

GUYANA FOLK *And Culture*

LAUNCH OF GUYANA'S 50TH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY

NEW YORK SETS THE STAGE FOR GUYANA'S GRAND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS



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A bright and prosperous New Year to our readers.

The proverb "Time and tide waits for no man," is a reality that haunts our daily lives. This year the Republic of Guyana is commemorating and celebrating through a year of activities, its 50 years of existence as an independent nation. I remember that glorious day on May 26, 1966 when the occasion was made manifest. It seems like yesterday. The road like any other transitional milestone, had obstacles and room for repair and maintenance. Notwithstanding, we are here to share that moment and congratulations are in order. To all who contributed in whatever way, form or fashion there is need for jollification.

Simultaneously, the Guyana Cultural Association of New York (GCA) will also be celebrating 15 years, recognizing the cultural diversities outside of Guyana. To all our supporters near and far we the members of the board, thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Of course conversations are afoot to link Literary Festivals, Symposia and a Masquerade Jamboree, collaborating with the responsible Ministries in Guyana, to have joint ventures in Guyana and in the Diaspora. As the months progress, this publication will keep you apprised of those activities as we preserve, promote and propagate Guyanese folklore; recognizing Who we are; What have we become and Where we are going. In our February issue we will publish a comprehensive Jubilee Calendar of Events for your perusal.

At the beginning of every year, we are all saddled with new opportunities for rekindling, refreshing thoughts with enlightened suggestions for reorganizing. This is supported by ideas that would expeditiously effect a change of lifestyle and rejuvenated resolutions poised to be placed in motion. As our GCA family moves forward, we pray for renewed vigor to confront the challenges of inevitable life changes and progressive organizational challenges, such as the establishing of the Guyana Arts and Cultural Center (GACC).

We will promote:-

**"OUR PEOPLE, OUR CULTURE, OUR HISTORY
 CELEBRATING GUYANA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE"**

Let us place our best foot forward to face the days that lie ahead. We will forge relentlessly to promote the Guyanese culture, with our 2016 theme, "Bridgin" the gaps and by transforming attributes of love and understanding to bring about lasting togetherness.

While we reflect on 2015, let us not harbor on nor be distracted by past imperfect encounters, but rather focus on the good that it produced punctuating the positives and providing pathways into realistic thoughts and actions for the future.

Let us examine ourselves for change and craft dreams of cultural grandeur; extending a helping hand to the needy so they too can face this New Year with some veneer of hope. Most of all let our giving be generously mingled with love, not expecting a return on our investment, but guided by altruistic commitment. Also let us pause to remember those who struggled and faced challenges with uncompromising determination to make last year a success.

Each month for the Independence celebrations, we will feature Guyanese who played remarkably essential roles in the independence struggle in a wide range of development accomplishments. In this issue we commemorate the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr. We honor and are inspired by his dream, his dedication as one who challenged the nation and the world to overcome hatred and injustice; New York sets the stage for Guyana's Jubilee celebrations; A reflection of GCA's accomplishments and its fifteen years of existence by our president Dr. Vibert Cambridge; Valerie Coddett's expressions of "The New Amsterdam I Knew"; A beautiful summation on "The songs and dances of my time" by Peter Halder; Registration information for our GACC, Music, Dance, Performing Arts and Dancercise classes and many other articles and commentary we hope you will find interesting.

We would like to extend particular acknowledgement to our writers and all who contributed in our previous issues. Nothing brings us more joy and excitement than the success of actually being able to make a difference in our publications.

Whether it is our cultural expertise, our business ventures, charitable contributions large or small, let us begin the New Year resolved to do the right things so that our lights will shine attracting others to the celebrated cause. In particular, we hope to inspire our youth to carry the mantle of their past heritage as a foundation for their future advancement. May 2016 bring another year of cultural and artistic inspiration for all of us to enjoy.

Warmest regards,

Edgar Henry

January Editor

Guyana Cultural Association of New York Inc. on-line Magazine

New York Kicks off its Celebration of Guyana's 50th Anniversary in Fine Style

Maggie Reece, Guyana Graphic

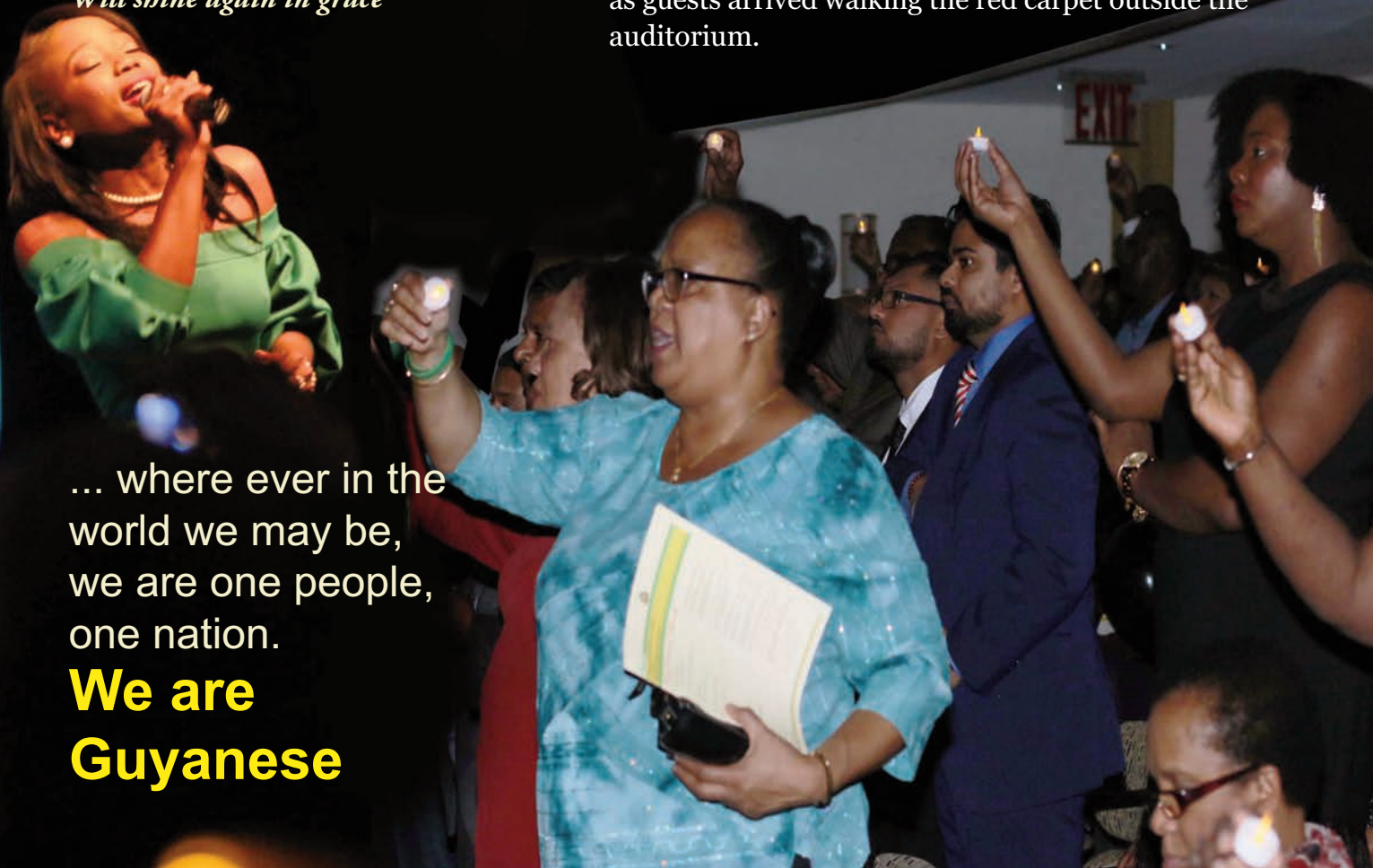
*We could fly so high
Let our spirits never die
In my heart I feel
you are all my brothers
Create a world with no Fear
Together we'll cry happy tears
And the dream we were conceived in
Will reveal a joyful face
And the world we once believed in
Will shine again in grace*

The New York launch of the 50th Anniversary of Independence of the Republic of Guyana got off to a great start at an event held at the Jamaica Performing Arts Center in Queens, New York on Saturday, January 16.

The auditorium was standing room only as several hundred attendees from all over New York and several other states packed the space for the auspicious event. The atmosphere was one of excitement and high energy as guests arrived walking the red carpet outside the auditorium.

