

Rhythm Live!

Presented by the Rhythm Project and
The Governor's School for the Arts Dance Department

VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL

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THE DIVERSE CARIBBEAN

Africa

Africa is the second largest continent in the world and is made up of 56 countries.

The African influence on the development of music in Trinidad derives from Western Africa, particularly the countries of Angola, Gabon, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Senegal. These nations were among the most commonly represented in the population of Africans taken during the slave trade of the colonial era (ca. 1500-1850).

Slavery

Slavery was used by colonial powers to maintain a cheap labor force for cash crops like cotton, sugar cane, and coffee throughout the newly discovered Western Hemisphere by powerful European nations. Sugar cane became extremely profitable throughout the Caribbean causing more and more Africans to be brought to islands like Cuba, Jamaica, and Trinidad. The trans-Atlantic slave trade not only displaced millions of Africans, but it also brought African cultures and traditions to the Western Hemisphere. Obviously, not all customs and practices were kept (un-impeded) due to the Africans' status as slaves and physical property of their owners, but even oppressed peoples can hold on to their heritage in various ways.

By the 1830s, most colonial powers (Spain, France, England, Denmark, Portugal) had legally abolished slavery throughout their colonies. However, a large (and cheap) workforce was still required to work sugar cane, coffee, and tobacco plantations in these colonies and former colonies.

England used indentured servitude as a means to transport millions of people throughout the empire as a work force for the British economy. Adding to the already large non-indigenous population of Europeans and Africans, over 400,000 Indians and 50,000 Chinese were brought to Trinidad between 1834 and 1920.

Trinidad & Tobago

Two Islands; One Nation

Trinidad and Tobago are the southern-most islands in the Caribbean Sea. Trinidad is named for the three mountain peaks ("tri" means three) seen by Columbus when he sailed to the islands on his third voyage to the "New World" in 1498. Trinidad sits right off the coast of Venezuela, and Tobago was once a volcanic island and lies just about 40 miles from Trinidad's north-eastern tip.



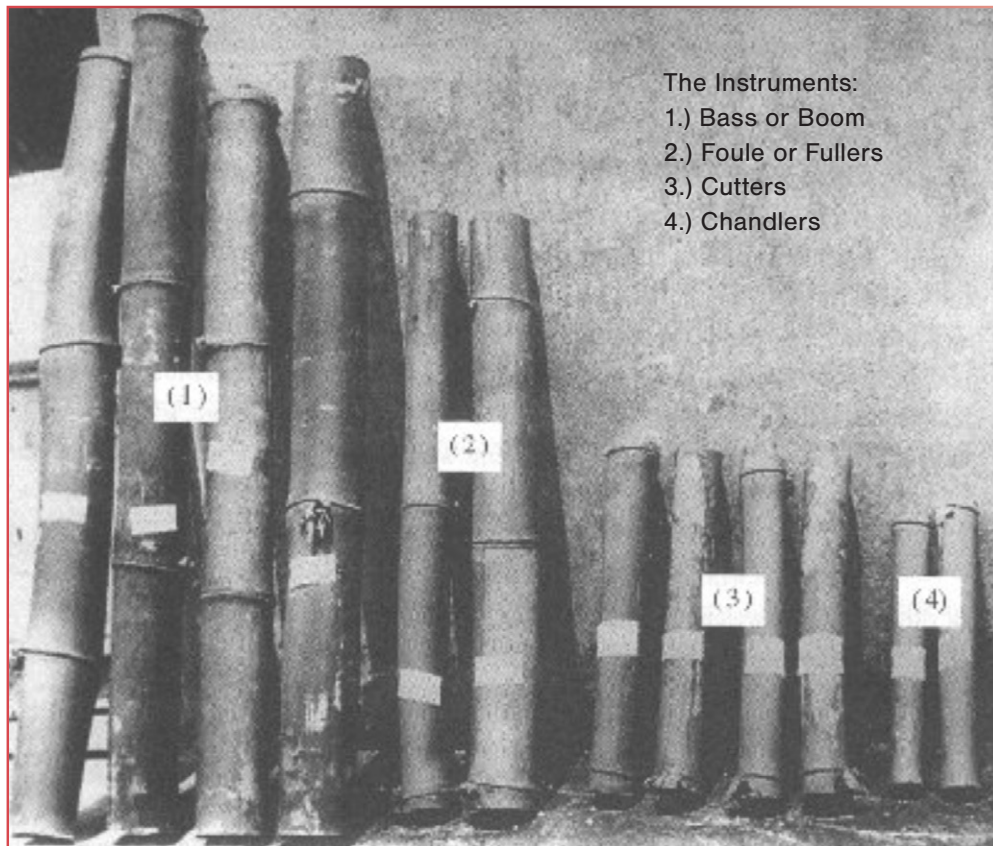
THE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC IN TRINIDAD

