

## INTRODUCTION

**ROY CAPE:** I never thought that I would be writing a book one day. Being approached by Jocelyne, I thought about it and I knew that I had a nice little story to tell about my experiences and the people I have met through these experiences who had become the pillars of my future development. I knew that I could then pay tribute to these people who had paved the way of this path that I have traveled over the past fifty-odd years. I am referring here to my teacher Sister Paul and to Frankie Francis, Art De Coteau, Sel Wheeler, Ron Berridge, Beverly Griffith, Earl Rodney, Clive Bradley, Frankie McIntosh, Pelham Goddard, and Leston Paul, who have been a great part of my training and the finest arrangers throughout the years.

It was quite challenging to work on this book in many different places—Port of Spain, Manzanilla, Toronto [Canada], Grenada—at different times over the years. There was no documentation, and we had to rely on pure memory of my living experiences. With no preparatory note, I had to dig deep inside to get back the memory and relive what has already been lived. All the things that I went through became part of living memories about the road that would eventually lead me to be maturing in the journey of my travels. I will also say that, thanks to all the people who have offered their knowledge and all the facts, we were able to put things together.

I also want to thank Jocelyne for all the time and patience. She has never once been overwhelmed by the challenges.

This is how we got here.

**JOCELYNE GUILBAULT:** This book is a collaborative experiment in storytelling. It joins the voice of Trinidadian saxophonist and bandleader Roy Cape and mine as a scholar of Caribbean popular music. This idea came about as we were working on compiling and evoking the complex history of Roy's labor of love as an active performer and bandleader over the past fifty-plus years. We began experimenting with voice, who takes the lead, who says what, when, to whom, and why. So at times we feature first-person narrative, at other times dialogue, and at still other times polyphony to hear bandmates' testimonies. We experimented also with different materials to elicit stories. We rely on sound recordings and photographs as well as interviews, not only because they tell their own stories, but also because they help generate additional stories about Roy's musical journey. Together and through juxtaposition, these tactics produce different ways of knowing Roy's labor of love—his sound and work through sound, his reputation and circulation as a renowned musician and bandleader in the world.

I want to thank Roy for being open to experimenting with different ways of telling stories and for caring to acknowledge not just what he did, but also the many people, sounds, and events that have marked his career. His constant emphasis that no man is an island has been inspiring and productive of a rich chapter of Trinidadian music history and its transnational connections.

For both Roy and me, this book was a challenge to write. It is the first book-length study of the journey of an instrumentalist and bandleader in the English-speaking Caribbean. So we literally started from scratch, as the following anecdote makes abundantly clear.

In one of our meetings to discuss this book, Roy remarked that we were missing some photographs. What he had in mind were images of musicians he worked with, people who were important to him and who he thought should be included. Okay, I figured, the best place to find these photographs would be at the archives of national newspapers. A few hours later, I called and made an appointment to meet the head archivist of one of these dailies. I explained that I wanted to find some photographs of musicians who were very active in the local music scene from the 1960s onward. He quickly answered, "You're not going to find that. We don't keep the photographs of musicians. What we are interested in are the stars, the singers. We cut the photographs to keep just the singers." "Why?" I asked, a perplexed look on my face. He replied, "The people here don't write about the musicians. They write about the stars. So we need photographs for them, not for the musicians." He sounded annoyed by my question, but I insisted, "Would you have any folders of photographs, say, of musical events or of the brass band fes-

tivals? Perhaps there would be some shots of musicians there, no?” Seeing my determination to find something, he reluctantly went behind the shelves and brought back some folders. I sat down at a table and began my search. Out of at least eight folders, with no less than forty photographs in each, I finally found four that would be useful for my project.

Most biographies in popular Caribbean music focus on the stars.<sup>1</sup> But who is a star? Who really matters in popular music? And how does star status and the category of stardom restrict who and what is known about the makers of popular music? Particularly over the past fifty years, the rather exclusive focus on Caribbean lead singers has diminished the presence of nearly everyone else involved in the production of music. As a result, no more than a mere mention of the players who headline tours and recordings remains.

This practice is not limited to popular music in the Caribbean. North American and European popular music biographies published by the most widely circulated academic presses and journals seem to suffer from the same limitations. What image of popular music is generated by this narrow focus on the individuals occupying the center stage—literally, the center of the performance stage? Who and what does it serve, and why? Is this widespread tendency a remnant of the romantic construction of the artist as the individual genius, or is it the product of marketing strategies, the commodification and fetishization of the individual? While these questions are certainly worth answering, the main query that led me to this project concerned the other side of the coin: what have (Caribbean) popular music studies been missing by focusing so heavily on lead singers?

Little is known about band musicians in the Caribbean. Yet the musicians are the ones who give the pulse, who make things happen, and who bring the songs alive. And musicians have many stories to tell, stories that are otherwise rendered only in the voice of popular press journalism.<sup>2</sup> Exploring the work world of a bandsman and bandleader presents new dimensions of a bandleader’s reputation and offers fresh understandings of circulation histories and cosmopolitan practices. It calls attention to the tremendous importance of material resources for all musicians. Most importantly, it helps us appreciate the determination and stamina necessary for musicians of the working classes to succeed and thrive with limited access to such resources.