... where ever in the world we may be, we are one people, one nation.

**We are
Guyanese**



OUR PEOPLE, OUR CULTURE, OUR HISTORY: **CELEBRATING GUYANA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE**

Along with Guyanese living in the US were a number of dignitaries from the political arena including Keynote presenter His Excellency the Honorable Moses Nagamootoo, Prime Minister of Guyana, Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Dr. Rupert Roopnarine, and Ambassador Bayney Karan.

The event which was hosted by the 50th Independence Anniversary Celebration Committee (New York) began with welcome and introductions from Dr. Ivelaw Griffith who chairs the Symposium Committee. Griffith introduced Dr. Candace Cummings and Mr. Kishore Seunarine who served as mistress and master of ceremony for the event. In a gesture to the theme of unity that permeated all the remarks throughout the evening, the invocation was provided by Bishop Cummings, Pandit Manoj Jadubans and Imam Ahmad Hamid. Each faith leader provided a message of hope, peace, and unity for all Guyanese. The rousing renditions of the national anthems of the United States and Guyana performed by Anthony Alleyne and Lenessa Alexander respectively.

We will demonstrate to the world, the genius of Guyanese innovation whenever we put politics aside and work together for the common good of Guyana.

The mandate of our committee assigns special importance to our young people as they will play a critical role in shaping our destiny and propelling Guyana to new heights of development. Our strategy, therefore, is not only anchored by their involvement in conceptualization and planning, but by them assuming principal roles in the execution of our celebration model.

Rickford Burke

*Chairman, the 50th Independence
Anniversary Celebration Committee
(New York)*

OUR PEOPLE, OUR CULTURE, OUR HISTORY: CELEBRATING GUYANA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE

The evening continued with musical selections that spanned multiple genres including, gospel, soca, and chutney. Performers included Dr. Cherry-Ann Hislop, Eddie Neblett (who performed his hit song Love & Unity), Gopaul Malgalram Chutney artiste and Lisa Punch, Guyana's 2015 Miss World Contestant and winner of the Miss World Talent Contest. Dance performances included the Bethesda Healing Center Dance Ministry, the Impressions Dance Theater (dancing to the song "O Beautiful Guyana) and Nikita and Nadia Persaud who presented an authentic Classical Indian dance.

President David Granger who was unable to attend the event in person, nevertheless was present by video as he shared his vision of a Guyana not mired in the past, but in a nod to the theme of the evening "forging unity embracing modernity". Greetings were presented by a number of New York elected officials many of whom are connected to Guyana by birth, parents and marriage.

Rickford Burke, Chairman of the New York 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee introduced members of the planning committee and sub committees and promised an exciting slate of events to celebrate the auspicious anniversary.

Dr. Taj Rajkumar Executive Member and Chair of the Queens Sub Committee introduced keynote speaker Prime Minister Nagamootoo and thanked all for their ongoing support.

In his remarks to the audience Prime Minister Nagamootoo emotionally referenced the early days of the independence movement. He shared with the audience that even as independence was initially granted it was done under emergency order and at that time forces unsupportive of the move, initiated a process of race baiting and divisiveness that permeated politics for decades. He spoke of he and President Granger's commitment to abandon the politics of separation and asked all Guyanese to unite and work to ensure that Guyana lived up to its enormous potential. His remarks were interspersed throughout by supportive applause from the audience.

The evening closed with a prayer from Reverend Alfred Cockfield and then performers and committee members joined together on stage to the strains of "I am a Guyanese" led by recording artiste Adrian Dutchin.

The cords that bind us as a team are woven with strands of national pride, love of country and each other and unshakable patriotism.





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Extract from article by Maggie Reece

*Prime Minister
Moses Nagamootoo*



A section of the capacity diverse audience at the event



NEW YORK CITY GOLDEN JUBILEE COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS JUNE 4 -12, 2016

- ▶ **June 4th** **Interfaith Prayer Service, Queens**
Saturday, June 4, 2016
Proposed Theme: “Standing As One We Heal In Unity”
Proposed Time: 1pm- 4pm, VIP Reception: 4pm-6pm
Proposed Venue: Performing Arts Center, York College
- ▶ **June 4th** **Unity Concert, (evening) Brooklyn - TBD**
This event is designed to bring international and/or recording artists of Guyanese and/or Caribbean lineage together with local Guyanese artists to produce a night of unforgettable entertainment for our young people, and to promote unity and healing in the global Guyanese community and nation.
- ▶ **June 5th** **Symposium on the History & Development of Guyana,**
Sunday, June 5, 2016
York College, Queens
Theme: “Guyana at 50: Understanding our Independence Journey”
- ▶ **June 6th** **Exhibition of Guyanese Art,**
Venue: TBD
The vision of this exhibition is to showcase and promote illustrations, paintings, drawings, or other artistic works by Guyanese artists.
- ▶ **June 7th** **“ Invest Guyana” Business and Investment Conference, Manhattan**
“Stimulating Economic Development through Private Enterprise”
Venue: President’s Room – New York Athletic Club, Manhattan
The conference will create a synergy between stakeholders who impact business investments, commerce, trade and economic development in Guyana, and overseas-based Guyanese entrepreneurs as well as foreign businesses and corporations that find Guyana attractive for profitable business investments.
- ▶ **June 8th** **“Guyana Gives Back,” Day of Volunteerism,**
Venues: Designated Centers in New York City
- ▶ **June 8th** **United Nations Reception to Commemorate 50 Years of Membership,**
United Nations Headquarters, Manhattan
- ▶ **June 9th** **Flag Raising Ceremony, Irvington, New Jersey**
- ▶ **June 10th** **Cultural Extravaganza, “Showcasing Our Rich Cultural Heritage”**
Prospect High School Performing Arts Theater, Brooklyn, New York.
- ▶ **June 11th** **President’s Cup Soccer Tournament & Youth Fun Day, Brooklyn**
“Developing Our Youth Through Sport”
Venue: South Shore High School Park, Brooklyn
The soccer tournament is intended to unite all regions of Guyana as well as showcase young, talented Guyanese soccer players in the USA, and provide a fun-filled day of interactive carnival activities for children and families, while feasting on traditional Guyanese delicacies.
- ▶ **June 11th** **State Dinner & Awards Ceremony (evening),**
Venue: 583 Park Ave New York, NY
- ▶ **June 12th** **“Mashramani in New York,” Brooklyn - “Celebrating 50 Years Of Nation Building”.**
Venue: Church Ave and Bedford Ave, to Ralph Ave to Flatlands Ave, Brooklyn
Mashramani (Carnival) in New York” affords the Guyanese diaspora an opportunity to, in typical “Mash” carnival-like atmosphere, come together to celebrate our nation’s golden jubilee Independence anniversary with costume band parade, masqueraders and a sea of Guyanese nationals displaying renewed national pride, patriotism and national unity in artistic and cultural splendor.

***I am de very best
ah the Guyanese
Baboo ...***

*Oh Bangali Baboo,
Oh Bangali Baboo
Oh Bangali Baboo,
Oh Bangali Baboo
I am de very best ah de Guyanese Baboo
I am de very best ah de Guyanese Baboo
Oh Bangali Baboo, Oh Bangali Baboo
Oh Bangali Baboo, Oh Bangali Baboo*

*Me come from de country dey call Guyana
Land of de Bauxite, de Rice and Sugar
Me come from de country dey call Guyana
Land of de Bauxite, de Rice and Sugar
Me say pack up me grip and leh me go
Me gat fe go back ah Guyana some more
Me say pack up me grip and leh me go
Me gat fe go back ah Guyana some more*

*Singing in de US and Canada
I am coming back man
fe nice up Guyana
Singing in de US and Canada
I am coming back man fe nice up Guyana
Me say pack up me grip an leh me go
Me gat fe go back ah Guyana some more
Me say pack up me grip an leh me go
Me gat fe go back ah Guyana some more*

***Pack up me grip
an leh me go...
I am coming
back man
fe nice up Guyana***

*I am going back, back to Guyana
To find me one Dulahin, for dis Dulaha
I am going back, back to Guyana
To find me one Dulahin, for dis Dulaha
Me say pack up me grip and leh me go
Me gat fe go back ah Guyana some more
Me say pack up me grip and leh me go
Me gat fe go back ah Guyana some more*



Prime Minister Moses Nagamootoo flanked on the right by Minister of Education and Culture Rupert Roopnarine and on the left by Chairman of the 50th Independence Anniversary Celebration Committee (New York) Rickford Burke



JOURNEY TO JUBILEE



THE INDEPENDENCE TEAM:

In London before Independence, from left Neville Bissember, Winifred Gaskin, Llewelyn John, Forbes Burnham, Eugene Correia and Mr. Hugh M.E. Cholmondeley.

