

On a Saturday morning in 2012 I hunched over a desk in the reading room of Goldsmiths Special Collections, digitising one of the last boxes of photographs in the Daphne Oram Archive.¹ The slides were dirty and scratched, and the scans came up on screen in blocks. Decades of deterioration had rendered ruin on the set of holiday photographs. A dusted narrative unfolded from plane window, palm-lined shore and road, continuing through fields of sugar cane, cocoa plantations and city streets. Amongst the Caribbean landscapes were two whitewashed shots of the British composer Daphne Oram, seated on a beach. In the first she looks away, inspecting the undercarriage of a turtle (fig.12), in the second, one of the last of the sequence, she sits alone, centred, smiling at the camera (fig.13).

Daphne Oram was one of Britain's earliest and most innovative composers of electronic music. After her death in 2003 she left behind a wealth of writings, recordings and ephemera. Her archive is a history written in life, a biographical template teeming with reflections and addenda. This writing is inspired by a number of items catalogued by the author in 2012, and its context is woven from threads found in forums, articles and interviews.

At first, the barren practicality of the housing of the Oram collection is chastening — the modern archive is delimited by principles of preservation, classification and inter-relation. Light and temperature controlled environs induce sterility — a context-free primer frozen in time. Gone are the nostalgic days of dust, of Jules Michelet's feverish breathing and Walter Benjamin's card systems. Material now swims in a contemporary stream, perpetual and dematerialised. Surrogacy ghosts it from its shelf, away from the concerned purview of the archon. Digital reformation unfetters the information in lines of data and meta-data; searchable, browsable, zoomable. Tactile encounters in the place of origination have become distant and rarified. The material remains untouched, structured and conserved from the chaotic environment outside, liberated by digital avatars from institution and hierarchy.² These surrogate fragments are

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This text is accompanied by a soundscape of tape recordings made by Daphne Oram during her trip to Trinidad and Tobago in 1964. The soundscape is referred to throughout the text with time-codes (0'00"), and can be listened to alongside reading, or as a separate contextual piece. The audio is available at: b-f-t-k.info/progress-music and will also be looped on the BFTK homepage (b-f-t-k.info) for the duration of the issue.

Photographs denoted throughout the text as 'fig.' are housed on the signature-wrap that intersects these two eight-page sections. Archival listings for the soundscape, photographs and scanned excerpts included in the text can all be found on p.22.

1

The Daphne Oram Archive is housed in Special Collections & Archives at Goldsmiths, University of London. The archival material referenced in this article is referred to by item catalogue number within the collection e.g. (ORAM/1/1/001)

2

For Esther Leslie, in her translation project *Walter Benjamin's Archive* (Verso Books, 2015), 'knowledge that is organised in slips and scraps knows no hierarchy' (p.26).

summoned at will, activated and mediated in technology. In a visual-inter-net age, archival imagery shifts like ink on blotting paper — no sooner is it posted than it pixelates, reappearing cropped from context, reformulated, reanimated, a digital *I am Sitting In a Room*.³ The scale and form of the originating stuff is made skeletal in myriad transformations. But the material does not only emanate outwards. Each archive has its inversion — that which is not there — excluded by choice, flippancy and chance. The writing of history is the stuff of non-presence. Stories are framed by what exists, and refracted in the space between.

Sitting in the reading room adjoining the closed stacks where the collection is preserved, I leafed through a grey series box containing a half-catalogued stack of papers. I came across Oram's notes regarding the film soundtracks she had worked on in the early 1960s and found amongst them a handful of thin airmail paper and a thick dark green notebook. The papers were a four page typed treatment for a film entitled *Trinidad and Tobago*, their heading denoting their sender:

GEOFFREY JONES (FILMS) LIMITED
28 HAMILTON TERRACE, N.W.8. CUN. 4276

Geoffrey Jones' work seems known now only to the most inveterate British film enthusiast, his fate cast in a post-war industrial era, shadowed in the glow of the documentary masterpieces of John Grierson, Humphrey Jennings and Paul Rotha.⁴ His was a uniquely pure documentary art form,⁵ a self-contained genre centred on dynamic rhythmic editing, free from commentary, closely synchronised to music. His work teems with a musicality born from childhood trips to the cinemas of north-west London where, accompanied by his mother, Jones watched a wide range of British, German and Russian films, including early shorts by Norman McLaren and Len Lye, and the epoch defining silent film *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) by Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov. Vertov's film had an indelible influence on the young Jones, and became the driving force in his pursuit of a visual language of his own.

