

## **Follow the Signs – The Quadrille**

**The Quadrille was danced throughout the eighteenth century, and became a symbol of European refinement and enlightenment. It was during this century that the rapid expansion of European colonisation of the Americas and Caribbean took place, and along with it the establishment of the plantation based economy based on the free labour of enslaved African peoples. During this period, many examples of creolisation, the cultural transference between African and European cultures, still survive. It can be thought of as surprising to find that amongst these examples that the Quadrille, a formal eighteenth century style of dancing and music, remain part of the Caribbean intangible cultural heritage of many Caribbean communities, and still danced as part of celebrations and festivities which take place around Carnival, and other celebrations, including in the Caribbean diaspora in the UK.**

**This brief paper is an early exploration of some of the literature which has been produced about orality and the preservation and transmission of the intangible cultural heritage of the Quadrille. A longer paper and more detailed paper will follow.**

It is extremely difficult to undertake the academic exploration of the cultural life of enslaved Africans, before emancipation, which is needed to be able to understand how the Quadrille became part of the intangible cultural heritage of the Caribbean. Manuel (2012) discusses the challenges of undertaking research into dance amongst the enslaved, including the lack of contemporary accounts, and the wide

variety of terms and spelling to describe used across the Caribbean nations and in the literature that has been produced; for example the traditional Jamaican and Bahamian masquerade Jonkunnu, is also spelt Junkanoo, Jonkannu and even John Canoe. Much of the work about enslaved music and dance which has been undertaken in this area has been completed by musicologists, ethnomusicologists and anthropologists. The Quadrille, although not directly linked to Caribbean Carnival, is part of the many activities which surround Carnival, and in which many British Caribbean Carnivalists participate. In my research project, I first began examining the Quadrille as an example of how orality has been used to preserve and transmit knowledge, skills, traditions and values (intangible cultural heritage) over many centuries and geographic regions during forced and voluntary migrations (RAMERINE??) Both Carnival and the Quadrille are superficially viewed as creolised versions of European cultural activities, which the enslaved Africans appropriated. However on closer examination, both Carnival and the Quadrille retain close ties to the cultural heritage of the enslaved Africans transported to the Caribbean, This discussion of the Quadrille centres on the recognition of the Quadrille as a sign which is recognised by a specific social group, who are able to decode its specific meaning (Chandler, 2002). Semiotics explores the signs we use to negotiate and understand the world. For the Quadrille, there are many interpretations of this sign, which are discussed below.

When examining the role of orality in the preservation and transmission of the Quadrille, Walter Ong's (2012) descriptions and definitions of primary, secondary and residual orality, provides a clear framework for the identification and classification of oral cultures at the various stages of their interaction with literacy. Ong's work is useful, not only because it is so comprehensive, but also because it

gives a plausible definition of the orality, the characteristics of oral cultures and descriptions of how oral cultures function. Using Ong's framework to analyse the texts below, it is clear to see how orality has contributed to the preservation and transmission of the Quadrille, both in the Caribbean and the diaspora. The oral tradition has been central to the preservation of this cultural skill, which is rarely practised outside of Caribbean communities.

In *A Critical Analysis of Caribbean Contredanse*, Daniel (2009) writes that the intention of the paper is a study of:

'the values that inform dance behaviours...that have marked the longevity and pervasiveness of contredanse – derived dancing throughout the Caribbean region . . . values concerning identity, ancestor reverence and the colonial experience'. (Daniel, 2009, p148)

Here Daniel points to the complicated history of contredanse in the Caribbean. The French word contredanse itself, is an example of this mixing of histories.

Daniel begins by discussing contredanse across the American region, but focusses on the uniqueness and continued popularity of Caribbean contredanse, which has performed since the eighteenth century. Daniel writes that it is curious that a 'structurally European dance form is still performed.... by the descendants of enslaved and free Africans' throughout the Caribbean, and by people of all ages' and continues by referring to contemporary Quadrille dancing as African- descended contredanse.

