Joyce Foundation Is Early Funder of Project Kalinda

With the release of this issue of Kalinda newsletter, Project Kalinda has reached the half-way mark of its planned three-year duration. Project activities have already greatly increased the understanding of and mutual interest in the many relationships that exist between and among the musics of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Americas. It has allowed the Center to heighten its visibility in Chicago’s Latino and West Indian communities and to involve musicians and scholars from these communities, and it has generated strong interest from area institutions of higher learning and within the Columbia College community. Scholars, musicians, and lay persons have praised the project as an overdue and illuminating endeavor. Connections with researchers and institutions from Europe and the Americas have been secured and open dialogues have been created.

The Joyce Foundation, with a grant of $50,000, supported the first year of the project, which included lectures by scholars Martha Ellen Davis, Juan Dies, Lorna McDaniel, and Peter Manuel; preparation for the presentation of lecture-demonstrations and performances by Ensemble Kalinda Chicago; and the publication of the first issue of Kalinda newsletter. The foundation renewed its initial grant with an award of an additional $50,000 for the second year of the project.

In October 1994, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation awarded the project a two-year grant in the amount of $112,460 to support Project Kalinda activities during the last two years of the project. The second year of the project is also being supported by a grant of $20,000 from the Chicago Community Trust, as announced on page 14.

What’s Music Research Without Performance?

Project Kalinda was introduced to the public nearly a year ago with a program that included three lectures and a performance of Haitian folk songs by singer/guitarist, Raphael Benito. The Center for Black Music Research has always believed that any serious study of music must be accompanied by performances of the music that are as stylistically and historically accurate as possible. The original concept of Project Kalinda included a (continued on 4)
Voices

JAIME RIVERA
Youth Guidance Program
THE PROJECT KALINDA CONCERT at Columbia’s Getz Theater can best be described as one of the evening’s most inspiring and enchanting musical sojourns into the roots of African musical influences in the New World. It offered my children a cultural sensory experience barely imaginable in books. They loved it!

CYNTHIA PERRY
Vice President, Harris Bank
IT WAS an uplifting and educational performance. I learned a great deal about music and its African heritage in Latin America. The entire performance was well done and very professional.

CAROLYN GOLAB
Legal Assistance Foundation
I AM GLAD that I was present to enjoy the wonderful program coordinated by the Center for Black Music Research. I was very much impressed by the presentation made by the Sones de México and Ensemble Kalinda.

RAMON E. VELEZ
Spanish Speaking Outreach
Institute, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
MY MOST SINCERE congratulations on the premier of the Ensemble Kalinda. What an exciting and promising evening! It validated once again that cultures and civilizations constantly interact, exchange ideas, and influence one another.

WILLIAM NEY
Latin American & Iberian Studies Program,
University of Wisconsin-Madison
THE ENSEMBLE KALINDA CHICAGO presents an important new cultural resource here in the Midwest. No where else will you experience a Brazilian singing plena or a Puerto Rican laying down a capoeira beat. The fusion of Afro-Latin rhythms from across the Americas in a single ensemble is an innovative effort by the Center for Black Music Research that should be strongly commended.

OMYRA CORDOVA
Student, Columbia College
PROJECT KALINDA was a hit! My parents and I enjoyed the show very much. Sones de México Ensemble, Son del Barrio, and Ensemble Kalinda Chicago played wonderfully, but Ensemble Kalinda Chicago touched our hearts. Listening to the true barrio music of the Caribbean islands such as Puerto Rico, Cuba, and so on was very inspiring. Events like Project Kalinda encourage young adults to learn more about their culture, as well as others.

GUSTAVO PEREDES
Northwestern University Settlement
THE MANIFESTATIONS of the African diaspora in the Americas have taken many forms since the days of the Middle Passage. Certainly, the challenge has always been to value the cultural influence of Africa, particularly in the musical context. The Center for Black Music Research has realized the challenge and has begun this process of cultural education through performance and a resident musical group, Ensemble Kalinda Chicago.

Providing interesting points of reference, an engaging musical tour through the Americas was conducted in a concert produced by the Center for Black Music Research, featuring Sones de México Ensemble, Son del Barrio, and Ensemble Kalinda Chicago.

The two guest ensembles joined forces with Ensemble Kalinda to showcase repertoires and cultures not featured elsewhere on the program. Sones de México Ensemble demonstrated facsinating Afro-Mexican forms and dances, including “La Iguana,” a mimetic dance from Tixtla, Guerrero. Son del Barrio performed several works in the salsa style, currently popular throughout the United States.

