

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE TRADITIONAL ARTS AND
MID ATLANTIC ARTS FOUNDATION PRESENT



MASTERS OF
CARIBBEAN
MUSIC

A NATIONAL TOUR

EXPLORING MUSICAL TRADITIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN

MASTERS OF CARIBBEAN MUSIC

THE MIGHTY SPARROW
ECOS DE BORINQUÉN
TI-COCA ET WANGA-NÈGÈS

Masters of Caribbean Music explores the musical ideas, influences and relationships in the cultures of the Caribbean Basin and brings to the stage a variety of exciting musical forms representing the rich heritage of Caribbean communities in the U.S. The finest performers from three distinct Caribbean musical traditions will be featured: Puerto Rican *jíbaro*, Trinidadian calypso and Haitian *twoubadou*, reflecting the complex, multi-cultural histories and cultures of the region. Legendary calypsonian **The Mighty Sparrow** from Trinidad, the exquisite Puerto Rican jíbaro ensemble **ECOS de Borinquén** and, from Port-au-Prince, the engaging and rarely heard **Ti-Coca et Wanga-Nègès** making its U.S. touring debut.

TOUR PACKAGE

The tour package includes artist fees, transportation, hotel, state of the art sound system, audio engineers and beautifully produced educational program books available to all audience members free of charge. We welcome the opportunity to present educational workshops, master classes, community activities and specially designed hour-long K-12 programs in conjunction with this tour, and will offer contextual materials for use in study guides and other publications.

TOUR AVAILABILITY

Masters of Caribbean Music will be offered in the Eastern U.S. during October/November, 2005.

ABOUT THE NCTA

The National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA) is a private not-for-profit corporation dedicated to the presentation and documentation of folk, ethnic and tribal arts in the United States. Founded in 1933, it is the nation's oldest producing and presenting organization with such a focus. www.ncta.net

ABOUT MAAF

Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation celebrates and supports the wealth and diversity of the region's arts resources and works to make those resources widely accessible both in the mid-Atlantic region and beyond. The Foundation's programs include performing arts touring, jazz presenter training, an artist residency program, and regional traditional arts projects.

www.midatlanticarts.org

BOOKING INFORMATION

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PUERTO RICAN JÍBARO

The Spanish colonized the island of Puerto Rico in the early decades of the sixteenth century. Settlers, mostly from the region of Andalusia in southern Spain, who moved to the highlands were known as *jíbaros*. Their small-scale farming activities were largely family affairs not requiring the use of slaves. Thus, the culture of the highland *jíbaro* retains the strongest elements of Spanish culture found on the island.

In both form and repertoire *jíbaro* music reveals its connections to Andalusia and sixteenth century Spanish musical practices. The music is played by small ensembles consisting of *cuatros* (small 10-stringed guitars), *güiro* (a gourd rasp), *maracas* and voice. More recent additions include bongos and sometimes a clarinet or trumpet. But even in the purer setting of *cuatros*, guitars and *guiro*, the influence of Afro-Caribbean rhythm is unmistakable.



Photograph: Tom Pich

In the 1950s, few people would have thought that the rural traditional music of Puerto Rico had any future. *Jíbaros* living on

small farms and in towns along the mountainous spine of the island (known as Borinquén to its original Taíno Indian population) flocked to San Juan and the U.S. in search of opportunity. In their rush to a new future, they abandoned more than their *bohíos* (traditional country houses); *música jíbara*, at the heart of their centuries-old Spanish heritage, was also left to languish.

Counter-currents to this trend gathered momentum to form a riptide that by the 1960s would begin to pull Puerto Ricans back to their musical roots. Today, the mere sound of *música jíbara* can provoke a cheer of cultural and national pride. For many Puerto Ricans, it has become a national musical “flag.”

Miguel Santiago Díaz, founder of **Ecos de Borinquén**, was born in 1946 in Comerío, a town in the mountainous center of the island, in 1946. He has played a part in driving the renaissance of Puerto Rican roots music. Miguel founded Ecos de Borinquén in 1978. While the membership of the group has changed over the years, its mission of bringing the “echoes” of the *jíbaro* musical past into the present and the future has remained constant. The group has performed throughout Puerto Rico and has toured to the United States, Mexico, Venezuela and Costa Rica.

The group’s very first recording entitled *Jíbaro Hasta el Hueso* on Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has garnered critical acclaim, a 2004 Grammy® nomination for Best World Music Album, and a Latin Grammy® nomination for Best Folk Album.

TRINIDADIAN CALYPSO

Developed in Trinidad in the nineteenth century with lyrics in English, calypso is a popular music with a delightful sense of humor. Highly danceable as well as lyrically sophisticated, it achieved international popularity in the 1930s with a stream of humorous commentary about prime ministers, dictators, presidents and others troubling the public eye. Calypso is still going strong on its home base, both in its traditional form and in its modern, high-tech variant, soca.

