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Music as Sound, Music as Archive: Performing Creolization in Trinidad

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This article positions performance as a key concept in understanding creolization. In doing so, it situates music as both sound and archive in analyses of Trinidadian tassa drumming, soca, and chutney-soca. Musical analysis provides useful insights into the processes of creolization, while revealing colonial and postcolonial relationships between groups of people that give shape and meaning to the music, past and present. I draw on notions of music as sound to further analyze the forces that work to control the Trinidadian soundscape by promoting or marginalizing musical styles in an effort to shape musical production according to the ideal of creole culture. I conclude by suggesting that the conventional notion of the archive has from its very beginnings been connected with elite desires to enumerate and historicize positions of power. In this context, musical performances analyzed in this study emerge as subaltern archival practices that run alongside mainstream archives and popular interpretations of history. In listening to Trinidadian music as sound and archive, I trace present and potential social structures while providing new ways of thinking about creolization as performance.

Keywords: Indian Caribbean, tassa, soca, chutney-soca, creolization, performance

Este artículo posiciona el performance como un concepto clave para entender la creolización. Al hacerlo, sitúa la música como sonido y archivo en los análisis del tamborileo tassa, la soca y la soca-chutney de Trinidad. El análisis musical proporciona información útil sobre los procesos de creolización a la vez que revela relaciones coloniales y poscoloniales entre los grupos de personas que dan forma y significado a la música del pasado y del presente. Utilizo las nociones de la música como sonido para analizar más a fondo las fuerzas que se imponen para controlar el paisaje sonoro trinitario al promover o marginar ciertos estilos musicales en un esfuerzo por dar forma a la producción musical de acuerdo con el ideal de la cultura criolla. Concluyo al sugerir que la noción convencional del archivo ha dependido desde sus inicios de los deseos de una élite de enumerar y mantener sus posiciones de poder. En este contexto, los performances musicales analizados en este estudio emergen como prácticas de archivo subalternas que se ejecutan a la par de los archivos principales y las interpretaciones populares de la historia. Al escuchar la música trinitaria como sonido y archivo, trazo las estructuras sociales presentes y potenciales, proporcionando nuevas maneras de pensar en la creolización como performance.

Palabras clave: Caribe indio, tassa, soca, soca-chutney, creolización, performance

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In 2007, I was invited to a Hindu wedding in Aranguez, Trinidad. I came early on Sunday morning well before the guests had arrived. The wedding maro,[1] *strung with hundreds of flowers, stood at the center of a sea of empty plastic chairs while the DJ played nostalgic Bollywood film songs. The scent of wedding foods—curry channa, dhal, pholourie, pumpkin, curry mango, buss up shut—was blown about the place by an army of oscillating fans meant to push back the sweltering morning heat. Stopping to look, smell, and listen, my friend turned to me, stretching his arms out to take it all in, and said, "Look! It's India right here in Trinidad!" A while later the DJ started thumping the latest chutney tunes, periodically supplanted by soca and reggae blasting from speakers somewhere down the narrow village streets. In the early afternoon, all this was in turn squelched by the ear-splitting, chaotic sound of two opposing tassa drumming bands signaling to everyone in the neighborhood that the wedding had begun. After hours of eating, talking, listening, and making new friends, I walked back up the hill and hailed a maxi to take me home. A compact Hyundai van pulled up, decked out with purple velvet upholstery and a huge decal that read* اَللهُ أَكْبَرُ[2] *covering the rear window. The driver's impressive sound system blared a mixtape of Carnival-season favorites and American pop hits as we bounced down the Eastern Main Road toward Tunapuna.*

Music as Sound

I begin with a vignette detailing my experience as a listener. Listening is an exercise in hearing and perceiving sound. While sounds can be measured, scientifically reduced to particular frequencies or vibrations, sounds are not things. At least not in the sense that a pencil or a cat is a thing. Rather sounds are perhaps best regarded as events that are set in motion by some action, have duration, then end (O'Callaghan 2007, 57–59). Importantly, sounds cannot be easily contained; they reverberate beyond their source, mix with other sounds, set other vibrations in motion. And while the vibrations of a sound are temporary, our individual and collective memories ensure their relevance and resonance through time. Noise is a special category of sound, namely "sounds we have been trained to ignore" according to Murray Schafer (1969, 11). Salomé Voegelin puts it another way: "Sound is noisy when it deafens my ears to anything but itself" (2010, 44). Noise need not be loud, but it is by definition intrusive. In her astute history of automobile sound design, Karin Bijsterveld (2015) points out how car manufactures have worked since the 1920s to make automobiles an "acoustic cocoon" where riders have become increasingly isolated from the exterior environment. This cocooning is also evident on a broader social level, evidenced by effective soundproofing in modern buildings (Crocker 2007) and, more importantly, through community noise abatement ordinances (Coelho 2007) that frequently work to control unwanted "noise" by regulating the activities of relatively powerless groups of people (Godsil 2006, 520–22). Schafer rather innocuously declares that "modern man is at last becoming concerned to clean the sludge out of his ears and regain the talent for clairaudience—clean hearing" (1977, 11). But who decides what noise is and at what cost? As Jacques Attali observes: "our science has always desired to monitor, measure, abstract, and castrate meaning… forgetting that life is full of noise" (2012, 29).

[1] A maro is a canopy supported by four poles under which the main rituals of the Hindu wedding ceremony take place. It is alternately known as a *mandap* or simply "bamboo" since the frame has traditionally been constructed from bamboo poles. For example, it is common to hear of couples being married "under the bamboo" in times past.
[2] "Allāhu ʾakbar" transliterated from Arabic. This common phrase in Islam means "God is great."

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Music is another special category of sound. Just as sound cannot be easily confined in space, so too does music actually and metaphorically reverberate beyond its source, mix with other musics, and set new musics in motion. Where sound resonates according to the laws of physics, music's perception and reception operate within personal and social realms. Jerrold Levinson makes a distinction between what "is" music (in the conventional sense) and what "can be regarded" as music: "any sounds can be listened to as if they were music… one can transform (just about) any sonic environment into an occasion for receptive awareness" (2011, 275). Birds chirping, whales singing, workers jackhammering, industrial plants whirring; these are music only when we as humans think of them as musical. It is people—that is we, not Mother Nature—who make music, and we do so according to certain social norms (Feld 1984). In this way music reflects and makes audible the "signs that make up society" as composers and musicians create music and people consume music according to sets of socially accepted rules and technologies (Attali 2012, 30). Therefore inclusion, exclusion, and fusion of musical styles "reflect the manufacture of society" as those in authority seek to control musical production while those lacking power push back (Attali, 2012, 30). "If you like your neighbours," writes Voegelin, "their music is less noisy. If you dislike or fear them, any sound they make is noise, encroaching on you through the walls or over the garden fence" (2010, 44).

