

JAMAICAN FOLK SONG SUITE

Introduction

Jamaican folk songs are full of social commentary, censure, and recrimination in a vehicle of humor. They often touch on areas which are almost taboo in the normal circumstances of polite everyday speech, and at other times provide humorous relief in times of adversity. The importance of traditional Jamaican folk songs today is mainly historical, since much of the lyrical content refers to events and relationships which give insight into the human condition of the past and not so distant past.

—Marjorie Whyllie

Patois Pronunciation and Translation

Jamaican “patois” is the native language of the island and is an English-based Creole language with West African influences. It also uses many words borrowed from Spanish, Portuguese, Hindi, Arawak, and Scottish/Irish dialects, reflecting Jamaica’s turbulent yet vibrant multicultural history.

1. Train a Blow

Train a blow, yuh nuh hear de min’ i’ lef yuh	<i>trayn ah bloh yuh nuh heer dih myn ih lehf yuh</i>	The train whistle is blowing. don’t you hear the make sure it doesn’t leave you
Mass Tom a run, Miss Mary da come. What a way de gyal foot dry!	<i>mahs tahm ah ruhn mihs may-ree dah kuhm wuht uh way dih gyahl foot dry</i>	Master Tom is running, Miss Mary has come. How skinny her feet are!
Poor Madda Jane da try catch de train, but her fowl da look fe fly.	<i>poor muh-duh jayn dah try kehtch dih trayn buht hahr fowl dah look fih fly</i>	Poor Mother Jane is trying to catch the train, but her chicken is trying to fly away.
Look how de woman a hide her little bwoy inna de ker’sene pan.	<i>look hahoo dih woo-mahn uh hyd hahr lih-tuhl bwoy ih-nuh dih keer-seen pan</i>	See how the woman is hiding her little boy in the kerosene pan.
Tap, yuh tink yuh smart, no, ma. Yuh nuh wan’ pay fe yuh son.	<i>tahp yuh tihnk yuh smaht noh mah yuh nuh wahn pay fih yuh suhn</i>	Stop, you think you’re smart, don’t you, ma’am. You don’t want to pay for your son.
Port Antoni, Frankfield, Ewarton	<i>port ahn-toh-nee frank-feeld yoo-wahr-tuhn</i>	Port Antonio, Frankfield, Ewarton
Gyal an’ bwoy, young lady, gentleman	<i>gyahl ahn bwoy yuhng lay-dee jehn-tuhl-mahn</i>	Girl and boy, young lady, gentleman

2. Cookie, Cookie

Cookie, Cookie, yuh nuh see nobody pass yah?	<i>koo-kee, koo-kee, yuh nuh see noh-bah-dee pahs yah?</i>	Cookie, Cookie, didn't you see anybody pass by here?
No, me friend. Nuh tell me so.	<i>noh mih frehn nuh tehl mih soh.</i>	No, my friend. Don't tell me so.
One o' me dumplin' gawn. Half o' me sorrel gawn. Big junk o' corn pork gawn.	<i>wuhn uh mih duhm-plihn gahn hahf uh mih saw-rehl gahn bihg juhnk uh kahn pahk gahn</i>	One of my dumplings is gone. Half of my sorrel is gone. A big chunk of corned pork is gone.

3. Ha One Cousin

Ha one cousin uppa Seafort Town. Cheer, bwoys, cheer.	<i>hah wuhn kuh-zihn uh-puh see-fort town cheer bwoyz cheer</i>	I have a cousin up in Seaforth Town. Cheer, boys, cheer.
Tek 'im aunty coat, trow trough de window.	<i>tehk ihm ahn-tee koht troh troo dih wihn-doh</i>	He took his aunty's coat, threw it through the window.
Gyal, a whe yuh call am? Call am Funduwah.	<i>gyahl ah weh yuh kawl ahm kawl ahm foon-doo-wah</i>	Girl, what did you call him? Call him Funduwah.
Put yuh foot in deh. han', head, body	<i>put yuh foot ihn deh hahn hehd bah-dee</i>	Put your foot in there. Hand, head, body

About the Arranger

Marjorie Whyllie is a Jamaican musician (piano/keyboard, hand drums, percussion, voice), composer, arranger, musicologist, and music educator. She is arguably Jamaica's finest all-round musician and unquestionably Jamaica's most versatile proponent of the fine arts, as well as being the foremost living expert on Jamaica's cultural and musical heritage. During her long career she combined lecturing in Jamaica (University of the West Indies and the Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts) and overseas visiting attachments (England, Canada, USA, Latin America, the Caribbean) with performances. During her long tenure as the Musical Director of the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica, with which she performed internationally, she composed and arranged music for choreographed works and traditional Jamaican and Caribbean folk songs for the NDTC Singers and musicians.

*Special thanks to Dawn Muir for her editorial contributions to this publication.
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for S.A.T.B. voices, a cappella
with percussion*

1. Train a Blow

Traditional Jamaican Folk Song
Arranged by **MARJORIE WHYLIE**

Rhythmically (♩ = ca. 144-152)

SOPRANO ALTO *mf*

Train a blow, yuh nuh hear de train a blow.

TENOR BASS *mf*

4 *cresc. (no breath 3rd time)*

Train a blow, min' i' lef yuh, train a blow.

cresc. (no breath 3rd time)

8 1. *f* 9

Mass Tom a run, Miss Mar - y da come. What a

NOTE: This playful song describes a comical scene at a station where there is a departing train bound for three popular Jamaican towns. Mister Tom is running to catch the train, followed by Miss Mary, whose feet are skinny. Mother Jane carries a chicken that is trying to fly away. Another woman attempts to hide her son in a large kerosene barrel, hoping she won't have to pay his fare.

