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*An Island's Story:*

Told through the Music of Julia Hydes

A presentation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree Bachelor of Arts in Music

by

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2010

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**To Miss Julia Hydes, who at 101 years old is still making music, and to all her family and loved ones.**

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## **ABSTRACT OF THE PRESENTATION**

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This project in ethnomusicology is based on the life and music of Julia Hydes, a drummer, singer and composer of traditional Caymanian folk music. The Caymanian folk music tradition which Julia is a part of is a genre largely unstudied and mysterious due to a lack of interest and resources. More research and study is needed on the folk music of the Cayman Islands as it is a vast topic full of ripe opportunities for discovery. This project is the first of its kind on Miss Julia Hydes and will aid in the preservation, communication and cultivation of Caymanian folk music.

Julia Hydes was born in 1909 and is still alive and playing music today at 101 years old. She is the only female drummer in the history of Caymanian folk music and the only living member of the fraternity of iconic Caymanian folk musicians. This dissertation explores and discovers the story of the Cayman Islands, its people and culture through the music of Miss Julia Hydes. Using the interviews, musical recordings and texts collected in Grand Cayman, Miss Julia's role as a tradition-bearer and musical icon is explored.

Through the analysis and interpretation of her song *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, new insights are gained on Caymanian culture, society and identity.

Accordingly, an ethnography of my first encounter with Miss Julia Hydes is presented as the preface to this project. The first chapter provides an introduction to the project and methodology. Chapter two provides a brief history of the Cayman Islands, its traditional music and a biography on the life of Miss Julia Hydes. An analysis of Miss Julia Hydes' song *Cardile Gone to Cuba* and a comparison to Samuel Bagnall's *A Starry Night for a Ramble* is presented in Chapter three. Finally, I will look at how we can gain insights into the life and culture of the Caymanian people and Miss Julia Hydes through an interpretation of her song *Cardile Gone to Cuba*.



# **PREFACE**

## **An afternoon with Miss Julia**

It was a long awaited rain that greeted my mother and I that hot afternoon as we drove up to West Bay. We were on our way to meet the 100 year old percussionist Miss Julia Hydes. My search for Miss Julia began that morning when I opened the phone book to search for her number. I was greeted by, what seemed like, a hundred numbers under the name 'Hydes'. From cousin, to son to brother to daughter-in-law, I finally found her and was happy to know that I could visit her that afternoon. Unfortunately, not remembering the house number Miss Julia lived in, my mother and I observed each home on the picturesque seaside road. We tried to guess which one was hers. On one side of the road lay the extravagant beachside properties, decorated in stone and Mercedes Benz; while the houses on the opposite side were more modest, decorated with gingerbread fret-work and sand gardens full of conch shells. Old time Caymanians rarely built on the beach because of storms, but now the view is obstructed by modern architecture and seven story high beach condos. We kept our search to the side that harkened back to the past, and, after running in the rain from door to door, we finally found her.

We were greeted at the front door by Miss Julia's housekeeper who welcomed us in and announced our presence to Miss Julia. The living room was adorned with photos of her countless family members, from children to grandchildren, to great-grandchildren; no one was left out. It was a house full of love and this was obvious in Miss Julia's warm hospitality and friendliness. We all sat down on her colourful sofas and began to talk. She was easy to talk with and had a lot to say about her music. She told us how she would go from district to district and house to house

with the fiddler, Mr. Radley Gourzong. She described the dances and the atmosphere, putting us all on the edge of our seats with her vivid descriptions and her infectious enthusiasm. She explained the lyrics of her songs and how she came about writing the song *Munzie's Boat* and others. Then she started to sing one of my favourites *Cardile gone to Cuba*. As she sang for us she clapped rhythms in between the phrases as if she had an invisible drum in her hands. She was enchanting. When she finished she laughed and said, "You hear about a Waltz? That is one. That's a Waltz! It's a pretty song. I made it you know. I made plenty songs!" After cheering her on to sing it again she began, "Cardile gone to Cuba he gone about two weeks. Leave his darlin' Julia with tears rolling down her cheeks. Starry night for your ramble down in Hogsit Lane. I sure to meet my Cardile if it does not rain..." We all clapped and laughed with joy as she sang it again and when she finished she said, "You not hear a song with more rhyme than that! That went all over the island then. All over the island that song went."

We then asked her if she knew any songs that were popular for dancing back in her day. After a few seconds of thought, Miss Julia asked for her drum and placed it on a stool in front of her. It was hand-made and I observed the unique markings on the membrane, the hooks and cords wrapped around the old pan and the metal bar on the side of the drum. She placed the sticks in her hands and began drumming and singing, "I don't want no chip-up potato, chip-up potato, chip-up potato..." It was a light-hearted song that got us all clapping, singing along and bursting into laughter at the finale. The different sounds that were produced when she hit the membrane, the metal bar and the sticks together mingled wonderfully with her rhyming lyrics and upbeat melodies. Her voice was unlike any I had heard before. Her voice was the voice of our past and

Island's heritage. Her voice was pleading with me not to forget, and, as I sat there and listened, I felt an immediate desire to capture each melody, each note as it floated away from us.

After the music and laughter subsided, Miss Julia said, " Oh, good music them day, you know. Oh boy, no fights or nothing like that. All day dance, all night dance - don't hear a thing! But now?"

"The world change, Julie. The world change" stated Miss Julia's housekeeper compassionately.

"Yes boy..." sighed Miss Julia.

"People now...they don't want to get together." I added, lost in the pensive state we found ourselves in.

"That's the truth," continued Miss Julia, her voice filled with sadness, "you can't get no little bit of good music here now. One thing, all fighting and killing. One thing, see what Cayman come to?" Then Miss Julia looked wistfully off in the distance. "Boy those days were good music and good fun man," she stated fondly. Then, with a soft sigh she simply uttered, "But now...oh boy."

I could not help but share the sadness and nostalgia that Miss Julia was feeling for she had just taken me by the hand and led me back to the days of a Cayman I only heard of in stories and, upon returning, I too felt like I was missing something precious.

After an inspiring afternoon spent with Miss Julia, my mother and I said goodbye. Miss Julia hugged us and invited us to come again whenever we liked. I left her knowing that I had just been

part of something special and wishing I had experienced it earlier. I felt extremely lucky to have been able to spend time with Miss Julia and witness this Caymanian music. As a young musician, I hope I can help in some way to carry on this tradition before it fades away.



**Plate 0.1** Julia Hydes with her Drum Talking to the Author<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Photograph by Alpha Kozaily

# Chapter 1

## On the Road to Discovery

### **A Music, a Reason, a Mission.**

We are as essential in the creation of music as music is to us. In the words of John Blacking, music is ‘humanly organised sound’.<sup>2</sup> Music, both in production and reception informs and reflects certain human behaviours. It is deeply rooted in culture, just as food, dress or language. Therefore it is in music that we can find the answers to questions we all ask ourselves: Who am I? Where am I from? And where am I going? As a Caymanian it is only natural that I begin the discovery of my own identity by asking the question, what is Caymanian music?

This question is far from simple and can be the topic of research and investigation for years. When I first asked myself what Caymanian music was, I immediately thought of the current musical-political debate that has been a part of the music scene in Grand Cayman. It is an ongoing debate that finds its self in all aspects of Caymanian society today and one that stems from the question of identity. What is it to be Caymanian? In regards to the issue of Caymanian music, everyone has their own ideas, but I will briefly outline a few predominant views. Some believe that Caymanian music is anything that sounds ‘Caribbean’ like reggae or calypso. Others believe that Caymanian folk music is the true representation of Caymanian Music. Another general viewpoint is the belief that if music is composed by a Caymanian then it can be considered ‘Caymanian music’. And

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<sup>2</sup> Blacking, John. 1973. *How Musical Is Man?*

finally there is the opinion that Cayman does not have a native music or culture and that everything is an import. While, my aim is not to examine these viewpoints or attempt to define Caymanian music within these pages, I believe that Caymanian music cannot be defined in such simple terms and that music is just as complex and diverse as the society we live in today. My search for Caymanian music starts at the very beginning with the mysterious and unstudied traditional folk music of the Cayman Islands.

While growing up in Grand Cayman, I don't remember ever hearing a kitchen band play or listening to Caymanian folk songs. While studying music in high school I learnt about the history of western classical music and even the traditional music of India or Africa, but never about the music of my own country. This may be due to the lack of research and resources or a lack of interest in the musical traditions of Cayman. This project is a gift to the people of the Cayman Islands.