In the 1930s sound and music in British documentary filmmaking was often functional, romantic and derivative. But there were notable exceptions: the 1936 GPO production *Night Mail*, directed by Harry Watt and Basil Wright, introduced an innovative visual-sound narrative, tracking the journey of a Postal Special train across the British Isles. The film showcases the compositional dexterity of Benjamin Britten, whose music develops to a surreal staccato underlay for the rapped rhythmic verse of WH Auden's extraordinary beat coda.



Night Mail heralded the potential of a novel film-sound combination, and in its evocative imagery portrayed the towering industrial landscapes of the British North as a sleeping giant, ready to awake:

Towards the fields of apparatus, the furnaces,
 Set on the dark plain like gigantic chessmen.

Whilst the arrival of the Second World War necessitated a shift in focus towards national propaganda, the experimentalism of the British film and music industries endured. Humphrey Jennings' documentary *Listen to Britain* (1942) showcased a stark lack of spoken narration, informed by his work with the Mass-Observation⁶ organisation. By predominantly utilising music and diegetic sound, Jennings cast ambiguity on his intentions, allowing the viewer to understand the film from their own perspective.

The early 1940s saw rapid technological advances in Britain, especially in the broadcasting of film and sound. In October 1943, a seventeen

3

Alvin Lucier's 1969 piece *I Am Sitting in a Room* involves Lucier recording himself narrating a text, and then repetitively playing back and re-recording the fragment until the words become unintelligible and only the resonant frequency of the room remains.

4

During the pre-war period, The Empire Marketing Board (EMP) and General Post Office (GPO) were headed by the groundbreaking Scottish documentary filmmaker

John Grierson, who in 1926 coined the word *documentary*. Grierson recognised and collaborated with numerous talented filmmakers in this era, including Humphrey Jennings, a co-founder of the Mass-Observation movement; Paul Rotha, who worked closely with the cinematographer Wolfgang Suchitzky, and the animators Len Lye and Norman McLaren.

5

'Geoffrey Jones' [films] are probably the best-known examples of "pure" documentary, though there are many one-off examples.

The drama-documentary often acquired greater psychological sophistication than it had enjoyed before.' Patrick Russell & James Piers Taylor. *Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain* (London: BFI, 2010, p.7)

6

The Mass-Observation social research organisation was co-founded by Jennings in 1937. The organisation sought to use anthropological methods to gather records of the every day lives of the people of Britain.

year old Daphne Oram arrived in London to take up a position at the BBC.⁷ Oram worked in the music department at the Royal Albert Hall, exploring novel microphone techniques for radio broadcast of orchestral performances, and studying composition privately with the composer Ivor Walsworth. As bombs rained down on London, Oram and her colleagues broadcast the concerts from a balcony high up under the glass roof, tracking gain against the dynamics of the score, and ensuring they had a disc recording of the same piece cued up, so if the hall were to be evacuated, the concert broadcast would appear to continue as normal:

*From standby gram records (to fool the Germans!)
Doodle bugs — Proms left London.*

In 1948, at the age of twenty-three, living in a shared flat on Great Portland Street, Oram began work on her groundbreaking composition *Still Point*. The piece, for double orchestra and turntables, is one of the earliest known examples of turntablism⁸ and demonstrates a radical attitude towards the manipulation of recorded sound.

Just a mile away on Southampton Row, Jones had begun studying at the Central School of Art, where he encountered the work of Italian film-director Luciano Emmer whose narrative films probed the internal rhythm of the still image. Jones was captivated by Emmer's work *Goya* (1951), in which a tightly choreographed topographical dance amongst Francisco Goya's thirty-three drawing series *Bullfighting* plays precise duet to the interlocking rapidity of Andrés Segovia's flamenco guitar. At Central, Jones organised screenings of the graphic sound experiments of Len Lye and Norman McLaren, who had been experimenting with 'Visual Music' — drawing directly onto the optical soundtrack of film. What was seen and heard became one and the same.⁹ Jones also screened Dutch filmmaker Bert Haanstra's *Glas* (1958), a hypnotic feat of editing that illustrated the precocious potential of non-verbal sound-film. *Glas* is a film of process, whose focus is not strict narrative or *dramatis personae*, but the systems and mechanics of glass making — the rhythmic music of manufacture.

By the early 1950s Daphne Oram had been promoted to the position of studio manager. Inspired by developments in experimental music in Europe, she campaigned for the BBC to provide the facilities needed to explore new forms of electronic music. By the mid 1950s, the BBC had acquired a few early tape recorders, and in March 1957, operating under the aegis of the *Radiophonic Effects* unit, Oram was commissioned to compose music for the television play *Amphitryon 38*. Using a sine tone oscillator, self-designed filters and early tape manipulation, the score for *Amphitryon 38* was the first piece of pure electronic music produced at the BBC.

