



Edna Manley College  
of the Visual and Performing Arts

# **INAUGURAL EDWARD SEAGA DISTINGUISHED LECTURE**

Normalising The Role  
of Arts Education in  
National Reconstruction:  
A Bruckins Party

Monday, October 6, 2021  
2:00 p.m

Bert Rose Studio Theatre

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**Edna Manley College  
of the Visual and Performing Arts**

## Context and Overview



*Amina Blackwood Meeks, BH(M) PhD,  
College Orator*

The United Nations has articulated 17 inter-linked goals, Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals designed to transform our world by 2030 and to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”. Jamaica has articulated four main goals with a number of corresponding outcomes for its development programme Vision 2030. The SDGs pay attention to multiple cross-cutting issues, such as gender equity, education, and culture cut across all of the SDGs.

Culture, seen as a cross-cutting theme because it impacts several SDGs, is explicitly referenced in SDG 11 Target 4 (“Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage”).

In the case of Jamaica, National Outcome # 4 is expressed as an Authentic and Transformational Culture. The Vision recognizes “the uniqueness of our Jamaican culture, its impact on the world stage particularly with respect to music, the visual and performing arts and sports, and the importance of having a shared sense of identity, values and wholesome attitudes. Under this outcome, Vision 2030 Jamaica will ensure that our heritage is respected and preserved by our people and all who come to our shores, and that the material value of our culture as expressed through our creative industries contribute meaningfully to the development of our society”.

In addition “Recalling the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which states that the organization, as part of its purposes and functions, will maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge by encouraging cooperation among the nations in all branches of intellectual activity, and noting the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on culture and sustainable development,<sup>1</sup> in which it is stated that cultural and creative industries should be part of economic growth strategies,”

The United Nations has designated 2021 as the International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development.

One troubling observation might be where is any of this even referenced anywhere in Jamaica as the context within which we operate and as the purpose of what we do as artists and arts educators. Do our young people, artists, students, teachers know that?

More troubling might be the impact of the COVID19 Pandemic on the work of the arts, culture and heritage sectors, so much of which still struggle to be taken seriously as development tools and to be liberated from the confines of backdrop or transient entertainment.

This lecture is intended, in part, to allow us some space to give ourselves context and broaden the conversation with our stakeholders. Thus, we might be able to invite the human, financial and logistical resources that will allow this institution to be on purpose with its programmes in traditional artforms. It might also facilitate its guiding the nation into an appreciation of the value of what we have preserved through centuries of trials and tribulations and how that may be applied in normal times and in abnormal times “no matter what the crisis is” to quote Bob Marley.

The value, role and function of folk forms and folk wisdom was an ongoing concern of the late Most Honorable Edward Seaga for whom the library and resource centre at the EMCVPA are named. This inaugural lecture, also named in his honour is intended to be an annual affair that allows us to unpack and apply his vision for this institution in nation-building.

The lectures will explore the concerns of the Most Hon. Edward Seaga with the links between arts and culture and development. The series is, therefore, designed to accomplish the following:

1. Broaden the educational experience of the College community regarding the role of arts and culture in nation-building.
2. Encourage conversations that will lead to the development of a teaching methodology unique to the College and which draws on the vision of the Most Honourable Edward Seaga for an interdisciplinary approach to arts education.
3. Facilitate engagement with persons from the region who have had significant impact on public life in a way which honours his dream of enhancing Jamaica's reputation as a cultural point of focus attracting regional and international audiences

who will contribute to innovative arts research and curriculum delivery.

4. Provide a forum for collection and documentation of data and information and that will propel the continued recognition of the relationship between the arts and wider socio-political cultural imperatives.

#### FORMAT

Each lecture will feature a main presenter and three discussants. The discussants will be drawn from the College Community and the wider body of stakeholders. The lecture will take place within the structure of a Jamaican/Caribbean traditional cultural format.

The inaugural lecture, a Bruckins Party, a tradition emerging from Emancipation from chattel slavery, is symbolic. It highlights the need for traditional forms to be liberated from the confines of entertainment. They must be recognised as repositories of the spirituality and wisdom which were essential to freedom. The courage necessary for emancipation must guide the design of a curriculum which will serve the continuing need of full freedom.

## Endorsement - Ministry of Education, Youth and Information



*Honourable Fayval Williams MP,  
Minister of Education, Youth and  
Information*

students of the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts - good afternoon.

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to join us this afternoon for this inaugural Edward Seaga Distinguished Lecture. Thank you also to the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts for the invitation to participate in this seminal event in honour of our former Prime Minister who played such a pivotal role in the development of the performing arts in Jamaica, particularly in our schools. I am therefore honoured on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information to endorse the launch of this distinguished lecture series.

It is indeed fitting that as we observe Heritage Week that we should turn our attention to the role that the arts have played in strengthening our identity as Jamaicans, and that in so doing we should recall the Honourable Edward Seaga's commitment to this area of national life.