Many theorists such as Philip Bohlman have highlighted the idea that through the study of folk music we can not only find the origins of all musical genres but the common origins of the human species or of all cultures as well.<sup>3</sup> Why does folk music so often exist in confined repertoires and cultures and as a genre of "national music"<sup>4</sup> These speculations lead many ethnomusicologists to debate and evaluate the importance of their work and areas of study. In return, I ask myself the same questions: why am I interested in studying Caymanian folk music? Why is it important? There are many theories and

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<sup>3</sup> Bohlman, Philip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*.

<sup>4</sup> Bohlman, Philip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*. p. 11

problems regarding the purpose of the ethnomusicologist which several persons have tried to define. Alan Merriam, in *Purposes of Ethnomusicology: An Anthropological View*, outlines a few main concepts which I feel reflect my passions and reasons for the study of Caymanian folk music. In Merriam's 'White Knight' and 'Duty of Preservation' concepts, the ethnomusicologist's purpose is to defend the music of 'others' and preserve the music of the folk as it is fast disappearing in many non-literate societies.<sup>5</sup> Western cultures often view the 'others' music as inferior and unworthy of study. As an ethnomusicologist and due to my personal investment in this project as a Caymanian, I see myself as the 'White Knight' whose duty it is to aid in the conservation and study of this music before it diminishes. A final incentive for this project which I have always been a firm believer in is the concept of communication. Alan Merriam divides this concept into three different approaches: firstly, music as a form of communication between and among people, second, music as a reflection of the values, goals and attitudes of a people, and thirdly, ethnomusicology as an agency of international understanding.<sup>6</sup> To understand a people you must understand their culture. Ethnomusicology is the study of music in culture and therefore provides an outlet to communicate and understand a people through music. Through her music, Miss Julia Hydes communicates her story and the story of the Cayman Islands and their people. By writing this project in an outside institution, I am communicating this exploration of her music to a foreign audience. These modes of communication enable national and international understanding among people. Through the study of folk music we have limitless learning potential about ourselves, others and our shared humanity.

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<sup>5</sup> Merriam, Alan P. *Purposes of Ethnomusicology: An Anthropological View*

<sup>6</sup> Merriam, Alan P. *Purposes of Ethnomusicology: An Anthropological View*

It is upon this basis of preservation and communication that I begin my search in uncovering what there is to learn about the people of the Cayman Islands through Julia Hydes and her Music. It is my wish that this project will help the people of Cayman to better comprehend, recognize and cultivate their own musical heritage. While I have made the decision to limit the focus of this ethnomusicology project on the study of Julia Hydes and her music, it is also my hope to direct interested readers to other literature. Other scholars and musicologists may ultimately explore and generate the more broadly inclusive panoramas that the subject of Caymanian folk music requires.



## Methodology

The focus of this project is on one specific individual who has played a vital and essential part in the creation and conservation of the traditional folk music of the Cayman Islands. Julia Hydes, “Miss Julia” or “Aunt Julia” as she is known by many on the Island, is a traditional folk drummer, singer, and composer of Caymanian traditional music. (For the purpose of this project I will be referring to Julia Hydes as ‘Miss Julia’.) Fascinated, by a video taken of Miss Julia at the Cayman National Archives, I knew I had found the focus of my ethnomusicology project on Caymanian Music. I began my research by searching for recordings of her songs and other Caymanian folk musicians.

The Cayman Islands National Archive (C.I.N.A.) Memory Bank is a useful resource for oral history and interviews. However on this subject resources are limited to a couple of videos, interviews, a tape recording of Radley Gourzong and the Happy Boys and a collection of transcribed folk songs entitled *Our Islands Past Part III*, which was available for purchase. I purchased a copy of *Our Islands Past Part III* and requested copies of interviews and videos which the staff at the National Archives assisted me with. I headed to Radio Cayman as they have an extensive collection of local music. I was able to get copies of several albums by local artists such as The Cayman Cowboy, Radley Gourzong and the Happy Boys and Hilton Connolly. The recording I found most useful was a CD entitled *Music from Pedro Castle* which featured six recordings of Julia Hydes singing and playing the drum. Unfortunately, I could not tell when the CD was produced or by whom since it was a burned CD with only a list of track names and artists

accompanying it. Included among these tracks was Miss Julia's song *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, which is the focus of my musical analysis. Due to limited resources in the libraries available, I turned to online journals such as Jstor and purchased books from Amazon.<sup>7</sup>

I carried out my field work during my holidays, which I spent at home in the Cayman Islands. When preparing to go out in the field to meet Miss Julia for the first time, it proved difficult to get in touch with her. After talking to a few members of her family that I found through the phonebook, I was given the mobile number for Miss Julia's housekeeper. I explained to Miss Julia's housekeeper that I was a music student at Cardiff University and would like to meet with Miss Julia for an informal interview. Fortunately, I was able to visit Miss Julia that afternoon in West Bay. My mother came along as she was also interested in meeting Miss Julia and helping me take photographs. When we arrived at her home, Miss Julia was already sitting in her living room expecting us. We sat down on the sofa next to her and, after introducing ourselves, we began our chat. The conversation remained casual but deeply intriguing and towards the end I requested to see her drum. When the housekeeper brought it out, I examined it and took photos. It was not the original goat-hide drum that Miss Julia played on for most of her musical career, but a different one that was also handmade. At this time Miss Julia offered to play a few songs. My mother took this opportunity to videotape and take photos with the Canon G9 Camera.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org) and [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

I prepared quite differently for my second visit to Miss Julia on 16 December 2009. I called Miss Julia's housekeeper to arrange the interview which was fairly easy as Miss Julia, at 101 years old, spends most of her days at home entertaining visiting family members and friends. I prepared a list of questions that I planned to ask her during the scheduled interview. I brought the same Canon G9 Camera and a Tascam DR-07 Portable Digital Audio Recorder to record the interview. My mother joined me for the second time. When we arrived, Miss Julia was sitting down in the living room expecting us once again. It was a very informal setting and I set on the sofa next to her and placed the Tascam recorder between us. My mother sat at the other side of the room to take photos. The interview proved slightly challenging at first due to background noises coming from the kitchen. I also found, while trying to conduct the interview in a conversational way, I had to be quite assertive with my questions because Miss Julia, at her advanced age, tended to repeat herself.

I transcribed the interview between myself and Miss Julia on Microsoft Word while listening to the recording. Although some sections were a little inaudible because of the background noise, it only took a couple of replays on high volume to distinguish them. As a native Caymanian I did not find it difficult to understand Miss Julia. No detailed analysis of the Caymanian language has been made but it is said to be a mixture of an archaic form of English with fragments of Negro dialect, Spanish forms and expressions common to the Southern United States.<sup>8</sup> The accent of each district in Grand Cayman as well as Cayman Brac and Little Cayman differs slightly. Miss Julia's accent is typical of

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<sup>8</sup> Doran, Edwin Jr. *Notes on an Archaic Island Dialect*. *American Speech*, Vol. 29, No.1 (Feb, 1954)

persons from the West Bay area of Grand Cayman. I transcribed her interview by phonetically transcribing her accent as best I could. I found this important in portraying her as genuinely as possible as language is an important aspect of culture and identity.

I decided against transcribing my field work recording of Miss Julia's performance of *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, having found another recording more suited for my analysis. I worked from a recording taken from the CD *Music from Pedro Castle*; I felt this recording to be a better representation of the piece as Miss Julia sings all three verses and even improvises at the end. I completed the song transcription by hand on manuscript paper using an electronic Yamaha keyboard. I then notated it using the notating software program *Sibelius 6*. Some rhythmic patterns were hard to transcribe as I did not have a visual of what Miss Julia was doing with her sticks. I described these sounds in my analysis and created a key to label these rhythms and other drumming techniques with special note heads.

## Chapter 2

### Historical Context

The written history of Cayman's folk music is virtually non-existent. Because of this remote past, we can only speculate and theorise about the history of Caymanian music by examining oral history and the musical past of other English-speaking Caribbean Islands. The purpose of this chapter is to equip readers with a basic knowledge of Caymanian Folk Music and to provide a context from which the detailed work of this project stems. The second half of this chapter consists of a short introduction to Miss Julia Hydes, the woman behind the music. There is very little written on Miss Julia's life and music. I have compiled a brief biography based on her interview with me during field work, her interviews at the C.I.N.A.'s Memory Bank and other related texts<sup>9</sup>.

