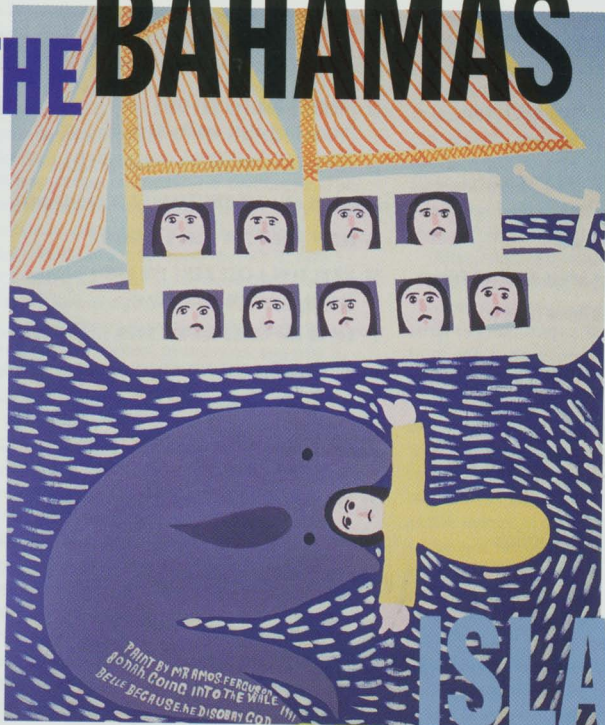


THE BAHAMAS



PRINT BY MIRA MOS FERROVIA
JONAH GOING INTO THE WHALE
BECAUSE HE DISOBEY GOD

ISLANDS OF SONG



Smithsonian Folkways

THE BAHAMAS ISLANDS OF SONG

The Bahamas can truly be described as the islands where stories are more often sung than spoken. For hundreds of years, Bahamian voices have reflected the musical influences from their African ancestors, colonial rulers, and nearby American neighbors. The rich, varied soundscape includes sacred music reminiscent of African American slave songs intermingled with European Christian music; secular or *goombay* music played by "rake and scrape" dance bands using goat-skin drums, saws, and accordions; rhyming songs featuring a storyteller with back-up chorus in three-part harmony; and children's ring-play game songs. From acoustic banjo to unaccompanied gospel songs, this CD contains 23 tracks, extensive notes, and photographs. (64 minutes)

1. YOU AIN'T HURRYIN' ME 2:28 Dickey Doh Singers
2. GIRL, IF I WRITE YOU 2:31 Nat Saunders
3. WATERMELON IS SPOILIN' ON THE VINE 2:41
Thomas Cartwright and the Boys
4. RAIN CHILDREN 2:08 Sons of Andros
5. WHEN I GET INSIDE 1:29 Cat Island Mites and Friends
6. I'M GOING HOME ON THE MORNING TRAIN 2:44 Israel Forbes
7. BIG BELLY MAN POLKA 2:18 Ed Moxey's Rake 'n Scrape
8. ALL IN THE WOODS 3:16 Avis Armbrister and
Almeda Campbell
9. LET THE CHURCH ROLL ON 2:05 Dickey Doh Singers
10. LYNN 2:43 Nat Saunders
11. WENT TO THE BIGHT 1:34 Cat Island Mites
12. NOBODY'S DARLING BUT MINE 2:35 Thomas Cartwright
and the Boys
13. CHRISTIAN AUTOMOBILE 2:12 Sons of Andros
14. LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART 2:24 Israel Forbes
15. SLOOP JOHN B 2:08 Dickey Doh Singers
16. JIMMY BEND A TREE WHILE IT'S YOUNG 2:43 Thomas
Cartwright and the Boys
17. ROUND AND ROUND THE BAR ROOM 3:27 Nat Saunders
18. ROLL OF PIN 4:26 Avis Armbrister and Almeda Campbell
19. DRY BONES 2:57 Sons of Andros
20. BID YOU GOODNIGHT 2:57 Cat Island Mites and Dickey Doh
Singers, with Patricia Bazard as soloist
21. THE TIMESTABLE 2:12 Ed Moxey's Rake 'n Scrape
22. GOD SENT JONAH 2:47 Israel Forbes
23. LIAR 2:10 Dickey Doh Singers



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THE PEOPLES & CULTURES OF THE BAHAMAS by Gail Saunders

Introduction

Music is very important in the lives of the majority of Bahamians. Africa and Europe influenced Bahamian culture and music. This phenomenon is aptly described by well-known Caribbean cultural guru Rex Nettleford as "the melody of Europe and rhythm of Africa" (Nettleford 1970:173). Derived from the antebellum slave songs of the United States and from the hymns contained in the early Wesley and Baptist hymnals, music was and still is important in the holding of ceremonies and church rites, as well as in everyday life.

Charles Edwards observed a wake in the 1890s, which he described as "the strangest of all their customs...held on the night when some friend is supposed to be dying...." He wrote, "The singers, men, women, and children of all ages, sit about on the floor.... Long into the night they sing their most mournful hymns and 'anthems'" (Edwards 1942:17). The mourners kept watch over the patient until he or she either succumbed to death or recovered.

Black Bahamians also gathered at sunset on other occasions, such as the Eve of Emancipation Day and Christmas, to sing all night; whereas the wake music was sad, this music was predominantly merry and was called

"setting up." People, gaily dressed, gathered in a large hut filled with choirs: "One man better-dressed than the others...'lines off,' in a sonorous voice, the words of some good old hymn." Later "all voices, joining together every shade of tone, send out into the beautiful night the rapturous, voluptuous music.... The hymn swells,...and the wave of sound rolls on" (Edwards 1942:18).

