

REVEL

Sashoya Simpson

A young child stands barefoot beneath the branches of an almond tree
They look on as colorful skirts twirl in the hands of swaying hips
Palms of musicians echo the song of drums
Of marimbulas
Of shak-shaks
Calling ancestors forward
Singing ancient tongues
Evoking battle ritual
Swaying firm
With grace bestowed
In hand
In foot
In waist
In throat
As every body part wake up and join the party
Drowning out ninky-ninky bias from ministers, naysayers, sideliners
The child steps from the shadows
Dirt under footbottom
Holding weight of the charge
Walking stilts tower high above
A grand expanse of might
Of story
Of stance
Of unbridled resistance
Of joy
The child take center stage
Theatre stage
Concert stage
Bar stage
Marketplace
Grandma living room
Town square
Banana walk
And shout in the voice of the people

Dance in island colours
Dub in rhyme and rhythms
Chant in proverbs and nation tongue
Dismantle the oppressive
Let them know
Be seen
Be heard
Be change

We change
As we behold
Footprinted path carving legacies
Revolutions
Rebellions
Decolonial tapestries
We erect structures
Movements
Pathways
For survival of voice
For preservation
For freedom of creation
Of expression
Of identities
We revel in virtuosity
We revel in prowess
And it's loud
It's loud so our children can inherit
It's loud for our people to bask in pride
It's loud for the world to know
We carry lifetimes in our words
In our actions
In our presence
On the stage.

Sashoya Simpson is a Jamaican-Canadian writer, storyteller, theatre practitioner, audiobook narrator and children's book author. She's the founder of The Walking Griot collective, dedicated to producing work for young Black audiences, with works inspired by Afro-Caribbean folklore and cultural practices, through various artistic media. She's the award recipient of the ArtReach Pitch Contest (2016), Emerging Arts Finalist for the Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts (2017), and a Simminovitch Playwright Protege Finalist (2023).