Daniel describes the development of contredanse in eighteenth century Europe, and its rigid performance style which 'focussed keenly on manners, sociability and

courting practises which were taught by expert dance masters'. (Daniel, 2009, 147) and the acquisition of contredanse skills became a symbol of high social status. Daniel cites the works of Rameau (1777), and Sharpe (1924) who wrote that by the eighteenth century, the French minuet and English square dance, had both become important elements in contredanse. This early European form of the dance developed into different sub-dances or formations, which are often danced together, and are collectively referred to as contredanse. The square formation, developed into the Quadrille; the circle formation in contredanse became Ronds, and the line dance formation remained as the original dance formation of contredanse. Each of these formations were dance in sequence at balls and other social gatherings, and migrated to the Americas and Caribbean with the plantocracy. Daniel writes that the Quadrille remains widely known across the Caribbean but has become known by a variety of names including the Bele, the Quadrille, the Haute – Tailed, Affranchise and Tumba Francesca. Between 1997 and 2004, Daniel observed contredanse in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Trinidad, Carriacou, US Virgin Isles, and Pruerto Rico. From my research, I also know that the Bele and Quadrille are also danced in Grenada and Carriacou, which I will discuss later in this paper.

From the beginning of African enslavement, the skill and enthusiasm of African dance was recognised by the Europeans. Daniel continues by citing Dominique Cyrille's (2006) study of the Quadrille in the French Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and Cyrille's belief that these dances were a form of dialogue between the enslaved Africans and Europeans. Daniel also cites the studies of Entioppe (1996), who writes that the dances of the enslaved Africans could have

been a 'camouflaged resistance' and a sign of shifting cultural values for both Europeans and the Africans they enslaved, which can still be recognised today. Daniel believes that the importance of dance in both African and European societies collided in plantation society. For both cultures dance was a means of communicating social status, cultural values and identity. This reinforced the role played by contredanse in the Caribbean, and the layers of social stratification that existed:

contredanse performed in the Americas projected differentiated statuses between Europeans and Europeans, between Europeans and Africans and between free and not free'. (Daniel, 2009, p149)

The ability to perform contredanse, Daniel and Cyrille believe conferred an elevated status on those enslaved Africans who could follow the strict dance steps needed to execute the dance. I believe that this would have added to the already stratified nature of the enslaved population on the plantations, which Zobel Marshall classified as a hierarchical structure of plantation owner at the top, then estate manager (overseer), slave driver, domestic slaves, skilled slaves and lastly at the bottom of the hierarchy, the field slaves (Zobel Marshall, 2012).

Daniel believes that Enslaved African contredanse dancers in the colonial Caribbean, implied and sought a different social different and elevated social identity,

and also became a symbol of the concealed rebellion against degradation of enslavement. It differentiated between those who could dance the complicated and precise European movements, than those who could not, and therefore identified those enslaved Africans who were able to acquire skills and ability to equal those of the European plantocracy. In an environment where such a high status was given to these skills, the ability to perform contredanse was 'an affront to slavery and colonisation' (Daniel, 2009, p 149) and Entioppe describes this as 'camouflaged resistance' and one of methods which the enslaved Africans used to sabotage slavery, assert their dignity and covertly strike back against the plantocracy, including working slowly, poisoning and suicide. Scott (1985) discusses this form of resistance in his work on hidden transcripts, which looks at how those without power find covert ways to subvert and disrupt the powerful. The ability to out dance or outperform the plantocracy in public or private displays of contredanse would have been a means of asserting or restoring dignity for the enslaved Africans.

Daniel then discusses how ancestor worship has always and remains an integral part of Quadrille dancing. For the early enslaved African dancers, the steps to the Quadrille connected them with African ancestors and lost family, and this ancestor reverence and connection is still important to contemporary Quadrille dancers, both in the Caribbean and in the UK. So much so, in fact Daniel writes that contredanse has lost its associations with slavery and oppression, and is no longer seen as a European dance. I argue that Daniel's interpretation here that Daniel's focus on the creolised Quadrille does not explain why several forms of traditional African dance such as the bongo and the temne, both of which have been preserved, or whether they would have a greater impact on the connection with African ancestors enslaved

in the Caribbean, which I do believe it does. However Daniel does acknowledge the essential role of orality has in preserving and transmitting Caribbean Quadrille dancing skills, cultural values and knowledge about an African ancestral heritage in the Caribbean and the diaspora.

