Bassez down

Traditional Caribbean – from the Sing Up Song Bank

A lively, up-tempo, Caribbean calypso full of irresistible syncopated rhythms: an appealing song with a contrasting call and response section in the middle.

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Getting started

- Like many other calypso songs, this needs little teaching; its catchy rhythms and simple melody will have singers joining in very quickly.
- Notice how the words and melody are shared between two groups in the call and response section beginning at bar 16, where the lyrics read ‘bassez down Missie Mary, bassez down,’ etc.
- Listen to the trumpet ‘break’ between verses and notice that in verse 2 there’s an option to stop singing at bar 23, where the score reads ‘optional tacet 2nd time to bar 40’.

Learning the song

- Most of the phrases start on a high D which needs to be sung effortlessly. Try this vocal warm-up to prepare your singers’ voices. Draw a wavy line in the air with your finger (rather like a roller-coaster track) and ask the singers to ‘sing’ this line to the sound ‘ng’. Encourage them to explore their highest and lowest voices and use an open throat to achieve an easy fluid sound.
- Although the tune is simple, it is worth practising with the echo tracks on the Sing Up website to get the calypso rhythms really accurate.
- Divide into two groups for the call and response parts.

Developing music making

- You may not have a trumpeter who can manage this part but you could substitute a violin, flute or clarinet player. Perhaps you could persuade your peripatetic instrumental teacher to accompany the singing, or ‘borrow’ a student from your local secondary school?
- Once the song is familiar, invite pairs of soloists to take on the call and response section, using real names, such as:
  
  **Solo**: Bassez down, Missie Kayleigh  
  **Solo (Kayleigh)**: Bassez down  
  **Solo (Darren)**: Bassez down … etc.

Check out this song on the Sing Up Song Bank and register for free as a Sing Up Friend to download all your classroom extras:
- Performance track, backing tracks & echo tracks
- Lyrics, Whiteboard mode, sheet music, accompaniment & melody/harmony lines
- Curriculum-linked activities, tailor-made teaching resources & SEN resources.
Deryck Smart carrying a tray of bananas
Abigail Hadeed/Oxfam
Bassez down

Up-tempo calypso \( \mathbf{J} = 170 \)
(Or other instrument - optional)

Traditional Caribbean calypso

TRUMPET

\[ D \]
\[ G \]
\[ D \]
\[ A \]

MELODY

\[ D \]
\[ G \]
\[ D \]
\[ A \]

Bas - sez, Ma - ma, bas - sez down, _

\[ A \]
\[ D \]
\[ G \]

bas - sez in the mor - ning, bas - sez down, _ Bas - sez, Ma - ma,

\[ D \]
\[ A \]
\[ D \]

bas - sez down, _ bas - sez in the mor - ning, bas - sez down, _ Bas - sez
Traditional

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