The Television play "Amphitryon 38" has Radiophonic Effects of a much lighter mood. The sound sources used by Daphne Oram were mostly pure tones from an oscillator but she also sang, hummed,

blew three notes on a flute, struck the strings of a grand piano and played half a dozen notes on the violin, some pizzicato and some tremolo. In the final product these were so reshaped and intergrated into the composition that none was recognisable as its former self

As demand grew for these electronic sounds, Oram lobbied those higher than her, drawing up budgets and technical specifications for a studio where composers would be free to work on electronic music on a full-time basis. Finally, at the beginning of 1958, Oram, alongside her colleague Desmond Briscoe, was granted a budget to establish the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, which was founded in Maida Vale in March of that year. But Oram yearned to pursue her own ideas for electronic music composition, and was frustrated by the workshop's focus on producing effects for radio and drama.

Whilst working at the BBC, Oram had studied the technological advances taking place in the film industry. In 1950 she distributed a paper to colleagues entitled *The Broadcasting of Music* in which she proposed that rather than paying attention to the work of Stockhausen, Schaeffer and the serialists, the BBC should look to the nascent film art being produced in Britain at the time for inspiration.

My contention is that a great opportunity has been missed by not looking on the microphone as a camera. Although for 25 years we have been using it only as a reproduction instrument in serious music to eavesdrop on the concert hall or opera house, is it too late to explore its real potentialities?

Oram's interest in the relationship between film and music grew in her time at the BBC. Correspondence from 1957 details her plans to create a drawn sound machine,¹⁰ by which a new landscape for sound composition could be explored. She researched the work of experimental filmmakers including Norman McLaren¹¹ and was sent in October 1958, with three colleagues, on a fact-finding mission to the *Journées Internationales de Musique Expérimentale* at the Brussels World Trade Fair. There, as well as witnessing Edgard Varèse demonstrate his *Poème Électronique*, in a chance encounter, Oram met the pioneering American visual-sound artist

7

See 'A letter from PA Florence, Engineering Establishment Officer', where Oram is offered a post as 'Technical Assistant (Class II) on the unestablished staff of the Engineering division in Programme Engineering based in London at a weekly wage of £2.15.0d' (ORAM/3/1/109).

8

When Oram completed *Still Point* in 1950, she submitted it to the BBC to be considered for the inaugural Prix Italia prize. The BBC

refused her entry, explaining that the piece could only be judged as a 'straight score'. In June 2016 *Still Point* was performed for the first time by the London Contemporary Orchestra with Shiva Feshareki on turntables, over sixty years after it was completed. The piece was realised by the author in collaboration with Feshareki from hundreds of pages of draft fragments found within the Daphne Oram Archive.

9

Experiments in visual music had begun in Russia decades before this. See Andrey Smirnov's fantastic book *Sound in Z* for detailed

information about the many pioneering figures in Russian film and music of the early twentieth century.

10

'Pen and pencil notes hand-written by Daphne Oram detailing her plans for the Oramics technique', copies sent to Mr Porter and Mr Garrard at the BBC on 4th April 1957 (ORAM/1/1/008).

11

See 'Radiophonic Workshop Log Book 2', notes by Daphne Oram and Alec Nisbett (R97/23/1). BBC Written Archives, Reading.

Jordan Belson, who at the time along with musician Henry Jacobs, was organising a series of audiovisual shows known as the *Vortex Concerts* at the planetarium in San Francisco.

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We did meet two people who seemed to have a genuine interest in Radiophonics, and an interest in meeting others and comparing notes. They were two Americans, Messrs. Jacobs and Belsen, who put on a show called "Vortex" in the Planetarium. This consisted of relatively short pieces of Musique Concrete to the accompaniment of lighting effects. It was in fact very similar to the expensive undertaking mounted by Phillips in their specially constructed building.

Continued

On returning to London, Oram set to work at the Radiophonic Workshop, but less than a year after it had opened, on 1 November 1958, she resigned, frustrated by its lack of ambition and anxious to pursue her own ideas. Oram left London and purchased an old oast house in Kent named Tower Folly, where she set about gathering the equipment she required to start her own electronic music studio.