Ensemble Kalinda Chicago places Afro-Caribbean music in context. The difficulty of
performing various Afro-American rhythms (such as danzon, pambiche, and plena) and with passion cannot be underestimated. The arrangement of standards and challenging compositions were tasty and alive. The ensemble has tremendous potential to supersede the clinical academic approach to truly educate an audience about the African diaspora through a high level of musicianship and entertainment. The Center for Black Music Research has taken an ambitious step toward creating a united Afro-American sensibility.

RONALD E. HARRIS
Bobby E. Wright Community Mental Health Center

THE ENTIRE PROGRAM was awesome! It was a pleasure seeing the effort of the Center for Black Music Research in trying to preserve the African contributions of the Diaspora as it relates to music. This type of program definitely bridges gaps among those communities of African descent that are not aware or familiar of [with?] each others’ cultural influences.

RAFAEL ANGLADA
Project Kalinda Advisory Committee, City of Chicago, Department of Revenue

I WAS very impressed with the performance presented by Ensemble Kalinda Chicago. Not only is there ethnic diversity among its players, but the quality of its musicianship is outstanding. I was glad that the concert also featured Son del Barrio, because it provided an opportunity for young people to pursue their talents and gave the concert a local community flavor.

ELENA MULCHAY
Director, Ventures in Science Program, Harry S. Truman College

I HAD INVITED some friends to attend the concert, and we were all very much impressed by the spectrum of diversity presented in the entire program and by the fact that young people from Son del Barrio were given an opportunity to perform in a large venue. I felt that the quality of musicians were first rate, and those of Ensemble Kalinda Chicago, with its great presence, were very secure in their playing and with the content of the music they were presenting.

ESTHER NIEVES
Assistant Director, Erie Neighborhood Settlement House

THE ENTIRE Project Kalinda concert was an excellent example of the depth and scope of Afro-Caribbean music. It was an excellent opportunity to reflect on our rich cultural history and the ties to non-Latino culture.
Music Research? (continued from 1) permanent project ensemble that would actively participate in project activities through musical lecture-demonstrations and performances of music that demonstrate the styles and genres of the Caribbean and Latin American music that were influenced by African music and would later influence music in the United States.

Many readers of Kalinda! newsletter already know that this ensemble has been assembled and that it has been performing in Chicago to critical acclaim and rousing audience reaction. Ensemble Kalinda Chicago (EKC) is off to a great start. The group’s debut performance was hosted last September by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs as part of its Nuevo! series. The event was a lecture-demonstration titled “From the Mandinga to the Mambo: African Rhythms in Latin Music” and featured noted author Peter Manuel. This same event was given a second presentation at the Dance Center of Columbia College. Both events elicited good audience response and interaction with the band and guest lecturer.

The next two appearances by the EKC occurred in January at the Getz Theater of Columbia College. Performances were given on two successive nights by the ensemble, joined by two other Chicago bands, Sones de México Ensemble and Son del Barrio, the latter from Roberto Clemente Community Academy High School. The audiences heard a large range of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latin American music. Sones de México performed black Mexican music, including a mimetic dance called “La Iguana.” EKC performed an African chant; a songo, an old danzón, and a cha cha cha, all from Cuba; a samba/baía from Brazil; a Dominican merengue; and a Puerto Rico plena. Howard Reich, Chicago Tribune arts critic, wrote “Ensemble Kalinda Chicago . . . is anything but typical. The great appeal of this ensemble . . . lies not so much in the novelty of its repertoire as in the authenticity of its performances. Consistently, Ensemble Kalinda honors the stylistic requirements and historical demands of the music while dispatching it with a freshness and a spirit that one might sooner expect to hear from an indigenous street band.” (Reprint courtesy of the Chicago Tribune.) A translation of the review by Alejandro Riera, ¡Exito! reporter, appears on page 5 of this issue.

During February, Columbia College’s Office of Student Life sponsored a lecture-demonstration event for college students, faculty, and staff. The event, part of the college’s Black Heritage Month activities, included brief lectures by Lee V. Cloud, the Center’s Coordinator of Education. This presentation was repeated during early April for the Center for Latino Research at DePaul University. Similar events were given during May at the DuSable Museum, St. Augustine College, and the Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center. A fall event is scheduled for September at Malcolm X College. Details will be provided in the next issue of Kalinda!

Ensemble Kalinda Chicago consists of the following musicians:
Kenny Anderson, trumpet
Carlos Eguis-Aguila, percussion
Luiz Ewerling, drums
Padinha Garcia, guitars and vocals
Mike Rivera, music director, arranger, and bass
Edwin Sánchez, keyboard
Henry Salgado, trombone
José Santiago, flute, saxophone, and vocals

As Project Kalinda continues to develop, so will the EKC, its repertoire, and its lecture-demonstration topics. Look for future performances and lectures in the Chicago area.
The Brave Cadences of Ensemble Kalinda

BY ALEJANDRO RIERA
¡EXITO! REPORTER


Nothing can separate Carlos Eguis-Aguila—better known as Carlos Quinto in Chicago musical circles—from his tumbadoras; not even his fellow members of Ensemble Kalinda Chicago.

