

!HalleluliaH!

Excursions into a Third Space: *Carnival Messiah* as an Instrument of Postcolonial Liberation

Geraldine Connor

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ABSTRACT

Trinidad has a long history of applying the linguistic formulation of 'double entendre' as a mode of misinformation that permeates every aspect of its culture. Double entendre here forms an agent of secrecy and camouflage, reversal and subversion, and ensures that 'nothing is ever as it seems'. It is not just a witty, mischievous past-time, but is endemic to the very workings of that society, a status quo that has been born out of a long history of suppression. Even though my theatrical production *Carnival Messiah* makes no direct reference to the institution of slavery or the British parliamentary abolition act of 1807, its every step is rooted in the emancipation of slaves in order to comprehensively reflect the entire the cultural history of Trinidad and Tobago from that date.

Carnival Messiah symbolically depicts the emergence of the cultural history of Trinidad and Tobago through its use of carnival masquerade as a multi-dimensional metaphor which embodies the historical experiences of African holocaust, sixteenth-century European expansionism, and nineteenth-century Asian indentureship. Attached to these experiences are the consequent appropriation of those multiple and shifting identities within one space, which in *Carnival Messiah* are harnessed and transformed to re-present an established western narrative within a new and distinctly re-imagined Caribbean cultural identity.

This shift was characterised by an evolutionary process unique to the historical experience of the Caribbean; a process which effectively deployed the use of aesthetics as the prevailing agent of non-confrontational resistance and

transformation, and sought the empowerment of a people. As an aesthetic manifestation, *Carnival Messiah* draws upon the heritages of two diverse and culturally distanced traditions -- European classical music and Caribbean carnival practice -- combining in new and exciting ways the visual, and live and performing arts, creating new celebratory performance environments and engaging them in new and innovative methods of artistic delivery.

In the Caribbean, the word 'Messiah' as expressed in Handel's oratorio *Messiah* represents two opposing standpoints. Firstly, the dramatic and aesthetically pleasing baroque culture of Europe, encapsulated within an outstandingly beautiful and technically perfect musical composition. Secondly, the historical representation of an oppressive colonial hegemony, both political and religious, that is closely entwined with the institutions and memory of African enslavement and Asian indentureship -- institutions that were endured within the Caribbean region for many centuries.

However, this outlook was challenged by the theologically marginalised Caribbean peoples, many of whom surreptitiously removed themselves from the dominant enforced theology of colonial Christianity in a bid to craft their own self-affirming belief systems by creating liberative perspectives particular to them that corresponded to the context in which they were being forced to theologise.

Therefore, *Carnival Messiah* cannot be considered to be merely a straight-forward Caribbean adaptation of George Friedrich Handel's *Messiah*. Instead, using those same historical techniques of camouflage and agencies of non-

confrontational resistance, *Carnival Messiah* is rather a radical re-invention, or even a subversion, of *Messiah*. *Carnival Messiah* does not purport to present the life and passion of Christ, as Handel may well have intended in his original composition. Rather, *Carnival Messiah* is a lyric-epic contemplation of the idea of redemption, a re-reading of the bible in an attempt to rationalise its accompanying oppressive colonial interpretation of freedom as 'divine' -- as opposed to the enslaved African's interpretation of freedom as 'human', that is, God's freedom is for all people, in particular the freedom and liberation of enslaved Africans, and by extension, the legacy and impact of that interpretation of human freedom, on contemporary Caribbean consciousness.

Carnival Messiah should thus be viewed as a unique paradigm. It contains a progressive mission with a complex assignment that constitutes the foundation that supports a dynamic and multifaceted metaphor. It is this metaphor that enables *Carnival Messiah* to function as a unique instrument of postcolonial liberation.

Therefore, the carnivalized re-invention of aspects of *Messiah* taken from the oratorio within *Carnival Messiah* purposely re-interprets, re-positions, and re-texturises the Caribbean people's transformation of their status from slave to free individual, and from victim to subject. This is evidenced in the production through a new-found consciousness, a privileged 'voice', and empowerment, all of which are deeply embedded within the spectacle of carnival theatre.

Carnival Messiah has two principal inter-related objectives. Firstly, it aims to present itself as a stand-alone professional aesthetic creation. Secondly, it aims,

through its education programme, to create a vehicle and catalyst for implementing strategies of non-confrontational resistance to target and appease some of the problems faced by many disenfranchised youth within Britain today. These are essentially the same strategies that were used by the peoples of the historical Caribbean between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Today they can activate social re-cultivation and regeneration through the promotion of growth and intellectual expansion, while at the same time engendering processes of change, transformation, equality, fairness, and social empowerment through aesthetic practice.

The successful realisation of these objectives necessitates the coming together of five key elements which are: the aesthetic content of *Carnival Messiah* as artefact; the professional creative and teaching input of the *Carnival Messiah* creative team; the identification, recruitment and participation of a cohort of artistically inexperienced community participants through a series of open auditions; the participation and performances of a core professional performing company auditioned by the *Carnival Messiah* creative team; and the attendance and response of an audience to their combined presentation of *Carnival Messiah*.

Deeply embedded within the aesthetic cultural materials of *Carnival Messiah*, camouflaged within the music of Messiah and the act of 'playing de Mas', are the ephemeral, emotional, and empirical machinery -- the instruments of liberation -- that await release. I hope to prove that these instruments of liberation, when combined with the human resources gathered in the way previously described, activate and propel all the participants and recipients into a place that sustains and enables processes of transformation, equality, and empowerment.

This new territory is what I define as the 'Third Space'. Third Space is a space of many voices and unfixed cultural identities, the site of transformation and multi-consciousness. That moment of entry into Third Space, which in *Carnival Messiah* suspends reality, is often experienced in a moment of psychological catharsis as a moment of spiritual renewal in a short period of transported existence, even euphoria, and whose effects will last for far longer than those actual moments of quintessence.

It is this moment that shifts its recipients (whether performer, participant, or audience) from reality towards an aesthetic territory of pleasure, transcendence, and magnificence, from which they emerge purified and fortified. In effect the process is akin to a possession.

Rather than refuse multiple cultural identities with their idioms, symbols, and assumptions, *Carnival Messiah* instead simply appropriates them, re-imagines them, and creates new and dynamic co-existent cultural spaces. This Third Space encourages sight from and through new perspectives, the elimination of boundaries between margin and centre, subversiveness, transgressiveness, and the creation of a new universe where all difference is to be affirmed and celebrated.

Carnival Messiah thus embodies aspirations for an integrity of being, seeking to collapse entrenched and negative notions of difference, whilst guiding its participants and recipients towards a critical consciousness which can only be achieved through self-discovery and self-recovery.

It is from within this Third Space that *Carnival Messiah* strives to exemplify notions of forgiveness, re-construction, self-affirmation, healing, and unity. As an allegory for enabling transformation and enlightenment, *Carnival Messiah* becomes an instrument of empowerment, a tool of post colonial liberation, that takes all those it touches to a new space, giving them all new hope and a new future.

**!Hallelulah! Excursions into a Third Space:
Carnival Messiah as an Instrument of Postcolonial Liberation**

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INTRODUCTION

Reflections

My earliest recollection of Carnival is as a child growing up in Trinidad, sitting on the bleachers of the Queen's Park Savannah in the scorching sunshine and seeing a fantasy of my imagination come alive. I was seeing Silver Star Steelband's portrayal of *Gulliver's Travels*. Right in front of me were all the Children of Lilliput in glorious costumed splendour -- exactly as I had imagined them -- surrounding the tied-up and nailed-down giant Gulliver. It was 1963 and the masquerade band was designed by Pat Chu Foon.

1963 was also the year I first heard Steelband and, although I did not know it at the time, my cousin Richard had taken me to the first ever Panorama Steelband Competition. The event was to leave a lifelong impression on me; the band that impressed me the most was the Guinness Cavaliers with Kitchener's Kaiso of that year, 'De road make to walk on Carnival day', and another serious contender, Sparrow, with 'Dan is de man in de van'. The sailor bands were all in white, with masqueraders numbering in the thousands, and you had to duck to prevent yourself from being sprayed with talcum powder.

Another formative memory comes from around 1974, this time in London, when we played a tee-shirt mas' (mas' refers to masquerade, the primary form of carnival enactment) and jumped up all over Notting Hill behind Miguel Barabas (on a solo tenor pan) and his percussion crew, who were playing perched on the back of a pick-up truck. In those days Peter Minshall was designing for Notting

Hill Carnival and I believe his famous 'Hummingbird' costume first took flight at that time. On the road, Ebony Steelband played a Peters and Lee hit, 'Don't make me wait too long'. Ebony's mas' band that year was called 'Colour my soul' and depicted all the national colours of the different English-speaking Caribbean islands; Grenada, Trinidad, Jamaica. London Carnival would not have been the same if we did not dance the night away in one of (the now late) Charles Applewhite's legendary carnival fetes. The latest calypso import from Trinidad that year was Shadow's 'Bassman', which pounded out 'bom bom pudi bom bom!'

I was born in post-war Britain in 1952, to Trinidad and Tobagonian parents who had settled in London. My father, the singer and actor Edric Connor, was a major celebrity of radio, film, and television, and particularly associated with the folk traditions of his native Trinidad where he was a beloved figure.

My mother, Pearl Connor, was a theatrical agent, black theatre consultant, and the leader of the first professional black theatrical company in Britain, The Negro Theatre Workshop. Today the theatre company would have been more accurately described as Caribbean cultural activists.

Therefore, I came from a family tradition rooted firmly within the culture of Trinidad and Tobago as well as the emerging culture of post-war Britain. My family tradition was steeped in the development of a black British Caribbean identity, culture and legacy, and exceptional artistic excellence. It was a tradition that was involved in the creation of artistic genius whilst proliferating

outstanding performance talent, as well as supporting the advocacy of the creative imagination.

Although I was born in the United Kingdom, I was schooled in both Trinidad and Tobago (at the Tranquillity and Diego Martin Government Secondary from 1960 to 1968) and Britain (at the Camden School For Girls: The Frances Mary Buss Foundation from 1968 to 1971). This unique background and multi-faceted upbringing providing me with a distinct blend of experience and a broad cultural, social, and aesthetic perspective.

In 1974 I graduated from the Royal College of Music, London, where I majored in voice, pianoforte, and conducting. In 1975, I returned to Trinidad and Tobago. During this time I made a conscious decision to become intimately acquainted with the indigenous musical, cultural, and folk traditions of both islands. For eight consecutive years I gained extensive experience as an educator, teaching music at one of Trinidad's premiere boys' secondary schools, Queen's Royal College, before returning to London in 1984.

On my return, I took up employment with the Brent Black Music Co-operative as their Education Supervisor. Here I tutored in various genres of vocal technique whilst consolidating my own work as a composer and record producer.

In 1988 I returned to Trinidad for two years, where initially I worked for a short period as a music teacher at Malick Senior Comprehensive Government Secondary School, and then as a consultant to Jennifer Johnson, then the Minister of Youth, Sport, Culture, and Creative Arts. By late 1988, I had been seconded as

an artistic consultant to the Secretariat of the fifth Caribbean Festival of the Arts, *CARIFESTA V*.

I came to Leeds in February 1990, ostensibly to develop and lecture for a degree course in Multicultural Music Studies at the Leeds College of Music. This was at the behest of two far-sighted individuals and one accommodating college principal: the late Roy Walmsley, Arthur France, and Joe Stones. The only real progression that would occur from this move, or so I thought at the time, was that I would take up residence and new employment in Yorkshire -- a place of which I had absolutely no previous knowledge or experience.

However, within six months of my arrival I began working with Arthur France, alongside Dudley Nesbitt and the New World Steelband, and within my first year at the College of Music I had purchased a full sixty instrument steelband orchestra from Trinidad to inaugurate college classes in how to play the Steelpan.

I had also, as they say, 'set up shop' in the Mandela Centre in Chapeltown, running a choir called 'The Mandela Singers' who would go on to become 'Black Expression'. We consisted of -- as one ingenuous local character (who shall remain nameless) dared to suggest aloud -- 'a bunch of vagabonds and erstwhile ne'er-do-wells'.

The right to become a member of this 'elite' choir was 'attendance on the day of rehearsal'. We numbered about forty, met once a week on a Thursday and, between 1990 and 1993, performed all over Leeds and in particular at any special event in the Chapeltown district.

The success of this endeavour was due to the practice and exercise of several very basic concepts -- hospitality, access, ownership, equality, and hard work -- which was reflected in public by participants as self-empowerment, self-confidence, and self-esteem and which engendered in each and every one of them a new consciousness and pride of self.

As I walked amongst the black community in Leeds going about their everyday activities, I was overcome by an almost palpable and pervasive sense of loss and hopelessness, almost like a bereavement. This was particularly striking in the faces of the young people, who seemed to have no direction, no ambition, and (even more seriously) did not seem to feel as though they belonged.

Coming from Trinidad with a cockiness and self-assurance born of belonging, confidence, and self-esteem, I could not understand the reticence and aimlessness I witnessed. All the black people, young and old alike, looked wizened, miserable, downtrodden, and with no apparent zest for life. Faced with such tangible hopelessness I asked myself what I could do to make a difference.

In 1992, I began lecturing at Bretton Hall, University College of Leeds, on a new degree, the BA (Hons) in Popular Music Studies. At the time, I imagined that this was just the kind of course that would attract a very diverse group of students. However, what we in fact recruited was a cohort of young, white, male, middle-class students: no women and certainly no people of colour.

This of course puzzled me, and I wondered where all those young people full of talent that I had been working with in Chapeltown were. I knew they would excel on a course like this, but they were no where to be seen. In twelve years of teaching delivery at Bretton Hall, we in fact attracted onto our course only four students that could even vaguely be described as having a black or Asian background.

In 1992, my current relationship with the West Yorkshire Playhouse was initiated when I was invited by Jude Kelly and Artistic Director Burt Caesar to be the Musical Director for a professional stage production of Eugene O'Neill's 'All God's Chillun Got Wings'. Burt needed a Choir/Greek Chorus of sixty people made up of thirty white and thirty black individuals who were to reflect the inequalities of 1930s New York society: in particular, its poverty, its deprivation, and its segregation.

I promptly co-opted 'Black Expression' and volunteered a group of thirty second-year Bretton Hall music students (as part of their performance module) to take part in this show, which ran for five weeks in the Quarry Theatre. The relationships and friendships that came out of this unlikely union still have repercussions to this day. Even more importantly, the access, ownership, equality, self-empowerment, self-confidence, and self-esteem that was engendered in all who participated was incredible. I had proved that we could all work together, successfully, in a positive manner and with very positive outcomes.

It is probably at this time that the first seeds of *Carnival Messiah* were sown. I had always wanted to explore in a creative manner the issues related to, and the benefits of, cross-cultural exchange. I had grown up, been educated, and lived and worked within two parallel cultures all my life, and had reaped the positive benefits of both. Working on 'All God's Chillun Got Wings' allowed me to start exploring issues of inter-culturalism from an aesthetic, social, and cultural perspective for the first time.

The direct catalyst for *Carnival Messiah*, however, was a recording produced by Quincy Jones in 1992 called 'The Soulful Messiah'. Here he took several famous airs and chorus's from Handel's oratorio *Messiah* and very successfully placed them in an American black popular music context.

I thought to myself: if Jones could do that, so could I. Except I wanted to extend the concept to instead include the musical, theatrical, and visual aspects of the carnival and folkloric traditions of the Caribbean and, more specifically, those of Trinidad and Tobago. This was to become the beginning of my own personal journey of enlightenment that would culminate in *Carnival Messiah*.

Carnival Messiah was presented first for one night as a student production at the Wakefield Theatre Royal and Opera House on Saturday 19 March 1994 as part of Bretfest, an annual performing arts festival initiated by the Bretton Hall, University College of Leeds.

The unprecedented success of this first production precipitated an invitation from Jude Kelly, then Chief Executive Officer and Artistic Director of the West

Yorkshire Playhouse, to present the same production as a community effort (involving mostly students from Bretton Hall augmented by a handful of enthusiastic black participants from Chapeltown and Harehills in Leeds) for two nights on 13 and 14 March 1995, in the 800 seater Quarry theatre. This was yet another unprecedented success: the production played to a full house on both nights.

The first professional production of *Carnival Messiah* was staged for a four-week run between 20 September and 16 October 1999 in the Quarry Theatre, co-produced by myself and the West Yorkshire Playhouse. The production featured its first fully culturally diverse performing company of some one hundred and twenty-five performers, thirty-two of which were professional actors, dancers, masqueraders, and musicians.

The creative team included the following personnel. Conceiver Geraldine Connor; co-writers Geraldine Connor and Mark Tillotson; Artistic Director Geraldine Connor; Co-Director Mark Tillotson; Production Designer Wayne Berkeley; Masquerade and Costume Designer Clary Salandy; Musical supervisor Andre Tanker; Musical Director Michael Lovelock; Choreographer Carol La Chapelle; Lighting Designer Robert Bryan; Sound Designer Mic Pool/Glen Massam; Chorus Master Michael Steele; and Eyle and Steelband Director Dudley Nesbitt. This particular team has continued to successfully work on all five productions to date.

The national press reviewed *Carnival Messiah* as follows:

This new country, I thought, was the creation of an expansive genius, a

place where dance, movement, colour and music provide a vibrant landscape in which peoples and cultures are united in an exhilarating sense of common humanity and spirituality [...]

Carnival Messiah is a production which exudes quality, innovation and integrity whilst exemplifying a completely new direction as regards cultural and artistic aesthetic [...]

[W]hat we're seeing here is epic [...] It combines theatre, music, dance, visual art, event theatre and spectacle with a huge cultural and racial mix [...] there are Afro-Caribbeans, Asians, Chinese, Filipinos and European [...] I've never seen diversity on such a scale. (Biscoe 1999)

This really shouldn't work. Geraldine Connor's ambitious attempt to marry Handel's *Messiah* with traditional West Indian Carnival ought to be an epic disaster [...] yet a packed playhouse grants it a standing ovation [...] the key message however, is to brilliantly equate the Resurrection with the emancipation of black people [...] more than that, this multi-racial, multi-generational epic provides powerful evidence of what unity can achieve [...]

Carnival Messiah is indeed an immaculate conception. (Simpson: 1999)

You know that a production has been really exciting when you get up and join in the standing ovation and your knees are wobbly [...]

Carnival Messiah is a must see -- a musical extravaganza with stunning Caribbean costume [...] the show is a staggering fusion of Handel's *Messiah* with black and world music styles -- everything from traditional Oresha chanting to hip hop [...] and inspired pan-religious pastiche with the spirit of a street party [...]

Carnival Messiah is the West Yorkshire Playhouse's millennial alternative to Tony Harrison's celebrated adaptation of the Mysteries. (Bassett 1999)

[I]t is a joyous glorification of life seen through the peoples, music, religions and culture of the Caribbean carnival/Mas cycles [...] highlights -- where to begin? The classical ragga 'For Unto Us a Child is Born', the soca/bhangra 'Hosanna', the unexpected living tableau of da Vinci's 'Last Supper', the Steelpan 'Hallelujah', the spine-tingling gospel/operatic 'He Was Despised', the Crucifixion on stilts [...*Carnival Messiah* is] one of the more inspiring vistas to sweep before recent audiences, this should become a regular fixture in the nation's calendar [...]

As a production, it is something of a theatrical miracle. (Awde 1999)

In 2002, *Carnival Messiah* went on to be produced for a second time to great acclaim and more full houses, at the West Yorkshire Playhouse as an initiative of the Commonwealth Games Arts Festival, for a five week run between 22 June and 27 July.

At the special invitation of the Government in 2003, *Carnival Messiah* successfully premiered in Trinidad and Tobago in July of that year for twelve performances between 20 and 29 July, to celebrate the opening of the newly refurbished National Theatre facility, Queen's Hall. In February 2004, *Carnival Messiah* went on to be successfully produced for a fourth time, during the carnival season and for five performances between 16 and 20 February. This was a Queen's Hall collaboration with Dreamteam Entertainment LLC and myself, put on specifically as an Investor's Audition toward mounting a prospective Broadway production in 2006.

As a direct result of these performances contracts were exchanged with the Los Angeles based Dreamteam Entertainment LLC, with a view to taking *Carnival Messiah* to Broadway, New York, for a projected opening of Spring 2006. However, this deal however did not successfully materialise and, after the completion of what should have been a-two year option period, the rights to *Carnival Messiah* were returned to me in June 2005.

At this time, David Lascelles, who had informally expressed an interest in co-producing *Carnival Messiah* with me as Harewood House Trusts' main commemorative event for the celebration of the Bicentennial of the Abolition of Slavery parliamentary act in 2007, officially confirmed an interest. Thus

Carnival Messiah was produced for twenty-one performances at Harewood House between 14 and 30 September 2007. This new production of *Carnival Messiah* was produced by David Lascelles and presented in a 800-seat big-top erected in the grounds of Harewood House.

To date, in a total of some one hundred live performances and excerpts in five separate professional productions, over seventy-five thousand people have attended *Carnival Messiah*.

CHAPTER ONE

CARIBBEAN CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The concept of Columbus as founding father has, for the Caribbean, always been highly problematic. Caribbean theorist Rawle Gibbons comments that 'Caribbean society is fleshed out on the basic, stubborn assumption of white superiority'. Unfortunately, this remains largely true today, five hundred years after Europeans 'began our history with the conquest and rapid eradication of the indigenous Amerindian peoples' (Gibbons 1979: i).

The early diasporic response to inequity and racism from the Caribbean postcolonial theatre establishment embraced a mode of resistance, if one should even call it that, which was very limited indeed. The Caribbean postcolonial, postmodern subject uncritically and unquestioningly accepted the lead of European theatrical conventions and standards as the only way forward. Colonisation had successfully created in the Caribbean native the impulse toward mimicry of the western global metropole.

Cornel West writes:

They [the black post colonial, post modern subject] proceeded in an *assimilationist manner* that set out to show that Black people were really like White people -- thereby eliding differences (in history and culture) between Whites and Blacks. (West [1993] 2000: 262)

In *Black Skins, White Masks*, Franz Fanon examined and documented this 'psychic split' as a kind of racial and cultural schizophrenia and found it to be what he described to be the most damaging legacy of colonisation:

that wrestling contradiction of a white mind in a black body, which is still a notable characteristic of Caribbean culture today. (Gilkes 1986: 2)

Jose Marti embraced the same viewpoint when he spoke with the voice of the Spanish Caribbean and Latin America. In his famous poem 'We were':

we were a masquerade in breeches from England, Parisian waistcoat, jacket from the United States and Spanish matador's hat. (Gilkes 1986: 2)

In his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre identifies the coloniser's religion as a cause of the disassociation of self among the colonised when he observes:

Let us add, for certain [...] unfortunates, that other witchery of which I have already spoken: Western culture. If I were them [...] I'd prefer my mumbo-jumbo to their Acropolis [...] you've grasped the situation. But not altogether, because you *aren't* them [...] and [...] they can't choose; they must have both. Two worlds: that makes two bewitchings; they dance all night and at dawn they crowd into the churches to hear mass; each day the split widens. (Sartre [1967] 1974: 17)

It was thus that the weighting towards black specificity and particularity in the Caribbean cultural aesthetic, theatre, and writing was banished, in order for them to gain white acceptance and approval. These responses to 'blackness' also encouraged a colonial homogenising impulse that developed into a very misguided assumption on their part that all black people were really alike, i.e. the same -- hence obliterating differences of class, nation, gender, and religion between all black people.

This assimilationist response toward racism, coupled with the more recently imposed dismissal and invisibility of black artists and their work in the world today, when allied with the general expectation that the work of these artists were visible, speaks of a universal black experience or speaks only for and to the

marginalised community from which it hails, has been extremely detrimental to the general perception of black theatrical practice throughout the western world.

Added to these historical indignities, in Europe and America, particularly in the business and art of music theatre and opera today, the Western privileged intellectual elite have continued to draw upon cultural product that exploits the life experience of lower-class black people, to make its aesthetic products. Hollywood has a lot to answer for.

These products seldom challenge the Western system of domination that further emphasises oppressive economic circumstances by exploiting essentialist notions of what they perceive as 'an authentic black experience' -- always described as either being colourful, exotic, sensuous, and lively or completely deprived, depressed, and/or depraved. These are the very images that obscure the reality of the hopelessness, pain, and deprivation of marginalisation.

There has also been a growing reflexivity about the constructed and thus contestable nature of the process by which some people acquire the right to 'write the culture of others', for example *Showboat*, *Carmen Jones*, and *Porgy and Bess*, all of which have been created, produced, and controlled by the dominant white western arts establishment. Collectively, these pre-conceptions and presumptions have inevitably limited the representation of the diversity of the black cultural experience and served to confirm established misconceptions of the 'other'.

Carnival Messiah exists in complete opposition to this perspective, giving positive reinforcement to arts practice that has traditionally been expressed through universally negative stereotypes of pain and distress. Rather than show pain, *Carnival Messiah* instead reflects joy. A truly profound and uplifting cross-cultural experience, *Carnival Messiah* uses theatrical metaphor to describe the celebration of life and living, joyfully creating for just a short while a space and place of safety and wellbeing.

My main criticism of postcolonial theory, then, is that it is more often than not politically complicit with the dominant neo-colonial regimes of knowledge. Therefore the institutional location of postcolonial theory in the western academy necessarily, automatically, and constantly threatens to preclude it from being able to perform radical and liberatory kinds of cultural analysis. I suppose one could, however, argue that at least postcolonial theory has helped to establish new areas of academic enquiry, of conceptual frameworks, formulae, and tactical procedures, where none existed before.

These procedures are now fortunately being extended, rigorously challenged, and modified by a very discerning generation of 'insider' theoreticians. They include such academics as Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Antonio Benítez-Rojo, Édouard Glissant, Michael Dash, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, C.L.R. James and critics such as Chinua Achebe, José Martí, Gabriel García Márquez, George Lamming, Paul Carter Harrison, Kamau Brathwaite, Earl Lovelace, Wole Soyinka, Wilson Harris and Derek Walcott.

Maya Jaggi concludes from comments made by C.L.R. James in 1984 that he believed

the black Briton's gaze is directed not only at the self or the 'black community', but into British society and the myths of identity at its heart [...] black Britons retain a dual or multiple heritage, a sense of having a history elsewhere, that can be a creative force -- what Rushdie has termed the 'stereoscopic vision' of being both insider and outsider. (Jaggi 1999: 30)

Unknowingly at the time, it was this very impulse that first motivated me in 1993 to create *Carnival Messiah*. Jaggi reads further into C.L.R. James's comments when she observes that:

The impulse of many such writers is to link creatively what they know, bringing newness into the world through drawing on and combining several heritages. In the process they experience their particularity not as a problem, but as a strength. (Jaggi 1999: 30)

In his book *Caribbean Discourse*, Édouard Glissant often uses the phrase 'irruption into modernity' to describe the Caribbean archipelago's experience of the modern and its essential link with the rest of the Americas. He argues for the Caribbean aesthetic in his essay 'Novel of the Americas':

we do not have a literary tradition that has slowly matured: ours was a brutal emergence that I think is an advantage and not a failing [...] the irruption into modernity, the violent departure from tradition, from literary continuity seems to me a specific feature of the American writer when he seeks to give meaning to the reality of his environment. (1989: 146)

Glissant goes on to describe the Caribbean as 'a multiple series of deeply complex relationships'.

Antonio Benítez-Rojo corroborates and expands this view when he notes that the Caribbean is in truth an extremely complex socio-cultural interplay. He likens it to an 'island bridge', describing it as a 'discontinuous conjunction' where, within

the disorder of its 'nature', it is possible to identify and observe dynamic states or regularities that 'repeat' or reflect themselves globally ([1992] 2001: 4). This entirely because of the Caribbean region's previously unequal relationship with the various dominant colonial powers that were present within the historic Caribbean.

This reading suggests that within the socio-cultural fluidity of the Caribbean archipelago Benítez-Rojo senses the features of a metaphorical island that repeats itself throughout the world (Europe, the Orient, the Africas) and this 'repeating or reflecting island' is either all, or none, of the islands we know.

This 'metaphorical' island has neither boundary or centre. In this place-island-space, the discourse of myth interfaces with the discourse of history. The discourse of resistance interfaces with the discourse of power. I call this space of ambiguities, dichotomies, and enigmas -- or as Benítez-Rojo describes it, this 'reflecting/repeating island' that is the Caribbean -- a/the Third Space.

Benítez-Rojo believes that the Caribbean presents a completely different perspective on the states of paradox and chaos, that is, new ways of reading concepts of chance and necessity, new ways of reading particularity and universality ([1992] 2001: 4).

It is therefore logical to extend this premise to include what has become acutely and increasingly apparent in the creative imagination of the Caribbean diaspora's writers, artists, and thinkers: that their shared heritage, multiple identities, parallel sensibilities and commonality of interests link them to each other, not

only across the region, but more importantly, link them beyond nation, race and language, by encompassing or 'repeating/reflecting' the African, Asian, and European metropolitan centres of the world.

Carnival Messiah should therefore be regarded as a re-definition and expansion, even, of postcolonial criticism, as a new and distinct set of reading practices and analysis of these shared and multiple cultural identities through the harnessing and re-deployment of performance practice and its ephemeral manifestation seen entirely from an insider's perspective.

These readings mediate, challenge, and reflect upon relations of domination and subordination between and often within the nations, races, and cultures that have had their roots in the history of the formation of the Caribbean through the practice of European expansionism and colonialism.

For these reasons, I am probably considered by western academia to be revolutionary in my dismissal of metropolitan postcolonial theory as a viable way of expressing my Caribbean consciousness. I have chosen instead to locate *Carnival Messiah* in what I believe to be a much more resonant articulation of the postcolonial and postmodern, and that is within the realm of magical realism: a realm which, unsurprisingly, is mostly dismissed as irrelevant by the metropolitan academy.

In my opinion, this realm in my opinion possesses a unique aesthetic response which is virtually embedded in social and natural landscapes, a magical reality unavailable to the postcolonial European artist or writer. It is from this source

that I have chosen to exercise my creative imagination and commence the journey of *Carnival Messiah*.

David Mikics summarises Fredric Jameson's position as follows:

For Jameson, magical realism relies on disjunctions among differing cultures and social formations, which coexist in the same space and time in the New World [...] magical realist writing often stems from a place and time in which different cultures or historical periods inhabit a single cultural space. (Mikics [1995] 2005: 373)

Theo L. D'haen notes that Carlos Fuentes recalls how the Mexican postcolonial critic Octavio Paz taught him that ““there were no privileged centers of culture, race, politics”” (Fuentes quoted by Mikics [1995] 2003: 194), which supports Jameson's position by defining magical realism as being an essential feature of postmodernism.

The fate of Caribbean society was not shaped by its own evolution, development, and internal dynamism in response to the normal challenges that might be posed by nature, environment, history, and habitat. The Caribbean was not shaped in fulfilment of its own desires, aspirations, and social goals. Indeed, as Glen Sankatsing, Director of The Caribbean Reality Studies Centre, Aruba, astutely comments, Caribbean societies

emerged as the scar of oppression and have been shaped from [the] outside, as an artefact of a foreign venture. The Caribbean is a product of structural discontinuity as opposed to self-realisation -- “trailer societies” towed not toward their own destiny, but toward the destiny and teleology of the West, whose global mission was not to impart, but to collect. Colonialism therefore was not a regrettable accident, but a requirement. (Sankatsing 2003: 26)

It is in this way that the achievements of the West, separated from their specific historicity, were transferred to the Caribbean, as universal, context-free

yardsticks for the future of all these new geographic destinations and peoples. This process successfully suppressed the Caribbean people's essential internal life processes, truncated their evolution, interrupted their history, alienated them from their natural environment, and overwrote their culture, by undermining the creative force of internal social dynamism, thus reducing them to remote controlled societies.

In fact the Caribbean postcolonial subject has been exposed to not one but two crises of identity, although these crisis events were separated by some five hundred years. The resultant 'double diasporisation' (Hall 1991) and fragmentation of identity that occurred within both eras has produced a dislocation and de-centering of said subjects. V.S. Naipaul cuts to the heart of the matter when he notes:

These Caribbean territories are not like those in Africa or Asia, with their own internal reverences, that have not been returned to themselves after a period of colonial rule. They are manufactured societies, labor camps, creations of empire; and for long they were dependent on empire for law, language, institutions, culture, even officials. (Naipaul 1972: 254)

Carnival Messiah thus became my contribution to, in the words of Glen Sankatsing, a 'Development' which had in fact taken place in the Caribbean centuries ago but also needed to take place within the enclave of a postcolonial, postmodern, twenty-first century Britain. The 'Development' Sankatsing speaks of is that of a Caribbean self-realisation or consciousness. He believes that the history of the Caribbean could really only really be understood as a clash between two opposing processes:

"Envelopment" -- a modelling from outside, an assimilation, a colonisation and, "Development" -- led by Caribbean people, whether resident there or here, in the diaspora, which reflects their efforts toward

achievement of self-realisation and self consciousness. (Sankatsing 2003: 26)

These processes in fact move us forward towards the achievement of future 'Development', not as victims of a horrific history, but as the protagonists of an empowered future history.

C.L.R James had always upheld this position. He observed that the only way to go was forward, to not wallow in self-righteous pity and a 'dis'-membered past. He further observed that:

Nowhere else can the Caribbean postcolonial, postmodern subject's solidarity and identity be found. There is no way back to Africa, Asia or Europe. (Dash 1998: 150)

James set about mapping the Caribbean in terms of a quest for national identity that in his analysis began with the Haitian revolution in 1804 and culminated in the Cuban revolution of 1959. He saw the Caribbean in terms of phases of resistance in a region characterised by a history of violent change, forced re-location, and prolonged colonial domination.

He did not see the Caribbean as a collection of static, victimised cultures but instead, much more in terms of a region in dynamic engagement with its global history. In his view, the desire for emancipation was not about the Caribbean creating isolated communities united by a shared defiance of a dominant force. It was instead much more about their struggle to become modern states and to achieve technological power and the achievement of a new self-consciousness, by reflecting their own creolised image in the power of the state and, thereafter, throughout the world.

Theo D'haen sees magical realism

as a way of access to the main body of “Western” literature for authors not sharing in, or not writing from the perspective of, the privileged centers of this literature for reasons of language, class, race, or gender [...] (D'haen [1995] 2000: 195)

He further argues that the following features are generally regarded as marking postmodernism:

self-reflexiveness, metafiction, eclecticism, redundancy, multiplicity, discontinuity, intertextuality, parody, the dissolution of character and narrative instance, the erasure of boundaries, and the destabilization of the audience. (D'haen [1995] 2000: 192-93)

and goes even further by suggesting that

the cutting edge of postmodernism is magical realism. As Douwe Fokkema remarks, the postmodernist device of “permutation” -- which he circumscribes as “permutation of possible and impossible, relevant and irrelevant, true and false, reality and parody, metaphor and literal meaning” -- is “probably the most subversive one with regard to earlier conventions”. (D'haen [1995] 2000: 201)

This definition is further sustained by the theoretical issues that Jean-François Lyotard raised in his seminal work *The Postmodern Condition: A Report On Knowledge*, and certainly supports the notion of postmodernism, which completely underpins the methodology and approach I have used in developing the concept of *Carnival Messiah*. Lyotard writes:

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. ([1979] 1984: 81)

I believe that, in the Caribbean, aesthetic enactments that are derived from its indigenous culture are much more than the creative and imaginative expression

of a society: they are able to illuminate the human condition and act as unifying and regenerative factors in the development of their fragmented communities.

Carnival Messiah is about establishing structures that can dismantle and replace the divisions in nations, power, prosperity, and ethnicity, structures which even today still remain based upon essentialist notions of them and us, black and white, margin and centre constructs.

Carnival Messiah espouses unifying and regenerative antidotes appropriated from the Caribbean's historical experience. Antidotes that liberate, that do not confine but instead enable. Antidotes that can replace the divisions in nations, power, prosperity, and ethnicity which even today still remain based upon notions of essentialist ethnic and class divisions, rupture and discontinuity: the trade marks of colonialism, post- and otherwise.

The Third Space of *Carnival Messiah* is concerned with shifting away from essentialist and negative ideas about any particular cultural identity. *Carnival Messiah* espouses the notion that individuals of a particular social type possess certain essential characteristics and that these are found expressed in particular cultural practices -- towards the idea that cultural identities are not fixed in any essential way, but are actively created through particular communication processes, social practices, and articulations within specific circumstances that allow them all to exist harmoniously within the same space.

Much like the Caribbean today, *Carnival Messiah* should be viewed not as the sum of its essential parts, but as a system of layers or strands which at their

greatest density represent a reciprocal free-flowing exchange of otherness within the context of cultural equality.

This Third Space is a space of many voices and unfixed cultural identities. It is a site of transformation. It is a site of multi-consciousness. *Carnival Messiah*, rather than refuse multiple cultural identities with their idioms, symbols, and assumptions, instead simply appropriates them, re-imagines them and creates new and dynamic co-existent cultural identities within one space, the Third Space.

This Third Space encourages sight from and through new perspectives, the elimination of boundaries between margin and centre, subversions, transgressions, and the creation of a new universe where all difference is to be affirmed and celebrated.

Carnival Messiah thus becomes the embodiment of aspirations toward achieving an integrity of being, collapsing entrenched and negative notions of difference, whilst guiding its participants and recipients towards the attainment of a critical consciousness which can only be achieved through self-discovery and self-recovery.

Like the work of Alejo Carpentier, Wilson Harris, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Pablo Neruda, George Lamming, Edward Kamau Brathwaite, Samuel Selvon, Peter Minshall, and Derek Walcott, I hope that *Carnival Messiah*, as an instrument of postcolonial liberation 'camouflaging' itself as a secular theatrical event, will demonstrate its power of cultural inclusion, by drawing upon the

pessimism that derives from an historical violence perpetuated by Europe within the Caribbean centuries ago and transforming it into an optimistic hope for the future.

Walcott, our Caribbean Homer, sums up our Caribbean cultural schizophrenia in the first part of his poem 'The Schooner *Flight*', in which the 'red-nigger' named Shabine -- a Caribbean Odysseus -- sets sail leaving his island and his woman behind. He narrates:

and I, Shabine, saw
when these slums of empire was paradise.
I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,
I had a sound colonial education,
I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation. (Walcott [1977] 1980: 4)

The Trinidadian writer and postcolonial critic Earl Lovelace has recently termed 'the suppressed, intimate and hidden (*idden*) layer of the colonised African diasporised self' as being 'our darkness' (Lovelace 2006).

Derek Walcott once described himself thus:

I am a kind of split writer: I have one tradition inside me going one way and another tradition going another. The mimetic, the narrative, and dance element is strong on one side, and the literary, the classical tradition is strong on the other. (Walcott 1970: 48)

It is that sense of being 'wrenched by two styles' that led Walcott to describe himself as 'the mulatto of style', expressing the dichotomy that exists between the oral and the written tradition.

Furthermore, in the Caribbean, the word 'Messiah' as expressed in Handel's oratorio *Messiah* represents two additional, and even more complex, opposing

standpoints. Firstly, it refers to the dramatic and aesthetically pleasing baroque culture of Europe, encapsulated within an outstandingly beautiful and technically perfect musical composition. Secondly, it refers to a historical representation of an oppressive, elite, colonial hegemony, both political and religious, dominated by the institutions and memory of African enslavement and Asian indentureship, destructive institutions endured within the Caribbean region for many centuries.

As we now acknowledge, the status quo of the 'Messiah' was in reality seriously challenged by those marginalised Caribbean peoples, many of whom surreptitiously removed themselves from the dominant enforced theology of colonial Christianity in a bid to craft their own self-affirming belief systems, doing so by creating liberative perspectives particular to themselves that corresponded to the context in which they were being forced to theologise.

I would like *Carnival Messiah* to be regarded as a lyric-epic contemplation of the idea of redemption, which facilitates the re-reading of the hegemonic bible text by the peoples of the then enslaved Caribbean as just another story. In particular, the work offers a rereading of the Bible, and attempts to rationalise its accompanying and oppressive colonial Christian ideological interpretation of freedom. In doing so, it challenges the colonial Christian ideological interpretation of freedom as 'divine' and re-casts freedom according to the enslaved African's interpretation of the concept as 'human'. That is, the work suggests that God's freedom is for all people. In particular it champions the freedom and liberation of enslaved Africans and, by extension, examines the legacy and impact of this interpretation of human freedom on contemporary Caribbean consciousness.

This re-imagination of Handel's *Messiah* as a complex and multi-dimensional metaphor that leads us away from a wholly colonial and hegemonic authority, becomes, then, an essential element towards the transformation, empowerment, and achievement of a true state of Caribbean cultural self-consciousness and self-realisation.

Gordon Rohlehr writes that *Carnival Messiah* is a radical re-interpretation of a hegemonic parent text -- the Bible -- in which a colonised subject brings into the reading

the suppressed half or three-quarters of her "education", consciousness and being, her "darkness". (Rohlehr 2003c: 10)

As Rohlehr so succinctly observes, in the creation of *Carnival Messiah* is to be found my effort to freely express what I call my indigenous or creolite voice: my darkness.

Therefore, I see the Caribbean cultural challenge of the future, as nothing short of the positive and creative use of our cultural 'schizophrenia'. *Carnival Messiah* is, if you like, the embodiment of that schizophrenia. In a sense, one might see the choice of using Handel's *Messiah*, which is one of Western Europe's greatest classical musical canons, to underpin the framework of *Carnival Messiah* as a serious transgression into existing European essentialist practice. It is really so much more than that. The average Caribbean postcolonial subject, having received Handel's *Messiah* as the benchmark by which to judge musical quality within Caribbean culture, would probably actually see this multi-stranded approach to culture as a natural progression. Gordon Rohlehr observes:

Describing the evolution of the idea of *Carnival Messiah*, Connor spoke of Handel's *Messiah* and indigenous Trinidad music as representing "parallel cultures" that reside comfortably side by side in the heads of many Caribbean creative artists [... and that it was] "very natural and normal" for her to explore the possibilities of these parallel cultures and to use "Europe like Europe used us". (Rohlehr 2003c: 8)

In this third millennium, I see myself as a living exponent of the meeting of Europe, sixteenth century Africa, and twentieth century Asia. I see myself as a product of African enslavement, of European colonisation and domination, and of the ensuing cross-current of latter-day mass migration from the Caribbean to Britain. I am also an artist -- a minority within a minority -- and I carry all this cultural baggage with me. I am what Anton Phillips defines as a 'New European' (Phillips: 1998).

'New European' might be a self-identity to be adopted by those of us in Europe who positively read the history of that continent as one of migration and cultural interchange, those whose skin colours vary from pink to olive and, of course, recognise the implausibility of describing themselves as 'white', and those who, through cultural and political practice, work toward the abolition of this category (Roediger 1994; Ware and Back 2002).

Thus, *Carnival Messiah*, as a tool of re-articulation, was conceived as a crucial response to a crisis of alienation and fragmentation that characterises most black British and, by extension, immigrant metropolitan communities. Uncertainty and anxiety fuelled by persistent racism, the increasing disenfranchisement of the black community, alongside the realisation that legal equity does not automatically translate into political, social, and economic equality, coupled with the rise of the radical right and the changing meaning of race itself, resulted in

my artistic bid through *Carnival Messiah* to attack directly the notion that some kind of homogenous, essentialist black culture ever actually existed and whether it was actually achievable, advantageous or desirable.

The postmodern, postcolonial Caribbean subject resident in Britain today stands between three poles of hegemonic, European, Asian, and African essentialism, each pole operating out of opposing world views but at the same time each using similar interpretative frameworks to evaluate themselves.

This static notion of culture supports an essentialist ideology, each pole evaluating its 'difference' from a perspective of 'less than' the original (pure) form, i.e. either European, Asian, or African. These interpretative frameworks are unsatisfactory and limiting, as they outline a political and philosophical programme of confrontation which can only be addressed by the replacement of one supposedly homogenous system with another. It is my intention to create a new theoretical paradigm with which to negotiate and establish a new politics in the relationship between what has been traditionally regarded as the 'margin' and the 'centre'.

As an aesthetic ephemeral experience, my aim is that *Carnival Messiah* move towards collapsing some of these essentialised differences that continue to exist between Europe, Asia, and Africa by creating a space and place where they can exist equally. This space is what I define as the Third Space. This new cultural space, then, becomes a tool or space of liberation for all, because it establishes its own unique ideological interpretation of reality, built upon a balanced

combination of universal value systems and norms that sometimes converge and sometimes diverge.

Cultural production can and does affect ordinary people profoundly and in extraordinary and unexpected ways. It is exciting to create, think, talk about, and write art that reflects a passionate engagement with the 'here and now', the meeting place where new and radical happenings can and do occur. Stuart Hall declares that:

'modernity' (or post-modernity) is not waiting for an authority to 'permit' or sanction these explorations of creativity in contemporary media and form. [Cultural production from the margins] represents one of the most important cultural developments of our time: the stakes which 'the margins' have in modernity, the-local-in-the-global, the pioneering of a new cosmopolitan, vernacular, post-national, global sensibility. [We have a stake] in what I might call 'the post-nation': but only if it can be re-imagined, re-invented to include us. (Hall 1999: 22)

Carnival Messiah is a manifestation of all these phenomena.

Sir Arthur Lewis, Nobel Laureate, encourages Caribbean people to claim their cultural uniqueness as the one contribution above all others that they can make to the common human heritage.

Derek Walcott, whose work is predicated upon the aesthetic that emphasises the cross-cultural pollination of the Caribbean region, shares the view that the future of Caribbean militancy lies in aesthetic practice: and that the genius of the Caribbean lies in the interactive process of creolisation. In his essay 'What the Twilight Says', Walcott observes that:

one kind of writer, generally the entertainer, says "I will write in the language of the people however gross or incomprehensible"; another says: "Nobody else go' understand this, you hear, so le' me write

English”; while the third is dedicated to purifying the language of the tribe, and it is he who is jumped on by both sides for pretentiousness or playing white. He is the mulatto of style. The traitor. The assimilator. (1998: 8-9)

He later describes the liberating mission of the ‘mulatto of style’ as being ‘to create an oral culture of chants, jokes, folk-songs and fables’, and to make ‘creative use of his schizophrenia, an eclectic fusion of the old and new’ (Walcott 1998).

Gordon Rohlehr suggests that the first of those two objectives would ‘involve direct exploration of an already existing popular oral folk tradition’ while the second would require ‘forceful and energetic reconciliation of antagonistic ancestral cultures within a New World stage and in the context of a changing time’ (Rohlehr 2003b: 2).

Carnival Messiah does this, and much more than Walcott’s ‘creative schizophrenia’. *Carnival Messiah* does not simply contest stereotypes of Caribbean theatre that unconditionally ape Western theatrical ideology; *Carnival Messiah* strives to deconstruct early black theatre strategies that were used for identity formation, by embracing the historical enactment of Cannes Brulees resistance as precursor to modern day carnival practice and re-assigning it to the role of providing the foundational bedrock for a contemporary indigenous Caribbean theatre.

By constructing a multi-dimensional, non-literary, performative response that favours the oral tradition as the method of articulating the complexity and diversity of Caribbean cultural heritage and, by extension, theatrical practice,

Carnival Messiah proclaims carnival, its evolution and its practice, as the true theatre of the Caribbean.

Gordon Rohlehr notes that *Carnival Messiah*

efforts to bring together the heritages of European and vernacular African diasporan and Asian diasporan styles [such as *Carnival Messiah*] where high tradition as represented in Handel's majestic work encounters Orisha melodies and Bhangra rhythms as stylistic equals [...] The West Indian sensibility has moved into [...] new space [...] The music and the poetry have both been proclaiming that the Africa/Europe dichotomy is now an anachronism. (Rohlehr 2003b: 51-52)

Carnival Messiah does not limit itself to fulfilling what both Derek Walcott and Arthur Lewis identify as an 'assimilation' or 'mulatto of style'. *Carnival Messiah* is instead empowered by a truly unique and wholly re-imagined theatrical Caribbean identity with a voice that reflects an acknowledgement and accommodation of 'difference' within one space.

It proudly eschews, through accommodation and celebration, all those world cultures and identities -- Europe, the Africas, the Asias, and the Americas (referencing Benítez-Rojo's metaphor of a 'repeating island') -- that impacted upon the historical Caribbean as they today freely circulate and interact around and through one another, within the Caribbean space. This is the space I define as the Third Space.

Therefore, I offer *Carnival Messiah* back to the world, from whence it came, as a unique, re-imagined, carnivalised template for global identity formulation, transformation, and unification.

CHAPTER TWO

MIGRATION: A CRITICAL CONTEXT

Part One: Cultural Multiplicity

Perhaps one can only begin to assess the changing significance of the Caribbean region in world affairs by remembering that, before the Caribbean had begun to do Europe's bidding, there had not been anything that could be described as 'world affairs' or for that matter, the Caribbean.

In fact, the 'world' first became a modern concept in the Caribbean. For the first time in human history, ordinary folk became dependent on food staples transported from distant lands. The remaking of the European diet was an intrinsic feature in the remaking of European society and of the emergence of a global market. Franz Fanon astutely notes in *The Wretched of the Earth* that 'Europe is (was) literally the creation of the Third World' (Jaggi 1999: 25).

Cuban academic Antonio Benítez-Rojo observes in his seminal work *The Repeating Island* that the Atlantic was the navel of capitalism: the child of the Caribbean. Without the Caribbean Holocaust, Western capital accumulation would not have been sufficient to effect the change from a mercantile revolution to the industrial revolution. The Caribbean remains 'one of the main strands in the history of capitalism, and vice versa' (Benítez-Rojo [1992] 2001: 5).

Benítez-Rojo uses Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of the machine metaphor -- 'the machine of machines' in which 'every machine is a conjunction

of machines coupled together and each of these interrupts the flow of the previous one' creating a picture 'of flow and interruption' -- to describe the fragmentation of the Caribbean. He also maintains that the 'Caribbean machine' was set in place in 1565, invented by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés ([1992] 2001: 6-7). This machine comprised 'a naval machine, a military machine, a bureaucratic machine, a commercial machine, an extractive machine, a political machine, a legal machine, a religious machine' ([1992] 2001: 7).

Benítez-Rojo identifies in particular two machines. Firstly, the fleet machine which consisted of

ports, anchorages, sea walls, lookouts, fortresses, garrisons, militias, shipyards, storehouses, depots, offices, workshops, hospitals, inns, taverns, plazas, churches, palaces, streets, and roads that led to the mining ports. ([1992] 2001: 6)

and the plantation machine. This machine produced

no fewer than ten million African slaves and thousands of coolies [...] mercantile capitalism, industrial capitalism [...] Caribbean population, [...] imperialism, wars, colonial blocs, rebellions, repressions, sugar islands, runaway slave settlements, air and naval bases, revolutions of all sorts, and even a "free associated state" next to an unfree socialist state. (1992: 9)

The late Dr. Walter Rodney stated the following recorded facts in his book *A History of the Guyanese Working People 1881-1905*:

The Venn Sugar Commission of 1948 estimated that each square mile of [sugar] cane cultivation [in Guyana] involved the provision of forty-nine miles of drainage canals and ditches and sixteen miles [...] of waterways [...] for transportation and irrigation. (Rodney 1981: 2)

The commission noted that the original construction of these waterways must have entailed the moving of at least one hundred million tons of soil (Venn

Commission quoted by Rodney 1981: 2-3). Walter Rodney decided to locate the human presence behind these historical facts, noting that

this meant that slaves moved 100 million tons of heavy, waterlogged clay with shovel in hand while enduring conditions of perpetual mud and water. (Rodney 1981: 3)

In 1783, as a direct result of a special decree proclaimed by Charles IV of Spain known as the Cedula of Population for Trinidad, French planters, their enslaved Africans, as well as people of colour from the French West Indies, were to settle in Trinidad. The Cedula gave the right to all, once they were of the Roman Catholic faith, to settle in Trinidad. Various incentives were offered to encourage people to make their homes there, such as grants of land and freedom from taxes.

The sole purpose of this proclamation was to augment the agricultural labour force of the island by increasing the population. The French settlers came mostly from the islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Dominica, St Lucia, St. Vincent, and Grenada. Trinidad's population received not only "Planters bringing slaves and free coloureds from British islands..." "...French colonists and their slaves..." but also "a large number of slaves imported directly from Africa" (George Peter Murdock quoted by Elder [1969] 1972: 6).

Gordon Rohlehr observes that in the 1790s a number of Saint Domingue royalists, who 'offered their services to the British forces during their ultimately abortive campaign to undermine the Haitian Revolution and wrest Haiti from both the Black Jacobins and the French', were resettled in Trinidad (1990: 7). These were the people who brought the European institution of carnival to Trinidad.

In 1797, at the height of the Napoleonic wars, Trinidad passed from the hands of the Spanish regime into those of the British. The British Empire was the largest imperium of the modern world. The very notion of greatness in Great Britain was inextricably bound up with its imperial destiny. Stuart Hall observes that for centuries

[Great Britain's] wealth was underpinned, its urban development driven, its agriculture and industry revolutionised, its fortunes as a nation settled, its maritime and commercial hegemony secured, its thirst quenched, its teeth sweetened, its cloth spun, its food spiced, its carriages rubber-wheeled, [and] its bodies adorned, through the imperial connection. (1999: 16)

By 1803, the Trinidad population of 31,478 contained 2,476 whites, 5,540 free people of colour, and nearly 21,895 enslaved Africans. With the Abolition of Slavery in 1838, the enslaved Africans of Trinidad became fully free (Emancipation).

In fact, the Cedula had resulted in the setting up of a French state within a Spanish one. Therefore, even when the British took over in 1797, it was the combination of all these immigrants (both European and African) that was to have a major influence on the oral traditions, folk language, and cultural heritage of Trinidad and Tobago today.

It is clear that the Caribbean as we know it originated in the most violent of historical circumstances, as a direct result of the horror of imperial expansionism. Thus, one of the distinctive features of Caribbean colonialism has been that several cultures were forced to share the same geographical space under European oppression. Interaction within these shared spaces over time led to a

mixing of races and a sharing of experiences, creating a society that reflected all these contributions from diverse cultural elements.

This creolisation, or creole culture, was by its very definition composite, mutable, and open-ended. It had affiliations with various religions, but often its instincts were celebratory rather than sacred. It emphasised immediacy as a prime value, but also secrecy. It was a survivalist culture, grown out of the very need to adapt quickly to new conditions.

Embedded within stories of conquest, enslavement, resistance and indentureship, the Caribbean region was particularly shaped by the originally animist cultures of the Amerindians: the indigenous peoples of the Antilles. In Trinidad, five known groups of indigenous Indian have come to light: the Nepuyo, the Aruaca, the Shebaio, the Yaio, and the Garini, with some evidence of the Warao and Island Caribs, the Kalipurna or Califournians from the Orinoco region (Riggio 2004: 39).

The Africans, who were mostly Igbo, Mandingo, Yorubas, Asantes, Hausas, and Alladas from West Africa and Kongo from the Congo basin (Liverpool 1993: 11; Elder [1969] 1972: 5-6), were forcibly brought to the area to service the plantation system.

Significant enslaved African importation does not seem to have come to Trinidad until long after 1517, although it has been established that enslaved Africans were introduced to Hispanola in 1502. Records between 1808 and 1815 show that the slave population of Trinidad during that period increased from 21,895 to

25,871 (Elder [1969] 1972: 5). In Trinidad today, there are descendants of the Yoruba, Congo, Rada, Mandingo, Hausa, and Ashanti tribes of West Africa. The strongest music and dance retention exists in the ritual of the religions of the Rada Rada and the Yoruba tribes (Oresha or Shango), both of which are practised in present-day Trinidad.

B. W. Higman describes pre-emancipation African groups as having 'lost their identity almost immediately as a result of extensive intermarriage' (1978: 176). I do not agree with this point of view; nor does Maureen Warner-Lewis, who, working from both oral and non-oral sources, observes a rather slower process for the post-emancipation African immigrants. This includes culture loss, retention, assimilation and what she describes as 'a coalescence and synthesis of overlapping African cultures' (Warner-Lewis 1973: 6).

In specific relation to the institution of carnival, Warner-Lewis particularly notes the Rada people's group participation in, and contribution to, carnival, and surmises that the various carnival masquerade bands from East Dry River and La Cour Harpe (downtown Port of Spain, capital of Trinidad) might, during the nineteenth century, have been organised partially according to the ethnic groupings of immigrants from Africa.

It should be noted that for a considerable time after Emancipation -- between 1841 and 1867 -- the African-born population of Trinidad was also augmented with 3,510 re-captives from Sierra Leone and the Kroo Coast, 3,996 from St Helena, and 879 from Rio and Havana. The fact that after the cessation of African enslavement in Trinidad and Tobago in 1838 Africans who were not

slaves still entered the country has major implications with regard to identity, “culture strength”, and cultural transmission (Elder [1969] 1972: 8). All these people had come from regions with fully developed cultures. Each group, whether in a position of power or not, brought with it its own native arts, religions, language, and other forms of culture.

After emancipation in 1838, and to meet the shortage of labour resulting from the newly free Africans’ refusal to work on the estates without proper safeguards to their interests, the British Parliament negotiated a deal with India whereby people from India would come to the Caribbean as indentured labourers. This industry began in 1844 and lasted until 1917. British government statistics show the following distribution of Indian indentured labourers from 1845 to 1917: 238,900 to British Guiana; 143,900 to Trinidad; 36,400 to Jamaica; 5,900 to Grenada; 4,400 to St. Lucia; 2,500 to St. Vincent, and 300 to St. Kitts (Sherlock 1973: 247-48).

The East Indians (and Chinese) began arriving in Trinidad to replace the Africans between 1845 and 1917. Approximately 145,000 East Indian indentured labourers, mainly Hindus and Muslims from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and South India, were brought in to work the estates and plantations. This certainly had far-reaching effects on the culture and ethnicity of the peoples of Trinidad, which today comprises a population that is 52% Indian.

Imperialism, commercial, cultural, and ethnic exchange were the reason for the arrival of all the other settlers. It should be noted that in addition to the

previously mentioned Irish, Germans, Chinese, Portuguese, Corsicans, Syrians, Canadians, Lebanese, Jews, and Americans.