As a social anthropologist by training, Mr. Seaga developed a keen interest in Jamaica's folklore and traditions from his early studies in pre-independent Jamaica, and worked assiduously in succeeding decades to see that the information gleaned from his studies was archived and shared through the establishment of the Jamaica Journal, a publication of the Institute of Jamaica, and also popularized among the wider citizenry.

Let me begin by acknowledging senior officers of the Edna Manley College – Principal, Vice Principals, College Orator, the Honourable Olivia Grange, Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Mrs. Carla Seaga and members of the Seaga family, faculty and

He was particularly interested in preserving the authenticity of our traditional folk forms, seeing in them more than a performance for entertainment, but a vehicle through which Jamaicans could become more aware of the root, meaning an intent of the rituals being staged. He also identified the transformative power of the arts in education and in communities, and this certainly helped to fuel the national festival movement through which so many of our young people developed the discipline that comes from regular training and performance, and who went on to distinguish themselves in various fields in Jamaica and overseas.

His work led to the formation of the Jamaican Folk Singers. And as a founding patron of the National Dance Theatre Company, his insights and guidance helped to authenticate the movements and sounds that have so delighted thousands of Jamaicans, and our overseas guests for decades.

The Tivoli Gardens Dance Troupe which grew out of the dance group at the Tivoli Gardens Comprehensive High School located in the constituency he served for over 40 years, is well noted for its high standards of excellence. Your theme "Normalizing the role of arts education in national reconstruction" is therefore quite appropriate.

I recognize, of course, that in many ways we will be challenged this year by the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the limitations that observing the related protocols will cause. Yet, we can still enjoy the performances of our singers, dancers and drummers through audio and video. The Honourable Edward Seaga's contribution to national development through social welfare and economic programmes, and the awakening of our cultural awareness are well documented. I am sure this will be articulated in this inaugural lecture and the years to come.

Congratulations once again to the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts for organizing this important event.

Thank you.



## Endorsement - Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport



*Delivered by  
Honourable Alando Terrelonge, MP  
Minister of State- Ministry of Culture, Gender,  
Entertainment and Sport*

On behalf of the government of Jamaica, The Hon. Olivia Grange, Minister of Culture, Gender, Culture Entertainment and Sport, I wish to commend the leadership of the Edna Manley College for the staging of this the Edward Seaga Distinguished Lecture. Through it, the Arts and Culture fraternity can safeguard and promote the legacy of one of Jamaica's most distinguished sons, the godfather of Jamaica's art and culture, the Most Honourable Edward Phillip George Seaga.

As an institution that benefitted from his enduring patronage and generous oversight, your decision to stage this event annually, during heritage week is indeed fitting.

From his earliest insertion in the political life of Jamaica, Edward Seaga has always been concerned by what he saw as two Jamaicans. For him, the discrepancy between the haves and have nots needed to be addressed frontally in order for the economy to work for the prosperity of all our people. Mr. Seaga was conscious of the need for an enabling environment for creativity and innovation and economic success. As such, he championed Jamaica's most formidable experiment in urban transformation by converting 'the slums of back a wall' into the creatively sizzling Tivoli Gardens, with a dance troupe that would be the standard

bearer for outstanding talent in the Jamaican arts and culture fraternity.

Mr. Seaga was the master craftsman who helped us understand and appreciate the expansiveness of our cultural landscape. Through him, the Jamaica persona gained insight into the dignity and integrity of their creative imagination. He understood that the culture of the people, engaged through the transfer of oral and other elements of their glorious heritage, and traditions must serve to bolster their cultural identity while also providing real opportunities to enhance their lives and livelihood.

Mr. Seaga was convinced that the Jamaican people, once supported, would be able to create new ways of thinking, being and doing that would redound to their social and economic prosperity. In a tribute to Mr. Seaga at the time of his passing, the Most Honourable Prime Minister Andrew Holness expressed the following words, "In many ways he introduced Jamaicans to their own culture, brought it out of the dark and obscure into the light of mainstream to stand side by side with colonial culture. Thereby giving us a definition of who we are as a people and getting us to accept what we create as being valuable". Indeed, the greatest homage we can pay to this phenomenal, creative manager and cultural anthropologist, is to recognize and advance the role of arts and culture in national reconstruction.

To do this, we must reflect the confidence in the people's creations and traditions. We must reach out to the arts and cultural standard bearers while giving prominence to the guardians of our culture. We owe a great deal to Mr. Seaga for highlighting and promoting the artistic genus of our great revivalist, Kapo. Similarly, Mr. Seaga gave great support to Queenie and enabled her to carry out the rituals of Kumina at Jamaica House.

Through him, national institutions were created such as the Jamaica Festival Commission now JCDC, the HEART Trust NTA, and a host of others whose role was to engage and advance the creative offerings of our people. Ultimately, Mr. Seaga understood that in this way, the people would be able to enhance their personal income and the country reap economic benefits, even as we seek to find new ways of pursuing our artistic and cultural heritage during this COVID-19 pandemic.