Daniel believes that modern contredanse 'points to the superficial irony involved in African performance of European dances for centuries' (Daniel, 2009, p149), but concludes that contredanse continues to be a strategy to fight the continuing effects of colonialism and degradation.

In *Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean*, Manuel (2012) has produced a comprehensive study of the development of the Quadrille and contredanse derived dances in the Caribbean basin and former Spanish colonies in South America. Manuel and writes that Caribbean contredanse and Quadrille are the product of creolisation in this region.

Miller (2006) then goes on to give a vivid and accurate description of how creolisation and its effect on the development of the Quadrille dance and music, might have worked in practise in the early Caribbean of the seventeenth and eighteenth century

Perhaps, for example, at an informal soirée in 1790 in Port-au-Prince one might encounter some local whites dancing a French-style contredanse to English jigs ...on a plantation in the nearby countryside, three musically inclined slaves from Dahomey, Yorubaland, and the Congo are playing together on some drums....while their own traditional rhythms are all somewhat the distinct from each other, they soon settle on one based around

a pattern—the cinquillo—that is at least implicitly extant in the traditions of all three....with their master's encouragement, [have] learned to approximate a few contredanses (Miller, 2006, p33)

Meanwhile, the cultivation of such European-derived genres as the contradance and Quadrille—like the adoption of European languages—also served to facilitate socio-cultural interaction between ethnically diverse segments of the slave population. In other words, in sharing the able to develop equally unknown languages and cultural practises of their captors, the enslaved Africans were able to begin to develop a unified and new culture in the Caribbean. This belief in the power of creolisation has been embraced by academics such as Burton (2008), Tancons (2012) and Riggio (2015), and dominates the discourse around the extent to which the enslaved Africans were able to preserve and transmit their culture in any significant way.

Like Daniel earlier, Manuel also discusses the importance and popularity of dance in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, and in particular the Quadrille and contredanse and how this was partly fuelled by the growing availability of printed books, and Manuel cites the example of *The English Dancing Master* by John Playford, (1658 and subsequent editions until 1721). The development of African Quadrille dancing occurred very early in slavery in the Caribbean. Manuel discusses this early creolisation of dance in the Caribbean, and uses a contemporary report from 1707 (cited in Abrahams and Szwed, 1983) which describes Africans in Jamaica dressed in European court dress, dancing in Quadrille style lines and the spinning and twirling the petticoats African women slaves.

Interestingly in this work, Manuel also cites a rare example of an African dance, the calenda, which was popular with early Spanish Caribbean settlers and enslaved Africans alike, and was danced frequently by the Europeans, with no adaptations, using original African steps. The description of the calenda given by Manuel is of a dance which involved gyrating, thrusting pelvises and kissing to the accompaniment of drumming. This was very different to the rigid structures of the European dances which were being performed at this time. When a description of a performance of the calenda was recorded by the French priest R.P. Labat in his work *Nouvelles Voyages* in 1724, he wrote about the scandalous nature of the calenda dance

One can well appreciate, then, how immodest this dance may be, in spite of which it is so pleasing to the Spaniards and creoles of America, and so in use among them (Labat 1724, in Manuel 2012)

The calenda remained popular in the Spanish Caribbean, and Manuel cites a report by Saint-Mery in 1797, of the calenda still being danced, and which describes the same movement and steps which had been recorded 70 years earlier by Labat.

Manuel continues that this form of calenda can still be recognised in the contemporary calinda which is danced in Martinique, and the tumba francesa which is dances in Cuba.

Manuel, like Daniel, also addresses the issue of status in the dances of the Caribbean, and of the Quadrille in particular, and writes that it is the complexity of the Quadrille dance that has given it and its dancers such a high status throughout its history in the Caribbean

Most Caribbean Quadrille dance styles require a fair amount of learning and rehearsal, even in comparison to other European-derived genres, and hence they traditionally enjoy a sort of prestige vestigially associated with the plantocracy. (Manuel, 2012, p16)

Manuel continues with a discussion about the creolisation of Quadrille music, and believes that the greatest African influence on European contredanse and Quadrille music and dance is the rhythm and syncopation which has been introduced by the ancestors of enslaved Africans, and remains as part of contemporary Quadrille music. Manuel cites the habanera rhythm as an example of this, and it can also be observed when watching performances of the Quadrille.

