Special 25th Independence Issue

Winter 2005

The Jako

The Future of West Indies Cricket

The Development of St. Lucian Culture

Jany Williams: The Last Interview

St. Lucia's Men of the Century:
Sir George Charles Sir John Compton George Odlum

Cedric George and Organometrix: A New Way of Looking at the World

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Introducing The Jako

It is many years since an anthology of Saint Lucian writing was published. That enterprise had been undertaken when Mr. Edward Braithwaite, the Barbadian historian and poet, had been at the Extra Mural Department of what is now the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College. Nonetheless, there is a growing army of writers in Saint Lucia, mostly aspiring poets and, in the main, young people. There are also a number of Prose Writers and Playwrights, some of whom are represented in this first edition of this magazine, ***The Jako***.

Twenty-Five years ago, in 1979, the Devaux family and their business house, M&C, made one of the most marvelous gifts to the new nation of Saint Lucia when they established the M&C Crafts and Arts Awards. Not since the demise of the Saint Lucia Arts Guild, had an enterprise become responsible for the veritable flowing of the Arts in St. Lucia.

This first edition of ***The Jako*** is in commemoration of the nation's 25th year of nationhood, and is in recognition of the contributions of the M&C Fine Arts Awards to the nation. However, we dedicate the magazine to the memory of the St. Lucia Arts Guild that spanned the golden era of St. Lucian Art and literature, and out of which emerged many St. Lucian Greats, including playwright Roderick Walcott, orator and man of letters George Odlum, novelist Garth St. Omer, painter The Honorable Dustan St. Omer, and poet, playwright, painter, and Noble Laureate The Honorable Derek Walcott.

It is the aim of ***The Jako*** to take on the mantle, bring to the fore, and present to the region and the world beyond the best of St. Lucian writing. Following in the footsteps of the Arts Guild, and lending our voices to the M&C Fine Arts Awards, we hope that this magazine will encourage the artistic expression of St. Lucian culture, and help the nation rediscover or renew its love and appreciation of our rich cultural heritage and unbounded creative spirit. We hope also that our writers will contribute liberally and that the nation will validate this endeavor by becoming earnest readers of the magazine.

There is an enormous body of world literature to which we can turn to spend our leisure time. This magazine aims to contribute to that body of literature. To read the best of that world literature is to embark upon a voyage of adventure and discovery. It is there and in the other creative arts that we feel the temper of a nation's mind, of the national sensibility, the national cultural identity, and find there the unexplained aspirations of the human mind. Accordingly, we hope to have our readers experience the flights and depths of feelings and the palpitating humanity of the writers presented in this and subsequent editions of ***The Jako.***

—Jacques Compton

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SUBMISSIONS

The Jako considers unsolicited manuscripts, including poems, short stories, essays, and reviews of books, music, art, film, and theater. Correspondence should be mailed to: The Jako, Gablewoods South, P.O. Box VF665, Vieux Fort, St. Lucia, West Indies or emailed to: info@jakoproductions.com.

ADVERTISING AND CIRCULATION

The Jako is published quarterly by Jako Productions, New Dock Road, Vieux Fort, St. Lucia, West Indies. Printed in St. Lucia. Advertising and circulation: Gablewoods South, P.O. Box VF665, Vieux Fort, St. Lucia, West Indies, 758-454-7839, info@jakoproductions.com, www.jakoproductions.com.

A Summer to Forget: The Future of West Indies Cricket

"Of all the things that we need to get right, the captaincy of West Indies is undoubtedly the most important."

by Cletus Springer

Benjamin Disraeli described time as "…the great physician" and Ovid, writing in Remedia Amoris, considered time as "…the best medicine." Well, I can only hope that one of these esteemed gentlemen is correct. While my spirits have been buoyed somewhat by that stunning defeat of England in the ICC Champions Trophy Final, I can't see my mind ever being purged of the painful memories of the "whitewash" that was inflicted by the England Cricket team on a frail West Indies team, in the summer of 2004.

There are two things that are making it difficult for me to forget this ignominious defeat. One is the memory of the "Blackwash" bestowed by West Indies on England in the summer of 1984. It was the 12th West Indies team on a tour of England and it came on the heels of outstanding Test victories over India and Australia in the Caribbean. I was on holiday in England at the time, and was present at the Oval when the final nail was driven into a rather bland England coffin. Oh what joyous occasion that was! A great furor was unleashed throughout the United Kingdom and especially in The British Parliament. At the end of it all, the British preferred to take comfort in the alibi that the England team had been weakened by the unavailability of some of its best players who had been suspended for participating in an unofficial "rebel" tour of South Africa. But two years later West Indies would undress that alibi with yet another blackwash on a fuller-strength team that included Graham Gooch, Mike Gatting and John Emburey.

What preserved the afterglow of the 1984 "blackwash"—until last month—was the indomitable spirit that was displayed by virtually every member of the West Indies team. In the First Test, it was Vivian Richards who ignored violent stomach cramps to score an imposing 117 runs. In the Second Test, Gordon Greenidge, Larry Gomes and Desmond Haynes stunned the gentry and plebs at Lords into silence by 344 runs for the loss of Haynes' wicket, in four and a half hours, and with 11.5 overs to spare. In the Third Test at Headingley, Leeds, it was the turn of the "One Arm Bandit"—Malcolm Marshall—to reinforce the never-say-die attitude of the West Indies team. A double-fracture of the left thumb, sustained while fielding in England's First Innings, prompted his doctor to instruct him to stay out of the game for 10 days. But Marshall had other ideas. With his left hand in a cast, he returned to the game, first to help Larry Gomes score a century and then to take 7 wickets for 53 runs, in one of the best spells of swing bowling ever seen, anywhere. And in the Fifth Test, it was Skipper Clive Lloyd who literally walked away from his sick bed to score a fighting 70 runs that gave the West Indies the foundation for victory.

The second thing that deepens the pain and discomfort of England's recent "whitewash" occurred in that same summer of 1984. Sri Lanka was touring England for the first time since being accorded Test Status by the ICC. In the only Official Test of that tour, Sri Lanka was "creamed" by England. Now, 20 years later, both England and Sri Lanka hold higher rankings than West Indies in Test Cricket. How on earth could the tables have turned so dramatically in 20 years? How is it possible that a West Indies team that in the 1980s, had in reserve, scores of talented players of the calibre of Andrew Jackman, Carl Hooper, Carlisle Best, Anthony Gray, Jimmy Adams and Wayne Daniel, could have fallen from grace so ignominiously, in such a short space of time?

I can't claim to have the answers to these questions. I have only suspicions and theories. The more appealing of these include the following: (i) we took it for granted we would remain on top of the Cricket world without having to fight hard to stay there; (ii) we wrongly assumed our players were blessed with sufficient natural talent to be able to triumph at any time, over any opposition; and (iii) we believed our opponents were so lacking in pride that they would allow us to walk over them, at will. But perhaps the most irrepressible answer is that while others prepared detailed plans to dethrone us, we had no plan to stay on top of the game of cricket.

The evidence of our foolhardiness and neglect is there for all to see. When the England and Wales Cricket Board (EWCB) took that brave but controversial decision, to limit the number of overseas players in County Cricket, we did absolutely nothing to expose our players to alternative, top-class cricket in our region. For nearly a decade after that, not a single day was added onto the schedule of our regional cricket championships. While opposing teams were offering long-term contracts to their premiere cricketers to encourage them to keep physically and mentally fit and committed, we did nothing. Instead, our

top players limed, ate junk food, swilled lager and chased skirts. While other countries were installing state-of-the art technology at their cricket grounds and clubs, we did "nada". For years, very few of our grounds were equipped with even basic technology, such as bowling machines. And while opposing coaches were using multi-angle television replays to analyze flaws in the techniques of our players, our coaches walked around with empty hands …and as it turned out, with even emptier minds.

And so it shouldn't surprise us that we are in the cellar of Test Cricket with the likes of Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. My God!

Despite incontrovertible evidence of our shortcomings, there are persons, including some who are close to the leadership of West Indies Cricket, who believe it is only a matter of time before West Indies returns to the top of Test Cricket. They see our current predicament as part of a natural cycle. I propose that a special prison should be built on the dome of some volcano specifically for persons who spew that kind of baloney. I insist that the only way we can return to the top of Test Cricket is if our Governments, Cricket administrators, players and coaches do more than our opponents are doing, such as: placing decent cricket facilities and qualified coaches in schools and communities; offering cricket scholarships to the UWI to our most promising and brightest cricketers; setting tougher standards for players vying for selection to any West Indies Cricket team; recruiting coaches whether from within or outside the region with the requisite zeal, competence, creativity and commitment; making our Cricket administrators at all levels more accountable; and imposing stiff discipline on all key actors in the realm of cricket, be they umpires, coaches, administrators, or players.

Frankly, I can see nothing in the approach of the top Cricket teams that suggests they will be relinquishing their leadership positions anytime soon. In addition to having a larger pool of disciplined, talented and committed players and coaches to choose from, these countries also hold a significant technological advantage that enables them to quickly correct any flaws in the techniques of their players and to decipher and exploit the flaws of opposing players. Those who pay close attention to the chatter of commentators might remember that it took Jeff Thompson just one delivery to identify myriad flaws in Tino Best's bowling technique. Thompson had never seen Best bowl before. But after one delivery, he was able to point out that Best has no balance at the point of delivery; that on delivery, his left foot points in the wrong direction; and that Best doesn't really watch where he pitches the ball. You can only wonder how Tino Best was able to progress from school cricket, to youth cricket, to club cricket, to regional cricket and finally onto Test Cricket, with so many horrendous flaws in his bowling technique.

Those who might want to suggest that Thompson was being harsh should take a look at Best's returns in Test Cricket. The fact that he takes a rash of wickets in regional competitions doesn't say a heck of a lot about our own batsmen. Does it?

It is entirely possible that Tino Best may yet become the best fast bowler in the world. I'm told that he is eager to improve. But he and those who have his interest at heart must take his future seriously. Among other things, he and his peers (and that includes our own Darren Sammy) must eat well, sleep well, exercise regularly; practice religiously, read prodigiously, (especially about cricket) and remain focused.

Of all the things that we need to get right, the captaincy of West Indies is undoubtedly the most important. It must be acknowledged that no captain, however blessed with sound leadership skills, can transform mediocre players into a successful team. While Clive Lloyd and Viv Richards were capable and effective leaders in their own right, I believe that their success was also due to the exceptional talent and professionalism of the players available to them. In his early days in youth cricket Brian Lara promised much as a captain, but the first time he was handed the mantle of leadership of the senior team, he wasn't ready for it. I don't think he is technically at the same level of Australia's Ponting, England's Vaughan, South Africa's Smith and/or New Zealand's Flemming. While Sarwan has acquitted himself well in Lara's brief absence, I don't think he is quite ready for the job of Captain. He needs another two years to develop the requisite leadership skills through a specially-designed training programme. I propose that Clive Lloyd and/or Ian Bishop be appointed as Mentor to Sarwan during this development period.

Getting over the disappointment of the summer of 2004 will take a very long time. But the conscious implementation of a clear and comprehensive Cricket Development programme will help me feel a lot better and give me reason to hope that West Indies will not easily suffer such humiliation again.

The Development of St. Lucian Culture

by Anderson Reynolds

"In this era of globalization, the ubiquitous mass media and the information super highway, it is easy for the cultures of small societies like St. Lucia to be swept away and replaced by the cultures of larger, richer and more dominant societies."

At 2003 Jazz On The Square, while listening to Ronald "Boo" Hinkson doing his thing, reveling in his new CD, *BEYOND*, which it appeared was rapidly becoming a hit, I overheard a conversation in which a young man was trying his best to convince a young woman that jazz wasn't St. Lucian culture, rather it was music like calypso, reggae, and cadence. Of course, the young woman, who was rocking away, would have none of what the young man was offering.

I know a well established St. Lucian musician who takes every opportunity to denounce country and western as red-neck music and as such has nothing to do with black culture and therefore is in no way St. Lucian culture. In fact, this artist goes as far as to say that St. Lucian country music lovers should be ashamed of themselves for loving a racist originated music. And I know a carnival activist who (based on his discussions of culture) seems to think that calypso and carnival are the beginning and end of St. Lucian culture.

What constitutes St. Lucian culture is no doubt an intriguing conversation piece. However, what I want to focus attention on with this article isn't what classifies as St. Lucian culture, but how we as a society can encourage and develop the artistic expression of St. Lucian culture. Culture is the visible expression of a people's way of life. So in that sense everywhere there is human life there is culture. Culture requires no encouragement, for it is a natural outgrowth of human beings going through their daily lives. What I am proposing to encourage and develop is the translation of this outward expression of our existence into artistic expressions as represented by cultural products. By cultural products I mean paintings, plays, movies, documentaries, musical recordings, books. In short, artistic expressions that can be readily disseminated.

Painting by Cedric George, featured artist of this issue

The CDF has a Role to Play

The Department of Culture renamed the Cultural Development Foundation (CDF) was established to do just that. According to the CDF its role is to create conditions conducive to the enrichment of St. Lucia's cultural environment, and to encourage, facilitate, and promote cultural development and cultural events. The CDF hopes to accomplish this through training, advocacy, and effective administration. However, a common problem with institutions set up to promote culture is that the institutions themselves quickly acquire the notion (or at the very least behave that way) that culture is all about them, that they are the paragons of culture, they are the creators of culture. But if not the CDF, who creates culture? Who among us are actively engaged in giving artistic expression to St. Lucian culture? They are the people and groups creating the cultural products. I am talking about the writers, poets, musicians, calypsonians, painters, actors, video and film producers. The Kendel Hippolytes, McDonald Dixons, and Adrian Augiers; the Pelees, Invaders, and Meshaks; the Dustan St. Omers, Cedric Georges, and Stephan Pauls; the Travis Weekes', Mathias Burts, and Kennedy "Boots" Samuels'. Having said this, how should the CDF avoid the trap of seeing itself as the embodiment of culture and go about promoting the artistic expression of St. Lucian culture?

To accomplish this mission the CDF need not simply wait for the creators of cultural products to come to it for assistance. The CDF needs to be proactive. It needs to seek out all such persons and groups and ask "how best can we assist you in developing your craft, in transforming your creativity into cultural products, and in marketing and promoting these products worldwide?" We have groups like Chè Campeche and Tanbou Mélé who have acquired national acclaim, have already taken their act overseas, and, in a limited way, have produced audio or video recordings of some of their works. We have the pioneering southern drama group, Vizyon De Lavi / Iyanola Pictures, who so far has produced two movies, Tears in the Valley and Ribbons of Blue now available on VHS and DVD. How do we help them climb the next hurdle of becoming regional and international cultural icons? How can we help them to record their work more extensively for mass dissemination? In these respects C&W's Star Quest may have worked wonders.

Besides such groups or persons who are now enjoying national attention, there are a host of aspiring singers, musicians,

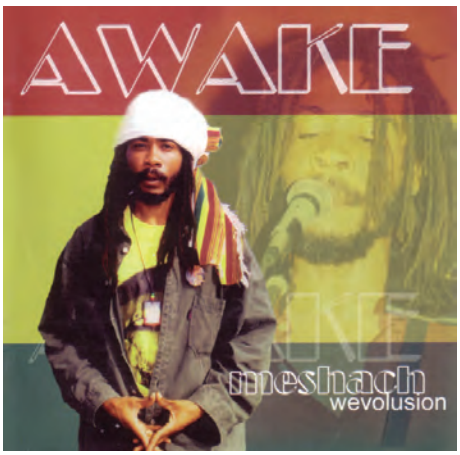
writers, poets, painters, actors, who have the talent and motivation, but have limited guidance, and who often haven't a clue about what it takes to uplift their craft to international standards. Through my visits to our secondary schools to do book readings and to impress upon students the importance of reading and education, I discovered that we have a profusion of promising student writers. With little encouragement from anyone they are writing poetry, short stories and novels. The sad thing is that they are receiving little guidance in the art of writing. There are no writing workshops to help them hone their craft, there are few avenues for publishing their work, they have few contacts with established writers, and from where they stand they probably cannot envision writing as a career. So

graduation from secondary school often marks the end of their writing and, in many cases, creative life.

A few years back the CDF launched a series of islandwide workshops taught by Jamaica School of Drama lecturer, Pierre Lemaire. The CDF had also sponsored a writing workshop at the Central Library, geared mostly towards members of the Writers Forum who, as a group, won the 2002 M&C award for poetry. And in the past the CDF has sponsored calypso writing workshops. In a further effort to develop the arts, the CDF has created literature, drama, and music think-tanks that are charged with developing ideas on how best to encourage and spur the artistic expressions of our culture. So it would be misleading to suggest that the CDF isn't actively involved in developing St. Lucian culture. The problem with the CDF's efforts is that they are sporadic and often it is only the well initiated that are aware of these activities. The CDF can go further in the nurturing and development of craft. Workshops in the various artistic disciplines could be institutionalized and made into annual or better yet biannual events. The CDF could team up with the literature, music, and art teachers of our secondary schools to help establish art programs and art clubs. The CDF could set aside overseas scholarships for gifted and aspiring artists to further the development of their craft.

Besides the CDF, other laudable institutions that are playing a significant role in the upliftment of St. Lucian culture include the M&C Annual Fine Arts Awards and the Jubilee Trust Fund whose recent undertakings included the staging of Sarafina and The Banjo Man (along with CDF) and the establishment of The George Odlum Grant for the Creative Arts.

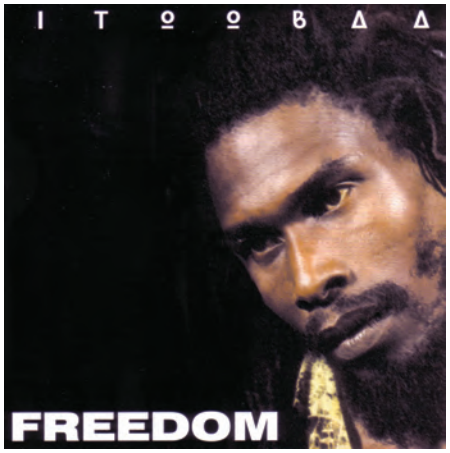
The Demise of St. Lucian Culture



Failure to encourage the artistic expression of St. Lucian culture, and the documentation of these artistic expressions takes on a more serious tone when you consider that without urgent intervention there is a chance that some aspects of our culture will be lost to us forever. Specifically, I am talking about our folk music, the music that no one can and would argue isn't St. Lucian culture, because one would be hard pressed to find another music or cultural expression more indigenous to St. Lucia. St. Lucian folk music speaks to the genesis of St. Lucian culture. If we want clues about where we came from, and who we are, there are few better places to look than our folk music. But the sad fact is most of the paragons of our folk music, the people who are not simply performing songs passed on to them, but have created and are creating their own music, are in the later part of their lives. I am talking about the Rameau Poleons, and the Yves Simeons of St. Lucia.

Monty Maxwell, one of St. Lucia's leading jazz and blues musicians, a fixture of the St. Lucian Jazz Festival, and arguably the best musician to have come out of Vieux Fort, is so taken by Rameau Poleon that as often as possible he teams up with Rameau on gigs. In fact, Rameau Poleon features prominently on some of Monty Maxwell's songs in *Shine*, his-soon-to-be- released debut CD. By teaming with Rameau Poleon, Monty has created a cross between Jazz and St. Lucian folk music, a new genre of jazz. In fact, by fusing St. Lucian and Caribbean rhythm with Jazz and Blues, Monty is no doubt cultivating a new jazz or musical niche. Therefore, the release of *Shine* may prove to be no less than legendary.

Monty Maxwell admits that Rameau Poleon's music inspires him. He laments that Rameau Poleon has so many wonderful songs that it would be a great national



loss if the artist were to pass away before his songs were recorded. He says many of the songs are known only to Rameau. That is the reason he, Monty, takes every opportunity to work with the folk musician, and that is why he has volunteered to help produce recordings of the artist, providing that sponsors can be found to finance logistics and studio time.

Now, the loss Monty is talking about isn't simply that the world may never hear some of Rameau Poleon's songs. The loss could go much deeper than that. To illustrate let us ponder Reggae. Or let us ask the question: What are the roots of Reggae?

Well, long before there was reggae there was Jamaican folk music. Then in the 1940's Jamaicans came up with the bright idea of fusing all of this folk music to form what was coined Mento, which they started recording in the early 1950's (the birth of a cultural product). In the early 1960's, to Mento was added American R&B and the result was Ska and "Rude-Boy" music. A few years later, beginning in the mid 1960's, Ska was mixed with Soul to give rise to Rock

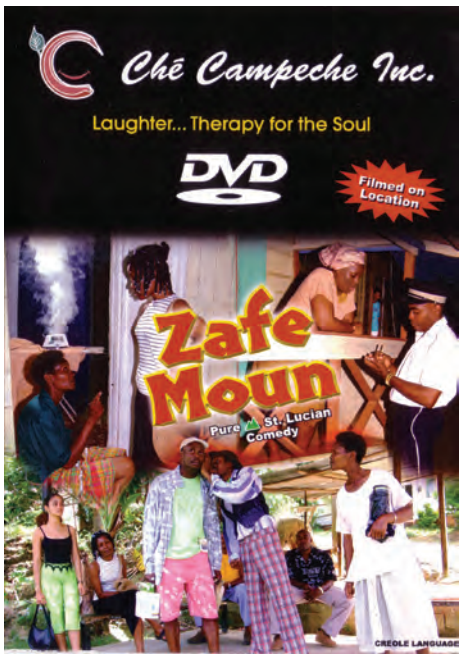
Steady. Then in the late 1960's, under this restless Jamaican creativity, Rock Steady gave way to Reggae, a term that encompassed the many developing styles of Jamaican music characterized by the trademark "skank'" as in skanking. Out of this skanking music, Dub and Roots Reggae emerged in the early and mid 1970's, and soon branched off into Dancehall, Lover's Rock, and Hiphop, Now reggae, Dub, Dancehall, Lover's Rock and Hiphop have changed world music and have become a multi-billion dollar industry.

