

**J**amaican Folk Forms, the essence of our nation's culture are rooted in the ceremonies and traditions of our fore fathers. The JCDC plays a critical role in the preservation of these folk forms, which, without support, would simply die. These folk forms are sustained in various ways. These include: the annual National Traditional Folk Forms Competition, local and external exposure of outstanding awardees, institutional preservation through the library and museum, training seminars and the availability on audio visual materials. These avenues accord them the dignity and their rightful place in the consciousness of the Jamaican society.

### Traditional Forms of strong African Influence

#### Ring Games



Providence Kinder Preparatory School

Traditional Ring Games are done by children and adults as they portray happenings in a community reflecting humour and situations otherwise taboo in everyday Jamaican speech. However, today it is mostly a children's game of "song and dance", performed in JCDC's Traditional Folk Forms Competition.

#### Revivalism



Spot Valley High School

Revival is a religious ritual resulting from mixing of African and European cultures. It has two main branches, Zion (Revivalism) and Pocomania. Zion is more European

JChristian and deals with holy angels and heavenly spirits. Pocomania deals with earth bound spirits and have stronger African elements. Revival groups comprise "Bands" with a strict hierarchy of leadership. The Central Figure is a "Mother" when it is a female and "Shepherd" when male. Mission grounds where meetings are held are decorated with holy pictures and biblical symbols, inscribed or drawn on the ground and the walls. Drums and tambourines accompany the singing, sometimes of hymns, but other times of just words with very little meaning, simply used to carry the tune. The dance movement initiated by the shoulder, is a forward dip with a stamp of the foot, knees slightly bent, progressing around in a circle.

#### KUMINA

Kumina is the most African of the Jamaican Folk Forms. The ceremonies are usually associated with wakes and entombments, but can also be performed at births, anniversaries and thanksgiving. During a kumina ceremony the exponents call upon their ancestral spirits. The dance and music are two strong features of kumina with the drums playing an integral part of this dance ritual. Other instruments used include shakkas and the grater. The dancers move in a circular pattern anti-clock



Kumina, Deeside Cultural Group Trelawny

wise around the drummers in the centre inching their feet along the ground with the back held in an almost erected posture. The hips, rib cage, shoulders and arms become involved as spins, dips and breaks in the body movements occur throughout the dance. Kumina is to be found primarily in the parish of St Thomas and to a lesser extent in St Mary and St Catherine.

#### ETTU

This is an African retention kept alive by a small group of people found in the parish of Hanover, who claimed Yoruba (Nigerian) ancestry. The "Ettu" play is usually performed at weddings feasts and "nine nights".



Green Island High School

"Shawling", a feature of the dance, is a ritual of appreciation for the dancer's skill an movements and forms an integral part of each performance. The Queen throws a scarf around the neck of the dancer, who is then ceremoniously dipped back from the waist for strength, then the shawler raises the dancers arm in salutation and congratulations. Songs accompanied with drumming on the kerosene pan, beaten with the bare hands, form the musical accompaniment.

#### NI NITE (NINE NIGHT)

The Ni Nite is closely related to "Set Up" with emphasis base on religious aspect. Matured spirit is sent happily to the spirit world. This form is the climax of nine nights of observances after the death of a person. It is usually held on the ninth night after death (however, it is customarily done the night before the funeral owing to economic and social reasons). The form general starts out on a slow pace (referred to as "long meter") with hymns tracked from the "Sanky" (Redemption Songs) and gets lively as it develops.



William Knibb Memorial High School

During the singing, the voice is used in a creative way producing guttural sounds at various intervals. The dance generally starts with subtle revival movements and gradually transitioned in movements used in the other death observances such as Dinki Mini, Gerreh, etc. Percussion instruments from any of the folk forms are utilized as musical accompaniment depending on the

geographical location. A table covered with suitable cloth is placed in the centre of performance area displaying paraphernalia used during performance.