Unlike Daniel and Miller, Manuel describes contemporary Quadrille as a dance which retains a great deal of its historical eighteenth century European formality, and believes that contemporary Caribbean Quadrille is performed in an ad hoc and informal manner, where the quality and form of the dance is determined by the availability of performers. Manuel continues with descriptions of Quadrille style folk dancing across the Caribbean region, such as the Dominican jing-ping and Bahamian rake and scrape, as well as more conventional forms of Quadrille dances. In these descriptions, Manuel appears to be dismissive of the skills, expertise and value placed on Caribbean Quadrille dancing by Daniel and Miller, writing:

Insofar as they flourished as folk genres, the West Indian Quadrille styles did not achieve the level of professional cultivation that elevated the Cuban and Puerto Rican danza to the status of a light-classical art (Manuel, 2012, p29)

This attitude is problematic as it feeds into the racial and cultural bias and European value structure against which is still placed on African and Caribbean culture.

I will now go on to discuss the available literature about the intangible cultural heritage of the Quadrille across the Caribbean region.

### **The Quadrille in Carriacou, Grenada**

Miller's paper, *Performing Ambivalence: The Case of Quadrille Music and Dance in Carriacou, Grenada* (2005) is about Quadrille dancing and music in Grenada. It discusses the nature of contemporary cultural memory and its effects on the Quadrille. Miller discusses the diversity of musical traditions on the Grenadian island of Carriacou. Whilst some of these, in particular Big Drum Nation Dance, are rooted firmly in African traditions, others Miller writes are blends of African and European cultural forms, with Quadrille music and dance, falling into the latter category. Significantly, in the paper, Miller references the importance of orality in preserving and transmitting dance skills, including the dance steps and rituals around dance performances. Also, how orality has been essential in preserving and transmitting the musical skills, including how to play the instruments involved and the traditional European dance tunes. Miller writes about the difficulty of constructing an accurate picture the lives of enslaved Africans, as there is little documentation, and cites Gates (1988) methodology which stated the need to reassemble fragments of past cultures from many sources:

'These fragments include oral histories, songs descriptive of the era, contemporary belief and material culture, all of which provide evidence of an enslaved past' (Miller, 2005, p423)

Miller writes that it is unclear when the Quadrille arrived in Carriacou, or how the enslaved Africans learnt how to perform the dance and music, and whether the enslaved Africans acquired the dance skills when they directly instructed to learn the Quadrille dance and music by their European masters, or if the slaves learnt their skills by imitation, when watching and listening to the plantocracy at play. Miller cites an article in an 1832 edition of the anti-abolitionist newspaper, the *Grenada Free Press and Public Gazette*, which discussed the condition of life for the slaves on the Grand Sable plantation and describes the slaves dancing during the Christmas celebrations:

On these occasions, they spend the greater part of the day and night in dancing, with their usual characteristic ardour and agility..... with so much time and precision the time and tune that their performance would often do credit to the more practised elegants (Miller, 2005, p422)

This supports the descriptions provided by Daniel and Carty (1988) which describe the skilled and accomplished dancing of the enslaved Africans.

It is extremely surprising to find a public acknowledgement in a newspaper, of a higher level of dancing skills of enslaved Africans, as in the value system of the plantocracy, this would suggest equality and perhaps even social superiority with Europeans, as I discussed earlier when examining the hierarchy of plantation societies.