As elites seek "clairaudience" through strategies like banning African drums in colonial Trinidad (Dudley 2008, 41) or sound abatement ordinances in more recent times, they work to quiet subaltern performance traditions by categorizing them as nothing more than noise. Within such social confrontations, music is powerful and subversive, transformative and transcendent. The musical sounds of postcolonial societies in particular are the product of past and ongoing negotiations of power, both vertically and laterally. While some musics have been erased, others have been incorporated (or appropriated as the case may be), within other styles, fused in ways that reflect past and present relationships between and among groups of music makers. With attentive listening, we can therefore hear music as an archive of historic, current, and potential relationships between people and ideas.

Music as Archive

Archives are methodical: artifacts are collected, catalogued, and stored away, each a signpost marking a specific moment in time. When thinking of archives, we conjure images of disheveled back rooms in parish churches or dusty stacks of ledgers hidden away in basements. Perhaps we imagine more austere or fabled places like the British Museum or the Great Library of Alexandria. Maybe idealistic collections like the Internet Archive or the Svalbard Global Seed Vault come to mind. However, these kinds of archives are relatively few compared to other kinds of more personal archives (Stewart 1993). My own archive is in fact stored in an old chocolates box. In it, among other things, are family photos, a memento from our wedding, a lock of hair from my son's first haircut, my daughter's handprint from when she was four months old. These are my signposts. These are my moments in time.

Music is also an archive. Carol Muller (2002) demonstrates how music can become "a mechanism for archival deposit, care, and retrieval in contexts of immanent loss" (409). She describes

how Shemba hymnody in South Africa deliberately preserved "Africanness" in the face of liturgical influence from European missionization throughout the twentieth century. Shemba musical style was consigned to the musical archive in the early 1900s and conserved through congregational performance over generations. In a similar example, W. E. B. Du Bois weaves musical references to what he calls "The Sorrow Songs" throughout his classic *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). The Sorrow Songs "came out of the South unknown to me," writes Du Bois, a native of Massachusetts, "yet at once I knew them as of me and of mine" (1903, 250). This is not simply a case of remembering, not just an instance of song stirring a memory. Rather, he insists these songs were "unknown to me," yet instantly recognizable "as of me and of mine."

> My grandfather's grandmother was seized by an evil Dutch trader two centuries ago; and coming to the valleys of the Hudson and Housatonic, black, little, and lithe, she… often crooned a heathen melody to the child between her knees… The child sang it to his children and they to their children's children, and so two hundred years it has travelled down to us and we sing it to our children, knowing as little as our fathers what its words may mean, but knowing well the meaning of its music (1903, 254).

Du Bois importantly makes a distinction between the music and the words, avoiding the pitfall of privileging song texts alone with the entirety of musical meaning. In this scenario, music is the keeper of meaning. And significantly, it is performance—not just knowing a song, but singing it together with others as is the case for both Shemba hymns and Du Bois's sorrow songs—that imparts continued relevancy and signification to the music as sound and as archive. To illustrate, Du Bois unwraps the history of African American spirituals in three steps: "The first is African music, the second Afro-American, while the third is a blending of Negro music with music heard in the foster land" (256). In this way, he suggests that music does not retain a singular meaning once it is consigned to the archive. Rather, music is imbued with new meaning as later generations approach it from their particular circumstances. Du Bois therefore "know[s] well the meaning of [the] music" within which are preserved fragments of the past made relevant for the present.

Performing Creolization, Performing Archive

Antonio Benítez-Rojo writes that "creolization is not merely a process . . . but a discontinuous series of recurrences" (1998, 55). This perspective provides opportunities to view specific events, things, food, language, music, dance, behavior, even individual everyday choices as moments of creativity informed through points of cultural contact. Tina Ramnarine (2007), for example, describes the Caribbean as a "beautiful cosmos" of conflicting orientations, which, by virtue of their abrasion, results in ongoing construction and negotiation of sociocultural meaning. The tensions and products of such a process—one seemingly built on an instable foundation "whose sole law is change" (Benítez-Rojo 1998, 55)—form a familiar, understandable, and comfortable anchorage upon which individuals and groups moor their identities. Benítez-Rojo continues: "Where does this instability come from? It is the product of the plantation (the big bang of the Caribbean universe) whose slow explosion throughout modern history threw out billions and billions of cultural fragments in all directions,

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fragments of diverse kinds that, in their endless voyage, come together in an instant to form a dance step, a linguistic trope, the line of a poem, and afterward repel each other to re-form and pull apart once more, and so on" (1998, 55).

For Benítez-Rojo, performance is a key element of this pulling apart and reforming of the plantation, past and present. Ananya Kabir explains this process, and creolization more generally, as a "balancing act" that occurs "between oceans, between empires, between metropole and colony, and between groups of divergently-(dis)empowered people" (2020, 137). Music and dance, Kabir argues, are especially rich sites of transformation in this regard. Katherine Dunham (2005) found echoes of the Charleston in West Africa, Haiti, and in the "store-front churches" of the southern United States where "possessed devotees… propell[ed] themselves up and down the aisles" (224–225). Dunham suggests this scattered choreography was "fundamentally familiar, as part of a deep tradition" (223) circulating the Black Atlantic in much the same way that Du Bois recognized African American hymnody as "of me and of mine." As embodied, performative archival practices, music and dance critically rely on "the resources of community, the crowd, and the collective" (Kabir 2019, 73) to think about and rework the old dislocations of the plantation, bringing them to bear on the still-creolizing present.

Within Caribbean music and dance are "pulsations" of Amerindian, African, Asian, and European diasporas, "but there are also the rhythms of the sugar mill's machines, the machete stroke that cuts the cane, the overseer's lash, and the planter's language, music, and dance. . . . This complex polyrhythmic orchestration was born on the plantation and now lies within the memory of the people of the Caribbean" (Benítez-Rojo 1998, 58). In the conventional sense, archives were first compiled to legitimize and perpetuate the apparatus of power in eighteenth-century Europe (Steedman 2002, 69). Music (and with it dance) is an example of an alternative, subaltern archival practice that runs alongside and in counterpoint to mainstream archival narratives. The examples I present below highlight ways in which music works as an archive of cultural mixing in Trinidad. In this context, musical performance emerges as a way of remembering, of embodying the past to make sense of the present and look ahead to the future.

Carnival Arts and Trinidadian Nationalism

First claimed for Spain by Christopher Columbus in 1498, Trinidad remained a colonial backwater until the 1783 Cedula of Population prompted an influx of French settlers and slaveholding planters. When the British took Trinidad in 1797, the indigenous population was decimated, and enslaved Africans far outnumbered Europeans. The British ramped up sugar production, importing thousands more enslaved Africans in the process. Upon the end of slavery in the 1830s, planters turned to a scheme of indentured labor to keep wages low. After experiments with contract labor from Europe, Africa, China, and other parts of the Caribbean, planters set upon India as a source of labor in an indentureship scheme that lasted from 1838 until 1920. In this time, Trinidad received about 150,000 indentured men, women, and children; most remained in Trinidad after their contract period had expired. One hundred years later, everyday life in Trinidad is marked by the interconnected

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legacies of colonialism, slavery, and indentureship. Such a cultural inheritance is remembered and made audible through musical performance.

