

Rhythm Live!

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The Governor's School for the Arts Dance Department



VIRGINIA ARTS FESTIVAL 2025

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Map of the Caribbean Sea and its islands. Knusser.

CARIBBEAN PEOPLES

Caribbean populations and cultures today are the result of centuries of history.

Let's take a closer look at the people who live in this unique region!

Indigenous Caribbean Communities

The original inhabitants of the Caribbean islands were indigenous Taino and Kalinago peoples who used skillfully crafted canoes to traverse the Caribbean Sea. In fact, the word Caribbean comes from "Carib," a word for the Kalinago.

In the first fifty years of Spanish colonization, starting with Columbus' voyage in 1492, European diseases, massacres, and forced labor killed eighty to ninety percent of the Taino in the large islands of the Greater Antilles. Across the whole Caribbean, indigenous people struggled to confront disease, brutality, and displacement from their land amid shifting European alliances.

The Taino and Kalinago have had a lasting impact on the Caribbean region, its ecology, and its culture. Indigenous people and their descendants still live in the Caribbean today and work to keep Taino and Kalinago traditions alive and even to revitalize indigenous languages.



Reconstruction of Taino village. Michal Zalewski.

Did You Know?

- Indigenous cultural legacies in the Caribbean include
- the Taino origins of the English words for hurricane
- (from Taino *huracán*, adopted into Spanish), manatee
- (*manatí*), canoe (*canoa*), hammock (*hamaca*), and
- barbecue (*barbacoa*).

CARIBBEAN PEOPLES, CONT.

A Blend of Cultures

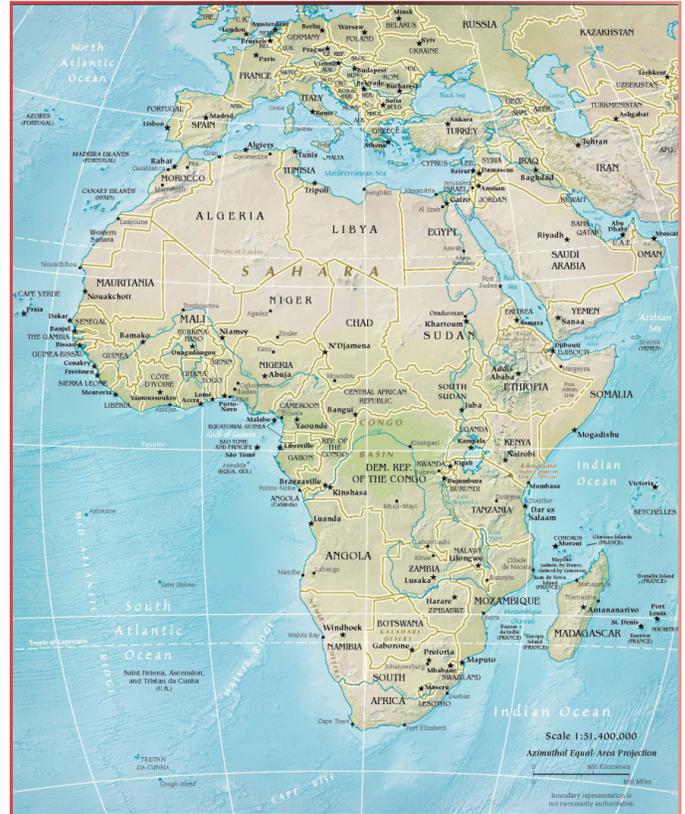
In addition to the Taino and Kalinago, ethnic groups from all over the world have left their mark on the Caribbean: Europeans including the Spanish, French, English, and Dutch, Africans including the Kongo, Yoruba, and Igbo, and more recently, Asian and Middle Eastern people from India, China, and Syria. Altogether, the Caribbean region today is a diverse mix of many peoples and cultural influences.

West Africans have played an especially important role in shaping the modern Caribbean. Most of the enslaved people brought to the Americas in the transatlantic slave trade (ca. 1500-1850) were originally from West Africa—the region where the modern countries of Angola, Gabon, Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Senegal are located. Today, a majority of Caribbean people are related to the West Africans who came to the region during this period.

