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*DREADNESS: The Mystic Power, Philosophy and  
Performance of Shadow 1941-2021*

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# THE MAJOR SHADOW OF THE MINOR: WINSTON “SHADOW” BAILEY, MUSIC MODES AND TRINBAGONIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD PREVALENT SOCIAL ISSUES



*Khion De Las*

In early music scholarship, it is accepted that the major and minor modes each evoke predictable feelings and emotions in music listeners. Certain categories of feelings and emotions were attributed to either of the modes. The major mode was generally noted as sounding bright, clear and sweet (Hevner 103-118). Hevner’s study recognised that the major mode is more readily associated with expressions of triumph, joy, celebration, hopefulness and strength. On the other hand, it was also observed that the minor mode, sounds dark, tumultuous and bitter and was more readily associated with expressions of doubt, sorrow, grief, strife, mystery and depression. Research by Hunter et al. states that the general consensus is that listeners can often perceive and decode emotions that are portrayed in music. This paper focuses on the assumed intent of a composer to ensure that the intended emotions within a song are in fact being received by the consumers of the music. Therefore, I emphasise the view that modes have often been used by composers in their music, not only as a means of self-expression through their music but also with the intention of having listeners connect emotionally with that expression.

Shadow’s unique style of blending social commentary with ‘feel good’ party lyrics, is often equally mirrored in the accompanying music of his songs. This mirroring occurs in the music by exploiting the major and minor modes using three identifiable techniques that I refer to as the *alternating*, *cycling* and *mixing* of both modes. Each of these mirroring techniques can be observed in various compositions by Shadow. I interpret Shadow’s use of these techniques as a reflection of popular Trinbagonian attitudes towards pressing social issues. This paper analyses three (3) of those compositions: “Dingolay”, “Yuh Lookin’ For Horn” and “Goumangala”. The analysis

will demonstrate his use of the minor keys to reflect social issues such as strife, social injustice and poverty. It will also look at his use of the major keys to reflect joy, happiness and revelry amidst negative social issues.

The musical form and structure of these three (3) songs generally reflect that of a typical calypso. There is an introduction, verse and pre-chorus, chorus (refrain) and band chorus (which is the same as the introduction). However, although the form remains the same, the use of interchanging tonal centres while maintaining the traditional form, is what makes Shadow's "Dingolay", "Yuh Lookin' For Horn" and "Goumangala" so musically unique.

### Alternating

This technique, as used by Shadow in the song "Dingolay", is alternating between the major and the minor modes, depending on the lyrical message. According to Hevner (103), professional musicians know that a mode in music alone does not achieve a desired effect on its listeners. Rather many other elements aid in conveying the intended emotions or feelings to the listeners including changes in harmony, melody, tempo and more. However, Hevner posits that professional musicians still choose to rely heavily on the major and minor modes to achieve foreseeable reactions to their music. This reliance on the major and minor modes is very evident in Shadow's compositional technique choices. In the song "Dingolay", each verse is structured in two (2) sections, Section A and Section B. Each of these sections has contrasting lyrical content. The first half of each verse, or Section A, contains lyrics which speak about topics that the listener may generally consider as being profound and philosophical in nature. In Section A of the opening verse, Bailey sings:

Music sweet, music sweet,  
The one who invented music, has got to be terrific,  
Got to be the one who created the sun and the trees,  
Rivers and seas.

Shadow demonstrates his sense of mysticism both lyrically and personally in these opening lines of "Dingolay". In these lyrics, he opines that music is so marvellous, it

ought to have been a deity who was responsible for its creation. His sense of mysticism is then further propounded by his choice of the minor mode to represent the philosophical nature of his lyrics in Section A. Ando et al notes that the minor mode has been shown to evoke stronger emotional responses than the major mode (389) and Shadow may have used the minor mode at this point to ensure that listeners connect with his deep sense of awe and gratitude towards this deity for the creation of music.

Section A is in the D minor key and it should be noted that Shadow uses the natural minor mode in this section. While the harmonic minor uses the raised seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) degree of the minor scale, the natural minor does not have any changes to the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) scale degree. In this section of “Dingolay”, the chords D minor, C major, Bb Major and A minor, are played in a descending series. The A minor chord signals the use of the D natural minor mode since there is the presence of a C natural in the A minor chord. This would have been a C# in the D Harmonic minor mode since the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) degree of the D minor scale would have been raised by a semitone, as intrinsic to a harmonic minor mode. In a study by Ando et al. (389) magnetoencephalography<sup>1</sup> was used on subjects who had no formal music training to demonstrate that the natural minor was more natural to listeners as compared to the harmonic minor. The study concluded that the raised seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) in the harmonic minor created an interval that was larger than a whole tone which seemed more unnatural to the listener. Shadow therefore may have chosen to remain with the natural minor in Section A since it seemed more natural to him, which arguably can feel more natural to his listeners.