Meanwhile Jones had completed his studies at Central School of Art. Influenced by Emmer's illustrative films he created his own hand drawn animations, which earned him a job with an advertising agency. Lacking a camera, Jones' early work drew inspiration from the techniques of Lye and McLaren, drawing directly onto exposed film to create animations synced to music. Jones then took up a role as supervisory director for animation at the Shell Film Unit, where he made his first documentary *Shell Panorama* (1959), his first and only film with spoken commentary. When the in-house animation department at Shell was closed in 1961, Jones formed his own company 'Geoffrey Jones (Films)' and was re-contracted as a freelancer. The result was the giddy rhythmic journey of *Shell Spirit* (1962).

In the early 1960s at Tower Folly, Daphne Oram was focused on the creation of her drawn sound machine, a project she had entitled *Oramics*. The composer would draw onto a synchronised set of ten 35mm film strips, overlaid on light sensitive components that generated electrical charges to control amplitude, timbre, frequency and duration of sound. To support her work Oram took on a series of commissions, including composing animation soundtracks for Horlicks, composing the anthology *Electronic Sound Patterns* for EMI, and designing electronic sound effects for Jack Clayton's 1961 film *The Innocents*.

In September 1962 the head of the British Transport Film Unit¹² Edgar Anstey invited Jones to begin work on a new commission to explore the design innovations resulting from the electrification of the railways. Jones agreed and set off across the British Isles, filming the length and breadth of the rail network. As he travelled, Jones became acutely aware of the juxtaposition between the comfortable well-heeled passengers and the hostile conditions faced by the railwaymen working in all weathers to keep the trains running. In January 1963, Anstey met Jones for an update on the film's progress. Jones described to him an idea for a different short





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film, focusing on the railway in winter and documenting the reality for the workers pitted against the inclement conditions. Having a sharp eye for an excellent filmic subject, and aware of the rapidly changing weather, Anstey commissioned *Snow* (1963) the very next morning.

In *Snow*, the hypnotic tension of its cascading soundtrack is the linchpin of the film. Initially, Jones had wished to use the hit song *Teen Beat* by the American drummer Sandy Nelson, but was unable to obtain a license. Hearing of Oram's work at the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, Jones asked her to rework Nelson's song, employing British musician Jonny Hawksworth to record a new arrangement, expanding it to twice its length and filtering and effecting the result. Oram finished the sound score in February 1963. The resultant film was a staccato masterpiece, a virtuosic interplay of rhythmic film editing and clattered electronic manipulations that embodied the passenger train's progress, made possible by untold human endeavour.¹³ After Jones had finished shooting *Snow*, further work on the railway design project was put on hold when it became apparent that electrification had not progressed sufficiently at that time.

In the Autumn of 1963, Jones was approached by a film officer for British Petroleum (BP) to create a documentary about their operations in Trinidad and Tobago. With his railway project on hold, Jones agreed. In the winter he flew out to the islands with his friend and director of photography Wolf Suschitzky¹⁴ to spend five weeks filming for the documentary. Buoyed by his experience working with Oram on *Snow*, Jones asked her to join them. He sent her a four page brief for the film, typewritten on wafer thin airmail paper.¹⁵ Jones proposed that Oram should create a field-sound based composition to act as the foundation for a rhythmic narration-free documentary. Jones planned to use a graphic scoring technique, allowing him to compose and edit his filmed material precisely to the timbral character of the soundtrack:

Method... To compose a framework in sound that throughout the film will be evocative of the subject, and to make the action of the individual pictures, and, or, the action of the transition from picture to picture, relate to the rhythm, textural instrumentation, and where used, the melody in the composition.

12

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the British prime minister Clement Atlee had created the British Transport Commission (BTC), a vision of integrated, publicly-owned transport, whose aim was to inspire the British population with a feeling of progress into the future. Within the commission was British Transport Film (BTF), which aimed to use innovative

short film to communicate to the public and its own employees the technological progress being made as transport networks were upgraded across the country. At this time, the BTF was headed by Edgar Anstey, a filmmaker who had learnt his craft under John Grierson.

13

Snow went on to gain an Oscar nomination in 1965 and received over fourteen other major awards at film festivals.

14

Wolfgang Suschitzky is perhaps best known for his collaborations with Paul Rotha in the 1940s, and his work on Mike Hodges' 1971 film *Get Carter*. Suschitzky is also a successful photographer whose photographs have been exhibited at the National Gallery, London.

15

'Trinidad and Tobago brief' (ORAM/8/35/001).

The film, titled *Trinidad and Tobago*, was to be structured into four sections; history, landscape, work and play. Under each heading Jones added his punctual impressions as to how the film and sound should work as one.

Work. Visual.

