Vibert C. Cambridge

Musical Life in Guyana: History and Politics of Controlling Creativity. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2015. ix + 370 pp. (Cloth US\$70.00)

Musical Life in Guyana examines the ways that “national governance” has shaped production, propagation, perceptions, and music consumption in British Guiana/Guyana. Vibert Cambridge explores how governmental practices create “discrete musical traditions,” or “musical communities” (p. 4), that reflect, reinforce, and challenge race, class, gender, political factions, religion, and other identities. He commences with a detailed historical background of British Guiana, emphasizing the demographic and ethnic influences on the then-colony’s musical fabric, focusing on three overarching political eras: 1900–53, a period of mature colonial governance, guided by “new imperialism”; 1953–66, the age of internal self-governance which began as the country readied itself for independence and its first general election under universal adult suffrage; and 1966–2000, the postcolonial era when the country engaged in self-governance. During the “new imperialism” of 1900–20, the diverse musical styles that emerged reflected creolization, hybridity, and growth. Music originated from the Guianese population and the colonial elites. Locally produced music such as Indian *biraha*, African *kwe-kwe*, and Indian *matticore* (dig dutty), as well as the indigenous people’s folk songs (shanties) and the “disrespectable” Masquerade or “Centipede music,” all derived from the cross fertilization of musical elements from the colony’s “African, Scottish, and Irish heritages” (p. 24), emancipation of folk songs such as “Me Cawfee in de Marnin,” and the trade unionist brass band music of Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow. While the ruling elite celebrated European classical music and disparaged the music produced by locals, state-supported religious institutions, including the Anglicans, Catholics, and Scottish Presbyterians, propagated the music of establishment churches.

Between 1921 and 1930, racial and ethnic organizations such as the Chinese Association, the Negro Progress Convention, and the British Guiana East Indian Association influenced Christmas music, midnight mass, street musicians, ceremonial and martial music, sacred and classical music, as well as Negro spirituals and African American art music influenced by the Negro Progress Convention and the Tuskegee Institute in the United States. Simultaneously, there was an increase in the number of formally trained music teachers from the London School of Music, the Associated Board of Royal Academy of Music, and the Royal College of Music, among others.

In the mid-twentieth century, musical expressions in British Guiana shifted from ethnic-centered performances. This occurred at the British Guiana Cen-

tenary celebrations (1931), the Centenary of the Abolition of Slavery (1934), Georgetown's Centenary (1937), the Coronation of George VI (1937), and the Centenary of East Indian Immigration to British Guiana (1938). The Centenary Carnival featured the latest Broadway hits, Reverend Hawley Bryant's composition "Song of Guiana's Children," calypso, jazz, and other international genres, and work songs of the urban ghettos and the hinterlands called "Shanto and the Bhagee Beat." Radio broadcasting, visiting colonial musicians, Guyanese people in the diaspora, and music companies all helped to develop and spread the music. The musical achievements of the East Indian Mootoo Brothers Orchestra, along with musical education in schools, reflected the cultural and political climate in the colony

As British Guiana neared independence, racialized political discord erupted, Guianese protested in songs drawn from the U.S. labor and civil rights movements, such as "Solidarity forever," "We shall not be moved," and "We shall overcome." During this period, which aided healing and reconciliation after race riots broke out between the descendants of Africans and Indians, a crucial body of music for nation-building, including the country's national anthem and patriotic folk songs, developed. Cambridge argues that since independence in 1966, multiple internal and external factors have shaped Guyana's musical landscape. State-owned and controlled media had overriding influences on music. This resulted in the emergence of nationalistic music and festivals; musical fusions of the Afro-Indi beat, popularized by calypsonians like The Mighty Enchanter; military band music; dance "partying" music; the "*de-Englishifying*" of popular Guyanese folk songs; local public festivals such as *mashramani* [a celebration after hard work]; Carifesta (Caribbean Festival of Arts) 1972; and Mas games.

Musical Life in Guyana provides a detailed and timely interrogation of Guyana's history through an examination of the many musical forms that have marked its transition from colony to nation. This work would have benefitted from transcription of local terminologies and musical examples. For example, Cambridge states: "The Portuguese in British Guiana were primarily from Madeira, and the Catholicism practiced there has been described as 'folksy'" (p. 44). Qualifying the term "folksy" would have allowed readers to understand its application in this context, as well as the differences between Madeiran Catholicism and other forms. Musical transcriptions (notation) would have enabled readers to replicate the sound of musical selections such as "My Native Land" and "The Song of the Demerara Youth Rally." Nevertheless, *Musical Life in Guyana* is a crucial contribution to the study of Guyana's history, politics, music, and identity, broadly construed.

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