Throughout the early part of 1966, preparations for Guyana's independence celebrations went in full swing. A special committee appointed by the Government designed the new coat of arms and selected the Canje pheasant as the national bird.



The design and colours of the new flag, appropriately called "The Golden Arrowhead", had already been chosen during the period of the PPP Government from entries submitted through an international competition. The winning five-coloured design was submitted by an American, Whitney Smith.

The flag of Guyana, was designed with a golden arrowhead along its middle to signify Guyana's journey into the future. The golden arrowhead, with narrow white and black strips along its sides, was set on a green and red background with narrow white and black strips along the sides of the arrowhead. The five colours were also seen as symbolic to the country various assets: green for the agriculture and forests; gold representing the country's mineral wealth; red for the zeal of nation-building; black border, depicting the people's endurance; and white symbolising the natural water potential of the country.



OVERPRINT SG
378 FINE
MINT STAMP



GUYANA INDEPENDENCE 1966 (Overprinted on stamps of British Guiana)

Guyana formerly a British Crown Colony named British Guiana, became an independent member of the British Commonwealth and renamed itself Guyana in 1966. It issued its first stamps in 1966 using British Guiana stamps with an overprint for postage until it could issue its own.



The Coat of Arms

The design consists of: Amerindian Head-Dress symbolizing the indigenous people of Guyana; two diamonds at the sides of the head-dress representing the mining industry; a helmet (monarchical insignia); two Jaguars holding a pick Axe, sugar cane and a stalk of rice symbolizing Guyana's sugar and rice industries; a shield decorated with the national flower (Victoria Regia Lily); three blue wavy lines representing the waters of Guyana; the Canje Pheasant, the national bird.

The name chosen for the independent nation - Guyana - was also chosen since 1962 by a select committee appointed by the House of Assembly.

A nation-wide competition, sponsored by the National History and Arts Council, also helped to select the words of the new National Anthem. The winning entry, "Green Land of Guyana", was written by Reverend Archibald Luker, and the words were set to music by Cyril G. Potter, a prominent Guyanese educator and musician

OUR FRIEND, OUR BROTHER

11

Godfrey Chin



We Will Never Forget You!

*Some may think you are forgotten,
Though on earth you are no more,
But in our memory you are with us,
As you always were before.*

*Your precious memories are for keepsakes,
with which we never part,
God has you safely in his keeping,
But we have you forever in our hearts*

Your GCA Family

GCA 15TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Welcome to the 2016 Guyana Folk Festival season.

This year the Guyana Cultural Association of New York Inc. will celebrate its 15th anniversary. We are pleased to associate this moment with Guyana's Golden Jubilee. This note is to introduce you to our plans for 2016.

The theme for GCA's 2013 annual symposium was "Who Are We? Or...Imagining Guyana beyond Indian and African Politics of Race." That focus was influenced by an editorial in the Sunday Stabroek of August 11, 2013. That editorial spoke to the persistence of ethnic mistrust in Guyanese society and its retarding effect on all aspects of Guyanese life.

The 2013 symposium attracted participants from Guyana and its diaspora. The participants concluded that the pervasive ignorance of Guyana's collective multi-ethnic history and heritage is contributing to the perpetuation of the racist myths and stereotypes. These nourish and reinforce ethnic mistrust and undermine the development of a just and caring society.

One recommendation was a three year program of events to address these problems. The process anticipated the development of partnerships among stakeholders in Guyana and the diaspora.

This was the background to the "We Bridgin ..." initiative, which has informed and guided our work since 2014. As with our work plan in 2014, all of the events on the 2015 Folk Festival calendar served as bridges to strengthen relationships between diaspora and homeland, to connect generations, and to continue to provide a family-friendly space for enjoying Guyana's creativity.

The improvement of GCA's communications infrastructure and establishment of the Guyana Arts and Cultural Center in December 2015 are facilitating GCA's "Bridgin" work in 2016.

Our calendar starts earlier in 2016. Through our ongoing partnership with Guyana's Department of Culture, Youth, and Sport, GCA is involved in the following 50th anniversary programs in May 2016:

National Symposium series

The symposium series scheduled for Guyana and New York, will reflect on four interrelated questions: Who are we? How has been the journey [since independence]? What can we become? How can we get there? The symposium in Guyana will be held on May 23 and 24 at the Arthur Chung International Conference Center. The New York leg will be held at York College, on June 5, 2016.

The Literary Festival

We are proud to be associated with Guyana's inaugural literary festival. The inaugural literary festival is envisaged as a multi-day, multi-program event. The objectives of the festival are to:

- Increase the competencies of emerging creative writers in

Guyana

- Improve Guyana's standing as a destination with a distinctive cultural product
- Raise awareness of Guyana's literary heritage
- Encourage reading and support literacy
- Establish an organization to ensure sustainability of the literary festival

As you will expect, all of our events in 2016 will be special. Here are some of the emerging highlights of the upcoming season:

Caribbean Heritage Workshop Series

The Caribbean Heritage Workshops, which are open to all children of Caribbean heritage in New York, will provide opportunities to study and celebrate Caribbean culture through the creative arts. The workshops will take place July 5 to August 14. This program is supported by New York City Council Member Mathieu Eugene, New York City Council Member Jumaane Williams, Materials for the Arts, the New York City Department of Children and Youth, community groups: New York Tutorial Support Group, Guyana Tri-State Alliance and Caribbean American Social Workers Organization.

Awards Celebration

The Awards ceremony will be held on August 31, 2016 at Brooklyn Borough Hall.

Come to My Kwe Kwe

This year's Kwe Kwe will be held on Friday, September 2 at St. Stephens Church Auditorium, Brooklyn, New York.

Literary Hang

The date and venue for the 2016 Literary Hang will be announced.

Family Fun Day

The annual Family Fun Day will be held on Sunday, September 4 at Old Boys High School Grounds, Brooklyn.

Symposium

The date, venue, and theme for our annual symposium will be announced soon

In addition to our annual events, we are developing other Brooklyn-based events. These include:

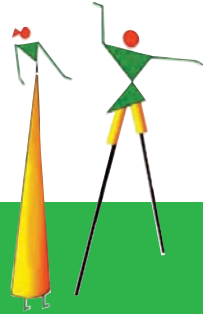
- **The GCA 15th Anniversary Church Service** – July 17, 2016 – St. Stephens Church
- **An International Photographic Exhibition** – Date and Venue to be announced
- **15th Anniversary Gala** - Date and Venue to be announced
- **Food & Wine Festival** – Date & Venue to be announced

December 2016

Masquerade Jamboree

Since 2012, GCA and the Department of Culture, Youth, and Sport have been partners in an initiative to reinvigorate the art form. Masquerade Jamboree, scheduled for Guyana in December 2016, will be the high point in this partnership. One element in the jamboree will be the "International Flounce Off."

We look forward to staying in touch and sharing further details. Your ongoing support during our 15th anniversary will be appreciated.



In 2016 we continue our 2013/2015 program which signalled the commitment of Guyana Cultural Association of New York, Inc., to creating the linkages—building the bridges—to support the exploration of the commonalities of heritage that connect the peoples of multi-ethnic Guyana.

GUYANA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK, INC.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

THE BEST OF GCA IN 2015 & WHAT'S HAPPENING IN 2016

WE BRIDGIN'

In 2015, GCA continued the three-year program launched in 2013, under the theme "We Bridgin'." The goal is to develop partnerships in the global Guyanese community to make Guyana's collective history accessible to Guyanese at home and in diaspora during 2016—the 50th anniversary of Guyana's independence.

OUR CARIBBEAN HERITAGE
SUMMER WORKSHOP
SERIES - TRANSFERRING
HERITAGE, BUILDING
CONFIDENCE,
ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY



The 2015 Caribbean Heritage Workshop series is an example of intergenerational and community

"bridges."

These workshops, open to all children of the community, not only of Caribbean heritage in New York, feature a curriculum that explores and celebrates the Caribbean heritage in the creative arts (art, dance, music, literature, etc.) They also develop the creativity of the young participants.