It is because of these major historical interventions that Benítez-Rojo sees the Caribbean Antilles as an 'island bridge' connecting 'in a certain kind of way' Europe, the North and South Americas. He describes it as a 'discontinuous conjunction'. Within the disorder of its 'nature', it is possible to identify and observe dynamic states or regularities that repeat themselves elsewhere globally (Benítez-Rojo [1992] 2001: 4).

Professor Gordon Lewis had earlier compared the Caribbean to the Mediterranean, noting that the Caribbean is not unlike the older Mediterranean; both were built upon 'the violent conflict between rival imperial entities', both remained 'eclectic, porous, absorptive' societies, and both the Caribbean and Aegean Seas are suspended on 'subterranean volcanic faults', and it is this kind of correspondence that makes traditional, homogenous, metropolitan scholarship ineffectual when it attempts to understand the Caribbean (Lewis 1983: 16-19).

Benítez-Rojo goes on to say that, in fact, the Caribbean presents a new way of reading the concepts of chance and necessity, of particularity and universality. He suggests that the Caribbean presents a different perspective on Chaos ([1992] 2001: 2). His theory advocates that within the socio-cultural fluidity of the Caribbean archipelago there exist features of an island whose characteristics repeat or reflect themselves throughout the world, where every repetition is a practice that necessarily entails a difference and nothingness, and this 'repeating island' is none of the islands we know.

The island at this centre is a metaphor; it has neither boundaries nor a centre. In this place-island-space, the discourse of myth interfaces with the discourse of history. The discourse of resistance interfaces with the discourse of power with regard to world history's contingency, i.e., global changes in economic discourse and vast collisions of races and cultures.

These injections, which brought millions into the Caribbean area during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, created what is commonly referred to as the 'new world'. This was, in fact, a very old world, which contained many retentions and relics, assimilations, and beliefs from the various cultures from which they had been uprooted.

Using Benítez-Rojo's theory of a syncretic artefact ([1992] 2001: 21), it follows that in the Caribbean what we call traditional culture is really an interplay of super-syncretic signifiers whose principal 'centres' are pre-industrial Europe, the sub-Saharan regions of Africa, and certain island and coastal zones of Southern Asia and Central/South America.

Benítez-Rojo suggests that when 'a centre' or a foreign signifier arrives, or is commercially imposed upon the Caribbean, 'that centre' then becomes the Caribbean within a play of difference, i.e. a particular rhythm and way of expressing Caribbeaness 'in a certain kind of way'. Therefore, for example, the blues became reggae, the flamenco became salsa, and the Ballade became calypso (Benítez-Rojo [1992] 2001: 4).

Stuart Hall in 1991 tabled an example of the relatively recent arrival of a super-syncretic signifier. He claims that reggae music is 'a product of the invention of tradition'. It is

sixties music, its impact on the rest of the world comes not just through preservation -- though it is rooted in the long retained traditions of African drumming -- but by being the fusion, the crossing of that retained tradition with a number of other musics, and the most powerful instruments or agencies of its world propagation are those deeply tribal instruments, the transistor set, the recording studio, [and] the gigantic sound system. (Hall 1991: 11-12)

Characteristically, creole culture expresses an unswerving commitment to community. Thus, Caribbean space today is a space where societal and class differences are overlaid with differences of an ethnographic nature, creating a complex socio-cultural interplay uniquely defined by its geographical fragmentation, its societal fragmentation, and its cultural fragmentation: it is an apparent chaos. Certainly, it is a space of paradox.

Benítez-Rojo observes that Caribbean culture is 'the union of the diverse', and what defines this culture as unique is its

instability; its reciprocal isolation; its uprootedness; its cultural heterogeneity; its lack of historiography and historical continuity; its contingency and impermanence; its syncretism. ([1992] 2001: 1-2)

Such was the horror and the rupture of these historical experiences where several cultures were forced to share the same geographical space, and several other aspects of the environment, that severe and strategic cultural coping mechanisms or subversions emerged, evolved, intervened, and were invented. These coping mechanisms actually manifested themselves in many unique forms of cultural expression.

The first of four coping mechanisms to emerge is at the very root of what today in the Caribbean can only be described as a valid and mystic theology, where the discourse of myth effortlessly co-exists with the discourse of history, as does the discourse of resistance with power. Moreover, because of its association with the ephemeral, the unreal, the indefinable, and the uncanny, it is often omitted, ignored, under-rated, or overlooked by most western scholarship. This phenomenon has been identified and defined in western academia as 'magical realism'.

The second coping mechanism is directly related to the conditions of secrecy through the use of camouflage or the act of syncretism, where, often, particularly horrific historical remembrances are portrayed/camouflaged in modern-day enactments of great aesthetic beauty or as forbidden religious practices that are submerged within, or syncretised into, the existing status quo.

The third and fourth coping mechanisms indeed shape the basis of contemporary Caribbean identity formations. They are a clear disposition toward non-violence, and a predilection towards a distinctive individuality which stresses plurality, hybridity, and differentiability -- a unique condition that I describe as cultural multiplicity.

Benítez-Rojo implores the world to recognise and evaluate the meaning of the two overriding features of these coping mechanisms, suggesting that the one thing that expressing ourselves "in a certain kind of way" through performance and rhythm achieves is to 'displace' and dispose the participants 'toward an

poetic territory of marked by an aesthetic of pleasure, or better, an aesthetic whose desire is non-violence'; dancing or playing an instrument 'in a certain kind of way' attempts 'to move an audience into a realm where the tensions that lead to confrontation are inoperative' ([1992] 2001: 20-21).

The Caribbean, then, is the pre-eminent social and geographic place in the modern world in which peoples, traditions, and values have met, clashed, and resulted in the creation of a new social order. C.L.R. James sets out to map the Caribbean in terms of a quest for national identity that in his analysis begins with the Haitian revolution in 1804 and culminates in the Cuban revolution of 1959. He sees the Caribbean in terms of phases of resistance in a region characterised by a history of violent change, forced re-location, and prolonged colonial domination. He does not, however, see the Caribbean as a collection of static, victimised cultures but, in fact, much more in terms of a region in dynamic engagement with global history.

In James's view, the desire for emancipation was not about the Caribbean creating isolated communities united by a shared defiance of a dominant force. It was instead much more the struggle to become modern states and to achieve technological power, that is, the achievement of a new self-consciousness through creolising the power of the state.

J.D. Elder notes that the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in his 1925 *Magic, Science and Religion* argues that

Anxiety in society may spring from diverse roots such as rational economic uncertainty: a realistic fear of death: or a pseudo-realistic fear of magically induced illness. To meet and deal with these, society

provides the means through which ritual beliefs, ritual activities, art, drama, or even daily work can operate in such a way as to relieve chronic anxiety arising from the individual's own view about his inadequacy, or lack of status, or even his own belief that his ego is threatened by conditions around [...] Art is a cultural product and its execution is an experience which at once integrates the personality and unites the individual with society and its traditional values. (Elder [1969] 1972: 18)

Therefore it should be no surprise that a valid mystic theology characterised by a near merging of two realms -- the living and the dead, an intersection between two worlds, a crossing and blurring of boundaries -- is present and of cardinal importance in the Caribbean today. Maya Deren defines this state of transience as 'the mysteries of man's harmony with himself and the cosmic process' (Deren 1953: xi). Lucia Inez Mena suggests that this 'magical realism is a way of acquiring a deeper understanding of the mystery of reality' (Maxwell 2004).

This theology includes the African derived religious belief systems such as Voudoun in Haiti, the Oresha (Shango) of Trinidad, the more Christianised Spiritual Baptists, also of Trinidad, Candomble and Macumba in Brazil, Winti in Suriname, Big Drum in Grenada, Santeria in Cuba, and the East Indian derived anthropomorphised pantheon of gods and goddesses who are also possessed of powers from the mystical and metaphysical realms. These East Indian deities are to be found all over the Caribbean but are most prevalent and concentrated in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana.

The adoption of these theologies and associated rituals has effectively invested the most ravaged victims of colonialism and slavery with a living spiritualism -- a pantheon of Gods and their timeless symbols, who, with proper service and contemplation, make themselves apparent to humans through possession: a state

where 'enemies are [become] brothers, the poor in spirit know the kingdom of heaven and the pure in heart see God' (Deren 1953: xiii).

That displaced persons torn from various homelands and thrown together indiscriminately into a totally new environment should have been able to re-constitute, out of the fragments of their differing heritages, a series of religious practices which remain self-consistent and authentic is truly a modern-day miracle.

The belief in these super powers continues to be present and practiced by a significant number of followers today and manifests itself in a range of cultural practices and folk beliefs. Some call it magic, some call it mysteries and miracles, some just vaguely acknowledge the existence of these practices without committing themselves to any belief system. Others share several systems at once, moving easily between the established Christian churches of imperialism and the African churches of Possession.

I believe that the Caribbean uniquely possesses an original aesthetic which is virtually embedded in its social and natural landscapes. Fredric Jameson suggests that

magical realism relies on disjunctions among differing cultures and social formations, which co-exist in the same space and time in the New World [...] magical realist creation often stems from a place and time in which different cultures or historical periods inhabit a single cultural space. (Mikics 1995: 373)

Mexican postcolonial critic Octavio Paz regards magical realism as an essential feature of postmodernism, where 'there are no centres of culture, race or politics'. D'haen goes much further and suggests that

the cutting edge of postmodernism is magical realism. As Douwe Fokkema remarks, the postmodernist device of "permutation" -- which he circumscribes as "permutation of possible and impossible, relevant and irrelevant, true and false, reality and parody, metaphor and literal meaning" -- is "probably the most subversive one with regard to earlier conventions". (D'Haen [1995] 2000: 201)

D'haen sees magical realism as a method of accessing the main body of western dominant discourse for creators not sharing the perspective of the "privileged centers" of this literature for reasons of language, class, race, or gender (D'Haen [1995] 2000: 200).

It is within this principle of cultural multiplicity that I have embedded the creative impulse and fashioned the aesthetic of *Carnival Messiah*. The theatrical techniques I have used find precedence within a plethora of historical and contemporary enactments that are 'repeated/reflected' (to use Benítez-Rojo's terms once more) in Trinidad and Tobago but hail from Africa, Europe, and Asia. Clearly, as its name suggests, *Carnival Messiah* wholly exemplifies all these principles of cultural multiplicity.

Therefore, just like the Caribbean itself, *Carnival Messiah* creates a truly paradoxical space -- an ephemeral, intangible space, an arbiter of 'chaos', a Third Space that can only ever be intuited through the poetic and the performance. *Carnival Messiah* then becomes the embodiment of creative strategies which symbolically utilise elements of camouflage, paradox, apparent chaos, and

plurality -- all conditions which support a position of cultural multiplicity to neutralise a deep and inhumane historical injustice.

Part Two: The Evolution of a Caribbean Space in Twenty-first Century Britain

'A people's art is the genesis of their freedom' (La Rose 2004: 3) reads the banner of a carnival inspired party/festival organised by Claudia Jones and Edric Connor at the St. Pancras Town Hall in the Borough of Camden, London. The festival took place after the 1958 race riots in Notting Hill Gate, in order to bring some semblance of peace and stability in the face of the rampant racism experienced by many Caribbean migrants who, at the invitation of the British government, came to England from the Caribbean in the late 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s (La Rose 2004: 3).

On 22 June 1948, Britain saw the arrival at the Tilbury docks of the *SS Empire Windrush*, carrying 492 Caribbean pioneers who had travelled across the seas to begin a new journey in their lives (Camden Equalities Unit 1998: i). This date has now come to symbolise the first wave of post-war Caribbean migration to Britain. It should be noted, however, that many West Indians had lived in Britain before this date, hundreds of thousands of them enlisting in the British armed services during World War Two. Nevertheless, the arrival of the *Windrush* is seen as a defining moment in the history of this modern age.

This migration was no mere coincidence: the post-war British economy was experiencing acute labour shortages in its service and industrial sectors. In fact, an open invitation had been extended to citizens of what were then still British colonies, to 'come to the motherland'. People from different parts of the West Indies, indeed some a thousand miles apart, came together with many other West Indians from the other islands for the first time on British soil. They received a very mixed reception, from a 'welcome home', to open hostility.

The 21 June 1948 edition of the *Daily Express* reads:

Five hundred unwanted people, picked up by the trooper *Empire Windrush* after it had roamed the Caribbean, Mexican Gulf and Atlantic for 27 days, are hoping for a new life. They include 430 Jamaican men. And there are 60 Polish women who wandered from Siberia, via India, Australia and Africa to Mexico, where they embarked on the *Empire Windrush*. The Jamaicans are fleeing from a land with large unemployment. Many of them recognise the futility of life at home. (Quoted by Phillips and Phillips 1998: 41-42)

The impact on diversifying British society and culture was immediate and significant (Hall 1999: 18). Stuart Hall identifies the 'black and ethnic minority communities' in Britain as originating in and coming from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent (1999: 18). Their presence since the late 1950s has transformed Britain into a multicultural and postcolonial society. Their presence has also been augmented by much smaller groups of non-European minorities from Africa, the Middle East, China and the Far East, and Latin America. More recently, however, and also unexpectedly, Eastern European migration to Britain has soared in unprecedented numbers.

The mid-twentieth century saw continual and substantial Caribbean emigration to Britain. These Caribbean immigrants expected their economic and educational

status to change dramatically. Instead, Britain's response to them was a long-term covert and overt practice of racism and marginalisation. Like migrants the world over, once they had arrived, they were promptly pushed into the worst paid, least attractive jobs, and housed in metropolitan slum areas.

Figure 1: Disembarkation of the SS Empire Windrush at Tilbury Docks on 22 June 1948.



Samuel Selvon in his groundbreaking novel *The Lonely Londoners* astutely observes

it have no place in the world exactly like a place where men get together to look for work, and draw money from the welfare state, when they ain't working. Is a kind of place where hate and disgust, avarice and malice and sympathy and sorrow and pity all mix up. Is a place where everybody is you enemy and you friend. (Selvon 1956: 38)

While this community was still mourning its lost dreams and crushed illusions, and whilst it was facing the reality of daily survival in a hostile environment, the seeds of Notting Hill Carnival emerged like a phoenix from the ashes to quell the disappointment of a disenchanted people, in direct response to this disenfranchisement, blatant racism, and victimisation.

To accurately survey the emergence of Notting Hill Carnival, we must chart the arrival and work of the political activist and communist, Claudia Jones, who was born in Trinidad but brought up in the United States. Jones arrived in Ladbroke Grove, London, around 1951, and founded the *Caribbean News* publication, which later became the *West Indian Gazette*. This publication espoused an international as well as a Caribbean ethos, while delivering a very progressive perspective on black issues in Britain. Jones developed a considerable reputation for campaigning on behalf of the black community in the North Kensington area (Johnson 1985: 66).

Mike and Trevor Phillips note that

In the early 1950s, the Notting Hill area was still a slum, full of multi-occupied houses crawling with rats and rubbish. The people who lived there were poor. Their wages were low or they were unemployed. It had a raft of dodgy pubs, gang fighting, illegal drinking clubs, gambling and prostitution [...] On the morning of Sunday, August 24, the police began stopping groups of young white men in cars touring west London. They

arrested a group of nine [armed] youth in one car [...] after they'd assaulted several black people in Ladbroke Grove and Shepherds Bush [...] even then, it was not obvious that this was the build-up to something more serious than the usual Saturday-night mayhem. (Phillips and Phillips 1998: 44)

When, in 1958, Kelso Cockrane was murdered in the Notting Hill area in a racially motivated incident, the West Indian community responded with violent rioting. These disturbances became known as the Notting Hill race riots and had the effect of creating a watershed in the mentality of the immigrant West Indian community in Britain. They no longer regarded Britain as the 'Mother Country'. These working class people from a varied cross-section of the Caribbean islands, who had never come together before as a collective, began looking toward themselves for their salvation. Thus were the seeds sown for the birth of a new British black identity.

A visionary, Claudia Jones recognised and exploited the relationship between politics and culture and, recognising that a dangerous but crucial sea change of attitude had taken place within the West Indian community, in 1958 she orchestrated the first public carnival procession around Powis Square, followed by a dance at the St Pancras Town Hall (La Rose 2004: 3).

The 1958 Notting Hill race riots served to establish the 'place' of the Carnival and, with the weather of the summer season, probably the 'time' too. Sympathies in the Notting Hill Gate area were positive; the black working class rubbed shoulders with the hedonistic, white, upper-classes of Holland Park who lived on the periphery of the Notting Hill area. These people were attracted to the creativity, pleasure, enjoyment, rhythm and music of carnival and eventually

these 'coming togethers' would often take place in the neutral territory of the Mangrove Restaurant.

In his book *The Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre*, Errol Hill states that

The Carnival of Trinidad has traditionally served as a most powerful cultural force which has not only successfully welded together a diverse multi-racial and heterogeneous society, by creating an identity for Caribbean people in the Caribbean, but more importantly, it has created an identity for those West Indians who have found themselves domiciled in foreign countries and in particular Britain. (Hill 1996: 19)

Migration always challenges a culture to replicate itself in new spaces, and because of this migrants will adopt, adapt, and re-invent, often with somewhat differing and even sometimes totally new materials. Humanity invariably responds to change with energy, vision, and creativity. These new possibilities of human interaction arise only because these migrants are from the same place. Race, class, colour, and other barriers are breached or dissolved as they who previously imagined themselves disparate discover their shared identity.

In the case of Caribbean migration to Britain in the mid-twentieth century, this manifested itself through the practice and celebration of Caribbean home traditions and, in particular, carnival celebrations. Caribbean cultural expressions such as food, music, artistic activity, drink, and fashion, became the important visible symbols of a memory migrants held inside.

What often emerges in terms of these cultural adaptations is usually familiar enough to be comforting and comfortable, but sometimes the results are so startlingly new and represent such radical departures from previous trajectories

that people scarcely remember or recognise that they are descended from certain remembered or un-remembered prototypes or models, myth and/or memory.

In fact, carnival for the twentieth-century Caribbean migrants to Britain addressed, initially and emphatically, the deep spiritual and psychological needs associated with anonymity, alienation, racism, materialism, classism, sexism, and subversion of spirituality. Then, and to a much lesser extent, it addressed their social needs -- that social clothing which hid their natural nakedness, so preventing them from becoming their real selves by imposing tension, anxieties, and other neuroses of social existence.

Evolving culture cannot be divorced from the social and political system in which that culture is located. Carnival is one of the various modes of action by which settlers from the Caribbean and their children changed the cultural life of Britain. Refusing the racial assumptions of imperial British culture, carnival appropriated and reformulated European aesthetics, combining them with African traditions, and created a new cultural space as a tool for liberation.

Brian Alleyne points out that, despite differences in detail, the existing studies of the British carnival all

see the development of carnival in Britain in terms of a struggle by West Indians (Caribbean people) to make a public expression of a collective identity in the face of a structurally racist and hostile social reality in Britain. They have treated the carnival as one instance of the ongoing struggle of Black people to forge social and political space in Britain. (Alleyne 2002: 67)

There is a long history of the Trinidad carnival being used as a vehicle for protest against the injustices of colonial subjugation and it is this practice that has been

transported into the British carnival tradition; this 'protest' must be understood in the context of opposition to white British racism.

Therefore, the carnival tradition in Britain today is really best understood as a subtle, cultural/political response to racism. Its subtlety lies in its production of an invisible politics, a politics which is normally non-confrontational. Carnival in Britain understands that the anti-human negativity of racism is effectively challenged by the embodied, human performance of art.

Today, third- and fourth-generation black, Asian, and other postcolonial ethnic minorities in Britain have formed communities that are both distinctively marked culturally but yet have never been separatist or exclusive (although some may have been perceived as such). They have maintained some cultural traditional practices and these continue to carry respect.

However, the degrees and forms of attachment are ever changing and fluid -- they are being negotiated constantly. Traditions co-exist with the emergence of new, hybrid, and cross-over cultural forms of tremendous vitality and innovation. These communities are in touch with their differences without being saturated by tradition. They are actively involved with every aspect of life around them without the illusion of assimilation and identity. This is the 'New Britain'.

If anything, these communities' perennial problem has been one of omission, of lack of accommodation and lack of inclusion (hospitality) from within the host country. However, it seems to me that the agenda of Britain's black communities is complex but clear. They desire to be treated and represented with justice and

equality (i.e. treated as the 'same') while simultaneously demanding recognition of their 'difference' (i.e. there are many ways of 'being black').

It is clear that the reasons behind, and the consequences of, diasporic movements are many, and often shared across a variety of communities who have had similar experience. Therefore Britain needs a fresh and creative political and social consensus on migration today. This should contain a variety of compensations which might firstly include a bias towards seeing the economic benefits of inward migration and a welcoming of the diversification of society.

Politically, then, the question to be asked would be how migration can equip Britain for the global economy and the society that is here to stay. These compensations might also include cultural aesthetics, as aesthetic practice is one of the essential channels through which culture is understood, generated, and transmitted, and provides the necessary means through which people can express their feelings and beliefs.

The Windrush Migrants, otherwise known as the formerly colonised, the sometimes anti-colonial, and now postcolonial subjects from the Caribbean, have transformed themselves in Britain over the past sixty years, mainly through carnival practice, using the creative and expressive arts as the central weapon and leading non-confrontational feature of change.

Claudia Jones recognised this, and the St. Pancras Town Hall Party was indeed to become the forerunner of the now well established Notting Hill Carnival. It is to

this end that I, in this new millennium, will endeavour to justify the emergence and relevance of a cultural paradigm such as *Carnival Messiah*.

Contemporary carnival practice in Britain today, by its very eclectic nature, embraces a broad church of multi-disciplinary, multinational, overlapping, and shifting aesthetic and cultural practices which successfully defy all existing mainstream definitions. It is this resistance to categorisation and containment as well as its ability to surprise and unnerve which makes carnival's impact so unique, creative, unpredictable, adaptable, and accessible. Carnival as arts practice is also one of the few remaining spaces available for artists to confront complex ideas of identity as well as challenge every existing notion of what art can do.

The profile of Caribbean derived carnival practice in the United Kingdom is undergoing radical change. There is a growing recognition of its riches as an art form as well as a tacit acknowledgement of its evolving impact on British cultural identity and an increasing status within the British cultural calendar.

In particular, the musics of Caribbean derived carnivals have consistently provided unique and unusual approaches to the understanding, representation, and expression of original, diverse, and global ideas, often creating significant common ground and common humanity to which many peoples and cultures of the world seemingly want to subscribe.

Global trends such as technological restructuring, economic liberalisation, and the emergence of post-industrial aesthetics suggest a window of unique

opportunity for the permanent positioning of carnival practice within the realm of cultural industries. The global success of Caribbean derived carnival practice indicates a vibrant but under-explored potential.

Notting Hill's Carnival has, over the years, obtained significant support from a variety of sources, but in 1976 it was the scene of major violent protest -- described by the mass media as rioting -- by young black men against the Metropolitan Police. One thousand five hundred policemen were deployed that year, and used what some observers described as 'highhanded and severe' methods in their dealings with the youths (Cohen 1993: 34). Three hundred and twenty-five policemen were hospitalised, and sixty people were arrested (*Race Today* Collective Association 1976: 170). This was the starting point for a concerted and long-running effort to remove the Carnival from the streets of Notting Hill.

In Britain today carnival, then, best expresses the strategies that the people of the Caribbean have for speaking about themselves and their relationship with the world at large, their relationship with history, their relationship with tradition, their relationship with nature, and their relationship with God. Carnival in fact plays a crucial part in blending the wide variety of identifications that are available in post-modern, or late-modern, Britain.

Inherent to the aesthetic of carnival is the seamless fusion of arts practice and community engagement. In particular, carnival is now seen, and often used, as an effective creative tool for bringing disparate communities together in common celebration. It has repeatedly demonstrated the potential it offers for

communication and unification across social, cultural, and political boundaries and more recently carnival has been seen as a model for artistic and social co-operation, integration, and cohesion, ultimately offering a creative opportunity for social and political change.

Despite the commonalities that can be drawn out of the carnival activities of various British Caribbean communities, the nature and form of artistic expression is also characterised by a diversity which is reflective of the differences and complexities evidenced within particular areas of the Caribbean Diaspora. This cross-fertilisation of celebratory archetypes reflects influences from a variety of communities, including Trinidadian, Barbadian, Dominican and Jamaican. In fact, the Liverpool Carnival is a blend of cultural tradition from six Caribbean islands.

But the carnival tradition in the United Kingdom is more than simply a means of unifying people whose origins lie in the various islands of the Caribbean sea. Thus the Bradford Carnival has embraced contributions from Dominica and Barbados in the Caribbean, but also includes Asian and white English cultural forms. The Unity Day Carnival in Wolverhampton reflects Barbadian, white English and Asian influences. At Notting Hill, the Reggae of Jamaica is heard alongside the soca and steelband of Trinidad, the Samba of Brazil, and the Jungle, drum'n'bass, and garage of Britain.

British carnival practice has acquired its particular uniqueness and flavour precisely because it has embraced alternative immigrant communities -- African, Asian, South American -- all of whom have their own specific celebratory

promenade traditions from which they can draw. This diversity is also reflected in the increasingly common practice for the formal aspects and ideologies integral to Caribbean-style carnival to be borrowed, appropriated, and integrated, to enhance and transform British carnival and British celebratory traditions.

Having been witnessed first in the early Notting Hill street fairs, these transformations can be seen with great effect at the Barrow-in-Furness and Luton Carnivals as well as the Fish Quay Festival in North Shields, Newcastle, where there is a long and established tradition of carnival to build upon. A more understated approach has been taken at events such as the High Wycombe, Reading, and Dover Carnivals.

Politically, like most other carnivals that take place in Britain, the Notting Hill Carnival (which is celebrating its forty-sixth birthday this year) has had a long and chequered history and has been subjected to the most insidious plots to get rid of its existence. Over the years carnivals have been subjected to petitions and High Court injunctions from local residents asking the authorities to ban the Carnival, and police resistance, which gained momentum in the early 1970s and spiralled out of control during the 1976 Notting Hill riots.

Over the years, the huge police presence at the Carnival has been tolerated, but not liked. There have been internal wars between rival Carnival Committees as well as a major and continuing aggravation from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Council, who have done their best, and successfully so, to divide and rule these 'committee organisations'.

With the advent of interest from the Arts Council England and the Greater London Assembly, who have introduced and waved the 'funding carrot' at them and seem suddenly to have seen the economic benefits of this 'ethnic' festival, all hell has broken loose. Unfortunately, the art and social benefits of carnival have been obscured in the fog of this pure greed and racism. Michael La Rose notes:

There was an ignominious end to the reign of Claire Holder (barrister at law), the longest serving Carnival Chief Executive Officer and chairperson. The NCL trustees locked her out of the carnival offices. This internal palace coup is still swathed in confusion and counter claims. What was clear was that the Leader of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea publicly attacked the NCL chairperson and her organisation. The Greater London Assembly GLA [...] was also critical. (La Rose 2004: 9)

What is eminently clear is that the carnivalists are no longer in control of the Notting Hill Carnival. I believe that it is only a matter of time before we see the complete demise of the Notting Hill Carnival as an expression of Caribbean consciousness in an adopted domicile and as a celebration of 'black' identity in Britain. It will probably be relegated to a park and regulated into silence.

In 1998, Tom Fleming produced one of the most sustained analyses of carnival in the United Kingdom. Using Leeds and Bristol as his models, his work draws upon issues of the sociologies of space and identity. As his final example of the potential for carnival to formulate and express new identities and new cultural practices in Britain, he cites my production of the *Carnival Messiah*, which he notes 'represents a unique fusion of the Caribbean carnival with European opera' (Fleming 1998).

He and I both believe that this model of identities forged in cultural and political practice takes us beyond entrenched positions imposed by racism. *Carnival*

Messiah as contemporary artistic practice is about providing a means of examining cultural and ethnic identity within the effectiveness of the British cultural arena, as a space in which we can construct and deconstruct identities and representations of ourselves.

Carnival Messiah demands that the focus is shifted toward embracing and examining the diversity of the black, and, by extension, the Caribbean, British experience in a bid toward looking for a future which could offer a new multi-stranded cultural alternative at its heart, an alternative which could offer an arena within which we could all belong and live: a common home, a shared heritage.

C.L.R. James once noted that we are 'in', but not 'of', Europe (Jaggi 1999: 30). Nevertheless, we have known Europe for three or four hundred years. We have been described as "conscripts of modernity" (David Scott quoted by Hall 1999: 19) and we have been described as "intimate enemies" (Ashis Nandy quoted by Hall 1999: 19). We have

dwelled for many years – and long before migration -- in the double or triple time of colonisation, and [we] now occupy the multiple frames, the in-between or "the third spaces" -- the homes-away-from-homes -- of the post-colonial metropolis. (Hall 1999: 19)

Kobena Mercer observes that:

In a world in which everyone's identity has been thrown into question, the mixing and fusion of disparate elements to create new, hybridised identities point to ways of surviving, and thriving, in conditions of crisis and transition [...] the emergence of new insights on the question of "identity" from black British positions and perspectives must be seen as holding out the prospect of an alternative to the more prevalent and pernicious responses to the crisis of our times. (Mercer 1994: 4-5)

Stuart Hall observes that what is particular about the English-speaking Caribbean peoples in Britain is that they are

simultaneously deeply familiar [with British culture], because they have lived with the British for so long, and [yet considered by those very same British to be] ineradicably different, because they are black. (Hall 1999: 22)

As reflected in *Carnival Messiah*, many of the creative talents of the Caribbean community are still framed within the familiarity of these rich culturally specific 'traditional' arts practices which are interwoven within the textures of our lived culture.

It is clear that even new and experimental work such as *Carnival Messiah* draws upon these repertoires, idioms, and languages of representation. George Lamming, Barbadian writer and post colonial critic has added his voice to the understanding of our condition. He observes,

It is the brevity of the West Indian's history and the fragmentary nature of the different cultures which have fused into something new; it is the absolute dependence on the values in the language of his coloniser which has given him a special relation to the word colonialism. It is not merely a political definition; it is not merely the result of certain economic arrangements. It started as these, and grew somewhat deeper. Colonialism is at the very base and structure of the West Indian cultural awareness. His reluctance in asking for complete, political freedom [...] is due to the fear that he has never had to stand [alone]. A foreign or absent Mother has always cradled his judgement. (Lamming [1960] 1995: 15)

For better or for worse, I believe *Carnival Messiah* represents a 'coming of age' for Caribbean consciousness.

Claire Holder, chairperson of the Notting Hill Carnival Trust from 1988 to 2000, had this to say:

Carnival is not just a legalised rave [...] an occasion to make a quick buck [...] lest we forget, millions have lost their lives in pursuit of liberty and millions more will do so in time if mankind continues to want to assert superiority over others [...] carnival evolved as a victory over oppression [...] carnival is a celebration of our liberation [...] for us as a

people, carnival is spiritual -- the embodiment of our sense of being and purpose. (Holder 1999)

Out of the 'violence and rupture' of a colonial legacy of negative social factors was born the carnival of Trinidad and Tobago. Out of the experience of racist rejection during mass migration to Britain from the Caribbean in the 1940s grew the unique celebration that today is carnival in Britain.

I hope *Carnival Messiah* will encourage insight into way that such major population movements, incursions, and their cultural histories carry within them the stimulus that is essential for the renewal and future prosperity of the societies they encounter. Indeed, I hope *Carnival Messiah* will illustrate how human civilisation itself could scarcely have evolved and flourished in the ways it has without the interplay of ideas, customs, and beliefs that large scale migrations invariably generate.

CHAPTER THREE

CARNIVAL AS CONTEXT

Part One: Existing Theories of Carnival

Traditional carnival theory, based mainly on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Victor Turner, has long defined carnival as inversive or subversive. Under Bakhtin's and Turner's influence, carnival and the 'carnavalesque' have become virtual synonyms for moments of transgressive communal excess and riotous disorder.

Recently, however, it has been acknowledged that there are several other theoretical interpretations of carnival which need further critical evaluation in light of contemporary Caribbean carnival practice, and that there is a need to redefine the complex and some times contradictory concept of carnival and what has come to be called the carnivalesque.

One of the earliest critical evaluations of carnival is that of Mikhail Bakhtin, who wrote *Rabelais and His World* in the 1930s. Here, Bakhtin examines the spectrum of popular humour and folk culture of the Renaissance, particularly the world of carnival as presented in Francois Rabelais's novels. It is worth noting that, as with the Brazilian, North American and Caribbean carnivals, both Bakhtin and Rabelais's work evolved out of a period of revolution. Bakhtin saw carnival as a play in which the main streets and squares of the city transformed into a huge set and stage, with the city becoming a theatre without walls, and the city's inhabitants becoming the actors.

The complexity of the cultural politics of carnival lies in the special form of embodied performance that it represents. Mikhail Bakhtin provided an analysis of Rabelais's representation of the sixteenth-century carnival in France, which continues to be relevant to an understanding of worldwide Caribbean carnival practice today.

Carnival is one of Bakhtin's great obsessions, because in his understanding of it carnival, like the novel, is a means of displaying otherness: carnival makes familiar relations strange. (Holquist 1990: 89)

One form of this display of 'otherness' is the production of bodies which, by use of extraordinary costume and often bizarre cosmetics, radically transforms the body's appearance. This then becomes a new type of body, one which often transgresses conventional norms. Bakhtin produced a vision of what he called 'the grotesque body':

A body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed: it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body [...] eating, drinking, defecation, copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body [...] In all these events, the beginning of life and end of life are closely linked and interwoven. (Bakhtin *Rabelais and his World*: 317, quoted by Holquist 1990: 89)

Bakhtin's concept of dialogism -- that thoughts, words and existences take place only through dialogue with the other (Roberts 1994: 247) -- applies to carnival because this is one of the sites in which the grotesque body is displayed.

In carnival, all bodies are in dialogue. It would be surprising if all the excesses which Bakhtin described in the Rabelaisian, fictional carnivalesque world of the mid-sixteenth century had survived intact in twenty-first century carnival practice. However, Bakhtin's general point about 'grotesque bodies' still remains partly relevant today. For example, Max Farrar observes that

in the Leeds Carnival of 2001, people played Mas dressed in rags and smeared in cosmetics to represent mud, and Captain Wenham's Masqueraders troupe (which was a major feature of the Leeds Carnival until very recently) were dressed in tatters and wore grotesque masks. Benji's troupe once appeared as Pallbearers, carrying a body in a gorilla mask, playing dead. In 2001 Ruth Bunday appeared in an elephant's mask (referencing the Hindu god Ganesha). The regular appearance in the Leeds Carnival of men who delight in dressing as women (Hebrew Rawlins and Michael Paul being the best examples) is another aspect of this playful transgressiveness. (Connor and Farrar 2004: 264-65)

In contemporary carnival practice, the 'grotesque' is in dialogue with its opposite, 'beauty', and, perhaps in keeping with the postmodern obsession with the perfection of form according to increasingly globalised notions of what constitutes beauty, this form now predominates.

It is important to note, however, that in worldwide Caribbean Carnival practice, costumes are worn by people of all shapes and sizes, and aesthetic standards are mainly judged according to the artistry of the costume, rather than the perceived beauty of the wearer. Holquist writes that these bodies, for Bakhtin (and we would argue for today's carnival)

militate against monadism, the illusion of closed-off bodies or isolated psyches in bourgeois individualism, and the concept of a pristine, closed-off, static identity and truth wherever it may be found. (Holquist 1990: 90)

The Caribbean carnival is thus one source of resistance to the 'egotism of the West' that Bakhtin denounces (Holquist 1990: 90). The 'carnavalesque thus defined is a mode of parodic cultural inversion, its central images, those of an obese carnival king and grotesque devil dancers. From this perspective, carnival is both dangerous and seductive, a time when the 'other' reigns over, but also beckons the civilised 'us', in what Frank Manning in 1983 described as a 'tenuous, subjunctive, paradoxical' celebration (Manning 1983: 4).

Though not incorrect, this definition of carnival is one-dimensional and misleading -- and therefore, inadequate. *Carnival Messiah* aims to widen and redefine Bakhtin's theories of Carnival in the light of actual contemporary Caribbean carnival practice.

Writing thirty years later, Levi-Strauss saw carnival in terms of oppositions: that is, oppositions between carnival and Lent, oppositions between man and beast, and oppositions between man and man -- all enactments which capsize the world and the perceived natural order of things.

Part Two: The European Historical Context of Carnival

The word *carnival* in the English language derives from the Latin expression *Carne Vale*, meaning 'farewell to the flesh', and in Europe dates back to the Roman Saturnalia in honour of the God of Saturn and Dionysian Greek feasts. The Saturnalia were characterised by one important feature which saw social order capsized, roles reversed, masters becoming slaves and vice versa. The celebrations involved excesses of behaviour and escape from the humdrum. Other associations include the Roman feast of Isis which included the wearing of fancy dress, masks, and floats. These enactments were paralleled in Spain and Germany.

Carnival-type feasts were prevalent in late Medieval European society, one such being the Feast of Fools. Indeed, this custom lasted for ten centuries between the

seventh and the seventeenth. The Feast of Fools took place both inside the church and outside on the streets. It often involved role-reversal, with the lesser clergy performing the duties of their superiors, sometimes wearing masks and dancing in the sanctuary dressed as women and minstrels. Outside, in the streets, festivities took the form of singing bawdy songs, masking, torch-lit processions, indecent gesturing, nudity, pelting people with excrement, reciting scurrilous and derisive verses, clanging kettles, saucepans and bells, role-reversal, and generally transgressive behaviour : gross practices prevailed.

That the church seemed to compromise by allowing this festive space for role-reversal and subversive performance was puzzling. Bakhtin suggests that the church did not stop these activities because they could not. However, another more plausible explanation suggests that Christianity, 'in its conquest and erasure of pagan (i.e. colonized) cultures', had long decided to devise a 'strategy of absorption'; thus, what appeared to be compromise in fact was not. As Rohlehr notes, 'wiser counsels' recognised that, 'by seeming to tolerate this festive freedom', they could better contain 'rebellious impulses'. This in fact 'strengthened and restored intact the hierarchical and oppressive structures of the Church Militant' (Rohlehr 2003c: 28).

Thus there are clear parallels between the activities that took place during the Feast of Fools and the post-emancipation evolution of the Trinidad Carnival from which the j'ouvert enactment of today -- the singing of 'bawdy and scandalous songs, masking, torch-lit parades', 'transvestism and role reversal' -- emerged (Rohlehr 2003c: 27). Therefore, although a mechanism of social control authorised by the elites and the Trinidad Government did exist, the lower classes

circumvented it by passively resisting their dominance and by mobilising the common folk for political action.

By locating the dramatisation of the minstrel/urban griot characters of *Carnival Messiah* in the European medieval Feast of Fools enactment, I have in the ancient tradition of the early church placed the carnivalesque within the sacred. Gordon Rohlehr describes this strategy as ‘both antithetical and complementary to the idea of the holy’ (Rohlehr 2003c: 29).

Carnival may provide the catharsis which makes it possible to endure oppression, but it also offers infinite possibilities as described above for political mobilisation, subversion, and more. Carnival is a contested festival in which contending political, religious, geographical, moral, and social forces have license to subvert. In carnival or fiesta, the principle of subverting the normal order becomes the governing principle. Through the carnival enactment, society frees itself of its self-imposed norms. Essentially, carnival is revolt, the experience of disorder, the bringing together of opposing elements and principles in order to trigger the rebirth of life; the group/the actors emerge purified and fortified from this submersion in chaos.

Trinidad Carnival often embraces the practice of the absurd to do this. J’ouvert uses mechanisms of humour, picong, satire and buffoonery, i.e., the total subversion of social order. The reveller plays the mask in earnest and so becomes the personality which the mask characterises for the duration of the performance, celebration or observation. Hence it is not the individual, but the mask or

character played, which is responsible for lauding, lampooning, satirising, parodying or criticising public or private figures in the society.

The British Egyptologist E.A. Wallis Budge notes that the centrepiece of Kemetic devotion to Wosir was the annual mystery play, and it involved the Pharaoh and other officials as well as the common people in the movement of all participants in procession through a public space. The ritual was a dramatic re-enactment/commemoration of certain transcendent events in the life of the founding God or Hero. It was a profoundly religious event tantamount to a passion play. It was a commemoration of the suffering, death, and eventual resurrection of the greatest of the Egyptian ancestors, Wosir, who was a God as well as the son of God (Smart 2000: 51-53).

The holy mass for Roman Catholics is a re-enactment of the saving mystery of Calvary, the passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God and Son of Man. In both the Wosirian Mystery Play and the Christian Mass, offerings are eaten sacramentally. The Mass itself is a dramatic sacramental memorialisation of the saving events of Calvary. This dramatic enactment is the same sacramental that African people have used in every liturgy from the beginning of recorded history through to present time.

The element of theatre was central to ancient Kemetic festivals and continues on after many millennia into the Roman one. Conventional wisdom affirms that modern-day carnival was derived from a pre-lenten festival, a bacchic Saturnalia which was re-interpreted into the Christian world order. The once pagan festival was stripped of its bacchanalian excesses, converted into a decent Christian

celebration of one final indulgence in *carnem levare* -- the taking away of flesh that would manifest itself through forty days of fasting, abstinence, and general penance for sins -- Lent.

However, it was in particular Italy during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries that changed the entire nature of early European carnival practice, with its introduction of masquerade balls, magnificent street parades held with lavishly decorated floats, and most significantly the new art of improvisation termed *commedia dell'arte*. This practice perfected the representation of the 'stock' character who, when presented collectively, represented a cross-section of then contemporary Italian society and, in particular, illuminated an entire range of human weaknesses.

Like carnival, *commedia dell'arte* became a vehicle for criticism and social satire. These European social festivities, alongside several other rites of passage and seasons, were eventually absorbed into the Christian calendar.

Today, there are three major carnival celebrations in the world which, significantly, have emerged directly out of sixteenth century European expansionism through colonisation and African enslavement. They are all celebrated on the two days preceding Ash Wednesday, which in turn heralds Lent: forty days of fasting and abstinence. They are the Rio Carnival in Brazil, the New Orleans Carnival in the United States, and the Port-of-Spain Carnival in Trinidad.

It is no accident that the cultural map of the Caribbean -- a complex map that

includes parts of Brazil, Central America, and the United States -- should have several carnivals that are all internationally famous. However, the characteristic that is shared by New Orleans, Rio de Janeiro, and Port-of-Spain is that of socio-cultural density. According to Benítez-Rojo, this term refers to

a critical mass or high concentration of differences (ethnological, political, social, etc.). From this we can derive a principle: Given conditions that are favourable, the more sociocultural density, the greater the carnival. (Benítez-Rojo [1992] 2001: 306)

This suggests, therefore, that carnivals can be taken as indications of social complexity. Benítez-Rojo notes:

carnivals inscribe themselves within a time lag; they are, above all, concentrations of paradoxical dynamics by virtue of which the world becomes a travesty mirror [...] that at once reflects the tragic and the comic, the sacred and the profane, the historical and the aesthetic, [...] death and resurrection. ([1992] 2001: 306; 311)

Every human seeks to preserve the family of families, that is, the nation. We as a Caribbean people have experienced the psychic terror, the spiritual death, the social dismembering, and the psychological violence of the African holocaust -- a terror inhabited by generation after generation. It is this series of historical enactments that are testimony to the ancient origin of carnival and the fundamental, all consuming nature of its attraction, which has led to its massive global appeal today.

Caribbean carnival has the power to repeatedly and seamlessly integrate different cultures, creeds, and races. It is this meeting of Africa and Europe centuries ago that has spawned what today we have finally come to regard as a new art form: a new Caribbean aesthetic. It has a distinct cultural identity and a highly sophisticated repertoire which, through processes of globalisation and mass migration, currently spans at least four continents.

Part Three: Carnival as the Theatre of the Caribbean

To my mind, carnival is the theatre of the Caribbean. Carnival and the Masquerade are about experiencing and participating in total theatre, out front, on the streets: music and dance, costume and masquerade.

Carnival is a ritual of performance within which rites of purification, rites of conflict, rites of passage, and rites of participation are all celebrated and enacted within the confines of an unprecedented and unique historical reality.

The late Cy Grant also offers an insightful reading of carnival as

a mass celebration of collective identity that exhibits an explicit desire to affirm that life and art are not separate. Merely to be a passive recipient of artistic activity is alien to the life and the innate creativity of Caribbean communities. Joyous participation of all creeds and races is not only essential, but symbolic in the extreme. (Cy Grant 1995)

Rawle Gibbons further develops my perception of carnival practice when he observes that

Carnival is not commemorative but a living, protean event, whose very validity depends on its capacity to absorb and express the current while containing the past. [...] The ritual purpose of Carnival is regeneration, the celebration of life. (1979: 100; 118)

Carnival is the essential and profoundly self-affirming gesture of a people. The participation of the people in this enactment is an historically crucial self-affirmation, where their aesthetic experience occurs within the framework of rituals, representations of a collective, ahistorical, and improvisatory nature. In Trinidad and Tobago Carnival this encompasses a series of cultural configurations that, through a process of unfolding, defining, re-defining,

changing, and re-evaluating as the culture matures and grows, have merged and become indigenous to the country.

Carnival is also a participatory democracy, where the masses become intimately involved in the most important aspects of the carnival ritual; this in marked contrast to that of Greek ritual drama, where the role of the masses is given over to a professional chorus.

Carnival is not only a superficial escape: carnival as a form of catharsis makes it possible to endure oppression. The donning of a masquerade costume not only allows one to escape from present reality into that other self, but to escape into a repressed self shaped by a unique and terrible historical reality.

Carnival also offers infinite possibilities for political mobilisation, subversion, and more. Therefore, it is also a contested festival in which contending political, religious, geographical, moral, and social forces have license to subvert.

In carnival, the principle of subverting the normal order becomes the governing principle. Through the carnival enactment, society frees itself of its self-imposed norms. Carnival, then, can also be seen as revolt, the experience of disorder, the bringing together of opposing elements and principles in order to trigger the rebirth of life. The community thus emerges purified and fortified from this submersion in chaos.

But carnival time is also sacred time; it is time outside of time (Smart 2000: 30).

Octavio Paz notes that

Our poverty can be measured by the frequency and luxuriousness of our holidays. (Paz [1950] 1961: 48)

There is one moment in the carnival which is central to the highest, deepest, and truest experience of carnival because it suspends and resolves everything: a short period of transported existence whose effects last for far longer than the actual moments of quintessence. This moment resolves so many contradictions and delivers the ultimate feeling of joy and peace. Ian Smart calls it 'Momento Pleno', Patricia Allyene-Dettmers calls it 'Moment of Transcendence', Kimani Nehusi calls it 'psychological catharsis and spiritual renewal', and Antonio Benítez-Rojo describes it as carrying one self 'in a certain kind of way'.

Carnivals are our only luxury: I believe that they substitute, perhaps to our advantage, the theatre, the vacations, the 'weekend away', and the 'cocktail' party of the North Americans and the Europeans, and the receptions of the bourgeoisie and the coffee houses of the Mediterranean people.

Alternatively, poor Africans throughout the Americas -- from Rio to Panama to Barranquilla, Colombia to Port-au-Prince to New Orleans -- have traditionally centred their cultural, social and economic life on the carnival. In contrast, I believe that mass gatherings in the modern world are really assemblies of loners: there is no sense of being a people; there are couples and small groups but never a vibrant community; there are simply agglomerations of individuals such as the crowds at Disneyland. Westerners seem to be overwhelmed by the fullness, the overflowing openness, and the transcendence of the carnival, and hear all invitations to 'get on bad' with a simple-minded literalness to indulge in

unacceptable excesses. Quite often, they fail to distinguish between the celebration of fertility and crass, un-nuanced, unmitigated debauchery.

Octavio Paz empirically underpins this chaotic paradoxical nature of carnival when he notes that in the magical time and space of fiestas

the very notion of order disappear. Chaos comes back and license rules. Anything is permitted: the customary hierarchies vanish, along with all social, sex, caste, and trade distinctions. Men disguise themselves as women, gentlemen as slaves, the poor as the rich. The army, the clergy, and the law are ridiculed. Obligatory sacrilege, ritual profanation is committed. Love becomes promiscuity. Sometimes the fiesta becomes a Black Mass. Regulations, habits and customs are violated. Respectable people put away the dignified expressions and conservative clothes that isolate them, dress up in gaudy colors, hide behind a mask, and escape from themselves. By means of the fiesta society frees itself from the norms it has established. ([1950] 1961: 51)

However, the Carnival of Trinidad and Tobago today is really a quite unique social site. The annual enactment allows certain things to be said and certain forms of social power to be exercised that, under normal circumstances outside the festival, would be forbidden.

Carnival continues to be an occasion for recrimination from the lower classes because of the dominance that continues to be displayed by the elite and upper classes. Historical evidence shows that the popular culture that characterises Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival is, in many ways, the property of the lower-class Africans, whose social place and West African traditions have generated distinctive experiences, values, and shared characteristics that consequently appear in their masquerade, dances, and calypsos (Liverpool 2001: 483-85).

Further, as a consequence of the historical events and experiences that affected the islands and their inhabitants between 1783 (the abolition of slavery) and 1962 (Independence), the African masqueraders and musicians in Trinidad have inevitably adopted cultural practices and traits from Europeans, Asians, Africans, Venezuelans, neighbouring Caribbean islanders and mainlanders, and North Americans. In that process of re-adaptation, they have incorporated these influences into their masquerades, music, dance, and song.

Finally Trinidad Carnival during the period between 1783 and 1962 meant significantly more than a process of release, and certainly much more than Bakhtin's 'ritual location of uninhibited speech [where] undominated discourse prevailed'. Bakhtin speaks of the irresistible power of 'festive laughter' (Bakhtin 1984: 12), not understanding that this was in fact a manifestation of their speech, their 'new' voice that had been suppressed by the elite and Colonial Government for so long. As such, the ridicule, aggression, and mockery particularly available during the j'ouvert enactment only makes sense to the outsider 'when seen in the context of the power relations that will have taken place during previous years' (Liverpool 2001: 483-85).

CHAPTER FOUR

CARNIVAL MESSIAH: THE CREATIVE IMPULSE

Part One: Preamble

Carnival Messiah creates, like the Caribbean itself, a paradoxical space (an ephemeral, intangible space), an arbiter of 'chaos', a Third Space that can only be intuited through the poetic and the performative. The audience must have the illusion of experiencing a totality with apparently no repressions or contradictions: a fantasy space which displaces normal expectations and learned behaviour. The machinery of magical realism allows for boundary-skipping between worlds. The audience should have no other desire than that of maintaining themselves within the limits of these zones for the longest possible time, in free orbit, beyond imprisonment or liberty.

Carnival Messiah should be viewed as a new and unique cultural paradigm that is characterised by a process which effectively deploys the use of aesthetics as a prevailing agent of non-confrontational resistance and transformation. It contains a progressive mission with a complex assignment that is supported by a dynamic, multifaceted, multi-dimensional metaphor. It is this metaphor that enables *Carnival Messiah* to function as a unique instrument of postcolonial liberation.

As an aesthetic manifestation, *Carnival Messiah* symbolically depicts the emergence of the cultural history of Trinidad and Tobago through its use of the masquerade of carnival as a multi-dimensional metaphor. This metaphor embodies the historical experiences of African holocaust, sixteenth-century

European expansionism, nineteenth century Asian indentureship, and the consequent appropriation of those multiple and shifting identities, all within one space.

These historical experiences, combined with carnivalised re-inventions of aspects of Handel's *Messiah* oratorio and apprehended for use within *Carnival Messiah* the aesthetic manifestation, purposely re-interpret, re-position, re-texturise, and re-present the people of the Caribbean's transformation of their status from slave to free individual, from victim to subject. This is evidenced in the production through the presentations of their new-found consciousness and their privileged 'voice'.

Part Two: Masquerade as Metaphor

The choice of Handel's *Messiah*, one of western Europe's greatest classical music canons, to underpin the framework of *Carnival Messiah* might be seen by some as a reversal of existing European essentialist practices. However, it is really so much more than that. The average Caribbean postcolonial subject, having received Handel's *Messiah* as the benchmark by which to judge musical quality within Caribbean culture, would see this multi-stranded approach to culture as a natural progression.

In the Caribbean, the word 'Messiah' as expressed in Handel's oratorio *Messiah* represents two opposing standpoints: one, the dramatic and aesthetically pleasing baroque culture of Europe, encapsulated within an outstandingly beautiful and

technically perfect musical composition; two, a historical representation of an oppressive, elite, colonial hegemony, both political and religious, that is closely entwined with the institutions and memory of African enslavement and Asian indentureship, institutions that were endured within the Caribbean region for many centuries.

This outlook was, however, challenged by these theologically marginalised Caribbean peoples, many of whom surreptitiously removed themselves from the dominant enforced theology of colonial Christianity in a bid to craft their own self-affirming belief systems, by creating liberating perspectives particular to them that corresponded to the context in which they were being forced to theologise.

Carnival Messiah, therefore, should never be considered as merely a straightforward Caribbean adaptation of Georg Friedrich Handel's Oratorio *Messiah*. Instead, using those same historical techniques of camouflage and those agencies of non-confrontational resistance, *Carnival Messiah* is, rather, a radical re-invention, a subversion even, of Handel's *Messiah*.

The theatrical techniques used in the production of *Carnival Messiah* find precedence within a plethora of historical and contemporary carnival enactments found in Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean. These are apprehended within the medium of multi-dimensional metaphor to present a unique expression of Caribbean consciousness that positively reflects the historical Caribbean's close association with the cultures of Europe, Africa, and Asia, presented within a carnival context and on a carnival stage to tell a universal story with a distinctly

Caribbean voice. Patricia Alleyne-Dettmers refers to this process as 'metamasking' (1992: 5). I prefer to describe this practice as one of 'cultural multiplicity'.

Carnival Messiah as the overarching multi-dimensional metaphor is, in fact, characterised by three root metaphors. They are: colonisation, and the role that religion played within that institution; slavery, and the enigma of cultural retention; and creolisation, as it reflects cultural reconstruction and the establishment of a unique Caribbean identity.

The carnival elements of *Carnival Messiah* that derive from these root metaphors are taken from the following: the pre-emancipation carnival of Trinidad -- Cannes Brulees -- and the contributions to this by the enslaved Africans, as well as the French plantocracy, the colonial Spanish, and then British post-emancipation governments; the post-emancipation carnival -- J'ouvert -- and the contributions of the free Africans; pre-World War II masquerade or mimetic masquerade; post-World War II masquerade; historical and contemporary masquerade; ritual and dance enactments as folkloric form; the contributions of Islamic culture (Hosey and Hindu culture -- Phagwa); calypso and the Sans Humanité vocal form; steelband; contemporary popular black music; the size and presentation of the performing company; and, finally, the Caribbean Carnival cycle.

The *Messiah* elements of *Carnival Messiah* that derive from these root metaphors include the nine selections taken from the oratorio itself, the employment of the

libretto from *Messiah*, the Christian doctrine of the New Testament and its implications, and Handel's understanding and definition of redemption.

Thus *Carnival Messiah* does not simply contest stereotypes, it (amongst other things) strives to deconstruct early black theatre strategies for identity formation, by constructing a multi-dimensional response that articulates the complexity and diversity of Caribbean arts and cultural practice in the modern, the postmodern, and the postcolonial world.

Part Three: The Cultural Aesthetic

The theory that has dominated for many years as regards the evolution of Trinidad Carnival suggests that, until emancipation in 1833, enslaved Africans were debarred from taking part in these celebrations, except as performers at the behest of their masters. Andrew Pearse (1956a), Errol Hill (1972), Andrew Carr (1956), and Raphael De Leon, also known as the calypsonian Roaring Lion (1988), cite Trinidad Carnival as originating in Europe. Andrew Carr notes that 'the Africans began to take part in Carnival after they had attained freedom under the emancipation bill of 1833' (Carr 1956: 57).

However, there is a contrary academic view to which I adhere and which is also held (and led) by the Trinidadian academics and cultural critics Hollis Liverpool, J. D. Elder, and Earl Lovelace, all of whom now concur that emancipated Africans, even though living in a society in which masking and disguise were often prohibited except on Carnival Monday and Tuesday, pre-empted this

season for their own celebration and memory. Such a disguise of purpose -- hiding one celebration behind another -- was a characteristic of enslaved Africans everywhere in the 'New World'. It seems to me that clearly there were two parallel but distinct carnival traditions that existed in Trinidad during the nineteenth century, both of which will have been practised by the enslaved Africans long before emancipation.

In my opinion, the wealthy French planters who had traditionally celebrated carnival in Europe were only partly responsible for the evolution and emergence of a carnival tradition in Trinidad. Their contribution consisted of a two-day period of merrymaking, feasting, and enjoyment which preceded Ash Wednesday and the Roman Catholic observance of Lent, which began forty days and forty nights of repenting and fasting. At such times, imitation of the French aristocracy by the enslaved Africans would take place. However, and even more importantly, aspects of their own African heritage, -- especially their rituals and social practices -- were able to come to the fore.

In Africa, it would have been commonplace for performances of music and dance to take place within the framework of community enactments such as initiation, funerals, thanksgivings, and harvests, particularly on ceremonial occasions. This would almost always incorporate some type of visual display (special ornamentation, jewellery, hair style, costume, body painting) depending on the nature of the enactment. This 'masking', also rooted in the French portrayal of carnival as a symbol of deception, had special meaning for the enslaved Africans as it was associated with many of their own rituals: often representing ancestral spirits, Gods, or mythological beings. The masquerade aspects of Trinidad

Carnival as we now know it potently highlight the issues of preservation, continuity, and identity of the culture which was forcefully stripped from the enslaved African people when they were trafficked to the West Indies.

The Africans imitated the clothing, costumes, characters, and manners of the French, no doubt mimicking and playing on the characteristics of their masters and mistresses. This satirical charade was the birth of the 'Ole Mas' carnival tradition which was, in essence, the continuation of the African tradition of role play/enactment in the community. This had now been transported across the ocean and was instead being used in estate slave yards to reflect the mood of these people, acting as a show window for satire and wit which they now expressed with great originality and imagination through disguise, music, dance, and, of course, song.

One traditional 'Ole Mas' carnival character who endures to this day is the Dame Lorraine. This character parodies the aristocratic French women of the period to the point of absurdity. The character is always played by a man dressed as a woman with the normal female attributes of breast and bottom stuffed and extended beyond reality. These characters always wear masks, carry fans, and wear an imitation of the aristocratic clothing women would have worn in that era. They dance to a particular signature tune with instrumentation of guitar/lute, flute, and light drum percussion.

