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<u>MUSIC FROM TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO</u>

By: Vanessa Tuttle

ABSTRACT

This essay will explore the musical culture and customs that come from the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago. Some of the traditions examined include the usage of the steel pan as a percussive instrument, the evolution of Carnival music in Trinidad, and the various types of poetic styles used in calypso songs. In an effort to understand the development and importance of musical practices in Trinidad and Tobago, it will be vital to take an anthropological and historical look at the two islands. This means learning about how the various cultures of people came to exist in Trinidad and Tobago and how the influences of multiple ethnicities combined to create unique musical sounds that can always be identified as coming from Trinidad or Tobago. This essay will reflect a compilation of information from literary works, documentaries and descriptions of historical events in order to gain a clear understanding of how the musical culture in Trinidad and Tobago came to be what it is.

The two small West Indian islands of Trinidad and Tobago are home to some of the most influential musical styles in the world. The island's national instrument, the steel pan drum, and everything calypso oriented is what truly put these Caribbean islands on the map and turned Trinidad and Tobago into a world destination for tourists all over the world who yearn to hear the rhyming talents of calypsonians or enjoy the complex rhythms of the steel pan ensembles. The unique blend of cultures that populate the small West Indian created genres of music that are that showcases the beauty of African, French, Spanish, and English and East Indian musical styles. The way in which the music of these various cultures mixed together is what makes the history of the islands fascinating and worth understanding. But the way in which these cultures ended up coming together to create such intriguing music was nothing short of tragic making the history of the music even more fascinating.

Trinidad and Tobago are two Caribbean islands off the coast of Venezuela. Present day Trinidad and Tobago is populated by people mostly of African, East Indian, European, or Chinese descent. The pair of islands had a colonial past that involved European rulership and African enslavement. The European groups in Trinidad and Tobago originate from the islands being controlled by Spanish, British and French conquerors. The African population stems from the existence of slavery on the islands from 1777 until 1834. And after the emancipation of slavery when the option to of labor by force was no longer available, the British, the European power in control of Trinidad at the time, sought out East Indian peasants to fulfill the duties that

the Africans were no longer carrying out. During the years 1833 to 1883, some 143,000 East Indians populated the Caribbean islands of Trinidad and Tobago (Manuel 183).

Despite the fact that how many of these cultures came to exist in Trinidad was rather tragic, it was mostly because of the dreadful past of Trinidad and Tobago that some of the most admired musical styles from the Caribbean were birthed. Some of the most popular music forms from Trinidad include the steel pan drum, the annual Carnival celebration, and the array of different traditions that are encompassed in calypso music genre. The rich history of how each of these traditions began and evolved is relevant in analyzing how humans and societal factors directly affect musical culture. A prime example of how social conditions and already established cultures influence music is in the Carnival tradition that takes place every year in Trinidad.

The Carnival tradition is a two-day celebration that takes place in the Trinidadian capital city of Port-O-Prince. The event lasts two days, and it occurs on the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The cultures that have most notably influenced the Carnival are the African and the French. The overall structure of the annual Carnival traces back to sixteenth century France. It was a festival celebrated by the Roman Catholic population in Paris, and it was a way to prepare for the day that marked the beginning of Lent (Pierre).

The West African heritage and cultural practices took influence over the French Carnival and led it to becoming the more secular event that it is today. The first Carnival in Trinidad took place during the nineteenth century when large numbers of French Caribbeans migrated to Trinidad from neighboring islands like Dominica, Martinique, and Haiti. The some 33,000 Africans and 1,400 Frenchmen that populated Trinidad created what is known as a creole

society. The definition of the word creole evolved throughout history as African identity in the Americas transformed and became more complex. But the widely accepted definition of the word in the present day is that a creole society is one that maintains both European, specifically French, and African traditions and values. Other places that have a yearly carnival and a heavy influence of creole is in New Orleans, Louisiana and in Haiti. Mardi Gras, the well-known carnival in New Orleans occurs on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday just as it does in Trinidad. And in Haiti, festivities last for several weeks before the start of Lent (Eble 41).