Examining a musician and bandleader’s stories also opens a window on sound and its ephemeral qualities. It grounds sound in work, apprenticeship, and rehearsals. It links sound to a distinct local sonic environment and musical traditions. It relates sound to histories of listening and musi-

cal affinities. It also makes clear how it takes not only many different types of musicians but special instrumentalists and bandleaders to make people move, to be moved, and to share public intimacies.<sup>3</sup>

This book is about one such musician. Roy Cape is a saxophonist who has been active as a band musician for over fifty years and as a bandleader for over thirty. Roy's reputation in terms of both live performances and recordings has long been established in the islands and the Caribbean diasporas—not only in North America but also in Europe. He is highly recognized for having accompanied the most famous calypsonians of the Caribbean in both calypso tents and regional competitions and also for playing with the biggest names in the soca music industry. As a band musician, he is known to have participated in hundreds of recordings. Since 1990, his own band, Roy Cape All Stars, counts eight commercially released CDs and nearly two dozen singles in compilations. Roy's recognition in the Caribbean and in the Caribbean diasporas is unique and all the more extraordinary because in general, bandsmen's contributions have been devalued locally—not to mention academically—in favor of singers in the pop music industries. Still, for some readers, my focus on Roy Cape may beg the question, why write a book about an alto saxophone player and bandleader?

*Roy Cape: A Life on the Calypso and Soca Bandstand* shifts the focus away from the headliners and concentrates instead on what is happening at and in the site of live production. Writing about cinema, Howard Becker has already shown how many kinds of expertise it takes to make a movie beyond the presence of the star actors. In doing so, he has significantly expanded the very definition of who could be viewed as stars in their own right. Likewise in music, many kinds of workers and work expertise are essential to produce, promote, and perform a show or a recording. In this project, I focus on a bandsman and a bandleader to show how a musician's biography can be a powerful document, revealing how the ethics of work come together with work consciousness, work pride, and work accomplishment.

*Roy Cape: A Life on the Calypso and Soca Bandstand* tells the story of a labor of love. The idea of a "labor of love" in music is commonly seen as the antithesis of alienated labor described by Karl Marx. In a compelling and evocative article published more than twenty years ago, sociologist Eliot Friedson coined the expression "labors of love" (in the plural) to address work that is much more than "an unpleasant necessity, something to be merely minimized." "In contrast to alienated labor," he writes, "labors of love are voluntary." While they still refer to activities enabling one to earn a living, they can be the source of enjoyment and fulfillment.<sup>4</sup> This is the kind of statement, it could be argued, that show organizers often use to underpay musi-

cians. “They enjoy what they do, so why pay?” This book shows that even though they usually choose to play music and enjoy doing so, musicians do not necessarily enjoy everything that is integral to being a professional musician: the long hours of waiting before going onto the stage; playing the same songs over and over for months—for as long as these songs are considered the hits the audiences want to hear; sleeping on uncomfortable beds on tour; being away performing at times of important family events; the habitual little to no public recognition of the efforts they put into a show; and the relatively small salaries they earn compared to what the lead singers make. And the list could continue. In other words, playing music may be voluntary and come from the love of doing so, but the many activities that enable one to earn a living through music nonetheless constitute labor—labor that can be rewarding, but that can be the source of frustrations and alienation as well. One of the main reasons why the work of musicians is often misjudged, to use Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s wording in relation to artistic production in general, is arguably because it is “immaterial labor.” Apart from recordings released as CDs, it is “a labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, and communication,” that is, productive of sounds and affective relations (Hardt and Negri 2000: 290). So what is produced by this labor “is on the one hand *immeasurable*, because it cannot be quantified in fixed units of time, and, on the other hand, always *excessive* with respect to the value that capital can extract from it because capital can never capture all of life”—that is, all the social life that musicians create.<sup>5</sup> This book explores both the love and the (immaterial) labor that are involved in Roy’s musical journey.

What does it take for a musician like Roy Cape to build his name? What does it take for him to circulate? And how do work ethics, reputation, and circulation work symbiotically? Reputation in the English-speaking Caribbean refers to the feats one accomplishes and the prestige and recognition one gains through such accomplishments. In much Caribbean literature, reputation is contrasted with respectability: reputation being associated with prowess while respectability is linked to discipline and virtues. Reputation and respectability are also often viewed in gender-specific terms: reputation as a male quest and respectability as a female’s main pursuit. These interpretations have been contested by many feminists and do not hold true in the Caribbean music business.<sup>6</sup> While male musicians earn their notoriety through their feats—their numerous participations in performance or recording projects—they can also be recognized in terms of respectability through the ethical behavior they adopt vis-à-vis their peers.

This book recounts the values Roy has cultivated in order to build his

reputation and acquire an aura of respectability in Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean region, and in the Caribbean diasporas. To point out how his name became intimately linked to the ways in which he has circulated—playing with different people in different projects, spaces, and places, becoming influential and sought after—may seem tautological: a musician who circulates is one who is renowned and who can be counted on (in terms of ethical behavior). The advantage of this tautology is that it shows how to incorporate into the notion of reputation the *regimes of circulation* that are conventionally left out of the analysis of a musician's acclaim. What I am referring to are the conjunctural linkages of (post)colonial legacies of race, institutions, discourses, and political economy that allow the regulation of what and who circulates, where, and why.<sup>7</sup> An important objective of this book, then, is to examine how Roy's recognition and circulation have reinforced each other and have been informed by particular conjunctural and historical contingencies.