Imagine that. If the various strains of Jamaican folk music had disappeared before they could have been fashioned into Mento and then Ska, there would be no reggae, no Bob Marley. There would be no Three Little Birds singing at dance halls, bars, discos, hotels and airport lounges, and the classy restaurants of the world, and the millions of dollars of income and foreign exchange that Jamaica earns from music each year may have never materialized.

Imagine again. It is 2030. On an early Sunday afternoon a young musician is visiting his grandparents. On top of an old bookshelf lies a dusty CD that hasn't seen play in years. The CD catches the eye of the aspiring musician. Bored, he absent-mindedly slips the CD in a CD player. The CD is The Best of Rameau Poleon. Suddenly, the young man's boredom vanishes. The music has hit a nerve. Maybe it is a long forgotten song that when he was small his parents used to play. He picks up his guitar and starts picking a tune and playing a rhythm. But restless by nature, after half an hour he gives up on that and goes and hangs out with the boys. Amid the talk and laughter of his friends, Rameau Poleon and the rhythm keep ringing in his ears. So he leaves his friends, returns home and spends all afternoon and most of the night developing the tune that refuses to go away. He has a few hours of restless sleep during which the rhythm and Rameau Poleon kept humming. By six in the morning he can take it no longer, so he gets up and returns to his guitar and the rhythm. Before long, the tune and rhythm take shape, so by the time he has breakfast at 9AM he has a fully developed song. He calls his girlfriend and says: "Guess what? I have just received a gift from God." But the gift isn't from God, it is from Rameau Poleon and the people or organizations who had had the foresight to sponsor the recordings. He records the song. It's a hit. The world cannot have enough of it. So he records a full album of songs with the same basic rhythm. A new musical genre is born; he calls it RamPo. In less than a decade, RamPo becomes a billion dollar industry, placing St. Lucia squarely on the musical map.

The Value of Culture to Society

Notwithstanding the above discussions, what is the value of giving artistic expression to our culture, and the value of presenting these expressions in the form of cultural products? Art, or the artistic expressions of our culture, provides a window, a looking glass, into our way of lives. Therefore art provides us with a better or clearer sense of who we are as a people: where we came from, where are we at now, where we are heading, and where we should be heading. Art develops consciousness. It enables us to became more conscious of ourselves as a people or nation or civilization (the West Indian Civilization). By clarifying the circumstances of our existence, it helps us go through life by making conscious decisions, instead of simply reacting to circumstances, or acting out of necessity. Art provides us with the leverage or mental fortitude to change the very circumstances that shape our lives. Through art we begin to have a sense that we could be in control of our lives, for it is the daily choices we make that help determine how our lives turn out.



Art is the avenue through which the culture, the way of life, of previous generations is passed on to future generations. Knowledge and understanding of the way of life of our predecessors enable us to learn from their mistakes, and, rather than reinvent the wheel, build upon the foundation they bequeathed us. We know of past peoples, not because we were there to observe their lives, but from the artifacts they left behind. So we know of the Roman and Greek empires because of the books, architecture, artwork, music, etc. that survived them. Similarly, we know something of the lives of ancient Egyptians and the people of the other great African Kingdoms like Zimbabwe and Ashanti, because of the pyramids, hieroglyphs, art and artifacts that remain and the songs and stories that were passed on from one generation to the other. Art provides a distilled representation of a people's way of life. Therefore, it should be possible to study a people's art and reconstruct how they lived their lives: how affluent, how democratic, how religious, how peaceful, how happy they were.

In this era of globalization, the ubiquitous mass media and the information super highway, it is easy for the cultures of small societies like St. Lucia to be swept away and replaced by the cultures of larger, richer and more dominant societies. The concern that many St. Lucians raise about the ongoing Americanization of St. Lucian culture suggests that this issue isn't just a theoretical one.

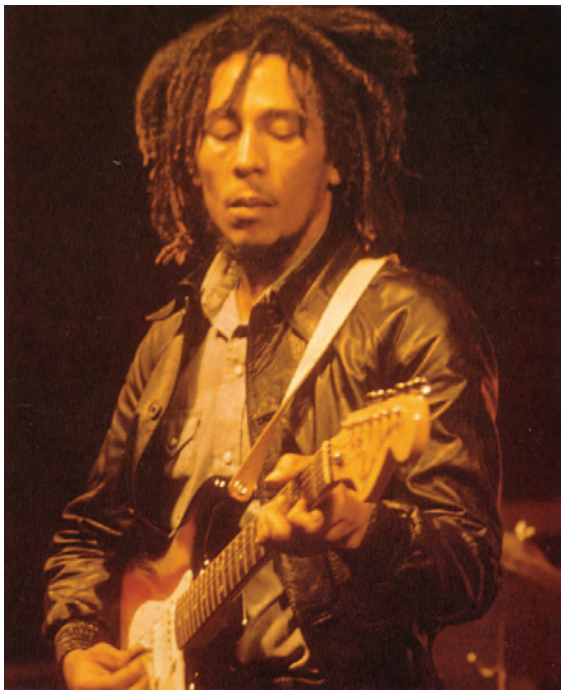
There are two ways of dealing with this concern. One is to screen out or place restrictions on the inflow of foreign culture: music, movies, television programs. The second is to pay less attention to what is coming in, and more emphasis on the quantity and quality of

what we are putting out. Meaning, fine, we are getting plenty of US television programming, but let us make sure our people are exposed to plenty of our own. Fine, the radio stations are playing a great deal of foreign music, but let's make sure that we are producing an abundance of quality music which is getting its fair share of air play. It is for this reason I think that NTN (Channel 2) is a stroke of genius. My position is that while others are influencing us with their culture, let us put ours out there in this great world cultural pot, so we are doing our fair share of influencing others.

Case in point. Reggae, or more specifically Bob Marley's music, has influenced generations upon generations of writers and poets, not to speak of musicians. It is as if each new generation is pleasantly surprised to discover that a Bob Marley exists. Bob Marley's music has changed the world. A visitor to the Castries, New Yorks and Londons of the world cannot fail to notice the vast number of people wearing African-influenced garments and variations of locks (even if most are by no means Rastafarians and have never smoked weed). Clearly, there is a Jamaicanization, or rather, an Africanization of Black Culture throughout the New World. No small feat for a three-million-people country!

There is a lot of talk about the world wide web and the information super highway, but I am a little bit disheartened because amid all that talk I hear very little from our leaders about content. Besides the promotion of tourism, carnival, and the jazz festival, we are providing very little content of our own. What I mean is, how much of our music, books, movies, etc, are out there? How many video and educational games are we producing? How and when are we going to address the content issue? Clearly, in terms of cultural content, in terms of putting our culture out there to mitigate the influence of other people's culture on us, the government and the CDF have a role to play.

In dollar terms, entertainment (music, movies, theater, etc.) is the largest industry on earth. The greatest influence America has on the world is not through its military, nor its financial aid, but through the export of its way of life, its culture: music, movies, books, television, fast foods. As a resource-poor country what are we doing to corner a fair share of this multi-trillion dollar entertainment pie? Continuing advances in music, video, computing and cinematic technology are making the creation of quality cultural products more affordable. The beauty about cultural



products like books, music and film is that once they are in place they face a potential market of six billion people, and at high volumes the per unit reproduction cost is negligible. Furthermore, once there continues to be a demand for the product, production and sales can continue into perpetuity (case in point, Bob Marley's music). At sufficient volumes, even if net profit from the sale of any one unit were only a fraction of a dollar, total profits could still amount to millions of dollars. Often times all it takes is for one song, one book, one piece of painting, or one movie to achieve prominence. Because once this one song or one book achieves financial success all previous and subsequent works of that author acquire greater demand and value.

Culture as a Public Good

A relevant question at this point is that if the entertainment industry can be so lucrative why do our artists need financial and other support from the CDF or the government? The rewards to be had should be motivation enough for artists to bring their craft to international standards, and to produce cultural products for the world market.

Here is the problem. A lot has to happen before the artist arrives at a level where his craft is on par with international levels. And even when the his art is as good as what is produced anywhere else, a lot has to happen in terms of packaging, marketing and promotion before the art can enter the shop window of the world. Very often it takes years of working at his craft before the artist can arrive at an acceptable level, and sometimes much longer before the artist's work catches the imagination of the public. What often happens is that the artist's home market is sufficiently large to allow the artist to live off his creativity, even while developing his craft.

On the contrary, one reality of small economies like St. Lucia is that the market is too small to fully support artists. Too few books, CDs, or paintings get sold to allow the writer, musician or painter to recoup cost, much less earn a living. For this reason businesses are reluctant to invest in the creation of cultural products, and many artists trade their craft for gainful employment long before they have reached internationally competitive levels. Among those who continue to produce, few invest the kind of time and resources required to create at international standards. Consequently, there is a paucity of books, music and other types of cultural products authored by St. Lucians and on St. Lucia that are marketable beyond our shores.

The sad thing is that while the cost to the artist may far exceed the financial benefits, the benefits to society can far exceed the cost. For example, of what value are the story books we read as children, the books that instilled in us the values of civility that have shaped us into responsible and productive members of society? Of what value are the works of Derek Walcott? Works that have given voice to our voices, have placed us on the world map and have made us proud to be St. Lucians. Of what value is the music of Bob Marley to society? Music that has changed the world, has helped forged a cultural bond across the West Indian Civilization and across African descendants no matter where they live, music that has become the voice of protest for the suppressed and dispossessed of the world. Clearly, the value to society of cultural products can far exceed the cost of production or the financial benefits to be had by the artist, particularly in small economies like St. Lucia.

Because of that, cultural products need to be treated as public goods. A Public good is such that its consumption by one person doesn't exclude its simultaneous consumption by other persons. The inability to exclude others from consuming the good, makes it difficult for producers of the good to recoup their cost, therefore, left to the private sector, the good may not get produced or an insufficient amount may be provided. Nevertheless, from the perspective of the

society the benefit of the good may far exceed the cost of production, particularly since once the good is produced it is available for simultaneous consumption by all members of society. A perfect example of a public good is national defense. What often happens in the case of public goods is that the state subsidizes or fully sponsors the provision of the good.

If the CDF and government are to treat cultural products as public goods, besides the above suggestions, what more can they do to encourage the creation of cultural products and how can they raise money to sponsor such activities? Presently if a cultural group is registered with the CDF it is eligible for a 50 percent exemption on imported equipment and products related to its craft. Musical instruments, video cameras, etc. are very expensive, so even with this concession customs duties on these items are tantamount to paying twice for them. The cost of musical instruments discourages the formation of bands, especially since the money to be made from playing music in St. Lucia is so limited. There are almost no bands in St. Lucia that are on par with the top Caribbean bands. Were it not for the musical contributions of the police band (a 100 percent government sponsored activity), there may not have been a band to back the calypsonians.

In terms of music it would appear that Barbados has far surpassed St. Lucia. To add insult to injury, Barbados has taken our creole, mixed it with soca and then exported it back to us. I should think that if any one were going to fuse soca with cadence and market it worldwide it would be us. If you were to walk into the major music stores of New York—the HMS's, the Virgin Records', the Tower Records'—you would find the music of Square One, Krosfyah and other Barbadian bands and artists, but not one St. Lucian CD. Are we locking ourselves out of a trillion dollar industry?

We need to go much further than simply exempting instruments from customs duties. We need to find a way to formally finance cultural development. How about a cultural levy on cigarettes and alcohol? How about setting aside 5 percent of all grants (no matter for what purpose) for cultural development? We have proven to be very efficient in getting grants to build stadiums, schools, jails, fishery complexes and commercial free zones. How about tapping into international sources for grants to finance the creation of St. Lucian cultural products?

If additional motivation for financing cultural development is needed, consider that a recent international study indicated that real economic development was predicated on the health and social (cultural) development of a society. In this world of globalization our cultural identity may be at stake. Besides, what's wrong in carving for ourselves a piece of this multi-trillion dollar entertainment pie?

Monty Maxwell

Thanks, Rameau

Though my feet do not speak the language
Of the steps and rhythms of your dance
My heart understands the lyrics of
The culture you unselfishly shared
The pieces of our past you upheld.

I have seen you as you are
Never as you deserve to be;
On makeshift thrones of borrowed lumber
on Independence Day in the park,
In naked country's disused discotheques
Drenched with the scent of the smelly white stuff
Dispensed from demijohns below the counter.

I have stood in sacramental awe
Imbibing each stanza of fluid note
That flowed like magic from your vyolon's lips;
You are an alphabet of mystique
Each time I have watched you play:
Hat askew, fingers walking the body
Of the thing you necked like a lover,
Your feet light, tap dancing on the spot.

Entouraged, as your menu often shows,
By gay and bouncy, *dwietted chantwèls*
That pause from homely chores or from sweating,
Futilely, in the sweet potato fields,
Chanting a desideratum;
And the fellow on the goat-skin *tanbou*
Fingers recalling the ancestral kraal
Fingers itching, too, to shift the ashen cigarette
Locked in his chimneyed mouth;
The others that dance and carousel
That *bwiyé* for *La Woz* or *La Magéwit*;
Captivating as they always are
It is you, always you who spice up
The enchanting Kwéyol ambiance
That colours us different from our neighbours.

And so through you, a living legend
I send a prayer for missing comrades
Whose voice I still hear from the great beyond:
Roddy who loved 'mas and lived for the stage
And Eric the biggest voice in folk;
To the Queen of culture, unparalleled
To the cultured priest who raised Kwéyol high
To you and others yet unrewarded:
May you live, even though you die!

Now, play me that vyolon to a sigh!

—Modeste Downes

Jany Williams
The Last Interview

by Anderson Reynolds and Jacques Compton

"I also think that it is important for persons involved in the arts to take the bull by the horns, do what needs to be done, perfect your art, work on your development, and then something will definitely work out."

By many accounts the 2004 calypso and carnival season was a year of bountiful harvest and Shakespearean drama. It was a year of record attendances at the tents and soca and calypso competitions. It was a year that celebrated the history of St. Lucian calypso with a massive calypso event at Pigeon Island at which the best twenty-five calypsos since independence were performed by their respective artists to the crowd's hearts' content. It was the year that gave us *Down De Road* and *We Making Love*, two songs that, given their freshness, tempo, rhythm, and universality, were bound to make waves across the Caribbean. It was a year where the soca was so captivating and so original that St. Lucia captured the first four spots of the OECS soca monarch competition. It was the year that the calypso competition was such that Invader and Pep, two perennial calypso monarchs, were unable to secure a place in the finals. It was the year that welcomed back the legendary Ashanti, and Herb Black, the veteran calypsonian, who had become the conscience of St. Lucian calypso. It was the year of the youth, the year that all the crowns (road march, party monarch, OECS soca monarch, and calypso monarch) were won by persons under thirty and who were competing only for the first, second or third time. It was the year that Lady Spice, the first woman to win the calypso crown and, up till then, the only woman to have done so, caused the nation to hold its breath as, eight months pregnant, she strutted, gyrated on stage like a teenager without a care and pelted her calypsos like there were no tomorrow. She was to give birth the day of the calypso finals; so to avoid any mishaps and thus ensure her place at the top of the calypsonian heap, she added more drama to an already drama packed season when a few days before the finals she induced forced labor and gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Shakespeare could not have scripted a more dramatic and thematic play, for Lady Spice's best and most popular song for the year, which also was one of the most controversial and talked-about songs of the competition, was about abortion and a woman's right to choose. The 2004 calypso season was also the year of the women. It was a year when there was Jany and Spice and the rest. It was the year when these two women blew the competition so far away that next to their performances at the finals, multiple crown calypso kings like Educator and Ashanti looked like child's play and it seemed they would have been better served staying at home and recounting to their grandchildren stories of their past glories. Above all, 2004 was the year of Jany Williams, who, remarkably, in her first foray into national calypso competition, both stunned and mesmerized a nation, when like a bud bursting into flower, or sunshine suddenly flooding a room, she edged Lady Spice—the crowd's favorite, the one who had hitherto captured the hearts and imaginations of calypso and non-calypso lovers alike—by two points to win the calypso crown.

We caught up with Jany on a late Thursday, September morning when the heat of the day was already making its presence felt. She was wearing a green top and worn out jeans, both clinging tightly to her petite body. Her yellowish hair matched her sunshine complexion. We were lucky. Since winning the crown, Jany's already hectic schedule had become even more so. This was our second attempt at meeting her.

Taking advantage of whatever little breeze there was, we sat in the balcony of a house on top Barnards Hill, a short distance away from the Cultural

Development Foundation, overlooking Castries and its historical harbor.

The Jako: **Jany, I must first congratulate you on winning the calypso crown.**

Jany: Thank-you.

With all the excitement that has surrounded wining the Calypso Monarch, how do you feel now about all what has happened?

Definitely I am very happy, because I achieved one of the goals that I had set out to do for the carnival season. But generally life is the same, no great changes. But I must say I am very, very happy about that.

Laborie seems to becoming a hotbed of music in St. Lucia. There is Extra Love, and I remember when we were establishing a band in Vieux Fort, we could get few committed musicians from Vieux Fort, most of the musicians came from Laborie, and here you are from Laborie, having won the calypso monarch. I don't think there is anyone from Vieux Fort, per se, who has won the monarch. What do you think accounts for that?

Laborie is a very strong community, and growing up there the whole community support was more like the community raising the child, rather than just the parents or a family member. In general, going to school there, the community was very open to being involved in the arts, whether it was dance, drama, or music. And in terms of encouragement from the other community members, it has always been very, very high. Being from Laborie, I am very proud that I was at least able to take home the calypso monarch, because we have been able to accomplish in other fields but not really music. I know that other Laborians are extremely happy as well, and I'm just proud that I was able to do it. I know I made a lot of my teachers and family members proud as well.

Yes, I am pretty sure of that, because this is a very big accomplishment, especially since this is only the second time a woman has won the crown. So I think it is special.

Now, when I first saw you at the Cultural Center, at one of the calypso tents, I said wow! This woman must have had theatre training. What impressed me most was the way you dramatized your songs, your performance. I sensed that you gave it your all, each line receiving its full dramatic flair and space. Have you had theatre training? What has molded you into such a fantastic performer?

The group I am a member of, Caribbean Vizions, have members from different Caribbean islands. Our whole focus is with the young persons in the schools and bringing across positive messages to them. Our production entails dance, drama, music, poetry and so on. In terms of the drama part of it, this is what I do in the other Caribbean Islands and at the schools, that is the experience I have in terms of drama. The support system from the group, Caribbean Vizions, is tremendous as well, so in terms of rehearsal and getting everything together the other members have an input in that.

Reggae has become international, but calypso and, to a lesser extent, soca has not made that kind of headway. I have thought a little bit about how best to present calypso to the outside world. One thought I had was to present calypso as theatre. What I mean is that the same way the calypsonians perform in the finals, with all the props, and so on, if when they present the calypso to England, Europe, America, they accompany the calypso with theatre, maybe that might be one way of selling it. I'm not sure whether this has been tested, I know when I have seen calypsonians perform, say, in America, they are usually straight up, with none of the props. Furthermore, when they do go abroad, they cater specifically for a Caribbean audience. I suspect because the non-West Indian is not too au courant with calypso. That is partly why I think the theatre aspect of it might help to carry it over. What do you think?

I think that's a very good idea, because my whole enjoyment of performing calypso for the season was because I was able to be a lot more expressive than I could have been when I do soca. I think it comes hand-in-hand. Sometimes you may not have props, but with the message your song is sending and how you perform, your expressions, it will entail that. But I definitely feel that would be a good idea. Probably will make it easier for a non-Caribbean person to understand what you singing about, whereas a West Indian person will automatically grasp the message.

The other idea I have about how to package our calypsonians is to team them up with big European and American artists. Maybe initially as warmup acts. When Lady Spice first joined the arena I envisioned her singing calypso and soca to large international crowds who may not have necessarily come to listen to calypso or soca; maybe they came to listen to a Janet Jackson, or a Wyclef Jean, or a Lauryn Hill, but once there, they get exposed to calypso, and if the performance is captivating, the audience may get hooked. I think this is one way to help grow the calypso and soca audience. I still feel we have not done enough to internationalize our calypso and soca. That is why I keep thinking of ways of how best that could happen. I suspect it is women who will have to do it. When I saw first Lady Spice and then you perform this is the idea that came to me. Watching the men perform didn't bring out that idea.

Now for the standard question asked of artists. Who influenced you? What got you started in the music business in general and calypso in particular?

