

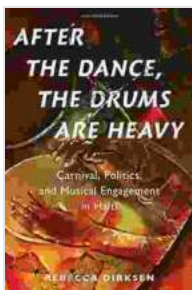
# After The Dance The Drums Are Heavy: Carnival Politics And Musical Engagement In Haiti (Currents In Latin American And Iberian Music)

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**Carnival**, a vibrant and multifaceted festival with deep cultural roots, occupies a prominent place in Haitian society. This annual celebration provides a space for social commentary, political expression, and musical engagement. In this article, we delve into the complex relationship between carnival politics and musical engagement in Haiti, exploring the ways in which these two realms intersect and shape each other.

## Carnival Politics: A Space for Subversion

Haitian carnival is characterized by its satirical and subversive nature. It is a time when social hierarchies are temporarily inverted, and the marginalized voices of the society can be heard. Carnival participants use music, dance, and costumes to express their discontent with the political and social status quo.



## After the Dance, the Drums Are Heavy: Carnival, Politics, and Musical Engagement in Haiti (Currents in Latin American and Iberian Music) by Ben Settle

★★★★★ 5 out of 5  
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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
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One of the most striking ways in which this subversion manifests itself is through the use of **Rara**, a musical genre that originated in the countryside and is now ubiquitous in urban carnival celebrations. Rara bands, composed primarily of marginalized youth, perform satirical songs that critique the government, the wealthy elite, and other societal ills. These songs are often improvised, allowing for immediate and spontaneous commentary on current events.

## **The Political Power of Music**

Music plays a central role in the political engagement that unfolds during carnival. It is a powerful tool that can mobilize people, raise awareness, and challenge authority. In Haiti, this power has been recognized and harnessed by both political leaders and social activists.

Politicians have long used carnival to reach out to voters and promote their agendas. They sponsor music groups, provide financial support for carnival events, and use carnival platforms to deliver speeches and make campaign promises. In return, musicians often incorporate political messages into their performances, praising or criticizing specific candidates or policies.

Social activists have also recognized the transformative power of music in carnival. They use music to raise awareness about social issues, mobilize support for their causes, and create a sense of community among

marginalized groups. For example, during the Duvalier dictatorship, musicians played a vital role in the resistance movement, using their music to spread messages of hope and defiance.

## **The Influence of Latin American Currents**

The political and musical engagement that characterizes Haitian carnival has been influenced by currents in Latin American culture. The region has a long history of political and social struggle, and carnival has often been a platform for resistance and change.

One of the most significant influences on Haitian carnival is **salsa**, a musical genre that originated in Cuba and became popular throughout Latin America in the 1970s. Salsa lyrics often incorporate social and political commentary, and the genre has been used by musicians to raise awareness about issues such as poverty, inequality, and human rights.

In Haiti, salsa has been adopted and adapted by carnival musicians, who incorporate elements of the genre into their own performances. This fusion of musical styles creates a unique and powerful expression of political engagement.

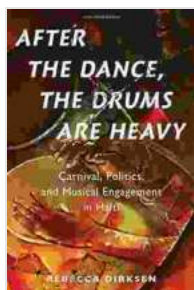
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Carnival plays a vital role in Haitian society, providing a space for social commentary, political expression, and musical engagement. The festival's subversive nature allows for the marginalized voices of society to be heard, and music is a powerful tool that can mobilize people, raise awareness,

and challenge authority. Haitian carnival has been influenced by currents in Latin American culture, particularly salsa, which has contributed to its unique and vibrant political and musical landscape.

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