad Carnival in the 1880s with the arrival of naval ships on the island. Locals would dress in white uniforms and imitate the drunken gait of foreign sailors through highly stylized dances in a mocking celebration of the racialized other—white foreigners. Speaking about the development of the Fancy Sailor character, Daniel J. Crowley writes:

The Fancy Sailor or King Sailor bands evidently first came out about 1946. Before that time sailors wore masks made from undershirts or stockings stretched over their heads, and with holes cut for eyes and mouth. With this they wore false noses or cardboard or papier mâché, and ‘shades’ or dark glasses or goggles...Finally whole headpieces were made in papier mâché and the original white uniforms were covered in gold braid, red or blue ricrac braid, sequins or colored rhinestones, diagonal sashes, imaginary and fantastic insignia, and a multitude of Army arm patches or authentic Navy enlisted insignia sewn anywhere on the inform" (Crowley 1956: 203).

As the Fancy Sailor costume developed and became more elaborate, it began to represent an air of sophistication, elegance, and refinement ironically juxtaposed with the drunken and disorderly bodily movements and behavior associated with sailors.

I use this title because like the Fancy Sailor character, this composition, too, highlights several bittersweet juxtapositions that enable me to shed light on the history of jazz in Trinidad through Clive’s personal life story. It is a story of determination and passion that demonstrates the transnational processes at work in Clive’s pursuit of jazz. Just as the history of the Fancy Sailor character speaks to colonial legacies in relation to the British and United States military presence on the island, Clive’s biography tells the story of musical life in pre-Independence Trinidad. It highlights a crucial time period of migration and movement both within the Caribbean and from the Caribbean to Britain, bringing to the fore precisely how colonial subjects dealt with issues of race and class both in their native lands and in the “Mother” land.

Beginning as a satirical character, sailor mas was simultaneously an enactment of the racialized other (white men in a predominantly non-white country) and a display of the tenacity of Trinidadians as colonial subjects to turn an otherwise unpleasant situation into something celebratory and festive. This chapter highlights the parallels between this kind of re-creation in mas’ and in the music Clive developed called Kaiso jazz—taking a foreign musical expression (jazz) and recreating it in his own terms, through his local idioms of calypso and folk music.⁷ Moreover, this “re-creation” is an alternative way of thinking about the ways that colonial

⁷ Kaiso is a term with a complex history and complicated contemporary usage. Today, it is often used interchangeably with the term calypso. However, the term has been documented as Igbo in origin and as having distinct musical characteristics from calypso. For more information see Warner-Lewis (1991), Rohlehr (1990), Liverpool (1985, 1986).

subjects of the Windrush Generation navigated, and reshaped a sense of self and identity when faced with the harsh reality that “Mother England” was neither home, nor welcoming.⁸

Clive’s composition, *Fancy Sailor*, tells its own sonic story about Clive’s life and the history of jazz in Trinidad. With its incredibly long, intricate and chromatic melodic line, the piece immediately challenges Trinbagonian musical aesthetics which generally focus on simpler (diatonic) and shorter melodies. Despite the length and chromaticism of the line, it is a theme that many a Trinbagonian can sing easily after having heard it so many times. Where, or how did Clive learn to develop such gripping melodic lines? How did Clive, a boy from rural southern Trinidad find access to jazz music? This chapter specifically does not take for granted the difficulties associated with the materiality of music—whether in the form of records, instruments, sheet music, radios or gramophones. In particular, I hope that this chapter highlights how, in fact, the concept of materiality is tied deeply to issues of race and class. Thus, drawing on Appadurai, I focus on the “dynamics of exchange”—how material objects are obtained and interacted with rather than merely as items exchanged for monetary value (Appadurai 1986).

Against the sophisticated melodic lines of *Fancy Sailor* is a stoic bass line that falls, in true calypso style, ever so slightly behind the beat representing the drunken gait of the sailor. Clive’s development of *Kaiso* jazz also tells the story of a colonial state coming into its own age of nation building. His life story shows the growing pride that becomes associated with local musics and art forms, which later would become a key theme in both the nationalist agenda and the Black Power movement in the country. What is interesting, however, is the fact that Clive and other musicians were embracing local musical forms long before they became reclaimed or adopted by the black middle class on behalf of the nation-building movement.⁹ Thus, rather than merely following the trend of embracing Afro-Trinidadian cultural forms that were once viewed as unsophisticated, Clive could be seen as a trend setter—understanding the inherent value of his culture from the earliest days.

Finally, this chapter is an exercise and a lesson in the practice of orality. It is largely based on months of interviews conducted between myself and Clive. At 80 years old, Clive is one of the last few remaining musicians of his generation.

⁸ The term Windrush Generation refers to Caribbean migrants to the United Kingdom between the 1930s and 1970s.

⁹ See Oxaal (1968).



2.1 Clive “Zanda” Alexander performing at Tobago Beach Jazz, April 2017

In the course of undertaking this project, several musicians of his generation including Fitzroy Coleman passed away. Working with Clive showed me how little documentation exists on musicians of this generation. Although much information could be gathered through discussions with local musicians, this project reminded me that in spite of the importance of oral tradition in Trinidad and Tobago, I had to exercise much caution to verify information continuously. Thus, this chapter is not intended to be a definitive history of jazz in Trinidad. It does not and cannot account for the stories of all the musicians who played important roles in the development of Caribbean jazz in Trinidad. However, I try, through and in reference to the story of Clive’s life, to incorporate and include these other musical giants however possible.

The Early Years

The year was 1939. Clive was the first of nine children born to a Vincentian father and a Grenadian mother. Sent to live with relatives in Grenada as a young boy, Clive's father, Richard, was no stranger to travel and spent time working in the cane fields in Cuba later in life. As Shalini Puri notes, in spite of the large focus both in scholarship and popular culture on migration of Caribbean nationals to large metropolitan countries such as the United States and Britain, the impact of intra-regional migrations on various Caribbean islands had long lasting effects (Puri 2003). Thus, it would come as no surprise that Clive’s parents would later decide to relocate to Trinidad in the 1930s. Referring to it as the “New York” of the Caribbean, Clive

described the move as one through which his parents sought more opportunities for themselves and their growing family. However, instead of moving to one of the bustling larger cities such as Port of Spain or San Fernando, the family went far south to Siparia, a town that today might be considered remote and “backward” by some. But in those days Siparia was a hotbed of activity particularly for the workers of the growing oil industry. In fact, it was such an important location that in 1913 the now-defunct railroad line was even extended there as a final destination because of the high volume of travel to and from the area.

Although the family settled in Siparia, the choice of location was less related to potential oilfield employment than other factors. Many of Clive’s mother’s relatives had also moved to Siparia from Grenada and, with the growing economy, it was quite easy for his father to find work in his trades as shoemaker and carpenter. While there were many positives to living in Siparia for the family, there were certainly some drawbacks. In spite of Siparia’s budding social life with events such as La Divina Pastora,¹⁰ it was not a major city and thus did not carry some of the perks of city life. For one, it did not hold the perceived sophistication of living in Port of Spain or San Fernando—a trope that has carried forth in modern Trinidadian life regarding living in rural versus urban areas. Rural life also meant not having quick or easy access to the latest entertainment (records, movies, live performances) and also what were considered the premier schools for education at the time.

Nonetheless, as Clive describes it, there was a strong sense of creativity in Siparia with many talented musicians emerging from the town. It was through his parents that he was first introduced to music. Neither of his parents had any formal training yet Clive learned to play his first chords on the guitar and solfège from his father, and the art of singing from his mother. Speaking about his father, Clive says:

At first he would sing it and make it up. I mean...he was fantastic when I think about him. He would sing ‘ba dah ba dap do dos...bram bram bram’ ...and he searched [on the guitar] ...and he find “bram bram bram!” I mean...which is...which is fantastic!

These interactions, coupled with the family’s involvement in the church choir, formed the basis of Clive’s introduction to and development of musical skills. But when or how was the seed of jazz planted for Clive? Where did that journey begin?

Radio Broadcasts and Colonial influences

Since record players were luxury items in those days, Clive could not learn about jazz this way. Instead, he listened closely to jazz on radio broadcasts on channels such as WVDI and Radio Trinidad. These two radio stations were incredibly important at this time, not only for the content of the broadcasts, but they were also an indicator of the development of radio broadcast and improvements in broadcast quality. WVDI and Radio Trinidad were the first radio stations located in Trinidad that broadcasted from the island as opposed to long distance, shortwave broadcasts that came from European countries.

10. La Divina Pastora, also known as Siparee Mai, refers to a statue and corresponding celebration in Siparia, Trinidad for the Virgin Mary. The dark-skinned statue is celebrated not only by Catholics but also Hindus and is said to have granted many miracles to devotees.

WVDI, established in St. Clair Port of Spain in 1943, was a radio station created by the U.S. Armed forces specifically intended for troops stationed on the island. Although the establishing of a physical radio station on the island may have seemed premature or short termed for the duration of the war, it was rather part of a much larger strategic move by the United States due largely to the 99-year lease on land in Trinidad as part of the Destroyers for Bases Agreement. This agreement, signed into effect in 1941, guaranteed the United States full access to large parcels of land to establish military bases on several British territories in exchange for the British use of naval destroyers during World War II. The radio station was established as a primary source of entertainment for the heavy military presence on the island. Although the station aired primarily American content, it became an important avenue for local calypsonians to share their music. In spite of the popularity that calypso had gained internationally in the 1930s, historian Harvey R. Neptune argues that it was official policy that led to the popularity of calypso amongst the troops. He states:

U.S. Authorities consistently proffered the song to their personnel as a virtuous alternative to the vicious forms of recreation that existed in the island. Like everyone else in Trinidad, American officials observed that left unregulated, Yankee servicemen often became unruly, drunkenly thronging the streets soliciting prostitutes and brawling (Neptune 2007: 138).

Radio Trinidad, on the other hand, was opened on the island in 1947 by the international UK based station Rediffusion. Although early programming consisted mostly of rebroadcasted BBC material, the station soon began to focus more on local news and entertainment. Whereas WVDI focused on the music of calypsonians gearing their content toward soldiers, Radio Trinidad featured a larger variety of local musicians. It was here that Clive listened to local jazz musicians such as Felix Roach, Ralph Davies, Rupert Nurse, John “Buddy” Williams and Rupert Clemendore as they played on the weekly hour-long session called “Sunday Serenade.” These musicians, as Clive described them, played in the style of straight-ahead jazz focusing on American jazz standards and language.

Before the advent of Radio Trinidad and WVDI, however, this generation of musicians would have relied on other sources to encounter jazz. While some such as Roach and Davies from middle class families were fortunate enough to have private lessons in both jazz and classical music, others such as Rupert Nurse were largely self-taught through mail order catalogues of music, relying on poor quality shortwave broadcasts of jazz and whatever music they could encounter through the elaborately scored movie soundtracks of the day. Others such as Clemendore and Williams found their paths to jazz through travel as touring musicians, Clemendore eventually settling in Sweden.

Although these musicians formed the core of jazz musicians in the generation preceding Clive, some of them such as Fitzroy Coleman would become his contemporaries when he later traveled to London. Felix Roach and Ralph Davies became staple pianists of the nightclub and hotel scene in Trinidad, while Rupert Nurse made his mark in the British music scene. Rupert Clemendore and John “Buddy” Williams would later become most famously known for the album *Le Jazz Primitif* (1961) on the Cook label.¹¹ It was this album that initially put jazz from the Caribbean “on the map” in terms of influential developments in jazz.

¹¹ Emory Cook was a U.S. born audio engineer who was best known for his development of recording techniques. He recorded extensively in Trinidad, even setting up a pressing plant in Port of Spain to facilitate his recording

Dance Bands

Apart from listening to these musicians on radio broadcasts, Clive sheepishly admitted to sneaking out at night to the local dances of his day. But he was not interested in the dancing nor the girls. He went so that he could stand right next to the members of the band to watch and listen closely as they played. The bands, such as the Sel Duncan Orchestra, Choy Aming and his Orchestra, and the Dutchy Brothers, did not play jazz, however. In addition to arrangements of calypsos, the bands played other popular melodies of the time. These ranged from jazz standards such as Irving Berlin's "Cheek to Cheek" to Latin music such as sambas and gaitas, and Western classical music such as Brahms' Hungarian Dance Number Five. Regardless of the original genre of the piece being performed, the music would be arranged in a style that allowed for dancing. Sel Duncan's arrangement of Brahms' Hungarian Dance Number Five, for example, occurs over a steady calypso beat with an ever so slight lilt to the melody giving it the more relaxed stylistic feel of calypso.



2.2 The Dutchy Brothers Album Cover, "A Study in Rhythm"

there. For more information see, "Cook Labs Records." Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. <https://folklife.si.edu/archives-and-resources/cook-labs-records>.



2.3 Sel Duncan and Orchestra, “Concert at the Hall”

Since the bands did not play jazz, Clive’s interest was less in the type of music that they performed and more so in learning about music in general through the bands. He was intrigued by the chord progressions and the stylistic features of the music as well as the technical and musical components of being a member of a band. It was through attending these band performances that Clive would later meet Errol Ince who was a member of Choy Aming’s Orchestra at the time. The two would become great friends, driving each other toward their musical aspirations while in London.

Looking Toward the Future: Drafting and Architecture

As was common in those days for the children of working-class Afro-Trinidadian households, Clive did not finish secondary school but instead got his School Leaving Certificate.¹² He says contemplatively:

I went to high school in England. I didn’t um.... I went to primary school here. I got my school leaving....it was very bad. Very very bad. Yeah....cause remember I’m the first of nine children.....so when you’re the first....first thing you want to do is to get a job to help...my father was a shoemaker...got no big income...so I had to...I was gonna get a

¹² According to Heidi Blake, the School Leaving Certificate of the 1940s to 1970s was awarded to students who attended secondary modern schools - schools where students were placed when their grades were not sufficient to gain entrance to grammar or technical schools. The certificate was awarded without the need to complete any examinations. Blake argues that the qualification was “designed to equip them with the breadth of knowledge and skills they would need to get by in the world of work” (Blake 2010).

job early....After school leaving that was it....I started working in my father's shoemaker shop.....That kept me off the streets, so that was good. So, I learned to cut and design shoes...Yeah. And um...I used to do a lot of painting...glass painting. Painting on glass, flowers and landscape and so forth. And then.... I realized that I am heading to do something related to art...

When he left school, he applied for an apprenticeship in the oilfields in Palo Seco. Applying for apprenticeships in the oilfields did not guarantee a person any particular job. In fact, work was offered based on whatever positions were available and not based necessarily on what applicants were interested in pursuing. Clive hoped to get a drafting apprenticeship, but when he found out it was unavailable he instead began a correspondence course in architecture at home. Clive's interest in architecture came from his interest in being able to be creative. He felt that architecture, like music, allowed him to be expressive through drawing which he saw as its own kind of compositional process.

While he took the correspondence course, he helped his father in his workshop fixing shoes. One day an Englishman visiting his father's shop for shoe repairs saw some of Clive's architectural drawings hanging in the shop. The man, a District Engineer, was struck by Clive's talent and the next day sent for Clive to begin an apprenticeship as a trainee draftsman at Works and Hydraulics in Siparia. In 1959 Clive decided to go to England to formally pursue the study of architecture. Clive's entrance to the United Kingdom and his access to its plethora of resources was made relatively easy due to Trinidad and Tobago's status as a British colony. As a British citizen, therefore, Clive could easily stay in England as long as he wished and pursue any form of employment he desired. He planned to stay with one of his sisters who lived in London and was studying nursing. A family friend (doctor) for whom he used to draw plans paid Clive's passage to England and drove him and his family to Port of Spain to catch the boat to England. The trip took about four weeks (December 1959).

Sojourn: London

Clive's first priority upon arrival in London was to find a job. Having taken his drawings with him in preparation for potential job interviews, he looked for architectural jobs in the newspapers but also walked along Piccadilly street knocking on the doors of various architectural firms. But often, people would look out, see a black face and slam the door on him. Like many other Caribbean migrants of the Windrush Generation, Clive would learn the harsh realities of his blackness in London. As author George Lamming states:

Migration was not a word I would have used to describe what I was doing when I sailed with other West Indians to England in 1950. We simply thought that we were going to an England which had been planted in our childhood consciousness as a heritage and a place of welcome. It is the measure of our innocence that neither the claim of heritage nor the expectation of welcome would have been seriously doubted. England was not for us a country with classes and conflicts of interest like the islands we had left (Lamming 2016: xii).

For Caribbean migrants at this time, British citizenship certainly entitled them to various forms of access such as education, healthcare, and even the ability to go on the dole. However, as

Lamming infers, they were less than welcome in London and particularly so by the English working class with whom they would now have to compete for survival.

In spite of being turned away because of the color of his skin, Clive persisted because he was too proud to go on the dole. After four months, still unable to find a job, he finally went on the dole on the advice of his sister. Several months later he was finally given an opportunity at an architectural firm. He met with the manager, Mr. Norton and presented him with his drawings. Unfortunately, the firm was doing much larger scale projects than Clive had been trained to work on. In spite of this, Mr. Norton hired Clive as a trainee. Clive's primary job would be to make the tea for everyone in the office, but he would continue to learn architecture at the firm while in this position. During his breaks, Mr. Norton would have Clive come to the drawing board for short training exercises.

With things going well at the firm, Clive decided to enroll in Northern Polytechnic (now University of North London). He went to his entrance interview carrying both his portfolio of drawings and his diploma from the correspondence course he had completed. However, his diploma could not be accepted since he needed to have five GCE (General Certificate of Education) passes. Having only obtained a School Leaving Certificate, Clive had not sat nor prepared for any of these examinations during his school years. Clive was shocked and disappointed. This meant he would have to start all over—he could not simply begin taking architectural classes as he had hoped. Despite feeling defeated, Clive was determined that he would not return to Trinidad until he became an architect, no matter what it took. And so, he enrolled in the City of Westminster College where he spent three years achieving his GCE passes in mathematics, English, constitutional history, physics and art, all whilst continuing to work at the architecture firm. Clive's status as a British citizen meant that he was only required to pay for his books as tuition was covered by the state. After finally achieving all five subjects, Clive enrolled in the five-year architectural program at Hammersmith College of Art (now known as Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College).

Although Clive was extremely occupied both with his job at the firm and studying at school, he still maintained an active interest in music during his spare time. An upstairs neighbor who wanted to get rid of an old piano gifted it to Clive who then started practicing furiously. He started playing what he could remember and began visiting jazz clubs at night to listen to musicians live. The first club Clive visited was the Flamingo Club in Soho, London and he soon began to visit other places such as Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club.¹³ With his student ID he did not have to pay much to enter and this only encouraged him to keep going, listening and meeting other musicians. Clive credits his personality and persistent quest for knowledge to his fortunate encounters with famous musicians such as Yusef Lateef, McCoy Tyner, Ahmad Jamal, and Bill Evans while they performed in the London nightclub scene.

Forming the Trio and the Art of Extemporizing

When Clive saw the Dudley Moore trio performing in London he was deeply inspired. He felt that Moore's group had showed him that the format of a trio was the basic component to musical expression—melody, rhythm and harmony. It was through listening to the Moore trio that Clive also had the epiphany that what musicians abroad called jazz was what Trinbagonians referred to as “extemporizing”: the lyrical improvisation of calypso. Clive would later develop this idea into what he termed Kaiso Jazz, the fusion of calypso elements with jazz.

¹³ The Flamingo Club existed in Soho between 1952 and 1967.

As Clive began to meet more musicians, he found a piano teacher with whom he began to study and soon formed his own group with Trinidadian musicians called “Dez Alex Combo” that consisted of piano, bass, drums and steel pan. Through the West Indian community, Clive started getting regular gigs around London. But after some time, he felt that he wanted to focus on improving his playing and he left the band to study piano privately, returning to the jazz scene only when he felt he had increased his skill.

His activity in the jazz scene was also punctuated by a brief return to Trinidad in 1967. Although the architectural program was five years long, the first three years consisted of coursework followed by research and an internship for the completion of his final thesis. Clive seized on the opportunity to go home to also make use of the time to do research on local musics (folk and calypso) in order to further develop the concept of Kaiso Jazz. It was during this time in Trinidad that Clive was introduced to Scofield Pilgrim, a Barbadian born teacher who taught music at Queens Royal College (one of the premier secondary schools on the island). Through Pilgrim, Clive became involved in the QRC Jazz club, a weekly meeting that Pilgrim held with his students to discuss and learn to play jazz.

On his return to London, Clive continued his explorations in Kaiso jazz. What is notable about his time in London is that he focused on playing only with other Caribbean musicians. That is to say that although he sought out famous musicians and was eager to learn about jazz from any experienced player, Clive only performed his music with other Caribbean musicians. When I asked him why, he spoke about Caribbean musicians feeling a sense of loyalty to each other. Perhaps this could be interpreted as the quest amongst Caribbean musicians for a sense of solidarity and belonging in a foreign land that proved to be quite unwelcoming. Perhaps, too, it was because, as Clive said, other Caribbean musicians could truly understand the “kaiso feel” that he was after in his music, a feel that Clive believed other (European and British) musicians could not replicate.

However, an article in *Jazz News* (December 27th 1961, page 6) about Trinidadian jazz pianist Wilfred Woodley reveals greater depth about perhaps why Caribbean musicians chose to “stick together.”¹⁴ The article, which is quite sensational in nature, highlights several issues surrounding not only race and class but also questions of musical authenticity. Wilfred Woodley was a Trinidadian born jazz pianist who became a part of the music scene in London. However, he became famous not for his piano playing or for his music, but rather for his marriage to British royalty, Juliet Priscilla Mary Duncombe. The marriage was viewed by white Britain as scandalous not only because Woodley and Duncombe got married just one month after meeting, but because it was an interracial marriage within the royal family. Using words and phrases such as “brute” and “crude magnetism for pretty white girls” in reference to Woodley, the article was quite forthcoming in expressing disdain for interracial relationships and black men in general (Ibid.). Furthermore, expressing great contention with the use of the term jazz to describe Woodley’s musical activities, the article states:

¹⁴ John Merrydown (1961).

Wilfred Woodley is not and never has been a recognized jazz pianist. He has never played at any recognized jazz club anywhere in Great Britain...Both Woodie and Juliet have their troubles, and it is not our place in these columns to defend or attack either of these people. BUT IT IS OUR BUSINESS -- IN FACT OUR DUTY - TO COMPLAIN AGAINST THE DISGUSTING HABIT SUFFERED BY MANY EDITORS WHO DELIGHT IN ATTACHING THE WORD "JAZZ" ON THE SLIGHTEST PROVOCATION, TO THE MOST SORDID, SENSATIONAL AND GREASY STORIES THEY CAN FIND (Ibid.; capital letters in the original).

Thus, issues of race aside, the music scene in London was evidently gained by tropes of what counted as "authentic jazz" – straight-ahead jazz in the fashion of jazz in the United States.

The Return: Trinidad and Other Travels

Although Clive left the island to pursue studies, he always intended to return to Trinidad. He felt a strong sense of obligation to his family and to help his parents financially since he was the first born of nine children. He was also very much interested in forming his own architectural practice as well as developing his concept of kaiso jazz. Part of his musical legacy, he hoped, would be to help formalize jazz training in Trinidad.

Clive formally returned to Trinidad in 1969 after having completed his degree in architecture. It was the defining moment of the Black Power Movement in Trinidad and Tobago. The heightened sense of black consciousness was not without its impact on Clive whose wife at the time was a black South African. Many people in Trinidad looked to her to speak on the issues facing black people around the world, particularly given her experience of apartheid South Africa. Clive, however, was less interested in overt political involvement than he was in exploring blackness through music. He started to focus on ways to highlight the African influences in kaiso jazz by paying greater attention to the rhythmic influences of African drumming in Trinbagonian musics. In spite of stating his avoidance of being overtly political, Clive's early interest in local musics and his incorporation of them into jazz was in itself a political move. He insisted on the acceptance of cultural forms that were deemed folk and working class long before these same cultural forms became tools in nationalist agendas for the creation of a unified national culture.

In addition to this important work, Clive began to host workshops with the help of Scofield Pilgrim, which he called Gayap, to teach young musicians the fundamentals of jazz.¹⁵ His aim was to create a community where musicians would come together not simply to play in a jam session, but rather to leave group sessions with some new form of knowledge whether it be a scale, a chord progression, or having learned a new tune. Clive hosted the Gayap sessions in the annex to the office of his architectural practice, embracing the philosophy of "each one teach one." By 1985 he started creating his own records and performing at various music festivals across the Caribbean in islands such as St. Lucia, Grenada, St. Vincent, Guyana, and Martinique. His group, the Caribbean Jazz Messengers, consisted of musicians Len "Boogsie" Sharpe (steel pan), Douglas Redon (bass guitar), Errol Wise (drums), and Luther François (saxophone).

¹⁵ Jules Ferdinand defines gayap, a Kalinago term, as "the tradition of people getting together to complete a huge task."

Pilgrim was also instrumental in helping Clive meet teachers across the Caribbean with whom he could organize workshops for students.

Time in the United States

Clive traveled quite frequently between the United States and Trinidad as a tourist. On his early trips in the 1970s he sought out performances by acclaimed musicians and attended whatever workshops he could at the New School and the Thelonious Monk Institute. Although he never participated (played) in these workshops, he listened eagerly and took detailed notes of whatever he could from the sessions. He says in retrospect that he did not feel confident enough to play “standard” jazz because he was so focused on developing Kaiso jazz that he did not have a solid enough grasp on “standard” jazz.

Clive was particularly influenced by his time at the workshops held by founder of Rhythm Associates, a small music school in New York, bassist Chris White. These workshops were part of a series hosted by MUSE in Brooklyn. Clive said he first met Chris White playing with Dizzy Gillespie at the Village Vanguard. He felt that Chris White had a “feel” for calypso and so after the gig he introduced himself to Chris. Clive says that he developed a close relationship with White when he discovered that White’s mother was Trinidadian, perhaps explaining the calypso “feel” he could hear in his playing. In the late 1980s, through White’s encouragement, Clive went to Rutgers University to attend a six-month course on jazz improvisation.

It was during his time at Rutgers that Clive did extensive studies in jazz theory, not only improving his understanding of scales and chord progressions but also learning how to apply them practically, and strengthening his technical ability at the piano. Chris White introduced Clive to a piano teacher while he was there to help him make the most of his experience. He loved his time in New Jersey because there was a kind of freedom that came with being so close to New York. He spoke about going to the Village Vanguard as late as 3 AM and going to restaurants with musicians after gigs to eat and talk about music. He enjoyed the freedom of interacting with musicians.

After several trips to the United States, and having made contacts with several musicians, Clive recorded the album “Fantastic Vibrations Revisited.” He rented a studio in New York and worked with a combination of session musicians he met and friends such as Chris White. We would later discover that one of the musicians Clive worked with on this album and with whom Clive had been searching for many years, Dick Oatts, later became a jazz professor at my alma mater, Temple University where I studied music.

Legacy and Looking Toward the Future

Clive’s story has introduced us, thus far, to the material implications of transnational exchanges, showing how the circulation of music is not *de facto* but is intrinsically governed by relationships of power. We see this through the imperialism that presents itself both in the period of British colonialism and the stationing of US armed forces on the island. More importantly, however, the story of Clive’s body, the body of a black man and how he experienced jazz (and by extension, life) through this particular body while in London, shows us the deep implications of how one’s experience of the transnational is shaped by racial politics.

Clive views his music as having developed in three streams or phases. He says:

Well the first stream came out from my parents, from that environment because of the church and the village folk kind of feel. The gospel aspect... My father was a choir master in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and I think the melodic part of that comes from there.

This stream is best represented by the works on his first album, *Clive Zanda is Here with Dat Kinda Ting* (1976), in which the tunes are of a more contemplative nature with a more laid-back groove. In this album we can truly experience what Clive means by the influence of religious life on his music. He says, “In religious music, you improvise and it’s almost like getting licks [beaten], yuh know? Don’t stray from the melody!” We experience this parallel through the sparse use of improvisation throughout this album. Although Clive does in fact improvise, his explorations never take him too far from the melody, and he keeps a consistent groove throughout most of the tunes.

This album also allows us to understand Clive’s development of Kaiso jazz—the ways in which he takes calypsos, and the feel of calypso music and puts them into conversation with jazz. One of the tracks on the album is an arrangement of the Mighty Sparrow’s “Mr. Walker” which was originally released in 1968. The time period of this song is important because it explains the very particular instrumentation used to accompany the vocalist: a big band setting featuring trumpets, trombones, saxophones, string bass and other instruments that were reminiscent of the influence of the big bands that were popular during the US occupation of the island.

Mr. Walker

The Mighty Sparrow

The musical score is arranged in eight staves, each labeled with an instrument. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is common time (C). The score consists of four measures. The Trumpet and Bb Trumpet parts are silent throughout. The Alto Sax and Alto Saxophone parts play a melodic line starting in the second measure: a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes G4 and A4, a quarter note Bb4, and eighth notes A4 and G4. The Trombone part starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes G2, A2, Bb2, and C3, then a half note G2, and eighth notes A2 and Bb2. The Guitar part plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes, with chords G2-Bb2-D2, F2-A2, and G2-Bb2-D2. The Bass part plays a simple bass line: a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, a quarter note Bb2, and a quarter note C3. The Hi-hat part plays a consistent eighth-note pattern: eighth notes G4 and A4, followed by eighth notes Bb4 and A4, with an accent (^) over the first eighth note of each pair.

2.4 Transcription of “Mr. Walker,” The Mighty Sparrow

The image shows a musical score for a jazz ensemble. The instruments listed on the left are Tpt. (Trumpet), Bb Tpt. (B-flat Trumpet), Alto (Alto Saxophone), A. Sax. (Alto Saxophone), Tbn. (Tuba), Gtr. (Guitar), Bass (Double Bass), and Hi-hat. The score consists of eight staves. The Tpt. and Bb Tpt. staves have a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures. The Alto and A. Sax. staves are mostly silent. The Tbn. staff has a melodic line with a slur. The Gtr. staff has a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes. The Bass staff has a simple melodic line. The Hi-hat staff has a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed notes and accents.

2.4 (continued)

Clive's arrangement stays true to the melody, but his treatment of rhythm is the defining characteristic of the arrangement. Instead of keeping to the typical cut time of calypso, Clive does a complex manipulation of the rhythm as follows:

Intro to Mr. Walker

arranged by Clive Zanda

The Mighty Sparrow

Swing

Piano

Acoustic Bass

Drumset

5

Pno.

Bass

D. Set

2.5 Transcription of Clive Zanda's arrangement of "Mr. Walker"

I call it a “complex manipulation” because although the arrangement has a strong 6/8 swing feel to it, when performed, the way that Clive places emphases within the measure are not on beats one and two (the first eighth note and the fourth) but rather the accents are placed on the first, third, and fifth eighth notes thereby almost lending to a $\frac{3}{4}$ feel rather than a 6/8 feel. This complex rhythmic emphasis is juxtaposed against the swing of the melody which now, instead of falling “neatly” on the beat as in the original piece, emerges as a series of quadruplets.

In his second stream, Clive says he began to “vary, expand and explore” in his improvisation. Not only does this stream feature longer improvisatory passages but Clive’s exploration also extends to varying the groove during these passages, allowing the music to unfold organically—in an unplanned manner. We encounter this stream in his work on *Pantastic Visions Revisited*, an album originally recorded in 2000 and reproduced in 2014.

This album shows the direct influences of Clive’s time in New York when he visited the many jazz clubs, as well as his time studying at Rutgers. It is yet another story of how uncannily transnational relationships unfold. Clive gifted this album to me a few sessions into our meetings. When I looked at the musicians involved on the recording, I immediately noticed that one of the saxophone players, Dick Oatts, was one of the jazz teachers during my undergraduate studies at Temple University. Clive met him in the 1990s at a session in New York and enjoyed his playing so he asked him to record on the album. He had not heard from him or seen him since the recording was completed. When I reached out to Dick on behalf of Clive, Dick said “When I teach my students, I always bring up the importance of Trinidad because it combines melody, rhythm and harmony so effectively and coordinating all three together is what it’s all about!”

When we conceive of the transnational, we so often only think about the ways in which powerful countries exert their influences over smaller, less established countries. This exchange between Dick Oatts and Clive however, is a prime example of the lasting impact that Clive’s work had on an American musician—that precisely the three aspects of music that Clive insists form the foundation of jazz are the same three things that Oatts emphasizes to his students because of his experience with Clive.

The music on this album also reflects a shift in the space of Clive’s practice of listening. Whereas his time in England was spent mostly playing with other Caribbean musicians, his time in the US was one shaped by the necessity to interact with musicians whom he did not know: mostly American musicians that he met at various clubs throughout New York. This period of interaction makes itself audible in the growth of Clive’s improvisation in which he begins to step away, more comfortably now, from the melodic line and begins to include some (although still sparse) chromaticisms.