The emphasis here is on manual labour, skill and dexterity. Sequences will also contain portraits illustrating the multi-racial composition of society, and details of crops unfamiliar to audiences outside the tropics. Special attention will be given to team work, and the interrelation of actions in cutting.

16

Jones' brief sat on top of a faded green notebook¹⁶ in the boxed pile of papers. Titled 'Trinidad and Tobago' in felt tip, its pages were densely packed with handwritten notes, tape timings and lists.¹⁷ The first half of the book mirrored Jones' briefing document, detailing an acoustic itinerary that matched and augmented his ideas. At the back of the notebook, pages of draft musician's contracts prefaced an inked inventory of recording equipment:

Microphones (5)

- One Type MD 21 Serial No 56332 (given in error as 57616 on
Sennheiser make supplied with Nagra. Supplier's receipt)
- One Resosound Ribbon microphone RBL/T (matchbox shape)
- One Reso Ribbon URA - 30n with switch (fat tubular shape)
(on loan to the Company from G. Wrensch Esq. London)
- One Jumpiers DP 4/X 200n (slender shape)
- One Reso Dynamic DPL - 30n (small tubular shape) with clear plastic
shield. (On loan to the Company from F.W. Wood. J. Beckwith London)

Oram joined Jones and Suschitzky in the last week of January 1964, and as she flew in over the Caribbean, she took photographs from the plane window with a Kodak Bantam camera loaned by her mother (fig.1, fig.2, 00'00", 00'03").

Mama Dis Is Mas¹⁸

Trinidad and Tobago had gained independence from Britain in 1962, just one year after BP had begun operating off the east coast of the islands. Trinidad was famous for its yearly carnival, a celebration that Jones planned to make the centrepiece of his film. In the late eighteenth century 'Mas' traditions had started in Trinidad, when French plantation owners held masquerade parties to mark the beginning of fasting for Lent. In response, the slaves working on the plantations formed their own parallel

celebration, 'Canboulay' (from the French 'cannes brûlées' meaning burnt cane). Canboulay featured stick fighting and call-and-response protest music called 'Cariso'. Cariso music was a form of vocal protest for the enslaved population, and its verses carried oral traditions from their ancestral homes. During Canboulay, torches of burning sugar cane were carried in procession as symbols of resistance. After the abolition of slavery in 1834, Canboulay merged with Mas, becoming Carnival, a celebration of freedom, multiculturalism and defiance. From 1845, large influxes of indentured immigrants from India, Syria and Africa dramatically changed the ethnic composition of the islands, adding new folk musics into the existing Creole mix. In February 1881, stick fighting, torch burning and percussion music were banned in response to the Canboulay riots, when descendants of freed slaves protested against attempts by British police to crack down on the celebrations. It wasn't until the mid 1930s that the traditions began to reappear, transformed amongst large orchestras of tuned inverted oil drums. These 'steel-pans' were forged in the industrialisation of the time — a by-product of the swelling petroleum industry sculpted into a melodic percussion instrument, a unique rolling of complex history in a physical sounding vessel.

From the documents and photographs in the paper collection of the archive, it was clear that over her three weeks in Trinidad Oram had travelled widely (fig.3, fig.4, fig.5) — her notebooks referred to around twenty 1/4" tapes of recordings. I spent days listening through a stack of uncatalogued tapes I had stumbled across in the archive¹⁹ that I thought might relate to her work on the film. As I sat listening, I began to piece together how Oram's soundtrack had been made. One tape was particularly curious. Unlabelled but for a small sticker on its reel simply denoting 'Birthday Message', it seemed unlikely to relate. As the tape crackled and began, Oram's voice crisped from the speakers. What followed was a twenty minute message recorded from her Hilton hotel room and sent to her father back in Wiltshire — an oral birthday card that described in detail her time in Trinidad (15'44"). As she excitedly regaled her experiences of carnival, I noticed that the tape was about to run out. She emitted a gasped goodbye, and was cut off by the tape unspooling.

17

16
'Trinidad and Tobago Notebook'
(ORAM/8/35/003).

17
Oram documented her day-to-day process throughout her life, favouring pencil for her technical and practical remarks, blue ink for formal writing and felt tip of varying colours for emphasis and exclamation.

18
Lord Kitchener's *Mama Dis Is Mas* was the calypso hit of the steel band panorama competition in 1964.

19
The tape collection in the Daphne Oram Archive consists of over five hundred tapes. It includes full compositions, field recordings, audio letters and process tapes relating to around one hundred different works and projects.