African Trinidadian music and dance traditions are closely related to those of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Grenada. Perhaps most important of these is the *bèlè*, a creole dance style built by West African elements mapped onto eighteenth-century European *contredanse* (Daniel 2011, chapter 3). The primary gestures in bèlè are graceful, including sweeping arm motions and dips of the upper torso toward the ground. The dance is accompanied by call-and-response singing led by a *chantuelle* and an ensemble of drummers featuring a large lead drum called *cutter* (anglicized from *kata*) and two supporting drums called either *buller* (from *boula*) or *fuller* (from *foulé*) (Guilbault 1993, 18; 239). Timekeepers including chac-chac, bells, or improvised percussion may also be added. This musical arrangement—a lead elaborating drum and supporting ostinato drums accompanying call-and-response singing—forms the foundation of much African Trinidadian traditional music (Bazinet 2017). After emancipation in the 1830s, African Trinidadians assumed creative control over Carnival. Carnival bands, led by a chantuelle and comprising instrumentalists, singers, and masqueraders, coalesced around the *lavway* (from *la voix*), a call-and-response song sung in Patois. The word "calypso" was first used in the local media to refer to Carnival lavways around the turn of the twentieth century. Soon after, there was growing demand for chantuelles as stand-alone entertainers in the weeks leading up to Carnival. This led to the proliferation of so-called "calypso tents" featuring a handful of contracted chantuelles-turned-calypsonians performing on stage for paying audiences. A new style of calypso subsequently developed, still today called "tent calypso," intended to be performed on stage and focused on social and political commentary.

Nineteenth-century colonial authorities consistently looked to curtail the musical activities of African Trinidadians during Carnival, fearing that music making fostered a dangerous solidarity that threatened social order. When police restricted Carnival drumming in 1884, many turned to improvised instruments—discarded boxes, bits of metal, and so on—to pound out drumming patterns. By the early twentieth century an ensemble of bamboo stamping tubes called *tamboo bamboo* emerged first to supplement, then to replace drumming ensembles. When stamped on the ground, groups of long bamboo tubes play rudimentary bass lines, often outlining a *habanera* pattern, while higher pitched ostinatos, lead elaborations, and rhythmic cues are played on shorter tubes.[3] Soon musicians were supplementing tamboo bamboo with improvised instruments made of scrap metal: biscuit tins, paint cans, etc. (Johnson 2011). Players then discovered the possibility of tuning different notes into the playing surface of these instruments allowing for rudimentary melodies. Such experiments gave way to more refined tuning methods, and by the 1940s sizable steel orchestras comprising a full range of "steel pans" fashioned from oil drums had largely replaced tamboo bamboo. In the 1950s, politicians latched onto Carnival arts—especially calypso and steel pan—as unique expressions of Trinidadian nationalism in an effort to build national pride and agitate for independence.

[3] For more on the development of the *habanera* bass pattern and its popularity throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, see Manuel 2009.

Figure 1. A steel band performing for 2013 Carnival in San Fernando, Trinidad. Photos courtesy Dion Samsoondar.

Political patronage worked to valorize Carnival arts, regarded as living and vibrant examples of creole culture in action. However, as Jocelyn Guilbault (2011) points out, "the celebration of this hybrid culture was highly selective" (9) in narrowly defining "creole" as a fusion of African and European culture, expressly excluding Indian Trinidadians and other subaltern groups. After Trinidad and Tobago achieved independence from Britain in 1962, the state subsidized calypso and pan through competitions and other programs, thereby cementing their preservation and development as a priority of the state. This policy has had broad and long-lasting implications, in part determining which musical styles, musicians, and performances can meaningfully participate in the inscription of national identity and therefore access state resources. Most relevant at present, this gatekeeping meant that Indian Trinidadian musics were excluded from the nationalist project at the moment of independence, an exclusion that reflects Indian Trinidadians' enduring status as outsiders extending from their nineteenth-century arrival in an already-creolizing social system. From the independence-era onward, the musical soundscape was governed by powerful social and political forces. The state exercised some control over musical production through financial subsidy for Carnival arts and sponsorship of high-profile calypso and steel orchestra competitions that favored performances that promoted the state's ideal of Trinidadian creole culture (Dudley 2003; Guilbault 2007; Ballengee 2019a).

Such political strategies penetrated deeply into a broad academic and public discourse that worked to indigenize calypso and steel pan as part of a nationalist project that positioned "people of African or part-African descent–Creoles in local terminology" as "the most important constituent group in the nation, the core Trinidadians" (Brereton 2010, 221). Histories of calypso, for example, codified its roots in Europe and West Africa, linking contemporary performance with venerable origins (Elder 1964; Hill 1967; Quevedo 1983; Warner 1983; Liverpool 1990). Steel pan too was provided a noble lineage (Elder 1964; Johnson 2011), with pan pioneers rising to the status of national heroes and the steel pan itself declared the national instrument in 1992. With the mythos of Carnival arts firmly in place, allegiance to calypso and steel pan became patriotic imperatives. The transformation of calypso and steel pan from folk traditions to national culture was part and parcel of the nationalist project. As emblematic of local creativity, calypso and steel pan were "reformed"

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(Turino 2003, 175) by the state—through competitions, academic discourse, and other support—as quintessential representations of Trinidadian national culture.

Calypso took the world by storm upon the release of American pop music icon Harry Belafonte's album *Calypso* in 1956, spawning a wealth of fly-by-night imitators but also sparking genuine interest in Caribbean music among global audiences (Vogel 2018). Trinidadian steel orchestras toured the world, while pan pioneers like Ellie Mannette, Cliff Alexis, and others were instrumental in establishing university-based steel orchestra programs in Canada and the United States whose alums spread the gospel of pan around the globe (Gormandy 2017; Martin 2017). Carnival arts garnered notoriety abroad, which increased their cachet and further confirmed their vitality back home. As Carnival arts received the lion's share of state funding, however, other Trinidadian musical traditions were excluded: the "noise" was filtered from the nationalist project. Indian Trinidadians in particular were left to maintain and develop their own musical traditions without the expectation of significant state support. This exclusion reflects larger and longer-lasting political debates about the place of Indian culture in the Caribbean (Puri 2004; Khan 2004). However, careful listening complicates notions of discrete "African" and "Indian" musics while laying bare historic and ongoing creative exchanges indicative of Benítez-Rojo's metaphorical "slow explosion" of the plantation. In discussing two iconic Trinidadian genres, tassa drumming and soca, I explore this idea in the sections that follow.

Figure 2. A tassa band accompanying the groom's entourage at a wedding in Aranguez, Trinidad. June 2007. Photo by the author.