### Music from the Sea

Although the Cayman Islands were discovered by Christopher Columbus on 10 May 1503, permanent settlement did not occur until the late 1600's early 1700's.<sup>10</sup> From this time until the latter half of the twentieth century, the Cayman Islands 'were among the

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<sup>9</sup> Miss Julia Biography from the linear notes of *Radley Gourzong & The Happy Boys & "Aunt" Julia Hydes: Traditional Music of the Cayman Islands*, CNCF and biography from *Our Island's Past Volume III: Traditional Songs from the Cayman Islands*

most isolated, unknown, and unchanging countries in the British Empire.’<sup>11</sup> In their isolation, Caymanians relied very much on the bounty of the ocean for their survival and livelihood. This ‘bounty’ did not only provide food and salvage, but it carried people, news, culture and music from as far away as Europe and Africa to these ‘isolated and unknown’ Islands.

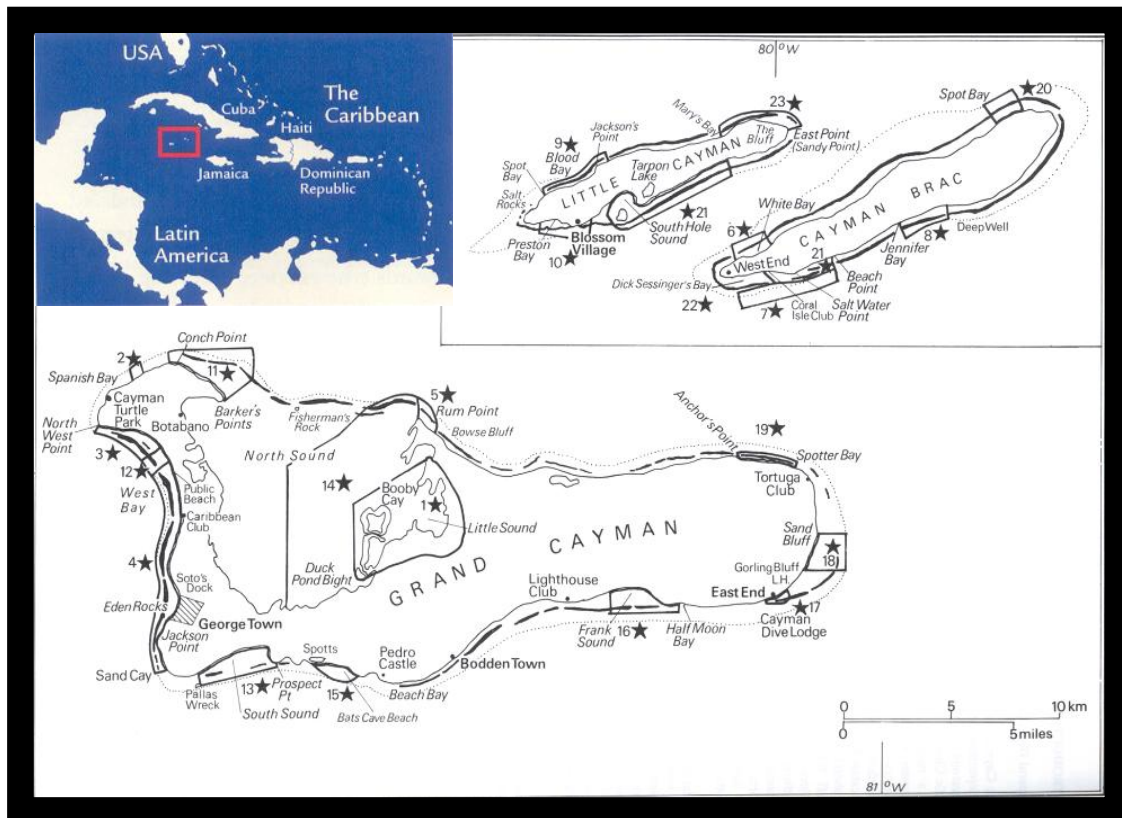


Figure 1.1 – Map of the Cayman Islands<sup>12</sup>

The Cayman Islands were claimed by the British after the capture of Jamaica from Spain in 1655. The population of Cayman was mainly made up of small-scale planters from

<sup>11</sup> Craton, Michael. *Founded Upon the Seas: A History of the Cayman Islands and their People*.

<sup>12</sup> The Cayman Islands are a group of three islands, Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, and are located in the Caribbean Sea 180 miles south of Cuba and 195 miles northwest of Jamaica. Grand Cayman is the biggest of these islands with an area of 76 square miles and a population of ca. 55,000 people.

Jamaica and their Negro slaves. The occasional runaway debtor or shipwrecked sailor and later English settlers, expelled from the Miskito Coast in the 1780's, also settled in Cayman at this time. The Cayman Islands stayed quite isolated from Jamaican affairs and British interference for much of the eighteenth and nineteenth century and social divisions of race and class were far less present than in neighbouring Jamaica and other parts of the British Caribbean. Even towards the end of the nineteenth century change was extremely slow in part to an innate conservatism based on Christian values and a lack of resources. Even after Cayman was declared a dependency of Jamaica in 1863, there was little or no change on the people's economic and social circumstances. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that Cayman saw great changes in development, technology and a rapidly growing population. Within a few decades the gross national product of the Cayman Islands increased a thousand fold, and brought major changes, both positive and negative, to the lifestyles and prospects of the Caymanian people. It was at this time that traditional industries such as turtleling, shipbuilding and rope making declined and, along with them, some cultural and musical customs that were once a part of everyday life. It is through these special circumstances that the Caymanian people developed their own unique way of life from the rest of the British West Indies.

Before the arrival of television and radio around the mid-seventies, Caymanians were obliged to entertain themselves. They drew largely on the repertoire of folk songs and traditional dances that had been inherited from parents and grandparents. Cayman's traditional music has its roots above all, in the music brought from Europe and other surrounding islands such as quadrille and other formal dances. There are also echoes of

African music, sailors' chanties, popular song and Christian hymns. Caymanian folk music can best be described as a repository of different influences and genres which, through isolation and poverty, developed into its own music.

It was not uncommon for folk songs to take on the role of a “news-report” or narrative. The song *Munzie's Boat in the Sound* was said to have been written about a fishing trip in the 1930's.<sup>13</sup> In Julia Hydes' performance of *Sammy Beatin Susanna*, the character Moses Hydes is Miss Julia's uncle.<sup>14</sup> This narrative style of folk music can tell us a lot about how Caymanian people used music as an important form of communication. These songs would have mostly spread through kitchen dances where fiddlers from other districts were present or at celebrations such as boat launchings, which were considered an important festivity where music was a necessity.



**Plate 2.1** Traditional Caymanian musicians at a boat launching in the 1920's<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Our Islands Past Volume III: Traditional Songs from the Cayman Islands*

<sup>14</sup> *Under the Coconut Tree: Music from Grand Cayman and Tortola*

<sup>15</sup> Photograph taken from *Our Islands Past Part III*



The most typical style of music is ‘Kitchen Band Music’, which mainly took place in someone’s kitchen where the whole town would squeeze into for music and dancing. Kitchen Band Music can be closely compared to the Jamaican Mento. While each is still very different and defined in their own way, strong links can still be made between these neighbouring islands regarding certain folk music elements. Like Mento bands, a traditional Cayman Kitchen Band has three types of instruments for melody, harmony and rhythm. While mento bands often carry a larger variety of instruments a few of these can be found in both genres. These are the fiddle, guitar, a grater and nail and maracas. Up until the mid-twentieth century or later, the grater was a common household item that was used to grate coconut and other vegetables in the kitchen. When the musicians and neighbours crammed into the kitchen for a festive kitchen dance, the grater was transformed into another percussion instrument by brushing a nail or piece of cutlery up and down the body. This improvised instrumentation which became one of the defining sounds of Kitchen Bands can also be found in mento bands from Jamaica. In a 1996 video footage of a traditional music workshop, featuring folk musicians from Cayman and Jamaica, one can hear and see the similarities between the two styles of fiddling.<sup>16</sup> Both fiddlers held their instruments in the same position with the fiddle resting above their left breast. Like recordings of Radley Gourzong, a legendary fiddler on the Island, the same untempered tuning reflected the self-taught freedom of these musicians. The Caymanian fiddle tradition is a topic of Caymanian folk music in great need of attention and preservation as the ancestry of Caymanian fiddlers is an old one that is disappearing.

