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Hey there – and welcome to the one HUNDREDTH episode of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I just want to say thank you to all the families and listeners out there who follow along and have joined me over the last few years as we make musical discoveries together. I'm Carly Seifert, the host of the podcast and creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so grateful for each and every one of you for making this journey possible.

If you've been following along with us, we are in the middle of our annual summer series Around the World with Busy Kids Love Music, where we travel around the world to learn about the folk music of different countries during each episode, collecting stamps for our passports as we go. If you're new to the podcast, I'll link to previous episodes and also provide a link to download your passport in the show notes at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/100](https://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/100). So far this summer, we've visited the countries of Scotland and India, and today we're headed to the Western hemisphere to learn about the folk music of the beautiful Caribbean island country of Jamaica.

The music of Jamaica is said to be the most powerful art form and cultural heritage of this island. As with any country's folk music, the history shaped the influences of the early Jamaican folk tunes. So to give context to the cultural influences of Jamaican music, here's a super brief history of Jamaica...

The first Jamaicans were the Taino Indians, who migrated from the northern coast of South America and settled on the island around 600 AD. They lived in Jamaica for about 900 years before being wiped out during the Spanish conquest of the country in 1494. In 1655, the British Navy took control of Jamaica from the Spanish, and continued to expand the established slave trade, bringing thousands of African peoples to the country and enslaving them. The interaction of these different cultures with the English led to a new language called Jamaican Creole or Patois (patwa), which was

used to sing Jamaican folk songs. The tunes were sung by the people as they worked or sent messages to each other or gathered to dance.

In 1696, the British banned the traditions of singing and dancing, fearful that they were fueling a spirit of freedom among the Jamaicans. But the enslaved Africans still found a way to pass their musical traditions down.

Mento music is a style that is heavily influenced by folk music and became extremely popular in the 1950s and 1960s. Mostly acoustic instruments are used such as the guitar, rhumba box and banjo. You may be familiar with the song Day-o, which is a hugely popular mento song. The version you're listening to now is performed by Harry Belafonte, who was of Jamaican descent and a famous actor, singer and civil rights icon.

The 1950s mento music influenced the later development of the musical genre Ska. The ska music form was a fusion of folk mento music with American rhythm and blues and jazz. The ska style of music would rise to popularity in the United States in the 1990s. It accents the rhythms on the upbeat, or off-beat, and emphasized horn instruments.

Ska evolved into rocksteady when it began to be played at dance parties. If you listen closely, you'll hear a lot of similarities between ska and rocksteady, with the emphasis on the bass line. Instead of the strong horn section of ska, rocksteady emphasized the rhythm guitar. The rocksteady music also tends to have a slower dance beat.

Rocksteady paved the way for perhaps the most renowned music that comes from Jamaica...reggae music. Reggae is a mix of mento, shuffle and soul music, which was popular in the 1970s. Thanks to the international success of Rastafari-inspired artist Bob Marley, reggae enjoyed popularity around the world. Rastafari is a term that perhaps you've heard before, and it's a religious and social movement that originated among impoverished Afro-Jamaican communities in the

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1930s sort of as a reaction or rebellion against British colonial culture. Bob Marley's lyrics about love and natural beauty were captivating to his audiences. In 1978, the One Love Peace Concert was held in Kingston, Jamaica during a political civil war between two opposing parties. 16 of Reggae's biggest stars performed and it attracted more than 32,000 spectators. The climax of the concert came during a performance of the song "Jamming" by Bob Marley & the Wailers. Bob Marley called the two leaders of the opposing political parties onstage and famously joined their hands above his head. While the event did little to squelch the political violence in Jamaica in the years that would follow, it is still held up as an important moment in music.

Many current artists, such as Sean Paul and Shaggy, continue to fuse reggae styles with their music. Isn't it amazing that such a small island in the Caribbean has had such international musical influence?

As always with our summer series of Around the World with Busy Kids Love Music, I have lots of goodies for you in the show notes, which you'll find at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/100](https://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/100). At that link you'll be able to print the passport stamp for Jamaica, now that you've "visited" this country with me and learned about their folk music. You'll also find a link to a curated playlist of Jamaican folk music, so that you can listen further to the music you learned about in today's episode. Again, you'll find that at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/100](https://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/100).

Thanks so much for joining me today on our stop to Jamaica in this episode of Busy Kids Love Music. Join me again in 2 weeks as we continue our world tour with our summer series, Around the World with Busy Kids Love Music and learn more about folk music in the next brand new episode. I'll see you then!