Tassa Drumming

Trinidadian tassa drumming is a Caribbean variant of the North Indian *dhol tasha* drumming tradition. Spread globally by the British indentureship system, dhol tasha styles developed in nearly all places where workers settled, but most spectacularly so in Trinidad where tassa bands are essential

accompaniment for portions of the three-day set of Hindu wedding rituals[4] (figure 2), for the annual *Hosay* observance[5] (figure 3), and for all manner of cultural and national celebrations. The ensemble is comprised completely of percussion instruments, and while tassa might have accompanied singing in the past, this is not the case today. The term "tassa" refers both to the bowl-shaped drum called tassa and to the ensemble within which it plays a central role. There are four musical parts: one lead tassa called the cutter, one accompanying tassa called the foulé, one large double-headed dhol or "bass" drum, and one set of hand cymbals called jhal. While a tassa band might feature multiple foulé, bass, and jhal players, in all cases there is only one cutter (though this role can be passed around among all the tassa players). The terms "cutter" and "foulé" were long ago adopted into tassa nomenclature, borrowed from African Trinidadian drumming ensembles where "cutter" refers to a lead or improvising drum part and "foulé" refers to a supporting drum part.[6]

Abdul Halim Sharar's description of nineteenth-century dhol tasha in Lucknow certainly suggests that tasha, dhol, and *jhanjh*[7] were already commonly played as an ensemble at least by the early nineteenth century, though he makes no clear reference to a differentiation between roles corresponding to Trinidadian cutter and foulé (2012, 151). While an improvising lead drum is part of dhol tasha tradition, the variety and scope of improvisation present in Trinidadian tassa is unlike that of its dhol tasha forebears. In the colonial past, tassa musicians perhaps found an intriguing corollary to their own music in African Trinidadian drumming and adopted the terms cutter and foulé as these roles were strengthened and standardized for the tassa ensemble in the diaspora. Therefore, it is possible that along with borrowed African Trinidadian nomenclature came ideas about drumming hierarchy that strengthened distinctions between a lead improvising "cutter" and a static, supporting "foulé," as is the case in African Trinidadian drumming ensembles. As I describe below, aspects of African Trinidadian musical structure and repertoire came alongside such borrowings, all while tassa maintained a distinct Indian-identified musical aesthetic.

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[4] Tassa bands can perform as entertainment at many points within Hindu wedding rituals, though tassa is essential for *matikor* night (a women's fertility ritual performed by friends and family of the couple, usually on a Friday night), *lawa* (another fertility ritual, usually on Sunday morning), and at the start and conclusion of the wedding proper (usually on a Sunday afternoon).

[5] Hosay (derived from the name "Hosein") is the local term for activities surrounding the Shi'a Muslim Muharram observance.

[6] The term *kata* is a common African Caribbean drum name. *Cata* in Cuban rumba refers to a timekeeping instrument and the pattern that it plays. *Kata* similarly refers to various aspects of percussive timekeeping in Haiti (Averill 1997, 217n; 239–240). The related term *ka* is used for lead drums in St. Lucia and in Guadeloupean *gwo ka* (McDaniel 1988, 88). *Foulé* perhaps derives from the French *refouler*, meaning "to repulse" or "drive back." Supporting drum parts referred to as *foulé*, *fula*, or *boula* are present throughout the francophone Caribbean.

[7] Jhanjh indicates large hand cymbals, while jhal refers to medium-sized hand cymbals. Starting in the 1960s, jhal slowly came to replace jhanjh within the Trinidadian tassa ensemble.

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Figure 3. A tassa band accompanies the procession of a tadjah during the Hosay observance in Cedros, Trinidad. Photo courtesy of Dion Samsoondar.

Musical Structure

In Indian Trinidadian drumming terminology, including tassa but also encompassing other folk drumming traditions, the term "hand" refers an individual musical composition comprising a distinct composite rhythm derived from the interplay of the ensemble. While some veteran drummers claim to know upwards of fifty distinct hands, most drummers know fewer than ten. In this sense the scope of tassa repertoire is quite narrow. Musical interest lay in bands' idiosyncratic interpretations of the repertoire together with expectations of virtuosic improvisation by the cutter and precision from the entire band. Many common tassa hands are rhythmic distillations and adaptations from Indian musical sources, some of which have faded from cultural memory, while their tassa corollaries have carried on. The tassa hand called *tikora*, for example, approximates typical rhythms played on the now obsolete North Indian *tikara* drum. Similarly, the tassa hand *nagara* preserves rhythms typically played on the North Indian *nagara* drum pair whose performance has disappeared in Trinidad while remaining vibrant in other former sites of indenture like Suriname and Mauritius.

Formal structure in tassa music is in part derived from a genre known as tān or simply "classical" singing in Trinidad. While somewhat related to South Asian classical music, this local variant is a unique Indian Caribbean genre built on fragments and elaborations of North Indian devotional, folk,

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and classical music (Manuel 2000). The standard ensemble—one also used to perform *chutney*, *bhajans*, and some other Indian Caribbean genres—includes four parts comprising a vocalist, harmonium (usually played by the vocalist and generally doubling the vocal melody), the double-headed *dholak* drum, and *dhantal*, a timekeeping instrument comprised of a metal rod played with a horseshoe shaped beater. Adaptations of tān repertoire for tassa center on transposing rhythms of the dholak and dhantal. The dhantal patterns are approximated on the jhal (and sometimes also the foulé), the low-pitched strokes of the dholak are played by the bass, and the high-pitched strokes of the dholak are played by the foulé. Typical musical structure in tān singing comprises a loose sectional form including up to three musical units: *theka*, *taal*, and *barti*.[8] Theka refers to the main part of the song and taal refers to a cadential pattern that marks a shift from theka to the barti, a section with contrasting rhythm if not also meter. As tān repertoire has been adapted for tassa, this song form is marginally preserved despite the absence of singing. In tassa drumming, theka refers to the main part of the composition, and taal is an idiosyncratic and largely standardized rhythmic passage that signals the music to start, stop, or move to the barti. Unlike taals in tān singing that largely work to separate theka from barti, taals in tassa drumming are often played simply to punctuate the cutter's improvisation to provide a bit of musical interest during long sections of drumming.

To illustrate the basic structure of tān singing, I have annotated the video excerpt linked below that features the popular bhajan "Jai Jag Janani Bavani" sung by Andrew Sookhoo. I specifically indicate the use of taal to transition from theka to barti. The theka is presented in a fast, asymmetrical septuple meter emphasizing beat four. The taal abruptly modulates to quadruple meter, established by the dhantal and dholak emphasizing every beat for three measures while the tempo gradually increases, giving way in the next measure to the barti, which is marked by more active rhythms in the dhantal and dholak.

[8] Theka and taal have cognates in South Asian classical music, though their meanings are different. In South Asia, theka refers to a skeletal articulation of the *tâl*, the rhythmic cycle of a given composition. To my knowledge, there is no direct counterpart to barti in South Asian classical music

[https://vimeo.com/252334296]

The tassa hand *chaubola*—named for a particular poetic form used in tān singing—is the most commonly played hand that features this kind of theka/taal/barti structure. In the theka for chaubola, the cutter plays a series of "cuts," in this case referring to a set of formulaic rhythmic passages. This is followed by a taal that signals a transition to the barti, which leans toward a compound duple meter giving the rhythm a galloping groove. In the following video excerpt, the tassa band Trinidad and Tobago Sweet Tassa plays chaubola. The video begins as bandleader Lenny Kumar completes the sequence of cuts and prepares to signal the taal. This preparation comprises an extended period without improvisation followed by a visual cue. The taal then begins abruptly with a drum roll. In contrast to Andrew Sookhoo's performance above, here Trinidad and Tobago Sweet Tassa play the barti only briefly, then transition back to the theka. This is typical for performances of chaubola; the band may play the barti two or three times throughout a performance, returning to the theka each time.

