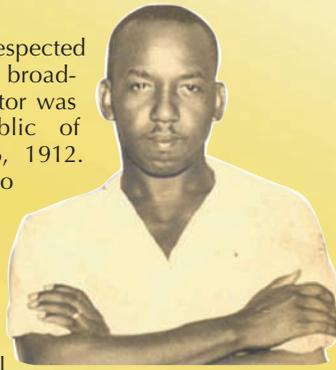


## The Man

The highly loved and respected folklorist, social activist, broadcaster, comedian and actor was born in Colon, Republic of Panama on October 26, 1912. Ranny was destined to become an extra ordinaire great cultural figure to astonish the Jamaican theatre and media landscapes adding flair and vibrancy to 'brand Jamaica'. His spiritual expression of his unquenchable love for culture was a diverse and an overflowing bank of enriching experiences which documented in an exciting way the cultural life of Jamaica during his time. He promoted the Jamaican culture with his choreography and work with the Jonkunnu/John Canoe Bands at Independence Galas and Jamaica tribute 1974. He knew a great deal about revivalism which consist of Zion (heavenly spirits) and pukumina (earth bound spirits) which was often enshrined in his many public and diverse public performances.



He loved the Jamaican people and devoted his life to know them and to help them also to better understand their national identity and self worth. His role in this regard helped to fuel the rise of a new Jamaica, to break free from eurocentric beliefs and practices.

He was born to Jamaican parents Thomas Samuel Williams and Francis Emeline Williams. In 1918 at the age of six, he returned to Jamaica with his family where they lived in Kingston for a while and the rest of his childhood was spent in Williamsfield, St Catherine. His maternal grandmother who was of maroon heritage provided the necessary nurturing that helped to shape significantly his appreciation and passion for Jamaica's folklore, culture and the rich cultural expressions of the Jamaican people.

His family environment created the natural habitat for the development and nurturing of

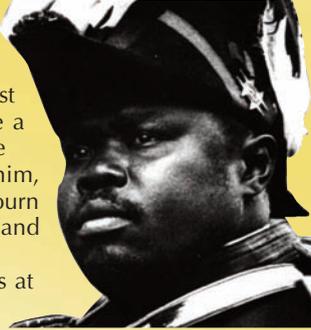
his theatrical abilities which made him into one of the most celebrated and respected comedians and actors that Jamaica has ever seen.

His mother was a music teacher, singer with the Coke Church Choir and a stage show producer for churches, school rooms and lodge halls. He along with his sister Luna and brother Roxie performed songs, comic skits and recitations at many events across the island. Their father provided the necessary stage performance support.

While performing in plays and skits, his education was not neglected. He attended Tutorial College, Calabar High School and Kingston Technical High School. By the time he left school, he was a well established and celebrated amateur dramatist and comedian.

## The Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey and Ranny Williams

It was Maas Ran's father who introduced him to the Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jamaica's first national hero. This was to be a significant break in his theatre development. Unknown to him, this phase of his career sojourn would transform his destiny and national impact. Though he performed Christmas concerts at the Ward Theatre, it was through his employment with Garvey that his theatrical abilities were further honed which blossomed into greater stage successes.



He was employed as a member of the Vaudeville Group which was organized to entertain thousands of people locally and overseas who attended the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) meetings at the Edelweiss Park on Slipe Road, Kingston.

According to Ranny: "Mr. Garvey felt that entertainment was needed for the vast crowds. He organized the first professional entertainment company in Jamaica." Maas Ran was a great cultural asset and contributed significantly in keeping this cultural movement alive in a

riveting and memorable way. He undertook various roles working with the group and eventually became a key figure at the Edelweiss Park. He was first employed as a hooper or chorus dancer and gradually became a front line dancer, expert and a comic. His writing skills emerged and were reflected in the group's skits, musical, comedies and plays such as "Queen of Sheba" and "The Medes and the Persians". He received great reviews in Garvey's newspaper, The Blackman and became a star in the Vaudeville performing group.

## Amos and Andy... Ranny and Lee Gordon

They became a performing duo in the 1940's having met and worked together at the Edelweiss Park. Lee had invited Ranny to be a part of a "Sagwa" medicine show which was organized by a visiting American Victor "Chief Little Bear" Webb. They offered herbal remedies for sale and offered a great entertainment package under the name of 'Amos and Andy' which included dancing girls, tap dancing, singing and comedy acts. They travelled extensively across the island.