WE COLLABORATED

with the Brooklyn Arts Council for Folk Feet In the Street. La Troupe Zetwal and Impressions



Dance Company joined our Guyana Masqueraders. We also acknowledge other collaborators in 2015 and our many sponsors..

WE RECOGNIZED

those individuals and entities whose work has contributed to bridging Guyana's ethnic divide.



WE HOSTED THE FIRST MASQUERADE BAND IN NORTH AMERICA



2016
GCA's 15th
Anniversary Celebrations

GCA AT 15 Special 15th Anniversary Events

- Folk Festival 2016 Events**
- GCA Summer Heritage Workshop
 - Folk Festival Awards
 - GCA Literary Hang
 - Kwe Kwe Nite
 - GCA Symposium
 - Folk Festival Family Day

GCA'S PARTICIPATION IN GUYANA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

- Literary Festival in Guyana
- Symposia: Guyana & New York
- Masquerade Jamboree in Guyana



START OF A NEW PHASE IN OUR MISSION TO CELEBRATE GUYANA'S RICH HERITAGE AND TO ENCOURAGE & PROMOTE GUYANESE CREATIVITY

GACC DANCE PROGRAM:
Ages: 6-35
(Plus Adult Exercise & Ballroom Dancing Classes)
GACC PERFORMING ARTS PROGRAM:
Ages: 6-65

AUDIO/VIDEO PROGRAM:
Ages: 18-25
THE ART PROGRAM:
Ages: 13-35
THE MUSIC PROGRAM:
Ages: 6-35

CONTACT GUYANA ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER
718 940 GACC (4222) 800 774 5762
2806 NEWKIRK AVENUE, BROOKLYN, NY 11226 (Between E.28 - E29 Streets)
Secretariat - 3rd. Floor Center - 2nd. Floor



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REGISTRATION

GUYANA ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER

2806 NEWKIRK AVENUE (2nd. FLOOR) BROOKLYN, NY 11226

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2016

1.00 - 3.00 P.M.

800 774 5762 or 718 940 4222



MUSIC PROGRAM

MUSIC THEORY
VOICE
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VIOLIN
CELLO
GUITAR
SAXOPHONE
TRUMPET
DRUMS
XYLOPHONE

GACC MUSIC PROGRAM THE BEST PLACE TO GIVE YOUR CHILD A GREAT START IN MUSIC

GACC offers a wide variety of music lessons and classes for children from six years through teenagers. Youth can explore the world of music in an age-appropriate and fun environment. Our teachers are creative and flexible in meeting the unique needs and learning styles of students as they grow and mature. They help students discover the joy of playing music. Whether learning music individually or with their peers, students gain music appreciation, focus and creativity.

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 FOR STUDENTS TO EXPRESS
 THEMSELVES THROUGH MUSIC**

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2806 NEWKIRK AVENUE (2nd. FLOOR)
 BROOKLYN, NY 11226

SAT. JANUARY 30, 2016 - 1.00-3.00 P.M.

800 774 5762 or 718 940 4222



Dance is a wonderful activity for kids. Dance will foster a positive self image in both girls and boys. A child introduced to dance at an early age will likely develop a love of the arts and a passion for rhythm and movement. Most importantly, dancing is lots of fun!



Dance

PROGRAM FOR KIDS

EXPLORE CREATIVE
EXPRESSION
THROUGH MOVEMENT BY
LEARNING DIFFERENT DANCE TECHNIQUES

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GIVE YOUR CHILD THE BEST START IN DANCE

REGISTRATION

GUYANA ARTS & CULTURAL CENTER

2806 NEWKIRK AVENUE (2nd. FLOOR) BROOKLYN, NY 11226

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2016

1.00 - 3.00 P.M.

800 774 5762 or 718 940 4222

OUTSTANDING GUYANESE WHOSE WORK & IMPACT SPAN THE 50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

MICHAEL KHAN

OLE' MAN PAPPIE-CELEBRATING GUYANESE FOLKLORE

*Kiana Wilburg,
Kaieteur News*



I WAS INSPIRED BY STORYTELLER "LAW & ORDER"

In some families there is an "Ole' Man Pappie." This person is born from the land of Drama and Folklore. He is one that celebrates the child within himself and glorifies the splendor and beauty of the Creole tongue. In the family which resides in Lot E' Klien Pouderoyen, West Bank Demerara, there is an "Ole' Man Pappie." He is none other than Mr. Michael Khan.

At 57 years old, this proud grandfather loves nothing more than to captivate his audience with a session of Guyanese folklore through storytelling. It's a wondrous sight to see him bring to life the well-preserved child within himself.

Born March 1, 1957, Khan has always been inspired by the beauty and mystery of folklore. It remains the magical medication that extends the life of his child-like qualities. This youthful spirited father and husband is known in many circles. He is a well respected dramatist and a Lecturer at the University of Guyana. He holds a Diploma in Art Education (E.R Burrowes School of Art) a Degree in Art (University of Guyana) and a Masters in International Education from Framingham State College.

"I grew up with loving parents. Sometimes I was happy, sometimes sad. I had caring siblings, but I was a bit mischievous," Khan reminisced in a recent interview.

"I had happy school days and I remember as a child I always liked to build and create things. I liked to investigate, so I would break up my brother's toys just to see how they worked."

"I have five siblings. One is a caregiver, one is an agronomist, one is a doctor, the other is a lawyer, and the last one is a chemist and I am 'De Clown', Khan expressed in a burst of laughter.

However, Khan's first contact with drama was when his second grade teacher asked him to sing a song by Johnny Braff in front of the class.

"I remember that night, when you said that we will never part..." I sang it with such ease, and all the elements and antics just came to me. It was entertaining. The creativity however, came about when I broke up toys with an aim to find out how they operate. In Secondary school, a ceramics teacher Ms. Marks played an integral part in my artistic development. So my skills developed at a young age and it was consistent throughout."

In describing his love for art and drama, Khan says, "My love for art and drama began in primary school and it developed in secondary school. The Burrowes School of Art was the moulding factor in my artistic development. As for drama, the Theatre Guild and the Pouderoyen Drama Group of which Richard Narine was a part, influenced me in storytelling."

"As for storytelling, a man called 'Law & Order' who plied the Georgetown/ Vreed-En-Hoop ferry and a man referred to as Ole' Man Pappie (a beggar) inspired me with his stories and antics. 'Law & Order' would have these dummies on show while telling his stories."

"He would use the dummies to try matters within the magistrate courts, and according to a man from Linden, on several occasions he somewhat predicted the outcome of specific trials, and to everyone's surprise they came to pass in reality. Ole' man Pappie on the other hand would rattle proverbs and verses and tell stories about Brer Anansi and Brer Dog."

But the reality is that drama and art is not considered the most lucrative career choice in Guyana, but this did not deter Khan. He was greatly inspired by his siblings to follow his dreams, not forgetting his contemporaries like George Simon, Philbert Gajadhar, Winslow Craig and Maylene Duncan.

Khan is currently an art lecturer in the field of Art Education, Textile and Graphic at the University of Guyana, School of Education and Humanities, Department of Language and Cultural Studies. "I am totally satisfied with my job and very happy to be part of the University of Guyana and to serve my fellow citizens who are enrolled there."

He also holds several accolades and these include; Best designer (Comrade Mash finals in the 1980s), Designer of the Children's Millennium Monument, National Park, Child Art stimulator for the 'UNITYVILLE' mural at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation and The Guyana Cultural Association of New York (GCA) award for his work in preserving Guyana's Cultural Heritage through storytelling.

He has also performed as a storyteller in Jamaica, Venezuela, Suriname (CARIFESTA XI & Inter-Guiana Cultural Festival), Folk Festival in New York and GIMISTORY in the Cayman Islands. He has also been performing professionally as a dramatist, entertainer,

puppeteer, and a party clown for the past 28 years; and as a storyteller for the past ten years.

"There are lots talents in these areas. However, the sponsorship is not enough for the young artists. I guess as the country grows so will sponsorship. I must commend the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport for their commitment and dedication in safeguarding Guyana's Cultural heritage and promoting young artistes and artists."

He added, "One major impediment to arts and drama in Guyana is the lack of finance from sponsors and investment in the Arts industry. Public and private sectors are hesitant in investing their monies in Guyanese talents but would proudly support international artistes and artists. Many persons are foreign minded with little respect for homegrown talent."