After midnight, refreshments of coffee and bread were served. Following this came the "anthem" or religious folk songs that had not been learned from a book but passed down from one generation to another. These customs are still observed in The Bahamas today.

Dancing was another popular manifestation of music. Clement Bethel has demonstrated that while religious music in The Bahamas was heavily influenced by Africa, the songs themselves came almost exclusively by way of the United States mainland.

Secular music, on the other hand, with its emphasis on drumming and dancing, emanated more directly from Africa. Many priests and missionaries saw the dancing as un-Christian and sinful, probably objecting to the vigorous hip movements and coupling which had sexual overtones. In spite of the move by the Christian church to suppress dancing, the holding of ring-dances to the accompaniment of the goatskin drum, and perhaps a concertina and two pieces of iron, remained a

favorite form of recreational activity wherever there was a strong African element in the population, (Saunders 1985: 104-5).

Clement Bethel argues that there were three distinct types of ring-dance—the Fire Dance, the Jumping Dance, and the Ring-play. All were held upon the formation of a ring where the participants stood in a circle around one or more dancers; there was always some form of rhythmic accompaniment—singing, chanting, clapping, drum rhythms, or maybe a combination of these. Solo dancing took place at some point in the proceedings. The sequence of events in all three dances was similar. To begin, a solo dancer would perform in the center of the ring and start the dance. After dancing for a short period, he or she chose some person, usually of the opposite sex, from the surrounding circle as a replacement. The succeeding dancer imitated this sequence until each person had danced in the ring (Bethel 1978:126).

Other dances which evolved from the African-European settlements were the Bahamian Quadrille and the Heel-and-Toe Polka. The modern “rake and scrape” bands, which date back to the early 19th century, would accompany the dancers.

Other festivals also used music to celebrate the special event. Emancipation Day, for example, was celebrated throughout the

Bahamas on August 12 in various ways in different settlements. Whatever form the celebration took, the festivities were accompanied by music and dance.

Similarly, Fox Hill Day, which followed a week later, also included music in the Sunday School programs. Guy Fawkes Day was celebrated every November 5; besides the burning of the effigy of Guy Fawkes, celebrations also commemorated the day with processions of bands of music. It seems that Whites and Blacks participated together in the Guy Fawkes celebration and in the Christmas Junkanoo (Saunders 1985:107)

Traditionally, the latter was a Black festival, and Whites were mostly spectators. Three days' holiday had been given to the slaves at Christmas, and they celebrated “in their own way” usually ending with a “gran’ dance.” By 1801 John Canoe [now known as Junkanoo] was “a fixture in The Bahamas.” The Junkanoo festival has grown into a well-organized and competitive parade with elaborate costumes and well-rehearsed groups. It always included music, the beating of drums, the blowing of whistles and horns of some kind, and the beating of some sort of cow bell. Recently, the Junkanoo parade includes elaborate brass sections in each major group.

How did The Bahamas inherit such rich musical traditions? This article tries to

address that question by exploring the environment and the people who settled and brought with them diverse patterns of culture.

The Land and the Sea

The Bahamian archipelago comprises about 700 limestone islands and cays stretching more than 500 miles southeasterly from just off Florida to Cap Haitien in Haiti. The climate is temperate, the terrain is mainly flat, and the soil is sparse. Primarily owing to the poverty of the soil, the population of The Bahamas, now numbering 255,000 people, has never been large. Yet the sea is “more fertile and far more spectacular than the land” (Cronon and Saunders 1992:5), yielding fish, mollusks, and turtles and encouraging the growth of coral. The color of the water varies from place to place according to the water's depth but is generally turquoise and an almost undescrivable green. The name “Bahamas” may be derived from the Spanish phrase *baja mar* (land of shallow seas), or, as Julian Granberry has argued, it may be of Arawak origin.

Early Inhabitants of the Islands

It is believed that the first inhabitants of the Bahama Islands were the Lucayans, Arawak-speaking peoples, whom Columbus met on his epic voyage and landfall in 1492. By approximately 1509 the indigenous popula-

tion had been killed off by diseases and enforced labor both in the gold mines of Cuba and Hispaniola and in the pearl fisheries of Cubagua and Margarita.

The Bahamas remained depopulated for the next hundred years. Spain claimed the islands but neglected them for much more profitable enterprises on the Spanish Main. The British formally annexed The Bahamas in 1629, but no permanent settlement took place there at that time.

In 1648 a small group of about 70 “Independents” from Bermuda and England, with a small number of slaves, arrived at Eleuthera, seeking religious freedom. Their life was extremely harsh, but, as time passed, they learned to live from the resources of the land and sea. They collected salvage from wrecks and exported hardwoods, ambergris, and salt. Although many of the early Puritan “Adventurers” (as they were called) left, some pioneers, including the Adderley, Albury, Bethell, Davis, Sands, and Saunders families, stayed in The Bahamas and were joined by poor Whites, rebellious slaves, and free Blacks and Coloreds—all put out of Bermuda.

Before 1670 settlements were founded on Harbour Island and St. George's Cay (Spanish Wells), and by the end of the century there were believed to be settlers on Current Island and Cupid's Cay (Governor's Harbour)

as well. Sometime around 1666, Sayles Island, or New Providence, a sizeable island fairly near the American mainland with an excellent sheltered harbor, was settled and soon had several hundred inhabitants. Charlestown, later renamed Nassau, became the Bahamian capital and its main street, Bay Street, the center of commercial and political activity.

In 1670 the Bahama Islands were granted to six of the eight Lords Proprietors of the Carolinas. These Proprietors never visited The Bahamas but ruled by sending governors from England as their representatives. The Crown bought the islands from the Lords Proprietors; however the sale was not completed until 1785.