Of his third stream, Clive says, “I focus on rhythm here. With a beat, you tend to produce shorter melodic lines, more like statements. Now I am moving towards that now in what I call my third stream of my musical development. I am deliberately going to shorter melodic lines more so than long [melancholic] lines.” In this stream, Clive’s goal is to use more non-tonal sound in order to push the boundaries of Trinidadian musical aesthetics. To keep their interest, however, he insists that using catchy rhythms is key. The album *Piano Vibrations* (2016) best represents this phase. The tracks all feature much shorter melodic lines. In fact, Clive often makes statements of three or four notes at a time. Non-chord tones no longer appear merely as passing tones but instead take center stage as Clive embraces the crunchy dissonances, no longer shying away from the possibilities they avail.

Concluding Remarks

Respected as the father of Kaiso jazz, Clive has been influential in the lives of the entire Caribbean jazz community in Trinidad. As one of the last remaining musicians of his generation, Clive has made great effort to document his legacy. In addition to his four albums, *Clive Zanda is Here with ‘Dat Kinda Ting’* (1976), *Piano Vibrations* (2016), *Pantastic Visions Revisited* (2000, 2014), *Pan Jazz Conversations* (2003), Clive has also done extensive work to record his musical system—a system he developed to teach and understand jazz theory without the need to be able to read music notation (see Figure 2.7).



2.6 Clive performing at the Ethnic Jazz Club, November 2016

VOICE LEAD CHORD FORMATION CHART: CLIVE ZANDA METHOD
CLIVE ZANDA SELF TEACHING METHOD

12TH	C	D ^b	D	E ^b	E	F	F ^b	G	A ^b	A	B ^b	B
VL	C	D ^b	D	E ^b	E	F	F ^b	G	A ^b	A	B ^b	B
5TH	G	A ^b	A	B ^b	B	C	D ^b	D	E ^b	E	F	G ^b
3RD RH	E	F	F ^b	G	A ^b	A	B ^b	B	C	D ^b	D	E ^b
FLAT 7TH	B ^b	B	C	D ^b	D	E ^b	E	F	G ^b	G	A ^b	A
ROOT LH	C	D ^b	D	E ^b	E	F	G ^b	G	A ^b	A	B ^b	B

(LERN) MOVEMENT SEMITONE UP/DOWN

NB THIS METHOD LOCATES THE MELODY LEAD VOICE AT THE TOP IN THE RIGHT HAND (ie C) AND LEFT HAND POSITIONED THE ROOT (IN THIS INSTANT THE VOICE LEAD TONE) AND THE FLAT SEVENTH OF THE VOICE TONE (ie B^b) THE VOICE LEAD OR MELODY NOTE CAN BE ANY NOTE ON THE STANDARD 12 TONES ROW
Clive Zanda 1-6-2017

#5	C	D	E	G ^b	A ^b	B ^b	B	D ^b	E ^b	F	G	A
3	D ^b	D	E ^b	E	F	F ^b	G	A ^b	A	B ^b	B	C
1 RH	C	D	E	G ^b	A ^b	B ^b	B	D ^b	E ^b	F	G	A
#5	A ^b	A	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E
3	G ^b	G	A ^b	A	B ^b	B	C	D ^b	D	E ^b	E	F
1 LH	C	D	E	G ^b	A ^b	B ^b	B	D ^b	E ^b	F	G	A
	C	F ^b	B ^b	E ^b	A ^b	D ^b	G ^b	B	E	A	D	G

	C	D ^b	D
	D	E ^b	
	B ^b	B	
RH	C ^b	G	
	D	E ^b	
	B ^b	B	
LH	E	F	
	C	F	

2.7 The Clive Zanda Method
Image reproduced by permission of author

Having recognized the lack of documentation on both the national and personal level of his contemporaries, Clive has also been working on having his compositions transcribed so that they may be accessible in multiple formats to other musicians.

His focus on documentation importantly highlights the unfortunate lack of recognition of local musicians and creative individuals in Trinbagonian society. Many of the musicians I worked with including Clive spoke with sadness of Fitzroy Coleman's last days of life in Trinidad. Although Coleman had gained great fame abroad for his exceptional guitar skills and was well known for performing with several world class jazz musicians, Coleman's return to Trinidad was sobering, his final days spent as a recluse and in the absence of music. Similarly, one finds that an Internet search for information on Rupert Clemendore, famously known for the album, *Le Jazz Primitif* (1961), yields pages upon pages that mention the album. Yet, it is impossible to find any information on Clemendore's life and music.

The issues surrounding documentation of musicians and the creative industry in general consequently raises questions surrounding the state of the music industry in Trinidad and Tobago. Having followed Clive's "journey to jazz" in this chapter, the reader is perhaps left with many questions. For example, why did Clive need to go to the United States to record? Have recording technologies and recording spaces improved in Trinidad since this time? Although we learned much about Clive's time in the London music scene, one perhaps wonders what the performance scene was like upon his return to Trinidad. Were there many new spaces to perform? Did it become easier, over time, for other young musicians to learn about and access jazz music?

Clive's story also highlights other important absences. Of all the musicians discussed throughout the chapter, all but one, Choy Aming, are of Afro-Trinidadian descent. What were the circumstances that shaped the community of musicians in Trinidad to be of predominantly African descent? Women are also notably absent from this account of the history of jazz in Trinidad. Apart from pianist Winifred Attwell, who is discussed at considerable length by scholar George McKay (2005), the music scene in Trinidad and in particular, the jazz scene of this time was almost exclusively male.¹⁶ In the coming chapters I delve more deeply into issues of race and gender, as well as an exploration of how the jazz scene in Trinidad continued to develop beyond the 1970s.

¹⁶ It is important to note that women have been absent from all other band formations until only recently. For more information see Guilbault (2007, 2014). See also McKay (2005).

PART II

The Transnational at Home, Letters to....

Emerging as a series of “Letters to ...,” this chapter is an experiment in storytelling, imaginative writing and definitely an experiment in theoretical writing. By using the format of letters, I open this chapter to a level of intimacy that is not always possible in theoretical writing. But this in itself begs to ask the question, “What qualifies as theoretical writing?” Must a text produce and maintain a level of emotional distance (in the name of objectivity) in order to be considered theoretical? Why are scholars quick to judge the work of women who engage personally with the text as too emotional, or too revealing, yet sing the praises of similar work done by men? Writing a series of letters in the chapter seemed the most appropriate approach for me given how deeply entangled I find myself in the politics of “home.” As someone who has left “home,” created “home,” lost “home,” and is constantly in the process of redefining “home,” this chapter bears particular significance for me as I explore how two Trinbagonian musicians understand and experience the concept of home in radically different ways.

In ethnomusicological scholarship, the concept of home has largely been related to the theoretical and methodological implications of conducting “ethnomusicology at home” (Nettl 2005; Stock and Chiener 2008). However, the notion also emerges in relation to the musical practices of diasporic communities and the ways in which they perform “home” whether imagined, remembered, or recreated (Kyker 2013; Muller and Benjamin 2011). Focusing on vocalist Vaughnette Bigford and saxophonist Anthony Woodroffe, this chapter questions what it means to explore the notion of home in relation to musicians who are within the boundaries of the homeland or nation-state. How do diverse understandings of “home” shape the ways in which locally situated musicians engage with a particular musical practice? Although Vaughnette and Anthony both left Trinidad and Tobago to pursue advanced study in music abroad (US and UK respectively), unlike other musicians such as Etienne Charles, David Bertrand, and the long history of migrant musicians from the country, Vaughnette and Anthony returned to Trinidad upon completion of their studies.

Within a larger theoretical context, however, this chapter questions the ways in which these diverse understandings of “home,” through the musical practice of Caribbean jazz, add complexity to the study of transnational processes. A recurring theme in the study of transnationalism, the concept of “home” has been addressed in a variety of ways by scholars. The concept appears in discussions of the impact of emigration on home countries (Al-Ali and Koser 2002), and the various types of networks formed between home and host countries (Glick-Schiller, Szanton, Basch 1995). Drawing on the works of Gupta and Ferguson (1997) and Canon (2005), however, I make the following arguments in this chapter: the concept of home has become largely normalized and homogenized in the literature on transnationalism. An examination of what the concept of home means at the individual, rather than structural level, however, allows for much different and broader understandings of the process of transnationalism. Therefore, although two people, in this case Vaughnette and Anthony, live in the same country, the ways in which they define and understand home are deeply personal and cannot be treated as equivalents.

These chapters also demonstrate the various ways in which the transnational is eminently local. It is a chapter in which we become aware that much of the way that people define and understand the concept of home is informed by the intricate and varied connections that “home” may have to the “outside world.” In so doing, the chapter deconstructs the equating of “home” as defined by the nation-state. By looking at Vaughnette and Anthony’s musical journeys, I show how “home,” while certainly influenced by the politics of nation-state, can be understood beyond (in greater depth than) the boundaries of national borders. Thus, while Vaughnette and Anthony both reside in Trinidad, this chapter shows the different impacts of race, class and gender on the shaping of their experiences of “home” and how these differences voice themselves through their musics.

How to Woman: Vaughnette Bigford's Journey to Jazz



3.1 Vaughnette performing at the Point Fortin Borough Day Celebration, 2017

I open this chapter by telling Vaughnette's musical story, firstly by writing a letter to the now deceased Miriam Makeba, and focusing on the song "Pata Pata," which has become one of Vaughnette's iconic performance pieces. The letter is a "Thank You" to Miriam Makeba for her role in musically inspiring so many people of African descent during (and even after) the Black Power Movement. Although Miriam Makeba passed away in 2008, I write to her in the present tense because of how powerfully her music and activism have transcended time, continuing to have high impact on young black people around the world today. Makeba's influence was also particularly salient in Trinidad and Tobago because of her marriage to a son of the soil, Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture).

This letter performs three acts. First and foremost, it sets the stage for the time period that Vaughnette was born into, in Trinidad, thereby establishing much about her aesthetics of style and her particular experience of the concept of "home." More theoretically, however, the letter demonstrates the complexities of race in Trinidad and Tobago by speaking about the social context of race at a particular historical moment. As Victoria Pasley describes it:

A number of events in the late 1960s led to the articulation of Black Power in Trinidad. The government had passed the Industrial Stabilization Act in 1965 at a time of severe worker unrest...In passing the Act, the government severely restricted workers' rights to protest and settle grievances...Finally, many Trinidadians began to feel that the black government of Eric Williams had done little to help the majority of poor people of both African and Indian descent (Pasley 2001: 25).

The letter shows the impact of the transnational circulation of ideologies, particularly those of Black consciousness and the far, wide and (most importantly) the uniting effect of these struggles for black people and black women globally. Finally, the letter also establishes place, La Brea Trinidad, and how intra-local understandings of Trinidad impact one's sense of home.

The second letter, written to the young girls of Trinidad and Tobago, focuses on Vaughnette's performance of the Mighty Sparrow's "No Money No Love." Highlighting the various nuances of how Vaughnette performs this particular calypso, this letter is a challenge to readers, and particularly to young Trinbagonian women, to broaden their views on how women are and have been perceived socially. Inspired by both the "Life In Leggings" Movement in the Caribbean, and the "Me Too" Movement, public advocacy for women in Trinidad is at an unprecedented high sparking much pushback toward old-fashioned expectations of women.¹⁷ Drawing from this outcry, this letter questions the pervasive conception of the woman's role as being primarily at home and defined solely in relation to the home.

The issue of gender is often overlooked in research on the concept of transnationalism. When it is addressed, however, it has most often been labelled as "emotional transnationalism" and defined by the ways in which female migrants reconstruct senses of home (Osirim 2008; Takeda 2012; Gu 2010; Falicov 2005). What if a woman's travels could be theorized in spite of or besides her responsibilities to home? In other words, this letter also seeks to question what it means to be a woman today, and, through an examination of Vaughnette's lived experiences to show how being a woman is not and does not have to be defined within the context of the home. Beyond the issue of gender, however, this letter also (briefly) addresses the issue of sexuality and the respectability politics that play a large role in the policing of Trinbagonian women's bodies. At large, this letter raises the question: *How to woman?*

The final letter in the collection of letters about Vaughnette is addressed directly to her. In this letter I explore the concept of "sounding." More specifically, I expand the concept of sounding (making audible through sound) to the idea of voicing. I use this term with Vaughnette not just because she is a vocalist but rather because of how she renders visible many aspects of life in Trinidad that have been overlooked and, in some cases, silenced. In addition to giving voice to the stories of different places and time periods, Vaughnette has rendered audible numerous social issues that face Trinbagonians. Whether or not Vaughnette's voicing of these issues is intentional or happenstance, she plays a crucial role today as a local activist of sorts, mobilizing her fans to seek and do better in their daily lives. Furthermore, these voicings do the work not only of rendering audible, but also of highlighting the ways that life in a small village in Southern Trinidad could be intricately connected to the larger world: that transnational processes are not dependent on the travel or migration of people but are experienced in a myriad of ways.

¹⁷ The "Life in Leggings" movement began in 2016 in Barbados by Ronelle King as a social media hashtag through which women throughout the Caribbean shared their experiences of gender-based violence.

Letter to Miriam

Dear Ms. Makeba,

I am quite ashamed to say that I have only recently deeply delved into your music. The first song of yours that I experienced was “Pata Pata,” sung by my fellow country woman Vaughnette Bigford. When she performs it, I am always mesmerized by the audience’s reaction to the music. From the moment the opening ostinato begins, the Trinidadian crowds get out of their seats and begin to dance. And while I’m not sure that anyone necessarily knows the pata pata dance, Vaughnette’s audiences react to the song like the greeting of a dear old friend: with love, anticipation and excitement.

When I learned that this was your music, I could not help but wonder how or by what means a song that originated in South Africa could have gained such immense popularity in Trinidad and Tobago. This is by no means to deny your international renown, nor the capability of music to circulate far and wide. But I was curious about how exactly a song in the Xhosa language became ingrained in the memories of people from an English-speaking nation for more than thirty years? I know that you are probably familiar with quite a bit of the history of Trinidad and Tobago because of your marriage to Kwame Ture. However, I believe that it is a combination of both the lasting effects of the Black Power Movement in Trinidad and Tobago and the complexities of the movement (the people involved, transnational significance, and various ideological stances) that makes the reception of “Pata Pata” today still so poignant and relevant to Trinbagonian life. Most importantly though, I want to tell you more about the important parallels I see between your life as a musical activist and the life of Vaughnette Bigford.

While I don’t know the precise circumstances that led Vaughnette to choose the song, “Pata Pata,” I imagine that much of this had to do with the fact that she was born in La Brea in 1974, just four years after the Black Power Riot in Trinidad and Tobago. The 1970 riot was perhaps the definitive moment of the Black Power Movement in the country. The feelings of unrest in the country and the pivotal moment of the riot, however, were by no means independent of the larger, worldwide contexts through which the ideologies of Black Power circulated. Trinbagonians had long been influenced by the teachings and activities of intellectuals such as Jamaican Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (the UNIA), and Che Guevara in Cuba. Nonetheless, Trinbagonians in the 1970s were widely influenced by the various movements of black consciousness happening throughout the world. These movements impacted not only union workers, but were reflected deeply in the art, music, and stylist choices made by people in Trinidad and Tobago.

Vaughnette, an Afro-Trinidadian woman, was born in this era when Afro-Trinidadians truly embraced the idea of pride in the black body. But as you know, to be both black *and* woman anywhere in the world, comes with immense burden. Today, Vaughnette speaks candidly about her battle to learn self-love especially in her younger years. Often sharing pictures of herself at a younger age through social media, it is amazing to note her transformation over the years. More than simply a reflection of changes in fashion and in her maturity, the pictures show a young shy girl with relaxed hair who is retreating within herself in an attempt to avoid the full gaze of the camera. In later pictures, however, Vaughnette is radiant, self-assured, and commands the gaze of the camera, proudly sporting a completely shaven head –much different from her earlier years.

Her formidable presence has been incredibly important to young black women in Trinidad and Tobago in this current historical moment where the impacts of racial tensions in the United States can be felt and sympathized with, even all the way in Trinidad and Tobago. Through your music, Miriam, and the music of many other black queens (Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Nina Simone), Vaughnette has taught us to remember to love our melanin.



3.2 Vaughnette wearing Zadd and Eastman at Jazz Artists on the Green 2017

Furthermore, her regal and commanding presence on stage has much to do with her choice to always dress in specially commissioned clothing of local designers Zadd and Eastman (Omzad Khan and Nigel Eastman) whose creations celebrate the vibrancy of Caribbean life. Although Vaughnette's personal and stage attire reflect her personal choice to avoid tight fitting clothing, Zadd and Eastman's designs have locally revolutionized the image of the black female body in the fashion industry by rejecting Eurocentric beauty standards that typically celebrate thin, petite bodies. Instead, their designs acknowledge the differences in bodies, particularly celebrating the shape and curves of the black female body with a kind of tenderness rarely seen in the fashion industry.

Vaughnette's presence both on and off stage is one that exemplifies abundant possibilities of difference: difference in the way the black female body is represented publicly, difference in the ways that femininity can be expressed, and challenges the ways in which black women might express power publicly. What is so striking about the way Vaughnette expresses power is the way that it is always in defiance, yet through utmost grace and beauty.

Vaughnette's expression of power is also evident in her sense of pride in home that goes beyond identifying as a Trinidadian to a deep rootedness in her hometown of La Brea. A small town in South West Trinidad nestled between the more busy and urban Point Fortin to the south, and San Fernando to its north, La Brea is a town I have known since childhood. It is a well-known fact amongst Trinidadians, however, that most people of my generation living in the north of Trinidad have little to no familiarity with the island beyond the central range, or the Chaguanas area. Like much of southern Trinidad, La Brea became part of a narrative of being known as a slow, old-fashioned or "backward" place that lacked financial and educational opportunity particularly by Trinidadians living in the capital and other northern metropolitan areas of the country. Unfortunately, this constructed narrative of the south of the island permeates Trinidadian culture in every form and fashion much to the disadvantage of those who hail from southern Trinidad. Speaking to me about La Brea, Vaughnette once said:

I was born in La Brea. Raised in La Brea. And I still live in La Brea. Sometimes when I hear people talk about La Brea –like people who are not from La Brea –I want to know.... but where they talking 'bout? Because ...I doh know boy ...but if I coulda buy five houses in La Brea, I woulda buy five houses. Cuz I just love La Brea. There's a sense of community that I don't see ... [anywhere else] that still exists!

Her performance of power through pride, however, is more than simply embracing her La Brea roots. Through the idiom of speech, Vaughnette makes a distinct statement about her origins by using dialect that is specific to southern Trinidad. In a country that has for decades equated the Queen's English (Standard British English) with being educated, refined and appropriate, Vaughnette has redefined the boundaries placed upon colloquial language, taking it from a place of shame and scorn to one that has been embraced for the intricacies of humor, and the intimacy of storytelling between friends. In essence, Vaughnette has taken the speaking of Trinbagonian dialect out of the shadows of the private and into the public, unabashedly insisting that her fans take pride in who they are, wherever they are from.

Through her music, Vaughnette has found multiple ways of expressing or sounding home—a home that is both deeply situated in La Brea, but yet a much larger understanding of the country of Trinidad and Tobago. In spite (or maybe because) of her travels to the United States where she studied vocal jazz performance, Vaughnette's music is shaped first and foremost by her understanding of self in relation to home. Therefore, although she often may perform covers of jazz standards, or popular music on the US charts, they are always presented to her audiences through a distinct lens of what home means to her. While this distinct lens may be specific stylistic (rhythmic, expressive) elements used to convey what Trinidad feels like and means to her, it often also emerges in linguistic choices. More crucially, however, she shows her understanding of home as a place never in stasis, but in constant movement and development. La Brea, and Trinidad are always presented as varied, complex places in Vaughnette's musical renditions of them. We experience this when we learn through her storytelling how her childhood, though experienced in a small remote town, was filled with the music of musicians as varied as Sarah Vaughn, Joni Mitchell, Billy Joel and your music, Ms. Makeba!

When I think about your journey as a musician, Ms. Makeba, I see so many ways in which you have been such a great influence to Vaughnette. You have, throughout your career, also sung many varied types of music –from popular music to jazz standards to South African folksongs. But in this journey, you have never abandoned your sense of self: your pride in home,

in your black body, your South African heritage, despite the trials associated with them. Your insistence in singing in the Xhosa language, even on stages in the United States is akin to Vaughnette's insistence on singing and speaking in Trinidadian dialect even in what some would consider "formal" settings. For your inspiration, I want to say Thank You. Thank you for being a crucial presence in the narrative of self-love that has become so important to black men and women around the world. Thank you for exemplifying a sense of pride in home that has encouraged artists, musicians, and creatives around the world to understand that yes, while "home" is local, it is deeply shaped by the ongoing fluctuations of the world at large, and that to express "home" is by no means to deny the various transnational influences experienced while *at home*.

No Money, No Love: A letter to Trinidadian girls

To our future women, future leaders
Dear girls,

I write this letter to you today because I have been thinking quite a bit about the meaning of "home" and the kinds of implications that word, space and idea carry for you and those who have gone before you. The concept of "home" has had a long history of being gendered—as the space *for* women, the space coordinated *by* women and yet, a space that never truly belongs *to* women within the confines of a patriarchal society such as ours. In this letter I want to contemplate with you different ways of thinking about our role within the home, and even beyond the confines of the home. I want to challenge you to be different, to defy, to assert yourselves and claim every inch of space that you believe belongs to you. To do this, I want to tell you a story from the many stories about my friend, Vaughnette Bigford, a Trini jazz vocalist.

In September 2016, I saw Vaughnette perform live for the first time even though I had heard recordings of her previously. That was the night of her "Homecoming" Concert on September 24 in La Brea, Trinidad. While there are so many qualities about Vaughnette that I find admirable, I want to focus on her performance of one particular song that night: The Mighty Sparrow's "No Money, No Love." Now I know you are familiar with the Trinbagonian concept of "picong"—comedic banter that usually occurs at the expense of someone else's pride. We Trinis like picong too too bad. Perhaps it was always part of the culture, or perhaps much of it had to do with the development of calypso from the 1930s onwards and the use of double-entendres to publicly yet "politely" convey sexual innuendos. However, any Trinbagonian will tell you the importance not only of good calypso lyrics, but also of the performing style in which they are delivered.

What does it mean, though, when a calypso that is originally meant to make fun of a woman and her choices is then performed by a woman instead of a man? For those of you not familiar with this particular calypso, here are some of the lyrics:

*Ivy pack up she clothes to leave
Because John was down and out
All alone he was left to grieve
She had a next man in South
She said openly
I really love you Johnny*

*But you ain't have no money
So what would my future be
Even though you say you love me?*

*We can't love without money
We can't make love on hungry belly
Johnny you'll be the only one I am dreaming of
You're my turtle dove
But no money no love*

*If you hear how he plead with she to get she to understand
Listen, mister, she tell Johnny
Leggo me blasted hand
And make up your mind
We got to break up this lime
She said poverty is a crime
You got no money
Still you tanglin' me all the blinkin' time*

*We can't love without money
We can't make love on hungry belly
Johnny you'll be the only one I am dreaming of
You're my turtle dove but
No money no love*

*Johnny nearly killed she with blows
Poor Ivy bawl like a cow
Rip up she wig and he tear down she clothes
The South man ain't want she now
Oh, Lord, what a fight
They roll until broad daylight
Charlotte street was hot that night
She get some good lick but she let go kick and some bite*

In this calypso, Sparrow sings about a woman, Ivy, who leaves her boyfriend Johnny when he is down on his luck. Although this calypso focuses on Ivy and her relationship with Johnny, it is a larger commentary on some of the many ways that women in Trinbagonian society are viewed. Apart from suggesting that women only stay committed to relationships when men are doing well financially, the calypso paints women as opportunistic, arguing that giving love is conditional upon some form of monetary compensation. In a larger sense, however, the song also suggests that women rely on men for financial security and choose not to work, therefore relegating their duties to the sphere of the home. This calypso is incredibly telling about how women in Trinidad and Tobago were and very often still are viewed today. Many Trinbagonian women have been raised to be “seen and not heard.” While their brothers and male counterparts are taught to be adventurous, speak their minds and be strong, women have often been expected

to be delicate, eloquent (meaning mostly silent), and understand their place in the home –to be the homemaker and to understand the requirements of maintaining a household.

Too often, even outside of Trinidad and Tobago, the space of the home has been conflated with gender, and specifically with that of “woman.” This has placed immense burden on young girls all over the world in terms of what they are expected to do, how they are supposed to behave, perform and what responsibilities fall upon them as opposed to male siblings. As Patricia Hill Collins argues:

Because women are so often associated with family, home space becomes seen as a private, feminized space that is distinct from the public, masculinized space that lies outside its borders...Women are expected to remain in their home ‘place.’ Avoiding the dangerous space of public streets allows women to care for children, the sick, and the elderly, and other dependent family members. Men are expected to support and defend the private, feminized space that houses their families. (Hill Collins 1998: 67)

When Vaughnette performed “No Money No Love,” it occurred to me that she was enacting a reclamation of power. What do I mean by this? Well, by becoming the narrator of the calypso, Vaughnette redirected the satire of the song by placing women in a role of power instead of ridicule. Her performance of the song essentially asks, “And *so what* if I expect money for the labor that I do within the home? Don't I have every right to expect some reciprocity?” In many ways, when Vaughnette sings “No Money, No Love” she is reclaiming a woman’s right to say no to the blind expectation of unrewarded and unacknowledged domestic labor.

There are other aspects to Vaughnette’s performances of “No Money, No Love” that I wanted to tell you about. Despite the upbeat and jovial tempo at which the song was originally recorded by Sparrow and the Dragonaires, Vaughnette takes the song at the tempo of a sensual ballad: slow enough that each word of text can be savored, yet still maintaining the syncopated rhythms through the funkiness of a slapped calypso bass. Vaughnette also chooses not to follow Sparrow’s decision to mimic Ivy’s voice during the song. The stylistic adjustment to the song that Vaughnette makes which is perhaps most important to my argument is her decision to completely omit the last verse of the song. In this verse, Sparrow sings about how Johnny physically assaults Ivy, highlighting Ivy’s wig and torn clothing and the location of the fight on Charlotte Street.

Vaughnette’s decision to omit this final verse is in the first place a refusal to accept the violence toward women that has become normalized and often trivialized in the lyrics of local musics. By denying the location of Charlotte Street, Vaughnette is also denying the implicit suggestions that Ivy is in fact a prostitute who lives and “works” on Charlotte Street.¹⁸ In many ways, this denial of place and abuse is an attempt by Vaughnette not only to reclaim power and pride in the female body and its sexuality, but to question where precisely is the place of the female body? Should women only be viewed as being productive within the domestic sphere wherein their value lies in the ability to meet the sexual desires of men? What is the role of women in society? *How* does one “woman?!”

I tell the story of Vaughnette because I see her as a shining example of what young women should aspire toward. In spite of working in the male dominated music industry, Vaughnette’s unapologetic fierceness and charisma have allowed her to form strong bonds with

¹⁸ Charlotte Street, Port of Spain is located just shy of the East Dry River which acts as an informal boundary between Port of Spain and Laventille. The street is infamously known for being a hot spot for prostitutes.

the male musicians with whom she works. Her strong personality goes in defiance of the patriarchal idea that women must be “seen and not heard.” Vaughnette is a wife, mother, and daughter. Yet none of these things exclusively define her. While she, too, bears the responsibilities faced by many women, she has also defined herself beyond these contexts. In spite of these roles, Vaughnette’s dedication to improving her art form led her to Berklee College of Music where she studied jazz vocal performance for a semester.

Throughout my time working with Vaughnette, her husband Shurlan Griffith was a constant presence. From organizing the recording of the album and its launch, to managing the Vaughnette Bigford brand, handling most of the household cooking and being an equal partner in raising their son, Isaiah, Shurlan defies the many stereotypes of Caribbean masculinity. This support, and Vaughnette’s strong sense of purpose definitely helped her in navigating the complexities of moving abroad, albeit for a short time. Shurlan’s active role also shows us that women simply do *not* have to do it all and that it is completely acceptable and should be expected that men, too, carry some of the responsibility of a household.

We are at a moment in time in Trinbagonian history where there is an unparalleled move to recognize women’s rights and a growing sense of awareness of violence against women. Through groups such as the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies (UWI) and Womantra, there has been increasing public awareness surrounding daily issues faced by women in Trinidad and Tobago. So, girls, I urge you to be bold and fearless, demand what is yours and expect only the best for yourselves from the world!

Letter to My Readers

Dear friends,

I feel like we have spoken so much about Vaughnette, yet I still haven’t actually told you the story of how she came to jazz. In fact, I’ve said very little on what the term “jazz vocalist” means to Vaughnette and how or where her music fits into the Caribbean jazz oeuvre.

Vaughnette’s first memory of singing publicly was for the San Fernando Arts Festival when she was seven years old. Although she was no stranger to the stage, performing in drama productions, this was her first time on stage to sing. Her primary school teacher wrote a calypso for her to perform, and this was the genesis of her love affair with singing on stage. She said, “I sing calypso every single year in secondary school...for competition. And I win *every* single year. Heh. The only year I didn’t win was the year I didn’t take part. Hah. But that was about it. But it was more drama than singing all through school.” Vaughnette loved music, but it could not be her career goal. Speaking about her time after secondary school, she says:

I guess maybe I was just trying to establish some sort of semi-decent career. Which of course, for me, music wasn’t a viable option. I mean...we in Trinidad and Tobago. Who...prepares to be a full-time musician in Trinidad and Tobago? Nobody. So, I went to school. Started doing different things. Started off in accounting. I did my level one ACCA [Association of Chartered Certified Accountants] and then switched to Business

Management which I did for maybe a two or three years. And *then* [I] eventually switched to Occupation Health and Safety.¹⁹

Here is what she had to say about how the journey to jazz began, in her own words.

Jiselle: So, at what point did jazz start to speak to you?

Vaughnette: Umm.... I remember once I was singing in the bathroom, and my husband said to me “Um...you don’t intend to start back singing again? Ever?” (Steups²⁰) So I say, “Well yeah, eventually,” you know? Eventually. I didn’t take him seriously for a couple weeks. But then I keep saying, I tell people that when yuh see you have some kinda....you have a gift—which I consider I have a gift. Just like anybody else, it could be anything. It’s not very easy to keep it dormant for very long, you know? It’s almost like you have to physically stifle it... And then I just did a demo. It was for some Norah Jones thing. (J laughs at the expression of Vaughnette’s face). And I dropped it off for the Sando Fernando Jazz Festival Committee. I don’t know why though. But I think I kinda moved towards that because...

J: You don’t know why what?

V: I don’t know why jazz. Why I didn’t drop it in ah tent? [Calypso tent]

J: Yeah.

V: Yuh understand? Or why...why I felt like jazz...I had a natural affinity for it...maybe because of what I used to listen to...through my grandparents I guess. Now they listened to a lot of songbook type stuff eh? Ella Fitzgerald, Lena Horne, Sarah Vaughan. Stuff like that.

J: Okay...so you were growing up listening to that?

V: Yeah. So, I listened to that even though I didn’t like it at the time. It didn’t speak to me at the time. It was just like boring music. Like...why is he playing that?

J: (laughs)

V: Who are these old dead women? You know? (Pause).... And when I actually started listening to music, seeking out music to listen to...that’s the kind of stuff I wanted to hear! More and more and more. So, I guess it was kind of like a natural movement towards that.

J: So, you sent in the demo and what happened?

V: Well, a guy by the name of Rudy Thomas, he actually gave the demo to the committee. And then they called me and asked me if I wanted to do this gig with Boogie Sharpe and Phase II.²¹ Boogie Sharpe and Phase II. This was actually part of the QRC...It wasn’t San Fernando yet...It was QRC Pan Jazz Festival. They were holding this show in Petrotrin’s Staff Club.

J: Oh okay.

V: I think maybe Petrotrin was hosting, and of course I was an employee of Petrotrin at the time. So, I guess maybe...I dunno if thas how the connection happened. But they asked me if I wanted to do this. And I actually did a...that was actually my first.... somewhat professional gig...with Len Boogie Sharpe and Phase II Pan Groove.

J: So, what you sang?

¹⁹ The issue of music as labor will be further discussed in the coming chapters.

²⁰ “Steups” is the Trinbagonian onomatopoeic word for the act of sucking one’s teeth. It is used to communicate annoyance with something or someone.

²¹ Len Boogie Sharpe is the arranger for the Phase II Pan Groove steel orchestra.

V: Summertime [sounding not impressed with herself, in a sing song type way]

V: [I] Never sing that shit again.

J: [scandalous laugh]

V: I had enough of Summertime.

