



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Social Development and Sports

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

To the House of Assembly

By
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Minister of Social Development and Sports

Bermuda's Participation in Carifesta XIII

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Mr. Speaker, *“Asserting Our Culture, Celebrating Ourselves”* was the theme of Carifesta XIII held in the host country of Barbados from 18th to 27th August 2017; and Bermuda's participation certainly captured that theme. Our thirty-five strong Bermuda contingent represented Bermuda in dance, music, gombey performance, crafts, literary arts, spoken word, visual arts and the Symposium. Several films, produced by local film makers were also featured throughout Carifesta XIII.

Mr. Speaker, Carifesta is short for *“The Caribbean Festival of the Arts”*. It is the premier roving, multidisciplinary mega arts festival that showcases the cultural expressions of artists from various countries of the Caribbean region; and was initiated in 1972 to celebrate the arts, foster a vision of Caribbean unity, provide a space for artistic discourse and exchange amongst cultural practitioners of the arts, and to positively advance Caribbean culture both regionally and internationally.

Mr. Speaker, Our participants included eleven representatives from five Gombey troupes (dancers Germiko Gardner, Zane Hendrickson, Bilal Binns, Vaughronde Joseph, Seion Darrell and Harley Place; drummers Zaniko Hendrickson, Kelvon (Showande) Butterfield, Robert Wilson, Dennis Parsons and Earshun DeShields); six senior dancers from United Dance Productions Junior Company [featuring Keiazia (Key-a-sha) Burchall-Busby; Karina Forth; Shani Tucker; Zya (Zy-eh) Fraser; Zane (Za-ney) Aberdeen; and In'Dasia (In-dey-sha) Showers-Reid along with Instructor Suzette Harvey - Founder and Director of United Dance Productions]; solo dancer Rikkai Scott; seven members of the Wall Street Band; vocalists Joy T. Barnum, Cindy Smith, Mitchell Trott aka Arijahknow (A-rig-in-ah) Live Wires, and Keamon Woolaston aka KASE; three spoken word artists; banana doll maker Ronnie Chameau; story teller and author Florenz Webbe Maxwell; and visual artist and lecturer Dr. Edwin Smith. We also took art work

produced by Meredith Andrews, Robert Bassett, April Branco, James Cooper, Rhona Emmerson, Alan C. Smith, and Dr. Charles Zuill. Films produced by Lucinda Spurling, Andrew Stevenson, Kalilah Robinson and Adrian Kawaley-Lathan were also showcased.

Mr. Speaker, Our participants delighted audiences with the pulsating rhythms of our Gombey dancers and drummers; the soulful yet powerful singing of our vocalists; and the exquisite, elegant yet artful, spectacular, professional and creative movements of our dancers. The cacophony of sounds created by the Wall Street Band delighted, wowed and mesmerized the audiences where ever our participants performed. All of them performed brilliantly and masterfully. They collaborated with each other and developed showcases that were exceptional.

Mr. Speaker, Although the Opening Ceremony was postponed until Sunday August 20th – due to the arrival of Tropical Storm Harvey on Friday morning –this in no way dampened the spirit or enthusiasm of the members of our contingent. Led off by our Bermuda Gombey troupe, all of our participants, as well as Bermudian organizers and supporters, paraded through the streets of downtown Bridgetown wearing T-shirts designed by local company Bermunities; and arrived at Kensington Oval for the official start of Carifesta XIII. The excitement was palpable and the energy was exhilarating.

Mr. Speaker, There were several highlights experienced by our contingent both collectively and individually. All of our participants were well-received and performed regularly throughout Carifesta. Banana doll maker Ronnie Chameau gave daily workshops for adults and children; demonstrating the intricacies of banana doll making. Our literary and spoken word artists, Chris Astwood, Alan C. Smith, Florenz Webbe-Maxwell and Yesha Townshend, performed on stage at Barbados' Queen's Park Steel Shed, where they also had the opportunity to meet and interact with award-winning Caribbean literary giants such as Olive Senior and Edwidge Danticat.

Mr. Speaker, The Bermuda Gombey were in great demand throughout the festival; and performed at various locations including Bay Street Esplanade, the Grand Market and at the famous "Oistins". The Gombey Troupe also performed with our musicians, vocalists and dancers on many occasions; for example Tuesday August 22nd was Bermuda's turn to show case its talent at the Grand Market. On that occasion two of our artists – Keamon Woolaston whose stage

name is Adum Reb – and Yesha (I-sha) Townsend hosted and participated in the Bermuda show that included performances from poet Alan C. Smith, dancer Rikkai Scott, United Dance Production dancers, vocalists – Joy T. Barnum, Cindy Smith, Live Wires, the Wall Street Band under the direction of Mr. Robert Edwards, and a finale featuring our Bermuda Gombey troupe.

Mr. Speaker, This Bermuda showcase was replicated on Thursday night at The Bay Street Esplanade. Our Bermudian performing artists again treated the crowds with brilliant, well-choreographed and energetic demonstrations of their exceptional talents. They were very well-received; and the DJ publically stated that he didn't want the Bermuda show to end. However, later that same evening the Gombey's had to perform at another venue.