It should be noted that although the enslaved Africans imitated their masters' and mistresses' costume and antics, they did not in fact acquire the dainty French music (with the exception of the Dame Lorraine music) which was played at

these occasions. Instead, they opted for their vibrant drumming and chanting, coloured by impromptu 'call and response' songs associated with the Kalinda (stick fighting), which in earlier days as a free people would have graced their village festivals and ceremonial occasions. These were almost all certainly the forerunners to present day calypso and carnival traditions.

The annual Cannes Brulees (burning of the sugar cane) harvest, when the enslaved Africans were moved from plantation to plantation in rotation, was the only time of the year that enslaved Africans from different plantations were legitimately able to gather together. It was a time of celebration for them: many marriages, child namings, and thanksgivings were known to take place under the guise of Cannes Brulees.

When the abolition of slavery (emancipation) took effect in Trinidad on 1 August 1834 (seventeen years after the signing of the abolition of the slave trade parliamentary act in England), the freed Africans celebrated their newly acquired freedom by reproducing on the streets of Port-of-Spain a re-enactment of Cannes Brulees. This changed the existing carnival situation drastically, as the newly-free Africans took over the streets.

Deeply rooted aggressions that had been smouldering for years in these previously enslaved Africans began to take tangible form. Uprisings on the estates became very common. Murder, arson, and assaults on white overseers by black workers became the rule of the day. For many years after emancipation, the newly freed Africans celebrated the anniversary of their freedom on an August day, by marching in organised bands in the streets and singing Kalinda songs.

This new pageant became known as 'Camboulay', creolised from the French Cannes Brulees, and

The freed Africans would dress up like "garden Negroes" of past times and came to be called Negres Jardins by the French-speaking element. The celebrating "bands" were each headed by a mock King and Queen, several Princesses and royal imitators. There was a strong body-guard of armed batonniers each carrying a lighted flambeaux and a lethal-looking, hard-wood, three-foot battling stick -- two significant symbols for the newly freed slave. The champion of each band walked ahead singing boastful kalinda songs about himself and the victories and conquests of his followers. (Elder [1969] 1972: 11)

This heralded the birth of the call and response Kalinda song or calypso. These bands were organised on parochial/tribal lines and very often clashes occurred between rival bands which refused to recognise each other's supremacy (Elder [1969] 1972: 11). This is also the opinion held by Maureen Warner-Lewis, Basil Matthews, and Gordon Rohlehr and certainly seems again to dispute the observations of B.W. Higman on the loss of African identity. Turino suggests that:

"the identity factor" [...] comes into play when members of a socially and economically dominated group consciously draw upon symbols or cultural manifestations of their own group to buttress publicly their own unity, identity, and self esteem in the face of oppression and prejudice. (Turino 1984: 254)

Often, however, there was 'no band-wide free-for-all'; the 'two leaders would close in to do battle with each other'. In the circle the drummers would be directing the fighters with their beat, and the supporting chorus would be chanting out their refrain to the kalinda songs, led by the chantrelles. The songs 'gave the warriors courage and the audience saw to it that the crude rules of the game were observed' (Elder [1969] 1972: 11).

Thus it was that the Camboulay entered into the French planters Carnival/Mardi Gras. The law had been prosecuting freed Africans for enacting it every August since emancipation. The freed Africans then argued that since Mardi Gras (the upper-class fete) was a public holiday, the celebration of Camboulay could take also place during this time without causing offence. However, this was completely resented by the whites and soon stringent laws and proclamations were passed to outlaw the performance of Camboulay on Mardi Gras.

Also banned were the playing of African drums, and it was this particular ruling that spawned the birth of the steelband. This was to have a far-reaching effect and significance, initially on the musical culture of Trinidad and Tobago, and then throughout the world.

Part Four: Structure and Methodology

In the creation of *Carnival Messiah* I have radically re-examined and remodelled the impositions and assumptions of western European formal theatrical cultural bias in terms of how I use the space, place, body, language, and role play of formal theatre to authentically accommodate all the characteristics of the traditional performance of Trinidad and Tobago in a contemporary context.

Thus the dramatic structure of *Carnival Messiah* purposely does not unfold in a linear or chronological fashion. Nor does it adhere to the normal conventions of western theatrical dramatic practice. Like carnival itself, it is unpredictable and often paradoxical.

The content of *Carnival Messiah* is rooted in the carnival and folklore of Trinidad and Tobago and, by extension, the wider Caribbean. However, Trinidad in particular has a long history of applying the linguistic formulation of ‘double entendre’ as a mode of misinformation that permeates every aspect of its culture, where ‘nothing is ever as it seems’, and using this as an agent of humour, secrecy, camouflage, reversal, and subversion. ‘Double entendre’ is not just a witty, mischievous past-time; it is endemic to the very workings of that society; it is a status quo, born out of a long history of suppression and ultimate survival.

Carnival Messiah symbolically utilises these techniques of ‘double entendre’ to tell its story, by using traditional, aesthetically beautiful Caribbean enactments, which are all significantly born out of slavery (such as j’ouvert, carnival, shango, hosey, phagwa, the steelband and calypso) to tell the universal story. These are coupled with one of western Europe’s most sacred classical music icons, Handel’s *Messiah*, the libretto of which is based upon elements taken from the New Testament of the Christian Bible; the very same text that represented to the enslaved African institutions and memories of an oppressive, elite, colonial presence, both political and religious.

The main characters implicated in the universal Christian doctrine or, as I translate it, this narrative of birth, death, and re-birth are played out by several different actors, singers, dancers, and masqueraders throughout the duration of the production. My point is that everyone recognises the action and narrative and everyone knows this universal story, whether they adhere to its beliefs or not. Thus the actors become secondary to the story.

So even though *Carnival Messiah* has religious content the show is not actually dominated by this aspect of its composition. *Carnival Messiah* has a spiritual basis, but the description 'sacred' should be reserved only for its subject matter rather than its mission. In reality *Carnival Messiah* presents a lyric-epic contemplation of the idea of redemption and its relevance to the Caribbean condition.

Carnival Messiah successfully manages to recognise the roots of the millennium in Judeo-Christian theology, as well as celebrate and respect the multiplicity of faiths found in Britain and in the world today, but at the same time the show acknowledges the existing secular nature of much of British society.

Therefore, I have allowed myself to exercise my creative imagination by 'playing' with, transgressing, interrogating, and subverting (like carnival itself does) the expected. I have allowed myself the indulgence of experimenting with many unspoken and undiscovered but dreamed of scenarios.

The production is organically grounded in two cherished but specifically culturally distanced musical traditions: those of Oratorio and Caribbean Carnival.

Gordon Rohlehr correctly identifies my intention when he notes that

Carnival Messiah is the equation of different cultural forms and enactments; the seeking of congruence in apparently dissimilar shapes. (Rohlehr 2003c: 33)

I have undertaken to combine in new and exciting ways the visual and live performing arts of different cultures, by creating new celebratory performance, environments, and innovative methods of aesthetic juxtaposition and delivery.

Carnival Messiah, then, is inspired by, and a radical reinvention of, Georg Friedrich Handel's *Messiah*. However, and contrary to popular belief, *Carnival Messiah* is definitely not an adaptation of Handel's oratorio. Created for large-scale stage and theatre, *Carnival Messiah* features nine musical offerings from the *Messiah* oratorio, using text taken from the St. James's version of the New Testament. These have been boldly re-arranged musically, and the text creatively combined with western European medieval popular theatrical genres and, quite specifically, Trinidadian traditional folk techniques. These have then been matched alongside a multitude of Caribbean and contemporary popular indigenous music and dance genres, all of which are then showcased through the spectacular masquerade of Trinidad and Tobago. Any additional narrative, drama, dance spectacle or music has been specifically created for the production.

In *Carnival Messiah*, I use the aesthetic mores of the Caribbean to explore and evoke cultural parallels, transformations, and abrogations through various and often converse genres of artistic practice and expression. I do this by investigating, employing, playing with, and shifting perspectives of historic, environmental, and sociological world-views to suit the needs and location of my creative discourse.

I am recovering and exalting in the history of my people using my own language, and presenting this on my own terms. By superimposing traditional western

European musical and theatrical devices on those of traditional Trinidad Carnival practice, *Carnival Messiah* combines the visual, live, and performing arts in new, unique, and exciting ways.

In Trinidad and Tobago, there are two types of dramatic entertainment -- traditional performances and formal theatre. The term 'formal theatre' refers to that art form introduced by the white colonisers, and simply describes theatre that is accepted and given recognition as an institution of the dominant western European tradition. Conversely, 'traditional' performances are those given by sections of the black and Asian masses wherever they worship or celebrate, and are strikingly different from formal theatre in terms of their sense of display and presentation. However, this does not mean that these performances are informal in any way; in fact, they are often more highly formalised and structured than formal theatre.

Formal theatre is, however, the province of the elite: owned, controlled, and even performed by them. Formal theatre demands distance and separation in its physical arrangements between its actors and its audience. Each is allocated a separate area apart from the other. The audience area is stable, unchanging, and relatively comfortable. The actor's area inhabits a region where conditions are highly variable. Numerous aids to create illusion increase the distance between participants in formal theatre. Usually, the actor's area is not only apart, but also raised and boxed in (the proscenium). This is additionally accompanied by the use of lighting, curtains, costume, scenery, amplified sound, and other effects. Formal theatre isolates and presents only the central encounter, in which the performer confronts its audience.

Traditional performances are structured on the principle of participation and present the convictions and creations of the *folk*. No rigid distinction can be made between actor and audience. The structure of the event is fixed, but its progress and eventual outcome are directly influenced by its participants. The structure of the traditional event always encourages and accommodates the spontaneous and unpredictable. In traditional performances the performance space usually has a symbolic as well as a practical significance and all the participants share the conditions of this space, which is usually natural and unembellished. The performance area is always defined by the event.

A shared belief encompasses all traditional performances. This belief is not necessarily religious, but it always prompts common action and creates a reality that requires little or no help from devices of illusion. Thus, traditional performance is based on the concept of community and usually presents a complete dialectic from which the principal actors emerge. These then confront the community and, afterwards, they are re-absorbed into a renewed whole.

The staging of *Carnival Messiah* inhabits a middle ground; the production roughly accommodates a 60:40 ratio of Caribbean traditional folk performance presentational techniques, and formal western European traditional and contemporary theatre techniques, all within one space.

Carnival Messiah is officially presented on a traditional western European three-quarter 'in the round' stage which features at least five entrances/exits. However,

at various times during the show, *Carnival Messiah* also occupies the auditorium and the front of house areas.

As they arrive, the audience is greeted by a j'ouvert carnival which is taking place in the front of house area and the auditorium. During the show, the stage is used in a contemporary theatrical fashion, but then there also at least five performing company auditorium entrances, exits, and processions that take place through the aisles and vomitoria of the auditorium during the show. During the Epilogue, the performers actually dance and sing in the aisles, using them as a stage. Often, the action on the stage spills out into the audience. There is also a very visible offstage choir, a visible offstage DJ, and an onstage orchestra positioned on a raised bandstand that overlooks all the action that takes place on the stage.

Carnival Messiah was conceived in the tradition of 'gayap' (a Trinidadian traditional enactment of communal self-help set to the accompaniment of a cappella call and response vocal techniques) and its aesthetic evolution is a reflection of this process. Many of the performers who took part in the first professional production of *Carnival Messiah* in 1999 (and even some who came later) are responsible for partially developing some of its narrative, music, and lyric.

The first utterances of Mama God were contributed by Jean Binta Breuze. The Pierrot Grenade's discourse was penned by Alyson Brown. The narrative of the minstrels/urban griots is the end product of a joint effort between themselves, Mark Tillotson, and myself. The Robber speeches performed in Trinidad and

Tobago were penned by the now deceased Brian Honore and segments of the authentic fancy Sailor dance choreographed by Ralph Dyette as well as the original topical ole' mas conceived by Bunny Deiffenthaler and John Cumberbatch, the graphic representation of which was presented as a play on the name of Saddam Hussein, and read: 'is Bush who mad [...] because is 'Saddam who sane' (Queen's Hall production of *Carnival Messiah* 2003).

I explore spiritual cultural consciousness by examining and juxtaposing the parallels that exist between worship in all the religious practices that live side by side in Trinidad and Tobago. These parallels include those within Christian theology (specifically the Roman Catholic religion and the Oresha traditional Yoruba cult/religion/ritual), Middle Eastern and Asian theology, and aspects of Trinidadian cultural and carnival practices.

With the exception of the addition of a libation or blessing at the beginning of the show, the production's structure is based on a western operatic format, which consists of a libation or blessing, an Overture, Act I, Act II, Act III, and an Epilogue.

Act I is characterised by a traditional and folk aesthetic. Act II is characterised by what I refer to as Carnival Fantastique which, as the description suggests, is where my carnival imagination is allowed to express itself completely. Act III is characterised by contemporary rendition and aesthetic expression. The Epilogue, as its western definition dictates, concludes the artistic proceedings.

The foundational framework of *Carnival Messiah* is built around the 'Three

Mysteries of Devotion' as ascribed to the life of Jesus Christ in the Roman Catholic liturgy. These have been assigned in the following manner: 'The Joyful' mystery (Act I), 'The Sorrowful' mystery (Act II), and 'The Glorious' mystery (Act III).

These are then aligned in parallel with the Yoruba (and Christian) cycle of 'Birth', 'Death', and 'Rebirth', which in turn reflect the three key stages (acts) of Trinidad Carnival, 'Dimanche Gras'(Big Sunday), 'Lundi Gras' (Carnival Monday), and 'Mardi Gras' (Carnival Tuesday), with 'J'ouvert' (opening of the day) being utilised appropriately as the 'Overture' within the Prologue.

Finally, 'HalleluiaH!' is the Epilogue, fulfilling the role of 'Las Lap', the enactment that signals the ending of Trinidad Carnival or the finale/curtain call which also, of course, signifies the end of a production in western European theatre.

In the Trinidad and Tobago and Harewood productions of *Carnival Messiah* the opening of the show included major foyer decoration and a pre-show j'ouvert which took place outside the auditorium, in the foyer area in the theatre grounds.

In Trinidad this consisted firstly of decorating the huge Samaan Tree that dominated the front of the Queen's Hall Grounds, with hanging colours and shapes made out of long strips of torn coloured cloth and atmospheric lights: this with a view to making it look like a supernatural Silk Cotton tree.

Suspended above the prospective audience's heads inside the auditorium was Clary Salandy's dramatic Queen masquerade costume of Mama God and her child, conceived and played during 2000 when we took *Carnival Messiah* the stage production and put it on the road as *Carnival Messiah* the Street Experience for London's Notting Hill Carnival. This masquerade band received full honours winning Masquerade Band of the Year.

The Queen costume's design based on the concept of Mama God was designed as a three-metre head of a black Madonna and her child, in a forty by twenty foot span of materials that represented all the countries and oceans of the world.

Added to this initial foyer-based spectacle, six Ole Mas characters played masquerade and mingled in between the arriving guests. Two of them, a Pierrot Grenade (Felix Edinburgh) and a Midnight Robber (the late Brian Honore), had speech. Two of the Ole Mas characters (Bunny Dieffenthaler and John Cumberbatch) carried placards, and the final two (the Fancy Sailor played by Ralph Dycette and a Blue Devil played by Amadu Wiltshire) represented traditional carnival characters through dance and interaction.

Two live musical interludes were played alternately for a twenty minute period each along with piped pre-show auditorium music. The pre-show auditorium music consisted of the original renditions of the nine musical items used in *Carnival Messiah* that were taken from Handel's *Messiah*, as well as renditions taken from the Quincy Jones's produced recording of 'The Soulful Messiah'.

The first live musical interlude was a Tobago Tamarind band which was acoustic in sound and mobile in movement. This consisted of six male performers dressed in Tobago folk costume making folk music which was sung and led by a fiddle, and accompanied by tamarind or tambour drums and miscellaneous hand percussion. This group of musical troubadours greeted arriving guests and audience whilst moving around and through them, within and outside the auditorium.

The other live pre-show musical interlude was a stationary steelband of approximately twelve players, set up in one corner of the foyer area of Queen's Hall. They played a repertoire of classical music as well as popular calypso and folk song.

To complete the pre-show foyer activity, I arranged at the five-minute call into the theatre for the prospective audience to be heralded by three performers who blew conch shells using the technique of hocketting mixed with vocal announcement.

The Harewood 2007 pre-show decoration and welcome was similar to that of Trinidad and Tobago, but additionally included many multi-coloured and multi-shaped flags strategically placed in the grounds and at the entrance to the Big Top, as well as a much larger group of pre-show entertainers performing an even wider variety of authentic j'ouvert presentations.

I have employed polyphony as an overarching metaphor to deliver the overall theatrical concept of *Carnival Messiah*. This is a musical technique that features

interlacing strands or solo 'voices' of music, each having independent melodic lines which, when they come together, create harmony.

These dramatic 'voices' or dimensions are represented variously in (and by) song, dance, masquerade, and narrative. Thus the story unfolds in these four dimensions that are able to operate singularly as well as in varying combinations.

These dramatic 'voices' include the dimension and interpretation of the masses through song, dance, and masquerade. These masses are 'the people of the World', a vast chorus-cast of poly-ethnic assemblage. These people of the world theatrically present the litanic African-derived call and response genre through their enactment of the story in their response to, and support of, the various characters and incidents that take place within the narrative. It is a Caribbean as opposed to a Greek chorus.

Their commentary oversees all of the show's action and their vehicle manifests within all the major choruses of the show, namely the 'J'ouvert Overture', the Downtown Bethlehem Market scene ('For Unto us a Child is Born'), the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem ('Hosanna'), Eshu's underworld ('the Crucifixion Adagio'), taking the gospel to the world ('How Beautiful are the Feet of Them that Preach the Gospel of Peace'), the Whoopi Band, and '!HalleluliaH!', as well as all the dramatic ensembles such as the Last Supper, and Mama God and her alter egos.

The second polyphonic 'voice' or dimension is the rendition and interpretation by the 'Minstrels' or 'Urban Griots', who are charged with the responsibility of

actually 'telling' the story through narrative and physical theatre techniques.

The third polyphonic 'voice' or dimension comprises the actual voices of several characters within the story: Mother Earth, Mama God and her alter egos, Mary, Joseph, Joseph's brother, the Ragga storytellers, the twelve disciples, the Lone Disciple, the Dark Angel, Pontius Pilate, Jesus, the two thieves, the Apostles, the Evangelist, the Dove of Peace, the Dove's attendant, the Voice of Truth, and the Carnival Messiah.

The fourth and final polyphonic 'voice' or dimension includes all the steelbands, as well as all the musical accompaniment and instrumental work used throughout the show.

Part Five: Content

A spectacular two-hour musical showcase, *Carnival Messiah* features a multitude of singers, musicians, masqueraders, dancers, and actors in a minimum cast of some one hundred and twenty-five performers. It has all the excitement, music, and colour of carnival blended together with some of the most inspiring and exhilarating melodies from Handel's *Messiah*. Gospel, oratorio, soca, rapso, reggae, tassa, hip hop, ritual theatre, and masquerade combine with towering and glittering carnival costumes and dancing mobiles.

Arrangements of Caribbean folk rhythms, Yoruba Oresha ritual, Islamic and Hindu cultural and musical references, the Carnival of Trinidad, and the Liturgy

of Christianity unite in unforgettable celebration. Music, masquerade, pantomime, street theatre, commedia dell'arte, and dance combine to tell the universal and compelling story of birth, death, and rebirth.

As noted earlier, *Carnival Messiah* greets its audience with a full-throttle j'ouvert carnival. The history of the j'ouvert enactment in the Trinidad and Tobago Carnival is essentially a template that describes the history of the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago and, by extension, the history of the Caribbean. The j'ouvert enactment of today should also be seen as a living embodiment of contemporary Trinidad and Tobago: it contains and often displays a true historical and contemporary account of all the cultural transformations and abrogations that have taken place, and continue to take place, within that society. The j'ouvert enactment is employed as the overture to *Carnival Messiah* in a bid to create a significant context and set an aesthetic precedent, as well as pay homage to the sacrifice of ancestors who eventually peopled what we recognise today as the Caribbean.

Some of the other performative juxtapositions that have been employed in *Carnival Messiah* include unusual cultural and aesthetic combinations. For example, in 'How Beautiful Are The Feet', the style and rhetoric of the black American evangelical church preacher is superimposed on a Caribbean calypso folk-style three part vocal chorus as a vehicle to broadcast the 'gospel of peace' to the world.

I have also combined the syncretism of the Shango (traditional Yoruba religion) ritual with the Roman Catholic liturgy as it relates to the Nativity. In 'Shango

Aye', Mother Earth leads the devotional chanting to the Shango-Oreisha deity of Thunder and Lightning, while also singing Handel's aria 'But Who May Abide The Day Of His Coming' in tandem, underpinned by a simple repetitive two-part choral Oresha chant response. Here, I have theatrically and musically allied the concept of the Immaculate Conception found within the Christian liturgy with that of the phenomenon of the African ritual of Possession.

'If the search for identity always involves a search for origins, it is impossible to locate in the Caribbean an origin of its peoples' (Hall 1991: 2). Everybody there came from somewhere else. Therefore, one should not presume to believe that one can understand black culture and black civilisation in the 'New' or 'Old World' without understanding the cultural role of religion that exists through the distorted languages of the one book that anybody would teach the enslaved Africans to read.

In 'RedcemeR', using mostly Handel's original melody, I vocally combine Jennens' version of the Christian liturgy of 'I know my Redeemer liveth' with the drum and miscellaneous percussion rhythms of West Africa and the Kora string sound of twelfth-century Islam. This Air is sung in the tenor tessitura, commencing with a completely conventional classical style of singing but, as the melody progresses, slowly transforming into a litanic, calypsonic liberation shout.

In this carnivalised version of 'RedcemeR', I try to represent what those enslaved Africans and their descendants might have felt at that time: that is, we have no voice, we have no history, we have come from a place to which we cannot return

nor have never seen, we used to speak a language which we can no longer speak, and we have ancestors whom we cannot find and they worshipped Gods who we do not know.

It is against this sense of profound rupture that a metaphor for a new kind of principle, place, and space (the Third Space) can be re-worked and can become a language in which a certain kind of history can be retold, in 'a certain kind of way' through which aspirations of liberation and freedom and emancipation can be expressed for the first time and therein symbolically resurrected. Therefore, it was my intention here to convey through subliminal musical suggestion the transformative theological journey that was taken by those enslaved Africans who had been forced to acquiesce to the enforced doctrine of Christianity as a result of the institution of European colonisation. This intention is conveyed by equating (camouflaging) the idea of the emancipation, liberation, and freedom of the enslaved African within the most sacred position of Christian faith, the Resurrection of Christ.

Part Six: The Dance

The dance forms that have emerged from the negative forces of Caribbean history have created a rich and thematic significance for dance in the *Carnival Messiah*. This is characterised by a diverse vocabulary featuring very obvious influences of African, Asian, and European cultural elements that are then contained and underpinned by an overall African sensibility.

These diversified dance registers, which are more than just a revitalisation of an African past, became part of a process of continual translation and accommodation of African and other cultural legacies, creating new features and genres which were indigenised and then expanded metaphorically into the artistic masquerade forms of Trinidad and Tobago.

Carnival Messiah in fact highlights how important dance is as an indicator and retainer of the diversity of cultures, particularly those available in Trinidad and Tobago such as the Shango, a Yoruba derived religious syncretic enactment, and the Phagwa ('Hosanna'), based on the Hindu festival of Holi and the Islamic enactments of Hosey, and most especially the 'J'ouvert Overture'. Here, dance is not peripheral: it is the central vehicle of all the traditional and contemporary enactments of *Carnival Messiah*.

In summing up the creative impulse of *Carnival Messiah*, Gordon Rohlehr observes that

This typical "mulatto of style" carries both worlds -- the worlds of drum and minuet, madrigal and calypso, pastoral sad song and the bitterly gay roadmarch [...] these worlds intersect at the crossroads within the mulatto psyche, transformation occurs from both ends: minuet becomes bèlè and Eshu metamorphoses into the Dark Angel. (Rohlehr 2003c: 18)

The 'J'ouvert Overture' of *Carnival Messiah* not only reflects my own experience, impression, and memory of j'ouvert practice between the 1960s and the present, but is also a testament to my lived encounter with the shared cultures of Europe, Asia and Africa in the Caribbean.

Rohlehr succinctly concludes:

[*Carnival Messiah's*] J'ouvert/Overture [is] a libation of sound and

motion poured to [Connor's] ancestors who had been the mentors of her artistic nurturing. (Rohlehr 2003c: 14)

CHAPTER FIVE

CARNIVAL MESSIAH: THE MUSICAL IMPULSE

Part One: Social and Cultural Processes

Carnival Messiah is particularly concerned with the validation of performance art as a medium for postcolonial and postmodern discourse. Derek Scott observes that postmodernity in music reflects

a readiness to engage with, rather than marginalize, issues of class, generation, gender, sexuality and ethnicity in music, and to address matters such as production, reception and subject position, while questioning notions of genius, canons, universality, aesthetic autonomy and textual immanence.

He goes on to note that this reflects

a concern with social and cultural processes, informed by arguments that musical practices, values and meanings relate to particular historical, political and cultural context [...and moreover a concern to] avoid teleological assumptions of historical narrative. (Scott [1998] 2005: 132)

Carnival Messiah continually reflects elements of postmodernism in its musical representation by its conscious deployment of found music, its employment of pastiche, and certainly its readiness to contest the binary division between classical and popular music.

Drawing on the power of the European classical music tradition, in this instance elements of George Friedrich Handel's oratorio *Messiah*, *Carnival Messiah* fuses this with the contemporary musics of carnival as well as traditional and contemporary African diasporic and syncretic material. *Carnival Messiah* uses these newly combined elements as vehicles within which social relations and struggles are enacted by the appropriations of musical discourses normally associated with one group which here serve other social interests.

The canon of music recognised today began as the great works of the classical music tradition started to form in the nineteenth century when European concert music was wrenched away from a variety of popular contexts and made to serve the social agenda of a powerful minority. Thus, classical music should be seen either as a relatively recent cultural construct or in the manner described by the now well-known term ‘invented tradition’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 1ff), which reflects the priorities of a historical moment whereby current interests construct an apparently cohesive past to legitimise present day institutions and social relations.

Today, the prestige of classical music encompasses both its constructed aura of profundity and its affiliation with powerful elitist social groups which depend upon the widespread assumption that it is somehow timeless and universal. Thus, the immense social and cultural distance that is normally assumed to separate classical music and music of the African diaspora is not one of musicality, but a distance made by cultural difference and enactments of social experience. It is the intersection of classical and African musics in *Carnival Messiah* that affects the complex relationships among those who would depend on these musics to legitimise their social values and constructs.

Carnival Messiah's appropriation of elements of Handel's oratorio used in tandem with elements of African diasporic music combines creative ingenuity, contradiction, and conflict, and strives toward revisions of cultural representation, musical meaning, and prestige.

Carnival Messiah shares several significant similarities with *Messiah* and the surrounding cultural impulses of that time. Like myself, Handel was a migrant and also particularly concerned with the plight of the marginalised; his work, always eclectic, favoured the adventurous, and his work was often associated with the epic and specifically leaned toward the theatrical. I believe that if Handel were alive today, he would have composed works similar in conception to *Carnival Messiah*.

Part Two: Handel and Messiah

The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* states that:

Handel's stature as one of the greatest composers of the Baroque age, in both vocal and instrumental music, has always been recognised, though the popularity of a few of his oratorios in English-speaking countries, and their acceptance as religious and even church music, for a long time masked the true nature and extent of his genius. He was a cosmopolitan and eclectic artist, drawing impartially on German, Italian, French and English traditions. A humanist (in the broadest sense) and by training and inclination, a composer for the theatre. (Stanley 1980)

George Friedrich Handel was born in Halle, Germany, in 1685. He became a pupil of Friedrich Wilhelm Zachau, a German composer, teacher, and organist at St. Mary's Church in Halle who wrote cantatas and other sacred works and chorales for the organ. He is primarily remembered as the teacher of Handel.

'Inclination' is too mild a description to demonstrate Handel's love of composing for the theatre, which was more a passion beyond reason that compelled him to continue writing Italian *opera seria* long after his English audiences had lost their taste for it. Contrary to the accusation that Handel's oratorios were really operas

in disguise, recent theatrical revivals such as *Theodora* and *Semele* have demonstrated the dramatic potency of many of them.

Handel's fortunes as an opera composer began to decline in the 1730s despite the fact that he wrote some of his finest operas during this period. A rival opera company to his own attracted the superstar singers -- castratos Senesino and Farinelli and the soprano Cuzzoni -- to its ranks, but a dwindling audience eventually destroyed both companies. Even so, Handel did not give up on composing Italian opera until his visit to Dublin in 1742. By then, however, he had composed some of his best known oratorios including *Saul*, and *Israel in Egypt*.

The *Grove Dictionary's* definition of oratorio reads

a Western European compositional genre, originating in the sixteenth century, based on a religious or reflective text, performed without action or costume, in a concert hall. (Stanley 1980)

Because of the general unpopularity of Italian opera in England, Handel turned increasingly towards composing English oratorios. His most important works in this genre include *Saul* (1739), *Israel in Egypt* (1739), *Messiah* (1742), *Samson* (1743), *Judas Maccabaeus* (1747), *Joshua* (1748), *Solomon* (1749), *Susanna* (1749), and *Theodora* (1750).

I believe Handel's strength as a composer rested on his ability to fuse psychological penetration with representation, and then present this combination in wondrous musical pictures and expressive colours. For Handel, it was not so much the quality of the libretto that mattered, as much as its emotional possibilities. In fact, Handel exemplified the postmodernism of his time.

Handelian oratorio is altogether different from either of its Italian or German counterparts. Religion, politics, technical necessities, and influences from other artistic disciplines all played an important part in its formation. In fact, Handel united three different and seemingly irreconcilable strains or elements -- the Old Testament as living history, Greek Drama as living mythology, and Shakespearean characterisation -- in developing what eventually became known as English oratorio or the new English Music Drama. Thus Handel's musical language, much like *Carnival Messiah*, hovered between the extremes of the lyric and the epic-dramatic.

Handel began work on composing *Messiah* on 22 August 1741 and completed it in three weeks, finishing on 14 September 1741. The speed with which he worked was not unusual for a composer who regularly wrote at least two operas or oratorios a year. *Messiah* premiered in Dublin on 13 April 1742, at the New Musick-Hall in Fishamble Street, for a charitable gathering "For the relief of the Prisoners in the several Gaols, and for the support of Mercer's Hospital in Stephen Street, and for the Charitable Infirmary on the Inn's Quay" (Lang 1967: 333). It was immediately a great success.

Messiah was believed to be a special commission based on Handel's reputation as a composer of church music, which might explain *Messiah's* very specific nature and why Handel never returned again to this type of Christian contemplative style of composition (Stanley 1980). *Messiah*, however, had its critics, who questioned whether a public theatre was an appropriate place to

perform an ostensibly sacred work. The reply given was to ask if the presentation of virtue should therefore be excluded from places of public entertainment.

Interestingly, *Messiah* was not a success in London and it had to wait until its first charity performances there in 1750 to really become established. Significantly, Handel gave these two performances in aid of the Foundling Hospital, a charity for the 'Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children'.

The tradition of performing *Messiah* with massed choirs and large orchestral forces began before the end of the eighteenth century even though Handel had originally composed the piece for relatively modest forces. Haydn was overwhelmed by a performance of *Messiah* he heard in Westminster Abbey in 1795, and this became the chief inspiration for his own choral masterpiece, *The Creation*.

In terms of oratorio at that time (and all Handel's other oratorios) *Messiah* is non-dramatic, and non-descriptive -- in fact completely ready to receive another inscription such as the mores that *Carnival Messiah* imposes upon Handel's original music for *Messiah*. There is scarcely any narration or action and most of the recitative is almost perfunctory. This is in contrast to, say, Bach's *St. John's Passion*, which is highly dramatic and in which Jesus is represented in person. Musically, however, what one does find in *Messiah* are the use of certain dramatic formulas, intervals, repetitions, and sequences that are so basic to the compositional techniques of that time that their relevance and importance cannot be denied.

However, Handel's new grand sacred oratorio *Messiah* is unique in that it is the only biblical oratorio he wrote which calls upon the New Testament. The libretto was written by Jennens and selected from a variety of passages from both books - - virtually every word being scriptural. But the libretto was really much more than a compilation: there was a subtle plan behind it. The sequence of Promise, Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection provided an epic unity which successfully dispensed with a dramatic plot.

So although *Messiah* does have a very religious basis, the description *sacred* refers to neither the style of music nor in fact Handel's reason for writing it, but rather to the subject. Indeed, *Messiah* does not present the life and passion of Christ, but a lyric-epic contemplation of the idea of Christian redemption. Nor does *Carnival Messiah* purport to present the life and passion of Christ but, as suggested before, much more a contemplation of its relevance to Caribbean consciousness.

Overtures, airs, arias and choruses taken from George Friedrich Handel's *Messiah* for use in the theatrical production of *Carnival Messiah* are from The Prologue And Overture. The production uses the first four and a half bars of the Allegro Moderato taken from Part I, Overture No. 1; the Pastoral Symphony Larghetto taken from Part I, No. 13. In Act I, 'But Who May Abide the Day of his Coming' uses the Largo taken from Part I, No. 6; 'For Unto Us a Child is Born' uses the Andante Allegro taken from Section A and B of Part I, No. 12. In Act II, 'He was Despised' uses the Largo taken from Part II, No. 23. In Act III, 'How Beautiful are the Feet' uses the Largo taken from Part II, No. 38; 'I

‘Know My Redeemer Liveth’ uses the Largo taken from Part III, No. 45; ‘Hallelujah’ uses the Allegro taken from Part II, No. 44.

During his last years of life Handel became blind, although he continued to compose with the assistance of an amanuensis until the end of his life. As well as in his oratorios and operas, he displayed his mastery of composition in a variety of other genres.

Among these works are *Music for the Royal Fireworks* which he penned in 1749. Handel wrote music for the Harpsichord, such as the *Harmonius Blacksmith* variations, concerti grossi, organ concertos, cantatas, and sacred music such as *Alexander's Feast* (1736), sonatas and chamber duets, as well as coronation anthems such as *Zadok the Priest* (1727) (Isaacs and Martin 1986).

Handel's death in 1759 at the age of seventy-four ended the career of one of the most successful and prolific composers ever known. His work lives on today, more than two hundred and fifty years after his death.

Part Three: Music as Metaphor

Carnival Messiah is led by its musical content, which has been conceived to operate on many different levels while at the same time offer a variety of access points. It is this use of music as one of the dimensions available in this multi-dimensional metaphor that makes the musical discourse of the *Carnival Messiah* quite unique.

Most, if not all, of the music that makes up the composition of the *Carnival Messiah* offers up a gamut of plural interpretations and hidden historical associations which can be read on several different levels and in many different ways. These combinations, which are often employed in conjunction with other seemingly unrelated Western genres of music, go towards creating a completely alternative and complex set of definitions, cognitions, and outcomes.

Caribbean poet Edward Brathwaite describes black music as the music of liberation via his research into indigenous black music (Reggae, Kaiso, Blues, Jazz). In his words black music, the music of the oppressed, is a comment on the colour and class-based 'higher' culture of the oppressors. Herbert Marcuse in *An Essay on Liberation* observes:

In the subversive, dissonant crying and shouting, rhythm, born in the "dark continent" and in the "deep South" of slavery and deprivation, the oppressed revoke the ninth symphony and give art a de-sublimated, sensuous form of frightening immediacy. (1969: 47)

Bob Marley adopts Eshu, the Yoruba trickster 'power' (or if one prefers, Anansi, the West African spider deity and trickster figure), the creator, destroyer, deliverer, and devourer, as his metaphor. He adopts an Anansi persona, forcing his audience to 'suss him out' through his music, which is full of tonal and verbal shifts -- from Reggae music to Rebel music; from 'revelation' to 'revolution'. Marley's use of rhythm and tone -- the upward movement; the quick, witty, and satirical effects of calypso; the slower more grounded rhythms of reggae -- suggest a shared experience in which participation is more important than explicit meaning and where 'the poet/singer is playing from an "Anansi score"' (Gilkes 1986: 11).

Carnival Messiah has an exceedingly large and rich vocabulary of musical styles and genres from which to choose, in particular those available from the Caribbean folkloric chest. A full study of the emergence of musical styles in Trinidad and Tobago during the nineteenth century would need to consider the following elements. First, the musics and dances of the largely French Creole slave society before Emancipation, in particular the various African inputs into that complex of musics and dances. Second, the musics and dances of the predominantly Anglophone West Indian migrants between 1840 and 1900. Third, the musics and dances of the distinctive groups or 'nations' of liberated Africans during the post-Emancipation period. Fourth, a small but persistent Hispanic element created from the maintenance of constant contact with Venezuela and Curacao and the influence of Venezuelan migrants on music, dance and masquerade. And, finally, the ritual celebration of all these elements in the annual Carnival, as well as their simplification into a few predominant forms by 1900.

These areas have never been thoroughly researched and thus a substantial grey area surrounds any knowledge of the development of music and dance forms during this era. However, it is known that in 1939 Melville J. Herskovits recorded and analysed 325 melodies from eighteenth-century Trinidad. These were all found to be African, particularly in terms of modulation and the manner in which they were sung (Herskovits 1990: 267). In 1942, Richard Waterman also examined forty-five of the melodies analysed by Herskovits and found them to reveal 'musical patterns stemming from Africa and passed down through several generation to the present time' (Waterman 1943: 113-15).

In 1952, the ethnomusicologist Andrew Pearse identified and summarised the different types of folk songs existing among the population of Trinidad and Tobago and classified them according to ethnic origin. This was the first comprehensive study of its nature to be formerly researched and published in this way (Pearse 1955a: 30-33). The following table provides a summary of his findings.

Music Genre	Origin	Function
Congo	Congo/Africa	Weddings, christenings
Rada	Ewe/Africa	Spirit possession
Shango	Yoruba/Africa	Religious ritual
Yarraba	Yoruba/Africa	Pleasure, recreation
Big Drum	Africa	Thanksgiving, critical life situations
Bongo	England/Africa	Wakes, recreation
Sings	England	Wakes, storytales
Pass-Play	England/France	Children's games
Sankeys and Trumpets	England	Choral singing, possession
Bele	France	Festivals, pleasure
Reel Dance	England	Pleasure, spirit invocation
Reel Engage	France/England	Thanksgiving, recreation
Work Songs	Africa	Group labour
Chanties	France/England	Boat Launching, wakes
Quesh (creche)	France	Choral singing at Christmas
Veiquoix	Spain	Cross wake, Catholic hymns
Fandang	Spain	Recreation
Parang	Spain	Recreation at Christmas
Kalinda (calinda)	Africa	Stick fighting
Road March (lavway)	Africa/England	Music for street dancing

Part Four: Ostinato, The Circle and Communitas

In *Carnival Messiah*, the contemporary manifestation of black cultural elements emanates from the extended and still evolving relationships between black populations of the first-world diaspora and, in particular, black America. *Carnival Messiah* in fact unites the European musics of redemption with the African musics of liberation, strategically re-arranging some of the best known melodies from Handel's *Messiah* within the context of contemporary popular black music culture.

Genres such as Soca, Calypso, Dub, Ragga and Reggae, Caribbean traditional music forms of drumming and steelband, folk song, Yoruba ritual chants and Tassa, as well as contemporary western popular music genres such as Rock, Pop, Hip Hop, Drum' n' Bass, House, Jungle, Garage, Sound Systems, Bhangra, Jazz fusion and Gospel, are all linked together by one particular phenomenon or characteristic that I describe as the 'ostinato of the circle'.

Lucy Durant explains her understanding of the circle as the essence of African music:

Unity, order and harmony are expressed through the circle, music affects the way in which [African] society is organised through shared work, shared finances, shared hospitality, life is shared, music is shared. (Durant 1993)

Francis Bebey extends her definition thus:

Music is born with each child and accompanies him throughout life. Music helps the child triumph in his first encounter with death -- the symbolic death that precedes initiation; it is reborn with the child who is now a man and it directs his steps along the path of law and order that has been laid down by the community. (1975: 134)

The Caribbean theorist and writer Michael Gilkes describes the metaphor of the broken circle in the work of Caribbean writer and muse Wilson Harris thus:

The emphasis on circularity (rather than vertical power structures) and on “enabling space” – what Wilson Harris calls “phenomenal space” and Gaston Bachelard calls “felicitous space” -- is a repudiation of the restricting effect of a patriarchal Western power ethic [...] The variety of images of “felicitous space” that recur in his work: cave, womb, shell, cradle, egg, room boat -- reverberate in the mind as his “inner-space” journey proceeds [...] towards [...] a “recovery” (or “re-membering”) of broken history, [and] broken community. (1986: 13-14)

The music of Africa mirrors this belief of the circle through its constant use of various polyrhythmic cyclic expressions, such as hocketting and interlocking techniques, call and response vocal forms, improvisation, and drum tonal and rhythmic languages that constantly encourage communal participation.

Most African and African derived musics are also characterised by polyrhythms, that is, music based on the combination of different strands of rhythm, for example, the combination of duple and triple time:

1 1 1 1	main beat
1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2	binary/duple
1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3	ternary/triple

This polyrhythmic technique, a combination of different strands of rhythm, melody, and movement (often in combination with ostinato or repetition), has impacted upon the entire compositional concept and performance of *Carnival Messiah*.

This principle is further enhanced through the practices of hocketting, a technique that allocates a unit (sometimes just one note) of the main melody to each individual who participates in the performance and has been described as a type of musical democracy, and interlocking, a technique of polyphony

characterised by the 'fugal' or 'canonic' overlapping music lines often used in vocal and percussion renditions.

It is the admittance and utilisation of very specific elements of Handel's *Messiah* into this musical 'circle' that dominates the creative impulse of *Carnival Messiah*.

Part Five: Rhythm, Genre, and Voice

Like the musical aesthetic of *Carnival Messiah*, which is underpinned by an African subjectivity, so too is its dance. Francis Bebey notes that the 'the sound of feet pounding the ground becomes the rhythm of the music whose notes are in turn transformed into dance steps' (1975: 14).

With few exceptions, most of the music in *Carnival Messiah* is associated with dance that is obviously born out of rhythm but also employs many other unwritten musical communications and representations, and additional aural and visual systems such as handclapping, hand gestures, and obviously, kinesic systems such as body movements and tactile systems where the body can and is used as a translator as well as a resonator.

Movement and rhythm in African dance cannot be separated from the music of Africa. The cultivation of musical life in traditional African societies is promoted through active participation in the collective or group life rather than through the creation of special musical institutions.

It is this that forms music making in Africa into a community experience, and the continuity of this tradition depends on individual and collective efforts. It is the creative individual who develops and/or re-creates the repertoire, but those who learn it and perform it on social occasions sustain the tradition and make it a part of the common heritage.

African, and by extension African-derived music, is therefore fundamentally a collective art. It is communal property, whose spiritual qualities are shared and experienced by all: in short, it is an art form that can and must communicate with people of all races and cultures, and it should enjoy the ultimate possibilities of all the great currents of human thought available.

In *Carnival Messiah* all vocal music is taught aurally by rote, a process that imitates the learning, listening, and dissemination process of the twelfth-century West African Griot or Djeli. The role of the Griot/Djeli was to tell the truth to the people. In fact, the Griot/Djeli combined the multiple functions of musician, dancer, storyteller, and keeper of the epic memory. Griots/Djelis were the guardians of the history of the African nation and the living exponent of the African aesthetic. They learned everything by listening and they performed everything from memory using improvisation.

Thus in *Carnival Messiah* the voice is used in many diverse ways, and unusual juxtapositions emerge between classical western European techniques, African and Asian vocal diasporic techniques, jazz and blues techniques, and rock and popular music techniques. It often does not matter if (because of language

difference or a particular delivery style) one cannot understand the words of a song or the aesthetic basis upon which the quality or intonation is predicated.

What is more important here is that, like the Griot or Djeli, the voice (quality notwithstanding) is a metaphorically powerful means of communication, whether spoken or sung: it is so direct, that it can transmit an emotion or cognition without recourse to words. In *Carnival Messiah*, the general vocals of the cast are augmented by a sixteen strong, four voice, 'offstage' choir, which is not so much hidden offstage as placed within full view in the galleries above the audience.

Music also satisfies spiritual as well as physical needs, since in Africa it is almost invariably used to accompany labour and other activities of everyday life. The Ba Aka Hunter gatherers of Central Africa vocalise without using many words; their daily occupations and leisure activities ('mbalax') are all accompanied by music. Men and women, and young and old alike, contribute their share to the collective enjoyment, which exhibits the polyrhythmic combinations of dance, singing, clapping, stamping, much percussion, and other rhythmic responses. The final rendition in *Carnival Messiah*, '!HalleculiaH!', was conceived with this very principle.

Part Six: The Kalinda or Calypso Song Tradition

The calypso or kaiso, upon which all the Minstrels' vocal music in *Carnival Messiah* is predicated, can be traced back to those enslaved Africans brought to Trinidad during the seventeenth century for the purpose of working on the large

sugar plantations. The earliest forms of calypso were transmitted orally from generation to generation. In calypso, as in any vocal genre, language is structured to the rhythms of music, and many modern-day calypsos still possess common characteristics with some early plantation songs.

In African music, rhythms created by music are often used to accompany communal work. As for a large group of enslaved Africans clearing a field, or several women grinding millet in mortar with pestle, these rhythms serve to relieve monotony as well as propagate greater speed and efficiency. Music (and thus rhythm) also accompanies many important rites and festivals associated with daily African life, for example burials, initiation, harvest, thanksgiving, weddings, birth, and religious occasions. As we are aware, some of these certainly have been maintained in almost pristine condition in the Caribbean.

Owners of the enslaved Africans in Trinidad would allocate them portions of land for growing their own food crops. The enslaved Africans would then employ a system of mutual aid in the cultivation of these plots which is still to this day called 'gayap'. They would divide themselves into two or more gangs and keen competition would then ensue between them for the honour of doing the most work.

Each work gang had a leader whose main duty was to set a rhythm by creating and then improvising on a song, the refrain of which would be taken up and maintained in unison by the whole gang. The leader 'called' and the gang 'responded'. It was customary for the leader (eventually called a chantuelle) to always choose an important name such as 'Thunderer' or 'The Great Elephant'.

The chantuelle would raise issues about politics, community, and remembrance of the homeland under the camouflage of these work songs, thus setting the score for developing community relations in a hostile environment. Calypso/kaiso, which is the most dominant form of popular vocalisation in Trinidad and Tobago today, grew directly out of this tradition.

In *Carnival Messiah* the Minstrels use exactly that same technique of camouflage in their vocal storytelling through the employment of Sans Humanite calypso and caricature. This same strategy is also employed by a large number of black youth in Britain today who have developed a rhythm and language of their own which manifests itself as patois, ragga, rap, and dub.

'Lavway', from the French 'le vrai' meaning 'the truth', was the word used to describe the earliest call and response work/plantation songs and kalinda chants. These songs and chants were eventually assimilated into the calypso, endowing it with melodies, rhythm, and a satirical and combative manner. When the lyrics were transcribed from French patois into Creole and Standard English at the turn of the twentieth century, calypso was transformed into its current form.

With the banning of the African drum in Trinidad in 1881 came the advent of the Cannes Brulees riots. Thousands were involved and hundreds of men, women, and children were wounded. The combination of harsh laws and the ensuing riot only served to drive Cannes Brulees and kalinda underground. It is thus that the evolution and development of champion stickmen, kalinda singers, and kalinda (calypso) songs continued un-interrupted and untouched.

The kalinda songs worked themselves deep into the cultural music tradition, becoming more biting with satire and meaning, and castigating the laxity of high society with great viciousness and effectiveness. Of course, this would have been impossible had it not been for the African domestic servants who worked in the estate houses on the plantations. They were able to observe and report back, first-hand, the immorality and lechery of the ruling classes.

Part Seven: The Steelband

Tambo bamboo (also tambour bamboo) bands were the precursor to the steelband and did not exist in Trinidad prior to the suppressive legislation of 1884, when the playing of the African drum in public was banned. It appears to have been developed to fill the need for a strong, rhythmic carnival music that would not be directly restricted by any of the existing laws or ordinances that came into being as a result of the Cannes Brulees riots.

Faced with outright condemnation of the African drum, conch shell, and horns, musicians turned to bamboo stamping tubes. These were manufactured from pieces of bamboo trunk with the varying lengths corresponding to sounds of different pitch. Bands began to emerge around the 1880s, and, like the kalinda/j'ouvert bands for which they provided music, they were associated with the districts from which they came. It should be noted that a wide variety of other prepared and spontaneously improvised percussion instruments were employed alongside the bamboo. In *Carnival Messiah*, this is the instrumentation featured in the 'J'ouvert' overture.

All in all, these newly-free Africans were resourceful enough to bring out from their cultural past an alternative musical system, a percussion orchestra which was cheaper to produce and free from the legal strictures accorded to the African drum. Thus the continuity of the native folk orchestra entered the next phase of its development. Tamboo bamboo music prospered well into the second decade of the twentieth century, until it was outlawed just as the African drums were before. However, it should be noted that tamboo bamboo was never completely suppressed.

By the 1920s, different sizes and designs of zinc and pitch oil tins (as well as kerosene, biscuit, and caustic soda drums) were beginning to be substituted for equivalent tambour bamboo instruments. For example, the 'Foule' was replaced by the zinc pan, the 'cutter' replaced by a caustic soda drum, and the 'boom' replaced by a biscuit tin (Goddard 1984). Much experimentation was taking place at this time and by the 1930s the first steel pans began to appear, with names like 'dudup' and 'ping pong'. These instruments took their names from the timbre of sound they produced and the manner in which they were played.

In 1937, social conditions in Trinidad had reached a point of great tension. Working conditions were unbearable, wages were low, and unemployment was rampant. Great mobs of workers led by Uriah Butler rioted in the oil fields in the south of the island. The Abyssinian War raged in Ethiopia. It was during the period 1938 to 1945, while the rest of the world was locked in a life and death struggle to decide the fate of western democracy, that steelband music emerged in Trinidad (Elder [1969] 1972: 16).

Winston 'Spree' Simon is credited as the first person to discover specific pitches on the steel pan that he called a 'melody' pan. In fact, he was probably the first person to publicly play this new musical instrument, rather than its inventor. This steel pan carried eight pitches placed randomly on the surface of a shallow convex dome. It was possible for Simon to play nursery rhymes, simple calypsos, and some theme songs from the new American films.

By the first Carnival after World War Two in March 1946, it was apparent that the pan-bands of the late 1930s and early 1940s had progressed significantly. As well as calypsos, recognisable bits of Christian hymns, popular Latin American tunes, and Caribbean-style renditions of European classical melodies were being played. Winston 'Spree' Simon and the John John Steelband demonstrated to selected members of the colonial government and upper class the pan's ability to play melodies. The 'melody' pan was now capable of producing fourteen notes.

Turino observes that a group that is economically, socially, and politically dominant will also dominate cultural values and artistic orientation, at least at the macro level of that society. He calls this the 'hegemonic factor'. Groups who strive for upward social mobility will adopt the values and social manifestations of the dominant group as a part of their effort to join the elite. It is the aspiration to achieve that 'hegemonic factor' that has had a major influence of the musical repertoire of the steelband in Trinidad and Tobago (Turino 1984: 253).

A nationalist may well regard the imitation or borrowing of Western musical features as an illustration of Western hegemony in the form of an obsequious

aping of one's former colonial masters. However, the upper and middle classes of Trinidad were intent on maintaining the musical standards of the Mother Country, Britain. On the other hand, while attempting popular songs and musical pieces as well as calypsos the steelband-men put their emphasis on western classical music repertoire in an effort to achieve the elite status quo, and thus gain acceptance as capable musicians performing on a 'sophisticated' instrument.

They had begun to progress to a point where they could no longer be denied recognition by Trinidad's musical establishment. Therefore, the real significance of Winston 'Spree' Simon's performance was of course that he chose and succeeded in playing recognisable European melodies on the pan for the first time.

To those immersed in the struggle, the emerging steelband served as a powerful and meaningful symbol of identity, functioning as an avenue for expression and conflict mediation. The steelband served as a metaphor for the creation of a distinctive world of common meanings and shared cultural ideologies on the part of the new urban classes of Trinidad, specifically the lower classes.

A combination of the success of Trinidad All Stars Percussion Orchestra at the Festival of Britain in 1951 and their enthusiastic reception by European listeners finally began to make clear to Trinidadians what they were almost too close to see for themselves. Removed from the context of depressed urban environments and associations with gang violence, and given the opportunity to overcome stereotypes of social, intellectual, and artistic inferiority, the great musical potential exhibited by the steelband players, tuners, and musical arrangers began

to be recognised. The steelband would find a place in Trinidadian society and indeed become recognised on a global scale as a legitimate, meaningful, and creative artistic expression.

Following a broadening social acceptance and a developing musical sophistication like carnival masquerade and calypso, in the 1950s steelbands began to cultivate an identity and image apart from the masquerade bands with which they were associated, enabling them to function as independent musical and social entities. Steelband music expanded beyond the role of musical accompaniment to 'jumping up' in the road at carnival, and began to be perceived as worthwhile listening and dancing music at the carnival season fetes. Sadly, today, the steelbands' last traditional stronghold on carnival days is limited to appearances at the early morning j'ouvert.

The history of the steelband movement has been fraught with conflict, contradiction, and irony. However, one of the steelband's greatest achievements has been its ability to successfully reconcile the national culture of Trinidad and Tobago with that of the western world by creating a musical hybrid of great significance and magnificence.

Finally, Clary Salandy, costume designer for *Carnival Messiah*, always speaks of her costume designs in musical and rhythmic terms. She observes that 'emotionally the costumes work with the rhythm of the music, which is the heartbeat of our race [...] crescendo and decrescendo [...] tension and release' (Salandy 2004).

Part Eight: Instrumentation

In Africa, music is perhaps the main manifestation of culture in its broadest sense. Unlike the classical music of Europe, it is seldom performed on its own as a pure art form; it is invariably accompanied by dance, song, poetry, mime, masquerade, or drama and, in keeping with the underlying emphasis on the African aesthetic and subjectivity, the same characteristics exist in *Carnival Messiah*. Thus the music can be either communal or personal, recreational or ritualised, and has been traditionally performed on an enormous variety of instruments.

These instruments have been classified into the following families: chordophones, which have stretched string that provides a principle sounding device of the instrument (for example, musical bows, harps, zithers, lyres); idiophones, usually made of a rigid material which acts as the principal sounding device (for example, rattles, bells, xylophones, mbiras); aerophones, wind instruments where a column of air creates the principal sounding device (for example, trumpets, horns, flutes, bull roarers); and, finally, membranophones, where stretched skin provides the principal sounding device (for example, drums) (Erich Moritz von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs musical instrument classification, first published in the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* in 1914).

The instrumentation employed by *Carnival Messiah* has been designed to incorporate and imitate many of the sounds that might be heard in a traditional African percussion ensemble, a Trinidadian string band, a baroque orchestra, or a

contemporary rock and pop band, whether derived directly from Africa, Europe, Asia, or an acculturated Caribbean source.

Carnival Messiah's line-up consists of five keyboard synthesisers, an electric bass guitar, an electric rhythm guitar, an acoustic guitar, a kit drum, a large assortment of skin drums, sticks and general and specialist percussion, a tenor and a double tenor pair of steel-pans, a Kora, and a set of record decks. The musicians are strategically positioned on a bandstand, in full view of the audience, overlooking all the activity that takes place on the stage.

Part Nine: Notation or Not

I particularly favour the use of both the prescriptive and descriptive processes of notation. *Carnival Messiah* exemplifies this dual approach to live performance by creating a continuum that bridges both poles of interpretation.

On one hand, western notation is used to accurately interpret Handel's contribution to *Carnival Messiah*, and alecotic and improvisational systems which employ non-graphic notation and which might be architectural, geographic, or even cosmological are used to address the functional, intentional, communicative, and multiple extra-musical dimensions of the piece (such as questions of structure, pitch, note durations, expression of timbre, expressions of amplitude) and to interpret the rest.

Rhythmic capabilities are too complex and repetitive to either express accurately or, equally, provide notation for, and so just the genre and tempo are indicated.

The African musician is primarily concerned with the art of playing an instrument and not necessarily with the technique. Technique is an intermediary stage, and once the musician has mastered the rudiments of his or her instrument, he or she will pay very little attention to it.

This attitude to instrumental musicianship is often reflected in western popular music by musicians who are often self-taught and not formerly trained. However, this absence of technique (in the Western sense of the term) does not imply a corresponding absence of artistry but instead goes towards explaining why the same instrument is often played in many different ways, and why the individual musician's improvisational and interpretative skills become such a key element to the overall outcome of a performance.

The musicians and singers in *Carnival Messiah* are always specifically employed for their skills and qualities of improvisation. Like its text, *Carnival Messiah's* score cannot be read in isolation. Very specific 'insider' knowledge, formulaic manipulative skills, and execution related to the various Caribbean, European, Asian, and African music genres evidenced in the score are required to deliver a satisfactory end product.

CHAPTER SIX

CARNIVAL MESSIAH: THE AESTHETIC IMPULSE

The following comprises excerpts from *Carnival Messiah* itself, commentary about the production, and my analysis of the historical and aesthetic reasons behind my creative choices. The chapter follows the actual order of *Carnival Messiah* when performed, with the exception of the four Mama God and all the Minstrel/Urban Griot scenes, which I have compiled under their first instance in order to analyse their combined significance.

The Prologue

Mother Earth

Oresha or Shango is a Yoruba derived, West African, non-Christian ritual cult religion that is practised in Trinidad and Tobago, and within which over six hundred deities are worshipped. As with other belief systems there is the notion of one supreme God, here called Oludumare. There is no written liturgy or sacred book.

The liturgical rituals of traditional African religions are essentially dramas, mechanisms for incarnating the supernatural, and they only achieve completion when the divinity descends and ‘rides’ or ‘mounts’ the devotee. The devotee then takes on the personality of the Oresha and literally plays or acts this out through dance and speech.

