



Performances

An Echo in the Bone. By Dennis Scott. 1974. An estate owner is killed by a peasant gardener who then commits suicide. The celebrants in a dead-wake ceremony want to know why this tragedy has occurred. They become possessed by the spirit of the gardener and reveal untold parts of his story. They provide historical perspectives and offer the conflicts and antagonisms that have existed between the races in time past.

Carnival Messiah. Dir. Geraldine Connor. 1999. This work is a Caribbean re-visioning of Handel's oratorio. The musical combines Handel's music with the imagery of Trinidad's Carnival and other ritualistic practices to tell the story of Christ – from his birth to his resurrection.

Curfew: The Musical. Dir. Trevor Nairne. Comp. Michael Holgate. Chor. Kelly Barrett and Michael Holgate. Perf. Othneil Nation, Orlando Pinto, Michael Holgate, La-Toya Moulton and Sharee McDonald-Russell. 2006. A Jamaican community struggles to overcome crime and violence. The musical addresses issues of unemployment, silence and the lure of “easy money.”

Dance Bongo. By Errol Hill. 1965. This one-act work is a fantasy about the dead-wake ritual dance.

Devil Mas. By Lennox Brown. 1971. Carnival takes on a sinister meaning for a White priest and two Blacks in Trinidad. The hero assumes the Devil masquerade in defiance of church warnings. Descending into hell he brings back the bodied souls of ancestral freedom fighters to challenge the established religion that continues to enslave the minds of his people.

Din Shuru. By Tony Hall. Comp. Jit Samaroo. 2005. A musical that pushes the boundaries of carnival and theatre and explores the meeting point of Indian, African and European cultures. It is a script of one woman's journey spanning three continents over 160 years.

Dream of Monkey Mountain. By Derek Walcott. 1967. This work sheds light on Caribbean people in search of identity. Ritual and fantasy are mixed with realistic working-class figures.

Henri Christophe. By Derek Walcott. 1949. Henri Christophe is set in Haiti in the years immediately following the slave revolt that drove the French colonists from the island. The leader of the revolt, Toussaint L'Ouverture, was hoodwinked by Napoleon's agents and spirited off to France, where he died in prison. His absence led to a power struggle among the remaining leaders – a struggle that forms the material of this play. The first “winner” of the deadly game was Jean-Jacques Dessalines; after his demise, the country was divided between Pétion's rule in the South and Henri Christophe's in the North. Christophe was a revolutionary hero, dedicated to freeing his people from French oppression but he was also unable to envision power outside of frameworks that mimic white style and structure.

Koanga. By Frederick Delius. 1995. This opera is set in a sugarcane plantation on the Mississippi in Louisiana where a tragic triangular love story develops. Palmyra, a mulatto slave-girl, Koanga, an African prince and also a voodoo priest are drawn to each other.

Man Better Man. By Errol Hill. 1954. The three-act production relays the story of a young man who resorts to voodoo, or folk magic, to win a stick-fighting contest with the intent of impressing the girl he wishes to marry. It is a play incorporates heroism, deceit, love and loyalty with calindas, calypso and dance. Putting stickfighting at the centre of the drama fixes the dramatic focus on an important origin of Carnival.

Maskarade. By Sylvia Wynter. 1973. This drama is inspired by events connected with the attempt to ban the Jonkonnu festivities in Kingston in 1841. The work incorporates costumes, masks, choral singing and dancing to tell a story that stresses the importance of traditional performance in sustaining the spirits of the dispossessed.

Orpheus and Euridice. Dir. Claudia Applewhaite. 2005. This Greek opera is given a Trinidadian interpretation through the use of Carnival motifs. A Pierrot tells the story of the love shared by Orpheus and Euridice – a love over which death has no dominion. In this work Orpheus is the sweetest pan man. Blue devils, Jab Jabs and Dragon masquerade characters comprise the Furies, those guardians of the gates of Hades.

Ping Pong. By Errol Hill. 1948. This play is an intimate portrait of life in a panyard, celebrating Trinidad's culture. It is dedicated to those early "pan-beaters" who, out of adversity and in the face of opposition, created a new type of music. The comedy is set in a backyard bamboo "tent," the home of the Canary Steelband. An hour before an important competition, the captain's irreplaceable pan is stolen. The audience sees the theft, and the suspense that is skillfully developed from the outset of the play relies not on who did it, but on his motivation, on whether the pan will be rescued undamaged, whether the culprit will be discovered and the framed man cleared, whether the band will play in the competition, whether the Canaries will beat their rivals (summarised by Judy Stone).