J: [still laughing]

V: No....no more Summertime...But yeah! That was quite frightening though! Cuz I mean...Boogsie is like this enigma you know? But the experience, they made it very comfortable. I must say. Phase II and Boogsie. They made it very comfortable for me. But it was scary.... But good!

J: Scary because it was your first time singing that kind of [music]...

V: Exactly! And in this...space! I mean, it was like a big thing at the time, you know? It's Boogsie too, you know?

V: But after that...they kinda hooked me up with Carlton Zanda who is Clive Zanda's younger brother. Who of course arranged for Despers [Desperadoes Steel Orchestra] this year and last year. And I actually started singing with Carlton's band, The Coal-pot Band. Carlton was doing some really nice Trini jazz, Caribbean jazz, folk jazz things. Very very interesting. And we did like San Fernando Jazz Festival in 2004, 2005, I think 2006 as well. With Carlton. Me being one of his singers. And that's how it started really.

Vaughnette says that her decision to pursue advanced studies in music came about as a distinct planning process that she and Shurlan undertook to create the brand of "Vaughnette Bigford." The first step in the process of creating the Vaughnette Bigford brand was to begin voice training in 2004 with Chris Barbosa in Southern Trinidad, from whom she then moved on to Jessel Murray, Director of the Department of Creative and Festival Arts at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus. While Murray was able to help Vaughnette with the rudiments of music, he was not equipped to help her develop her voice as a jazz musician. On the recommendation of a friend, she went to St. James to listen to jazz vocalist Patti Rogers.

V: And when I heard Patti Rogers for the first time I said, "This is it. This is it. This is exactly what I want to do." And I started kinda stalking Patti regularly. I kinda befriended Patti, and we became close friends, and I started kinda stalking, going around to stuff that Patti would do. And actually, Patti was like my first jazz vocal teacher. Now, the only person who really taught me jazz vocals unofficially, because she wasn't a teacher. But I'm talking about teaching via demonstration. 'Cause...I would copy everything. I would look at what she did. How she did it. How...how she was so personable... how ...you know how she interpreted a song...Patti was my first teacher without actually, formally teaching...

Rogers was one of the only jazz vocalists locally who worked with musicians such as Felix Roach and Mike Boothman before her passing in 2016. Vaughnette was deeply affected by her passing and frequently pays homage to Patti in live performances by dedicating songs to her.

Around 2007 after studying Rogers' style for some time, she began taking courses with Berklee Music Online in music theory and ear training. Forging relationships with her tutors Russell Hoffman and the late Matt Marvuglio, she was encouraged to go to Barbados to do an audition for both a five-week program and full-time enrollment as an undergraduate at Berklee College of Music in Boston. She was successful in her audition and was granted a full

scholarship to attend a five-week program after which she kept returning, each time for a different five-week program. Vaughnette's captivating personality and skill as a musician allowed her to foster a much deeper relationship with her tutors who eventually convinced her to take a year off from her job as an Occupational Health and Safety Officer at Petrotrin (Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited).

Unlike the previous five-week sessions that she enrolled in and that were fully funded by Berklee, the full semester that she enrolled for was funded personally and through the generous donations of friends and family. The cost of full-time enrollment at Berklee was quite prohibitive, however. Estimating it to be around \$120,000 TTD, Vaughnette decided to enroll in a twelve-week summer course at Berklee which was designed to reflect a typical first semester of an undergraduate degree. The pain in her voice was intensely present when she told me how she tried to apply to the Ministry of Culture for funding to help her meet the costs.

V: Could you imagine, I applied to the Ministry and told them that I had gotten accepted to Berklee and I was trying to raise...(heh)... I was trying to raise an additional \$5000 US or some kinda thing (mumbles)... (steups). Well dem eh even take me on. Yeah...them tell me.... They didn't even...They didn't even acknowledge receipt of my letter. Yeah. When I call them back and thing, them doh know where my letter is when I call them back. And well, they doh know how I could raise the rest of money, so.... In other words, is like. You tell somebody you need \$10, and they say "Oh, you need 10. Well we can't give you 10" ...But instead of giving you 3, they'll tell you "We can't give you 10 so we'll give you none because we don't know how you'll raise 7." That's basically what the Ministry said to me. (Pause). So, depressing eh.... So depressing in this country. Because we do not possess the ability to see people and nurture from inception.

J: Yeah....

V: We doh invest in young people. When they invest in themselves and they make a name for themselves, then we jump on the bandwagon. That's how it is.... That's how it is in Trinidad....What yuh go do? They doh even acknowledge your letter.... (pause)

Vaughnette's dissatisfaction is one that has been echoed by many people wishing to obtain financial support from the Government to pursue studies abroad. Traditionally, while students have gained scholarships post-secondary school in the fields of science, business and language, the scholarships are ranked and awarded following exactly that hierarchy. Scholarships for the arts, which are generally not part of the curriculum, do not exist. However, the Ministry of Culture began a campaign to support the arts and began offering support to those who could demonstrate exceptional ability. Despite these efforts, several well deserving people like Vaughnette struggled to obtain funding from the government. Nonetheless, through the efforts of family and supporters, she was able to raise the money to go to Boston as she had planned.

During the course of the semester, Vaughnette studied ear training, harmony and other courses that helped her develop her musicianship. Recalling the first time she was asked to write a chart, she told me of the shock she felt when her professor, Janie Barnett, asked the class to write a chart in one week. With an incredulous look on her face, she sarcastically joked to me that at the time she was still trying to understand a treble clef. While she was in fact exaggerating, raising this particular experience showed the kinds of difficulties Vaughnette had to navigate as a mature student (in her mid 30s at the time) who was only just beginning to be familiar with music theory and advanced skills such as chart writing. However, with the help of

tutor Daniele Siliquini, who became a close friend, roommate, and later the godfather of her son Isaiah, Vaughnette worked diligently to make the most of her time at Berklee.

When the semester was over, she then stayed in Boston for the rest of the year taking private lessons with vocalists such as Janice Pendarvis, Donna McElroy and Gabrielle Goodman. These three vocalists proved to be fundamental in helping Vaughnette to develop her vocal skills, but also allowed her to finally obtain the training she sought in non-classical vocal technique. In fact, they were a well curated team of vocal coaches whose individual performing experiences exposed Vaughnette not only to jazz (Gabrielle Goodman), but gospel (Donna McElroy) and various types of popular musics (Janice Pendarvis).

I wondered to what extent Vaughnette's studies at Berklee were fueled by a desire to learn jazz in the North American context of the genre, or whether she, like other Caribbean musicians, had entered into the learning process with the goal of personalizing the music to her own life experiences. It was interesting to see her think through this question which it seemed no one had ever really asked her before. For her, the trips to Berklee and the quest to improve her vocal skills were fueled by a strong passion for swing and the blues. She wanted to learn about swing, the blues, and what she called North American jazz in its "purest" form.

V: But you know what? I remember a lecturer of mine.... a guy called Armsted Christian.²² Grammy nominated.... Armsted used to run this class called Flo'ology. And this class was basically teaching you about rhythm, movement and...it was more poetry than music...it was more.... spoken word. Oh my gosh! I remember every time I would go to that class I would cry....it was so real and personal...

It was Christian who quite frankly told Vaughnette to stop attempting to emulate African American singers. Unlike African Americans who had lived a particular experience, he explained, Vaughnette had not. Instead she had something just as vibrant and beautiful to offer through her Caribbean heritage and her personal interpretation of whatever music she sang. He encouraged her to embrace what was unique about her life. It was perhaps at this moment that Vaughnette stopped thinking about herself as a jazz vocalist, but rather as a Caribbean (Trinidadian) vocalist who utilizes stylistic elements of jazz in her music.

One example of this is the way that Vaughnette and her band created an arrangement of KMC's (Ken Marlon Charles) hit soca song released in 2005. As a soca song, emphasis in the original version is on the interlocking rhythms that keep the song driving forward. Harmony comes secondary and even the melody features very little movement spanning the range of a minor third.

²² Armsted Christian passed away in January 2016. He was known for his work as teacher and mentor at the Berklee College of Music and for his work with musicians such as Herbie Hancock, Diana Ross, Roberta Flack, and Regina Carter.

Soul on Fire

Ken Charles (KMC)

The musical score for "Soul on Fire" is presented in a multi-staff format. The top staff is for the Voice, followed by Electric Guitar, Electric Piano, Electric Bass, Hi-hat, and Drums. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score consists of eight measures. The Voice part features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes. The Electric Guitar part provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. The Electric Piano part plays sustained chords. The Electric Bass part has a steady eighth-note pattern. The Hi-hat and Drums parts provide a consistent rhythmic accompaniment.

3.3 Transcription of KMC's "Soul on Fire"

In Vaughnette's treatment of "Soul on Fire," however, in addition to a much-reduced tempo, we see a stripping of rhythmic layers:

Soul on Fire

Arranged by The Vaughnette Bigford Band

Musical score for the first system of "Soul on Fire". The score is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. It features six staves: Alto (treble clef), Alto Sax (treble clef, key signature one sharp), Guitar (treble clef, key signature one flat), 5-str. Electric Bass (bass clef), Piano (grand staff), and Drums (percussion clef). The Alto part has a melodic line with eighth notes and rests. The 5-str. Electric Bass part has a simple bass line. The Piano part has sustained chords in the right hand and rests in the left hand. The Drums part has a steady pattern of eighth notes.

Musical score for the second system of "Soul on Fire", marked "A.". The score is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. It features six staves: Alto (treble clef), Alto Sax (treble clef, key signature one sharp), Gtr. (treble clef, key signature one flat), El. B. (bass clef), Piano (grand staff), and Drums (percussion clef). The Alto part has a melodic line with eighth notes and rests. The El. B. part has a simple bass line. The Piano part has sustained chords in the right hand and rests in the left hand. The Drums part has a steady pattern of eighth notes.

3.4 Transcription of verse from "Soul on Fire" arranged by the Vaughnette Bigford Band

Soul on Fire: Chorus

Arranged by the Vaughnette Bigford Band

♩ = 74

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for Alto, Alto Sax, 5-str. Electric Bass, and Drums. The second system includes parts for A. (Alto), Alto, El. B. (Electric Bass), and Drums. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 74. The Alto part features a melodic line with a long note in the second measure. The Alto Sax part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The 5-str. Electric Bass part has a steady eighth-note bass line. The Drums part features a consistent pattern of eighth notes with accents.

3.5 Transcription of Chorus

Instead, the audience’s attention is directed toward the vocals which become the center of attention. This, stylistically speaking, draws from what record producer Kedar Massenburg termed “neo-soul”—music that drew from genres such as jazz, pop, hip-hop, funk, and gospel that were more focused on the message of the lyrics than on melodic content.²³ As an example, we can see these stylistic features in Erykah Badu’s “On and On”: very little harmonic movement with rhythms below that support the voice and allow it freedom for melodic exploration.²⁴

²³ For more information on the label “neo-soul,” which was used as a marketing concept, see Leight (2017).

²⁴ Erykah Badu is a soul artist who came to fame on the Motown label in the 1990s. Her music has been described as “neo-soul” because of her focus on lyrics and the influence of R&B and funk.

On and On

Erykah Badu

The image shows a musical score for the song "On and On" by Erykah Badu. The score is written in 4/4 time and features four staves: Voice, Piano, 6-str. Electric Bass, and Drumset. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The Voice part consists of four measures of melody. The Piano part features a rhythmic accompaniment with chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The 6-str. Electric Bass part plays a steady eighth-note pattern. The Drumset part provides a consistent rhythmic foundation with a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes.

3.6 Transcription of Erykah Badu’s “On and On”

What makes the band’s arrangement of “Soul on Fire” and other songs jazz, however, is the featuring of instrumental solos in the performance of each piece. More importantly, the instrumentalists of the Vaughnette Bigford Band accompany with much more freedom than one would experience when listening to soca music. For example, in the chorus of the arranged version of “Soul on Fire,” we hear that the bass player does not necessarily stick to the same ostinato patterns throughout the song. In fact, he often adds embellishments to his patterns, sometimes changing register and sometimes even changing his accompaniment according to the groove.

I hope that this letter provided you, my readers, with more background on Vaughnette’s musical journey. More so, I hope that it has helped to explain why Vaughnette will frequently say that she is *not* a jazz singer—but that she is a vocalist. Does the music she performs fit neatly into a classification of jazz *qua* straight-ahead jazz? Absolutely not. However, it does rely on a key stylistic technique of jazz—improvisation while also drawing on Trinidadian musical practices.

In the final letter that follows, I write to Vaughnette whose kindness and humility left lasting impressions on me. It is a fan letter of sorts but, it in many ways is a theoretical closing to the chapter: a retelling of the many ways in which she engages with the process of transnationalism. Whereas the letter to Miriam Makeba focused on the transnational circulation of racial ideologies and the complexities of embracing the black body, the letter to the young girls of Trinidad and Tobago questioned what it means to be a woman within the transnational imaginary and in so doing was a call to young women to claim and reclaim power beyond the confines of private life. The final letter, thus, demonstrates that the transnational—which thus far has perhaps always seemed to be something that is not here, but there—is in fact deeply situated: that one needs not leave, travel or be elsewhere in order to experience another place. The letter also demonstrates how transnational processes transcend time. A transnational exchange need

not be continuous nor currently happening. Instead, much like the life experiences of a musician like Vaughnette, the musical exchanges, circulations of music, ideas, and material objects occur haphazardly and not linearly...

Stay tuned,

Jiselle

Letter to Lady V

Dear V,

When we first met I explained to you that a large part of my project would focus on discussing how different Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad craft their sound: what their musical influences are, who they listen to, what messages they want to deliver in their music. One of my primary considerations, however, has been to focus on how a person's lived experience has shaped their personal experiences of music—that each person's body (gender, race, nationality) has had a distinct role to play in how sound is created. During the course of my work with you, I realized that you, Vaughnette, enact a very special type of sounding through voice. I think of this as “sounding through voice” or voicing not simply because you are a vocalist. In fact, this goes far beyond singing and music. Instead, I think of the crucial role you have played in voicing critical social issues, in giving voice to the intra-local (Southern Trinidad), and being the voice of many different times, places, musical genres and people through your musical repertoire.

I realized at some point that your vast repertoire was not merely a reflection of your skill as a musician, but rather a much deeper, intimate expression of the times and places that you have lived through. For example, you have repeatedly talked about the music that you heard at your grandparents' house as a child. Even though you admitted that you did not love the music then, you noted how important it became later on in your musical development. Speaking about those memories of listening to musicians such as Lena Horne, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald does not only tell me that your grandparents liked the music of black jazz vocalists. It also tells me that at that time in your childhood, people listened to music in a different way than we do today. Whether the music was on the radio or played by records, your admittance that it was what you “had to listen to” is telling that perhaps there were not many listening choices to begin with, but also that the act of “listening to” was highly valued and should not be interrupted. How different that must have been when compared to the plethora of devices, formats and platforms we have available to us to listen to music today.

Your repertoire also tells the story of your time abroad at Berklee where you were fortunate to work with musicians such as the late Matt Marvuglio, and vocalists Janice Pendarvis, Donna McElroy, and Gabrielle Goodman. Although you began your journey at Berklee wanting to become a blues singer, working with these three vocalists proved to be fundamental in helping you to finally obtain the training you sought in non-classical vocal technique. In fact, they were a well curated team of vocal coaches whose individual performing experiences were crucial in exposing you not only to jazz (Gabrielle Goodman), but gospel (Donna McElroy) and various types of popular musics (Janice Pendarvis). Although you were

only able to study at Berklee for a year, the ways you spoke about how valuable that time was for you as a musician serves as an important reminder of how it was no easy task for you as an adult woman to go abroad for a year leaving behind your family and career. It reminds me of the privilege and extreme value for Trinbagonians who have the ability to travel to the United States to study, regardless of how long, and how this is often taken for granted.

Through your music, you take your listeners on a trip through various eras of time. From the disco and funk influenced melodies of calypsonians such as Lord Merchant, to the powerful melodies of Miriam Makeba that united black people around the world, your music has helped us to either remember or learn about life during different time periods. One of the most important lessons I learned from the music you perform, perhaps, is about the thriving music industry in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1970s and 1980s. You reintroduced to listeners local music that once flooded the airwaves but have since mostly been long forgotten: the music of Katie and Mac Kisson, Carol Addison, Oliver Chapman and Arthur Marcial, to name a few. Your album was equally important for its role in highlighting the various genres of music coming out of Trinidad and Tobago –not just calypso and soca but also R&B and pop in the 1970s and 1980s.

People love Vaughnette Bigford not just because of your amazing voice and stage presence. Your fans love you because of how you share so much of your personal life with them. You are not an enigma but someone with whom they deeply relate. Since I have known you, you have always been vocal about your battle with depression. When you have difficult days, whether related to depression or otherwise, you reach out to and draw strength from the community you have so carefully developed through Facebook. I really believe that it is your open, candid voicing of these issues and struggles you face that make your music and person so powerful to those who interact with you. Your willingness to be so open about yourself and so vulnerable stands in defiance of the norm worldwide to stigmatize mental health issues. To voice these things which are so difficult is to make audible the pain that too many people struggle to face themselves.

I hope that this letter will bring you joy on future rainy days. I hope you continue to let your light shine. And most importantly, I hope you continue to be a source of inspiration to all the people who are fortunate to meet you.

With Love,
Jiselle

Music as Labor: Anthony Woodroffe, Jr., the Sax Man

“Home, at its core, to me, boils down to what is important. And what’s most important to me is my family. So... I could be at home anywhere... Wherever Jade, Jayden and Jean-Michael are, that’s home for me. It doesn’t matter. Music is important, but there’s nothing more important than the people that live with you.”—Anthony Woodroffe, Jr.

In the first of two letters about Anthony, I spend a great deal of time giving a historical background of race in Trinidad. The letter, though fictional, is addressed to my friend Paul Bissember with whom I have had many in-depth conversations about Trinidad. Paul’s interest in my research is not just academic but deeply personal because although he was born in the United States, his father is Indo-Guyanese and his mother who is from the island of St. Thomas is white. Thus, the racial “in-betweenness” that I discuss in relation to Anthony and myself in this letter is something that Paul also experiences in his daily life.

I felt it necessary to spend this time explaining these details given that neither the first chapter nor the introduction really set up the demographics of Trinidad, and how this is related to musical practices. The issue of race becomes especially important in discussing Anthony in relation to Vaughnette because it details how the politics of race operate differently for different people, even when both parties are persons of color and from the same homeland. While the issue of race is by no means the only lens through which to understand his positioning in the Caribbean jazz scene in Trinidad, it certainly helps to paint a much clearer picture of how and why Anthony has taken certain decisions regarding his musical output.

Through the final letter to Nigel Campbell, journalist and jazz promoter, I contend with the other factors that have shaped Anthony’s music and role in the Caribbean jazz scene in Trinidad. First and foremost, I address the growing number of jazz festivals in Trinidad and the Caribbean, and more importantly how they relate to, or rather are often at odds with, the Caribbean jazz scene in Trinidad. That they are not one in the same, and do not work symbiotically is not obvious to the outsider of the music scene.

This letter furthermore highlights some of the ways that Anthony in particular, as a performer, is at odds with the aesthetic preferences of Trinidadian audiences. I tell the story of Anthony’s journey to jazz, his musical influences, and address the factors that have helped shape his musical preferences that are quite distinct from other Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad. The letter closes by discussing Anthony’s vital role as an educator and his unwavering commitment to provide to young musicians in Trinidad that which was not available to him in his formative years.

The final letter of this chapter is addressed to my readers. It is a series of reflections on Anthony’s role in the Caribbean jazz scene in Trinidad. More importantly, however, it brings together the issues highlighted in the previous letters in order to demonstrate the various ways through which Anthony has engaged and continues to engage transnational networks of circulation.

Letter to Paul

My Dearest Paul,

Thank you for your last letter! It is so wonderful to hear from you and as always, I am so excited to tell you about what I've been up to in Trinidad. I'm not surprised about your questions about how or whether the issue of race comes up in my research and fieldwork. I think the best way to answer your question is to tell you about one of the musicians that I've been working with: Anthony Woodroffe. I first met Anthony in 1999 when we were both members of the youth orchestra in Trinidad. He is an incredibly versatile musician and plays a range of instruments apart from his primary instrument, the saxophone. Anthony possesses a musical dexterity that few wind instrumentalists in the country have. I always remember being struck by how effortlessly he would switch from playing clarinet to bassoon, to oboe, to flute, sometimes all within the same rehearsal. In years to come, Anthony would gradually withdraw from the classical music scene in Trinidad as he began to find ways to pursue jazz locally.

Let me first begin with a brief history of race in Trinidad. I need to give this background in order to explain how Anthony fits into this narrative, and to show you how complex it is to speak about race in Trinidad and also in my research: Trinidad was captured by the British in 1797 after the Spanish (re)discovery of the island in 1498. When the British arrived, there was a thriving sugar economy on the island fueled by the labor of West African slaves and their descendants.²⁵ The social structure at that time was what was referred to as the three-tiered structure: at the very top of the social ladder were white plantation owners who represented the smallest portion of the population. This was followed by the second tier of persons referred to as “free coloreds”—persons of mixed white and black ancestry who had been able to secure their freedom. Finally, at the bottom of the social ladder were blacks and the few native Indians that remained. The slaves constituted the largest segment of society. With the coming of the Emancipation Act of 1833 and the Abolition of Slavery in 1834, the British Empire found itself in great need of a labor force. In Trinidad, like Guyana, there were multiple attempts at securing labor from other sources: China, Syria, Lebanon, and finally India. From 1845 onward, indentured laborers were brought to Trinidad to become the primary labor force on the sugarcane estates.

As a brief note, I haven't mentioned Tobago because its history is different, having been annexed to Trinidad only in 1899! Also, because of the lack of sugarcane estates on Tobago, even after Tobago was annexed to Trinidad it did not need the labor force that Trinidad needed. This is why to this day the population of Tobago is predominantly Afro-Trinidadian.

So, as you can imagine, with the arrival of laborers to Trinidad post Emancipation, the social hierarchies shifted quite dramatically. Of course, white plantation owners remained at the top of the social ladder. However, the middle tier would become occupied not only by “free coloreds” but also by Chinese, Syrian and Lebanese laborers who left plantation work and became engaged in commerce, becoming quite successful financially. Former slaves remained at the bottom of the social ladder and were joined by the Indian laborers who were initially viewed as perhaps even lower than blacks.

This did not last for long though. As time passed, East Indians would begin to elevate their status through both education and religion, many converting to Presbyterianism. The former

²⁵ See Williams, Eric (1944), for a history on the role of the Spanish empire in the development of Trinidad and its role in the early stages of the slave economy in Trinidad.

slaves would soon come to resent the East Indian laborers for their successes due to the opportunities they were afforded that blacks did not have. Most critically, East Indian laborers were allowed to maintain their religions and customs upon arrival to Trinidad. For a brief period, they were also given land grants as incentives to stay on the island at the end of the contracts. Later on, they were allowed to purchase land at reduced rates and continued their journey into “respectable” society through the educational efforts of the Canadian mission schools.²⁶ The resentment was also largely due to the fact that the Indian laborers did not and could never carry with them the legacy of slavery that would always be attached to Afro-Trinidadians. With such an already complicated social structure, could you imagine how much more complicated it became when considering the growing population of people of mixed race?

In Trinidad and Tobago, Anthony is what we call a “red man.” Most frequently described as the racial mixture of Afro-Trinidadian and European heritage, everybody says that “red man’ sweet too bad” (are incredibly good looking). By Trinidadian beauty standards, to be “red” is to possess all the beautiful physical characteristics of being simultaneously black and white, while being neither.



4.1 Anthony performing in the Vaughnette Bigford Band at Jazz Artists on the Greens, 2017

²⁶ For more information, see Bridget Brereton (1979). See also Williams (1944).

This is actually the modern-day colloquial term for people who were once called “mulatto,” a term that has since fallen out of favor due to its derogatory connotations from its association with slavery. However, the categorization of “red” goes far beyond simply being a beauty aesthetic. Historically, to be mulatto or of any mixed race (whether black and white, or indigenous and white) positioned a person much higher on the social ladder—above blacks and East Indians. To be “red” meant that one was so much closer to being white, and therefore of higher class. So, although today “redness” is associated largely with beauty standards, it is deeply entangled in colonial legacies of race and class.



4.2 Anthony doubling on flute for Élan Parlē at Jazz Artists on the Greens, 2017

Speaking about his family background he said, “My mom is from Santa Cruz—they [family members] always say we have Amerindian in the family. And my dad is black.” The significance of mentioning Santa Cruz was not merely to conjure an image of place, but also to alert me to the fact that his family is also of Spanish heritage, as is common of families from the area given the history of cocoa plantations during the Spanish reign on the island (1498 to 1797). During his childhood, therefore, he was heavily involved in parang and Spanish folk musics in addition to the other types of music he performed.²⁷ Anthony argued that although he has played

²⁷ Parang or parranda refers to a type of music (and music-making) that occurs in Trinidad around Christmas. The lyrics are sung in Spanish and features instruments such as the cuatro, mandolin, maracas, flute, and box bass. For further scholarship on the genre, see Allard (2008) and Brown (2009).

various types of local musics such as Afro-Trinidadian folk music, parang, and calypso, he did not feel that he had any particular inclination toward any specific type of music.

I raised the issue of race with Anthony in one of our conversations, asking him quite directly whether he considered himself black. He laughed and stated that by Trinbagonian standards he was not black but that outside of the Caribbean, he would immediately be considered as such because he is not white. Isn't that interesting? I'm not surprised that this was his experience though, since I also never considered myself black until I lived in the United States! Anthony would learn this harsh reality when he moved to London in 2005 through the "Working Holiday Visa" before enrolling at Leeds College of Music. The now defunct visa allowed Commonwealth citizens between the ages of 18 and 30 to undertake part time employment for up to two years in the United Kingdom. As he told me about the experience, I could see the pain in his face while he recalled what it meant to be an immigrant in the UK and the types of jobs he had to take to make ends meet (call center, data entry). It was while he was there that he made the decision to cut his long dreadlocks because they attracted too much attention to him. He felt that since he already stood out as one of the few black students (again, black by non-Trinidadian standards), he did not want to draw any more attention to himself as being exotic.

Many people have asked me whether Caribbean jazz is a genre practiced by mostly Afro-Trinidadians. Well, it is in fact true that Caribbean jazz is a musical practice performed mostly by Afro-Trinidadians. The impact of racial tensions stemming from the social structure during colonial times was such that cultural forms were also kept strictly divided along racial lines. This meant that today, musics such as calypso and soca are performed by mostly Afro-Trinidadians while musics such as tassa and chutney are performed by Indo-Trinidadians. This was perhaps further exacerbated by the fact that the nationalist movement of the 1960s was led by a predominantly Afro-Trinidadian middle class. Because of this history and these legacies of race, Anthony's racial "in-betweenness" has positioned him quite differently from the other musicians that I have been working with. Whereas musicians such as Clive "Zanda" Alexander, Vaughnette Bigford and Etienne Charles exude and exhibit a strong sense of pride in their Afro-Trinidadian heritage, this is not present for Anthony. This is not to say that he is ashamed of his blackness, or more in tune with his European heritage. However, by purist standards, Anthony's and my racial mixtures are seen as "bastardizations" of racial lines. Just as I never considered myself black until I lived in the United States, in Trinidad I would never refer to myself as exclusively (East) Indian nor exclusively black. Because although I belong to both races, I am simultaneously neither and I am also met with various tensions in trying to claim either individually on Trinidadian soil.

I imagine that so much of this feels and sounds familiar to you because of your own family background. What I'm curious to know though, is how you navigate your sense of "in-betweenness" as a person who lives in the United States. How have the politics of race in the United States impacted upon you? I really look forward to hearing your thoughts on my letter and your responses. Please send news of our Casa Azul amixs!

With love,
Jiselle

Letter to Nigel

Dear Nigel,

I hope you are well. I wanted to write to you to follow up on a conversation we had many weeks ago about Caribbean jazz. We began our conversation talking about the distinction between Caribbean jazz and jazz in the Caribbean where you defined the former as a genre and the latter, quite truthfully, as the aesthetic expectations of audiences at jazz events in the Caribbean. As a promoter of one of the top jazz festivals in Trinidad you marked this distinction because, as I have also learned during this process, many of the festivals that are promoted as jazz festivals in Trinidad and elsewhere in the Caribbean do not feature jazz but rather focus much more on R&B and other genres of music that create a more participatory, and danceable environment. Thus, the phrase “jazz in the Caribbean” may not necessarily always feature local musicians nor Caribbean jazz but rather the creation of a certain atmosphere of enjoyment.

Our discussion was particularly intriguing to me because it made me think quite a bit about the role of Caribbean jazz musicians within the context of jazz festivals. I thought quite a bit about the Tobago Jazz Experience, remembering how few performances of Caribbean jazz occurred, and how poorly they were attended in comparison to the performances by R&B singer, D’Angelo, Grace Jones, and dancehall artiste Shabba Ranks. Most specifically, I was thinking about Anthony Woodroffe’s performance at this festival and its stark contrast with the performances that preceded and followed his.



4.3 Anthony Woodroffe, Jr. and band performing at the Tobago Jazz Experience, 2017

Even though you were at the festival, I remember that you were at another stage location following Vaughnette's performance which was unfortunately scheduled at exactly the same time.

As Anthony and his band set up, the DJ played music by artists such as Marcia Griffiths and Bunny Wailer's "Electric Boogie," and Kool and the Gang's "Get Down on It." By the time the band was ready to perform, the entire audience was dancing away to the DJ's mix of funk and R&B classics. With much anticipation, the crowd briefly settled down to welcome the band and receive the performance. Anthony began the set with Joshua Redman's "Jazz Crimes." Though steeped in the feel of funk, which the audience had previously been dancing to, "Jazz Crimes" suddenly left the audience in a state of unease. I could visibly see that people were unsure of what to do with their bodies. As I'm sure you know, Joshua Redman's "Jazz Crimes" begins with intricate polyrhythms that to the unfamiliar ear might seem uneven, uneasy, or even uncertain. This perhaps was Redman's goal in this album –to unsettle his listeners and this was certainly true in my observations of the audience. True to your statements, Nigel, the audience wanted to connect with the music through dance, but were unsure. Unsure of how to physically and by extension emotionally connect with this music in which the beat could not easily be discerned.

But when the band finished "Jazz Crimes" and moved on to a cover of "Breakout" by the band Lettuce, the audience had mostly dissipated. Still in the language of funk, even with a more regular beat, "Breakout" similarly did not grasp the audience's attention. I think that one of the elements your description of jazz in the Caribbean did not address was the importance of melody to audiences. Although the groove could be easily distinguished by the bodily movements of the band players, the fragmented and frequently changing melodic ideas presented in "Breakout" were not something that the audience could hold on to in the way that they held closely to the lyrics of the music performed by Vaughnette. After these two pieces, the band planned to continue with covers of songs such as Anita Baker's "Caught Up in the Rapture," D'Angelo's "Brown Sugar," Ed Sheeran's "Shape of You" and Justin Timberlake's "Can't Stop this Feeling," progressing from R&B toward pop. However, because of poor time management by the event managers, the band was unable to perform the Ed Sheeran and Justin Timberlake songs.

Over the years that I have known Anthony, I observed that while he performed frequently and was a constant key name in local Caribbean jazz events, he performed less and less of his own shows than he performed as a backing musician or band member for other musicians. In the few instances during my fieldwork in which he headlined his own shows, I was intrigued by the kinds of music he selected for his sets. Unlike other local Caribbean jazz musicians who had developed ways of incorporating jazz language into local musics, and local musics into jazz standards, Anthony consistently performed what could be described as straight-ahead jazz and bebop. As I started fieldwork and began to more closely follow Anthony's activities, his musical choices seemed incredibly intriguing to me. How would I talk about his music when, by all local understandings, it did not necessarily embody Caribbean jazz? How could I not talk about him when he is *the* Sax Man? Then it dawned on me that Anthony's choice of musical style was important not because of any unspoken rule that Caribbean musicians *must* play music that speaks to their cultures, but rather because of what Anthony's choices meant within the local jazz aesthetic. The more I contemplated his musical choices, the more I came to realize that his musical style was reflective of his complex relationship with this place called home.

During our interviews I asked Anthony to tell me about the point in time when he distinctly recognized his love for jazz. He told me about a cassette of Grover Washington

Junior's music that he received from a friend of his father who lived in New York. Discussing the pervasive conception locally of Kenny G as the epitome of music for saxophone, Anthony stated that when he first heard Grover Washington Jr's music, he felt a much deeper connection to the music and to what Washington Jr was conveying through his sound. It was at that point that he began to realize that "music was not just about playing something nice. It was something a lot deeper. Spiritual." With the difficulties of accessing jazz recordings locally, Anthony's next acquisition was a CD by the Caribbean Jazz Project in 1997 featuring Andy Narell, Dave Samuels and Paquito D'Rivera. This CD was particularly important to him because of his involvement with the band Fuego Latino and his desire to hear and learn more about Latin Jazz on saxophone.