“When Sugar Was King”

Sugarcane became the major cash crop throughout the Caribbean in the seventeenth century. Growing and processing sugar required intensive labor. Feeding sugarcane stalks into the rollers of the mills that extracted the juice was particularly dangerous for workers, who could be injured or killed. Planters (the owners of sugar plantations) in islands like Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad imported increasing numbers of enslaved Africans from slave ship captains so they could reap sugar’s high profits. Through enslaved people’s work, planters and European empires amassed enormous wealth.

The enslaved Africans who worked on plantations throughout the Caribbean came from various ethnic groups, including the Yoruba, Igbo, and Kongo, and brought with them their languages, traditions, beliefs, and values. Though West African customs and practices like drumming were often banned by plant-



Lithographic plate from 1836 showing harvesting of sugarcane in a Trinidad sugar plantation.

CARIBBEAN PEOPLES, CONT.



Newly arrived Indian indentured servants in Trinidad, circa 1897.

ers, enslaved people held on to their heritage in various ways, holding religious gatherings in secret, electing their own “kings” and “queens,” and singing while they worked in the fields.

In 1834, slavery was legally abolished across the British colonies in the Americas. Over the course of the nineteenth century, all European empires and independent American countries would eventually follow suit. However, planters still wanted a large, cheap workforce to maintain profits on their plantations. They tried to coerce formerly enslaved people to continue the harsh work of sugar production, but were not always successful. In colonies like Trinidad, where the hills and mountains of the interior remained relatively undeveloped, formerly enslaved people were able to move away from plantations and become small farmers in their own right.

Planters turned to indentured servitude as a means of cheap labor, with the help of the British colonial office. Their agents recruited people from Britain’s colonies in

India to work on Caribbean sugar plantations. Workers signed contracts (or “indentures”) to work on plantations for several years in exchange for food and housing. Afterwards, in theory, they could choose to return to their homeland or gain a plot of land in the Caribbean.

Most workers who came to the Caribbean could not read the contracts they were signing, and many were manipulated or even kidnapped into making this “choice.” On the plantations, Indian indentured servants encountered several hardships. The terms of their contract made it hard to protest mistreatment or even to leave the grounds of the plantation.

Chinese workers in Britain’s imperial sphere of influence were also “recruited” for indentured servitude. Altogether, before WWI, about 500,000 Indians immigrated to the Caribbean as indentured servants (mostly to Trinidad, Guyana, and Suriname), as well as 143,000 Chinese people (mostly to Cuba). Indian and Chinese workers brought their music, food, languages, and religious and cultural traditions to Caribbean societies.

CARIBBEAN PEOPLES, CONT.

Trinidad & Tobago

Two Islands, One Nation

The “twin islands” of Trinidad and Tobago are the southernmost islands in the Caribbean Sea. On his third voyage to the Americas in 1498, Columbus named the island of Trinidad after the Christian doctrine of the Trinity (“Trinidad” means “Trinity” in Spanish). While at sea, Columbus’ ship’s lookout saw the outline of three hills on Trinidad’s southeastern coast, inspiring the name.

Trinidad was under Spanish colonial rule until 1796, when it became a British colony. Tobago changed hands several times between the Dutch, Spanish, French, and British. In 1887, the British government placed Tobago under Trinidad’s colonial administration, uniting the two neighboring islands. In 1962, Trinidad and Tobago became an independent country.

Trinidad sits right off the coast of Venezuela, and Tobago lies about 20 miles from Trinidad’s north-eastern point. Geologically, the islands are very different. Trinidad was once a part of the South American mainland, while Tobago is partly volcanic in origin and located between the Caribbean and South American tectonic plates. Trinidad is the larger island, with lush rainforest in the Northern Range mountains, mangroves and beaches along the coasts, a buzzing cultural scene, and important natural gas and oil industries. Tobago is smaller and full of beautiful coves and coral reefs. Together they make up “Sweet T&T”!



• Research & Reflect

- How have different industries shaped your own community—in the past and today?
- Do you see any similarities between Trinidadian history and your own? What about differences?