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<sup>16</sup> *Traditional Music Workshop AM Sessions w/ Fiddler Theophilus Miller*, 1994 Cayman Islands National Archive



**Plate 2.2** Fiddlers Radley Gourzong and Boyd Hydes<sup>17</sup>

Quadrille is a large facet of traditional music and dance in the Cayman Islands and many other Caribbean islands. By the late 1700's a number of European dance and musical genres such as the waltz, polka, gigue, as well as African ones, had taken root in the region, with varying degrees and sorts of modifications.<sup>18</sup> In the nineteenth century a set of contradance and quadrille variants flourished so extensively throughout the Caribbean Basin that they enjoyed a kind of predominance, as a common cultural medium through which melodies, rhythms, dance figures, and performers all circulated.<sup>19</sup> This occurred both between islands and between social groups within a given island. The story of Jamaican Quadrille is best described by Olive Lewin:

Jamaican slaves, and other workers, learnt quadrille from their masters either by casual observation or as they played for these ballroom dances. Instruments used included fiddle, merrywang (later, guitar) and shakkas. In addition to adapting the music and style of great house dancing, the

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<sup>17</sup> Photograph by G.H. Nowak from *The People Time Forgot*

<sup>18</sup> Neely Daniel T., Bilby Kenneth M. *The English Speaking Caribbean: Re-embodiment of the Colonial Ballroom, Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean.* p.10

<sup>19</sup> Neely Daniel T., Bilby Kenneth M. *The English Speaking Caribbean: Re-embodiment of the Colonial Ballroom, Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean.* p. 1

Jamaicans extended the range and increased the number of "sets". Ballroom quadrille retains formal dress and deportment while campstyle quadrille uses couples in various formations and far more spontaneous and improvised music and movements based on the particular dance figure. (Olive Lewin 2000)<sup>20</sup>

The Caymanian Quadrille contains around 6 figures plus a Waltz and a Polka. These dances, as well as the gigue, were standard repertoire for kitchen dances around the island. Each district developed their own practices and contained features that set them apart from each other. For example, in some districts kitchen dances were considered inappropriate for children and only adults were allowed to attend while in other places, everyone was welcome no matter the age. Certain dances were also performed more regularly than others depending on the district.

Musicians were not scarce on the island, and each district had a set of musicians they could be proud of. Within society there existed a hierarchy among the musicians with the fiddler being the most important. Every district had a number of fiddlers, some as many as 5. But it was uncommon to have more than one play at a time. Instead, when one fiddler got tired of playing at a kitchen dance, another would take over. Some fiddlers from various districts were known better than others, and revered for their skills and musicianship. These 'master' fiddlers travelled around the island to play at different kitchen dances, and were often accompanied by a fellow musician from their district.

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<sup>20</sup> Lewin, Olive. *Rock it come over: The folk music of Jamaica*

John Storm Roberts, a writer and researcher of World Music, documented and recorded some traditional Caymanian music during a series of family expeditions to Cayman in 1982. He compiled these recordings as well as some from the island of Tortola and entitled the LP ‘Under the Coconut Tree: music from Grand Cayman and Tortola’.

Among the songs featured from Grand Cayman, were performances by Radley Gourzong and Group, Rachel Rankin, Julia Hydes, Burnell Dixon, Lil Rose Dilbert, Edison Scott and Dalmain Ebanks. In the liner notes of *Under the Coconut Tree: Music from Grand Cayman and Tortola*, John Storm Roberts makes some interesting observations about the music of the Cayman Islands. He notes that the music contained many purely British survivals and hardly any purely African ones.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps this is because unlike many other Caribbean islands like Jamaica, Cayman had a very short affair with plantations and slave society. Of course, a region as linguistically and culturally diverse as the Caribbean has never been embodied by a single music or dance genre. Individual elements lend themselves to acculturation when one tradition comes in contact with another, thereafter functioning as new points of origin for certain aspects.<sup>22</sup> Like the rest of the Caribbean, Caymanian folk music can be seen in these terms.

Caymanian folk music is heavily rooted in British origins but there are some African elements that can be found as well. One of these can be seen in the folk song Balimba, which seems to be an old Jamaican import.<sup>23</sup> The song was used as both a Ring-tune and

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<sup>21</sup> *Under the Coconut Tree: Music from Grand Cayman and Tortola*

<sup>22</sup> Bohlman, Philip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*. p. 5

<sup>23</sup> A transcription of the Jamaican version of Balimba can be found in a collection of Jamaican folk songs by Walter Jekyll and Alica Werner in *Jamaican Song and Story: Annancy Stories, Digging Sings, Ring Tunes And Dancing Tunes*.

as a favourite fifth figure for Quadrilles. “Balimbo” is an African word in origin, and nick-name for a cheap kind of cloth with calico print. Another example of the fusion of influences found in Caymanian folk music is the ‘S’acabo’ (Se’acabo meaning “It’s over”) which Rachel Rankin shouts at the end of one of her songs in *Under the Coconut Tree: Songs from Grand Cayman and Tortola*. This most likely came from Cuba as many Caymanian sea man travelled there and around the Cuban Cays turtleling. Sea shanties such as “The Turtlers Alphabet” and “Southeast by South” have become artefacts of Cayman’s sea-faring tradition and European musical origins. “Southeast by South” in *Under the Coconut Tree* was performed by Burnell Dixon who was 84 years old at the time. He claimed he learnt the song while at sea in the port of Colon, Panama.



**Plate 2.3** Rachel Rankin with her guitar and drummer, Cyril “Old Sea” Rankin<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Photograph by G.H. Nowak from *The People Time Forgot*

## Who is Julia Hydes?



**Plate 2.4** Miss Julia and her goat-hide drum in the early 80's<sup>25</sup>

### **“I must have been built for playing music”**

Julia Almeria Hydes was born in West Bay, Grand Cayman on 25 January 1909. She was the youngest of twelve children. Julia’s father, who she remembers as being an exceptional dancer, died when she was around 9 years old, leaving her mother, Susannah Ebanks, alone to raise 12 children. Miss Julia’s admiration for her mother is obvious in the fond way she speaks of her, “Smart ol’ white woman she was. I can see her working now....Oh she could work. Dat woman could work!” Miss Julia attended school at Ada Cato’s and Miss Redley’s All-age Schools in West Bay until the age of 15, when she began to work.<sup>26</sup> Miss Julia assisted her mother and other relatives with the hard labour of cutting “grass pieces” along the coasts between West Bay and South Sound.<sup>27</sup> They

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<sup>25</sup> Photograph by G.H. Nowak from *The People Time Forgot*

<sup>26</sup> *Radley Gourzong & The Happy Boys & “Aunt” Julia Hydes: Traditional Music of the Cayman Islands.* Cayman National Cultural Foundation 2010

<sup>27</sup> Also referred to as “cutting tops”

would also plait thatch baskets and make thatch rope.<sup>28</sup> It was at this age that Miss Julia also found her love of music. Among a male-dominated musical society Miss Julia became the only female drummer in the country. Leighton “Duxie” Ebanks, a well-known fiddler on the island and Miss Julia’s first cousin, helped her begin her musical career. She recalls the first time she played the drum:

So me and the fiddler was first cousin, so I went and seen him. I said “OI’ Dux...I wanna learn how to beat dat drum” He say “I’m not a fool....you can’t beat no drum.” I say “you mek the drum for me”.... Soon he got it made he give it to me. And the first time he made dat drum, and the first time he give it to me; I took the drum and put it between me legs, took the sticks and I start.<sup>29</sup>



**Plate2.5** Leighton “Duxie” Ebanks<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Radley Gourzong & The Happy Boys & “Aunt” Julia Hydes: Traditional Music of the Cayman Islands.* Cayman National Cultural Foundation 2010

<sup>29</sup> Miss Julia interview with Natasha Kozaily

<sup>30</sup> Photograph by G.H. Nowak from *The People Time Forgot*

The drum that Duxie Ebanks made for Miss Julia was handmade from available materials like most instruments were made in those days. It was fashioned out of a used paint pan with goat-hide stretched on both ends and the sticks were made from the branches of a guava tree. Miss Julia bought a “he-goat-hide” and a “she-goat-hide” from a man in George Town. She told her cousin that she wanted to use the “she-goat-hide” on the drum as she was sure it would have a “heavier ring”. Duxie agreed with her and when asked how she knew that the “she-goat-hide” was better she said “...must have been because I was a musician and that came right to me just like that.”<sup>31</sup> Alongside her drumming, Miss Julia is also a celebrated songwriter. Many of her songs have become popular additions to the traditional music repertoire. At twenty-five years old she married and had five children. Her husband Cardile, left her soon after to raise all five children alone. Cutting “grass pieces” and playing music at kitchen dances were the main sources of income. Song-writing remained an important outlet for expression and creativity.