Though the practice of slavery made it so that skin color played a huge part in determining one's role in Trinidadian society, there was also an interesting hierarchy of class among the European inhabitants. At the time that the French arrived, the British maintained power over the island despite the fact that they were largely outnumbered. This led to the suppression of the Carnival celebration by the English government. Because of the slave status that Africans lived under, the Carnival in Trinidad was originally nothing more than just a masquerade festival for French aristocrats to socialize with one another (Manuel 186). With the emancipation of the slaves in 1843, more of an African influence permeated the event. As a result, the British government on the island introduced even harsher restrictions to the event. These restrictions led to the Carnival splitting into two separate events (Dudley 10).

One of these separate events was the outdoor street Carnival with festivities available to all of the public. This Carnival's participants mostly included the lower-class Afro-Trinidadians and those of mixed African and French heritage who were known as coloreds. The other version of the Carnival was reserved for the more privileged members of society. This included mostly European and some upper class colored constituents (Dudley 10). Of the two, the outdoor

Carnival that allowed for the involvement of lower class Afro-Trinidadians became the more popular celebration. This was due to the extravagant costumes, colorful themes, energetic African dancing, spirited chantwell singing and of course the steel pan orchestral arrangements (Micallef and Johnson).

This Carnival was specifically known as the *jamette* Carnival. The word *jamette* derives from the French word *diametre* meaning "boundary" and specifically refers to those who exist "outside of the boundary of respectability" (Dudley 13). The characteristics that differentiated the *jamette* rendition of the Carnival from that of the original masquerade event that was observed by mostly just the French was the stylistic African dancing, the *kalenda* stick fighting, and the enhancement of costumes, which changed from just masks to colorful full-body wardrobe that fit into a specific theme (Manuel 186). The overall spirit of the event is to acknowledge the liberation of the Afro-Trinidadians from the forced labor and hard life they endured because of the time they spent as slaves. In the documentary *Calypso Dreams,* Brother Akil, a Trinidadian historian, referred to Carnival as essentially being a "celebration of emancipation from plantation slavery for the African population" (Dunn and Horne).

Kalenda, also commonly spelled as *calinda*, was essentially a martial art form that was practiced by the Afro-Trinidians during their enslavement and after emancipation. *Kalenda* stylistically resembles the combative discipline of fencing. It involves two opponents battling each other using a single bamboo stick as their primary weapon. The goal of each fighter was too draw the blood of an opponent in order to be declared the victor of the battle. The relevance of this fight form was that fighters involved in a battle were always accompanied by pulsating

rhythms. Many of the rhythmic patterns were used in Carnival and in steelpan orchestras (Dudley 24).

Part of the *kalenda* tradition was that each fighter would come with an ensemble of percussionists and *chantwell* singers. Musicians that took part in *kalenda* events were known collectively as *kalenda* bands. The role of the musicians in these bands was not only to provide music for the event, but to increase the momentum of the fighter they were accompanying. The music helped to motivate and also to taunt. The *chantwell* singers would gloat about the skills and abilities of their fighter while also 'toasting' the other competitor (Dudley 24).

Toasting was originally a West African tradition that the slaves brought with them to the Americas (Pitts 146). It was an oral tradition that involved rhyming in a melodic and rhythmic way in order to tell stories, recite poetry and exchange insults. The chantwell singers of the *kalenda* bands would use this technique as a way to contribute and feel involved in the battle. Chantwell singers incorporated rhymes into their wordplay when bragging and teasing. In addition, the poetic style used by the chantwell singers is thought to be what inspired the calypso singers who participated in the tent competitions, which will be discussed later on (Charter 162).

Then *kalenda* drummers also played specific rhythmic styles that originated in West Africa. These were polyrhythmic patterns played during the battles and also played on the plantations during slavery. The instruments used to create these rhythms were called 'skin drums.' West African skin drums were another one of the surviving traditions that made it through the gruesome Middle Passage experienced by those who were both captured and sold into American slavery. These drums, brought from West Africa, were a staple part of the Afro-Trinidadians culture and musical traditions (Dudley 26).