African Drumming

When Africans were shipped to Trinidad as slaves, they brought with them their culture of music: song, drumming, and dance. Even though the Africans had been taken out of their home environment, they continued to make music by finding new resources to make instruments. Eventually, slavery on the island was abolished in 1834 and the freed slaves began to play their music freely again. The government allowed the drumming for some time until the newly freed Africans began celebrating local holidays and customs in public, and eventually all hand drumming was banned in the 1880s. With their drums outlawed, the Afro-Trinidadians discovered the musical possibilities of bamboo.

Tambo Bamboo

Bamboo is a remarkably strong plant and Trinidadians soon discovered that they could use the bamboo as a musical instrument by beating it with sticks and pounding it on the ground. The bamboo was cut at various lengths and sizes to create different sounds and pitches. Some of the thinner bamboo, called “Fullers” and “Cutters,” was held between the hand and shoulder and played with sticks. The smallest bamboo, called “Chandlers,” was played by striking the bamboo together. The biggest pieces of bamboo were called the “bass”, or “boom,” and were played by striking the bamboo on the ground or played with a stick. These bamboo bands were referred to as “tamboo bamboo,” from the French *tambour*, which means “drum.”





THE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC IN TRINIDAD

Metal Beating

When the tamboo bamboo bands became too large for city streets to accommodate during holidays and other festive celebrations, the government made the bamboo bands illegal as well. Trinidadians then turned to metal beating in order to play their music. Trash cans, oil barrels, and other metal objects were now used to beat the rhythms of the bamboo bands. With the constant beating and stretching of the metal, it was soon realized that the metal could be tuned to a specific pitch. With one or two drums of pitch, it was easier to control the ensembles. Eventually band leaders tried to make several pitches on one drum, and this led to the development of a melody on a metal drum. Quickly, band leaders were in a race to create drums with more and more notes to showcase their musical superiority to other bands. It soon became apparent that the smaller the note, the higher the pitch could be, and therefore a bigger note could be used for a lower pitch. In order to fit enough notes on a single surface, Trinidadians began looking for bigger barrels and trash cans.

During World War II, the United States government leased land from Trinidad in order to maintain a Navy base on the northwest corner of the island. With the US Navy came many oil barrels - much larger and in more quantity than Trinidad had ever seen before. It was perfect timing to fuel the development of the steel pan. The 55-gallon oil barrels used by the US Navy would eventually become the standard size for steel pan making.

The US Navy not only brought oil barrels to Trinidad, but the service men brought with them American music and culture. This blending of cultures would also go on to influence the styles of music played on the steel pan.

Source: Wikipedia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steelpan>

THE STEELPAN FAMILY

With quality steel, pan builders and tuners are able to create not just one instrument, but an entire family of instruments much like a brass or string section of an orchestra.

The modern steel pan family is made of the following instruments:

Lead or Tenor Pan (single drum)

Double Tenor (2 drums)

Double Seconds (2 drums)

Double Guitar (2 drums)

Triple Guitar (3 drums)

Cello (3 drums)

Quadrophonic (4 drums)