TRINIDADIAN PERCUSSION MUSIC: CREATIVITY AND RESISTANCE

Drumming

When West Africans came to Trinidad, they brought with them their culture of music. Musicians were among the enslaved people brought on slave ships from West Africa, and they adapted their crafts of instrument-making and playing to the new environment in which they found themselves. Drums and rhythm played an important role in these musical traditions. West Africans also used drumming to convey messages over long distances.

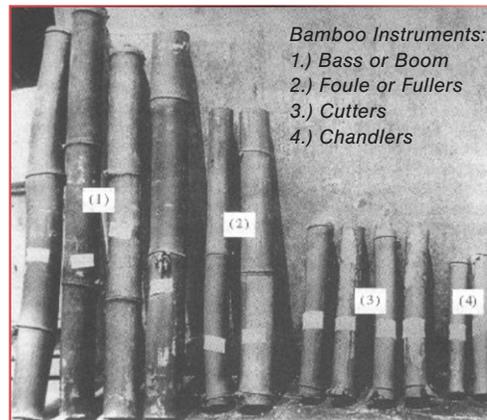
Planters tried to suppress enslaved people's drumming with strict bans and punishments. They especially feared drums' potential for communication as a means of organizing rebellions. However, planters never succeeded in eliminating drums entirely from enslaved people's music.

When slavery was abolished, planters' bans on drumming were no longer in force. However, the British colonial government still viewed this drumming tradition and the festivities that featured it with suspicion and disapproval, and soon they cracked down. Colonial authorities' efforts to suppress drumming in public spaces sparked resistance. Police clashed with Afro-Trinidadian drummers in the 1880s Canboulay Riots and fired on Shia Muslim Indo-Trinidadian *tassa* drummers commemorating Hosay in 1884. In 1884, all drumming in public was outlawed. Confronted with these obstacles, Trinidadians explored other ways to make percussion music.

Tambo Bamboo

Trinidadians discovered that they could use the widespread bamboo plant to play the rhythms of their drum music. Bamboo was strong enough that stalks could be pounded against the ground and struck with sticks to produce musical notes without breaking. Like a drum, bamboo stalks are hollow inside, allowing sound waves to reverberate.

By cutting bamboo at various lengths and sizes, musicians create different sounds. The thinnest bamboo lengths, called "Cutters," produce the highest or soprano pitch. "Chandlers" are a little larger than cutters and make up the alto range. "Fullers," larger still, produce a tenor pitch. The longest and widest lengths of bamboo, the "bass" or "boom," are about five feet long and create the lowest and most resonant sounds.



The music produced by these bamboo instruments is called "tamboo bamboo," from the French *tambour* (drum). Today, tamboo bamboo survives in Trinidad as an important folk tradition, preserved by small and dedicated groups of players. But in the early twentieth century, tamboo bamboo was

incredibly popular and played at dances, wakes, to accompany kalinda stick-fighting, and of course, at Carnival, with heated, even violent rivalries between bands of musicians.

The British colonial government was also suspicious of tamboo bamboo. In 1934, tamboo bamboo was banned on the justification of preserving public order. However, another transformation in Trinidadian percussion music was soon to take place.

TRINIDADIAN PERCUSSION MUSIC: CREATIVITY AND RESISTANCE, CONT.



The Development of the Steelpan

The tamboo bamboo bands sometimes included music made with manufactured objects that had outlived their original function—spoons struck against glass bottles to produce a high-pitched sound, or metal rods beating old car brake drums for a low one. Steelpan grew out of this musical tradition and spirit of innovation!

Musicians started to incorporate biscuit tins and paint cans for percussion. The first steelpanns were actually made from these kinds of containers! Meanwhile, Trinidad's oil industry had been rapidly growing since commercial oil production first began in the colony in 1908. As the oil industry increased in scale and mechanization through the first half of the twentieth century, oil began to be stored in large 55-gallon steel barrels called oil drums (drum can also refer to a cylindrical container.) These oil drums are the basis for steelpan as we know it today. Trinidadian percussionists realized that by stretching and beating the surface of a metal container, the improvised drum could be tuned to a specific pitch. They eventually

tried making several different musical notes on one container's surface. The smaller the bump on the surface of the metal, the higher the pitch would be, and vice versa. Quickly, bands were competing to create drums with more and more notes and to play more complex rhythms and melodies. The large, 55-gallon oil drums' large surface provided the ideal canvas for steelpan builders, and has become the standard starting point for the steelpanns made today.