In the Oresha faith, the devotee derives a sense of well-being and self-worth from practising what are essentially community-focussed enactments and keeping in close touch with nature. The continuity and uniformity of the religion has depended upon the maintenance of the oral tradition throughout the generations.

Thus African theology confronts contradiction by accepting with equanimity the existence of such an Oresha as Eshu/Elegba. Eshu is the 'connector', the 'go-between' deity who negotiates two irreconcilable realms, making this 'impossible' connection possible through 'trickery', joking, nonsense, disorderly behaviour, and humour. Essentially, he operates at the 'crossroads' or interface between the living and the supernatural.

Carnival Messiah begins with an Oresha invocation sung by Mother Earth -- Shango priestess, Oloran and Chantuelle -- to Eshu and Oshun. She sings to Eshu first for a safe and trouble-free performance. Eshu is a male Oresha deity or loa in the Shango ritual, without whose authorisation no ceremony can begin. Eshu is understood to be a marginal, liminal force that manipulates destinies, a God of crossroads and pathways. He is a trickster, impersonator, and shape-shifter.

In the Caribbean, Eshu Elegbara or Legba is a doorkeeper, a remover or maintainer of barriers, an ambiguous, flexible, crippled yet powerful figure, aged and ruined, but in control of all beginnings. If Eshu is not appeased at the beginning of any Oresha ceremony, he may impersonate whomever he chooses. When this happens, the enactment is said to be 'cross-currented'.

Conversely, Oshun is a female Oresha deity or Loa associated with fertility and the sea. Oshun is the goddess of the rivers, the warrior woman, goddess of beauty, sensuality, and fertility. A loa of great beauty and youth, Oshun is maternal: She is the sea that surrounds the Caribbean islands as well as a fertile womb of water.

Oshun is also the daughter of Yemanja, goddess of the seas, who is the mother of all Oreshas ('Mama God'). Gordon Rohlehr observes that '[t]here is a suggestion here of psychic and spiritual balance, with male and female principles [Eshu and Oshun] enjoying exact and equal authority in the beginning of the world' (Rohlehr 2003c: 12).

Carnival Messiah opens with the pouring of a libation, in particular to appease Eshu. A chant is sung by Mother Earth in Eshu's and Oshun's honour. She is accompanied by four West African Djembe drums and supported by an unseen vocal chorus, the people of the world.

Figure 2: Mother Earth performs the Libation



Prologue Scene 1

The Void: Set at the back SR of the auditorium. Mother Earth is lit, chorus is unseen

Chant: Mother Earth

Music: A capella solo voice and chorus

Orisa: Libation/Blessing/Praise

Solo vocal chant: Libation to Eshu
 Eshu Barakbo koh ju ba
 Ah ray Ah ray
 Eshu Barakbo koh ju ba
 Jah mone dey
 Ko rce Eshu Barakbo ...o
 Moh Ju ba ey ley cou yah shu ba lo yah
 A du la who yeah
 Wah dang gah

Solo vocal chant: Libation to Oshun
 Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah Oh!
 Osha, Oh Ah re mi
 Osho wah se kumcre

In *Carnival Messiah*, this libation heralds the connection between the living and the ancestors, the natural and the supernatural, the world of the spirit (the invisible) and the world of reality (the visible).

Scene 2: Mama God

Historically in the Caribbean the woman, the mother figure, has always been the head of the household; the 'Monitor' who keeps the family together. This role is inherited by women as a remnant and reflection of the ravages of slavery and its effect on black male loyalties and survival.

P. Gabrielle Foreman notes that in Toni Morrison's work, 'women become the site of a history that survives and so nurtures the present'. In *Song of Solomon*, Aunt Pilate is 'the giver of stories, of counsel, the link to a precarious but necessary past'; 'women are simultaneously the site of the historical and the magical' (Foreman [1995] 2000: 286-7).

Gordon Rohlehr reinforces this view when he observes that 'Connor's first attempts at a re-reading of Handel involve her feminisation of the Godhead'; '[m]aking God and nature female however, does not in any way alter the harshly ambiguous conditions under which humanity exists'; 'Earth Goddesses are usually two-faced -- womb and tomb -- like the Akan Asase Afua, the fertile earth and Asase Yaa, the sterile earth, or the Lakshmi/Kali mother figures of Hinduism' (Rohlehr 2003c: 11).

In *Carnival Messiah*, Mama God appears on four occasions throughout the show. She functions as the all-seeing, all-encompassing eye. She is the overseer, the protector, and she embodies the mother of all mothers and the father of all fathers. She is the Monitor, the character who controls the theme of all enactments.

Figure 3: Mama God and her two alter egos



However, in reality the Monitor is rarely the focus of the ritual action. In *Carnival Messiah* Mama God is Monitor, and, through the spoken word, its accompanying leitmotif of steelpan, and her two dancing alter egos, she carries out two important functions: structuring the action, and both establishing and reinforcing the theme, of *Carnival Messiah*.

Mama God is accompanied by her two alter egos who respond to her word-wisdom through the dance. They are neither male nor female but androgynous. In Haitian Vodoun, the Marasa are the sacred twins, the spirits of the first ever children of Bondye, Vodou's most superior God, who is beyond the reach of mere mortals. I have bestowed the spirit of the Marasa on Mama God's two alter egos. To revere the Marasa is to rejoice in the duality of the nature of man and the universe. They are the acknowledgement of the human and the divine, the mortal and the immortal, the connection between the material world and the spirit domain. They are also the protectors of children and fertility.

Thus Mama God emerges from deep within the void, in silence. We first hear her voice in the darkness, and then see her image slowly radiate into the light, like a birth. She wills a world into life by changing silence into sound and rhythm. Out of the void comes the sound of Ogoun (through the sound of the steelpan), Oresha deity of Iron, the warrior-hunter and founder of the kingdom of Oyo.

As the steelpan translates rhythm and sound into motion, the Marasa alter egos dance. Gordon Rohlehr notes that 'this version of the creation is an important variation on the notion of God as a light-bearer who breathes upon the dark

waters of chaos and old night and creates day and night, dry land and ocean' (Rohlehr 2003c: 11).

Benítez-Rojo suggests that the culture of the Caribbean 'is not terrestrial but aquatic' ([1992] 2001: 11) and that the 'culture of the Peoples of the Sea [attempts] to neutralise violence and to refer society to the transhistorical codes of Nature' that are 'neither limited nor fixed, nor even intelligible'. This culture refers to itself as 'a space that can only be intuited through the poetic' (1992: 17). The Caribbean is therefore a culture of 'chaos that returns', a 'detour without a purpose', and a 'continual flow of paradoxes' (1992: 11).

Both Rohlehr's and Benítez-Rojo's insightful yet divergent readings correctly reflect my intention to emphasise the mystical meaning and cultural significance of these metaphorical and paradoxical representations of Mama God and her alter egos. She is Yemanjá, Oresha deity of the Sea, Mother of the peoples of the Caribbean Sea, as well as Mother of our Caribbean chaos. At yet another level, it is Mama God who conjures up an alternative time zone and alternative space, which projects what Benítez-Rojo describes as a 'sinuous culture where time unfolds irregularly and resists being captured by the cycles of the clock and calendar' ([1992] 2001: 11).

Carnival Messiah obeys no time, no chronological structure; it will be timeless and limitless. Milla Riggio displays a clear understanding of this concept when she observes that Trinidadians (and therefore myself) are governed by two competing concepts of time: "'Trini time", loose and playful, keyed to seasons of festivity, celebrating the resistance to and triumph over enslavement and

affirming a stubborn independence and refusal to be governed even by the tyranny of the clock', and "'clock time", measuring labour and guaranteeing the island's place in the multinational flow of capital' (Riggio 1998: 8).

Thus thinking about, preparing for, and playing carnival creates a flexible, resistant strength and stability, a balance and readiness. This is the condition that Mama God and her alter egos must create, prepare the space for, maintain, and call upon through her invocation. She is the lynch-pin and the balance. Mama God – Yemanja-Oresha deity of the Caribbean Seas -- and her Marasa twin alter egos, protectors of children and fertility, respond thus to Mother Earth's libation.

The Prologue Scene 2

Centre stage: The Void

Narration: **Mama God**

Music: **Solo steelpan**

Dance: **Pas de deux by Mama God's two alter egos**

In the beginning there was silence (**In darkness**)
and silence was black
Black silence breathed and there was motion (**in light**)
and the world formed inside darkness with a breath
and stretched, stretched an arm and flexed
giving birth to rhythm

Steel pan begins

Breath grows like a tree
rooted in blackness
bending, twisting, reaching for the sky

Enters the serpent
seed of life
cool and deadly
Writhing 'round de worldie

here is my belly
here in my belly
the axis of the universe

Pause

(Sung) I breathed and sun burnt real against horizon
I breathed and moon wore her hair, locks and circles
I breathed and roots gave leaves their pleasure
I breathed and void became a jungle
I breathed, fire came in tongues, told our stories
I breathed and the winds cried me an ocean
I breathed out into blackness
and I dreamed

Steel pan ends

(Spoken) Listen, a body sings in silence
can you hear that?

Steel pan begins

Inside this womb
is the Song of Songs

the story of all our stories

Between Mother Earth, Mama God, Eshu and Oshun, the ground is prepared for 'a re-visioning of Hebraic/Christian mythology. Gordon Rohlehr correctly notes that both worlds exist in my mind and that both mythologies have been part of my imaginative landscape as a

Caribbean, New World mulatta of style and culture [...] one of these cultural ancestors has been suppressed by the dominant and more socially acceptable other [...] Connor attempts to correct this imbalance by privileging Africa and darkness in her Prologue. (Rohlehr 2003c: 13)

In Mama God's world, rhythm and vibration precede light and order. The serpent bears 'the seed of life' which he implants in the womb of Mama God.

But this ancient cosmogony will be propelled via the slave trade into shattering collision with Isaiah's world, and Milton's and Handel's; a world of puzzling virgin births where light conquers darkness and the serpent is a creature of darkness and damnation. (Rohlehr 2003c: 13)

Mama God's world is at once a place of chaos and a place of safety; Mama God's world is a place of complete paradox, a Third Space.

Act I

Scene 4: Mama God and Alter Egos (Mama God enters from within the audience and walks toward the stage)

Mama God's second appearance here reminds us that we are not alone in our observation of the ongoing action in *Carnival Messiah* and that there is an all-seeing presence that surrounds everything. Mama God's manifestation here with her two alter egos is presented in the form of a repetitive, hypnotic inner chant,

like the meditative hum that is practiced within the Buddhist religion or the chanting of the Rosary in the Roman Catholic tradition.

This provides a calming moment which transports one away from reality to a place of peace and tranquillity, as well as providing an introduction for the upcoming stories that the minstrels/urban griots will tell of Jesus' life on earth. It is an exercise in reassurance and continuity.

Mama God: Jesus walking
 Jesus talking
 Here among us
 All the love He brought us

 Jesus walking
 Jesus talking
 Here among us
 All the love He brought us

 Walking glory
 Telling his story
 Touch the hem of His garment
 And praise His holy name

 Christ is no stranger now
 Praise His holy name
 Full of forgiveness
 Loving and Truth
 Praise His holy name

Act II

Mama God's next appearance does not take place until Act II, Scene 5. For the first time in the production Mama God is assigned narrative from the Bible. She is no longer an objective overseer but much more a subjective commentator. Mama God, directing her words to the action on the stage, from within the audience, speaks for the first time into total silence.

Scene 5**The Crucifixion**

Dance/Visual: Three Moco Jumbie crucifixes slowly traverse the stage to create a symbolic tableau of the crucifixion

Music: Silence

Narration: Mama God

Mama God: Bout noon. Darkness fell across the land,
Jesus called out in a loud voice,
Eli, Eli, Lama sabachtani
My God, My God, why have you forsaken me!

(The veil in the temple fell apart)
'Father, I commit my spirit to you!'
and with that, he died.

Mama God's final appearance is in Act III, Scene 6 and precedes the steelband's Hallelujah. This is primarily an act of joyful summation. She has successfully completed her duty as Monitor and all that is left for her to do is to conclude the

proceedings. Here, some of Mama God's narration is taken from Psalm 100; 'therefore, make a joyful noise unto the lord all ye people, come before his presence with singing' (King James Bible).

Act III, Scene 5

Mama God

Narration: The light shined in the darkness
 And the darkness has never put it out
 You are witnesses to all these things
 And I will be with you to the end of the age
 Whom shall come
 Redemption
 Liberation
 Resurrection
 Therefore make a joyful noise
 Unto the Lord all ye people
 Praise the Lord with gladness
 For our emancipation, our liberation, for our freedom
 Come before his presence with singing
 Halleluiah! (x3)

The Prologue Scene: 3

AN' DE' CARNIVAL BEGINS

 From de darkness came de early light of morning
 de first sounds of dawn.....de awakening
 de' j'ouvert ... de preparation for de'
 Carnival

Figure 4: Carnival 1888 by Melton Prior



This depiction of carnival shows how black bands with white face masks freely intermixed on Shrove Tuesday. Here devils, prostitutes, minstrels, sailors, and the character with an ithyphallic nose derived from Italian commedia dell'arte celebrate together (Nunley & Bettelheim 1988: 2-3, 112).

The Overture

J'ouvert: Opening of the day

The overture features a pastiche of ole-time Caribbean calypso, folksong, and folk dance interspersed with and accompanied by African derived percussion and the steelband. These rhythms are then developed into what we recognise today as the very trendy hip hop, jungle, ragga, disco, and funk dance music which are accompanied here by the appropriate dances. The drama is that of traditional carnival, 'Ole Mas'.

Rising out of the receding melody of solo pan is a crescendo of early-morning carnival sounds which represent daily life, the preparation for something exciting, a rustling, a coming to life, laughter, dogs barking, whistles, shouts, and sporadic conversations.

In the distance, and getting closer all the time, are the definite sounds of drumming -- steel and percussion bands. Centre stage, musicians are tuning their miscellaneous instruments. Iron and Tamboo Bamboo bands wend their way across the stage and through the audience.

The cast make staggered entrances through the audience/vomitoria/stage left and stage right, portraying individuals found in carnival crowds or various Ole Mas' characters such as Bat, Dame Lorraine, Blue Devil, Robber, Pierrot Grenade, Fancy Sailor, Fireman, Dragon, and Mud Mas', intermingling with traditional

European commedia/circus figures and carnival characters such as Halequine, Poirot, and Scaramouche.

Six of the seven minstrels are to be seen and heard weaving through the crowds and the seventh minstrel plays a traditional French Pierrot character that mirrors Pierrot Grenade of the traditional Trinidad Carnival throughout the 'J'ouvert' segment.

Within this j'ouvert melce, several choreographed events take place which include large groups of cast; a Blue devil's dance, a Bele dance sequence, and a Hip Hop/street dance sequence. Other events to be highlighted are the Police and teif, Robber talk, Fireman and Sailor dance, Street side Shouter Baptist Preachers, Acrobats, flag dance, Stick fight, Pierrot Grenade and Dame Lorraine.

Narration: **Pierrot Grenade**
 Robber talk

Music:

Miscellaneous instruments such as clarinets and violins mixed with Pan-round-neck play a calypso improvisation based on the first four bars of the *Messiah's* Overture No. 1 Allegro Moderato. There is miscellaneous percussion - - pan/iron bands, tambour bamboo, bottle and spoon, and Calypso drum percussion. Ole time lavway and folk songs: Camboulay lay oui! Rum Glorious Rum; Matilda; a Hip Hop riff/percussion only for Street Dance sequence. The Bele dance sequence is based on Pastoral Symphony (Larghetto) arranged for string quartet and tabla. A capella hymn singing 'How Great thou art' for street side singers. General solo and choral singing.

Figure 5: J'ouvert/The Overture



Origins of J'Ouvert

Errol Hill cites the origin of the term j'ouvert as emerging from a

folk tale about a soucouyant or bloodsucker -- French sucer -- who sheds her skin before midnight prior to flying through the air to attack a victim, knowing that she must resume her natural form before daybreak [...] the soucouyant is unable to recover her skin because someone has sprinkled salt upon it, and as day approaches she is left crying 'jouvay, jou paka ouvay' -- daybreak or no daybreak? (1997: 86)

At this time superstition was rife and many fictitious and legendary folk characters were parodied and burlesqued on the streets. Hence the description jouvay became identified with carnival, as it was used to specifically describe masquerade bands in which revellers depicted these folk characters. As the belief in these mythological characters dwindled, their representations at the carnival decreased and the j'ouvert parade was taken over by 'old mask', whose main pre-occupation was with satire and buffoonery.

These ex-slaves in fact made carnival a total festival of the streets, which is perhaps the most important and lasting result of black involvement in the Trinidad carnival. The ex-slaves also invaded, and eventually dominated, the elitist carnival of the French planters, significantly changing its appearance. Fraser in his *History of the Origin of the Carnival* saw the black presence in carnival as degenerative.

After the emancipation of the slaves things were materially altered, the ancient lines of demarcation between the classes were obliterated and as a natural consequence the carnival degenerated into a noisy and disorderly amusement for the lower classes (Fraser quoted in Pearse 1956a: 183)

Thus the Camboulay in its new guise of j'ouvert celebration provided the model for tribal and later mass mobilisation of a disenfranchised people by providing the blueprint upon which the carnival masquerade bands of today have modelled

themselves. J'ouvert is the time for traditional masquerade thus described because all its basic features of appearance and performance were set and passed on from player to player, and generation to generation, over many years.

J'ouvert as Overture

The third scene of the Prologue in *Carnival Messiah* is the Overture. In the western classical music tradition an overture would consist of a fairly lengthy musical interlude containing excerpts or allusions to the main musical themes to be found in the overall presentation of, usually, an opera or symphony. *Carnival Messiah* instead subverts the western musical definition of overture by using the j'ouvert enactment to visually, musically, dramatically, and metaphorically record and highlight many of the major historical moments and developments in Trinidad and Tobago from its ancient history through to its role in contemporary society.

The j'ouvert in *Carnival Messiah* presents a traditional performative and non-chronological enactment of a history of resistance. Through visual and sonic narrative, this charts slavery to modern day political activism through the use of tried and tested historical carnival techniques. These techniques were developed as a protection and survival technique for the individual sensibilities of the enslaved African and began through processes cultivated within early Cannes Brulees enactments.

Rawle Gibbons in 'Traditional Enactments of Trinidad' writes

Carnival then is a ritual of performance within which rites of purification, rites of conflict, rites of passage and rites of participation are continually enacted Traditional enactments of Trinidad. (Gibbons 1979)

Cultural Resistance

Specifically employed in *Carnival Messiah* are techniques that particularly engage with the aforementioned societal coping mechanisms of camouflage, such as double entendre, irony, metaphor, satire, ambiguity, mimicry, reversal, parody, 'fatigue', 'pappyshow', and 'picong'.

Homi Bhabha suggests that mimicry must be approached from the point of view not just of the subject who is being mimicked (the coloniser) but also the subject who mimics (the colonised). In the latter (the colonised), mimicry can be best described as a defence, exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare. The active element in this kind of resistance is illustrated in two ways: the colonised subject is empowered to return the coloniser's gaze, and thus mimicry (and cognate processes like hybridization) is also the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination that turns the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power (Moore-Gilbert 1997: 132).

Taken further, this represents the capacity of the native subject to question the foundational narratives and texts of western culture and interpret them in other ways than they were originally intended, possibly using them for purposes which were not foreseen by the coloniser. Taken even further, the subject who mimics can also refuse to return the coloniser's gaze, an act that destabilises colonial

authority just as effectively because it is a deliberate attempt to elude the subject positions to which the dominant order seeks to confine the Other in order to confirm itself as dominant.

The Carnival Space

The carnival space is usually the most frequented space for the nation; the very streets of the city become the possession of the participants. In the Oresha religion the Shango takes place in a 'yard', the very same yard that supports the most profane and ordinary functional universes. The stickfighters mark a fighting perimeter off on street corners called a Gayelle. Spiritual/Shouter Baptists inhabit the Street Corners, hedges, byways, and town squares, and the centrepiece of these rituals is when the divinity comes down and possesses the devotee.

Creative Context

The entire j'ouvert enactment in *Carnival Messiah* takes place against the background of Green Corner, which is a famous crossroad found in upper west Port-of-Spain. However, Green Corner as remembered in *Carnival Messiah* no longer exists. The 'place where roads meet' is of some significance to j'ouvert activity; the crossroad in Caribbean mythology is visualised as a junction between mankind and the spirit world. The crossroad is also recognised as a battleground, a public arena where antagonists meet.

Rohlehr notes that the 'J'ouvert' becomes a mythological place of Carnivals gone by:

we are at this time immured in frozen time [...] 'J'ouvert' parallels the imaginary pre-lapsarian state of young humanity, a state of both nature and innocence marked in the imagination by pristine celebration and joy. (Rohlehr 2003c: 16)

The parallel moment in Handel's *Messiah* is the Pastoral Symphony, where he too idealises an imaginary time past.

Euro-pastoralism and Afro-creole pastoralism meet in Connor's 'rememorised' Bèlé, a syncretic dance since ancestral times, when enslaved Africans infused the European minuet with the dark earth of their own drum rhythms. (Rohlehr 2003c: 17)

Ole Mas'

Today, j'ouvert has become a showcase for satire and wit, and for irreverent remarks mainly through apt disguise and the 'little placard'. It has developed from a few individual traditional folk characters into whole bands organised around selected themes or institutions with local and global connotations. Ole Mas' is today defined as a style of satiric masquerade, which involves the visualising and acting out of puns: this visualisation is often assisted by the use of the 'little placard'.

Ole Mas' today has transformed into the assumption of grand postures by the socially disadvantaged, and the violence associated with its original enactment is often demonstrated through bitter satire. This reversal is central to the fulfilment of the rite of purification; it restores balance to the society and better adjusts groups and individuals towards living with the status quo.

Theatrical Techniques

In *Carnival Messiah*, the theatre is represented through spoken, choreographed, visual, and musical narrative. Traditional j'ouvert characters such as the Pierrot Grenade, Robbers, Blue Devils, Dame Lorraines, Sailors, Firemen/stokers, Dragon and Imps, Police and T'eif, Spiritual Baptistes, Stickfighters, Ole Mas' and Bele dancers combine with the more contemporary manifestations of hip hop street dancers and acrobats toward creating what the choreographer of *Carnival Messiah*, Carol La Chapelle, describes as an 'impressionistic j'ouvert ballet' (La Chapelle 2003) and Gordon Rohlehr refers to as 'blurred impressionism' (Rohlehr 2003c: 19).

Rituals and Rites

The overriding rite of performance involved with carnival and, in particular, j'ouvert, is that of participation. Genuine ritual is always a participatory event, for it is from this act of commitment that the benefits of the ritual are derived. It is through involvement that carnival fulfils its function of release and replenishment. No one is exempt, neither the spectators nor the masqueraders.

The audience/spectator can be confronted by any one of many j'ouvert characters and their paraphernalia, such as the jab jab's whip, the jab molassie's (blue devil's) pitchfork, the wild Indian's tomahawk, or the grisly threat of the midnight robber. To be released they must relinquish their 'treasures' (usually money).

Other j'ouvert masquerades which operate in this way that I have not used for *Carnival Messiah*, and which are usually perceived as far less threatening, are flower-girls, doctors, tailors, and shoe-shines, all of whom perform their 'professional' services 'on' the spectator, and demand their fee in 'pounds'. By paying, the audience submits to the role in which it has been cast, and thus takes on the role of a performer. Therefore the payment gesture completely implicates the spectator in the enactment.

The Theatre of J'ouvert in *Carnival Messiah*

During the j'ouvert enactment in *Carnival Messiah*, several contrasting choreographed events take place in a rapid succession of visual and musical images. Their simultaneity, like carnival itself, spans many years and reflects both historical and contemporary Trinidad. Most importantly, though, this 'impressionistic' and 'fragmented' ballet is supported by a variety of roving onlookers and street people with all the musical references being made through, and accompanied by, a pan band, a string band, and the chantuelle or lead singer, all of whom actually make up the onlookers and street people.

Interspersed amongst all of this and used to constitute the carnival background sound are identifiable snippets of the first four bars of Handel's first overture from the *Messiah*. This first occurs in medley with a self-composed carnival chant led by the chantuelle, which uses as its only lyric the word 'j'ouvert' to underpin the entire performance.

The j'ouvert players, masqueraders, and onlookers tumble onto the stage from all directions in typical carnival celebration, performing this mixture of carnival chants and themes both vocally and accompanied by the pan band and string band.

In Trinidad and Tobago during the 1890s, some middle-class, free coloured, and African people accompanied their voices with 'string bands' on carnival day. The string band originated in neighbouring Venezuela and was brought to Trinidad and Tobago by Spanish peons who had populated Trinidad in earlier times. The instruments consisted of guitar, cuatro (a four stringed banjo type instrument), mandolin, and maracas or chac-chac. To these were added the African banjo and the European flute and violin. Errol Hill is of the opinion that the clarinet was introduced in the 1920s as Jazz came into vogue (Moore 1972). However, in describing one band that was about to parade, the Trinidad Chronicle of 1877 noted that the revellers would be accompanied by

a clarinet, 2 big drums, a fiddle, the beke negre of the auctioneer (if not already brought off by others) with his small tatoo drum, a line of tomtoms (keg drums with goat skin top) and a triangle – that seems to be all they can collect this time. (Liverpool 2001: 329)

In 1899 more European instruments were added:

The musicians played in excellent time but had evidently not studied their music by note, and many purely West Indian airs were introduced. The instruments used were violins, a piccolo, a concertina and a tin vessel scratched with a small iron rod, corresponding to the shac-shac of Trinidad and known in Barbados as a "vira". (Liverpool 2001: 329)

However, it should be noted that this was most likely a Venezuelan 'string band' that was using the African banjo and grater, and that these were instruments that had been banned under the Peace preservation acts of 1884. And yet, Hollis Liverpool observes that:

banned instruments were seen to be acceptable in a “string band” playing for upper class people. Moreover, the band was probably playing calypso music and probably applied the calypso rhythm to European melodies, hence the *Gazette*’s editor’s concern that the musicians did not play by note [...] “String bands” and “string band” musicians were held in high esteem while the African Tamboo Bamboo bands, even though they were not banned, were not at all highly regarded by the middle and upper classes. This was considered music for people of low status, meaning the “Africans”. (Liverpool 2001: 329)

Gordon Rohlehr suggests that the classical melody played by the pan-round-de-neck players in the j’ouvert is a ‘libation of sound and motion poured to [my artistic] ancestors’ as well as to steelband ancestors such as ‘Spree Simon or Neville Jules, Ellie Mannette [and] Tony Williams’, ‘pioneers of pan [steelband] who in less than two decades since the invention of the ping-pong pan were adapting European classical music to their instrument’ (Rohlehr 2003c: 14-15).

Dragon and Imps

During this first section of the j’ouvert, the Dragon and Imps masquerade is introduced. These traditional carnival characters have been traced back to 1908 when, inspired by Dante’s *Inferno*, Patrick Jones created a dragon-type depiction of Lucifer. Dragons intimate fire, hell, and damnation. The costume tends to have a tail and wings as well as chains attached to the waist which are pulled and directed by Imps who are a few feet away. Their movement is characterised by rolling on the ground, crawling, and writhing. The ritual of purification is completed in all acts where the performer/participant is symbolically renewed if one accepts that the renewal of life is the prime function of all seasonal festivities.

The Dragon and Imps masquerade is a re-enactment of the mythos; the dragon's fear of water leads to a whole dramatic interlude every time he comes to a canal. The Dragon dance is thought to have been fashioned after the Oresha god Shango. The dance embodies all of the elements that have been used by Africans from the beginning of recorded history to effect man's contact with the divine or supernatural. It is a dramatic event that involves masking which, as a form of incarnation, is believed to make the supernatural present in a manifestation that mortal man can apprehend with his senses.

Camboulay Chant

The second musical theme to appear within the j'ouvert and one that recurs throughout the enactment in *Carnival Messiah* is the Cannes Brulees chant, the pronunciation of which in modern times has been corrupted to Camboulay. This j'ouvert enactment is derived from the time during slavery when all the enslaved Africans and their masters would gather at various sugar plantations to burn the cane fields in a bid to rid them of insects and snakes before harvesting. An enactment called Cannes Brulees, which translates from the French patois as 'the burning of cane', is now known to be the only time of year that enslaved Africans from different plantations were able to legitimately get together en masse. It was a time of celebration for them; many marriages, child naming ceremonies, and personal thanksgivings were known to take place under the guise of Cannes Brulees.

Official protests against Camboulay were brought to a head in 1858 and then in

1881 and 1883. In 1884 Camboulay was officially abolished. Errol Hill suggests that '[t]he Trinidad jouvay must have begun soon after Camboulay stopped in 1884' ([1972] 1997: 86). When on 1 August 1833 emancipation took effect in Trinidad, the enslaved Africans celebrated their newly-acquired freedom by reproducing and instating the enactment of Cannes Brulees on the streets of Port-Of-Spain as an anniversary symbol of liberation and freedom. Donald Wood suggests that '[p]robably during the 1840s Camboulay, with its torches and stick-fights, merged into the Carnival' (Wood 1968: 243). Thus, the ritual significance of the Camboulay is its commemoration of freedom from plantation slavery.

In *Carnival Messiah*, it is during this initial rendition of the Camboulay chant that the revellers take over the crossroad space which is prepared for a series of traditional j'ouvert dances, the first being a calypso flag dance. It is also at this point that we meet the first our voices of j'ouvert. The narrative of the j'ouvert is led principally by the Pierrot Grenade and enhanced a little later by Robber talk, which is led by the Midnight Robber characters.

Pierrot Grenade and the French Pierrot

The Pierrot Grenade is a speech-based masquerade derived from the satire of the Pierrot character, who comes originally from the Italian/French families of travelling commedia dell'arte troupes of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The Pierrot Grenade is a jester in the guise of a schoolmaster. The character would usually be male but is female in *Carnival Messiah*.

Beautifully regaled in the 'neg jadin' (from the French for 'field slave') costume, the performance is an early masquerade apparently played by liberated Trinidadians in satiric mockery of their former enslavement, and also by plantation owners as a derisive imitation of the enslaved which was originally worn by 'gentlemen' at Trinidad Carnival during the 1820s (Martin 1998: 233). It seems evident that the sophisticated 'batonniere' called the 'Pierrot' was played at that time by persons of some social standing, a viewpoint which finds further support in Errol Hill's reminder of 'the costliness of the costume, the players' knowledge of history and literature, and the enthusiasm with which the press responded to this mas[querade]'. (Hill [1972] 1997: 92). This masquerade was played early in the twentieth century when French patois was still the language of the streets of Trinidad.

Like the Pierrot, the Pierrot Grenade gives a display of vast learning; however, there are significant differences between the two. While the Pierrot stakes his reputation on his erudition, his 'lowborn' counterpart caricatures attitudes towards education. The Pierrot uses English, whereas the Pierrot Grenade constructs his or her own version of the local French patois, inserting English phrases with the pronunciation of the people from the smaller Caribbean island of Grenada (hence the term 'Grenade'). His or her role in the performance is that of an immigrant, who, like most immigrants, is given only subordinate status in their adopted home.

Figure 6: The Pierrot Grenade



In *Carnival Messiah* the role of the Pierrot Grenade, like all clown figures, places her in a position inferior to that of her audience. As the comic jester figure in the disguise of the immigrant, her role is in fact doubly inferior since both are low-status positions ritually and socially. However, in *Carnival Messiah* the Pierrot Grenade instead makes wide and verbose commentaries peppered by an irrepressible sense of fun; she is the 'scholar' who boasts of her 'deep learning' and delights in a display of her 'wide knowledge', which in fact her dialogue displays to the fullest. Hers is an example of complete role reversal. In addition, her performance is mimicked in dance in its entirety by the original French version of the Pierrot character.

The Pierrot Grenade's dialogue irascibly incorporates a wide range of subject matter -- social and political commentary, family disputes, news and rumour, spelling exercises -- all with a touch of exaggeration, risqué satire, and burlesque. Her vocal delivery is characterised by the use of a wide range of pitches and a variety of paces and punctuations, and is always accompanied by an idiomatic commentary of popular exclamations such as 'aye-ya-yai' and 'bonje'.

She employs an abundant use of proverbs which is both an important tool in folk learning and represents a major convention of Creole speech. Another convention is 'fatigue', in which one person heckles another, usually about his or her physical appearance. She attempts grandiloquence, but at the same time systematically demolishes words into syllables, giving each syllable a new meaning consonant with her own personal experiences. Through the use of these

conventions the Pierrot Grenade improvises new material all the time, so that no two performances are ever the same. One example follows:

I am the Pierrot Grenade
 P...I...E...R...R...O...T, Pierrot ! Scholar
 Descendant of Kings and conquerors
 Great Leaders bow at my feet
 With my wit and discourse...and great beauty of course
 ...
 I can walk among the literary geniuses of all time ...
 Derrick Walcott, Sir Vidya Naipaul, William
 Shakespeare.

There is a suggestion here that the language should be re-built; that it should express truly the lives of the people. The spelling exercise that climaxes the end of her performance is the chief means through which the Pierrot Grenade re-assembles language. The exercise consists of the elaborate weaving of a story around each syllable of a word. Connections between the incidents in the story and the original word are made through phonetic resemblances and puns. Sometimes, other roles and personalities are played out in the course of the spelling exercise. In fact, the Pierrot Grenade is not only immigrant and absurd school mistress, but she also plays storyteller with each attempt at spelling.

In fact, there is more at work here than a circuitous unravelling of syllables. Rawle Gibbons observes that '[t]he word here is perceived as a tangible entity, its very concept is physical, spelling becomes a test of strength, an arduous physical task', and '[t]his approach to intellectual activity is a further caricature of colonial education and dramatisation of the condition of the immigrant' (1979: 168). Her position as 'outsider' actually affords the Pierrot Grenade

enormous ritual power. She can ridicule the customs and speech of the English, and at the same time deftly strike out at the society from which she has been orphaned. However, at all times, and quite unlike in the storytelling tradition, the distinction between herself and the audience is kept clear. She maintains her place as an outsider.

Three key issues are highlighted and brought to the fore in this portrayal of the Pierrot Grenade in *Carnival Messiah*: the Pierrot Grenade's gender, her education (which was never traditionally a part of the ambition or place of a woman in Trinidad society in the late nineteenth century), and the fact that the Pierrot Grenade is an outsider and an immigrant. Of course, these issues have great resonance for the Caribbean diasporic descendent who is resident in Britain today.

The Midnight Robber

The Midnight Robber masquerade character provides the only other spoken word in the j'ouvert. This masquerade is a traditional carnival character who usually accosts onlookers with an audacious barrage of slang and double-talk aimed at getting them to part with their hard-earned cash. Usually, the function of their words, far from being informative or enlightening, are instead delivered with an intention to inspire admiration through the use of fine words well placed together. This attribute, combined with their unique and outrageous costuming, completes their individual creativity.

Molly Ahye notes that the Igbo Grandee in the Egwugwu festival of Nigeria also engages in what we call in Trinidad and Tobago 'Robber Speecch', which manifests itself in what can only be described as the spirit of competitive confrontation. This same macho boastfulness is also at the core of the 'Indian Talk' of the New Orleans Carnival Rapping, 'the Dozens' of the USA, 'Rhyiming' in Trinidad and Tobago, the 'face-offs' of the Payadas in Latin America (Ahye 1978: 59), and the 'toasting' of the Jamaican DJ. However, in *Carnival Messiah* the Robber's Speech is an oratorical tribute and a praise-song to the history of carnival and its masquerade.

In the world of scholarship Robber Speeches have revolutionary implications as they are a prime example of the radical changes that take place in an isolated folk culture on contact with 'modern' western culture. The Midnight Robber masquerade has been identified by scholars such as Errol Hill and Dan Crowley as mimicry of American western movie icons (Hill [1972] 1997: 90; Crowley

1956a). They imply that the Robber masquerade took material and subject matter from the ‘tritest products of commercialism’ and, in particular, North American ‘movies, popular songs, pulp magazines (and old steel oil drums)’, to create new forms of expression (Crowley 1956a: 274). These were reflected in their costume, some of their language, their pseudonyms, and storyline references, in particular to Hollywood films of the 1940s.

In *Carnival Messiah* the three Midnight Robber speeches were especially commissioned to be written by one of the few remaining, genuine, practicing Midnight Robber masqueraders of today, the late Brian Honore. Through the speeches, he pays homage and tribute to Trinidad Carnival and its history, its music and musicians and finally, its masquerade and its masqueraders.

Robber I

I come, I come, see I have come
 From the valley of the shadow
 From the mountain of the drum
 I come as an axe to a bending tree
 To welcome all to my carnival camboulay majesty
 In this gayelle there is no room for pretenders of dubious distinction
 For I have been the glory of Bailey’s brightest Africa
 I conquered imperial Rome with General Saldenha
 And stole Brittania’s penny with Wilfred Strasser

Robber II

I have been to hell yard and back
 With a red army of Renegades, Desperados and Invaders,
 I ties down Gulliver with manacles of fruits and flowers

I am the bird of paradise who keeps an eye on the Sparrow
 I am the alphabetical infinity of kaiso from Atilla to Zhivago

Robber III

I am the gliding King Sailor shrouded in Ken Morris copper
 Like moko jumbie, I stand tall, tall like a wall
 Presiding over this annual coronation
 Of masters of mime
 Sirens of steel
 Lords of lyric
 Warriors of the word

However, to my mind the Midnight Robber is armed with historical precedents dating back to the griots of West Africa. This is corroborated by Brian Honoré (1998: 126) and Maureen Warner-Lewis who notes that ‘he [the Robber] is one of Guinea’s other suns, his dress [especially the outrageous hat] and speech descending directly from African Griot’. Warner-Lewis links Trinidad Robber talk to the following passages taken from *Arrow of God* by Chinua Achebe (Warner-Lewis 1991: 183):

There is a place, Beyond Knowing, where no man or spirit ventures [...] But I, Ogalanya, Evil Dog that Warms His Body through the Head [...] made my third friend and he was a leper [...] from whom even a poisoner flees [...] Tell me, folk assembled, a man who did this, is his arm strong or not? (Achebe 1964: 39-40, emphasis in original)

The ‘Keelboat talk and manners’ overheard by Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn as he stows away on a Mississippi river boat are another example of Robber talk, which begs the question of the similarities of influence and dissemination of African culture within the Mississippi basin.

“I’m the old original iron jawed, brass mouthed copper belled corpse maker from the wilds of Arkansaw! I’m the man they call Sudden Death and General Desolation sired by a hurricane, dam’d by an earthquake,

half brother to the cholera.” (Twain [1896] 1981: 13, quoted by Honoré 1998: 126)

The choice of the Robber character’s subject matter or theme and costume are always spectacular and larger than life, as well as being capable of extensive variation and development. Their speeches provide worthy opportunities for them to show off their sensitivity, skills of social commentary, and theatrical delivery of words.

The Robber’s masquerade costume is usually a sombre black or brown but on occasion, as in *Carnival Messiah*, the Robber may choose to wear shimmering white. The costume is usually made up of trousers which carry rows of thick fringe from thigh to ankle, giving the impression of a really shaggy look. With this he would wear a long-sleeved shirt and a sweeping cape, upon which is usually painted the dreaded skull and cross bones.

This reference to the underworld and death is also associated with the Haitian loa and, in particular, the Gede, Baron Samedi. Around his waist is fitted a holster for the revolver he carries and his shoes usually exhibit imaginative designs such as a replica of a coffin or sculptures of grotesque animal heads.

Figure 7: The Midnight Robbers



The robber's hat, which is the focal point of his costume, is an architectural construction of wide brim complete with dripping silk fringe around the bottom edge. Atop this structure is a high rise of sculptured curves or squares -- much like a European wedding cake -- rising into a dome. This is usually ornately decorated with braid, small mirrors, and beads. The exact style of headdress has been traced back to the Chiefs of the Ogboni Secret Society of the Yoruba nation in Eastern Nigeria. The shaggy effect of their trousers is also repeated in the throw cape worn by these Ogboni people (Ahye 1978: 40). However, the Robber headdress also mirrors the sculptures of the Tadjia or Temples found in the East Indian Islamic Shiite festival of Hosey, which takes place annually in Trinidad.

The Midnight Robber character is not a comic character. He is, however, capable of satirising his own use of language and, always the boaster, he can (like the Pierrot Grenade) become the master of malapropism and metaphor: he feels no qualms about self-mockery. He also has the ability to create new words to assist him in expressing his awesome power when the English language and Trinidadian dialect are inadequate. Thus the hapless mortal should never dare to "equivocate his equilibrium or challenge his cyclomic diploma" (Honoré 1998: 130).

The Midnight Robber recalls the emancipation tradition that is at the heart of the Carnival of Trinidad and Tobago, and his desire to outwit and out-talk his rival lies at the heart of this masquerade. Whether 'in Egoski', on the 'Mississippi River Boat', or 'in Port of Spain, Trinidad', the Midnight Robber 'talks his way into kingship, even as he mocks the very traditions over which he would reign' (Honoré 1998: 130).

The Bele Dancers

Next enter the Bele dancers, who are accompanied by the complete melody from Handel's Pastoral Symphony. This has been re-arranged to accompany the dance which is underpinned by the traditional Bele African drum folk rhythm as well as a tabla rhythm. The tabla rhythm has been added for two reasons: for sonic variety and colour, and as a cultural representation of the East Indian presence in Trinidad's history.

Instruments from the western classical tradition (flutes and woodwind) and the Caribbean and the African diaspora (a selection of drums and percussion) are all easily identifiable in this melee of sound. Significantly, Handel's music here is a clear representation of the style and aplomb of nineteenth-century European dance styles and is infinitely suited to the grace and finesse found in the traditional Bele dance, which originally derived from the French Minuet (Ahye 1978: 44).

Figure 8: The Bele Dancers



Rohlehr cites this dance as descending from the African Congo's 'Jhouba', meaning dancing party (1990: 20). Known throughout the Antilles and in America's plantation states, the Jhouba was everywhere recognised as an assimilation dance. Marshall and Jean Stearns note that 'the Juba is found in Cuba [...] using steps and figures of the court of Versailles combined with the hip movements of the Congo'; it is 'called the Martinique in Haiti and described as a set dance of several men and women facing each other in two lines' ([1968] 1971: 28). Rohlehr observes that this form is apparently the temporary result of European influence, since in Africa and the United States it is usually a circle dance. Harold Courlander notes that 'Juba is also remembered in New Orleans and the Creole communities of Louisiana' (Courlander quoted in Stearns and Stearns [1968] 1971: 28).

Rohlehr suggests that the Jhouba was assimilated into the Bel Air or Bele tradition of Trinidad and that Bele was a name applied to a variety of song and dance types (1990: 20). Andrew Pearse identifies three different types of Bele activity. He calls the Bele style of dance and performance closest to that performed in *Carnival Messiah* Belé and notes that it is 'Trinidadian and performed in English, though its function was clearly African'; it is 'music for a pleasure dance and for "working" by magicians involving possession', and has assimilated the 'Congo music of nineteenth century immigrants to Tobago' (1955a: 31).

Costumes 'consist of bright plaid or flowered material which is made into a long dress with fully gathered skirt, attached to a bodice with long sleeves', and is then 'tucked up over a long white stiffly starched cotton petticoat richly

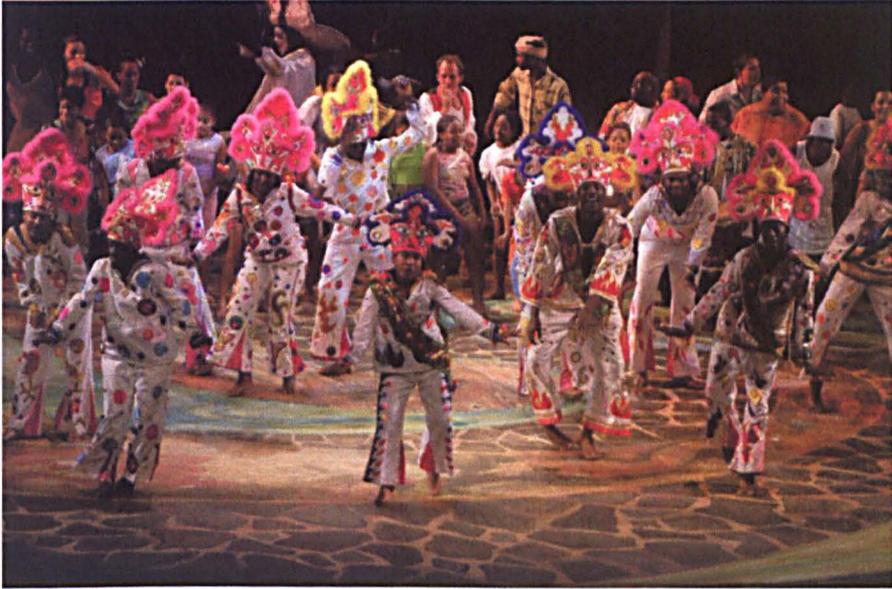
embellished with lace and edgings'. The dress 'dates back to the eighteenth century and is called a Douitte' (Ahye 1978: 44).

In *Carnival Messiah* the Bele dancers, resplendent in purple and green (two of the traditional colours of the New Orleans Mardi Gras), enter majestically in 4/4 couplet, floating gracefully through the imaginary cross roads of Green Corner their dance, 'frozen' in time.

The King Sailors

The moment of suspended time soon however becomes overwhelmed by an iron band of carnival revellers, fancy 'drunken' Sailors, and firemen/stokers, all of whom chant King Radio's 'Matilda'. This calypso, in contrast to the majesty and serenity of the previous bele dance, celebrates a most un-pastoral encounter between a beautiful Venezuelan temptress and an innocent home boy: what Gordon Rohlehr describes as a Trinidadian version of 'the passionate shepherd and his anansi-spirited mistress' (Rohlehr 2003c: 17). The first line of the famous calypso 'Mathilda' by King Radio (circa late 1930s) runs, 'Mathilda, Mathilda, Mathilda yuh tek meh money an' run Venezuela'.

Figure 9: The King and Fancy Sailors



The King sailors' dance movements were adapted from the Marico, which in turn derived from the Maricon, a name of Spanish origin given to effeminate men; the dance symbolises the movement of females and dandies.

The Fancy Sailors move from side to side with a gliding movement of the support foot, while the gesturing foot makes a heel and toe movement along the ground [...] There are hops forward with wide legs and a sort of crawling walk with bent over torso, jerking onto the ball of the foot in alternation. (Ayhe 1978: 25)

Molly Ahye suggests that this step originates from the Rawar Yammata dance of Kontagora in the Sokoto state of Nigeria. She goes on to note that another popular and commonly employed step is a 'rocking, mincing step, characterised by the crossing of the feet at the ankles' (1978: 25). The step is typical of some Spanish folk dances, the English Hornpipe, the Tobago Jig (which originated from the Hornpipe), and the Dance Jhouba of Haiti which Gordon Rohlehr cites as originating in the African Congo (Rohlehr 1990: 20).

The participatory rite that is unique to traditional Fancy Sailor masquerade is the gesture of 'sprinkling' or 'smearing'. The Fancy Sailors carry talcum powder with them while they are playing mas' to shower their 'audience' with sporadically.

The Firemen and the Stokers

In *Carnival Messiah* the King Sailors are followed swiftly by the Firemen or Stokers, who are actually sailors who stoke the ship's boilers. Their costumes are characterised by black bell-bottomed trousers, sleeveless vests, and if wearing a high standing collar it is sometimes decorated with swansdown. The ensemble is

completed by a flat-top navy styled cap.

They can carry with them a variety of accoutrement such as ship's tools of varying functions and a long pipe dangling from the mouth, over which is stuck a false moustache and a false beard of sisal hemp dyed black, or, as in *Carnival Messiah*, a long iron poker.

The Fireman's movements are mimetic and sensual and, according to Molly Ahye, 'give rise to the opinion that he inspired the development of the Limbo as an exhibitionistic cabaret dance' (Ahye 1978: 27). The dance is characterised by a distinctive sliding step that accompanies the stoking of the engine.

Police an' T'ief

Police and Thief are a traditional masquerade that showcases humour, satire, high drama, and a variety of movements and effort actions that are often associated with the performance traditions of j'ouvert. As its name suggests, this masquerade is played by two characters of opposing characteristics. One is dressed as a legitimate policeman carrying a very threatening baton or 'bootoo', with a droll expression and a no-nonsense attitude; with mock-seriousness he comes huffing and puffing, shouting, 'Thief! Stop that man!'

The other character is dressed up in a striped gaol suit, carrying a sack full of his illegal and ill-gotten gains. Usually, the police chases the thief, who bolts through the crowd, darting, dodging, leaping, and turning furtively, but as is customary in

carnival, these roles are eventually reversed, and so the drama continues. In *Carnival Messiah* this masquerade is played throughout the j'ouvert, taking place on stage and in the audience, always at great speed, and often interrupting other set piece masquerades taking place within the j'ouvert.

Dame Lorraine

The Firemen and the Police and Thief are followed in quick succession by the Dame Lorraine. Trinidad Carnival often embraces the practice of the absurd and j'ouvert in particular uses mechanisms of humour and picong, satire, and buffoonery (the total subversion of social order). The reveller plays the masquerade in earnest and so becomes the personality which the mask characterises for the duration of the performance, celebration, or observation. Hence it is not the individual, but the masquerade or character played, who is responsible for lauding, lampooning, satirising, parodying, or criticizing public or private figures in the society.

Victor Turner observes that

Cognitively, nothing underlies regularity so well as absurdity or paradox. Emotionally, nothing satisfies as much as extravagant or temporarily permitted illicit behaviour. Rituals of status reversal accommodate both aspects. By making the low high, and the high low, they reaffirm the hierarchical principle. By making the low mimic (often to the point of caricature) the behaviour of the high, and by restraining the initiatives of the proud, they underline the reasonableness of everyday culturally predictable behaviour between the various estates of society. (Turner [1969] 1974: 165)

Several masquerades are performed within the category of these reversals, in particular the Pierrot Grenade and the Dame Lorraine.

Figure 10: The Dame Lorraines



The Dame Lorraine masquerade epitomises what can only be described as the 'creative promiscuity' of Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival theatrical practice, showcasing in one enactment the characteristics of admittance, accommodation, and a blurring of barriers that decimates issues of social hierarchy, cultural tension, and political entrenchment.

Based on the lifestyle of the eighteenth-century French elite, the Dame Lorraine parodies, satirises, and caricatures the mannerisms and costumes worn by the elite women who attended the Grand Carnival Balls of that era. The costumes, which are accessorised with wide hats, gloves, fans, and jewellery, are wide-skirted, frilly, lavish, and colourful.

The master of the Ball invites the 'special dignitaries' to enter the space and the onlookers are at once fascinated and horrified. These dignitaries are in fact men dressed as eighteenth-century French elite women, but with 'disabilities' that emphasise outsized parts and certain bodily defects such as extraordinarily large breasts and bottoms.

The Dame Lorraines make a big show of these 'disabilities' to a very specific and rhythmic tune that has been associated with the masquerade since its inception. They flutter their fans and dance, whirling around in circles and flouncing up and down, mimicking the elite with mock haughtiness and curtsies. As the music waxes warmer they begin to shake and turn without inhibition in true peasant style.

The occurrence of transvestism in early j'ouvert portrayals is perhaps based on the association between womanhood and pollution, and would have been adopted more as a rejection of female physicality than a rejection of gender. Cleanliness is a pre-requisite for any involvement in sacred ritual, and in all instances, menstruation is regarded as unclean and polluting.

Thus in many of these enactments the women's involvement is strictly prescribed to the private and preparatory phases of the ritual or masquerade. As described earlier, and as portrayed in *Carnival Messiah*, the Dame Lorraine was always played by cross-dressing men, but in contemporary carnival practice it is now considered to be primarily a female masquerade.

The street children are seen to be playfully mocking and imitating the Dame Lorraine display against their parents' better wishes. Surrounding them, creeping around and under them, and jeering at them, the children soon however get caught up in their own acrobatic activity as the Dame Lorraines begin to exit Green Corner on the way to their next engagement.

The Street Children and the Acrobats

The children then move seamlessly into a short choreographed acrobatic display, which is suddenly and rudely interrupted by the arrival of a large and noisy contingent of Jab Molassies, who are otherwise known in contemporary carnival as Blue Devil masqueraders.

Diable Molassie/Jab Jab/Blue Devil

Most scholarship traces the devil masquerade back to the religious prejudices exhibited by Protestant English press reports of post-emancipation carnival. The British opinion was that carnival was 'savage, 'demonic', and 'devilish'; according to Andrew Pearse, the black masqueraders were stigmatised as 'children of the devil' (1956a). Attempts were made to outlaw carnival practices on the grounds of the worthlessness of the indigenous culture. The imposition of the Devil masquerade on African tribal beliefs, rites, and practices led to its practice becoming a unique carnival tradition.

Jab is a corruption of the French word for devil (*diable*), and a Jab Molassie translates as a 'Molasses Devil'. The name came about because the character's costume covers the entire body, including the face (the rite of blackening the face referring to the West African mutilated past) and hair, with what was originally molasses -- the residue left after refining sugar cane that was of course the mainstay of the Caribbean plantation economy during the slave trade.

Figure 11: The Jab Molassie or Blue Devils



Today the molasses has been replaced by mud, tar, blue and brown ochre, or engine grease. The Jab Molassie is the ugliest form of devil masquerade and was really a denigration of the black man's image that was considered undesirable in society.

A Jab Molassie wears a loin cloth or briefs, to which is attached a devil's tail, and if female a brassiere of some type is worn. They sometimes wear chains and their feet are usually attired in running shoes. He or she will also hold a devil's trident in one hand, wear a pair of devil horns on his or her head, and often display long and dangerous finger nails.

The Jab Molassie's movement is epitomised by a lascivious gyration of the pelvic region forward, backward, and in a circular fashion. They can be seen leaping in the air, stamping on the ground, rolling in ditches, and weaving from pavement to pavement, all to the rhythmic and monotonous cacophony of large square biscuit or oil tin drums that are beaten with sticks or pieces of metal, a noise that is punctuated by sharp, shrill whistle interventions.

Their mission is to instil fear via a vision of threatening blackness. The Jab Molassie dance is also seen in Haiti, where it features in the Ra Ra festival. The dance assumes ritual significance when we recognise that it is directly linked to the Gede cult of Old Dahomey through the Banda dance which is associated with the Haitian loa of death, who is also the God of life and sex, Baron Samedi (Ahye 1978: 29).

One of the purifying rites of carnival performance is through devices that create fear. Fear (or some other basic discomfort such as revulsion) is the natural and legitimate response on the part of the individuals when confronted with the 'shadows' of their personality (Gibbons 1979: 122). This rite allows the participants to purge themselves of guilt, aggression, and inhibition. These feelings are invoked and externalised through their 'street' ritual performance. The Devil Masquerade, the Beast characters in the Dragon Bands, and the Robber Masquerade all fulfil this function of purification.

Popular legend has it that the devil and his horde of fallen angels roam the earth on the two days of carnival before the beginning of the Catholic season of Lent to test the virtues of the faithful. Onlookers or other masqueraders have to pay them to make them go back to hell.

The participatory rite that takes place through the Jab Molassie masquerade is the gesture of 'smearing'. With the Jab Molassie the audience becomes the victim: they are smeared in molasses, grease, blue or ochre if they refuse to pay up. The audience is thus forced to identify with the ritual, and within its context these actions are reciprocal and interactive; one answering the demands of the other.

Rawle Gibbons notes that this performance 'appears to be the only mas' [masquerade] to have survived from the post-Emancipation period', and that it 'carries with it memories of slavery and Africa (1979: 122).

With the arrival of the Jab Molassies at Green Corner, the lights dim to indicate that the day is passing away and it is time for little children to go into the safety

of their homes. The Jab Molassie masquerade stakes its claim to the space, performs the rite of combat, creates fear, performs the rite of renewal, and then moves on.

Spiritual Baptists

As the Jab Molassies leave, we hear a distant bell ringing and loud voices preaching. The previously frightened revellers have reverted to their normal action of dancing and 'wining' in the street to a contemporary four bar chorus adaptation of the 'Ring Ding Song', originally written and sung by Rhoma Spencer.

The voices and the bell come closer and finally they arrive, bursting through the crowd looking for a prominent by-way or hedge in order to set up shop. The cross roads at Green Corner seem to be very appropriate. The Spiritual (Shouter) Baptists have come to clear the space of evil forces and condemn all carnival revellers. They predict hell, damnation, famine, and flood to all those who would participate in this illicit festival. As they sing 'How Great Thou Art' the Spiritual Baptists are surrounded by curious onlookers; they extemporise and preach, telling of past and present circumstances and their hopes and fears for the future.

The Spiritual Baptists' songs are always permeated with their beliefs and are used as vehicles to express their philosophies. Their singing consists of lyrics, chanting, ballads, sankeys (an African adaptation of a well known Christian hymn), and minstrelsy, and is always historical in origin.

Figure 12: The Spiritual Baptists



Contrary to popular belief, the Spiritual Baptist faith is not based on superstition. Rather, it is based on the fundamental beliefs of Ile-Ife, the Yoruba God of light and life, and the practical experiences of African life. This religion emerged out of slavery as a direct effort to preserve Yoruba roots and to provide a source of consolation to immigrants within a new and foreign environment.

Thus they borrowed from their own myths and religious practices until they established a variant form of their faith, which then became known as the Shouter/Spiritual Baptist religion. The faith is fact a combination of Yoruba religious beliefs from ancient African tradition fused with concepts of Christianity. Hand-clapping and chanting, which are expressed by the Shouter/Spiritual Baptists, are a substitute for the drums and shac-shacs of African custom.

Therefore this faith is in contrast to the main structure of the Shango or Oresha Yoruba cult religion, which also came to the Caribbean at the same time with other enslaved Africans from West Africa. Both use a central pole in their main ritual spaces, but this carries a completely different significance for the Shouter/Spiritual Baptist's church, in which the pole symbolises the faith's spiritual foundation. The pole is believed to be even more important than the altar and is represents the timber of Lebanon, which was used for the construction of Solomon's temple.