Although Anthony became a crucial musician in the local jazz scene even before leaving for advanced studies, he openly admits that he had no idea what he was doing—he simply played what he felt worked in each circumstance. It was during his time at Leeds that he would acquire what he calls the critical tools of jazz language to be able to convey more effectively and more sophisticatedly his message through music. At Leeds, Anthony studied with three different saxophone teachers. In his first and second years he worked closely with Ev Marcus, a saxophonist who studied at Berklee under George Garzone and Jerry Bergonzi. Anthony's studies with Marcus are important because they help to trace the lineage of musicians that inform much of his style and influences. George Garzone, notably, was a teacher of Joshua Redman and Branford Marsalis, whilst Jerry Bergonzi toured and recorded extensively with Dave Brubeck. In his final year, Anthony chose to focus on bebop with Jim Corry on alto saxophone, and contemporary music with Rob Mitchell on tenor saxophone.

I think that it is really important to understand Anthony's musical journey in order to understand the music he plays and where he might be "placed" in discussions of Caribbean jazz. Anthony's musical choices when he headlines are anything but self-indulgent. He is not simply playing this music because it is what he enjoys. It is in fact a much more complex negotiation between trying to manage audience expectations whilst still providing them with something new—not specifically local. He argues that this is his way of trying to challenge audiences to step out of their comfort zones and to listen to different kinds of music. Drawing a comparison between audiences in New York versus audiences in Trinidad, he argued that whereas in New York musicians are constantly challenged to play new, innovative material, in Trinidad he has found that audiences connect to that which is familiar—either melodically, rhythmically, or instrumentally. Speaking about "Jazz Crimes," he explained that he did not expect that the audience would truly understand the piece, especially given that the Tobago Jazz Experience, despite its name, caters to audiences who are more interested in R&B and contemporary popular musics.

Audience aesthetics aside, it occurred to me that Anthony's choice of music is a direct response to his search for jazz in his adolescent years. In other words, his insistence on playing bebop and straight-ahead jazz could also be seen as his quest to provide music at home through live performance that was not available to him in his younger years. Ironically, in spite of the plethora of access to jazz and music from around the world today through the Internet and other technological developments, the performance of bebop and or straight-ahead jazz is rare in Trinidad. Furthermore, as you well know, until the establishment of the performing arts program through the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) at the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA), there were few avenues to obtain advanced lessons in music and particularly jazz.

Anthony's obligation to home was to be a part of this change, and to help young musicians in Trinidad and Tobago have opportunities that we did not have as young adults. As we discussed his role as a teacher, Anthony admitted that initially he began teaching at UTT in order to have a stable income to support his wife and sons. However, as he grew into the role of teacher, he began to reflect on his own circumstances, having to leave the country to pursue advanced studies, and realized the importance of an institution such as UTT to young musicians in the country. He spoke about the difficulties of having to ration money for living expenses while at school in Leeds, and also the difficulty of sourcing the money to fund his studies in the jazz program. Speaking about the students' attitudes toward the program, he said, "I see it [the institution] as very very important because even if some students don't realize what they need [musically] or how important it is that they have it [this opportunity], I know what I didn't have."

So, although Anthony's musical choices do not reflect the kind of situatedness that Vaughnette's music espouses, he is nonetheless enacting a sounding of home. Anthony's sounding, though based in the language of straight-ahead jazz and bebop and not informed by local musics, is reflective of his desire to provide locally the musics that he was unable to easily access as a young adult. So, in fact, his sounding of home emerges as the fostering of space and relationships (through teaching) with young Trinidadians who are similarly trying to find a career path in music.

What do you think of my theory? I'm looking forward to hearing from you and for more updates on the local Caribbean jazz events. Until soon!

Best,
Jiselle

Reflections on Anthony: A letter to my readers

Dear friends,

I was reflecting on Anthony's role in the Caribbean jazz scene in Trinidad and it occurred to me that I urgently needed to voice some thoughts about the process of transnationalism and what that entails and has entailed for Anthony. If one was unfamiliar with the musical landscape of Trinidad, it might be surprising that I have included Anthony in this series of biographies. I say "surprising" because unlike the other musicians in this project, and as discussed in the previous letters, Anthony does not regularly lead his own band. He also does not write much music currently, nor does he adhere to the stylistic and aesthetic preferences of audiences who attend Caribbean jazz events. And yet, he is unbelievably talented, dedicated and passionate about his craft. How, then, is Anthony "sounding the transnational" through his complex positioning as a Caribbean jazz musician?

Transnational processes are at work in every step of Anthony's journey that I have discussed thus far. They are present when we consider *what* Anthony needed to do to get to jazz—and here I speak of jazz as a goal, an endpoint, a dream. Coming from a working-class background and raised primarily by a single mother, Anthony speaks candidly about the financial difficulties he experienced in pursuing his dream. In order to first discover and begin to explore jazz, Anthony had to contend with the difficulties of accessing recordings and scores that most

often had to be acquired abroad. For Anthony, these acquisitions were mostly dependent on the good will of friends of his father who came to visit from the United States.

He also played, until adulthood, on instruments that did not belong to him and were often in disrepair. Anthony did not own his own saxophone until he began to work as an adult, and so his teenage years were spent practicing on borrowed instruments that were often lacking one thing or another. The high costs of obtaining one's own instrument in Trinidad were so prohibitive that Anthony, like other musicians, had to make use of whatever was available to him. Furthermore, it was almost impossible to replace parts or have repairs done on the instrument. During his childhood, owning an instrument in Trinidad and Tobago, as was the case in most islands in the Caribbean, was not simply a matter of buying an instrument. Rather, this was a complex navigation of the politics of class and of nation-state. Even though there were at least two music stores in Trinidad, these stores which focused on selling beginner instruments did not carry a wide range of instruments nor brands. On the rare occasion that they did carry an instrument of interest, the cost of importing it was so high that these instruments would be financially unavailable to those interested.

We encounter the difficulties of moving transnationally once again when we consider *what* one experiences once they have physically moved transnationally. Anthony's primary concern after submitting his application to Leeds College of Music (LCM) was finding funding to support him throughout his studies. With the help of his mother, he held a series of recitals in which he played both jazz and classical music. But in spite of his hard work, he was unable to raise the 8,000 pounds for tuition. Instead of giving up on his goal however, Anthony found another way to make it work. He applied for the now defunct "Working Holiday Visa."²⁸ He deferred his entry to Leeds College of Music and instead worked for a year in London to finish raising the money for the program.

Like Clive, Anthony was also able to stay with a family member temporarily on arrival in London. However, Anthony was not fortunate like Clive to have the privilege of British citizenship that came with the status of being from a British colony. I say "privilege" because Anthony's citizenship as a Trinidadian meant that he could not operate in England as Clive did: school was not free for him, there was no option of the dole should his financial situation worsen, and he could not stay as long as he wanted. There were very distinct terms and conditions to Anthony's existence in England—governed by finances and nationality.

Yet, even when one has conquered these difficulties, the process of transnationalism poses an implicit yet understated *how*. By *how*, I mean how does one stay? What are the terms governing how long one can stay in a foreign country? When Anthony completed his studies at LCM, he attempted to find employment in the UK but with the completion of his student visa, and no job in sight, he had no choice but to leave the country and look elsewhere for work. Anthony decided to try working on Carnival Cruise Lines to earn and save money and to gain even more experience as a performer. He continued to work on the cruise ship for a few years until he decided to return to Trinidad to be with his family.

Anthony's return home was by no means the end of his active participation in transnational processes. Quite the contrary, it shows the frustrations one experiences after having acquired so much skill and experience abroad yet is unable to truly put these skills to use. I want to highlight this frustration by returning to the photo I used in the letter to Nigel.

²⁸ This has since been replaced by the Youth Mobility Scheme which is now only open to citizens of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and Monaco.



4.4 Anthony and his band performing with Ben Lowman at the Tobago Jazz Experience, 2017

I mentioned that this was Anthony's band performing at the Tobago Jazz Experience in 2017. What I did not mention, however, was the irony behind the flautists' presence on stage. Moments before Anthony's band was about to perform at the Pigeon Point stage, Anthony randomly ran into a friend from his college days at Leeds, Ben Lowman, who was on vacation with his family in Tobago. Excited to see an old friend, Anthony invited him to play on a tune during his set.

While this might just seem like a chance encounter between two old friends, it is in fact a much more complex unfolding of the power dynamics inherent in transnational processes: it highlights the issue of labor, demonstrating how one musician's vacation spot is in fact another musician's "bread and butter." It is the perfect example of the power differentials at play in transnationalism—that these two musicians, in spite of having attended the same university and studied with the same, if not similar, teachers have had such different life trajectories: one vacations on the beaches of a tropical island. The other works there (albeit for one particular event).

Furthermore, because Anthony's musical preferences do not fit into the local aesthetics, there is no true space or avenue for him to write his own music. To earn a living as a professional musician in Trinidad, therefore, he *must* be versatile—able to play multiple instruments and multiple genres of music *and* also supplement his performing through teaching. As a side man, Anthony performs regularly with Élan Parlé, having taken over as the primary wind player when

David Bertrand left for the United States. He is also the horn player for the Vaughnette Bigford Band and frequently does guest collaborations with Clive Alexander, Chantal Esdelle, Ray Holman and even Etienne Charles when he performs locally. He is perhaps one of, if not the most sought-after woodwind player in the country because of his versatility, virtuosic technique, and his exceptional sight-reading skills.

Anthony joined the faculty of the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) not long after his return to Trinidad and has since been teaching as a Senior Instructor. Two years ago, in an effort to further support his students and his role at UTT, Anthony put aside his dream of gaining a Master's Degree in Jazz Performance and instead earned a Master's Degree in Music Education through Boston University's online education program. He described the process as incredibly useful for him to learn about the importance of music and music education from a critical perspective that addressed issues of race, class, and identity. Perhaps most importantly, he believed these tools were particularly important for him as one of the four faculty members who are Trinbagonian.²⁹ He felt that these skills would enable him to address issues arising for students at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) and in the music industry in Trinidad and Tobago that the other faculty members, who are from the UK and the US, would not be able to fully understand nor necessarily understand the cultural background to adequately address them.³⁰

I hope that I've been able to shed more light for you on the complexities of the concept of transnationalism and that maybe now you have begun to think more about the fact that yes, people move, music circulates, things travel across the globe—but *how* do these things happen, and what are the conditions that either make these movements possible, or impossible? I hope that I've peaked your interest. The journey has only just begun!

Warmly,
Jiselle

²⁹ The faculty at UTT has since grown to include more local musicians.

³⁰ The program at UTT was born out of an initiative by the then Prime Minister Patrick Manning to create a National Orchestra. In order to achieve this, foreign musicians from the UK and Europe were hired to be members of the orchestra which they would then help to grow by teaching students. As such, the faculty at UTT is predominantly white and non-Trinidadian.

PART III

Things in Motion: Storytelling Trini Style...

One of the things about having a foreign husband is the joy of teaching him all the “Trinisms” and the excitement you feel when the Trini in him starts to pop up: when he starts to order his doubles like a Trini, when he says the food isn’t hot (spicy) enough, when he drops Trini slang unexpectedly in a sentence. And it just absolutely makes your day because not only did he use the phrase correctly, but he also just made a really good Trini style joke. My favorite moments though, are when we sit with my parents and ole talk (chat). Usually dad is telling us a story about something that happened to him: a person he met, a thing he did. But when dad tells a story, it’s never a linear trajectory. In order to tell the story, he has to take several detours that often bring on so much scandalous laughter that one forgets where the story was even headed in the first place. Luckily, my husband has a knack for reminding us that we steered off course and almost always asks us to reign it back in so that he can hear the conclusion.

This skill of storytelling—very gripping, evoking scandalous laughter—is not unique to my father. It is a very very Trini characteristic. We like drama, flair, excitement. We cannot just tell you “Mary went to the store to get eggs.” No. Instead we will tell you, “Mary was leaving the house in a short short skirt around nine o’ clock. And when she stepped out of the house, John stopped her to ask about her grandmother who was sick for a really long time. While they were talking, it started to rain and even though Mary forgot her umbrella she was feeling too lazy to go back home to get it.” Ten minutes later we still don’t know where Mary was going, but we do know all the details of Mary’s day thus far.

In chapters five and six, I employ the strategy of Trini storytelling to speak about the lives of Michael Low Chew Tung (Ming) and Chantal Esdelle. It is a tricky task. I try to deliver the story the way a Trini would, and as I described above: with detours, building excitement, and with Trini flair. To do this, however, means I have to break several rules of academic writing: I use Trini dialect, I use contractions, I don’t give a clear thesis statement to my paragraphs. Essentially, I am trying to write this chapter as though I were telling the stories to my friends. Trinidadian dialect is complicated. It is not standardized, and thus there are no conventions. Like language anywhere else in the world, there are variations. These variations reflect things such as class, race, and geography. This means though, that I need to briefly explain my voices.

My Trini dialect is what some Trinis would call a “Convent girl” accent. A “Convent girl” is a girl who went to one of the three St. Joseph of Cluny Catholic girls’ schools in the country. We are known for our mix of “the Queen’s English” with a tinge of Trini dialect. It is, quite frankly, a statement of class reflected by education in a prestigious school. As my friend Derron describes it, “It is Beverly Hills meets Kensington Palace Gardens with a smidgen of Trinbago dialect.” That was a loaded description, but I think you get the references. So, in my delivery of Trini dialect you will find that it often reads like Standard English with a few verbs dropped in between, for example: “You probably thinkin’” (You are probably thinking). This is my most common “voice”. As a Trinidadian living in the United States for the past thirteen years, I speak less Trini dialect on a daily basis than I did as a teenager, though I do so more now that my husband has earned his stripes as an honorary Trini.

But my voices are situational. If I am on Ariapita Avenue limin’ with the girls, I will not be speaking “Convent girl” Trini dialect. Because at moments like that, moments with family,

moments full of bacchanal and excitement, everything breaks loose: letter “t”s start to sound like “d”s (brother versus bruddah), words like “your, for, through” start to be shortened to “yuh, fuh, tru”, onomatopoeias abound: whatap (sound of a slap), papayo! (exclamation of excitement), boodoop (sound of something falling), bradang (sound of something crashing). When I’m with my mother’s family there are words and phrases I use with them that I wouldn’t use with my father’s family: words that reflect East Indian culture such as baigan (eggplant or melongene), chook (to poke or stick), dulahin (Bhojpuri term meaning new bride, but often used as a term of endearment in Trinidad). In short, every person has multiple voices. In the stories to come, you will encounter some of mine.³¹

From a theoretical standpoint, chapters five and six address the concept of “things” in motion. I initially conceived of them as chapters about transnational circulation but somehow the word circulation does not seem to fully capture the multitude of things that are moving here. With the idea of “things” in motion (people, records, ideologies, educational systems, musical equipment), the two chapters show how transnational circulation is never direct. James Ferguson, in discussing Africa’s integration into conceptions of globalization argues:

We have grown accustomed to a language of global “flows” in thinking about “globalization,” but flow is a peculiarly poor metaphor for the point-to-point connectivity and networking of enclaves that confront us when we examine Africa’s experience of globalization. Such language literally *naturalizes* globalization by making it analogous to the natural process of flowing water. Rivers really do flow. Like so many ecologically significant processes, a river’s flow works via spatial contiguity—a river goes from point A to point B only by traversing, watering, and connecting the territory that lies between the two points. But as the contemporary African material shows so vividly, the “global” does not “flow,” thereby connecting and watering contiguous spaces; it hops instead, efficiently connecting the enclaved points in the network while excluding (with equal efficiency) the spaces that lie between the points (Ferguson 2006: 47).

These chapters will therefore show the many geographical detours that must be taken by Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad to produce this music.

Moreover, the chapters will demonstrate the importance of time in conceiving of transnational relationships: that time cannot be viewed as linear but rather as something that quite often comes to a complete halt, sometimes slows down, and at other moments goes full speed ahead. Henri Lefebvre explores this in *Rhythmanalysis* when he argues that time is subject to change according to its representation, political issues, and interactions with the lived body (Lefebvre 2004: 14). He states, “Objectively, for there to be *change*, a social group, a class or a caste must intervene by imprinting a *rhythm* on an era, be it through force or in an insinuating manner” (ibid.; Italics in original). These rhythms, he argues, are effected through the production of meaning in repetitive actions that interrupt both linear and cyclical time. To demonstrate these interruptions or changes, I cover four primary themes. I examine the ways that issues of labor, technology, race and space have been affected by (and conversely affect) complex networks of circulation and show how these are deeply situated in the lived experiences of Ming and Chantal.

Labor and education are a recurring theme throughout this dissertation. In these chapters in particular, however, I pay less attention to what kinds of labor are valued in Trinidad and

³¹ For a detailed discussion on the use of storytelling in anthropological studies, see Jackson (2002).

focus more on *how* these two Caribbean jazz musicians have proceeded in order to follow specific paths in life. The chapters follow them on their travels, showing *where* they have had to go in order to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. I also question *what* kinds of tasks they have had to undergo in order to legitimize their career paths as musicians. Of note is also the way that the playing of the steel pan at a certain historical moment in Trinidad was not legitimized by middle classes until it became a voice for Western Classical music.

The issue of access to technology surfaces throughout the chapters for both Ming and Chantal. We see the impact of location, trade tariffs, foreign exchange rates, and shipment times on how and when these musicians are able to create. The discussion of technology also informs us on how and why these musicians make specific choices in relation to the instrumentation they use and, consequently how this affects their distinct sounds.

These biographies also shed light on the complexities of race in Trinidad. They provide important historical details on the ethnic diversity of the country, as well as the important south-south connections that have existed between various islands in the Caribbean. Most difficult in the chapter on Chantal is the section in which I address Blackness. It was an incredibly hard section to write because it was a struggle to find the words to explain some of the tensions surrounding blackness in Trinidad. I highlight what is sometimes contentiously viewed by non-Afro-Trinidadians as an act of erasure of other histories of other ethnic groups in the country.³² I do not address this specifically, but I hint at the impact of ideological movements such as Pan-Africanism on many Afro-Trinidadians.³³ While this movement and the Black Power movement have been critical historical moments that have empowered black people around the world, they have left in their wake many Afro-Trinidadians who have reduced blackness to something that is one-dimensional, and often very exclusive, appearing in phrases such as “Well everything came from Africa” or “Black love is the best love” (meaning that black people should be with black people). As someone who is both, yet neither (Afro-Trinidadian and Indo-Trinidadian), I feel somewhat “ok” about addressing this topic. Many may disagree. But I speak from the point of being a part of both experiences and having understood the plight of both Afro-Trinidadians and non-Afro-Trinidadians. It is still a touchy subject. I hope though, that I have been able to shed light and incite further thinking about the subject.

Finally, these chapters address the concept of space. As Doreen Massey argues, “Space is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and the non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from the local to the global” (Massey 1994: 265). In order to highlight the ways that space is in fact a product of social relations, I show how Ming’s training in sound engineering has allowed him to open up spaces of possibility to other musicians in need of production services.³⁴ The concept of space is critical also, in discussing Chantal’s use of a physical location, her grandmother’s house, as a site that becomes an important node in the circuit of Caribbean jazz in Trinidad. It is a space that allows for new connections to be fostered, the rekindling of old relationships, and a site where Caribbean jazz musicians can release their music and become a part of the circuit of “things” in motion.

³² See Anton Allahar (2004) for detailed discussion of ethnic nationalism in Trinidad. See also Singh (1993), Munasinghe (2001).

³³ For information on the rise of the Black Power Movement in Trinidad and its ties with Pan-Africanism, see Quinn (2014).

³⁴ Here I draw on the work of Doreen Massey (1994, 2005) and Henri Lefebvre (1991, 2004) who both speak about space as a product of social relations.

Race, Cosmopolitanism, and Transnational Motions: The Story of Michael Low Chew Tung (Ming)

A Trini is Never *just* a Trini...

I always knew Ming as “Ming.” As the founder of the band Élan Parlē, he is one of the most respected and most prolific musicians in Trinidad and Tobago.



5.1 Michael Low Chew Tung
Image Courtesy Michael Low Chew Tung

As composer and keyboardist of the band, Ming is one of the staple musicians in the T&T music industry, providing much needed recording services as well as technological innovation and support. Everybody knows Ming. Yet I had never heard anyone call him or refer to him as Michael. The thing is, Trinidad is the kind of place where everybody has a nickname. A lot of times you meet someone by their nickname and you could go through your entire life of knowing this person never knowing their real name. But that’s the nature of “picong” though –somebody makes one unfortunate joke at your expense and that nickname will follow you throughout your life. Names like Chicken, Spooky, Boy Boy—they all have a story. A fella called “redman,” yet he dark skinned. Somebody called “tooks” because he used to steal. A woman they called “baby” into her old age because she was the youngest of the family. In fact, there isn’t a Trini you could meet who doesn’t have some family member with a name used daily that isn’t their given name.

That wasn't the case with Ming, though. I knew he was Michael Low Chew Tung. But I always wondered if Ming was a name people gave him because of his Chinese ancestry, or whether it was a nickname he chose himself.

Even if I didn't know Ming's full name, I could, like any Trini, tell you he was of Chinese descent by looking at him. His skin tone, his eyes, the texture of his hair. It's a strange and uncanny skill that we have –being able to look at some and tell their racial makeup just by physical features. I didn't realize this was a skill particular to Trinis until I had lived in the United States for a long time and realized that here, people only judge you by your skin color. In Trinidad, we read a person's physical features like a book that could tell you the details down to how their parents met. That last sentence was an example of Trini storytelling exaggeration, but I think you get my drift. Anyway, so about Ming.

The story of Ming's family arriving in Trinidad from China dates back to the travels of his paternal great grandfather who came to work as an indentured laborer. Although Ming doesn't know the exact date of his arrival, it would have coincided with the arrival of immigrant laborers after the abolition of slavery. Scholars generally speak of four waves of migration of the Chinese to Trinidad. Under the British administration the first wave of migrants, only 200 men, arrived in 1806 as experimental "free" labor similar to what was done in Malaysia. It was not until 1853, with the start of the Indentureship program as an alternative to slave labor, that the next wave of immigrants arrived. Spurred by the Chinese revolution, the third wave of migration to Trinidad began in 1911 and consisted mainly of migrants seeking to join family members who had emigrated earlier. This was precisely how Ming's grandfather came to Trinidad. Born in China, he left in 1938 to join his father (Ming's great grandfather) in Trinidad. By this time, though, the Chinese had almost exclusively left plantation work to become business owners and skilled tradespersons.

It's one thing to simply say that Ming's family came to Trinidad from China. But it's really another to understand what that means in Trinidad. Even after all of this time, the Chinese in Trinidad occupy a *really* marginal place in society. This isn't just a numbers thing. In fact, it had so much more to do with entering an already stressed social structure at the bottom, and yet emerging above. Emerging above? Above Afro-Trinidadians! Imagine this: You are an Afro-Trinidadian in the 1930s. That means you are at the bottom of the social ladder. Things already tense with Indo-Trinidadians where everybody fighting for survival. In the midst of this, the colonial powers decide to throw in more foreigners, of different ethnic groups who also have to fight for survival. The truth is, though, that it was always worse for Afro-Trinidadians. None of the other groups, not the Chinese, not the Indo-Trinidadians, not the Syrians or Lebanese. None of these groups were ever anybody else's property. Somebody's slave. So, things become infinitely more difficult for you, when the Chinese arrive. They are supposed to work on the plantations as laborers but not long after they arrive, they abandon that work and start small businesses that become extremely successful. It seems like everybody else is getting a chance to be successful, and successful away from the plantations too. Everybody but you. Everybody but black people.³⁵ Is it not possible, then, to understand why there was often resentment toward the Chinese?

Well. Let me complicate the story about Ming even more now. You see, in Trinidad, nobody is ever just one "thing." I mean, yeah, we identify as Trinis but a Trini is never just a Trini. Who in this world is really just one "thing" though? As Trinis, we are proud of all our different components. You shouldn't be surprised then when I tell you that Ming's mother is not

³⁵ See Hilary Beckles and Shepherd (1993).

Chinese nor of Chinese descent. In fact, Ming's mother is a black woman from Grenada. At this point you probably thinking: so everybody related to someone from Grenada? And I can't blame you. Clive's mother was from Grenada, my father's mother was from Grenada. It's not just Grenada though. I mean there is definitely a strong connection with Grenada and a lot of Trinis have Grenadian family but this is just one of many larger connections between the various islands of the Caribbean. Remember when I said a Trini is never *just* a Trini? Well, although Ming's father was born in Trinidad to a Chinese father, Ming's grandmother was actually what Trinidadians call "cocoa payol": of mixed Spanish, Amerindian, and African descent.³⁶

Are you still with me? So here is Ming, born to an Afro-Grenadian mother and a Chinese Trinidadian father in a country where despite the plethora of ethnic groups and racial mixing over time, there is still the constant feeling that one needs to "fit in" somewhere. When I asked Ming about his heritage and how or whether it ever had any impact on his life and his music he said, "If I ever had to write a book about my life, it would be called *A Black Man Called Ming*... Somehow for me, in my mind, I have always identified as black!" In spite of this, he had something of a rude awakening when at secondary school he wasn't accepted as black, but as Chinese. At the same time, when he began to play hockey as part of the Trinidadian Chinese Association team he felt like an outsider amongst a group of people who looked predominantly Asian. As he says, "So imagine among Black people you are Chinese, but among Chinese people you black!"

Now if you think things were already complicated for Ming, hear this one. A couple years ago, Ming went down to the passport office to renew his passport. Now you know how things work in Trinidad. When you go to a government office, yuh waiting *whole* day in a line, only to get through and have to wait in another line. Anyway, so Ming was waiting to take his paperwork and when he finally reach the front of the line, the officer will tell him, "But you not born here! You cah get a Trini passport!" Why? Because Ming was actually born in Ireland. His parents were living there while studying in medical school and both he and his older sister were born there. Ming has no memories of Ireland though. The family left there when he was still very young. But they didn't go back to Trinidad, nah. They went to Grenada and were living there for some time until the Grenada Revolution of 1979.³⁷ Ming said his father, observing the rising violence, decided it was time to pack up and leave and go back to Trinidad. And that is where Ming has been ever since! As I said, a Trini is never *just* a Trini. As we would say, "We *in* everything," because we are famously known for being connected to so many different places, people and events, – "truly transnational," one could say – often in the most unsuspecting of ways!

So how does an Afro-Chinese man born in Ireland, who lived in Grenada but then spent his life in Trinidad self-identify? As most Trinis do! Forever in love with everything nice and sweet about T&T. We really love our complex "mix up" culture – a little bit of everything in the pot. This is exactly what you find when you listen to Ming's music and particularly in his first and last albums.

Although Élan Parlē's first album, *Tribal Voices*, takes its name from one particular track on the album as opposed to acting as a unifying theme, I see the album as the genesis of Ming's musical journey reflected by his life experiences. It is a sort of exploration of his disenfranchisement with blackness: the varied styles and rhythmic elements of the African

³⁶ See Aisha Khan (1993).

³⁷ The Grenada Revolution of 1979 was an armed coup d'état led by Maurice Bishop who had established strong ties with Cuba and other communist countries. See Puri (2010, 2014) for further elaboration.

Walter Murphy. The Salsoul Orchestra, originally formed as a backing band for Salsoul Records, played a mixture of disco, soul and funk while Walter Murphy gained fame for his disco adaptations of popular pieces of classical music like “A Fifth of Beethoven”, “Tocatta and Funk in D Minor” and an arrangement of Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue.”

Much like the importance of the radio, which was a vital source of connection to the world outside of Trinidad in Clive’s time, electronic instruments and gear during Ming’s youth were also a crucial part of transnational circulatory networks linking Trinidad to the world.⁴¹



5.5 Ming in Rehearsal with the Vaughnette Bigford Band

When Ming first started to experiment with recording as a teenager, he used a Casio CK-500—a keyboard with two built-in cassette decks. The two decks allowed you to play along with one cassette and simultaneously record on the other. He was on a trip to Suriname with the national badminton team when he saw the Casio in a store and bought it immediately. It was revolutionary for him because now he could record his songs. In those days, he says he was writing two kinds of music: love songs and songs about saving the world. Typical teenager things, you know? It wasn’t until he started playing with the QRC Magnum band that he really started to play on electronic instruments. He played electric bass, a Rhodes piano, a Yamaha DX-7 (the first keyboard to be released with MIDI technology) and all the other equipment that band was fortunate to acquire.

Ming talks about two important music stores while he was a teenager. Louis Gilman Thomas’ Music Store and Sa Gomes Music Store.⁴² At that time music stores would have contracts with various dealerships of electronic gear. With the number of bands performing at that time (Charlie’s Roots, Kalyan, Sound Revolution as well as many rock bands), there was

⁴¹ For more information on the oil boom of the 1970s in Trinidad and its impact on infrastructure and development in the country, see Auty and Gelb (1985).

⁴² Eddie Sa Gomes was instrumental in the recording of calypsos in the 1940s and 1950s. See Hill (1993).

certainly a demand for the instruments. Sa Gomes for example had a contract to bring Yamaha gear while Thomas sourced Roland gear. When Ming finished secondary school he actually worked at Sa Gomes for a very brief period. He said “By Mr. Eddie, [it] was different. It was a real kinda traditional shop...” It was the kind of store that you couldn’t really touch the equipment or hang around to ask questions and learn about the gear. But by Louis Gilman Thomas’ shop, run by his grandson Brent at the time, it was different. “It used to have jams *every* day. As a musician you could come in and play whatever you want!” It was the place to lime. Ming developed such a close relationship with Brent that whatever piece of equipment he wanted, Brent would order it for him. In fact, that was where Ming purchased his first professional keyboard, an Ensoniq ESQ-1.

It was expensive to get equipment in those days. Ming recalls that he paid \$4500 TTD for the Ensoniq. That was in 1985. That is *rel* money.⁴³ *Rel* money for a teenager too. Ming was fortunate though. On the one hand, his parents were financially able to help him acquire the equipment he wanted. On the other, having started gigging from the time he was about seventeen, he already had an income at his disposal to get his gear. It also took a lot of time to get the gear. Most equipment came through the port on ship, and if someone wanted it more quickly (by air), they would have to pay a much higher price for the cost of shipping.

Through his growing love for instrumental music, Ming started to get excited about experimenting with different sounds and equipment functions. His adolescent years placed him smack in the middle of the 1980s technological revolution.⁴⁴ It was the heyday of gear. There was a new drive in industry to make electronic equipment not only more portable, but also more affordable. This decade ushered in a series of new inventions. In 1981 IBM released the Personal Computer, the IBM 5150—a smaller and faster machine than any of its predecessors. This was also the period in which game consoles, camcorders and VCRs came into being. For the music industry, the invention of the Walkman in 1979, and then Compact Discs in 1982 allowed a new kind of access and portability to music.⁴⁵ The most important musical innovation of the 1980s, though, was the development of MIDI technology.

MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) was a standard designed as a way to connect devices that make and control sound thereby allowing them to communicate with each other. In other words, the technology allowed someone to control multiple synthesizers from one keyboard thereby giving them access to a much larger range of sounds and effects. Before MIDI, however, the method by which different pieces of equipment communicated was not standardized which meant that there were often incompatibilities between different gear. The success of MIDI also allowed for a shift from “real time” recording to the use of pre-programmed tracks.⁴⁶ This shift inevitably had major ramifications for the recording industry. Perhaps most notably, it meant that there was no longer the absolute need for specific musicians—if composers wanted a violin in a track, they could simply sample from the range of sounds readily available to them. In some senses, while this certainly would have affected the

⁴³ *Rel* in Trini dialect means “a lot of”.

⁴⁴ An important intervention must be made here to connect the linkages between the impact of the 1970s oil boom in Trinidad on the economy, its subsequent crash in the 1980s, and the mass migration of Caribbean nationals to the United States and Canada following the downfall of the economy during that period. In addition to the movement of people, transnational networks were fostered through the trade of oil, but more importantly through the shipping of barrels of goods to Trinidad by family members who went abroad search of work. The shipping trade, therefore, played a critical role in the movement of things, electronic instruments and gear included.

⁴⁵ See Du Gay, Paul, Stuart Hall, et al. (1997), and Carasso, Peek, and Sinjou. (1982).

⁴⁶ See Gibson (2013), Liverpool Museums (n.d.), The MIDI Association (n.d.)

opportunities for labor/employment for many musicians, it also opened a whole new realm of possibilities for other musicians.