Steelpan originally emerged in poorer neighborhoods, like Laventille near Port-of-Spain. It was the product of these neighborhoods' creativity and spirit of competition. Like hand drumming and tamboo bamboo, steelpan music and the "panmen" who played it were at first disregarded by many in society. However, steelpan's popularity grew rapidly and it came to be a point of national pride. Formal steelpan competitions, like Panorama, further spread steelpan's reach and audience. Today, steelpan is the national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago and played worldwide!



THE STEELPAN FAMILY

Starting from a 55-gallon steel oil drum, pan builders and tuners are able to create an entire family of instruments, much like a brass or string section of an orchestra.

The modern steelpan family is made up of the following instruments:

Lead or Tenor Pan (single drum)

Double Tenor (2 drums)

Double Seconds (2 drums)

Double Guitar (2 drums)

Triple Guitar (3 drums)

Cello (3 drums)

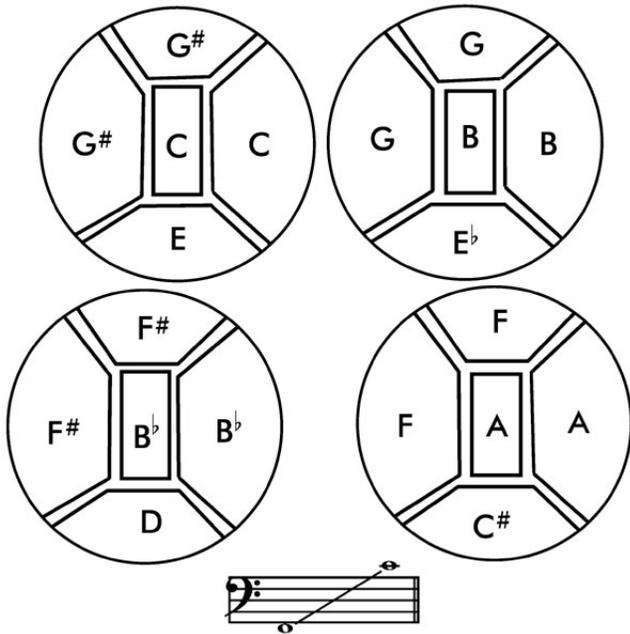
Quadrophonic (4 drums)

Tenor Bass (4 drums)

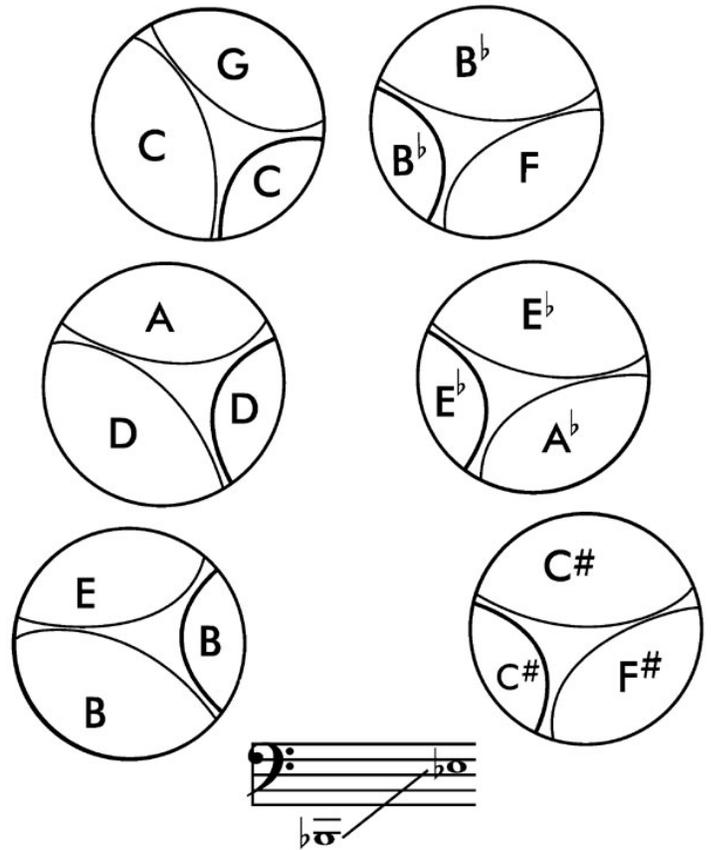
Bass (6 - 12 drums per set)