As the College designs its curricula surrounding arts education, we must assure our students of real possibilities for commercial gain from their talent. This means putting instruments and programmes in place to ensure that there is positive correlation between the quality of the artistic product, and its viability for commercial exploitation and income-generation.

For the College to engage its crucial role in national reconstruction, it must continually develop persons who are masters of their craft whose creativity and innovation may cause them to be desired in other industries for which creative design would be an asset. In other words, arts education must engage the current realities of the relevant creative industries. It must seek partnership with the most powerful exponents of the various art forms, and ultimately, it must track global trends in order to establish a presence in the global marketplace.

Mr. Seaga's establishment of the national festival song and pop and variety competition lead to the emergence of power-houses like Toots and the Maytals, Desmond Dekker and so many more. Arts education for national reconstruction must, therefore, contemplate the impact of a partnership between the School of Dance and the dancehall industry, in which the school, like the dancer known as Bogle and presently the Ravers Crew create new dance forms to support the music industry. Arts education for national reconstruction must place students in good stead to carve out their place within the fullness of the creative sector.

For arts education to be effective it must also reflect constructs of the creative industries focusing on copyright, technical arts etc. Arts education must also allow students to freely develop their creative genius while nurturing a deep interest in issues of social criticism and critical consciousness. It must offer students the opportunity to consider the role of power and authority, both in their art practice and in a wider social context. This is the link between conventional approaches to teaching and the artistic approach, which premises the ideology of free artistic social reconstruction as a tool for nation building. At its core, an arts education curriculum should also focus on the creative process that gives students a cause for exploring knowledge and envision what a new world could be.

To do this, the College must therefore forge a more dynamic union between the artistic and the

commercial. It must ensure that students while still in College may earn from their talent. It must consequently align itself with industries that, thanks to Mr. Seaga, have proven themselves as platforms for income generation, poverty reduction and wealth creation.

There are many great Jamaican cultural icons who are able to translate their artistic expressions to financial success while adding to the national discourse. Cultural icons like Bob Marley and Louise Bennett used creative expression as a bridge between the world of art and culture and nation building. They focussed on self-empowerment, socio-political commentary while connecting persons across the region, and the globe with their wide international appeal.

In immortalizing the words of Marcus Garvey, Bob Marley taught "emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our mind, have no fear for autonomic energy cause none of them can stop the time". Miss Lou, as we fondly call our mother of culture, by the use of her artistic expression through poetry, helped our people to understand and accept who and what we are. Popular reggae artist Chronixx sings "they never told us that black is beautiful. They never told us that black is beauty. This is not a racist song. This is a song to tell the children where their race is from. Preacher is preaching wonder who taught him to preach. Teacher is teaching where did he get his degree. Now it is no mystery who taught us black history".

In closing, the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport assures the College of its commitment to ensure that the human capital created here will find its rightful place in programmes for national reconstruction. It is about product definition and packaging; about taking advance of international treaties and agreements signed by the government of Jamaica. It is about advocacy and lobbying to ensure that all take advance of financial instruments that will benefit the industry. Ultimately, it is about a new way of teaching, a new way of envisioning arts and culture as a teaching module right here at the Edna Manley College. As Mr. Seaga noted "the unequivocal belief in the talent and the creativity of our people, is but one keyway of ensuring nation building".

I thank you.

## Presenter: Michael Holgate



Michael Holgate has spent over two decades exploring the world of theatre, dance, music, film and writing. He holds a BA (Literatures in English) and an MPhil (Cultural Studies) from the University of the West Indies. He is currently the Head of the Philip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts at the UWI and also Artistic Director of The ASHE Company. His body of work includes 'Garvey The Musical' (theatre) and a new TV series - CHILL. Holgate's novel is entitled 'Night Of The Indigo' and he is

co-author of the self-help manual 'Your Empowerment GPA.'

Mr. Holgate is also a part time lecturer and external examiner at the Edna Manley College. He is a prolific creative artist and is consistently produces works in multiple disciplines. For screen he has worked as performance coach and audition judge with the Digicel Rising Stars. His forays in film include the featured role of 'Bobo' in the 2004 Jamaican Film ONE LOVE. Holgate has also written scripts and choreographed for numerous Jamaica Independence Grand Gala productions.





The Lecture delivered by Michael Holgate

## “Normalising The Role Of Arts Education In National Reconstruction”

### IRONIC CONTEXT

There is great dramatic irony in the year 2020. The eye doctors have always told us that 2020 is perfect vision, and yet in this numerically symbolic year 2020, so much has happened to tear down all our preconceptions, disturb the world and in particular the arts world. Is it possible that this is the ideal time for a revolution? Or better, yet a national reconstruction? Black Lives Matter has found a vitality and life that might not have been possible without these special 2020 covid times. Can we trigger a rebirth of our arts world, and the creative world in a way that brings the kind of value, vision and transformation that we have always longed for nationally and regionally?

