

Gombey, Bands and Troubadours

By Ronald Lightbourne

THREE TRIBUTARIES FLOW into Bermuda's musical mainstream, giving it a rich and distinct identity: the music and dance drama of the Gombey, a prolific tradition of marching bands, and a heritage of singer-songwriter troubadours. Over time these tributaries have deposited a fertile soil in which Bermudians have nurtured their musical expression and the continuance of their creative traditions.

Gombey

The oldest of these tributaries is the Gombey. Research by Mrs Louise Jackson and others have established their uniqueness, and Dr Kenneth E. Robinson in his book *Heritage* says this of their genesis:

The origins of the Gombey and local bands are lost in eighteenth century obscurity. Mention of the culturally distinctive Gombey, Gumbies, or Gumba appears unheralded in Bermudian Literature ... [but] not by way of recognizing them as significant art forms... It is the fact that mention was made of them that matters. (K.E. Robinson, *Heritage*, London: MacMillan, 1979, p.118)



Courtesy, Smithsonian Institution.

Musicians, Place's New Generation Gombey at the 2001 Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C.

We know that amongst the measures taken by Bermuda's Legislature following the 1761 conspiracy to revolt was the banning of Gombey dancing. One surmises that the government feared the decorative Gombey masks, which obscured the performer's identity, and allowed him to escape political retribution. In the Gombey we see an archetypal Bermudian entertainer: masked, in a group, performing dances that tell stories of resistance and survival. This is so even today.



Gombey masked dancer

Allan Warner, Captain of the Warner's Gombey, says that some of his troupe's dances refer specifically to Bermuda's connection with Africa. There are freedom dances, wherein dancers celebrate an absence of shackles and chains on the limbs. Other themes he depicts as African stories are "Johnny and His Spear," "Sampson and Delilah", and "Daniel in the Lion's Den." Other stories depict the Hunter's Return and pay homage to the earth and sky.

These narratives enacted by masked performers continue a tradition of social commentary. This begins to flourish in the 20th Century, and grows even stronger today, when performers no longer need to hide behind a mask to perform their songs of social and political commentary and challenge.

The Gombey dancers are lively, colourful, and rhythmic dancers who move to the beat of drummers. Their costumes cover their bodies from head to toe and are decorated with tassels, mirrors, and other small items. They appear on the streets at Christmas, New Year's Day, and certain other holidays, often accompanied by a crowd of followers, who chant in rhythm with the drummers. The appeal of their performance leads to congested streets and slowed traffic, an effect they apparently have had for years. In 1837 an editorial in the *Gazette* read:

We fully agree with our correspondent that the savage and nonsensical exhibition of the Gumba, practiced here by the idle, should be done away with, as a thing not suited to a civilized Community, and highly dangerous to Passengers on horses or in carriages. (K.E. Robinson: *Heritage*, 1979, p. 124)

The Gombey drum ensemble consists of a bass, or "Mother" drum, typically home-made; and two or more side drums, sometimes snares. To begin the masquerade the mother drum will strike a series of beats, in four quarter time, initially one beat to the bar, then two, then all four beats, by which time the side drums will have joined in. The snare drummers play complicated riffs over the steady pulse of the mother drum, often employing call and response patterns, and striking the rim of the snare, as well as the skin. The result is an exhilarating, intoxicating, rhythmic mix which provides the impulse (or impetus) for both the dancers as well as the followers.

The captain sounds a whistle to punctuate the choreography. For example, the captain blasts his whistle in rhythm with the drums as he points to specific dancers whose turn has come to perform.

“ Bermuda’s entertainers have rarely been concerned solely with entertaining. They also engage wider social issues in their music. ”

The Gombey bands have enjoyed a remarkable shift in social status. Once marginalized by polite society, they now take pride of place as icons of Bermuda’s culture. Their images appear on postage stamps, our poets have praised them, the National Dance Company of Bermuda has performed work based on their dances, and sculptors have depicted them. Recently they performed in Carifesta, a Caribbean cultural festival last held in St Kitts. Since many Gombey crowds acknowledge cultural connections to the Caribbean and specifically to St Kitts, it was an occasion to compare styles and exchange ideas with that island’s Macajumbies. At the invitation of the Bermuda Government, the Gombey bands have even performed at a world financial conference in Davos, Switzerland—quite a change from the days when a government banned them.

This change merits attention here and fuller discussion elsewhere. It indicates a shift in social and political thinking about Bermuda’s African and Caribbean connections. It also indicates the social significance of the themes that communicate.

Bermuda’s entertainers have rarely been concerned solely with entertaining. They also engage wider social issues in their music.