Most music bands in the Caribbean, as elsewhere, do not usually last long together. The thirty-plus years since Roy Cape All Stars was formed constitutes a notable exception. Sociologists Howard Becker (2008) and Bruno Latour (2005), in their studies of art worlds in particular and the concepts of network and agency in general, argue that there cannot be any lasting group without sustained work. In their view, to account for action—such as keeping a band together—one has to trace the many things and connections that contribute to making such an action or feat possible. Put another way, one has to acknowledge that the networks to which humans are connected include not only other humans but also material worlds (material things and material cultures) of all sorts—geography, history, institutions, laws, industries, media, and globalization. As Daniel Miller insightfully remarks, material worlds have power of their own. They establish the frame for proper behavior and order life (rhythms of seasonal activities, relative access to circulation, appropriate clothing, and so on).<sup>8</sup> So part of the musicians' labor also includes working with, at times against, and at still other times around materiality—a materiality that is not always of their own choosing.<sup>9</sup>

This work with, against, and around materiality that musicians are required to do cannot be underestimated. However, I want to extend the notion of immaterial labor in relation to popular music by taking into account many other aspects that play roles in a band's longevity and success. These include the acts of reciprocity that are essential for maintaining the networks vital to musicians' circulation; the generative force of pleasure that helps sustain music making and further collaborations; the kinds of

attitudes toward change that make it possible to stay current with the times and stay employed; the synergy and dynamics among band members that help create playing opportunities; the issues of race, class, and gender that articulate the bonds and boundaries of musicians' work and networks; and the formal and informal economies that inform the kind of work musicians can do, where, when, and for how long.<sup>10</sup>

In the particular context of the postcolonial Caribbean, how has Roy Cape been able to remain an active band member for the past fifty-plus years and to maintain his Roy Cape All Stars band for some three decades? What musical skills, personal dispositions, histories, material resources, institutions, laws, and events have been constitutive of his musical journey? Put more broadly, what has enabled him to circulate through so many musical eras, musical styles, and musical groups? How has he managed to assemble people from so many different walks of life, with different knowledges and skills, ages, attitudes, and political orientations? What relationships on and off the bandstand, in and out of the studios, in the Caribbean, the diasporas, and beyond, have created the conditions of possibility for him to play and tour? And in what ways have Trinidad's colonial legacies (for example, in relation to the particular configurations of class, race, and gender) and the material realities of the island (in terms of geography and demographics) enabled Roy Cape to reach out to certain publics and not others? This book is about a musician from the Caribbean who is widely recognized but who is not a star—as traditionally represented in the Euro-American popular music business and film industries, and music biographies. It is an attempt to learn about and from a musician's journey, out of a postcolonial context and an island's distinct material realities.<sup>11</sup>

## ON WRITING STORIES

This book is not just about music as a labor of love. It is also an experiment in storytelling—not a biography in the conventional sense. Let me explain. Much can be learned from reading exceptionally well-documented megabiographies (five hundred pages or more) like those of Elvis Presley and Thelonious Monk, written respectively by Peter Guralnick (1999) and Robin D. G. Kelley (2009). But this book does not follow these writing models. While it recounts stories and describes places in rich detail, it does not attempt to present Roy's journey exclusively from a chronological perspective. Nor does it draw solely from day-by-day press, and personal diaries, industry, and historical data, as in the case of greatly detailed personal biographies. Neither does this book follow the “in-his-own-words”

model, as with Thomas Brothers's (1999) wonderful edited book on Louis Armstrong and many other publications on great jazz or pop instrumentalists or vocalists—even though there are many pages of Roy Cape speaking in his own words here. Nor do I follow the model of biography “as told to,” a form championed by David Ritz, who published collaborative biographies coauthored with the artist in question (see, for example, *Brother Ray: Ray Charles' Own Story*, Charles and Ritz 1978; *Aretha: From These Roots*, Franklin and Ritz 1999; *The Brothers Neville: An Autobiography*, Neville et al. 2000).

The writing of this book also does not draw on the classic life history, biography, and autobiography methods elaborated in *Lives: An Anthropological Approach to Biography*, by L. L. Langness and Gelya Frank (1981). It does not follow, as the authors put it, “such procedures as eliciting narratives and recording them, compiling notes and assembling a final document, and, finally, analyzing the results of these labors” (6)—even though these techniques have been refined to great sophistication in the literature of anthropology and ethnomusicology, for example, in Judith Vander's (1988) *Songprints: The Musical Experience of Five Shoshone Women*, Virginia Danielson's (1997) *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*, Charlotte Frisbie's (2001) *Tall Woman: The Life Story of Rose Mitchell, a Navajo Woman, c. 1874–1977*, Veit Erlmann's (1996) *Nightsong: Performance, Power, and Practice in South Africa*, Eva Tulene Watt with Keith Basso's (2004) *Don't Let the Sun Step over You: A White Mountain Apache Family Life (1869–1975)*, Suzanne Oakdale's (2005) *I Foresee My Life: The Ritual Performance of Autobiography in an Amazonian Community*, and George Lipsitz's (2010) *Midnight at the Barrelhouse: The Johnny Otis Story*.<sup>12</sup>

Nor does this book adopt the contemporary models featured in works such as *African Rhythms: The Autobiography of Randy Weston* (Weston and Jenkins 2010), in which pianist and distinguished jazz elder Randy Weston is presented as the composer, and Willard Jenkins, his collaborative writer, as the arranger. Or *Musical Echoes: South African Women Thinking in Jazz* (Muller and Benjamin 2011), whose cover cites Carol Ann Muller and Sathima Bea Benjamin as coauthors because, as Muller puts it in the book's introduction, “I am the book's writer,” but the stories and reflections “have been shaped in conversation with Sathima” (xx). Like Muller's publication, this book is a negotiated text. In contrast, however, I am not the sole writer.

Perhaps closest to my experiment in storytelling is *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five Musical Years in Ghana* (Feld 2012a). The author, Steven Feld, mixes memoir, ethnography, biography, and history in ways that highlight ironic juxtapositions—disparities, conjunctures, and disjunctions. The stories are told in the voices of musicians in dialogue with his voice as well as

with each other's voices, in the past and in the present, in Accra and in other places where they have found conversational space—as multilayered, interconnected, and attuned to different moods and modes of being in the world. In the same vein, my approach focuses on stories. Stories do memory work, and they transform memorable experience into a vocal (voiced) performance. Like Feld's, my approach to stories does not feature a unified or singular narrative model from start to finish. Some stories are best told in Roy's voice, others in mine. Other stories or topics are better expressed in dialogue of different types. Still others are best conveyed through images, with words in the background. At other times stories are better told with words in the foreground and images in the background. Some are best told with Roy narrating and me providing endnotes. Taken together, creative collaborations like these involve improvisation. So Roy is not simply or strictly recounting his life to and for me to write down. And I am not the sole author or reteller of the stories written here about Roy. Every detail of this book is a negotiated text, a text in which there are multiple voices that negotiate authority in and through multiple exchanges, retelling, rewriting, and rereading.

