

September 3, 2002

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For Immediate Release

## SUNSHINE Awards TO HONOR JAMAICAN MUSICOLOGIST DR. OLIVE LEWIN

Teaneck, New Jersey, USA, September 3, 2002....The SUNSHINE Awards™ organization today issued the following statement:

At the Fourteenth Annual SUNSHINE Awards, which will take place in New York City on Saturday, October 26, 2002, Dr. Olive Lewin, the distinguished social anthropologist and musicologist from Jamaica, will receive a 2002 Special Recognition Award for her outstanding contribution to the music and cultural heritage of the Caribbean. Dr. Lewin has devoted her life to the research, promotion and preservation of the rich traditional folk music of Jamaica. Her work has impacted the cultural awareness of her fellow Jamaicans, as well as others throughout the Caribbean, through the discovery of their unique folk music and rich cultural traditions.

Dr. Lewin brought to her lifelong profession a deep love and respect for the Afro-centric traditions found within the local customs of people of the Caribbean. Growing up as a child in the parish of Clarendon, Jamaica, she had an early exposure to music. Both her parents played the piano and music was a part of her everyday life. By her own account, she "just loved music." This love of music, combined with her inherent talent, would later lead her to her chosen profession as a musicologist.

As a young girl, she was exposed to the great European music masters. At the same time, however, she was also discovering the beauty of her Jamaican musical culture. She fell in love with the local folk music and traditions, which would later become the focus of her work as a researcher and teacher.

Olive Lewin was awarded a scholarship to attend the prestigious Royal Academy of Music in London, where she studied piano and the violin, as well as music composition. After completing her studies, she chose to make teaching her profession instead of pursuing a career as a performer. She wanted to share, as a teacher, what she had learnt. But most importantly, she wanted to educate her people about their cultural heritage. She realized that in Jamaica no one knew anything about his or her "real" background, and she decided that she had to do something to change that. Thus began her lifelong task of taking a people on a remarkable and oftentimes reluctant journey through the discovery of their rich Afro-centric folk music and traditions.

Dr. Lewin has devoted her life to teaching and has inspired young and older musicians alike.

She has also shared with her students and with the wider Jamaican and Caribbean community, the results of her extensive research into the history of Jamaican folk music and traditions. She traveled around the island, interviewing older Jamaicans, collecting their oral histories and songs. In 1966, she founded the Jamaican Folk Singers, a group which performs traditional Jamaican folk songs, and which has received, over the years, national and international acclaim for its performances.

Dr. Lewin's efforts, however, were not immediately welcomed with open arms, as the performance of Afro-centric folk music was then looked down upon and considered degrading. Many schools were reluctant to have their students attend concerts of this type of music. This resistance by society to embrace the local traditional folk culture did not, however, deter Dr. Lewin. On the contrary, it hardened her resolve to bring this important cultural heritage to the fore and to educate her fellow citizens on its significance to society. The Jamaican Folk Singers persisted in their performances and traveled extensively, taking the music to audiences around the world.

In her efforts to preserve this important aspect of the cultural heritage of the Caribbean, Dr. Lewin has researched, arranged and directed traditional folk music to be used by schools. In 1983, she founded the Jamaica Orchestra for Youth, a group that plays with equal skill the music of Bach, Bob Marley, as well as local traditional folk music.

Dr. Lewin was responsible for initiating and implementing the National Memory Bank Project, established to collect and preserve Jamaica's oral history and cultural heritage. Not only has her work impacted the island of Jamaica; it has also played an important role in helping to raise the cultural awareness of people throughout the Caribbean. In the 1980s, she served as an advisor for the establishment of the Memory Bank Project in Grenada. She also coordinated the work of the Caribbean Memory Bank.

She has served as Director of Arts and Culture in the office of the Prime Minister of Jamaica, and as Executive Director of the Jamaican Institute of Folk Culture. She has also coordinated cultural activities for the United Nations and the Organization of American States. She has lectured extensively around the world and has been the guest of a number of governments for activities related to the Arts.

Dr. Lewin is the author of several books and has made numerous recordings of folk music, performed by the Jamaican Folk Singers. She has been honored by the Government of Jamaica, the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the Government of France and by academia for her outstanding lifelong contribution to the Arts. In 2001 she was awarded the Jamaican Order of Distinction. In 1973, she was named an Honorary Maroon by the Jamaican Maroon community.

Dr. Hollis (Chalkdust) Liverpool, noted historian and lecturer and co-founder of the SUNSHINE Awards Hall of Fame, had this to say about Dr. Lewin's nomination for this year's special recognition award. "This is a most deserving award. Dr. Lewin has done so much for Jamaica in all areas of music. In fact, I would say that her name is synonymous with Jamaican music."

Mr. Franz Hall, Deputy Consul-General of Jamaica, said, "The Consul-General's office extends congratulations to Dr. Lewin on being a recipient of a Special Recognition SUNSHINE Award for her many years of being one of Jamaica's leading folklorists."

When told that she had been nominated for this Special Recognition Award, Dr. Lewin commented, "Nomination for the 2002 SUNSHINE Award is more than I could ever have dreamt

would have come my way. It is a huge bonus for having had the privilege of working in the area that has been such a joy to me since childhood. It has been wonderful to have been able to help to increase respect for the significant and beautiful Caribbean mosaic of music and other arts in their myriad forms. The 2002 SUNSHINE Award is greatly appreciated."

Gil Figaro, Sr., Chairman and Founder of the SUNSHINE Awards in announcing Dr. Lewin's nomination, had the highest praise for her work, "Dr. Lewin has played and continues to play a most important role in helping to preserve for future generations the rich folk music and traditions which are so important to our cultural heritage as people of the Caribbean. Her nomination for this award is certainly well deserved."

The Fourteenth Annual SUNSHINE Awards will take place on Saturday, October 26 at the New York's Hotel Pennsylvania, directly across from Madison Square Garden. It is sponsored in part by Hennessey, Angostora, Ltd., Colonial Life Insurance, Ltd., New York Carib News, Air Jamaica, Quaker Foods and Beverages and Calypsociety.

Ticket information is available on [www.sunshineawards.com](http://www.sunshineawards.com)