In her old age Miss Julia mostly plays solo, singing and playing her drum. But in her younger years she was a much desired drummer who accompanied fiddlers to kitchen dances around the Island. Kitchen dances were a time of celebration, music and dancing, and sometimes a little adventure. During a kitchen dance in the district of Bodden Town, also known as “Dallas, Texas” for its reputation as a lawless place full of troublemakers, Miss Julia saved a man’s life. I have decided to include this story as I feel it provides a snap shot into Miss Julia as a person and an accurate description of what Kitchen Dances in Cayman were like. Going to a Kitchen dance in Cayman at that time would have been

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<sup>31</sup> *Julia Hydes Interview*. February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Cayman Islands National Archive Memory Bank



similar to going dancing at a club today. There was music, dancing and drinking which sometimes led to rowdy behaviour. In some districts, children were not allowed to attend these dances. This was a popular form of entertainment which Julia played the role as the only female drummer and entertainer. This is her account of the night she remembers saving the West Bay boy's life.

That afternoon Miss Julia bought a new pair of shoes from Willie Farrington's shop in West Bay. They were black laced shoes that Miss Julia would remember for the rest of her life. She was scheduled to go to Bodden Town that night to play at a dance with Radley Gourzong. While she was waiting for transportation that never arrived, two West Bay boys arrived in a Dodge and offered her a ride. One of those boys, Waldo, has Miss Julia to thank for what would happen that night. From an interview in the National Archives Memory Bank, Miss Julia recalls the evening:

'I say, "Now, listen now, Waldo, listen now Sherry, I hope you all ain't go' no woman in Bodden Town tonight, because you know where I playing...Dallas Texas....that's a bad place"...[They] say "No, no old Jule, I heard you were going to beat, and I going to listen to your music..." I took that for granted...went about my business....I thought they was gone somewhere you know, take a drink or something. I didn't think they was gone at these two Bodden Town women. When I look, I beating my drum, saw Waldo come in, saw Sherry come in, saw this Bodden Town man behind him with a knife! I wasn't as frightened as that in my life! So I look and say, "Oh blessed Savior, tonight's the night!" And I took the drum between my leg quick...put her down, put my sticks down and I got up. Waldo didn't know the man was coming behind him. Sherry didn't know. But something say, "Julia, you look." Look and saw him. And you know those Bodden Towners kill you. You girl, I got up and I went there and I kicked that man in his backside, I lift him in the air on my shoe and he went like a Chinese kite in the air.

Oh, from then, them two had love me. And I run to the Dodge...I say, “Come on, let’s go”. Because they saw what I had done you see...and the crowd of them took at us. I say, “Tonight is the night. They going kill everyone of us there.”...And in a minute they open the Dodge and we took to West Bay’,<sup>32</sup>

Although she promised to never play in Bodden Town again, Miss Julia still travelled to other districts to play at kitchen dances, weddings and celebrations. When kitchen dances became a rarity, she performed for cultural festivals, schools and workshops. At 101 years old Miss Julia is the only living member of the traditional Caymanian music fraternity that included icons such as Leighton “Duxie” Ebanks, Boyd Hydes, Radley Gourzong, Cleveland Ebanks, Montgomery Albert and Reid Green.<sup>33</sup> She has received many awards for her contribution to music and culture in the Cayman Islands including the CNCF (Cayman National Cultural Foundation) Award and the Certificate and Badge of Honour in 1996.



**Plate 2.6** Miss Julia performing at Cayfest, April 2010<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Julia Hydes Interview*. February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Cayman Islands National Archive Memory Bank

<sup>33</sup> *Radley Gourzong & The Happy Boys & “Aunt” Julia Hydes: Traditional Music of the Cayman Islands*. Cayman National Cultural Foundation 2010

<sup>34</sup> *Cayfest* is an arts and culture festival produced every year by the Cayman National Cultural Foundation.

## Chapter 3

### Cardile Gone to Cuba – A Song by Julia Hydes

*Cardile Gone to Cuba* is by far the most popular of Miss Julia's songs and one of the best known folk songs in the Cayman Islands. Miss Julia wrote this song soon after her husband, Cardile, left her for another woman, leaving her a single mother of five. This chapter consists of my transcription of *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, taken from a recording of Miss Julia's performance on a CD entitled *Music from Pedro Castle*. The transcribed elements of the song will then be analyzed and examined in detail. I have also included a short analysis and comparison of *Cardile Gone to Cuba* to Samuel Bagnall's *A Starry Night for a Ramble*.

### Cardile Gone to Cuba – Text and Transcription

**Figure 3.1** – *Cardile Gone to Cuba* Text

**Verse 1:**

Cardile Gone to Cuba  
He gone about two weeks  
Leave his darlin' Julia  
With tears rolling down her cheeks

**Chorus:**

Starry night for your ramble,  
Down in Hogsit Lane,  
I sure to meet my Cardile  
If it does not rain.

**Verse 2:**

Cardile gone to Cuba,  
He's gone loaded with coal,  
Cardile gone to Cuba,  
To buy Julia wedding clothes.

**Chorus**

**Verse 3:**

Cardile gone to Honduras  
He's gone loaded with wood.  
Cardile gone to Honduras,  
To buy his baby hood.

**Chorus**

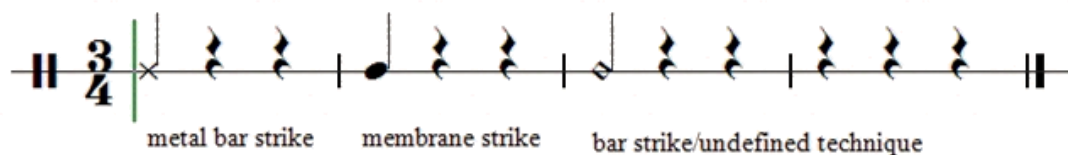




## “You hear about a Waltz?” - Song Analysis

*Cardile Gone to Cuba* is a waltz in 3/4 time. This piece is performed at with an upbeat tempo at *crochet* equals 172. It is performed on a handmade membranophone which is played by Miss Julia while she sings. The goatskin drum which she plays on is fitted with a metal bar attached to the rim which she uses to hit her sticks on through out the piece. While drumming she strikes the middle of the membrane and the metal bar. In my transcription I have notated the various drumming techniques with different note heads. The diamond shape notehead indicates the sections of drumming where the technique is hard to define due to a lack of visual references. The possible technique could either be both sticks hitting the metal bar with a semi-quaver delay between them. Or one stick striking the other stick which hits the metal bar with the same semi-quaver delay between the two. Example 3.1 is a key of the different note heads I use for each sound.

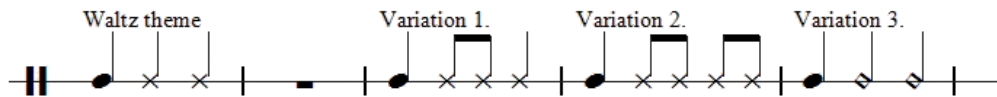
### Example 3.1 – Drum Notation Key



The piece begins with a one bar introduction of a waltz rhythm on the drum before Miss Julia begins singing. The downbeat of the waltz is created by striking the middle of the drum’s membrane, while the following beats 2 and 3 are sounded on the metal bar. This basic rhythm makes up the main structure of the drum part while several variations on the waltz rhythm are created throughout the piece. The first two variations shown in

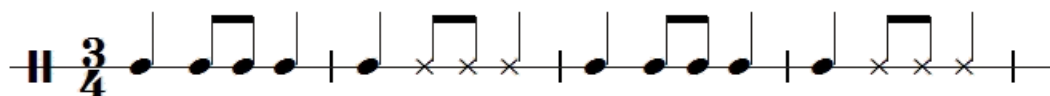
Example 3.3 are created by replacing beats 2 and 3 with quavers. While variation 3 consists of an irregular semi-quaver following beats 2 and 3.