#### Jonkunnu / Burru

Jonkunnu (John Canoe) is a Jamaican traditional dance of African origin. It is performed mainly at Christmas time and a strong feature of the dance is the characters, all males whose moments match their role. Some of these characters are Pitchy Patchy, Devil, Horsehead, Cowhead, Actor Boy, Police, Belly Woman, Warrior and Wild Indian. The rhythm of the Jonkunnu Music is quite distinct from other ritual folk music with its fife and "rattling drum" which is carried on the shoulders played with sticks.



Actor Boy Costume



Gerreh, Mannings School

#### GERREH / DINKI MINI / ZELLA

Both dances of African origin of the wake tradition are usually performed after the death of a person up until ninth night. Gerreh is performed the night after a person's death. The dance is very lively and celebratory in nature and geared to cheering the bereaved family. The dance is similar to that of the Dinki Mini and Zella with more emphasis being placed on the hip movement executed mainly by the female dancers. The movements although vigorous, are very subtle. The males also maintain the knock knee position as they execute their movements with subtle breaks towards their female partner, signaled by the drums. The music and songs which are done to a call and response style play an integral part, as it indicates the type of movement the dancer should do. The instruments used in Gerreh are similar to those used in

Dinki Mini with the “pot covers” taking the place of the benta. Gerreh/Wake is found in the Western end of the island and Dinki Mini and Zella in St Mary and Portland respectively.

## Traditional Forms of strong European Influence

### BRUCKINS PARTY



Clonmel Cultural Club

This dance was performed traditionally to celebrate the anniversary of the Emancipation from slavery on the 1st of August, 1838. Bruckin's party comprise a retinue of dances costumed in Blue and Red involving Kings and Queens, Sergeant – Major, Captians, Grand daughters, etc. who perform as part of a ‘contest’, especially between the King and Queen of each set. The main movement of the dance is the dip/kotch of the body using the feet as the arms move across the chest in an upward movement and a wheel and turn of the body. Musical accompaniment is also the drums and vocalization. Bruckin's Party is found only in the parish of Portland and is now performed mainly for the JCDC's Annual Traditional Folk Forms .

### QUADRILLE



Ball Room Quadrille, Buff Bay High School



Holly Hill Primary & Infant Westmoreland Class 3  
Quadrille Contra

This is a ballroom set dance performed by four couples which originated in the courts, of Europe and was danced in Jamaica by the gentry during slavery. There are three styles, the Ballroom– the former European, the Camp Style and the Contra Style the two creolized version. Mento Bands accompany these dances playing a variety of traditional European tunes except for the fifth figure and contra style which employs the Mento, the first music created by Jamaican.

### MENTO



Peace Maker Mento Band

The Mento is the original folk music created by Jamaicans. Instruments range from saxophones, flutes bamboo fifes, PVC pipes, banjo, violins, bamboo fiddles, guitars, rhumba boxes, double bass, rhythm sticks, shakkas and drums played with both sticks and hands.

### MAYPOLE

The Maypole is a European retention which was originally celebrated on the 1st of May at the May Day fertility celebration in England. It is now very Jamaican in character. Groups may comprise 12 to 16 dancers – sometimes all female/male or mixed gender. The plaiting on the pole with coloured ribbons has basic traditional-patterns, starting with the grand chain, (basket weave)



Liberty Learning Centre

wrapping the ribbons around the pole from the top. The plaiting then continues away from the pole ending in the “cobweb” plait before the full unplaiting takes place. Mento music is not an unusual musical accompaniment, but it is now not unusual to have groups perform this dance to popular reggae tunes bearing the mento rhythms.

### TAMBU



Deeside Cultural Group Trelawny

Tambu is a lively and flirtatious dance, derived from the French word “Tambour” meaning drums. Tambu groups are found mainly in Trelawny. Today, Tambu is performed mainly for entertainment. The dance includes couples advancing and retreating. It has been observed that there is similarity in the dance movements to that of the “Bele” of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Drums with singing form the musical accompaniment. The chief drum is called the “Ka.”

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