THE STEELPAN FAMILY, CONT.

Tenor Bass



6 Bass



HOW THEY'RE MADE

Sinking

To begin with, the flat, round surface on the bottom of a 55-gallon steel oil drum is carefully hammered down using a heavy sledgehammer or even a shot put ball. As the builders shape the surface into a concave bowl, they gradually move to lighter strokes to smooth the surface in preparation for stenciling.

Making the Notes

The builder then makes precise measurements on the concave surface and uses stencils to mark where the individual notes will go, arranging them to avoid stressing any weak points in the stretched metal. The builder then hammers along the lines and spaces between the notes to push them lower, making the notes appear as convex bubbles on the surface. Once this “backing” is done, the builder uses a small metal punch to make grooves in the metal outlining each note, so that the individual notes can vibrate independently of the rest of the surface. A final careful hammering or “levelling” establishes the shapes of the notes and smooths out the grooves and spaces between them.

After the bowl of the steelpan has been shaped, the oil drum is cut horizontally across. The longer the remaining cylindrical “skirt” of the steelpan, the deeper the pitch of its notes will be.

Tempering

After all of the hammering that has taken place up to this point, the metal surface of the steelpan has become unevenly stressed. Briefly applying intense heat redistributes these tensions in the metal and oxidizes some of the carbon in the steel, making it easier to shape and tune. Traditionally, this “burning” of the steelpan is done by placing the pan upside down over a fire. Today it is also performed industrially in an electric oven at high heat. When the steelpan cools, the metal hardens, strengthening the new shape of the drum.

Tempering has to be done very precisely—too much heat, and the steelpan will be “slack” and impossible to tune!



Tuning

After being cooled and cleaned of ash and soot, the steelpan is now ready to be tuned. A tuner corrects each individual note on the steelpan to the perfect pitch using various sizes of hammer and a rubber-tipped tuning stick to strike the notes. Tuning occurs in successive stages of fine-tuning until the steelpan’s notes ring true. “Blending” tuning adjustments may even occur at a later stage to ensure all the steelpans in a steelband sound good together. Both the pitch of the note and the timbre (the sound’s particular character or quality) must be adjusted by the tuner to ensure the harmonious sound of “sweet pan”!

Try This

- If you were going to make a new instrument out of something reused or recycled, what would it look like?
- Brainstorm with a friend!

MUSICAL STYLES

Calypso

The modern genre of calypso arose in Trinidad and Tobago in the nineteenth century out of different West African satirical and praise music traditions. A singer known as a griot led songs incorporating call-and-response, for example to cheer on kalinda stick-fighters. West African origins of calypso are in the name: “calypso” is probably an adaptation of “kaiso,” an Efik and Ibibio exclamation to encourage a singer, like “Bravo!” Kaiso is still another word for calypso in Trinidad.

Calypso music has always been used as a tool of social commentary, with its funny, biting lyrics critiquing the political and cultural atmosphere of the day. Calypsonians (calypso singers) often sing in colorful Trinidadian Creole, which combines English words with some words and phrases of French, Spanish, West African and Indian origins, arranged according to West African grammatical structures.

Calypso music is usually sung live accompanied by backup singers and a jazz-like rhythm section (piano, drums, bass, and horns). For centuries, calypso has been especially associated with Carnival and the season leading up to it. Spectators gather at “calypso tents” to hear the latest news and satire.