When Roy introduces me as “my biographer” to his friends, he vocally marks that I take care of certain kinds of business in this book. I assemble stories into chapters. I highlight certain themes instead of others. I develop some aspects of his career in my own voice, and I also provide historical details to help contextualize the complexity of Roy's stories. However, Roy is my editor when he tells me how to write this or reformulate that, for example, to attend to subtleties in order to avoid hurting feelings, or to avoid being misunderstood. I am also his editor when he recounts his journey. That is, I ask him at times to elaborate, to clarify, and to add details as he enunciates his narrative. I ask him to tell more in order to know how much detail is enough and how much is too much. There is a shifting ground of who is editing whom and who is presenting what. We are both trying to capture something that involves a mixture of closeness and distance, professionalism and friendship.

We are quite aware that I am a researcher, and also that while musically trained, I am not a bandsman. He, on the other hand, is a professional musician and bandleader, but not a writer or academic researcher. We respect each other's voices—our own ways of intertwining and sequencing things. Sometimes we engage in conversations; at other times, we write solo. At still other times, I invite other voices to present additional perspectives. We are both concerned with being accountable to multiple constituencies—some are overlapping, and others are quite distinct from one another.

At times, we did not agree on what should be included or excluded in the book. To give just two examples: Roy would have liked me to include a map of the numerous nightclubs that existed in the 1960s. While I liked the idea of having a visual representation of that geography, it required too much archival research that I felt was not essential to Roy's musical journey. In turn, I would have liked to know more about the migration of Trinidadian musicians overseas. But after searching his memory to find the names of musicians that migrated, where they went, and when, Roy abandoned the project.

This book is thus an experiment in storytelling that involves creative collaboration and negotiation at multiple levels. Such an experiment can be looked at as an expected outcome after the publication of *Writing Culture: The Politics and Poetics of Ethnography* more than twenty-five years ago. Following the work of many ethnographers concerned with distinctive accounts of agency, this book addresses subjectivities and voices, histories, and events in various ways—through dialogues, polyphonic interventions, and testimonies. It developed out of multiple collaborations and through what Steven Feld refers to as “dialogic editing,” negotiations of what is said, how it is said, by whom, for whom, and through whom, between Roy, many interlocutors, and me.<sup>13</sup>

As dialogic editing implies, the goal was thus not simply to learn about Roy's musical journey through Roy and other musicians, calypsonians, promoters, and friends. As Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins (2008) aptly point out, learning about someone may be filled with good intentions, but it does not necessarily mean that the so-called collaborators have much to say about what is written in the end. There is a difference between learning about and learning from others.

The critical issue here is how local knowledge and ways of knowing are valued. In his article “Intimate Knowledge,” Hugh Raffles asserts, “Local knowledge . . . is fundamentally relational. . . . [It is] local only in relation to the supra-local of science and only as a result of their enforced emplacement.” He calls for attention “to the spatialised hierarchies of knowledge production and to the entrenched inequalities in social and natural scientific research” (Raffles 2002: 332). Again, this brings us back to the delicate issue of dialogic editing. How many details in a story become too many? How many repetitions should be included? To paraphrase Raffles, among the many things I learned from both Roy's accounts and those of other commentators was how places are made. Each and every time these places were mentioned, they became invested with a new detail, a particular memory, a

distinct sound. They became “formed by the movement of people and ideas and . . . constituted by traces of pasts and futures.”

Similar to Raffles’s and many other ethnographers’ experience, I came to understand that the repetition of place names, in many of the stories included here, was not about a repeated reference to ready-made places, but rather about place making (Raffles 2002: 329). It was also about narrating time and narrating or anchoring experience. Many other examples could be given to show how, “distilled to a question of method, the issue becomes not what is known, but in what language that knowledge is expressed.”<sup>14</sup> In this sense, writing a biography through storytelling and dialogic editing draws attention to the hierarchies of social practice, ways of knowing, and ways of saying, in relations of power.<sup>15</sup>

This point has been highlighted in many ethnographies since 1986, after the issue of ethnographic authority was brought under intense scrutiny by publications like *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus (1986), and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*, by George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer (1986).<sup>16</sup> Many monographs, manuals, courses, and guides, such as *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography* by Luke Eric Lassiter (2005), and even a journal called *Collaborative Anthropologies* (created in 2008) have since promoted different forms of reflexive writing to render explicit and legible what is involved in dialogic and collaborative practice—the poetics and politics that come into play in every aspect of the construction, conception, and articulation of a text based on dialogue and collaboration. It was from this perspective that this book was conceived.