The altar is suspended on a wheel attached to the pole, and is built to accommodate very specific and religiously significant instruments. The Right Reverend Eudora Thomas explains that

The bell signifies the awakening of its adherents through the Holy Spirit and prepares them for spiritual purposes. The flowers represent man or the designed beauty of holiness, one's life in God's heavenly light. The calabash is the symbol of one's national tribe, the goblet, a pitcher for water as in ancient traditions, a signification of one's spiritual recognition, and the lota a jewel vessel of current resistance. (1987: 31)

The government of Trinidad and Tobago regarded the Spiritual/Shouter Baptist's religious exercises of bell ringing, shouting, chanting, pouring lotions, and loud singing and praying as disturbances to the peace, consequently passing laws against them. However, the Shouter/Spiritual Baptists persisted in these articulations of their faith and became well-known for preaching the gospel beside the by-ways and hedges of Port-of-Spain. This is still common practice today, even though in 1965 their sect was officially incorporated as the National Evangelical Spiritual Baptist Arch-Diocese, thereby being made into a legitimate religious practice in Trinidad and Tobago.

Other similar religious practices can be found in Jamaica, where they are known as Pocomania, and in the United States, where they are associated with the American Negro Charismatic sects. The contemporary religious practices of Spiritual/Shouter Baptists include the baptism of the Holy Ghost thanksgiving, mourning, talking in tongues, pilgrimages, preaching by byways and hedges, teaching the gospel, healing prayer, and fasting.

Some of the West-African retentions that continue to manifest themselves today include the significance of colours, which are thought to indicate mystery and power. Different colours are identified with good fortune, peace, love, purity, and other practices of the Shouter/Spiritual Baptist faith. The extemporaneous

manner of praying and shouting is the whirl of spiritual elevation awakening the mortal in action that precedes immortality.

Eudora Thomas notes that

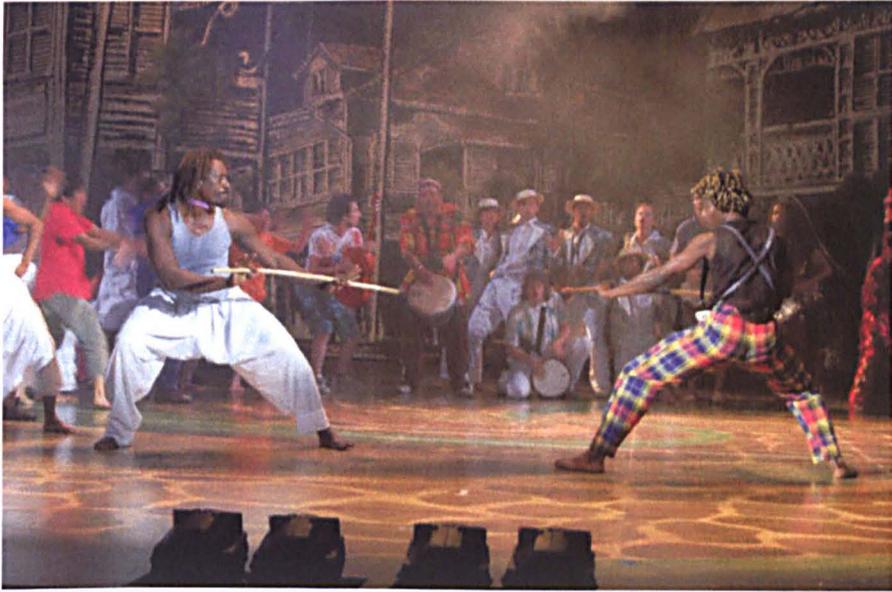
such action brings a shaking to our bodies and limbs [...] the movements develop the Holy Ghost, which gives us the power to shout, dance and rejoice. (Thomas 1987: 52)

Relieved after the immense fear that has been conjured up by the Jab Molassie masquerade, and completely amused by the unexpected intervention of the Spiritual/Shouter Baptists, the crowd begins to relax and make fun of this motley crew of preachers. However, the arrival of two Stickmen palpably changes the atmosphere and the crowd begins to part as they take sides in what will become a competition to the death.

The Stickfight/Kalinda

It is early evening now as the tension builds. The women of the stickmen jump into the Gayelle and ominously circle each other, and each group of supporters begins to chant Kalinda songs. One side commences with 'Mooma Mooma yuh son done in de grave already! Take a towel and ban'd yuh belly'; the opposing supporters sing over the first chant, even louder and at the same time, 'Fight! Fight! Fight! In de mornin', punctuated by shouts of 'Bois!' (the French patois for wood, corrupted in Creole to mean stick), 'Poui' (a beautiful yellow or pink flowering tree from which the 'stick' is made), and 'Bonje' (let the battle begin).

Figure 13: The Kalinda or Stickfight Drummers



At this point, the drummers are feverishly beating out a deep, fast, and hypnotic rhythm. The stickmen begin to circle each other very slowly; their supporters (who have by now demarcated the Gayelle area) are wildly shouting and screaming their support; the pulsating and pushing crowd speedily shift from side to side of the Gayelle. There is a great deal of 'gran-charging' as they pretend to charge at each other, and then stop at the last minute, sizing each other up as they circle the Gayelle. Fancy and complex footwork is also brought into play in this declaration of war, before the fighters actually attack each other. They fight to the death and there can only be one victor.

The stick fight formed the basis of pre-emancipation celebrations as well as the riots in which rival bands of newly-freed slaves, led by their stickmen (also called bois-men or batoniers), roamed the streets and engaged in bloody battles. Kalinda is the earliest song type in Trinidad and Tobago to be identified with carnival and has always been associated with the stick fight.

In Kalinda songs, both the chorus and chantuelle sing with a single purpose: to incite the stickmen's fight. These chants often become the main provocation for action. 'Call and response' is a specifically African litanic style of singing and is characterised by a lead solo voice 'calling' and a chorus 'responding'. It is the ultimate achievement of vocal communities. In Trinidad and Tobago folklore, the lead singer is called a chantuelle and his or her role carries considerable authority. The chantuelle presents the main melody and rhythmic basis of the song or chant, often punctuating it with an ecstatic shout as well as creative multiple variations and improvisations on the main theme.

Figure 14: The Stickfight



The chorus tends to maintain the main melody. In Kalinda songs, the chantuelle also often applies a vocal technique of ululation called 'gonde'. This technique is believed to incite possession and seems to instil a fearlessness in the fighters which then catapults them into action. The singing is characterised by a tight, repetitious (ostinato) call and response framework, which is really a verbalisation of the polyrhythmic drum play that, like the call and response vocal technique, continuously moves between tension and release. The end result is hypnotic.

In j'ouvert, the masquerade recognises the contention of opposing forces in life: the contest, display competitions, and the fight. Spontaneous and ritualised violence is one of carnival's key motifs. Conflict is inevitable at a time when so much energy is released and violence has remained a permanent ingredient of carnival to the present day. There is an unspoken ritual of conflict within carnival with the more aggressive types of masquerade formalising their encounters into rites of combat which usually consist of the challenge, the contest, and the settlement.

These rites of combat can be verbal (as expressed by the Robber, the Jab Molassie, and the Pierrot) as well as physical (exhibited by the stick fight and Jab Jab). Competition is more often associated with an overall concern with survival of the fittest and where competition stems from the community itself it is usually concerned with a re-focussing or re-arrangement of society, or the public presentation of specific social tensions.

There is historical precedent for the stick fight enactment in carnival. According to E.A.W. Budge, the ritual fight (men fighting with sticks) at the door of the

temple during the Egyptian Wosirian festival clearly represented the battle that took place in pre-historic times between Set and Osiris, in which Osiris was killed (Budge quoted by Smart 2000: 54).

This is probably the source of traditional carnival stick-fighting. The tendency of these fighters to roam the streets of Port-of-Spain at carnival time, spurred on by chantuelles who provide the rhythm of Tambour Bamboo (Bamboo stamping tubes), is also probably a throw-back to the Wosirian festival in which the followers of Set and the followers of Osiris wandered through the countryside, repeating at intervals their sham fights (Smart 2000: 54-55). Stick-fighting plays an integral part in the Trinidad Carnival since the festival is essentially a celebration of fertility, and hence virility as well as femininity.

Stick-fighting is an art that combines the skills of dancing and fighting -- agility, accuracy, grace, timing, and endurance. The parts of the body that are attacked and defended are the ankle, the pelvic region, the head, and the temple. It is often wrongly perceived as an excessive frenzy of violence. 'Bois bataille' (its Creole name) was an institution in the tenement yards that was often employed quite effectively for the purpose of settling a dispute, and also served as a measure of masculinity. Today it most commonly forms a mode of entertainment.

David Hamilton, the associate choreographer of *Carnival Messiah*, notes that the music accompanying the stick fight plays an integral role as a stimulator or controller. The same is true in Brazilian Capoeiria, an art form that has influenced the competitive element of contemporary break dancing and engendered a selection of highly skilled and dramatic dance movements

characterised by elements of creative improvisation. The structure that emerges from these enactments has given rise to the use of the circle in other contemporary black dance forms such as 'skanking', 'body popping', and jazz funk (Hamilton 2004).

The Street Dance

Imagine: thousands of people, all moving with one collective rhythm; excited chatter; a blend of sounds and smells, rum, rice 'n' peas, beer, ackee and saltfish, cologne, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and fry plantain; laughter; sweat; the insistent, consistent, percussive rhythm of steelband in the distance; Ragga, Soca, and Hip Hop throbbing from huge speakers and passing forty-foot articulated lorries at a decibel level which insists on engraving the lyrics on your brain; you scream along with the lead singer; you are engulfed in a sea of sound and motion, wave after wave of bass, riddim' and heights bombard your body, mind, and soul; you are alone, but you are not alone; everything is excluded but the sound; shoulder to shoulder, back to back, belly to belly, your body and their bodies respond in primal instinct to a gamut of sonic emotion as you journey freely through the cross roads of Green Corner, enwrapped on a voyage of sound and discovery.

This atmosphere is what I wanted to convey as the Street Dance begins at the Green Corner cross-roads. As with all things, the traditions of j'ouvert are beginning to be replaced by modernity. Electric amplification and sound systems have more of an attraction to the youth of today than the acoustic sound of the

steelband; the stationary gyrations of modern dance have more resonance than the 'chip' and procession of the street masquerade.

The Jamaican mobile disco or sound system has in many ways been the most vital element in the development of reggae. Often down-played and misunderstood outside of Jamaica, the dances serviced by these sound systems are the most significant outlet for reggae music in both Jamaica and Britain. Sound systems have been officially associated with carnival in the United Kingdom since 1975, but in fact have been part of the carnival milieu since its inception in the late 1950s. Today, sound systems are hi-tech and high-powered systems of sound generation which are quite often custom-built to accommodate very specific sound separation requirements.

They came into existence in Jamaica in the late 1940s and consisted of portable sets of record decks, powerful amplifiers, and huge banks of speakers which played in yards and dance halls to paying customers. Initially they played imported American rhythm and blues, but then certain sound system proprietors began to record their own exclusive discs.

This was the birth of the Jamaican recording industry, the earliest products of which were intended purely for the use of the sound system. By the 1960s the most important elements of the modern sound system had been developed, namely: the custom of dancing to portable recorded music, the development of records especially tailored to the needs of the disco, and a new role for DJs as the main focus of the music rather than as a mere announcer.

The sound system provided an opportunity for the grassroots people to talk back to, to respond to, and to choose music, and each system had its own 'toasting' heroes who could express the feelings of an entire crowd. Often, as in the *gayap* tradition of Trinidad and Tobago, the DJ/talk-over artiste, like the calypso singer/*chantuelle*, would clarify the local opinion of pressing social and political issues.

It is evening time and hundreds of youth gather around the sound systems that are strategically stationed at Green Corner, huge speakers facing the 'Decks', to display their latest 'cool'. They move in unison; the DJ is king. He or she will have to choose the right equipment, find the right position and set up all the equipment. The DJ will have to select the right music then perform on the turntables or decks; mixing, scratching, MC-ing, singing, rapping, toasting, and matching time signatures, tempos, arrangements, and styles. Most importantly, the DJ has to catch the imagination of the groove.

Las' Lap

As the evening fades into dark night, we can hear a small band of revellers led by Pierrot Grenade coming slowly and tiredly from the distance, all heading for home, and following a bottle and spoon percussion band. All of the revellers are either too drunk or too tired to walk in a straight line.

Pierrot G

Is carnival las lap
 The bands gone
 We tired cause we feteing since J'ouvert morn
 Is home we goin -- and on the way
 We start to think about the next day
 We done wine up ... Jam up ... Jump up ...
 We done break way
 After carnival we does have to pray

This is 'de' Las' Lap'. It is the saddest time of the carnival as the festivities are over, but it is also the most optimistic time since the end signals a new beginning: the renewal of life is the prime function of all seasonal festivals, and j'ouvert is the ultimate act of renewal.

ACT I

Birth

The Joyful Mystery

Dimanche Gras

Carnival Sunday

Annunciation, visitation, nativity, presentation, finding the temple

Scene 1

The annunciation

Set in an Orisa tent at night

Dance:	Orisa fertility/birth procession and ritual
Music:	'But who may abide the day of his coming' Traditional African: Gospel: Soul
Mother Earth:	Shango Aye, Shango Aye Shango Aye, Shango Aye But who may abide the day of His coming? Shango Aye, Shango Aye Shango Aye, Shango Aye And who shall stand when He appeareth? Shango Aye, Shango Aye Shango Aye, Shango Aye Who shall stand when He appeareth? Shango Aye, Shango Aye Shango Aye, Shango Aye But who may abide the day of His coming? Shango Aye, Shango Aye Shango Aye, Shango Aye And who shall stand when He appeareth? Shango Aye, Shango Aye Shango Aye, Shango Aye And who shall stand when He appeareth?

Shango is like tunder and lightening,
 Shango is like tunder and lightening,
 Shango is like tunder and lightening, tunder
 and lightening
 Shango is like tunder and lightening,
 Shango is like tunder and lightening,
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 and lightening
 Shango Aye, Shango Aye
 Shango Aye, Shango Aye
 Shango Aye, Shango Aye
 Shango Aye, Shango Aye

Shango is one of the principal Yoruba Gods of West Africa, the Caribbean, and Brazil. In the Oresha pantheon of deities Shango, the legendary Alaafin of Oyo, is the Divinity of Thunder, Fire, and Lightning. In Trinidad and Tobago, he has been syncretised with the Catholic Saint John The Baptist. However, for the dramatic purposes of *Carnival Messiah* I have instead allied the Oresha deity Shango to Jesus Christ.

The participants in a Shango or Oresha cult are almost exclusively African Creoles, though individuals of other races are also active in the cult, and there are many roles performed by all the celebrants who take part in these feasts. Shango's parallels in the Caribbean and South America can be found in the Santeria of Cuba, the Voudou of Haiti, and the Candomble of Brazil. The cult has acquired many features of Christian belief, particularly Roman Catholic and Baptist and, to some extent, other African religions.

Some features of this acculturation are demonstrated in the recital of Roman Catholic prayers and litanies during the ritual, the identification between the Saints of the Roman Catholic Church and the Yoruba Oresha Gods (or 'powers' as they are commonly termed), and the acquisition of the Spiritual/Shouter Baptist's rites of 'Baptism' and 'Mourning'. The Baptists have made incursions into the cult, with some of their communities describing themselves as 'Shango Baptists'. There are also some East Indian influences, in particular from the Hindu religion, which are manifest in some of the paraphernalia commonly used during Shango ceremonies or feasts such as small clay bowls called 'deeyas', which contain oil and a lighted wick, and clay goblets made by Indian craftsmen.

The ceremonies or 'feasts', which generally take place over a period of three nights and finish each morning at dawn, are held annually from the end of the Lenten period to mid-November and then from New Year's Day to the beginning of Lent. Oresha worship is conducted on the land where the Oloran lives, on which is found three structures, the Chapelle, the Palais or 'tent', and the PaioGUN.

The Chapelle is a small structure, approximately twenty by twenty feet, with a roof, a door, and a window or two. This is where most of the religious ceremonies are held. Inside is an altar, and a number of Oresha 'stools', which are holes dug in the earthen floor and which house the Oreshas. The expression 'stool' in West Africa is equated with the word 'throne' in Europe. I assume that this word lost its physical manifestation during its journey from West Africa to the Caribbean. It is through these 'stools' that the Oreshas are paid homage during ceremonies and rituals.

There is an altar in the Chapelle which is often constructed on three tiers. On the altar are kept a number of symbols and implements of different Oresha deities as well as a Bible, candles with a stand, and flowers. The altar is draped in the colours representing that particular period of the year. On the wall above the altar are pictures of the Sacred Heart or the Last Supper. Homage is paid by saying prayers, lighting candles, pouring oil in the 'stool', and offering the favourite food of the Oresha deity.

The Palais or 'tent' is used for thanksgivings, feasts and prayer meetings. The Palais used to be constructed with earthen walls, about four feet high, with a gold carat leaf roof. Recently however, this has given way to wood and galvanise. There are two entrances and benches which are situated along the walls. Three ritual drums and 'cocoroo', the sticks used to beat the drums, are hung from the ceiling when not in use. The Palais or 'tent' is larger than the Chapelle, measuring approximately thirty foot square.

The Paiogun is the area situated at the entrance of the 'yard' or compound. Planted on the Paiogun are the 'stools' and 'flags' of the Oresha deities Ogun, Mama Latay, Shakpana, and Osayin. Ogun is the god of war; his colours are red, red and blue, or red and green, and his symbol is the machete. Mama Latay -- who is very old -- is associated with the seasons, the forest, and the plants, her symbol is a walking stick, and her colours are brown or plaid. Shakpana is responsible for getting rid of evil and disease; his symbol is a wand and his colours are red and gold. Osayin is the deity associated with bush medicine; his symbol is the candle and his colours are yellow and brown. The flags and their

placement in the Paigun act as a very important indicator of the prevailing mood of the community.

The Oloran is assisted by the Amombwah, who is always male and responsible for preparing the compound for ritual use. This might include rituals of sacrifice. He also acts as the 'prover': he is responsible for identifying the particular Oresha 'powers' that are manifest at a feast. He will then direct the Ariwo, who are the communal body of participants within and around the 'tent', as to which chants are to be sung, as well as assign them very specific tasks that must be carried out during the feast.

In *Carnival Messiah*, the Oloran-Ella Andall, ably assisted by Ronald Samm who is her Amombwah, is responsible for carrying out many critical functions related to the Shango feast. These include overseeing and directing the actual ritual. Her special preparation for this responsibility includes meditation, abstinence, and continuance. She is responsible for the final cleansings and the preparation of the Oresha's space. She also counsels devotees and visitors, using obi seeds or cowrie shells as an instrument of divination. The Oloran also teaches the doctrine of the Oresha religion, and functions as a spiritual advisor to the community (ariwo) as a whole.

The Re-re or Whe-re are mischievous spirits said to be minions of the principal 'powers'. If they come during a feast, they repeatedly 'mount' bodies after their masters have left, providing a striking contrast to the commanding behaviour of the real 'power'. Sometimes one of them may manifest itself in the Oloran who in theory cannot be possessed. The Re-re can sometimes take control of the

Oloran and, if so, will then conduct the rest of the ceremony through the Oloran's body. Though mischievous and childish, these spirits cannot be ignored as they are potentially powerful. However, their activity always remains external to the order of the ritual.

The chantuelle is the lead singer/chanter of an Oresha ceremony. He or she needs to know all the chants and leitmotifs of the Oreshas or 'powers'. Each Oresha can be identified by seven different chants which fall into the following categories: invocation, praise and pleasure, work, and dismissal.

Shango Aye, which falls into the category of an invocation, is taken from Part I of Handel's *Messiah* and is based on the Air 'But who may abide the day of his coming?'. In *Carnival Messiah*, Mother Earth is the Oloran and I have taken the artistic liberty of combining the role of the Chantuelle with that of the Oloran.

Though all the ceremonial roles in a Shango feast are inter-dependent, that of the drummer is central to the entirety of the proceedings, because it is through the invocation of the drum that the 'powers' manifest themselves. The Drummers are the first to be acknowledged and are usually favoured when the 'powers' are leaving. The 'powers' often share offerings with them.

Three types of drum are used in Shango feasts. They are the Bembch, which is the bass drum and played with a stick; the Congo, which is the middle pitched or second drum; and the Oumelch, which is the characteristically high-pitched cutter or lead drum. These drums are always accompanied by the shac-shac or shekbeh. Like their chants, each Oresha has a special rhythm that each drummer

must know. The drum rhythms are central – they are the source of the whole feast -- because they sustain the ritual and dictate the mood and the pace of the ceremony.

However, the principal participants in a Shango ceremony are the ‘Saint Horses’, who also known as ‘Saint Children’, ‘Hou’si’, ‘Dancers’, ‘Mediums’, or ‘Adepts’. In *Carnival Messiah* they are easily identifiable as the main dancers. It is they who become possessed during the ceremony. But possession is not exclusive to them and anyone in close vicinity of the ‘tent’ who is susceptible to the atmosphere created may also be possessed.

The Saint Horses have to be prepared through a process of fasting and abstinence, and initiated through a rite of ‘Headwashing’ called Daysunna, which is meant to effect some control over the Oresha. The act of possession can last for a few hours or a few days, but the average period is about forty minutes. The arrival of the Oreshas or ‘powers’ is usually announced by a spasmodic jerking of the body, particularly in the shoulder area. All vestiges of the body’s former personality disappear when the Saint Horse is ‘claimed’ or ‘mounted’ by the ‘power’, a process called the transformation.

Once accepted by the Saint Horse, the power demands his or her symbols as confirmation of the Oresha’s identity. In *Carnival Messiah*, the presence of the Oresha power Shango is announced by his colours of red or red and white, and a shepherd’s crook.

Figure 15: Several of the Oloran's Hou'si

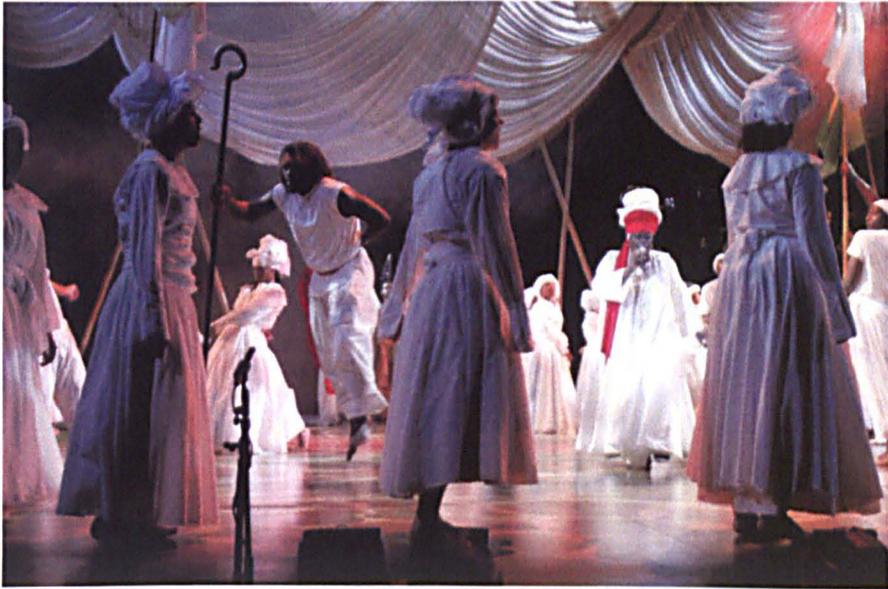


Figure 16: The Oloran in the presence of Shango



I have allied this 'claiming' or 'mounting', which in general is the transformation of the devotee by his or her God, and in *Carnival Messiah* specifically is Mary's possession during the ceremony, with the Christian Catholic concept of the Immaculate Conception.

Mary is attended to by a 'Ye-ye', which translates as 'Mother' from Yoruba. The Ye-ye is the community's spiritual mother; her role is to support the Oloran as she pursues her daily organisational duties. In the Shango ceremony, Ann Fridal plays the role of Mary and Alyson Brown the role of the Ye-ye.

In *Shango Aye*, I contend that the Messiah's immanence and the annunciation of his presence at the opening of Act I are ways of paying homage to the genesis of the life-force. The triumph, the birth, the inception, or the immaculate conception of Jesus therefore should be greeted in grand style, with overwhelming sound, rhythm, motion, dance, enraptured possession, pure exultation, and limitless joy.

Handel took text from the second and third verses of chapter three of Malachi in the Old Testament (Jennens wrote the libretto for *Messiah*). In the middle of the fifth century B.C., Malachi dreamed and prophesied, like Isaiah before him, of a 'messenger' who would 'purify the sons of Levi': a fiery, forceful evangelist that future ages would believe was John the Baptist. Both Handel (Jennens) and I have taken artistic liberty here by clearly re-reading the prophesy to describe the immanence of the Messiah himself, Jesus Christ, instead of John the Baptist.

Shango Aye slowly emerges out of the staccato rhythm of the j'ouvert iron as a long, high-pitched, continuously legato, and ethereal series of pedal notes and

chords, sustained over an ever-evolving crescendo of persistent deep bass drum rhythms. This signifies the eternal background of space, the void, the 'black silence' out of which 'breath, motion, and rhythm' springs. Rohlehr notes that the music signals that the masquerade is 'on the verge of ending and the mass about to begin'. He continues to suggest that Act I 'begins with the first really transgressive encounter between Afro-Creole Orisha sensibility and Euro-Christian hegemonic tradition', and notes that '[the] equation of Christ with Shango suggests that at the early stages of evolution of the notion of the divine, most Gods are conceived in terms of energy, mastery, warriorhood and absolute power' (Rohlehr 2003c: 22-23).

In an authentic Shango ceremony, fire (which is associated with Shango) is often prevalent and, on some occasions, Shango may be offered fire in the form of lit wicks of cotton dipped in olive oil and placed around the edge of a white plate. In *Carnival Messiah*, the ceremony is performed in a fire-lit 'tent'.

All the dance motifs within this Shango choreography are taken from the authentic Shango ritual. They include the planting of the flags, the libation and blessing of the four corners of the tent, the sweeping clean of the space with 'cocyea' brooms, the procession, and the possession, all of which reflect as closely as possible the real enactment within a ceremony. Possession is simulated in large ensemble by powerful, swift, and intricate footwork, and erratic movements of the body and hands in exacting co-ordination. The sound of feet pounding the ground becomes the rhythm of the music whose notes are in turn transformed into dance steps. Movement and rhythm in the African dance cannot

be separated; often dance is not an end in itself, but a transition to a higher state of spiritual being.

The basic colour of a Shango ceremony is white, and the presence of Shango is indicated by the colour red and the shepherd's crook. Variety of costume was created by employing a layering technique along with the use of different shapes and textures of materials. All the head wraps were personalised. The costume of Mother Earth and the Ye-ye, as well as the three Hou'si, were designed to stand out in this sea of white. Mother Earth's costume derives from its Nigerian and Brazilian Oresha counterparts.

Mary and Joseph are the only two characters in this entire scene who are dressed in a different colour, for contrast and identification. Mary wears a traditional light blue smock with a white veil and Joseph a slightly darker blue-green smock and head covering.

I use a filmic technique to present Shango Aye on stage that privileges the use of sound and vision and relies entirely on the particulars of the traditional Shango enactment for its dramatic content. Mother Earth leads the devotional chanting to the Oresha 'power' Shango while at the same time singing Handel's aria, 'But who may abide the day of his coming', a praise song to the Messiah. The effect is a meld of two devotional styles, both of which are in the minor key like early kaiso.

I then take the liberty of transforming the second 'allegro' section of Handel's aria 'For he is like a refiner's fire', into a praise song to Shango -- 'Shango is

like, T'under and lightin' -- which, in contrast to the first section, is more emphatically African in style, energy, and cadence than the more classically operatic mode of the former. This section is embedded in ululations, screams, guttural sounds, yodelling, and frantic falsettos.

It is the musical accompaniment, choral support, and tone, rather than the lyric or language, which seems to account for the overall effect. The structure of the singing, the tight, repetitious call and response framework, and the verbalisation of the poly-rhythm of the drum, climaxed by the improvised and extemporised ululations and shouts, has the greatest musical and psychological effect. Gordon Rohlehr's interpretation of this musical contrast and intervention suggests that

the Christ of the typical colonial church seems entirely to disappear, and become submerged under the volcanic African presence erupting from wherever it had been confined, below or within the hidden or "idden" dungeons of consciousness. (Rohlehr 2003c: 24)

Therefore, the Shango ceremony not only privileges Africa over Europe by providing its own cognition of the Annunciation, but the Shango also dramatically introduces another reading of the same story from a very Caribbean perspective.

The Minstrels or Urban Griots

Carnival Messiah's narrative is enacted by seven minstrels or calypsonians, who are ostensibly a group of travelling troubadours with a trunk full of costumes and paraphernalia with which they can create a variety of characters and scenarios wherever and whenever they please.

The group are variously referred to as the Minstrels or the Urban Griots, and are charged with telling the story of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The three models upon which their characterisation is based have a common foundation: all three models are associated with the dissemination of the 'word' (or oral tradition) via music. Although the griot (the French translation for Djeli/Jali/Gewel) and the minstrel or calypsonian are distanced historically and geographically in their aesthetics, they all fundamentally perform the same role.

Between the early-thirteenth and late-fifteenth centuries in Africa, the states of Mali and Guinea formed the heartland of the historic Mande Empire, founded by the warrior-hunter Prince Sunjata Keita. It is from this Empire and its attendant culture that the tradition of the jeli or griot emerged. Fundamental to all music of the Mande culture is its virtually exclusive performance by this group of professional musicians. The principal role of the djeli or griot was that of 'praise singer'. They were usually attached to the courts of local kings or tribal chiefs, and entertained the nobility with their epic songs and stories about major events in Mande history. The role of the griot or djeli for the people was primarily as a truth-teller.

In fact, the griot or djeli combined the multiple functions of musician, dancer, storyteller, and keeper of the epic memory. Griots or djelis were the guardians of the history of the African nation and the living exponent of the African aesthetic. They traditionally depended upon the generosity of their patrons to make their living. The djeli and their patron had a close, trusting, and mutually dependent friendship. In *Carnival Messiah* I have tried to develop dramatically that same relationship between the minstrels/urban griots and their audience.

In African culture, it is believed that perfection cannot be achieved unless it draws upon spiritual experience and memory. The epic memory is the manifestation of this consciousness, calling upon the ancestors, gods, and private mind to permit the flow of energy which will enable the artist to create and man to thrive.

The American black-faced minstrels were white performers who caricatured black people by performing popular songs about life which reflected poor black society from a white (and misappropriated) perspective. They found capital in imitating antebellum African plantation workers in their performances. The black-and-white-face minstrel masquerade character of Trinidad is a twentieth-century construct that emerged in Trinidad during the American occupation of the country during the Second World War.

This minstrel character developed in Trinidad because of a fascination with, and assimilation of, the North American cinematic images of the 1930s and 1940s and resulted in Trinidadians imitating American whites in black-face. Carol Martin notes that 'they are Trinidadians (black persons) imitating white persons imitating black persons' (Martin 1998: 222).

In fact, the black-and-white-face minstrel became a very popular feature of Trinidad Carnival, and would play banjos, guitars, and cuatros accompanied by clapper boards, while singing plantation songs from the American Deep South. They wore very distinctive clothing, including boater hats, bow ties, white shirts, red and white striped scissor-tailed jackets, and trousers of different colours and

patterns. However, it should be noted that there was some precedent for this imitation at the end of the nineteenth century when black camboulay/masquerade bands in white face were also known to have danced in the streets of Port-of-Spain on Shrove Tuesday (Martin 1998: 222).

In *Carnival Messiah*, these Minstrels/Griots have been apportioned the role of Urban Griot, Calypsonian, Musician, and Storyteller; they are the keepers of history and the praise singers. Like the Everyman character in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, these seven minstrels/griots assume all the characters of the story as and when necessary. When directing these seven characters I allude to the combined qualities of the griot, the calypsonian, and the black-and white-face minstrels to inform my own cognition and the actors' understanding and characterisation of the role.

Figure 17: The black- and white-face minstrels



On the left is a 1919 photograph revealing the popularity of minstrels in early carnival. One of the members of this band carries a cylindrical metal instrument which, when stroked with a baton, emitted a scraping sound. The scraper is widely dispersed in the West Indies. On the right are several minstrels representing Ole Mas strolling down Frederick Street, Port of Spain, in 1983.

The minstrel/griot characters manifest as a group of travelling players with a trunk full of clothing and costumes with which they spontaneously create and enhance their various characters. The costumes are medieval and jester-like in conception, involving shirts, waistcoats, and breeches in a range of specific combinations that reflect their individual personalities, but all in a range of earthy burgundies, browns, pale blues, and ochres; colours reflecting Mary's veil, Joseph's hat, and Gabriel's sleeves.

The theatre techniques used in the narrative of the minstrels/griots (and thus the

universal story of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection) create a complex equation which, like carnival, presents a bewildering set of variations on the theme of oppositions and their inversions or dissolutions in a non-sequential pattern. The drama is placed firmly within the genre of Trinidadian traditional folk theatre, but is conveyed using various European comic methodologies including *commedia dell'arte*, Bouffon, Fantastique, Grotesque, and English pantomime.

The main elements of these comic forms as they are commandeered for use in *Carnival Messiah* include farce, raucous comedy, improvisation, social caricature, particular attention to nuance and detail, and the precedence of action over character. The physical skills are at least as important as the verbal skills involved, and verbal skills are of a very particular genre played within local frames of reference. Here the process in *Carnival Messiah* mirrors that in the Caribbean.

The minstrels/griots in *Carnival Messiah* are first and foremost storytellers and they must each individually perform several different roles. The vividness of their story depends entirely on how well they manage to distinguish between each of these roles. This demands that the minstrels/griots are capable of displaying not only a considerable vocal range, but great facility, flexibility, and skill in both imitation and in juggling the differences between tone, pitch, and volume. Rawle Gibbons further suggests that

in appreciating the creative impulse characteristic of our [Trinidad's] culture, the playwright can assist the actor in enriching this trait by leaving open situations in his play. The actor is thus challenged to fill these situations through improvisation based on creative language habits. (1979: 226)

Having employed this technique in the conception of *Carnival Messiah's* narrative, it becomes impossible to accurately predict the end performance of the Minstrels/Urban Griots by analysing the written text in isolation.

Added to that, the audience must take part in the conversation or dialogue in order to become possessed by, rather than merely possessing, the meaning of the work. Therefore, the traditional role of the audience as a knowledgeable commentator or judge is usurped; this position is no longer tenable since in this context the unsaid is often more important than the said. The style appears simple but in fact is extremely complex. The audience needs to be continually open and vulnerable to new possibilities of meaning.

The language of the theatre is select: compressed, extended, or otherwise intensified into a shape in which words are chosen to convey specific dramatic effects and meanings, and language functions in obedience to the demands of the drama. Therefore, the language and narrative of indigenous performance (like all other features of indigenous performance) must be approached with a great deal of insider knowledge and sensitivity, whilst consciously bearing in mind the contexts from which that language will have emerged.

In writing *Carnival Messiah* I have drawn on a variety of language models, while remaining acutely aware that English has become the lingua franca among a variety of other languages used in Trinidad today. Words of Spanish, French, East Indian and African derivation also pepper its vocabulary. Patois or Creole is still understood and spoken by a significant proportion of the older members of many local communities. Its influence is obvious not only in vocabulary, but in

the syntax and inflexions of spoken English.

The accepted process of marrying Standard with Creole English to engender poetic and linguistic power and produce original and unique poetic utterances is the result of a hitherto suppressed and subversive folk element, which has endured a long and patient evolution in the Caribbean region. It is of course an approach that draws on an African-based folk culture as well as upon a western, non-scribal tradition of ring-games, mimes, and folk dance. And then, there is the Eshu of the narrative, Ananse, the West-African spider god, creator, destroyer, and devourer. The Caribbean storyteller (and so too the minstrels in *Carnival Messiah*) will often adopt this Ananse attitude in order to force the audience to decipher their speech and actions.

Therefore, the performer of this narrative clearly must not only be aware of the lexical variety that exists in the Creole English of Trinidad, but also understand the implication that it is therefore structurally different from Standard English. Furthermore, the narrative of *Carnival Messiah* purposely and comfortably accommodates both forms of English side by side, and moves easily between them as low and high codes of language, as well as accommodating instances of French, Spanish, Hindi, Urdu, and Yoruba.

These non-English languages (including Creole) are employed as part of a protective and survivalist technique of concealing or camouflaging information in order to prevent outside interference, a measure that was often employed during the days of slavery. In *Carnival Messiah*, this technique is used to subtly highlight the historical evolution of Trinidad society. Low and high codes of

language should not be regarded as mere value systems, but in terms of their ability to support or undermine an established authority.

In *Carnival Messiah*, language therefore is used not only to convey cognitive information, nor for the sheer pleasure of using language creatively; language is also used for subversive purposes of undermining authority, and to express, establish, and convey ethnic sympathy and ethnic identity.

In addition to the conflicts wrought by language, there is the added dimension of class identification within Trinidad society that is borne out of a stubborn assumption (which still exists today) of colonial superiority (and which regards African culture as vulgar, violent, and evil). Additionally, there exist conflicts between high versus low culture, traditional versus formal theatre, the elite versus the masses, and margin versus centre. In *Carnival Messiah*, the minstrels/urban griots are bestowed with fluent speech which accommodates the use of both high and low codes of language. In effect, they are able to speak from the margins while using the language of the masses as well as the elite.

This language of the masses relies upon a series of techniques emphasising wit through word-play. The minstrel's dialogue reflects a particular brand of humour very particular to Trinidad, in which the banal and the everyday express the extraordinary and the celestial. One sees the Trinidadian's verbal dexterity in his marvellous capacity to borrow, to creatively re-adapt, and to transform all modes of speech to suit his own performance purposes, and it is thus that speech (and all its accessible devices) are explored, distorted, condensed, and expanded. These techniques employ with great facility the use of irony, mimicry, reversal, contest

punning, double entendre, rhetorical commentary, ambiguity, repetition, imitation, exaggeration, explanation, satire, and picon: all devices which release the performers from social order and constraint, and which move toward collapsing essential differences.

Rawle Gibbons further observes that the question of tradition operating in texts is not found only in terms of imagery, but in the kinds of activity that language performs:

[In Trinidad], the concept of 'mamaguism' [...] to flatter someone in order to secure one's own ends [and] 'gran' charge', a colourful vociferous bluff [...] is a case of speak the gesture and show the words. (1979: 160-61)

In other words, it is the style that the intention is played out in that makes the difference, and defines that particular speech convention as Trinidadian.

Gordon Rohlehr observes that

the minstrels strip the Nativity of its wonder and mystery. The situation of Mary and Joseph, that of a woman at a loss to explain her pregnancy to her fellow, is an all-too-familiar one in ballad or narrative calypsos from the 1920s onwards. (Rohlehr 2003c: 25)

The following dialogues taken from the three Minstrel/Griot scenes in Act I of *Carnival Messiah* demonstrate how language is used both creatively and traditionally to tell the story of the nativity, the temptations, and the miracles. The inversion of language -- the play between Creole and Standard English and the characters and scenarios to which they have been assigned -- clearly reverses the normal ranking and importance of the characters as well as de-formalising their circumstances.

Act I, Scene 2*The Nativity*

Joseph: Honey, I'm home! What have you been doing today?
Mary: Joseph, I'm pregnant.
Joseph: But I brought you these flowers -
Mary: They're so beautiful -
Joseph: Well you can't have them -
Mary: But it's God's baby!
Joseph: I'm taking this case to court.

Gordon Rohlehr notes of the following dialogue that 'the situation is rich in farce and the spirit of the farce is sustained in the comic word-play when Joseph, the stock figure of cuckold-as-buffoon, takes his "case" to court'; the scene is 'reminiscent of Shakespearean comedy with its clowns, jesters and fools and its comic pun-filled wordplay' (Rohlehr 2003c: 25).

The Courthouse

Judge: Order! Order! Next case
Clerk: The case of the holy father, m'Lord
Judge: I declare this case open
Prosecution: My client Mr. Joseph Carpenter would like to disengage his Christian engagement
Onlooker: She's pregnant
All: Huh
Onlooker: It wasn't me!
Prosecution: It's an open and shut case
Clerk: Your case I believe
Judge: It's a fascinating case

Judge: After investigating this case I believe that Joseph has not read the scriptures

Joseph: I've been busy

Prosecution: We rest our case

Onlooker: This case is getting on top of me

Prosecution: He's dropping the case

Onlooker: It's an open and shut case

Judge: Case dismissed

Onlooker: It's a brief case

Sing two verses

Exodus

MMI: Hold on there keep back, please, keep back

MMII: I've been in this queue for over an hour do you know who I am?

MMIII: My husband and I are trying to get to Bethlehem...

MMI: Stop pushing there hold back please

MMIV: My husband lives in Egypt please don't send me back there I can't stand him

MMV: My name's Joseph Carpenter I live at 444 Jerusalem Way.

MMVI: I'm here for the census, when am I going to be censored?

MMVII sings 'Matilda'

Mary: Oh Joseph it's happening

Joseph: What's happening?

Mary: The baby

Joseph: What baby?

Mary: The baby, baby!

Joseph: Oh ok, look here's an inn I'll just knock

Knock Knock

Joseph: Evening
Innkeeper: Evening
Joseph: I'm looking for a king sized, queen sized, twin bed, futon?
Innkeeper: Sorry there's no room at the inn (goes in and closes the door)
Joseph: (Gets irate and knocks again) Look buddy! I've come all the way from Nazareth City, I've got blisters, I'm tired, Oh and my wife's pregnant. I'll take anything
Mary: Groan
Innkeeper: I've got nowt upstairs, nowt downstairs, beer in the cellar...I have got a stable out back
Joseph: We'll take it...How much?
Mary: AAGGH GRILL
Joseph: Doesn't matter

The bar sings Silent Night and it turns into the stable scene. Baby Jesus is born

Joseph: What shall we call him? ... I was thinking maybe Wayne?

The stable scene changes into the Shepherds in field scene

Shepherd 1: Who did that?
Shepherd 2: Ewe
Shepherd 3: No I didn't
Shepherd 1: It was ewe
Shepherd 2: Who?
Shepherd 3: Ewe
Shepherd 1: Oh

PAUSE

MM: Sheep – Maaaaa

Gabriel: This very night in Bethlehem the king of the Jews has been born, Hosanna in the Highest and peace to all God's people on Earth. Don't be afraid! I bring you the most joyful news ever announced and it is for everyone! The saviour – yes the Messiah, the Lord has been born tonight in Bethlehem!

Shepherd: Holy Temple jam packed with religious icons, rich palace filled with wondrous tapestries glorious jewels

Gabriel: No, no it's a low key affair – been born in a stable in Bethlehem

Shepherd: Where will we find him?

Gabriel: In a stable in Bethlehem – follow yonder star, Lord God heavenly King, Almighty God and father

Minstrels leave singing 'Silent Night' followed by a bleating sheep

Gordon Rohlehr correctly reads my theatrical strategy here when he suggests that 'placing the burden of narrative on the minstrels' is in 'the ancient tradition of the early Church, locating the carnivalesque within the sacred, as both antithetical and complimentary to the idea of the holy'; so the Nativity is 'presented as burlesque' and 'the sentimentality of the conventional Christmas theme [...] is laid bare by the matter-of-fact style of the minstrels, who function as the collective voice of an historical Common Man/Common Woman' (Rohlehr 2003c: 28-29).

Clearly, in *Carnival Messiah* I have employed the minstrels/griots to prepare the audience for the transition of Jesus-as-Shepherd to Jesus-as-sacrificial lamb

through particularly carnivalesque versions of the life of Christ. I use narratives, antics, and sans humanité choruses (which remain the antithesis of the grand-style oratorio) to trace this path, whether at the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, or Garden of Gethsemane. However, as they approach the Crucifixion the minstrels' tone becomes much graver, and here all elements of the subversive disappear.

Thus Act III, Scene 2 is the final dramatic appearance of the Minstrels and, in contrast to all the previous dialogue in the production, the entire scene is delivered in Standard English, to underline the importance of the subject matter as well as to introduce the mood for the next scene.

Roger Abrahams notes that

[high code language] emphasises order and the ability to make discretions and distinctions, to reveal the real world in terms of observed or received truths. It is usually brought into play at those times when transitional experience sparks an intuition of a possible social disordering among members of the family or community. (1970: 522-23)

The minstrel/griots costuming mirrors this intuition. All the costumes are robe-like, high-collared, very structured, and vibrantly coloured. The costumes trail behind to give a sense of continuation and the ecclesiastical.

Act III, Scene 2

The Assumption

The Minstrels:

Mary: We had brought him myrrh and aloe to anoint his body. We didn't know how to get in for there was a large heavy stone in front of the tomb. Suddenly the earth shook beneath our feet and we were blinded by a shining light. When we looked up again we saw that the stone had been rolled away and that the tomb was open. Terrified, we walked in and saw where his body had been, an angel was sitting.

Angel: Do not be afraid. Why are you crying?

Mary: They have taken my Lord away and I don't know where they have put him.

Mary: (narrates) Terrified and bewildered we went out and fled from the tomb. We said nothing to anyone because we were afraid.

Mary exits the stage

The Minstrels:

Enter MMI

MMI: That evening the disciples were meeting behind closed doors.

Enter FMI

FMI: They were locked because they were afraid of being hunted by the Romans, or betrayed by the Jews.

Enter FMII

FMII: Many Jews were in Jerusalem that day for the feast of the Passover, having arrived from every country in the World.

Enter Jesus I and II

Jesus I: Jesus himself was suddenly among them and said.

Jesus II: Peace be with you.

MMI: They were terrified and thought they'd seen a ghost.

Jesus II: Why are you frightened? Why do you doubt that it is really I? Look at my hands and side. Look at my feet and see that it is I, myself. Touch me! For a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones as you see I have.

FMI: And as he said this he showed them his wounds.

Jesus II: These are the very things I told you about while I was with you. The Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days Later.

Enter MMIII

MMIII: You are witnesses to these things. And I myself will send upon you what my father has promised.

Jesus II: John baptised you with water but I will baptise you with fire.

Jesus I: I have given all authority in Heaven and on earth. Go then and baptise all peoples in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

- FMI:** Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you and I will be with you always, to the end of the age.
- Jesus I:** As the Father sent me, so I send you.
- Jesus II:** Go throughout the whole world and preach the good news to all Mankind.
- FMII:** Suddenly a sound like the roaring of a mighty wind came from Heaven.
- FMIII:** It filled the whole house where they were sitting.

Enter MMIV

- MMIV:** Then what looked like tongues of fire came to rest on each one of them.
- MMII:** Everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit had enabled them.

The disciples simultaneously speak the Creed in tongues of Nigerian, English, Hindi, Latin, Creole/Patois, Spanish, and Italian as they exit the stage in different directions

Sans humanité

Calypso (or kaiso) is primarily a vocal form that emerged as a result of the suppression, repression, and oppression of a people, so it should not be surprising that its lyrics often reflect this. Calypso can best be described as a form of information dissemination, a historical, social, and political commentary, and a vehicle for satire and wit, humour, and storytelling. Often with biting lyrics, calypso is said to be more indebted to words than melody. This was because early kaisonians developed the trait of using one basic melody to convey all their

different messages.

'Lavway' (from the French 'le vrai' meaning 'the truth') was the word used to describe these earliest call and response work songs and kalinda chants. These same songs and chants were eventually assimilated into the calypso, endowing it with melodies, rhythm, and a satirical and combative manner. When the lyrics were transcribed from French Patois into Creole and Standard English at the turn of the twentieth century, calypso was transformed into its current form.

This kaiso or lavway was based on an eight-line ballad form, which always contained four lines of original lyric that mostly boasted of the singer's exploits or told a specific story. The first two lines were always repeated and the kaiso or lavway always ended with the same refrain, 'sans humanité', meaning 'without humanity' or without human compassion. In Creole English this expression was corrupted to 'santimanitay'.

Live calypso performance can be played directly to the audience and the singer can become the objective observer and commentator of the events they depict. Dialogue may be employed, and mime and drama may also occur. In effect, calypso has contained and developed its own style of theatre.

I have requisitioned this historically loaded melody and used it as the main musical vehicle for the minstrels/urban griots to tell their stories. I employ the sans humanité or santimanitay melody as their leitmotif; using it sometimes as a musical explanation and sometimes as a musical bridge between the different episodes and enactments (the nativity, the temptations, and the last supper) that

take place in the story. The *sans humanité* phrase links the minstrel/calypsonian with the tradition of his predecessors, in much the same way that the Trinidadian's storytellers 'crick crack' recognises the traditional links of the folktale with the spiritual world.

Act I, Scene 2 begins with all the minstrels tumbling onto the stage in a state of complete disarray, as if arriving late at a pre-planned meeting point in the middle of the *j'ouvert* celebrations. After hasty greetings they break into a simply structured ballad calypso that succinctly tells the story of the nativity and which they will dramatically enact again immediately after singing the 'Wonderful Story' calypso, now through the use of speech and physical theatre. This dramatic format employs the traditional calypso technique of repetition, traditionally associated with invocation -- also often found in the delivery of the first two lines of any traditional calypso, and used to emphasise or make a point.

Loud and confused trumpet & vocalised tuning up

All singing

I'm gonna tell you a wonderful story

Is not too grim and it's not too gory

Full of music and mystery

About a little girl from Galilee

Now this girl her name it was Mary

She was a very sweet and pure lady

But soon she going to have a big fright
 An angel goin' tuh visit she tonight

Now Mary was engaged to Joseph
 She would tell him the truth but what if?
 He don't believe that is his baby
 She'll win' up a one-parent family

Act I, Scene 5

The presentation, the miracles, finding the temple

The Minstrels: All singing
 Born in Bethlehem a bouncing beautiful boy
 Wrapped in swaddling bands, three shepherds three, kings and much joy
 God came to Joseph in a dream,
 and told him to pack up his stuff
 Flea to Egypt, save my son

Herod he killed the babes,

but our hero he remained free. (HOORAH)
 He talked of temples, he walked on mountains.
 Meek are the bless-ed are ye.
 Baptised by John on the Jordan's bank,

then into the wilderness went.

For forty days and for forty nights

In fact he stayed up there for lent...

The temptations

Jesus is asleep centre stage. The devil cartwheels on and sniffs around Jesus' body. Eventually he kisses him. Jesus wakes up.

Narrator: Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights and then the tempter came. He ate nothing, drank nothing and then the devil came...

Jesus: Who are you?

Devil: Hey -- you're Jesus! I can't believe it... Jesus Christ wow....you've been out here for ages you must be tired. Hey let's do lunch! Ah but there's nothing to eat. Then again if you are the Son of God you can turn this rock into bread...Are you hungry Jesus? Go on try it.

Jesus: The Lord says men cannot live on bread alone but survives on the words of God

Narrator: Then the devil took him to the Holy Temple, highest pinnacle of the temple and said to him...

Devil: GGrrll [takes Jesus to high temple]. We're pretty high up here. But if you're the Son of God you could jump. Why not jump Jesus? Step off...It says that God would send

down his angels and prevent you from even grazing your feet on the stones.

Jesus: It also says that thou shall not put the Lord your God to the test!

Devil: GGRRLL

Narrator: He then showed the higher kingdoms of this world...

Devil: Wow just look at that Jesus all my kingdom...Paris! Tokyo! Moscow! Skegness! Las Vegas and I'll give them all to you. All of them! If you just worship me, just kiss my feet Jesus, just one little kiss and all this will be yours. Go on. Why not Jesus?

Jesus: The Scripture says you shall only worship one God and serve him alone. So be gone SATAN!

Devil: GGRRRLL

Jesus: Nice one! [to the narrator]

Figure 18: Just Kiss my Foot Jesus



The Miracles

The Minstrels: All singing

All the Pharisees, were jealous of his good tricks

“He’s getting famous, people love him”

This popularity makes us all sick,

We’ll ask him questions

We’ll catch him out.

We’ll make him look a right berk

Embarrass him in front of his mates and...

Put an end to his good work. (HAH HAHHAHAHAH)

FMI: But wait, hear this, someone who was also there told me that that same night, Jesus went to meet his disciples on a boat out at sea and you wouldn’t believe how he got there – walking on the water! Yes as if it were the ground.

FMII: Well, my brother was out sailing with Jesus, suddenly a violent storm broke out and the sea raged. The boat nearly capsized, my brother feared for his life. But Jesus stood up, ordered the sea to calm down and it did.

MMI: Well, I knew this guy who knew a guy who was dead! Now this guy was called Lazarus you know -- the dead guy was called Lazarus. He’d been dead for 4 days Jesus who was a friend of this guy strolled into the tomb, touched Lazarus, said, “Rise”. The dead guy gets up and walks off. It’s true

Displaying a variety of narrative styles, the minstrels/griots here provide an economical and sceptical account of Christ's miracles, which are conveyed to the audience in the form of exaggerated gossip.

Miracle of the Blind Man

FMIII: My brother's cousin was in the synagogue the other day, and there was a man there who was obviously possessed. His head was spinning round and he was shouting "I know you're Jesus!" So, Jesus walks over to him, clamps his head still and says, "OUT DEMON!" The demon rolls out of the man onto the floor, into the crowd and was never seen again. The man was fine. Fine, possessed, fine, possessed. Jesus did that!

MMIV Oh yeah, listen to this. I went to this huge party, but the host was cheap. WATER! That's all they had to drink. All of a sudden Jesus turns up with his A-posse and being the Mr Cool that he is, he waves his hands. Whooooh! Wine! In every glass ... in every bowl. We drank until 6am the next morning!

MMV I was on my way into Jerusalem travelling with this massive group of people. We were following Jesus watching him heal the sick. Eventually Jesus climbed the hill and seeing all gathered he decided he would feed us.

A small boy brought him some fish and some bread. He
 prayed to God and somehow there was enough food to
 feed us all ... Yorkshire Pudding! KFC! ... Curry Goat!

Gordon Rohlehr notes that 'Christ emerges from these accounts as rather more of
 a Carnival Messiah than the orthodox readings of his life might have led one to
 believe' (Rohlehr 2003c: 30).

The Minstrels: All singing

All the Pharisees were jealous of his good tricks

He's getting famous, people love him

This popularity makes us all sick,

We'll ask him questions We'll catch him out. We'll make him look a right berk

Embarrass him in front of his mates and ...

Put an end to his good work

(HAH HAHAHAHAHAH)

In the Last Supper scene, the masquerade re-creates in the flesh (or through the
 flesh) a painting which was itself an imaginative attempt to render an historic
 event, ingrained in the artist's mind through readings of biblical text. Rohlehr
 supports this premise when he observes that masquerade is 'a fiction based on a
 series of other chain-linked fictions'; it is, 'like *Carnival Messiah* itself, transient,
 impressionistic and utterly elusive in the meanings it suggests' (Rohlehr 2003c:
 32).

Figure 19: The Last Supper



The image of the Last Supper that is re-created on the *Carnival Messiah* stage is taken almost exactly from the original Leonardo Da Vinci painting of the same scene. The drama of the Last Supper is simple but effective and consists of movement in very slow motion that indicates communication and conversation between Jesus and his twelve disciples.

The minstrels/griots, who are placed stage right of this tableau, observe and comment musically on the activities that are taking place. The disciples are costumed in blue and pink smocks with Jesus and Judas in slightly brighter hues. They all wear black head wraps as well as a sash and shawl of contrasting colour. In this scene, Jesus is played by Donald Edwards.

Scene 7

The Last Supper

The Minstrels are positioned stage left

The Twelve Disciples & Jesus will emerge out of black

The Minstrels: All singing

They failed. Those Pharisees. Jesus remained the top man

So Pontius Pilate did plot and scheme

and rehearse the washing of hands.

They needed a traitor someone so bad.

A lowlife, scumbag or trash

Thirty pieces of silver was the right price

and Judas did need the cash.

*The image of Da Vinci's Last Supper slowly materialises with Jesus and the
twelve disciples in a freeze*

The Minstrels: All singing

So the last supper. The disciples shared the same cup

Then Jesus knelt and washed their feet

They knew then that something was up

He said -- do unto others as I have shown you

Wash them and make their souls clean

One of you men will betray me soon

A cru-wel fate I have foreseen

Instrumental

The image of Da Vinci's last supper begins to move almost imperceptibly

The Minstrels: All singing

They all fell silent they were in shock

The disciples dare not believe

That one of them his chosen flock

Had the hatred and greed to deceive

They went to the garden of Gethsemane,

the disciples slept in such bliss

Jesus still prayed while the Romans arrived

Figure 20: The Whoopi Band



This process represents the descent of the Word from its exalted status of pure idea back to its normal residence in human flesh and blood. Gordon Rohlehr observes that 'the Word is thus both reincarnated and re-carnivalised, as it enters popular culture'; 'Connor's Third Space remains a trysting-place for the interplay of diametrically opposed attitudes' (Rohlehr 2003c: 46-47).

The costuming here for the Whoopi Band presents them as tourists and reflects a melee of characters and people from different parts of the world: Spain, Israel, Greece, and the Caribbean -- all the costumes are relevant. The minstrel/griots represent Mexico (Speedy Gonzales), Spain (Flamenco dancer), the United States (Elvis Presley), Europe (1920s showgirl), and England (medieval jester), thus creating a look of complete chaos and incongruity which is again reflected in the music and lyrics they perform.

Gordon Rohlehr observes that 'three of the four songs mentioned [La Bamba, Istanbul, and Coconut Woman], all Glee Club sing-along favourites of the 1950s and 1960s, were performed by Harry Belafonte', who 'represented a bridge over which the entire Afro-Creole folk music of the Archipelago attempted to cross into the North American big time'. Here 'Belafonte comes to represent the Anansi principles of adaptation, shape-shifting, versatility, and transgressiveness typical of all cross-cultural encountering' (Rohlehr 2003c: 47-48).

Scene 4**The Celebration**

Dance/Visual: *The chorus make a semi-circle around the Minstrels 'Whoopi Band' who will have come on stage with their instruments hidden within the chorus*

The Minstrels hold dialogue with the audience as well as sing a medley of celebratory songs in call and response mode, directed at the chorus and the audience.