Section B of “Dingolay” immediately transitions from the minor to the major mode. In this case, the music moves from the key of D minor to its relative major key, which is F major. This modulation to the major mode now has a motif being announced by horns. This motif, aided by the choice of instruments, may sound triumphant and joyous to the listener. The overall tone and message of the lyrics at this point, also transition away from the sombre mood of Section A. Bailey now sings:

Music fills the world with happiness,

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<sup>1</sup> A (mag)netoencephalography is a functional neuro imaging technique for mapping brain activity.

Plenty sweetness and togetherness,  
Music have no friend or enemies,  
Everybody could dingolay.

Shadow sings about music transcending boundaries, filling the world with sweetness and its ability to induce feelings of “happiness” and “togetherness” in people. These lyrics demonstrate a feeling of bliss and comradeship. The message here is now less overtly philosophical and rather more optimistic and joyous. In similar fashion to what Hevner noted as being typical of professional musicians, Shadow relies on a shift in mode to channel those lighter feelings. He does this by mirroring those lyrics with the major mode in the music. Section B of the verse is then followed by the chorus which continues to be underpinned by the major mode. At the start of the chorus, he sings “Dingolay/Aaaa/Dingolay/ A a a”. The lyrics of the chorus contain the instructional song title “Dingolay” which tells the listeners that they should dance with fancy elaborate movements (Winer 298). However, right after these instructions, Shadow adeptly moves into social commentary. At this point he sings:

If yuh clothes tear up,  
Or yuh shoe burst up,  
Yuh could still jump up,  
When music play,  
Ole lady, young baby,  
Everybody could dingolay.

Here he hints that existing poverty and classicism are overlooked in Trinbagonian society, whenever music and partying are involved. To capture that sense of carefree thinking, Shadow maintains the major mode throughout this small commentary before returning to the hook, “Dingolay/Aaaa/Dingolay/ A a a”. Following the chorus is the band chorus, which is also used as the song’s introduction. This band chorus immediately reverts to the solemn sounding natural minor mode. This alternation from the major back to the minor, prepares the listener for another mood change. I argue that it gives the listener an immediate sense that the topic about to be sung, is perhaps more weighty in nature. The lead tone or instrument that plays the main motif at this point, is

a type of muted string instrument whose tone further echoes the solemnity of the music's mood. However, the second half of the band chorus, without warning, alternates between the relative major keys. Even though Shadow alternates between the major and minor modes to enhance the various messages in his music at given junctures, it has yet another application. His use of this technique of alternating of modes, may also symbolise the Trinbagonian society's often sudden shift of attention from a pressing issue to that of revelry.

### Cycling

Cycling is yet another technique involving the use of both the major and minor modes is demonstrated in Shadow's rendition of "Yuh Lookin For Horn"<sup>2</sup>. In this song, he rapidly cycles back and forth between both modes. Similar to the previous song, these modes are used by Shadow to complement the song's lyrics. This song can be heard and analysed in both the C major and A minor modes. The introduction/band chorus sets up the tone of the lyrical content by employing the cycling technique. At this point, the cycling between the moods and modes is more apparent and vivid to both the trained musical ear as well as the untrained ear. The chords used in the band chorus are: C major, G major and F major. These chords can all be found in the C major mode as well as the A minor mode, making it easier for Shadow to cycle back and forth between both modes. Although the chord progression and bass line remain constant for the majority of the song, the harmonies and motifs played by the horns are what highlight the shift between the major and minor modes.

The song begins with a recurring chord progression in the major mode. The first motif played by the horns in the band chorus is derived from the pitches of the A minor chord. This motif is centred on that chord for eight (8) bars and highlights the A minor modes. The motif played in the next eight (8) bars uses pitches predominantly from the C major chord and highlights the C major mode. Then the first minor motif is repeated for another eight (8) bars completing the cycle between the major and minor mode. Shadow uses both the motifs in the horn section along with selected pitches in his vocal melody

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<sup>2</sup> Horn- to commit adultery; have a sexual relationship outside an official one.

to cycle through the modes in the song. Additionally, he maintains the cycling technique in the bass by a recurring subtle movement from the tonic note of the A minor mode (A), to the tonic note of the C major mode (C).