Bands

Bermuda has a long tradition of banding. Military bands were part of the British Garrison at Prospect, and historical records tell of bands being invited to perform at Government House. For example, in the May before Emancipation, an aggregation called the Hamilton Band, a black ensemble, shared the honours with the band of the 71st Regiment at a function at Government House.

From the late 19th century until 1965, Bermuda had two militias, one black, one white; each had its own band. The militia men were amalgamated into a single Bermuda Regiment, and their bandsmen united into one band. This is the origin of the Bermuda Regiment Band.



Bermuda Regiment Band

Courtesy Smithsonian Institution.

The Salvation Army, North Village Community, The Hamilton Fire Brigade, and The Somerset Brigade Band all originated in the last century. All but the Fire Brigade Band survive today. Quite often it has been the case that bandsmen have served more than one of these outfits, with Salvationists, members of the NVC band, and the Somerset Brigade Band doing the national service in the Regiment Band.

The Somerset Brigade Band traces its origin to events of the Christmas season of 1929. That year Shepherd's Lodge asked two dance orchestras to come to their aid, as the group that usually led the annual procession was unable to do so. Pot Gilbert's and Clifton Robinson's orchestras responded by forming themselves into a single marching band for the occasion. This was so successfully done that it sparked the idea of their coming together permanently. This became a reality in February of the following year. In 1930, then, the Somerset Brigade Band was formed, and it has been in continuous existence ever since.

Dance bands, of course, existed before this date. There was a lively social scene even before the rise in Bermuda tourism early last century, and before the American Naval Station was established at Kindley Field. Tourism and the American military, however, changed the lives of Bermudian musicians considerably. The Officer's Club featured shows with first-class musicians from the United States. Entertainers such as trombonist Bobby Brookmeyer and singer pianist Shirley Horn gave local musicians an opportunity to know and work with these people. The work to be had in hotels was an even bigger influence on their development. All the major hotels had

Courtesy Smithsonian Institution.



Bermuda Regiment Band at the 2001 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

Reggae Music in Bermuda

BY VEJAY STEEDE

The story of reggae music in Bermuda starts in the modest hills that stretch north from Victoria Street in the City of Hamilton to the jagged edges of earth that hang off of North Shore Road, Pembroke.

Commonly (and often affectionately) known as 'Back of Town,' this area has long been a hotbed of cultural innovation and creation. The fact that this area is the closest Bermuda gets to having a 'ghetto' should come as no surprise when one considers that reggae music has always exhibited significant themes of hardship, struggle and, ultimately, redemption. Bermuda's homegrown *riddims* (rhythms) have not strayed far from the tried and true formula that the Jamaican originators introduced the world to in the late '60s and throughout the '70s. Themes of history, struggle, religion, political trickery and redemption have dominated Bermudian reggae over the years

since a group of ghetto youths calling themselves Ital Foundation first started gathering, reasoning and playing the music they loved in the hills overlooking the Victor Scott Primary School on Glebe Road, 'Back of Town'.

Ital Foundation thrived throughout the '70s, gaining acclaim locally as a crowd favourite and internationally as a well respected and renowned roots band. The fact that their seminal LP, titled simply *Ital Foundation Volume 1*, was also their last work is a tragic footnote in Bermuda's musical history. Ital Foundation's passionate pursuit of local and international recognition was in no small way responsible for

the introduction, promulgation and popularisation of what has become Bermuda's dominant musical form.

Reggae music in Bermuda has become a cultural tour-de-force. From the youthful angst and religious fervour of Youth Creation to the political expositions of Ras Mykkal, local reggae has visited every nook and cranny of our socio-political and socio-economic landscape. Legendary artists like Runksie, Ras Giorgis, Matic Rizzla, Carly Don and Junior C have registered chart hits throughout the globe, while local celebrities like the celebrated Jahstice Reggae Movement, the spiritually inspiring Fires of Africa and the Christian Sing-jay Geneman keep the home fires burning with considerable skill and originality. Christian reggae especially has enjoyed

a significant amount of support within our shores, with artists like Jamba, Septimus, a Jamaican born Dee-jay who records and performs throughout the island and has won awards throughout the Caribbean for his debut album *War Against The Devil*, and the aforementioned Junior C and Geneman getting a lot of attention.

The story of reggae music in Bermuda is a long and lively one. The future is perhaps not as bright as it once was with the spectre of the Hip-Hop juggernaut on the horizon, but the last 30 years or so have given us enough ground-breaking reggae music to ensure a continuing legacy of musical uprising within these narrow shores.

bands. The “house band” was usually all white and from overseas, and it was supported by a local black band. Work was so plentiful that some players could give up their day jobs.