[https://vimeo.com/252334487]

An important takeaway from a comparison of these musical examples is that tassa repertoire has rearticulated the basic formal structure of tān singing, preserving the song form while adapting it to an all-percussion ensemble. In this way, chaubola is a good example of what drummers call a "classical hand," a category that rightly suggests a connection with devotional music or tān singing. Another broad category of repertoire includes "breakaway" or dancing hands. I discuss one of these in the following section.

Calypso

As new hands are added to tassa repertoire, the process of adaptation described above continues while source material becomes more diverse. In this section, I discuss the tassa hand called calypso, which approximates a groove characteristic of early steel orchestras (figure 4). Calypso hand's relationship with steel orchestral style is most clear in the bass, whose theka outlines a *habanera* rhythm typical of early calypso and steel pan bass lines. The foulé's theka pattern, comprising a subtly articulated sixteenth-note ostinato, further emphasizes this connection with a rhythm similar to that played by so-called "strumming" pans or inner voices in a steel orchestra. Rhythms of the "engine room"—the collection of non-pitched timekeeping percussion instruments in a steel orchestra—are also echoed in the foulé and jhal.

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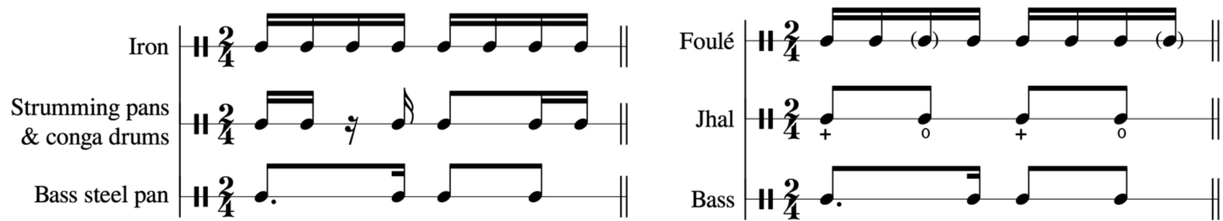

Figure 4. Typical patterns played by early steel orchestras, including a habanera bass pattern (left) and transcription of the tassa hand calypso (right). This and subsequent transcriptions by the author.

The video linked below contains two musical examples both recorded by Emory Cook in 1956. The first example features a steel orchestra parading during Carnival, and the second is of a tassa band led by legendary drummer Rahamat Ali. I present these examples in succession to draw attention to similarities in musical structure between calypso played by the steel orchestra and calypso hand played by the tassa band. Note that Cook incorrectly labels both tracks. The first one labeled "Mardi Gras Carnival/Lord Melody" (*Jump Up Carnival* 1956) is an excerpt of calypsonian Mighty Sparrow's "Jean and Dinah" played as a steel orchestra road march, and the tassa hand labeled as "Imitation Steel Band" (*East Indian Drums of Tunapuna Trinidad* 1956) is the hand that most drummers today refer to as calypso hand.

[https://vimeo.com/248990886]

This example of calypso hand compared to today's renditions reveals strikingly similarities.[9] The theka is virtually the same in both. The taal is different, but the rhythmic scaffolding is essentially the same. Moreover, common "cuts" played for calypso hand are present in both. All this suggests that calypso hand had largely assumed its current form at least by the mid-1950s when Cook made his recording. As such, calypso hand for tassa is clearly a New World creation and not an import from India. If the name "calypso" was not enough, the most important evidence lay in the hand's structural elements that parallel typical steel band repertoire. This meeting of musical styles could only happen in the diaspora.

There are competing claims about the "composer" of calypso hand, all of which are largely unverifiable (Ballengee 2013, 132). Therefore, it is likely that calypso was collectively adapted for tassa over time, borrowed from the steel orchestra in much the same way that other hands have entered tassa repertoire. Where chaubola came into tassa complete with theka, taal, and barti, calypso lacks the barti which was, of course, not present in the source material. This pattern continues as new hands are added to the repertoire: theka and taal are always present while barti is typically absent. Good examples of non-barti adaptations in this vein include *chutney* (distilled from the Indian Trinidadian folk-pop genre that surged in popularity in the 1980s) and more esoteric hands like drummer Lenny Kumar's original composition titled "George of the Jungle" that essentially adapts a samba groove and includes a taal based on the iconic "Watch out for that tree!" lyric from the eponymous cartoon's theme song.

This brief musical analysis suggests that tassa emerges from a coherent Indian Trinidadian musical system, one that borrows from other styles by distilling essential rhythmic elements into familiar musical structures. The music remains characteristically Indian while soaking up select elements of African Trinidadian music. It is through such a process, through rearticulation and adaptation, that tassa remains relevant for drummers, dancers, and listeners today. As tassa emerges out of the slow explosion of the plantation, it benefits from the newness of creolization and the creativity inherent in the diasporic experience, yet it is still bound by the compartmentalization of "culture" in a multicultural society. In this way, musical instruments, timbres, forms, and performance contexts mark tassa as "Indian," all while the music itself suggests significant departures from Indian forebears while taking a decidedly Caribbean trajectory in its development. With close listening, then, tassa emerges as an archive of relationships between diverse music makers through which ideas about music were transplanted, borrowed, fused, and continually made new. In the section that follows, I discuss soca and its counterpart chutney-soca in this regard.

"Jam Together": Soca and Chutney Soca

The Black Power Movement reached Trinidad and Tobago in the late 1960s and came to a head in 1970 with intense demonstrations, labor stoppages, and a mutiny by a segment of the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment. An outgrowth of the movement was an exploration of new ideas about cultural

[9] For comparison, listen to "Calypso" (track four) on the self-titled compact disc *Trinidad and Tobago Sweet Tassa* (2013) also available streaming online at the following URL: https://spoti.fi/2Esv3lY.

identity and cultural mixing. From this context, a new musical genre called soca emerged and quickly became the preferred soundtrack for the Carnival season and beyond. Today's soca features diverse musical influences including American hip-hop and R&B and other regional styles like reggae, zouk, and others. Moreover, soca's fundamental groove (figure 5) maps directly onto the three-stroke *tresillo* pattern common in many West African and African Caribbean musical styles including, as just one example, Puerto Rican *reggaeton* whose groove closely mirrors soca. In the paragraphs that follow, I trace soca's emergence through the 1980s and end with an analysis of the popular fusion genre chutney-soca.

Figure 5. The tresillo pattern and 3-2 clave for comparison (above), and a basic soca groove as articulated on the drum set (below).

