

UNDERSTANDING OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM

From Federation to National Independence, by Dr Hamid Ghany

On the evening of Thursday 9th August 1962 in a radio broadcast to the nation, the Premier, Dr Eric Williams, announced the winner of the competition to choose the National Anthem of Trinidad and Tobago.

The National Anthem Committee had received entries that consisted of words only, music only, and words and music jointly. There were 834 word entries, 33 music entries, and 306 word and music entries. Out of such a vast field of competitors, Mr Patrick Castagne won the prize of \$5,000.00 in Government Bonds and a gold medal inscribed with the Coat of Arms of Trinidad and Tobago that was at stake.

At the Cabinet meeting before the announcement of the winner by the Premier, the Minister of Education and Culture, Senator Donald Pierre, presented Dr Williams with a sealed envelope that contained Mr Castagne's name in it. The Cabinet approved the winner and confirmed the new National Anthem.

Mr Castagne, a renowned West Indian songwriter, was employed at the Trinidad and Tobago Commission in London. The anthem was itself an edited version of *A Song for Federation* that he had written for the Federation of the West Indies that had been dissolved by May 1962.

The close resemblance between the National Anthem of Trinidad and Tobago and *A Song For Federation* can easily be discerned by a perusal of the latter which read as follows:

*“FORGED BY THE LOVE OF UNITY
IN THE FIRES OF HOPE AND PRAYER
WITH BOUNDLESS FAITH IN OUR LIBERTY
WEST INDIANS ALL DECLARE
SIDE BY SIDE WE STAND
WITH OUR HEARTS JOINED ACROSS THE SEA
THIS OUR NATIVE LAND
WE PLEDGE OURSELVES FOR THEE
HERE EVERY CREED AND RACE FIND AN
EQUAL PLACE
AND MAY GOD BLESS OUR NATION*

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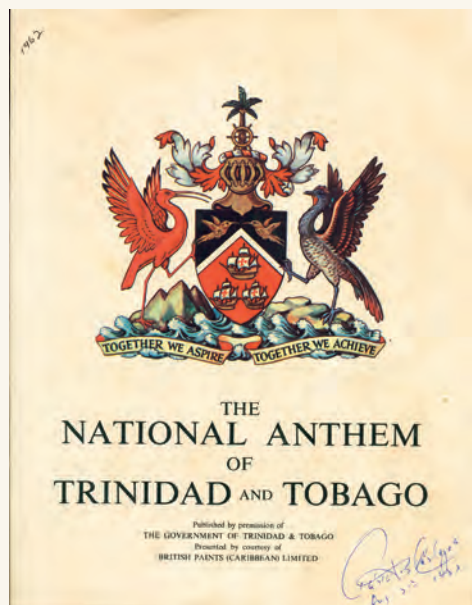
The political demise of the Federation of the West Indies opened the door to independence for Jamaica (6th August 1962) and Trinidad and Tobago (31st August 1962). With it went the dreams and aspirations of ten island states (Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Lucia, St Vincent, St Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla,

and, Trinidad and Tobago) who were on the verge of becoming a new nation state that was to be called “The West Indies”.

There is no doubt that Castagne's *A Song For Federation* provided the musical inspiration that could have matched the foundation of a strong federation had it survived.

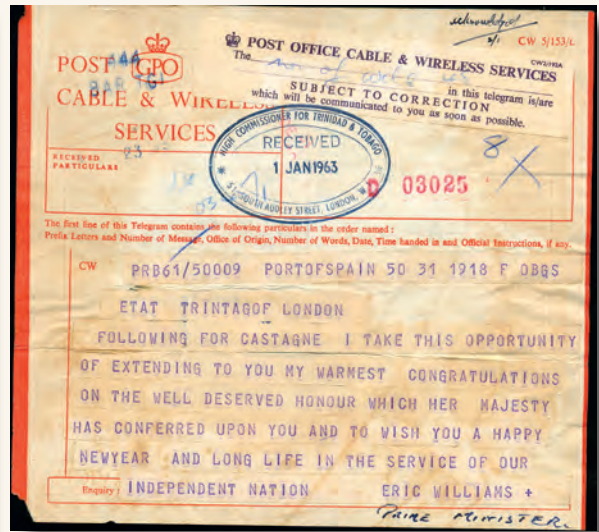
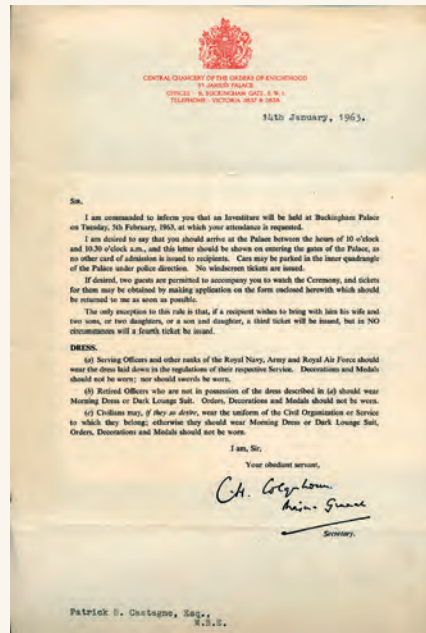
Nevertheless, his alteration of *A Song for Federation* was deemed to be most suitable for a twin-island state that consisted of “islands of the blue Caribbean Sea” who would stand “side ▶