Bermuda sported the Hedrick Lawrence Band, the Mark Williams Orchestra, the Melody Climbers, the Al Davis Orchestra, Berry Brown’s Orchestra, “Pot” Gilberts Band, the Kenny Iris Orchestra, Ernie Leader’s Orchestra, Triscott Scott, Sidney Otley Band, to name a few. There was an abundance of well-organized musical talent.

Several persons stood out for their musical excellence. Alto-saxophonist Clifford Darrell, trumpeter Ghandi Burgess, drummer Clarence “Tootsie” Bean, trombonist Kenny Iris, and pianist Lance Hayward, for example, all won the respect and admiration of their most discerning colleagues here and abroad. Duke Ellington was impressed by trombonist Iris Burgess. At the age of fourteen, Burgess, a child prodigy,

Church Music

BY RONALD LIGHBOURNE

In a locale that boasts more places of worship per capita than almost any other country in the world, religious music has been of special significance to the people of Bermuda.



The Apex Quartet at the 2001 Smithsonian Festival.

Courtesy Smithsonian Institution.

Bermuda’s churches, it must not be forgotten, have always played a tremendous role in the development of music in Bermuda. That role, they themselves may have seen as secondary to their main purpose of worship, but it is nonetheless true that Bermuda’s musical well being has been the beneficiary.

AME, Pentecostal, Salvationist missionary efforts in Africa and the Caribbean have kept the stock of gospel songs and ‘choruses’ replenished as music from those missions have found their way back to

Bermuda and into the repertoire of congregations and choirs.

It is impossible to accurately estimate the effect of hymnody, in its various forms, on the development of Bermudian songwriters’ craft. Most songwriters will have been to Sunday school, and will have encountered there the rudiments of rhyme, metre, and other elements of versification.

Often Biblical narratives formed the basis of these ‘choruses’; for example:

*The wise man build his house upon the rock (repeated)
And the rain came tumbling down!*

won an American amateur talent show in Chicago. Lance Hayward spent the last twenty-five years of his life excelling in New York's most competitive musical milieu, a pianist other pianists and entertainers came to hear in New York's Greenwich Village. Clarence "Tootsie" Bean still roams the world's jazz venues, from London to Tokyo to New York, working with top-line artists.

Ghandi and Lance are considered by common consent to have been Bermuda's two greatest musical entertainers. They held one another in high respect. They worked together for a while in the house band at the Forty Thieves Night Club in its heyday, took turns at being president of the Bermuda Federation of Musicians and Entertainers (also known as the Musician's Union), and went on separately to distinguish themselves as bandleaders. When the Southampton Princess Hotel opened up in 1970, its house band of mostly Bermudians was led brilliantly by Ghandi. It backed a large Las Vegas style cabaret, supporting many top-line American artists.

*The rains came down
and the floods came up
(repeated)
And the house on the
rock stood firm.*

Or, the Spiritual,

*Li'l David play on
yo' harp,
Hallelujah.*

*David was a
shepherd boy,
He killed Goliath and
he shouted for joy!*

For many island song-writers, these songs will have served, perhaps unconsciously, as models for their later work. The strict separation of the secular from the sacred notwithstanding, it is not

hard to see how, along with radio and recordings from North America and the Caribbean, church music with its basic harmonies and clearly defined cadences will have contributed to the development of music on the island.

On the radio currently can be heard a recording, made in the US by a popular Gospel group; it is called 'Caribbean Medley', and is made up of just those 'choruses' that travel the mission circuit. Now they arrive via radio broadcasts, and CDs; but they travel an old route.

By this time Lance Hayward had already left Bermuda, leaving behind his male voice chorus, the Mu-En Chorale. He had initially formed the group to teach instrumentalists to sing, so as to make them more sympathetic accompanists for the vocalists. The group also attracted men with fine voices who had not been professional entertainers. The Mu-En Chorale became the outstanding vocal ensemble of its time. They continued to perform for years after Hayward

left for New York using only arrangements he had made and taught to them. By the late 1970s, Lance had begun forming and rehearsing his New York choir of blind and sighted people, the Lance Hayward Singers, whom he eventually brought to Bermuda on a concert tour.

That was Hayward's third chorus. His first was in the forties. He composed music for the libretto of Robert Hayward, a distant cousin, and he trained and conducted the choir they called the Hayward and Hayward Singers.

Troubadours

When they started hiring blacks to play in the hotels, it was to play calypso, so that the serious musician again didn't have a chance. A guy would grab a guitar and learn four chords and some calypso tunes and that was it. And they played opposite the house band which was always white — American and later British. So it really drove the instrumentalist to go home and put his instrument in a case and forget it. But there were a few of us who doggedly persisted. It all happened because the powers that be didn't want black bands in their hotels. At one time there were 10 black bands with seven or eight players in them.