Speaking about his earliest days working in recording studios, Ming says:

When I started recording in studios in about '87 we were recording on 2-inch tape on a 16 or 24 track reel –big studio reel like what you see in movies...and huge big long mixin' boards. And then you have a whole bank of outboard gear –effects and compressors and so. And you had a big patch bay... like if you ever look at movies with telephone operators... that's how you used to get the effects into the board. That's how you used to get the microphone into the board. Everything, you patch...It was a really extensive process...What Roland did is they debuted a thing called the VS-880.⁴⁷ So basically it was eight main tracks by eight virtual tracks. It was digital, so you didn't have tape. Stored to hard drive. You could edit digitally. So again, long time when we had tape we used to have to physically take the tape off, put it on a cutting block, right? Well first of all we had to rock the tape on the heads, find where we wanted to cut...we used to have a little chalk...we used to mark the tape and then take it off, put it on the chopping block. We used to have a fancy razor blade. Cut the in point, cut the out point, put it together and then tape it back, then put it on to make sure yuh get it correct.⁴⁸ That was the process of editing in an analog situation. With this VS-880 now, I could do all those things digitally and if I made a mistake, I could undo it and do it again.

Ming's coming of age during this technology boom and his subsequent work in sound recording is perhaps why some would describe his music as "smooth jazz".⁴⁹ It is in fact true that one can hear the influence of smooth jazz in his music through the use of synthesizers and a very distinct recording aesthetic that renders the sound "smooth" or well finished. The development of MIDI technology allowed Ming to start composing at a much faster rate and most importantly, without the need to write charts for each part and without the need for specific instrumental musicians. His use of synthesized sound is what definitively sets him apart from other Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad. Although other musicians like Clive and Chantal also use keyboards, their use of the instrument goes only as far as its logistical benefits: portable and more readily available than an acoustic piano. However, to reduce Ming's music to the category of "smooth jazz", would be a disservice to him. As we'll see, there is so much more at play in Ming's music...

⁴⁷ The Roland Digital Station (VS) 880

⁴⁸ This technique is known as punching in/out which allows you to record over a previously recorded segment of tape.

⁴⁹ Christopher Washburne argues that the label "smooth jazz" was created by Broadcast Architecture to reflect the term used by listeners to describe "this mainly instrumental musical style, whose defining elements include R&B, Latin, and soul-infused grooves, heavy use of synthesizers, easily recognizable melodies, slick pop-like studio productions, and jazz-like soloing." (Washburn 2004: 124)



5.6 Ming and some of his gear at Jazz Artists on the Greens 2017

Quite-oh, Quite-oh From the Land of Calypso

Quite-oh, quite-oh. When you hear a Trini use this phrase, they are trying to tell you that something is far away. More than just being far, though, the repetition of the expression is one of those Trini-isms—a verbal expression that carries heavy non-verbal implications. Quite-oh quite-oh is not just far away. It represents something that is far, difficult, and a bother to access. If you were looking for an easy way to accomplish something, you are not going to go quite-oh quite-oh to get it or get it done. But if you really consider this thing, task, person—whatever it is that requires you to travel quite-oh quite-oh to be worth it, you do it knowing full well the burdens and trials associated with it. Ming’s musical development is a story about travels to some quite-oh quite-oh locations. Let’s start the story.

The thing about Ming is that he is a brilliant man. Brilliant, but humble to a fault. Ming will tell you he didn’t absorb the book knowledge in school. He was absorbing the music. But he couldn’t and didn’t absorb in the classroom. Ming was learning what he could on his own terms, whenever he could and however he could: during lunch time and after school. It wasn’t anything formal or in-depth. A chord here, a chord there, and ok let’s jam on that. Now switch instruments. Let’s go! And when he wasn’t in school, he was down by Sa Gomes music store asking questions, testing out equipment, trying new instruments. With all of that, Ming never formally studied music, though. He didn’t learn to read and he didn’t take private lessons. Everything he learned, it was from the boys at school, reading music magazines and listening to

recordings. He trained himself by ear and whenever there was a new tune to be played, he would go home, listen to it and figure out the chords.

By the time he was in secondary school he was already playing paying gigs. He was so enthusiastic about learning music that he became the keyboard player for the Magnum Band of his secondary school, Queens Royal College (QRC). The band, established by the late Lawrence McDowall, was the pop music component of the QRC Scout Band. It was because of Ming's involvement with the scout group that he started getting other gigs. In addition to playing bass guitar with several local rock groups, he became the keyboard player for a group called The Majors (1984). The band played all kinds of music –pop, reggae, ballads, soca –but all covers. Ming said life was sweet too bad.⁵⁰ Imagine: You about seventeen or eighteen and you have yuh own car to drive. Every weekend, you have some gigs and come back home with hundreds of dollars while everybody else in school only have the twenty dollars they get for the week from allowance.⁵¹ Big money, papayo! And while it wasn't the prospect of making money that kept Ming at it, it certainly gave him a feeling of self-worth and purpose.

When the time came for him to finish secondary school, Ming and his mother made a plan. He said, “She start to talk fall back talk. When yuh want to be a doctor, nobody talk fall back talk. When yuh want to be a lawyer, nobody talk fall back. From the time yuh say yuh want to play music –well, yuh must have something to *fall* back on!” Since music was his passion, he would go and learn to be a piano tuner in New York. That way, he could be sure to have a steady income. Instead, Ming went quite-oh quite-oh Chillicothe, Ohio to study sound recording. At that time, the music industry in Trinidad was booming. There were recording studios everywhere because there were so many bands and musicians performing and recording. The 70s and 80s in Trinidad were a time of musical innovation. Apart from the development of soca, local musicians were writing their own pop music and ballads which became popular across the country. Ming's decision to go into the recording industry was therefore both strategic and a decision of passion.

I said to Ming, “Ming, of ALL the places you could go...how you reach Chillicothe, Ohio?!” He laughed. He found out about the six-week program at the school, Recording Workshop, through a music magazine. Founded in 1977 and still thriving today, Recording Workshop caters to both musicians and non-musicians as well as all levels of experience in production. So, it really didn't matter that Ming had never studied music, and probably had never had any prior experience with recording. This was the place that he needed to be!

So, in 1987 he left Trinidad and went to do the production and recording course. He first traveled to New York as part of the cultural exchange with St. Mary's Church Folk Choir from Trinidad to do performances at the Basilica of St. Patrick and other churches in New York. That tour became the spring board from which he went to Ohio to take the course. He stayed behind in New York and traveled by bus to Ohio where he rented a room in an apartment for the duration of the course. When he returned, he started to do work in several studios around Western Trinidad. At Star Sound Studios he worked under sound engineer Jerome Francique who was known for his work with Byron Lee in Jamaica. Through Francique, Ming got to work with the biggest names in the Trini music industry like Roy Cape, Ella Andall, Brother Resistance and Stalin. Ming also became a founding member of the band Traffik where he played keyboard for

⁵⁰ When Trinis use the term “sweet” it is meant to describe how nice or pleasant something is. “Sweet too bad,” therefore, describes that life was just really wonderful, “bad” actually denoting positive emphasis.

⁵¹ Because of the type of music that Ming played (popular music, covers, soca, rock), there was a multitude of available venues for such performances: night clubs, hotels, live concerts etc.

two years. It was through his work at the studio with Jerome Francique that the next big phase of his life began: playing with the famous Charlie's Roots.

The band was formed in 1975 by Pelham Goddard as an in-house (studio) band for K Studios and was originally called Sensational Roots.⁵² It was later renamed Charlie's Roots because of its connection to Rawlston Charles in New York who became one of the producers of the band. The band performed almost exclusively soca and became known as one of the premier live bands in the Caribbean. Ming joined Charlie's Roots in 1992 as the keyboard player and traveled extensively with the band performing at every major diasporic Carnival: the New York Labor Day Parade, Caribana in Toronto, the San Francisco Carnival. The tours kept Ming and the band on the road for several months at a time as the band's manager would book as many back-to-back gigs as possible to make the tour financially worthwhile. After all, the musicians had to be paid after costs like lodging, airfare and domestic travel were covered.



5.7 Ming with Charlie's Roots while on tour
Image Courtesy Michael Low Chew Tung

I asked Ming once if he ever thought about staying abroad and why he didn't. There were a lot of reasons. For one, he didn't have any family connection in the United States. But really, the idea just didn't appeal to him. He talked about how he would perform for one night in Brooklyn as part of a soca band and make up to two hundred and fifty dollars. Then in the same night, he would head to Manhattan to listen to jazz in the clubs. Those musicians were only making about fifty dollars a night, if that much and had to work multiple jobs to make ends meet. For Ming, though, with the touring he could play several gigs without paying any incidentals

⁵² Pelham Goddard is an arranger, songwriter and producer who has played an instrumental role in the development of soca in Trinidad and across the Caribbean.

(travel, lodging) and come home to Trinidad with a large amount of foreign cash that could “go farther” there than in New York. He wasn’t interested in the life of hustle that New York represented.

After a couple years playing with Charlie’s Roots, Ming decided it was time for a change of gears. With the birth of his son, his first child, he decided that being on the road for months at a time just wasn’t the best for his family. He returned to studio work and performing with bands locally. This was also around the time when he first began to play jazz. Although he had already been listening to jazz for many years, his first real jazz gig was in the mid 1990s as a member of Michael Boothman’s band, Kaiso Fusion with whom he played for four years.⁵³ Ming traveled with the band to St. Lucia for the St. Lucia Jazz Festival where they opened for famous musicians such as Tito Puente, Al Jarreau and George Duke.

These gigs with Boothman sparked something in him and so his growing interest in jazz led him to take his next big career move. In 1997, he went to the Players School of Music in Clearwater, Florida where he spent three months studying music. Like a true Trini, Ming tried to cheat the system a little. When he applied for the visa to go to Florida, he tried using his Irish passport instead of his Trini passport. You see, it’s not that anything is wrong with the Trini passport specifically. It’s just that ever since the massive wave of migration of Caribbean nationals to the US in the 1980s, travel got increasingly more difficult for those coming after.

If you think US border crossing is only now a problem, try being a Caribbean national. Wary of “Third world” nationals trying to stay in the country illegally, the United States is conservative with the length of time granted for tourist visas. That’s only part of the nightmare though. Stories abound of Trinbagonians trying to travel to the US whether for vacation, or as part of student groups and getting denied visas. A lot of times, the embassy denies the visa if they decide (on their terms) that you probably look like you want to stay illegally. So basically, if you young, black, have little money, and no permanent ties to Trinidad (i.e. don’t own land, a house, are unmarried or have no children), you couldn’t possibly just be traveling for vacation. In their eyes, you would be a prime candidate for wanting to stay illegally. So, no visa fuh you. When Ming thought he was gonna get extra time with his Irish passport, the joke was on him. Although he wanted to stay for six months, they only give him 90 days –the standard time allotment for a Trini who don’t look too too suspicious.

Ming decided to go to Players School because exactly as the name says, it is the kind of school created to teach people the skills needed to become players. He was finally ready to “formally” study music, on his own terms, at his own pace and timing. At Players School he spent all day, every day playing music for three months. He called it a musical rebirth of sorts. It was here that he gained more tools to help further himself musically. Ming learned the “logistics of music” (theoretical foundations) with his piano teacher, Matt Bokulic and took part in ensembles coached by bassist Jeff Berlin.

When Ming returned to Trinidad, he picked up again with Charlie’s Roots and playing other gigs. In 1999 he set up a studio in Maraval working next door to another studio where he collaborated on music related projects and particularly on jingles. Although the owners of the other studio had the technical expertise of recording, they didn’t have the musical know how that Ming provided. This was also the year that Ming formed his own band, Élan Parlē.

⁵³ Michael Boothman is a Trinidadian Caribbean jazz musician who was a major figure in the era of combo music in Trinidad. Boothman is hailed as one of the fathers of smooth jazz in the Caribbean vernacular, having been one of the few local musicians to be signed to a multinational recording label (RCA) that was not calypso. Boothman, notably, is also the nephew of Geoffrey and Boscoe Holder.

Ming is a prolific composer and with Élan Parlē as his muse he delved into the world of Caribbean jazz, drawing not only from his time with Michael Boothman, but also from his deep listening throughout his years as a musician. Even though the music of the seven albums he has produced fall within the stylistic realm of Caribbean jazz, it is soca and calypso pumping through Ming veins, not blood. From his first to most recent album, every album except “Songs for Wayne” (dedicated to the memory of the band’s guitarist Wayne Cottoy) has at least one track that is a cover of or reference to a well-known calypso.

One of my favorite tracks is Ming’s arrangement of David Rudder’s “Calypso Music” on the album, *Tribal Voices*. Rudder’s music undoubtedly plays an important role in Ming’s life because Rudder was once the lead singer of Charlie’s Roots before he left to pursue his career as a soloist.⁵⁴ I have always been spellbound by Rudder’s music so it is no surprise to me that I’m drawn to the three arrangements of his works Ming has done throughout his oeuvre. I want to tell you about Ming’s arrangement of “Calypso Music” because there is something so tender, uplifting and exciting about the way Ming interprets the music.

Rudder’s “Calypso Music,” written in 1987, was one of his many great hits. It begins with a sparse melodic introduction on synthesizer that engages in a call and response with a cuica and hand drum. This eventually gives way to a much denser rhythmic accompaniment of interlocking rhythms played by congas and other hand drums. The song is driven by the interlocking rhythms of the hand drums, the interjections by the brass chorus, and a standard soca beat ostinato provided by the bass guitar and electronic drum kit.

"Calypso Music" Soca Beat

The image shows a musical transcription for the 'Calypso Music' Soca Beat. It consists of two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Bass' and is in a 2/4 time signature with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The bass line starts with a quarter rest, followed by a sequence of eighth and quarter notes: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, G60, A60, B60, C61, D61, E61, F61, G61, A61, B61, C62, D62, E62, F62, G62, A62, B62, C63, D63, E63, F63, G63, A63, B63, C64, D64, E64, F64, G64, A64, B64, C65, D65, E65, F65, G65, A65, B65, C66, D66, E66, F66, G66, A66, B66, C67, D67, E67, F67, G67, A67, B67, C68, D68, E68, F68, G68, A68, B68, C69, D69, E69, F69, G69, A69, B69, C70, D70, E70, F70, G70, A70, B70, C71, D71, E71, F71, G71, A71, B71, C72, D72, E72, F72, G72, A72, B72, C73, D73, E73, F73, G73, A73, B73, C74, D74, E74, F74, G74, A74, B74, C75, D75, E75, F75, G75, A75, B75, C76, D76, E76, F76, G76, A76, B76, C77, D77, E77, F77, G77, A77, B77, C78, D78, E78, F78, G78, A78, B78, C79, D79, E79, F79, G79, A79, B79, C80, D80, E80, F80, G80, A80, B80, C81, D81, E81, F81, G81, A81, B81, C82, D82, E82, F82, G82, A82, B82, C83, D83, E83, F83, G83, A83, B83, C84, D84, E84, F84, G84, A84, B84, C85, D85, E85, F85, G85, A85, B85, C86, D86, E86, F86, G86, A86, B86, C87, D87, E87, F87, G87, A87, B87, C88, D88, E88, F88, G88, A88, B88, C89, D89, E89, F89, G89, A89, B89, C90, D90, E90, F90, G90, A90, B90, C91, D91, E91, F91, G91, A91, B91, C92, D92, E92, F92, G92, A92, B92, C93, D93, E93, F93, G93, A93, B93, C94, D94, E94, F94, G94, A94, B94, C95, D95, E95, F95, G95, A95, B95, C96, D96, E96, F96, G96, A96, B96, C97, D97, E97, F97, G97, A97, B97, C98, D98, E98, F98, G98, A98, B98, C99, D99, E99, F99, G99, A99, B99, C100, D100, E100, F100, G100, A100, B100, C101, D101, E101, F101, G101, A101, B101, C102, D102, E102, F102, G102, A102, B102, C103, D103, E103, F103, G103, A103, B103, C104, D104, E104, F104, G104, A104, B104, C105, D105, E105, F105, G105, A105, B105, C106, D106, E106, F106, G106, A106, B106, C107, D107, E107, F107, G107, A107, B107, C108, D108, E108, F108, G108, A108, B108, C109, D109, E109, F109, G109, A109, B109, C110, D110, E110, F110, G110, A110, B110, C111, D111, E111, F111, G111, A111, B111, C112, D112, E112, F112, G112, A112, B112, C113, D113, E113, F113, G113, A113, B113, C114, D114, E114, F114, G114, A114, B114, C115, D115, E115, F115, G115, A115, B115, C116, D116, E116, F116, G116, A116, B116, C117, D117, E117, F117, G117, A117, B117, C118, D118, E118, F118, G118, A118, B118, C119, D119, E119, F119, G119, A119, B119, C120, D120, E120, F120, G120, A120, B120, C121, D121, E121, F121, G121, A121, B121, C122, D122, E122, F122, G122, A122, B122, C123, D123, E123, F123, G123, A123, B123, C124, D124, E124, F124, G124, A124, B124, C125, D125, E125, F125, G125, A125, B125, C126, D126, E126, F126, G126, A126, B126, C127, D127, E127, F127, G127, A127, B127, C128, D128, E128, F128, G128, A128, B128, C129, D129, E129, F129, G129, A129, B129, C130, D130, E130, F130, G130, A130, B130, C131, D131, E131, F131, G131, A131, B131, C132, D132, E132, F132, G132, A132, B132, C133, D133, E133, F133, G133, A133, B133, C134, D134, E134, F134, G134, A134, B134, C135, D135, E135, F135, G135, A135, B135, C136, D136, E136, F136, G136, A136, B136, C137, D137, E137, F137, G137, A137, B137, C138, D138, E138, F138, G138, A138, B138, C139, D139, E139, F139, G139, A139, B139, C140, D140, E140, F140, G140, A140, B140, C141, D141, E141, F141, G141, A141, B141, C142, D142, E142, F142, G142, A142, B142, C143, D143, E143, F143, G143, A143, B143, C144, D144, E144, F144, G144, A144, B144, C145, D145, E145, F145, G145, A145, B145, C146, D146, E146, F146, G146, A146, B146, C147, D147, E147, F147, G147, A147, B147, C148, D148, E148, F148, G148, A148, B148, C149, D149, E149, F149, G149, A149, B149, C150, D150, E150, F150, G150, A150, B150, C151, D151, E151, F151, G151, A151, B151, C152, D152, E152, F152, G152, A152, B152, C153, D153, E153, F153, G153, A153, B153, C154, D154, E154, F154, G154, A154, B154, C155, D155, E155, F155, G155, A155, B155, C156, D156, E156, F156, G156, A156, B156, C157, D157, E157, F157, G157, A157, B157, C158, D158, E158, F158, G158, A158, B158, C159, D159, E159, F159, G159, A159, B159, C160, D160, E160, F160, G160, A160, B160, C161, D161, E161, F161, G161, A161, B161, C162, D162, E162, F162, G162, A162, B162, C163, D163, E163, F163, G163, A163, B163, C164, D164, E164, F164, G164, A164, B164, C165, D165, E165, F165, G165, A165, B165, C166, D166, E166, F166, G166, A166, B166, C167, D167, E167, F167, G167, A167, B167, C168, D168, E168, F168, G168, A168, B168, C169, D169, E169, F169, G169, A169, B169, C170, D170, E170, F170, G170, A170, B170, C171, D171, E171, F171, G171, A171, B171, C172, D172, E172, F172, G172, A172, B172, C173, D173, E173, F173, G173, A173, B173, C174, D174, E174, F174, G174, A174, B174, C175, D175, E175, F175, G175, A175, B175, C176, D176, E176, F176, G176, A176, B176, C177, D177, E177, F177, G177, A177, B177, C178, D178, E178, F178, G178, A178, B178, C179, D179, E179, F179, G179, A179, B179, C180, D180, E180, F180, G180, A180, B180, C181, D181, E181, F181, G181, A181, B181, C182, D182, E182, F182, G182, A182, B182, C183, D183, E183, F183, G183, A183, B183, C184, 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G231, A231, B231, C232, D232, E232, F232, G232, A232, B232, C233, D233, E233, F233, G233, A233, B233, C234, D234, E234, F234, G234, A234, B234, C235, D235, E235, F235, G235, A235, B235, C236, D236, E236, F236, G236, A236, B236, C237, D237, E237, F237, G237, A237, B237, C238, D238, E238, F238, G238, A238, B238, C239, D239, E239, F239, G239, A239, B239, C240, D240, E240, F240, G240, A240, B240, C241, D241, E241, F241, G241, A241, B241, C242, D242, E242, F242, G242, A242, B242, C243, D243, E243, F243, G243, A243, B243, C244, D244, E244, F244, G244, A244, B244, C245, D245, E245, F245, G245, A245, B245, C246, D246, E246, F246, G246, A246, B246, C247, D247, E247, F247, G247, A247, B247, C248, D248, E248, F248, G248, A248, B248, C249, D249, E249, F249, G249, A249, B249, C250, D250, E250, F250, G250, A250, B250, C251, D251, E251, F251, G251, A251, B251, C252, D252, E252, F252, G252, A252, B252, C253, D253, E253, F253, G253, A253, B253, C254, D254, E254, F254, G254, A254, B254, C255, D255, E255, F255, G255, A255, B255, C256, D256, E256, F256, G256, A256, B256, C257, D257, E257, F257, G257, A257, B257, C258, D258, E258, F258, G258, A258, B258, C259, D259, E259, F259, G259, A259, B259, C260, D260, E260, F260, G260, A260, B260, C261, D261, E261, F261, G261, A261, B261, C262, D262, E262, F262, G262, A262, B262, C263, D263, E263, F263, G263, A263, B263, C264, D264, E264, F264, G264, A264, B264, C265, D265, E265, F265, G265, A265, B265, C266, D266, E266, F266, G266, A266, B266, C267, D267, E267, F267, G267, A267, B267, C268, D268, E268, F268, G268, A268, B268, C269, D269, E269, F269, G269, A269, B269, C270, D270, E270, F270, G270, A270, B270, C271, D271, E271, F271, G271, A271, B271, C272, D272, E272, F272, G272, A272, B272, C273, D273, E273, F273, G273, A273, B273, C274, D274, E274, F274, G274, A274, B274, C275, D275, E275, F275, G275, A275, B275, C276, D276, E276, F276, G276, A276, B276, C277, D277, E277, F277, G277, A277, B277, C278, D278, E278, F278, G278, A278, B278, 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A302, B302, C303, D303, E303, F303, G303, A303, B303, C304, D304, E304, F304, G304, A304, B304, C305, D305, E305, F305, G305, A305, B305, C306, D306, E306, F306, G306, A306, B306, C307, D307, E307, F307, G307, A307, B307, C308, D308, E308, F308, G308, A308, B308, C309, D309, E309, F309, G309, A309, B309, C310, D310, E310, F310, G310, A310, B310, C311, D311, E311, F311, G311, A311, B311, C312, D312, E312, F312, G312, A312, B312, C313, D313, E313, F313, G313, A313, B313, C314, D314, E314, F314, G314, A314, B314, C315, D315, E315, F315, G315, A315, B315, C316, D316, E316, F316, G316, A316, B316, C317, D317, E317, F317, G317, A317, B317, C318, D318, E318, F318, G318, A318, B318, C319, D319, E319, F319, G319, A319, B319, C320, D320, E320, F320, G320, A320, B320, C321, D321, E321, F321, G321, A321, B321, C322, D322, E322, F322, G322, A322, B322, C323, D323, E323, F323, G323, A323, B323, C324, D324, E324, F324, G324, A324, B324, C325, D325, E325, F325, G325, A325, B325, C326, D326, E326, F326, G326, A326, B326, C327, D327, E327, F327, G327, A327, B327, C328, D328, E328, F328, G328, A328, B328, C329, D329, E329, F329, G329, A329, B329, C330, D330, E330, F330, G330, A330, B330, C331, D331, E331, F331, G331, A331, B331, C332, D332, E332, F332, G332, A332, B332, C333, D333, E333, F333, G333, A333, B333, C334, D334, E334, F334, G334, A334, B334, C335, D335, E335, F335, G335, A335, B335, C336, D336, E336, F336, G336, A336, B336, C337, D337, E337, F337, G337, A337, B337, C338, D338, E338, F338, G338, A338, B338, C339, D339, E339, F339, G339, A339, B339, C340, D340, E340, F340, G340, A340, B340, C341, D341, E341, F341, G341, A341, B341, C342, D342, E342, F342, G342, A342, B342, C343, D343, E343, F343, G343, A343, B343, C344, D344, E344, F344, G344, A344, B344, C345, D345, E345, F345, G345, A345, B345, C346, D346, E346, F346, G346, A346, B346, C347, D347, E347, F347, G347, A347, B347, C348, D348, E348, F348, G348, A348, B348, C349, D349, E349, F349, G349, A349, B349, C350, D350, E350, F350, G350, A350, B350, C351, D351, E351, F351, G351, A351, B351, C352, D352, E352, F352, G352, A352, B352, C353, D353, E353, F353, G353, A353, B353, C354, D354, E354, F354, G354, A354, B354, C355, D355, E355, F355, G355, A355, B355, C356, D356, E356, F356, G356, A356, B356, C357, D357, E357, F3

Calypso Music

Introduction

David Rudder

Trumpet

Trumpet

Electric Piano

Electric Guitar

6-str. Electric Bass

Cuica

Drumset

6

Tpt.

Tpt.

El. Pno.

El. Guit.

El. B.

Cu.

D. Set

5.9 Transcription of David Rudder's "Calypso Music"

The image shows a musical score for a jazz ensemble, labeled '5.9 continued'. The score is written for six instruments: two Trumpets (Tpt.), Electric Piano (El. Pno.), Electric Guitar (El. Guit.), Electric Bass (El. B.), Cymbals (Cu.), and Drums (D. Set). The music is in a key with three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a 4/4 time signature. The score begins at measure 13. The Trumpets play a melodic line with accents. The Electric Piano provides a harmonic accompaniment with sustained chords. The Electric Guitar plays a recurring B-flat major chord. The Electric Bass plays a steady eighth-note groove. The Cymbals and Drums provide a sparse rhythmic accompaniment.

5.9 continued

For Ming though, the harmony is just as important as the vocals. In this particular arrangement, Ming does not necessarily use harmonies that are more elaborate (altered chords) but instead gives more body to the harmony. Unlike Rudder’s version in which we only get a sense of tonic from the electric bass, Ming’s arrangement features sustained harmonies from the keyboard, bass and a recurring B flat from the electric guitar which is a sonic reminder of the fluctuation of the key center between B flat major and B flat minor. The sparse rhythmic accompaniment in the introduction, however, sets the tone for the arrangement—a full harmonic texture supported by a soca groove. Ming’s arrangement becomes more dialogic as the song develops and features short improvisatory interjections from the guitar, bass guitar and synthesizer throughout. The accompaniment in his approach is independent, adding its own layers to the song.

Calypso Music

Introduction

Arr. Michael Low Chew Tung

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system (measures 1-8) includes staves for Voice, Trumpet, Electric Piano, Electric Guitar, 5-str. Electric Bass, and Drumset. The second system (measures 9-16) includes staves for Vo., Tpt., El. Pno., El. Guit., El. B., and D. Set. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 2/4. The score features a vocal melody in the first system, which is repeated in the second system. The instrumental parts provide a rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment, with the drumset playing a simple pattern of eighth notes and rests.

5.10 Transcription of “Calypso Music” as arranged by Michael Low Chew Tung

17

The musical score consists of six staves. The top staff is for the voice (Vo.), showing a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff is for the trumpet (Tpt.), which is mostly silent with some notes in the later measures. The third staff is for the electric piano (El. Pno.), featuring a complex texture of chords and moving lines. The fourth staff is for the electric guitar (El. Guit.), which is mostly silent. The fifth staff is for the electric bass (El. B.), showing a steady eighth-note bass line. The sixth staff is for the double bass (D. Set), showing a rhythmic pattern with eighth notes and rests.

5.10 continued

Conclusion

From Ireland to Grenada to Trinidad and through the various music related journeys of Ming, we encountered some of the many different routes traversed by Caribbean peoples. In fact, we see that to be in motion transnationally—to travel, to circulate, to engage artistically—for Caribbean people is to adapt to detours and to moments when time seems to stand still. The process of transnationalism, also, is an ongoing practice: vitalized by family linkages that cross the borders of nation-state, yet not defined by the ability to travel. Ming demonstrates this through his use of media and technology. While he lives in Trinidad, he has been nonetheless in the 1980s and up to now in full conversation with the technological revolutions in the United States and Japan.

In the following chapter, we continue to explore “things in motion” with Chantal Esdelle, beginning first by looking at systems of knowledge that move transnationally. Through training in Western Classical Music, we encounter modes of music making and areas of pursuit that become available to Chantal. The chapter will also explore the impacts of transnational ideological movements on Trinidad and on the ways that Chantal experiences her particular body in the world.

Race, Economics, and the Negotiation of Space in the Transnational Making of Caribbean Jazz: Chantal Esdelle's Story

Chantal Esdelle is one of the two women featured in this project on Caribbean jazz in Trinidad and Tobago. She is one of the few, and possibly the earliest, female instrumentalists to be involved in the jazz scene in Trinidad. Chantal is undoubtedly a major figure in the jazz scene locally. However, one might observe that she is less featured in larger jazz events. In fact, whereas we have so far encountered many interrelationships between musicians such as Anthony, Ming and Vaughnette who recur as regular collaborators within each other's projects, we have heard less about Chantal.

In this chapter, I voice the critical work done by Chantal in the Caribbean jazz scene in Trinidad by further exploring the themes presented in the previous chapter: issues of labor, technology, race and space and the implications of these issues for networks of circulation. I show the complex negotiations that Chantal considers in *what* projects she undertakes, *whom* she collaborates with and *where* she does this vital work. Through the story of her musical education, we learn about the different musical circles to which Chantal belongs. We also encounter the voicing of a different experience of blackness as a distinct articulation of the transnational.

Education

Chantal Esdelle was born in Manitoba, Canada to Trinidadian parents. When she was quite young, the family returned to Trinidad, settling down in Tunapuna. Chantal was only about four years old at the time, but she was already drawn to music and asked her parents to have piano lessons. She began taking piano lessons with Louise McIntosh at the Pan Pipers Academy. Encouraged by her father who played pan with Highlanders Steel Orchestra, Chantal started to play the pan at age eight. Music was everything to her. Pan Pipers, though, was more than just a music academy. It was an important community in Chantal's life where she made strong friendships with other children and enjoyed other activities such as dance, drama, and even the occasional excursion. She began competing in the largest music competition in the country, the Music Festival of Trinidad and Tobago. An incredibly talented musician, she once tied for first place in the Pan solo competition, Pan Is Beautiful VI, with now world famous pannist, Liam Teague.

Chantal's music education at Pan Pipers is one that distinguishes her from other Caribbean jazz musicians in several ways. In the first place, Pan Pipers Academy was one of the first music schools in Trinidad and Tobago to formalize pan education. This was an important moment in the history of steel pan because this action effectively moved pan from the streets into middle class homes—from an oral tradition to a “cultured” tradition by employing the use of Western Classical Music and musical notation. Chantal was a pan jumbie though, and her love for the instrument took her beyond the pages of sheet music, and into the panyard of Birdsong

when she was fourteen. I think in those days she would have been seen as such an anomaly: a middle-class young girl, literate in music down in the panyard beatin' pan—what used to be considered the activity of lower-class black men, maybe even akin to limin' in the rum shop.⁵⁶ But no, Chantal loved the music and wanted to be in the thick of things. She is a woman, but so what? She had no inhibitions.

It was no surprise then that she decided she wanted a career in music: a life full of it. After secondary school, she applied to Berklee School of Music to study sound engineering. Fascinated by records since she was a young child, she had dreams of becoming the Vice President of a major recording company. She mailed a video cassette of herself playing her ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) examination pieces on piano, her primary instrument. Chantal's talent earned her a scholarship which covered most of her tuition but she had to take a loan to cover the rest of tuition and living expenses.

In those days the idea of traveling to visit schools abroad before applying was unheard of. She had not been to Berklee or Boston yet, but she was in contact with Orville Wright, Trinidadian pianist, composer and arranger who was then serving as the Chair of the Ensemble Department at Berklee. Wright had been the guiding link for many Trinbagonians wishing to pursue music abroad for several years. The transition was also easier on Chantal than many others her age traveling for studies because it was not the first time she had traveled abroad alone. When she was sixteen years old she traveled to Brazil as part of a youth group to perform steel pan.

Although Chantal's was enrolled in the music production and engineering program, when she arrived at Berklee she finally got the chance to immerse herself in understanding chord progressions—something she had always been intrigued by. While taking an arranging course in her first semester, she realized she enjoyed writing and arranging much more than sound engineering. That was when she decided to switch her major to jazz composition. Through the courses for her new major, she gained in-depth exposure to Latin music, taking a course on salsa and even learning to play the congas. She had always had an interest in Puerto Rican and Cuban music and through the practice of transcription she immersed herself in various styles of Latin music. Much like the experience Vaughnette would later have at Berklee, Chantal also found herself at odds with the language of swing. Although she wanted to play jazz, she realized she needed to do it in her own language—in a style that she felt at ease with. Her deep love for Latin music coupled with the courses she took helped her incorporate many elements of Latin music into the works she wrote. At the core though was her love for Trinidad.