**Example 3.2 – Variations on the Waltz Rhythm**



Gradually the rhythmic patterns get more complicated with the addition of triplets. Bar 31 is the first bar that 2 groups of triplets are played in a row and then again 3 bars later. The number of rhythmic variations per chorus and verse increases until the final chorus has ten rhythmic variations compared to five in the previous two verses. There is also an interesting pattern that is created on the drum which has a certain African “call and answer” structure to it. It first appears as a two bar phrase at the beginning of the second line of the second verse and happens again at the end of the second verse. At the beginning of the chorus it reappears as an 8 bar phrase. And during the vocal improvisation section it comes in as a five bar phrase and as a 2 bar phrase finale which ends the piece.

**Example 3.3 – Call and Answer Motif**



The shape of vocal line moves in form of a wave. Intervals moving in thirds and seconds is most common throughout the piece with a few 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. The melody in the verses descend at the beginning and the end of the phrase, while the melodic line in the chorus ascends at the beginning of the phrase and descends at the end. The vocal line consisted of eleven notes in total with the most common being C, C#/Dflat, and D. The following example shows the direction of the notes and intervals and wave shape of the vocal line.

**Example 3.4 – Shape of Melodic Line**

The image shows a musical staff in 3/4 time with a treble clef. The melody is written in a simple, folk-like style. Above the staff, a thick black line traces the overall contour of the melody, showing a series of small peaks and valleys that create a wave-like pattern. Below the staff, a series of arrows indicates the direction of each note: down, down, down, up, up, down, up, down, up, up, up, up, down. The lyrics are: "Car - dile gone to C - u - b - a. He gone a - bo-out two weeks".

Interestingly, the vocal line does not follow the usual even numbered bar length of a musical phrase. Instead of being eight bars long, the first verse is split into two phrases which are seven bars long. The chorus follows this same pattern except for the second line of the chorus, (I sure to meet my Cardile if it does not rain), which includes a pick up note on the word 'I'. This pattern is consistent throughout verse two, three and the choruses. When the improvisation section comes along, the melodic phrases fall into an irregular pattern of length in the order of eight bars, seven bars, seven bars, nine bars, eight bars, eight bars.



Another example of the unconventional nature of the melodic line is the relationship between lyrics and music. Usually the beginning of a phrase would start at the beginning of the bar with the exception of a pick up note. In the following example we can see how this is not the case. The first word of the second phrase is not placed at the beginning of a bar but the last beat of a bar instead.

**Example 3.5** Relationship between Text and Melody in *Cardile Gone to Cuba*

The image shows a musical staff with lyrics underneath. The lyrics are: "Car - dile gone to C - u - b - a. He gone a - bo-out two weeks". A red circle is drawn around the notes for "He gone", which begin on the last beat of a bar, illustrating the unconventional relationship between the text and the melody.

In *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, Miss Julia begins singing in Bflat major but does not stay in the same key through out the piece. In bar 34 she modulates down a semitone to the key of A major and in bar 110 she modulates down a semi-tone again to the key of A flat major. The range of the vocal line stretches from a C<sub>3</sub>, the C one octave below middle C, to the F above middle C (F<sub>4</sub>). In the improvisational vocal section at the end of the piece, the vocal line ranges from C<sub>3</sub>, the C one octave below middle C, to an E above middle C (E<sub>4</sub>). This vocal range is more typical of a male tenor voice as the female contralto, the deepest female voice in classical singing, does not typically go below an F (F<sub>3</sub>) or an E (E<sub>3</sub>) below middle C.

**Example 3.6** – Miss Julia’s Vocal Range in *Cardile Gone to Cuba*

The image shows a musical staff in 3/4 time. It starts with a low C<sub>3</sub> (one octave below middle C) and then moves up to an E<sub>4</sub> (one octave above middle C), illustrating the vocal range.

The lyrics of *Cardile Gone to Cuba* share a very personal relationship to Miss Julia. This creation of this song was inspired when Julia's husband, Cardile, left her as a young mother of five children. Despite the sad nature of this true story behind the song, the lyrics lend themselves to a more romantic nature. In the song, Cardile hasn't left Julia because he does not want to be with her anymore. He has left her so he can buy her a wedding dress or buy his baby a hood, and she waits for him in Hogsit Lane. The verses are sung from the point of view of a third person, while the chorus is in the first person, 'I sure to meet my Cardile...' By doing this, Julia's relationship to the piece changes from being the story teller to becoming the character. Miss Julia becomes the 'Julia' that is represented in the song. This transformation occurs from third person to first person between the verse and chorus throughout the song until the final section where she improvises with different vocalizations. This improvisation is a development of the verse and chorus.

## **A Comparison – *A Starry Night for a Ramble***

While reading through an interview with Annie Scott from the C.I.N.A. Memory Bank, I came across a song that was very similar to Miss Julia's *Cardile Gone to Cuba*. Annie Scott claimed her brother had written a song and the chorus was "A starry night for a ramble down in Lavender Lane, I hope to meet somebody if it doesn't rain..."<sup>35</sup> Upon discovering this, I decided to search for an original version of the song that Annie Scott's and Julia Hydes' versions might have stemmed from. What I found was the sheet music for the song *A Starry Night for a Ramble* by Samuel Bagnall.<sup>36</sup>

*Starry night for a ramble* was a popular song that dates from the mid to late 1800's and can be found in several song books published during this time in England and the United States. The song is said to be composed by Samuel Bagnall who, according to a playbill from the Royal Hotel, Odd Fellows' Hall in Halifax, England on 28 August 1874, was said to be a "great English star comic vocalist, author, and composer to J.L. Toole and H.J. Byron", both of whom were famous comic vocalist in England during that time. Different versions of *Starry night for a Ramble* can be found in the folk music repertoires of Ireland, Scotland, England, Australia and the United States. This was obviously a popular song that made its way around the world into different folk music cultures. Like Australia, the song *Starry Night for a Ramble* could have come to the Cayman Islands by way of British settlers during the late 1800's or via Caymanian seamen who travelled

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<sup>35</sup> *Annie Elizabeth Scott Interview*. July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1994. Cayman Islands National Archive Memory Bank

<sup>36</sup> Bagnall, Samuel *A Starry Night for a Ramble*. Sheet Music. Indiana University, IN Harmony

extensively around Jamaica, Cuba, Honduras and the Southern United States. Julia Hydes' *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, contains similar elements to Samuel Bagnall's *A Starry Night for a Ramble*, but still remaining an entirely different song.

**Example 3.7** – *A Starry Night for a Ramble* by Samuel Bagnall



The version of *A Starry Night for a Ramble* taken from a collection of popular songs sung by Harry Vandemark is written for voice and piano. It is a waltz like *Cardile Gone to Cuba* except that it is written in 6/8 time as opposed to 3/4. The piano retains a basic waltz motif, with the downbeat on the first and fourth beats of the bar. This continues throughout the song except in two sections: The introduction carries a melody in the right hand while the left hand plays a waltz rhythm. The same occurs in the chorus except that the right hand imitates the vocal line.

Both songs share the same key and basic structure. *A Starry Night for a Ramble* is a strophic song in the key of B flat major. This is the same key that *Cardile Gone to Cuba* begins in although Miss Julia changes key throughout her performance. One of the many

differences between the two is that the verses in *A Starry Night for a Ramble* are thirty two bars in length. This is double the amount of bars in *Cardile Gone to Cuba*.

Similar harmonic structures are shared between the songs for example: The harmonic progression in the verses of *Cardile Gone to Cuba* goes as follows: tonic, sub-dominant, dominant, tonic (B flat, E flat, F, B flat). This progression is the same for the verses in *A Starry Night for a Ramble*. The melodic theme in example 3.7 from *A Starry Night for a Ramble* is nearly identical to the theme in Example 3.8 from the verse in *Cardile Gone to Cuba*. The theme from Miss Julia's song differs in several ways: it is an octave below and contains variations on the melodic theme in the form of additional and passing notes.

**Example 3.8** Melody in verse of *A Starry Night for a Ramble* and *Cardile Gone to Cuba*

The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is for the song 'A Starry Night for a Ramble' and the second is for 'Cardile Gone to Cuba'. The lyrics for the first staff are: 'Croquet, or howling on the green. Or bath - ing or stroll - ing on the sands. Or'. The lyrics for the second staff are: 'C - u - b - a. He gone a - bo - out two weeks'. The music is written in a simple, melodic style with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature.

The lyrics in *A Starry Night for a Ramble* are quite comedic as the singer explains that this favourite thing to do is take “a ramble in a flow’ry dell, through the bush and bramble, Kiss and never tell.” The song is written for a male singer to sing and in the verse there are several references to games and activities common in England at that time such as croquet, or howling on the green.