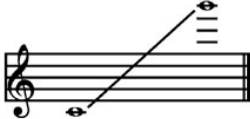
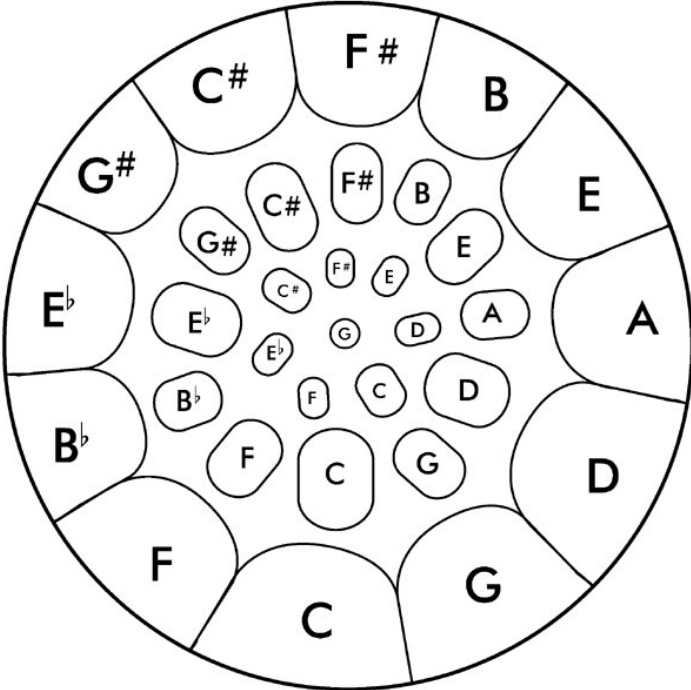
Tenor Bass (4 drums)

Bass (6 - 12 drums per set)

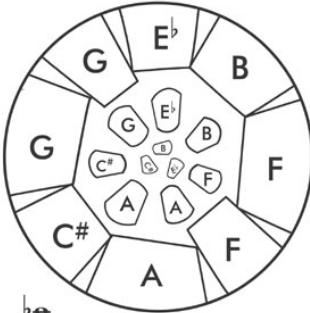
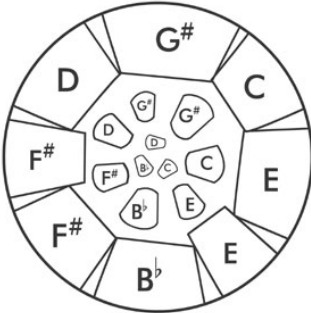


THE STEELPAN FAMILY

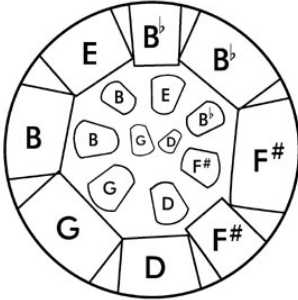
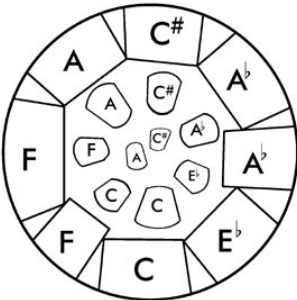
4th and 5ths Lead