The Proprietary period (1670–1717) was a time of much lawlessness, due to the ineffectiveness of the governors, constant invasions by the Spanish and French, and the instability inspired by such notorious Bahamian residents as the pirates Edward Teach (“Blackbeard”), Captain Henry Avery, and Anne Bonny. Conditions changed slowly for the better when the first Royal Governor of The Bahamas, Woodes Rogers, arrived in 1718. In 1721 The Bahamas had approximately 1,031 inhabitants, living mainly in New Providence (480 Whites and 233 Blacks), Harbour Island (124 Whites and 5 Blacks), and Eleuthera (150 Whites and 34

Blacks). Not much is known about the substantial number of Blacks in New Providence. Most were slaves, but some were free. However, what is clear from slave regulations passed in 1723 is that the White settlers felt threatened by the Black presence (Saunders 1990b:11).

Some efforts were made in the early 18th century to diversify the economy. The most lucrative sources of trade remained woodcutting, salt-raking, the gathering of turtle shells and ambergris, and the collection of monk-seal oil for export. Because the inhabitants were not inclined to farm, no staple crop was developed; they seemed to prefer seafaring activities. The essentially maritime nature of the Bahamian economy would continue into the 20th century.

The Loyalists & Their Slaves

By 1773 the population of The Bahamas had grown to 4,000, with an almost equal ratio of Whites and Blacks living mainly on New Providence. However, in the space of two years (1783–85) the population of The Bahamas doubled with arrivals from the recently independent United States of America. Known as Loyalists because they wished to remain British subjects, the majority of these American colonists came from the South, and they settled in New Providence and the surrounding Out Islands, many of

which had had no permanent population before. The Blacks they brought with them—mostly Creole slaves born in the Americas, West Indies, or The Bahamas—tipped the population balance in the Islands, putting Blacks in the majority, where they have remained and now comprise 85 percent of the population. The Creole society which evolved during the Loyalist era reflected strong influences from Europe, America, and Africa.

Many of the Loyalists tried their luck as merchants. They also developed the boat-building industry, which, although not prevalent today, is still practiced especially in Abaco, Andros, and Long Island. Farmers with large families and 10 to 100 slaves were induced by land grants to establish cotton plantations on the Out Islands. These thrived for several years, but by 1800 cotton as a commercial crop had failed, and most farmers were facing ruin. Many Whites left The Bahamas as a result.

Among the Blacks accompanying the Loyalists to The Bahamas, many claimed to be free by virtue of having been born free, having purchased their freedom, or having been granted it by official decree. Among them were Joseph Paul, the first Methodist in The Bahamas, and Prince William and Samuel Scrivens, who set up the Society of Anabaptists in 1801 and established Bethel Baptist Church, out of which St. John’s Native Baptist

Church grew. The Baptist Church quickly gained converts among the Black population. While the Established (Anglican) Church took little interest in the slaves, the Baptists, with their stress on freedom, rousing music, emotional sermons, lively singing, hand-clapping, and spirit possession, appealed to the Bahamian slaves as well as to the freed Blacks.

The slaves brought by the Loyalists comprised a youthful and healthy population that was increasing at Emancipation in 1834 (Saunders 1985a:50). They were used to build the plantation system; when it failed, they worked as field laborers on farms and were utilized as salt-rakers, seamen, domestics, and artisans.

This migration of Loyalists and Blacks exerted a significant and long-lasting influence on countless areas of Bahamian culture. For example, the color and class barriers characterizing the social structure during slavery were intensified after the coming of the Loyalists and would continue well into the 20th century. On the positive side, the Loyalists improved record-keeping and started a lending library. In 1784 John Wells from Charleston, South Carolina, founded the first Bahamian newspaper, the *Bahama Gazette*. Vernacular architecture reflects the introduction by slaves of thatching techniques and outside rock ovens. In Nassau a number of

public buildings and private residences that are highly regarded today display stylistic elements brought by the Loyalists from their homes in the American South.

The slaves had kept alive many of their African customs, even though these were adapted to their new environment, and brought these as well as beliefs and folklore from America to The Bahamas. There they were reinforced by the coming of the liberated Africans and still affect Bahamian culture today.

Liberated Africans

After the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, many African slaves were liberated from foreign ships by British naval patrols, and between 1808 and 1860 about 6,000 were settled in The Bahamas, mainly at New Providence. They were first "apprenticed" to "masters" or "mistresses" and performed many of the same tasks the slaves had, under similar conditions: "fishing, wrecking, cutting wood, raking salt and agricultural and domestic tasks" (Johnson 1991:20). As Howard Johnson argued, a proto-peasantry emerged in The Bahamas in the late 18th century. Liberated Africans formed the nucleus of the peasantry that developed during slavery. They also were a part of the free Black community, enjoying some independence and "a measure of prosperity" (Johnson 1991:24).

Although many lived in the town of Nassau,

there were in the 1830s at least eight free Black villages or settlements elsewhere in the archipelago. For about a hundred years after Emancipation these villages retained strong African characteristics and an identity of their own.

African Bahamians learned to fend for themselves after Emancipation. They were able to survive in a depressed economy which offered few opportunities for wage labor (Johnson 1991:185) by thrifty habits and through the custom of the *asue*. A system of financing with roots in West Africa (Eneas 1976:17), the *asue* is still popular in the contemporary Bahamas. Ex-slaves and liberated Africans also formed Friendly Societies to provide "by mutual assistance, for periods of sickness, old age and burial expenses" (Johnson 1991:183). "While the early friendly societies in the Bahamas were based on English antecedents," the organizations "reflect African cultural values" and resembled associations and secret societies of the Efik and Igbo peoples of West Africa (Johnson 1991:184). Until the latter part of the 19th century these Friendly Societies operated as pressure groups on the White power structure as well. Other affiliated societies providing for the physical welfare of their members and mobilizing the Black community on political issues became more popular in the 20th century; these were

linked to organizations in Britain and the United States. Both the Friendly Societies and affiliated lodges are still important in the lives of many Bahamians.