*Trinidad and Tobago*²⁰ begins with Jones and Suschitzky's serene vistas of coastal landscapes and mangrove swamps, ancient and untouched by human hand. Footage of birds duet with flute, floating atop undulating waves of echo-effected Shango drums. The drums and flute increase in pace, propelling a visual exposition of multiculturalism on the island, a journey through architecture, iconography and people at work and play. We jump to footage of cocoa bean workers, their circular stamping of beans ground to dust²¹ cut beautifully against tape recordings of their work songs (03'11").²² After the historical landscape sequence Jones unfurls a dynamic encounter with the mechanics of progress. Oram's manipulated drum loops and steel-pan recordings scatter percussive counterpoint to footage of manual and mechanical labour. Sweeping footage of blazing sugar cane²³ is soundtracked by a slowed tattoo of low sonorous drum hits, a fleeting evocation of Canboulay that is immediately overrun by oil lines, pylons and transportation. The echoing drums are subsumed by the rapid back-and-forth of high frequency bongo patterns, an industrial rattle that speeds up and slows down in mimicry of the machinery. As we watch an oil drill burrow down into the ocean floor the patterns spiral into a clattering steel-pan introduction, heralding the climactic carnival sequence (35'45").

1964 was to be a defining moment for carnival in Trinidad, marking not only the advent of the first official steel-pan 'panorama' competition, but also the moment that Trinidad's carnival reached across the globe, inspiring the Caribbean community in London to launch an offshoot in Notting Hill.

Oram was enthralled by the music of carnival, and on her arrival in Trinidad immediately began meeting and recording local musicians. She visited a steel-pan yard to learn the mechanics of how the instruments were made, and set up a recording room in a small theatre near her hotel in Port of Spain. In the theatre she recorded sessions of Shango spiritual music with a local percussion-flute duo, and taped a cappella performances of *The Eyes Have It* and *Come Leh We Go!*²⁴ (09'10") with the calypsonian Mighty Endeavour. She also recorded some of the most well known steel-bands of the time, taping performances by Mighty Sparrow, Lord Kitchener and Warlord Blakie. Unfortunately these recordings do not survive, and for some, the only reference to the sessions having taken place are Oram's cursory notes and accountings:

Paymer via Bruce P. BP
 Sparrow 100
 Kitch 100
 Blakie 100 } 163

The recordings that Oram, Jones and Suschitzky captured of carnival are the feature point of *Trinidad and Tobago*. In an interview late in his life

Jones commented that the combination was deemed so effective that audiences were convinced the sound and film must have been recorded simultaneously (something that would have been impossible for him to do at the time).

On the first day of carnival Oram woke early to walk down to Frederick Street in the centre of Port of Spain. She watched thousands of revellers dressed in a surreal attire of striped robbers, horned devils and African warriors spill out of bars and alleyways in the morning light, the aftermath of all night jump-up calypso parties (fig. 6, fig. 14). She spent the second day of carnival in Savannah Park, viewing proceedings from a large photographer's platform that provided a perfect centre point for the carnival parades. She watched enthralled as carnival-goers dressed as vikings, bronze-helmeted goths swaddled in fur, and children wearing oriental carpets as robes danced to vast steel-pan bands numbering as many as four thousand players. In the intense heat of the day Oram found a cool spot, ducking underneath the viewing platform to sit and watch proceedings through the dangling legs of the people sitting on its edge. Every now and then she dashed out with her Nagra tape recorder and microphones to record the bands as they passed (18'58"). She took numerous photos of carnival-goers in the park throughout the day, marvelling at their barely describable costume (fig. 9, fig. 10).

The carnival sequence in *Trinidad and Tobago* is bizarre, joyous and surreal — cultures merge and entwine; parodies of British colonials with huge paper mâché heads dance with Trinidadians bedecked in US navy uniforms who stumble cartoon walks to triumphant discordant brass, pipes in one hand, fake guns in the other. A giant red and black devil toots a paper clarinet (fig. 11), glaring menacingly as geisha women sway amongst crowds of Western tourists dressed as scarecrows. At the end of the carnival sequence, just before the end credits of the film, we see a tiny flash of Wolf Suschitzky in amongst the multitude, Jones' nod to his hero Dziga Vertov.

After the carnival Oram spent days collating and listening through the tapes she had recorded. On the Sunday, her driver invited her to attend his niece's Hindu wedding ceremony. At the wedding, Oram recorded

²⁰
Trinidad and Tobago was released as part of a British Film Institute DVD collection entitled *Geoffrey Jones: The Rhythm of Film*. The collection also features a unique interview with Jones, filmed in the last few months of his life, where he discusses *Trinidad and Tobago* and his collaborations with Daphne Oram.