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Patrick Castagne's personal copy of the National Anthem, signed and dated 31st August 1962

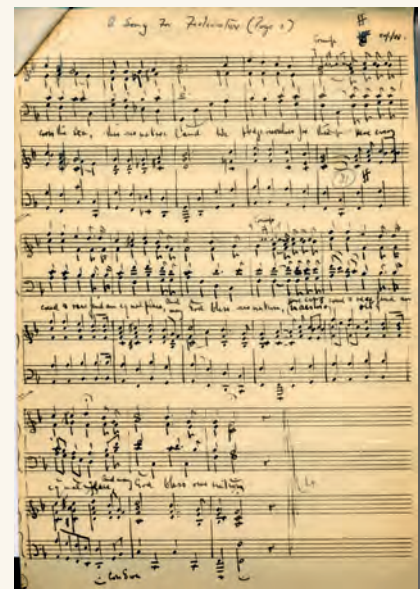
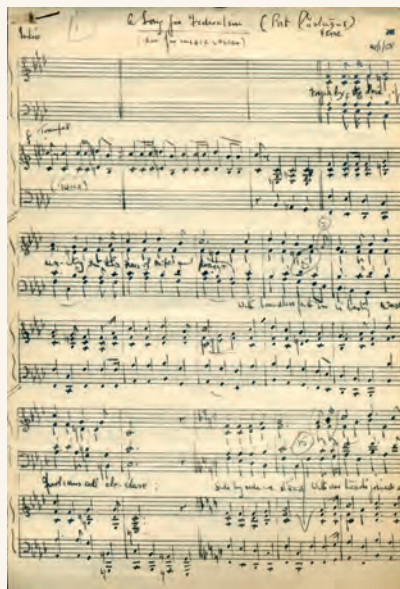
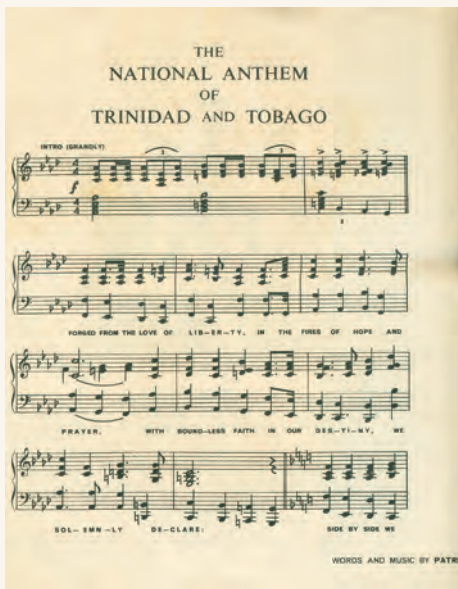
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Above right: Telegram of congratulations from Prime Minister Dr Eric Williams.

Above left: Letter from the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood to Patrick Castagne regarding his investiture as an MBE.

Right: Patrick Castagne at Buckingham Palace with his wife Lucille, daughter Dianne and son Glenn



◀ by side” in promoting the values of “every creed and race” finding “an equal place” in the multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural society of Trinidad and Tobago as it existed in 1962.

According to an excerpt from the editorial in the Sunday Guardian of 19th August, 1962:

“In its solemn declaration of brotherhood and unity, it very neatly includes Tobago with Trinidad without mentioning the name of either (“Side by side we stand, islands of the blue Caribbean Sea”); and as an added impulse to unity it goes on to describe them together as “our native land,” ending with the petition, “And may God bless our nation.”

In the Queen’s New Year’s Honours List on 1st January 1963, Patrick Castagne was awarded the MBE (Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The investiture took place at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday 5th February 1963 and he was accompanied by his wife, Lucille, his daughter Dianne, and one of his sons, Glenn.

After the announcement of his award on New

Year’s Day 1963, Pat Castagne received a letter from Sir Ellis Clarke, Trinidad and Tobago’s Ambassador to Washington dated 23rd January 1963. Clarke said, in part, to Castagne that he had “of course the deep satisfaction of knowing that your name will forever be linked with that of Trinidad and Tobago by its National Anthem.”

On Friday 31st August 1962, the National Anthem of Trinidad and Tobago was played right after the Clerk of the House of Representatives read the Proclamation at the official opening of the First Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago attended by Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal.

Fifty years later our National Anthem lives on, our House of Representatives is still intact, and the legacy of Patrick Castagne is firmly secured in our hearts and voices as we sing lustily that “here every creed and race find an equal place.” ■

Above: The National Anthem and A Song for Federation.

Below: Above left: Letter from Sir Ellis Clarke congratulating Mr Castagne on his award