— Lance Hayward, quoted in *Jazz on the Rock* by Dale Butler

Despite Hayward's placing calypso in unfavourable comparison to "serious" music, he himself was a master of the form. In the effort to keep working, not everyone grabbed a guitar. Kenny Iris, the trombonist who caught Ellington's attention, continued working, but as a pianist! However, Hayward does locate the moment when, and the reasons why the troubadours came on the scene. Although they were required to invent "national" costumes, calypso shirts (the mask of that time, in

order to perform), Bermudian musicians insisted on being heard. Even in unpromising conditions, by being adaptable, ultimately they were successful.

Calypso is a narrative form that takes whatever is topical as its subject. One critic calls the calypsonian "the great leveller," singing with courage and wit. Trinidad is the home to the calypso, but Bermudian musicians took it, as they took blues and jazz, and put it to work for

Courtesy Department of Communication and Information.



Stan Seymour performs for tourists.

them. It took its place in the Bermudian repertoire, where it met the ballad, and even the country and western song. Bermuda's music is nothing if not eclectic.

Among Bermuda's troubadours, pride of place goes, arguably, to the Talbot Brothers whose hit "Bermuda Buggy Ride" brought them wide recognition in the USA, and made them the group tourists most wanted to see. The song was a swing ballad and was actually written, according to Roy Talbot, the surviving member of the group, in a buggy en route to Tom Moore's Tavern. A young student from Yale was in the buggy, and he seems to have had a hand in the evolution of the song. On arriving at their destination, the musicians rehearsed the song until it was ready for performance that very day. It's been riding along ever since.

Hubert Smith composed "Bermuda Is Another World" in response to a competition, and it became probably the most performed and most recorded Bermuda song of all time. Stan Seymour, who worked with Smith for a while, shyly tried out a little song he wrote that spoke about the way young people sped around on their motor bikes, and he found himself with a hit on his hands. Sidney Bean was another prolific singer-songwriter of songs that feature Bermuda. "Bermuda's Still Calling You," "This Is Bermuda," and "Bermuda's Still Paradise" are just a few of his.

Gene Steede has played many roles as an entertainer. His versatility has earned him the sobriquet "Bermuda's Natural Resource;" he is an expert congista, a first-rate tenor and a guitarist, but it is his skill as a songwriter that assures his standing as a Bermuda troubadour. All subjects are grist for his mill, and no style is alien to him. He has composed songs in gospel, ballad, calypso, and even country-and-western styles, and has performed them to his own guitar accompaniment.

Many musicians received their instrument instruction from community religious bands and military bands, but there have always been excellent teachers as well. The late Mr Joseph Richards of Somerset stands out among them as one who left his mark on many. If he had taught only Lance Hayward and Dr Gary Burgess, his contribution would still have



Not the Um-Um Players at the 2001 Smithsonian Festival.

Courtesy Smithsonian Institution.

been outstanding; but he touched many more lives, including students at the Berkeley Institute, where he spent his entire teaching career. Among the excellent teachers also is Ghandi Burgess, who can point to Lloyd Williams, Shine Hayward, and Dr Milton Marsh as some of his better known students.

Some of Bermuda's ablest musicians have moved away to places that offer better opportunities for their talent, and they have made a mark there. Among them are educator/opera singer Dr Gary Burgess, Dr Milton Marsh, Al and Arnold Butterfield, Clarence "Tootsie" Bean and his son and protégé Sheldon, bassist Clarence Burroughs, flautist Lloyd Williams and arranger-pianist Ross Simons, to name a few.

Today's Bands and New Troubadours

Today, Bermuda's musicians continue making music, despite a dearth of venues in which to perform. They no longer need to hide behind a literal mask, as the Gombeys did, or behind a figurative mask as segregation-era entertainers had to do.

They hear the music of North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. The new bands and troubadours engage personal, local, and global themes and carry on the work of the old musicians, but in their own way. Calypso inspired Bermuda's troubadours, but now it is reggae that catches the attention and helps shape the way they think, compose, and perform. A profusion of studios and home recording equipment hums with the creativity of a new generation. No longer does a troubadour find it necessary or even practical to limit instrumentation to the guitar. Today's troubadours want to tell Bermuda's stories to the world, seeking distribution deals that will carry their messages to the four corners of the globe.

Bandleaders such as Shine Hayward and Winston DeGraff carry on where the bandleaders of yesteryear left off. One has a sense of optimism knowing that, even though times have changed, Bermuda's music is still in good hands.

And of course, there are, as there have been since time immemorial, the Gombeys!