My grandmother was a member of the Laborie choir, so automatically when I went to church I could sit nowhere else but in the choir. So you just became a member of the choir by force, you didn't really have a choice. But what really started it for me was in primary school when in those days they had interschool folk competition. And I competed for my school, Laborie Girls Primary, as a chantwèl. I was a chantwèl there. The two years I competed there I won the best chantwèl award, so that started it off for me in terms of really taking note of singing and music and being interested. I moved on to the convent where we did calypsos, not to compete with the other schools, but within the school we had calypso competition, so I

represented my class every year until Form Four, that was in 1994, when the school finally decided that we were going to be competing with the other schools and entering the Junior Calypso Competition, which I did and placed first runner-up. So that was basically the starting of my interest in terms of music.

So who were your idols in the singing, music, or calypso world? Of course, idol is probably too strong a word.

Well, actually my favorite calypsonian has been Robbie. In terms of the persons who contributed to my love for calypso and my being in the art-form, I can't say it is one person. The song that I did in the finals, the surprise song, actually dealt with that aspect of it. I learnt a lot from Pele, Pep, Educator, Ashanti, Invader, and Lady Lin in particular. As a woman she was the only one out there for a number of years, maybe not the only one, but the most significant woman who actually competed against the men. So all of them contributed in their own way to me being interested in the art-form. And when you see people working hard at something and you realize that they are at it year after year it has to be that they love it. And you know generally it is not a career where you make a lot of money, yet they keep doing it year after year, so that means they really love it and they respect that part of our culture. I see myself as somebody who loves culture, who is Caribbean in nature. Those are the persons I must say contributed, all the calypsonians.

Yeah, you touched on something there regarding artists. In terms of making money, making it big as an artist, it is almost like buying a lotto ticket. One can do it all one's life and nothing big happens. For some, the first time they are out and big things happen. So really if one is doing it strictly for financial reasons, it is very difficult to sustain the effort because the outcome is so uncertain, so unpredictable. Talent matters and hard work matters, but it is also being at the right place at the right time.

Your second song at the finals blew me away, I think it blew everyone away, the shock factor, the unexpectedness of it all added to its effectiveness. It was a brave move. I have heard people say that when you come up with a new song in the finals you are taking a big chance. The audience do not know the song so they may not respond strongly. But you took that chance and it worked quite well. So I think you should commend yourself for your bravery.

Thank you.

Do you see yourself as basically a soca and calypso artiste?

I wouldn't limit it to soca and calypso. I will just limit it to a Caribbean artist.

So what are your plans in the near and medium term future? For you have now started on a path.

I am not now starting on a path, I am just going to be continuing the journey I have started. Definitely continue in the work of my group, Caribbean Vizion. As the Calypso Monarch I now have more responsibilities on my shoulders in terms of bringing out positive messages to students, in particular those in St. Lucia. Presently, what I am going to be working on with my group, Caribbean Vision, we will be focusing on the schools, the students, definitely bringing out those positive messages to them via the arts, making them realize their education is very important, as much as being involved in any cultural aspect or any form of our culture.

Tell me more about Caribbean Vizions. What's the concept behind it? Who is behind it? What is its scope of activity?

Caribbean Vizions is a group made up of artistic persons from different Caribbean Islands. It was the brain child of Curt Allen who is also my writer and the

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Creole Canticles

In Memoriam of: George Odlum, Egbert Mathurin, Ruby Yorke, Lucia Peters-Charlery, Jany Williams, Florita Marquis, Evy Mondesir. R.I.P.

1.
Let us praise His Name with an opening lakonmèt,
and in the graceful procession of weedova;
let laughing, madras-crowned girls rejoice before Him in the scottish
and flirtatious moolala, its violon hinting of heartache.
And while we forget time turning in quick-heeled polkas,
pause during the tentative norwegian

for when the couples end the gwan won,
you alone must dance for Him your koutoumba.

2.
I was glad when they call me to go up in the Séwénal.
The violon scraping my heart,
banjo and kwatro thrumming my grief like their plectrum,
and the guitar pulling my heel.

I only seeing her tuning the mandolin on her bosom

Then the shakshak shake me loose, insisting, insisting,
"wait for the bow, the bow and the courtesy,
wait for the sax, the drum and the kwadril to start." Selah.

3.
And so, she has come: to the gold-flecked Wob Dwiyèt,
its long train in folds over her left wrist,
the clean petticoat adorned with lace,
the satin foulard, the head-piece of rainbow madras

from the nondescript costume of the far city,
from the profligate famine of Cardun's estates

to the embracing plenitude of Kwadril shakshak and violon,
to that Bright Brooch on the glistening triangular foulard.

4.
The cascading words of my hand
pluck His praise from eight-string bandolin and local banjo,
place His favour on madras and foulard, the satin and the lace,
plant His steps in mazouk, lakonmèt and gwan won;
point His casual grace in yellow pumpkin star, pendular mango,
plait Him a crown of anthurium and fern

He is the Crown, the Star of grace, the Dancer of creation,
the Robing of righteousness, Tuning of the spheres,
Hand of the Incarnating Word.

—John Robert Lee

director of the group. Caribbean Vizions lobbies for cultural and economic cooperation between Caribbean governments and their people. Our focus is mainly on youth, young persons in the Caribbean. First off, getting them to realize that Caribbean integration, bringing to them the message of Caribbean integration, and finding artistic and cultural ways to send messages to them, the messages they would probably get via lectures and talks from parents. Try to get those same messages across using the arts. Getting them to realize that being artistic does not prevent them from excelling academically, but it could only enhance their personality, their whole being.

The marriage of education and culture is very important in the message of the group, that's why we call it "educulture." Everything that we do is called "educulture," a combination of education and culture. So that is the focus of the group. We focus on young people around the region, we work with different ministries of education and culture, the various ministries involved in the messages that we want to bring across. Some of the topics that we deal with include keeping the education up, being involved in culture, West Indian Cricket, Caribbean tourism, HIV and Aids, school violence, mutual respect between themselves, the teachers, the parents.

I am very glad to hear this. I think it achieves several different things. Not only working with the children, inculcating in them an appreciation for their culture, instilling in them self-worth and so on, but liaising with the governments of the region may help elicit greater governmental support for the arts. It is often said that our governments don't respect artists, they don't give sufficient support to art and culture, they have not begun to realize the importance of the arts to the society, and they are skeptical of the financial benefits to be derived from the arts. So it is good that you all have so engaged governments and ministries of culture.

The other thing is that even in the best of economic times, when, as in the late 1980's, the economy was growing at 7 percent per year, our unemployment rate was still above 15 percent. In the United States when the unemployment rate starts approaching 6 percent, Americans carry on as if the country is in a crisis. And I am pretty sure that faced with a 10 percent unemployment rate, the US will go fight a war. Yet in St. Lucia and some of the other islands, a 20 percent unemployment is the norm. I am saying all this to say that the way to deal with this high unemployment rate is to attack it from many different fronts. And one such front is by way of the arts—music, paintings, books, film, etc. By giving the artists greater support they can become big on the international scene, thus turning art and culture into an important source of income and employment. So I think the work of your group is commendable.

In fact, your group's approach would have had the support of the late Sir Arthur Lewis. In his famous address to the students at Cave Hill he urged them to be different and he made a strong case for the introduction of the arts in schools, and for the governments of the region to spend more money on the arts.

Have you been getting good responses from the ministries of the various islands?

Yes, actually our group is an unfunded organization. It is voluntary. We don't get paid for what we do. I think that is important among artists. Sometimes we always look for help before we make one step. With Caribbean Vizions that was something that we said we would definitely not get involved in. We need to show our commitment, show what we want to do. Do what we say we want to do. Achieve some of our objectives before we even stretch out our hands. I also think that it is important for persons involved in the arts to take the bull by the horns, do what needs to be done, perfect your art, work on your development, and then something will definitely work out. If we need to be seen out there internationally, then we need to be international ourselves, and a lot of us are not that way. So we need to work on our art, do a lot of research, find out the number of different ways that we can get recognized. But generally since I have became calypso monarch, I have paid courtesies to the different ministries and discussed a lot of different issues I would like addressed, issues that need to be dealt with within the year of my reign. And they have been very supportive; they have pledged their support for the different activities we want to undertake as a group.

How do our singers compare with those of the other islands? How much talent do we have? Do we have the talent to be international artists? How do we compare with Barbados, for example?

I am not very good at that. To be honest, I don't really focus on other artists. Because of my preparation for this whole competition, I haven't been much updated with what's going on outside of what I was preparing for. But in terms of talent, I think that we have talent all over. It is just a matter of getting to nurture that talent and getting it to be developed to the standard that is necessary for getting out there.

I was speaking with Adam Gilmore of Chronic Heights, probably the best sound or studio engineer in St. Lucia. He has recorded some of the best CDs to come out of the island, including Freedom by Itoobaa and Awake by Meshak. He senses that there is an opening, a window of opportunity for Caribbean music on the international market, because right now there seems to be a craving for Carribean music. Recent examples of that phenomenon may include the success of Vincentian, Kevin Lyttle, with *Turn Me On* and the Bahamian group with *Who Let the Dogs Out,* and now you, about whom there is talk of having received a multi-million dollar recording contract. What's your sense of that? Do you think that this is a valid assessment?

Yes, definitely. But like I said awhile ago, we need to be prepared. In terms of contract, there is definitely a possibility of me getting the contract, but I need to be prepared. I need to get an album together. I need to produce good music. So the challenge now is producing music of the right standard that would be recognized out there. But definitely I think that there is an opening for Caribbean music. We just need to capitalize on it.

Now, I notice that with both you and Lady Spice, many of your songs focus on women's issues. Do you see yourself as being on a mission to bringing out issues of concern to women?

Yeah, first off, but still bringing out issues that deal with everyone, particularly young persons, not just women.

Regrettably our conversation with the calypso queen had to come to a close. "Educulture" was on her mind. She had to keep an appointment with the Ministry of Education. St. Lucia could not have hoped for a better and more dedicated calypso monarch, a perfect ambassador for the art-form. I congratulated her once again on winning the crown and I wished her continued success, but with her alertness, enthusiasm and sunshine smile it would have taken no effort on my part to engage her all day. As Jany walked away, carrying her sunshine with her, I had the feeling that the rest of my day, and even the rest of my week, would be quite dull in comparison to the time I had spent with her. And little did I know that this would be my last face to face conversation with Jany, for a month later, Sunday, October 24, a fatal auto accident would bring an end to her life, leaving all of us in shock and disbelief.

St. Lucia's Men of The Century

Sir George Charles

William George Odlum

Sir John Compton

by Anderson Reynolds

A most propitious question to ask in this the 25th year of St. Lucia's independence is: Who is the man (or woman) of the century? Who above anyone else has helped shape the history of St. Lucia? Understandably, this is not an enviable task, because for a country that has won two Nobel Prizes during its mere 25 years of independence (giving it the highest per capita of Nobel Laureates in the world), there is no shortage of candidates for this honor. Nonetheless, in search of this St. Lucian man or woman of the century, three names invariably surfaced—Sir George F.L. Charles, Sir John G.M. Compton, and William George Odlum. Two of these men are no longer with us, and the one remaining is partially retired from public live. Therefore, in this pause in our nation's history, this moment of reflection, it may be useful to dwell on the lives of these men to, if nothing else, obtain a glimpse of what vision they had for their country, what circumstances helped shape that vision, and what legacy did they leave behind.

George Charles And The St. Lucia Labor Movement

Sir George F.L. Charles died in June 2004 at the age of eighty-eight. Following his death there was an outpouring of praise and affection. Newspaper articles eulogizing his death carried titles like "A Man who Embodied a Movement and an Aspiration;" "A Secure Historical Legacy." In his tribute to George Charles the Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, said, "he was truly the Father of Decolonization." The radio stations were inundated with citizens calling in to talk about the goodness of George Charles, saying how he had taken money from his own pocket to help them put roofs over their heads, in the process labeling him *Ti Jezi*, little Jesus; others who called about how he had stood up to the then mighty sugar plantation owners to secure for them better wages and working conditions referred to him as the *Ti Hache*, the little axe. As proof that the nation wasn't simply being polite to the memory of a departed man, long before George Charles' death the nation had honored him by naming a community, a secondary school, and the island's busiest airport after him. And so as to ensure his presence was always with the nation, a statue of his likeness was erected at the airport that bore his name. During the last two general elections (which the Labor Party won by landslides), capitalizing on the political capital or goodwill embodied in George Charles, the Labor Party made sure that he was conspicuously present, in full party colors, at all party conventions. And not long before his death, the Labor Government established the George Charles Foundation with the stated goal of institutionalizing the education of generations to come on the life and contributions of George Charles. Clearly, from this national outpouring, Sir George F.L. Charles would indeed be one of the nation's candidates for man of the century.

The public life of George Charles began at the age of thirty, when, while working as a time keeper on the 1945 construction of Vigie Airport, and having witnessed time and again the futile efforts of unorganized workers to secure better wages and working conditions from the administrators of the project, he joined what was then the first and only labor union on the island, the St. Lucia Workers Cooperative Union.

George Charles' entry into the labor union was by no means special. The decade before, in which he had come of age, had been almost as great a turning point in the history of St. Lucia and the other British West Indian islands as the 1838 emancipation proclamation. For it was the events of this decade that sparked labor and political movements throughout the West Indies. The sugar industry, then the mainstay of these economies, was in deep decline. Sugar prices (as well as the prices of most other export crops) were in a downward spiral. Under these circum-

stances, to keep wages as low as possible, plantation owners took to importing indentured labor from India and to establishing laws and conditions that would keep workers tied to their plantations. Consequently, the masses were faced with high levels of unemployment, unliveable wages, detestable working conditions, deplorable housing, malnutrition, and low resistance to diseases. Worse, they had no legal avenue for voicing their grievances. The government of the day comprised a governor (or his representative, an Administrator) and an Executive and Legislative Council, both of which were under the direct control of the Governor since it was the Governor who appointed all members to the Executive Council and the majority of those in the Legislature. These Councils were invariably populated with white plantation owners or their surrogates. Therefore, the government served mostly as an instrument for safeguarding the interest of the plantocracy even at the expense of the masses. Furthermore, these privileged whites were banded together in exclusive white-only social clubs, and the best government and business jobs were reserved for them. Laws forbade peaceful worker picketing. Trade Unionism and labor protest was considered an act of treason. Here is what George Charles had to say of these conditions:

... it was a period of low wages, long hours of work, no rest on Sundays and public holidays, employment of child labor, little or no health facilities, no vacation leave, no compensation for industrial injuries and limited education facilities, 90 percent of our people were illiterate and disenfranchised.

By the 1930s worker discontent had boiled over into spontaneous strikes and revolts, with sometimes disastrous consequences. In St. Kitts, in 1935, police shot and killed three workers and wounded eight when a crowd of sugar workers marched onto a sugar plantation to demand higher wages. In that same year, three workers were killed and another twenty-six injured when a crowd of workers in St. Vincent came petitioning the Governor against recently increased custom duties. In 1937, attempting to restore order during an island-wide protest against the deportation of a Union organizer, police in Barbados killed fourteen protestors, wounded forty-seven and arrested four hundred. In Jamaica, worker upheavals during 1938 resulted in at least twelve deaths and one hundred and eighty wounded.

Growing up under these circumstances, it was by no means surprising that an educated and socially conscious young man would want to join the labor movement. However, what was remarkable about George Charles' involvement was that this mild mannered, slightly built, unassuming man of humble beginnings, with only a secondary school education, would rise to the forefront of not only the labor movement but also the political movement in St. Lucia. Upon joining the St. Lucia Workers Cooperative Union, George Charles was quickly elected secretary of the Castries branch, and made a member of the Organizing Committee. A year later, in 1946, he was elected to the Executive Committee as the recording secretary, then in 1949 he was elevated to the post of General Secretary, and then in 1954 he rose to the Presidency of the Union.

With George Charles in its leadership ranks the St. Lucia Workers Cooperative Union blazed a trail in the labor movement in St. Lucia. It took the island's first ever Union action when in 1947 it sought and gained recognition to represent sugar factory workers, and successfully negotiated wage increases, overtime pay, and eight-hour work days. Next, and in that same year, the Union tackled Castries bakers, who initially had refused to negotiate or meet the Union's wage demands. In response, the Union launched St. Lucia's first ever Union strike that, after five days, forced the bakers to the negotiating table where the Union won pay raises and improved working conditions for its members. Later that same year, the Union led a march to the Government house, seeking pre Christmas season employment for its members. On the heels of the march, complying with the Union's request, the government launched a public work program that provided jobs for most of Castries' unemployed workers. Then in 1949, following a brief strike, the Union forced the Colonial Development Corporation (in charge of rebuilding Castries after the 1948 fire) to the negotiating table and won fringe benefits and a more than 20 percent wage increase for workers.

Just as it did for the labor movement, George Charles's St. Lucia Workers Cooperative Union would catapult the political movement in St. Lucia. The first step in that process was taken when the Union began setting its sights on the Castries Town Board, then as now, the second most important political organ in the island. But penetrating the Town Board would prove no walk on the beach. The Board was controlled by the middle and upper classes, who saw the Union and the labor movement as a lower class engagement that needed to be kept out of the Town Board at all cost. However, unperturbed, knowing time was on its side, the Union contested the 1947 elections and won only one of the four contested seats.

The following year the Union received some help in its fight for the Castries Town Board. On June 19, 1948, fire destroyed four-fifths of Castries, rendering 809 families or 2293 persons homeless. The fire being no respector of income, class or race, placed everyone in the same homeless boat. This reality (and also that the Union was directly involved in the relief effort) helped erode class distinctions, if not permanently at least temporarily, and engendered a feeling of cooperation and togetherness. Thus, when the annual Town Board elections came around, the middle and upper classes lent a more sympathetic ear to the Union's cause. So, not too unsurprisingly, by the end of the 1949 elections the Union for the first time in history gained full control of the Board. Once in control, George Charles promptly moved a resolution to make the Choc Cemetery a common burial ground for all, thus doing away with the stigma of the paupers section which, according to him, was a "convenience for social discrimination even at death." This act of George Charles would be just the beginning of the

process of claiming St. Lucia for all of St. Lucians. Besides the issue of burial grounds, the Union controlled Board instituted a new wage structure for its employees that included higher wages, vacation leave with pay, improved promotional opportunities, gratuity and pension allowances, and overtime pay. In time a George Charles led government would permanently enter most of these workers rights (and more) into the law books of the nation. But before this could happen, a lot more work had to be done.

George Charles And The St. Lucia Political Movement

By 1950, with the Castries Town Board securely under its belt, the St. Lucia Workers Cooperative Union, renamed the St. Lucia Workers Union, along with the Seaman and Waterfront Workers' Union, began running for seats on the Legislative Council, and, through petitions, mass demonstrations, and public meetings, joined their voices with those of other Caribbean islands, demanding that the British government grant the islands Universal Adult Suffrage, and constitutional changes, including a fully elected Legislative Council, and an Executive Council with a majority of elected members. To further articulate these demands and to better advance the cause of workers, the Unions established the St. Lucia Labor Party to function as their political arm.

These were heady and feverish days. George Charles and his compatriots, young, bright, full of passion and fury and possessed with the righteous knowledge that justice, if not the law, was on their side, were giving their people, the poor, the downtrodden, the dispossessed a voice; giving them hope of a better tomorrow, hope of better pay and working conditions, hope of a somewhat dignified life, hope of overturning history. The fight against racial and class discrimination, against exclusive social clubs, against plantation owners and the colonial government was on. St. Lucia, like the rest of the British Caribbean islands, was caught in the hurricane of a movement, the labor movement, and at the head of the St. Lucian movement was George Charles.

The pressures that labor unions and infant political parties across the region brought to bear on the British Government bore fruit when in 1951 Britain introduced Universal Adult Suffrage and instituted changes in the structure of government that allowed greater electoral participation. In the general elections held later that year, the first elections that involved mass participation, the St. Lucia Labor Party won five of the eight electoral seats, the People's Progressive Party, formed also in 1950 and perceived as the Party of the middle and upper middle classes, won two seats, and an independent candidate won the remaining seat.

On March 15, 1956, Britain introduced a ministerial system of government. Thus, as the party with the most members on the Executive Council, the St. Lucia Labor Party of 1956 became the first government of the people and by the people. This first labor Government included George Charles, Minister of Social Affairs; Dr. Karl G. LaCorbiniere, Minister of Trade and Production; Herman B. Collymore, Minister of Communication and Works; and Clive A.M. Compton, Minister without portfolio. Taking advantage of its elevated status, the newly formed Labor Government quickly updated the labor laws to address such issues as holidays with pay, workmen's compensation, child labor, the rights of trade unions, and hours of work.

General elections came again in1957 to mark the third such elections under Universal Adult Suffrage. On contesting these elections, George Charles who was by then the President of the St. Lucia Workers Union was elected political leader of the St. Lucia Labor Party, and John Compton deputy political leader. At that election the Labor Party, continuing its success at the polls, won seven of eight electoral seats.

Three years later, January 1, 1960, Britain granted St. Lucia a new Constitution that, among other things, made provisions for a Chief Minster who essentially would head the government. As leader of his party, George Charles became the country's first Chief Minister, responsible for Finance, Internal Revenue, and Medical and Public Relations. In April 1961, soon after these constitutional changes, the government, as was required by Great Britain, called general elections at which the Labor Party won nine of ten seats.