### MEANING-MAKING

As we examine the topic before us we need to centre ourselves in some of the conventional meanings of some critical terms if we are to make meaning of the full implications for the arts and any special responsibilities which those means confer on the artists.

On one hand, there seems to be a call “to make conform to” or “reduce to a norm or standard”. At the same time other meanings such as “to make normal” or “to bring or restore to a normal condition” imply an existing state of abnormality. In accepting synonyms such as standardize and systematize I also want to use the word empower. Let us consider how we might bring the power of normalcy and acceptability in the use of arts in national reconstruction through arts education.

Who are we to attempt this? How dare we think we have a central role as artists?  
We dare because we must. Who are artists if not

visionaries who can pluck ideas and concepts from the ethers and concretize them in a way that is thoroughly understandable, valuable and applicable to this and any situation? And here I refer to the power of the arts to galvanize people to move. This includes the power of the arts to transform and itself, to educate. We must also factor in the inherent, functional, organizing principle in the concept of aesthetics, around which all artistic endeavors revolve.

### LEGACY AS RESPONSIBILITY

If we should call upon the invaluable and unsurpassed movement of Marcus Garvey we would need to ask ourselves what is that movement without the use of the arts for organizational purposes. Can there be any assessment which does not include the ritual fervor in the pomp and pageantry and ceremony in not just the sending of a message but the being of a message? Our dramatist friends will tell us clearly that the whole point of being on stage is being on stage. The act and practice of being on stage is the practice of living and being truth. That is a major part of the role of the artist.

So how do we normalize this for national reconstruction? First of all, anybody did tell we say di nation wah reconstruct? No, but we are artists. Nobody nuh need fi tell we dat. It is part and parcel of our role and our job. It is our responsibility. In this, allow me to suggest three guiding words which represent what I am calling tools of empowerment. Conroy B. Wilson and I wrote a book entitled Your Empowerment GPA and in it we list Clarity, Responsibility and Courage as Tools of Empowerment.

As practitioners we must seek clarity on what we mean when we say arts education for national reconstruction. We must understand and accept responsibility as artists and educators. Critically, where do we find the courage to do what needs to be done?

This leads us to the question of we make the role of the arts normative: so normal as part of our education systems, that it has an empowering effect on our nation, effectively impacting national

development in a number of fundamental areas. These include: Cultural Industries, Creative Enterprise, Community Building, Crime and violence, Social development, Civic Pride and ultimately Brand Jamaica.

## TAKE BOLD ACTION

Part of the challenge is how to standardize and systematize at the same time. These Covid times have forcibly demonstrated that Education, for example, needs new channels. This cannot just be limited to virtual learning platforms. Covid, too, will end but how can we use this time to take a new look at missed opportunities for Education, and normalize and systematize it, using the arts?

Motivational speaker Les Brown has been quoted as saying, "Opportunity does not knock at every door. Opportunity stands by silently waiting for you to recognise it."

I want to suggest an example of an opportunity which I believe has been waiting silently to be recognized in order to illustrate what I believe the path to normalizing the arts for National reconstruction could be. I reference the arts celebrations as expressed through the Independence Grand Gala and JCDC festival of the arts. They are not just events to be celebrated for the fun or one-day, one-week wonders, or as memory boosts for Jamaicans, only to be forgotten the next day or the next week. Instead, they constitute our primary emancipatory cultural events having potential as living, breathing, moving arts education opportunities. They have potential as monuments to social transformation.

Why do we miss the boat on Grand Gala and its possibility to unite communities and strengthen Jamaican creative and cultural industry while building youth empowerment and a sophisticated culturally aware citizenry? So whenever I am asked to work on the Grand Gala, I'm working daily on choreography with youths from Tivoli, Spanish Town, White Marl, Windward Road, Dunoon, Ardenne, Kingston Technical and other similar communities in full creative integration with other full communities.

Weeks of investing creative capacities, youth enthusiasm, love of country and focused energy culminate in one grand gala with no similar activity for perhaps another whole year. Grand Gala

represents a powerful opportunity as a civilizing force, bigger than mere crime fighting. The fact that crime itself is very often just the ill effects of our own failures to educate and provide resources for the very communities that supply the participants for this annual event demands urgent attention. These communities are at the core of brand Jamaica. They are source of reggae, dancehall, mento and jerk pork.

No examination of this potential can be complete without asking, why then do we have the annual controversy about the cost of the Grand Gala? I believe that mostly the complaint about the money spent is not because it is too much for such a grand spectacle but because too little comes out of it after the euphoria of "the dancing boys and girls and fireworks". When the last firelight explodes in the night, it does not end with the young people dancing on the field being more educated or even aware of anything beyond what dance they are in or what costume is next.