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Discussion Activity Ideas for Use With the Bermuda Connections CD

by Diana N'Diaye

FOLLOWING ARE SOME ACTIVITY AND DISCUSSION IDEAS, plus a few sample lesson plans written by music teacher Elizabeth Fortune, for use with the audio CD. Articles by Ronald Lightbourne and Vejay Steede in the Introduction chapter provide background information on Bermudian music. Both of the writers are also teachers in Bermuda's schools. Songwriters compose lyrics according to whatever strikes their fancy and often include references to local traditions and holidays. Songs composed by teacher Joann Adams about Bermuda kite flying will inspire young songwriters to look to their environment and traditions for material. These can be found following the lesson plans. (See Arts of Performance chapter for more on Bermuda's songwriting and Gombey traditions.)

Troubadours

The songs of Bermudian singer-songwriters or troubadours charm listeners as they remark on familiar situations or conditions in a particular locale or time. The lyrics of the songs "Bermuda Buggy Ride" (track 1) sung by the Talbot Brothers and "The Diddlybops" (track 3) by Stan Seymour both comment on the pleasures (or perils) of popular forms of transport in Bermuda during the 1940s and 1950s, when the songs were composed. (See Arts of Performance chapter of the Handbook for lyrics to "Diddlybops.")

In what ways would you update these songs to reflect on transportation in Bermuda today?

Reggae captures the attention of young people in the first decade of the new millennium just like calypso did for young people growing up at an earlier time. Reggae artists like Ras Mykkal (CD track #14) and Runskie (CD track #13) continue the troubadour tradition of social commentary of musicians like Stan Seymour and others who used the calypso song as a way to comment on issues and conditions of the day.

Listen to the calypso and reggae recordings on the CD. Notice when the same phrases are repeated. Pay close attention to how the lyrics are rhymed.

Think of issues about which you'd like to comment. Try using the calypso form to express your thoughts. Can you use the reggae form to make the same statements?

How about expressing your thoughts in a ballad style or in a rap song? Experimenting with song styles is an excellent way to learn to appreciate different types of music and to learn about the songwriter's art.

*Bands and Gombey*s

Military bands like the Bermuda Regiment, community bands like the Somerset Brigade Band and the Salvation Army Band, and the musicians of the Gombey tradition all use percussive instruments to beat out rhythms connected to specific ways of moving.

Compare the percussion instruments used by band musicians and Gombey musicians. How are they similar? How do they differ?

Note the music produced by the two types of musical groups. Listen closely to the rhythms of bands and Gombey. Try marching to the music of the band, then try moving to the music of the Gombey. Do you notice similarities? Differences?

The two styles of music and the ways one moves to them are very different. The Gombey music reflects influences from Africa via the Caribbean, and marching band music is influenced by European band traditions. Both Gombey music and military music are expressive traditions of Bermuda and both are embraced by Bermudians all over the island.

Sacred Music

There are several traditions of music in Bermuda used to express reverence for the divine. From church to church, and even within the same place of worship there may be different types of music performed at different times. On the CD, there are at least three sacred music selections. The Apex Quarter sings a cappella—the members use their voices in harmony without musical instruments to create music in “There Is Joy in that World” (CD track #5). The congregational singing from Rehoboth Church of God comes out of a long tradition of singing as part of the worship service. Bermuda is fortunate that many traditions of sacred music (beyond those on this CD) can be heard on the island. These different types of sacred music also reflect Bermuda's connections with the world.

How many distinct kinds of sacred music can your class identify?

Bermuda's Musical Connections

by Ronald Lightbourne, VeJay Steede and Diana N'Diaye

TRACKS 1 - 2

Gombey Music

Bermuda Gombey music is mentioned in pre-emancipation accounts, and so has been in existence a very long time. (The word "Gombey" derives from a West African word meaning "drum".) Much later, in the early 1900s people coming to settle in Bermuda from St Kit's and the Bahamas added the masked dance traditions they brought from the Caribbean. Over time as newer Gombey musicians learned to play from the more experienced musicians in the crowd, adding their individual flairs, the music took on a unique Bermudian style different from the music which inspired it. Gombey music brings together the instruments and drumming cadences of the British Military bands and the interplay of many beats and polyrhythms rooted in the music of the Caribbean and West Africa. Instruments in a Gombey crowd include snare drums a bass drum, cow bells, and a whistle. Other objects, such as mineral bottles used as flutes, are sometimes added.

This CD includes music from two crowds, Warners', and Places'. Note on each of the two tracks how the beats change patterns. This is usually initiated by blasts from the captain's whistle. Each pattern played on the drum is an instruction to the Gombey dancers to begin a different dance step. In this way the Gombey musicians lead the crowd.