The Emergence of Soca

What would come to be called soca perhaps first began to coalesce around the swift tempos and active rhythms in the music of Panorama, Trinidad and Tobago's national steel orchestra competition that was first organized in 1963. Contest rules steered these steel orchestra performances toward increasingly complex and exciting arrangements. In response, calypsonians began composing songs with faster tempos, foregrounded bass lines, and driving sixteenth-note rhythms with accented upbeats like those played by the steel orchestra's engine room. Calypsonian Mighty Sparrow's (Slinger Francisco) music of the 1960s exemplifies this trend. For example, Sparrow's bawdy "Bois Banday" (*Spicy Sparrow* 1967) includes a fast tempo, persistent sixteenth-note hi-hat pattern, heavy bass line, and subdued horn section. American funk and soul additionally contributed to soca's development as is evident in the work of calypsonian King Wellington (Hawthorne Quashie). Wellington's "More Woman" (*Who Is King Wellington* 1974) is typical of his music from this period. The bass is very forward in the mix, at times taking on a countermelodic role yet largely maintaining a habanera bass pattern typical of classic calypsos. Other instruments highlight the upbeat, playing two sixteenth notes on the second half of each pulse. The arrangement ends in a harmonically static, yet rhythmically driven, improvisational section in which several instruments take solos, an uncommon aspect of calypso but one typical of funk, soul, and later iterations of soca in the 1980s and onward. The groove in this section (figure 6) has one foot in calypso style and one foot stepping toward what is today regarded

as soca. The electric bass and bass drum outline a funky variant of the habanera bass pattern typical of calypso while the snare drum approximates a 2-3 clave pattern. Meanwhile, the hi-hats play an accented sixteenth-note rhythm with emphasis on the upbeat. Where calypso traditionally emphasizes lyrics and melody, here attention is shifted toward the groove itself supported by repetitive lyrics and instrumental improvisation.

Figure 6. Fundamental groove in "More Woman" by King Wellington.

Though its tempo is slower and its mood mellower than "More Woman," Wellington's tune "New Calypso Music" (1974) is sometimes cited as the first soca tune not because of any particular musical characteristic, but for its lyrical content. The musical structure and rhythmic groove of "New Calypso Music" reflects the post-Panorama calypso aesthetic. As in "More Woman," the bass is foregrounded, and short solo breaks feature moments of instrumental improvisation. Meanwhile, Wellington extolls the virtues of Carnival:

> Jump in the air…
> Calypso music is here!
> Hands in the air,
> Everywhere,
> Nobody ain't care!
> New calypso music is real fine,
> For everyone.
> Everybody jump in the groove and do what you want to do!

The catchy lyrics were innovative for the time, but this sort of refrain has become so common in today's Carnival music that critics often deride "party soca" as nonsense, so greatly has it diverged, they say, from the socially-conscious calypso of past generations (Leu 2000, 49–51).

Post-Panorama musical innovations were firmly in place when Lord Shorty (Garfield Blackman) coined the term "soca" to describe the kind of music he was creating in the 1970s. Born in the predominately Indian Trinidadian area of Barrackpore in south Trinidad, Shorty (later known as Ras Shorty I) set out to revive young people's interest in calypso and "to unite Indian and African peoples" through music (quoted in Guilbault 2007, 172). In other words, Shorty hoped to combat animosity between Trinidad and Tobago's two largest ethnic groups by creating a harmonious fusion of Indian- and African-identified musical elements in a new style he first called "sokah." As Shorty

explained, "The 'so' comes from calypso. And the 'kah'… represents the first letter of the [Hindi] alphabet" (quoted in Guilbault 2007, 172). Though later iterations would invariably be spelled "soca," Shorty's original rendering of the term is telling of his aim of musical and aesthetic synthesis. Yet, despite Shorty's claims of musical fusion, close listening does not fully bear this out. As described above, musical innovations that moved calypso toward what we now recognize as soca were already in play by the time Shorty announced his invention of soca. While Shorty includes some Indian-identified musical ideas at the surface level, as I detail below, the fundamental musical aspects of soca bear greatest affinity to African Caribbean musical style (Dudley 1996, 287). If soca is in part based on Indian musical elements, "they were only accepted," writes Selwyn Ahyoung, "because of their similarity to familiar African [musical] traits" and therefore their compatibility with "the African conceptualization underlying the tradition" (quoted in Dudley 1996, 287). The lack of substantial musical evidence notwithstanding, Shorty's claims of a fundamental fusion of African and Indian music is widely accepted, while Lord Shorty is praised as a national hero and champion of racial harmony.

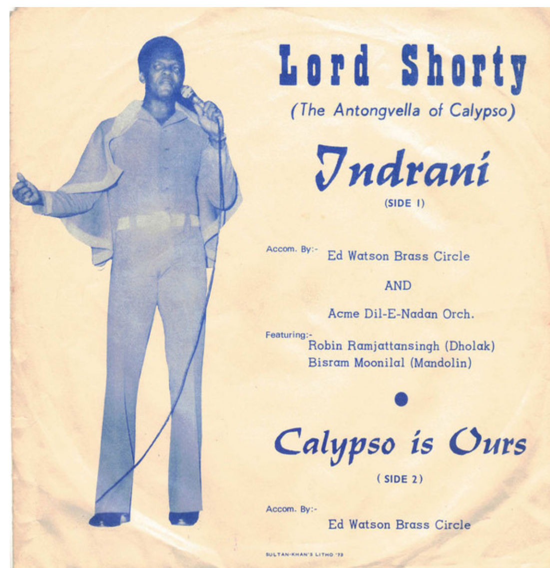

Figure 7. Record sleeve for Lord Shorty's release of "Indrani" (1973).

Shorty's early experiments are exemplified in his 1973 song "Indrani" (figure 7) which follows typical calypso form in terms of lyrical and harmonic structure. Each successive verse in "Indrani" details the narrator's growing frustration with not comprehending a Hindi-language song sung by an "old Indian chick." However, the refrain—which references the song this woman sings—marks an abrupt change in style characterized by a Hindi text set to Bollywood-inspired melodic contours and instrumental timbres. Moreover, the dholak is used as a rhythmic foundation throughout the song, not only contributing a unique timbre but also lending its rhythmic groove to complement that of the drum set and electric bass. Shorty continued to produce hits throughout the 1970s, the most popular of which was "Om, Shanti, Om" (1978) whose catchy chorus is drawn from a familiar Hindu mantra. Though intended as a message of unity, Indian Trinidadian leaders were offended by Shorty's use of a sacred text in Carnival music. Nonetheless, "Om, Shanti, Om" represents Shorty's mature soca

style—one which recalls elements of Mighty Sparrow and King Wellington's post-Panorama music of the previous decade—whose percussive groove is characterized by strong bass drum strokes on every downbeat, the snare drum playing an uneven syncopation between the downbeats, and the hi-hats emphasizing every upbeat. This rhythmic play between the strong foundation in the bass drum and the syncopation in higher-pitched instruments remains an important part of soca still today. After Lord Shorty's success, "soca" became a household word, and by the mid-1970s, numerous calypsonians were actively using the new soca groove, though overt references to Indian/African fusion were (and continue to be) conspicuously absent. It is the soca groove itself—not its idealistic origin story—that is so affectively moving for performers and listeners alike. Soca surpassed calypso in popularity by the end of the 1980s and became the soundtrack for Carnival alongside steel pan, yet Shorty's emphasis on musical-cum-cultural fusion remains largely overlooked in favor of song texts centered on bacchanalian revelry set to a fast, danceable groove, featuring largely synthesized instrumental timbres.