This cycling technique is another way that Shadow recreates the substance of his lyrical content in the accompaniment that supports his singing. The subject matter of this song is both serious as well as humorous, and Shadow uses the minor and major modes to connect the listener to each of those sentiments. Shadow narrates the song between himself and a fictional young male character, with Shadow as narrator. The young man seeks Shadow's advice about a young lady that he intends to propose marriage to. Although the psychological effects of infidelity are often harmful to a person, infidelity is often seen as a joke in some sections of Trinbagonian society. This style of giving advice on matters of the heart, can be said to be typical of sectors of Trinbagonian society. Oftentimes, a person is given important advice whilst simultaneously being ridiculed by the one giving counsel. This common aspect of Trinbagonian culture is illustrated when Shadow sings in the second half of the verse and the start of the chorus:

Verse:

Yuh learn trade? (No),

Yuh have good grade? (No),

You're a smart man? (No),

A magician? (No)

In this verse Shadow asks whether the young man has the ability to financially support his intended bride. He questions whether the young man knows a trade or has any academic qualifications for a job. As the young man responds "no" to each of those questions, the following two (2) lines immediately ridicule him. This ridicule comes in the form of Shadow asking the young man whether he is a "smart man"<sup>3</sup> or a magician. The mood of the lyrics quickly cycles from serious to being facetious. The music follows

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<sup>3</sup> A con artist.

suit as the bass line continues to cycle between the tonics of the minor and major modes respectively.

Chorus:

Yuh lookin' for horn,

Yuh goin' to get horn boy,

Yuh lookin' for horn,

Plenty, plenty horn boy.

At the start of the chorus Shadow further advises that the young man's decision has not been thought out, and that this can lead to his partner becoming unfaithful. At this point, although the manner it is brought across may appear jeering, Shadow's advice is sincere. This sincerity is captured within the music as the minor mode is simultaneously used to highlight the pensiveness of the lyrics. This use of the minor mode is often typical of trained musicians attempting to evoke this type of mood or emotion. Although the bass motif and the chord progression continues to be the same at this point, Shadow adeptly captures and uses the minor mode when he sings the principal lyric "horn". He does this by singing that word using the tonic note of the A minor mode, the pitch "A". As the chorus continues, Shadow explains his position on the matter to the young man in less uncertain terms:

Why you want to marry?

You doh have no money,

You eh workin' nowhere,

You doh have a pay day

Each of these lines is sung in the major mode of the song. However, Shadow continues to demonstrate the importance of each of these lines by cycling back to the minor mode at the end of each line. Instead of using his voice to do this, he now has the horns playing a two (2) note motif which moves from the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) pitch in the A minor mode to the tonic note of that mode. Immediately after this happens, the music reverts to the major mode to allow for the other question to be asked. The cycling technique is used by Shadow to support the cycling tone of his lyrics, which moves back and forth between



being informative and facetious. I believe this technique is musically reflective of the way Trinbagonian society often treats giving advice to others.

### Mixing

“Goumangala” is a mythical tale which many believe to be something that can be used to control a person’s feelings and emotions. In the previously analysed songs, there is a clear distinction between when the minor and the major modes are being used by Shadow. Since “Goumangala” is steeped in superstition, Shadow echoes this theme by predominantly using the minor mode. However, he still strikes a balance between social commentary and party music. To do this, he employs the *mixing* technique to the song by playing the major and minor modes simultaneously. I interpret this as Shadow’s attempt to capture and convey feelings of revelry in the listener whilst maintaining the mood of mystery from this superstitious topic.

“Goumangala” begins with a band chorus as the introduction. Immediately, Shadow uses the *mixing* technique as selected instruments play in either the major or the minor mode. In the band chorus the bass, keyboard and guitar all play lines, riffs or chords in the key of D flat major. The chord progression at this point consists of only two (2) chords; D flat major to G flat major. This chord progression is heavily carried by the strums of the guitar in a constant riff. While those aforementioned instruments are playing in the major mode, the horn section plays a series of motifs in the key of B flat minor. B flat minor is the relative minor mode of the D flat major mode played by the other instruments. The first motif begins with the horns playing the pitches B flat, D flat and F. These pitches are played simultaneously in a distinct rhythmic pattern and form the tonic chord of the B flat minor mode. The second motif played by the horns is built using the same three (3) notes of the B flat minor chord with the addition of two other passing notes<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, the horns maintain the minor mode throughout the band chorus while the other instruments maintain the major mode, creating a symbiosis of both modes. Since both are related, I argue they share chords and pitches which make it more feasible for Shadow to mix both modes.