## MAKE THE GALA GRAND

What would be really grand is if this experience reflected a Jamaica that is, in the words of Rex Nettleford, "cultured within its own culture," a Jamaica that is examining and developing itself through the arts as education and practice.

This activity happens to be a time of recognition and celebration of the events and people that represent who we are as a nation. The young people who are the primary participants are in contact with some of the most talented creative thinkers in Jamaica. The choreographers, directors, scriptwriters, marshals, teachers and coordinators are part of a large community, pointed towards an ultimate creative product. It lacks systematized teaching about the arts or attempts at development of an industry which could benefit the participants, their families, communities and the nation. Indeed, there is an opportunity begging for this one-off event to become an industry-wide transformation tool.

I am positing that the structure is there. What is not there is a system. The norm is, come to grand gala and dance for a couple weeks and get patty and juice when it's available, then big show then go home till next time. This is itself is a good example of the mis/treatment of artists which also must be remedied as part of the normalizing of arts education for national reconstruction. The location

of the Grand Gala in the National Stadium in Kingston, requiring persons to make the journey from rural communities if they desire to experience it up close and personal highlights the fact that there is no attempt to expand the arts experience into rural parishes and develop the arts there as well.

No claim is being made here that any of this would be easy, but the setting up of systems to support what deem to be important does not need to be easy. They just need to be done.

## CENTRING ARTS INSTITUTIONS

There is nothing like the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, JCDC in the entire Caribbean. It builds discipline of the arts into our young people but how can it be resourced to build our young people into the system as valuable resources for their communities and the nation? Not everyone who participates in the competitive festival events of the JCDC can, will or needs to become an artist but those who want to be, should see pathways and have routes of progression.

Seen as empowering, civilizing mechanisms, these need not only be developed by or for artists. They need the input of policy specialists and technocrats from a cross section of industries. This means injecting arts education into all our other systems for the purpose of creative thinking, innovation, leadership and visioning. This would benefit our scientists, our politicians, our businesses and our educators.

We may not be a cultural super-state as some have claimed. But we may just be pretty close. That artistry and creative ingenuity that flows through our veins is a real thing. Vision – that's what that is. It is the call to action of our National Anthem, the product of a creative mind. Not only does it speak to how highly spiritual Jamaicans are and choose to be, but also to how intricately interwoven our arts are, with our spiritual self; with our political selves; with our social identity.

## THE ARTISTS AS NATION-BUILDERS

The creation of the National Anthem, a veritable prayer of inspiration for the nation, also speaks to the multifunctional, polyrhythmic role of the arts and art the heavy responsibilities of arts educators.

Some of these include:

1. Cultural analysts
2. Social architects
3. Entertainers
4. Advocates
5. Nation-Building Engineers

We need to see our artists in these roles again. Marcus Garvey wrote so many plays and songs – nation builder; Louise Bennett Coverly – nation builder ; Ranny Williams – nation builder; Rex Nettleford – nation builder. It is a long list that we as artist must keep populating. However, we cannot continue to pretend that the Nation that we have been building collectively, has only those building blocks that are empowering to us or even represent us at our best. We have been layering on European foundations. Our education system, was initially built by Europe. This is also true of our political system and our justice system Specifically, our policing was built by Europe to keep enslaved and formerly enslaved population in check, pursuing agendas not of their making.

In fact, it is true to say that many of our systems were initially engineered to reinforce a slave mentality in our people. Equally true is that much of the uprooting, replanting and rebuilding has been accomplished through the arts. Let us not forget that our theatre and the arts also have European foundations, but our artists have done a wonderful job (though not perfect) of reconstruction. We indigenized our theatre; we mek patois popular; we interrogate the conscience of the society and where we find it wanting, we say so strongly with music, dance drama and visual arts. That power can and must be harnessed for every industry and every Ministry of Government.

## BRING THE VISION TO REALITY

Of course, this is a vision. We must now move beyond knowing the value of our arts and culture, to the point of using it to enrich and prosper Jamaicans. Where would countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia be if they only recognized the value of their oil resources but refused to put the infrastructure and investments in place to make it work for them? Or what if they only put lip-service into it and allowed the few who had interest in it to 'do a ting'. people.

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE NON-PHYSICAL

One challenge relates to the fact that culture and some aspects of the arts, in many ways are such non-physical products that many people have yet to learn how to treat them or invest in them. All around the globe, people are searching for renewable sources of energy and income. Bauxite can be used up in time, but the creative imagination of our people is inexhaustible. There might be equally beautiful beaches in other parts of the world to excite tourist interest, but the arts and cultural phenomena that is Jamaica has captured the imagination of the world and won't let it go. Our economic progress has not equalled our cultural development. What we must ask ourselves is "What does it take to fulfill on Jamaica's potential as a global arts and cultural power house?"