Coinciding with and propelling this newly acquired political autonomy was the development of the banana industry, which since its renewed inception in 1951, grew so rapidly that exports increased over a hundredfold from a mere 27 tons (worth EC$4000) in 1950, representing only 0.2 percent of exports, to 3.8 thousand tons (worth EC$490,000) in 1954, or 14 percent of all exports. Eleven years later, in 1965, St. Lucia exported 84.4 thousand tons, valued at EC$9.3 million and forming more than 83 percent of all exports. In fact, over the 1950-1965 period, banana exports grew by an annual average of 142 percent, causing gross domestic product to more than double from EC$10 million ($147 percapita) in 1950 to EC$27 million ($303 percapita) in 1962.

After being crowned Chief Minister of Government, here is what George Charles had to say about the socioeconomic effects of the banana industry on St. Lucia.

> *The Banana Industry was in the pinnacle of this momentum and the sunlight of hope was to be seen on the faces of large and small farmers, merchants, civil servants, teachers, fishermen, market vendors, speculators and workers. Small merchants mushroomed overnight to formidable business institutions, the more established merchants filled the William Peter Boulevard and Bridge Street with business premises of modern sophistication. The Royal Bank of Canada which closed its doors to St. Lucia during the years of depressions returned eagerly seeking its portion of the spoils, then followed the Bank of Nova Scotia all anxious to serve a developing St. Lucia. The working class felt free to verbally defend themselves before their employers.*

Interestingly, this overwhelming Labor victory and the progressiveness of the economy would mark the beginning of the end of George Charles' rather smooth and meteoric rise to the top leadership of the Union and the Labor Party. Ironically, this would happen just when the leadership of the party would be vested for the first time with real power in the form of Chief Minister of government, and ironically, John Compton, one of the other candidates for the man of the century honors, was the one chiefly responsible for the political fall of George Charles.

John Compton Stakes His Claim

In John Compton George Charles would have been hard pressed to find a more formidable foe. John Compton was a man whose life was shrouded in mystery and myth. He was credited with tremendous sexual prowess and with supernatural feats, such as what allegedly occurred during the 1993 banana strike when he drove through a furnace of burning tires and other debris (set by protesting farmers attempting to deny

vehicularly passage), with seemingly no damage to his car or his person, yet when a trailing vehicle attempted the same feat it burnt to uselessness. John Compton's regular alternation between head of state and banana farmer was no less mystifying. It was not unusual during the course of a day for the Premier to lead the debate in parliament or hold court with other world leaders, then following this trade his tie and business jacket for banana stained clothes and long rubber boots, jump into his rickety vehicle, leave behind the suffocating heat and crowdedness of Castries, and head twenty miles south to his banana farm at Mahaut in the deep interior of St. Lucia, where with cutlass in hand he would tend to his bananas no different from any ordinary peasant farmer. Even John Compton's birth was a subject of mystery and myth. At the turn of the century the Compton clan had moved to St. Lucia from the neighboring island of St. Vincent. The move forever brought into question John Compton's place of birth and hence his St. Lucian nationality. Many were convinced that he was either born in St. Vincent or on the waters that separated the two islands. For years to come opposition political parties attempted to use the question of his birth place to deny him the people's vote. Nonetheless, John Compton never did lose an election, his opponents's barbs serving only to enhance his mythical persona. It was often said of John Compton that he could never hold a steady gaze, much less look one straight in the eye. Obviously, this was meant as a negative, but it tuned out to be yet another one of the attacks on John Compton that rather than harming him succeeded in elevating him above the ordinary affairs of men.

After graduating from St. Mary's College, John Compton worked for several years in Curacao, and then emmigrated to England in the late 1940's to pursue his education. When he returned to St. Lucia in 1951 with a university degree in Law and Economics, he found a country on the move—three labor unions were in operation, Universal Adult Suffrage was yesteryear's news, and the island's two political parties (the St. Lucia Labor Party and the People's Progressive Party) had already contested a general election. George Charles and his brothers in the struggle were on a high. Any and everything seemed possible. In that euphoric state of mind both the St. Lucia Workers Union and the St. Lucia Labor Party were more than welcoming of fresh and talented men who could help in the struggle. So, unsuspecting that the very cause of his joy would later cause him great grief, George Charles, referring to the arrival of John Compton and Maurice Mason from their studies, wrote: "The Labor Movement heralded this youthful and professional injection with enthusiasm and Messrs Compton and Mason were quickly embraced in the leadership."

The years that John Compton attended the University of Wales and London School of Economics had marked the beginning of a new colonial world order. The whole impetus of world War II had been to defeat tyranny and imperialism and to uphold democracy. Consequently, after the war, European allies could not very well justify denying democracy to others. Moreover, bruised and war weary, they had less of an appetite for overseas warfare to maintain colonial rule. By 1947, two years after World War II, India and Pakistan had fought and won their independence, and starting in the fifties the African continent had begun its independence march. It was under this climate of colonial cry for freedom that John Compton read his law degree. One could well imagine him and his other Caribbean and African classmates, all leaders in the making, staying up deep into the night, arguing and discussing the injustices of colonial rule, fueling their feverish impatience to return home to join the fight against colonialism and take their rightful place at the head of the governments that would replace their colonial counterparts .

So, understandably, John Compton arrived home feisty and impatient. And right from the start it was clear that he was a person of independent mind, who, if need be, was quite willing to go it alone. Indeed John Compton's upbringing suggested that he would have had to form a habit of independence. For although his yellow, almost white complexion would have given him greater access than otherwise in this then color and class conscious society, his complexion and the question of his birthplace would have rendered him an outsider in his own country. Throughout history this outsider status, this living on the fringe of one's own society, has afforded one the insights of the observer, the onlooker, but has left one with no choice but to depend more than others on one's own resources.

The first clue to John Compton's independence of mind and which George Charles should have taken as a signal of John Compton's imminent challenge for the leadership of the Labor Party and the country came in 1954 as the Party was positioning itself to contest the second post Universal Adult Suffrage general elections. For this elections the Party had nominated James Charles as its candidate for the Dennery-Micoud seat. However, John Compton had other ideas. He insisted on contesting that seat, so he entered and won the race as an independent candidate. This political move alienated John Compton from the Party, but unrepentant he took up writing a column coined the "Jack Spaniard" in the *Workers Clarion*, a Union newspaper, in which according to George Charles he denounced "the aristocracy and social discrimination."

During the famous 1957 sugar workers strike, John Compton would show his mettle once again when as a union activist and elected representative he entered the compound of the Dennery sugar factory to articulate the Union's demands, only to find himself staring at the end of a gun held by the owner of the factory, and having to draw his own gun to

bring the confrontation to a stalemate. This image, this symbol, of John Compton like David facing Goliath, singlehandedly facing the enemy of the people, the enemy that had enslaved their ancestors, and returning unscathed and victorious, would further contribute to his mythical and epic-hero persona. This gun toting confrontation did not however end the strike. In responding to it, the magistrate invoked the riot act. Police from Barbados and Grenada joined those of St. Lucia. A British warship came to port. Sugar workers were so readily arrested and jailed that according to George Charles he and the Union went broke bailing them out. In Castries, on their way to joining sugar workers from the Cul-de-Sac Valley, it was only the quick reaction of John Compton when he pushed George Charles from the back and tumbled over him that saved

George Charles from the thrusting bayonet of a policeman, but not the arm of a worker who was trailing them. On a different occasion, police guards fired at George Charles as he was walking out of the Cul-de-Sac Sugar factory.

By the fifth week of the strike the Union concluded that if the strike didn't end soon it would turn into a civil war, so to hasten matters it spread the strike to banana workers and banana carriers in Castries, which effectively placed a strangle-hold on the country. A few days after, the factories came to the negotiating table. The rights of the union for collective representation were recognized. Workers got wage increases. The factories agreed to improve the methods of transporting canes by wagons to avoid spillage and to constantly inspect the scales used for weighing task-workers' harvested canes. After the settlement, John Compton was brought to court and convicted and fined for disturbing the peace. But thanks to his heroics during the strike, which according to George Charles helped foster a feeling of brotherhood and camaraderie, the Labor Party warmly welcomed him back to the fold.

But unfortunately for George Charles, John Compton's return to the party would be short-lived. After the 1961 general elections, disappointed that George Charles and not himself was the one appointed Chief Minister, John Compton along with two other elected members left the Labor government and formed the National Labor Movement Party. Then on April 1, 1964, The Bousquet brothers (J.M.D. and Alan Bousquet), resigned from the Labor Party, citing their dissatisfaction over the 1962 government restructuring of the SLBGA as the reason for their departure. The Labor Party no longer had a majority in the house, so Chief Minister George Charles opted for a premature general elections.

The Fall Of George Charles

To contest these general elections, the John Compton-led National Labor Movement Party joined forces with the People's Progressive Labor Party to form the United Workers Party. At these elections the Labor Party won only two seats, while the United Workers Party, joined by the Bousquet brothers who had run and won as independent Labor candidates, carried eight seats. After the elections the UWP elected John Compton as leader of the party, and John Compton replaced George Charles as Chief Minister of government. Following the elections, adding insult to injury, the Labor Party lost control of the Castries Town Board.

After Labor's defeat in the 1964 general elections, although George Charles had won his seat, his political stock fell sharply. In 1967 the St. Lucia Labor Party elected Kenneth Foster as political leader, and two years later Charles Augustin replaced George Charles as President of the St. Lucia Workers Union. Following this turn of events, at the prompting of the banana carriers, George Charles established a new labor union, The St. Lucia Agricultural and General Workers Union.

When general elections came along in 1969, the Labor Party found itself embroiled in internal disputes over the assignment of delegates to constituency districts. To sidestep the internal strife, George Charles formed the St. Lucia Labor Party United Front, under which he contested the South Castries constituency. Jean Reynolds, who unsuccessfully contested the Vieux Fort seat, was the only other candidate of that new party. At these elections, the Labor Party won three seats, United Front (George Charles) won one seat, and the John Compton Led United Workers Party won the remaining six seats to once again form the government. George Charles served out his term as elected representative of South Castries and then (at the age of sixty) bowed out of politics, but by then and under his watch the government had reclaimed the Morne from the British, had successfully negotiated the return of the Gros Islet and Vieux Fort bases, had gotten the Americans to build a secondary school in Vieux Fort, and had secured from them St. Jude's Hospital, power stations, water plants and water reservoirs. But more importantly, George Charles had helped lay the political foundation and establish the industrial relations upon which to build a nation.

To place George Charles's accomplishments in proper perspective, it is important to remember that his entire public life had been an uphill battle in which he had never quite reached the top of the mountain or attained a plateau that could afford him respite. Universal suffrage and open general elections came in 1951 but the battle for claiming the island for the majority of its people had just begun. In these elections the SLP had gained a clear majority of elected members in government, yet the first SLP resolution introduced (by George Charles) in the Legislative Council, which sought to legalize holidays with pay, had met with defeat. The ministerial system introduced by Britain in 1956 had loosened the colonial grip somewhat, but to some extent the hands of George Charles and the other SLP ministers of government were still tied. Responsibility for financial matters was still in the hands of the Governor of the Windward Islands. Legislation proposed by the Executive Council had to receive the endorsement of the Colonial Office in England before they could pass into law. Heads of government departments could override ministerial decisions by lodging their disagreements or complaints with the governor for final ruling. An administrator, appointed by the governor, was still presiding over the Executive Council and was in effect heading the government. Further constitutional changes in 1961 abolished the post of the Governor of the Windward Islands. The role of the administrator who had now become the Queen's representative was reduced to a more ceremonial one, and the Chief Minister had become the head of the government. Still, George Charles's SLP government could not operate with full domestic autonomy. Since the 1930's St. Lucia had been operating under a Grant-in-Aid condition whereby Great Britain had to approve of its annual budget before it went into effect. According to George Charles, under fear of having eventually to pick up the bill, England was bent on crossing out important development projects from the budget, even when the St. Lucian government was willing and able to secure funding elsewhere. Convinced that this British policy was impeding national growth and development, in 1964, at the risk of forfeiting grants and other financial aid from the British, the SLP government opted out of the Grand-in-Aid clause. Clearly, throughout his public life and right up to the very end of his political career, George Charles had been fighting against the plantocracy, against class and racial divisions, against colonial rule, to secure union recognition, workers' rights, political representation for the masses, and to claim the island for the majority of its people.

Nonetheless, the accomplishments attributed to George Charles need to be seen more as the accomplishments of first a labor movement and then a political movement of which George Charles was a member. Therefore, an important question to ask is: Why then was it George Charles who rose to such status? This is a difficult question to answer, because at first glance George Charles may not have been one's first choice for a national leader. Of slight build and mild demeanor he was by no means an imposing figure. He was a graduate of the St. Mary's College, the best education to be had in St. Lucia at that

time. However, quite a few of his colleagues had gone beyond a secondary school education: some were lawyers, some were doctors. There was nothing auspicious about his background and upbringing. He was of a working class family from Marchand. In fact, the one visible trait that may have set George Charles apart was his performance on the political platform. It is said that once up there his diminutive figure would seemingly elevate to six-feet and he would roar like a lion. Nonetheless, besides his platform metamorphosis, one may conclude that there were few tangible clues that would have foretold George Charles' political rise.

In fact, all along the way there were those who doubted George Charles's qualifications for the leadership role. In 1949 upon the invitation of the British Trades Union Congress the St. Lucia Workers Union selected George Charles to represent St. Lucia at a "Free World Labor Conference." The St. Lucian government paid for his boat fare, while the British Trades Union Congress covered remaining expenses. According to George Charles, the occasion engendered much debate in the St. Lucia Legislature, as some questioned his stature and ability to represent the island at an international conference that the government was helping to sponsor. In 1956 when the Legislative Council was debating the change to a ministerial government, a nominated member, referring to George Charles and the other Union leaders elected to the Legislature, proclaimed "a private in a general's uniform is still a private." On both occasions the doubters of George Charles' ability had to take back their words. Reporting on the World Labor Conference, Caribbean newspapers depicted George Charles as one of the stars of the conference; and the author of the famous statement "a private in a general's uniform is still a private" later openly withdrew his statement on account of how impressed he was with the performance of the George Charles led SLP government. These two episodes suggest that all along the way there were doubters of George Charles' qualifications or ability to lead, and George Charles had a habit of exceeding people's expectations of him.

George Charles' funeral procession

To understand George Charles' appeal, one may have to examine the intangibles. Reports about him suggest that he was a selfless man who habitually placed the interest of the union, the party, the country above his own. As mentioned earlier, radio call-in programs commemorating his death were overloaded with calls from people praising his goodness and generosity, some indicating that he had used his own money to help them build their homes. A generosity that must have come at some personal sacrifice because in George Charles' later years it was the John Compton led UWP government who had to come to his rescue and build him a home. Comments from observers and a reading of George Charles' memoirs suggest that he was totally committed and dedicated to the mission of advancing workers rights and claiming the island for the majority of its people. From his memoirs one also gathered that his preferred approach to arriving at decisions was by consensus. This combined with his perceived selflessness would have signaled to his colleagues that with George Charles as leader there was no need to be afraid of being locked out. Unlike many of his colleagues, George Charles didn't have a profession. After secondary school he worked as a clerk for a few years, then for a year in Aruba and then back to St. Lucia in 1945 when he was swept into the labor movement. The work of the Union and the work of the state had been George Charles' profession. It appeared that he was a man singular in purpose. All this suggest that what George Charles lacked in physical stature or education he more than made up for in character, dedication and commitment. And what better man to lead, than the one most dedicated and committed to the cause?

Lead, George Charles did, but like Moses of the children of Israel it seemed he was never meant to enter the promised land. For on March 1, 1967, three years after the1964 general elections ushered John Compton into power, as if divinely ordained, St. Lucia attained Associated Statehood. The country took full control of its internal affairs, while Britain remained responsible for its defense and foreign affairs in consultation with the government of St. Lucia. Under Statehood, the Legislative and Executive Councils were replaced by a Cabinet and a House of Assembly, and the post of the Administrator as the Queen's representative was filled by a local Governor. The first Governor under this new Constitution was Dr. Frederick J. Clarke. The Cabinet, to be headed by a Premier instead of a Chief Minister, would comprise five ministers, the Attorney General and the Secretary to the Cabinet. The house of Assembly would include the Speaker, ten elected members, three nominated members, and the Attorney General. As the leader of his party, John Compton made history when he became the first (and what would be the only) Premier of St. Lucia.

With statehood, John Compton acquired something George Charles never had—full control of the island's domestic affairs. This, along with a thriving banana industry that was transforming the socioeconomic and physical landscape of the island, gave John Compton the tools to move beyond the struggle for labor and political rights, to laying down the economic and infrastructural foundation of the country.

George Odlum Makes His Entrance

General elections came along in 1974 and for the first time since the 1964 general elections had propelled UWP into power, the Labor Party would become a serious threat. Plagued by droughts, the banana industry was in sharp decline. Mr. Allan Louisy who had recently given up his judgeship at the Supreme Court of the West Indies Associated States to join the political foray had brought a boost of respectability and integrity to a Labor Party that had been riddled with infighting and instability. But above all, George Odlum, the third candidate for the man of the century honors, would join the Labor Party and make his grand entrance onto the St. Lucian political stage, and in the process change the politics of the country.

Even from his teenage years George Odlum seemed destined for leadership, and no matter the field of endeavor he stood above the rest. It was as if stardom was his birthright. At St. Mary's college where he was an honors student and later an English, History and Literature teacher, his goal-keeping (the best on the island by many estimates) was so brilliant and inspiring that teenage boys idolized and hero worshiped him. Of those days, Ramanus Lansiquot, a St. Mary's College student of George Odlum, said: "It was an honor for St. Mary's College students to carry George's football boots after a match on Vigie Playing Field, to his home on St. Louis Street, with George leading the march all the way. In fact, we (boys) fought among ourselves to have the great privilege to carry George's football boots in the full view of cheering fans." George Odlum also carried his notoriety into the classroom, which by hindsight almost certainly was a training ground for the spellbinding oratory skills for which he would become famous. Jon, his younger brother, said that as a teacher at St. Mary's College, George Odlum delighted in "bamboozling" his students with Latin and Shakespeare quotes. Victor Marquis, editor of the Voice Newspaper and author of three books, recounted how, at his moonlight graduation party at Rat Island, he and his mentor, George Odlum, lay side by side on their backs, staring at the midnight moon and together recited word for word, from beginning to end, Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar." During that time George Odlum was also making a name for himself in theatre. He was a member of the famous St. Lucia Arts Guild out of which arose such art and literary giants as Dunstan St. Omer, Garth St. Omer, and the Walcott brothers.

In 1956, at the young age of twenty-two, George Odlum left St. Lucia (apparently on his own resources) for London to pursue his education. According to Jon Odlum, he did not have an easy time there. To survive George Odlum took up some novel occupations, including playing a Turkish dancer in a street festival; and for the first time he took up barbering, his father's old trade. Nonetheless, in England George Odlum's fame followed him to both the playing field and the classroom. For his heroics between the goalpost the English fondly renamed him the "flying darkie." George Odlum studied at Bristol and Oxford Universities where he earned B.A. and M.A. degrees with concentrations in Philosophy, Political Science, Economics, and English Literature. At Bristol he made history when he became the first black person to captain the university's debating team.

With his Masters and his well-honed debating and speaking skills in hand, George Odlum returned to St. Lucia in 1961 to take up the post of secretary in the Ministry of Trade in George Charles's Labor Government. After three years in that post and coinciding with John Compton's UWP unseating of the Labor Party Government, George Odlum returned to England where he worked as an Economist with the Commonwealth Secretariat. Then in 1967, at the age of thirty-three, George Odlum returned to St. Lucia to take up the prestigious position of the Secretary of the West Indies Associated States Secretariat, and, judging from hindsight, to begin his political career.

Between the time George Odlum left St. Lucia to study and when he took up the secretariat position a lot had changed in African, Caribbean and African American politics. The post World War II African cry for freedom had for the most part been answered. Beginning with Ghana in 1957, three quarters or forty-two out of fifty-six African countries or territories had gained their independence (Egypt and Liberia were independent long before World War II, and Ethiopia was never colonized). The men who led and fought these national liberation movements—Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Sekou Touré, just to name a few— became not only national idols, but heroes to the whole non-western world. As was to be expected, in the euphoria of independence, the African continent was adopting an increasingly pan Africanist stance. Not to be left out, the English speaking Caribbean territories of Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados had also gained their independence. By then the 1957 Cuban revolution was so firmly instituted that wherever there was a cry for help, Fidel Castro in conjunction with Che Guevera answered with the gospel of armed national liberation and revolution. In America, Martin Luther King had already led his Civil Rights matches and delivered his famous "I Have A Dream" speech; and the seeds of armed self-defense and black nationalism that Malcolm X was able to sow before his assassination in 1966 was germinating into the Black Panther and Black Power Movements. Worldwide, communism and socialism were on the move and had become the doctrines of choice for oppressed, marginalized, and colonized people seeking to rid themselves of their oppressors who more often than not were of Western European extract and exponents of capitalism. Communism mixed with nationalism had become a potent catalytic brew of societal change. In St. Lucia, with a concoction of Marcus Garveyism or Africanism, nationalism, nature activism, spiritualism, Bob Marley, reggae music and marijuana the Rastafarian Movement was about to launch a social and cultural revolution.