Mr. Speaker, Our dancers, Wall Street Band musicians and the vocalists as well as the Gombey's performed at several high schools throughout Barbados such as Combermere and Foundation. Our dancers also had the privilege of performing at The Frank Collymore Hall- a first class, purpose built performing arts facility.

Mr. Speaker, Some of our members also made presentations during the Symposia –Alan C. Smith and Folklife Officer Dr. Kim Dismont Robinson made presentations on visual arts and culture respectively. Visual Artist Dr. Edwin Smith every day provided commentary about the Bermudian art work that was being exhibited at the Barbados Community College. Dr. Smith also gave a presentation giving an historical context of Bermudian art and its development. These presenters were all well-received.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda had a Country Booth which displayed beautiful cedar bowls created at Jeremy Johnson's Craft Shop; cedar friendship goblets and cedar trinket boxes crafted by Llewellyn Emery; 2 beautiful ladies' palmetto hats designed and made by Donna Pink; a cedar fitted dinghy crafted by Milton Hill including cedar sails; Y'Art - depicting fauna found in Bermuda - created by Stratton Hatfield; and Gombey dolls made by Nahtasha Smith and Barbara Fubler. We were also provided with samples of locally-made perfume by Lili Bermuda. The three sides of our booth displayed a digital image of a Bermuda house displaying Bermuda's architecture, designed by Stephan Johnstone. Michael and Ann Spurling gave the Department permission to use the digital image that featured their lovely home "*Red Barracks*". We are grateful to them for allowing us to use this image of their beautiful home. Bermuda's Country Booth also

"doubled" as our information desk; and was manned daily by our Officers and some participants when they were not performing. This Country Booth, located in the Grand Market with the other Country Booths, provided many opportunities to engage with multitudes of people, share stories, develop and foster relationships, and promote Bermuda and her people.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda also had representation in the Carifesta Bookstore. There were a few copies of books by some of our local authors, such as Nadia Aguiar, Florenz Webbe Maxwell and Dr. Edwin Smith on Bermuda's book shelf that were available for purchase. Also the Department placed on that bookshelf copies of books that the Department has published such as *One Little Paw Paw*, *The Spirit Baby and Other Folktales*, *400 Years: 400 Portraits*; and DVDs produced by the Department such as *Dinghy Racing*, *Shipwrecks*, *Medicinal Uses of Plants* and others.

Mr. Speaker Another highlight was Bermuda's participation in the Closing Ceremony, also held at Kensington Oval. I would like to point out that **not** all participating countries are invited to perform during the Closing Ceremony; however Bermuda was invited to have our soloist Cindy Smith perform – and she was backed by The Wall Street Band and the other two vocalists. Bermuda's Live Wires was also part of that presentation. Bermuda's Gombeys were also invited to perform; and did a collaborative piece with the Masqueraders from St. Kitts. Our very talented Bermudians performed before a packed audience at Kensington Oval. It was a moment when we felt exhilaration and excitement, as well as pride in being Bermudian!

Mr. Speaker, The benefits of our participation in Carifesta XIII are many. It provided our artists with exposure. For example as a result of her participation Mrs. Florenz Webbe Maxwell has been invited to visit other countries as a storyteller and share with audiences about her most recent publication *Girlcott*. Another example of the benefit of exposure is seen in the invitation that was extended to our Gombeys to participate in the 10th Biennial Caribbean Secondary School's Drama Festival that was to take place from November 26th to December 2nd of this year in Antigua and Barbuda. Needless to say that event will not now take place. Our prayers are extended to the people of those islands as well as the other places that experienced such horrific destruction as a result of Hurricane Irma's deadly blow.

Mr. Speaker, all of our participants were so grateful for this opportunity to perform on the international stage and represent Bermuda. They acknowledged that such participation helped empower them; and further develop their skills and expertise. Moreover, those who participated are keen to share what they have learned to help nurture and develop others. This is crucial to capacity building.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of our participants; their performances and the collaborations that developed amongst themselves. They represented Bermuda well! On behalf of the Bermuda Government, again I say to them publically “Thank you very much for so beautifully and artfully representing Bermuda on an international stage!”

Mr. Speaker, in order to demonstrate the Government’s appreciation for the superb way that our participants represented Bermuda and Bermudian culture at Carifesta XIII, the Honourable Premier will host a reception for all participants at Camden tonight.

Mr. Speaker, In closing, I would also like to extend my appreciation to the Officers of the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs who worked relentlessly, and with such enthusiasm, energy and commitment for many months in order to develop and implement the audition process; acquire and prepare all of the documentation required by the host country of Barbados; attend to all of the logistical arrangements for the contingent of thirty five (35) people; develop policies and procedures; and attend to a myriad amount of details necessary for a project of such magnitude.

Mr. Speaker, I think it only fitting that I publically “Thank” those Officers who worked so conscientiously and strategically. They are as follows. Mrs. Heather Whalen – Director of Community and Cultural Affairs, and Head of the Delegation; Dr. Kim Dismont Robinson, Folklife Officer and Deputy Head of the Delegation; Ms. Carlita Lodge, Cultural Affairs Programme Manager and Officer responsible for communications for the delegation; Mr. Graham Mawer, Cultural Liaison and Development Officer; and Ms. Clyde-A-Mae Tucker, Event and Programme Coordinator. This team did great work and I am grateful to them for their diligence, persistence and perseverance.

Thank you Mr. Speaker