**Example 3.9** – *A Starry Night for a Ramble* Chorus

The image shows a musical score for the chorus of the song "A Starry Night for a Ramble". The score is written for voice and piano. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is labeled "CHORUS," and contains the lyrics: "A star - ry night for a ram - ble, In a flow' - ry dell,". The second system contains the lyrics: "Thro' the bush and bram - ble, Kiss, and nev - er tell." The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The melody is in a minor key and has a simple, folk-like character.

The only lyric that *Cardile Gone to Cuba* shares with Samuel Bagnall’s song is the first line of the chorus, “Starry Night for your ramble.” Even this line is not completely identical to Samuel Bagnall’s song, “A Starry Night for a Ramble...” Interestingly, Annie Scott’s rendition of the chorus contains a more identical wording to Samuel Bagnall’s version with the words “A Starry Night for a Ramble...” The rest of the chorus is more similar to *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, “...down through Lavender Lane, I hope to see somebody if it doesn’t rain...” She claims that everyone would be involved in making up different verses for the songs.

Through this comparison we can see how *A Starry Night for a Ramble* could very well have been the original song from which Annie Scott’s version and Miss Julia’s song

*Cardile Gone to Cuba* stem. There is a long life-history to this folk song which is a significant aspect of Caymanian folk music which we will look at in further detail in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

### **One Woman, Many Tales**

In the previous chapter, I carried out an investigation of the song *Cardile Gone to Cuba* and an analysis of its structure and musical elements. I also compared it to Samuel Bagnall's song *A Starry Night for a Ramble*. Within Julia Hydes and her music there rests a sea of history, memories, stories and artefacts of a people and their music.

Through this one woman comes many tales that tell about her life and the world around her. Through the analysis of Miss Julia's most personal and popular song, *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, we can discover a world of knowledge. What clues has she given us to the realisation and deeper understanding of a culture and ourselves as human beings? What is she communicating to us through her music? This final chapter will address these issues in further detail through the interpretation and meaning of *Cardile Gone to Cuba* song analysis.

#### **Interpreting *Cardile Gone to Cuba***

Miss Julia's first instrument was a handmade membranophone made from materials that were available at the time it was made, such as goat-hide and a used metal paint pan. Her sticks were handmade from the branches of the guava tree. This is testimony to the Caymanian way of life back in the 1920's when Miss Julia was 15 years old and had her cousin Duxie build a drum for her. Store bought western instruments were not in supply, except for the odd violin that made its way to the island. Instead, musicians built their



own instruments from the materials they had available and that nature supplied them. Fiddles were shaped from Birch, Candle Wood and other local trees. Kitchen graters were used as an addition to the percussion section of a Kitchen Band. Drums were hand made from animal skin and paint pans. The instruments that were not handmade were collected via shipwrecks or Caymanian Seamen on their travels abroad. When I met Miss Julia and heard her play, she no longer used the handmade guava tree drum sticks but a store bought pair of sticks. Although her drum was still handmade, it was not the original drum that she played on for many years, but a newer, more modern version with a kind of fabric used for the membrane instead of goat-hide. Just from these small details we can see how, in Miss Julia's lifetime, Cayman has transformed to a place where modern amenities and possessions, that were once not so readily available, have now become a part of everyday life.

The structure of the melodic phrasing is unorthodox when compared to the even-numbered phrases in Western music. In *Cardile Gone to Cuba* the vocal phrases vary in length from 7 bars to 8 bars to 9 bars. We can deduce by this observation alone, that Miss Julia was a self-taught musician. She did not receive any formal training or guidance. This is testimony to the extremely isolated and rural way of life in Grand Cayman when Miss Julia was growing up and starting her career as a professional musician. There were probably no music teachers available on the island and due to the rural surroundings and lack of resources, individual people and communities entertained themselves. Today things have changed in Cayman as the population has grown, and people now have the resources to build bigger schools with large music departments.

Music festivals, concerts and live music gigs have also become a popular form of entertainment as well as television and radio. Music teachers in Miss Julia's early days would have been other musicians who orally transmitted their music to others. Songs and dances were learnt by ear and observation. Miss Julia believed that she was born with a natural musical talent from God, in her words she "was built to play music". Going to kitchen dances as a young girl and hearing music being played in her community on a regular basis was the closest thing to a formal musical education she received. She valued this and viewed this "self-taught" musicianship as the only way to play music. In her words, "I learnt it myself...if you wanna play music, don't fool around with no body. You try and play it your own self. Coz it seem to me, that I wouldna learn it if I was gonna fool with anybody."<sup>37</sup>

Self-reliance and independence were traits that were valued in society. This process of learning is reflected in the untempered nature of Miss Julia's singing style and songwriting. The strophic structure of the song is made irregular by the length of the musical phrasing. The word placement in the lyrics is unconventional to what would be the normal union between lyric and melody. For example, the placement of the beginning of a phrase at the end of a bar in Example 3.5. Another insight into these unconventional musical practices is in the key changes that take place throughout this particular performance of *Cardile Gone to Cuba*. Miss Julia begins singing in the key of B flat but as the piece progresses her voice shifts down a semi-tone to the key of A major and again to the key of A flat major during her improvisation at the end. This shift in key is partly due to the fact Miss Julia was not playing with any melodic instruments such as

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<sup>37</sup> Julia Hydes interview with Natasha Kozaily December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009

a keyboard, guitar or fiddle. She only had her drum as an accompaniment. This detail would be unnoticeable to the untrained ear. While it might be viewed as “wrong” by Western listeners it is seen as “right” to Miss Julia. This feature is one of the characteristics of Miss Julia’s music that make it so special and allow us to gather meaning. Through these observations we can learn about the way in which a people transmitted, created and expressed their music.

Miss Julia’s singing voice is similar to that of a male tenor voice. This is reflected in the vocal range of her performance of *Cardile Gone to Cuba* which stretches from a C<sub>3</sub>, the C one octave below middle C, to the F above middle C (F<sub>4</sub>). The reason for this unusual vocal placement can be attributed to the fact that Miss Julia was the only female drummer and musician in the history of Caymanian folk music. Caymanian society is based on innate Christian traditions and conservatism. Female musicians were not the norm up until the past 50 years where it had become acceptable. Woman danced and sang modestly at celebrations, weddings and kitchen dances. Miss Julia is certainly an exception to these conventions. She played the drum in the same way male drummers such as Cyril “Old Sea” Rankin played. She placed the drum between her legs with the sticks in a traditional drummer position, sitting at the edge of her seat with a straight back. Her low voice and timber can be interpreted as an attempt to be considered equal to other male musicians. She made sure she got paid her seven shillings after every gig like all the other musicians. Through this adaptation and imitation of the male musician she rebelled against societal norms. A single mother and a female drummer in a male-

dominated society, Miss Julia is an example of the independent and free woman. Not only is this seen in her singing style but in her improvisation at the end of *Cardile Gone to Cuba*. Improvisation equals freedom. This is shown in her variations on the melodic theme and improvised vocalizations. The rhythmic variations on the waltz theme and call and answer motif are all further developed in this section. Miss Julia expresses her status as a free woman, independent from and equal to men.

The lyrics of *Cardile Gone to Cuba* not only tell us a story about Miss Julia's life but about the people of the Cayman Islands as well. In each verse Cardile goes away to Cuba or Honduras. He leaves by ship carrying goods like wood and coal and returns with gifts for Julia such as wedding clothes and their "baby's hood". In the real story, Cardile left Miss Julia for another woman and never returned again. But in *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, the story has a more romantic and nostalgic tone; Julia waits for her husband to return just like all the other wives who watched their men go out to sea in Cayman at that time. In this song, Miss Julia tells the tale of a long tradition of sea-faring, where men went out to sea for weeks or months at a time for turteling and trading. Often times they would return with goods from abroad just like Cardile does in this song. In the lyrics of *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, Miss Julia not only tells her story, but the story of all the men who went out to sea and all the women who waited patiently for their return. This was a common way of life in the Cayman Islands up until the mid twentieth to late twentieth century.