Minstrels sing: **'Jesus Christ our Saviour' to country and western song**

Jesus Christ our Saviour, that' the fellas name
Mighty glad you came upon the earth that day
Spreading lots of news, making blind men walk
and giving out free food

'Jesus Christ Our Saviour' to 'La Bamba'

Jesu Christo es bueno
Jesu Christo te quiero
Y yo te adoro bonito hermano
Un bonito hermano tu eres Reino
Del mundo y cielo
Del mundo y cielo
Tu eres mi reino
Y yo tw quiero
Te alabare, Te alabare

Chorus:

Jesu Christo
Jesu Christo
Jesu Christo
!Natividad!

'My Lord Hosanna' sung to the Kalinda song

Je.....ho.....vah! x 3

Allah!

'Miracles' sung to the Coconut Woman song

Verse:

Mary tol' me the other day

No one can take she saviour away

I ask her what was de' mystery

She say 'Jesus Christ form Galillee'

Chorus:

Get your loaves and fishes

Miracles!

Cure your aches and twitches

Miracles!

Turn ya water into wine

Miracles!

Makes you feel very fine

Miracles!

Verse:

De' miracles, dey keep pourin' out

And everywhere you can hear dem shout

If you ask dem what it's all about

Dey say 'with Jesus Christ there can be no doubt

Chorus:

Get your loaves and fishes

Miracles!

Cure your aches and twitches

Miracles!

Turn ya water into wine

Miracles!

Makes you feel very fine

Miracles!

Rohlehr suggests here that the

parody of the lyrics of “Coconut Woman”, when played alongside the “leap-of-faith” histrionics of the American evangelist, suggests that the word has descended into the battlefield of quotidian reality, where all the world’s simultaneously a stage and a Common Market, and Elvis, not Christ, is worshipped as “the King”. so the born-again minstrels of *Carnival Messiah* revert to being ordinary hungry and thirsty human beings, who can remember only such miracles as have addressed their recurrent bodily needs (Rohlehr 2003c: 48-9).

‘My Lord Jehovah’ sung to ‘Hava Nagela’

My lord Jehovah x 3

Jehovah

The Whoopi Band chanting ‘My Lord Jehovah’ to the Jewish chorus ‘Hava Nagela’ is not supposed to suggest the imminent or ultimate conversion of the Jews to Christianity, but to announce their prominence in a commercial system of which Christianity is an integral part. The song is also chosen for its joyful sentiment, its history as a folk song, and the journey it has made from its almost immaculate conception towards the secular market place. Conversely, ‘Istanbul’ is a comic lament over the cycle of historic events that led to the reversion of Constantinople to its former Asiatic and ultimately Islamic name. Gordon Rohlehr notes that Constantinople, ‘located at the fault-line of encounter between West and East, Christianity, Judaism and Islam’, had once ‘rivalled Rome as a centre of Christian civilisation’ (Rohlehr 2003c: 51). The name change suggests

to me that imperialistic Christianity has encountered, and will continue to encounter, fierce cultural and military resistance from alternative and antagonistic ethnic and religious nation-cultures that it has historically sought to subjugate and even erase.

'Istanbul'

Jesus came to save all people
 And then Jesus died to save all people
 And then Jesus rose to save all people
 Resurrection of the dead kept him ahead

The Son of Man he came down among us
 And he'll come again it says it in the Scriptures
 To judge us lot our sisters and our brothers
 (not to mention the living and the dead)

Make the bad repent and bless all of mankind
 Be nice to others and occasionally pray
 You might get to Heaven that way...

Thank you Lord for all you have given us
 The sun, the flowers and all that is livin'
 We can humbly thank you and pray for forgivin'
 From you God of power and might

That's us done, finished and goodnight!

Gordon Rohlehr observes that

while the *Carnival Messiah* parody of "Istanbul" seems to celebrate the Resurrection, the message of salvation and the prophesied return of the

Messiah as ultimate judge, the subversive sub-text, that suppressed other voice of the cultural mulatto, is pointing to quite different dimensions of meaning (Rohlehr 2003c: 52).

Therefore, it should be clear that it is within the preposterous, the outrageous, the transgressive, and the incongruous that I consistently locate my Third Space in *Carnival Messiah*.

The minstrels/griots appear in several other scenes throughout *Carnival Messiah* using mostly mime and movement as their vehicle of narrative. They are seen frolicking with each other throughout the 'J'ouvert Overture' celebrations and they appear with Jesus as sleeping disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. They also appear as the Roman centurions in the Crucifixion procession and tableau and as the Apostles taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world in 'How Beautiful are the Feet'. Finally, they appear as 'HalleluiaH!' singers and dancers in the 'Las' Lap'. In all these manifestations they purposely can still be clearly identified as their original minstrel/griot characters.

It is thus that I use the traditional and contemporary aesthetic practices of Trinidad Carnival -- in particular those of the music and the language and its movement -- in combination with western European oratorio, dramatic techniques, and narrative, as a multi-dimensional metaphor that then enables the accommodation of multiple and shifting identities within one space. This process empowers, re-interprets, reconstitutes, modifies, and transforms an established western narrative into a new guise, which in turn reflects the Caribbean people's experience of subjugation and their subsequent acquisition, adoption, appropriation, ownership, and creation of a new culture and a new space: the Third Space.

For Unto Us a Child is Born

The market place is, like the Shango 'yard', the Shouter Baptists' by-way, Green Corner's cross roads, and the stick-fighter's 'gayelle', the meeting place of the people; the place where all important cultural transactions take place. Thus the market place is the only appropriate place to introduce the newly-born child of Mary and Joseph (here again performed by Anne Fridal and Brian Green) to the world. In sharp visual and musical contrast to both *Shango Aye* and the Minstrel's/Urban Griot's Nativity, 'For Unto Us a Child is Born' is the first instance of prophesy within the production. It is transmitted visually and sonically.

The colour spectrum for the costumes in 'For Unto Us' comprises many different shades and hues of brown and orange to create a sense and landscape of the dessert: hot, empty and dry. The women and men wear layered sets of basic loose shapes which hang, sway, and flow, all made from natural materials such as cotton, linen, and hessian. Both men and women wear personalised head wraps and draped shawls. In complete contrast to the chorus, Mary and Joseph wear the same costumes they wore in *Shango Aye*: Mary, a light-blue smock with a white veil and Joseph, a darker blue and green smock.

Figure 21: The Marketplace, downtown Bethlehem



Enwrapped in a lilting reggae rhythm, introduced by a simple melodic eight bar steel pan motif, the audience hears Mary's voice singing the first strains of 'For Unto us a Child is Born', using the original melody of Handel. She is joined in fugal fashion, again as written by Handel, by her husband Joseph, and both of them accurately represent Handel's notation and Jennens's lyrics. It is on arrival at the lyric 'and the government shall be upon his shoulder', that the music completely departs from the oratorio, moving smoothly and securely into a raucous and rhythmic call and response three-part repetitive *ostinato* harmony in Creole English ('an' de' government shall be upon his shoul'da') which is finally broken up by a soprano unison descant chorus, formulated on the words 'for unto us a child is born'.

This sudden and radical musical change is the vehicle which transports the proceedings into the magical and heralds the arrival of the Ragga Storyteller, a larger than life character whose advent and entrance have no precedence. He is purposely portrayed as an ambiguous individual, costumed all in black except for his white shirt, with a trilby hat and long, wide-bottomed, calf-length coat, providing a cross between a rock star and a Chasid Jew. He could be a modern-day prophet, or he might be the Judas character; for me, he is a magical intervention that fulfils both those roles.

Figure 22: The Ragga Storyteller



In Trinidad and Tobago I developed this fantasy further by creating his alter-ego in another Ragga Storyteller, costumed in exactly the same way except wearing a red shirt, to become the trickster character, Eshu. In this production both Eshu and Judas vies for fame and fortune, creating a new and additional tension. The role of these two characters was to tell or accurately predict the future life and times of the little baby Jesus and share this information with all who would listen, foretelling his encounters with the Scribes and Pharisees, and noting their failure to deter him from his mission of truth, justice, and love.

Ragga vocal technique is characterised by a harsh and rasping vocal tone or incantation, which uses Jamaican Patois English very much in the style of a Jamaican DJ or toaster. Except for the quality of vocal sound and the language used, the Ragga chant is similar in rhythm and delivery to American rap.

Act I, Scene 3

Market celebration

Dance: Using the entire cast (chorus and minstrels), this scene is a dance sequence which joyfully celebrates the birth of Jesus.

Downtown Bethlehem on a market day

Music: 'For Unto Us a Child is Born'; Classical/Jungle/Ragga/Dance Hall

Mary and Joseph:

Verse:

'For unto us a child is born
unto us, a child is given

unto us, a son is given'

Chat/Dub Ragga/Dance Hall styling

Ragga Storyteller:

Roots style! O my God x 3
 Jesus was born in a stable
 At healin' he was very able
 He came to teach us about peace and lov'
 Yes he came, sent from our Holy Fadder abov'
 So, listen to Jesus and tek' his advice
 Lov' is sweet and lov' is nice
 To forgive your brudder is a far greater ting'
 Than to hol' hatred in your heart, hear me sing!
 De Scribes and de Pharisees try to hol' him back
 But, oh no! him never tek dat
 Standin' firm for truth and justice
 Yes! Dey never could kill dat spirit...

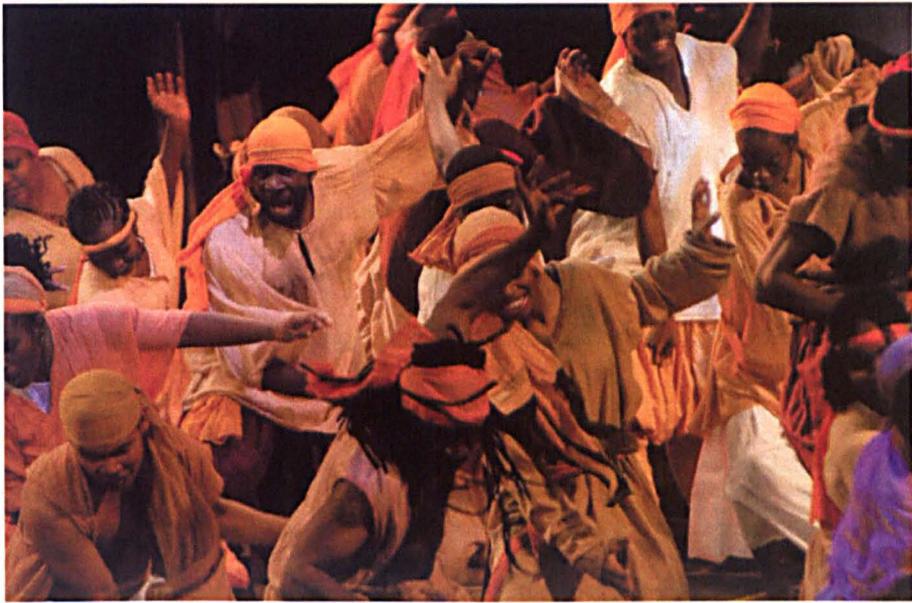
Chorus:

And de gover'ment shall be upon his shoulda
 And de gover'ment
 For unto us a child is born

The dance, which is now commonly associated with Ragga chanting, is called 'skanking' or 'stepping' and first came to prominence with the Jah Shaka sound system in the 1970s. David Hamilton describes this dance technique as being deeply rooted in the Jamaican popular and folk dance tradition. It is

an energetic dance which uses mime with rhythmic steps [...] like Morris dancing [...] bouncing, rhythmic, high stepping, swinging, rotating arms over the head, mimetic [...] characterised by gesture, marching and in particular a second position pleir position with bent knees. (Hamilton 2004)

Figure 23: Skanking



A Hip Hop street dance sequence was introduced into the choreography of 'For Unto Us' in the 2003 and 2004 Trinidad and Tobago performances and was conceived and integrated in the existing choreography as a competition between the Ragga 'skankers' and the hip hop dancers. Of course, the Ragga skankers won.

During the time of British colonisation, its music (as a super-syncretic signifier) was absorbed by the enslaved African and transformed through conscious indigenisation into Jamaica's traditional expression. In the post-emancipation period these two music traditions continued developing alongside one another to both create a tradition of formulating new songs within a context of African tradition, and produce the indigenisation of existing European music.

One example of the African contribution to the song tradition of Jamaica is a work-song known as the Jamma song. This displays the common call and response representation of African song; the harmony of the response is characterised by intervals of fourths and fifths. As regards instrumentation, there is evidence that 'a great number of percussion and reed instruments were used, the drum being derided because it spoke the African's language' (Clarke 1980: 24-25).

At the inception of Rastafari in the late 1920s the belief system had developed a doctrinal credo, but there was no associated music. Rastafari evolved through association with the Bible and an emphasis on Africa and therefore its early members were themselves religious people. Stuart Hall notes that 'it was not the literal place that people [Rastafarians] wanted to go back to, it was the language,

the symbolic language for describing what suffering was like, it was a metaphor for where they were' (Hall 1991: 11). However, if Africa was to be projected appropriately, it would have been contradictory to project the music of the (white) Christian church.

In 1930s Jamaica, the only form of African musical expression was that of the Burru people, who came from Clarendon and settled in the slums of Kingston. It was said that 'Burru' denoted an African dance that was celebrated in Ghana around Christmas. The Burru instruments consisted of the bass drum and the Fundeh, which held down the basic rhythm and provided pitch and tonal variation, and the repeater, which was high-pitched, and played the syncopated melody. A number of miscellaneous percussion instruments were also incorporated, such as bottle saxes, bamboo scrapers, shakkas and the rhumba box.

The musical influence was that of Kumina, which was associated with spirit possession. Today, this drumming genre is referred to as 'nyabingi' in popular music circles. The Burru people had African music but no African theological philosophy. The Rastafarian movement had the African theological doctrine but no music. So, by the end of the 1930s Burru and Rastafari agreed to merge, each imparting important learning and philosophies to the other.

Thus the superimposition of black western musical influences via the short-wave radio onto a conscious and manipulated merger of Rastafarian philosophy and Burru music produced the first culturally identifiable national music for, and of, Jamaica.

In the 1940s the nearest thing to a Jamaican popular music style was mento, a calypso-like, Latin influenced folk music with a gentle, lilting melody, and topical, sometimes bawdy, lyrics. Only two other musics flourished at that time: the religious expression of Rastafari accompanied by Burru drumming, and the music that was broadcast via short-wave radio from the Florida belt of the Americas. Thus it was that in the late 1950s Jamaica's unique interpretation of the popular American rhythm and blues sound resulted in the birth of Ska.

Ska, the street music of poor Kingston, was played on electric guitars, drum kit, and usually a small brass section. Its distinctive musical feature was the stabbing syncopation of the piano and guitar chords accented on the second and fourth beats of the bar. Most important, however, was the fact that with the new rhythm came a new message about poverty, inequality, and black identity.

In 1965, another Jamaican popular music style came into being. Dub was simply a rhythm track without any solos. By the late 1960s, along with the development of the DJ as an artiste in his own right, and by emphasising the bass and drums as well as introducing sound effects, Dub developed as a separate and very popular style. By 1966, rock steady changed the format of ska to include a more specifically Jamaican experience, whilst simultaneously absorbing vocal and instrumental influences of black America. However, by late 1967 the rhythm was changing from a slow meditative beat to a walking pace, with the bass even more prominent. This style became known as reggae. Reggae has achieved international recognition and remains extraordinarily popular to the present day.

Hosanna

Act I, Scene 6

Palm Sunday: Triumphant procession into Jerusalem

Dance: Tassa, Bhangra, Soca & Chorus

All: Ta ta ta te te ta ta ta te!
Aah aah aah aah aah aah!

Celebration Singers:

Glory to God in the highest
And peace to his people on Earth
Lord God, Heavenly King, Almighty God and Father
We worship you, we give you thanks
We praise you for your glory
Ho-san-na, Ho-san-na, ho -sa- na-na-na, hos-san-na
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord
Hosanna in the highest

Jesus enters Jerusalem. It is Palm Sunday and he is greeted by the celebration singers and dancers.

In striving to conjure a sense of a place such as Jerusalem in a narrative that has already been established as Caribbean-based, it seemed logical for me to lean towards traditional Trinidadian enactments that carried within them elements of the East as well as some type of religious connotation.

Figure 24: The Kathak Dancer

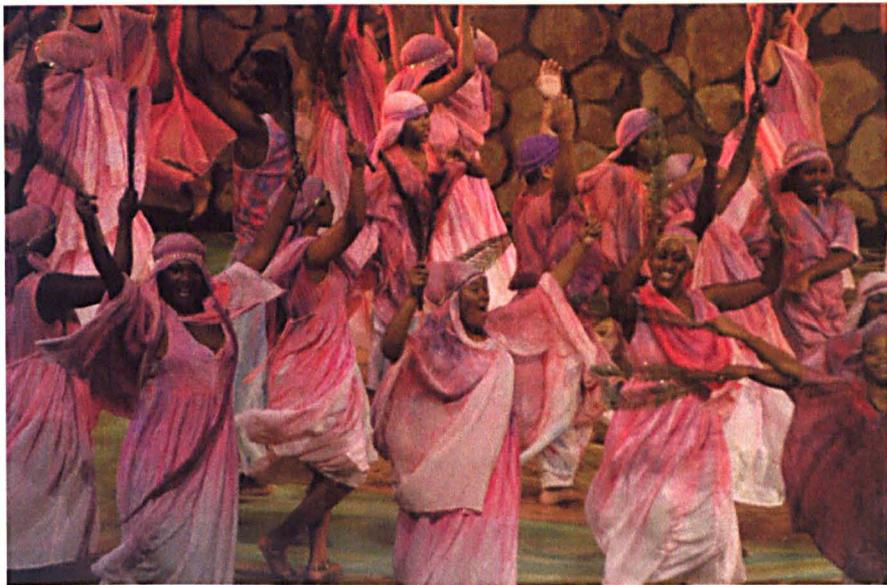


Thus the symbolism of Hosanna combines elements of the Hindu Spring festival of Holi (or Phagwa) via the pink abeer stained white costume, and the Islamic Shiite commemoration of Hosey via the carrying of two moons and two tombs (Tadjas) for the brothers Hosain and Hasan, accompanied by Tassa drums and the Christian practice of carrying palms on Palm Sunday. In Trinidad it is commonplace for all these religions to operate amicably, side by side, in the same space. Phagwa or Holi usually follows on the heels of Carnival and Hosey often precedes Christmas. Again, in 'Hosanna', there is no spoken word; the narrative is conveyed visually and sonically.

Phagwa or Holi is a festival of Hindu origin brought with the Indian indentured labourers to Trinidad and Tobago in the early twentieth century. Like carnival, it is a communal joyous transformation in which participants shed their inhibitions. Phagwa has been called the 'Indian Carnival'. In both festivals, in a spirit that is both mischievous and gleeful, participants will often throw things at each other; in Phagwa, this will be a bright red-purple liquid or powdered purple-pink dye called 'abeer'.

In Trinidad and Tobago, young women in white dresses sit quietly on benches, with their hands in their laps. Young men in white tee-shirts and trousers will usually be running around the compound. After much singing and swaying, the young people soon bubble over into wild and uncontrolled glee as they duck and run, squirting abeer at each other. The white garments soon become a canvas of bright pink, lilac, and lavender.

Figure 25: Hosanna singers and dancers enter Jerusalem



Phagwa is also celebrated with vigorous drumming and singing. Choral groups perform 'chowntals' in Hindi which are often bawdy, spirited spring songs, these often accompanied by harmonium and drums.

According to Gordon Rohlehr, the celebration of Phagwa is rooted in myth, the primary of which is 'the death of the demon Pootna who nearly kills Lord Krishna, and whose effigy is burnt to signify the end of winter, darkness and evil' (Rohlehr 2003c: 33). I am more familiar with the story that suggests the throwing of colour commemorates the legend of Prahalad, who was commanded by his father (the powerful and ruthless King Hrinia) to worship him as a god. When the boy refused, the king sent for his sister Holika, a witch, to take her nephew into a sacrificial fire. The fire consumed Holika and spared Prahalad. The people who witnessed the miracle embraced Prahalad and took the ashes of Holika (Holi) and scattered them on each other. This story similarly reflects the situation that will prevail when Jesus after his arrival in Jerusalem is betrayed, accused, arrested, and crucified.

The structure and iconography of the Hosey festival can be found today in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. In its beauty and its music, the aesthetics of Hosey -- which in fact depict the horror of the decapitation of Husain, the poisoning of his brother Hasan, and the massacre at Karbala -- underscore Antonio Benítez-Rojo's critical theory of the manifestation of historical violence of African enslavement and Asian indentured labour through the modern day celebrations of Trinidad Carnival, as well as festivals of remarkable beauty like those of Hosey and Phagwa (Benítez-Rojo [1992] 2001).

Hosanna is the holy word through which the Jewish faith acclaim the Messiah. However, I use the expression to provide a prelude to the different kinds of joyful praise represented, even though they at the best of times can be transient, effervescent, and illusory, in opposition to the shouts and accusations that will ultimately send Christ to his death. Gordon Rohlehr notes that there is 'no truer difference between illusory idealism, and murderous reality' than the dramatic transition that takes place between 'Hosanna' and 'He was despised'. He refers to 'the mesmeric and monotonous possession chant' of 'Hosanna', in which 'masses of people seem to be caught up in a zombie-like dance of acclamation' before the 'agonized adaptation' of Handel's aria 'He was despised' in the Garden of Gethsemane (Rohlehr 2003c: 35).

Wherever East Indians settled in large numbers in the Caribbean the Hoesey festival followed, and while it served a religious need in the community on a wider scale it united Muslims, Hindus, and those others who wanted to maintain their East Indian identity. However, as is characteristic of creolisation, the participants adapted the enactment of Hoesey specifically to the existing environment of each new Caribbean territory. Therefore, like the Caribbean experience in 1940s immigration to the United Kingdom, differences between Muslim and Hindu (like the differences between Jamaican, Antiguan, Vincentian, and Trinidadian) became secondary to a new status; both were suddenly in the minority but they shared a common heritage: in their case, India.

In 'Hosanna', the permission that the Caribbean gives its people to use this mixed religious iconography within the same space is quite unique. It allows each religion to tell its own story in its own way. *Carnival Messiah* uses this

permission to signal that 'the end is nigh'; using the beauty of the (Christian) Palm Sunday procession in which where Jesus joyfully enters Jerusalem unwittingly on the way to his ultimate death and horrific crucifixion. The Phagwa and Christian iconography effectively camouflage the prophecy of a great sadness to come whilst the Islamic iconography heralds the exact opposite. All are very beautiful.

The 'Hosanna' scene opens with the entrance of a solo Indian dancer -- Jaymini Chauhan -- who is dressed in the traditional costume of Kathak, which is deep pink and green. She dramatically enters with the classical pirouettes or 'Chakkkars' of Kathak, which begin with flowing graceful movements of the hands and culminate in a rhythmic footwork pattern. This is based on the short introductory interlude of music composed and played by Pandit Narendra Mishra on Sitar, and Sukhdev Namdhari on Dilruba (a fretless, bowed stringed instrument). This dance was specifically choreographed by Dr Geetha Upadayaaya for 'Hosanna'.

From the distance we hear the sound of the Islamic Tassa drums of Hosey approaching, followed by the celebration singers and dancers of Jerusalem. The Minstrels/Urban Griots take on the guise of Jesus and his disciples; Jesus this time is played by Jem Dobbs. The chorus are dressed in costumes of fluorescent pinks shaded with purple and with touches of gold that mirror the spattering, blending, and merging effect of the spraying of beer.

The chorus also carry the Christian iconography of green palm branches. They are in turn followed by the two symbolic moons and the two ornate and symbolic

tombs of the brothers Hasan and Hosain. The chorus follow the Tassa drummers who lead them through the audience, towards the wall of Jerusalem, singing the Hindu influenced Hosanna rhythmic pattern and song motif.

At the wall of Jerusalem, they are greeted by Mary (played by Ann Fridal), Joseph (played by Brian Green), and Joseph's brother (played by Ronald Samm), who sing the main 'Hosanna' anthem 'Glory to God in the Highest'. Mary then greets Jesus with a blessing. The celebrations continue through the day and they all dance outside the wall of Jerusalem. As dusk slowly approaches, they process towards the main city. We are left with a vision of the city ramparts in silhouette.

Act II

Death

The Sorrowful Mystery

Lundi Gras (Carnival Monday)

Agony in the garden, Hades, Eshu The Dark Angel, The Scourging

Crowning with Thorns, Stations of the Cross

The Crucifixion, The Transformation

Masquerade (or Mas') is the visible physical channel that carnival in Trinidad and Tobago assumes and it is probably the most important mechanism by which the society continually generates new folkloric forms and, in the case of the *Carnival Messiah*, new myths.

Patricia Alleyne-Dettmers describes this process as meta-masking, defining it as a 'lateral process of cultural borrowing of standard forms available in the environment' and 'dissecting, discarding, re-shaping, even transvaluating these to produce other masks, not only with alternative meanings and values, but cast in another form or language' (Alleyne-Dettmers 1993: 5).

Alleyne-Dettmers only applies her meta-masking theory to the carnival and masquerade of Trinidad and Tobago. However, it is akin to my theory of a Third Space, in which exactly the same processes take place with regard to difference, culture, and identity, but where the end-product is not limited to masquerade or carnival and its histories or even to its diaspora, but includes a tacit recognition of a wider cognition of Caribbean consciousness, throughout the world.

Therefore, I describe Act II of *Carnival Messiah* as the 'Carnival Fantastique'. This is where I allow my Caribbean Carnival imagination and all the techniques associated with the Trinidad and Tobago masquerade tradition to take complete control: here, everything is possible; this truly is a space for the 'suspension of disbelief'.

Mas' is used to refer to both the face mask and the fully costumed figure which are used to both efface and effect character. This twin function varies in emphasis from ritual to ritual and sometimes also from moment to moment. The mask offers a means of moving beyond everyday realism and is an important link through which traditional enactments recall their origin.

There are four types of masking techniques in Trinidadian masquerade. First is the use of a covering of one sort or another over one's face, which may be a full or partial mask. Second is the painted mask where the wearer chooses to paint their face and/or body or use white powder to conceal or reveal a character. Third is the carried mask, where the emphasis has shifted from covering the face to the wearing of elaborate headdresses. Fourth is the inner mask where, during possession, the dancer or Hou'si assumes the role of the power or deity and his or her face stiffens into that of a mask.

Act II runs for twenty minutes and the dialogue, which is minimal, is confined to the crucifixion in Scene 3. Act II is completely immersed in vision, choreography, and sound, and it unfolds in epic cinematic dimensions. The action continually traverses the territory that lies between the natural and the supernatural, and the magical and the real; it begins on earth in the Garden of Gethsemane and then descends into Hades, returning to the 'braying' crowd and the crucifixion on earth, then moving into a metaphorical place of fantasy where 'good' battles against 'evil' and where good eventually prevails.

Gethsemane

Act II, Scene 1

Agony in the garden

**Dance/Visual: Jesus and his eleven disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane:
Inner and Outer turmoil**

Music: **The Lone Disciple**
 'He was Despised'
 Solo male voice
 (Classical/jazz)

The disciples sleep

He was despis-ed, despis-ed and rejected
 rejected of man, a man of sorrows
 and acquainted with grief'

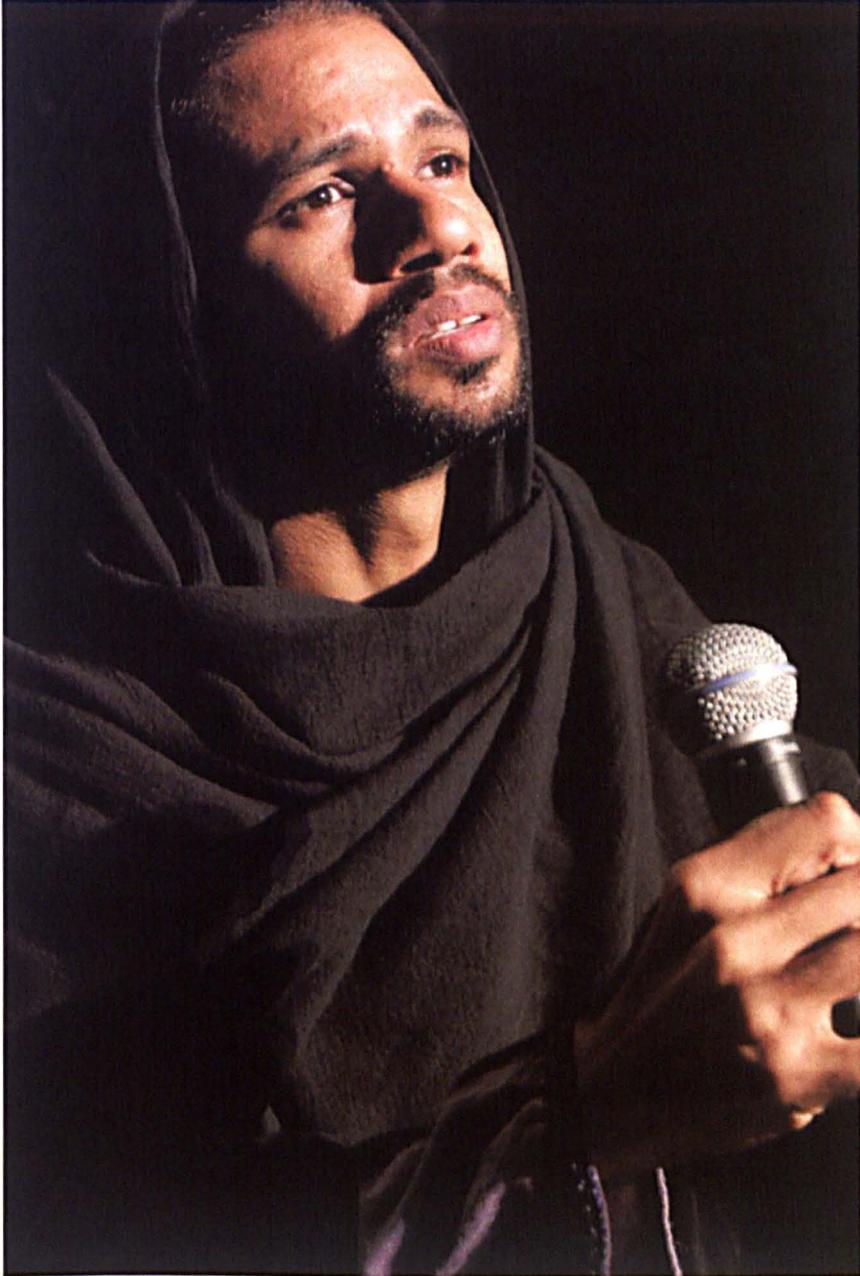
Dance/Visual: **The cast/chorus create sinister representations of the**
 underworld, which appear and stealthily engulf the
 stage
 Entrance of Judas/Eshu, the Dark Angel

Music: **Screams, shrieks, moans, cries etc**
 A Capella vocals
 Traditional Ewe drummology

He was despised, despised and rejected
 Rejected of man, a man of sorrows
 A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
 A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
 And acquainted with grief
 He was despised, rejected, a man of sorrows
 And acquainted with grief
 He was despised,
 Rejected of man,
 A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
 A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief
 He was despised, rejected, a man of sorrows
 And acquainted with grief, acquainted with grief

The scene in the Garden of Gethsemane is sombre and presented in a mix of dark blues, purples, and deep greens; the vegetation is very Caribbean, lush, and darkly dramatic. The colours of the background are reflected in the costume of the Lone Disciple, which is the same as the costumes worn by the disciples who attended the Last Supper.

Figure 26: The Lone Disciple in the Garden of Gethsemane



The twenty-four bar largo musical introduction, taken in its entirety from the piano realisation of Handel's original composition, completes the transition from the end of Act I and the Last Supper to Act II in the Garden. It is night; we can barely make out some of the disciples (minstrels/griots) sleeping in the Garden through a dim mist. The Lone Disciple (who is played by Brian Green), immersed in a deep moral and spiritual isolation, notices them. He then directs the first phrases of his song to them -- 'he was despised, despised and rejected' -- and then moves on introspectively through the Garden.

We see Jesus (played this time by Ram John Holder) emerge out of the mist, looking at the sleeping disciples thoughtfully, and then be slowly absorbed back into the fog. An inkling that all is not peaceful and well is signalled as the disciples appear to be awakened from their dreams by the evil presence of two devil imps. Soon this evil presence also begins to manifest itself visually and sonically as the Garden becomes transformed by magical lighting, lightening, and thunder and we begin our descent into Hades.

Hades

The Lone Disciple continues to sing. High-pitched screams, accompanied by deep, long, and drawn-out moans and staccato shrieks embedded in a musical discordant crescendo, start to interrupt, suffocate, and supplant the quiet action and emotional song of the Lone Disciple.

An even deeper mist settles over the garden, through which a heaving mass of dark and sinuous underworld characters slowly emerges. These are the faces of souls that have been sent to hell, and this is purgatory. The emphasis here is on character portrayal and anonymity; the absence of identity is marked in this hellish darkness.

According to Victor Turner,

liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, to an eclipse of the sun or moon. (Turner [1969] 1974: 81)

Between one and one and a half metres high, these masquerade faces are made out of papier-mâché and decorated with blue, green, and purple shiny dust. They all have different expressions and shapes, which inform the mood and style of performance. The hair is knotted, gnarled, stringy, and hangs dark and impenetrable like roots and cobwebs. Slowly -- in time with the prevailing action on stage -- the Garden of Gethsemane set is flown out and replaced with a giant, dark, and sinuous Silk Cotton tree, which is known for its supernatural powers in Trinidadian folklore. The tree is enhanced by the addition of two live tree creatures who writhe at the tree's base, making it come to life. The whole picture looks, and sounds, surreal and is designed to make one feel uneasy. The Lone Disciple unobtrusively leaves.

Eshu, The Dark Angel

Into this pulsing, living, and breathing hell, enters Eshu, the Dark Angel: The Judas: omnipotent, powerful, pompous, overwhelming, very beautiful, and the living embodiment of our worst fears.

Act II, Scene 2**Hades and Eshu The Dark Angel**

Dance/Visual: Eshu, the Dark Angel, the messenger dominates

The arena and commands attention and obeisance.

He struts his power and superiority, surrounded

By his underworld minions. He is omnipresent.

Music: A Capella vocals, moans, groans, screams, shouts, cries, etc.

Traditional Ewe drummology

Eshu leaves as dramatically as he has entered, moving to stage left where he remains stationary. It is at this point that the second transition takes place: the movement from the supernatural to the natural and the ascent back up to earth.

Figure 27: Eshu, the Dark Angel, the Judas



Performed by David Hamilton, Eshu wears a highly sequined black half mask with tentacle-like horns and is clad in an overtly sexy, even vulgar, shiny black leather body suit, with fluorescent pink and lightly tinted red fifteen-foot high wings that are attached to long fibre glass rods. The wing design is based on that of the traditional bat shape and they are purposely not very wide. The wings are very flexible and aggressively shaped, and attached to Eshu's body by a specially designed backpack that ends just above his rib cage, allowing for waist movement around a full 360 degrees. Though symbolic, this costume is also highly functional.

The icon of the devil has its origins in the European medieval miracle plays, where death and the devil formed a part of man's everyday existence. It is also aligned with the French Roman Catholic ethic and so signifies western concepts of good and evil. The traditional European form of the devil provided the necessary means to symbolically unmask the people's traumatic experiences.

The devil in *Carnival Messiah* is black, since this colour has always been associated with evil. Of course this is significant for the black Caribbean subject who shares the devil's blackness and who has to learn to perceive that blackness as part of a new identity, and to reclaim it as part of a positive vision of black selfhood. The devil icon in fact represents the collective enslaved black African's experience. Through this borrowed 'white' mask, the devil icon's very ugliness becomes a symbolic projection of the psychological tensions and conflicts of their attempts to come to terms with themselves as black Caribbean people, their African past, and the 'white' west.

Bearing this in mind, within the Shango cult, Eshu is sometimes identified with the devil: a black man wearing a black mask, personifying and embodying a dangerous 'white' icon. It is this paradoxical reading of Eshu that I have chosen to use in *Carnival Messiah*.

The Messiah's glorification in the triumphant march to Jerusalem has awakened Eshu's malice and drives him to engineer the transition from the ecstatic acclamation of 'Hosanna' to the dramatic betrayal and Crucifixion. It is thus that Eshu reigns terror through choreographic dialogue and menacing and demonic laughter with his minions and devil imps: he commands, chases, dominates, and is frightening, omnipresent, and all-powerful.

The Scourging and Crowning with Thorns

The silk-cotton tree is slowly flown out and replaced by distant hills. The lighting becomes blue-grey. Slowly, at the same speed as the flying tree, the Dark Angel's minions and devil imps remove their masks and either place them front stage to stare at the audience in silence or hang them on lines, readying them to be flown three-quarters offstage, where they will hang over the rest of the stage action ominously for the duration of Act II.

Wayne Berkeley notes that the original design concept for these scenes included an enormous mechanised crown of thorns, which was to be suspended over the whole stage and used as a sign of the impending doom of the crucifixion

(Berkeley 2004). The suspension of the masks high above the action was the closest I could get to achieving Wayne Berkeley's original concept.

The company all move backwards, devoid of their original costume; they are now clad in plain, black, and shapeless long jersey tops and leggings. Toward stage right, as the screaming and underworld sound effects conclude, they too subside into an eerie silence. They form a silent, huddled, and kneeling throng. The Dark Angel, who is the only character carried over from the preceding scene, remains in his stationery position, overlooking the action.

Figure 28: The throng/crowd



A distant voice pierces the silence. It is the voice of Pontius Pilate, who in *Carnival Messiah* is played by a woman (Jo Jo Moorhouse). Costumed completely in different textures of black layered materials and fashioned in the style of the 'Grim Reaper', Pilate delivers her speech to the throng from within the audience.

Act II, Scene 3

The Scourging and Pontius Pilate: Crowning with Thorns

Dance/Visual: The throng/crowd is held at bay with an imaginary rope

Drama: Pontius Pilate

Pilate: You brought this man to me
 And said that he was misleading the people
 Now I have examined him here in your presence
 And I have not found him guilty of any of the crimes
 You accuse him of
 Herod did not find him guilty
 For he sent him back to us
 There is nothing this man has done to deserve death
 Shall I let him go?

Crowd: Kill him, free Barabas

Pilate: But what crime has he committed?

Crowd: Kill him, free Barabas

Pilate: What would you have me do with him?

Crowd: Crucify him. Crucify him. Crucify him.

Stations of the Cross

As the throng's final words subside, the ominous drums of the Crucifixion Adagio rise up in slow crescendo to break the silence. The throng rise up in slow motion and form a human cross.

As they begin to move diagonally across the stage towards stage left we see the beginning of the crucifixion procession led by Roman centurions (played by the seven Minstrels/Griots).

Figure 29: Stations of the Cross



Scene 4*Stations of the Cross*

Dance/Visual: The chorus/cast make a giant slow motion Cross. Cast/chorus continue moving in slow motion towards stage left and then exit.

Music: ‘Crucifixion Adagio’ – Ogoun belele
 African traditional / Free improvisation
 Silence

The Crucifixion

Christ and the two thieves enter; they are the most noticeable because they are elevated high above everyone else. They wear loin cloths and balance on tall stilts of three different heights. These height variations will create an additional sense of perspective when they achieve their final end position on Calvary Hill. The Roman centurions (minstrels/urban griots) who sit at the foot of the cross are seen to ‘part his raiments and cast lots’ (as is described by the gospel according to St. Luke in the King James version of the Bible).

This time the Jesus character is played by Ernest Brew and the two thieves (one male and one female) by David Mitchell and Laura Tudhope. Also in this procession are Mary, mother of Jesus (Ann Fridal), and Mother Earth (Ella Andall). Like the enslaved Africans of old, they sing an Oresha invocation to Ogun, the deity of war, signalling the upcoming struggle of Jesus on the cross and asking for his

protection. The scene is completely lit in the colour of blood. Mama God speaks from within the audience.

Scene 5

The Crucifixion

Dance/Visual: Three Moco Jumbie crucifixes slowly traverse the stage to create a symbolic tableau of the crucifixion

Music: Silence

Narration: Mama God

Mama God: 'Bout noon. Darkness fell across the land,
Jesus called out in a loud voice,
'Eli, Eli, Lama sabachtani
My God, My God, why have you forsaken me!'

(The veil in the temple fell apart)
'Father, I commit my spirit to you!'
'Father, I commit my spirit to you!'
and with that, he died.

Figure 30: The Crucifixion

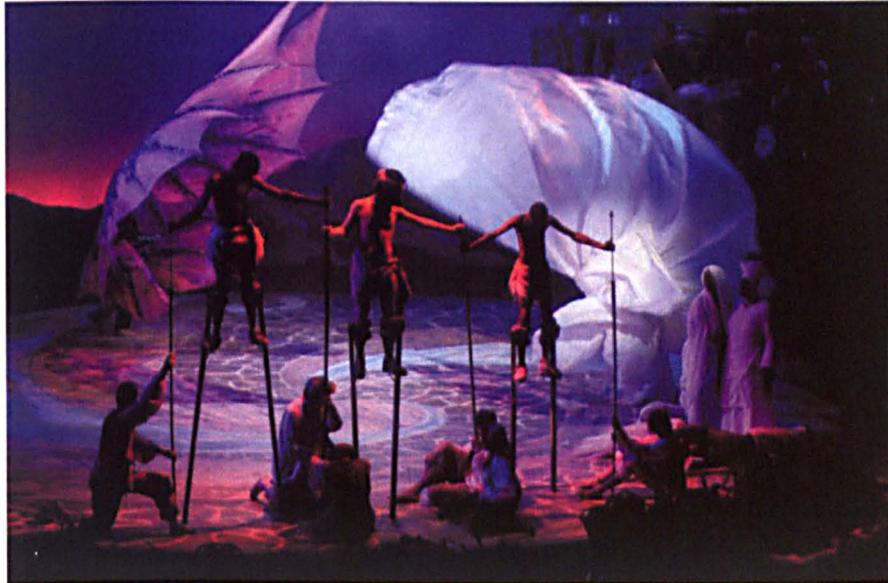


The Crucifixion is probably the most significant enactment within the Roman Catholic liturgy. I Corinthians 5. 5, which is the first Epistle of St Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians, states that 'the spirit may be saved, the day of the Lord Jesus'; 'even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us' (King James version of the Bible). It is at this point in the production that the third transition between the real and the magical, the struggle between good and evil, and the emergence of light triumphantly over darkness take place.

The Transformation

Christ dies and accordingly the *Carnival Messiah* once again transcends the natural and enters the realm of the supernatural. The Dove of Peace (musically represented by the tenor steel pan) and Eshu, the Dark Angel (musically represented by the ewe drum) enter. The music of this conflict will be dictated by the mood and action within their choreography. The conflict that will take place between these two supernatural masquerades is being enacted on the stage for the adjudication of all people.

Figure 31: The Transformation, the conflict



Act II, Scene 6*The Transformation*

Dance/Visual: The soul of Christ, The Dove of Peace emerge as Christ dies. There ensues a physical conflict between evil (Eshu the Dark Angel) and good (the Dove of Peace). The Minstrels adjudicate. The Dove of Peace triumphs.

Music: Conflict – tenor steel pan represents the Dove of Peace, and the African Drum represents Eshu, the Dark Angel, the messenger.

At the death of Jesus Christ, the stage becomes an even deeper red and the silence is broken by an avalanche of staccato ewe drums which signal the re-appearance of Eshu, the Dark Angel, the Judas who has been stood stationery upstage left for Scenes 3, 4, and 5. He struts arrogantly and triumphantly to centre stage where he preens himself.

The Dove of Peace rushes like the wind from stage right towards Eshu, and just stops short of knocking him down. They joust with one another at high speed, up and down, around and around, bending backwards and bending forwards, spinning and attacking. All this action takes place behind the Crucifixion tableau.

Finally the Dove of Peace rises to her full height and, towering over Eshu, topples him to his death. Only the sound of the steel pan remains, climbing higher and higher in pitch, as the Dove of Peace first looks down at Eshu to acknowledge her triumph and then towards the audience in a freeze, surrounded by a shrinking follow spot which slowly fades to black.

The donning of a Mas' or costume should be likened to that of being 'mounted' in a Shango ceremony. The masquerader becomes possessed by the 'power' of the Mas' and thus becomes an embodiment of the role being played. This same phenomenon becomes very clear in this scene as the audience is drawn into the mesmerising and powerful performance of the conflict that is taking place between good and evil.

Act II, Scene 6 highlights the three inter-related components of carnival performance: masquerade design, masquerade portrayal/dance, and the affective response elicited from the audience (Alleyne-Dettmers 1993: 1). The conceptual design and movement of these two masquerades symbolically parallel the varying stages of both the African (the majority, black, enslaved, de-humanised) and the European (the minority, white, powerful, dominant) contribution to the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Dove of Peace is performed by Alyson Brown in a masquerade costume designed by Clary Salandy. Salandy notes that 'the Dove of Peace's costume is a symbol of purity; she is gentle, heavenly, ethereal, formless, and light and her choreography is musically *legato*, the opposite of Eshu [...] whose body is black, demarcated, of human form, shiny, and his choreography musically *staccato*' (Salandy 2004).

The Dove of Peace's costume is made from fifty metres of white crushed silk, which endows the wings with a special folding quality as they fill with air to create a whirling impression. The Dove's body is extended through the arms. She

is bigger than Eshu and there is a lot of drama in the movement of her costume which has very little wind resistance: 'when she runs, her silhouette looks like a crucifix' (Salandy 2004). As such, these masquerade costumes also become a site of dramatic opposition.

The theme of the struggle between good and evil, or light and darkness, does not need specific cultural frames of reference, since it has been repeatedly used in world mythologies and literatures, forming the keynote of such recognisable narrative as Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

In Trinidad and Tobago this theme has informed the epic works of Peter Minshall (a phenomenal masquerade band designer) many times. Minshall's *Paradise Lost* (1976) has left an indelible impression on my memory; I actually played Mas' in 'Song of the Earth', and I also narrated and musically directed 'Santimanitay' (1989).

In *Carnival Messiah*, I allude to Peter Minshall as a most valued and influential ancestor, as well as specifically referring to his vast oeuvre of work in the 'conflict' scene between the Dove of Peace and Eshu via his work which operates in that same dimension -- including 'Danse Macabre' (1980), 'River' (1983), 'Callaloo' (1984), 'The Golden Callabash' (1985), 'Hallelujah' (1995), and 'Tapestry' (1997).

Act III

How Beautiful are the Feet

Act III, Scene 1 follows the intermission and is presented in three sections. There are no spoken words; the narrative here is conveyed visually and sonically.

The first section is the dance of the Apostles. The eleven Apostles meet Jesus in the void, where they symbolically receive the Holy Spirit. The music begins; the sound grows out of nothingness and crescendos very slowly and organically with a warm and full-sounding sustained pedal sus4 chord played on the keyboards, over which the Apostles sing and dance.

This introduction gives an early indication of the quality and sound of the instrumental break to follow during the second section. In the first section of 'How Beautiful are the Feet', the Minstrels/Urban Griots have taken on the role of six of the Apostles and Jesus is danced by Donald Edwards.

First, Jesus slowly enters the space by himself. He is then gradually joined by the rest of the Apostles, who greet him and gather closely around him. They sit in animated yet deeply intense conversation as Jesus gives them an indication of their future duties. They receive the Holy Spirit and then seemingly make a pact with Jesus in which they are charged with the responsibility of taking the Gospel out into the world.

Figure 32: The Apostles' Determination



They confirm the pact through a beautiful yet torturous dance set diagonally across the stage in which they all hold hands in a line, before breaking free in farewell to each other. They leave the stage slowly, departing in many different directions. The choreography throughout this section conveys a mood of deep thoughtfulness and introspection, lending itself completely to the music of Handel. I have in fact taken carte blanche with the melody line from Handel's oratorio, turning it from a soprano solo into a male unison chorus. This suits the needs of, and illustrates, the narrative.

The Lone Disciple sings as a counter melody over Handel's 'How Beautiful are the Feet' melody, the prophesy:

It was written long ago
that the Messiah must suffer and die
and rise again from the dead
upon the third day

This message should be taken
from Jerusalem to all nations
Forever I will sing

Act III

REBIRTH

The Glorious Mystery

Mardi Gras

Carnival Tuesday

The resurrection, ascension, Pentecost and assumption

Scene 1

Dance/Visual: The eleven Apostles gather, they receive the Holy Spirit.
 They take the gospel to the world...
 Chorus/cast join the disciples at this point. There is great
 rejoicing. Nation flags, national Costumes and
 representations of peace and integration.

Music: ‘How Beautiful are The Feet’
 Classical/Jazz/Soca

Verse:

Apostles:

Section A

How beautiful are the feet of them
That preach the gospel of Peace
How beautiful are the feet
How beautiful are the feet of them
That preach the gospel of Peace

Section B

How beautiful are the feet of them
That preach the gospel of Peace
And bring glad tidings
And bring glad tidings
Glad tidings of good things

Section C

And bring glad tidings
Glad tidings of good things

Section D

And bring glad tidings
Glad tidings of good things

Section E

And bring ...
Glad tidings
Glad tidings of good things
Glad tidings of good things

The lone Disciple sings this prophesy over the preceding verse

Apostle: It was written long ago
It was written long ago
that the Messiah must suffer and die
and rise again from the dead
upon the third day

This message should be taken
from Jerusalem to all nations
Forever I will sing

The Apostles leave the stage or join the beginning of what will become a slow spiral of the 'People of the World', walking with purpose and focus, thus beginning section two which presents a dream of world peace.

Figure 33: The people of the world form the spiral of peace

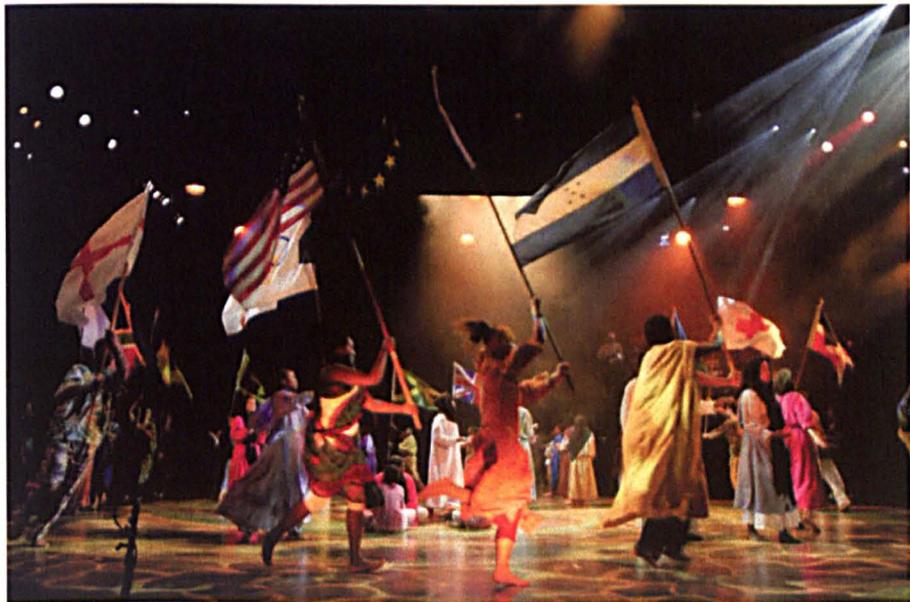


Figure 34: The Lone Disciple



Many people of many nations and cultures -- people from all walks of life, creeds, races, and professions -- silently and slowly join the spiral. Rohlehr suggests here that these people are 'presumably recently redeemed through the sacrifice of the risen Christ' (Rohlehr 2003c: 40). Some of the people circle the spiral, running nation flags and emblems of world organisations which they then place upstage centre. Some symbolise taking the gospel to the world; moving up and down through the auditorium, running flags, or distributing gifts.

The spiral on stage is full of silent emotion and creates a continuous unbreakable circular motion. Several symbols of peace, named 'Shields of Honour' by their designer Clary Salandy, slowly appear; these are a tribute to those un-recognised that have walked a similar path, and descend from above and hover above the people's heads, presenting graphic representations of the faces of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson Mandela and Mother Theresa.

Rohlehr notes that

if these men's lives seem to contain a common saintliness, they also manifest a common quality of engagement with the concrete political issues of their day; a tendency, too, towards headlong, unambiguous confrontation with the enemy: prejudice, injustice, racialism, oppression, tyranny. (Rohlehr 2003c: 41-2)

This is a correct interpretation of my message.

The music envelopes the listener, slowly washing over the audience, lulling and hypnotising, ethereal, full of improvisations over deep rolling pedal formations, which are produced in particular by the steel pan and the alto saxophone. Rohlehr likens this to 'Coltrane-like riffs such as one hears in the "Psalm" of praise and thanksgiving that is the final movement of *A Love Supreme*'. Rohlehr continues:

‘Coltrane is, undoubtedly, one of the ancestors invoked and celebrated in this séance of saints, and at this imaginary dream-time that is Connor’s version of Isaiah’s, St. John the Divine’s and Handel’s “new heaven and new earth”’ (Rohlehr 2003c: 40).

Instrumental and Dance

The people of the world, carrying the flags of the world, join the disciples centre stage. They form a moving spiral circle. The Shields of Honour are flown in. The people of the world take the gospel to the world.

Handel’s depiction of the post-crucifixion moment differs substantially from mine. In ‘Lift up Your Heads, O Ye Gates’, he welcomes the Resurrection with a call to the nations and cities of the world to prepare themselves for the triumphant entry of a risen Messiah. This is a call to the masses to make amends for their false acclamation of the Messiah during Christ’s first triumphant entry into Jerusalem. However, in *Carnival Messiah*, the resurrected ‘King of Glory’ is not entering an earthly Kingdom but a new heaven and earth, where the ‘Kingdom of this World’ (once the devil’s playground) has now become the ‘the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ’.

Handel’s next aria is ‘How Beautiful are the Feet’, followed immediately by ‘Why do the Nations so Furiously Rage?’ (Psalm 2) and ‘Why do People Imagine a Vain Thing?’ (Psalm 2). The questions posed by the latter two arias of

course rudely interrupt the dream of peace and plunge the human spirit, which is seeking redemption and release from the world, back into relentless warfare.

‘The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed’ (Psalm 2). The implication here is of course that the kings of the earth (who have no doubt heard of the subversive power and levelling mission of the Messiah) reject his evangelists, who preach the gospel of peace. Thus they must forcibly destroy all emissaries of this new religion, and the old war continues on both terrestrial and celestial battlefields.

In *Carnival Messiah* however, I choose to ignore the dark observations which occur in Handel’s *Messiah* oratorio and instead, via an evangelical preaching and a joyful celebratory ‘lavway’ rendition in the third section of ‘How Beautiful are the Feet’, move towards

the confident individual, then communal affirmation of “I Know That My Redeemer Liveth,” which [Connor] locates before and not after the “Hallelujah” Chorus as it appears in Handel’s “Messiah.” (Rohlehr 2003c: 44)

The people of the world then gather centre stage where they dance and sing in gospel celebration.

Chorus x 4

How beautiful are the feet of them
That preach the gospel of Jesus
How beautiful are the feet of them
That preach the gospel of Peace
That preach the gospel of Peace

Moving through the audience an Evangelist preaches the word of God over the preceding chorus. He is accompanied from the stage by two female gospel backing singers.

Evangelist: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
 Welcome brothers and sister of the world
 It is time to get down with God
 We are gathered here to groove and celebrate his
 favourite move
 I'm talking about the late, great M.C., J. C. Mr Jesus
 Christ, Hallelujah!
 Those who wish to follow in the funky footsteps of the
 Lord
 Must consider themselves dead to sin, but remain alive in
 Jesus Christ, Hallelujah!
 Then when your mind is clear and your heart is open
 wide
 You may begin your everlasting journey, one step at a
 time
 Up the spiritual staircase towards salvation
 Towards the rock and roll soul of the galaxy
 The Lord God almighty
 God is the creator of the world
 Fell him in your mind and body
 Join me now and let's get down and give Jesus some
 loving
 Now with soul sing, sing Hallelujah!
 Sing for love and sing for Jesus
 Let Jesus into your heart and fill your mind with the love
 of God
 Now, I'm not talking about no rockstar baby
 And I ain't talking about no popstar baby
 I'm talking about reaching

I'm talking about freaking
 Jesus gives us love and builds our heart and soul!
 Jesus gives us love and builds our heart and soul!
 After Jesus was dead
 God came down and he got down on his knees and said
 "Jesus my son wake up! Wake up! Before it's to late"
 and Jesus rose, Oh yes he rose!
 Well he rose up and he led his people
 Jesus gives us love and builds our heart and soul!
 Jesus gives us love and builds our heart and soul!

Gospel backing singers sing

Sister! Brother!
 Oooh! Can you feel it!
 God is almighty saviour
 Feel the almighty saviour
 God is almighty saviour
 Feel the almighty saviour

God is love, so spread the word of Jesus, yeah!
 God is love, so spread the word of Jesus, yeah!
 God is love, so spread the word of Jesus, yeah!
 God is love, so spread the word of Jesus, yeah!

If you feel him, jump up!
 If you feel him, jump up!
 If you feel him, jump up!
 If you feel him, jump up!

Sing! Sing! Hallelujah sing! (repeat and ad lib)

‘RedeemeR’

‘RedeemeR’ is a musical piece that is sung by the Voice of Truth. I drastically depart from Handel’s oratorio here in Act III, when I re-introduce the seven Minstrels/Urban Griots, who narrate the story of Christ’s last forty days on earth in a tone that is devoid of any scepticism, as their earlier playfulness is replaced by awe, conviction, and reverence.

A major characteristic of carnival is its ephemeral and transitory nature, and in the *Carnival Messiah* the power of the Dove of Peace masquerade arises out of this phenomenon. The power of this particular masquerade is reflected by its ability to harness the attention of everyone through its spirituality, gracefulness, tenderness, and uplifting sense of tranquillity and peace in the expression of a journey towards the inner self, where conflict can be expunged.

This is the Third Space: a space to re-discover and re-shape the self through a process of renewal, rebirth, and resurrection. Clary Salandy suggests that the Dove of Peace’s costume ‘must conjure up in the mind of its audience a “sense of the soul in full flight”’ (Salandy 2004).