Liberated Africans also maintained other cultural forms and practices with African roots. These included John Canoe (Junkanoo) and dances such as the Jumping Dance, Ring-play, and (to a lesser extent) the Fire Dance. *Goombay*, or "rake-and-scrape" music, although Bahamian, contains strong African influences (see Kayla Edwards's article). The foods eaten and the methods and types of cooking also reflect African influences.

"Bush" medicine—the use of local medicinal plants—is utilized in the practice of *obeah*, a Caribbean phenomenon that almost certainly originated in Africa and that persists today, even if more privately. *Obeah* is based on the belief that all good and evil, illnesses and cures, result from spirits, sorcery, or magic.

Inheriting traditions from their slave and African forbearers, African Bahamian populations traditionally grew much of their produce in their own garden plots. They sold their produce either from door to door, at small home-made stalls in the streets, or in front of the houses. Most of the vendors were women and, according to Cleveland Eneas, nearly all were of Yoruba descent. The Nassau Market, in existence since the early 1800s, was the

central mode of local commerce.

For some years, even until the early 20th century, many African Bahamians kept their native languages alive. Most Blacks, however, spoke Bahamian Creole, a syncretic dialect which resembled the Black English spoken on the United States mainland in the 18th century. Shilling and Holm argue that the slaves of the American Loyalists preserved American Plantation Creole of the 18th century. Standard English is the country's official language, but many Bahamians of all colors and classes still speak variations of English.

Later Migrations

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries demand for labor encouraged the immigration of significant groups of "trading minorities" (Johnson 1991:125-48), including Chinese, Greek, Lebanese, and skilled laborers from the West Indies. The first Greeks who arrived in the late 19th century engaged in the sponge trade, and by 1925 the Greek community "was firmly established in the Bahamas" (Johnson 1991:130). The Lebanese, who also arrived in the late 19th century, were peddlers and later successful shopkeepers. A small number of Jews also began retail businesses. Chinese immigrants established restaurants, although many worked in other capacities. The descendants of the original immigrants have branched out into profes-

sional areas such as law, medicine, and architecture, and some are still engaged in lucrative businesses.

In the 1920s the "immigrant groups occupied an intermediate position in Bahamian society" (Johnson 1991:136). At least until the 1950s they were seen as a threat to the local mercantile elite and remained on the margins of society. Although there are distinct Greek, Lebanese, and Chinese communities in The Bahamas today, some members of these groups have intermarried with other Bahamians.

West Indian laborers migrated to The Bahamas, many via Cuba, during the prosperous Prohibition years. Better-educated than local Creoles, these immigrants and their descendants later played a large role in sensitizing Bahamians to political movements in the Caribbean.

By far the largest minority in The Bahamas are the Haitians. They began migrating in the 1950s because of sociopolitical unrest and economic hardships in Haiti; as conditions in Haiti have deteriorated in recent years, the number of Haitians landing in The Bahamas, many of them illegally, has increased. Most Haitian men work in gardening and farming, and many Haitian women work as housekeepers and cooks, although quite a few have set up small retail businesses. Numerous Haitians also are

employed in the Royal Bahamas Police Force and the Defence Force; others are lawyers and teachers.

There is friction between the Creole Bahamian and Haitian populations, arising from Bahamians' resentment of the competition by Haitian women in retail trade and the demands that Haitians put on health services and the educational system.

Many children born of Haitian parents have become Bahamianized to a large extent. More research is needed, but, although they usually live in all-Haitian communities, it seems that some Haitians desire to distance themselves from their Haitian roots and culture. Some have converted from Roman Catholicism to the Baptist faith and other non-conformist denominations.

Conclusion

The society of The Bahamas has been mostly influenced by Africa, Britain, and more recently by America and the Caribbean. As Winston Saunders wrote in 1989: "Culture in The Bahamas today is an amalgam of our British heritage, our African heritage, and the effects of our closeness to North America. Our language is English, our Parliament follows the judicial procedure set down in England.... Our courts follow the English system.... Marry the above with the practice of *obeah*, the girating movements of the ring-

play, the pulsating rhythm of Junkanoo and the goat-skin drum, the hand-clapping jumpers, the use of bush medicine, the songs and the drinking of a wake and the consequent outpouring of public grief at the death of a loved one, our African-inspired neighborhood banking system called *asue*, and you almost have a Bahamian. The final touches come in the form of the American Jerri curl, the American Afro, American television, American and Japanese technology, the American system of higher education and its graduate degrees, hamburgers and hot dogs, Coca-Cola, the Chevrolet...the satellite dish. Frivolous though some of these things may seem, they fuse to form a representative catalogue of our cultural heritage and the patterns that dictate our reaction to any given situation" (W. Saunders 1989:243).

Indeed, despite the powerful influence of North America, The Bahamas continues to forge a cultural identity of its own.

Gail Saunders heads the Department of Archives in The Bahamas and was Bahamian curator for the Smithsonian-Bahamas program. She received her PhD from the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.

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MUSIC IN THE BAHAMAS by Kayla Olubummi Lockhart Edwards

The Bahamas could be described truly as the islands where stories are more often sung than spoken—"islands of song." For hundreds of years along this scattered island chain, the human voice has been raised in melodious strains of joy and sadness to a rhythmic pulse that is deeply influenced by its populace's African ancestry. Even Bahamians' spoken dialect has a particular melodic ring.

