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In Memoriam

Rex Nettleford (1933–2010)

The Caribbean as well as the worldwide scholarly communities are greatly saddened by the passing of Jamaican choreographer and scholar Ralston Milton Nettleford, more commonly known as Rex Nettleford. Mr. Nettleford died on February 2, 2010, just hours before his 77th birthday, of a heart attack while traveling in the U.S. for a University of West Indies fundraiser. His multifaceted contribution to Caribbean cultural and intellectual life will be remembered by countless students and colleagues across nations and disciplines.

Mr. Nettleford's notable legacy spans a number of important institutions and areas of practice, testifying to the organic and passionate nature of his work. One of Nettleford's most dedicated projects was the National Dance Theater Company of Jamaica (NDTC) which he co-founded in 1963 and led as an artistic director for nearly the following five decades. This prominent cultural organization was motivated primarily by Nettleford's personal passion for Jamaican art and folklore, and guided by his unquestioned expertise as a dancer and choreographer. Under Nettleford's leadership, the Company produced some of the most elaborate stagings of Jamaica's regional and national vernacular culture.

Though widely recognized for his artistic activities, Mr. Nettleford left his mark also as an influential scholar and academic administrator. In 1953, Mr. Nettleford entered the University of the West Indies as a history student and proceeded to maintain an almost uninterrupted affiliation with the university for the rest of his life. Over the years, Mr. Nettleford arose from his position as an esteemed professor to the roles of Vice Chancellor

and Chancellor of the university, and continued to serve as Vice Chancellor Emeritus even after his official retirement.

During his years of dedicated service to the UWI, Professor Nettleford came to be known as a first-rate scholar whose studies on Jamaican and Caribbean dance, culture and identities continue to hold relevance across academic disciplines. Some of Professor Nettleford's most notable publications are *Mirror Mirror: Identity, Race, and Protest in Jamaica* (1970), *Caribbean Cultural Identity* (1978), and *Dance Jamaica: Cultural Definition and Artistic Discovery* (1985).

Though Professor Nettleford's interests transcended a variety of topics ranging from close studies of Jamaican Rastafari and Kumina practices to the broader issues of Caribbean identities and cultural space, there is an underpinning concern with the region's African foundations present in all of his works. Nettleford's commitment to the sense of self-worth and positive depiction of the Black Caribbean has been of great relevance since

racism, exoticism and negative essentialism have haunted the Caribbean image historically.

Honored by Jamaican, Caribbean and larger international organizations with some of their highest awards and titles, remembered by his students and colleagues as a loved professor, prolific writer, talented dancer, and inspiring intellectual, Professor Nettleford has left a notable mark on all aspects of the Caribbean life and scholarship. The *Latin American Music Review* recognizes Professor Nettleford's esteemed contribution.

Donald Thompson (1928–2010)

Musician, art critic, and musicologist Dr. Donald Thompson passed away on February 13, 2010. A native of Sarasota, Florida, Thompson completed undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Missouri, and received a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa (1970). He became a member of University of Puerto Rico faculty in 1954 and remained there until his retirement in 1985. In 1995 he was named Professor Emeritus of the University of Puerto Rico.

Thompson's scholarship reflected a sustained interest in musical practices of the Spanish Caribbean in general and Puerto Rico in particular. Much of his published research takes the form of concise case studies to

which he brought a careful attention to historical method and a keen interest in examining historical documents. *Gottschalk in the Virgin Islands* (1970) and *The “Cronistas de Indias” Revisited: Historical Reports, Archeological Evidence, and Literary and Artistic Traces of Indigenous Music and Dance in the Greater Antilles at the Time of the “Conquista”* (1993) are two of a number of such studies. His writings on Puerto Rican musical practices and musical life are extensive and demonstrate the same scholarly focus. Among others he examined particular historical moments (*Nineteenth-Century Musical Life in Puerto Rico* [1982]), institutions (*Notes on the Inauguration of the San Juan (Puerto Rico) Municipal Theater* [1990]), and musicians (*El joven Tavárez: Nuevos documentos y nuevas perspectivas* [1990]).

In keeping with his interest in historical musicology, Thompson devoted considerable attention to compiling reference works on Puerto Rico’s musical history. His book *Music and Dance in Puerto Rico from the Age of Columbus to Modern Times: An Annotated Bibliography* (1991)—which he co-authored with his wife Dr. Annie Thompson—represents a landmark study in this respect and includes 995 references in the fields of music and dance of Puerto Rico. In 2002, he published *Music in Puerto Rico: A Reader’s Anthology*, in which he compiled and translated into English numerous excerpts from historical texts that discussed various aspects of Puerto Rican musical life.

As a scholar Thompson helped to narrow the gap between English- and Spanish-language musical scholarship. He served in various editorial capacities in both English and Spanish publication, including *Yearbook for Interamerican Musical Research* (1971–75), *Revista/Review Interamericana* (1979–80), the *College Music Symposium* (1980–86), and the Puerto Rico sections of *Diccionario de la Música Española e Hispanoamericana* (1999–2002), to name but a few.

In addition to his work as a scholar, Thompson was actively engaged in Puerto Rico's art music community. As a founding member of the University of Puerto Rico's music department, he directed the university's *Orquesta de Camera* and *Banda Sinfónica*, and was also contrabassist for the *Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico* (1963–1974). Between 1957 and 1992, he wrote extensively as an art music critic for *The San Juan Star*—Puerto Rico's premier English language newspaper. Many of his columns can be found in a book he coauthored titled “Concert Life in Puerto Rico” (D. Thompson and F. Schwartz, 1998). In this respect, Thompson's life is a testament to one of those rare individuals who succeeded in combining his scholarly pursuits with a serious engagement to his broader musical community.

Sean Bellaviti