In May 1997 Chantal graduated from Berklee and through Optional Practical Training (OPT), a program offered to international students at the end of their degree programs, she took a job at the House of Blues in Cambridge, Massachusetts working in merchandizing. In addition to this work she also gigged regularly, performing throughout Boston and New England and also teaching at a music school in Dorchester, Massachusetts. She never really wanted to stay in the United States but she decided to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the OPT visa extension to see what life could be like there as a performing musician. At the end of the year she returned to Trinidad and submersed herself in music-making.

Chantal's band, Moyenne, was launched in June 1998. Originally a duo consisting of piano and pan (with Glenford Sobers) the group expanded to include percussionist Donald "Junior" Noel, then a member of Andre Tanker's band.⁵⁷ Moyenne was her primary focus and

⁵⁶ Limin' means hanging out.

⁵⁷ Junior Noel passed away in November 2015.

the group for which she wrote almost exclusively. But as things go in Trinidad, a career as a performing musician requires one to juggle many hats. She could not *just* play music and so, like Anthony, she sought other opportunities as a musician. For a few years, she lectured at the University of the West Indies Creative Arts Center teaching musicianship classes. She also spent time as a member of Andre Tanker's band from 1999 to 2000 and also played with Señor Ruiz from 2003 onward.⁵⁸ There was even a period of time when she worked for the Ministry of Education and helped to develop a music program for children in Tobago. Chantal was industrious and knew how to keep busy.

After a number of years in Trinidad, she decided that she wanted to experience life in Canada, her place of birth. As someone who is driven, Chantal could not simply go to Canada without having some kind of purpose. In 2007, she enrolled at York University to pursue a Master's degree in Ethnomusicology. Once again, the prospect of uprooting herself and starting over did not phase her in the least. She followed her love of pan at York and wrote her thesis on one of Clive Bradley's calypso arrangements for the Desperadoes Steel Orchestra. In 2010, Chantal graduated and returned to Trinidad where she has maintained an active career as a performing musician, educator, and event promoter.

Chantal's musical education might seem like the typical journey of someone who decides to become a professional musician today: start music lessons at a relatively young age, go to college to study music, become involved in a local music scene. But for Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad, this path is the exception. It is quite rare. While other Caribbean jazz musicians did in fact go abroad to study long term, they almost all did this at a considerably older age: Anthony started at Leeds when he was 25, David at ACSM (the Aaron Copland School of Music) when he was well into his thirties and Vaughnette was in her thirties when she went to Berklee.

As a composer and arranger, Chantal's work is quite different from other locally based Caribbean jazz musicians. Her ability to play multiple instruments (piano, steel pan, and flute) as well as sing is reflected in her compositional style in which we hear not only beautiful melodic lines, but also a rich contrapuntal exchange between all instruments involved. When I asked Chantal to tell me whose music has been the greatest influence on her, her immediate response was J.S. Bach. Listening to her music, you hear this. From the triplet ornamentation and turns (~) in the melodic line to the independence of each line (as harmony, or response), there is a kind of deliberation to her music. The way that her lines work together, against each other, for each other is reflective of a very distinct kind of mental clarity in writing that is quite different from a general Trinidadian sense of "lehgo" (let go)—a kind of let's see where the music takes us, jam session kinda feel. No. Chantal's music definitely has groove and you feel it deeply. But you can tell that the music comes from a place of deep introspection. I believe that this has so much to do with her classical training in her early years: that sense of analysis, of development of a theme, of voice leading. Throughout her music you hear extensive thematic development that lends itself to long melodic lines. In the excerpt below, we see the sequential development of a rhythmic and melodic phrase between the steel pan and piano.

⁵⁸ This is notable because Chantal is one of the few female instrumentalists in the non-classical music scene in Trinidad. For further information on the involvement of women in bands see Guilbault (2007, 2014).

Final Farewell

The musical score for "Final Farewell" is written for Steel pan and Piano. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 5/4. The Steel pan part is in the upper staff, featuring a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The Piano part is in the lower staff, with the right hand playing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth and sixteenth notes, and the left hand playing a simple bass line. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

6.1 Excerpt from “Final Farewell”

Chantal’s music also standards apart from other Caribbean jazz musicians’ work because of the strong influence of Afro-Cuban music in her works. More than simply a choice of instrumentation through the use of congas and rattles, the Afro-Cuban influence also emerges stylistically through her incorporation of rhythmic phrasing in the melodic lines including, but not limited to, the use of *montunos*.⁵⁹ On her album, *New Hope*, the track “La Mejor de Mi” opens with a *montuno* as follows:

La Mejor De Mi

The musical score for "La Mejor De Mi" is written for Piano. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score shows a repetitive rhythmic pattern in both the right and left hands, characteristic of a *montuno*. The right hand plays a series of chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a similar pattern with octaves and chords. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

6.2 Montuno used throughout “La Major De Mi”

Why, though, have I referred to it here as Afro-Cuban music and not Latin jazz?

⁵⁹ A *montuno* is a repetitive rhythmic pattern.

On Blackness

Upon entering Chantal's home, I am immediately struck by the African artwork displayed everywhere: wooden carvings, sculptures, paintings. All celebrations of blackness and of the black diaspora. I'm not surprised by the decor, though. Chantal is a tall, elegant Afro-Trinidadian woman: caramel skin, waist-long dreadlocks, charismatic smile and piercing eyes.



6.3 Chantal performing at the Ethnic Jazz Club. Photo courtesy Maria Nunes.

Her celebration of blackness extends beyond the home and lends itself to her musical creativity that is driven by a deep sense of spirituality. Speaking about her work she says, “I understand music to be my method of channeling the African experience in the Caribbean...past and present, for me and mine...” Moreover, she feels that it is important to represent both physically and spiritually what she is: a woman of African descent in the Americas.

What sets her music apart from other Caribbean jazz musicians in Trinidad, however, is the way that she personally understands the “African experience in the Caribbean.” For Chantal, this has manifested itself in a deep love for Afro-Cuban musics whereas for other musicians such as Clive and Etienne it presents itself as a deep sense of nationalistic pride. Chantal's music is certainly influenced by her identity as a Trinidadian. This can be experienced through songs like “Kaiso Kaiso” and “New Hope” that carry the rhythmic feel of calypso. However, the influence of what some might call Latin jazz is equally present. Chantal argues though, that the labelling of Cuban music as Latin performs a dangerous act of erasing the African influences in the music.

What Chantal takes issue with here is far larger than the problem of categorizing or labelling types of music. Rather, her stance serves to illuminate the fact that Latinidad is most often thought of as distinct from blackness. Speaking about the reception of Afro-Latinxs in the United States, Petra R. Rivera argues, “Within a US context, Afro-Latino identity has been subsumed under a dominant understanding of blackness and Latinidad as separate identities” (Rivera 2011: 230). This is precisely what bell hooks speaks about when she argues that “We [African-Americans] have too long had imposed upon us, both from the outside and the inside, a narrow constricting notion of blackness...” (hooks 1990).

In the case of the Caribbean, the concept of Pan-Africanism, as distinct from black nationalism, has had a long and contentious history in Trinidad and Tobago. Emerging with the rise of Jamaican Marcus Garvey’s influential ideologies in the early 1900s, Pan-Africanism experienced a resurgence in the Caribbean with the rise of the Black Power Movement in the 1970s. The unity of black people around the world was seen as tantamount to conquering the injustices faced by blacks everywhere. This, however, has left lasting impacts on the ways that many Afro-Caribbeans perform and understand blackness.

The socio-political history of Trinidad and Tobago, however, also warrants commentary on the tense relationship between nationalism and blackness in the country. Sociologist Ivar Oxaal argues that the roots of nationalistic movements in Trinidad began with the hunger of the masses for education. As Oxaal and Selwyn later demonstrate, however, these early movements became increasingly exclusionary.⁶⁰ Oxaal describing the predominantly Afro-Trinidadian membership of the early stages of the People’s National Movement (P.N.M.) states:

The racial bias in the social backgrounds of the P.N.M. leadership was not, as already emphasized, a product of deliberate preference; rather, it was an emergent consequence of the early membership criteria and of the informal recruitment process which fanned-out through the links of personal acquaintances in the “educated” Negro middle class and its periphery. (Oxaal 1982: 151)

Furthermore, Both Oxaal and Guilbault acknowledge that with the coming to power of the PNM in 1950s, the black middle-class no longer sought to be merely a political movement, but also a cultural movement.⁶¹ In so doing, they adopted Carnival, calypso and the steelpan as the culture of the new nation. Whereas calypso and steelpan were formerly resented by the middle-class as representative of the unruly, lewd behavior of the black masses, it was now embraced and claimed by the middle class on behalf of “the nation.”

But these constructed images of “nation” are problematic. They did not and do not account for a large portion of the Trinbagonian population. Despite many Trinbagonian’s best intentions through phrases like “all ah we is one family,” the national image that perpetuates to this day is one that is inherently Afrocentric and unabashedly exclusionary. I want to highlight how incredibly fragile discussions around this issue can be by provided an extensive quote from a text on ethnic nationalism by Trinidadian-born sociologist Anton Allahaar. He states:

⁶⁰ See Ryan (1972: 76), Oxaal (1982: 162), Brereton (1981: 198).

⁶¹ See Guilbault 2007: 47-56.

... at a conference of Caribbean academics and scholars in 2002, I presented a paper that was highly critical of a book edited by two Afrocentric academics (Smart and Nehusi 2000). I described the seven contributors to this book as Afrocentric and racist, and challenged their assertion that Trinidad was an African country with an African culture (carnival, calypso, and steelband), in which other ethnic groups were marginal cultural interlopers. During the question period one colleague, who wanted to distance herself from Afrocentrism but to retain the critique of racism, accused me of “using a sledge hammer to kill a mosquito.”

The implication was that the Afrocentric racist position was such a minority position (the mosquito) that it did not warrant the detailed critical scrutiny to which I subjected it in a twenty-five-page paper (the sledge hammer). Following this, another colleague at the same panel discussion charged me with writing a “lazy man paper,” again implying that I chose an easy target, or a target that was easily assailable and did not really merit a sustained critique of the sort I offered. Both charges suggested that mine was an intellectual overreaction, for although there was racism in the Afrocentric position, it was deemed to be minimal and best dealt with by ignoring it...

I disagreed with both critics and suggested as Afrocentric sympathizers they were in denial over the social and political implications of this philosophy. The denial has two related aspects, one emotional and the other political. The emotional aspect of Afrocentrism is linked to contemporary concerns with political correctness and the fact that groups that have been traditionally downtrodden must now be empowered and given their fair due. In this logic, to criticize Afrocentrism is to be insensitive at best and racist at worst. The political aspect of Afrocentrism speaks to the fact that there are many academic ethnic entrepreneurs, who, though uncomfortable with the intellectual and historical claims of this philosophy, nevertheless opportunistically embrace and defend it...(Allahar 2005: 228-229)

There are several things to be said about this passage. Firstly, we must note that Allahar’s critiques were poorly received. What one cannot tell from the text, however, is that much of this certainly has to do with the fact that Allahar is of Indo-Trinidadian descent—an unwelcome critique by a racial outsider. Allahar’s statements in this text also speak about his interpretation of Afrocentrism within the confines of academia in relation to academic writing on Trinidad. I agree with Allahar but I also believe that this Afrocentrism extends beyond academia and into the daily lives of Trinidadians—and again, not as an exclusionary tactic but rather more as an expression of empowerment, as Allahar describes.

And while this empowerment is vital, critical and important for black bodies, I raise these issues to compel my readers to question exactly whose “culture” or whose “nation” is represented when one speaks about Caribbean jazz. When I speak about the “incorporation of local musical elements”—elements from *which* of the various musical traditions am I speaking about? This, essentially, is a highlighting and acknowledgement of the absences in the narratives of my interlocutors throughout this work. It is a reckoning, here in this moment, with the fact that while my interlocutors refer to the music they perform as jazz (whether kaiso jazz, pan jazz, Caribbean jazz, jazz jazz, or not jazz), Indo-Trinidadian musicians like famed sitarist Mungal

Patasar who also engage in improvisatory “locally inspired” musics refer to their work as “fusion.”

Yet I say this not as a critique, nor to place blame. Rather, I provided this information to remind and alert readers to the fact that what constitutes “nation” for some is not what constitutes “nation” for others. Similarly, how some folks experience blackness is incredibly different to how others do—as was demonstrated in the previous chapters on Vaughnette Bigford and Anthony Woodroffe, Jr. Chantal’s embrace of Afro-Cuban music serves as an additional reminder that blackness is multifaceted and takes many forms. This comes in direct defiance of the tendency of many Afro-Trinidadians to adopt Pan-African ideologies that often do the injustice of creating a one-dimensional view of blackness.

This distinction Chantal makes through the label “Afro-Cuban” also brings to the fore the precarious nature of the relationship between the anglophone Caribbean and the hispanophone Caribbean. While one can observe the many connections between the Anglophone and Francophone islands (whether through trade, culture, shared colonial histories, etc.), the hispanophone Caribbean exists at the margins, not truly a part of Latin America, and not truly part of the Caribbean. Furthermore, there seems to be a general sense within the Anglo-Caribbean, or Trinidad and Tobago at least, to equate Latinidad with some measure of whiteness or mestizaje, thereby disavowing any shared histories. By speaking of the music, she draws from as Afro-Cuban, Chantal is giving voice to these shared histories, to the “African experience in the Americas” as she describes it.

Her voicing of these interrelations goes beyond stylistic and artistic ventures, however. Chantal has traveled extensively to Cuba and has also been to Colombia, Venezuela and Brazil. Though these trips may not have all been work related, she has used these experiences to forge important business and musical relationships with musicians in these countries. From the production and mastering of her latest album, to the hosting of Cuban musicians for workshops and performances, Chantal’s work as a musician has done a great service in strengthening south-south connections that are often overlooked in favor of north-south connections. More than simply creating and revitalizing these connections, Chantal has created a unique space in which to foster these relationships.

Creating a Space for Caribbean jazz

If you mention nightlife in Trinidad to most young people today (and by young, I mean under the age of 40), the mind almost immediately goes to Ariapita Avenue, in Woodbrook Port of Spain: the hotspot of Trinidad’s nightlife. That wasn’t always the case though. When I was a teenager Carenage was *the* place to be—from Base, to Anchorage, to *Pier One*, those were the hot spots for partying.⁶² Then *Zen* and *51 Degrees* came around and shifted the party space back to Port of Spain around Cipriani Boulevard. For a while there was a spot called Satchmo’s that used to host live music. You could find jazz there. A little later there was another live music spot called Casa de Ibiza but that was actually on Tragarete Road. Things on Tragarete never survive as long as those on Ariapita. In any case, if you wanted to find live music in Trinidad today, it hard. My generation...my generation is probably responsible for the near disappearance of the

⁶² Although Carenage is only 5.6 miles away from Woodbrook, Port of Spain, it is a lengthy journey. With narrow roads and only one way in and out, traffic is often at a standstill for hours when large events are held there.

live music scene. We were into DJs and sound systems, not acoustic music, not “sit down and listen” music. It’s not a surprise, then, that on Ariapita Avenue, although the highlight of nightlife in Trinidad today, you won’t find a single spot with live music. Far less Caribbean jazz.

The truth is that jazz struggles in Trinidad. Any and all variations of it. Caribbean jazz. Straight ahead jazz. Latin jazz. It’s a struggle. There are all kinds of reasons for that. And while I don’t wanna get too much into the specifics of how and why, I’ll mention a few things. For one, there used to be a strong culture of listening back in the day. To own a record, or a record player was a privilege and people cherished the opportunity to listen to music. Now that music is easily available online, though, and you don’t even have to buy it, the act of listening embodies completely different ways of knowing and experiencing. The other thing about nightlife in Trinidad is that it caters mostly to young people who, for the most part, are not really looking to be entertained by *listening* to music, but to socialize.

Tucked away into one of the more residential areas of Woodbrook though, on Cornelio Street, you find the headquarters of the Ethnic Jazz Club, run by Chantal. If you didn’t live in the neighborhood, or weren’t a jazz aficionado you wouldn’t know that it was an important spot for live music. There is no sign outside. None of the bells and whistles of the clubs on Ariapita Avenue. In fact, walking by you would think it is just another residential home. Because it is, and it was. The house once belonged to Chantal’s grandmother who left it to Chantal on her passing. Chantal, who lives in Tunapuna, has made use of the house as an artistic space not only for her musical needs but for those of other musicians as well.



6.4 Chantal Esdelle and Moyenne performing at the Normandy Hotel

When Satchmo's and Casa de Ibiza closed, jazz musicians were left without a low-key performance space for more regular sessions.⁶³ Apart from those locations, if any type of musician wanted to put on a show, they would have few choices.⁶⁴ Some of the smaller venues used by various musicians in Trinidad include the Simon Bolivar Auditorium at the Venezuelan Embassy in Port of Spain, the Cipriani Labor College auditorium, the University of the West Indies (UWI) Learning Resource Center, hotels such as the Normandy, the Hilton Ballroom, Crowne Plaza Ball Room (now known as the Radisson), and churches throughout the country. While these spaces come at lower costs (except perhaps for the hotel venues) and cater to smaller audiences, they are mostly not equipped for musical performances. The quality of sound almost always suffers at events hosted in these spaces.

The large venues like Queen's Hall, Central Bank Auditorium, Naparima Bowl, NAPA (National Academy for the Performing Arts), ideal for musical performances in terms of being equipped with the necessary sound and lighting technology, seating layouts, and being acoustically designed for the purpose of performance, come with much red tape. The size of these venues means that there are high costs associated with renting these venues, most often requiring musicians to seek sponsorship from local business. Costs aside though, these venues are often booked months in advance, and even in the event of availability, there is usually a preference for events that can yield higher profits. Given the already marginal nature of jazz in Trinidad, it would be highly unusual for a Caribbean jazz musician to have a sold-out event at Queens Hall (that seats 754 persons), for example.⁶⁵

In 2015 the live music scene would experience a major revival when musician Carl Jacobs opened Kaiso Blues Cafe on Woodford Street, Port of Spain. Jacobs, an important figure in the musical life of Trinidad and Tobago in the 1970s and 1980s, came up with the concept of Kaiso Blues Cafe as a platform for local and foreign artistes to perform and showcase their talent in a more intimate setting. The success of Kaiso Blues Cafe is perhaps largely due to the fact that the establishment is run by a musician (someone who understands the need of performers in the country) and not purely as a business venture. Since Kaiso Blues opened in 2015, it has become the hub of live entertainment in Trinidad featuring not only musical performances and jam sessions but also comedy nights, karaoke nights, and spoken word events.

So where does the Ethnic Jazz Club fit into all of this? Well, if you take a look at the various jazz events in Trinidad throughout the year, you would be hard pressed to find Chantal and Moyenne listed as a featured act. She argues that because of the music she plays (original jazz compositions), her audience base is quite small and as a result she is not often sought out for large "jazz" events.⁶⁶ She says, "I understand the need for everything else that is out there. But for me...it would be uncharacteristic for me to take a calypso and play it in a ballad style or a R&B. Thas not me. If I take a kaiso, I doing a kaiso."

Chantal wanted a space where she could play music on her own terms: play whatever she wanted and whenever she wanted. The Ethnic Jazz Club therefore emerged as a space not only for Caribbean jazz but for musicians to showcase their original work—the kind of music you

⁶³ These spaces, Satchmo's and Casa de Ibiza, did not last very long because jazz is simply too small a niche market in Trinidad.

⁶⁴ When I speak about "regular sessions" here, I am referring to smaller events held by individual bands and not large festivals such as Jazz Artists On the Greens, or the Tobago Jazz Experience.

⁶⁵ The only Caribbean jazz musician to have successfully done this is Etienne Charles. This will be further discussed in the following chapter.

⁶⁶ Jazz here appears in quotations because it refers to events in Trinidad that are advertised as jazz shows but are actually more focused on R&B and other popular musics.

would hardly hear at an event like “Jazz on the Beach.” As a space for artistic creativity, Chantal has used the venue to celebrate the work of older musicians in the community. Events such as the “Clive Zanda Legacy Project” and the “Chat with Earl (Rodney) and Ray (Holman),” create opportunities for the musical elders who for various reasons have fallen to the margins of the music community.⁶⁷ Additionally, by day Chantal uses the space as a music school offering lessons to students in the community.

The Ethnic Jazz Club offers a different kind of intimacy from that offered by Kaiso Blues Cafe. They each serve their purpose, however. Kaiso Blues offers the dark and stormy lighting of a Manhattan jazz club, complete with the offerings of cocktails, food, and light conversation over high top or low top tables. At the Ethnic Jazz Club, intimacy presents itself in the opening of the private to the public. The home becomes salon, the living room a lounge.



6.5 Clive Zanda and band at the Ethnic Jazz Club

Here you find no food nor drink. No fancy chairs, no colorful lighting or decorations. There are maybe 20 chairs available, set closely together. You get to know your neighbor even if you did not know them previously.

⁶⁷ Specifically speaking about Clive Zanda [Alexander] and Earl Rodney here, these two musicians though very much revered in the community have become less and less part of the actively (regularly) performing cast of musicians.



6.6 Audience at the Ethnic Jazz Club

But it's not uncomfortable. It is intimate. Raw. The space directs you to focus on the music, and if anything else at all, the company with whom you enjoy it. It is a revitalization of the art of listening. A quiet space. Quiet but never tense. The kind of quiet that speaks of a hunger waiting to be satisfied. Awaken hunger. This space wills you into existence.

Making an Album

I can't remember exactly how I got the hook up, but after hearing all these stories about some mystical warehouse where you could find thousands of records by Trinbagonian musicians, I had to see it for myself. Apparently, the place was ah gold mine. It was a collection of records owned by Rhyners Record Shop that had been moved to storage upon the closing of the store in 2006. Whenever people talked about it, it was always kinda hush hush. The truth is, people didn't want too many other people to find out about it because of the invaluable kinds of things you could find there: highly sought-after records, original masters, Eric Williams' speeches, you name it. It's there. Anyway, I wanted to see for myself. I wasn't really looking for anything in particular. Maybe if I could find some of Clive's old records, that would be great. Or if I could find some of the Boothman's releases. Honestly, as a musician and a researcher it didn't matter what I was going to find. I just needed to see it. So, I called up Nigel Campbell and told him we were going on an outing.

When the Rhyners lifted the door to the storage unit, we were in shock. First of all, where to even begin? There was no way we could go through this in one day. How do you even get inside? There is no space! What are all of these records? So much music? Is it that there are just a lot of duplicates?



6.7 Rhyner's Storage Unit

Nigel and I spent hours upon hours going through those boxes. It was an archeological expedition of sorts. For Nigel, it was a dream come true to be able to look through some of the gems he came across. For me, it was a huge learning experience about the recording industry in Trinidad. This is where my age shows. A child of the late 80s, I never experienced the days of live music and bands that wrote their own songs and performed regularly. My generation also wasn't familiar with the concept of buying the CD of a local musician. We were born in the generation of piracy. If you hear a song you like on the radio, you make a mix tape yourself. Later on, we would burn CDs of everything: pop, reggae, dancehall, soca. Everything.

I mean, of course local musicians made records before my generation's time! But I think the "record diving" experience in the Rhyners Warehouse gave me a different perspective. For one, it signaled the material importance of music through the record jacket: usually elaborately designed with many large colorful pictures of the musicians, you could tell that these items were more than a mere casing for a record. The massive number of records also highlighted to me how much the process of listening was once valued. The number of records in the storage unit was less a reflection of multiples (of the same records) than a reflection of how feverishly musicians produced albums and shared their music with audiences. The stark contrast between record output of musicians then and now, and the propensity of local consumers to actually purchase these records made me start to ask questions about the nature of the recording industry in Trinidad and Tobago. What does it take for a musician to make a record now? What did it take then?

The process of creating an album for Trinbagonian musicians has always been one that has relied heavily on various kinds of transnational relationships. As early as the 1930s, calypsonians began recording abroad with multinational labels such as ARC and Decca, with

RCA establishing a subsidiary in Trinidad in 1965.⁶⁸ In fact, the popularity of calypso in the United States in the 1930s owed much of its happenstance to the trip taken to New York in 1934 by calypsonians Atilla the Hun and The Lion to record the season's hit tunes. According to Michael Eldridge, while the calypsonians were recording in the studio they were overheard by a radio producer in a neighboring studio who then asked them to perform live on his radio program the following night. The program was on the National Broadcasting Channel (NBC) and was the most popular radio show at the time (Eldridge 2002: 621).

However, Keith Nurse argues that one of the major reasons for the failure of these locally established recording companies was competition from Caribbean owned recording companies in New York (Nurse 2001: 62). More critically for this project, however, Nurse alerts us to the reality that after 1995, there no longer existed a pressing plant in Trinidad.⁶⁹ The three that previously existed were all shut down either due to financial troubles, or difficulties in replacing necessary equipment. With no pressing plant in the country since 1995, how then do local musicians today create albums? What is the process? I talked to both Ming and Chantal about their CD production experiences.

Ming has been producing CDs for Élan Parlē since 2000 and has been involved in the recording industry from the 1980s. Given his knowledge of the local recording industry, I was curious to know what steps he took in order to produce an album. In the earliest days of producing a CD, Ming would have to burn the music onto a disc then send it via FedEx to be mastered and pressed in the United States. However, between the years 2008 and 2011, Ming produced all CDs for Élan Parlē locally, using the process of duplication. In replicated CDs, the data is stamped onto the CD mold whereas in duplicated CDs, content is added to blank discs through the use of laser technology. The processes of replication and duplication are often distinguished along the lines of price range and compatibility. Duplicated CDs have a much lower manufacturing cost, however are often incompatible with older CD players that pre-date duplication technology.

To make replicated CDs, Ming began working initially with Ken Lee (in Oakland, California) who had previously worked with Andy Narrell.⁷⁰ He later worked with companies such as Wavelength based in Salem, Oregon, and Disc Makers in New Jersey, learning about Wavelength through an advertisement he had come across in *Mix Magazine* many years before.⁷¹ The mastering process was long and costly because for every bit of work done, a physical copy of the CD needed to be mailed between the two parties. When he finally approved the master, Ming would then have to wait for the replicas to be shipped to Trinidad where he would then have to pay import taxes, as well as for the weight of the shipment. Furthermore, most companies often maintained a minimum quantity (often 1000) for replication of discs. With no

⁶⁸ In 1984 music researchers Roger Wallis and Krister Malm presented the results of a three-year research project entitled "Music Industry in Small Countries" (MISC) which consisted of a sample of twelve countries including Jamaica and Trinidad (Wallis and Malm 1984). This text provides one of the earliest historical accounts of the music industry in Trinidad, addressing issues including, but not limited to, the role and implications of transnational (multinational) recording companies in small countries, issues faced by small, local recording companies, problems surrounding copyright laws, and the role of governmental policies in the recording industry.

⁶⁹ Caribbean Sound Basin owned the last pressing plant in the country and closed it in 1995.

⁷⁰ Andy Narrell is an American steel pan player who has gained international acclaim for his work. He is well respected by the community of local musicians in spite of his nationality status as a "cultural outsider."

⁷¹ There are in fact studios where mastering can be done in Trinidad. This, though, is a personal preference by Ming to have it done elsewhere. Pressing, however, cannot be done locally.

pressing plant in Trinidad, Ming had no choice but to outsource this part of the production process.

Today, there is still no pressing plant in Trinidad. With technological advances, however, the process of making a CD has become much simpler. Although Ming still needs to have the music pressed abroad (as do other musicians), he is able to save time getting the tracks to the companies digitally by uploading them online. Instead of costly long distance phonically, he can now communicate with the technicians via email or even video chat, if necessary. It is still not a straightforward process, but shipping has also become easier. The growth of online shopping in Trinidad has increased through the use of Skyboxes, allowing people to have items purchased sent quickly to Miami where they are stored and later transported to Trinidad.

Chantal took a much different route. Her first album, *New Hope*, was recorded live at Caribbean Sound Basin. When Chantal was ready to record her second album, *Imbizo Moyenne*, she wanted to do it live as well. She didn't want to go to a studio and lay down different tracks. She wanted it to be an experience, a performance. With the closure of Caribbean Sound Basin, however, she needed to find an alternative way to record the album. Caribbean Sound Basin was one of the few studios locally that had a recording space that was built to accommodate an entire band recording live. She was faced not only with the need to find a space to record, but also to find a producer who understood the kind of sound she wanted to create. At this point in her career, Chantal had been to Cuba many times. With the help of her friend Alexis Vasquez, she was put in contact with a team of sound engineers from Cuba. She rented the auditorium at Cipriani Labor College and within the course of a week, the album was recorded.

Sounds simple, right? Not at all. When the engineers arrived from Cuba, they had to source parts to literally build a computer from scratch. Chantal laughed when she told me that one of the screens for the computer was an old television from her house. She said they described it as a Mac-PC. It wasn't a Mac and it wasn't a PC but it was some combination of the two. Even though the album was recorded within a short space of time, it was not until over a year later that Chantal was financially able to travel to Cuba to complete the mastering process. She had initially planned for the CD to be pressed there as well but the pressing plant had been closed because the machines were in need of repair. Eventually, she decided to send the masters to the United States to be pressed. It was not her first choice of location. In fact, she considered sending them to Colombia and Venezuela but in the end decided that the hassles of shipping to both countries outweighed the time and cost benefits (for travel and shipping) of having them done in the United States.

The processes by which Ming and Chantal produced their albums may not sound all that complicated. After all, it is true that no matter where in the world you are located, creating a CD takes time, patience and a lot of back and forth between the parties involved. What their stories highlight, however, is the indirect nature of how goods from the Caribbean circulate. A CD cannot simply be created in Trinidad. It must pass through multiple points before returning to its point of origin. For Ming that route was from Trinidad to Oakland to Miami and then back to Trinidad. For Chantal it began in Trinidad, developed in Cuba, returned to Trinidad, traveled to the United States and then finally back to Trinidad. Additionally, as Chantal's experience shows, these kinds of processes tend to privilege relationships of dependency for countries of the peripheries with large metropolitan countries. In spite of Chantal's desire to have a Caribbean made CD, the logistical complications of conducting a south-south business relationship left her with no choice but to rely on the United States as a source of labor and material.

Connections aside, another major consideration for any musician undertaking such a task is whether or not the process will truly yield any financial returns. Speaking about the recording process for calypsonians, Guilbault notes:

Not only are the artists themselves responsible for the production costs of their recordings, but much of the profit from their recordings ends up in the pockets of others (due to transactions or uses without copyright royalties, illegal dubbing, and so forth). Their performance wages are usually relatively low...and not guaranteed, depending on ticket revenues at the door (Guilbault 2007: 88).

The same holds true for Caribbean jazz musicians, who hold a considerably smaller portion of the live entertainment market. Speaking about this, Ming reflected on how he ordered 3000 CDs for “Tribal Voices” and “Caribbean Renaissance” but later reduced the numbers to 1500 for “Kindred Spirits” and 1000 CDs for all other albums. There simply just was not and is not the market for the sale of 3000 CDs in Trinidad. Given all of these issues at stake, it is understandable that so few Trinidadian musicians (apart from calypsonians) make albums today.

Conclusion

The process of creating an album in Trinidad highlights the myriad of ways through which engaging with the transnational becomes materialized: the physical album, the equipment required to press the album, the equipment required to record the album. It also, however, brings to the fore the economic constraints of transnationalism—that one *must* have the financial capacity in order to partake in this network of “things” in motion. We encounter this in the lapse of time between Chantal’s recording of the album and its completion (mastering).

Beyond the record making process, the economic constraints present themselves in musicians’ struggles to afford university tuition, as we experienced with Vaughnette. Chantal, in spite of having to take a loan, was much more fortunate than many other musicians who simply had to forgo the idea of a four-year degree.

Chantal’s experience of her body in the world also provides nuance to understanding blackness in the context of Trinidad. In the chapter on Vaughnette, we learn about the impacts of transnational ideological and political movements such as the Black Power Movement and Pan-Africanism. This chapter, however, presents the ways in which these movements have been empowering, yes. But it also shows alternative ways that black musicians have envisioned themselves as part of a larger transnational network of black people in the “New World.” I do this by complicating the concept of blackness, showing that Chantal’s embrace of Afro-Cuban musics is highly political and a critical and welcome interruption of tropes of blackness.

Furthermore, I use this opportunity to question the “we” of the nation-state. This theoretical move, once again, interrogates the idea of home *qua* nation-state that has become a binary in studies of transnationalism. Whose home? Whose idea of nation? Who remains silent?