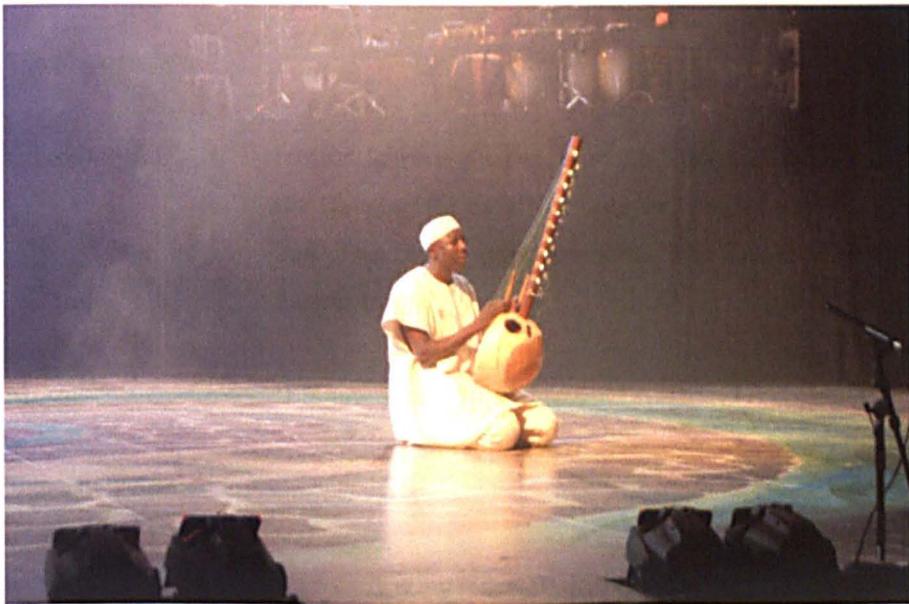
The Minstrels’ scene culminates with their recitation of the Creed -- ‘I believe in one God’ -- delivered in seven different tongues: Italian, Spanish, French, Hindi, Creole English, Nigerian, and Latin. This is the cue for a distant sustained pedal note divided again into fourths and fifths that heralds the transformation of Handel’s theme, and over which can be heard the improvisation of the Kora: the

traditional twelfth-century Islamic instrument of the Malian Griot, sometimes referred to as the African harp.

Preceded by his own music we then actually see the Kora player as he diagonally traverses the centre of the stage towards front stage left, where he kneels in contemplation. Next the subtle musical entrance of a selection of miscellaneous hand-held African percussion, kept in rhythmic structure by a marimba arpeggio ostinato pattern, signals the entrance upstage right first of Ronald Samm, the lead singer of 'RedcemeR' who notably also played the 'Amombwah' in the Shango ceremony.

He is immediately followed by the entrance of the spirit of the Dove of Peace -- the Dovette, who is completely enclosed within the shimmering form of the Dove of Peace. The Dovette masquerade embodies the spirit of the Dove of Peace and she will be released into the surreal world of the 'RedcemeR' once the lead singer has musically beckoned her.

Figure 35: The Dove of Peace



In addition to these two female masquerades described above are four other male characters who are all costumed in West African traditional robes. They all also wear 'tams' as their head gear, the design of which is Islamic in origin. The lead singer, Ronald Samm, is accompanied by three musicians on stage: the Kora player, Seiko Susso (who hails from the Gambia); the talking drum player, Danny Templeman; and the hand held African percussion player, Sam Bell.

All the costumes in this scene are white, in a bid to emulate the purity of Mama God's Alter egos, whilst creating an image of great beauty which I hope suggests a place of quietude and conciliation whilst conjuring up a feeling wholeness.

Act III, Scene 3

The Resurrection

Dance/Visual: **Dramatic re-appearance of The Dove of Peace and the Domette, led by a Kora player, The Voice of Truth and Two hand percussionists. The Dove of Peace dances to the vocal solo**

Music: **'I Know That My Redeemer Liveth'**

Voice of Truth:

Verse

'I know that my redeemer liveth
and that he shall stand at the latter day
upon the earth

And though worms destroy his body

Yet in my flesh I see God
 For now is Christ risen from the dead
 the first fruits of them that sleep

All: 'I know that my redeemer lives
 I know that my Redeemer lives . I know,
 I knowthat he liveth'

Ad Lib: Resurrection, emancipation, liberation, freedom

Gordon Rohlehr notes that in 'RedeemeR'

a certain sly subversiveness remains in the musical text where, reading the music as metaphor, one recognizes a certain re-carnivalisation of performance. (Rohlehr 2003c: 44)

However, here my key messages, transgressions, and subversions are, in my re-imagined version of Handel's 'I know that my redeemer liveth', to equate the Resurrection with the emancipation of black people and, on a more subtle note, musically parallel Islam with Christianity as a metaphor for an imagined future unity between those religions and their affiliated nations.

The technique I use is to transfer the previously subversive narrative that I had assigned for use only by the Minstrels/Urban Griots to the lyrics, musical arrangement, and performance style of the lead singer of 'RedeemeR'.

The singer is directed to shift almost imperceptibly from a fully classical vocalised rendition of almost two thirds of the aria, to what Gordon Rohlehr describes as a 'litanic gospel-shout' and 'African-style chanting' (Rohlehr 2003c: 44).

However, the ultimate subversion takes place within the lyric itself, with its improvised ostinato style at the end of the rendition where the singer repeatedly cries 'Resurrection', 'Emancipation', 'Liberation', and 'Freedom'. Gordon Rohlehr succinctly observes that here 'Shango and Ogoun, divine Yoruba spirits of manhood and warriorhood, far from having died, have entered and submerged themselves in the body of Christianity' (Rohlehr 2003c: 45).

As I have demonstrated in my re-carnivalised version of 'RedeemeR', I believe that what they (the enslaved Africans) thought was: we have no voice, we have no history, we have come from a place to which we cannot return nor have ever seen, we used to speak a language which we can no longer speak, and we have ancestors whom we cannot find who worshipped Gods who we do not know.

It is against this sense of profound rupture that the metaphor for a new kind of culture and belief system can be re-worked. Against this rupture a language can evolve in which a certain kind of history can be retold and in which aspirations of liberation, freedom, and emancipation can for the first time be expressed and symbolically resurrected.

'RedeemeR' is the first and 'real' ending of *Carnival Messiah*. However, continuing in the spirit of Caribbean carnival chaos, it is but the first of two further false endings which come at the end of the Whoopi Band and then again at the end of the steelband rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus.

Hallelujah Chorus – The Steelband

Carnival Messiah ends with the performance of alternative versions of the ‘Hallelujah’ or ‘!HalleluiaH!’ chorus. In the first rendition, which is played by a steelband, orchestra I pay homage and give acknowledgement to George Friedrich Handel as a great ancestor of mine.

The steelband play the ‘Hallelujah’ chorus note for note as Handel wrote it. It is also offered in the most simple and unadorned fashion, because I felt that this performance needed to be heard and seen in its purest form. So, the steelband is presented in a black box scenario, and the only colour expressed is seen in the players’ rainbow coloured tams (headwear) and the glittering chrome plating of the instruments they play.

Gordon Rohlehr states that

Connor’s use of the small steelband ensemble was as dramatically effective as her earlier presentation of the grand Bèlé in frozen time. In both instances -- and here, the later instance echoes and parallels the former and closes the circle of the play’s action -- a silence is created at the heart of the carnival’s vast mass of sound; and tribute is paid to Trinidadian genius and creativity. (Rohlehr 2003c: 53)

Therefore, in keeping with my subversive technique of using music as metaphor by measuring conventional renditions of Handel’s *Messiah* against carnivalised transformations of the same arias and/or choruses, throughout the production of *Carnival Messiah* presenting a conventional rendition of the ‘Hallelujah’ chorus on the steelband is my way of paying unambiguous tribute to both Handel and the inventors of the steel pan.

Figure 36: The Carnival Messiah Steelband



Act III, Scene 6*Halleluiah Chorus*

Set: **The steelband is placed and presented on a moving platform which travels from back to centre stage.**

Music: **The steelband play the ‘Halleluiah Chorus’**

From the late 1940s through to the mid 1960s both pan players and pan tuners refined their art (names and designs were frequently being altered and exchanged) and wave after wave of change swept through the steelband movement, revolutionising the state of pan music. Steelbands began to usurp the position of the string band as the most sought after music for accompanying the masquerade bands on carnival days.

Even seasonal music competitions, which had been introduced by upper class entrepreneurs and were judged by specifically British musical standards, began to include categories to accommodate the steelbands in recognition of their level of sophistication.

However, the steelband continued to be denied or, at best, given restricted access to the economic, technological, and social networks created by the colonial government and upper class elite; the very networks that could have supported, nurtured, and hastened the progress of the genre.

As a result, the steelband existed almost completely independently of these upper class support systems. This fostered a sense of self-sufficiency, pride, and self-worth directly associated with the eventual achievement of success of the musical form, and subsequently established an inherent distrust and resentment of anything remotely associated with the 'Establishment'. I would further suggest that the technological innovation of electronic amplification was, for steelbandsmen, strongly imbued with white, upper class, foreign, and colonial association and thus was perceived as a potential outside exploitative tool and a threat to the maintenance of traditional internal control of the steelband format. This suspicion continued into the twenty-first century.

Today, the steelbands' last traditional stronghold on carnival days is j'ouvert, when they take to the streets as revellers emerge from their homes and the all-night fetes which have just concluded. By midday, however, the steelbands have passed the last official spectators and reviewing stands and are returning to their yards. Most of them do not return to the carnival.

One of the steelband's greatest achievements has been its ability to successfully reconcile the national culture of Trinidad and Tobago with that of the western world, creating a musical hybrid of major significance and magnificence. This is why, in the *Carnival Messiah*, the steelband is given the responsibility of presenting the production's only untouched rendition of Handel's music.

Like the j'ouvert enactment, the history of the development of the steelband mirrors the history of the development of Trinidad and Tobago and its people, which in turn is a microcosm of the development of the Caribbean. It seemed

appropriate to prelude the artistic conclusion of proceedings with a Hallelujah of then and a ‘!Halleluliah!’ of now.

‘!HalleluliahH!’

‘!HalleluliahH!’ is the final aesthetic statement of the *Carnival Messiah* and is a carnivalised re-invention of the ‘Hallelujah’ chorus. It is an enormous collective improvisation, not only of various voices, but of various cultures, all of which are assigned equal space in the music, the dance, and the drama.

Because ‘!HalleluliahH!’ begins as a praise song but moves seamlessly into the Epilogue ‘Las’ Lap’ as the finale, its duration is in excess of twenty minutes.

Out of the steelband rendition of the Hallelujah chorus, ‘!HalleluliahH!’ is signalled first by the deep drone of synthesized keyboards and then by a solo ragga voice (Tom Briggs Davis) chanting the praise word ‘!HalleluliahH!’

In the Trinidad and Tobago performances I chose to use three ragga voices instead to lead the chanting (Ataklan, Tom Briggs Davis, and Brother Resistance). This is followed by a female solo gospel intervention during which a ragga-soca ground beat is established, which then remains the containing framework of rhythm throughout the piece.

Figure 37: A !HalleluliaH! Singer



Voices overlap in a mutual affirmation of their right to a space within the ‘chorus of the redeemed’ as the chorus enters singing a soca style alliteration of the word ‘!HalleluliaH!’ repeatedly.

The DJ rudely interrupts these proceedings at the end of the first alliterated chorus cycle with a sample of four bars of the most famous choral motif from Handel’s original writings. The end of the second alliterated chorus cycle is interrupted by a call and response rap. Rohlehr notes that

one can at times hear four or five different lines of improvisation taking place at the same time, contesting space in the vast chorus of life [...which is] dismantled, carnivalised, cannibalised and calibanised [...it becomes] a chorus that is made up of several choruses. (Rohlehr 2003c: 54-55)

Sometimes the voices sing words, sometimes they sing entire phrases taken from the oratorio, sometimes they sing revival style chants, sometimes they sing syllables, and sometimes the voices just re-create sounds.

‘!HalleluliaH!’ is really a grand song and dance number that swings easily between a multitude of varying and even opposing music and dance styles including ragga, ragga-soca, lavway, gospel, hip hop, rap, rapso, jazz, bhangra, indic, and classical genres and it is these styles which finally dictate the choreography.

Figure 38: !HalleluiaH! Jubilation



The message I wished to convey in ‘!HallcluliaH!’ is indicated midway through its performance, enwrapped in the Hindu chant ‘Hare Hare!’. It is a call for the acknowledgement of a universal spirituality. This is not only conveyed through a male chorus that chants the names of leaders of various world religions (‘Allah! Jah! God! Jehovah! Krishna! Christ! Mohammed! Oludumare!’), but also is mirrored in the poly-ethnic diversity of the cast as well as significant designs within the masquerade.

These all go towards suggesting that despite our differences we can all live in harmony together, in one space: this space, the Third Space, where the *Carnival Messiah* is located.

The chorus’s costumes are all based on modern representations of different religions, particularly prominent in the masquerade headpieces which showcase a variety of iconic shapes and designs such as Asian Minarets, Egyptian headgear, Christian bishop’s head gear, African ritual head-ties, and Rastafarian locks

Act III, Scene 7*!HalleluiaH!*

Dance/Visual: Entire chorus/cast in celebration featuring representations of the supremacy of Peace, Love and Harmony etc. All the cultures of the world as one

Drama: Celebratory

Music: **!HalleluiaH!**
Gospel/Soul/Hip Hop/ Soca/ Classical

Chant - Ragga Storyteller:

HalleluiaH, HalleluiaH feelins in meh belly when the
 Lord doth rock meh!

HalleluiaH, HalleluiaH feelins in meh belly when dey find
 dey cyan stop meh!

HalleluiaH, HalleluiaH feelins in meh belly as meh hips
 swing above

I've got to get, got to get, got to get...get down!

Gospel Solo Vocal: Yeah I need you Jesus

Soca Chorus Intro: Haa...le le le le le le luh...yah!

Soca Main Chorus: Haa le luh yah! X 4 Haa le luh! Haa...le le le luh...yah!
 (3 parts)

DJ on Decks: Hallelujah x 2 (classical chorus)

Chorus - All: He reigns x 5 (spoken)

Rap Solo: Yo dat boy sure knows how to reign!

Yeah man!

I love it!

Oresha Riddum: Dance and serious percussion accompanied by a rap

CHORUS SOPRANO VOICES/CLASSICAL

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth

CHORUS TENOR & BASS VOICES/CLASSICAL

For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth

CHORUS HIGH/HINDU STYLING VOICES

Hare Hare! X 4

CHORUS LOW VOICES

Allah, Jah, God, Jehova, Krishna, Christ, Mohammed,
Oludumare (Under hare hare!)

MAIN CHORUS/SOCA

Haa le luh yah! X 4 Haa le luh! Haa...le le le

CHANT: (MALE)

Call to prayer or decks

MAIN CHORUS: (CALL AND RESPONSE)

Funk groove with DJ, decks, and rap

SOLO CHILD TREBLE VOICE:

The kingdom of this world the kingdom of this world and
Christ is Lord

'And he shall reign for ever and ever' eventually emerges as the overriding chant, i.e. the metaphorical masquerade 'lavway' that will take the masqueraders (the audience) 'home' at the end of the carnival. Before we leave the 'band', however, there is one more 'big Mas' that we have to see, hear, and 'play', and that is the embodiment of the *Carnival Messiah*: Carnival Messiah as Mas'.

Act III, Scene 8**EPILOGUE*****Las' Lap******Carnival Messiah and !HalleluiaH! Finale***

Music: **!HalleluiaH! Chorus 'Outro'**
 And he shall reign forever and ever
 Lord of Lords and King of Kings

**SOLO CHANT / RAP IMPROVISATIONS OVER CHORUS BY ALL
 LEAD SOLOISTS**

Clary Salandy describes the Carnival Messiah costume thus:

this masquerade embodies the Holy Spirit and is a representation of the 'tongues of fire'. Its flames are the colour of a rich gold, represent energy and look like the fall of a waterfall of fire. She is twenty-eight feet tall and her profile looks like Rastafarian hair. She has the golden oval face of an African God. Her skirt can close or open, like a flower, or a flicker of flame. The width of the skirt takes up the breadth of the entire stage. She creates her own personal drama within the costume because she can control its skirt, by making the fabric flutter, or rotate, or fan outwards and then inwards. (Salandy 2004)

The Carnival Messiah masquerade makes her entrance during the final ten minutes of the show, beckoned by a chorus who welcome her arrival in a rising tide of jubilant emotion.

Dance/Visual: **The entire chorus/cast, dancing in celebration, move up the aisles of the theatre to create space on stage for the entrance of The Carnival Messiah Masquerade**

She enters slowly and majestically, with her skirts closed and held high above her head. When she finally reaches centre-stage she dramatically opens the skirt, creating a stunning vision of gold, yellow, orange, and copper that completely fills the stage as she begins to dance the masquerade. She looks completely breathtaking as she swirls and rotates, moving her skirts upwards and downwards, swinging and swaying, moving forwards and backwards.

The singing and dancing chorus leave the aisles of the theatre and return to the stage, surrounding the upheld skirts of the Carnival Messiah Mas'

The Carnival Messiah mas' moves upstage centre where she will remain, overseeing the proceedings, for the duration of the performance

All the characters of the production begin to cross the stage diagonally to take their curtain calls:

Ole Mas' characters

The !HalleluliaH! singers

The market children

Mary and Joseph

Ragga Storyteller/s

Hosanna Singers

The kathak dancer

Mother Earth and her two Hou'si

Mama God and her alter egos

Lone Disciple

Voice of Truth and the Kora player

Eshu, The Dark Angel

The Dove of Peace

The Minstrels/Urban Griots

The Carnival Messiah

The company indicate

Curtain Call:

- The Choir in the gallery**
- The DJ in the gallery**
- The Music Band on the stage bandstand**
- The entire cast dance on the stage**
- Lights fade to black,**
- the entire cast continue to dance on the stage**
- Lights fade up**
- The entire cast continue to dance on the stage**

Gordon Rohlehr comments upon the las' lap in these terms:

Far more prolonged than the ending of "J'ouvert", this post-Resurrection, post-Ascension, post-Apocalypse las lap of las laps is a complex praise-shout that grows progressively louder as it nears its end. While J'ouvert chants are simple, straightforward, one-dimensional iron -- string -- or mouth-band litanic choruses, las lap chanting is multi-vocal, contrapuntally and collectively improvised, as a multitude of voices and rhythms affirm their space "forever and ever" on the stage of eternal life. (Rohlehr 2003c: 55)

Lights fade to black, the entire cast exit the stage, except Carnival Messiah, Mama God, and her alter egos, Mother Earth, Eshu and the Dove of Peace who all remain onstage in frozen tableau.

The Lights slowly fade up to create a silhouette of the tableau.

The voices gradually fall silent until what remains (just like at the end of the j'ouvert) is the ring of a tenor steel pan against the drone of what Gordon Rohlehr intuitively describes as 'primal silence, darkness, space, void or eternity, the shapeless, horizonless, [Caribbean] sea that contains all life forever and ever' (Rohlehr 2003c: 56). The still and now small voice of the steel pan also subsides and is seamlessly replaced by the ring of iron, Ogun's metal. This is 'what

remains after God, Javeh and Olodumare have merged voices and rhythms: this chime of iron, principle of rhythm signaling the eternal possibility of renewal, even as it marks the end of Carnival and the *Carnival Messiah*' (Rohlehr 2003c: 56).

Lights slowly fade to black as music fades to silence. The tableau remains on stage, frozen in time and silence

Figure 39: Carnival Messiah in silhouette - !HalleluliaH!



CHAPTER SEVEN***CARNIVAL MESSIAH: THE PARADIGM***

I identify black and ethnic minority communities in Britain today as mostly originating in and coming from the Caribbean and Indian sub-continent, and it is their presence here since the mid 1940s that has transformed Britain into what is often described today as a multicultural society.

More recently, the presence of these communities has been augmented by smaller groups of non-European minorities from Africa, the Middle East, China, the Far East, and Latin America. Their impact on further diversifying British society and culture has been immediate and significant (Hall 1999: 18). In twenty-first century Britain one cannot ignore the impact of mass eastern European immigration on British society.

When I first came to the city of Leeds in 1990, I encountered a black Caribbean community in a crisis that was characterised by prevailing conditions of alienation and fragmentation. As this black Caribbean community struggled to gain acceptance within the metropolitan centre, I observed that the adverse conditions they faced reflected not only the position of most black and other non-white second-generation immigrant communities in Britain but also that of quite a wide variety of new European immigrants.

The fragmentation, uncertainty, alienation, and anxiety within these migrant sectors had been fuelled by persistent racism coupled with the increasing disenfranchisement of their communities. Alongside this, the communities

experienced a dawning realisation that legal equity did not automatically translate into political, social, or economic equality for them.

Crucially, *Carnival Messiah* was conceived as a tool of re-articulation in direct response to this crisis. Bell hooks remarks:

understanding marginality as a position and place of resistance is crucial for oppressed colonised people [...but] if we only view the margin as a sign marking the condition of our pain and deprivation, then certain hopelessness and despair, a deep nihilism penetrates in a destructive way [...] I want to say that these margins have been both sites of repression and sites of resistance. (hooks 1990: 149-51)

I offer *Carnival Messiah* as an intervention: a message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and positivity; an inclusive space where we can recover ourselves, where we can move in solidarity to erase the categories of coloniser and colonised and where marginality can become a space of non-confrontational resistance. It is in this Third Space that those who would promulgate essentialist, elitist cultural hegemony can be shown the error of their ways.

In the first instance, it is in this Third Space that all sectors of the British population would adopt inclusive global identities, which would draw upon outward-looking histories and celebrations of diversity. This would be a new way of negotiating difference which could not be reduced to a binary either/or concept, and in which 'difference' could not be erased or traded. Rather, our difference would constantly be negotiated.

The popular culture of Britain today has been transformed by a rich profusion of contemporary hybrid and cross-over cultural forms in music, dance, street-style,

fashion, and film, as well as the innovative use of multi-media techniques which mark the production of the new and transgressive alongside the traditional and the preservation of the past. However, to date this kind of work and its practitioners have been relegated to or located within an ethnic enclave, which by implication suggests that non-European practice only reflects the cultural idioms in which they are composed as if only the individuals involved have ethnicities.

This movement of critical consciousness regarding contemporary hybrid and cross-over cultural forms has in fact long breached these boundaries. However, these forms are only allowed into the public domain and mainstream when permitted by the cultural gate-keepers of Britain. Their visibility has depended on a few pioneering figures and the marathon efforts of the small, local, and community-based theatre companies. Many practitioners and companies surface, briefly flourish, and then pass away quietly from view into an early and undeserved obscurity.

Unless the younger generation of black British artistes have access to a quality cultural repertoire from the margin -- that is, unless their particular ethnic minority can understand and practice the art from the inside to some extent at least -- they will lack the cultural capital of their own heritage as a base from which to engage other traditions. Stuart Hall describes these individuals as becoming 'culturally "mono-lingual" if not silenced'; 'deprived of the capacity to speak -- in a world which requires us all to be or become culturally bi- if not multi-lingual'. Hall goes on to suggest that '[t]here is no intrinsic contradiction between the preservation and presentation of 'other cultures' and [...] the engagement with the production of new diasporic forms' (Hall 1999: 22).

Carnival Messiah is therefore about validating performance art as a non-confrontational, shared, cathartic, and catalysing platform of emotional and aesthetic experience. It aims to play a healing role in the lives of all people, unfixing existing boundaries of difference while at the same time providing a notional balance of equality by creating a place of safety, hope, affirmation, and celebration and a quantitative strategy for the transformation of all peoples.

Carnival Messiah establishes a dynamic interface between hospitality and accommodation that is exemplified by its overarching pre-occupation with creativity, innovation, and inclusion. *Carnival Messiah* seeks to reach successfully a range of people, from the global intellectual elite to those who are excluded and marginalised, introducing all of them to a new politics of recognition and celebration over and above those of equal opportunity, multiculturalism and programmes of cultural diversity. As such it works towards a new paradigm that is characterised by notions of inclusion and balance.

Carnival Messiah, unique in its sense of hospitality, focuses on the centrality of culture by its admittance and acceptance of all cultures. The term cultural diversity here should not equate to cultural separatism or imply some kind of cultural assimilation. It should instead explore issues of difference and otherness in terms of cultural parallels and divergences; both cultural uniqueness and similarity.

Carnival Messiah, then, should be viewed as a unique paradigm. It contains a progressive mission with a complex assignment that constitutes the foundation of

a dynamic, multifaceted metaphor and it is *Carnival Messiah* the aesthetic, as metaphor, that enables the production to function as a unique instrument of postcolonial liberation.

Carnival Messiah has two principal and inter-related objectives that address Stuart Hall's observations that I cited earlier. *Carnival Messiah* presents itself as a stand-alone professional aesthetic creation and, at the same time, is a vehicle and catalyst for implementing strategies of non-confrontational resistance through its education programme, working to target and appease some of the problems and omissions faced by many disenfranchised youth within Britain today.

These same strategies were used by the peoples of the historical Caribbean between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Today, they are techniques that can activate social re-cultivation and regeneration through the promotion of growth and intellectual expansion, while at the same time engendering processes of enlightenment, transformation, equality, fairness, and social empowerment through aesthetic practice.

The successful achievement of these objectives necessitates the confluence of five key elements. These include the aesthetic content of *Carnival Messiah* as artefact; the professional creative and teaching input of the *Carnival Messiah* creative team; the identification, recruitment, and participation of a cohort of artistically inexperienced community participants through a series of open auditions; the participation and performance of a core professional performing company auditioned by the *Carnival Messiah* creative team; and the attendance

and response of an audience to the combined presentation of *Carnival Messiah* the aesthetic form.

Deeply embedded within the aesthetic cultural materials of *Carnival Messiah*, and camouflaged within the music of *Messiah* and the act of 'playing de Mas', are the ephemeral, emotional, and empirical machinery -- the instruments of liberation -- that are waiting release. When combined with the human resources gathered in the way previously described, these instruments of liberation activate and propel all the participants and recipients into a place that sustains and enables processes of transformation, equality, and empowerment to take place.

Using this Caribbean-derived aesthetic material as a multi-dimensional metaphor 'in a certain kind of way' to translate ordinary people across realms of new experience, *Carnival Messiah* thus introduces and re-imagines alternative dimensions to historically immovable hegemonic positions of cultural authority.

Benítez-Rojo observes that

The one thing that expressing ourselves "in a certain kind of way" through performance and rhythm achieves is to displace and dispose the participants towards an aesthetic territory of pure pleasure, an aesthetic whose desire is non-violence [...] dancing or playing an instrument "in a certain kind of way" [...] attempts to move an audience (and its performers) into a realm where the tensions that lead to confrontation are rendered inoperative. ([1992] 2001: 23)

Caribbean Carnivals and other related folk festival techniques and enactments defuse violence: either the violence of histories organized by slavery, despotic colonialism, and the plantation or, even more relevantly, the blind contemporary violence of today that is led by disenfranchised British youth. Like Benítez-Rojo, I see this cultural discourse as an attempt to neutralise violence and to refer

society to trans-historical codes of nature through both real and symbolic sacrifice.

Therefore, in formulating *Carnival Messiah*, in the recruitment and training of a large segment of inexperienced and, in many cases, disenfranchised black and other British participants as members of the community company (to portray 'The People of the World' in the production) is not an act of charity or the employment of 'positive action', nor an economic theatrical ploy to avoid paying professional fees. It is instead a very unique and strategic exercise toward people-empowerment.

It is an exercise in the genesis of creating a unified, cross-cultural global amalgamation in a bid toward achieving a new state of critical consciousness and integration. It offers an attempt to symbolically neutralise violence by providing a contextual platform through performance for discourse and exchange, which supports the notion of cultural transformation, an inclusive worldview, and a shared narrative that celebrates difference and diversity in one space: the space I refer to as a Third Space.

The new territory that I define as a Third Space is a space of many voices and unfixed cultural identities. Third Space is the site of transformation and of multi-consciousness, and the place where *Carnival Messiah* is securely located. Rather than refuse multiple cultural identities with their idioms, symbols, and assumptions, *Carnival Messiah* instead simply appropriates them, re-imagines them, and creates a new and dynamic co-existent cultural space.

This Third Space encourages new perspectives, the elimination of boundaries between margin and centre, subversions, transgressions, and the creation of a new universe where all difference is affirmed and celebrated.

Carnival Messiah thus aspires to the achievement of integrity of being and the collapse of entrenched and negative notions of difference, whilst simultaneously guiding its participants and recipients towards the attainment of a critical consciousness which can only be achieved through self-discovery and self-recovery.

From within this Third Space *Carnival Messiah* strives to exemplify notions of forgiveness, reconstruction, self-affirmation, healing, and unification as an allegory for enabling transformation and enlightenment. *Carnival Messiah* thus becomes an instrument of empowerment and a tool of postcolonial liberation, which takes all of those it touches to a new space, a new place, a new dimension, giving them a new tolerance and understanding, and providing them with new hope and a new future.

The objectives of *Carnival Messiah's* progressive Community and Education programme are: to provide specialised vocational training; to provide a unique artistic inter-cultural and interdisciplinary experience; to highlight carnival practice as a distinct art form; to develop an understanding of the colonial experience; to develop an understanding of the socio-political implications of the migrant experience; to provide social empowerment through arts practice; to develop professional and life skills through arts practice; to create positive

employment prospects for its participants; to identify, capture the imagination of, and draw new audiences; and to enhance and celebrate cultural diversity in Britain in the third millennium.

Carnival Messiah, equipped with the resources to enthral and inspire, brings creative people, educators, families, audiences, and participants together in an environment where difference is celebrated and learning is seen as a way to widen horizons and participation, to visualise ambitious futures, to unearth paths to future employment, and allow all to possess England's rich and diverse cultural heritage.

Carnival Messiah's diverse and inspirational community, education, and outreach programme operates from within the heart of the community. It places creativity, creative thinking, good practice, and learning at the very centre of delivering its core educative objectives through accessible and inventive programmes, training, and professional performance experience.

The programme specifically targets voluntary and community participation as well as young aspiring professional artists. It is these people who will go on to become informed and experienced performers and the new audiences of the future. In each community we target the youth, people with an interest in the arts from voluntary organisations, the unemployed, artists, performers, writers, carnivalists, educators, professionals (established or at the beginning of their career), and so called 'amateurs'.

The programme consists of components that are aimed at identifying individual needs, providing counselling, guidance and practical artistic skills development training, and in particular identifying and addressing the individual's particular disadvantages in a planned and realistic way. This aims to assist the individual either into future employment within the Arts/Education industry, or provide them with specialised knowledge of a new artistic and cultural context, understanding, and language.

The programme acknowledges that within our target group of beneficiaries and apprentices some may face difficulties varying according to their age and general social situation. Some will be under severe social and financial pressures as well as in some cases experiencing racial alienation. They will also be experiencing all the associated emotional and follow-on consequences of these circumstances. The programme will endeavour to provide constant positive reinforcement by raising their self-esteem and levels of expectation and achievable goals, aiming to increase their 'feel good' factor, and countering the negativity and depression that can result from this particular set of social circumstances.

Carnival Messiah has people from all over the world -- all colours, all creeds -- and it's about empowering them, it's a big family, and once you come into the family you don't leave: even if you're miserable and grumpy and a pain in the arse, we keep you in, because that's what families do. (Connor: 2004)

Carnival Messiah is characterised by a dynamic and ground-breaking community, education, training, and outreach programme that culminates in professional performances which reflect the most vivid and vibrant aspects of contemporary and historic Caribbean culture. An average of ninety community

performers of diverse ages, ethnic, and social backgrounds are recruited with a view to their participation in the final professional outcome.

Carnival Messiah offers a performing arts apprenticeship that includes induction and skills workshops, teaching across all art forms with an emphasis focussed toward participants gaining hands-on experience, with real deadlines, and professional skills and expectations. Successful attendance and completion of rehearsals and skills workshops or work shadowing and performances of *Carnival Messiah* will all count towards providing the vocational and academic basis for future professional study and/or activity.

One of the objectives of *Carnival Messiah* is to reach all its participants -- professional, and non-professional (on or off stage), management and technical staff -- and, most importantly, audiences (traditional and new), through art, music, dance, masquerade, and theatre, and by providing a unique vehicle which not only celebrates issues of cultural diversity through arts and social practice, but strategically promotes an ethos of multiculturalism by providing direct access and participation. No one will be excluded; all are welcome, young, old, and infirm: 'the right to ownership is attendance on the day'. *Carnival Messiah* is all about art and empowerment.

The *Carnival Messiah*'s community, education, and outreach programme content is made up of ten modules, some of which are compulsory and some optional and based on the aesthetic content of *Carnival Messiah* the show. These explore,

from a practice-based aesthetic as well as an academic perspective, all areas of the *Carnival Messiah* production.

The ten modules are: 'Performance Skills and Masquerade Making -- Fundamental Techniques'; 'Chorale'; 'Dramatic Ensembles'; 'Solo/Individual Performance'; 'The Minstrels'; 'The Band'; 'The Steelband'; 'Technical'; 'Administration'; and 'Cultural Theory'.

The programme is delivered at three levels: Level I (Beginners); Level II (Intermediate); and Level III (Advanced). For a full description of all the modules taught as part of the *Carnival Messiah* Community and Education programme please see the supporting materials of this thesis. Here follow the module descriptions for two of the compulsory modules, MU 111 'Performance Skills and Masquerade Making Techniques', and MU112 'Chorale'.

Module Title:	Performance Skills & Masquerade Making Techniques
Module Code:	111
Credit Weighting:	20 credits
Status:	Compulsory
Assessment:	Continuous assessment: 50% Professional performances: 50%
Pre-requisites:	Satisfactory completion of the Community auditions.
Overall Content:	

This module examines the fundamental skills and techniques of music, dance, drama, and masquerade, through the practice, observation, and analysis of the principals of each of these performance and making disciplines, in so far as they relate to the overall production and performance of *Carnival Messiah*.

MUSIC

Content:

A concentrated series of workshops focussing on the dual heritage aspects of all the aesthetic enactments portrayed in *Carnival Messiah*. These include the carnival of j'ouvert, Shango ('But who may abide the day of his coming'), Reggae ('For unto us a child is born'), Bhangra ('Hosanna'), classical/jazz ('He was despised'), classical/jazz ('Gethsemane'), classical/jazz ('Hades'), classical/gospel ('How beautiful are the feet'), western and Caribbean folk (Whoopi Band medley), and classical/folk/jazz/gospel/Hindu/Islamic calypso/reggae ('!Hallelujah!'), with appropriate vocal or instrumental tutors.

The styles and genres explored will encompass and generally explore the Caribbean indigenous folk music tradition and how it relates to Trinidad and Tobago, the eighteenth-century western classical music tradition, and most specifically how it relates to the music of Handel, (*Messiah* Oratorio); the West African tradition of Ritual Chant; the American Jazz and Blues tradition; the Islamic tradition of Tassa drumming and Hosey; the Hindu tradition of Holi; the Gospel tradition of the United States; western folk music traditions; and contemporary popular music traditions such as rock, pop, reggae, hip hop, soca, indie, and Bhangra

Learning outcomes:

Students should be able to:

Develop technical and interpretative skills for the voice in each style and genre;

Development manipulative skills on specific instruments;

Broaden their musical experience through the exploration of a wide and varied repertoire;

Perform confidently and with authority;
 Consolidate skills of performing in front of a live audience.

DANCE

Content:

The development of the body as an expressive instrument focussing on the dual heritage aspects of 'J'ouvert' (traditional Carnival dance); 'But who may abide the day of his coming' (African ritual dance), 'For unto us a child is born' (reggae dance), 'Hosanna' (Asian dance), 'He was despised' (contemporary and ballet dance), 'Gethsemane' (contemporary and ballet dance), 'Hades' (contemporary and ballet dance), 'How beautiful are the feet' (contemporary dance), Whoopi Band medley (folk dance), and '!Hallelujah!' (contemporary dance), all with appropriate dance and movement tutors.

Learning outcomes:

Students should be able to:

- Demonstrate basic principles of dance technique related to each style and genre;
- Demonstrate co-ordination and spatial awareness;
- Develop body awareness through observation and analysis;
- Explore and demonstrate a range of dynamics;
- Demonstrate an understanding of group interaction and relationship;
- Explore stimuli for improvisation;
- Develop individual and group expression and communication;
- Show awareness of focus, intention and presence;
- Develop a degree of strength, flexibility and stamina.

DRAMA

Content:

An orientation in relation to key concepts of mimesis and theatre. An introduction to acting, improvisation, and devising, focussing on the dual heritage aspects of 'J'ouvert' (Traditional Trinidad Carnival), 'But who may

abide the day of his coming' (African cult ritual), 'For unto us a child is born' (contemporary Caribbean), 'Hosanna' (Hindu, Islamic, and Christian references), 'He was despised' (Christian references), Gethsemane (Christian references), 'Hades' (Christian references), 'How beautiful are the feet' (Christian references), Whoopi Band medley (indigenous western and Caribbean folk traditions), and '!Hallelujah!' (contemporary popular culture).

Learning outcomes:

Students should be able to:

Demonstrate appropriate basic performance skills, in particular, clarity, precision, flexibility, and sensitivity;

Demonstrate appropriate basic performance skills in movement and vocal techniques;

Demonstrate appropriate basic devising skills from self, others, action and narrative;

Work with increasing confidence with others in the workshop situation;

Work as part of a creative ensemble in a variety of rehearsal situations;

Work as part of a creative ensemble in a professional performance situation.

MAS MAKING

Content:

The fundamental skills and techniques used in the production of dramatic masquerade costumes will be explored through the process of realising over 400 designs for the production of *Carnival Messiah*.

Students will develop an in-depth understanding of the major theoretical and practical building blocks of vocabulary within the Caribbean Arts aesthetic, through the acquisition of technical expertise and knowledge of appropriate production and making methods. This will be structured around the skill areas of mask making, design structure, pattern cutting and sewing, painting, and decorative techniques. In particular, students will be responsible for designing and making in part their own j'ouvert costumes and Hades masks.

All of the above will be pursued in conjunction with material explored in MU120, 'Cultural Theory'.

Learning outcomes:

Students will:

Develop an understanding of the interface between costume and performance within the context of carnival masquerade and theatre;

Develop experience of expressive characterisation through the making and use of masks;

Understand the context and development of traditional Trinidadian and European carnival characters and acquire knowledge the fundamental/appropriate costume making techniques required;

Through the process of making, develop an ability to interpret and realise a design accurately, and with flair;

Develop imaginative visual and three-dimensional communication skills;

Develop an understanding of the importance of producing work of high quality;

Develop an understanding of the importance of the relationship between the designer, the aesthetic, the maker/s and the performers;

Develop skills of team work;

Identify and develop personal creative skills related to their particular area of heritage interest and artistic expertise;

Develop skills which enable them to work confidently within a range of new materials;

Gain an understanding of the Health and Safety implications with regard to the design and making of masquerade costumes, as well as the monitoring the workplace and showing environment.

Module Title:	Chorale
Module Code:	MU 112 (delivered concurrently with MU111)
Credit Weighting:	20 credits
Status:	Compulsory

Assessment:

Continuous: 50%

Professional performances: 50%

Pre-requisites:

Satisfactory completion of the Community auditions.

Content:

This module presupposes no Caribbean-related background. Thus lectures, seminars, master-classes, performance workshops, discussion, listening, some descriptive analysis and practical interpretation, and performance of oral tradition are all integral components of this module.

Students will develop a degree of familiarity with some of the outstanding forms of artistic expression (all of which encompass issues related to expressions of dual heritage) in the Caribbean indigenous folk aesthetic and the European/classical aesthetic tradition that invariably underpins their authentic interpretation.

Students will be introduced and nurtured in techniques both for cognitively describing all of the above as well as performing them.

There are ten major enactments in the production of *Carnival Messiah* that involve the community company/chorus (People of the World). These are 'J'ouvert', 'But who may abide the day of his coming', 'For unto us a child is born', 'Hosanna', 'He was despised', 'Gethsemane', 'Hades', 'How beautiful are the feet', Whoopi Band medley, and '!Hallelujah!'.

In conjunction with the above, and in order to create a live interpretation of what is essentially an oral heritage tradition, this module MU112 will run concurrently with MU111, 'Fundamental skills of Performance and Masquerade Making'. Students will develop an in-depth understanding of the major theoretical and practical building blocks of the vocabulary of the Caribbean performing arts aesthetic (oral heritage tradition) through the development of technical expertise and the knowledge of appropriate repertoire. These will be structured around the

disciplines of drama, music, dance, and masquerade, including both practical and cognitive contextual perspectives.

The module will be delivered through performance workshops, seminars lectures, master-classes, directed listening, and professional performances.

Learning Outcomes (theoretical):

To formulate, contribute, criticise, and show (through discussion and performance using the aesthetic manifestations of *Carnival Messiah*) key aspects of issues relating to the heritage and historic contexts of: the African slave trade and its impact on Britain; Handel's oratorio *Messiah*; and the emergence of contemporary Caribbean enactments of carnival directly from the practice of European expansionism, colonialism, African enslavement, and the Triangular Trade.

To develop constructive critical facilities relating to the theatre of carnival as incorporated within African tradition, which is understood to be a mixture of elements of European, Caribbean, African, and Asian theatrical aesthetics, musicianship, movement, choreography, fashion, style, and popular iconography.

To develop and expand constructive critical facilities relating to other Caribbean artistic aesthetics and praxis and other popular music aesthetic and praxis which are understood to be a mixture of theatre, music, dance, masquerade, fashion, and popular iconography.

Learning Outcomes: Oral Heritage (practical heritage workshops)

To enable students to perform confidently and with authority in each style and genre;

To develop skills of performing in front of a live audience;

To develop skills of communication, expression and interpretation, ensemble ability and ability to sustain a performance;

To develop the relationship of the performer to the performance, performance discipline, physical mastery, response to directorial guidance, stylistic accuracy, and musicality;

To identify and develop manipulative skills and techniques related to the student's area of artistic expertise;

To develop and expand constructive critical facilities relating to other Caribbean artistic aesthetic and praxis and other popular music aesthetic and praxis which are understood to be a mixture of theatre, music, dance, masquerade, fashion, and popular iconography.

Here follows one component of the above mentioned lecture and practical workshop series:

J'OUVERT **To be delivered over a period of ten sessions (40 hours) in a series of four dedicated lectures and nine practical heritage workshops**

Lecture no.: **1 (introductory)**

Lecture name: **Cannes Brulees and the emergence of J'ouvert**

Duration: **1 hour**

Tutor: **Geraldine Connor**

Content:

The history of j'ouvert is essentially the history of the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago. The j'ouvert enactment of Trinidad Carnival today is a living legacy of the history and heritage of Trinidad and Tobago. It contains a true historical and contemporary account of all the cultural transformations and abrogations that have taken place and continue to take place within the society, not in the least those caused by the institution of slavery, colonialism, and their legacy.

Lecture no.: **2 (introductory)**

Lecture name: **Definitions, Structure and Interpretation of J'ouvert in Carnival Messiah**

Duration: 1 hour

Content:

The third scene of the Prologue in *Carnival Messiah* is the Overture. In the western classical music tradition, an overture would consist of a fairly lengthy musical interlude containing excerpts or allusions to the main musical themes to be found in overall presentation, usually an opera or symphony. *Carnival Messiah* instead subverts the western musical definition of overture by using the j'ouvert enactment to metaphorically record and highlight many of the major historical moments and developments in Trinidad and Tobago, from Cannes Brulees through to contemporary carnival practice today.

Lecture no.: 3

Lecture name: J'ouvert enactments; Dragon and Imps: Cannes Brulees: Pierrot Grenade; Midnight Robbers: Bele Dancers; Fancy Sailors: Firemen & Stokers

Duration: 1 hour

Delivery: In conjunction with practical workshop 1

Practical workshop: 1 & 2

Workshop name: J'ouvert enactments; Dragon and Imps: Cannes Brulees flag dance: Pierrot Grenade: Bele Dancers; Fancy Sailors: Firemen & Stokers

Duration: 7 hours

Tutors: 3

Workshop Leaders: 8

Content:

During the j'ouvert enactment in *Carnival Messiah*, several contrasting choreographed events take place in a rapid succession of visual and musical images. Their simultaneity, like carnival itself, spans many years and reflects both historical and contemporary Trinidad. Most importantly, though, this

'impressionistic' ballet is supported by a variety of roving onlookers and street people, with all the musical references being made through and accompanied by a pan band, a string band, and the chantuelles or lead singers, who actually make up the onlookers and street people.

Interspersed amongst all of this, and used to constitute the carnival background sound, are identifiable snippets of the first four bars of Handel's first overture, taken from the *Messiah* oratorio. This first occurs in medley with a chantuelle-led, self-composed carnival chant, which uses as its only lyric the word 'J'ouvert' to underpin the entire performance.

Lecture no:	4
Lecture name:	J'ouvert enactments; Police & Tief: Blue Devils; Dame Lorraine: Stick Fight; Spiritual Baptists: Street dance; las lap'
Duration:	1 hour
Delivery:	In conjunction with practical workshop 1
Practical workshops:	3 & 4
Workshop name:	J'ouvert enactments; Police & Tief: Blue Devils; Street dance; Las lap'
Duration:	7 hours
Tutors:	3
Workshop Leaders:	8

In Level I (Beginner) the participants must complete a total of ninety credits of practice and study from three compulsory modules. They are the completion of 'Performance Skills and Masquerade Making: Fundamental Techniques', 'Chorale', and 'Cultural Theory', requiring an overall minimum of 106 sessions or 424 hours attendance.

In Level II (Intermediate) the participants must complete 120 credits of work. These must include the completion of 'Performance Skills and Masquerade Making: Fundamental Techniques', 'Chorale', and 'Cultural Theory', plus another compulsory module of our allocation, requiring an overall minimum of 116 sessions or 464 hours overall attendance.

In Level III (Advanced) the participants must complete 140 credits of work. This must include the completion of 'Performance Skills and Masquerade Making: Fundamental Techniques', 'Chorale', and 'Cultural Theory', plus another compulsory module at Level II of our allocation, as well as one Optional module, i.e. 'Dramatic Ensembles'; 'Solo/Individual Performance'; 'The Minstrels (understudy)'; 'The Band'; 'The Steelband: Technical'; or 'Administration', with a minimum of 116 sessions or 464 hours attendance.

Each participant is assigned to one lead assessor. This lead assessor is responsible for managing the overall assessment profile of the participant. The participant will be assessed by specialist assessors (one of them being the lead assessor) in the four practical disciplines of music, dance, drama, and

masquerade as they pertain to the professional rehearsal and performance requirements of the *Carnival Messiah* production.

The final assessment adjudication will be made in conjunction with the lead assessor and the other discipline assessors as well as the participant's mentor. This adjudication will be made against the specific criteria outlined for each module in the *Carnival Messiah* education programme validation document. The first assessment takes place at the end of the MC111 Fundamental Techniques module, the second at the end of the professional rehearsal period, and the third assessment at the end of the professional performance period of *Carnival Messiah*.

Each participant will be assigned a mentor. This mentor cannot be the same person as their lead assessor. The mentor will act as an example of good practice as well as advise and guide the participant through the professional rehearsal and performance period. The mentor will also act as a confidant and be responsible for monitoring the general overall progress and well-being of the participant.

Assessment templates will be devised by age category (A -- 12 years and under, B -- 13 to 17 years, or C -- 17 years and over) and assessment level (1 -- Beginner, 2 -- Intermediate, or 3 -- Advanced) for each module available in the *Carnival Messiah* Education Programme. Each discipline will be assessed individually and then an overall grade will be calculated. The criteria used to determine the assessment will be based on the stated content of the module, and the assessment will be taken from the learning outcomes outlined in the module description.

All participants are required to complete an evaluation form based on the course content, course delivery, and learning outcomes of the *Carnival Messiah* education programme. The first evaluation will take place at the end of the 'Fundamental Techniques' module, the second evaluation at the end of the professional rehearsal period, and the third evaluation at the end of the professional performance period of *Carnival Messiah*.

**CARNIVAL MESSIAH AT HAREWOOD HERITAGE COMMUNITY,
EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMME**

STAFFING AND EDUCATION TEAM

Director of Education & Artistic Director:

Geraldine Connor*

Director of Programme:

Ava Hutchinson*

Harewood Heritage Advisor:

Terrence Suthers*

Community Liason:

Sheila Howarth*

Harewood Learning & Access officer:

Jennifer Auty

Co-Director:

Mark Tillotson

Musical Director:

Micheal Lovelock*

Chorcographer:

Carole La Chappelle

Costume & Masquerade:

Clary Salandy

Chorus Master:

Michael Steele- Eytle

Masquerade:

Clary Salandy

Steelband:

Dudley Nesbitt/Michael Steele-Eytle*

Rehearsal Pianist:

Michael Lovelock

Rehearsal percussionist:

Danny Templeman

Assistant Choreographer:

David Hamilton*

Heritage Workshop Leaders full-time:

Chantelle Davis
Camille Quamina
Emmanuel Egypto
Stella Litras
Genevieve Say
Sophina Maynard

Heritage Workshop Leaders part-time:

Kirsty Almeida
Marvin George
Karlene Wray
Paulette Morris

Visiting Lecturers:

Dr. Douglas Hamilton -- Harewood History
Tony Wallace -- Black British role models
Dr Geetha Upadaya -- Asian dance heritage
Kevin Farmer -- Barbados Museum
Marvin George -- Theatre of j'ouvert
Tony Hall – The J'ouvert Carnival Tradition
William Rea – African Masks
David Lammy – Minister of Culture
Baroness Lola Young – DCMS
Dr Carl Hylton - African Enslavement
Prof. Gus John – African Enslavement
Jane Troughton – Harewood Handel Archive
Diane Abbott – MP
Dr. Jon Finch – William Wilberforce

* These individuals will be required for the full duration of the project.

THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION TEACHING TEAM

The Community, Education, and Outreach programme will be directed by Geraldine Connor PhD Cultural Studies (Leeds), MMus Ethnomusicology (London), L.R.S.M., Dip. Ed., who is also the conceiver, co-author, composer, and artistic director of *Carnival Messiah*. The programme will be managed and administered by Ava Hutchinson Agard Cert. Ed., L.T.C.L., A.T.C.L. Her core team, who are all fully trained teachers, lecturers, and practitioners, will include Mark Tillotson, co-author and co-director, theatre director, actor, and commedia dell'arte specialist; Carol La Chapelle, international choreographer; David Hamilton, Associate Choreographer; Clary Salandy, Masquerade and Costume Designer and Artistic Director of Mahogany Arts; Musical Director Michael Lovelock; Choral Director Michael Steele-Eytle; and Steelband Director Dudley Nesbitt. This team will be augmented by approximately eight specialist visiting lecturers and ten heritage workshop leaders.

COMMUNITY LIASON

To ensure the overall success, the Community Liaison position will be one of the most crucial roles within the project. This individual, Sheila Howarth, has been sourced locally and will work in tandem with Harewood's Learning and Access Officer, Jennifer Auty, and the *Carnival Messiah* at Harewood Programme Director of the Community, Education, and Outreach programme, Ava Hutchinson.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION TECHNICAL CREW

Company Manager: Helen Gaynor

Stage manager: Witty Forde

Chaperones: TBC.

CHAPERONES

These personnel are to be sourced and trained locally. Their number will be determined in direct ratio to the number of participants under 16 years of age.

COMMUNITY CAST

These performers are drawn from existing choirs, dance groups, theatre groups, multi-disciplinary arts departments of schools, colleges and universities, as well as the general public. There are no age restrictions although young people aged 16-25 have been targeted.

All members of the Community Cast/'People of the World' Chorus are called upon to vigorously sing, dance, and dramatise throughout the production.

TRANSFORMATIONS

Here follows a cross-section of a few snapshots which highlight the influence that *Carnival Messiah* has had upon the lives and careers of some of its participants.

Jonathan Bishop first participated as a child in the community chorus at the tender age of 9, in the 2003 production in Trinidad and Tobago, and then again in 2004, and in 2007 at Harewood House. Jonathan successfully auditioned for the Sylvia Young School of Performing Arts in London in 2005. During this time, among many other accolades, he has won the professional role of the child **Simba** in the Disney production *Lion King* in London's West End. He has also appeared on the X Factor.

"Being involved in Carnival Messiah is an honour for me because this is the show that made me who I am today! After I had done the first show, my heart was full of desire to do more. It changed my life and there was no turning back: I now pursue a professional career in dancing, singing and acting. Thank you Carnival Messiah for helping me find me, my life, my dream and my future, at such a young age".

Emmanuel Egypto hails from the Philippines and has performed with *Carnival Messiah* since 1994, first as a member of the chorus in 1994, 1995, 1999, 2002, and 2003, and then in the leading role of Eshu, The Dark Angel, in 2004 and 2007. He came to us 'as a walk-in off the

street'. He has since gone on to complete a foundation dance course at The National School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds, Performing Arts at Newcastle College, and a BA(Hons) Degree in Dance at Sunderland University. Emmanuel is Founder and Director of his own dance company, *Magic Sixteen*. Before *Carnival Messiah* he had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Karlene Wray is a Yorkshire-based dancer/singer/actor, whose knowledge and artistic experience began at the age of 13 with *Carnival Messiah* in 1999. She went on to achieve a BA (Hons) Degree in Performing Arts from Roehampton University. Her most recent professional engagement was in Theatre Royal Stratford East's production of *The Harder They Come* in which she played a leading role. In 2007, Karlene played the professional leading role of Mary, minstrel in *Carnival Messiah*. She is currently a featured swing performer/actress/singer in the London West End production of Disney's musical *The Lion King*. Before *Carnival Messiah* she had no knowledge or previous experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Genevieve Say has participated in *Carnival Messiah* since 1995 at the age of 11 as part of the community chorus, and in a professional capacity as a lead dancer since 2002. She has danced several roles: Mama God Alter Ego and Thief on the Cross in the 2002 and 2007 productions. She graduated in 2006 with a first class BA (Hons) Degree in Performing Arts - Dance from LIPA. She presently makes her living as a performer and choreographer. Before *Carnival Messiah* she had no knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Tom Briggs Davis first came into contact with *Carnival Messiah* in 1997 while studying for a BA (Hons) Degree in Popular Music Studies at Bretton Hall College of the University of Leeds. He is very gifted singer, song-writer, composer, teacher, and performer. In *Carnival Messiah* Tom created the role of The Ragga Storyteller and has performed in all its manifestations to date. Tom is also a founding member and creative

director of *The Goose Performance Collective*. Before *Carnival Messiah* he had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

LS7 Results Theatre Company is led by **Chantelle Davis**, (dancer, actor, writer, and director). All sixty of its members -- professional and community -- benefited socially, artistically, and educationally from participation or as audience in the West Yorkshire Playhouse productions of *Carnival Messiah* in 1999 and 2002. Some also took part in the Trinidad and Tobago productions of 2003 and 2004. Of particular note are **Chantelle Davis, Sheila Howarth, Michelle Scally Clarke, Nkem Emenike, Saffia Morris, Claire Howarth, Simon Howarth, Sophina Maynard, Hayley Mort, Olivia Buckley, Denmarc Creary, Regina Eigbe, Danielle Wyle, Dominic York, Cherelle Davis, Cassandra Walker, Lauren Willerton, and Rico Robinson**. These young people have secured funding from several public bodies, including ACE-Yorkshire, and gone on to write, produce, and perform in several of their own professional productions and training workshops. Before *Carnival Messiah* they had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Ayodele Jones El-Hadaad is a Yorkshire-based choreographer and dancer trained at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. Her knowledge and artistic experience of carnival began in 1999 when she created the role of the Doves in 'RedeemeR'. She also performed this role in the 2002 and 2007 productions. Most recently she has teamed up with Rhian Kempadoo to form a company that uses carnival as its basis for all its teaching. Before *Carnival Messiah* she had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Dave Mitchell was born in Australia, and created the role of the Evangelist in *Carnival Messiah* from its professional inception in 1999. He has also played Jesus on the Cross from 2002. David graduated with a BA (Hons) Degree in Popular Music from Bretton Hall University College of Leeds in 2000. David is involved in a broad range of artistic projects which all involve skills honed during his *Carnival Messiah*

experience such as stilt-walking, African and Brazilian drumming, singing, acting, and masquerading. Before *Carnival Messiah* he had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Ernest Brew joined the *Carnival Messiah* family in 2002. He is an outstanding dancer and gymnast. Ernest was born in Ghana, trained at the Ghana School of Arts, and was a lead dancer for *Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble* for several years. He recently moved to Leeds and, in collaboration with Chantelle Davis, started his own performance company, *Rama Cultural Ltd and Events Company*. Before *Carnival Messiah* he had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Jo Jo Moorhouse is a Yorkshire based broadcaster and media personality (Breakfast Show on Galaxy Radio, Leeds). She studied at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. In 2002 she participated in the community chorus and in 2004 and 2007 went on to play the professional lead role of Mama God. Before *Carnival Messiah* she had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

“Carnival Messiah has been an incredible challenge and very enjoyable. It helped me confront some of my fears of being back on the stage, but has also given me a connection on a deeper level -- a further understanding about the black part of my heritage.”

Danielle Wyle participated in both the 1999 and 2002 productions of *Carnival Messiah* as a community chorus member. She recently graduated with a BA (Hons) Degree in Performing Arts and Dance from Huddersfield University. Danielle has become an Arts journalist. Before *Carnival Messiah* she had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Justin Archibald, who participated in both the 1999 and 2002 productions as a community chorus member, has become a fulltime

professional musician. Before *Carnival Messiah* he had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Stella Litras has participated in the 2002 (as a student at Bretton Hall University College of Leeds), 2003, and 2004 Trinidad and Tobago productions, and the 2007 Harewood production as a professional artist, singer, songwriter, musician, and producer. She comes from Greek stock, although the focus of her career surrounds the influences of the musics of the African and Caribbean diaspora. Before *Carnival Messiah* she had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

Mark Tillotson is both a performer and director. He trained in Paris in the styles of Jacques Lecoq and Phillip Gaullier. He has worked all his professional life touring with companies including his own, Mark Mark productions, specialising in commedia dell'arte, pantomime, and physical theatre. Mark has been closely involved in *Carnival Messiah* since its inception in 1994 as co-writer and co-director. Until *Carnival Messiah*, Mark had no knowledge or experience of the Caribbean or its arts practice.