"The young people who have visions and dreams are left to sometimes only dream or migrate to another country or island where their work may be appreciated more."

When asked if he believes that folklore is dying in Guyana he said, "The culture of a people never dies, sometimes it's dormant. I must say that folklore was dormant however; Mashramani 2014 ignited a greater interest in Guyanese folklore. My contribution to the restoration and preservation of Guyanese folklore is performing as Ole' Man Pappie."

"I attend schools on invitation and tell traditional Guyanese folk tales, display and use "lang time thing". For example, I would tell the story of how the Cassava came to the Amerindians and would use a Matapee, some farine even cassava bread for demonstration.

"In addition, I have a family of folklore puppets which is also used when I'm telling the story of De Baccou, Moongazer, Ole' Higue in she ball-a-flame and the Dutch Man Killum. The Ministry of Education can help further in the preservation process. I must make mention of the Allied Arts Unit's dedicated work towards the sustainability and preservation of cultural art forms. The Guyana Learning Channel can broaden its programme content by promoting more folklore based programmes as well."

Nonetheless, when it comes to balancing family and his work, Ole' Man Pappie asserts: "My family life is part of my work. What creates the balance is not neglecting my responsibilities to my family. As an artist I do lots of works at home in my studio and in the presence of my family."

Apart from his hectic schedules and doing what he loves most, the man from the land of drama and folklore says that he loves collecting Guyanese folklore artifacts, e.g; Coal Pot, Coal Iron, Milk Can, Ghir-Ghir, etc. and working with the elderly in the homes.

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THIS MONTH'S FEATURE:

Valerie Coddett

THE NEW AMSTERDAM I KNEW

Some eight years ago I shared the 1952 and 1954 British Guiana music festival results on Facebook with a group of Guyanese friends/acquaintances who insisted I record the event. I was born in Bread Street, New Amsterdam (renamed Charles Place after Sir Charles Woolley, a former British Governor). The first seventeen years of my life were spent there. Having emigrated to the United States some fifty years ago, I am now attempting to portray my impressions of the New Amsterdam I knew. It is my hope that in sharing these stories, they will provide not only an Afrocentric view of New Amsterdam but a Truthcentric one as well. Included are some stellar personalities that the soil has produced. Growing up in New Amsterdam, music lessons were foremost on my agenda. I am not a practicing musician, but I play the piano for my own pleasure and to entertain friends. Here in New York when attending concerts at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall and other venues, I would reflect on time spent every year diligently preparing for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music Examinations that were held in Guyana.

New Amsterdam Public Hospital

designed by Ceasar Castellani, a Maltese architect. Arranged like a pavilion hospital with the wards end to end. This edifice was constructed in 1878.



Ms. Edith Pieters taught me music in New Amsterdam. She was a gifted musician who also had a beautiful voice. Whenever she sang arias from Handel's *Messiah - He was Despised and Rejected of Men or I Know that My Redeemer Liveth* - reality seemed to disappear as another dimension soundlessly entered the frame. On hearing *O Perfect Love*, a staple at weddings, expanded this dimension even further.

Hers was a life lived in song. She is a capsule from Guyana's past; a period in which music did not emanate from CD players and public transportation but from stages. "The environment is different now," she said, "It does not facilitate learning. The most fulfilling thing is my relationship with the people I teach." Ms. Pieters relocated from New Amsterdam to Georgetown in 1958 to teach music at Bishop's High School. Under her tutelage, I was the first student to sit the GCE Music Examination there.



New Amsterdam: The Eastern County

New Amsterdam was a town where everyone knew each other. On Main Street - the central artery of the town - the grocery stores, dry goods stores and cake shops all lined this main thoroughfare that stretched for six kilometers, its head connecting to the road leading to the lunatic asylum, its toe joining the road that led to the only burial ground. It is the administrative capital of Berbice County, located sixty miles east of the capital city. It boasted numerous schools, multiple churches and a town hall with its tall spire reflecting its gothic architecture. Adding character to the town were the New Amsterdam Public Hospital, and businesses running along the Strand.

The Strand, also known as the Waterside, stretched itself beside the Berbice river. At the junction where the Esplanade and Waterside Road met, a dense growth of vegetation fanned the landscape that hid the Berbice river that my father often crossed. Kingsley Coddett, my father was a teacher, later headmaster, at Blairmont Government School. He took the Blairmont launch every day to cross the river. One day he returned home soaking wet, and riding his bicycle. He had slipped and fallen into the Berbice river that ran along the bank of New Amsterdam.

There are numerous stories in our cultures and in our lives. In the town of New Amsterdam, there was an abundance of the gifted -- voices uplifted in stirring song, in the written word, providing exultation to poetry, and those demonstrating skill at the piano. Parents played a huge role in the welfare of their children. For those who were less privileged, opportunities arose in the form of scholarships from Government and other donors. To further education abroad, the Lutheran Church in New Amsterdam offered assistance to its members, based on performance and need.

It is from New Amsterdam that most of our country's talented, prolific and most widely read authors hail: **Edgar Mittelholzer**, **Sir Theodore Wilson Harris**, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and **Dr. David Dabydeen**, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. **Peter Kempadoo**, **Beryl Gilroy**, **Jan Lowe Shinebourne**, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and former **President Cheddi Jagan** come from the Ancient County, too.

The one mile zone that is New Amsterdam has also produced illustrious sons and daughters in other spheres of endeavor:

Dr. Habiboola Niamatal Ameerally, in 1962, was the first Rhodes Scholar for Guyana. After his training, he returned to Guyana where He served the community at the New Amsterdam Public Hospital from 1973-1978.



Mission Chapel
Congregational Church, a national heritage site.

The foundation stone of this structure was laid in 1841

Congregational Church, New Amsterdam

VALERIE CODDETT: THE NEW AMSTERDAM I KNEW

Dr. Ewart A.C. Thomas, with a B.Sc Degree in Mathematics from the University of the West Indies and a Ph.D. in Statistics from Cambridge University, London, supports advancing the agenda of bringing the children of Guyana fully and confidently into the 21st century. Dr. Thomas is a Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, USA. For his success, he has acknowledged the contribution of his teachers, and given credit to his parents for creating a home with the discipline of homework. His father, Mr. A.N. Thomas, was Headmaster at Mission Chapel Congregational School in New Amsterdam.

Artist Frank Bowling, OBE, emigrated to Britain and attended the Royal College of Art in London. During the early 60's he found himself at the forefront of a new generation of British artists. His perseverance was crowned with success for he is now a member of Britain's Royal Academy of Art, the first African American British artist to be elected a Royal Academician in the history of the institution. Throughout his career he has received high honors for his service to art: in 2008 the Order of the British Empire; a solo show in 2011 at the Royal Academy of art; an important group exhibition in 2012 at the Victoria & Albert Museum; and a display at the Tate Britain, London. He is an abstract painter whose work can be found in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and other prestigious public collections. It was reported that aspects of Abstract Expressionism, Process Art, and Color Field Painting reflected in his work might have been influenced by his mother's craft as a seamstress in New Amsterdam. Her wooden house in New Amsterdam was located on Main and St. John Street. It has appeared in his work; reflecting architecture brought to Guyana by the Dutch and British that now blend to form Guyanese architecture.

Artist Philip Moore born October 12, 1921, in Manchester Village, Corentyne, is a self-taught man. His paintings and sculpture brought him renown. He was the first artist from the Caribbean to be invited to Princeton University as Artist-in-Residence. At the Studio Museum in Harlem, he exhibited 43 paintings and 22 pieces of sculpture from April 9 to May 14, 1972. 'Art should be taught in schools,' Moore felt, 'and the museum brought into the home. The more art available, the more people will understand themselves.' (Spriggs, Studio Museum, Harlem).

In addition to being a painter and sculptor, Moore held another job as high priest who sang in his own church - a mystic, god man, preacher - he is one of Guyana's most revered painters. He wrote poetry, too; a Renaissance man, our own Leonardo da Vinci.