Miller then examines the changing nature of intangible cultural heritage on Carriacou and the demise of the Quadrille on the island, where until the 1960s, Quadrille dances were important community social events. However, by the time of Miller's study in 2005, the Quadrille was reduced to a small group of dancers, most of whose were members of L'Esterre village Quadrille Group, who dance for exhibition at formal events, such as during the annual August Regatta Festival. General participation in the Quadrille amongst the general population has diminished to such an extent that 'the tradition is not actively being passed on to the younger generation' (Miller, 2005, p403) and the average age of Quadrille dancers at the time of Miller's study was between forty and sixty years old. Also, even more challenging to the survival of Quadrille dancing on Carriacou, Miller found was the growing scarcity of musicians who able to play Quadrille music, and describes the group's violinist, bass (a two headed drum) tambourine and triangle (steel) Quadrille musicians, two of whom are over 75 years old. During my visit to Carriacou in 2018, I interviewed Clemencia Alexandra, daughter of Canute Caliste who was one of the last fiddle players on Carriacou. Clemencia told me that when her father died in 2005, the Quadrille fiddle skills died with him, and now recordings and not live music is used for Quadrille dance performances.

Miller examines the African overtly African rather than creole influences in the dance, and describes the ancestor worshipping ritual of libation that takes at the beginning of the L'Esterre group performances:

'The performers dance in a circle, sprinkling the ground with water, rum and other beverages, in an act that serves as an invitation to the ancestral spirits to join the ceremony' (Miller, 2005, p406)

Miller also writes about Canute Caliste, his belief that it was his dream messages which taught him to play the Quadrille music. By describing the African influences on the dance, such as the interpretation of dreams and the pouring of libations, Miller emphasises the creolisation of the European dance, rather than the European influence on the Africans, as often occurs. As with other examples of preserved intangible heritage on Carriacou, a great deal of African culture has been retained from the enslaved Africans.

Miller describes the music played for the Quadrille dancing as reminiscent of traditional French and English country music, and of American square dancing music, all of which Miller writes is another indication of the legacy of British colonialism in the Americas. From the many Quadrille styles that flourished in the Caribbean, the remaining dominant style which is still danced is the English Quadrille; the Caledonian, Lancers and Albert Quadrille are no longer performed at dances. L'Esterre group dancers follow a traditional form 'with few adaptations or changes' (Miller, 2005, p408), except the notable exceptions of innovations introduced by celebrated dancer, Mr. Joseph, in the 1960s. However, underpinning this European musical style Miller also describes the African 'polyrhythmic underpinning to the European-derived violin melodies' (Miller, 2004, p407). Like Carty (1988), Miller describes the African influences on the dance movements and 'The emphasis on syncopation and on this rhythmic and gentle hip sway are both commonly found in many Caribbean dances derived from Africa' (Miller, 2005, p407). However, the Quadrille dance continues to contain some of the formal and courtly European elements, including the formal dance steps of the wheel, chaining and the

paisade. In addition, there are courtly manners displayed between the dancers and musicians, such as the lead male dancer laying of his hands into the violinists lap to signify the end of that dance, and that a new one should begin. In this, Miller continues, the Quadrille danced on Carriacou is 'both sonically and visually link Kayak [Carriacou] African ancestry with the historical legacy of European colonisation' (Miller, 2005, p407).

Therefore, the Quadrille as danced on Carriacou is evidence of creolisation which has been preserved in Grenada, using the orality, but is in danger of being lost as it is has not been able to maintain its skills or intergenerational support.

However there is a great deal of ambivalence about the Quadrille on Carriacou.

Miller writes that:

Because of its European origins, its links to slavery and with subsequent years of Colonial rule, Quadrille today has an uncertain status in Carraicou (Miller, 2005, p403)

Because of these associations, Miller writes that the Quadrille is a dying tradition on modern day Carriacou, with few new participants performing the dance, although during my visit to Carriacou Clemencia told me that it is now taught in schools, which will help to preserve what is left of this intangible cultural heritage. This, Miller (2005) argues is the cultural ambivalence which surrounds the Quadrille on the island, and attributes this to Cathy Caruth's (1995) theory of cultural trauma. Caruth's theory states that it is the trauma itself that has an historical power in the collective memory, and its transformation into performance can be seen as a coping strategy. This is an extremely important interpretation and helpful when examining many aspects of Caribbean Carnival, including some traditional Mas characters seen in Trinidad

Carnival, such as Sailors and The Bookman, who represent kidnappers and plantation overseers in the collective memory of the African descendants in Caribbean. However Miller questions the concept of cultural trauma, writing that it presumes a passive and reactive response from the traumatised, and therefore removes any self-direction in the response to the trauma. Miller instead promotes the concept set out in her paper, of social ambivalence, describing it as 'a rupture with a historical understanding of community and self' (Miller, 2005, p404).

