

WHEEL & COME AGAIN

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY ART EXHIBITION OF THE HARDER THEY COME

Stop by the Levin Mezzanine, during intermission or after the show, to view an exhibition of art inspired by the original film. For the film's 50th Anniversary, the Henzell family commissioned Jamaican visual artists and poets, based on the island and overseas, to create new pieces celebrating and reinterpreting the film. The exhibition of more than 50 pieces was originally mounted at Perry Henzell's Kingston home and studio, where much of the film was shot. To honor the film's significance and influence on Jamaican culture, select pieces will be on display at The Public Theater for all to visit through the show's run.

CHECK OUT OUR PODCAST!

Dive deeper into the process with members of our creative team on the relaunch of our podcast, Public Square 2.0

hosted by Garlia Cornelia Jones, our Director of Innovation and New Media.



thepublic.nyc/THTCpodcast

THE HARDER THEY COME FROM THE SCREEN

On June 5, 1972, the Carib Theatre in the heart of Kingston, already used to massive crowds at film openings, was especially chaotic for the opening night of the first Jamaican feature film, *The Harder They Come*.

The Harder They Come remains one of the most important and influential Caribbean films due to the charismatic power of Jimmy Cliff, and the way in which director Perry Henzell and co-screenwriter Trevor Rhone presented viewers with a complicated series of moral questions that spoke to the rising challenges of Jamaican society in the early stages of the post-colonial world. The legacies of imperialism, colonialism, and slavery were proving to be lingering challenges, demanding powerful acts of creativity, and daring to forge new, dynamic societies.

The film's soundtrack would go on to be one of the greatest and arguably the most influential reggae records released to the world. It captures the heart and spirit of a time in Jamaican life, in the voice of Jamaicans, first, for Jamaicans and then for the world.

TO THE STAGE

"Explain to me how I'm wrong! / When all I want is to hear my song"

-Ivan, *The Harder They Come*, Act I

How does one adapt an internationally treasured classic? In this production, the creative team for *THE HARDER THEY COME* doesn't re-invent the wheel, but they do roll the wheel forward.

We open on the original setting of 1970 Kingston experiencing Ivan as a dreamer, eager to make a record upon arrival to the big city. Several of the key plot points from the film remain intact: Ivan falls in love and encounters a host of relentless obstacles that he defiantly opposes. However, in concert with the mythic story of one man's rebellion against an unjust society, Suzan-Lori Parks creates a new set of complex, vital relationships between Ivan and everyone around him. While Ivan is connected and rooted in a community, he grows to realize that he lives in a world where most people believe in things that don't believe in him. His rebellion that follows is informed by responsibility and love.

Adapting a film into a musical requires a re-imagining and expansion of the song cycle. Parks takes the renowned underscoring soundtrack of the film and places directly in the mouths of Ivan and the Kingston community. Here, we hear how music encompasses every facet of their inner thoughts and outward-facing desires—from their hopes and fears to their rallying cries for a better world.

In making these changes, Parks has enlarged the moral circumference of the film to include questions surrounding the modern global experience: What is the personal cost of fighting against systemic injustice? When is violence justified? And ultimately, how can we rediscover our collective sense of joy?

BY KWAME DAWES, CULTURAL CONSULTANT & AMRITA RAMANAN, DRAMATURG

THE PUBLIC



Jamaica is captured by the British from the Spaniards

1655

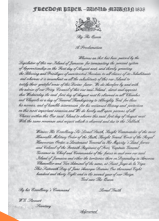


Sam Sharpe Christmas rebellion

1831

Apprenticeship declared —slavery is finally being abolished

1834



Emancipation achieved—full freedom

1838

Morant Bay rebellion ruthlessly put down by British forces

1865



UNIA convention—Marcus Garvey inspires the Pan-African independence movement

1920



Labour rebellions across the island

1938

Peoples National Party (PNP) founded

1938

Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) founded

1943

Universal adult suffrage enacted—every adult can vote

1944



Rhying shot dead by police after 8 week manhunt

1948

Independence from Britain achieved



1962

The visit of H.I.M Emperor Haile Selassie to Jamaica

1966



The Harder They Come premiere at the Carib Theatre

1972



PNP wins the election—promoting Black consciousness, women empowerment, pro-African sentiment

1972

Bob Marley holds Smile Jamaica concert after being shot

1976

PNP wins re-election. Period of political violence, declaration of democratic socialism, implementation of austerity measures, IFM, and Cold War

1976

Bob Marley stages One Love Peace Concert held in response to political violence

1978



THTC soundtrack inducted into the U.S. Library of Congress National Recording Registry

2021

Only 2nd reggae album to achieve that honour after The Wailers Burnin'

50th anniversary of THTC premiere celebrated by an exhibition of art & poetry in Kingston

2022



THTC Soundtrack re-release on vinyl by Universal Music

2023



THTC stage musical at The Public Theater in NYC opens

2023



THE HARDER THEY COME TIMELINE