Maestro Eguis-Aguila’s work in music teaching is well known, and we have seen him play before in conferences and seminars; but this is the first time that he performs as part of a group.

And what a group! Those who attended the professional debut of Ensemble Kalinda Chicago last Jan. 26 at the Getz Theater of Columbia College, located at 62 East 11th Street, were pleasantly surprised. The band attracted an ethnically and musically diverse audience that was taken through a musical tour of Latin America.

Ensemble Kalinda Chicago is part of a series of events directed by Project Kalinda from the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College.

The project, named after a dance of African origin that was popular all over Louisiana and the Caribbean during the 19th century, plans to research and document the influence of African culture on the music and culture of Latin America and the United States. It also tries to research the common roots of such diverse genres as jazz, the Puerto Rican plena, the Dominican merengue, and soul music.

Carlos Flores, the group’s coordinator, and Mike Rivera, its musical director, have gathered eight professional musicians that, as a group, dwarfs any other Afro-Latin band. And that’s after being together for only four months.

Ensemble Kalinda limited its presentation to seven numbers, clearly emphasizing Cuban rhythms. The concert began with a chant to the god Changó, of the Yoruba religion, sung by Eguis-Aguila with a slightly raspy voice (as a result of a cold) that did not allow the audience to enjoy his deep tone.

In size and structure, especially in the organization of the wind section, the band is reminiscent of the new Eddie Palmieri octet, perhaps without the brutal strength of Brian Lynch or the obsessive perfectionism of Palmieri himself. However, in terms of arrangements, musical variety, and commitment to reflect the authenticity of these rhythms, Ensemble Kalinda shares many an element with New York timbalero Manny Oquendo’s band Libre. The interpretation by Kalinda of Manuel “Canario” Jiménez’s “Elena, Elena” had the rhythmic and vocal density that are present in the recording that Oquendo made in 1991, with arrangements by Andy González, entitled Sonido, estilo y ritmo.

In the jazz and salsa worlds, it is said that a musician is brave when he manages to extract new tonalities from his instrument. This is an appropriate way to describe the extraordinary work by saxophonist José Santiago and trumpeter Kenny Anderson. Without wanting to lessen the merits of the other six members, it can be said that these two musicians had a superb performance.

In both “Las alturas de Simpson” and “Chachá-chá para siempre” Santiago, besides obeying the rhythmic structures of these two genres, insinuated brief jazzy variations in his flute solos. Anderson, on the other hand, was less obvious.

This explosion of sounds was preceded by equally splendid presentations by the bands Sones de México and Son del Barrio.

Sones de México performed melodies that went hand in hand with the night’s African theme. Son del Barrio showed a musical maturity surprising for a group of such young musicians.

Reprinted with permission of ¡Exito! newspaper.
—Translated by Marcos Sueiro
The syncretistic nature of Caribbean culture has allowed it to constantly adapt to the wave of people, cultures, and languages passing through the region. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the accordion became the first mass-produced instrument adopted across the Caribbean. Some of the styles that arose, such as vallenato and merengue, have thrived in the modern era. Others, like those played by the Virgin Islands scratch bands, replaced the accordion with electric guitar or electronic keyboard. A number of genres that used an accordion at one time have disappeared altogether.

Cultural antecedents in Europe and Africa existed for the already-present string and percussion instruments. The skills to build and play instruments of these families could be found in the local populace of most islands. The accordion arrived without any such cultural precedents; it required new skills to play and utilized new construction technology that precluded local manufacture of its reed blocks. The local musicians weighed these disadvantages with the physical advantages the accordion offered, and its quick integration into the music across the basin shows that they favored it.

Mass production of the German diatonic button accordion began in 1839 and first made its appearance in the New World shortly thereafter. The simple box construction was very durable and was unaffected by extremes in humidity. The one-row diatonic accordion, the most common model, was built with 2-4 sets of reeds. This gave the instrument the capacity to generate enough volume to hold its own with indigenous percussion ensembles. The musician had only to avoid prolonged exposure to high temperatures, which would cause the beeswax sealing to soften, and to sea air, which would corrode the steel reeds. Its volume meant that a single instrument could project a melody to a large group of dancers. The multiple reeds ensured that even if a reed was damaged the player could continue uninterrupted. No contemporary, mass-produced instrument other than the accordion offered these advantages along with built-in accompaniment, the freedom to play and sing simultaneously, and early transportability.