Double Second

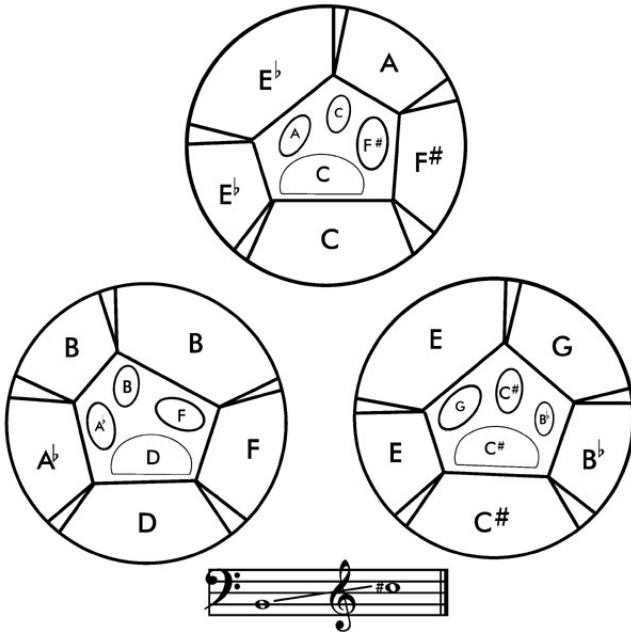


Double Tenor

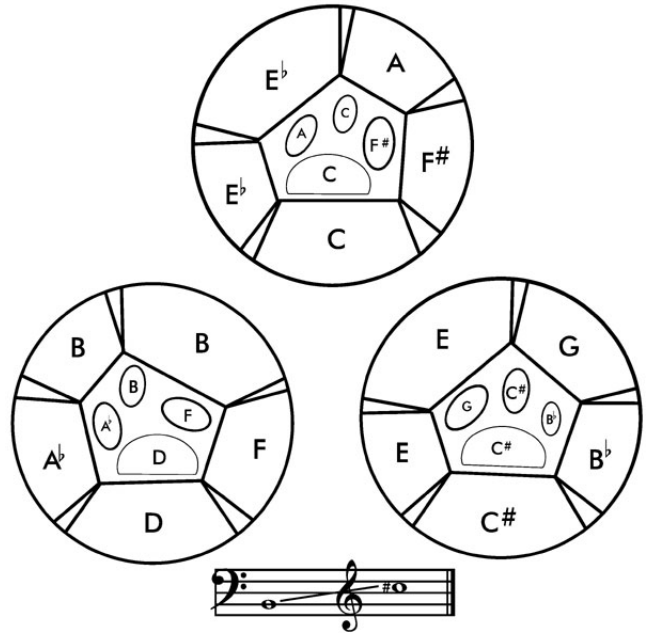


THE STEELPAN FAMILY

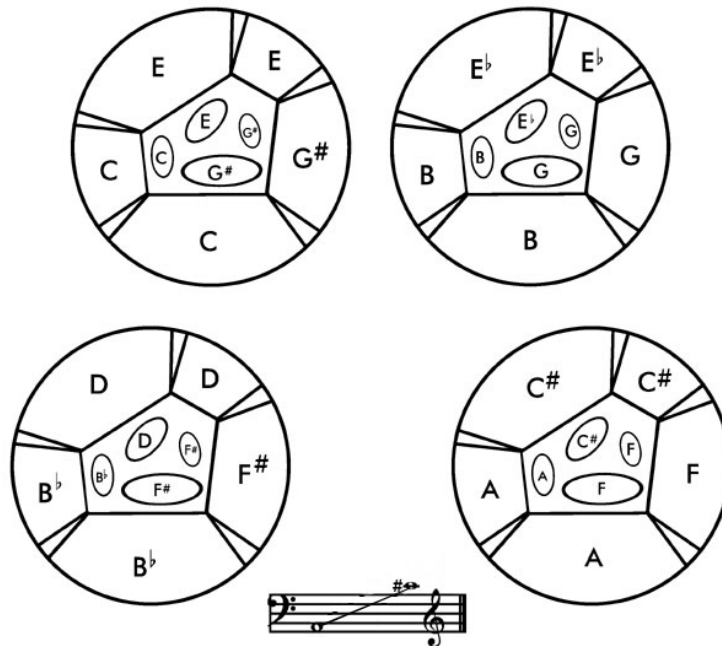
Guitar



Cellos

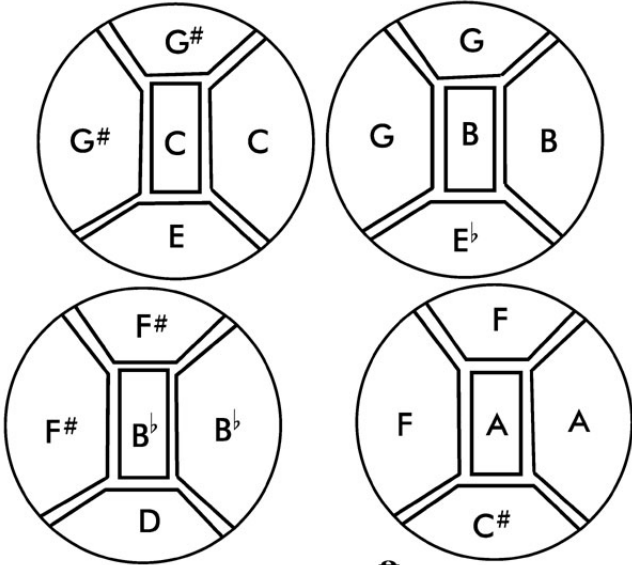


Quadrophonic

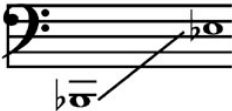
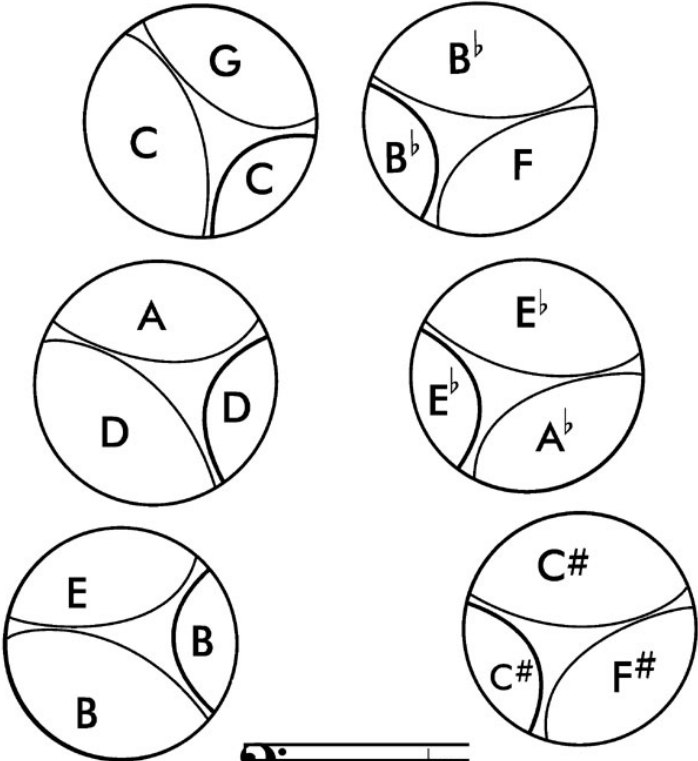


THE STEELPAN FAMILY

Tenor Bass



6 Bass



HOW THEY'RE MADE

Sinking

Modern steel drums are made from 55-gallon steel barrels. These drums are bought directly from the manufacturer before any industrial materials are stored in them. The flat surfaces on the ends of the barrels are then hammered down (either by hand or with an automatic tool) starting with unique 8-pound hammers. As the builders make a concave bowl, they gradually move to lighter hammers in order to smooth the surface in preparation for stenciling. After both sides have been sunk to their desired depth, the barrel is then cut in half.

Stenciling and Grooving

The builder then makes precise measurements over the, now concave, surface and begins to stencil where the individual notes will go. With a small metal punch, the builder outlines the stencil marks. From underneath the surface, the builder will then bubble up the notes to make a convex bump and stretch the metal even more so that it will be suitable to tune.

Burning

The drum is now put over a very high heat to “reset” the metal. After all of the hammering that has taken place up to this point, the metal has become extremely stressed. Burning the drum for several minutes alleviates the stress and tension and prepares it for tuning.

Tuning

Each individual bump on the drum is now tuned by a master tuner who uses various hammers, blow torches, a mechanical tuner, and other various tools to help them achieve the desired tones.