'cultural ambivalence is specific to an expressive mode or mode that has played a continual role over time' This ambivalence Miller continues, 'typically emerges during a period of upheaval, and is manifested by conflicting representations and diverse perceptions of identity' (Miller, 2005, p404)

Miller then goes on to explore this conflict within Carriacouan consciousness. Miller discusses this idea of dual identity within the Caribbean using Du Bois's 1903 concept of 'twoness', and Paul Gilroy's (1993) concept of 'double consciousness'. Both works discuss the need and development of a double identity in the Black communities in the diaspora, to incorporate the experiences of black enslavement, African heritage and the influences of dominant and often brutal European culture. Miller continues that as a result of the demographic changes brought about by emigration, the rise of Black consciousness and the end of colonial rule, Grenadians have could be said to have 'ruptured' from their former identity as emancipated slaves and colonised Caribbeans, in their traumatic past, leading to a conflicted relationship with the elements of their cultural identity.

Miller also explores how the pressures of modernism and the popularity of newer cultural expressions such as soca and calypso on Carriacou, are also factors in the demise in traditional and folk forms of music but ultimately dismisses this as a primary reason for the decline in the popularity of the Quadrille. In fact Miller describes how the island's other traditional form of music and dancing, Big Drum and Nation Dance, has not suffered in the same way, and is in fact thriving, 'remaining vital and of significance' in all areas of Carriacou society (Miller, 2005, p404). Big Drum is part of the island's African rituals, and is 'perceived by Carraicouans as a direct and important link to their Kayak ancestors and to an African past' (Miller, 2005, p425). The continued popularity and practise of Bid Drum is contrast to the diminishing of participation in other forms of creolised cultural forms, such as sea chanteys, string bands and the Quadrille as has been discussed here.

Miller continues with accounts of how slavery and colonialism are remembered on contemporary Carraicou in 'collective memories, folklore, and oral histories' (Miller, 2005, p425). Slavery, Miller writes, is ever present in the songs of Big Drum, which use an eighteenth century French patois language to transmit the horrors endured by the enslaved Africans. An example given by Miller is of one Big Drum song which describes the cruel destruction of a family unit when parents and children are sold to separate islands. Even though this was against the laws as set out in the slave codes, 1685 Code Noir, Miller writes was the law largely ignored and rarely enforced. Miller writes that her research on Carriacou found a great deal of remaining hostility towards historical slave experiences and this anger is expressed at contemporary Europeans and N. Americans. However I did not experience this during my trip to the island; during a guided tour of Carriacou I was shown a house which was still owned by the descendants of the plantation owners who had once enslaved Africans on the

island. My guide was genuinely shocked at my suggestion of residual anger or resentment towards the family.

Miller (2005) writes that other studies of the Quadrille have focussed on the representational rather than the identification aspects of the Quadrille. In other words how Quadrille has been used to demonstrate a high class status and its creolising nature as a sign of closeness to the European centre of power, and this continues to be seen in Quadrille dancing on other Caribbean islands such as St. Lucia and Trinidad. However in Carriacou, the Quadrille has been in decline since the socio-political upheavals of the 1960s. Miller believes that in addition to re-evaluations of history of enslavement and colonialization, other reasons for the decline in Quadrille dancing in Carriacou are the demographic changes brought about by emigration to England in the 1960s, which saw many of the younger people leave the island, who might have learnt the Quadrille through the oral tradition. In addition. Miller writes that Big Drum and not the Quadrille is seen as a better representation of true Carriacou culture which links back to the enslaved African ancestors in a direct line. Another reason for the decline in the Quadrille can be seen as the intervention of the Catholic church. Miller writes that Quadrille could have died out completely without the intervention of the Catholic church on Carriacou which encourage Quadrille dancing and events, and the direct support of the post – revolutionary Marxist government from 1979. However as a result, since the 1960s, Miller (2005) writes the Quadrille moved away from a participatory event in which the whole community could participate, to a formal staged exhibition event which takes place on civic occasions, therefore breaking its roots with the community who had preserved and transmitted the Quadrille skills over the previous 200 years.