Another challenge specific to arts in education relates to a saying that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Local and international recognition could easily be read power and functionality. The truth however, is that a more organized, systematized, thoughtful and well developed approach is necessary to strengthen not hurt or destroy.

The oil-producing countries of the world became stronger and wealthier when they applied useful policy and infrastructural mechanisms to support their industries. I like the informal term used for oil as a metaphor for us as artists in Jamaica and for the Jamaican culture – BLACK GOLD. No less should be done for Jamaica's cultural 'black gold' – our arts.

## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP

This is a clear area for the responsibility of leadership from the community of artists. My definition for responsibility is simply "Owning It." All of it. Owning ourselves as artists. Owning ourselves as educators. Doing what needs to be done.

It is incumbent on us to take the responsibility to create that Jamaica where "creativity and the arts are at the forefront of development."

We have a responsibility to empower the people of Jamaica to being a demonstration of the enlightened use of the arts in the development of social and physical infrastructure, wealth, human

equality, wholesome governance and a happy, prosperity-minded society.

We have a responsibility to explore our Jamaican and Caribbean Culture in all its permutations in fulfilling on that role of arts education in national reconstruction: – Arts in Development; Arts as Research and Exposition; Arts as Expression.

We have a responsibility for the Gross National Empowerment of our people.

## THE COURAGE TO DO: The Progression Route

As arts practitioners, we know well the attributes of being. As arts educators, we must find the courage to do, to act both inside and outside the traditional education system. According to Les Brown, "Courage and faith are twins and faith that hasn't been tested can't be trusted."

So many of us have big ideas and equally big disappointments with our arts community and those who should be its stewards. All that disappointment was just the testing of our courage. We must continue to find that courage as arts educators to leap with faith and the intentionality in:

1. Training artists for careers in the arts
2. Using the valuable learnings of arts education as an intervention tool in communities for social reconstruction (arts for development; edutainment; drama in education)
3. Infiltrating the education system as far as non-arts-based careers are concerned and show them the value of and the opportunities in the arts
4. Systematizing national arts-based events, activities, celebrations as long-term arts education programmes, aimed at social, financial and community development
5. Creating mechanisms and structures so that financiers, bankers and others can choose investment in the arts as viable projects

This is but part of the normalizing and systematizing of the arts for national reconstruction. As it relates to arts education it must be supported by the Creation of a clear progression route for performing artists in Jamaica that will address the

viability of a career in the arts to parents, teachers and the youth themselves. I am proposing that this progression route should include not just the institutions but the consideration of the support mechanisms necessary to successful navigation by the artists as well as the viability and maintenance of the milestones of that route.

i. Let us assume the beginning point as our High schools and participation in choirs, bands, drama clubs and organized arts activities a number of support mechanisms become obvious.

We need to build the capacity of school administrators, as well as the guidance counselors to identify and support students with a high level of creative intelligence. This includes eliminating the is still too prevalent tendency to send so called 'smart' students into the sciences or business even when they show great interest or talent as artists. It is important to develop the interests in the schools for participating fully in the CXC Music and the Theatre Arts exams to enable students to practical link artistic proficiency with academic excellence

ii. JCDC competitions are major performing arts outlets for students. They provide a rich avenue for scouting talents at all levels of the school system who can then be shown the viability of the arts as a career.

iii. Linkages to groups such A Little People and Teen players/Ashe/Stella Maris would then function to introduce performing arts aspirants to what it means to be involved in the arts as commercial and business ventures.

iv. The Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts is the clearly the next step on this route. For the College to function as integral to the process it must address internal challenges. Why do so many of its students speak of a lack of opportunities after completing their studies? What is its role beyond education towards certification in engaging its students with the ever evolving and dynamic arts industries en route to their graduation? What is its role in the educating of school administrations as indicated above so that the College itself is involved in a structured and deliberate at this foundation level of the progression?

v. A Mentorship programme for artists is indispensable to the process.

vi. Career placement opportunities locally and internationally beyond mere internships

## **THE COURAGE TO DO: Supporting The Progression**

It is important that the linkages and partnerships be developed to support this route. Critical to this support are activities which will increase the appreciation of the general public for the value of arts in their daily lives, thus enhancing their inclinations to support arts education.

### **Innovative Show Venues**

For the public to understand and support the arts they must given access. There are underutilized resources which could readily make this possible. Numerous heritage sites across Jamaica could easily become the grounds for showcasing while generating revenues and bringing performances to rural areas and reducing the focus on Kingston for cultural events and activities.

### **Practice Venues**

The needs for investment in practice venues then becomes obvious.

### **International Outreach**

We need to develop a credible booking agency network so that we can take advantage of the literally thousands of festivals that take place throughout Europe alone each year. There is also the largely untapped market of Africa/South Africa/ India/Asia. Already a basis exists for building on the relationships which performing arts organizations throughout Jamaica have established with various promoters throughout the world including our Caribbean neighbours.