Edgar Austin Mittelholzer, born in New Amsterdam on December 16, 1909, was the earliest recorded author from the region to make a living from his pen. His legacy still resonates 100 years later for his books have now gained momentum. I flash back to the house on Coburg Street - standing next to the house of Mrs. Ruby McGregor, the music teacher - there lived the Caribbean's first professional novelist who had made a living by writing about the vast expanse of savannahs, rivers and creeks as in *Shadows* move Among Them . . . Then - on a dark and wintry day I was re-reading *My Bones and My Flute* -- the light being at

a low level in the bedroom -- when beyond the wall I heard the piano being played. I was home alone, and got up to check. I must have imagined the piano accompanying the flute. An eerie presence then seemed to enter the room, it made me shudder; whereas his *Kawviana* books -- kept out of sight from parents and delivering joyful reading to young adults -- would have evoked a different emotion altogether.

Over the years Edgar Mittelholzer has attained tremendous stature. During his lifetime he never received one quarter of such high esteem. Posthumous recognition may glitter, but it is still an afterthought. His sister Lucille Mittelholzer was the Director of the Brownie Girl Guide Association in New Amsterdam of which I was a member.



Phillip Moore



Sir Shridath S. Ramphal,



Sir Lionel Luckhoo

VALERIE CODDETT: THE NEW AMSTERDAM I KNEW

Statesman Sir Shridath S. Ramphal, GCMG, OCC Born 3 October 1928 in NA, the Commonwealth's second Secretary-General, the first from the Third World; he also held the position as attorney-general, and contributed to drafting Guyana's independence constitution. He is the twelfth recipient of the prestigious Indira Gandhi Peace Prize, and the first from the Caribbean. The Indian 'Nobel' instituted in 1985 awards individuals who have done outstanding work for international peace, disarmament and development. A Chancellor of the University of Warwick, the Ramphal Building at that University is named in his honor. He held similar positions at the University of the West Indies, and the University of Guyana. James I. Ramphal, his father, was a Presbyterian schoolteacher and a pioneer of secondary education in the country. His father's belief in the basic human nature within all made a deep impression on him.

Statesman Sir Lionel Alfred Luckhoo KCMG, CBE Born March 2, 1914 in NA. He was the brother of Guyana Governor-General Sir Edward Luckhoo.* He left Guyana for London to study medicine and later switched to Law. He was called to the Bar by Middle Temple in 1940. He became a Judge of the Supreme Court of Guyana, Ambassador and High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Barbados. His astounding success with juries is unmatched. He obtained 245 consecutive acquittals in murder trials. The world's most successful lawyer is also in the Guinness book of World Records.

His father, Edward Alfred, was the first East Indian solicitor in the colony in 1899, and later Mayor of New Amsterdam.

Valerie Fraser-Rodway, L.R.C.M., was born in 1919 in New Amsterdam. From childhood, her musical ability was evident to her family. She became a prolific composer of national songs and produced a body of majestic work. She wrote music for the independence poem *Let Freedom Awaken* by Martin Carter. Blessing the land gave rise to - *O beautiful Guyana* by Walter Mac A. Lawrence. Inspiration from poems by Vere T. Daly, A.J. Seymour and others contributed to a genre that celebrated rivers, flora, fauna and our first peoples. She received the Cacique Crown of Honor, one of the nation's high honors.

Joseph Oscar Fitzclarence Haynes (J.O.F.), Chancellor of the Judiciary, was born on July 18, 1912 at New Amsterdam. He was the son of Mrs. Ruby McGregor, the preeminent musician in New Amsterdam. After attending the Mission Chapel Congregational School, he became a Pupil Teacher. At the age of 20, he obtained a First Class Teachers' Certificate and also passed the London Matriculation Examination. Appointments as a teacher at Scots School in New Amsterdam, and as headmaster of Mara Primary School, Berbice River, followed. By virtue of a

correspondence course with London University, JOF read for his Bachelor of Arts and LL.B degrees. Having achieved these goals, he resigned his position in the Ministry of Education to pursue what was to be his life long career - law. He was President of the Bar Association of Guyana from 1965 to 1968, and President of the Grenada Appeals Court. He spent much of his time ensuring that the right word was always used in the right place and in excising whatever grammatical or orthographic scars there may unwittingly have been to flaw his work. Justice J.O.F. Haynes died in 1988. As President of the Grenada Appeals Court, he left in limbo the appeal of fourteen defendants convicted in the 1983 murder of leftist Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. (Google).

Musical Talent from New Amsterdam

New Amsterdam can justly boast of musical talent: Composers **Valerie Rodway** and **Joyce Ferdinand-Lalljie**; as well as 'brilliance' displayed by New Amsterdammers at the initial music festival held in British Guiana. This memorable palette consisted of **Josephine Blair, Frank Beckles, Joyce Ferdinand-Lalljie, Cicely Hoyte, Edith Pieters, Anne Rambarran, Norma Romalho, Moses Telford and Vernon Williams**. All possessed mellifluous voices. When **Edith Pieters** and her sister, **Marjorie Barry** placed first in the Women's Duet performance, the British Adjudicator, Mr. Vernon Evans stated he could not tell where one voice stopped and the other began. The input of these talented individuals has been rarely documented, especially that of **Mrs. Ruby McGregor** - a personality of rare vintage. This once vibrant but unassuming community was a hotbed of the arts.

The first music festival was held in British Guiana in 1952. I came across newspaper articles describing the event in 2009. Those old columns seemed to emit a fragrance which wafted up my nostrils for I had participated by rendering a piano solo (second place). I shared the article with a Guyanese group on F-Book. This pivotal event placed the county of Berbice above the other counties. Some members of the group were aware of New Amsterdam's standing in the music community at that time while others lacked knowledge of it. We relived life in the homeland, specifically New Amsterdam from that bygone era.

At the 1952 Music Festival, the British Adjudicator, Mr. Vernon Evans made comments on the musicianship of Mrs. Ruby McGregor - the "architect of music" in New Amsterdam - on the performance of **Vaughn Williams** "*Through Briars and Bushes*" by the New Amsterdam Musicians' Society (NAMS), he acknowledged that it was singing such as he had never heard before; there was almost a feeling of being out of this world *Music in the soul can be heard by the universe. Lao Tzu*

VALERIE CODDETT: THE NEW AMSTERDAM I KNEW

Singers and musicians from New Amsterdam carried off three of four Adult Championship Cups when British Guiana's First Festival of Music ended on July 20, 1952 at the Plaza Cinema, Georgetown. The reigning Champions were:

NAMS Choir (New Amsterdam Musicians' Society) - best adult choir, New Amsterdam

Soprano Annie Rambarran - best vocal soloist, New Amsterdam

Pianist Norma Romalho - best adult instrumental soloist, New Amsterdam

Georgetown's Maranatha Quartet - best adult vocal ensemble.

These were the best of 5,250 competitors in the Music Festival. Norma Romalho of New Amsterdam won the highest number of points awarded any individual competitor. Her performance of *Beethoven's Rondo - from Sonata Op. 13* - gained her 90 points in the piano solo competition. First places were awarded to the following individuals from New Amsterdam:

Adult Piano Duet - Norma Romalho and Cicely Hoyte

Under 18 Piano Duet - Moses Telford and Cicely Hoyte

Under 18 Piano Solo - Moses Telford

Under 14 Piano Solo - Deanna Sattaur

Soprano Solo - Annie Rambarran

Mezzo Soprano and Contralto Solo - Edith Pieters

Women's Vocal Duet - Edith Pieters and Marjorie Barry

Mixed Vocal Duet - Annie Rambarran and Vernon Williams

Vocal Trio - Women's Voices - Vireo Trio

On conclusion, Mr. F. H. Martin Sperry, the President of the Festival Committee, declared the first music festival ever held in British Guiana to be an important educational and cultural movement. 'Music, the greatest of all the arts, was often coupled with poetry but superior to literature in that it needs no language; a universal language for all and sundry without nationality, class, creed or color.'² Sir Charles Woolley, the Governor, counseled that the spirit of the Festival should never be allowed to die.



VALERIE CODDETT: THE NEW AMSTERDAM I KNEW

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Norma Margaret Jean Romalho-Bacchus, L.R.S.M, as a young child displayed a talent for the piano. Her parents enrolled her with Mrs. Ruby McGregor who imparted her knowledge to a highly qualified successor to carry on the Berbice tradition of musical art. She achieved distinctions in every grade to and including the eighth grade; and having obtained the highest marks in the country, she was the recipient of the Phillip Pilgrim Memorial Harp Prize. At the 1954 Music Festival she obtained first place with Doreen McGregor in the pianoforte duet, and second place with Joyce Lalljie. In 1956 she placed first with Moses Telford in a pianoforte duet. Appointed Berbice Representative, she replaced Mrs. McGregor who was leaving for the United Kingdom. In a 1962 Sunday edition, the Graphic Newspaper recognized her as one of the ten women in the country who made a sterling contribution to the nation as a whole. She played a significant role in the cultural life of New Amsterdam and Berbice. Music runs in the family; her grandchildren Jonathan, Madeline and Natasha have brought joy to her musical heart. Jonathan plays piano and violin. Madeline plays both piano and violin, and Natasha plays the Cello.