Apparently, all of these cross currents of ideologies, doctrines, movements, and heroic personalities had found a home in George Odlum, to which he added an astute intellect, a potent combination of well honed oratory, literary and theatrical skills, and, it would seem, a born-to-lead

posture and self confidence. Thus George Odlum would emerge on the St. Lucian political scene with slogans and ideologies evocative of communism and black nationalism, with a demeanor and dress code seemingly patterned after revolutionaries like Fidel Castro and Che Guevera, and with a drama and theatrical flair reminiscent of Shakespearean plays.

Soon after George Odlum's 1967 return to St. Lucia, he took over the Crusader Newspaper and joined the St. Lucia Forum, an avowedly apolitcal think-tank that sought to educate the population on the workings and policies of Government, and to act as a watchdog against government corruption, as well as to variously advise, criticize, or praise the government as they saw its actions and policies merited. Besides George Odlum, Peter Josie, a University of the West Indies (UWI) trained agronomist, working with the St. Lucia Ministry of Agriculture, also featured prominently in the St. Lucia Forum. Together, Peter Josie and George Odlum, would become one of the most formidable political duos of St. Lucian politics.

One of George Odlum's defining moments as a member of the St. Lucia Forum was with regard to the Education Act. Before then the island's education system was mostly under the supervision of the Roman Catholic Church. The Education Act, therefore, sought to free the schools from the hands of the Church and place them under government control. However, interpreting the proposed Act as a direct attack on its authority, the church opposed it, and since over 90 percent of the population were Roman Catholic, the government definitely had a fight on its hand. The Forum came out in support of the Education Act. At a Forum rally hundreds of people came out to demonstrate against the Act and the Forum. Facing the hostile crowd, George Odlum had marshaled the best of his oratory and debating skills to first silence the booing assembly, and then have them applaud and agree with him on why the Act was good for St. Lucia. Following the rally, the Act received broad public support and passed into law.

It'll Be Alright In The Morning

In 1972, with the 1974 general elections drawing near, the Forum discarded its apolitical stance, and joined with Julian Hunte (the Mayor of Castries who had recently defected from the UWP) and a few disillusioned members of the Labor Party to form the St. Lucia Labor Action Movement (SLAM). By then the Forum had gained a good deal of popularity and was credited with improving the people's understanding of the workings of government. It was also credited with instilling a greater appreciation of local products, and with fostering pride in St. Lucia's creole culture. However, despite all these positives, SLAM's public reception was at best lukewarm. It didn't help that the public had linked the Forum, George Odlum especially, to Black Power radicals, and that there was a suspicion that the Forum had communist intentions. It didn't help either that at public meetings George Odlum was dispensing such statements as: "We do not believe in party politics ... We must find another way;" and "the next batch of St. Lucians to fool the people of St. Lucia will be hanged in Columbus Square."

May 1973, barely one year away from general elections, Geest banana workers at the Cul-de-Sac and Roseau Valleys, protesting against low wages and what they perceived as undesirable working conditions, went on a strike that would present George Odlum with yet another defining moment and would allow him and Peter Josie to discover what John Compton and George Charles had discovered long before them. That the quickest way to political fame was not by well meaning (much less self-serving) intellectual forums, but by ingratiating oneself with the cause of workers. Upon the promise of wage increases to be negotiated among Geest, the Minister of Labor, and the Agricultural Workers Union (led by George Charles), workers soon returned to work. However, faced with a fledgling political party, George Odlum and Peter Josie refused to let an opportunity of getting into the good graces of the workers passed them by. Upon their encouragement, the workers resumed the strike and George Odlum and Peter Josie subsequently led a group of workers, allegedly mostly middle-aged and elderly women, on a protest march from the valleys to Castries where they hoped to force a confrontation with Geest Industries. At the Morne they were confronted by police who instructed them to cease from the march and return home because according to regulations a march in Castries required a permit from the Commissioner of Police. The strikers responded that they would rather die than turn back. There was a stalemate. The police fired tear gas into the crowd thus turning George Odlum and Peter Josie into saviors and heroes who were willing to stand with workers even unto death.

The Stoby commission that the government had appointed to investigate the strike and the problems of the banana industry wasn't similarly impressed. On the contrary, though it would recommend

an increase in wages, the commission's report would state that because of low profit margins the industry could not survive the high wages that the workers were demanding, and that the actions of Peter Josie, George Odlum and Tom Walcott, another member of SLAM, had unnecessarily prolonged the strike. Indirectly accusing the ex Forum members of foul intentions, the report also made clear that acts of violence under the disguise of Black Power or any ideology were not to be tolerated.

Undaunted, following the strike, George Odlum and Peter Josie established the Farmers and Farm Workers Union (of which George Odlum was the first president), thus institutionalizing their struggle for workers rights.

George Odlum and Peter Josie had gained notoriety, but SLAM faced an uphill battle. At Vieux Fort and at Micoud, the stronghold of the Premier, crowds jeered and stoned SLAM party members off their political platform. Defections and membership apathy and disillusionment would soon set in, and before long SLAM was reduced to only three active members—George Odlum, Peter Josie, and Tom Walcott. On the other hand, weakened by defection and a long history of political infighting, the Labor Party wasn't in much better shape than SLAM to contest the 1974 general elections. So, not unlike when the John Compton led National Labor Movement Party had

joined forces with the Peoples Progressive Labor Party to successfully contest the 1964 general elections, just months before the 1974 elections, George Odlum, Peter Josie, and Tom Walcott of SLAM joined forces with the Labor Party. So too did retired Supreme Court Judge, Allan Louisy. Hunter Francois, Minister of Education, who, calling John Compton a liar and a dictator, had resigned from both his ministerial post and the UWP, soon followed the example of the retired Judge. Finally, given this injection of new personnel, it wasn't too difficult to successfully convince some recently defected members of the Labor Party to return to the fold.

And so it was that it came to pass that the Labor Party would amass under its banner the most highly educated political platform to ever grace the St. Lucian landscape. Needless to say, unlike the Labor Party that John Compton had faced in the previous two general elections, he now had a more formidable foe on his hands. It didn't help that with the defection of Julian Hunte and Hunter Francois, considered two of the more capable members of the UWP, his party was thought to have grown weaker. And as if his troubles weren't enough, the banana industry was being strangled by an extended drought.

Yet, miraculously and further adding to John Compton's mythical invincibility, the UWP won the elections by a ten to seven seat majority. But the elections wasn't without drama and controversy. Despite his newly found fame in the Cul de Sac and Roseau banana valleys, which formed part of the constituency of his candidacy, and also despite the fact that he was unquestioningly the best and most charismatic platform speaker of his Party, George Odlum, the man born to lead, lost his seat to Heraldine Rock, a relatively unknown in St. Lucian politics. The Labor Party would have to swallow an even more bitter pill. The vote count on the night of the elections had the SLP candidate for Vieux Fort winning by one vote, but come morning a recounting of the votes pronounced the UWP candidate the victor by over thirty votes, an event so aptly captured by the title *It'll be Alright in the Morning* of a book by Rick Wayne. This irregularity must have no doubt echoed déjà vu in the minds of Labor Party supporters old enough to remember the 1964 elections when many were convinced that Labor Party candidate, Willie Volney, had won by six votes, but only to lose to Allan Bousquet, his UWP opponent, by three votes.

The Passing Of A Great Man

Like a mighty oak
in time's forested valley,
you came crashing down
with a pre-empting thud;
And the smaller oaks around you
twirled and whimpered
at your falling,
While bigger, more towering oaks,
In fraternal sincerity
or impious ostentations,
Bowed solemnly
and sang sweet hosannahs
to your name
that detonated like a cannon.

Petty creatures in the 'hood
put on wings,
and in unnumbered masses,
volleyed over the voiled earth
to see, perchance to touch
That felled thing
that had quaked the muted earth,
Even beyond the rims
Of these pampered shores
that awoke too late
to accept your worth.

And that calvaried place,
The Golgotha of your sanitised
Hospital room
where your ghost
took leave of your mortal remains
and shuttled off to its maker,
The tale is told
of how your tough bark,
Your battle-scarred skin
That had weathered so many storms
seemed pitifully incapable
of containing your hallowed sinews.

Our wretched world,
like mummified Bedouins,
now looks on
at your gravel and mortar castle
that ill-befits your titanic mold,
Vastly ignoring the message of your
dying:
That the peopled earth is in fact one,
as you squeezed that unity
out of beckoned comrades' flesh;
And the last remaining of the Musketeers
squeezed flesh and a tear
In reading those potent lines,
the confiteor of your political gospel;

In parting, you taught too,
That truth is truth,
though we spite the carrier
or scorn the parchment on which it is
inscribed;
And that the forest
that grew that once mighty oak,
Is no more incapable now,
of producing other oaks
to replace felled ones;
That 'the struggle' that took your life
must not die with your passing;
And that, finally
the forest be sheltered
by a canopy of love,
that all may grow unwanting,
Bearing fruit that is pleasing,
till we face the Eternal Logger.

—Modeste Downes

John Compton Is Dethroned

On February 22, 1979, amid heated opposition from the Labor Party, St. Lucia attained its full independence from Britain, thus completing the work of self-rule and self-determination that George Charles had started decades before. With independence, St. Lucia's Parliament would include the Governor General, the House of Assembly and the Senate. The House of Assembly would comprise a Speaker, who may be elected from outside the House, and seventeen elected members. The Senate would comprise eleven Senators, six of whom would be appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister, three upon the advice of the leader of the opposition party and two in consultation with the general community. The Cabinet, which remained the decision making body of government, would include the ministers of government led by a Prime Minister who replaced the Premier as the Chief Executive of government. John Compton made history again when in addition to being the first and only Premier of St. Lucia, he became the country's first Prime Minister.

Besides Independence, 1979 was an election year and despite John Compton's mythical prowess there were many signs that foretold the fall of the UWP. Banana production had remained stagnant. Teachers and other government workers were on strike for retroactive pay and higher wages. The island was plagued with sugar and gasoline shortages.

But equally important, with the experience of one general election campaign under his belt, George Odlum had arrived at the peak of his political

prowess. Dressed in army fatigues, and weaving satire, vivid imagery, literary quotes and St. Lucian creole into an intoxicating web of words, he held St. Lucians and visitors alike spellbound. But his objective wasn't entertainment. When George Odlum was studying in England he was reported to have told a friend that he intended to be the Premier (Prime Minister) of St. Lucia by the time he was forty. Yet George Odlum was about to turn forty-five, and he had tasted not even a parliamentary representative seat, much less the Prime Ministership. Clearly, the 1979 elections was for George Odlum a matter of urgency. As the elections drew near, his platform rhetoric, and that of Peter Josie and some other members of the Labor Party was increasingly laced with promises of a forceful take over of the government if they were to lose the elections. They could be heard announcing, "if we cannot get into power by law, then we will get into power by violence."

Also spelling doom for the UWP was the Labor Party's success in painting John Compton as a dictator, lording it over an inept and corrupt government where nepotism was the norm, and which was intent on taking from the poor to give to the wealthy. The Labor Party wasn't without help in making their case. As exemplified by its frequent platform cry, "listen to your masters," the UWP displayed great arrogance and an attitude that they were the lords and masters of the people.

According to George Odlum and the Labor Party, conditions in St. Lucia were sufficiently dire or appalling to warrant disposing of the UWP government by any means necessary. And it appeared that these were not idle threats, for it was rumored that the radical members of the Labor Party had a plan in place to overthrow the government a few days before the elections. There were also rumors that the party had sent people to Cuba to train in the art of overthrowing governments, and it had received large caches of arms from Cuba's Fidel Castro and money from Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi. As if to match the platform rhetoric of George Odlum and Peter Josie, in this 1979 election campaign, there was hardly a UWP rally that wasn't aborted by booing, and bottle and stone throwing crowds of Labor Party supporters.

So great was the climate of fear and of pending violence created by the unruliness of Labor Party supporters, the alleged plots of overthrowing the government, and the platform rhetoric of George Odlum and Peter Josie, that many UWP supporters were said to have stayed home on polling day, hoping for a Labor Party victory and thus preclude the bloodshed that may result from a coup d'etat. The results of the 1979 general elections surprised no one, but brought great relief. The Labor Party won by a twelve to five seat majority. Referring to the pre-election climate of fear that the Labor Party had spread throughout the country, a bitter John Compton said: "The SLP didn't win an election. They hijacked a country."

No matter. This time around George Odlum won his seat, so would he fulfil his self-ordained destiny and become the Prime Minister of St. Lucia? Well, the nation would have to wait another six months to find out.

Note: The second and final part of this article, which will be about the same length as the first part, will be carried in the next issue of *The Jako*.

The Cinderella Man

A Cricket Short Story For Francis Mindo Phillip

by Mc. Donald Dixon

A boy, saddled in the crown of a coconut palm, surveys his world from a great height. A breeze fans the palm fronds and he sways with his mind on a magic carpet ride to some new fangled realm of fantasy, occasionally baring his back to the soft afternoon sun. Earlier he had helped the white flannelled planter roll out and stake the coor matting to the pitch, with its patch, which read; "Made in Malaya, British Territories," diagonally across the center. Then as if in an effort to reinforce this statement to the world, a miniature version of the Union Jack in black and white substituted for a full stop. The boy fitted himself snugly between a cluster of young nuts and the crown of leaves, from where he could look down on his friends from the surrounding estates jockeying to be the first to dislodge the silver shilling the white planter had stuck to his middle stump as an incentive to whoever was fortunate to dislodge it with the old leather ball that was no longer round as a consequence of constant hammering and frequent visits to the shoemaker to restore its seam.

The planter, possibly a distant relation to the great W. G. stood at the crease in pot-bellied awe of a climate he had not known in the shires of his youth, or in the mosquito infested jungles of Malaya where he had been a rubber farmer until the bigger boys in the trade bought him out. Sugar in the West Indies was a thriving business and after a brief trip back home to England, he boarded a Harrison Liner at Southampton, to seek his fortune in another far-flung corner of his Empire. He was a superb cricketer, if one judged by local standards and the dainty hand-clapping chorus which rose from the tea tent. The arrogant snarl on his face as he watched the ball race through the clipped grass to the boundary further confirmed his status to both players and spectators. Everyone turned out to the Sunday afternoon picnics to watch him bat. Wives at their stations under the tea tent would suspend their chores in expectation of a scintillating display of fireworks that was as rhythmic as the hips of village folk at any local dance. They watched as their husbands scurried to and fro in vain attempts to outrace the ball to the boundary, providing comic relief, to peals of cultured laughter as they skidded across the close cropped lawn, particularly when it rained.

The boy took note of all these antics from his lofty perch in the coconut tree. He meticulously observed body movements, angles of delivery, the swerve of the ball leaving the bowler's hand and in particular the batsman as he thrashed delivery after delivery past the latent grasp of fieldsmen in a bold cavalry charge, glorious, like a lost brigade in a forgotten wood where conquest was a solitary mood on the mind of empire builders. On weekdays he watched as sugarcane whitened teeth with false smiles struggled to dislodge the shilling on the center stump, where it substituted for bails. He shared their pain of disillusionment at dusk when the planter pocketed his money and strutted towards his bungalow not-out after a long afternoon innings, leaving behind the stumps and the matting for tired hands to heave back to the garden shed behind the kitchen. Someone always secured the ball till the next day in anticipation of just rewards that never materialized.

The boy honed his art in secret on a pleasant patch along a riverbank, shaded from the rest of the world by cocoa leaves. He learnt to mould crude rubber balls from the sap of the balata tree, which swerved through the air without requiring seams. Already his young friends feared the accuracy of his arm for he had mastered the knack of getting this hard rotund object to bounce, or shoot at will on any surface, even on glass, with the devastating accuracy of a guillotine. Usually he practiced alone, bowling at a solitary broomstick cut in half until he was able to hit it four times out of six. But for him that was not good enough. Six from six was his target, inspired by the thought of being the first among his people to rock back the planter's sticks. It became his ultimate goal, an obsession. One shilling was more than a day's wage and to do so at least once on an afternoon would guarantee a place in the pantheon of local legend, together with Ti Jean, Flor and other great names his grandmother frequently referred to in her

stories. Another ambition was to be invited into the planter's circle on Sunday afternoons, and become the first native to meet them on their turf as equals and as a mark of respect for his talents. Demons possessed his mind; the euphoria of ambition lathered his dreams. He longed for recognition, not only for himself but also for those poor bastards struggling in the afternoon light for a rendezvous with fame.

Bareback down to his waist, his body beginning to reveal the early warning signs of a lithesome figure, his 'lats' protruding below his armpits like flying fish wings, ribbons of cloth flagging like bunting around his legs fluttering in the breeze on Empire Day, he begins his assault on the status quo, knowing that failure was not an alternative. Clockworks wound to precision—down to the infinitesimal second—allowing minimum margins for error, he joins the older boys on the field of play. He had observed planter and labourer duel for two full years. He had practiced his arm hitting the broomstick daily with almost every ball. Still, physically, a shade smaller than the older boys who fought each weekday afternoon with religious fervour for the elusive bob on the planter's center stump, he felt that he would be jostled around before he earned the respect of his peers when in possession of the ball. However, in his heart he knew his moment of glory had come. Fame was one ball away. He gave the top he had carved himself from guava wood, along with a few chipped marbles to his siblings. He lost interest in all the other games that had occupied his boyhood except this one. In his mind there was room for only one obsession, not even destiny could derail.

The first time he set foot on the field of play was a Wednesday afternoon after a heavy shower had made climbing almost impossible and most of the older boys had hurried to the cocoa shed to secure the drying beans from the rain. He felt a heat rise behind his ears spilling over to his forehead that soon engulfed his entire body. It was the unearthly urge to declare his presence. He was unable to control movement in his feet. They propelled him forward from the thicket towards the close-cropped grass of the arena. The planter was his usual exuberant self, struggling to disguise his elation as he chipped away at the feeble attack with accustomed ease. It was going to be a long afternoon for the fieldsmen, he needed to conserve his energies to be still at the crease at twilight, which comes quickly in these parts after an afternoon downpour. At first, the other players did not observe the nondescript fieldsman encroaching on their space, increasing their number, until the planter heaved a full volley through the covers with terrific force that scorched a straight line to the boundary. An outstretched hand snatched the missile—on first bounce—before it crossed the boundary line. Uncanny, with the ease of a cat, he had come. A shaft of light from under a cloud accompanied him on the field of play.

He was a somewhat reticent figure, almost stationary, less than a few feet within the arena, but when the ball came his way he uncoiled with economy in his movement; a stretch sometimes, reaching forward to pluck it from the grass, even if it moved at the speed of light. He fielded with a feline grace; without as much as a pause between cupping and throwing the ball back into the hands of the bowler, who most times stood immobile at the wicket, mesmerized by the speed of those young limbs. Less than a second before the bowler had been rudely dispatched and was beginning to feel down-spirited when out from the boundary comes a thunderbolt of hope. It was his right to bowl but he did not claim it. He preferred to limber up his muscles and await his turn. He knew from spying from his lofty perch in the coconut trees the older boys would soon begin to feel the wear and tear on their leg muscles and go through the motions of turning their arms over their shoulders more out of an obscure sense of duty to their boss, than love for the game. The Planter knew this too and was biding his time, conserving his energies for the onslaught to follow.

The boy waited his moment in silence. He treated the others as though they were strangers although he knew them from the surrounding estates, their little brothers were his friends. They did not treat his presence with any measure of significance either, after all he had barely past fourteen, and some of them were a full four years his senior. Besides, they were intent on wrenching the shilling from the planter and would allow nothing else to enter their field of focus. The jostling which was robust in the first hour was gradually slowing down as fatigue gripped calf muscles. Soon bowling would become routine: a gentle movement, turning hands over head like an ordinary reflex action that must be completed in the hope of an unlikely miracle. No miracle happened and the humid afternoon bore on with its hazy sun heading westward towards the sea to signal the advent of dusk. Two of the older chaps were alternating at the crease, without any sign of purpose in their strides. The fieldsmen were going through their motions returning the ball to the bowling crease to one or the other, for they had lost the zeal to continue and were waiting for the Planter to signal the end of the day's play by taking off his gloves. The boy could almost hear them yawn and chuckled to himself. The Planter straightened his spine from the crouching stance he had adopted earlier, and then started spanking the ball with the kind of ferocity attributed to exorcists in the face of demons. It was time to strike. He squared his shoulders, then, waltzed down the wicket with a murderous rage. The ball ricocheted off the meat of the bat flattening the grass in its path. The boy stretched forward, effortlessly to his right and stopped it cleanly, evoking from the bowler a slight applause that spread contagiously—by instinct—to the rest of the field. The planter acknowledged with a wry smile. It was then the unbelievable happened. The boy tossed the ball gently in the air, giving it a slight tweak with his index finger, then began marching slowly towards the bowling crease. The planter's smile broadened into a grin. He glanced over his shoulders to reaffirm the position of the stumps behind his back. The others were too weary to bother to claim the ascendancy of seniority and allowed the boy his right to bowl without a quibble.