Miller also discusses the semiotic signs which are recorded in the Quadrille costumes, writing about the 'collar and tie', the specific Quadrille costume used by the L'Esterre Quadrille group when performing on other islands outside of Carriacou. This costume, like many signs, has multiple interpretations. Firstly it emphasises the European influences and history of the dance, and also a sign which signifies the high social status of the Quadrille dancers who are performing.

Miller continues that the choice of collar and tie costume signifies

an unspoken intent of the Quadrille Group in choosing this costume and performance demeanour is to elevate the "respectability" of this folk art genre for Grenadian and other non-Kayak audiences (Miller (2005, p430)

Costume is also a sign in local performances when a more generic 'Caribbean' style of costume is worn. This sign allows the L'Esterre group to communicate that they are particularly skilled dancers who represent the best of Quadrille dancing on Carriacou, and that this skill elevates the Quadrille dance away from the links to enslavement and poverty with which the dance has been associated with in Carriacou's recent history. This costume also places the Quadrille into 'a greater, transnational pan-Caribbean culture', giving it a new and regional identity, again shifting away from a colonial past.

Miller concludes this excellent and thorough examination of the Quadrille on Carriacou by writing that unlike many post-colonial Caribbean societies, Carriacouans have a firm understanding of their African heritage and the separate African nations from which their ancestors belonged (including Igbo, Cromanti, Mandingo, and Kongo). In addition, Carriacouans have not only been able to keep their African rituals of Big Drum alive, it is in fact thriving on the island, and is more

actively practised than European and creole traditions of Quadrille dancing.

However, the Quadrille is still viewed affectionately and seen as part of the culture and heritage of the island, but Miller believes that the history of the dance gives rise to conflicted feelings about its place in the culture of Carriacou, where participation in the dance is declining steadily. Miller writes that

If Carriacou Quadrille is to survive in the twenty-first century, it is this contradiction of cultural memory that somehow must be negotiated and resolved (Miller, 2005, p435)

However, what is evident that the use of orality in preserving and transmitting this intangible cultural heritage is extremely important.

### **The Quadrille on Jamaica**

In *Folk Dances of Jamaica*, Carty (1988) writes that over the course of Jamaica's early history, most of its inhabitants came to the island unwillingly, as slaves and indentured servants. However, despite many nationalities which have been present in Jamaica throughout its history, Carty writes that the dominant cultural influences on the island are African and British. The deculturalisation of enslaved Africans, which followed was a deliberate and cruel policy used in the plantation system, and Carty continues that the enslaved were deliberately separated from kin and tribesmen, and thus all links with past life were broken. Although the enslaved attempted to continue their traditional practises, this was often forbidden, and a process of creolisation began. Carty writes that it was on feast days such as Christmas, Crop Over that the real beginnings of creolisation began to manifest, and with it Jamaican culture - which was unique to the island – began to develop. Unlike Daniel, Carty writes that

Africans doesn't believe that Africans mastered the exacting European movements of the Quadrille, writing that used African dance features when dancing the Quadrille.

Carty places traditional Jamaican dancing into four categories; African derived, European derived, indigenous creolised; and abstraction in Jamaican folk dancing. The African derived dances of Kumina and Dinkie Minie and the European derived dance of the Quadrille will be discussed here.

Carty believes Kumina represents a very strong link to African culture in Jamaica.