### **University and College Research**

This is an invaluable tool for development of the creative/cultural industry. Market research and other types of explorations from credible institutions must be fully incorporated into the process of development.



## Media Support

It is important to keep the idea of the performing arts as a viable career path in the forefront of people's mind. We must get some media partners and develop the campaign necessary that will keep the public engaged with the issues and motivate them to actively lend their support.

## CONCLUSION

This preliminary discussion in no way provides a full description of what is possible. In fact it is just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Arts education is truly a large and unwieldy concept to grapple with, but if any society in the world is ready and capable of tackling it, Jamaica is that society. Jamaica can be an example to the world of the intelligent and powerful use of arts towards the development of a Great Nation.

We obviously need a comprehensive cultural policy.

## Discussants



**Bernard Jankee**

Bernard Jankee has been the director of the African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica/Jamaica Memory Bank since 1995. He is a graduate of the University of the West Indies and the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He leads a team committed to fulfilling the mandate of the ACIJ/JMB to research, document and make available critical material related to the important contribution of African cultural retention to the Jamaican ethos.



**Sophia McKain**

Sophia McKain, graduate of the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts is the Chair of the Education Board of Studies and the Head of Department of Dance Education at the School of Dance. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Performance and Choreography, EMCVPA, a Masters of Arts in Dance Education, University of North Carolina, Greensboro and a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from the University of the West Indies, Mona.

**Nickiesha Jones**

Nickiesha is a third year student at the EMCVPA pursuing studies in dance education. A former pre-school teacher, Nickiesha has taught dance at a number of institutions. She is the recipient of several awards from the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, including Most Outstanding Dance Teacher and Most Outstanding Community Group. The latter was for the participation of Laud Dance Ministry of which she is the founder.



## The Manchioneal Cultural Group

This group from Portland is led by Richard Derby, a teacher at the Manchioneal All Age School and a graduate of the Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts. The group was formed in the late 1970s and perhaps, holds the record as the longest performing traditional folk group in Jamaica. Their members range from 10 – 60 years old and are usually persons from the Manchioneal community and surrounding districts.

The group has consistently won trophies and medals for the top traditional community group in the National Festival of Arts competitions organised by the Jamaica Cultural Development Competition, JCDC. In addition to performing, they conduct workshops for institutions such as the University of the West Indies School of International Studies, the Philip Sherlock Centre for the Arts, the Tourism Products Development Corporation, TPDCo, and the Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts as well as the JCDC.

They have represented Jamaica at a Global Youth Forum in Colorado USA, Guantanamo Bay and a Youth Rally in Cuba with items drawn from their wide repertoire of traditional folk forms. These include Bruckins Party, Dinki Mini, Gerreh, Kumina, John Canoe, Maypole and Quadrille.

## Bruckins Party (Jamaica)

*This information, provided by Patrick Earle, Dance Officer at the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission, former student and lecturer of the EMCVPA and resource person for students undertaking studies in Theatre Arts.*

### The Traditional and Elaborate Version of Bruckins Party:

The traditional Bruckins Party which took place up to the turn of the 20th century was an elaborate presentation. It extended over two days and included processions through the village during the day, with entertainment on the night of July 31 in a specially constructed booth. The booth was usually made out of bamboo and palm leaves and was decorated with flowers and brightly coloured objects. Two thrones - appropriately decorated in gold or blue and red - were positioned inside the booth for the Queens to sit on after displaying their dancing skills and courtly costumes.

### Elements of the Bruckins Party of the early 20th Century onwards:

1) Tea Meeting featuring The Queen Party and Showbread auctions: According to Mr. Richard Derby the leader of the Manchioneal Bruckins Group:

It begins with the welcome and outline by the promoter. The first segment would be a tea meeting where persons would be asked to perform items which were requested by someone who would put up a certain amount of money and call for a specific person and item. If the person does not wish to do this item they would have to pay more than the person had put up. Items could be stopped at anytime by anyone paying to do so. To restart would attract a higher fee. The items were usually quite comical and were often mimicry of the slave-masters' dress, speech and actions.

Following this was the bidding to unveil the showbread. Members of the audience would bid

to have the bread uncovered. One member would bid say "Two shillings to unveil the bread" while another put up two and a half shillings for it to remain covered. This would continue until a high bid to unveil was not challenged. The bread was then unveiled by the highest bidder who would get the first slice. Slices were then sold to members of the audience. This was done because a secret object such as a corn grain or a button was baked inside the bread. The person who found this object would be the winner of the gate prize. The bidding to the ex enslaved Africans was symbolic of the bidding while they were on the auction block. This time however they were the masters (black) and the object under bid for was white.

2) The Bruckins Party was a rivalry between Red and Blue Sets accompanied by their entourage and led by their respective Kings and Queens. Tea Meeting activities are no longer as common in Jamaica as they used to be up to the 1980s but Bruckins Party still survives in the parish of Portland.