The shilling lying flat like a bail on the center stump filled his mind as he cantered in, with bounce and rhythm, to bowl. The wind fluttered through the ribbons of his shirt-tail flapping like a kite behind him. He was fast becoming a mystical figure; the proverbial Ti Jean from village folk tales, the avenging hero, to the rescue of his brethren. His mind was still in a daze when delivered. The planter twisted and curled as the ball curved into his body and not till the last second did the bat come down in a defensive prod to save the stumps from shattering. There was a loud applause. This had seldom happened before. In fact, no one on the ground that day could remember anything that close. As a mark of honour the chap guarding the wicket threw the ball back to him and asked him to bowl again.

A new burst of stamina energized the ground, every fieldsman was on his toes, some moving into defensive positions in the slips and gully, others crouching around the wicket in the hope of intimidating the planter, baiting him to loose his cool. There were words of encouragement from those close to the boy; one convivial chap even patted him on the back. The next delivery came fast and furious belying a superhuman force disguised in those young shaping arms. The planter toppled forward, uncertain of his footing, as the ball curved away from his left pad, nicked the outer bottom edge of his bat and whisked past within a hair's breath of the off stump. All hands went up

as the ball raced towards the long leg boundary. The planter shook his head in disbelief. He was witnessing a miracle. His face reddened in fear. However, in the true tradition of his forebears he knew he could not surrender. He was confronted by a formidable foe and would fight on to the end in the true traditions of Eton and Harrow, without the slightest inkling of defeat. One of the older boys ran down to the boundary to retrieve the ball and he threw it directly to the bowler's end. The boy trapped it barefooted. It was a tacit indication of acceptance; a mandate for him to continue.

The Planter went back to his crouching stance, the one that he had used during his first hour at the crease, when it was important for him to gauge the pace and bounce of the ball off the matting. In the tropics it's alleged that wickets sweat. Be it superstition or fact, The Planter was aware. He knew when the leather orb landed on its seams and began to jump and shoot through the air like shells from the enemy's field cannon, the wicket was damp. The only cure was a clear head, constantly ducking outside the line of fire and buckets of patience… His face registered no emotion, but he felt the marrow in his thigh-bones freeze. This was not one of the ordinary croppers; he knew it and was beginning to picture the outcome in his mind.

The Boy came galloping in like a thoroughbred in full steam, with the cheers of all humanity shrieking at his elbows, his arms and legs in perfect harmony. His focus was the center stump, the one in the middle with the bearded image of King George V, in silver, lying undisturbed on top of it. The Planter locked eyes with his adversary, tapping a nervous rhythm with his bat on the matting, timing the pace of the youngster's approach. The next couple seconds gave birth to history. The Boy felt the ball twirl off his fingers at the point of delivery. He saw The Planter shuffle back, then across his wicket. The Boy remembered seeing him stick out his right pad in an unsightly last ditch attempt to stop the ball crashing into his stumps, only to fall flat on his face.

The shilling leapt into the air. The after effect produced shock. Gradually, it dawned on everyone's face, the fact that there was a vacant spot where the center stump used to be.

The Planter rose leaning on his bat, he removed his mittens, cursing under breath and walked in a huff towards his house, a vanquished warrior returning from a day at the front with an army of ghosts behind him. A slow victory dance began with the boys fielding farthest away from the wicket as they ran in to great the new 'Ace' in their midst. Some of the older ones scooped him up and began running a lap of honour around the grounds. They circled The Planter's house twice, jeering, but someone advised against a third lap as the provocation might cause The Planter to brandish the salt gun that year in, year out, protected his estate from praedial larceny.

Pandemonium broke loose as they entered the village carrying the boy shoulder high. Some of his friends had already heard the news and formed themselves into an honour guard to subsequently lead the group into the village. They armed themselves with water buckets, tins, old empty kerosene drums, even a piece of fence and paraded in the military style of conquerors. Everyone turned out to watch. Those from the neighbouring estates joined in and the crowd grew larger and larger as night came. Sometime during the proceedings The Boy asked for his shilling. No one knew, no one remembered. They even pretended they didn't know what he was talking about. The Boy felt a sour taste in his mouth. Suddenly he was overcome by an urge to wash himself in the river and forget the hypocrisy around him. Slowly he slinked away, unobserved by the merrymakers, who were more bent on telling stories about their involvement, when the most they did was to allow The Boy to bowl. They never revealed who capped the shilling but the flow of white rum that evening indicated that they all knew…

The next morning, while The Boy was in the process of completing his morning chores, the foreman on The Planter's estate came to see his mother. The Planter had decided that he was employing a houseboy and his adversary had been given the post. No shilling ever graced the top of a center stump again, nor did The Planter ever run the risk of being further humiliated. He gave all his gear to his houseboy and helped him to build a team from among the best players on the surrounding estates. In time, The Planter developed the mild perversion of inviting his colleagues from the Town and Country Club to a Sunday match against the boys on his estate. He would sit back in his armchair behind the boundary, his tumbler filled with gin and coconut water, gloating inside, as the humble country boys delivered a firm thrashing to the bright sparks from the capital. It was a subtle form of revenge for the humiliation he endured that hazy afternoon when the rain flies came out early to give him the excuse that one had got into his eye.

Cedric George and Organometrix:
A New Way of Looking at the World

By Anderson Reynolds and Jacques Compton

"I paint my feelings of the things of the world: its problems, its chaos, its politics, its religion, its love and its races. Art is an open book to life's mysteries, which I use to find answers. Once touched by that inspirational light, one is forever and holistically dedicated to the cause."

Artist, Cedric George, said he has discovered a new method of painting and a new philosophy of art. So much so, he has come up with his own name for this innovation—Organometrix. Few artists can be credited with inventing a completely new concept of painting equipped with its own philosophy, and most of those who have been so credited or who have initiated art movements have originated from Europe and North America, not St. Lucia, a 238 square mile island of 160 thousand people, where Cedric George is from. Should we now add Cedric George to the list that includes Sir Arthur Lewis and the Honorable Derek Walcott, St. Lucians who have led the world in their fields of endeavor? Understandably, *The Jako* looked forward with great anticipation to meeting the artist and finding out what Organometrix was all about.

I'm Woman I'm Invincible

A Portrait of An Artist

On first appearance, Cedric George didn't give the impression of an artist about to make a break through in the world of art. He is a quiet, soft spoken man of average built, and unlike many artists, he didn't dress or style his hair in a manner that pronounced him an artist. He is the type of man who would easily get lost in a crowd. The modesty of the artist was further revealed when he requested that we made mention of his wife, Mathilda, a teacher at the Bocage Secondary School; and that he was the fourth of eight children, four boys and four girls. The third child, a boy, had sadly passed away at the early age of four.

But this impression of the artist quickly vanished when in a voice filled with the passion, confidence and conviction of a man who has found his calling, he proceeded to explain his new artistic vision. Organometrix, he said, is a method of painting that combines geometric and organic shapes to present a different yet holistic view point. Straight lines are used to depict the geometric dimensions of the painting, while traditional shapes are used to represent the organic features. In Cedric George's world, the geometric represents culture, man made, and the organic is a manifestation of nature, God's creation. Therefore, by combining the geometric and the organic, he is bringing together nature and culture, God and man, to give rise to a new creation. As the artist explained the philosophy behind his art, I had the distinct impression that he was playing God. But with this thought came another. Are not all artists gods? After all, didn't God obtain his legitimacy as God through an act of creation, an act of creativity, when He created the heaven and the earth, and everything therein?

Cedric George's Organometrix paintings are prominently displayed at the Inner Gallery at Rodney Bay and on the gallery's web-site. If the artist is modest in appearance, his creations are anything but nondescript, and would stand out among any art collection. The colors are bold, the geometric lines are straight and clean, the images well defined. In fact, the paintings, acrylic on canvas, are so finely and cleanly drawn that though they are no doubt the product of a very imaginative and creative mind, they give the impression that they were drawn not by human hands but by machine. Moreover, the artist uses variation in line color, and the angles at which the lines meet or intersect to create

Cedric George at Work

the illusion of three dimensional worlds and multiple planes of existence.

Many of Cedric George's subjects are placed in tightly restrictive or constrained spaces that remind one of imprisonment (for example, *The burden*). But, as if resigned to their fate, the subjects display no intention or desire to escape. Some appear to be under one test or the other, or at the very least they seem to be aware that they are being watched and judged. Still, though they are unhappy, they do nothing to change their circumstances, nor do they plead for help, or seek sympathy. When the subjects appear in twos or threes they are in close proximity, sometimes hugging or enmeshed (for example, *For Your Eyes Only*) in each other, as if giving and receiving comfort. Other times they are holding hands and dancing round a circle (for example, *Long Time No See*), or they are seated around a table playing cards, keeping each other company.

The subject matter of the paintings is as varied as it is colorful. *I'm Invincible I'm Woman* depicts three women (a brown, a black and a white woman) with bold, confident, and unapologetic stares. *M.A.N.* portrays the plight of the working man. In it a man with a pickaxe and a shovel is shown working morning, afternoon and night (MAN), notwithstanding a cast on his leg. *Forking the Blues*, a painting with a man digging into deep blue soil, further illustrates the plight of the working man. *Mystery Woman*, depicts eve in the Garden of Eden, complete with the serpent, a bitten apple, and of course the man who couldn't do without the woman. Then lest we forget that art can be serious business, Cedric George gives us *Down But Not Out*, a portrayal of the 9/11 destruction of New York's twin towers.

The Making of An Artist

Cedric George's journey to the world of Organometrix began at the age of four, when he drew his first picture. At that age, Cedric was terrified of the *Papa Jab*s (devil) that inhabited the "Devil at Christmas," a play by St. Lucian playwright, Roderick Walcott. Young Cedric George was not the only victim of these *Papa Jab*s; dressed in rags and painted with livid colours they petrified most children. Luckily, having learnt a thing or two about drawing from his father, Edwin McDonald Stephenson 'Yankie' George, a graphic artist who painted billboards for a living (and whom Cedric often accompanied on his jobs), Cedric decided to do something about his fear of the *Papa Jabs.* He drew them, and in the process his fear dissipated. "Since then," said Cedric, "anything I didn't understand, I put on canvas and by doing so I gain a better understanding of the subject."

Down But Not Out

Cedric may have learned the rudiments of drawing from his father, but the habit of memorizing, which is a form of visualizing, a process that is indispensable to the creation of any work of art, had to do with his mother, Marie Madeline Edward. She would send him to the store to purchase a list of sometimes fifteen or twenty items. She never wrote out the list, and she rarely went over it twice, yet he was expected to bring back all that she had requested. Cedric had no choice but to memorize the list of items. On that score, he never once disappointed his mother That was his first training in the art of memorizing and visualizing. Emphasizing the importance of this early experience to his art, Cedric said, "One has to have that vision of the object. We all have that capacity. What needs to be done is to train it, to develop it. That power to retain information is in all of us."

When asked about the early influences on his art, Cedric George related the story of his first and only encounter with Harry Simmons, the man who inspired a whole generation of St. Lucian artists, including Derek Walcott and Dustan St. Omer. Cedric said he was six years old and walking out of the Castries Central Library when he saw this man, standing outside, dressed all in white like a safari hunter. He approached the man, and asked, "mister, are you a sailor?"

"No," said Harry Simmons, "I am an artist. Would you like to be an artist?"

Poor Cedric didn't know what an artist was, much less what they did. He answered, "I don't know."

That encounter with Harry Simmons would remain with Cedric for a long time, and it didn't take him long to discover what being an artist was all about. In fact, he went out of his way to seek information on Harry Simmons and in the process got to view several of the artist's paintings. Cedric was impressed, but several years after meeting the one who called himself an artist, he was shocked to learn that he had committed suicide.

Nonetheless, equipped with the knowledge of what being an artist was all about, Cedric's interest in painting deepened. He visited the Central Library regularly to pour over art and pictorial books. He took a keen interest in the works of Dustan St. Omer, St. Lucia's most renowned painter, and whom many see as being to painting what Derek Walcott is to poetry. He attended all of Dustan St. Omer's art exhibitions, and visited the artist's home to view more of his work. Dustan St. Omer had a series of portraits at the High Court in Castries from which Cedric said he drew great inspiration and determination to be a painter. The first time he saw the paintings, he got so lost marveling at them that he was locked inside.

Cedric George may be modest in demeanor, but even back then there was nothing modest about his ambition and his need to be the best. He said that all this time he was marveling at and admiring the works of Harry Simmons, Dustan St. Omer, and others, he kept telling himself that he had to paint even better than that.

In 1986, Cedric received a U.N.E.S.C.O. scholarship to study at the Jamaica School of Art, from which he graduated with distinctions. He said that in St. Lucia he had studied the works of the masters and had applied himself so zealously to his craft that attending the school of art had not added much in terms of improving his technical ability. However, the program helped broaden his knowledge and understanding of art. There he studied art history, became acquainted with the various art movements, and was exposed to new methods of expression and a wider range of techniques.

Fork in the Blues

Mystery Woman

An Artist's Search for Meaning

Ten years after his graduation, Cedric began getting restless with the Realism or Impressionism art that he had been practicing. These methods attempted to paint the world as it existed or as seen through the eyes of a camera. But armed with a profound understanding of art and a sure technique acquired through years of dedication and practice, Cedric was ready to move on. He said that by then he had "an urge to concentrate deeply on philosophic art where the subject matter along with the content becomes more important than the details in the painting." Cedric's muse was leading him away from the representational to the abstract, from the realism world to the expressionism and modernism world where the emphasis is on one's own subjective reality rather than on visual objective reality. In that regard, Cedric had no lesser teachers than Matisse and Picasso. He said that these two artists were the ones who led the way in conceptual art, and "it is because of their relentless vision that the art of today has rivaled the period of the high renaissance that included Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Titian and Raphael."

M.A.N. (Morning Afternoon & Night)

Picasso was one of the principal founders of the Cubist art movement (1908-1914), a method of painting that broke from centuries of tradition by rejecting the single view point, using instead an analytical system in which three-dimensional subjects are fragmented and redefined from several different points of view simultaneously. For this and other innovations and artistic endeavors, Picasso was considered the most versatile and influential artist of the 20th century. In recognition of the influence of Picasso and Matisse in his Organometrix paintings, Cedric has honored them with two of his creations—*Matisse and Picasso Dance* and *The Last Picasso*.

Cedric said that besides being naturally drawn to conceptual art, another reason why he was tried to depart from the past was because he had realized that the only way to make a dent in the world of painting was to break from tradition, to come up with something that was all his own. Western art, he said, has produced so many major works that there wasn't much value in continuing in the traditional way, recreating what has already been done. In his mind, the only way a modern painter could get on par with these great Western artists was not by imitating them but by clearing his own path. To emphasize his point, Cedric said that Picasso left an indelible mark on the world of

The Arrow and the Shadow

painting because he dared to break with tradition and introduce a whole new way of conceptualizing the world. Similarly, from a more modern era, he made mention of Jean Michel Basquiat, who, born of Haitian and Puerto Rican parents, was one of the most successful figures of Graffiti Art (1980s), named after the spray-can vandalism common in most US cities. Cedric observed that out of a total of 305,000 famous artists, Jean Michel Basquiat (1960-1988) was the only black person to make the list. And in Cedric's mind that was because Basquiat had helped pioneer a new way of painting.

Fortunately for Cedric, just when these notions of breaking with tradition and of making an impression on the art world were floating around in his head, he came across the works of Georges Seurat, one of the leading exponents of the Pointilism art movement (late 1890s to early 1900s). Pointilism is a method of painting that uses many small dots of color to give a painting a greater sense of vibrancy, especially when seen from a distance. Cedric said that upon studying Georges Seurat dotted paintings, it came to him that if the painter could use dots to create a work of art, why couldn't he, Cedric, use lines. In his mind, lines had never been used in that manner. Soon, Cedric was populating his paintings with lines. But there was a difference between the Pointilism use of dots and Cedric's use of lines. In Pointilism the colored dots seemed merely a method of applying oil on canvas to enhance color and light perceptions, but in Cedric's case the patterns of colored lines produce the more profound Cubist effect of three dimensional worlds and multiple planes of reality.

At first, Cedric saw his use of lines merely as a style of painting. But then the lines started suggesting things to him. Looking at them, he started seeing texture, space, geometry, human concepts, culture. It was then that Cedric said, "Ah! If God created organic shapes, organic life, and man made geometric shapes, why not amalgamate the two and give it a name, Organometrix, a combination of the organic and the geometric." Cedric said that in so doing, he would simply be helping God to continue His works. "He made me, He made us." Therefore, Cedric decided to introduce this new philosophy of painting in all his works. He said, "So there we have God and man working hand in hand."

In further explaining his new art philosophy, Cedric said that Organometrix is a vision and a statement of his values, preferences, and personality. "It is not only about St. Lucia, but universal in its theme, that at times leans towards the abstract. I paint my feelings of the things of the world, its problems, its chaos, its politics, its religion, its love and its races. Art is an open book to life's mysteries, which I use to find answers. Once touched by that inspirational light, one is forever and holistically dedicated to the cause."

The Triumph of an Artist

Cedric's dedication and hard work have not gone unnoticed. In 1981, and again in 1994 he won St. Lucia's M&C main Visual Arts Award. In between these M&C prizes, he made it to the finals of the 1986 Benson and Hedges Caribbean World of Art Competition held in Barbados. Then in 1996 he competed in the Artist Magazine Studio Competition in the United States, where he placed 32nd out of a field of 2,500 artists, making him the highest placed Caribbean artist in the competition. However, it was after Cedric George invented Organometrix that he really started to soar. For example, he won the 2000 Caribbean and Latin American Art Competition, held in the Dominican Republic, with his Organometrix piece, *The Arrows and the Shadow*. Two years later, the St. Lucia Nobel Laureate Committee honored him with an exhibition of his work during the Nobel Laureate week celebrations. In 2003, Cable & Wireless UK and the Royal Commonwealth Society held an exhibition of twenty-two of his paintings in London. At the conclusion of the exhibition, the Royal Society pronounced his paintings "bold, timeless, and immutable."

No Woman Don't Cry

Now for the big question. Is Cedric George the first artist to make use of colored lines in the manner described above? Is Organometrix, the notion of combing organic and geometric forms as a manifestation of culture working with creation, man working with God, to produce a new specie of artwork, truly a new, never before conceived philosophy of art?

A search uncovered Bridget Riley, a leading exponent of the 1960s Optical Art Movement, as another artist who used colored lines and other similar patterns of painting. But unlike their use in Organometrix, her use of lines was not meant to necessarily capture geometric shapes but to achieve a disorienting optical effect. And most certainly, her art was not infused with the notion of culture and nature working hand in hand. In fact, a study of art movements from the Ancient and Classical worlds to the present (see for a survey), found not one movement that suggested a philosophy of art in which nature and culture were explicitly or philosophically being brought together to create art.

The importance of having a philosophy behind one's art cannot be overstated. A conceptual framework helps one avoid getting stymied in the details and techniques of the craft, but helps in the search for the best means of capturing the philosophy which the art is meant to embody. Today Cedric George uses colored lines to capture culture, and traditional forms to capture nature. But it may well be that ten years from now he will invent a completely new and different approach to expressing Organometrix. So Cedric George may yet claim his seat next to Sir Arthur Lewis and the Honorable Derek Walcott as St. Lucians who have attained the apex of world achievement.

The M&C Fine Arts Awards:

An Independence Gift to the Nation

"We have produced some remarkable talents, here in Saint Lucia and in the rest of the Caribbean. We have more of them emerging every year with the M&C Art Exhibitions."

by Jacques Compton

On the occasion of Saint Lucia's Independence in February,1979, the Devaux family, who own the business house, M&C, thought of a gift to the new nation. They initiated the scheme which came to be known as The M& C Fine Arts Exhibition and Awards. It was a most momentous and valuable gift to the new nation.

The only other gift to mark the occasion was the establishment of free education in Saint Lucia, the brilliant idea of the late Allan Bousquet who had been appointed Minister of Education in the new administration of which, John Compton, now Sir John Compton, had been Prime Minister, Saint Lucia's first Prime Minister.