The absolute wealth of raw musical talent that exists in almost every island and the ease with which rich three- and four-part harmonies flow are remarkable. For example, while conducting research on Cat Island, a group of farmers waiting for a business meeting to begin were asked to sing a typical anthem. Without hesitation, two of the ladies raised a rousing song, and 92-year-old Mr. Donald Newbold became the featured bass with a voice of honeyed thunder that left us in total amazement at the depth of his vocal range and richness.

Greatly influenced by hundreds of years of colonial domination as well as by American culture, Bahamian sacred music is by far the Islands' most outstanding cultural expression. Anthems are religious hymns that closely resemble the American ante-bellum

slave songs brought to The Bahamas during the Loyalist period. Favorite characters in anthems are Moses, Noah, and Elijah from the Old Testament, and King Jesus, King Peter, and Mary Magdalene; the anti-hero is inevitably Satan. The most common themes are faith, optimism, patience, weariness, and fighting. An example of an anthem is "Do You Live By Prayer?"

*Do you live by prayer?
Do you live by prayer?
O, yes, I do live by prayer.*

*Remember me,
Remember me,
O, yes, remember me.*

*Have you passed here before?
Have you passed here before?
O, yes, I have passed here before.*

*I'll bid farewell
To every fear
An' wipe my weepin' eyes.
Then I can smile
At Satan's rage
To see a burnin' world.*

Rhyming songs (spiritual and secular) present an animated storyteller with back-up chorus. The rhymer tells the story—sad, happy, provocative—in verse after rhythmic verse, with the chorus echoing basically the

same refrain after each verse and usually singing in three-part harmony. It is not unusual for rhyming songs to have up to 10 or 12 verses; many times the rhymer will spontaneously create verses as he or she goes along. The texts are often based on biblical themes, fantasies, or real-life happenings. "Run, Come See Jerusalem," for instance, recounts the sinking of three small boats off the coast of Andros Island during the 1929 hurricane.

"Run, Come See Jerusalem"

*It was nineteen hundred and twenty-nine.
Run, come see, run come see—
It was nineteen hundred and twenty-nine.
Run, come see Jerusalem.*

*Now John Brown, he was the captain.
Run, come see, run come see—
Now John Brown, he was the captain.
Run, come see Jerusalem.*

*Now it was de Ethel, Myrtle, and Praetoria.
Run, come see, run come see—
It was de Ethel, Myrtle, and Praetoria.
Run, come see Jerusalem.*

*O, de big sea build up in the northwest.
Run, come see, run come see—
O, de big sea build up in the northwest.
Run, come see Jerusalem.*

When the first sea hit the Praetoria,

*Run, come see, run come see—
When the first sea hit the Praetoria,
Run, come see Jerusalem.*

Now there was thirty-three lost souls on the ocean.

*Run, come see, run come see—
Yes, there was thirty-three poor lost souls on the ocean.*

Run, come see Jerusalem.

It is now common to hear contemporary African American gospel and European classical harmonies emanating from the churches of the myriad religious denominations to be found throughout the Commonwealth. In about 90 percent of these denominations, regardless of what their founders intended, the congregational singing is accompanied by hand-clapping, rhythmic percussion, and spiritual dancing as well as spirit possession. In Baptist, Church of God (called "Jumper Church"), and other Pentecostal services, possession usually occurs during the singing and clapping section of the service, although it also could happen during the praying and preaching periods. Religious relics of West African worship style, both hand-clapping and spirit possession—the supreme African religious experience—have been incorporated into the European Christian religious practice. Although dancing is not allowed in the Baptist and Jumper

churches, a remarkable degree of rhythmic bodily movement called "rushing" is most commonly indulged in during the singing of the anthems and spiritual songs.

Secular music in The Bahamas historically has been called *goombay* music. In the Ring Dance, Jumpin' and Fire Dance, types of West African fertility dances, the participants would form a circle with one dancer in the center. The players would begin to clap with their hands, and the drummer would call out "gimbey," a corruption of the West African word *gumbay*, or large drum, to begin the song or chanting. Bahamian secular music relies on the goatskin drum to create its rhythmic base.

Stories of everyday occurrences become popular songs telling of lovers' infidelity, the Bahamian female's many wiles and schemes, and the beauty of the environment. They often contain proverbial instruction, e.g., "Never interfere with man and wife, never understand/No matter who is wrong or who is right Hoih?/Jus' offer sympathy."

These same songs are played instrumentally by rake and scrape bands. The rake and scrape band hails back to the 1800s, when the Africans who were brought to The Bahamas sought to make music on whatever was available to them. The carpenter's saw was a tool used daily, pork barrels made a suitable keg over which to stretch the skin of

a goat or sheep to make a drum, and the accordion might have been a gift from their colonial master; the music-makers combined these three instruments. The music of the rake and scrape band is traditionally used to accompany the Bahamian Quadrille and the Heel and Toe Polka dances, all relics of the initial mixture of Africa and Europe. Although these bands may now be composed of modern electronic instruments, they seek to retain the original "rake and scrape" flavor.

Traditional children's Ring-play games have accompanying "ditties" which are found throughout the Caribbean.