Ruby McGregor, L.R.S.M., L.T.C.L., L.R.A.M., described as the chief architect of a glorious festive record, had played an exalted role in serving her community. The most energetic, assiduous, helpful and successful teacher of music, she was honored at a public function at the New Amsterdam Town Hall by the music festival winners, and presented with an illuminated document and a check. These feats had never been accomplished in the realms of song and music in the history of the Ancient County. Mrs. Annie Rambarran and Miss Edith Pieters were also awarded gifts for the part they played in the training of choirs. The Hon W.O.R. Kendall, Chairman of the occasion, was introduced by Mr. Randolph A. Coddett, and the presentation made by Mrs. Stella Merriman. [Berbice Weekly Argosy, July 30, 1952].

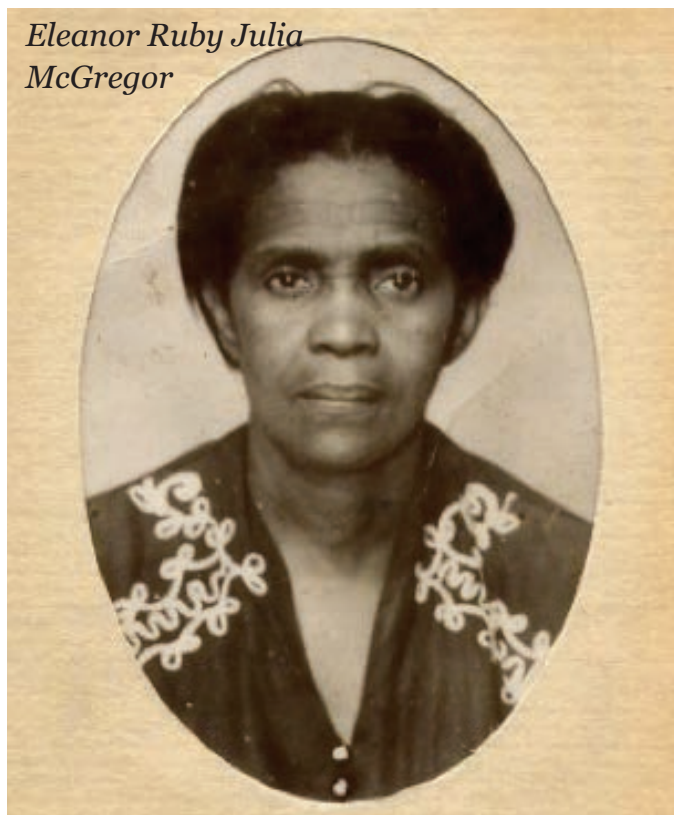
Joyce Ferdinand-Lalljie, L.R.S.M , L.T.C.L., was a pupil of Mrs. Ruby McGregor under whose guidance she excelled. Albert E. L. Isaacs in the Chronicle 1951 Christmas Annual Magazine, described her as one of the "Big Finds" of local radio. Her genius was shared with the people through Berbice Calling, a radio program produced by Olga Lopes-Seale on ZFY. The Guiana Times voted her 'Musician of the Year' for 1951.

Excerpt from Guyana newspapers in its 1951 chronicle - expressed elsewhere at the time - Professor Rudolph Dunbar and the Philharmonic Orchestra - Grand was the Mendelssohn Concerto in G minor with Joyce Lalljie filling the role of piano soloist. In simple grace and dignity, she commanded the rapt attention of the 1200 patrons, while Professor Dunbar held the orchestra well under her playing.

Norma Jean Romalho



*Eleanor Ruby Julia
McGregor*



VALERIE CODDETT: THE NEW AMSTERDAM I KNEW

The twenty minute spellbound silence was broken by thunderous applause which lasted fully three minutes after the conductor brought the item to a grand finale. Mrs. Lalljie, presented and congratulated by Professor Dunbar, bowed simple acknowledgement of the patrons' appreciation of her performance.



Joyce Laljee

Joyce Laljie, (also known as Joyce Ferdinand-Saunders) was the preeminent female composer. Her output covered viola, flute, voice, and pianoforte. One of her compositions, Janie Gal, was featured in *One Hundred Years of Classical Music in the Guianas: Selected Pieces for Pianoforte*, a publication edited in 2002 by Herman Snijders and Joycelynne Loncke. Other classical composers included were: Philip Edward Theodore Pilgrim, William R.A. Pilgrim, Hugh Sam, Valerie Rodway, Joycelynne Eleanor Loncke, Paschal Jordan O.S.B. and Patricia Adora Loncke. At a concert held in 2005 at Frank Collymore Hall in Barbados, Joyce Laljie performed her composition - Kaie – (<https://vimeo.com/40919097>) - based on A.J. Seymour's Legend of Kaieteur. Thunder emanates from Kaieteur Falls. Beauty is evident in the music.



Florence Kersting - (Guyana) - Kaieteur Falls
Courtesy of the artist.

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*Excerpt from: Valerie G. Coddett:
Artistic and Other Encounters*

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SONGS & DANCES OF THE 40s AND EARLY 50s

PETER HALDER

How I learned the waltz, king sailor & foxtrot

When Julius Caesar said the Ides of March are come, Artemidorus the soothsayer replied, yes Caesar but not gone. So the twenty-first century has come but my memories of songs and dances of the 40's and early 50's of the twentieth century have not gone.

During the early to the mid 40's, the only songs I was familiar with were Hymns sang in Church on Sunday nights and Good Fridays from a red cover Hymn Book. No one on Non Pareil Street, Albouystown had a radio much less, a pick-up or a radiogram. We were fortunate however because after 1945, our home had a Victrola Gramophone and three 33 size records. Two, both sides, could only be played during the Christmas Season because they were Carols : Oh Come All Ye Faithful; Silent Night Holy Night; Once In Royal David's City and Hark The Herald Angels Sing. The other contained Indian songs on both sides. One I remember was Sohani Raat. The singer was Lata Mungeshkar I think.

My friend Carl and I with a piece of cord tied to a nail in the trunk of a star apple tree in his yard on Henry Street began practicing how to Be Bop from what we saw in the film.

That launched my knowledge of songs and dancing.



SONGS & DANCES OF THE 40s AND EARLY 50s

The Gramophone was like a piece of furniture. It was about 4 feet high, wooden, varnished and had a cover. To play it, you had to raise the cover and there was a lever to keep it open. In the middle was a round turntable with a short silver pole in the centre to place the record. It fitted perfectly in the hole in the record. The first thing one had to do was to crank up the gramophone. There was a handle at the side and you cranked until it was tight. Then you took a steel needle from a small tin, Bird Brand, and fitted it into the bottom of the playing arm. To do that, you had to unloose a small screw at the side of it, place the bottom of the needle in a hole provided and then tighten the screw leaving the pointed top of needle exposed. You then placed the record on the turntable and turned the playing arm slightly to the right and to get the turntable spinning. Then, with some skill and dexterity, you placed the point of the needle into the top groove of the record and lo and behold, music erupted from it.

At the end of World War II, my father bought a third hand used Philco Radio. It could only pick up one station, the local radio station which was then ZFY. Stations VP3BG and VP3MR merged in 1938 into ZFY operating on North Road. Calypsoes were among the popular songs of the time. One I recall began with a few German words and then continued "Hitler say to bring back the saltfish." Another I recall was The More They Try To Do Me Bad Is The Better I Live In Trinidad.

A Calypsonian I recall at that time was Lord Caresser. Other songs that were aired were mainly Country and Western which we called cowboy songs. Some I remember were sung by Gene Autry while playing his guitar. I was only allowed however to listen to radio from 7.00 p.m. to hear the BBC news and then from 7.15 -7.30 whatever music played. Sometimes it was cowboy songs and music, sometimes the tenor Richard Tauber and sometimes waltzes by Victor Sylvester's Band. After, it was back to homework and reading. The radio station played only very prim and proper music in those colonial days.