Across much of the Caribbean basin, the accordion and the scraper or rasp were paired. Scrapping instruments made of gourds, calabashes, bones, and burro’s jawbones were deeply integrated into the local music at the time when accordions were being introduced. The pairing of the tonality of free reeds and scraping or scratching sounds seems to have been an extremely popular sound.¹

Early Descriptions
The earliest written account from the region comes from a description of a St. Kitts Mumming Play in 1901. An English authoress described the band that accompanied the play as including “a few dozen conch shells, concertinas, tin cans, fiddles, penny whistles, tambourines, and drums.” Walter Jekyll’s Jamaican Song and Story from 1907 included the common scraper with the free reed, reporting “One brings a cassada-grater, looking like a bread-grater; this, rubbed with the handle of a spoon, makes a very efficient crackling accompaniment . . . The top of the music is not always supplied by fifes. Sometimes there will be two fiddles, sometimes a concertina, or, what is more approved, because it has ‘bigger

¹ I have asked a number of musicians about the pairing of accordion and scraper and all have been perplexed that I should ask such a question. I have found other examples of this combination in Virginia (1890), the Cape Verde Islands (in a style called funana), and in Zaire (in a style called bandudu).
voice, 'a flutina. On asking to see this strange instrument I was shown the familiar accordion.'

In 1929 American record companies like Columbia and Brunswick were recording Puerto Rican plena groups such as Los Borinqueños and Los Reyes de la Plena. The plena is similar to the Trinidadian calypso in its use of repetitive verses and its topical nature. Both of these plena groups featured the button accordion, which was traditionally associated with plena groups. Ansonia Records continued to find an appeal for traditional plena music in the 1960s with the records of Ismael Santiago y sus Pleneros, who recorded three albums featuring singer Angel Luis Torruel accompanied by Santiago's button accordion and a small traditional ensemble. The accordion-based plena group has almost disappeared from Puerto Rico, but accordion-based merengue in Puerto Rico is a different story.

In 1840, when merengue was first mentioned in the Dominican Republic, the accompaniment was described as guitar, a drum called tambora, and a metal scraper called güiro. As the button accordion swept across the island in the 1870s, it replaced the guitar in this folk típico format, eventually evolving into the contemporary style known as perico ripiao.

Vallenato, a style with an almost identical instrumental lineup, emerged in the rural regions of northeastern Colombia (Magdalena, Cesar, and La Guajira) at the beginning of the twentieth century. The traditional vallenato ensemble consists of the three-row, club style accordion, the small two-headed drum called caja, and the stick rasp guacharaca. Colombia's own cumbia has been extremely popular among accordion-led groups along the Atlantic Coast from Panama to Veracruz. Although there is evidence of a Dominican influence in vallenato, it is still not clear if the instrument lineup was mimicked or arose independently.

Haitian mérinage developed simultaneously with the Dominican form. Haitians also paired the accordion with the metal scraper or grage. Rural villagers danced not only to mérinage but also to quadrilles, waltzes, polkas, contredanses, and mazurkas. Such European-titled dances were common in the repertoire of accordion-led Creole bands in both rural Louisiana and New Orleans, but they have now disappeared. Similar bands, complete with caller or commandeur, are still active in Guadeloupe. They use two-row button accordions, the triangle, or tit fer, and a stick rasp called grage. This is a bamboo pole notched and scrapped with a stick with similarities to the guacharaca used in vallenato and a similar scraper used by jing ping bands from Dominica.

Current Use of the Accordion and Scrapers

The more contemporary Haitian sound of compas direct was based on the indigenous merengue and merengue from the Dominican Republic's Cibao region. The influence of Dominican bandleaders like Ramón García and Angel Viloria is heard in the prototypic compas direct arrangement. The grage is still used and the piano (continued on 8)

2. I am not trying to consider Colombia as a whole, but specifically its Caribbean coast, which has had significant interaction with the people of the Caribbean and with the music of the Dominican Republic specifically. Forro or tango or huayno (from Peru) do not have any such relationship either with a Caribbean music or with the people and cultures of the Caribbean in general.
Pumping (continued from 7)

accordion, as used by these more urbane Dominican groups, provides obligatos beneath the vocal lines and the brass passages. Even early Min-Jaz recordings by guitar-dominated Tabou Combo still feature the piano accordion of compas direct.3

The combination of metal scraper and accordion defines the sound of zydeco music for its audience of French-speaking African Americans in southwest Louisiana. frattoir players now use a form-fitting corrugated metal vest first designed by the innovative accordionist Clifton Chenier. The modern vest allows the player more mobility and increases the volume to a level where the unamplified frattoir can compete with the fully amplified band. This vest design was an advance on the corrugated washtub, which, in turn, had replaced the earlier scrapers.