"Blue Hill Water Dry"

*Blue hill water dry
Nowhere to wash my clothes*

*I remember the Saturday night
Boil fish and Johnny cake*

*Centipe knock tuh muh dorr last night
Take him for Johnny, slam him BAM!*

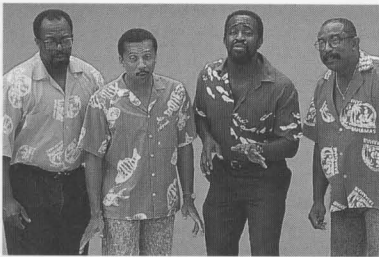
Ceremonial songs like "Soley Married" (Soley married, Soley married, come here, let me tell you gal/Soley married/She married Walter, Walter Ferguson, come here, let me tell you gal, Soley married) are still sung at weddings in New Providence and the Family Islands. The name of the girl being married at the time can be substituted for Soley. It is

also not uncommon for the welcome and introduction of the chairperson for an evening's concert to be sung instead of spoken.

Music in The Bahamas is changing. Pan-Caribbean *reggae*, *soca*, and *salsa* are heard in clubs and hotels. American pop and world music are widely recognized. And yet the song and music of the people—that which conjures up the soul of The Bahamas at home, in worship, at work and in play, and in celebration—endures.

Kayla Olubummi Lockhart Edwards is the Deputy Director at the Ministry of Youth and Culture as well as a singer, dancer, storyteller, and director of musical productions.

ABOUT THE SONGS



1. YOU AIN'T HURRYIN' ME Eric Minns

Performed by Dickey Doh Singers: Dwayne Curtis, Garland Dean, Kermit Strachean, and Tex Turnquest. Nassau, New Providence.

A contemporary *goombay* song that makes a statement with regard to the fast-paced life in North America as compared to the laid-back pace of life in The Bahamas. The Dickey Doh Singers perform this song in traditional four-part harmony a cappella, the traditional style of harmonized singing in The Bahamas.

2. GIRL, IF I WRITE YOU Nat Saunders

Performed and composed by Nat Saunders. Alice Town, Bimini.

In years gone by, the traditional method of courting a girl took the form of writing a letter seeking parental permission to visit the girl of choice. This was followed by a period of courtship that involved love letters. Many young ladies treasured these love notes, keeping them neatly tucked away in a secret place. In this song, the suitor is telling his "intended" that, due to the fact that she never learned to read, if he wrote her a love letter, she would not know what he was trying to say. Traditionally, the banjo or guitar is the instrument of choice for accompaniment in solo renditions—particularly in the Family Islands. Nat is a prolific songwriter who at 86-plus years of age finds great delight in creating songs about the daily happenings in his native Bimini.



3. WATERMELON IS SPOILIN' ON THE VINE

Performed by Thomas Cartwright and the Boys: Thomas Cartwright, accordion; Orlando Turnquest, drum; Huelon Newbold, saw. Clarence Town, Long Island.

A traditional Bahamian folk song, possibly created during an abundant year of watermelons in the 1920s. A popular dance tune, it is played by a *goombay* "rake and scrape" band—a creolized art form comprising the combination of carpenter's saw, goatskin drum, and accordion and created during the early 1900s, when musicians of African descent accompanied European melodies and original tunes with this unique instrumental ensemble. In Exuma, this type of music has been referred to as "Saw Music," because the saw basically sets and sustains the meter or tempo of the song. The drum is kept in pitch by constant heating with fire.



4. RAIN CHILDREN

Sung by Sons of Andros: Harrington "Zippy" Frazier Sr., Harrington Frazier Jr., Ricardo Frazier, Quintero Frazier, and Dexter Frazier. Staniard Creek, Andros.

Four-part harmony of male voices singing in the traditional a cappella rhyming spiritual style. Harrington "Zippy" Frazier leads his sons in telling the story of Noah and the forty days and nights of rain. Bahamians are famous for the art of storytelling. Many of these stories are sung as well as spoken. The themes for these songs are usually biblical and often issue warnings or inspire courage. The length of the songs varies in accordance with the story that is being told.

5. WHEN I GET INSIDE

Sung by Cat Island Mites and friends: Patricia Bazard, Buina Cleare, Dwayne Curtis, Garland Dean, Susiemae Dorsett, Kayla Edwards, Pearl Hart, Ozzie King, Kermit Strachan, and Tex Turnquest. Soloists: Patricia Bazard and Buina Cleare. Cat Island

A traditional spiritual from Cat Island sung to accompany "rushin'"—a stylized religious march in church, usually sung on New Year's Eve after midnight to usher in the New Year. Participants march or "rush" through the aisle of the church building, hand-clapping and rhythmically stamping their feet. The song is also used as a means of fund-raising for churches all year long. An appeal is made for funds, the band strikes up, and those who wish to contribute are invited to form a line, rush around, and drop the donation in a hat or straw-fanned collection plate. This ritual usually lasts as long as the money is flowing, however long that might be. It is believed that the Junkanoo Rushout borrowed this phrase from the Church in the formation of the style in which hundreds "rush" on Bay Street on Boxing Day and New Year's Day. The song is celebrating the time of redemption inside the gates of heaven.



6. I'M GOING HOME ON THE MORNING TRAIN

Sung by Israel Forbes. Bluff, South Andros.

Israel Forbes is a contemporary of the late famous Bahamian folk lyricist Joseph Spence. The musicians from this Family Island are self-taught and even created their own "board" guitars in the early 1900s. The unique technique and combination of voice and guitar set South Andros in a class almost by itself. Taking the ante-bellum slaves' songs of the southern United States, which no doubt were brought to islands during the 1800s by the Loyalists and their African slaves, Bahamians have adopted these tunes as their heritage and added to them their own unique interpretation and style.

7. BIG BELLY MAN POLKA

Performed by instrumental ensemble: Ed Moxey's Rake 'n Scrape: Ed Moxey, accordion; Huelon Newbold, saw; Cyril Dean, drum. Ragged Island and Cat Island combination.