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<sup>4</sup> A note not belonging to the harmony but interposed to secure a smooth transition.

Shadow warns another man about a woman's attempt to forcibly control the man's feelings towards her by using extraordinary means. She does this by putting 'goumangala' in various foods that she intends to offer the man to eat. There is urgency and concern in Shadow's tone as he sings:

Doh go in dem people house,  
I'm warning you,  
Doh go in dem people house,  
I'm telling you.

Shadow proceeds to inform the man that the 'goumangala' has been put in the food as he sings the refrain:

Goumangala (in d coffee),  
Goumangala (in d mauby)  
Goumangala (in d porridge)  
Goumangala (in d sandwich)

Shadow cautions the man about what will happen if he eats the food. He then follows this caution to the man with a repeat of the refrain to impress upon him the severity of the situation.

If yuh eat dem people food,  
Yuh turn stupid,  
An' when yuh start feelin' good,  
Yuh done marrid<sup>5</sup>  
Goumangala (in d toolum<sup>6</sup>),  
Goumangala (in yuh bum bum<sup>7</sup>)

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<sup>5</sup> Married

<sup>6</sup> A traditional Trinidad and Tobago sweet.

<sup>7</sup> Buttocks

The message in the lyrics is consistent throughout the song, cautioning the man of the possibility of becoming bewitched if he consumes the food offered to him. Shadow captures feelings of fear, mystery, concern and caution by having the B flat minor mode as being the predominant mode played by the majority of the instruments. The bass plays a recurring motif which ends with B flat, just off of the downbeat of every other measure. This B flat is the tonic note of the B flat minor mode. By ending just off of the downbeat with this note, Shadow solidifies the dominance of the minor mode in the verses. To aid the bass in establishing the minor mode, the keyboard plays the B flat minor chord while the horns play motifs created from the pitches of the B flat minor chord. These motifs are also strategically placed after each time Shadow warns the man, "Doh go in dem people house", to emphasise the seriousness of the warning. Even though the minor mode stands out in the verses and supports the overall tone of importance and concern in the lyrics, Shadow maintains the mixing technique in the verses. He subtly does this by allowing the guitar to continue to play the major mode riff from the band chorus. In fact, this riff is played by the guitar throughout the entire song, ensuring that the major mode is present even when the minor mode is the principal mode being used. I argue that the mixing of modes is Shadow's creative way of using his music to create mixed emotions in its listeners. Although he wants to highlight the possible realities and seriousness of the subject he is singing about by using the minor mode, in true Trinbagonian fashion he uses the major mode to give the consumers something that they can still party to.

### Conclusion

Although this paper analyses Shadow's choice of music modes to accompany the varying messages in his lyrics, it is not certain that this was done with conscious intent or natural intuition as a composer. Hevner posits that professional musicians choose modes in music based on the message or feeling they want to convey. However, much can be said about whether those choices are calculated or rather become instinctive to composers after constantly studying and composing music. Arguably these choices may even be what comes naturally to the brain, if we are to consider the study done by Ando and others. Conversely, it is also worth noting that the intent of a musical composer may not always be conveyed to their listeners. The results of the study *The Influence of Mode*

*and Musical Experience on the Attribution of Emotions to Melodic Sequences*, indicate that the simple distinction between common practice major and minor modality likely does not fully account for the way pitches convey emotion (Straehley and Loebach 21). The study found that varying degrees of musical knowledge in persons, yields varying emotional responses to the same music.

Furthermore, I note that an alternative to music modes can be used to analyse how emotions were conveyed through Shadow's music. Therefore, although it may have been Shadow's intention to convey certain feelings and emotions by *alternating, cycling* and *mixing* music modes, it is difficult to note whether these feelings and emotions were perceived by listeners. . This idea stems from research by Collier and Hubbard (355) who suggest that rather than mode, the pitch and contour of music more readily stimulated a listener. Further research can be undertaken to ascertain whether Shadow's music simply expressed his intent or whether it imbibed a sensitization of the listener to prevalent social issues.

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