Paint or Chrome

The drum is then cleaned and prepared for paint or chrome depending on the buyer's preference. After the drum returns, a final tuning is done on the instrument before it is shipped.



MUSICAL STYLES

Calypso

Like most of the music in the Caribbean, calypso comes out of a mixing of African and European elements. Much like reggae in Jamaica, the lyrics are the focal point of calypso music. Early calypso music was sung in Creole (a mixture of English, French, and African dialects) and has always been used as a “tongue-in-cheek” tool of commentary on the life, culture, and political atmosphere of the day. Calypso music is now sung in English, the official language of Trinidad and Tobago, and is performed by a calypsonian (the singer) and accompanied by a jazz-like rhythm section (piano, drums, bass, and horns).

Calypsos were the first songs to be played on steel pan, but many different kinds of music became popular for pan.

Classical

In order to gain more legitimacy in the public eye, pan players began playing classical music on steel pan. Trinidad and Tobago now has a national steel orchestra that plays all styles of music but prides itself on its classical repertoire.

Bomb

One of the most popular styles of steel pan music in Trinidad is “bomb tunes.” A “bomb” is a popular song on the radio (usually from the USA), not in the style of calypso or steelband, that is played in a calypso style on the steel pans.

Soca

When disco became a fad in the United States in the 70’s, it spread world-wide - even to Trinidad and Tobago. The driving dance beat of disco was mixed with the syncopated rhythms of Calypso and together formed a new style of music: the “Soul-Calypso” or “Soca” for short.