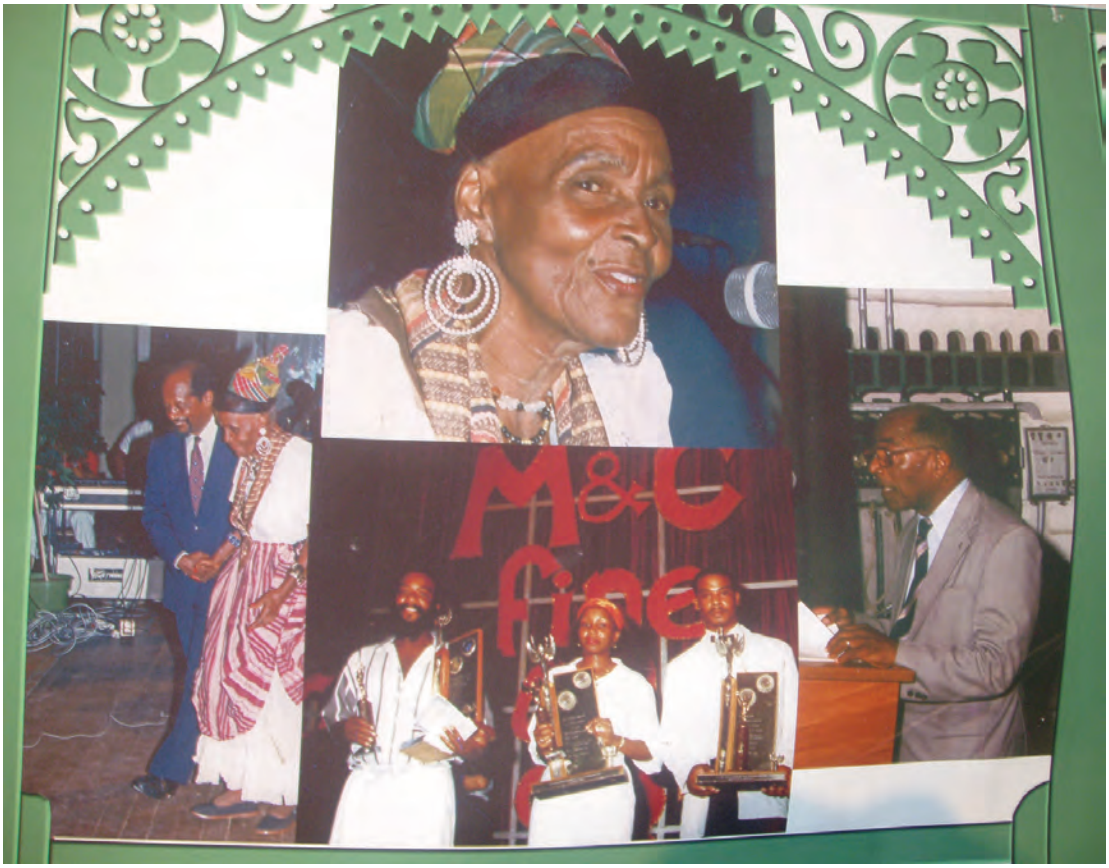
That thoughtful and most worthy gift to the new nation by the Devaux family was initiated for a five-year project. Such, however, had been the popularity and the overwhelming good of that gift, which drew attention to the work and talents of many Saint Lucians in the Visual, Literary and Performing Arts, that the scheme went on for twenty-five years.

Mr. Derek Walcott had already attained considerable recognition and fame before the M&C Fine Arts Awards had started, but he most certainly would have welcomed that initiative, for he had always advocated some such initiative and had even gone beyond that in his thinking, bemoaning the fact that governments in the Commonwealth Caribbean were spending too great an amount of money on Carnival and other spurious events when such monies could have been put to much greater and more valuable use, such as the granting of scholarships in the arts.

Artists do not like to work in a vacuum, nor do they enjoy working away from the environment from which they get their inspiration. The M&C Fine Arts scheme was encouraging Saint Lucian artists working at home to produce and show their work not only to Saint Lucians, but to the world at large. It was designed to pay laudatory tribute to standards of excellence in the arts.

People tend to misunderstand the role of the artist in society. Individually and collectively artists constitute the creative elements in the society. Yet all too often creativity is regarded as the result of some natural burst of inspiration on the part of the artist, someone who is naturally gifted in a particular art form.

Let us dwell upon that misconception for a moment. We take an artist, one who paints pictures, not on canvas, or carves in stone, but one who uses words to paint on a sheet of paper—the Writer. There has to be inspiration, true enough, in the creation of any work of art, but in order to sustain that creative energy there has to be discipline. There is, indeed, some hidden order in the creation of a work of art, a formal organization of the work which one will discover, in every great piece of creativity, be it music, literature, theatre, or sculpture. In literature, that discipline is most apparent, but this axiom applies to all artistic creativity, as said earlier; and that unconscious critical process in the formal organization of a work of art is the psychology of artistic creativity. Art, therefore, is the embodiment of rigorous organization.



The M&C Fine Arts Exhibition and, later, the Awards, forced us to look more closely at the nature of art. What makes a great work of art? That depends upon the artist's powers of observation and selection, and the vividness with which he can portray what he has observed. Those selections, what the Hungarian author, Arthur Koestler in his book 'The Act

Celebrating Derek Walcott. Right, John Compton; center, Derek Walcott; left, Dustan St. Omer

of Creation', calls the "selection emphasis", the artist makes consciously or unconsciously in order to represent those features or aspects which he considers relevant; and determine, to a large extent, what we can identify as the artist's individual style.

In St. Lucia we see the results of this process in the paintings of Mr. Dunstan St. Omer, those of Mr. Cedric George, the poetry of Mr. Derek Walcott, and the carvings of Mr. Eudovic. Those four Saint Lucian artists have established standards of excellence. Their works are the hallmarks of the greatest innovations.

More generally, one can point to the works of the Irish novelist, James Joyce ('Ulyses'), the novelist, Franz Kafka ('The Trial') from Czecoslavakia, Picasso's 'Guernica', the film makers, Marguerite Duras ('Hiroshima Mon Amour'), of France, Russia's Einsenstein, Sengal's Sembene Ousmane, Japan's Kurosawa, Poland's Roman Polanski ('Knife In The Water'), Italy's Fellini ('8,1/2'), France's Jean Luc Goddard and Jean Renoir.

Those artists inaugurated a new era, new movements in art by their particular selective processes, placing emphasis on some previously neglected aspect of experience. "They compel us" says Arthur Koestler, "to revalue our values and impose a new set of rules on the eternal game".

The works, therefore, at each M&C Art Exhibition, compel our attention, providing new excitement. Before our fascinated eyes the artists conjure up scenes, episodes, people, who live forever. What the M&C Fine Arts did further was to provide us, also, with an appreciation of the function of the artist in our society; a society that is changing rapidly, and which the artist feels compelled to mirror. He is also the guardian of the society's traditions, traditions which are built on values whose purpose is to transcend the historical moment. In a place like Saint Lucia, artists find themselves caught up in an evolution which is shaking the very foundation of the people's image of themselves.

It was unique that each year M&C's ideas for the exhibition and the Awards became more innovative and exciting. So much so that other territories in the OECS are thinking of introducing similar schemes.

Twenty-five years was a long time for one business house to have sponsored the Arts in Saint Lucia. The M&C Exhibition, an annually mounted event, became an excellent avenue for offering the artists of Saint Lucia the chance to develop their talent. That event became one to which all artists and the public looked forward with great expectations and enthusiasm, and at which selected exhibitors displayed their crafts and paintings with great pride.

It was an event that, unlike the Calypso Competitions and the judging of Carnival Bands, was free from controversy; because it was generally accepted that once an artist had had his works elected and displayed, that artist had arrived at a certain recognized stage of development in his or her particular artistic discipline.

What excited me, year after year, was the quality of the works produced; and these by people, the majority of whom had never even had occasion to attend an Art School. They were, in the main, naturally gifted persons. It could be, also, that the nature of the St. Lucian environment was what inspired them to produce such magnificent works of art.

I recall reading something about this phenomenon years ago while carrying out research into Caribbean History and Culture in the British Museum in London. I had come upon a very slim volume which had been written by a man who had been the first headmaster of Codrington College in Barbados in the 19th Century. The little book was about the history of churches in the Caribbean, but the writer made an observation which, at the time, I thought was worthy of note. He said that the West Indies had produced no great artists and regretted that all that beauty around ought to have been recorded in some way. Then he gave it as his opinion that there really was no need to paint all that luxurious beauty of the islands because the people simply came out and enjoyed all that tropical beauty and loveliness. So, why bother to paint it when it was there, all around and one had all day in which to bask and enjoy it?

Like the poet, Robert Browning, I wonder whether that is true. For Browning, in his poem 'Fra Lippo Lippi', makes this observation:

For, don't you mark? We're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted ...

Yes, and I agree with Browning when he says, later in the poem, "Art was made for that …" Indeed.

We have produced some remarkable talents, here in Saint Lucia and in the rest of the Caribbean. We have more of them emerging every year with the M&C Art Exhibitions. We saw, at those M&C annual Art Exhibitions, what the artists had caught and what they had to tell us about our rapidly changing society; caught up in this turbulent evolution, an evolution, as said earlier, which is shaking the very foundation and the very image of ourselves; changing, even, our physical environment.

A true artist always feels the need to transcend the historical moment, and out of that yawning void, that emptiness, creates a future of possibilities, or points to a way of looking into a future which he foretells and for which he is preparing the way.

We can see, then, that the concept of Art, properly understood, is not simply a

CYCLES

A film of stillness, opaque like tar covers
the water where mullets dance to twilight's
blinking eyes. Moss hardens like lead in the pools
where crayfish once fished by the tail...All this,
timelessly alive in memory. Waves
dressed in blue diothene parade; gramoxone
spits from plastic pails through a river's mouth
at cruise liners steaming past. “Hi Joey!
Stop here! This scenery is for sale.”
Dunstan, a fiery madness cramps his brush.
I return to boyhood, lured by scent,
To the cultured smell of yeast rising from
a baker's wood. Here the lost is doomed, writing
epitaphs to the damp demented air.
Thoughts rebel, imprisoned in their prism of fear.
I return…Dizzy, the whirl of tops gyring
In my head. This poem is a loose kite
Easter Monday, thirsting for a teaspoon
of wind to lift it above Morne Fortune.
On walls throughout my house these bold reminders glare…

II

A new kind of rain is falling from the skies
Boring through metal, devouring flesh
Banana leaves, proud heraldic emblems wave
In contradiction of the fury raging.
Nothing is the cause we fight with tooth and nail,
Our hopes and futures consciously suspended.
Tell me how many died, or still adrift
In the middle passage, I need numbers
To color my speech; to sound real at the UN
When I attack Cortez and Pizzaro
And the march of the Raj towards the setting sun.
A noble pretence to postpone fate. To bottle
Pride and pen it in the Ghettos at Calcutta....
All I need is a number to numb the tide
Conscience wears like a night dress without remorse:
A number to put in the books where future
Generations will read to rearrange
The building blocks that will remould these islands,
Like a placebo healing the pain of parched throats.
A new kind of rain is falling from the skies,
Transposing names on numbers, lessor mortals
Bogged down by a cross. A coconut lobbed
On its copra slag engenders trade. Names,
Like anchors, sink with misdeeds: History's asleep
Snoring among the withering weeds.

—Mc. Donald Dixon

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restricted number of disciplines—Painting, Sculpture, Drama, Dance and Music—but a diversity of creative activities. Indeed, Art is a study of Man in all his multitudinous creative aspects, as represented at all the M&C Fine Arts Exhibitions and Awards. Which presents a problem, really, that study of Man. For the artist has constantly to define himself in relation to his society. A society, I repeat, that is undergoing a continuous process of change and that tends to reject the scale of values to which, traditionally, the artist was attached; a society, also, that spurns those who want to protect and to support the artist.

Artists need protection, and by protection I mean, not political protection, but protection from isolation; they need a meeting place for Art that can create an audience and encourage talent; a place where artists, critics and audience meet to discuss Art.

That is where the M&C Fine Arts scheme was so important, for M&C had been offering a substantial measure of protection, and had made it possible for St. Lucian artists to display their works in a manner, form and language that was not only the most appropriate and agreeable to them, but, above all, had made it possible for the re-establishment, the recognition and the acceptability of the essentiality of Art. For Art, as a product of the creative imagination, is fundamental to the understanding of our society, for it addresses problems of self-definition, and give us a vision of how our people perceive themselves and their society.

I have used the Past Tense in this article because the Government, through the Cultural Development Foundation (CDF), after M&C's twenty-five years of organizing and administering the scheme, has taken over the project. So, the Cultural Development Foundation, will, in the year 2005, organize the exhibition and the Fine Arts Awards scheme.

Many artists had their misgivings about this 'Take Over.' Questions were asked. Why did not the Cultural Development Foundation and the Government establish their own Fine Arts Awards, or a similar scheme? Why should a Government Department want to piggy-back or highjack other people's ideas and projects?

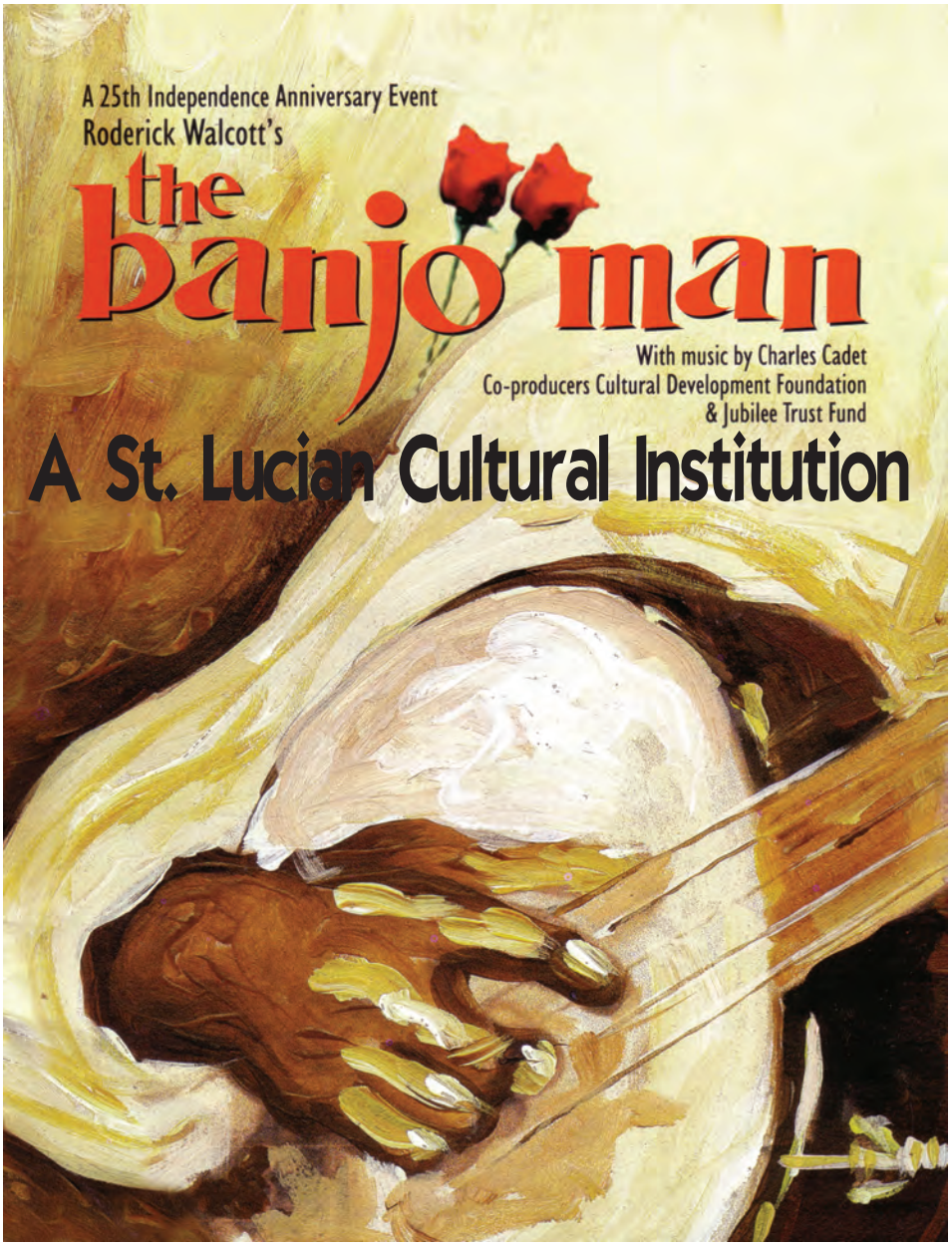
There are artistic activities that, clearly, could not have been undertaken by M&C: Training, the award of scholarships, and such like. The Arts needed to achieve loftier development heights, a goal a private business house could not achieve alone.

Clearly the M&C Fine Arts Exhibition and Awards played a most significant role in the development of the Arts in Saint Lucia. Indeed, the scheme initiated a veritable renaissance of the Arts in the country, served as a catalyst, as it were, and provided encouragement and support to artists of all disciplines.

Now that the State has decided to assume the role of Patron of the Arts, will it also assume the role of 'Director' of the national culture and gain control through its ability to emphasize or constrain artistic activities by means of its allocations, selection of individual artists or cultural and performing groups for participation in training, or representation of the State at events? Participation at regional and international events demands the selection of well trained, disciplined and professional groups and artists.

The artist cannot be at his best if he be constrained by political interference, or his freedom to create is hampered as in totalitarian societies. That freedom, as an act of consciousness, is attributable only to Man, but although that consciousness is essentially free, it is not the gift of freedom, but, rather, freedom forged in the course of time because it is creative and personal.

Mr. George Lamming, the Barbadian novelist, in the final of his quartet of novels, 'Season Of Adventure', discusses the politics of freedom. He makes one of his personages in the novel, the musician, Great Gort, say : “I don't care who makes the country's laws, so long as I can make the country's music.”



Like many of the Walcott Brothers' plays, Roderick Walcott's *The Banjo Man* draws heavily from St. Lucia's folk culture. In fact, the play is based on one of the most distinctive of St. Lucian traditions, the 'La Woz' flower festival of the 'La Woz' Society. Therefore, to place the play in its cultural context, it may be useful to provide a brief overview of not only the 'La Woz' Society but also its culturally complementary yet rival flower society, the 'La Marguerite.'

by Modeste Downes

According to Henry Breen, the foremost authority on early St. Lucian history, to attempt to establish the origin of the 'La Woz' and 'La Marguerite' flower societies is a leap into the impossible. Therefore, suffice it to say that they emerged during the slave period, grew through the colonial era and according to Breen, were "revised … with unusual éclat and solemnity" toward the middle of the 19th century. Judging by their musical genres, dances, dominant themes, accoutrements and personages, these societies bear the common characteristic of a re-enactment of the English and French societies that prevailed at different historical epochs.

Each society is dedicated to a religious saint: 'La Woz', to Saint Rose de Lima; and 'La Marguerite' to St. Mary Alacoque of France. Each has adopted a unique symbol or emblem that its followers regard with religious sacredness—the 'La Woz' has the rose, while the 'La Marguerite' has the bachelor's button, or such other flowers of that family referred to locally simply as 'Marguerite.' The 'La Woz' society hold their annual celebrations on August 30, while the 'La Marguerites' keep theirs on October 17. The celebration ceremonies are preceded by several weeks of preparation when the groups meet in country dance halls and other such venues for what is referred to as séance. On the day of the festivities there is much pomp, drinking and eating, and then following a church service there is a grand march through the streets, which is accompanied with lots of singing either in praise of the virtues of the society's own flower or in derision of that of the other society.

Directed by George Odlum, The Banjo Man debuted in St. Lucia in 1971. In the following year, directed this time by the playwright himself, Roderick Walcott, the play was staged in Guyana at the first Caribbean Festival of Arts (CARIFESTA). The huge success The Banjo Man received at both staging belied its rocky history. The Roman Catholic Church in St. Lucia had so strongly opposed the play that it was banned and denied its first staging to an international audience at the first West Indies Festival of Arts (1958) in Trinidad. The church's contention was that the play promoted banality and that its theme was "contrary to the doctrine of the church." So intense was the ensuing controversy, and regard for the authoritative voice of the church being what it was then, the rehearsing cast of the Arts Guild was forced to discontinue, and St. Lucia's feature contribution to the Festival (which also included Derek's Sea at Dauphin) was aborted.

Notwithstanding, as a colorful, frivolous, witty dress musical, it is easy to see why The Banjo Man had such mass appeal. Scripted to a near even distribution of lines and singing, the performance begins with a prologue (not part of the original script) of craftily selected favorites from a repertoire that brings out the intensity of the rivalry between 'La Woz' and 'La Marguerite' and the passionate dedication of the followers to their respective societies. The players are costumed in the traditional wear that speaks to their own colors, and if the singing is sparring/punchy, the accompanying gestures, suitably choreographed, can be considered spearing.

The main body of the play, however, focuses on the 'La Woz,' and the events portrayed take place on the day of celebration, the venue being the traditional community dance hall. In keeping with the spirit and ritual of the occasion, the set is characterized by a dominant red and white ('La Woz' colors), with appropriate regal designs and other appurtenances, fit for a king and queen of 'La Woz' and their entourage.

The production centers on lead character, Estephan (The Banjo Man), an unconscionable village ram known throughout for his sexual exploits and his love affair with his cuatro (banjo) that he blends with his enchanting singing as he goes from one village to the next, from fete to fete, leaving traces of his conquests in the form of broken-hearted females and countless unfathered children.

The plot presents the community of Belle Maison, a fictitious creation of the playwright, on the day of celebration. Completely transformed from its routine agricultural mode to comprehensively decorative and celebratory ambiance that is customary, the entire Belle Maison folk await the arrival of Estephan, The Banjo Man. Fete 'La Woz' cannot proceed without him, as 'chantwel' is the heart and soul of the celebrations. This year, however, Estephan is late in coming and his tardiness evokes consternation and panic, though Adolphus, his friend of many years, never gives up. The first sign of Estehan's coming, to the surprise and relief of everyone, is heralded by the distant singing voice that is his trade mark: "*Nom mwen c'est Estephan, Estephan the banjo man* ...; My name is Estephan, Estephan the banjo man ..."