In order to understand the art form of the steel pan drum tradition, it is necessary to be familiar with the overall relationship between Africans and drumming. Drumming and rhythm is such an essential aspect of African heritage that complex and unique rhythms can be found in the musical traditions of black populations all throughout the Americas. Africans identify the drum as being so significant that they often equate "the beat of the drum to the beat of the heart" (Smith 23).

Anglea Smith in her book *Steel Drums and Steel Bands*, references the Trinidadian calypsonian and soca musician Ras Shorty I in his song "Me To Way Way," to give an example of how the relation between African identity and the drum go hand in hand. The lyrics read:

African remember you are the same one

The beating of the drum is your heritage

So no matter where you go or where you live

The Blackman with the drum remains your true heritage

In West African societies, drums played a significant role in the different areas of daily life. Whether it was for religious ceremonies, life milestones, celebrations, or just as motivation to accomplish a daily chore or task, African people found a use for the drums in as many settings as possible. And the drum having such a central role in Africa is evident in Trinidad and Tobago. Steel pan culture reflects how important and relevant percussion is for the Africans residing in Africa and for those abroad. This is why the making of animal skin drums in Trinidad during the time of slavery became cruical. Drums helped to motivate and sustain the slaves. The enslaved Africans found the skin drums to be effective for motivation, time passing and also as a coping mechanism when dealing with the terrifying aspects that slavery encompassed (Kaemmer 158).

One important and very well-known type of skin drum that has its origins in Africa is the talking drum. Africans were able to use these types of drums to form rhythmic languages that could actually help one another communicate in a similar manner that humans do through spoken language. Thus why they are received the name "talking drums." Africans achieved language with these drums by squeezing the hourglass shaped instrument with varying amounts of pressure and striking it with a stick as the pressure changed. The combination of pressure applied to the squeeze and the beating of the drum with the stick is what varied the pitch and made communication possible for tribal communities (Gantt 208).

The importance of the talking drum increased and became a necessity once Africans found themselves in the Americas, and the Afro-Trinidadians were no exception to this fact. The talking drums helped to heal the emotional scars left from being torn apart from their families, communities and tribes. The thundering and pulsating rhythms played by the slaves helped them to stay in alignment with their heritage and communicate with slaves from neighboring plantations. This was especially the case since plantation owners purposely made sure to sell and separate Africans that spoke the same language or that came from the same region in Africa. Therefore, the talking drums were a resource the slaves used to ease the deep emotional affliction,separation anxiety and extremely isolating feelings caused by slavery (Roberts 74).

Many of the slaves came from or descended from cultures originating in the countries of Nigeria and Benin. Many of the people from the Yoruba tribe became victims of the slave trade and found themselves in regions all throughout North, Central and South America. The Yoruba people practiced polytheistic religions and referred to their gods as the "Orisha." One of the

many ways in which Orisha worshippers would praise and acknowledge their gods was through drumming (Smith 23).

Around the year 1815, vocalizing Orisha chants in an American black gospel-like fashion with three or four harmony sections also became a common way to worship. This was largely due to the group of African immigrants that had migrated to Trinidad from the United States (Smith 26). Modern-day artist Ella Andall centers her music around Orisha chants and worshipping the Orisha goddess Oshun, the goddess of love, sensuality and fertility. The harmonies and notes typically sung in an orisha chant relate to drumming because steel pan drum orchestras are often able replicate the chants due to how the steel pans are tunes (Smith 27). Trinidadians are able to connect with their gods and deities by playing steel pan drums just as the Africans did with the skin drums.

But when a massive slave rebellion occurred in Haiti, where the slaves were able to successfully overthrow their oppressive masters with the assistance of the talking drum, plantation masters throughout the Americas began to have increased fear of what it was that slaves could become capable when playing their skin drums. The recognition of more slave rebellions becoming possible with the help of skin drums led to oppressive laws being passed all throughout the Americas that allowed governments to ban the usage of skin drums for any sort of reason entirely (Guerrón-Montero 646).