But some early combinations of accordion plus scrapers can still be found. One of the earliest, the donkey jawbone and accordion combination, is still used in Belize for boom-an’-chime. Bahamas dance the quadrille and Heel-and-Toe Polka to rake-and-scrape music. In that music the accordionist is accompanied by a small hand drum and the common carpenter’s saw. The saw player holds the small end of the saw in his hand, presses the handle against his shoulder, and then scrapes across the teeth with a metal tool.

In the cultures where the accordion has become a symbol of cultural identity, accordion-based music has continued to thrive.5

The accordion and frattoir have become symbols of a rural Creole identity in southwest Louisiana. Perico ripiao has continued to find a steady market in the Dominican diaspora and has had enormous influence in modern vallenato, whose artists continue to translate merengue songs into the vallenato style.

Across cultural and linguistic borders of the Caribbean, musicians took to the accordion and integrated it into their own local traditions. The sound of the rasp and the free reed struck a resonant chord with the people, and the new genres recrossed the basin, first by means of worker migrations and then by mass media. The shared aesthetic has probably reached its zenith and passed as technology overwhelmed the need for the simple accordion except in locations such as the Dominican Republic, southwestern Louisiana, and northern Colombia, where it has become a symbol of cultural identity.

3. Nemours Jean-Baptiste, with Musical Tour of Haiti (Ansonia HGCD-1280), created the compas direct craze using a lineup based on the Dominican bands with the addition of the guitar. The accordion was very prominent in his band and also in the Weber Sicat band, which was his leading rival. The dominant guitar sound was part of the mini-jazz sound, which began in the mid-1960s; at that time the accordion disappeared from use.

4. I learned this information from C. J. Chenier, the son of Clifton Chenier. I have had it verified by Marc Savoy, the Acadian accordion builder and friend of Clifton Chenier, and Canary Fontenot, the great Creole fiddler who was also a friend of Mr. Chenier.

5. The accordion and scraper connote a symbol of the country life in the Dominican Republic. Those who wish to identify with the country life listen to merengue from the countryside. Occasionally, a singer (like Fefita La Grande) crosses over and sells even to the merengue orchestra crowd.
The Thirteenth Caribbean Music Festival in Cartagena

BY RAUL FERNANDEZ

MUSICAL GROUPS from eight countries performed March 17–21, 1994, at the thirteenth annual Festival de Musica del Caribe, or Caribbean Music Festival, in Cartagena de Indias on the coast of Colombia. Begun in 1981, Festicaribe presents ensembles representing many countries and music styles from the entire Caribbean and Africa.

Festicaribe is one of several festivals in the contemporary Caribbean music scene that includes Reggae Sunsplash in Jamaica, Trinidad Carnival, Curacao Salsa Festival, Green Moon in the island of San Andres, Colombia and Carifesta in Cuba.

Cartagena de Indias is a most appropriate site for Festicaribe. One of the earliest Spanish settlements in the New World, this city of nearly one million people became, during colonial times, the port of entry of enslaved Africans into South America. Today, the population of Cartagena—as well as that of the other major city in the area, Barranquilla, and the entire Caribbean coast of Colombia—for the most part, is a racially mixed people of African, Spanish, and American Indian heritage. The famed Barranquilla Carnival, one of the most deeply rooted in the hemisphere, reflects the musical impact of these three cultures.

The Caribbean coast of Colombia has been the source of important musical traditions and innovations. Cartagena itself is the birthplace of Joe Arroyo, one of Colombia’s most prominent contemporary salsa singers. Arroyo has successfully incorporated many elements from Africa and the English-speaking Caribbean into his very unique development of salsa music. Cartagena, as the site of Festicaribe, is reinforced as a center of cultural and musical activities. The countries invited to the thirteenth Festicaribe included Puerto Rico, Cuba, Haiti, Belize, Dominique, Jamaica, Venezuela, Zaire, and Colombia. United States-based bands have always been present at the festival as well.

The genres ran the spectrum from traditional or “pure” styles to modern blends and hybrids. Thus the audience could listen to the Cuban son, the Colombian vallenato, and Santo Domingo’s merengues as well as more modern forms. For example, Shinehead from Jamaica presented a blend of rap-dance hall-reggae to the Cartagenans. And Belize featured a band offering a mixture of punta and soca called punsoca. The visit by a Zairian group maintained a tradition of always presenting groups from Africa.