Calypso Rose (McCartha Lewis) was one of soca's biggest stars in the 1970s and 1980s. Her music mixed calypso's bawdiness and social commentary with soca's uptempo groove and celebratory mood. "Come Leh We Jam" (1978), for example, is a rollicking tune featuring lyrics infused with calls to dance and party while using the word "jam" as an all-purpose metaphor for musical, cultural, and sexual mixing. The refrain is full of repetitious hook phrases that riff on this idea:

> So, leh we jam,
> Soca jam,
> Calypso jam.
> So, leh we jam, jam, jam, jam, jam!
> Jam together!
> Jam one another!

While this kind of metaphorical language is typical of calypso, nearly all other aspects signal a soca aesthetic. Immediately apparent are the repetitive lyrics—a five-line verse contrasts with a refrain three times as long—indicating the importance of rhythm and groove rather than calypso's lyricism or Shorty's notions of racial harmony. The upbeat is significantly stressed while hi-hats and "iron" (as in the steel orchestra's engine room) pound out a sixteenth-note pattern over the foundation laid down by the steady bass drum. Perhaps most distinctive about "Come Leh We Jam" is the consistent interruption of the groove on the words "jam, jam, jam, jam, jam" in which the band thumps out five consecutive downbeats in near unison. This simple rhythmic disruption threatens to derail the groove, yet it is ultimately resolved just before the point of no return. This kind of rhythmic trick is often used in today's soca, especially in live performance.

The popularity of soca skyrocketed around the Caribbean in the 1980s and reached international fame with the hit "Hot, Hot, Hot" (1982) written and first recorded by Montserratian calypsonian Arrow (Alphonsus Cassell). Having been composed by a non-Trinidadian and covered by a ho st of diverse musicians, most notably in 1987 by American protopunk lounge singer Buster

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Poindexter, "Hot, Hot, Hot" encapsulates the broad reach of the soca phenomenon. The rise of soca also points to the importance of the recording studio as a creative space for exploring the sonic dimension of Carnival. It is likely no coincidence that soca's advent coincided with the introduction of more sophisticated and increasingly affordable studio recording technology that allowed for exploration of new sounds (drum machines, synthesizers, etc.) while also providing a space for experimentation, collaboration, and musical mixing.

Rikki Jai's (Samraj Jaimungal) self-produced soca hit "Sumintra" (1989) is a good example in this regard. Jai's Indian Trinidadianness aside, the song's use of Indian-identified instrumental timbres and of Hindi lyrics that quote a well-known Lata Mangeshkar film song, and a cleverly-devised narrative that plays on stereotypes about Indian Trinidadian culture clearly mark "Sumintra" as Indian within the soca soundscape. The song's narrator, presumably Rikki himself, pursues Sumintra, a young woman from the deep south of Trinidad, a predominately Indian Trinidadian area demographically and culturally. Rikki decides that romantic Bollywood film music is the best way to woo Sumintra: "So I hit the record shops / Indian records I buy up / When I reach by the girl / she say stop, Rikki, stop!" In the song's iconic refrain, Sumintra then scolds Rikki for making assumptions about her musical taste: "Hold the Lata Mangeshkar / give me soca!" Lata Mangeshkar—or better, Bollywood in general with all its melodramatic appeal—is an important representation of modern India that Trinidadians encounter on an everyday basis. Cinemas screen the latest Bollywood films, the Hindi-language Zee TV is broadcast via cable television (though virtually everyone watches with English subtitles), several radio stations daily program film songs, and of course no Hindu wedding is complete without young girls performing Bollywood-style choreography as entertainment for wedding guests. So when Sumintra rejects Mangeshkar and demands soca, she rejects India as the most important component of her identity, instead claiming the creolizing Caribbean as home.

Chutney-Soca

The 1970s saw a proliferation of soca fusion styles, foremost among them chutney-soca, a genre blending soca with chutney, an Indian Trinidadian genre comprising a mix of Bhojpuri folk styles. Characteristics of chutney in chutney-soca include Indian-identified melodic contours (derived from chutney and tān singing); a mixture of English, Bhojpuri, and/or Hindi song texts; and use of dholak, dhantal, and harmonium (or some synthesized version of these). Tassa too is often included in the instrumental mix (figure 9). Some elements drawn from soca include the typical soca groove and a preponderance of synthesized instrumental timbres. The first chutney-soca superstar was Drupatee (Drupatee Ramgoonai) who burst onto the Carnival music scene in the late 1980s. Trained in tān singing by legendary classical singer James Ramsawak, Drupatee crossed over into chutney soca with her aptly named 1987 album *Chatnee Soca* followed in 1988 by the megahit "Mr. Bissessar," still today her signature song. The lyrics extoll the tassa drumming prowess of the titular Mr. Bissessar, an old man who is filled with endless energy as he beings to play the drum. His dynamism resonates throughout an audience of listeners and dancers as the day-long fête wears on:

> Old man Bissessar,
> Take off he kapra,

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Pull out de tassa,
And start jammin' de soca…

When de music soundin' sweet,
And de crowd get in ah heat,
If yuh hear how people bawl,
"Bissessar don't stop at all!"

The lyrical juxtaposition of tassa and soca is reflected in the music itself. In essence, "Mr. Bissessar" chutnifies what is an otherwise standard soca groove by layering tassa on top of it. Specifically, the tassa band featured in the recording always plays calypso hand when featured as an ensemble within the arrangement, a logical choice since the habanera bass lines of soca and calypso hand are inherently compatible.

The opening four-measure instrumental groove of "Mr. Bissessar" features an improvising tassa overlayed on a soca groove built from synthetic percussive timbres (figure 8). The conga rhythm aligns closely with the foulé pattern for calypso hand, while the hi-hats and bass drum respectively approximate the jhal and bass of the tassa ensemble. This gives way to a slightly altered groove beginning in measure five as the acoustic jhal replaces the synthesized hi-hats in the mix and the bass drum's articulation is altered slightly to more closely approximate the bass line for calypso hand. The tassa drops out in the first verse then returns in the refrain as Drupatee implores Mr Bissessar to "roll up de tassa." At the bridge, the full tassa band is foregrounded as the soca groove disappears completely. The two forces are joined once again in the final celebratory refrain.

Tassa
Congas
Hi-hats
Snare drum
Bass drum
Hand claps

Figure 8. The opening groove in Drupatee's "Mr. Bissessar." The tassa improvises atop an ensemble built from synthesized percussion.