PART IV

The Places to Which we Belong: On Locating Oneself in Diasporic Spaces

Stuart Hall states, “diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference” (Hall 1990: 235). One of the shortcomings of much of the literature on transnationalism, however, is the way in which diasporic groups are painted as homogeneous communities in a constant nostalgic battle for the recreation of “home”.⁷² The two chapters of Part IV disrupt such notions of what it means to be a Trinidadian in the diaspora by engaging with the stories of trumpeter Etienne Charles and flautist David Bertrand. It is yet another exercise in storytelling, with both chapters reflecting unique writing styles. While the chapter on David gives a biographical account of his development as a musician, the chapter on Etienne follows his musical development as charted through the seven albums he has produced since living in the United States. Both chapters give depth, in different ways. David’s account is a story of intimacy, acceptance and growth. In the chapter about Etienne, and for the first time in this dissertation, I do deep musical analysis—another way of dealing intimately with music.

These two chapters also present a first in this dissertation on the discussion of masculinities in Trinidad and Tobago. Within the Caribbean context, it is often difficult to speak about gender without the inherent need to address women’s rights. Conversely, it is difficult to speak about gender in terms of men in the Caribbean because of the hegemonic notions of masculinity that pervade to this day. Nonetheless, Etienne and David’s performances of various masculinities reveal very interesting stories about the transnational circulation of cultural norms.

Finally, the two chapters also very much discuss the issues of class and race and the impact of these two issues on the professional careers of both musicians. Etienne’s chapter provides the story of this struggle through his musical telling of the struggles of people of African descent in the New World. We also learn about the struggles of black Trinidadians during Carnival and the subsequent development of the steel pan through the album, *Carnival*. David’s chapter recounts a more personal struggle—the harsh realities of being a black boy from the village of Cocorite, Trinidad.

We begin with David.

⁷² See Averill (1994), and Sakakeeny (2011) for the importance of intersectional analyses on diasporic communities. See also Ong (1999), Canon (2005) and Moore (2007) for critiques on lack of engagement with the politics of difference in studies of transnationalism.

Inward Hunger: Race, Class, and Masculinity in the Negotiation of Self: David Bertrand's Story



7.1 Photo of David Bertrand Courtesy Juhui Kwon

I begin with the story of David, a dear friend whom I have known since childhood. David was the principal flautist of the orchestra in those days. One day this fella with dreads showed up to rehearsal and played flute like I had never heard before. Seriously. I was spellbound by him. I could see how serious music was to him. He played every note like it was the last that would ever leave his lips. There were few people like that I had ever met before and I developed a deep admiration for him before I even knew him. In David, I saw and felt my deepest thoughts. That although I had been born on this island, there was something about me that never truly belonged there. There was an “elsewhere” where we needed to be; something else that needed to be discovered that we were not sure we would find in Trinidad; a complicated love-hate relationship with the concept of being Trinidadian and what some thought it ought to encompass.

The title of the chapter is in reference to the famous autobiography of Eric Eustace Williams who has been hailed as the “Father of the Nation” for his efforts in leading Trinidad and Tobago to independence from Britain.⁷³ Williams’ reception in Trinidad, however, is

⁷³ See Williams (1969).

troubled. While he is revered by some for the important political work he did, he is equally vilified by others for having had a nationalist agenda that was particularly in favor of the Afro-Trinidadian middle-class. I use this title because of the parallels I see between Williams and David in terms of public reception of their work, but also because of the similar social backgrounds from which they came: working-class families, incredibly intelligent, black, and constantly in search for more knowledge.

David's story tells the challenges of negotiating self in Trinidad where there are very specific societal ideals of what, how and where a man of his background should be. In other words, I look at the ways that David's personal desires are at odds with what society generally deems acceptable for someone of his race, class, and gender. His story speaks sadness: a sadness of trying to find out where one belongs with the awakening realization that you are different, and not like the rest somehow. Within the sadness however, there is much joy: joy at finding self, at finding a new "home," at finally understanding how and where the Trini fits into the larger image of life. There is transformation...

Trinidad

David was around eight or nine years old when he first began to play an instrument. Although he had been captivated by the music of Sesame Street since his earliest years, he finally got the chance to experiment with an instrument at his elementary school where he learned to play descant and treble recorders. It would be many years, though, before he would finally begin to play the flute as his primary instrument. When he started secondary school at Queens Royal College (QRC), he joined the Scout Band where he played the trombone for a few years. The instrument was not his choice but rather a reflection of what was available at the time. In fact, even the flute was not initially his instrument of choice! Later on, in secondary school, as David became more and more interested in jazz he wanted to play the saxophone. However, yet again, the instrument was not available. The band leader, Laurence McDowell, instead offered David a flute and that was the beginning of his love for the instrument. Within nine months of receiving the instrument, David had completed the grade five practical examination with the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM).

Secondary school was a difficult time for him. Being in the band, however, provided him with a sense of camaraderie that he did not otherwise experience at QRC. For David, these feelings of exclusion surfaced in many ways. First and foremost, his family did not live in the wealthy area of St. Clair, Port of Spain like so many of the boys that he went to school with. In fact, he grew up in the village of Cocorite, Saint James, known predominantly for gang violence, drugs and poverty. Although he admits that his family was certainly in a better financial position than most of the families within their neighborhood, that did nothing to help the fact that he was still viewed as the poor black boy from the rough neighborhood. The issues of class differences, however, went beyond the financial and material. David's feelings of rejection from the middle-class aesthetics also presented themselves in reference to his family life. He did not grow up in what would be referred to as a standard, middle class nuclear family. David was raised by his aunt and grandmother. He loved them dearly as did they him, but that did not prevent the kind of

isolation he felt within the QRC community not having entered with these middle-class ideals.⁷⁴ These were more than feelings, however. David would notice throughout his tenure at QRC that he was not afforded the same kinds of opportunities as other boys - boys with lighter skin tones, or wealthier families.

As he continued in secondary school, the struggle only intensified. David did not do well in his O' Level exams.⁷⁵ He was incredibly unhappy and could not understand why he was being forced to study things at school that he had no interest in, such as Principles of Business. By this time, he had already begun his obsession with jazz, listening to the music of Jaco Pastorius with one of his classmates. Hungry for more, he sought out every possible book that he could about the music and famous jazz musicians starting first at the school library and then going to the National Library in Port of Spain to find more material. At some point he even discovered that the U.S. Information center, located next to the embassy on Marley Street, Port of Spain, kept a collection of Downbeat Magazine as well as VHS tapes of famous jazz musicians. Later on, he would compete with Ming to get the single copy of Downbeat at SuperPharm (a pharmacy). "So, I knew that the *one* man in the West—in the Western end of Trinidad—who going for that magazine is Ming!"

As a result of his wavering interest in school and the resulting scores in his exams, David had to repeat fifth form and his O' Level exams. If he was not already struggling socially, being held back a year in school added even more to his feelings of isolation. The saving grace of his secondary school years, perhaps, was when one of his teachers, Mrs. Mackenzie-Cooke took him under her wing. She advocated for David and other students to be allowed to use their free (study) periods to prepare for ABRSM examinations. The boys used the time for independent practice and were often assisted by Mr. Raja, the music teacher.

David used this practice time along with flute lessons with an older student, Carlyle Mackenzie, to develop his skills. Along with practice, he continued to do whatever he could to learn about jazz. There was no live jazz to be heard at that time—as far as he knew—but he would listen to jazz on the BBC broadcast on Thursdays at midnight and record them using a General Electric tape recorder. Since there were not many other ways for him to listen to jazz, he learned through reading biographies of jazz musicians, texts on the history of jazz as well as articles in jazz journals. It was through his readings that David realized that the most important way to develop his skills as a jazz musician would be to practice all of the various scales. To make practicing interesting, he would play the scales over songs on the radio and tape himself so that he could listen to and review what he had done in each session. He recalls having to make "executive decisions" about the content of his aunts' cassettes to determine whether they were worthy of being saved or could be repurposed.

Once he had retaken his exams in the fifth form, David continued to sixth form and studied art, literature, and General Paper (GP). He already knew that he wanted to go to the US to study jazz. He said, "But my family didn't have money. I mean...we had enough money that we had a slightly different life to people in our neighborhood..." What David did not say was that coming from a working-class family, he didn't have access to the kinds of resources people

⁷⁴ M. Jacqui Alexander discusses at length the politics of belonging in Trinidad and specifically the impact of notions of respectability that served to strengthen the view of the nuclear family as a nationalistic ideal (Alexander 1994).

⁷⁵ O' Level (Ordinary Level) exams are subject-based qualifications required by all secondary school students in Trinidad and Tobago to complete the mandatory five-year period of secondary education. It is a British qualification and one's success (or failure) in these exams is very much to this day a measure of one's respectability.

needed to go abroad to study, far less for studying music. As things already stood he could barely afford flute lessons and even had to stop once when money became scarce. For someone to go to the US to study they would have to arrange to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SATs), a costly exam. They would also have to pay to have test scores sent to various schools and these fees did not cover the costs of applications, nor the costs involved in either auditioning in person (airfare, hotel, daily expenses) or sending prerecorded auditions.

In 1996 when David graduated from sixth form in QRC, he began his bachelor's degree at the University of the West Indies (UWI) St. Augustine in English Literature. At this point, he had acquired his own flute, thanks to the support of his aunt and grandmother who did everything in their power to help him get the instrument he dreamt of. David decided to attend UWI as a means to an end, but never as a final destination. He knew that in order to be able to go away to study music he would first need to get a job and save sufficient money to support himself through the course of study. Upon graduation from UWI he taught English at Mucurapo Senior Comprehensive School. He stayed active musically playing flute in the youth orchestra, but had also begun to play as a member of Élan Parlē. David actively sought out Ming because he was excited that someone else was playing jazz in Trinidad and he deeply respected Ming for his work in jazz in the country. Through all of this though, David's eyes were set on the future. He had already begun his own research into which music teachers he wanted to study with by watching videos of their performances on YouTube to see whose music spoke to him the most stylistically. Having already completed a bachelor's degree, another important aspect of David's choice of school was that it needed to be a program where he would not be required to start at the level of a bachelor's degree again, but directly at the master's level. Even more importantly, for David, that place had to be New York.

David's life in Trinidad was far from unhappy. He had a loving and supporting family system, he was able to play music, and he acknowledges that he was deeply fortunate in many ways. However, I hope this story (thus far) has been able to show what a deeply different experience he had of growing up in Trinidad from the other musicians in this project. David says that Trinidad is very much "home" for him and served as an excellent preparatory ground for interacting with many different kinds of people. He is proud to be a Trinidadian. But he also says, "If I am honest, Trinidad is also hard [for me] ... From an early age I realized that Trinidad decides who its heroes are going to be. You have to carry yourself in a particular way, check specific boxes. I didn't want to be anybody's hero, but I certainly didn't check the boxes."

In addition to the isolation David felt as a result of his race and working-class background, he also experienced a lot of criticism and ridicule as a musician. First and foremost, he was ridiculed for playing the flute which many people told him was a "woman's instrument".⁷⁶ Other musicians would even tease him and say that he was gay because he played the flute and he "walked funny". None of this was really a surprise to me. Trinidad and Tobago and many other Caribbean island nations have had long histories of homophobia that have been linked on the one hand to archaic laws of sexual conduct from the British administration during colonial times. On the other hand, however, much of the homophobia today owes its presence to complicated histories of what is now referred to as "toxic black masculinity"⁷⁷: that black men

⁷⁶ Scholars across many disciplines have discussed the gendering of musical instruments. For further references see Koskoff (2014), Doubleday (2008), Conway (2000), Tanur (1994), Zecher (2000).

⁷⁷ For a discussion on black masculinity as shaped by legacies of slavery, see hooks (2004). Although hooks in this text is largely speaking about the experience of the African-American male, her text explores an elaborate history of

ought to exhibit very specific behaviors - those of strength and dominance. Playing the flute was viewed as too delicate, too effeminate.

The criticisms about playing flute went beyond his choice of instrument, however. Drawn deeply to modern jazz, David was frequently told that he was a bad musician because his style of playing did not match the Trini jazz aesthetic. At one particular gig, after he had employed the technique of side stepping, the hiring musician said that clearly David could not hear through the monitor because he was playing in the wrong key.⁷⁸ Essentially, because David did not play diatonically, and instead employed the harmonic language of modern jazz, he was criticized for playing “strange sounding things”: things that did not appeal to Trini audiences. Other musicians frequently reminded him that he was Trinidadian and living in Trinidad and therefore should forget about playing “them American sounding things.” As David said to me, however, “What does jazz mean if you are a Trinidadian? Are you doing a disservice if you express it as an *American*?”

Aside from being ridiculed for his flute playing, however, David did not fit the other criteria of a black Trini man that others felt he should. A deeply spiritual man, David is not a limer or a drinker.⁷⁹ You would be hard pressed to find David in a bar, or liming with a large crowd of friends with loud music blasting in the background. Where many Trini men (subconsciously) feel the need to have their presence known both visually and sonically, David is the stark opposite. He will engage in “ole talk” but having been raised by two women, David is deeply respectful of all women and as such does not care for the “slack talk” about women that often characterizes Trini male interaction.⁸⁰ I suppose one could say that if you viewed the types of relationships David had with friends, other Trini men would also label those as effeminate because they are deeply respectful relationships, intimate, and very sacred to him.

For David, then, Trinidad was a series of experiences of exclusions—of belonging yet never quite fully being a true part of various communities. Trinidad was home, but it was also a stop along a much larger journey—never the end point...

Palmyra and Other Places: New York

In 2009 David began a master’s in jazz performance at the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, City University of New York (CUNY) where he studied under jazz saxophonist, Antonio Hart. I suppose David always knew he wanted to stay in New York. When he finished the program, he opted to make use of OPT (Optional Practical Training) and stayed in New York working the jobs he could find: initially as a construction worker and later as a music teacher in an after-school music program in Brooklyn.

It was yet another difficult period for David. He had achieved his dream of going to New York to study music, but after having a taste of what life could be like with people who thought about music in the way that he did, he could not imagine having to leave it all behind. He would have to figure out how, by any and all means necessary, to stay in the country legally.

patriarchy and dominance during slavery and the impact of these systems of power on black men today. See also Reddock (2004).

⁷⁸ Side stepping is the technique of playing within a scale or mode that is harmonically distant from the given chord.

⁷⁹ When someone is referred to as being spiritual, in Trinidadian parlance, it is meant respectfully and yet does not infer any particular religious belief.

⁸⁰ “Ole talk” means light hearted chit-chat or banter.

Construction work was difficult for David, not because he could not handle the labor physically but because of the strain it put on his hands—his true means of earning a living. Realizing that the work was too risky, he immediately began to seek other possibilities for himself. Alongside this work he gigged regularly and continued to build his portfolio as a performing musician in New York.

By the end of the year of OPT, David had gathered sufficient documentary evidence and support from peers in the music scene to file the necessary paperwork for an O-1 Visa, the non-immigrant visa for individuals of extraordinary ability. This was a costly and time-consuming process. He had to hire a lawyer to advise him, pay the application fees for the visa, but also make sure that he documented every aspect of his work: any reviews, major performances, and contributions to the New York jazz scene. Despite the challenges, David secured the visa and began yet another new phase of life.

Introducing *Palmyra* to the World

August 21st 2016

It is a hot, sticky, day during the New York summer. You would think that growing up on an island in the Caribbean, I would be prepared for a New York summer. But this is a different kind of beast. The air is heavy with humidity. The slightest touch on your skin, of cloth, of hair, of personal belongings reminded me of how utterly gross you feel in this weather that not even shorts and sandals can rectify. I am walking from my Airbnb to David's apartment in Brooklyn. This is a cute neighborhood: near to Park Slope and sufficiently hipster without being overbearing. There are many little restaurants and shops around. Everything you need is within walking distance. I had not spent time with David in a number of years. Even when we were together at Aaron Copland, we operated in different circles: he was a jazzier, I was a musicologist. Really different worlds. After I left ACSM, I moved to California and David stayed in New York. In that space of time, we had both achieved major professional goals and had begun to develop our own, new understandings of home with our respective communities.

I am in New York specifically to spend time with David and to interview him for this project. This is a particularly special weekend to visit him. I hadn't planned it this way, but it turned out that he would be hosting a private concert for his close friends that weekend before the official album launch. As I walk to his home, I'm not sure what to expect. I had been to his home several times in the days leading up to the launch, but I'm curious to see how the launch will unfold not because it is being held at his home, but more so because I really want to see David in his element—his place of belonging. Who would be at this event? Would I be the only Trini there? Would I be the only non-jazz musician there?

I arrive pretty early because I want to be sure that I could figure out the best spot to place my sound recorder. Moments after I arrive, my colleague from UC Berkeley, Ofer, arrives. He is also writing about David in his dissertation. Crazy, small, world, right? Ofer is the only familiar face in the crowd apart from David and his wife, Flora. As the guests begin to filter in I realize many things. Most of these people are not musicians. Some are, but for the most part they are close friends who have become like family to David and Flora, both immigrants. David and his band have set up in the living room, but the audience spills over into the other rooms of the apartment and even into the beautifully lush, green backyard.

Even though I don't know any of these people, as David introduces me they greet me like an old friend. It says so much about the kinds of relationships that David fosters, and the kind of intimacy with which he treats each relationship in his life. In a room of strangers, there is an atmosphere of welcoming, of friendliness, of closeness: closeness facilitated in many ways by the humidity of the summer day, and the yearning of bodies for the cool refreshing breeze of the blowing fans, but also the kind of closeness that one experiences in the intimacy of a "salon" setting where there are no distinct boundaries between audience and performer or public versus private. It is much like the space of the Ethnic Jazz Club that I would later experience but with the forced (yet welcomed) spatial intimacy of a New York apartment. People sit on the floor, merging into the space of the band. Nobody minds.

As the band plays, I begin to take more notice of the audience and the band members. With each Trini reference David makes about the tunes on the album, he looks at me proudly and happy to have a familiar face from home who can understand the depth of his references. I am the only Trini there. I'm also one of four persons of color here out of about thirty folks, David included. Even his band consists primarily of white men. Yet, nothing about this setting or the people present feel unfamiliar to me—and David looks happy and at ease in his element.

Reflections on the Concert

This ethnographic excerpt does the work of placing David in New York. It places him physically in Park Slope, New York—a place that I take time to describe. This location is significant because of the act of opening the home (private becoming public) that David performs in hosting the concert at his apartment. But it is even more significant when we consider what this means in the context of David's childhood—the ability to have a space to where he can proudly invite friends. This is not to infer by any means that David's childhood home was a source of shame. However, David certainly experienced shame, or rather was shamed by acquaintances, for having grown up in a "bad area." The specifics of Park Slope aside, I imagine what a relief it must be for him to operate within spaces (space as city, network, music scene) in which he enters without bearing the stigmas of class that were placed on him in Trinidad.

The moment I realize that there are only a few black people present is a familiar one. It is the reality of the daily lived experiences of black people who live in places where similar faces are not in the majority. We don't keep a running count. But it is hard not to notice when you are the only black face in a room and no matter how used to it you become, there is always the feeling of being slightly unsettled—worried about how you are perceived because of your skin color. At the same time, however, the demographics of David's audience, who are his close friends, demonstrate the kind of complicated relationship that both David and I have with experiencing blackness in the context of the United States.

The audience is predominantly white, but in spite of this, almost everyone present is an immigrant: from countries such as Sweden, Uganda, Italy, Argentina, Belgium, and Kenya. As I reflect on this now, I think about the striking difference between David's navigation of social relations in New York and Clive's experience in London. Whereas Clive fostered relationships primarily with other West Indians (and specifically Trinidadians) in London, David's relationships in New York do not and have not reflected these kinds of nationalistic ties. To understand this, however, is to remember the social and political context within which Clive

operated in London: a working-class black man in the “Motherland” where colonial subjects were deeply resented and scorned.

David’s community, however, is one that is defined by other means.



7.2 David Bertrand Quartet performing at Cornelia Street Café. Photo Courtesy Flora Bertrand.

To say that he never faced racism in New York would be an absolute mistruth. The scarcity of black faces in the audience, rather, reflects the struggle David faced in the United States as a black man. As a black man from the Caribbean in the United States, David has often been faced with the expectations of performing very particular expressions of blackness by other black musicians. Clive spoke about this when he explained to me that in the need to belong, cultural allegiances almost always took precedence over competency when he chose the musicians he performed with. To add another layer of complexity to this, how does a black man, whose blackness was critiqued even in his homeland where he was in the majority in racial terms, perform blackness in a new social space where there are different rules and parameters governing the performance of blackness?

Read it again.

It is a complicated question. With no easy answer. But one does the best that they can—forging connections with other folk based not on the premise of shared cultural values, or racial affinities, but rather through deep, meaningful relationships that transcend racial or national barriers. This is the only way to understand the demographics of David’s event. One cannot view this as a denial of his blackness, as some African American and Afro-Trinidadian musicians have suggested to him. Rather, it is a navigation of self—a self that had already been disavowed,

denied, unacknowledged in Trinidad—in the space of New York city where the new politics of belonging force one to reckon once again with where and how they “place” themselves.⁸¹

Releasing *Palmyra*: Production Strategies

When David decided he was ready to release an album he began to initiate conversations with other musicians whom he felt would be able to help him figure out the process of making an album. Although he had taken a course on the business of music at Aaron Copland, he felt that it had not really prepared him in the ways that he needed. One of the guiding principles of that course and other similar courses was that a (jazz) musician *should* acquire an agent and a publicist immediately upon graduating, and eventually become signed to a label that would represent them. What was not discussed, as David would later argue, was that there was a large financial component to undertaking this kind of process. David simply could not afford to do this. During the entire time spent as a student, he could not work legally and was supporting himself through the money he had saved during his years as a teacher.

So, when the time came he met with musicians such as American saxophonists Chris Bacas and John Ellis for coffee and sought their advice on making an album: about approaching record labels, about market forces, and also how to stay relevant. Bacas, who would later become a friend of David's, was instrumental in providing David with a variety of perspectives from his experience as a member of several leading big bands (the Tommy Dorsey Band, Buddy Rich's Big Band) as well as a respected musician in the European jazz scene, and one who also works largely as a side man. John Ellis, who David described as a “first call” tenor (saxophone) player in New York, was also deeply influential in David's musical style. Perhaps the greatest lesson David took from his interactions with Ellis was the importance of owning his own masters. Ellis spoke candidly with David about the problems he encountered in retrieving his own masters from his earliest recordings: things he wished he knew and understood better as a younger musician.

Unlike Chantal and Ming, David's location in the United States and in New York in particular gave him easier physical access (greater proximity) to a plethora of labels from which he could choose. Through jazz publications, online message boards in the jazz community and his own personal cross referencing, David was able to narrow down a list of possible labels that he was interested in being represented by, and most importantly, labels that would allow him to keep the rights to his masters. Finally, he decided to go with *blujazz productions*, a company based in Chicago. The company offered various kinds of representational packages based on what musicians desired. David's interest lay in reaching a larger audience across the continental United States. He was not interested in breaching the European jazz market. In fact, he had initially intended to release the album digitally but on advice from his team at *blujazz* he was required to release several hundred physical copies of the album solely for release to jazz critics and radio stations across the country.

It was a process that involved many unforeseen costs. Firstly, releasing a physical album immediately required manufacturing costs as well as design costs. For the several hundred albums sent for promotional purposes, that would mean David would have to cover the costs

⁸¹ See Rahier, Hintzen and Smith (2010), and Rahier and Hintzen (2014).

himself—there would be no (immediate) monetary return on this investment.⁸² It was a necessary process but it was difficult. David did not feel comfortable with the idea of crowd funding for the album and instead chose to save as much money as he could. This meant that he had to forgo many things like vacation—and in David’s case, this meant no travel to Trinidad for quite a few years. These costs, however, did not even begin to take into account the costs associated with recording and the costs for hiring the musicians he worked with. David was so focused on saving money that in retrospect he realized that he put less emphasis on the professional maintenance of his horns.⁸³ Through his hard work and persistence, however, David successfully released *Palmyra and Other Places* in 2017.

The Album

At a cursory glance of the album cover and the title of the tracks, one could easily “place” David as just another New York jazz cat. The image on the cover is one of David standing slightly obscured by the darkness, wearing shades and a beret with the daunting presence of the Brooklyn Bridge behind him. The image is a composite of many different places, it seems, as we also see part of an image of a park (Prospect Park) toward the bottom left of the cover that merges into the city setting of the background. *Palmyra and other places*. Palmyra is actually the name of a small town in southern, rural Trinidad. I later learn from David that it is also an ancient city in present day Syria. I begin to wonder how a small town in rural Trinidad would come to be named Palmyra. It wouldn’t be a far stretch to assume that the town was so named because of the long history of Syrian and Lebanese migration to Trinidad. But then again, it is a town that is predominantly Indo-Trinidadian and not known at all presently for having a Syrian population. In spite of this, there is nothing about the album cover or track titles that screams, “I’m a Trini!”. If anything, we get a stronger sense of New York than Trinidad: Lexington 63rd (referring to a subway stop in Manhattan), Fire Island (an island off the coast of Long Island), and 245 South 1st.

David describes his music as “modern jazz in the fashion of New York musicians of the mid 1990s and early 2000s, infused with folkloric elements from Trinidad.” He cites Brian Blade, Kurt Rosenwinkel and John Ellis as some of the most influential musicians on his musical style. From the moment the album begins, it is clear where New York stands. You hear it immediately in the complex harmonic language and the intricate rhythmic figurations in the melodic line. In an interview with Whitney Curry Wimbish, David speaks about the influences of tassa drumming (in the track “Lexington 63rd”), and rapso from the group 3canal (in “Storms and Mountains”) in the album (Wimbish: 2018).⁸⁴ As you listen more closely, Trinidad and the Caribbean begin to make themselves known through rhythm.

⁸² Although Chantal and Ming did not produce such large quantities for promotional purposes, the undertaking of producing an album in Trinidad is a financial risk that musicians take, understanding too well the history of piracy in the Caribbean, and the difficulties in promoting (and maintaining continued support) oneself locally.

⁸³ In the album, although he primarily plays flute as a gigging musician in New York city, David is versatile because of his ability to play multiple instruments and genres of music.

⁸⁴ Tassa drumming in Trinidad is derived from North Indian drumming traditions. The music is usually used for large celebrations such as Hindu weddings and the Muslim festival of Hosay. For more information see Ballengee (2013).

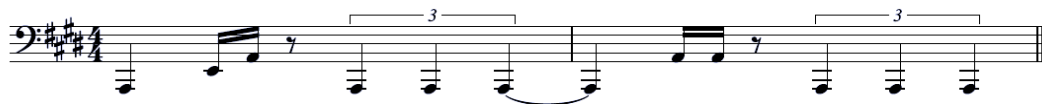
Guilbault describes rapso as a “musical offshoot of calypso [that uses] a chanting style that emphasizes Trinidadian rhythmic speech patterns over calypso rhythmic accompaniment...” (Guilbault 2007: 171). More detailed information on the genre can be found in Moonsammy (2009), and Sadre-Orafai (2000).

“Fire Island” was a tune inspired by a trip on a sailboat that David and Flora took to Fire Island, New York with some of their friends. Even with its distinct “placing” as a location in New York, the piece makes me think of the Caribbean and more specifically the baseline ostinatos characteristic of a lot of old school Jamaican dancehall music of my teenage years: the kind of bass line that rocked the floor and visibly shook the speakers so that you felt that beat to the core of your bones.⁸⁵ In “Fire Island” I hear similar rhythmic elements of the bass line in resonance with dancehall artiste Terror Fabulous’ 1994 hit, “Action”:



7.3 Transcription of Terror Fabulous’ “Action”

I hear that same slap of the bass in David’s “Fire Island”:



7.4 Transcription of David Bertrand’s “Fire Island”

And yet, when I speak to David about this, he tells me that people have told him that it sounds like samba to them, while others have referred to it as having a postmodern feel. “But isn’t that precisely the point”, he asks? “That everyone can hear, feel and experience something different? The idea is looped and so depth becomes more explicit with every repetition.”

The underlying lilting syncopations of David’s music that are ever so slightly behind the beat yet still on time remind me very much of the feel of calypso and reggae. I hear and feel these rhythmic characteristics also in the track entitled “Wood Slave.” David described this piece to me as a “kaiso in 6/4.”



7.5 Bass line in “Wood Slave”

⁸⁵ Here I think specifically of the dancehall from the mid 1990s to the mid 2000s which David Moskowitz refers to as *ragamuffin* dancehall—distinguished by the use of electronic music (Moskowitz 2006). In spite of the plethora of scholarship on Jamaican dancehall, very few works discuss the musical components of the genre and the development over time (Stanley 2005). Perhaps the major distinctions between dancehall of this period and contemporary dancehall are the use of much increased tempi and much more incorporation of electronic sound and effects.

“Claude’s Nariva” and “Palmyra” are the two tracks that reference places in Trinidad. “Claude’s Nariva” is a piece inspired by the music of John Ellis’ album *One Foot in the Swamp* and the harmonies of Claude Debussy. It is written in reference to the Nariva Swamp in Trinidad: a place that David has never visited and would love to go to but fears for the impact of man on such a sacred piece of natural habitat.⁸⁶

The album evokes feelings of nostalgia and romanticism that we experience through David’s expressions of both New York and Trinidad. Although he only arrived in New York as an adult, the city had much impact on shaping his imagination since childhood. New York was his dream that he encountered through Sesame Street, Marvel Comics, hip-hop, Spike Lee movies. It was the place that he always believed he would, and eventually did find sympathetic peers and contemporaries and the ability to be part of the musical visions of other like-minded musicians. Much like John Ellis, David’s album is a musical manifestation of one foot in New York, the other in Trinidad.

Conclusion

How does one measure the success of a musician? This is a particularly salient question in the context of Trinidadian nationals living in diasporic spaces. Many of the musicians I worked with in this project lamented on the tendency of locally based Trinidadians not to show support for other Trinidadian people unless their fame had somehow been internationally approved. And yet, approved according to what or whose standards? Years after his brief stint as a construction worker, David still recalls this as one of the best and most humbling times of his life. He says, “There is a myth that blue collar workers would be dismissive of music or the arts but in that group of workers there was no judgment and a deep respect for what I did.” That experience in construction, he argues, is something he considers a non-musical success.

As a musician, he has done much to be proud of: in the summer of 2018, he was able to play gigs twice within one week at the famous Cornelia Street Café in Greenwich Village. David described it as an unbelievable thing that he was able to perform twice in a week (once with his band, and as a member of another) at a place that was notoriously impossible for musicians to get bookings because of the high demand and the guarantee of sold out shows.⁸⁷ The David Bertrand Band also held a three-month residency at Club Bonafide—a telling accomplishment considering the club’s firm policy to cancel shows that do not gather enough online sales in advance of the event.

⁸⁶ In the past decade, perhaps longer, illegal hunting and pollution have had an undeniable effect on the flora and fauna in the Nariva Swamp. Most notably this destruction manifests in the decline of the Scarlet Ibis population (one of the national birds of the country) and in the fading color of its once flaming red feathers.

⁸⁷ The Cornelia Street Café is now closed after over four decades of operation due to soaring costs of the property rent.



7.6 The David Bertrand Quartet at Club Bonafide. Photo courtesy Flora Bertrand.

At the Brooklyn Conservatory, his music has been also featured as part of the faculty showcase series.

Apart from performing as a jazz musician, David wears other musical shoes. He has been commissioned as a flautist for the production of a recently composed opera that is being produced again in July 2019. Through his work at the Brooklyn Conservatory, David also teaches at Public School 131 in Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn where he works with a community of children who are predominantly immigrants and from marginalized groups in the community. He has been at the school for five years and leads drum circles with the children, drawing extensively on Trinidadian folk rhythms.

Caribbean jazz for David, however, is not about producing one specific kind of sound—one that draws upon the language of calypso and the West African folk traditions. Rather, what guides his music are various rhythms, places, and sounds of Trinidad that are placed in conversation with the tools he has acquired in his pursuit of modern jazz. In spite of all of these successes, however, David's music still has not received acceptance in Trinidad. He has not been sought to play at any of the large jazz events, nor does he actively seek out performing opportunities when he returns home—a word I use ironically, because *where* is “home” now? His lack of success at home, however, is indicative of the kinds of musical aesthetics that still govern what music is accepted as Caribbean jazz in Trinidad.

As much as he longs to be accepted at “home,” David has come to terms with the precarity of his otherness in Trinidad—the ways that race, class, and notions of masculinity have deemed him outsider. For David, however, the transnational has offered new ways of experiencing the world: while he may have to contend with his blackness according to the norms of a new social context, being in New York has offered new possibilities outside of the context

of Trinidadian-ness, outside of Cocorite—to be able to side-step the social restrictions imposed on him at “home” so that he can now, ironically, comfortably do his “side-step.”