²¹
 Cocoa production had been affected by a severe drought in Trinidad, between 1957 and 1962), and the film captures a rare moment of optimistic recovery before the industry changed beyond recognition with the mechanisation of the late 1960s.

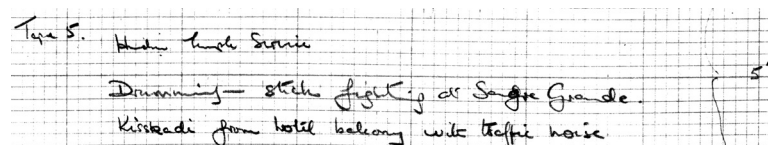
²²
Cocoa Songs can be heard at 4'18" in the Jones' final *Trinidad and Tobago* film.

²³
 Sugar cane is burned before harvesting to remove the leaves and insects from the crop.

²⁴
Come Leh We Go! was a calypso originally written in the early 1960s by the Guyanan singer King Fighter.

a traditional stick drum battle outside of the venue (24'43", 25'30"). The ceremony started at midday, and went on until the early evening (fig. 8).

The changing soundscape of Trinidad fascinated Oram. The arrival of BP and other oil companies had brought a wave of imported machinery and vehicles to the island. As the number of cars grew, so did the background noise of traffic, and Oram's notes are littered with lost battles against the noise, including numerous attempts to capture clean recordings of the song of the local onomatopoeic Kis-Ka-Dee bird (31'04"):



When Oram discussed the problem of traffic noise with Jones, he asked her to record separate tapes of the sound, so that she might thread the interruptive car horns and throbbing engines into musical rhythm for him in sections of the film. Oram went out into the city the following morning and recorded over twenty minutes of traffic sounds (13'25").

A roadside meeting with a family, their horse and cart laden with the day's harvest (fig. 7), led to Oram being invited to visit a sugar cane farm, where she recorded the burning of the cane and the slashing and cutting of the resultant crop. The following day she organised a visit to record a police brass band where she captured a bombastic militarised version of *Abide With Me*. In retrospect, the triumphalist brass fanfares and distant gun salutes of her recording evoke a faded afterglow of colonialism, slipping away in the dawn of Trinidad's independence (39'07").

As her trip drew to a close Oram spent a few days swimming and relaxing on Maracas beach to the north of the island, renowned as one of the most beautiful on Trinidad. She flew back to England at the weekend, waiting an extra day longer than planned in order to fly via New York (fig. 15) with Jones and Suschitzky. On her return to Tower Folly (fig. 16) she immediately set to work, reviewing and editing the tapes from Trinidad. She spent February manically creating the composition for the film; looping, splicing and effecting the tape recordings to structure and compose an otherworldly soundtrack that would provide the matrix for Jones to edit to.

Jones' *Trinidad and Tobago* documents an age when progress was celebrated in the industrialised world, a time when mechanisation teamed with prosperity, spurring things forwards, a progression against the odds. In Oram's deftly manipulated soundtrack the steel-pan acts counterpoint to this progression, a tuned inversion whose historical rhythm celebrates the humanity of industrial endeavour. Listening to Oram's raw tape recordings provides a uniquely unmediated document of a pivotal time in the island's culture. In the early 1960s the country was changing rapidly, old manual industry was being replaced by mechanisation, and the newly

independent nation was celebrating its freedom from colonial rule. This was a time of self-determination, and it is clear from both the working notes and the final film that Oram and Jones sought to capture this vibrancy, replete in contradictory ebullience. *Trinidad and Tobago* represents a forgotten impressionistic form of what a public information film could be. It sits on an unrecognised spectrum of rhythmic, artistic sound-film that stretches from Vertov and Haanstra to the morose environmental confusion of Derek Williams' 1970 documentary *The Shadow of Progress*.

In the five years following *Trinidad and Tobago*, a surfeit of visual material born from the ubiquity of television caused hyperactive short-form advertising to become the industry standard, and for Jones, the commissions dried up. The days of open briefs and forward-thinking commissioning came to an end. Oram and Jones worked together on only two other films. *Rail* (1967) saw the completion of Jones' railway project with Anstey, for which Oram provided additional sound effects on top of Wilfred Joseph's score, and *This Is Shell* (1970), for which Oram provided additional sound effects as counterpart to Donald Fraser's music.