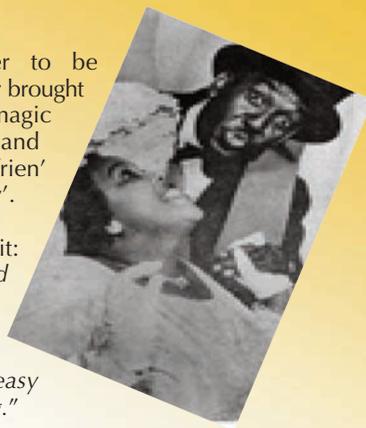
They performed in a 1942 pantomime "Babes in the woods". They worked the stage until 1954 when Lee left for England. Ironically, he died few weeks before Ranny died in 1980. When Lee left for England, this gave way to a new comedian partner for Ranny which created a magic and national treasure for posterity.

## Miss Lou and Maas Ran



Miss Lou and Mass Ran performed for the first time on stage in the pantomime "Bluebird and Brer Anancy". She joined Lee and Ranny well known as the 'topicalities' which provided immense amusement. When Lee retired Miss Lou took over as Maas Ran's comedy partner. It was the beginning of a duo that would take the theatre industry by storm while affirming, preserving and showcasing the Jamaican cultural life as it unfolded to locals and foreigners. The majestic duo of Miss Lou and

Maas Ran was never to be broken until death. They brought immense laughter and magic to Jamaicans of all ages and are unforgettable. 'Goofrien' betta dan pocket money'.



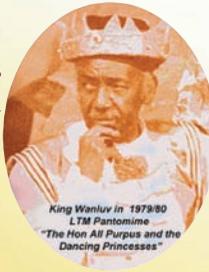
As one critic had put it: "Louise Bennett and Ranny Williams excel; she with accomplished variety of voice, face and body; he with the easy clarity and comic timing."

## LTM Pantomimes

As the first man of colour to become a member of the LTM's theatre cast in 1942, his candle of perfectionism lit brightly and his impeccable theatre professionalism fuelled his unquenchable passion for excellence. He always dreaded the day when he could no longer perform on stage and the Little Theatre for many years gave him that auspicious opportunity to live his dream and to showcase his talents. This purposefully transmitted the rich culture and heritage of Jamaica to his patrons that would live on perpetually.

## Some Pantomimes which featured Miss Lou and Maas Ran

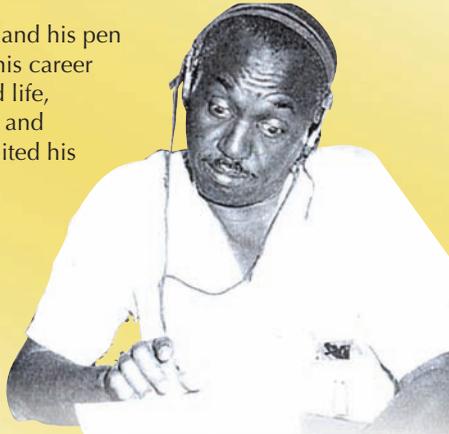
- 1949: Bluebird and Brer Anancy
- 1953: Robinson Crusoe
- 1954: Anancy and the Magic Mirror
- 1955 & 1967: Anancy and Pandora
- 1956: Anancy and Beeny Bud
- 1957: Busha Bluebeard
- 1958: Quashie Lady (writer)
- 1959: Jamaica Way (writer)
- 1960: Carib Gold
- 1961: Banana Boy
- 1962: Finian's Rainbow
- 1963, 1966, & 1973: Queenie's Daughter (co-writer)
- 1964: Bredda Buck (co-writer)
- 1965: Morgan's Dream of Old Port Royal
- 1968: Anancy and Dumbey
- 1969: Moonshine Anancy
- 1970: Rockstone Anancy
- 1971: Music Boy
- 1972: Hail Columbus
- 1974: Dickance for Fippance
- 1975: The Witch
- 1976: Brashana O



Though one of his legs was amputated in 1978, he continued to exhibit his indomitable will and courage to keep his career active. Though he persisted, the last pantomime that he performed in was "The Hon All Purpus and the Dancing Princess", 1979/1980.