Trinidad is My Land: Navigating “home” and “foreign” in the development of musical self: Etienne Charles’ story

This chapter takes its name from the calypso, “Portrait of Trinidad,” by the Mighty Sniper. The first verse goes as follows:

*Trinidad is my land, and of it I am proud and glad
But I can't understand why some people does talk it bad
But I know, all of dem wey [that] running dey mouth
Don't know wey [what] dey talkin' bout
They would paint here black every day
And the right things they would never say*

The brief excerpt of this calypso is a fitting start to this chapter because it perfectly describes the work that Etienne has done to promote the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. Furthermore, the calypso art form plays an important role in how Etienne envisions his music and his physical presence in the world. In this chapter, I explore how Etienne has developed his musical style while straddling two worlds: that of Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States (or “foreign” as some might call it in the vernacular). To do this, I provide some biographical detail, but I also conduct musical analysis and give rich descriptions of the music. I particularly pay attention to his early style, the factors contributing to the development of his music, and how these changes manifest in his subsequent albums. To begin, a brief contextualization of Etienne’s place in the world of jazz.

International Acclaim

Etienne Charles, jazz trumpeter, wears many hats. Literally and figuratively. Behind the sharp, dapper style that is always finished with the touch of a fedora, Etienne has made a name for himself in the US jazz scene through music that carries deep political and cultural significance. As an arranger and composer, he was awarded the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Image Award in 2018 for contributions to social justice through his work on the album *Petite Afrique* by vocalist, Somi.⁸⁸ Etienne has been honored numerous times for his excellence as a musician, having been awarded the Caribbean American Heritage Trailblazer Award in 2013, the Jazz at the Lincoln Center Millennial Swing Award in 2016, and by being written into the Congressional Record in 2012 for his musical contributions to Trinidad and Tobago and the world. In 2015, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for Creative Arts through which he conducted extensive research toward the production of his sixth album, *San Jose Suite*.

Etienne’s first encounter with performing was through singing in the choir at Bishop’s Anstey Junior School, an elementary school located in Port of Spain. He later started learning the

⁸⁸ Etienne co-wrote five songs on this album and arranged extensively for the album.

recorder following in the footsteps of his sister. After some time, his uncle heard him playing the recorder and told him that he would send him a saxophone. There were no saxophones in the antique shop, however, so his uncle bought a trumpet, had it refurbished and sent it for Etienne. In 1994 Etienne started trumpet lessons with Eddie Wade after which he studied at the Brass Institute in Trinidad for some time.⁸⁹ He had a very diverse musical upbringing because he also played the steel band since his father and uncle had long been members of Phase II pan side. For a few years, he even played in the youth orchestra but when he got braces at age fourteen he had to stop playing the trumpet for a number of years. Etienne did not let this deter him from music and he chose to play percussion instead. When the braces came off and Etienne could finally play the trumpet again, he began improvising. He did not have a lot of exposure to jazz at that point but this would drastically change after he spent a summer at Berklee studying jazz theory and improvisation. The summer program was something he stumbled upon whilst registering for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (the SATs) and selecting the jazz programs to which he would send his scores.

Florida State University (FSU) seemed to be the obvious choice for Etienne. For one, the scholarship he was offered made it affordable, but it was also the only school from which a faculty member actively recruited him. Although the program did not have a jazz trumpet teacher, the director of the program took an active interest in Etienne, leading him to decide it would be a good fit for him. At FSU Etienne studied with Marcus Roberts, Leon Anderson, and Rodney Jordan. Scotty Barnhart, a jazz trumpeter, started teaching at FSU during Etienne's second year there. For his first year, however, he took "classical" lessons with a doctoral student in the music program. Speaking about his early days at FSU, Etienne said, "I didn't know anything about jazz. And they put me on gigs! And I embarrassed myself. But that embarrassment put me deep in the shed and caused me to work harder." He also credited the versatility of FSU's music program for helping him to develop musically through the various types of ensembles offered such as the salsa band and the Ghanaian ensemble.

Culture Shock

By the time Etienne graduated from Florida State University, he had already released his first album, *Culture Shock* (March 2006). He created his own label for the record because his mentors told him to make sure to own his music, forever. He said "Not having any record labels interested in me was a blessing." The album was financed through the help of his parents as well as the money he had saved from playing gigs. On the album, we get a sense of the strong support system that Etienne had while at FSU—his band for the album almost exclusively consists of teachers and mentors from his time at FSU.

The album title, *Culture Shock*, aptly describes this, the first of Etienne's musical oeuvre. It is a musical reckoning of two spheres of his life: childhood and roots in Trinidad, with new life as a performing jazz musician in the United States. The opening track, from which the album takes its name, begins with a well-known Orisha drumming pattern that serves as the driving ostinato of the piece:

⁸⁹ Eddie Wade was the director of the Police Band when Etienne studied with him. The Brass Institute is a music school run by Anthony Woodroffe Sr.



8.2 Album cover of *Folklore*. Original work of Laura Ferreira reproduced courtesy etiennecharles.com

Dapper Style

Etienne describes his clothing style as “calypso meets jazz.” He says that as a student he observed that a lot of his teachers wore suits for gigs, including the director of the program at FSU who wore “loud” colors like purple and yellow. He viewed the wearing of a suit as a sign of respect for audiences, and for the people with whom he worked. Additionally, the suits reminded Etienne of the style of calypsonians of the 1940s and 1950s and in particular of Lord Kitchener and the Mighty Sparrow. The story of musicians, and jazz musicians in particular, wearing suits is an important historical element of the World War II period. Called “zoot suits”, they were a popular fashion among young men across the United States and specifically associated with young black and Mexican American men. Describing the style of the suit, Kathy Peiss says:

The zoot suit was, in the first place, a *suit*, a garment made of cloth cut and sewn to cover and ornament the body. What made it “zoot” [exaggerated, hip] was the way it pulled out the lines and shape of the traditional suit to widen a man’s shoulders, lengthen his torso, and loosen his limbs. The style itself varied from man to man and place to place, but however it was worn, it broadcast a self-conscious sense of difference from the conventional mode of respectable male appearance (2011:17).

It was precisely these kinds of suits that Kitchener was known for with their flashy colors and expert tailoring. In fact, the suits became all the more the rage when they were made illegal by the US government because of their excessive use of fabrics which were deemed more necessary for war efforts.

Etienne's presence is immediately known through his collection of statement pieces that are all varying shades of popping color or striking patterns. While it may be clear to older generations that Etienne's public persona pays homage to the fashion sense of musicians past, it is a style that one must consider within the context of heteronormativity in contemporary Trinidad. Beyond the 1940s and 1950s, there occurred a social shift in the way clothing was viewed. Recounting parts of his childhood, scholar Wesley Crichlow states:

The 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s saw rigid gender-based restrictions on clothing color in Trinidad. As a man I was not allowed to wear pink, red, yellow or any color that appeared too "flamboyant or bright", for these hues were viewed as weak, feminine, "uncool"—usually worn by women, bullers or white boys. The socially coded buller man's body is stereotyped as "flamboyant", "effeminate", "flashy", "crazy-acting", and in some cases loud and childlike... (Crichlow 2004: 202-203).⁹⁰

Against this historical backdrop, which still prevails today in Trinidad and Tobago, Etienne's suits become more than just statements of respectability and a sharp fashion sense. Instead, they stand in direct defiance of the singularity with which masculinity in Trinidad and (the Caribbean) have come to be understood. Etienne shows, or rather, reminds his fans and audiences that masculinity exists in multiple forms and that the embrace of the loud, the striking is by no means a rejection of masculinities, but rather an exhibition of its pluralities. As Patricia Mohammed argues:

To unmask masculinity is not to reduce what is deemed masculine or manhood to the known and therefore without mystique, nor is it to deprive masculinity of its difference from femininity. To unmask masculinity is to remove some of the stereotypes associated with the term, and to subject men themselves to an interrogation of what it means to be a man, how their masculinity is defined and to question who determines where the boundaries of masculinity lie. (Mohammed 2004: 53).

⁹⁰ Crichlow explains in his notes: "Buller man is an indigenous derogatory epithet that I grew up with in Trinidad and Tobago, used to refer to men who have sex with other men. It is also widely used in some English-speaking Caribbean islands such as St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Barbados" (Crichlow 2004: 217).



8.3 Etienne in one of his signature suits on the set of “Cup of Joe” with Joel Villafana

Folklore

Fashion statements aside, *Folklore* was an important step for Etienne in his musical development. It was the chance, as Trinis might say, to “flex his muscles” and show what he had been up to during his time at the Juilliard School. The tracks of the album take their names from various Trinidadian folklore characters such as Papa Bois and Douens that have their origins in West African traditions.⁹¹ The use of the names of these folkloric characters serve not only as cultural signifiers, but also indicates the development of Etienne’s compositional thought process: a distinct shift from the previous album which contained pieces that were conceived of independently, this album emerges as a suite with a distinctive theme that serves as a link through the entire album. One could say that in the previous album, *Culture Shock*, there was in fact a theme at work: the melding of Trinidadian musical elements with those of straight-ahead jazz that tells of the experience of a transplanted Caribbean national in the United States. In contrast, *Folklore* is a suite that tells a story about life in Trinidad.

Beyond the thematic, *Folklore* also presents Etienne’s first foray into programmatic writing through which the folklore characters come to life. The piece “Douens,” for example, brings to life the playful, mischievous nature of douens, who are said to be the lost souls of

⁹¹ See Marshall (2010) for more information on the history of slave resistance through Asante folklore. Papa Bois is known as the father of the forest, protector of the wildlife and flora. Douens are said to be the spirits of unbaptized children.

unbaptized children. The douen is the spirit that lures children into the forest until they are lost and unable to find their way home. This particular folktale was often used by parents to ensure that their children did not stray too far from home, or interact with any strangers. To be extra careful, children were warned to look out for strange children with their feet pointed backwards.

Douens

Etienne Charles

The image displays a musical score for the introduction of the piece "Douens" by Etienne Charles. The score is arranged for four instruments: Bb Trumpet, Soprano Saxophone, Acoustic Bass, and Piano. The music is in 4/4 time and the key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The score is divided into three systems, with measures 6, 10, and 14 marked at the beginning of each system. The Bb Trumpet and Soprano Saxophone parts feature a melodic line with triplet markings. The Acoustic Bass part provides a steady rhythmic accompaniment. The Piano part features a complex harmonic accompaniment with various chords and textures.

8.4 Transcription of the introduction to “Douens”

The A section or refrain of “Douens” is composed of several different ostinatos layered upon one another: the bass enters first, followed by the keyboard ostinato which is almost immediately interrupted by the harmonized ostinato played by the trumpet and saxophone. The interplay of the three ostinatos is emblematic of the interactions of children at play.⁹² The use of Lydian mode also adds to the playful nature of the piece through the raised fourth scale degree.

The “Dance with the La Diabliesse” begins slowly and mysteriously with the piano playing improvised arpeggiations over a sustained chord and accompanied by the dramatic flair of the drums. The trumpet enters providing a lyrical, free flowing motif that outlines an F Phrygian scale that later becomes the primary melodic theme of the piece.

F Phrygian scale



8.5 Mode used in “Dance with the La Diabliesse”

The introduction serves as the setting of the stage for this particular character: a beautiful, well-dressed woman, she is a seductress who lures men to a deathly trap. After the theatrical introduction, the groove begins followed by the development of the theme.

As the third track on the album, it is the first in which Etienne truly begins to experiment with tonality. In spite of his use of Lydian mode in the previous piece, “Douens,” the track “Dance with La Diabliesse” is the first piece on the album in which he unleashes his newly developed tonal palette. In addition to the use of the distinct dissonances that arise from the use of Phrygian mode, Etienne’s solos in this track feature his first extensive use of side-stepping, and much longer, more thematically developed improvisatory passages. This is a key development in his style from the music we experience in the album *Culture Shock* and, more specifically, it is an important sonic signifier of the changes Etienne experiences through his study at Juilliard. While the album *Culture Shock* charted Etienne’s coming of age through the lens of a Trinidadian musical aesthetic—one defined by mostly diatonic melodies drawing on a rich legacy of calypso music, *Folklore* is a musical departure, shaped by West Indian oral history.

A sharp departure from *Culture Shock* which primarily featured faculty members at his undergraduate institution, this album charts the growth of Etienne’s musical network in the United States. Through his relationship cultivated with renowned French-Guadeloupean saxophonist Jacques Schwarz-Bart, this album features Etienne alongside US-based musicians such as pianist Milan Milanovic and bassist Luques Curtis (both Berklee trained) as well as drummer Obed Calvaire, a graduate from Manhattan School of Music. The irony of this network of musicians is perhaps the fact that the relationship between Jacques Schwarz-Bart and Etienne was initiated when the two musicians met in Trinidad at the Trinidad and Tobago Steel Pan and Jazz Festival in 2007. In spite of these new connections, however, Etienne maintains his ties to “home” by incorporating musicians such as percussionist Ralph MacDonald, steel pan player and

⁹² For more information on the development of musical motives in children’s play songs, see Kartomi (1991).

arranger Len “Boogsie” Sharpe, and the beginning of a series of collaborations with vocalist Wendell Manwarren of rapso group, 3Canal.

Kaiso

Etienne’s third album, *Kaiso*, is a testament to his skills as an arranger. The album is a compilation of several well-known calypsos from Trinidad in which Etienne not only revives the brass band tradition that once accompanied calypso, but he also pushes the musical boundaries of calypso as it might be imagined, through the lens of swing. In spite of the various eras of calypso represented by the collection of songs on the album, Etienne’s arrangement perform a sense of nostalgia for the Swing and Big Band Eras of the 1930s and 1940s.

The song, “Ten to One is Murder,” for example was a calypso written by the Mighty Sparrow in 1986. The song is highly reflective of the early developmental years of soca: calypsos being performed at faster tempos and more use of electronic instrumentation and equipment, along with acoustic instrumentation.⁹³ The transcription below shows the harmony provided by the bass guitar and they keyboard (through synthesized sound).

Ten to One is Murder

The Mighty Sparrow

♩ = 96

8.6 Transcription of the Introduction to the Mighty Sparrow’s “Ten to One is Murder”

Because of the fast tempo of the song, the harmonic accompaniment here follows a very basic I-IV-V⁷-I cycle, with little to no room for much embellishment of the chords. The interjections by

⁹³ As the genre of soca developed, acoustic instruments were gradually phased out in favor of the use of synthesized sound. For more information on the development of soca, see Guilbault (2007: 207-224).

the brass, the only acoustic instruments used, provide a harmonized arrangement of the catch phrase of the song, “Ten to One is Murder.”

Etienne’s arrangement of this song places immediate emphasis on the harmonic possibilities. Tempo (meaning danceability) becomes secondary and Etienne instead foregrounds the unique possibilities of each of the instruments of his combo. The arrangement begins with a harmonized walking bass hit played by the piano.

Ten to One is Murder: Introductory Piano Hit

Arranged by Etienne Charles

Composed by: The Mighty Sparrow

Chord progression: $D\flat$, $d\emptyset7$, $A\flat/E\flat$

Roman numerals: IV, $vii^{\circ}7/V$, V_4

8.7 Introductory Hit

The hit serves two roles. In addition to establishing part of the chord progression of the main refrain of the piece, it acts as a break, allowing the instruments to introduce themselves each through a brief improvisatory statement. After each of the instruments are presented, the refrain is expressed completely.

Ten to One is Murder

Arranged by Etienne Charles

The Mighty Sparrow

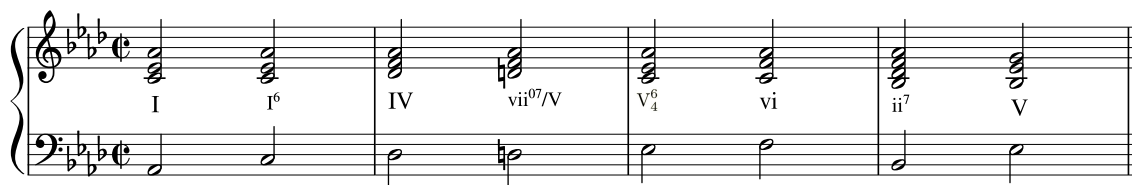
$\text{♩} = 120$

Instrumentation: Voice, Trumpet, Saxophone, Piano, Bass, Drumset

8.8 Refrain

The chord progression played by the piano is a stylized arrangement of the classic walking bass progression used in calypso music.

Calypso Walking Bass Line



8.9 Typical chord progression often used for calypso

By using this particular chord progression, Etienne not only pays homage to its long tradition in calypso music, but also allows much more harmonic possibility in his arrangement of the song.

Etienne's arranging skills in the album go beyond his ability to reimagine calypsos and soca songs. In this album, we encounter his debut in orchestral arranging through tracks such as "Teresa" and "Rose." Maintaining the aura of nostalgia, these orchestra arrangements pay homage to what has been referred to as the "Golden Age" of film scoring.⁹⁴ Both songs were performed by the Mighty Sparrow, Slinger Francisco.⁹⁵ Although the original dates of release are uncertain, the musical style used in both songs feature slower tempos and extensive use of big band accompaniment indicating their dates of composition to be between the 1940s and 1950s. It seems only natural then, that Etienne's way of reimagining these two particular songs would be to think in terms of what else may have been happening musically in that era. We find this in the lush, romantic string orchestration that opens his arrangement of "Teresa," complete with soaring oboe and French horn solos. Etienne's arrangement of "Rose" is particularly reminiscent of Miles Davis' soundtrack for the French film *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (1957) which begins with a slow and haunting trumpet melody that sails above a very sparse piano accompaniment before the groove begins many minutes later into the score. Etienne's "Rose" follows a similar pattern. It begins with a haunting cello solo that is followed by a mysterious trumpet solo based on a motif that is then taken over by the full orchestra before settling into a relaxed groove. Unlike Miles Davis' score, however, Etienne does not dive into modal jazz in this piece.

Transnational Connections: *Creole Soul*, *San Jose Suite*, and *Carnival: The Sound of a People*

The term "Creole" is a complicated one. Stuart Hall highlights this by noting the various ways in which it has been used historically: as a description of vernacular language in the Caribbean as discussed by Glissant (1976); as a sociological identifier of early French and Spanish settlers in the Caribbean and their descendants; and, more distinctly in Anglophone countries such as Trinidad and Guyana, as a signifier of race (Hall 2015). Hall states:

⁹⁴ See James Wierzbicki (2009) for more information on the development of film music and the "Golden Age" of film scoring.

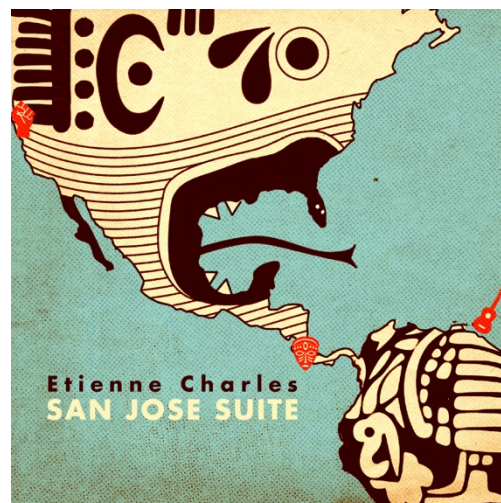
⁹⁵ Here I state that Sparrow performed these songs and not "wrote" them because in the history of calypso, performers were not always the composers of the music. In the case of these two songs, Etienne indicates on the album that ownership belongs to "Warner/Chappell" and not "Francisco." For more information on the relationships between composing, arranging and performing calypsos, see Guilbault (2007).

There [Trinidad and Guyana], it signals the difference between those of “Indian” and “African” descent. Guyanese talk about “Indians or Creoles,” and by Creoles they mean “blacks” (whatever their actual skin color), descendants of Africans born in Guyana, whereas “Indians” refers to the indentured population from Asia. These examples suggest that “Creole” remains a powerfully charged but also an exceedingly slippery signifier. It seems impossible to freeze this term in its meaning, or to give it any kind of fixed or precise racial referent” (Ibid.: 14).

The album, *Creole Soul*, thus plays an important role in charting this new oeuvre of works that locate Trinidad and Tobago within wider transnational networks. It is a departure from the previous album that was steeped in the language of calypso and conversely explores genres such as rocksteady, reggae and highlights the “creole” (of African origin) practices of the bélé (or bel aire) and Vodou. Through these musical genres and cultural practices, Etienne implicitly highlights both the colonial histories of the islands as well as the custom of intraregional migration within the Caribbean particularly between Anglophone and Francophone territories.

How, or why did Trinidad have such strong connections to French-speaking territories? Although Trinidad was never a French territory, the island was once home to a large population of French planters. This was a direct result of the Cedula of Population, a bill passed by the Spanish government that allowed French planters to settle in Trinidad in attempts to boost the plantation economy. When Trinidad was captured by the British in 1797, the large presence of the French planters on the island was a source of constant turmoil for the British government. The British may have ruled Trinidad in theory, but the French planters dominated the island economically and socially. *Creole Soul*, however, is only the beginning of Etienne’s transnational mapping of historical ties.

In the album, *San Jose Suite*, he tackles head on the legacies of the Spanish colonization of Trinidad. The album which was funded by a Guggenheim Fellowship is a sonic mapping of a very unique transnational connection for Trinidad. The title, *San Jose Suite*, refers very specifically to San Jose de Oruña, the first (original) capital of Trinidad when it was captured by the Spanish in 1498.



8.10 Album cover of *San Jose Suite*. Original work of Laura Ferreira. The three figures in red identify the three San Joses on which the work is based.

Etienne performs several political acts through this work. First and foremost, he highlights the history of Spanish conquest in the New World by identifying other locations (Costa Rica and California) that experienced similar Spanish occupation.

The story as Etienne tells it, however, is not one of conquest. It is a story of resistance. This work does not tell the story of how the Spanish captured Trinidad and established missions in Costa Rica and California. Instead, it tells the story of the First Nations peoples and African slaves who fought against the colonial powers. The album thus gives voice to histories of Trinidad that may have otherwise been unknown to US based jazz audiences. By establishing this linkage between Trinidad and its Spanish history and other similar Catholic missions established by the Spanish in the New World, Etienne tells a story of Trinidad that steps out the narrative of steel drums and calypso.

Etienne curates the entire suite in such a way that it develops chronologically, following the stories of First Nations Peoples to those of Africans enslaved in the New World and finally culminating with the story of Black resistance at San Jose State University in the 1960s. The chronological development, however, is not the only way that the suite is conceived. As the suite progresses, so too does the intensity and dramatic nature of the music, reflecting the building tensions surrounding the stories at their cores. The suite begins with the light and playful, “Boruca,” a tribute to Costa Rican First Peoples and their cultural practices, with an easily discernible beat and a funky groove. “Cahuita” is a story in the language of calypso which we hear not only through rhythm, but also through the distinct tonal quality of Etienne’s horn: the use of the mute and gentle vibrato to round off long notes at the end of phrases that very much replicate the declamation style of calypsonians.

“Hyarima” marks the beginning of the departure from the familiar and feelings of ease. Set against the backdrop of rainforest sounds, the movement begins almost nostalgically with gentle, free improv between the musicians of the band over the same sustained chord. As soon as the first chord fades, however, the tensions begin to seep in through the use of dissonant non-chord tones. The saxophone and trumpet begin to “cry” out—no longer singing gently. The drums become angsty. Etienne describes the following section as “waltzing a Parang waltz.” A waltz in 9/8. There is a constant feeling of being unsettled that is reflected in the gradually increasing wailing of the saxophone. The movement tapers off in a moment of respite.

The piece, “Revolt” describes the attack led by African slave Makandal Daaga on San Jose de Oruña. It is a tantric, climactic point in the suite. It begins sparsely scored with harmony provided by the piano and guitar, driven by the insistence of the drums signaling the beginning of an exciting, but tense, moment. When the horns begin to play, the drums enter again with a pulsating ostinato beneath the long-sustained harmonies played by piano. The saxophone eventually takes the solo: it is telling the story of confusion, of growing frustration as each passage reaches higher and higher into the stratosphere. The drums with the saxophone build in intensity leading up to a major drum solo followed by a guitar solo that hints at the underlying excitement of the battle. Just as we get adjusted to this new dramatic moment however, the horns enter again reminding us of the precarious nature of the battle. Tensions run high. The battle is over, just as quickly as it began. As the suite continues, the tension dissipates and the next two tunes, “Muwekma” and “Song for Minh,” serve as moments of reflection before the suite closes strongly in the style of funk (Speed City).

Etienne's latest album, *Carnival: The Sound of A People*, is a sonic reenactment of "the Olde Yard," a Carnival celebration that features the masquerade of "traditional" characters.⁹⁶ Etienne does important work in this production by not only highlighting the beauty and comedy of the traditional mas' characters, but also by engaging what feels like the entire Carnival creative industry in the making of this album. Etienne describes the album as a suite that tells the story of the journey from slavery to freedom in Trinidad and Tobago. Within the suite is a "micro-suite" that tells the story of the birth of the steel pan. Charting the steel pan's history from the banning of African drums at Carnival time, Etienne musically shows the resilience of enslaved Africans to retain their culture by adapting their music to whatever materials were available: tamboo bamboo (percussive instruments made out of bamboo logs), iron (the use of scrap iron and tins as percussive instruments) and eventually, steel (initially made out of discarded oil barrels).

The album is more than just music. On stage, it is performed and includes art, costume, history, community, tradition, and the elevation of the working class, the folk. For each piece on the album, Etienne worked closely and collaboratively with various communities of creative performers: traditional mas' characters such as the Dame Lorraine, the Jab Molassie and the Moko Jumbie, percussionists (drummers, tamboo bamboo bands), choreographers, and instrumentalists.⁹⁷

Conclusion

Etienne's albums are a testament to his ability to wear multiple hats: that while he continues to fulfil his role as a professor at Michigan State University, he also works as his own manager, taking care of the intricate details scheduling, publicity, and financial management. Yet his albums tell a completely different story of diasporic experience when compared to David Bertrand. Etienne's is a story of a strong love for his homeland and his acceptance by Trinbagonian society as having fulfilled the requisite middle-class ideals. It is represented through the constant and strong transnational ties that keep Etienne moving frequently between the United States and Trinidad and Tobago as he continues to develop more and more collaborative projects with locally based musicians and artists. Even when he is not physically in Trinidad, Trinidad and Tobago is at the forefront of Etienne's work and thought processes, placed in the spotlight for all of the world (and particularly all of the US jazz world) to hear, experience and consume.

Through his work, Etienne has not merely done work to highlight the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. Rather, his work has helped to paint multiple nuanced understandings of the country. Each album contributes in various ways to expanding the public understanding of the histories of the country and the various forces that have helped shape the cultural diversity of the nation. Locally, Etienne does important work in challenging notions of masculinity not simply through his style of dress, but also through his strong work ethic.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Garth L. Green discusses in detail the cultural politics behind the creation of events (or spaces) such as the Olde Yard, also known as Viey La Cou, which literally translates to the "Old Backyard" (Green and Scher 2007). See also Pamela Franco's article in this edition which describes the Olde Yard in more detail.

⁹⁷ For more information on traditional mas characters, see Carol Martin "Trinidad Carnival Glossary" (1998).

⁹⁸ Underachievement by male youth in Trinidad is a frequently discussed issue in the field of education. See Mark Figueroa (2000); De Lisle, Jerome, Peter Smith, and Vena Jules (2005, 2010).

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I took readers through an intimate journey—a journey full of pit stops and detours. Each of the four sections of this dissertation features a different kind of intimacy. We began with the biography of Clive (Zanda) Alexander whose story played an important role in laying the foundation of this dissertation. Clive’s story provided important historical, cultural, and musical information about Trinidad that prepared readers for what would follow in the subsequent biographies. The intimacy of this chapter, for me, was the honor and privilege of telling Clive’s story. Clive became a grandfather figure of sorts to me during my fieldwork and I took utmost care to present his story in a way that describes his struggles, yet celebrates him as the father of Kaiso jazz. The chapters on Vaughnette and Anthony emerged as collections of letters addressed to various persons. Through these letters I guided readers through themes and issues that I felt were particularly pertinent to the task of telling Vaughnette and Anthony’s stories. I found that the decision to use letters as a stylistic tool allowed me to evoke the concept of “home” with a kind of tenderness that showed how “home” could be simultaneously precious, and complicated. In Part Three I told the stories of Michael Low Chew Tung and Chantelle Esdelle through the art of Trini storytelling. At times the text was silly, sometimes I exaggerated to make a point, at other moments I spoke bluntly of some of the harsh realities of life in Trinidad. The stylistic approach to these two chapters, I believe, is a fantastic reflection of the ways Trinbagonians live: we embrace life to the fullest and certainly know how to have a good time and celebrate. In the midst of that celebration and joy, there are various elements of turmoil, highs and lows—and yet we persevere in spite of it all.

There is still much work to be done, however. This dissertation is only the beginning, I hope, of scholarship on Caribbean jazz in Trinidad and other islands. In relation to Trinidad and Tobago, however, this work leaves many unanswered questions, or calls to action. First and foremost, it highlights the urgent need for more documentation, and subsequently recognition, of local musicians. Too many important figures have passed on without their stories being told, shared, and honored. Fitzroy Coleman, Raf Robertson, Rupert Clemendore, John “Buddy” Williams, and others. What we know of them is all based on oral narrative—not to discount the importance of this, but rather to highlight the fact that memory wanes, and stories take on lives of their own when retold by various people. On a much larger scale, this call to action goes beyond the need for more biographical work to be done. Rather, it is a call to action to engage young Trinbagonians to begin doing the important work of documentation of our history and culture that has been (quite frankly) neglected since the early activities of nation-building geared toward the country’s Independence from the United Kingdom.

Much of my research centered on the use of records as archival tools. This process alerted me to two additionally important things. First, there is important work yet to be done with the archival information available at the various media houses in Trinidad. These places are important keepers of invaluable video and audio footage of many of the aforementioned musicians. Second, in dealing with records, I became more aware of the complicated nature of copyright in Trinidad and Tobago—both from an historical standpoint and also in terms of current music production. There is much work to be done to address the various issues at stake in copyright laws and how historical precedents have paved the way for current practices.

This dissertation was a large undertaking in terms of the types of theoretical goals I sought to achieve. As a primary goal, this project attempted to expand upon the notion of transnationalism by exploring how transnational processes are constituted and negotiated. Rather

than focusing on the flow of capital or the permanent migration of people as studies on transnationalism are wont to do, this study instead focused on what a musical practice, Caribbean jazz, could reveal about various socio-political issues at work in processes of transnationalism. To do this, I rendered the biographies of seven Caribbean jazz musicians from Trinidad and Tobago, showing the ways that their individual creations of Caribbean jazz were impacted by colonial legacies including, but not limited to, the intersection of issues of race, class and gender. In so doing, these issues highlighted other core themes in the project such as labor, the negotiation of power, the creation of space, the normative construction of masculinity, materiality and technology, and senses of belonging.

In this project, I also attempted to challenge the ways that scholars engage in the study of sound. I did this by urging that the lived body be placed first and foremost in such studies, thereby immediately engaging the politics of difference. Through these detailed biographies, I attempted to show that the process of creating sound is not one that can be taken for granted. Instead, it is a process, or rather a series of processes, that require much negotiation and adaptation that reflect the inequalities of power that affect black bodies to this day. I demonstrated this approach to studying sound through techniques such as descriptive writing through listening, musical analysis, historical and socio-political analyses, and the analysis of material objects used in the production of sound.

In conducting this study of sound, I also attempted to interrogate what qualifies as jazz, according to whom and why. Therefore, in this study I also sought to challenge the notions of jazz as being defined exclusively in relation to the practice of the genre in the United States. Rather than conceiving of Caribbean jazz as a specific genre, then, I argue that it is a musical practice that draws on the practice of US jazz but has taken a life of its own as a result of the inherent power dynamics in transnational processes.

This dissertation was also a celebration of the seven musicians featured. Through these biographies, I demonstrated the resilience of these musicians in the face of adversity, whether related to pursuing education, the struggling creative sector in Trinidad, or the difficulties of travelling abroad. I have also shown the importance of the lived experienced to provide much needed nuance in understanding the idiosyncrasies and disparities of this musical practice. Although everyone calls it “Caribbean jazz,” it sounds the same for no one. By extension, I have also demonstrated through this approach the dangers of homogenizing the people of a nation, albeit a small developing nation.

As a final goal, and not to be forgotten, this dissertation was a personal attempt at claiming space for myself, and other similarly underrepresented bodies within academia. This work, to its core, challenged the notions of acceptability, objectivity and sterility that often define academic writing. Through a variety of writing styles and the process of writing against, I attempted to write *for* those like me who struggle to finish, and those who never got the chance to dream of such an academic journey.

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