Oram's experiences working with Geoffrey Jones on *Trinidad and Tobago* had a profound impact on her compositional practice, enabling her to master a highly intricate tape manipulation technique and furthering her work with sound-visual narrative. Following the completion of the soundtrack she remained fascinated by the timbral characteristics of the steel-drum (41'24"). Two years later, in her otherworldly composition *Episode Metallic* (April 1965) she became the first electronic musician to manipulate the steel-drum, effecting and splicing her recordings from Trinidad with other concrete acoustic material to form the sound element of the futuristic sculpture *Nucleus* by Andrew Bobrowski. *Nucleus*, one of the earliest examples of electronic interactive art, was exhibited alongside Barbara Hepworth's *Theme on Electronics* in December 1965 at the Mullard Electronics Centre in London — the concrete rhythmic music of progress became the raw material for the electronic music of the new atomic era.

This narrative outlines the work of two artists who are only in recent years gaining the recognition they so richly deserve. The traces of material at its basis were necessarily reordered, recontextualised and reclassified, freed from the archive and fragmented on these pages. Writing between these fragments is not a fiction — it is, as with all history, a re-description and re-interpretation, a conversation conjured where there wasn't one, connections made that are only now apparent. In utilisation the archival material is activated, and in the passing of time its dormancy becomes an actor in the narrative. For it is in its dust, its sterile, frozen storage that the unexpected, the untold, becomes possible.

TEXT SCANS

p.6

Excerpt from 'Trinidad and Tobago Treatment' (ORAM/8/35/001). The Daphne Oram Archive, Special Collections & Archives, Goldsmiths, University of London.

p.7

Excerpt from the score manuscript for *Night Mail* by Benjamin Britten. Courtesy the British Library & the Benjamin Britten Archive (MS 60621).

p.8

Excerpt from 'Handwritten biographical interview transcript by Daphne Oram c.1988' (ORAM/9/6/001/006).

p.8–9

Excerpt from the typewritten manuscript 'Devizes girl constructs new type of music for the BBC' (ORAM/3/0/002).

p.9

Excerpt from 'Broadcasting of Music paper' (ORAM/3/2/025/001).

p.10

Excerpt from the BBC Written archives: R97/9/1 — Radiophonic Effects Committee and Electronic Composition Workshop 1956–68

p.15

Excerpt from 'Trinidad and Tobago brief' (ORAM/8/35/001).

p.16

Ibid.

p.16

Excerpt from 'Trinidad and Tobago Notebook' (ORAM/8/35/003).

p.18

Excerpt from 'Trinidad and Tobago Notebook' (ORAM/8/35/003).

p.20

Excerpt from 'Trinidad and Tobago Notebook' (ORAM/8/35/003).

SOUNDSCAPE

00'00"

'Greetings from Trinidad' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO283].

00'03"

'Flute and steel-drum manipulation' (April 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO019a].

03'11"

'Cocoa Songs' (February 1964) [ORAM/11/DO03].

09'10"

'*The Eyes Have It and Come Leh We Go* sung by Mighty Sparrow' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO286].

13'25"

'Traffic in Trinidad' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO089].

15'44"

'Tuesday at Carnival' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO283].

18'58"

'Carnival' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO285].

24'43"

'Drumming at Hindu Wedding Ceremony from distance' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO284].

25'30"

'Drumming at Hindu Wedding Ceremony close' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO284].

31'04"

'Kiskadee' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO284].

35'45"

'Bongo and Shango manipulations' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO284].

39'07"

'*Abide With Me*' (February 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO089].

41'24"

'Steel-drum manipulation' (April 1964) [excerpt from ORAM/11/DO019a].

PHOTOGRAPHS

fig.1

'Flight to Trinidad and Tobago' (ORAM/7/8/001).

fig.2

'Flight to Trinidad and Tobago' (ORAM/7/8/002)

fig.3

'Arrival in Trinidad and Tobago' (ORAM/7/8/003)

fig.4

'Palm cutting' (ORAM/7/8/004)

fig.5

'Car in palms' (ORAM/7/8/033)

fig.6

'Drumming group' (ORAM/7/8/017)

fig.7

'Harvest' (ORAM/7/8/016)

fig.8

'Wedding ceremony' (ORAM/7/8/048)

fig.9

'Carnival costumes' (ORAM/7/8/037)

fig.10

'Carnival costumes' (ORAM/7/8/020)

fig.11

'Carnival Devil' (ORAM/7/8/027)

fig.12

'Daphne Oram and turtle' (ORAM/7/8/047)

fig.13

'Daphne Oram on Maracas beach' (ORAM/7/8/066)

fig.14

'Steel-pan band at Trinidad Carnival' (ORAM/7/8/024)

fig.15

'New York City view' (ORAM/7/8/064)

fig.16

'View from the plane' (ORAM/7/8/068)