The drama unfolds. Adolphus verbally attacks Estephan for the distress he has put him through. Then with much gusto he recounts tales of Estephan's exploits around the country: his love affairs with some of Belle Maison's own women folk, including Adolphus's own wife; the many young women idolizing him and whose hearts he has broken. Other scenes are of disloyalty and female domination (as between Estella and Pascal); public exposure and individual embarrassment (as when Estephan informs the audience of his sexual bout with shy Iris, daughter of Estephan and Ma Stanio, "behind the school"); and of the typical "exploitation" of the local populace by traditional politicians (Waldron) and "foreign researchers" (Professor McKay).

Punctuated by singing, drinking and even ridicule of the other flower group ('La Marguerite'), the celebration goes on to the point where Estephan, overhearing Iris's account of how he had broken her heart and then shamed her, is finally brought face to face with the damage wrought by his wayward ways. Overtaken by remorse, he listens to the voice of conscience and makes an unhappy exit from Belle Maison, vowing never to return.

The Banjo Man brings out Walcott's intention of showing the flower festivals as having a more rustic than urban base by the constant reference to those communities with a long and unbroken association with them—Vieux Fort, Belle-Vue, Dennery, Babonneau.

Without detracting too much from the celebrations, the play is heavily laced with snapshots of the island's social life—religion, morality, infidelity, loose living and the like. These Juxtaposed various aspects of local folkways (konte and the wakontè, for instance), show Mr. Walcott's broad knowledge of those features of St. Lucian life which he allows to color the play either directly through spoken lines, or 'between-the-lines' to good effect. So amidst the more apparent doses of frivolity, drinking and eating, merry making, dancing and singing that typify the occasion, several of the weightier issues of every day living find due prominence and treatment.

Mr. Walcott's familiarity with other social and historical facts also enter into focus: the important and powerful propertied Bernard family in the south; the presence and dominance of East Indians in a corner of Vieux Fort at the time (where Son Son the 'La Woz' King went to get his beautiful Indian wife, Rosalie); the violent ways for which Aux Lyon was then known ("…when malcochon finish and cutlass start to fly"). And to the perceptive audience, there are shovelfuls of potent, not necessarily 'La Woz' related lines along the way:

Waldron:
"Here there is a season for everything."

Prof. Mc Kaye:
"Except making children,eh?"

Elsewhere, the lines are as poetic as Roderick's twin brother, Derek Walcott, knows best how to craft:

On Bar de L'Isle, I stopped to hear the sifflet montaigne sing his song just before night fall, where it's so quiet you can hear God singing vespers.

The Banjo Man Makes a Come Back

Some thirty two years after it was first produced, as part of St. Lucia's 25th year of independence celebrations,

The Banjo Man made a masterly return to the stage in September 2004. Although preceded by several stagings, the formal opening, or gala night, held Wednesday, September 15, was a treat that undoubtedly closed the thirty-odd year gap, oozing such warmth and freshness, one might think that it had just stepped out of the theatrical mint, as it were.

This time around, the play was directed by George 'Fish' Alphonse, and staged at the Cultural Center in Castries. Among the key actors and actresses, Calypsonian Wulstan 'Wally' Alfred is Estephan, The Banjo Man; Nathaniel Reynolds is Adolphus, Estephan's old time friend; Ida Adolphe is Ma Stanio, Adolphus' wife; Tassia Channel-Clement is Iris, the shy daughter of Adolphus and Ma Stanio, and one of the victims of Estephan's sexual exploits; Chanel Christophe is Pascal, the submissive husband; Natalie La Porte is Estella, Pascal's domineering wife; Ben Quinn is the intrusive Professor McKay; Jason Alcide is Waldron, the corrupt politician. Shane Cherry is Son Son, the 'La Woz' King; and Nickita Clarke is Rosalie, Son Son's Indian wife and the 'La Woz' Queen.

In general, if not younger, this cast was decidedly less experienced than that of the 1970's. The previous castings would also have benefitted from the stronger and better pitched voices of Eric Adley, Elcock, and Egbert Mathurin. However, the choreography and casting were excellent, except that Wulstan 'Wally' Alfred strikes one as being unfair to The Banjo Man character as defined in the script. The scripted character suggests a personage with an imposing physique, whose very presence commands attention. The Estephan this time around lacks this essential feature. Special kudos must however be given to Nathaniel Reynolds, as well as Natalie La Porte (as Estella), who to my mind were most impressive. In fact, Nathaniel Reynolds, as Adolphus, virtually carried the play.

The setting being a constant (Ma Stanio's dancehall), more effective use of the lightning (color change, focus, intensity adjustment) could have been made. Intermittently, the light was blinding and therefore somewhat of a distraction. It remained unclear whether the apparatus was lacking, or whether the production team had to make do with less than the best in terms of equipment. The original musical score of Charles Cadet is absolutely enchanting. However, contrary to what the script called for, the music was provided from a pre-recorded source. One wonders what qualitative difference a live band would have made to the renditions and the overall character of the performance.

Notwithstanding, the 2004 performance of Banjo Man will certainly have warmed the hearts of the generation of St. Lucians seeing it for the first time, whilst stirring feelings of nostalgia among those of us who are old enough to remember the 1971 and 1972 renditions. Hats off to the producers, CDF and the Jubilee Trust Fund. Congratulations to director George 'Fish' Alphonse and others on a job well done. Vive 'La Woz'!

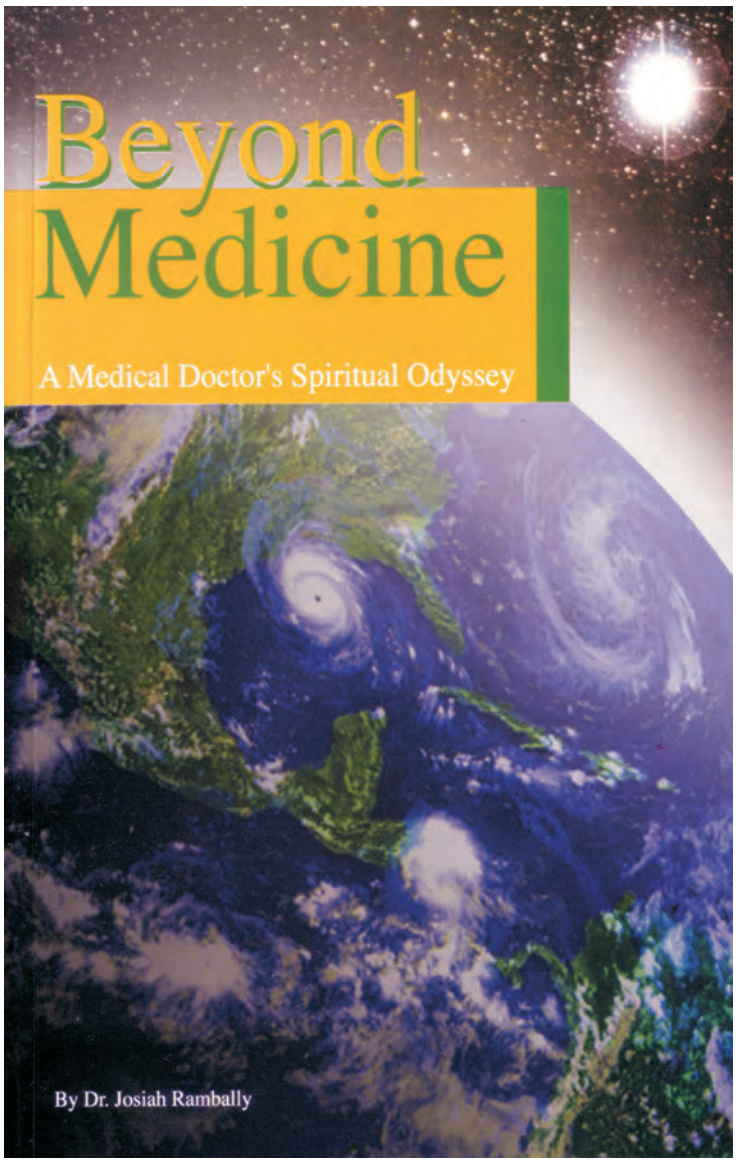
Beyond Medicine:

A Medical Doctor's Spiritual Odyssey

Book Review
by Modeste Downes

Anyone who denies the existence of God or evil forces will have great difficulty understanding and interpreting correctly the events of life on earth.

Thus affirms the author of an unusual local publication in the closing chapter of his book. But not only does he live by his belief in the quoted dictum; he sets about healing persons afflicted by the evil forces less often with syringe and pills than with the Bible. For skeptics, this may be a hard pill (excuse the pun) to swallow; but for me, I rather suspect that with the prevailing trends in materialism, consumerism, church sex scandals, religious pluralism, promiscuity, all amidst an information revolution, it must be incontestably challenging for church ministers and others of this ilk to win the hearts, far less the souls of a largely duplicitous world society armed only with the Bible. On the other hand new forms of disease such as HIV-AIDS continue to wreak havoc among humankind, while medical science continues to ponder the question, what happened, rather than producing a cure.



No doubt aware of this reality, and propelled by his personal experiences in the field as a medical doctor, counselor and preacher, Dr. Josiah Rambally trots a crusade trail that combines professional clinical routine with Biblical doctrine to treat the myriad problems, conflicts and maladies that afflict persons, families and societies. And judging by his accounts, the results are sufficiently convincing to cause him to uphold a practice that sets him apart from his peers. Thus Rev. Dr. Patrick A.B. Anthony, himself a renowned spiritual leader, has referred to him as 'no ordinary doctor.'

Flipping through the 136 pages of the book, BEYOND MEDICINE, my first impression was that it was a similar product to one I had read a few weeks earlier written by a Dominican evangelist, Peter R. Regis. As it turned out, Dr. Rambally has compiled 'a Medical Doctor's Spiritual Odyssey' (subtitle) whose content documents detection, definition, analysis and treatment of supernatural conditions in a manner I have not seen done hitherto.

In its opening chapter, the book introduces the writer, his family background and the social milieu in which he was born and grew up and which informed his earlier formation. Born into a religious family, his early and meteoric rise within the church's inner circle drew him with predestined accuracy to the center of the crusade for winning souls and hearts and to helping save minds and bodies.

One will easily discount the notion of the author as being the product of 'humble origins', as his family had acquired, by the time of his coming, such material stock as to spare him, and perhaps even his elder siblings, the hardships that the older Ramballys encountered. It is necessary to read all the details of his early life, as well his student history so that the normality of that life enables the reader to appreciate the author's umbilical link to his faith-in-practice. His earliest encounters with divine intervention in his own life at the time of the Ravine Poisson Disaster and subsequently make interesting reading. The reader may, however, be sometimes tempted into wondering to what extent sheer good luck was what did the trick.

For the most part, the book is a compilation of personal experiences and accounts of subjects whom the author attended to, either in his capacity as a doctor, counselor, preacher—or exorcist. The cases are in the main psychotic, schizophrenic, devil-possessed and the like to whom he (and his aides) administered non-clinical techniques where medical science was unable to diagnose or prescribe a permanent, or any cure, to a perceived condition.

The book is loaded with, not so much technical information on formulae or 'churchy' stuff, as it is with repeated accounts of what appear to be worst scenarios of strange or deviant behaviour and how they were handled. Some chilling episodes that describe the author encountering persons on death row, and his witnessing a double execution, as well as his professional reflections on

historic murder cases, including the Castries Cathedral murders of 2000, should revive the debate on the merits and morality of capital punishment. The reader will be moved by his thoughts on the famous Yamaha affair and his role in seeking justice and a fair trial, which were denied.

One must keep in mind that the book was written by one who is not primarily a writer. Yet it would be fair to say that Dr. Rambally's treatment of the subject matter displays a feature patently absent from other known works on the treatment of paranormal phenomena. This resides in the fact that he always seeks to ensure that medical science has exhausted as much as possible procedure and theory before his spiritual prescription is applied. Thus the latter chapters, particularly Eight and Nine must be read. At this point it gets really technical, even complicated, as it is here the reader gets an insight into the methodology invoked to identify and diagnose signs and symptoms to tell that the devil is at play; how the determination is made to separate the case for science from the one for spiritualism; the doctor/psychiatrist from the exorcist. Pages 123-125 are also highly recommended for their legal substance and for further discussion.

As dramatic and curious as the cases reported may sound, Dr. Rambally is held in such high regard in his profession as to render them believable. The book shows him reaching out for medical knowledge, skill, and procedure, and combining them with his spiritual gifts to assess, diagnose and heal—and leave victims free to realize their potential to the full.

The book raises a number of questions: Is devil-worship/possession as common as portrayed? Is it the case that 'Every illness whether it is mental, physical or spiritual is a direct result of the introduction of sin into planet earth'? (Pg. 106) Was Peter really demon-possessed; that it was the devil speaking through him (as in the case of Orban, pp. 79-97) at Mt. 16:23?

The book is a challenge. It is a challenge to the faith of 'believers'; a challenge to the skeptics; a challenge to the devil-worshiper. It underscores the power of the Bible, and of prayer and faith, particularly where science appears impotent in the face of unexplainable phenomena.

I cannot promise that you'll sleep any better after reading BEYOND MEDICINE. Printed by Mayers Printing Company, BEYOND MEDICINE is available in paperback edition at local bookstores.

My Dog Hamish:

A Humorous Perspective on Strategic Planning and Career Development as Viewed Through The Life of a Dog

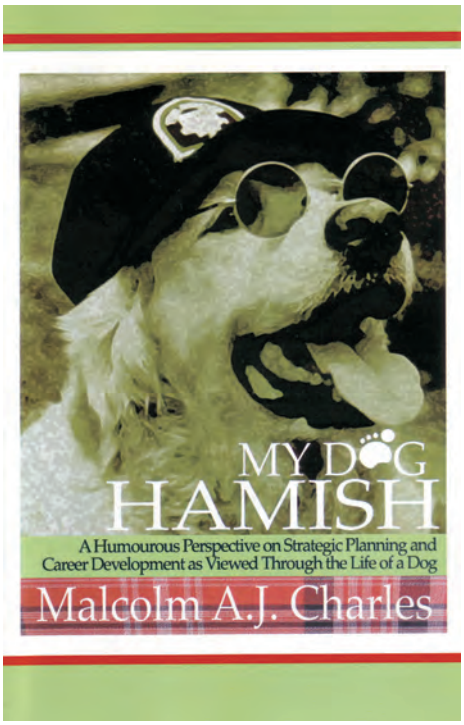
Book Review
by Modeste Downes

Is our world too serious? Should the teaching or learning environment be modified and methodologies revamped to make the experience more fun-filled, thereby enhancing performance? And if dog is man's best friend, why do we seldom listen to what they have to say?

The author of My Dog Hamish would no doubt have contemplated these questions and decided that not only was a less rigid approach to what obtains desirable, but that to help sell his message, he would both listen to the dog as well as let the animal tell his own story sometimes, at least. The result is a 158 page 'guide' to strategic planning, self-motivation and career development, 'a humourous perspective…viewed through the life of a dog.' Other locals have written fun-filled stuff before— Jacintha Lee (Anansi) and Victor Marquis (Of Cabbages and Kings)—but definitely, not with the more serious twist of My Dog Hamish. In reading My Dog Hamish one wonders whether the author was perhaps inspired by the comic series, 'Peanuts' by Charles Schwab (remember Linus, Charlie Brown, Lucy and Snoopy, the dog).

But don't be fooled, this is not a book for nitwits or stand-up comedians. The author, Malcolm A.J. Charles, is a serious man with a serious mission. A certified management practitioner, he is a Business/Human Resource Management consultant with years of experience under his belt. Seemingly a well-read individual, he is widely traveled and has attended scores of professional courses and visited schools and lecture-rooms both locally and overseas, imparting his knowledge and marketing his expertise on the themes covered by the book.

This book is written in an unconventional style that is chatty, personal and leisurely. It blends loads of humour with varying episodes from the life of the author's dog (Rover, turned



HAMISH—main canine character of the book) as well as about dogs generally, and with snippets from the author's own life and career experiences to convey the rudiments of strategic planning in a manner that helps one to absorb and have fun all at once.

Picture the scene if you can: the author is urged to obtain a dog, which on the advice of his brother, would be 'self-supporting and self-motivating', with the responsibility eventually to 'take care of security' while the author busied himself with professional matters, away from home. The dog is obtained, brought home, and introduced to his new environment. The owner goes out of his way to acquire all that was thought to be necessary to make Rover comfortable. But guess what? Not long afterward, he discovers that the 'villainous' Rover has run-off. But as it turned out, the animal had not 'run-off' but only switched one position for another, which offered a greater degree of luxury and comfort. Thus portraying the dog as having made a deliberate decision to terminate a situation he was not satisfied with, and entering another that would change his life forever, the author seeks to drive home the point that by assessing our present status and considering the options, an individual can decide whether by appropriate and timely action he scales the ladder upward or slide (further) down the slope. As such, it is no longer within the realm of humour to suggest that when we fail to take hold of a challenge, even our dog could turn its back on us. (Read of the triple A's at pp. 148).

Perhaps not your idea of a typical textbook, as in a dozen or so chapters My Dog Hamish offers a virtual crash course, dealing with such significant topics as Time Management, Goal Setting, Action Planning, Career Development Basics, Communications, and the like. The author addresses common pitfalls associated with each of these—how they can be avoided and how these different processes can be effectively employed in charting and pursuing a development path. For the critical mind and for students already studying the subject, the book offers much material for discussion, debate and group work. Some opinions expressed by the writer can provoke controversy even, for instance his treatment of what appears to be a growing trend in a shift of loyalty among western workers, from the old mode of long-term commitment to the employer/organization to the individual (see Career Development Basics).

Consistent with the writer's aim of teaching the essentials through the perspective of his canine friends, Rover, renamed HAMISH, teaches one of the crudest applications of strategic planning from the outset (as earlier highlighted). But whereas HAMISH used the radical approach to a better life—abdication of his former home and master—another of his peers uses the subtler, indeed, more sophisticated route. However, the effect and lesson are the same: if one is at the right place at the right time, and makes the appropriate move at the right moment, positive results will inevitably follow. In my view, the reader will find the best example of strategic planning, the HAMISH way that is, in the story featured in the section, 'Unsung Heroes'. It must also be remarked that, in all honesty, the substantive information (on Career Planning, etc.) is dished out with the passion and enthusiasm of someone with the expertise Mr. Charles is known for. And he does succeed in maintaining the humourous mood throughout.

Having extolled the virtues of the publication, it must be said however, that

at times I thought the 'dog' was used, in the negative sense, in that for large portions of the writing, the dog was virtually sidelined, while the author drifted into rather extraneous themes. Frankly, taken by the title, I expected to see more 'talking' by the four-legged star, of the type done in Chapter 9. On the other hand, with entire chapters devoted to the unrelated details of veterinary science and the causes of the 'terrestrial demise' of dogs one is left with the distinct impression that the author got emotionally and socially carried away, and comes across as having 'given a plug', as they say in journalistic circles, to a veterinarian colleague and to his allies at SLAPS (the animal protection service based up north).

Not only that. At times Charles devotes large chunks of space, that could have been better utilized, to entire quotations or anecdotes, when a mere reference would have sufficed, e.g. two full pages (49-50) for 'Desiderata'.

While giving the author high marks for his embodiment of the essentials of strategic planning, one will admit that he often betrays, unwittingly it appears, the mindset of the class of management personnel which is quick to find fault with the working class. I select at random, three instances where it 'escaped' him. In the first, the author goes for a stroll in the garden to 'peruse the work of the gardeners, whose work output I often suspected, was disproportionate to the level of time (and money) expended…'(p.20). At page 65, explaining common reasons for breakdown in communication: 'The employees on the other hand, may think… in a unionized environment… "He is always trying to rush us." And in parenthesis, the author remarks, perhaps apologetically, 'did I say that?' Finally at page 146 he observes, not untypically, '…when all around us, we seem to be faced with the malaise of more pay for an ever decreasing output.' It is not unusual for successful West Indian men of business to pile all sorts of negatives on the backs of a lazy workforce.

But then, Malcolm Charles is President of the Employers Federation!

Having secured the imprimatur of the Caribbean Office of the International Labour Organization (ILO), My Dog Hamish is undoubtedly a useful handbook for tutors or career guidance counselors, as well as senior high school students or graduates who are yet unsure where they're heading. Management personnel may also find in it some material for re-evaluating current practices or for retooling.

OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL AUTHORISING OFFICER

Government Human Resource Development Credit Facility

The **Human Resource Development Credit Facility** was introduced by Government to assist persons in accessing tertiary level and university education and to provide persons desirous of pursuing programmes of study with assistance in financing their education. This facility started with an initial amount of $1,000,000 to facilitate the September-December 2004 term.

The Tables to the right provide the progress of this facility to date, and indicate the various sectors to which grant support from the Human Resource Development project was directed.

For more information on this facility, please contact the office of the National Authorising Officer.

Grant and Loan Disbursements (EC$)

	Bank Of St. Lucia	Credit Union Cooperative	Total
Grant Fund Allocated	750,000	250,000	1,000,000
Number of Student loans	25	13	38
Total Amount of Student loans	1,063,425	589,992	1,653,417
Average Amount of Student Grants	11,584	6,346	9,792
Number of Skill loans	32	30	62
Total Amount of Skill loans	593,984	589,740	1,183,724
Average Amount of Skill Grants	7,975	5,583	6,818

Grant Distribution among Sectors

Health	21
Informatics & Communications	14
Education	25
Management & Accounting	26
Others	4

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