Going to High School in 1949 and sitting next to girls inspired the widening of my horizon to music and dancing because until then I did not know how to dance. I recall one Public Holiday morning, I was only permitted to go to the cinema on a Public Holiday mornings, my friend Carl Agard and I went to the Olympic Cinema on Lombard Street to see Stormy Weather with Lena Horne and also featured Billy Eckstine. One of the short features we saw was a Be Bop musical which included a song "Caledonia, What Makes Your Big Head So Hard." The "shorts" featured slow Be Bop and fast Be Bop. We

did enjoy the song Stormy Weather sung by Lena Horne.

That weekend, Carl and I with a piece of cord tied to a nail in the trunk of a star apple tree in his yard on Henry Street began practicing how to Be Bop from what we saw in the film. That launched my knowledge of songs and dancing.

PETER HALDER

How I learned the waltz, king sailor & foxtrot

In the 1940s there were no juke boxes or string bands. Music was played at Dance Halls by Orchestras. I recall the Syncopators and the Washboards. And there were no singers that sang with the Orchestras. It was pure and adulterated music to dance to. And if you took a young lady or met one there and did not display your dancing skills, you would lose out to the young man who did.



SONGS & DANCES OF THE 40s AND EARLY 50s

It was circa 1949 that I became exposed to the Latin American beat which we called then Spanish Music. The first I recall was Mambo Jambo and another was Mambo Number 5 featuring Xavier Cugat. The popular dance for them was the King Sailor and again we learned how to dance it effectively since Carl's niece Lynette had joined the family and so we had a dancing partner. I recall attending a Party and there was one guy who could only King Sailor to his right but could not do it back to his left. So he used to stop, walk back to his left with his dancing partner and then start to the right again.

Our next adventure into dancing was to the calypso. The popular calypso at the time were Ah Bernice by Lord Kitchener. We learned to move to the beat with the young lady and then "loose off" and individually gyrate desperately but rhythmically, moving in a circle and with hands in the air or flailing from time to time, sometimes crafting signs and symbols. The girls were more circumspect in their movements while the boys threw circumspect and caution to the wind.

The next adventure into the world of music was the waltz. The problem was learning where and how to hold the young lady with your right hand to guide the dance steps and then how to hold her left hand above the shoulder. There was also one-step, two-step and three-step waltzes and the foxtrot.

A neighbour on Henry Street had a radio so we heard waltzes Saturday nights for 15 minutes by Victor Sylvester and his Orchestra. Carl and I became proficient at the art of dancing the all forms of the waltzes and the foxtrot with Lynette as our partner.

Slow dancing to cowboy songs was another art acquired and soon sentimental songs came into the arena.

Among the latter, I recall Don't Sit Under The Apple Tree and Rum and Coca Cola by the Andrews Sisters.

Having learned the basic steps, doing the tango to Cherry Pink and Apple Blossom White and Celito Lindo featuring Perez Prado, were a piece of cake.

In the 1940s there were no juke boxes or string bands. Music was played at Dance Halls by Orchestras. I recall the Syncopators and the Washboards. And there were no singers that sang with the Orchestras. It was pure and adulterated music to dance to. And if you took a young lady or met one there and did not display your dancing skills, you would lose out to the young man who did.

Songs and dancing were not only art forms in the good old days. They were also avenues for meeting the opposite gender which often led to friendships, relationships and even marriage.

What I learned from the 40's and early 50's tuned me in to all types of music and dancing that flowed in the late 50's to now...the Rock and Roll, the Locomotive, the Mash Potato, the Twist, the Ska, the Reggae, the Strongman Dance, the Limbo and the songs that accompanied them and many many more. And my teenage group and I flashed our skills in the art of Terpsichore at Birthday Parties, \$2 sub-parties, Dance Halls like RAF, Haley's, Over The Laundry, Washington Hall at Wellington and Charlotte Streets, Night Clubs in Georgetown, on the East Coast at Linden and Up-river, New Amsterdam, Corriverton, Lethem, Anna Regina, Bartica and all over the world.

But it was the pop songs that were the most desired at dancing events like the Tennessee Waltz, My Jealous Eyes, The Great Pretender, The Duke of Earl and all the great songs of the Rock and Roll Era and beyond. That was so because the song and slow music enabled you to hold your partner close, the closer the better.

Songs and dancing were not only art forms in the good old days. They were also avenues for meeting the opposite gender which often led to friendships, relationships and even marriage.

Save the Date - April 8, 2016

Guyana Conference

Theme: Aspirations for Real Change-Commemorating Guyana's 50th Anniversary



Date: Friday April 8, 2016

Time: 8:30 am – 5:30 pm (Reception to follow from 6:00 – 8:00 pm)

Venue: University of the District of Columbia (UDC)-4200 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington DC

A group of academics, professionals and activists are convoking a one-day conference titled “**Guyana: Aspirations for Real Change-Commemorating Guyana's 50th Anniversary**”. The event will be Co-Chaired by Floyd Haynes, businessman and Adjunct Professor UDC, and Paul Nehru Tennessee, UDC Adjunct Professor.

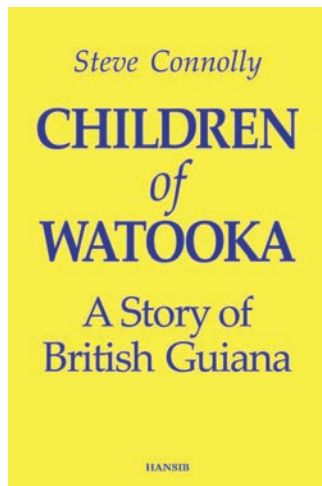
You are invited to participate in a thought provoking conversation with practitioners, academics and activists to discuss the challenges facing Guyana and spark a non-partisan dialogue that results in the development of recommendations for practical solutions that will achieve real change.

There will be three sessions:

1. Governance, Accountability & Transparency
2. National Identity
3. The Role of the Diaspora

For more information call **Melanie Smith**, Conference Managing Director: 301-202-6589

Please RSVP by March 8, 2016 to: guyanarealchange@gmail.com



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**AVAILABLE DIRECT
FROM THE AUTHOR**

Email: stevec@picanoc.ca



CHILDREN of WATOOKA

A Story of British Guiana

by Steve Connolly

Step into an extraordinary and fascinating world ... little known, but immensely remarkable and hollering for attention ... formerly British Guiana, now Guyana. Learn about the country's captivating history from before slavery/indenture through to modern times. Learn about some of its outstanding people both within/without the country.

Entwining history with people, the book is a 'story of stories'. Over eighty-five people of five races have contributed to make fascinating reading. Five notable people have endorsed the content.

Follow the stories of Guyanese people, as well as of ex-patriates from Britain, Canada, Holland and the U.S., and, particularly those of the Canadian Connolly family, as the centre of the more general story focuses throughout the middle of the twentieth century in the village of Watooka nestled in the former rainforest area of Mackenzie, now known as Linden.

The reader will also learn about the incredible and little known ties between Guyana and Canada and about the bauxite/aluminium industry. Working together, the two countries produced forty percent of the aluminum used by the Allies for airplane production to win WWII. Detailed drama stories of this, of torpedoed bauxite ships and of survivors prevail.

The unique and unsurpassed flora and fauna of the country are highlighted so as to enthrall the reader.

Children of Watooka is published to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Guyana's independence.

STEVE CONNOLLY was born in 1943 in Mackenzie, British Guiana, to Canadian parents. His family left British Guiana when he was only four months of age when they subsequently lived in Arvida, Quebec, Canada, and then in Texas City, Texas, U.S.A. The family returned to British Guiana in 1950 for three years, and it is this period of time that the author fondly remembers and that gave him the impetus to write *Children of Watooka*.

The author enjoyed his teenage years at Kitimat, British Columbia, starting in 1954. He obtained his degree in advanced electrical engineering from the University of British Columbia in 1965 and since then obtained management training at several other universities.

Upon graduation, he worked almost five years for Computing Devices of Canada in Ottawa helping to design/develop anti-submarine warfare technology for Canadian destroyer ships. By 1982, he had risen to the V.P. level at the Bank of Montreal in Toronto in the function of computer systems and operations. Later, he managed large informatics organizations in two ministries of the Federal government in Ottawa before his last work posting as Assistant Commissioner for Informatics with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

After forty years in the field of computer systems, he retired with his wife, Carolyn, at their farm in the Gatineau Hills of Quebec. They have two children, Todd and Julie, and five grandchildren.

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