### According to Derby

Round about midnight the contest started. The chairman for each group took turns to introduce each set of character before they appeared and at the same time to criticize their opponent. As they were popular characters, at times they would delay their entrance while the crowd waited in eager anticipation. The singers would then have to sing the following song;

*" Where must I go fe go find my noble chairman  
Him gone away to a foreign lan  
Kneel down bow down bow a little longer  
Him gone away to a foreign lan  
Solicitor ambassador, Where can I find dem  
Dem gone away to a foreign lan "*

The following song would then herald his entry

*Oh mi noble chairman  
Come step mek mi lady see*

Usually the courtiers were first to enter to songs such as;

*Recreation around the throne  
Descent marching around the throne  
Or*

*August mawnin come again dis is de year of  
jubilee  
Jubilee Jubilee  
Queen Victoria set we free*

Their mission was to make the audience aware that the royal party would soon arrive. They would dance around the throne while they entertain the audience. Staff sergeants were the next to enter ensuring that everything was in check for the royal party.

*Grandaughter da march  
Oh in a beautiful style*

This song brought the grandchildren on bringing some glamour and royalty in their richly decorated costumes.

*Mi queen a come in  
oh in a beautiful style* Audio online track

The high moment was the arrival of the queen and king. The queen entered with her face covered in a veil and was escorted to her throne by the king. Next the courtiers had to entertain the queen as she sat on the throne. They danced with each other moving as instructed by the lead vocalist. Usually the Kings battle is next. They face each other with swords drawn and try to make strikes at each other body while dipping, twisting and gliding to the beat of the drums.

The chairmen make their speeches to introduce each set of characters before they arrive of perform a special segment. The audience would normally make gleeful sounds are hit sticks on the bamboo posts of the booths in response to the comical speeches and to give support to their favorite side.

All this time the queens' faces are covered with veils and the promoter then announces the fee for each queen to be unveiled. The chairmen would try to make speeches to encourage their supporters to come forward with their money. The following

song is song during the collection of the fee.

*The King and Queen arrive  
And nuh money naw show  
Throw money throw  
Mek de Queen vanga show*

The men who are usually quite high in spirits from alcohol consumption boastfully and hurriedly bring their cash forward as they all want to see the queen's vanga. This is her petticoat (undergarment) which was richly decorated with sequins. Once the sum is collected the veil is lifted and she dances and raises her skirt slightly to reveal the vanga as she turns.

The queens try to out-dance each other and it is not unusual to see one dancing with a glass of water on her head as she bends lower and lower to the ground without spilling its contents.

The kings also dance with the queens at this time. He boastfully guides her around the throne and shows her off to the audience before teaming up with her as they "cut their caper" a term used for their freestyle dancing to demonstrate their skills.

The grandchildren are also featured at this time as the try to pattern their elders.

By this time it would almost be dawn and the party rests as the judges tally the points. These points are based on the crowd's response as well as the skill of the dancers and chairmen. When the announcement was made, the winning side would rejoice in dance then sit at the table and eat while the losing side entertained them. At sunrise they would march back to their villages singing this song.

*De day dah dawn  
De day de pon dawn  
Hear how de cock a crow  
Pick up yu thrown and go  
O day deh pon dawn*

The winning side would be hosts to the next year's contest. The ending at this time allowed them enough time to go home and rest for the street dances and parades later in the afternoon to mark "Fus- A -August"



## CHARACTERS



Queens

This is the lead figure of the party representing Queen Victoria who was queen of England at the time of emancipation. She is usually the best dancer and demonstrates her skills at the craft when in rivalry with the other queen. She is treated with respect by the other dancers



Kings

He accompanies the queen and plays a less significant role. He dances with her during her moments of highlight. He also engages the opposing king in a battle with swords.



Grand daughters/Grand sons

These are like junior queens and kings and share relative spotlight.





They usually dance alongside their elder counterparts.



**Courtiers:** These are like the queen's maids. In earlier days they were of both sexes. Nowadays they are called set-girls because only females are seen in that role. They form a party to herald the queen and entertain her.

**Bruckins Party Music:**

Bruckins Party dancers are accompanied by singers and musicians



playing military drum sets of European origin. These drum sets form part of many of the traditional musical ensembles throughout the Caribbean region. In the drum set are a double headed bass drum played with a stick in a fairly slow march-like pattern, a rattling drum played with two small slender sticks alternating between syncopated and triplet patterns and a bamboo fife. A pair of shakkas (shakers) made from calabash filled with seeds is usually played by the lead singer.





## Production Team

Dr. Amina Blackwood Meeks, College Orator, Producer

Dr. Keino Senior - Logistics

Mrs. Beverley Campbell Green - Display

Mr. Kamau Williams - Videographer & Editor

Mr. Dwight Roper - Lighting

Ms. Abena Chevannes - Production Coordinator

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