CARNIVAL

Origins of Carnival

In the Christian tradition, Lent is a 40-day period of reflection before Easter. There are no parties or celebrations, and many people fast and make extra time for prayer and meditation. Because of the fasting, many communities would eat all of their decadent food right before this time of penitence and restraint. In many countries throughout North and South America, Europe, and Asia, the traditional of Carnival developed. Carnival is an enormous party during the few days before Lent, in which a community throws a festival full of food, music, and dance. Many, many countries around the world have a Carnival tradition, but Trinidad's Carnival has become the most famous.

Like the cosmopolitan mix of peoples and cultures that shaped the island, Trinidad's Carnival has many influences. The Spanish and English colonial powers, French planters, African slaves, Indian indentured laborers, and the many other ethnic groups that settled there have all left an indelible mark on the festival. In 1783, the French brought their culture, customs, and Carnival, in the form of

elaborate masquerade balls, to Trinidad along with African slaves. The period stretching between Christmas and the start of Lent was a time for feasting, fancy dress balls, and celebration for both the French and British. Banned from the festivities, slaves in the barrack yards would hold their own celebrations mimicking their masters' behavior while incorporating rituals and folklore. Once slavery was abolished in the 1830s, the freed Africans took their Carnival to the streets and, as each new immigrant population entered Trinidad, a new flavor was added to the festivities. Today, this diverse culture has influenced the music, food, and traditions of Carnival.

There are still some sectors of society that consider Carnival as too lewd or morally unacceptable because of the wild costumes and behavior. Nevertheless, it has evolved into a festival celebrated by many - young and old, of every class, creed and color, in what truly is a spectacle of creativity, and an exposition of all the nation's strengths and weaknesses. It has evolved into an event of international stature, and the signature event on Trinidad's cultural calendar.



Carnival band, taken by Dr. Ted Hill in Port of Spain, Trinidad in the early 1950s

CARNIVAL

There are many different parts to the modern day Trinidadian Carnival:

J'Ouvert

Each year at 4 a.m. on Monday, Carnival begins under a cloak of darkness. Fuelled by exhilaration and the energetic rhythms of soca music, revelers take to the streets for the predawn party of J'Ouvert.

J'Ouvert (from the French 'jour ouvert' or 'day open') is almost ritualistic in its celebration of the darker elements of the island's folklore and history. Bathed in chocolate, mud, oil, and paint, bands of revelers depict devils, demons, monsters, and imps. Through music and dance, J'Ouvert is a time for loosening inhibitions.

Masqueraders' costumes are often accompanied by a satirical placard - usually of something socially or politically topical. Puns are a mainstay for the placards and costumes. These cheeky and clever costumes and characters often reflect public sentiment on current affairs, and also reflect Trinidadian's playful creativity.

Carnival Monday

Come daytime, the J'Ouvert revelry clears and massive costumed bands and dancers flood the streets with riotous color. A cast of thousands take to the street marching and dancing to the sound of soca blaring from speakers piled on music trucks. The excitement is at fever pitch, but Carnival Monday is only a "warm-up" for Carnival Tuesday.

Carnival Tuesday

Carnival Tuesday begins at 8 a.m. Thousands of masqueraders are in full costume, ready and impatiently awaiting their chance to strut in front of the television cameras as bands cross the main judging points. Each band has its own historical, mythological, or tropical concept with various sections depicting aspects of the main theme.

Bands are judged in three categories - small, medium, and large - and winners are announced after all the bands have crossed the stage. The Champion Band is crowned Masquerade Band of the Year.

The party goes on until it is officially Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, and thus the festivities end and the 40 days of restraint begin.



“

It is half-five, six in the morning, and the colour of dawn coming through and all these people all paint up in different colours, a riddim going and all of a sudden you feel this sense of suspension. You see all these people, all these people are your community and you realise, you feel a strong sense of love and you realise that what you are really doing is renewing a vow to love these people for the year coming.

—Tony Hall,
Trinidadian playwright

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Sources:

Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Tourism
www.gotrinidadandtobago.com

Discover Trinidad and Tobago
www.discovertnt.com

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How did your students respond to the performance?

How did you prepare your students for this performance? Did you use the Education Guide? If so, how?
Did students enjoy the materials?

How did this performance contribute to experiential learning in your classroom?

What role do the arts play in your school? In your classroom?

If you could change one thing about this experience, what would it be?

Please include quotes and comments from your students as well!

(Optional)

Name: _____

School: _____ City: _____

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