## Theatre and Media

The microphone and his pen were integral to his career development and life, unfolding his wit and humor which ignited his audience with a 'belly full of laughter' and a heritage worth celebrating and preserving.



He began his stint on radio at ZQI doing a monthly show called "Jamaica Nights" with his comedian partner Lee Gordon which featured their characters 'Amos and Andy'. When Lee left for England, Ranny created a new series which featured a new character 'Morgan Henry'. When the Jamaica Broadcasting Company took over ZQI this gave way to the birth of RJR. On July 9, 1950 Radio Jamaica and Re-diffusion Network (RJR) came into being. "Life With the Morgan Henrys" popularly known as "Morgie and Putus" was on air and Ranny voiced all characters. Alma Mock Yen (nee' Hylton) later joined Ranny and voiced Putus. It was such a big hit that it was said that it affected church attendance on Sundays. He also ran "Cuz in the Country" / "You Out There In the Country" for rural Jamaica.

When the Broadcasting Corporation took over the air waves in 1959 Ranny Williams was the first voice heard with his morning show "Early Bird".

He also served as disc jockey for "As Time Goes By" and went on to voice "Yu Did Know She?" and "Stick a Pin".

Miss Lou and Maas Ran worked on the "Lou and Ranny Show" which ran on JBC in 1958. It was a very popular programme that was tuned into on Sunday evenings. Ranny also did the Ranny Williams TV Show on JBC TV.

When Miss Lou had her own television series "Ring Ding" Ranny was guest performer and also hosted the show.

Ranny performed in several films with many local and international actors. These films include: "White Sails", Zaca Experience (also referred to as Cruise of the Zaca), "Oh Dad, Poor Dad", "A High Wind in Jamaica" and "Marijuana Affair".

## Death and Burial

At the time of his untimely passing, he was on tour in Canada with the Ed Wallace Production of "Operation P" in 1980. He performed for the opening night and became ill during his performance and was hospitalized after his performance.

Unknown to him was that this was his last theatre performance. Being the committed theatre soldier and professional that he was, on his death bed, he insisted that the show must go on without him.

Maas Ran died at the age of 67 of a heart attack at the Toronto General Hospital on August 10, 1980. His body was flown to Jamaica and laid to rest at the National Heroes Park on August 21, 1980.

As former Prime Minister Michael Manley said at his funeral and the same remains: "we shall Miss Ranny but we shall remember him with gratitude because he so greatly enriched our lives and nation." Ranny Williams was also served as his Cultural Advisor.



## Achievements and Commemoration



- **1963- Jamaica Certificate and Badge of Honour**
- **1966- Musgrave Medal- Silver**
- **1976- Order of Distinction Commander Class**
- **The Ranny Williams Entertainment Centre situated at 36 Hope Road Kingston 10 stands**

as a proud reminder of the nation's commitment in preserving his memories and rich legacy



- **The Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC) preserves his memories by having the "Ranny Williams Award for Best Actor" in JCDC's Drama Festival Competition.**



Troy Rodgers of the Port Antonio Theatre Group, Portland is presented with the Ranny Williams Award Best Actor award for "Negro Mancy - Anancy" Adults -Category -Musical, 2010. This award was presented by Miss Claudette Christie, Jamaica Co-operative Credit Union League.

### Sources:

*Ceremony In Honour of Mr. Randolph Samuel Williams, CD, February 1979.*

*Dawes, Gwyneth. Remembering Marse Ran: A Short Biographical Sketch of Randolph Samuel Williams, CD. Kingston : National Library, 1981.*

*Henry, Davina. 'Maas Ran remembered at intimate affair'. The DailyGleaner. <http://jamaicagleaner.com/gleaner/20121107/ent/ent2.html>. Accessed September 2, 2013*

*Little Theatre Movement Special Exhibition 2012 in commemoration of Ranny Williams 100th birth anniversary.*

*National Library of Jamaica*

*Nettleford, Rex. Remembrance for Ranny Williams delivered at his funeral, 1980.*



**Randolph Williams, CD**  
**'Maas Ran'/'Ranny'**

**1912-1980**

*The Man. His Life. His Legacy*

**"Man Pon Spot"**  
**&**  
**"A Man for All Seasons"**