Biographies, written in any form, never tell the whole story. They depend not only on access to knowledge—to archives or the people concerned—but also the filtering of memory, the political sensitivity of certain topics, and one’s wish—or the family’s wish—for privacy. They also greatly depend on who speaks, to whom, for whom, about what, why, and when. The stories biographies can tell are also greatly informed by whether the subject is dead or alive and the stage of the artist’s career. It should be clear that there are things about an artist one can learn only in conversation with the artist himself. There are also things about an artist one would not address out of respect or care in conversation, or following a conversation, with the artist in question.<sup>17</sup> Hence the use of dialogic writing in biographies provides no guarantee of completeness, any more than other styles of writing in this genre. What it makes clear, however, is how knowledge about oneself and others is deeply relational and constantly negotiated.<sup>18</sup>

## MEETING ROY

I met Roy Cape some twenty years ago during carnival season. The name of his band was on just about every poster announcing the “fetes” (a local term for parties of all sorts) in and outside Trinidad’s capital, Port of Spain, for the entire season.<sup>19</sup> One night, with some friends, I went to hear his band at a fete held in Pier One in Williams Bay, Chaguaramas, just twenty minutes away from Port of Spain. To hear twelve band members perform live was a treat. Apart perhaps from Latin bands that continue to perform in such a formation, few other bands in the islands can afford to include as many musicians. The live sound of “the brass section”—which in the English-speaking Caribbean refers to both wind and brass instruments and includes, in the case of Roy’s band, two saxophones (alto and tenor), one trumpet, and one trombone—combined with that of a keyboard, a guitar, a bass, a drum set, and a music sampler accompanying three frontline singers was “massive,” to use a Trinidadian expression. That sound had a powerful effect on the crowd, including me. The band’s tight coordination and punchy arrangements mobilized not only my ears and eyes but my entire body. The bass’s low-frequency notes, amplified by the kick bass drum, grounded my body while the brilliant, forceful sounds of the brass section energized me. The sweet melodic lines played on the guitar, the rhythmic chord accompaniment of the keyboard, and the wide range of sampled sounds punctuating the energetic singing all reached me. Roy’s band impressed me and left me with lingering memories.

I had heard about Roy’s feats and his accomplishments through two of his closest friends (also my good friends), Junior Telfer, affectionately called simply “Jay,” who worked for many years as the unofficial manager of Black Stalin, and also from Black Stalin himself, one of the most highly respected and renowned calypsonians of the Caribbean. One night at Jay’s place, on the small porch that was protected from uninvited onlookers by a wall of green and clouds of incense, I met Roy on his way to play at a fete. If the tales I’d heard about his stature as a musician and bandleader were truly impressive, his physical appearance was no less striking. About five foot two, Roy’s very small frame and light-skinned complexion, combined with his smiling brown eyes, remarkably soft voice, and calm presence in and of itself, were arresting. His abundant gray dreadlocks, tied in the back and falling all the way down to his ankles, added another dimension to his otherwise slender body, an imposing trace of his spiritual and philosophical orientation. His demeanor bore no pretense, only warmth and care. I knew then that I would like to learn and write about his remarkable career, but it was not the right

time for him or for me. I was in the midst of another research project, and he was making strides with emerging young artists, performing soca—a musical style that had been around but was just then taking off in new directions.

Studying the cultural politics of Trinidad's carnival music since 1993 undoubtedly prepared me to focus on Roy Cape's journey. I heard his band play regularly in calypso tents and fetes during carnival, heard Roy accompany top vocalists as well as beginners at concerts and at competitions, and heard him rehearse the latest songs of the season in the band's room in Trinidad. Traveling for my other research project to various Caribbean and Canadian cities where carnival is celebrated, I also heard Roy Cape All Stars on tour, at times playing in large stadiums for more than twenty thousand people, at other times performing at chic hotels for a few thousand aficionados, and on a few occasions at school gymnasiums for no more than a hundred people in the most horrible acoustic conditions. Attending these many live performances over the years proved invaluable and set the stage for me to hear and appreciate better what Roy later shared with me in our numerous conversations.

### **ON ASSEMBLING SOCIAL AND PERSONAL HISTORIES**

Roy's stories about his active musical life all have been about tracing connections: conjuring up the spaces and places that made him grow up with a particular sensibility, identifying the musics and musicians that led him to play in certain ways, casting the sounds and scenes that made him move from one band to another, and describing the people at the heart of his decision to leave and then return to Trinidad. His stories were all about how his many connections with different people, things, and events, at different times and places, have been central to who he is and what he has been able to accomplish. In contrast to the widespread notion that people are the products of their time, it was revealing to hear that Roy never spoke of himself as a product of these different connections, events, times, and places, but rather as being part of them as much as they have been part of him. The difference is significant. Roy described how he had been part of a configuration or, more accurately, of several configurations that both influenced him and that he helped influence. As he made abundantly clear in the many hours of conversation with me, his journey has never been just musical but social, living by and through many different circuits and connections at various moments of his life. Given this perspective, this book is an attempt to reassemble, in written form, the storied texture of how individuals, working relationships, institutions, sonic environments, economic

and sociopolitical conditions, skills, beliefs, and passions have been part of the making of Roy Cape.

As Roy Cape's musical journey clearly shows, to speak about personal experience is never just to speak about individual intimacies. It is to speak about history, place, and time. It is to speak of events and the assemblage of people who were there. It is to reveal those who were absent, and the material worlds that contributed in so many ways to what he has become. It is a musical journey that establishes connections that have not been written about and yet that had a major impact on that journey.<sup>20</sup> It is a journey that reveals belonging or, better put, multiple senses of belonging—to a nation-state, a brotherhood, a family, a musical scene, a community of affinities, a diasporic network within and across borders of all sorts (race, language, age, nation-states, and so on). Speaking about one's individual journey this way reveals the creative value and agency of the *I* and addresses the world—in its material, political, economic, and cultural senses. It is thus a story that is at once intensely personal and overwhelmingly social.

## **ON WORKING TOGETHER**

Celebrating his fifty-year anniversary in the music business in 2008 incited Roy to make more time to speak about his journey. In that year our work together began slowly. Roy was acutely aware that we needed several hours uninterrupted to be able to have an in-depth conversation about his life as a Trinidadian musician, bandleader, manager, family man, and so on. We met twice in Toronto at the end of July a few days before he and his band began to perform for many Caribana-related events. We also met twice in Trinidad just before Christmas and before he began in earnest to play nonstop every night during the carnival season. On one other occasion, we had a series of exchanges just before his departure with his band to go on tour.

It is a challenge to conduct interviews with musicians who are regularly rehearsing and performing all year, either locally or on the road. At home in Trinidad, a musician and bandleader like Roy is busy not only with musical life, but also with family obligations and friends, and with the chores of daily life. He has little time for interviews. On the road, planning ahead for the next show or resting from the previous night's show, dealing with the unanticipated breakdown of equipment or problems with transportation—these also reduce the time when musicians are disposed to have a conversation about their musical careers. After the first two years, we decided to meet in Grenada, away from his daily preoccupations, to be able to concentrate on our work.

After a long flight from San Francisco to Miami, with a two-hour wait, and then another flight from Miami to Grenada, I arrived around 10 p.m. at the hotel where I was going to meet Roy for a four-day work session on the book. It was only two weeks after carnival, and Roy's band had played every night, often with two bookings a night. Yet Roy looked relaxed and refreshed and ready to work on the manuscript.

It was not long after the greetings and the thoughtful welcome, which featured local fruit juice, that Roy declared with a smile he was ready to go over the chapters and transcriptions I had sent him ahead of time. So I opened the many folders I had brought with me and began to show Roy the plan for the book, and the ways I imagined mapping his musical journey. This was simply a warm-up for the four intensive days of work that were to follow before I boarded the plane back to San Francisco.

Roy's habits as a bandleader overflow into many aspects of his life. His attention to detail, his high standards of achievement, his quest to update himself constantly—whether on new sound technology or computer software—and his insatiable appetite for reading everything he can on local and international news by devouring daily newspapers from cover to cover make him a very engaged and engaging interlocutor and collaborator.

The next morning, our work began in earnest. Roy's markings on the first chapter struck me immediately. They were not simply notes addressing misinformation or the need to expand on certain sections, but full editorial comments. This revealed to me his professional work ethic and the passion with which he dedicates himself to everything he does. His emphasis on working toward the highest musical standards, on improving his knowledge constantly, and on multiplying his efforts to stay competitive in the highly cutthroat music market marked him, one could say, as a modern subject—as someone who shares many of the aspirations that are aligned with the Enlightenment and its notions of progress, teleological development, and unitary and coherent subject. Yet Roy's agency in the music world does not follow a simple, single, and teleological trajectory. His associations, at different times in his career, are with not only Trinidadian calypsonians but also American jazz musicians and Jamaican singers, and with different music scenes—including Trinidad's carnival, European festivals in France, Germany, Sweden, and England, and multisited Caribbean diasporic show circuits both in the Caribbean and in numerous cities in the United States and Canada. These multiple associations led him not only to live as a cosmopolitan but also to think, as contemporary lingo would have it, as a post-modern subject. His memory of events, musics, influences, and associations often fuses times and places, people and things in ways that proceed

by leaps and bounds, moving across and amid things according to multiple logics, knowledges, and interests.<sup>21</sup>

After going over the first chapter, we turned to the transcriptions of our conversations, as drafted by my students. The transcriptions were filled with misspellings and the narratives they transcribed appeared fragmented. We both agreed that we needed to proceed differently. Instead of recording, I proposed to write on my computer as Roy would speak. As the teller of his story, I knew that Roy would speak slowly, deeply engaged in the act of remembering. At the same time, I thought, by looking at the computer screen he would now be able to ensure that the recording of his words would be accurate and that his story would unfold smoothly.

### **WRITING AS AN ETHICAL PROJECT**

For Roy, recalling the past was hard work. It required time and concentration to go back to the years of his childhood, at home and then at the orphanage, to describe his life as an up-and-coming saxophone player and his activities in recording studios, to recall his time in bands playing in dance halls, to detail life on the road (such as walking in the streets while performing with a band during carnival Monday and Tuesday), and to recast his tours. And this storytelling demanded concentration, as well as eliciting strong emotions. At times, he paused and smiled reflectively before resuming his story. At other times, he requested a break to smoke and rest his mind. On some occasions, he continued to speak, but more slowly, weighing every word, measuring the possible impact of his narrative on Trinidadian readers, particularly on his fellow musicians.

I was struck by how Roy was constantly monitoring how he should tell his story and the care he took to pay tribute to his fellow musicians. I was equally impressed by how he weighed the ways in which he phrased things to ensure that his narrative would not dismiss anyone. In Grenada, typing his script into the computer as he spoke led us to deal with ethical issues of voice. It helped me to understand the details that mattered to him, and to use what he saw as the proper speech register (the language appropriate to the people he would like to reach—poor, with basic formal education). So, for example, I learned that he did not want me to use a contraction like “don’t,” because it would make the reading of the book much harder for many people he knows. In that sense, Roy’s conception of telling his story mattered to him insofar as it did not read as simply the journey of a sovereign subject—that is, decided by and acted upon by him alone. His interest was to recount how his life had unfolded socially: with people in a narrative

that could be understood by people. It mattered to him that his claims be fair, not only from his perspective but also from the perspective of others. It mattered to him to offend no one, and to pay respect to specific people. It also mattered to him that the book would pay homage to significant others, not only musicians, but also to people with whom he grew up.

In this sense, for Roy to tell his story is not only a personal project to further his fame—although it is that too—but also an ethical project, one that is concerned with acknowledging the work and help of others, and the friendships that sustain band musicians away from home during their many months of touring. It is also an ethical project in the sense that Roy hopes teaching youths about the past may enable them to have a better future. For Roy, speaking about his musical life over the past fifty years is thus about writing a social history, paying tribute to those who helped him along the way, and producing a pedagogical document that could be used in schools. It is also about sharing his passion for music and his love of people.

In telling his story, Roy cites the voices of many people. He quotes musicians, friends, promoters, and fans. He narrates their deeds and explains how his life has been entwined with theirs. In the same vein, I integrate into my story of Roy's journey the voices of several people whose lives have been enmeshed with his. To do this I interviewed heads of organizations and institutions, calypsonians, musicians, promoters, and friends. I also quote some of the journalists from Trinidad and elsewhere who wrote about Roy as a musician, bandleader, Rastaman, and veteran figure in the Trinidadian and Caribbean music business.

## **MAPPING ROY CAPE'S MUSICAL JOURNEY**

I use the term “journey” to refer to Roy's fifty years in the music business because it underscores the notions of regimes of circulation and reputation that are central to this book. Journey conveys the idea of “traveling from one place to another” and “the experience of changing from one state of mind to another.”<sup>22</sup> Journey signals that there will be stops along the way, fast and slow lanes, and unanticipated detours. It also makes it clear that similar to the ways in which reputation is publicly acknowledged, there will be vivid snapshots of specific events, places, and people and only vague recollections of other occasions, sites, and encounters. It thus indicates that Roy's story will be recounted at times by leaps and bounds and at other times in minute detail. And while the notion of journey summons particular spaces, it simultaneously recalls specific times. I like the notion of journey also because while it specifies the beginning point of the travel, the focus is on

motion, the process of living, with all its unpredictability, disappointments, hopes, and pleasures—never a completed circle or simple linear expanse. Through this notion of journey, this book ties together the time and space of a life's work, revealed through stories.<sup>23</sup>

Accordingly, chapter 1 begins with the first sixteen years of Roy's journey. From the start it shows how Roy's multicultural and multiracial family ancestry and the multiple locales where he spent his early life are both unique and at the same time typically complex, as is the case for most West Indians. Most important, it shows Roy's curiosity and determination to learn music against all odds. In addition to acknowledging the profound influence of pan (the instrument and the music of steelbands) on a youth like Roy, someone addicted to music, for the first time in academic writing, it addresses the profoundly influential role that Christian orphanages have had on the musical life of Trinidad and Tobago, and, perhaps, on the English-speaking Caribbean as a whole.

The different aspects of Roy's journey that are highlighted in this book require different ways of telling. In the first chapter, to recount the specific conditions—economic, social, political, cultural, gender, racial, religious, to name only a few—in which Roy emerges as a musician, I use several voices to offer different perspectives on Roy's childhood: my own voice, at times as a historian, at other times as part of an exchange to elicit history in the making; Roy's voice as the leading part in our dialogue when we reflect on some moments of this early part of his life; and the voice of Sister Francine, the director of the orphanage (today renamed the Children's Home), to provide her own recollection and views of the institution.

Two things strike me in chapter 1. First, for both Roy and Sister Francine, narrating time and narrating experience is done through the mention of places. Particular place names—which abound in the text—do temporal work as well as providing geographic orientation. So when asked about what happens, the answer often points to where it happens.<sup>24</sup> In other words, time, space, and memory work together through place in chapter 1, as in the entire book. Second, for Roy, the idea of growing up as a child at the orphanage is related to body skills, what he learned to do with his hands—like tailoring clothes or playing the clarinet. In this chapter, Roy powerfully relates body memory and place memory to the sensuousness of knowledge and agency.

Chapter 2 maps Roy's journey as a saxophonist and band musician between 1959 and 1977. It reveals the consciousness of a working musician and foregrounds the immaterial labor that goes on in the production of music. It addresses pride of craft and acknowledges those musicians

who have been Roy's models of mentorship. It shows how name is forged through work consciousness and the materiality of sound production and circulation.

In chapter 2, Roy takes a solo. Apart from our brief exchanges in the text where I help him clarify certain aspects of his collection of memories, I use endnotes to map my listening: to provide details beneath the descriptions, to establish connections, and to put in perspective what I am learning from Roy's stories.

Chapter 3 addresses Roy's history of listening as his history of sounding.<sup>25</sup> It thus describes Roy's voice on the saxophone not in the singular but in the plural. It details how at different times and also for different reasons—musical, material, social, economic, political—Roy has sounded and played differently. It shows how a player's sound or musical aesthetic is thus never merely a technical musical issue. As a corollary, it emphasizes how musical flexibility is key for a musician to survive and, indeed, to thrive.

In chapter 3, I take the lead. I write about my interest in Roy's unique sound and playing as both a musician and an academic ethnomusicologist. I seek to learn technical details about Roy's playing, to help performers and music aficionados better appreciate Roy's sound production and predilection for certain approaches to improvisation. I also aim to situate historically the genealogy of the aesthetic values that inform his playing, as both a soloist and a band member in a brass section.

Chapter 4 addresses what being a bandleader has entailed in postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago since the early 1980s. It shows how economics has been Roy's constant preoccupation as a laborer paid on a performance basis. It also shows how Roy's ability to manage and nurture multiple relations—his affective labor—has contributed highly to his success as a bandleader.<sup>26</sup>

In chapter 4, Roy recounts not only some of the events that marked his career as a bandleader but also a unique moment in his life when he performed on stage as a singer during one carnival season. The stories recounted here are thus about a series of transformative moments in Roy's musical career and the consolidation of his notoriety through his performance in an increasingly wide range of circuits.