David Hamilton is a Yorkshire-based choreographer and dancer, and founder of Phoenix Dance, RJC Dance, and Reggaeshun Dance. He has had a long and intimate involvement with *Carnival Messiah* as Associate Choreographer, Dance Rehearsal Director of 1999, 2002, 2003, and 2007, and lead dancer in the role of Eshu, The Dark Angel in 1999, 2002, 2003, and 2004. This experience led him to visit the Caribbean for the first time in 2002 and on several occasions since then, to research and develop his own particular style of dance. Before *Carnival Messiah* he had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

“Carnival Messiah has contributed to the journey that I was already on: my show Heartbeat Riddum Chant, which was put on at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in 2007, was created as part of that journey.”

Michael Lovelock, Musical Director of *Carnival Messiah*, began his career as a musical director for *Carnival Messiah* while attending Bretton Hall in 1999, under the watchful tutelage of the late Andre Tanker. He played keyboards and was jointly responsible for developing some of the musical arrangements for the 1999 production. He has musically directed all subsequent productions of *Carnival Messiah* (2002, 2003, and 2007). After graduating in 2000 from Bretton Hall, University College of Leeds with a first class BA (Hons) degree in Popular Music, he went on to form his own company and make a living as a musician and musical director in other spheres of music. Before *Carnival Messiah* he had no previous knowledge or experience of Caribbean Arts practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Carnival Messiah has become a landmark production: a glowing exemplar of our capacity as a nation for world class creativity, combining the very best elements of multi-culture, alongside the best characteristics of the human spirit, and sharing these with its world family. The global implications of *Carnival Messiah* on the international cultural and political horizon have been described as residing within the realms of the profound. (Connor 2004)

Part One: Horizons

On 18 April 2007 at The George Padmore Institute, London, I made the following observations regarding the ongoing legacy of *Carnival Messiah* at the launch of *Horizons: The Life and Times of Edric Connor*:

Edric Connor, my father, believed that our Caribbean culture is our greatest asset. He believed that we as a Caribbean people must not wait on the rest of the world to celebrate us as Caribbean artists before we celebrate ourselves.

He, like Arthur Lewis and Derek Walcott after him, held and unstintingly pursued this doctrine all their lives, long before it was fashionable to do so. Edric's staunch belief in the power and unique value of our Caribbean nationhood and cultural heritage sewed the original seeds of our cultural cognisance internationally and moved toward enshrining within us, a clear understanding of the journey towards critical consciousness that we as a Caribbean people, would all need to make.

My father was really an extraordinary man [...] that he had the foresight to want to preserve the memory of his early life experience in Trinidad and Tobago when clearly no one in the British or, for that matter, the Caribbean establishment (give or take a few enlightened individuals) at that time seemed even remotely interested, is a testament to his understanding and foresight [...] and it is due to this prescience that we have gathered here tonight to pay him tribute.

The seminal address that Edric gave on the subject of West Indian Folk Music at the Princess building sixty-seven years ago on 2 December 1943 was sponsored by the Trinidad and Tobago Youth Congress, but was originally delivered a few months earlier in July 1943 to the Music Association of Trinidad and Tobago, at Bishop's Anstey High School. Here, apart from setting the standard through his classification of West Indian Folklore that all of us today as scholars of the indigenous folklore

in Trinidad and Tobago adhere to as the benchmark [...] and I quote “under six heads, Songs, Dances, Tales, Games, proverbs and Customs [...] Dances like Calinda, Limbo, Bele, Bongo, Doption, songs like ‘Go Way Jestina’, ‘Sweet Man Dor Re’, the enactments of Shango, and Rada movements”, he also paid tribute to [...] “the old stick warriors and singers of our war songs [...] Mariguin, Albert Gregoire, who died last December, Alphoso Junction, Freddie Mungo, Peter Agant, Candy Boucan -- the king of Me Minor in Tambour Bamboo, George Innis, Robert Miler and James Brice, who at the age of 95 is still alive and kicking. They assisted in moulding West Indian music” (Connor 1943).

Internationally, he created a string of firsts [...] the first film on Carnival [...] the first film on West Indian test cricket [...] the first book of Caribbean folk songs [...] the first black actor in a lead role (Pericles) for The Royal Shakespeare Company at the Shakespeare memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, the first British based black actor to make Hollywood films, the first black actor to broadcast regularly for the BBC radio and television, making over 2,500 broadcasts for them during his lifetime.

He also performed in several West End Musicals and sung many operatic roles. He made over eighty recordings of songs from Trinidad and Jamaica, mostly, but not exclusively, for the ARGO label. He co-founded with Pearl the Eddic Connor Theatrical Agency and the immensely significant (and first black theatre company in Britain) Negro Theatre Workshop. He collaborated with Claudia Jones to establish what has today become Notting Hill Carnival and was instrumental in bringing and accommodating the TASPO steelband to the Festival of Britain in 1951.

Eddic led the way for all Caribbean artists resident in Britain today! His circle of colleagues, politicians, acquaintances, and friends included Martin Luther King, Caribbean leaders like George Padmore, Grantley Adams, Norman Manley, Errol Barrow, Forbes Burnham, and Eric Williams, and artists such as Marian Anderson, Paul Robson, Winifred Atwell. He went to Africa, acting in and making films, he familiarised himself with the culture and its peoples and many of the then African leaders, Seretse Khama, Mboya, Kenyatta, Nkrumah.

I am going to be a little controversial tonight. For the record, it is important that we take a reality check. I know we are here to celebrate the now widely acknowledged cultural icon Eddic Connor has become. But, for all his amazing achievements, those of us who were close to him [...] knew that he felt that he had failed in his bid to elevate Caribbean culture to what we now blithely recognise as its rightful place [...] in fact, Eddic died a broken and disappointed man [...] He felt that his work was incomplete [...] I can tell you this because I was there.

Eddic’s early and untimely death in 1968 meant that it was left up to Pearl Connor, theatrical agent and cultural activist, [...] also his wife and my mother, [...] and Beryl McBurnie, cultural pioneer and doyenne of Caribbean dance [...] and my mentor, to safely nurture the soul of my Caribbean consciousness to fruition and mould me into the artist I am today.

They were all accountable for the strategic development and direction of my creativity. Because of their remarkable personalities, talents and influence, I would like to talk for a few moments about how they impacted on my life's work, *Carnival Messiah*. [...]

Carnival Messiah is their legacy to the world. Edric laid that foundation stone when he looked toward the eastern horizon of the Atlantic ocean in Mayaro and will have dreamed of it, Pearl unstintingly guided me through the minefield of what she recognised and described as "our Olympian struggle" in the face of blatant racism and marginalisation that continues to exist in Britain today, and, finally, I was able to take it to Beryl for her approval and blessing, at her sick bed just before she died.

I must however not omit to mention my gratitude to the late Andre Tanker who actually worked on the production with me as musical supervisor in both the 1998 Little Carib workshops and the 1999 West Yorkshire Playhouse production in Leeds.

And so too, the late Errol Hill, close colleague and countryman of both Edric and Pearl, who wrote the seminal treatise, *Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre* (1973), with whom I had the opportunity to discuss the creative detail and development of *Carnival Messiah*, before he passed away. It was this treatise that first postulated the concept of regarding carnival as our very own indigenous theatre.

Part Two: Full Circle - Carnival Messiah at Harewood 2007

We cannot change the past [...] but we can address the present [...] and create a new future. (Lascelles 2006)

Harewood House was built from a fortune made by Henry Lascelles in Barbados and Tobago as a direct result of the African slave and Caribbean sugar trades. In a unique endeavour on behalf of myself, creator of *Carnival Messiah* and a direct descendent of an enslaved African, and David Lascelles, present owner of Harewood House and its estate and a direct descendant of Henry Lascelles the European slave trader and Caribbean plantation owner, *Carnival Messiah* was produced by and staged at Harewood House in an attempt to exemplify notions of reconciliation, re-construction, healing, re-moulding, integration, sharing, equality, and unification.

David Lascelles, producer of *Carnival Messiah* and chairman of The Harewood Trust, states:

2007 is an important year. It is the bicentennial of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, the beginning of the end of the institutionalisation of that brutal and de-humanising trade, though sadly its stain still remains in parts of the world today.

He continues:

Carnival Messiah is unique -- always was. Now, in its newest manifestation at Harewood as part of the commemorations of the bicentennial of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, it has added layers of meaning, relevance, and heritage significance. (Lascelles 2006)

And so it was that, under a banner boasting to the world 'Two Cherished Traditions: One Shared Heritage', *Carnival Messiah* at Harewood officially opened its doors to a full house on 14 September 2007. Screndipitously, it was on

the same date that George Friedrich Handel completed composing his masterpiece *Messiah* in 1741.

Carnival Messiah began as an educational project originally created to bring European students working in different performative disciplines together on a single project. At the time I had thought it would be a good idea for them all to start on a level playing field and therefore decided to work with them in a genre they would have absolutely no knowledge about (the Caribbean). *Carnival Messiah's* first showing took place in 1994 at the Wakefield Theatre Royal under the auspices of Bretton Hall, University College of Leeds, and was strictly a student production.

The performances in 1995 took place at the West Yorkshire Playhouse but this time featured students drawn from Bretton Hall, University College of Leeds and several young members of the Leeds Chapeltown community. As *Carnival Messiah's* popular potential became apparent, layers of professional expertise and excellence in performance were added; leading performers from Britain and the Caribbean working with, and becoming an inspiration for, all the chorus members.

Thus it was that in 2007, the performances at Harewood and the educational programme attached to them took the *Carnival Messiah* phenomenon into another dimension. For participants in the community workshops, for performers, and for the audience, the time, the place, and the context had become critical to the production.

Much of Britain's wealth in the eighteenth century was built on the hard labour of enslaved Africans working in the sugar plantations of the West Indies. Henry Lascelles was one of the most successful and sophisticated entrepreneurs of his time, and he became very rich indeed from the sugar trade. He was a banker, he owned ships and slaves and plantations, and he was Controller of Customs and exclusive provider of supplies to the Royal Navy in Barbados.

His son Edwin built Harewood House on land in Yorkshire bought with the fortune he amassed, and commissioned the finest artists, craftsmen, and designers to fill it with beautiful things. Henry committed suicide in 1853, six years before building started. No known portrait of him exists.

Today, more than two hundred and fifty years after Henry Lascelles made his fortune, Harewood House is one of Yorkshire's leading visitor attractions, with around two hundred and fifty thousand visitors each year. Since 1986 it has been an educational charitable trust run for the public benefit, with an award winning education department and a vibrant contemporary art programme.

Nevertheless, there are those in Leeds' West Indian community and beyond who still see Harewood as a symbol of that cruel and tragic time. This is what made the performances of *Carnival Messiah* in 2007 at Harewood (at such a significant time) such an important part of the process of remembrance, reconciliation, and moving on that the bicentennial was all about.

David Lascelles notes that, as the bicentennial approached, it was not really surprising that people asked him 'What are you going to do at Harewood for the bicentennial?'. He states

I was clear in my own mind that what we did should not be born solely out of a sense of guilt about a past that -- however appalling -- could never, ever be changed. Instead, I felt that the best way to mark the bicentennial would be to use Harewood and its resources as a venue to celebrate Caribbean culture in Britain today. And what more comprehensive, more multi-dimensional, more exuberant, more spectacular expression of that exists than *Carnival Messiah*?

He continues:

Britain today is a multi-cultural society. That's not a matter for debate in my opinion. It's a fact. *Carnival Messiah* is its living embodiment and there is I think a wholly appropriate sense of full circle, of reconciliation, about it being performed here at Harewood at such a significant time. (Lascelles 2006)

Chantelle Davis and Sophina Maynard were young members of the community chorus when *Carnival Messiah* was performed at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in 2002 and Harewood in 2007. Inspired by this experience, they went on to form *LS7 Results* in 2004, a Leeds based dance and theatre group. They remark:

For *Carnival Messiah* to be performed at Harewood House marks the restoration of today's generation. It highlights unity, repentance, and forgiveness of two cultures, working together to create a positive foundation for generations to come. *Carnival Messiah* would be an encouraging statement that would mark this bi-centenary to our community and most of all our young people [...] Combining the built heritage of Harewood House with the cultural heritage of *Carnival Messiah*, the project aims to create a bridge and contribute to reconciliation and greater cross-cultural understanding. (Davis and Maynard)

Many of the young people who made up the community chorus (there were more than one hundred of them) suffer from a particularly twenty-first century condition. They have the potential richness of a dual heritage --British/Caribbean, British/Asian, or British/Other -- but do not actually feel part of either of these categories.

At that time, David Lascelles asked the following question:

what meaning, for example, does somewhere like Harewood have for a young man or woman from Chapeltown? [...] Putting aside for the moment where and how the money that built Harewood was made, it is an embodiment of a Western heritage -- classical music, art, architecture, and design -- with which they feel little connection [...] “What’s a place like that got to do with me?” [...] At the same time, as second or third generation sons and daughters of immigrants, they may never have visited “their” island and will have little first hand knowledge of their Caribbean cultural heritage. (Lascelles 2006)

Carnival Messiah is unique in directly dealing with all these issues. The way the show has been conceived and put together draws on these dual heritages in a very explicit and considered way. It is based on Handel’s most famous work, one of the best known and loved pieces of music in the western classical tradition. But the performance styles draw on musical, folk, and oral traditions from the Caribbean, Asia, and Africa, sometimes combined or juxtaposed.

This is what gives the show its special and universal appeal. The community workshops were specifically designed to draw out these juxtapositions and make clear to the participants what it is they were performing and why, as well as how to do it. The young people may have come to the auditions thinking they were participating in some sort of ‘Pop Idol’ or ‘X Factor’ variant through which they would become famous overnight. They might, but what is certain is that at the end of the process they would definitely have a far deeper understanding of the different cultural influences and the different heritages of which they were an integral part.

The *Carnival Messiah* Community and Education programme describes the recruiting process in these terms:

Young participants of all colours and creeds aged between 16 and 25 are our primary target, but not our only target. Our recruiting measures will be unusual and sometimes unconventional, but guaranteed to enlist the interest of today's youth (as well as others). They will be encouraged to bring their own artistic perspectives to the production with a view to incorporating them within the production.

To be absolutely clear, the workshops were not and indeed could not be seen as separate from the preparations for the performances; they did far more than simply teach performance techniques or 'give young talent a break'. Nor should the fact that the participants were expected to perform in public, in front of a paying audience to the highest professional standards, detract or distract from that objective. In *Carnival Messiah*, performance and heritage are intimately intertwined, not academically separate.

The Greater London Authority's 2005 report 'Delivering Shared Heritage' notes that

African and Asian communities explore and interpret Heritage in various ways. Mainstream definitions of Heritage often present the notion that Heritage must be tangible to provide documented evidence of historical existence and cultural traditions. African and Asian communities often engage with their Heritage as part of their activities and rituals.

This notion of living Heritage present challenges to the mainstream interpretation: many approach Heritage through cultural activities and customary practices -- fashion, traditional self defensive arts, dance and spoken word art forms -- all of which are indications of the natural blurring of Heritage with the creative arts [...]

Within African descent communities, the intersection between history, identity and cultural expression significantly informs interpretation of Heritage. These are rooted in African Diaspora traditions that explore the influences of distinctive global settlements and cultural experiences.

This comes to the fore in the various creative platforms that have evolved in the African Diaspora, such as Carnival [...] which spans global Diaspora influences linked by a common African legacy. The complex tapestry of history, struggle, religion, language and the arts intertwine and creatively engage in the breadth and variation of the African Diaspora experience.

Carnival Messiah comes from this place. Its narrative is drawn from the core text of the Christian tradition: the story of the Messiah, with its universal themes of birth, suffering, death, and re-birth. Put in the context of the Caribbean experience as expressed in carnival, with its roots in the slave past and the plantations, this then in turn becomes a metaphor for capture, enslavement, emancipation, and freedom.

As a high profile part of the bicentennial celebrations in 2007 and against the back-drop of Harewood's historic connections with the Caribbean, *Carnival Messiah* is a unique example of a kind of living heritage and of, as it were, 'Heritage in Action'.

One hopes that all those involved -- workshop participants, professional performers, and audiences alike -- will have been enriched, transformed, and empowered by their experience, and better informed about both British and Caribbean cultural heritages whatever their own background might be. David Lascelles states that

As a piece of Theatre, *Carnival Messiah* has become hugely influential, not only because of its scale and high production values but also because of the way it assimilates and re-interprets such an extraordinary range of cultural influences: from historical and contemporary Trinidad and Tobago, the extended Caribbean, from historical Europe and contemporary Britain, from Asia and from Africa. (Lascelles 2006)

Part Three: National and International Media – The Impact of and Response to *Carnival Messiah*

Britain

All of the press reviews and letters that *Carnival Messiah* has received in Britain over the years, of which there have been many, have been extraordinarily positive and complimentary. Their content speaks volumes and clearly serve as a thorough and acute analysis of the production.

Harewood 2007

From the film *Amazing Grace* to *African Snow* at the York Theatre Royal [...] nothing however can match *Carnival Messiah*. A show that makes no direct reference to the parliamentary act of 1807 and yet whose every step is rooted in the emancipation of slaves [...] far fresher than *Jesus Christ Superstar* and even more musically diverse, this spiritual show is a joyous three-hour pageant of carnival song and dance, Caribbean masquerade and minstrel story-telling, opera and nightclub DJ-ing, the life of Christ and the wonder of Handel's *Messiah* [...] *Carnival Messiah* is truly Leeds united. (Charles Hutchinson, *The Press*, 2007)

[J]ust a brief note to say just how much I and my mixed age party (from 12 to 67) enjoyed *Carnival Messiah* [...] (Dianne, York St. John University, 2007)

I'm exhausted just from being in the audience [...] the overpowering experience of colour, noise and music is something I won't forget for a long time [...] the quality of the lead singers, the beauty and variety of the costumes and above all, the enthusiasm and energy of the performers made a wonderful evening [...] I hope everyone in Leeds and beyond will take the trip to this joyful performance in the normally peaceful grounds of one of our stately homes. (Valerie Kendall, Harewood volunteer, Leeds, 2007)

[T]he evening was made by *Carnival Messiah* [...] I am not sure that many of us knew what to expect from the outset, [but] the end result way surpassed all our expectations [...] the reaction of our guests was most telling [...] what theatre! That was such a brilliant night of entertainment [...] amazing production [...] a huge treat [...] mind-blowingly

memorable experience [...] we were enthralled and hugely impressed. (Charles Renwick, Lycetts Insurance and Financial Services, 2007)

[T]hank you for including us in this absolutely spectacular experience of *Carnival Messiah* [...] we enjoyed it thoroughly and have recommended it to everyone we talk to. (Lynette and Ralph, Leeds, 2007)

[I]t was unforgettable. (Gordon Black, CBE DL, Leeds, 2007)

It was simply stunning, marvellous voices, sensational costumes, mind-blowing variety of wings and dancing with such continuous enthusiasm from a marvellous cast [...] just as important was the portrayal of Christ's life and the Gospel in a manner that the whole audience could relate to, regardless of their faiths. (Bob and Pat Nash, Leeds, 2007)

I feel I really must put pen to paper to say how magnificent *Carnival Messiah* was [...] I saw it three times [...] it was breath-taking, colourful and the cast was superb. (June Coates, Leeds, 2007)

West Yorkshire Playhouse 1999 and 2002

Here follows some of the reviews and comments made about the *Carnival Messiah* West Yorkshire Playhouse productions in 2002 and 1999.

[...] an inspired pan-religious pastiche with the spirit of a street party, *Carnival Messiah* is West Yorkshire Playhouse's millennial alternative to Tony Harrison's celebrated adaptation of the *Mysteries* [...] Connor's re-working of *For Unto Us a Child is Born* pulses with particularly explosive *joie de vivre*, a ragga rabbi bringing the good news, and the chorus turning a dessert market-place into a jubilant disco with perhaps a touch of *Jesus Christ Superstar* [...] elsewhere Ella Andall's Yoruba ululations are cryingly beautiful and *I Know My Redeemer Liveth* is transcendently married with soul and West African rhythms, as the *Carnival Messiah*'s spirit of faith -- like a vast white gossamer butterfly - - unfurls, swirls gently, and envelopes the singer in its wings. (the *Daily Telegraph*, 1999)

[A]mazing, overwhelming, dynamic and totally mind-blowing [...] *Carnival Messiah* is an eye-boggling triumph [...] both *Carnival* and *Messiah* are rooted in tradition, both are truly inspirational, both are celebrations of life and rebirth [...] there is a natural bridge [...] it is not such an unlikely union as you first might believe. (Teletext, June 2002)

[T]his was truly a magical experience. (Shirley Parkinson, Lyn Hedges, September 1999)

[A]n absolute joy, splendidly performed, from exuberant beginning to climatic end. (Reviewgate.com, July 2002)

I cannot express enough how much I enjoyed the performance. (Ms. G, Wales, October 1999)

Bottle the energy of the Leeds or Notting Hill Carnival: squeeze the Olympic games opening ceremony inside a theatre: give the York Mystery plays a club remix for the Ibiza generation: revive It's a Knockout in the Caribbean: and praise the Lord to the highest high with wings on: add a twist of sublime Handel [...] and out bursts *Carnival Messiah* [...] a show so sunshine bright, you might be asked to wear sun-block. (*York Evening Press*, June 2002)

[A] masterpiece of unification [...] a work of continuing, evolving excellence. (Ann Hogben, 2002)

Eat your heart out Michael Flatly [...] Whilst not wishing to detract from the wonderful performance of *Riverdance*, I have to say that in my opinion *Carnival Messiah* is one of the most vibrant, colourful, witty, breathtaking etc., etc., etc., productions I have seen in a long time. (Margaret Collins, October 1999)

[A] New Testament for the third millennium. (*The Stage*, July 2002)

I thought it was absolutely fabulous. I have never seen the Playhouse audience so gripped with wonder, joy and enthusiasm. A total triumph. (Christopher Price, Chair of Yorkshire Arts Board, October 1999)

Simply the best show I've seen in a great many years. (Councillor Graham Clarke, October 1999)

Carnival Messiah is mind-bendingly frenetic and sumptuous [...] its passion and power match its humour [...] its energetic cast who number what seems at least a million swamped the playhouse audience and made us feel a part of this extraordinary production's beating heart. (*Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, July 2002)

I was completely blown away by the performance. (Robert Sturdy, October 1999)

Once the show begins you are carried away by the whole experience. Young and old, fat and thin, white and black performers join in joyous celebration in a Port-of-Spain setting, with terrific musicianship, vibrant dancing and strong performances from a cast mingling professionals and local community groups so effectively that you can't see the join. (*Yorkshire Post*, July 2002).

West Yorkshire Playhouse 1999: Negative Response

In Britain, *Carnival Messiah* has only ever received one negative review for 2002 and one partly negative letter in 1999 ('partly' because the writer began his letter by congratulating *Carnival Messiah* 'for providing us with a stupendous piece of theatre').

The letter of 19 October 1999, which came from Rabbi Ian. D. Morris of the Sinai Synagogue in Leeds, was concerned with the Jewish symbolism and theological interface within *Carnival Messiah*. Rabbi Morris makes the following observations:

My object here is to alert you to sensitivities that were tweaked inadvertently and which if they are accommodated, I believe would strengthen the production in its next incarnation [...] in summary, the issues I would mention are

1. The use of the melody of *Hava Nagela* with words praising Jesus
2. The words using *Shema*, spoken in Hebrew, in the context of 'speaking in tongues'
3. The use of a figure who appeared to be a cross between a Chasid and a Blues Brother
4. The broad issue of the unmitigated and simple use of the gospel accounts of the events leading up to the crucifixion, which attribute blame for the crucifixion to the "Jews".

In my reply to Rabbi Morris, I told him that in *Carnival Messiah* I use the traditional and contemporary Creole aesthetic practices of Trinidad Carnival, in particular those of the music and the language and its movement, in combination with western European oratorio, dramatic techniques, and narrative, as a multi-dimensional metaphor, which then enables the accommodation of multiple and shifting identities within one space to empower, re-interpret, reconstitute, modify and transform an established western narrative into a new guise. I continued to state that this in turn reflects the Caribbean people's experience of subjugation and their subsequent acquisition, adoption, appropriation, ownership, and creation of a new culture, a new space. In other words, I give myself permission to trust and subvert everything because in *Carnival Messiah*, as in Caribbean culture, no one and nothing is sacred.

However, and even more importantly, the mantra of *Carnival Messiah* is that rather than refuse multiple cultural identities with their idioms, symbols, and assumptions, the production instead appropriates them, re-imagines them, and creates new and dynamic co-existent cultural spaces, in what I call the Third Space. This Third Space encourages sight from new perspectives, the elimination of boundaries between margin and centre, subversions, transgressions, and the creation of a new universe where all difference is to be affirmed and celebrated.

Carnival Messiah thus becomes the embodiment of aspirations toward achieving integrity of being, collapsing entrenched and negative notions of difference, whilst guiding its participants and recipients towards the attainment of a critical consciousness which can only be achieved through self-discovery and self-recovery. From within this Third Space *Carnival Messiah* strives to exemplify notions of forgiveness, re-construction, self-affirmation, healing, and unification as an allegory for enabling transformation and enlightenment. *Carnival Messiah* becomes an instrument of empowerment, a tool of postcolonial liberation, that takes all those who it touches to a new space, a new place, a new dimension, gifting them with a new tolerance and understanding, and giving them all new hope and a new future.

Therefore, using the Shema alongside other sacred and holy utterances from other nations and faiths -- such as the Christian Creed, the Hindu Hari Krishna mantra, or the Buddhist chant -- should be seen in the most positive of lights: that of inclusion, a coming together in peace and with respect.

A further example of the same, and in keeping with the idea of employing the use of the Creole language and its cultural products, I have during the final dramatic presentation of the Minstrels/Griots in *Carnival Messiah* used a technique that conceptually subverts the authority of the western tradition. By subverting the use of several popular folk music melodies normally associated with a variety of different world cultures or religions, and reinterpreting them through a new and Christian lyric to the song, I place the entire rendition within a Christian-based musical metaphor or context: white American hot-gospelling telly-evangelism vies with choruses sung to the melodies of 'La Bamba', 'Coconut Woman', 'Hava Nagela', and 'Istanbul'.

The purpose of this strategy is twofold. First, it provides a comedic enterprise with a view to breaking down essentialist religious differences. While on the surface this scene represents in boisterous burlesque style the joyous dissemination of the gospel into the world, it also represents the bastardisation and commodification of the Word: the descent of the Word from its exalted status of pure idea back to its normal residence of human flesh and blood. Gordon Rohlehr observes that

the Word is thus both reincarnated and recarnivalised as it enters popular culture [...] Connor's Third Space remains a trysting-place for the interplay of diametrically opposed attitudes. (Rohlehr 2003c: 46-47)

The second reason for undertaking this final musical and metaphoric exercise is to return the audience to the banal and the real, that is, to allow them to herald the playfulness of the re-awakened minstrels for the final time after they have just experienced the 'celestial' Third Space of 'RedcemeR'.

As I outlined previously, my intention in 'RedcemeR' was to convey (through

subliminal musical suggestion) the theological transformative journey that was taken by enslaved Africans who had been forced to acquiesce to the enforced doctrine of Christianity, as a result of the institution of European colonisation. This is achieved by equating (camouflaging) the idea of the emancipation, liberation, and freedom of the enslaved African within the most sacred position of Christian faith: the Resurrection of Christ.

Therefore, the Whoopi Band chanting 'My Lord Jehovah' to the Jewish chorus 'Hava Nagela' is not meant to suggest the imminent or even ultimate conversion of the Jews to Christianity, but instead to notify their prominence in a commercial system of which Christianity is an integral part. The song is also chosen for its sentiments of joy, its history as a folk song, and the journey it has made from its almost immaculate conception towards the secular market place.

West Yorkshire Playhouse 2002: Negative Response

In the *Independent* newspaper, July 2002, Rhoda Koenig describes *Carnival Messiah* as

an argument for a colour bar [...] while black performers are full of beans, as well as the holy spirit [...] the white ones, flabby and slack, look as if they're wondering what to microwave for supper.

She then goes on to describe the production as

a mediocre muddle [...] thematically and emotionally too, it suffers from a lack of restraint and focus [...] here one is more likely to feel weighed down by three hours of milling and happy clapping.

Finally, she reveals the extent of her bigotry and ignorance by observing

the first ensemble number (the J'ouvert/Overture) throws everything at us -- girls in ruffled dresses, blue devils with pitchforks, men in yellow

can can dresses that can't contain their huge false bosoms [...] what follows simply repeats those effects.

What is ironic about this review is that Koenig actually picks up on the most important issues of *Carnival Messiah* but unfortunately from a solely subjective and superficial perspective, and in a highly confrontational and inflammatory manner which completely misses the irony, mimicry, and subversiveness of the portrayals she describes. We might ask why Koenig feels so threatened when faced with the unrestrained joy and celebration of a group of multi-ethnic performers. I suppose that she did not appreciate or recognise that 'the colonised [had successfully] returned the colonisers' gaze'. I have no answer for her; her comments seemed racist and mindless to me.

Trinidad and Tobago

The following are excerpts from my launch speech in the foyer of the newly refurbished Queen's Hall on 9 April 2003, to herald the coming of *Carnival Messiah* to Trinidad and Tobago. These performances took place between 20 and 29 July 2003.

Greetings and welcome! *Carnival Messiah* Trinidad and Tobago is an initiative of Queen's Hall, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and myself in association with the West Yorkshire Playhouse and the University of Leeds.

This is probably the most significant day of my life. To say that I am overwhelmed would be a serious understatement. That *Carnival Messiah* can come home to Trinidad and Tobago is simply a dream come true. How many people's dreams come true? I am very humbled and very honoured.

I must first pay homage to all those who came before me, who made me the artist I am today; to those who must take credit for this manifestation that is *Carnival Messiah*; to those who sewed the seeds of my cultural cognisance; to those who enshrined within me the unique value of our Caribbean nationhood and cultural heritage by giving me the confidence

and the tools to explore them; to all those who safely nurtured the soul of my Caribbean consciousness to fruition.

The list is as long as it is exclusive, and I am honoured to have had these people to learn from -- Earl Lovelace, Ella Andall, Christopher Laird, Derek Walcott, Peter Minshall, Torrence Mohammed, Tony Hall, Errol Hill, Pat Bishop, Paul Keenes Douglas, Brother Resistance, Gordon Rohlehr, Boogsie Sharpe, David Rudder, Clara Rosa De Lima, Astor Johnson, Carlisle Chang, Ataklan, Efebo Wilkinson, Eric Butler, Michael Steele-Eytle, Jackie Hinkson, Errol Jones, Sat Balkaransingh, Aubrey Adams, John Mendes, Horace Ove, Yao Ramesar, Marina Maxwell, Rawle Gibbons, Pearl Eintou Springer and Le Roi Clarke.

Thank God, most of them are still with us and continue against all odds to contribute to the cultural production of this country. They should be our most prized resource. As a nation, they are, like Best Village, Carnival, and Steelband [...] our greatest assets.

However, in April 2003, I have chosen to dedicate the upcoming performances of *Carnival Messiah* Trinidad and Tobago to the memory and work of four of our most phenomenal artistes and cultural ambassadors. Responsible for first introducing our cultural heritage into the mainstream international arena, they have also been largely accountable for the development and direction of my creativity and thus by extension, *Carnival Messiah*. They are: my father Edric Connor, my mother Pearl Connor, my mentor Beryl McBurnie and my fellow musician Andre Tanker.

Edric laid the foundations and will have dreamed of it, I was able to take it to Beryl for her approval, at her sick bed before she died and Andre actually worked on it with me in both the 1998 Little Carib workshops and as Musical Director for the West Yorkshire Playhouse production in Leeds in 1999.

I had expected Andre to work as musical supervisor for this production [...] instead, I have to take this opportunity to dedicate the Gala performance of *Carnival Messiah* in Trinidad and Tobago to the memory and work of Andre Tanker. All of us who had the opportunity to know or work with him will be aware that we have been blessed. May his spirit live on in his music and our culture forever!

I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce to you the creative team of *Carnival Messiah* Trinidad and Tobago. The excellence of their work is self-evident. Without them, *Carnival Messiah* could never have been realised. Here with us today are Wayne Berkerley, production designer, and Carol La Chapelle, choreographer. Not here today but soon to come are Clary Salandy, costume and masquerade designer (but her mother Barbara is)! Mark Tillotson, co-writer and co-director, Micheal Lovelock, musical director, Micheal Steele-Eytle, choral Director, David Hamilton assistant choreographer and rehearsal director, and Robert Bryan, Lighting Designer.

The 'People of the World' chorus of seventy singers/dancers/actors will be completely recruited in Trinidad and Tobago through a series of open

auditions which commence next weekend, April 12 and 13. Auditions for twenty-two professional lead roles will commence on April 14. The technical crew of twenty-four will be sourced and led in Trinidad and Tobago by Christine Johnson and Bagasse. They include Nicholas Boisselle (Costumes) and Frank Agarat (Sound Design).

A team of thirty-two participants made of seventeen performing artistes from the original production and twelve members of the creative and technical teams, all of whom are based in the UK, will be joining the Trinidad and Tobago performing company of 181 personnel in June 2003.

Some of the lead performing artistes involved in the production are Ann Fridal, Ella Andall, Alyson Brown, Glenda McSween, Nigel Wong, Brian Green, and Ronald Samm. Others to be confirmed include Ataklan, Redman, Evelyn Caesar Munroe, a steelband sourced through Pan Trinbago and an off-stage choir sourced from some of the leading choirs in Trinidad and Tobago. The total company will number 213 personnel.

There is a very real opportunity for an international collaboration at the very highest level between the University of Leeds and the University of the West Indies in terms of educational initiatives and The West Yorkshire Playhouse and Queen's Hall in terms of Arts related initiatives. *Carnival Messiah* should be regarded as the first step in this process.

I offer my personal thanks to all of you for coming here today with a view to supporting this venture philosophically and financially: to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and in particular the Minister of culture and tourism, Penelope Beckles; to the Board of Queen's Hall for their unstinting support; to Ann Marie Da Silva for her belief in and tireless efforts on behalf of this project; to Wilma Primus who continues to look after and support all my efforts artistically and otherwise without question. Please note that her horse, the triple crown winner *Carnival Messiah*, was named after this show.

Carnival Messiah is Queen's Hall and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's gift to the nation; *Carnival Messiah* is my gift to the artists and people of Trinidad and Tobago and I firmly believe that we do not have to wait on the world to celebrate us as Caribbean artists before we celebrate ourselves.

Some of my best work was done in this building; it was here in Trinidad and Tobago that I cut my artistic teeth. May Queen's Hall and Trinidad and Tobago become synonymous with progressive Arts practice throughout the world as we move toward recognising and celebrating our Caribbean identity as unique. I graciously thank you for granting me this once in a lifetime opportunity.

The responses to *Carnival Messiah* in Trinidad and Tobago were quite another matter; the reception can at best be described as mixed. The reviews cover a spectrum of opinions that go from emphatically positive to personally

destructive. One reviewer -- Kevin Baldeosingh -- admits that even though he had not attended any of the performances, he felt duty bound to join the debate anyway.

The response was a Caribbean chaos, if ever there was one! The public, however, voted with their feet, and provided full houses and standing ovations at every single performance. In truth, Trinidad and Tobago had never seen anything like it before and has never seen anything like it since.

Ronald F. DeC. Harford, Chairman and Managing Director of the Republic Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and Platinum Sponsor of the *Carnival Messiah* production at Queen's Hall Trinidad and Tobago in 2003, speaks in these terms about his company's investment in the show:

As man's way of expressing his deepest desires and his most ambitious hopes, the arts have always been the canvas of the bold and novel and the springboard for sometimes controversial ideas and concepts [...] *Carnival Messiah* showcases the spectacular artistry of Caribbean talent [...] and the harmonious fusion created in this process mirrors the essence of Caribbean society -- multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious [...] We view *Carnival Messiah* as a tremendous artistic collaboration of international value that offers untold learning possibilities for our young artists. Republic Bank's unwavering corporate focus has been on enabling the development of the young people of the Caribbean who will one day shape the destiny of this great region. (Harford 2003)

Lisa Agostini of the *Trinidad Guardian* states that

From J'ouvert to Las' Lap, *Carnival Messiah* was as intoxicating as a good Mas: vibrant and spectacular, carnal and spiritual, funny and poignant [...] Geraldine Connor is a genius to so brilliantly marry European classical tradition with the best of our own [Caribbean] traditions, birthing a whole that is pore-raisingly good [...] Underlying this whole magnificent production was the idea that our theatre can be great [...] With the exception of about 20% of the cast, everything was indigenous -- sets were designed by Wayne Berkerley, costumes by Clarinda Salandy -- and outstanding [...] choreography by Carol La Chapelle [...] this is the bar, and now that we have proven that

we can meet it, how do we return to our comfortable mediocrity?.
(Agostini 2003)

Such was the controversy surrounding the production of *Carnival Messiah* that the debate continued well into 2004 and has had a lasting impact within local carnival and theatrical circles to this day.

Peter Minshall, who notoriously became the most vocal critic of *Carnival Messiah*, is an artist and colleague of mine, that for many years I looked to for guidance and inspiration. His creative work in carnival nationally and internationally has been outstanding, inspirational, and groundbreaking.

I played Mas' in many of his carnival bands and in 1989 worked as his musical director for *Santimanitay*, this being his first and only foray into presenting a carnival masquerade band in a stadium, as a piece of theatre. In fact, I narrated the forty-five minute video that emanated from this landmark performance. *Santimanitay* was also the forerunner to Minshall's artistic contribution to the Barcelona, Atlanta, and Calgary Olympics. As such I, and many others with me, were completely taken aback by Minshall's manic and seemingly unbalanced attack of *Carnival Messiah*.

The first words of Peter Minshall's critique that appeared in the *Sunday Guardian* on 27 July 2003 echoed its distasteful headline -- which called the show 'Raw Sewerage' -- and read:

The finale of *Carnival Messiah* is undiluted Notting Hill on the Queen's Hall stage. It is raw sewerage up close. (Minshall 2003: 11)

And with these words, he declared war on *Carnival Messiah*.

Minshall's first glaring mistake was to assume that *Carnival Messiah* was a straightforward (and by implication, not very good) Caribbean adaptation of Handel's oratorio *Messiah*:

[...] on Monday night, we witnessed a promise broken [...] there was some carnival [...] here and there snatches of the *Messiah* were slipped in [...] The rest was a production that wandered all over the place in search of something to hold it together. (2003: 11)

As most audiences soon recognised, however, Minshall was observing the wrong promise: *Carnival Messiah* is in fact a radical a of George Friedrich Handel's *Messiah*.

A week later in the same publication, Marina Ama Omawale Maxwell answered Minshall's critique with the following:

Connor has gifted us with a journey of ourselves, of our syncretising and integrating culture [...] *Carnival Messiah* encompasses syncretic Carnival out of our African, Asian, and multi-cultural experience and European oratorio out of our colonial heritage, this has never been done before. (Maxwell 2003)

Maxwell was able to glean, as most other audience members were, that *Carnival Messiah* is a unique expression of Caribbean consciousness that positively reflects the historical Caribbean's close association with the cultures of Europe, Africa, and Asia, and presents these within a carnival context and on a carnival stage to tell a universal story with a distinctly Caribbean voice.

Like carnival (and the Caribbean itself) the structure of *Carnival Messiah*'s narrative purposely does not unfold in a linear or chronological fashion. Nor does it adhere to the typical conventions of western theatrical dramatic practice. *Carnival Messiah* is as unpredictable and often as paradoxical as the Caribbean itself. *Carnival Messiah* as Theatre of the Caribbean proudly proclaims to the

world that a new, unique, robust, and exciting genre of theatrical practice has arrived.

Interestingly, Minshall's main line of attack is aimed at the *Carnival Messiah* 'J'ouvert Overture' sequence. He in particular cites Aubrey Adams' 1972 production of *Ambakaila*, which was the first of its kind to tour beyond Trinidad and Tobago and was performed on the main stage at The Royal Festival Hall in London. *Ambakaila* was a dance/music/folk review, created entirely from the j'ouvert enactments and folk traditions of Trinidad and Tobago. Minshall begins his critique by commenting that

one might speculate that a young black British girl born of immigrant parents, from Trinidad, both in show business, would have seen *Ambakaila*. (2003: 11)

In this sole sentence Minshall clearly implies not only that *Carnival Messiah* lacks originality, but that it is also superficial and, moreover, that I have committed an act of artistic plagiarism by presenting traditional carnival characters of Trinidad and Tobago within the show and using them to tell the story.

It is clear to me that Minshall here has again had completely missed the point of *Carnival Messiah*. I did in fact see *Ambakaila* at the Royal Festival Hall in London in 1972, and like the work of many other of our great pioneering artists the performances left an indelible mark in my psyche. *Carnival Messiah* is indeed the legacy of such performances which are all referenced in my launch speech of April 2003 cited previously. The relevant section in full reads:

I must first pay homage to all those who came before me, who made me the artist I am today; to those who must take credit for this manifestation that is *Carnival Messiah*; to those who sewed the seeds of my cultural

cognisance; to those who enshrined within me the unique value of our Caribbean nationhood and cultural heritage by giving me the confidence and the tools to explore them; to all those who safely nurtured the soul of my Caribbean consciousness to fruition.

The list is as long as it is exclusive, and I am honoured to have had these people to learn from -- Earl Lovelace, Ella Andall, Christopher Laird, Derek Walcott, Peter Minshall, Torrence Mohammed, Tony Hall, Errol Hill, Pat Bishop, Paul Keenes Douglas, Brother Resistance, Gordon Rohlehr, Boogie Sharpe, David Rudder, Clara Rosa De Lima, Astor Johnson, Carlisle Chang, Ataklan, Efebo Wilkinson, Eric Butler, Michael Steele- Eytte, Jackie Hinkson, Errol Jones, Sat Balkaransingh, Aubrey Adams, John Mendes, Horace Ove, Yao Ramesar, Marina Maxwell, Rawle Gibbons, Pearl Eintou Springer and Le Roi Clarke.

To begin with, *Carnival Messiah* subverts the western musical definition of overture which in its normal guise is a musical interlude that introduces the first act of an opera. The 'J'ouvert Overture' in *Carnival Messiah* instead presents a traditional non-chronological performative enactment which is meant to represent the history of resistance in Trinidad and Tobago. Via visual and sonic narrative, it charts our journey through slavery to modern-day political activism, with the assistance of tried and tested historical carnivalesque characters and techniques. However, I would concede however that Minshall makes some relevant stylistic criticisms regarding our Blue Devil characterisation and costuming, elements of which we have since adopted.

At this juncture in the critical debate, Lester Efebo Wilkinson -- Caribbean dramatist, playwright, folklorist, and cultural historian -- took it upon himself to referee the multiple and diverse responses to *Carnival Messiah* by my Trinidadian peers, including intellectuals such as Professor Selwyn Ryan (who offered a positive response) and Professor Jeff Henry (who offered a neutral response), and Minshall's carnival production company, The Callaloo Company (who offered a negative response).

On Sunday 17 August 2003, in a long and wide-ranging article, Wilkinson carefully observed that

Minshall does have a point. But so too, Marina Ama Omawale Maxwell and Ramcharitar and Terry Joseph and all the other voices of those persons of the theatre and wider artistic community, who remain divided over the merits and de-merits of Geraldine Connor's *Carnival Messiah*: and even today, three weeks beyond the Gala opening, continue to hold passionately to fixed positions about the quality of the work and its contribution to the development to an emerging Caribbean/T&T aesthetic for the stage. (Wilkinson 2003: 60)

Wilkinson's opinion of *Carnival Messiah* is entirely positive, give or take one or two stylistic preferences:

[*Carnival Messiah*] was indeed a great concept brought to theatrical life through dazzling costumes, beautifully designed sets, choreography that was well focussed and fully energised, and truly engaging music that paid homage to Handel's melodies and subtleties, even as it celebrated wildly our Caribbean musical sensibilities with driving syncopations and soaring counterpoints, that were nothing short of awesome in design and execution. (2003: 60).

In particular, Wilkinson feels that the band of minstrels is too small in contrast to the large chorus. He had in fact failed to notice what I describe as the 'middle or small ensemble' which underpins my formula of contrasting structures of presentation in the form of small, medium, and large. For example, the structure of the prologue proceeds as Mother Earth's Libation (small), Mama God and her two alter egos (medium), and 'J'ouvert' (large).

Otherwise, Wilkinson was very complimentary of the stagecraft and ensemble of the minstrels who worked in the style of the Italian commedia dell'arte. He also likened our large chorus' and spectacle to early Italian Opera and Intermezzi:

peering through this prism of western theatre history, therefore Geri Connor's minstrels thrust up against the heady intermezzi type, spectacular backdrop of *Messiah* with its soaring creole arias appeared to

mirror a particularly rich moment in theatre history, capturing in the process, its essential dramatic qualities. (2003: 60)

I believe that, like Rhoda Koenig, Peter Minshall responds to *Carnival Messiah* in a manner that Maxwell describes as that of ‘an embittered, vindictive and frustrated artist’ (Maxwell 2003). Wilkinson agrees, and further comments:

[...] why the vitriol is so disturbing is that it gets in the way of analysis and denies us all an excellent opportunity for the kind of intellectual sharing without which it will be impossible to assign real meaning to the *Messiah* project [...] could it be that the attack by fellow artists launched “so savagely and so unfairly” (according to Marina Maxwell) was less about the work itself, and more about perceived unfair support provided for *Geri* and her *Carnival Messiah* by a battery of Godfathers and Godmothers with fabulous financial offers? (Wilkinson 2003: 60)

Like Koenig, Minshall correctly picks up on some of the most important issues facing *Carnival Messiah*, but unfortunately from a highly subjective and superficial perspective, and in a confrontational and inflammatory manner. He observes: ‘Ms. Connor begins her show with a forty minute carnival cruise ship preamble’. The reference here is to the ‘J’ouvert Overture’, the very same overture that Carol La Chapelle describes as an ‘impressionistic j’ouvert ballet’ (La Chapelle 2003) and Gordon Rohlehr refers to as ‘blurred impressionism’ (2003c: 19), continuing to suggest that the ‘J’ouvert’ becomes a mythological place of Carnivals gone by:

we are at this time immured in frozen time. ‘J’ouvert’ represents or parallels the imaginary pre-lapsarian state of young humanity, a state of both nature and innocence marked in the imagination by pristine celebration and joy. (Rohlehr 2003c: 16)

Rohlehr further observes that the parallel moment in Handel’s *Messiah* is the Pastoral Symphony (which in *Carnival Messiah* accompanies the Bele dance moment) where Handel, too, idealises an imaginary time past:

Euro-pastoralism and Afro-creole pastoralism meet in Connor’s “rememorized” Bèlé, a syncretic dance since ancestral times, when enslaved Africans infused the European minuet with the dark earth of their own drum rhythms. (Rohlehr 2003c: 17)

Rohlchr's succinct analysis did indeed capture my artistic vision for the inclusion of the Bele dance -- a vision which saw an intrinsically folk enactment within an intrinsically carnival enactment: the j'ouvert.

At the end of the 'J'ouvert Overture', Rohlchr notes that the music (and the lyric) signal that the 'mas is on the verge of ending and the mass about to begin' (Rohlchr 2003c: 20). The Pierrot Grenade sadly mourns:

Is carnival las lap
 The bands gone
 We tired cause we feteing since J'ouvert morn
 Is home we goin' -- and on the
 We start to think about the next day
 We done wine up ... Jam up ... Jump up ...
 We done break way
 After carnival we does have to pray.

Minshall does not dwell on this but instead quickly moves on (obviously without reading the order of programme), to express his thoughts about Shango Aye. Shango Aye is based on Handel's famous aria 'But Who May Abide The Day Of His Coming' (the clue of course is in the name of the aria). Minshall heavily criticises Shango Aye's appearance immediately after the 'J'ouvert'. I think he fails to realise that Shango Aye is in fact the first item of Act I. He states

no one even seems to mind that Shango is casually set down in the Trinidad repertoire of folk dance, cheek by jowl with J'ouvert Shango comes from a very real and deeply religious source [...] Shango has nothing to do with Carnival or the Messiah unless one is laying the way for some religious parallel. (Minshall 2003)

If Minshall were not so blinded by his own pique he may have observed that 'laying the way for some religious parallel' was in fact what I was doing. Minshall fails to realise that *Carnival Messiah* uses the Shango enactment as metaphor, to tell and show the first part of the universal story of the immaculate conception.

Rohlehr observes that Act I 'begins with the first really transgressive encounter between Afro-Creole Orisha sensibility and Euro-Christian hegemonic tradition' (Rohlehr 2003c: 22).

In Shango Aye the imminence of the Messiah's coming into history and the annunciation of his presence at the opening of Act I is a way of paying homage to the genesis of the life-force, the triumph, the birth, and the inception or immaculate conception of Jesus, and should therefore be greeted in grand style: with great sound, rhythm, motion, dance, enraptured possession, pure exultation, and joy.

In a Shango ceremony, the arrival of the Oreshas (or 'powers') are usually characterised by a spasmodic jerking of the body, particularly in the shoulder area. All vestiges of the body's former personality disappear. This is called the transformation and happens when the 'Saint Horse' is 'claimed' or 'mounted' by the power.

It is this general transformation of the devotee by his or her God and, in *Carnival Messiah* specifically, Mary's possession during the ceremony that I have allied with the Catholic concept of the immaculate conception. In *Carnival Messiah*, the Shango ceremony should be seen as an African equivalent to the European Catholic nativity. Minshall, in his haste to criticise, completely misses the irony and subversive intent of this portrayal.

Wilkinson's observations conclude that:

we already know what *Carnival Messiah* is. What we need to ask ourselves now is: what does [*Carnival Messiah*] mean for us? What has it contributed to the overall development of Caribbean (T&T) aesthetic for the stage? How has it advanced the cause of our emerging stagecraft? How has it assisted us to define and fully understand the dynamic of our native performance traditions? How has it helped to clarify those critical issues of style, of form, of content? (2003: 60)

Maxwell's response to Wilkinson's questions was that:

Carnival Messiah points a way to our future theatre [...] it marks the renewal and re-birth of theatre here [...] A country which is forgetting it has a past and is sinking into pure entertainment, lewdness, rubbish and obscenities [...] *Carnival Messiah* is a marker of tremendous importance [...] a "mile-mountain" [as in 'mile-stone']. (Maxwell 2003)

In summary, Donna Yawching, a well respected journalist in Trinidad and Tobago who made it her business to follow *Carnival Messiah* from rehearsal to stage, writes of the Trinidad 2003 performances:

Carnival Messiah [...] was not attempting a Trini version of *Jesus Christ, Soca Superstar* [Connor's] aim as she puts it, was "the creation of a new cultural paradigm" [...] one that would embrace equally the forms of colonial classicism, the Caribbean Carnival aesthetic and the sounds of the African diaspora, merging out of all these diverse elements "a new cultural space" that would then become "a tool of liberation for all".

Yawching goes on to say:

A daunting proposition surely: but at the end of the day it could only be considered successful if it translated into good theatre -- if in short, the people liked it [...] and this is where Connor can count her greatest triumph -- because for the most part, people did [...] the crowds that emerged from Queen's Hall for ten successive nights bore wonder on their faces that had little to do with ethnomusicological theory, and everything to do with the sheer magic of having experienced that Trinidadian rarity -- damn good theatre [...] unawares that they had been caught up in Connor's "cultural space" and "liberated" without even knowing it. (Yawching 2003)

The End Game: Heritage and Identity

The by-line of the 2007 Harewood marketing strategy for *Carnival Messiah* reads: 'Two cherished traditions: One shared heritage'. For Clary Salandy, *Carnival Messiah* represents her personal take on issues of heritage:

it brings together all the roots that make Trinidad what it is and it takes it on a journey back to Britain -- it's gone on a circular journey [...] Harewood House just adds another reality to it [...] for us to take that music [Handel's *Messiah*] and make it our own and put carnival back into Harewood House, in those grounds [...] where it all started [...] wow. (Salandy 2007)

Clearly, black British cultures have been created from diverse and contradictory elements, and apprehended through discontinuous histories. The resulting cultural and political interactions re-construct and re-work tradition, in pursuit of their own utopias. The global effects of these relationships, and the penetration of black cultural retentions into dominant western culture, mean that it is almost impossible to theorise black culture (especially where it is linked inextricably to the social relations of Britain) without being allowed to develop a new perspective on British culture and its heritage as a whole.

I believe that the notion of a shared national identity depends on the cultural meanings which bind each member of that society individually into a larger national narrative. It therefore follows that any national heritage should be a powerful source, and reflection, of such meanings. Moreover, those who cannot see themselves reflected in its mirror, cannot properly 'belong' to it.

During the past two decades, the British heritage industry responded to this dilemma in ways which further highlighted two major challenges that already existed. The response comprised a democratisation of a previously un-democratic

representation of Britishness, and the question of who exactly should control the power to represent Britishness.

I believe that Britain needs to re-imagine itself and its society, recognising and celebrating both its diversity and the value that its existing collective resources bring to the nation. This is by no means an assimilationist argument but, instead, a plea for the recognition that the British population is made up of multiple identities and that the key to supporting a successful cultural diversity lies in its ability to commandeer these identities flexibly and harmoniously within one space.

Therefore, *Carnival Messiah* should be viewed as a new identity mechanism, an intervention that offers all who partake of it (be they the professional creative and teaching team, the cohort of artistically inexperienced community participants, the core professional performing company, or the audience) an aesthetic medium of communication with which to enter a new situation -- a situation that I refer to as a Third Space -- in which realisation occurs through education, training, performance, and the ephemeral experience.

As a multi-faceted cultural paradigm based on a Caribbean model of empowerment, *Carnival Messiah* demands that in Britain today the focus shifts toward embracing and including excluded, marginalised, and disenfranchised cultural identities by creating a context that can accommodate new and multi-stranded cultural alternatives. These alternatives offer a space where we can all equally belong, co-exist, exchange, and share a common home and a common heritage.

It is from within this Third Space that *Carnival Messiah* strives to exemplify notions of forgiveness, re-construction, self-affirmation, healing, and unification as an allegory for enabling transformation and enlightenment. *Carnival Messiah* becomes an instrument of empowerment, a tool of postcolonial liberation, that takes all those it touches to a new space, gifting them with a new tolerance and understanding, giving them all new hope and a new future.

In his famous song *Sayamanda*, the late Andre Tanker (Trinidadian composer and musician) parallels Caribbean muse Wilson Harris's 'recovery' and 'remembering' of a broken history, as well as my own testimony to the creation of a Third Space as a space of forgiveness and a space of renewal. Tanker celebrates the chain not as an instrument of bondage, but as a signifier of the linkages between diasporic sensibilities:

Chain of colours, riddum and music yea,
Soul connection, chain of love
Chain of freedom across the world
Give children a hand to hold .

This chain links the survivors of the Atlantic crossing (survivors amongst whom I count myself and who today are scattered to all the points of the compass) in spirit. The song transgresses borders of land and sea, linking the urban, the dispossessed, and the ordinary man or woman in friendship and camaraderie across the world. The song begs that these 'children', those who survived the Holocaust of life, stand firm and 'hold on' to its makers in unity.

From pole to pole and corner to corner
Hold on! Hold on!
Behind the bridge and across the border
Hold on! Hold on! (Tanker 1996)

In the same way, *Carnival Messiah* departs entirely from a literal interpretation of the institution of African enslavement. Instead, it uses the metaphor of performance, traditional ritual enactments, and the music of one of Europe's greatest classical music icons as a vehicle in which to transport and showcase a shared heritage that has emerged in the Caribbean as a direct result of the institution of colonialism and African enslavement.

Because of its particularly close relationship with the institution of slavery and the sugar trade, Harewood's custodian saw it as an appropriate host for the show and a facilitator for the commemoration and celebration of shared heritage.

This was achieved through the direct training and interaction with over one hundred young multi-ethnic Britons, a large professional team of performers, a large technical support and management team, the staff, volunteers, and regular visitors to Harewood, and an audience of over ten thousand (all of whom hailed from a large variety of ethnic and social backgrounds), in a bid to champion heritage issues that might engender historical transparency, healing, and social re-construction.

Carnival Messiah charts the emergence, acquisition, appropriation, re-making, new ownership, and proud celebration of what is clearly a most extraordinary evolutionary process, through the portrayal of traditional enactments that the western world has continued to trivialise by viewing them as superficial entertainments, instead of recognising the direct links they have with the institutions of European expansionism, African enslavement, and Asian indentureship.

Carnival Messiah deliberately presents these enactments on an equal footing with western Europe's greatest classical music iconography, Handel's *Messiah*, in a bid to symbolically neutralise the deep and inhumane injustice that took place so many centuries ago.

Carnival Messiah gives positive reinforcement to a theatrical enterprise that has more often than not been expressed through universally negative stereotypes of deep pain and distress. *Carnival Messiah* is, however, a testament to the ingenuity of the peoples of the Caribbean and the fact that the more horrific the historical remembrance, the more skilfully the Caribbean people camouflaged it, and the more beautifully it was then portrayed in the public domain. Like our historical ancestors, rather than show pain, the theatrical production of *Carnival Messiah* instead manifests itself as joy.

Carnival Messiah, like carnival and the Caribbean, is able to create a space of multiple paradoxes -- a chaos even -- as it embraces and equally accommodates the historical and the contemporary, the essential and the multicultural, life and death, the real and the ephemeral, the tragic and the comic, the sacred and the profane, oratorio and calypso, the natural and the supernatural, and truth and reconciliation.

A profound and uplifting cross-cultural experience, *Carnival Messiah* as a theatrical metaphor describes the celebration of life and living, joyfully creating for just a short while a space and place of safety and well-being where we can all co-exist in love, peace, and harmony.

There is something of the Martin Luther King about *Carnival Messiah* -- I believe it is the powerful force of hope. (Connor 2007)

Postscript

Carnival Messiah welcomes all the world into its Third Space: and as audiences continue to rise to their feet as one, and in unison, to acclaim and affirm *Carnival Messiah*'s praise song at the end of each performance, I too can now truly believe that they have added their voices to that eternally joyous chorus of life: 'HalleluiaH!'

May 23, 2010

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