The Euro-African Quadrille folk dance remains the recognized stylized remnant of The Bahamas' historic past. The Heel and Toe Polka is one of the set dances in this series of traditional folk dances. Borrowed from the European polka style, this instrumental *goombay* rake and scrape rendition is used to accompany the One-Step, Two-Step, or Heel and Toe Polka. The words to this ditty are perhaps taken from an incident when a heavy man came in to the water (at the beach) and muddied it. The words repeatedly say "Big Belly Man, come muddy duh water, Big Belly Man, come muddy duh water." Instrumentation: saw, goatskin drum, and accordion.

8. ALL IN THE WOODS

Sung by Avis Armbrister & Almeda Campbell. Arthur's Town, Cat Island.

Typical campfire-type game song possibly taught to islanders by Anglo-Saxon missionaries (American or Colonial), who spent their lifetime as teachers and priests in the Family Islands in the early 1900s.

The game begins with

the tree and proceeds to test the singer's ability to remember all the sequences that progress from the tree to the bird, to the egg, to the feather, and to the color on the feather. Children take great delight in performing this game at breakneck speed.

9. LET THE CHURCH ROLL ON

Sung by Dicey Doh Singers. Nassau, New Providence.

Traditional ante-bellum spiritual borrowed from the southern United States, sung in Bahamian four-part harmony. The text admonishes that the Church must be kept pure even if it means kicking out the deacon (or even the pastor).

10. LYNN Nat Saunders

Composed and sung by Nat Saunders. Alice Town, Bimini.

A love song about a pretty Grand Bahamian "gal" named Lynn, who was discovered by a woman who went all over Freeport, Grand Bahama, a neighboring island, to find this pretty girl for Nat. He is self-accompanied on banjo.

**11. WENT TO THE BIGHT**

Sung by Cat Island Mites. Cat Island.

Traditional Cat Island Ring-play which usually precedes the seven-set Quadrille dance. Each dancer gets an opportunity to "show off" in the center of the ring until each one has had his or her turn. Accompanied by hand-clapping and syncopated drums, this introduction dance usually gets the crowds going, and the competition is keen between the male dancers particularly to see who can produce the most fancy footwork, such as "mashin duh roach" and other original steps. The song is actually tracing the journey from one settlement in Cat Island to the other until the singer has gone to every settlement or the Ring-play is finished and the group is ready to start the Quadrille.

12. NOBODY'S DARLING BUT MINE

Performed by Thomas Cartwright and the Boys. Clarence Town, Long Island.

A sweet waltz-tune used to dance the Bahamian Waltz, one of the sets of the seven-set Quadrille. The accordion carries the melody with rhythmic support coming from a hand drum and goatskin drum. The saw sets the pace in its own inimitable way. Usually, when the song is almost over, the leader shouts "rain," which signifies that the song will come to an end within the next phrase.

13. CHRISTIAN AUTOMOBILE Harrington "Zippy" Frazier

Performed by the Sons of Andros. Staniard Creek, Andros.

An original Bahamian anthem set in the narrative rhyming spiritual style. The lead singer tells the story. This song admonishes that every Christian is an automobile for God, and as such all the parts of this automobile should be kept in shape by prayer and faith.

14. LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART

Performed by Israel Forbes. Bluff, South Andros.

This world-famous waltz takes on a special feeling when sung by Israel Forbes in his unique South Andros style. He is self-accompanied on guitar, and in true Bahamian style, where there is memory lapse for the lyrics, he resorts to the "leet-deet" or any Bahamian scat-syllable that seems to readily come to mind. This waltz tune is also used in the set waltz of the Quadrille.

15. SLOOP JOHN B

Performed by Dickey Doh Singers. Nassau, New Providence.

This song tells the story of life in the yesteryear in the city of Nassau, when island sloops would plough the waves bringing cargos of fruits, vegetables, etc., from the islands of Cuba or Haiti to the capital for sale to its many residents. The sloops would all park at the Market Range, and, after all the produce was sold, the captain would share the profits with the crew. Many fool-

hardy sailors would take this new-found wealth and head to the nearest bar and get "kapoonkle to duh bone" (Bahamian dialect for "drunk") only to find that the Nassau policemen would quickly put them in jail for disturbing the peace. It was at this time that many sailors would moan and long to go back home to their Family Island, where everything seemed so much safer than in big bad Nassau. Dickey Doh Singers performed this great favorite a cappella in four-part barbershop harmony typical throughout The Bahamas.

16. JIMMY BEND A TREE WHILE IT'S YOUNG

Tyrone Williams

Performed by Thomas Cartwright and Boys. Clarence Town, Long Island.

A contemporary composition based on the biblical proverb, "Train up a child in the right way, and even when he/she is old, they will not depart from those principles." *Goombay* rake and scrape instruments are used for a good *skullin* dance. *Skullin* is quite similar to Spanish *meringue*.

**17. ROUND AND ROUND THE BAR ROOM**

Nat Saunders

Performed by Nat Saunders, banjo; Huelon Newbold, saw; Orlando Turnquest, goat-skin drum. Bimini.

Set in a typical Bahamian island bar room, the suitor goes round and round the bar room looking for the most shapely

girl. Of course, there is the myth that the girls from Andros, Eleuthera, Bimini, and Nassau are all "tiger" (tigo), meaning they have shapes like the old Coca Cola bottles. The combination of Nat Saunders on the banjo, Orlando Turnquest on hand drum, and Huyland Newbold on the saw makes this a delightful dance number.

18. ROLL OF PIN

Performed by Avis Armbrister and Almeda Campbell. Arthur's Town, Cat Island.