The banning of the skin drums began the evolutionary journey of percussion in Trinidad. As sad as it was that the symbolic instrument of the skin drum was outlawed, it did force the Africans to stretch their creativity through resourcefulness to maintain that aspect of their culture. Cy Grant, an actor, poet and musician and Guyanese native, wrote in his *Ring of Steel*,

“the new percussion groups reflected the African’s stubborn insistence on preserving whatever elements they could of their traditional cultures” (91). When similar laws were put into place in New Orleans, Louisiana, another place with strong creole culture, the black population responded in the same fashion as they did in Trinidad, which explains why New Orleans maintains its own steel pan traditions (Drewal 86).

But the banning of the skin drums in Trinidad did not immediately lead to the invention of the steel pan drum. First, the folkloric practice known as *tamboo bamboo* was created. The word tamboo has its origins in French with the word *tambour*, meaning drum.Tamboo bamboo is a tradition where bamboo sticks are used as a drum, and they are beaten on the sides with thinner sticks. In one hand, a semi-thick piece of bamboo is held and is lifted up and down to make a percussive sound against the ground. In the other hand, the thinly cut stick is tapped up against the side of the larger bamboo piece. The thicker the bamboo stick in the left hand, the deeper the pitch, and the thinner the stick in the right hand, the higher the pitch. When hit in different places, the bamboo will produce different sounds making for the possibility of polyrhythm. The different pitches produced in tamboo bamboo lay the foundation for a remarkable tuning system that would be later applied to the steel pan drum (Dudley 63).

In a tamboo bamboo ensemble, there are four different types of bamboo drums. Each represents a specific harmonic part. There are the *cutters*, the smallest pieces of bamboo, meant to represent a soprano pitch. Then there are the *fullers,* intended to provide a tenor pitch. The *chandles* act as the ensemble’s alto pitch, and the *bass* or the *boom* drum is the lowest pitch in the ensemble which is the . The names of specific drums and the rhythms have their origins with

Shango ritual drums and are another way that the Africans were able to secretly infuse their heritage into Trinidadian culture (Blake 49).

The tamboo bamboo tradition is intertwined with kalenda fighting because the same sticks with sharpened ends that were used to beat the sides of the bamboo sticks were used by the fighters. These polyrhythms produced with bamboo were the same rhythms that accompany and maintain or propel the momentum of the fighters. Tamboo bamboo rhythms were played in a standard 4/4 time with accents on the first and third beats of the measure. It was the unique way in which different pitches were created with the bamboo that would lay down the foundation for the tuning system of steelpan drums (Dudley 66).

In the 1930s, tamboo bamboo players began to substitute the bamboo sticks with tin pans. The sounds were much louder with the pan drums, and that is when pan players began to notice the different pitches and notes that could be produced from beating the metal that could not come from the bamboo. This is when untrained tuners began attempting to tune the steel pan drums to match specific notes. Over time, tuners perfected the art of creating distinct pitches by hitting the pans with a hammer and torch. Spree Simon, who is considered to be the "father" of the pans, found that if he hollowed out smaller sections of the metal head of an oil drum, then each different section would produce a different pitch. The tuners would use a five pound sledge hammer to stretch and pound out the tops of the pans into a concave shape. After this they would then use a torch to begin the process of "burning." This allows for the denting of the metal to make for the different areas of specific pitches (Smith 39).

In a steel pan ensemble, there are usually 7-8 commonly used types of drums. Each has its own unique role in the orchestra. There are three types of tenor pans. The high tenor is given that name because it produces the highest pitches out of the tenor pan group. Its pitch range is a two-octave span from D4-F#6. The notes of this pan are arranged in the cycle of 4ths, going clockwise. The role that this pan plays in the orchestra is to carry the melody, just as sopranos do in a choir or as the *cutters* do in the tamboo bamboo tradition. The low tenor has a range of C4 to E6. The low tenor also helps the high pan sustain the melody but the low tenor solos more than the other pans. Then, the last of the tenor pans is the two-drum set called the double tenor. These two drums play multiple roles. The double pans can be used for building harmonies, creating melodic contrast, or for playing chords. The double pans range from F3 to C6 (Dudley 52).