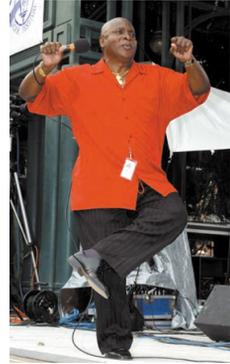
While always musically rich with an irresistibly lilting rhythm, words and ideas enrich calypso. This social and political commentary is peppered with patois and slang and, of course, there's calypso's trademark sexual innuendo, often masked through use of the double entendre. It is a music that comes to the fore at the Trinidad and Tobago Carnivals.

Today's Carnival began to take its present form when the separate celebrations of colonial planters and their former slaves merged after emancipation in 1834. Carnival singing competitions grew in popularity. The first calypso recording was made in 1914. By the 1930s, calypso was entering a golden age of popularity and creativity. In 1944 the Andrews Sisters recorded a cover version of Lord Invader's hit "Rum and Coca Cola" about a local girl whisked away by the Yankee dollar that became an enormous hit.

The post-war American recording industry took due note of this calypso success. RCA Victor signed up Mighty Sparrow as well as Jamaican-born American singer Harry Belafonte. In 1956, Bellefonte recorded his calypso album containing the famous Banana Boat Song ("Day-O"), the first album to sell over a million copies. This was also the year that the Mighty Sparrow burst onto the scene and took the calypso world by storm.

Slinger Francisco, better known as **The Mighty Sparrow**, is a living legend with a career that spans over 40 years and counting. The acknowledged "King of the Calypso World," rivaled only by the late Lord Kitchener, he has entertained audiences around the world. A giant of a personality, known and loved throughout the Caribbean, Mighty Sparrow was born in Gran Roi, Grenada, in 1935. His family moved to Trinidad when he was one year old, and the island claims him as its own. A brilliant singer and arranger, he is the dominant figure of Post World War II calypso both in Trinidad and Tobago and in the U.S. where in the 1960s and 70s he would often fill New York's Madison Square Garden.

It is said that he used the sobriquet "Little Sparrow" on his Carnival debut, but his rapid success led competitors to deride this upstart diminutive bird. So Sparrow added the prefix "Mighty" as a form of damage control and this rhetorical table-turning delighted his fans. That was a generation ago, but the Sparrow is still Mighty.



Photograph: Tom Pich

HAITIAN TWoubADOU

Twoubadou (from troubadour) music has a long and important place in Haitian culture, one that transcends rural-urban and class divisions. The term is used to describe singer-composers who accompany themselves or are backed by small string-based ensembles. These traditionally consist of one or two guitars, a *tanbou* (barrel drum) played with the hands, a *graj* (scraper) and a *manumba*, a large, box-like “thumb piano” on which the player sits and plucks metal tongues suspended over a sound hole. Twoubadou is derived from blending of the Cuban *son* brought back to Haiti in the early twentieth century by itinerant Haitian sugarcane cutters and Haitian *méringue*. The form has become deeply Haitian over the intervening decades, and most Haitians consider it an indigenous music. Twoubadou songs are expected to truthfully convey the bitterness and humor of life and love, often employing ribald and off-color lyrics. Some twoubadou singers have been the conscience of a generation.

During the 1930s, while conducting fieldwork in Haiti, noted folklorist Alan Lomax fell in love with this rustic acoustic music that he first encountered late one night at the end of a Port-au-Prince alleyway. “We had not walked twenty yards when we came round the corner of a shanty and saw four or five couples dancing a slow one-step in the alley-way between a high candelabra cactus fence and the house. Hanging to the fence was an old bicycle tire, burning slow and orange. I wish I could tell how beautiful this scene was, how melancholy, how restrained and graceful...”

Twoubadou groups can still be heard in Haiti at *fèt patwon* (patron’s day feasts), during Carnival, at private parties and in hotels and restaurants frequented by tourists. Eclipsed by *konpa* and other popular styles that it helped to spawn, twoubadou has been taken for granted by Haitians until a resurgence of interest that began in the late 1990s. Even so, this delightful music remains virtually unknown outside the country.

Ti-Coca (David Mettelus) is considered one of the best singers in Haiti today. Forming his first group with neighborhood friends in 1971, he soon acquired the nickname “Ti-Coca” (little bottle of Coca-Cola) because of his diminutive stature. For the last 28 years, Ti-Coca and his accordion-led acoustic quintet **Wanga-Nègès** have created twoubadou in the traditional style. In addition to David (vocals and *maracas*), the ensemble consists of Allen Juste (accordion), Mathieu Chertoute (*tanbou*), Wilfrid Bolane (bass), Kesner Bolane (drums), and Richard Hector (banjo and guitar). In their first-ever U.S. performances at the 2004 Smithsonian Folklife Festival the group created a sensation, as it is certain to do in its first U.S. tour, Masters of Caribbean Music.



Photo courtesy of the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution