

ABSTRACT

A fair amount of theatre activity occurs in the English-speaking Caribbean as a whole. Over the years numerous plays have been written by West Indians and produced by theatre groups stretching from Jamaica through to Guyana. Today one island can boast a full-time theatre school--the Jamaican National School of Drama--while short-term training programmes are still pursued in other territories. Apart from Dr. Errol Hill's Trinidad Carnival: Mandate for a National Theatre¹, however, there are no major reflections on the state of the theatre itself--where we are and seem to be heading.

This paper does not attempt this task in its entirety. Our thesis is that if the theatre in the Caribbean is to realise itself, it must locate both its method and inspiration in this very environment. What justification, we ask ourselves, is there for the theatre at all? Until some consideration is given to these questions, our efforts will continue to spawn the frustration of merely working in substandard conditions--poor theatre facilities, the absence of widespread training, professional opportunities, knowledgeable critics, a concerned public.

In indicating a solution, we have made a distinction between the 'formal' or 'conventional' theatre that relies on metropolitan methods and facilities for its practice, and 'traditional enactments'--the rituals and festivals of the people. While the scope of the study is Caribbean, we have focussed on the island of Trinidad for its particular richness in the area of traditional performances.

¹ University of Texas Press, 1972.

No attempt is made at critiques of West Indian playwrights,
but their works are cited for study where they employ traditional
methods or material.