

Not just the song and dance

BY TANIA TREPANIER



"Anyone here from Jamaica!" Insert cheers. "Anyone here from Barbados!" Insert cheers. "Anyone here from Bermuda!" Insert more cheers. This was how Caribanza 1997 began.

The annual Caribbean event is put on by the Saint Mary's, Dalhousie and Mount St. Vincent Caribbean Societies and the Bermuda Triangle Association. The theme for this year's evening was "Colour, Splendour, and Rhythms of Our People". And indeed, the evening consisted of a colorful display of clothing, food, and the sounds of reggae, rap and calypso.

What was refreshing about this Caribanza was that added to the "food, fashion and fancy footwork" was the presence of both political and spiritual messages. The tributes to Jamaican labour leader, trade unionist and former Prime Minister, Michael Manley, and Guyanan President and leader of the People's Progressive Party, Cheddi Jagen, were a clear indication that pride in culture and place was not being reduced to song and dance.

After the wonderful meal, the entertainment began. A number of poems were performed which were both entertaining and interesting. Lorraine Ferguson's reading of "If me did know" was well read and made reference to the bloodshed during the 1980 elections in Jamaica.

The fashion show, put on by the Bermudan students, was well

choreographed and fun to watch. It would be accurate to say that the entire evening was a fashion show of sorts. Members of the audience, comprised of young people from the Caribbean who study in Halifax during the school year, were dressed to the nines: gorgeous evening dresses, tiny summer dresses, stylish suits and everything in between.

The acts were interspersed with performances by a witch doctor character, complete with a skull, rubber chicken and flute. In addition, John Burnett delighted the audience with a lovely flute recital of "Annie's Song".

Perhaps the show could have been strengthened by representing even more of the cultural and racial diversity of the Caribbean.

Christianity and African heritage and history form common ground for remembrance and celebration of many Caribbean people's experiences. But the Caribbean is also enriched by other religions such as Hinduism, and other groups including South Asians, Chinese, and people of mixed heritage.

Of course, no Caribbean event is complete without dancing, bumping and grinding. The dance performances were good, with funky hip hop, a masquerade dance performed to traditional music from St. Lucia and Dominica, and the hilarious "grass skirt posse" which led right into dancing for everyone as soon as tables were cleared.

All yuh, leh we go wind an' ting!

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