PERFORMANCE SUGGESTION: Interact with each other as a group of neighbors gossiping while they observe people at the station.

* Free percussion parts for all three movements are available at alfred.com/choralparts.
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11

way de gyal foot dry! Poor Mad - da Jane da try ___

14

___ catch de train, but her fowl da look fe fly.

17

2.

18

Look how de wo-man a hide ___ her lit - tle bwoy

20

in - na de ker - 'sene pan. Tap, yuh tink ___ yuh smart, _

23

___ no, ma. ___ Yuh nuh wan' pay ___ fe yuh son.

6

26 *f* 3.

Port An - to - ni, Frank - field, Ew - ar - ton, train a blow.

29

Gyal an' bwoy, young la - dy, gen - tle - man,

32 *mf* 34 *mf*

train a blow. Train a blow, yuh nuh hear de

36 (train whistle, opt. solo)

train a blow. Woo - woo! Train a blow,

39 (train stop, low pitch)

min' i' lef yuh, train a blow. Paaw!

2. Cookie, Cookie

Traditional Jamaican Folk Song
Arranged by MARJORIE WHYLIE

Lively (♩ = ca. 100-104)

opt. SOLO

f (end solo)

Cook - ie, Cook - ie, yuh nuh see no - bod - y pass yah?

3 *mp* No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so. One o' me dump-lin' gawn. Me *grad. cresc.*

mp No, me friend. *grad. cresc.* No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so.

5 pret-ty, pret-ty dump - lin' gawn. Me big flour dump - lin' gawn. *f*

No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so. *f* No, me friend.

NOTE: In this song, neighbors suspiciously question Cookie about some missing items. Traditionally, participating community members would continue the song, improvising items that could have been stolen with amusing results.

PERFORMANCE SUGGESTION: Perform as neighbors gathering to confront Cookie with appropriate gestures of exasperation and humorous disgruntlement.

8

7 *opt. SOLO* *(end solo)*

Cook - ie, Cook - ie, yuh nuh see no - bod - y pass yah?

9 *mp* No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so. Half o' me sor - rel* gawn. Me *grad. cresc.*

No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so. Half o' me sor - rel* gawn. Me

mp No, me friend. *grad. cresc.* No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so.

11 *f* tast - y sor - rel gawn. *f* Big gill† o' sor - rel gawn.

No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so. No, me friend.

13 *opt. SOLO* *(end solo)*

Cook - ie, Cook - ie, yuh nuh see no - bod - y pass yah?

* Sorrel is a tart and tangy Jamaican punch made with dried hibiscus flowers and served over ice. This bright-colored red drink is traditionally served around Christmas time.

† Gill (*gihl*) is a liquid measurement, approximately one half cup.

15 No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so. Piece o' me corn pork gawn.* Me

mp *grad. cresc.*

No, me friend. No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so.

mp *grad. cresc.*

17 sweet, sweet corn pork gawn. Big junk o' corn pork gawn.

f

No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so. No, me friend.

f

19

mp *cresc. to end*

Cook - ie, Cook - ie, yuh nuh see no - bod - y pass yah?

mp *cresc. to end*

21 No, me friend. Nuh tell ___ me so. No, me friend!

f

No, me friend. No, me friend!

f

* Corned Pork is a savory Jamaican dish of heavily seasoned and salted pork, which is sometimes smoked.

3. Ha One Cousin

Traditional Jamaican Ring Play
Arranged by MARJORIE WHYLIE

Cheerfully (♩ = ca. 152-160)

(sing three times)

mp

Ha one cou - sin up - pa Sea - fort Town.

mf

mf

Cheer, bwoys, cheer. Ha one cous - in up - pa

mp

Sea - fort Town. Cheer, bwoys, cheer.

mf

9

BASS only (opt. solos) (end solo)

Tek 'im aunt - y coat, trow trough de win - dow.

mf

NOTE: This song is about a naughty cousin, named Funduwah, in Seaforth Town who threw his aunty's coat out of the window. It is also a ring play (a children's singing game played in a circle) in which body parts are named and pointed to the middle of the circle, as in the "Hokey Pokey" and similar songs from other countries.

PERFORMANCE SUGGESTION: Use gestures to tell the story to the gyal, then perform modified ring play motions, standing in place.

11 *mf*

Gyal, a whe yuh call am? Call am Fun - du - wah.

ALL *mf*

13

Gyal, a whe yuh call am? Call am Fun - du - wah.

15 *opt. add ring play motions**

f

1. Put yuh foot in deh, call am Fun - du - wah.
 2. Put yuh han' in deh, call am Fun - du - wah.
 3. Put yuh head in deh, call am Fun - du - wah.

f

17 *(repeat two times)*

1. Put yuh foot in deh, call am Fun - du - wah.
 2. Put yuh han' in deh, call am Fun - du - wah.
 3. Put yuh head in deh, call am Fun - du - wah.

*** RING PLAY MOTIONS:**

1. Shake lifted right foot 3 times, step on beat four, repeat with left foot
2. Shake right hand toward center 4 times, repeat with left hand
3. Turn chin to right, shake head center 4 times, repeat to left
4. 4 jumps forward (leaning back), then 4 jumps back to place (leaning forward)

12

19 *f*

4. Put yuh bod - y in deh, call am Fun - du - wah.

21 *cresc. to end*

Put yuh bod - y in deh, call am Fun - du ... Ha one cous - in up - pa

cresc. to end

24 *ff*

Sea - fort Town. Cheer, bwoys, cheer. Yay!

ff