The Kumina is a Congolese religious ritual which has been practised in Jamaica since the eighteenth century among enslaved Africans, the Maroon population and later free Congolese indentured labourers brought to Jamaica after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807. Carty then describes a Kumina ritual, as one where colourful clothes are worn by the participants, and ritual dancing is led by the Kumina King and Queen, who are known for their superior dancing skills, and whose dances are accompanied by drumming. Carty suggests that the practise has remained pure because it went underground, when resistance from the European plantocracy and Christian church was encountered. The second African derived dance which is explored by Carty is the Dinkie Minie, a funeral dance, which is still used at wakes in Jamaica. Death is an essential part of the African belief system, because of the important centrality of ancestor worship. The wake also includes the 'Set-up'; a vigil to wish the deceased well as they passed through death to a better place. The 'Set- Up' is in Jamaican tradition which, Carty writes is a creolisation of African, Welsh and Scottish funeral rites which came to the island during slavery.

The Kumina and Dinkie Minie have both been preserved and transmitted orally, and I

believe that the need for the Kumina to go underground may have even helped its survival, as it ensured that the value of the dance and rituals were recognised.

Carty then goes on to discuss the European derived dance of the Quadrille, and agrees with Daniel and Manuel that it continues to appear strange that enslaved Africans on Jamaica learnt to dance the Quadrille, which has movements and rules of such stiff formality, which was in stark contrast to the slaves own life experience. Unlike Daniel, Carty believes the Quadrille was initially used to mock the plantocracy, rather than resist the Europeans through acquiring the skill in the face of brutality, or to achieve a higher and possibly more favoured status. However, despite this cultural disconnection, Carty writes that the Quadrille became very popular within slave culture and was danced (and continues to be danced) on celebratory occasions. Like Miller, and Manuel, Carty believes that the Quadrille has developed with some strong African influences but concludes that in Jamaica, the Quadrille is no longer a social and community dance. Therefore like on Carriacou, the creolised Quadrille dance in decline and not being preserved and transmitted in the wider population, whereas the dances which have a closer direct link to the enslaved ancestors have been preserved and transmitted.

### **The Quadrille on St. Kitts**

Very little has been written about the Quadrille dance in St. Kitts, outside of descriptions of the Old Time Christmas Sports by Mosimba, (2011). In this work

about the traditional masquerade on St.Kitts, Mosimba discusses the island's traditional dances, and the European dances of the Quadrille and the Fine, which were brought to the island by the dance masters of St.Kitt's first Governor, De Poincy in 1639. Mosimba (2011) writes that the introduction of these dances into the Ole Time Christmas Sports reflects the creolisation which took place between the Europeans and the enslaved Africans on the island. It is expected that more information about contemporary Quadrille dancing on St. Kitts and in the UK, will be gained from interviews and from participant observation.

### **The Quadrille in contemporary British Carnival**

Although there is a lively contemporary Quadrille scene operating in the UK in 2017, there is very little documentation about this, outside of the groups' websites, for example <http://www.dona.org.uk/p/Quadrille-dancers.html>

However from the brief introductory interviews I have been able to conduct so far, it is clear that the Quadrille is still danced by Carnivalists in the UK, and its participants have acquired their knowledge of the dance from close family and group members.

One Grenadian interviewer said:

The Quadrille is more of a St. Lucian / Dominican tradition, and taken very seriously, and the correct clothes need to be worn and everything....there is a cultural event every year in November, which is a

very pleasant evening indeed.... The Quadrille has two parts; the children do the first part and the adults do the second part, which is the actual Quadrille, because it is very complicated...people learn from their grandmothers and people like that'

From this very brief interview, it is plain to see that the orality is in operation, and actively being used to preserve and transmit knowledge, skills, values and tradition about the Quadrille dance between generations in the UK.

As Manuel (2012) discusses above, the Quadrille is the national dance of the Dominican Republic, and the Dominican Oversees cultural group DONA, (Dominican Nationals Oversees Association), has a very active dance programme and the group performs all over London and the South East. The group will be observed and interviewed later in this project to gain deeper insights into the Quadrille dancing culture in the UK.

## **Conclusion**

From the academic literature and the brief interview conducted so far, it is clear to see that the Quadrille dance can be followed through Caribbean culture for almost 400 years, since the introduction of European colonisation and African enslavement into the Americas and Caribbean region. It can also be asserted, with some confidence that the Quadrille continues to be practised because it has been preserved and transmitted during this time by the use of orality, and this is a rich area of future research.

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