In the last few years, Festicaribe has organized lectures and panels that focus on the music and culture of the Caribbean. Two panels of scholars examined aspects of Caribbean music and culture in the 1994 Festicaribe. On the first day of presentations, a large audience gathered for the presentations of Cristobal Diaz-Ayala, Luis E. Julia, and Joel James Figueroa. Diaz-Ayala, the well-known author of La Musica Cubana: Del Areito a la Nueva Trova, discussed the African presence in the music of Cuba; Luis E. Julia presented a lecture-concert focused on his current research on Caribbean music traditions; and Joel James Figueroa, director of the Casa del Caribe in Santiago de Cuba, examined the symbolic representations of death in the traditions (continued on 10)
Music Festival  (continued from 9) of the Caribbean.

On the second day, Lacidas Moreno entertained the audience with his scholarly presentation of the process of cultural mestizaje as seen through the culinary arts of the Caribbean basin. Ruben Dario Olmos lectured on the Cancon Festival’s presentation of Cuban music. Finally, I lectured on the musical biography of the noted Cuban bassist Israel “Cachao” Lopez. A precursor of the Perez Prado mambo and a leading figure in the development of the Cuban “descargas” or jam sessions, Cachao has been a key figure in the development of salsa in New York as well as the new rhythmic approach of many U.S. jazz bassists from the 1960s on.

The presentations took place in the enormous back patio of a colonial mansion, under mango and avocado trees. During my paper—mostly audio and videotapes on Cachao—the audience was made up of groups of friends and families drinking beer in the shade. I should not exaggerate: there was a small group of old men drinking Santa Maria rum straight from the bottle! After the talk, two of them, for no apparent reason, came up to me crying and started hugging me. I suppose that they enjoyed it (the talk, I mean).

Spanish language bands and genres constituted the bulk of the performances at Festicaribe. Moreover, all the presentations were in Spanish and the audience was almost entirely Spanish-speaking. Importantly, Festicaribe and Green Moon (both in Spanish-speaking Colombia) are the only two festivals where the variety of languages spoken in the Caribbean are featured. Festicaribe constitutes an important site where musicians of different countries of the Caribbean and Africa, who already share common strands in their musical traditions, can push forward the exchange of ideas and inspiration.

Afrocubanismo
Canada Plays Host to the Exotic Rhythms of Cuba

BY TREVOR SALLOUM

In August 1994 I had the pleasure of attending “Afrocubanismo,” a ten-day festival of Afro-Cuban culture transplanted to the Banff Centre for the Arts in Banff, British Columbia, Canada. This event presented many aspects of Cuban music, dance, film, and song. The celebration was billed as “the most comprehensive offering of Cuban music and culture outside of Cuba since the revolution of 1959.”

Instruction and performances were given by Chucho Valdés; Irakere; Los Muñequis de Matanzas; Chanquito (percussionist); Richard Eguís (flautist); Amelia Pedroso (vocalist); Librada Quesada from Conjunto Folkorico Nacional; Natalia Bolivar (author); José Pilar, Fermin Nani, and Regilio Jimiénez of Danza Contemporánea; Eduardo Rivero (choreographer); and Mayra Valdes (vocalist). Also included were Canadian musicians Memo Acevedo, Don Thompson, Vic Vogel, and Hugo Fraser. Several notable musicians from the U.S. were present, including Scott Wardsinsky, Rebecca Mauleon, Michael Spiro, Walfredo Reyes Sr., and Richie Garcia.

Participants in the workshops traveled from as far as Paris, France, to attend this year’s festival, although most came from Canada and the U.S.

The days were filled with workshops in
musical styles from rumba to son to Latin jazz. Participants from beginners to advanced players benefited from classes in both Havana-style rhumba, taught by percussionists from Danza Contemporánea, and Matanzas-style rhumba, taught by members of Los Muñequitos de Matanzas. Popular music was taught by members of Irakere. The level of instruction was superb.

Master classes in piano and composition were offered by Chucho Valdés, in flute by Richard Ecués from Orquesta Aragon; and in percussion by Changuito (formerly Los Van Van) and Anga (of Irakere).

Special lectures and films were also presented. Santeria scholar Natalia Bolivar discussed “Myths and Legends of Afro-Cuban Food”; the session included a spectacular array of delicious samplings and a hike down to the local river to give offerings to the orishas.

Well-known Cuban film director Hector Veita led the Afro-Cuban film and video seminar, which occurred concurrently with AfroCubanismo. Veita, who is professor of directing at the International School of Film and Television in Cuba (EICTV), worked for many years as a documentary filmmaker and news journalist with the Cuban Institute of Cinema Arts (ICAIC). He provided insights into Cuban music and media with examples of video never previously viewed in Canada.