The second set of double drums in a steel pan ensemble is called the double second pan. This set of drums is tuned on a whole-tone scale, with the chromatic notes alternating between the two pans. The double second pan drum is also used a lot for creating harmonies and counter melodies. The next group of drums is called the quadrophone pans. These pans have a pitch range starting as low as B2 and getting as high as Bb5. The quadrophonic steel pan can be used to provide harmony, low melodic reinforcement, or for countermelodies. The pans used to produce a strumming like sound are called guitar pans. They are a double set of pans with a pitch range of C#3 to F#5. The cello pan set contains three pans and is used to create low harmonies and counter melodies. Each of the three pans contains four notes of a diminished seventh chord. The last drum is the tenor bass, and it is a four drum set that contains the notes of an augmented chord. The note range in these four drum is G2-D4 (Dudley 53).

To explain the rhythms produced by these pans and even the stringed instruments that accompany the oral traditions of calypso, it is helpful to compare an African rhythm to that of a Western one. The concepts of meter between African derived rhythms and Western rhythms are more alike than they are different. But what makes the African rhythmic feel unique from that of a Western feel is which beats are accented. The Western ear will be more familiar with rhythms that have accents on the first quarter if a piece is being played in 3/4 time and on the first and third quarter notes when in 4/4 time (Dudley 52).

Most African rhythms have the same number of beats per measure as a Western cycle, but the "feel" is how you can determine whether or not a rhythm is African. Trinidadian folklorist Selwyn Ahyoung emphasizes that in calypso music the rhythm is not solely expressed with just a single instrument (Dudley 274). Determining a calypso rhythm has a lot to do with the overall "rhythmic feel." In his book *Black Music of Two Worlds,* ethnomusicologist John Storm Roberts referred to Trinidad's calypso rhythms as "the most usual form of an extremely widespread rhythmic pattern in the black music of the Americas" (41). Roberts also emphasized that because of syncopation, African derived rhythms are typically accented more abstractly than that of Western rhythms (43).

During the 20th century, the name given to the oral traditions of Trinidadian music was *calypso*, and the talents that participated in the tradition were called calypsonians. Why the word "calypso" was the name given to the verbal practices is not fully known or understood. There is evidence that points to the word "calypso" as stemming from the word "kaiso," a word from the Hausa language of West Africa. The tradition is believed to have been made up of certain musical styles originating in both England and West Africa. Versions of calypso music can be

heard throughout the Caribbean like on the islands of the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, St. Lucia, Dominica, Jamaica, and even in Panama. But because of how often the calypso music is practiced there, the tradition is most commonly associated with the islands of Trinidad and Tobago (Manuel 188).

The West African griot tradition is credited by many calypsonians and Afro-Trinidadians as being calypso in its most original and authentic state. Griots were an important part of many tribes that existed in West African society. The role of a West African griot was profound. The responsibilities of a griot ranged from telling stories and fables to spreading wisdom or important information that was relevant to the community. Also, because of the rhyming abilities that many griots possessed, they were also used as pure entertainment in societies. But by far the most valuable role of the griots was to be the be the link that connected different generations together (Barkley 57). The role of the calypsonian in Trinidad mirrors that of the griots. One calypsonian described the genre as “a poor man’s newspaper” (Dunn and Horne).

The Africans forced into captivity brought the griot tradition from West Africa and continued to practice it on the slave plantations in Trinidad and Tobago. The usefulness of the art on the plantation setting was for psychological release and for honoring of heritage. Calypsonian David Rudder explained that the reason why people sang calypso was because it was “a cry to the skies,” meaning to the gods and deities. As the afro-Trinidadians worked in the fields, they would express their thoughts in a poetic fashion. Rudder also said that the slaves would use calypso singing as a way to “sing on the master their heritage” (Hill 64). Singing calypso music was a way for the slaves to flaunt their culture despite the attempts to erase the heritage and

traditions of Africa. These cries on the plantation were the earliest form of calypso singing in Trinidad. Then the chantwell singers from the kalenda bands and Carnivals greatly influenced those who during the twentieth century became known formally as "calypsonians" (Hill 64).

