



MEDIA RELEASE

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For the first time in CARIFESTA's forty-five-year history we will welcome a Caribbean diaspora contingent from outside the Caribbean. New York?? London?? No. That honour goes to Toronto, Canada. Toronto - the home of the world-famous Caribana festival (officially known as the Toronto Caribbean Carnival) will be sending a select group of its top dancers, singers, musicians, theatre and spoken-word artists to participate in CARIFESTA XIII in Barbados.

The contingent is headed by Chef-de-Mission Mr. **Michael Lashley**, a retired diplomat, and led by Artistic Director **Rhoma Spencer**. The inclusion of a Caribbean-Canadian contingent is the realization of work done by Spencer, a Trinidadian-born actor, director and storyteller, who embarked on efforts to woo the festival organizers eleven years ago when she and a small group of Canadian artists attended CARIFESTA as observers. It is especially significant that Canada, the world leader in diversity and multi-culturalism, should be the first country to be invited to send a diaspora delegation to CARIFESTA.

The contingent includes top dance companies **KasheDance** and **Toronto Children and Youth Dance Theatre**; popular singers **Susan Grogan**, **Connector** (current Canadian Calypso Monarch) and **Macomere Fifi**; ex-Sandpebbles singer / songwriter **Roger Gibbs**; and **Moses Lewis** and **Carlton Roberts** of the popular Canadian soca band **Moses Revolution**. Also hoping to join the contingent is **Kobo Town** led by **Drew Gonsalves**, a highly-acclaimed new calypso/hybrid band that is currently on tour of Canada.

Ms. Spencer is excited to establish Canada and Toronto's credentials as one of the top producers of Caribbean-inspired music, dance and theatre work. The city of over two million is home to a vibrant Caribbean community with members from all over the Caribbean, creating a unique space for cross-fertilization between the Caribbean-born artists who reside there. "Caribbean artists who live outside the Caribbean bring a different perspective to their work", notes Spencer, "a unique artistic hybrid that local audiences will find refreshing. We mix and match, cut and paste. We are at one and the same time in Canada and in the Caribbean archipelago".

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