Concerts were presented nightly, with jam sessions continuing until the wee hours of the morning. It’s not surprising that students and instructors often arrived the following morning with glassy eyes and strained vocal cords from singing coros all night.

Organizer and researcher Andrew Schloss accomplished a momentous feat in delivering such a wealth of performers to appear at the Banff Centre for the Arts. Banff was a spectacular setting for this wealth of culture. Nestled between gigantic mountains, this resort community is used to seeing hikers and skiers, and residents seemed shocked but enthralled when the finale of the festival culminated in a comparsa street dance through the center of the city.

The highlight of the festival for me was the opportunity to study with Enrique Plá, drummer for Irakere, and with members of Los Muñequitos de Matanzas. It was truly a drummer’s greatest dream come true.

TREVOR SALLOUM is a naturopathic physician and musician in Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada. He has made several trips to Cuba to study Afro-Cuban music.
Crop-Over (continued from 14)

song and dance.

At the end of the harvest of the sugar cane crop, which was providing lucrative returns for the planters and hard work and daily subsistence for the slave workers, a big party was permitted in the plantation yard, and the slaves participated in song and dance using fiddles, guitars, drums, and triangles. They even climbed the greasy pole, ate such delicacies as pudding and souse, cassava pone, homemade bread, mauby, and rum punch, and enjoyed entertainment, mimicry, and abandon.

One historical event of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century was sought out by the Barbados Board of Tourism in 1974 to boost tourism in the country. The event was called Crop-Over, a term used to describe the plantation feast of yore and to signify the end of the sugar crop harvest. A new festival was born, and since little written cultural history of Barbados existed, the populace received this event as a new form.

Twenty years later, in 1994, the festival is a grand street fair bordering on a carnival-like theater. It boosts the tourism industry, links Barbadians living overseas in the U. S., Britain, and Canada, develops a cultural consciousness for black Barbadians, places a stamp on the historical past for the current generations, reaffirming identity and ethnic consciousness, and provides an outlet for mass participation of all classes in the creative endeavor.

The Crop-Over Festival, now organized by the National Cultural Foundation and assisted and sponsored by businesses and private enterprises, has been marked as a tourism event of which all Barbadians are proud. The carnival is evident in the costuming and the street dancing, but the festival is more of an exhibition, with masquerading being the main focus, as opposed to being an established tradition handed down from generation to generation.

Oral tradition and practices are evident in this festival in the indigenous music, the food, the attitude of the people, and certain characteristic movements, gestures, and dances. But the mythological and religious components are not consciously evident or understood. The festival is held from June to August and is more a summer festival, having no relation to the Lenten period.

Many components of the Crop-Over Festival have been improved or reinforced as part of a marketable package. Events such as the Ceremonial Delivery of the Last Canes, the Crowning of the Champion King and Queen of the Crop, the Donkey Cart Parade, and the Promenade in Queen’s Park, serve as main attractions that draw crowds. Fêtes and parties are held in abundance at private homes, in nightclubs and hotels, and at the newly-constructed open air village, “Soca Village,” where one can dance under the stars to the latest calypsos. Other events of the festival provide employment to those in the recording industry, to costume makers, to food vendors, to tent managers, to security guards, and to photographers. All this contributes to the blaze of color, movement, excitement, and party atmosphere.

The Ceremonial Delivery of Canes marks the official opening of the Crop-Over Festival about mid-July. The last harvest of the sugar cane crop is brought to a plantation yard (the location changes annually) in a cart drawn by a truck, whereas formerly it was drawn by a donkey. The Donkey Cart Parade reflects history and is reminiscent of the use of the donkey and attached cart for carrying burdens. In this instance, canes used to be carried in varying forms of carts after being manually cut by men and women and headed from the field. Technology and development now permit the use of cranes to lift canes on the lorries or heavy-duty trailers drawn by motored tractors. The donkey cart was also used as transportation for the vil-
lagers and tenantry dwellers who wanted to come to town to sell their produce or to purchase items. Modern transportation needs have produced highways and fast-moving machines for travel. There is no longer a place for such a cart on the main roads.

I want back my donkey
He’s more than jackass to me . . .
I want back my donkey
I use him culturally.¹

The Crop-Over Festival glorified the cart and thus created a parade held the Sunday afternoon of the festival. Creative persons decorate carts or trucks with local material in accordance with local themes in order to win a prize for the best decorated cart and to preserve the symbols of heritage. This event is popular with children and families and is accompanied by music composed and recorded or taped for the Festival.