Spoken calypso has its origins in the tent. During the 1920s, a group of popular and skilled chantwell singers were invited to entertain a group of middle class Trinidadians with their rhymes, jokes, and commentary. This event took place in a tent, and it began the tradition of being able to observe the chantwell singers in a more isolated space that allowed their role in the Carnival to be separate from all of the other Carnival festivities. This began a greater appreciation for the skill of the chantwell singers and the overall poetic style used by the calypso singers. Calypso singers became admirable due to their knowledge of and ability to use the English language (Hill 92). Rudder, who was one of the most successful Trinidadian singers in the calypso scene during the 1970s and 80s, credits calypso music with being the "mother music of the English speaking Caribbean" (Dunn and Horne).

There are many different styles of calypso songs and this is an extremely important part of not only Trinidadian music culture, but Caribbean music as a whole region. Calypso singing and rhyming was made popular in the United States by Jamaican American singer Harry Belafonte who use to cover and modernize West Indian folk songs. The Andrews Sisters's cover of "Rum and Coca Cola" also contributed to the popularity of calypso music in the United States. And Nat King Cole's original song titled "Calypso Blues" also put calypso music in the spotlight (Manuel 208).

The oral side of calypso music is a tradition that can be defined in many ways. Carlton Joseph, whose stage name was Lord Blakie, was a Trinidadian calypsonian of the 20th century. Blakie referred to calypso as being "meant to narrate all sorts of situations and experiences." Joseph described calypso as being much different than the popular music made by artists in the United States. He observed how common it was for the popular music of the United States to have subject matter centered around either love or heartbreak whereas in Trinidad, because of how keen people were to being able to apply calypso to so many different areas of life, the lyrical content of calypso songs could be about anything from love to science to sports to education and, of course, politics. Calypso songs were never limited to just being about one common life experience or scenario (Dunn and Horne).

Leroy Calliste, also known as Black Stalin, also took note of the fact that explained that unlike in the United States, where most songs are about love, the subject matter of calypso songs at tent events usually include boasting about one's skills, racial identity, domestic and international politics, worldly events, sports and the differences between genders. As Calliste observed, "calypso songs are Trinidad's version of the blues" (Dunn and Horne). There were often references to leaders like Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkruma and culturally related events happening such as the civil rights movement that occurred in the United States or the West African country of Ghana gaining independence from British colonial power. Calliste also specified the uniqueness of the Trinidadian calypso when he said, "the only difference is that the Trinidadian expression of the blues is almost recited with a comical undertone." Despite the range of topics that can be covered in calypso, "by far the favorite subject of the calypsonians is

woman, her attractiveness, her sexual voracity, her infidelity, and her sharp tongue" (Crowley 66).

Calypso songs can be featured at carnival celebrations but are most well known for being sung at what are called the "tent" competitions. These competitions are where the best calypsonians come together and battle each other with the use of poetic satire. Calypsonians were typically male but there have been female calypso singers, such as Calypso Rose, who gained a wide following for their skill and talent. And it is not surprising that in the male-dominated calypso tent competitions women would be the most popular song subject (Hill 92).

The early calypsos were sung in the creole dialect that was specific to the Trinidadian islands. This showcased the blend of African, French, English, and Spanish cultures existing on the island. Being that the islands are located right off the coast of the South American country of Venezuela, the language and music of Trinidad and Tobago also finds influence from those who immigrated to the islands from Venezuela and brought with them their own language and music (Dudley 24).

The tent traditions were held in an actual tent made of bamboo stalks and branches and its participants usually had very epic and playful stage names. Some of the most famous and influential calypsonians that got their first start in calypso tent competitions were Lord Kitchener, Lord Beginner, The Mighty Sparrow, Lord Invader, and David Rudder. But there are several different types of calypso song forms that are also sung for different occasions and reasons. When referring to a type of calypso song form, the name typically refers to a specific type of rhythmic pattern as well (Dudley 25).