The dynamic musical structure of "Mr. Bissessar" follows a certain innate musical logic: if the soca/tassa groove were consistent throughout, it would become musically uninteresting after a while. Rather, the song's producers chose to alternate sections that foreground soca, tassa, and the two together. This musical structure closely reflects Benítez-Rojo's notion of creolization. Tassa and

soca—seemingly dissimilar and each already fragmentary and creolizing—come together, repel one another, and re-form by song's end.

Drupatee and others of her generation established a blueprint for the chutney soca sound, largely characterized by incorporating Indian-identified musical elements and form over a soca groove in this manner. Conveniently, the title track from Drupatee's 1987 album *Chatnee Soca* lists ingredients for this "new kind of soca": "Mix some tassa with some conga / throw in some paratha [roti] / a little congo pepper, mango / then you have the answer!" The first ingredients are Indian and African drums, followed by paratha roti, an Indian-origin flatbread with a preparation particular to the Caribbean (Fung 2012). The next ingredients are sweet (mango) and spicy (congo pepper). Drupatee's culinary metaphor is reflected in the naming of the genre; the term "chutney" refers to a range of often sweet and spicy condiments in South Asian cuisine. The implication is that the music, like the food, is packs a punch thanks to risqué song texts and danceable rhythms. Chutney also implies a mixture of various ingredients, such that Drupatee's recipe for chutney-soca emerges as a "symbolic mixture of Indo-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean sounds and tastes" (Baksh 2020, 148). This reflects other New World musical fusions like *salsa* and *merengue* that deliberately link ideas about food and music to draw attention to the kinds of cultural mixing that characterize former sites of slavery and indenture.

Drupatee ignited controversy as an assertive Indian Trinidadian woman entering the arena of Carnival music in the 1980s, which up to that time had been dominated by African Trinidadian men. While many praised her perspective as refreshing, Drupatee's suggestive lyrics and wining on stage—aspects typical of both soca and the ribald women's songs from which chutney in part derives—drew heavy criticism from conservative Indian Trinidadians who saw chutney-soca as a degradation of Indian culture (Manuel 2000, 189–91). One critic decried Drupatee as "vulgar" and claimed something was "radically wrong with her psyche" (Niranjana 2006, 113). By virtue of its mixture of Indian and African influences—that is, its fundamental creoleness—chutney soca runs counter to notions of Indian, particularly Hindu, purity (Baksh 2020, 149–50). "For Drupatee to sing and wine in public," writes Darrell Baksh, "was to adopt and appropriate Afro-Caribbeanness—a 'blackness' and a 'Jammetteness'" (2020, 150) at odds with conservative notions of Indian racial and cultural distinctiveness always at war with perceived threats of assimilation via creolization (see, for example, Singh 1962).

Today, Indian Trinidadian chutney soca musicians routinely collaborate with their African Trinidadian soca counterparts and vice versa. For example, in just one instance of their collaborative work, Drupatee and soca superstar Machel Montano sang in duet for the song "Real Unity" (2000), whose message of social and racial harmony is reflected in the musical texture (figure 9). Drupatee weaves a popular Bollywood film song ("Aap Jaisa Koi") sung in Hindi around Montano's rapid-fire lyrics about dancing together at Carnival. In another example, African Barbadian soca artiste Alison Hinds joined Drupatee in 2009 for an updated rendition of "Mr. Bissessar." At the finals of the Chutney Soca Monarch competition that year, Hinds appeared in Indian dress on stage with Drupatee, much to the crowd's excitement.

Figure 9. Album cover for Drupatee Ramgoonai and Machel Montao's *Chutney Soca* (2000). Photo by Darrell Baksh.

Conclusion

In my analysis of tassa, I demonstrated how African Trinidadian elements were rather organically adapted to work within Indian Trinidadian musical structure. I further showed how tassa features instruments, timbres, and performance practice that reference a multilocal identity rooted in India as a place of origin and the Caribbean as home. In contrasting examples that follow similar trajectories of musical mixing, I showed how soca and chutney-soca represent more deliberate, self-conscious fusions of African and Indian Trinidadian musical style. Each set of examples foregrounds performance as key to understanding creolization as a "balancing act" set in motion and perpetually propelled by the "slow explosion of the plantation." When regarded as "a domain in which people—all people—participate in equally meaningful . . . [and] equally empowering ways," the analytical frame of creolization tends to blur or even ignore hegemonic strategies of control and subordination (Khan 2001, 273). As I have described, close listening provides a useful perspective for interrogating this kind of social power since musical mixing reflects and anticipates sociocultural mixing.

For example, tassa is often evoked as a metaphor for Indianness in Trinidadian public and academic discourse. Yet, as I have demonstrated, tassa is quite removed from its South Asian antecedents while very much a product of Caribbean creolization. In this way, close listening reveals a greater degree of cultural mixing and diasporic creativity than is conventionally assumed. Nonetheless, as an Indian-identified musical practice, gatekeeping stakeholders continue to style tassa as "foreign" (Pan Trinbago 2012), as "not even our instrument" (Ballengee 2019b, 46:35). Relative to discourses of regional and national identity, tassa—and by extension Indian Trinidadian creative expression more generally—is marginalized, metaphorically marked as "noise" and therefore disregarded as an authentic representation of Caribbeanness. Since music "reflect[s] the manufacture of society," the exclusion of Indian Trinidadian creative expression from participating in inscriptions of Caribbean identity reflects long-lasting notions of Indian Trinidadians as not Trinidadian enough.

The bifurcation of soca and chutney-soca along racial boundaries emphasizes this rupture. Despite Lord Shorty's apparent invention of soca as a melding of African and Indian musical styles, soca has always been and largely remains the domain of African Trinidadian performers. While it is common for Indian Trinidadian performers to record and perform soca, few have achieved crossover success in this regard. Chutney-soca by contrast is exclusively the province of Indian Trinidadian performers. Seemingly, the only way African Caribbean artists are taken seriously in the realm of chutney -oca is when they participate in collaborations with chutney-soca stars as described above. Nonetheless, such musical fusions make audible the potential for social harmony by not only demonstrating the compatibility of diverse musical styles but also serving as examples of how such diasporic creativity can result in something at once indebted to its constituent parts but wholly new at the same time.

Sound cannot be easily contained. It reverberates beyond its source to mix with and set more sounds in motion. Stepping back to take it all in, the Trinidadian soundscape is "lovely when heard from afar" (Kartomi 1981), beautiful in its diversity and all the richer for its creolizing creativity. Sound and music resonate through space and by way of cultural memory also resonate through time. Francis Blouin writes, "what constitutes the archive has become a question fundamental to how our knowledge of the past is acquired and shaped" (2004, 296). The conventional notion of the archive has from its very beginnings been connected with elite desires to enumerate and historicize their positions of power. In this context, musical performances analyzed in this study emerge as subaltern archival practices that run alongside mainstream archives and popular interpretations of history. As an element of our perceptive senses, hearing is "part of how we understand our past, how we engage with our present, and how we imagine our futures" (Pink 2015, 3). In listening to Trinidadian music as both sound and archive, traces of colonial and postcolonial relationships emerge that inform present and potential social structures while providing new ways of thinking about creolization as performance.

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