1. Daniel in The Lion's Den

Allan Warner and the Warner Gombeys

Recorded in Steve Easton Studio

Gombey drumming to accompany a masquerade. The choreography depicts the Biblical story. "Mother" drum, snare drums, and the captain's whistle.

2. Gombey Drumming Rhythms

Places Gombeys

Recorded at Smithsonian Folklife Festival,

Washington, D.C., 2001.

TRACKS 3 - 4

Bands

Military style bands patterned after the marching bands of the British Isles have been enjoyed by Bermudians for many generations since the settlement of the island as a British colony. The tracks on the CD contain music from three different types of traditional bands on the island.

3. Mary Anne

The Bermuda Regiment Band

Recorded at Smithsonian Folklife Festival, 2001

The Bermuda Regiment Band is the official band of the island. In addition to its role in playing at government functions, the band marches along Front Street and through Court Street on Bermuda Day and during the Christmas and Easter holiday seasons accompanied by the

Bermuda Pipe Band, organized by Bermudians playing in Scottish Highland style. “Mary Anne,” one of the popular pieces in the band’s repertoire, is a rendition of a calypso song from Trinidad. In the choice of this song to play with Highland pipes and with the Regiment Band, the bandleaders saw a way to evoke Bermuda’s Caribbean connections.

4. Somerset Brigade March

Somerset Brigade Band

Composed by Director, Major S. Lowe

This march, played by the Somerset Brigade Band, was composed for them by their current bandmaster, a former Bermuda Regiment Director of Music, Major Lowe. Formed through the amalgamation of two Somerset dance bands for the Christmas procession of Shepherds’ Lodge in 1932, the Somerset Brigade Band has also enjoyed a mutually beneficial, if informal, association with the Bermuda Regiment Band, in that several of its members were, or currently are members of that outfit. The Brigade still serves the Somerset community at church and social functions. The band has visited England, Canada, and the USA.

TRACKS 5 – 7

Sacred Music

Bermudians perform sacred music from several British, United States, and Caribbean sources including congregational, gospel, and African American a cappella (voices only) quartet styles. These three tracks are examples of three distinct sacred music styles performed on the island.

5. There is Joy in That Land

The Apex Quartet

Gary Bean, 1st tenor and lead. Robert Symonds

2nd tenor lead. Eric Whitter, 1st and 2nd tenor.

Harry Bean, baritone, bass.

Traditional devotional song

Recorded at Smithsonian Folklife Festival, 2001

Sung by The Apex Quartet to their own arrangement, in the a cappella style that has its origins in the United States, the singing style of this quartet features the harmonization of male voices ranging from tenors, through baritone and bass. This quartet came into instant being when the choir director of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church asked the members to sing in a concert, while touring in the northeastern United States and Canada nearly thirty years ago. They have been singing together ever since. The Apex Quartet, apart from being in constant demand in Bermuda, has performed in the Caribbean, the USA, and Canada, and has been featured on Central China TV.

6. Gospel Medley: There Is Power; I Know It Was the Blood; Holy Ghost Power Is Moving Just Like a Magnet

Rehoboth Church of God, Apostolic

Congregation and Praise Team

Brother Dean Burrows, Praise Team Leader

Ronald Lightbourne, keyboardist

This music, sung in praise of God, is wholly directed by the Praise Team Leader, who alone selects the sequence of songs to be sung according to how the spirit moves him. The music therefore has an improvisational quality about it. With a few changes for the customs of individual churches, this type of music is representative of that typically heard in congregations of black Bermudian worshippers. Singing is always accompanied by the congregation’s hand clapping and

by tambourines, and in this case, electric bass, drums and piano. The songs themselves circulate among the various missions in the USA, the Caribbean and Africa, and range from traditional Spirituals, to composed songs on CDs currently getting air play on Gospel radio programmes.

TRACKS 7 – 14

Troubadours—Island Song, Calypso and Reggae

Bermuda's music reflects the fact that for many years its economic well-being was based on welcoming and entertaining tourists on the island. Many Bermudian musicians earned a living performing in hotels and inns. These songs were composed for, about and on occasion with tourists in Bermuda. Reggae, which has its beginnings in Jamaica, has become a world-wide music of social commentary. Bermudians have adopted this musical form including Jamaican verbal styles, and have created melodies and lyrics to voice local concerns. Calypso occasionally played a similar role for Bermudian musicians in the 1940s and 1950s. The reggae songs in this section were all composed and sung by Bermudians, and comment on a range of political, social and environmental issues.

7. Bermuda Buggy Ride

*Performed by the Talbot Brothers (circa 1934),
featuring Blackie Talbot's voice*

This song was actually composed in a horse drawn Bermuda buggy en route to Tom Moore's Tavern, where it was immediately rehearsed. Although the Talbot Brothers included the accordion in their instrumental line up, the solo in this American-made recording is by an

unknown studio musician. This group was the first of Bermuda's singing groups. Their popularity was immense both in Bermuda and in the United States, especially in New England.