Play Mas! By Marina Omowale Maxwell. 1968. In this drama, building a masquerade float becomes a symbol for the political aspirations of a group of youths.

Play Mas! By Mustapha Matura. 1974. An oppressive government regime lifts a ban on the carnival parade in order to shoot down revolutionaries who abandon their hideouts to participate in the carnival or “play mas.”

Red House [Fire! Fire!] By Tony Hall. 1999. This is a play on reality, where the reality of the play within the play becomes the reality of the play. This work features a blend of politics and sexuality.

Scenes from the Song of Hiawatha. Dir. Pat Bishop. Comp. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. 2008.

This opera is inspired by the Song of Hiawatha, a poem by American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The work acknowledges the “First Peoples” of Trinidad and Tobago by incorporating the Carib community and drawing on the work of Lionel and Rosemary Jagessar, who are designers and makers of traditional Carnival Indian masquerade costumes. The steelpan and tassa drums are included in the musical composition.

Shango: Tales of the Orisha. Dirs. Rawle Gibbons and Rhoma Spencerc. 1996. An explication of Yoruba myth and the Caribbean historical narration.

Shrove Tuesday March. By Roderick Walcott. 1966. Set in a steelband yard, this play takes place in a context when the steelbands in Trinidad were known for their fatal clashes.

Steel. By Derek Walcott. Comp. Galt MacDermot. 1991. This musical is a metaphor of the Caribbean’s attempt to free itself from European colonial dominance and assert its own identity. It looks at the development of steel pan music in the 1930s and 40s. The main character abandons his piano for the sounds of the steel drum.

Strictly Matrimony. By Errol Hill. 1959. This one-act work evokes comedy from a happy couple involved in a common-law relationship, who are tricked into marriage. Their lives turn into comical chaos.

Temple in the Sea: The Leela of Siew Dass Sadhu. Dirs. Rawle Gibbons and Dani Lyndersay. 1995. Based on the true story of Siew Dass Sadhu who built the temple in the sea at Waterloo, Carapichaima, Trinidad.

The Brand New Lucky Diamond Horseshoe Club. By Tony Hall. Comp. David Rudder. 2004. The Brand New Lucky Diamond Horseshoe Club was an actual bar and hangout in Trinidad that burnt down under mysterious circumstances. Taking place on the eve of Trinidad's world-famous carnival, this musical introduces us to the Club's salty and colourful misfits viewed in the glow of carnivalesque illusion. Lucky Diamond is a place where love, tempers and joyous music can ignite at any moment. The music, composed by calypso artiste David Rudder, makes you stand, dance and marvel at a Caribbean space that is as strong and beautiful as it is fragile and vulnerable.

The Isle is Full of Noises. By Derek Walcott. Dir. Douglas Turner Ward. 1982. This work is set on an island caught between its colonial past and uncertain future. The piece incorporates allusions to Robinson Crusoe, Greek mythology and The Tempest.

The View from Belmont. Dirs. Rawle Gibbons and Louis Mc Williams. 2004. Based on the book by Kevyn Alan Arthur, this theatrical work tells the story of an English woman's path to becoming a "Trinidadian."

Ti Jean and His Brothers. By Derek Walcott. 1958. This is a metaphorical story set in the Caribbean about three brothers who are challenged to a duel by the Devil. The terms are as follows: if the Devil can make the brothers angry, he will devour them in hell, but if the brothers can in turn provoke the Devil's wrath, they will be made wealthy. Each of the two older brothers has a defining characteristic: Gros-Jean, the oldest, has a very powerful arm, while Mi-Jean, the middle child, has an incredible intellect. However, Ti-Jean, the youngest brother is neither strong nor smart, but has common sense and is eager to take advice from his family as well as the animals. Each of these characteristics is integral to how the brothers attempt to beat the Devil. What initially sounds like a classic story of good versus evil actually has much deeper meaning. In this play, Walcott creates

metaphorical characters that confront issues of identity and questions of where we fit in. The oldest brother represents Africa, being strong and set in tradition, while the middle brother represents Westerners, viewed as rational and intellectual. The youngest, in contrast, represents the Caribbean: a blending of the two cultures. In the end, after the older brothers have failed with their superior strength and intellect, only Ti-Jean is successful in beating the Devil. Walcott makes it very clear that a new Caribbean identity, characterised in Ti-Jean, is much more important than trying to assimilate an English or African identity.

Twilight Café. By Tony Hall. 2002. This theatrical production underscores Caribbean experience through Caribbean man and woman politics as it focuses on the histories of two characters.

Wey Wey. By Errol Hill. 1957. This one-act play focuses on the circumstances surrounding the Trinidadian Chinese numbers/lottery game.