Colonial song taught by school masters and teachers throughout The Bahamas during the years of British rule. Avis and Almeda not only sing this song but dramatize it as only these two farming divas can. The song describes a suitor trying his very best to convince the girl of his choice to marry him. She continues to deny him until he agrees to give her the keys to his "chips" (treasure chest), then all is "peaches and cream" and she says "yes."

19. DRY BONES

Performed by Sons of Andros. Staniard Creek, Andros.

There are many arrangements of this Negro spiritual throughout the southern United States, but none more exciting than this Bahamian version of "Ezekiel and Dem Dry Bones." Lead singer Harrington "Zippy" Frazier not only sings it well, but he and his four sons have all the footwork to go along with this exciting spiritual.

20. BID YOU GOODNIGHT

Performed by Cat Island Mites and Dicey Doh Singers with Patricia Bazard as soloist.

When a death occurs in The Bahamas the community comes together to keep what is called a wake, or "Settin' Up." It's an all-night vigil complete with songs, food, and fellowship. The ceremony usually begins with hymns and anthems, and, as the night wears on, the singing style changes to rhyming songs and spirituals, with the rhymer singing the story. Most stories center around the eternal rewards of the Christian religion—heaven, immortality, and God's providence in taking the life of the loved one. Black coffee spiced with island spirits (alcohol) is the preferred drink and is served with chicken, pigs' feet, or sheep tongue souse (a clear soup eaten with Johnny cake—a type of shortbread).



21. THE TIMESTABLE

Performed by Ed Moxey's Rake 'n Scrape. Ragged Island and Cat Island

Long before the new math, at least 100 years ago, the children in The Bahamas learned their multiplication tables by singing them to this Anglo-Saxon hymn tune. "Twice one are two, twice two's a four," right up to the 12 timestable. Most of those students testify that these tables were indelibly imprinted on their minds, and at the drop of a hat they could sing the timestable without a hitch even at the age of 90 years. Ed Moxey's Rake 'n Scrape have arranged it as a catchy dance tune, which is used to dance one of the sets of the Quadrille folk dance.

22. GOD SENT JONAH

Sung and accompanied by Israel Forbes. Bluff, South Andros.

This song tells the biblical story of Jonah and the whale. It is written in a unique Bahamian rhyming fashion. The story is part of Bahamian oral tradition, and it is sung rather than spoken.

23. LIAR

Performed by Dicey Doh Singers. Nassau, New Providence.

"If you don't want to, you don't have to get in trouble, you better leave the ole liar (Satan) alone," admonishes Dicey Doh. This is one of hundreds of Bahamian spiritual songs sung in traditional barbershop Bahamian style.

Producer's Note

These recordings were made in Nassau, New Providence, on February 2 and 3, 1995. Equipment was flown down from Washington, D. C., and an impromptu studio was set up in The Culture Club, an establishment formerly operated by the local musical group, "Bahamen." We give sincere thanks to Mr. Fred Ferguson for arranging the use of the club and for allowing us to unplug beverage

coolers and turn off ventilation systems in order to create as quiet an environment as possible.

All of the artists who appear on this recording were participants in the 1994 Festival of American Folklife, an annual event presented by the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife Programs & Cultural Studies on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., which celebrates the diverse cultures of the world. After the Festival, funding was given to the Smithsonian by the Bahamian Embassy in Washington, D.C. to produce an educational kit for use in schools throughout the islands. This kit was the original reason for bringing these performers as well as some traditional Bahamian storytellers into Nassau. Transportation and housing was arranged for folks from the "Family" or "Out" islands and, after Kayla Edwards worked with them on repertoire, we brought them into our recording "studio."

It gives me great pleasure to see this music now offered to a wider audience, and I hope that you get a sense of the warmth of these individuals and their "islands of song."

*Pete Reiniger
April 1997*

CREDITS

Recorded and produced by Pete Reiniger

Mastered by Dave Glasser, AirShow,
Springfield, VA

Associate producer and annotator: Kayla
Olumbumni Lockhart Edwards

Introductory essay by Gail Saunders

Production assistance by Emily Botein

Smithsonian Folkways production supervised
by Amy Horowitz and Anthony Seeger

Production coordinated by Mary Monseur
and Michael Maloney

Editorial assistance by Thomas Vennum, Jr.,
Carla Borden, and Krista Thompson

Design by Visual Dialogue, Boston, MA

Cover art by Amos Ferguson, courtesy of
Beryl Edgecombe, Webe & Tomland, New
York City, Sawyer's Studio, Nassau, Bahamas

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Donaldson, Edda Dumont Adolph, Diane
Dean, Angela Cleare, Kayla Edwards, Gail
Saunders, Patricia Bazard, Phillip Burrows,
Amos Ferguson, Fred Ferguson, Beryl
Edgecombe, Grace Turner, Richard Kurin,
Heather MacBride, Kevin Doran, John
Franklin, and Brett Symonette.

ABOUT SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

Folkways Records was founded by Moses
Asch and Marian Distler in 1948 to document
music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds
from around the world. In the ensuing
decades, New York City-based Folkways
became one of the largest independent record
labels in the world, reaching a total of nearly
2,200 albums that were always kept in print.

The Smithsonian Institution acquired
Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987 to
ensure that the sounds and genius of the
artists would be preserved for future genera-
tions. All Folkways recordings are now avail-
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nal LP liner notes.

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings was
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quality documentation. It produces new titles,
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with other companies also produces instruc-
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through which the Center supports the work
of traditional artists and expresses its com-
mitment to cultural diversity, education, and
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fax (301) 443-1819
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folkways@aol.com