The calypso tents also find a place in the festival as is the case in Trinidad and Tobago and other carnivals in the English-speaking Caribbean. Calypso as an art form has become the culturally expressive tool for the masses, where spoofs, social and political commentary, humor, theater, dance, and drama are all encompassed in a four-verse composition with a verse and chorus format. Band arrangements and backup singers project the working skills of arrangers and composers. Performers reign supreme in this format and carry such names as Invader, Lord Mark, Traveller, Observer, Kinky Star, and Foreigner Frank. The tent is not a tent per se as it was in earlier times when calypso was perceived as an intimate social interaction with the people of the community who gathered to hear the bard speak in small groupings at the street corner or under a tent. Calypso now attracts a wider following and penetrates social barriers. Venues had to be formed to accommodate the persons attending. Marketing became important, creating jobs for public relations personnel, stage hands, entertainment managers, and performers.

This music, both from the tents and recordings, provides the basis for the Crop-Over Festival fever by providing background music and by setting the tone. It represents a greater license than was permitted in the original Crop-Over of the plantations. There are more blaring brass instruments, loud vocals, and varied drumming, which all captivate the enthusiastic participants of this festival and capture the abandonment of carnival.

A large street market is created on the Spring Garden Highway on Saturday and Sunday before the final week of festivities, and stalls adorn the routes with food, crafts, and cultural produce. Local indigenous characters parade the streets in costume or casual wear and provide entertainment. Several stiltsmen, walking ten feet tall and dancing on stilts, are a delight to the young and old. The Shaggy Bear and Mother Sally, two characters who compliment the “tuk band” on the streets and were part of the village and tenantry plantation life on public holidays, also appear with the Barbados Landship Movement. This friendly society was formed in 1862 and provided entertainment in the villages for plantation workers. Members dress in uniforms of the British Navy and ranks range from highest to lowest. Dances and drills provide entertainment, along with specific improvised, yet routine drills.

The Cohobblopot, held on the Sunday before the Festival ends, mixes music, dance, song, drama, and comedy to showcase local talent and indigenous music forms. Revelers leave the Cohobblopot and go to their “mas camps,” where costumes are donned in preparation for the road march and masquerade-type jump-up on Kadooment Day, August 1st. On that day revelers parade in groups across a stage at the Stadium to be judged. It is here (and at the Kiddies Kadooment) that spectacle, color, creativity, observance of historical topics, design, and mass participation are supreme. The pounding rhythm which keeps them afloat as they jump in the broiling sun for four to five hours along the streets towards the Spring Garden Highway brings the festival to a close in the late evening. Crop-Over, the colorful, picturesque mass-party comes to an end, providing a retrospective view of cultural practices while reinforcing new ones.

The Crop-Over Festival
Twenty Years of Cultural Development in Barbados

BY JANICE MILLINGTON

THE CARIBBEAN boasts a number of festivals and carnivals during the year. Carnivals, which seem to last for a two-week period and culminate at Ash Wednesday at the beginning of Lent, are part of the events that include holidays, fiestas, revelry, costuming, masquerades, music, songs, dance, food, and indigenous practices common to cultural expression.

The carnival, as perceived in Europe, has been associated with Catholic communities of Spanish ancestry having ingrained belief that the pre-Lenten period should be allotted for gay abandon, release of the spirit-body, costuming, and mimicry of problems, situations, and characters of cultural significance. In the Caribbean, these characters have included the soucouyant, the diablos, and the masquerader, the moco jumbié, and other supernatural characters interspersed with historical, topical, humorous, or "ole-mas" bands and costumes, and themes for display. The stress and tension of the year is released and the self is temporarily abandoned and transformed.

This pre-Lenten observation has been exemplified in celebrations in Venezuela, Brazil, Trinidad, and Tobago ("the home of carnival" for the Commonwealth English-speaking Caribbean); the Masquerades of St. Kitts and Nevis at Christmastime; the carnivals of Grenada and St. Lucia; John Koonu of Jamaica and the Bahamas Islands; and Mashramani in Guyana, where the spirit is particularly personified.

Barbados was never perceived as a carnival community or as a place where people visited to share this unique community expression of unity and cultural dominance. Ruled by the British Empire since 1627, the island acquired independent status and became a sovereign state in 1966. Yet ambivalence existed among the populace. The respectability and dignity common to English customs coincided with tribal mixes, languages, and customs, and the ruling planter class of Englishmen co-existed with African slaves. Ambivalence and the absence of cultural congruity precluded this spirit; and the expression of abandon, particularly for slaves, could never be encouraged. A ban was placed on the use of drums and loud music as an expression of (continued on 12)

Chicago Community Trust
Supports Project Kalinda

THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST has awarded the Center for Black Music Research a one-year grant in the amount of $20,000 in support of the Center's Project Kalinda. The grant will be used during the coming year as general operational support for the project, including performances and lecture-demonstrations by Ensemble Kalinda Chicago.