This "story-telling" style of song writing is a trait found in almost all Caymanian folk songs. At first we are presented with a story that Miss Julia sings from the viewpoint of

the narrator. In the chorus, her status changes from third person to first person and she becomes the character in the story. Miss Julia wrote *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, not long after her husband Cardile left her. She tells her story of neglect through the song and communicates it to the people. This style of folk song reveals to us how important music was to the Caymanian people. It was not just a form of entertainment but an outlet of expression and communication. Through music people spread news between one another and communicated their values, attitudes and stories. Today, newspaper, television and radio spread news around the Island and no longer is music needed or used as an essential form of communication.

Change assumes many forms and several directions of change can be gathered through the music and performance of *Cardile Gone to Cuba*. When interviewing Miss Julia and listening to her play, the music was transmitted to me in a context I would not have received it 40 years ago or more. Changes in a community's social structure influence not only its folk music repertory but also the ways in which this repertory is transmitted.<sup>38</sup> I did not witness her performance in a Kitchen Band setting with other musicians and district town folk dancing. I visited her in her home for a semi-formal interview where she kindly accepted to play a few songs and discuss her music. When transcribing her song, I used a recording I had found in Radio Cayman's library. Sadly, there are no more kitchen dances in Grand Cayman, and if one wishes to hear traditional folk music, they would have to keep a look out for the rare performance at a local festival or event, or listen to a recording of Radley Gourzong and the Happy Boys. The traditional folk music

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<sup>38</sup> Bohlman, Philip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*. p. 15

and dancing of the Cayman Islands is not a present tradition in the lives of most Caymanians today.

This concept of change is expressed in *Cardile Gone to Cuba*. Miss Julia's drumming patters comprise of a mixture of European waltz and short phrases of 'call and answer' which are more characteristic of African traditional music. These rhythms are evidence to the elements of stylistic change that entered the tradition. The Cayman Islands became a repository for different musical cultures. By altering and incorporating chosen motifs and elements from the different genres, Caymanian traditional music developed into its own. This concept of change goes hand in hand with the oral tradition of folk music. Through her music, Miss Julia tells a tale of the history of the Caymanian people and their origins. In *Cardile Gone to Cuba*, she celebrates diversity through assimilation of these outside musical influences from Europe and Africa. Any rigid conceptualisation of origin necessarily becomes impossible. This song is testimony that Caymanian people cannot be stereotyped. Caymanians represent an eclectic breed of people and this is reflected in the celebration of diversity and multiculturalism in *Cardile Gone to Cuba*.

Change can also occur in the form of rubric diffusion, which demonstrates change not so much in the variation of individual pieces as in the general mobility of repertoires.<sup>39</sup> Individual pieces have tremendous abilities to wander from culture to culture, regardless of origin. This is the case with *A Starry Night for a Ramble*, which has made its way into the folk repertoires of different countries around the world. So how does the composer fit into this picture of rubric diffusion and creation? The term "compose" is a term born out

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<sup>39</sup> Bohlman, Philip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*. p. 11

of the Western classical music tradition. Miss Julia described her process with the words, “I made it” instead of “I composed it”. The theories perceiving the origins of folk music in the acts of individuals permit considerable scope in the ways composition takes place. The composer may use relatively new melodic material, or they may borrow from previously existing pieces. Contrafaction, the application of an existing melody to a new text, is commonplace for certain subgenres.<sup>40</sup> This process can be found in *Cardile Gone to Cuba* with the borrowed melody shown in Example 3.8.

We can follow the evolution of Caymanian folk music by examining how she made *Cardile Gone to Cuba*. Folk music in oral tradition is often a fusion of several versions rather than consisting of a single, original version. The process is called consolidation. Consolidation may take place in overt ways, such as borrowing from other pieces, or in more covert ways, such as the assimilation of like melodic phrases.<sup>41</sup> This process of consolidation is at play in *Cardile Gone to Cuba*. Most likely Miss Julia did not come in contact with the original written version of *Starry Night for a Ramble* by Samuel Bagnall. When it reached the shores of Cayman via oral transmission a polygenesis, multiple births of similar pieces, branched from the original. In many ways a communal-authorship took responsibility for these versions due to the fact that many verses were improvised by members of society and so on. By borrowing from the song *A Starry Night for a Ramble* and assimilating like melodic phrases from the piece, Miss Julia transformed the song into something new using this process of consolidation. She made a Caymanian song that possesses countless amounts of meaning and insight into her life

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<sup>40</sup> Bohlman, Philip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*. p. 9

<sup>41</sup> Bohlman, Philip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*. p. 20

and the life of a people. By discovering the original piece of music that Miss Julia found inspiration and material from we can trace the life history of a folk song. *A Starry Night for a Ramble* changed from a piece belonging to a dominant written tradition and through oral transmission, rubric diffusion and consolidation, evolved into a personal and completely Caymanian creation by Miss Julia Hydes.



## Conclusion

Lend me the stone strength  
Of the past, and I  
Will lend you  
The wings of the future.  
-- Robinson Jeffers

## Communication and Preservation

The music of the Cayman Islands is an oral tradition passed down from generation to generation. Oral tradition is a measure of a community's sense of itself, its boundaries, and the shared values drawing it together.<sup>42</sup> Through the music of Miss Julia Hydes, these values are given a voice for their expression. From the exploration and interpretation of Miss Julia's music we have discovered windows into the soul of a community. The discovery of culture and identity through Miss Julia's music is testimony to the potential this music has in communicating these societal values. To understand music is to understand the social basis for human expression; through the music of Miss Julia Hydes we can find and share an understanding of ourselves and the world around.

As I look back on this project and reflect, I am reminded of the driving force behind my motivation; the communication and preservation of this unique folk music tradition. Alan Merriam outlined the role of the ethnomusicologist as a 'Wight Knight' whose duty it is to defend and preserve the music of the folk as it is fast disappearing in many non-

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<sup>42</sup> Bohlman, Philip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*. p. 14

literate societies.<sup>43</sup> This Duty of Preservation has been discussed by many theorists like Carl Sachs who, writing about tribal, folk and Oriental music, has noted:

Such music cannot be bought in stores, but comes from faithful tradition or from personal contributions of tribesmen. It is never soulless or thoughtless, never passive, but always vital, organic, and functional; indeed, it is always dignified. This is more than we can say of music in the West.

As an indispensable and precious part of culture, it commands respect. And respect implies the duty to help in preserving it. (Sachs, 1962:3)<sup>44</sup>

While I realise the inevitability of change in the oral tradition of folk music, it is still vital that respect is given to the importance of this music. This project has been an exploration of the potential folk music has, in particular the music of one individual, in communicating the culture and story of a people. In Alan Merriam's concept of communication, he points out the possibilities of understanding a people through music and the importance of communicating these understandings to the world. With this ethnomusicology project we can understand a people and culture. Through her music, Miss Julia Hydes communicates her story and the story of the Cayman Islands. She celebrates Caymanian diversity, culture, female independence and freedom in *Cardile Gone to Cuba*. These modes of communication enable national and international understanding among people.

On a personal level this project has been an awakening into a deeper understanding and concern for the future of Caymanian culture and music. Tradition is fashioned from both

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<sup>43</sup> Merriam, Alan P. *Purposes of Ethnomusicology: An Anthropological View*

<sup>44</sup> Merriam, Alan P. *Purposes of Ethnomusicology: An Anthropological View*

an authenticity that clings to the past and a process of change that continuously reshapes the present. Folk music is both a product of the past and a process of the present; these elements are essential to its stability and vitality and together provide the substance and dynamism of oral tradition.<sup>45</sup> But care must be taken to make sure that this music is properly studied and preserved before it is lost. When reflecting on the change Miss Julia has witnessed over the past 100 years, from the days of smoke pots and kitchen dances to the present age of commercial banking and tourism, I cannot help but wonder: Have we, Caymanians, lost our identity in the process?

They used to say that Cayman was the Island that time forgot. Now it seems that time is what we have too little of. There is little time to preserve our national treasures and cultural traditions. There is little time to make the next generation, who are the only hope for the future, the centre of our concern and care. There is little time to capture the good things of the past, the spirit of community and pass them unto our families, neighbourhoods and districts. The days of kitchen dances and weekend gatherings at a neighbour's should not be lost in the pages of our history books. The music of our Islands should be passed unto our children and not forgotten or drowned in the top 40 playlist. I can only hope that we, as Caymanians, don't let our traditions fade away with time. After all, we need to know where we are from to know where we are going. I hope that the young will learn from the old, because they have a lot to teach us. And I hope that we can not only come together and treasure our Islands, our heritage, and our music, but keep it alive...because there is little time.

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<sup>45</sup> Bohlman, Philip V. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*. p. 13

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