Chapter 4 takes the form of a conversation. It exhibits the dialogic relationship that Roy and I established in writing this book. It is punctuated by questions, anecdotes, and the reconstruction of important moments. Roy's desire to document certain aspects of his life combines with my interest in learning about the conditions of possibility that permit a band like Roy Cape All Stars to emerge, to thrive, and to last as long as it has. In our sec-

ond year working on this project, we were both more relaxed. Roy saw what I was writing by looking at the computer screen, and he knew that he could intervene at any time and go back on what he said, delete, add, abridge, reword, be more specific, and even come back later, insert a new track, back-track, and over track—for hours, days, or months afterward until the manuscript was complete and to our satisfaction. He also knew that he could rely on me to fill in the details if and where the need arises. I also felt more comfortable because I knew Roy better—his personality, speech pattern, and attention to details. I also felt more comfortable because I knew more about Trinidad from the late 1970s on than I did about the former periods. This is partly because many publications on Trinidad focus on sociopolitical conditions and cultural productions in the aftermath of independence, and partly because I have been deeply involved in research on Trinidad’s carnival music scene from this period on.<sup>27</sup> I thus feel that I can be a better interlocutor in many guises—annotator, researcher, translator, friend, provocateur, editor, commentator, questioner, and amplifier.

Chapter 5 looks at photographs illustrating different moments of Roy’s journey. Here the visual is in the foreground and the words in the background. In this chapter, my goal is to explore how Roy’s acclaim and his circulation have been visually mapped through photographs—in local newspaper archives and in Roy’s press book and personal collection. Roy’s efforts, in turn, focus on the memory work that these photographs generate.

In chapter 5, Roy first introduces the people, the moments, and the sites indexed in the photographs. His introduction often serves as a point of departure to emphasize the social relations and the particular political or social moments that the documents make visible. At other times, his description uses the images to pay homage to his musical mentors, peers, and friends, and to the local heroes that have inspired him. Sometimes, the photographs themselves ask questions that compel Roy to address how the images of past incidents or moments relate to the present. In turn, I use the introduction of this chapter to engage in a critique about the relationship of the popular music concept of stardom to our visual culture or, more specifically, to what Deborah Poole calls “visual economies.”<sup>28</sup> While I address, to use Corinne Kratz’s expression, “the various potentials of photographs” to boost the recognition, map the circulation, and archive the musical feats of musicians (Kratz 2012: 242), I also explore how photographs are deeply enmeshed in cultural practices and (re)produce specific artistic hierarchies and conventions in the popular music industries.<sup>29</sup>

Chapter 6 is based on testimonies. Here I call on a well-informed group of calypsonians, soca artists, friends, band members, and other musicians

to comment on Roy's career as a bandleader and saxophone player. I use their testimonies to examine how Roy's fame is constructed in the local musical milieus, and to learn about Roy's practice on a daily basis, his habits as a bandleader, and the dynamics that he creates with his own musicians. I also include excerpts from articles written by local and foreign journalists to acknowledge how Roy's accomplishments, in tandem with his circulation in different music milieus and among different people at home and abroad, have been (re)presented in the public media.

The inclusion of these many voices and many perspectives, drawn from interviews I recorded with numerous musicians, calypsonians, and friends, makes this chapter highly polyphonic. To produce this montage of voices, this chapter is laid out as if I had filmed the musicians' and artists' interviews on video and constructed an editing plan for a documentary. Based on this idea, I resort to opening shots to first establish the multiple musical experiences of these colleagues and to medium shots to understand the vantage point from which they speak about their relations with Roy. At times, I use jump cuts to condense the time of the interview exchange, in order to focus on particular themes. At other times, I resort to other documentary techniques such as fade and dissolve, to allow some of the voices to resonate, emphasize, or overlap with one another.

Chapter 7 traces Roy's circulation throughout his musical journey. It describes Roy's touring schedule and critically addresses the many other factors that have informed his access to certain sites and not others. While touring constitutes a crucial aspect of Roy's musical career, this chapter does not simply chronicle or focus on Roy's physical travels from point A to point B. Circulation here is conceived also in terms of the different spaces in which he has played; the social relations he has been able to establish in different milieus, as well as the role he has played in helping others make connections; and also the transmission of musical knowledge and experience to other musicians and singers. These different ways of conceiving circulation help show how a musician's fame is constructed across a variety of sites.

In this chapter, I take the leading voice for the most part, but I mix up different ways of telling a story. At times I include ethnographic snapshots—the story of my experience of particular events and performances. At other times, I quote the words of people I interviewed to add important details on the particular practices I am exploring and also to benefit from the insights of local observers. At still other times, I present excerpts of dialogues I have had with Roy and several other musicians in order to theorize what circulation has entailed over a long and active career.

This experiment in telling stories comes from my ethnographic commitment to learn not just about, but also from Roy's musical journey. Different ways of telling say different things. My attention to voice in this text has thus been to learn as much about the poetics as the politics of speaking selves. It has been about respecting how Roy and the many other contributors to this book organize, sequence, juxtapose, intertwine, and highlight their stories. But as Mikhail Bakhtin once said, speaking always entails entering an ongoing conversation, whether it is from the past, in the present, or in an imagined future.<sup>30</sup> So I have reproduced a number of dialogues to show how many of the ideas, notions, and stories in this book were prompted and came into being through conversations and negotiations. I have also reproduced many of the dialogues to show how, as is typical of most conversations, dialogic editing—to know what to include in, or exclude from, the stories, how to address some particular events—was an ongoing decision-making process as much for Roy as for me. While I was the first ear at the moment of record, the stories told were ultimately meant to be heard as widely as possible.

Band musicians in the Caribbean have been listened to, but not seriously heard. They have been seen, but not deeply known. This book begins to acknowledge what is involved in a working musician's journey in the Caribbean, both as a postcolonial subject and as an islander. It begins to show what it takes to earn an enduring reputation like Roy's, with the conditions he has worked in. It begins to call attention to the regimes of circulation that so deeply inform what such a reputation for a Caribbean musician entails, how it is built in the media, where and by whom it is appreciated, what kind of money it generates, and some of the other ways—sometimes in lieu of money, and sometimes not—by which it is rewarded. This book is a first step toward more deeply hearing, knowing, and engaging what Caribbean musicians' stories say about the pleasures and pains of their lives at work.