8. Bermuda Is Another World

Composed by Hubert Smith

*Performed by Gene Steede and The Bermuda
Triangle Band*

This ballad, by the late Hubert Smith, legendary bandleader and singer/songwriter, was the winning entry in a Department of Tourism contest, and is sung by another of Bermuda's legends, Gene Steede, "Bermuda's Natural Resource." Gene is a songwriter, guitarist, comedian, and conga drummer as well. For many decades now, Steede has represented Bermuda, performing in the Caribbean and North America, live and on television, epitomising the Bermudian entertainer's art of hospitality. He is accompanied by The Bermuda Triangle Band, which consists of Leon Smith on bass, Gerald Davis on drums, George Smith on guitar and Ron Lightbourne on piano.

9. The Diddlybops (And the Goose-neck Handlebars)

*Composed and sung by calypsonian Stan Seymour,
known also as Lord Necktie*

This was a frequently requested number on radio stations when it first appeared in 1962. Stan wrote this novelty song while he was a member of Hubert Smith's Coral Islanders, and tried it out on a tourist audience. He invited them to imitate the sound of the bikes' warning buzzer — "Beep-beep" — and it became a hit with the tourists and Bermudians alike. On the recording Stan Seymour accompanies himself on guitar and mouth organ.

10. Lost In Bermuda

Stan Seymour, composer, vocals, accompanist

This song gently satirizes the long-winded way in which Bermudians are said to give directions. Stan first learned about calypso from a West Indian co-worker, and his use of “next” instead of the standard Bermudian English “another” reflects this. Nowadays many younger Bermudian songwriters, and youth in general, use Jamaican Nation Language, particularly in reggae. The earlier calypsonians of Stan’s vintage, however, drew more heavily from the Trinidadian vernacular.

11. That’s How It Is In Bermuda

Stan Seymour, composer, singer, accompanist

Lord Necktie’s lyrics catalogue the delights of Bermuda, perhaps for people who have heard of Bermuda but have not ever been here. Seymour, besides being a calypsonian, also draws on the English tradition of the “Skiffle” musician, who accompanies himself on several instruments. Seymour uses mouth organ, guitar, and bass drum, with a foot pedal in performance.

12. Concrete City

Ital Foundation

Throughout the seventies, life was (and still is really) quite hard for the residents of the northern part of Bermuda’s capital city, Hamilton. The derelict surroundings and acute lack of “big money” charm once earned the area the invidious moniker “back of town” (a term that has since been appropriated by the residents of the area and turned into an affectionate term). This piece is Bermuda’s answer to the Bob Marley classic “Concrete Jungle,” and perfectly captures an extremely prevalent sentiment amongst black Bermudians in the late seventies, a time when civil unrest was far from an uncommon occur-

rence. The crux of the song comes when the city is turned into a metaphor for the plantation (which was not existent in Bermuda due to our small size, we had nothing more than farms), and the plantation stretches right across the entire “24 miles” that makes up our little island home. This song is an exceedingly powerful and important piece of our musical, and social, heritage.

13. Hurricane Emily

Runksie

The late 1980s saw the arrival of the most destructive natural force to ever hit Bermuda, until the arrival of Hurricane Fabian in 2003. Hurricane Emily literally renovated the landscape of our little island, ripping shorelines away, relocating roofs, boats, cars, trees and a slew of other things and causing an estimated 35 million dollars worth of damage before it faded into the horizon. Philando “Runksie” Hill was a teenager whose international hit “Pirate Population” was tearing up the reggae charts from New York to Jamaica right around the time Emily hit. It just made sense for Hill to tell the story of the legendary storm that carried away everybody’s belongings and scattered them across the island. “Emily take it, Emily take it, everything me used to own Emily take it” ... the chorus says everything really. The fact that Hill also decided to describe the island and her culture in the fourth verse of the song add to the essential status of the piece. Runksie has been a local legend since he first dropped “Pirate Population;” he is an undeniable pillar of our reggae music industry who has enjoyed international success more recently with the outstanding 1999 hit “Reggae Ambassador” “Emily” was a quite popular novelty hit back in the late eighties, and remains one of the most

deliciously detailed local flavored reggae songs ever recorded.