The most well known and used calypso song form is called the *oratorical* calypso. This is the classical style of calypso that was made famous during the 1930s, the decade that is considered to be the golden age of calypso. The oratorical style was developed and popularized by calypsonians Atilla the Hun and the Roaring Lion. These two were known for their wide range of English vocabulary and how they used the oratorical style. Songs sang in this style usually have a more serious subject matter such as world tragedies. An example of a serious oratorical calypso would be in the song "*Money is King*" by Growling Tiger (Hill 34).

In an *oratorical* calypso, the verses come first and then the chorus follows in a similar way that an English ballad flows. These calypsos are sung using mostly English vocabulary, but they also incorporate Creole words. Each calypso is typically four verses with each verse being 8 lines. Then the chorus is 4 lines, and they are used to separate the verses from each other. Despite the countless number of different and lyrically original calypso songs that have been created, all calypso songs are usually just a renovated version of one of fifty traditional West Indian melodies (Manuel 186). The meter that the classical *oratorical* calypso songs are played in is 2/4 or 4/4, and according to The Mighty Sparrow in *Calypso Dreams*, the Western audiences (in the United States and the United Kingdom) prefer calypso tunes to be in a major key, but the traditional calypsos are always played in a minor key.

Calypso songs were also accompanied by stringed instruments whose origins came from the Venezuelan stringed bands. This is why the most popular stringed instrument in calypso songs is the Venezuelan cuatro. The other instruments that are played in calypso songs are saxophones, clarinets, and trumpets (Crowley 64). During Carnival, the *lavway* form is sung. This type of Trinidadian song is meant for outdoor festivals and is strongly associated with

masquerading. The *lavway* is rhythmically slower than the *oratorical* calypso, and it has a hammering staccato beat with mostly improvised lyrics (Manuel 186).

Another calypso song form is the *belair*. The origins of this song form come from France, and so the belair in Trinidad is sung in a French Creole patois. Then there are *juba* and *bamboula* song forms which are distinctly African sounding and are sung to connect lyrics and rhythms with the ancestral spirits that are worshipped and called upon in many West African religions. *Juba* and *bamboula* fall underneath the category of chantwell songs and are sung during Trinidadian worship services by Shouter Baptist and Shango Baptist congregations (Manuel 186). Chantwell songs are used to embrace the Orisha faith of the Yoruba people. Artists such as Andre Tanker, David Rudder and Ella Anda all channel their African heritage with lyrics about their ancestral motherland or chants that call upon the Yoruba deities (Hill 56).

The creative process for music in Trinidad in present day has widely remained the same. The steel pan drum is still developed from a 55-gallon oil barrel and the bowl shaped is carved using a heavy sledge hammer. Skilled tuners are responsible for ensuring that the pans meet a high quality sound standard. But newer innovations such as the G-pan and the Percussive Harmonic Instrument (PHI) have advanced the steel pan genre. What separated the G-pan from that of the long-standing pans is the that fact that it has 37 notes for an impressive three octaves and is made of durable, high-grade steel sheets. And the PHI is a MIDI-based instrument that is able to synthesize steel pan sounds (Smith 134).

Today, steel band festivals and competitions include all sorts of people from Trinidad and all over the world. The Carnival and its music are both traditions of cultural significance and tourist attractions. And in present day Carnival, tent competitions and steel pan ensembles,

though the performers are often still men of predominantly African decent, more women are starting to make their way into participating in all of the festivities as more than just spectators. And the steel pan has also made its way into other genres as well. Percussionist Andy Narell based his career off of incorporating Trinidad's national instrument into jazz. Then in Japan, there are factories dedicated to producing standardized steel pans (Manuel 208).

The tragedies that fill the history of Trinidad and Tobago surely did have their negative effects. But the music that comes from the struggles of the Trinidadian people helped to heal the island of its wounds as well as encourage great musical innovation. The evolution of drumming, starting with African skin drums to then tamboo bamboo and finally the steel pan, is perhaps what makes the islands most recognizable. The chantwells and calypsonians that have their origins in the West African griot traditions also proved to be admirable by the way in which they found their way into the popular music of the 20th century. In conclusion, the oral, percussive and Carnival traditions that came to be as a result of colonialism and african slavery are what make Trinidad and Tobago a notable place for musical creativity.

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