14. Excuse Me Mr. Speaker

Ras Mykkal

Ras Mykkal exploded onto the local music scene in 1998 with a brand of politically charged Dub Poetry that enjoyed unprecedented and immediate popularity. The political scene had been fidgeting restlessly for some years before Ras, but when Ras kicked the door down, the political left was right on hand to benefit from his politicized Bermudian pop. November 1998 saw the inauguration of the first PLP (Progressive Labor Party) government in Bermuda's political history; some Bermudians interpreted the election as breaking the stranglehold of the old slave masters. Two years later political disillusionment brought Ras back to the House of Parliament to address the Speaker with this musical reprimand, and the people started talking again. The issue at hand was the laws governing the distribution of alcohol and the enforcement of "drunk driving" laws. His points are clear and sharp with a hint of sarcastic wit mixed in for delicate entertainment value. Many of the concerns Ras articulates here echo public sentiment, and have made quite an impact on our increasingly sober society. The question at the core of the discussion is the devastating "What is alcohol's value to our society?" Indeed Ras, what?

TRACKS 15 & 16

Humour

For decades, Bermuda has enjoyed a rich variety of social commentary from its entertainers. This was the calypsonian's

stock in trade. More recently there have appeared groups and individual artists furthering this tradition on their own ways. The pieces recorded here show two different styles; the protest songs in reggae style of Ras Mykkal, and the satirical works of a troupe called Not The Um-Um Players. While Not The Um-Um Players draw on the rich resource of British satirical masters like Monty Python, Peter Cooke and Dudley Moore, Ras Mykkal's mentors are the pioneering Linton Kwesi Johnson and contemporary Jamaican masters like the late Mikey Smith, and others. This partly accounts for Mykkal's choice of dialect. The dialect Not The Um-Um uses is mostly Bermudian, with social, loving reference for St David's Island and her people.

15. Bermuda Is Still a Colony

Not The Um-Um Players: Bruce Barritt, Fred Barritt, Peter Smith, Tim Taylor, and Chris Broadhurst (guitar)

This song satirizes Hubert Smith's "Bermuda Is Another World" by juxtaposing a number of interesting facts about Bermuda, comparisons with other British dependent territories, and the writers' own piquant observations, set to an adaptation of H Smith's well-known song.

16. Bermuda Word Chant

*Not The Um-Um Players
Bruce Barritt, lead*

This chant cleverly strings together popular Bermudian sayings. The explanations of these peculiarly Bermudian sayings such as "Chingas!" or "B'y no B'y" are both wickedly funny and deadily accurate.

TRACK 17

Jazz

Bermudian musicians and local audiences have had a strong attraction to and participation in jazz since the 1920s.

17. There's No You

Ghandi Burgess, trumpet, with The Lance Hayward Quartet. Lance Hayward, piano; Clarence "Tootsie" Bean, drums; Maxwell "Mac" Smith, Milton Robinson, guitar

This is a fine example of the instrumental jazz ballad, in which a soloist plays a lyrical, emotive style. Ballads sung, not only by female vocalists, became the vehicle through which instrumentalists often expressed their inner feelings. This recording brought together the best Bermudian instrumentalists of their time; some say ever. The standards they set have never been surpassed. Despite the technical shortcomings in quality of the original recording, this number has been included for its musical and historic importance, as it is believed to be the only one in which the two giants of Bermuda jazz, Lance Hayward and Ghandi Burgess, are to be heard.

TRACK 18

Choral Music

Sacred choral music has been a part of Bermudian tradition since the time of the first settlers on the island. In his 1816 *Narrative of a Mission*, Methodist Reverend Joshua Marsden remarks that the Bermudians of African descent "have in general fine clear voices, and strong retentive memories: they possess a

musical ear, and a real facility in catching a tune: hence the singing was soon very respectable." (Robinson: 1979). Wesleyan Methodists and Seventh Day Adventists, as well as members of other religious affiliations, sang without musical accompaniment as part of church liturgy. Although most choral singing remains in the church, secular choral traditions such as the selection on CD Track #18 composed by Lance Hayward for Mu-En Chorale, are an ongoing part of Bermuda's musical heritage.

18. Bermuda Blue

The Hayward and Hayward Singers
Lyrics, Robert Hayward. Music composed, arranged conducted, by Lance Hayward.
Soloist Lillian Outerbridge

This track, transferred from a 38" long play recording made in 1947, is a fine example of Lance Hayward's choral work. He went on to found The Mu-En Chorale in Bermuda, and the Lance Hayward Singers in New York. Although not represented on this CD, the Mu-En Chorale has a special place in Bermuda's music history. It was an all male chorus, made up mainly of members of the Musicians and Entertainers Union. Lance Hayward formed, directed and arranged for this chorus, whose purpose, he stated, was to give instrumentalists experience in singing, in hopes that they in turn would become more sympathetic accompanists. Although not of the highest acoustical quality, this track is included as much for historical as for musical reasons.