Calypsos were the first songs to be played on steelpan and deeply influenced the style of steelpan musical arrangements. However, calypso is far from the only genre played on steelpan.

Bomb

“Bomb tunes” are one of the most prevalent styles of Trinidadian steelpan music. A “bomb” is a popular song—not originally a calypso—that is played in an exciting calypso tempo and arrangement by a steelband. The word comes from the early days of competition between rival steelbands. Band members would prepare in secret and might even practice quietly by touching the notes with their fingers instead of the playing sticks. Then they would “drop a bomb” on their competition by publicly performing their arrangement of a well-known song!



Born around 1974

To a mother named Calypso
Junior appeared to be so much more
Over the years he began to grow
But like his grandfather Pa Kalinda
And grandmammy sweet Cariso
The family traits of little boy Soca
Coulda never hide just so
He is the head of the feting class
The heart of the Carnival
He’s the jumping legs in the mas
The waistline causing bacchanal”

—Machel Montano,
“Soul of Calypso” (2024)



Classical

One early genre of “bomb” music involved calypso-style arrangements of European classical music for steelpan. Such performances were especially striking because European classical music was the music most valorized by the colonial elite and seen as especially beautiful, complex, and worthy, as it often is today. Playing classical music on steelpan showed off the range of sound that could be produced by this new instrument as well as the skill of the pannists (steelpan players) and arrangers. It gave steelpan more legitimacy in the public eye. Trinidad and Tobago now has a national steel orchestra that plays all styles of music but especially prides itself on its classical repertoire. Classical compositions are a frequent choice for solo steelpan performances as well.

Soca

Soca emerged in the 1970s as a distinct genre based on calypso music. The term was first coined by the singer Lord Shorty’s song “Sokah: The Soul of Calypso.” Besides calypso elements, soca incorporates the fast-paced, layered rhythms brought by Indian indentured servants to Trinidad. It also contains influences from dancehall and disco. Soca has since spawned many subgenres, like groovy soca, ragga soca, and chutney soca.

While calypso music is typically sung live with the accompaniment of a house band, soca incorporates more

MUSICAL STYLES, CONT.

synthesized sounds and several recorded audio tracks, resulting in an exciting modern sound. Lyrics usually center dancing and letting loose instead of social commentary. Soca is the chief music genre associated with Trinidadian Carnival today, and the Road March competition judges which song is most frequently played along the Carnival parade route. “Bomb” arrangements of soca songs are some of the most popular choices for Panorama and other steelpan competitions!

Chutney & Chutney Soca

Named after the Indian condiment, chutney music is another genre that has roots in Trinidad—specifically among Indo-Trinidadians. Chutney developed in the 1940s–60s and is a fusion of calypso and the folk music Indian indentured servants brought with them to the Caribbean, along with other influences like the music in Bollywood films. It often incorporates Hindi and Bhojpuri lyrics. Chutney is also popular in other Caribbean countries where many people are of Indian origin, like Guyana and Suriname.

Chutney Soca, a term created by Drupatee Ramgoonai in her 1987 album “Chatnee Soca,” melds chutney with the dance beat and synthesized sound of soca music. Some chutney and chutney soca songs are also played on steelpan!



Listen to Trinidadian music and steelpan!

Calypso

Mighty Sparrow – English Diplomacy (1974):

<https://youtu.be/iG6uaOrgwoc>

Brother Marvin – Jahaji Bhai (Brotherhood of the Boat) (1996):

<https://youtu.be/NiBoxIR-ULE>

Jahaji Bhai on steelpan, performed by Renegades:

<https://youtu.be/WkvZp6tCnqQ>

Bomb

Michael Jackson’s Smooth Criminal on steelpan, performed by St. Margaret’s Youth Steel Orchestra:

<https://youtu.be/Vvm00DScCYo>

Classical

Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata on steelpan, performed by Renegades: <https://youtu.be/oynrHASuJp8>

Soca

Skinny Fabulous, Machel Montano, Bunji Garlin – Famalay (2019): <https://youtu.be/pD4IqYEwmil>

Kes the Band—Wotless (2010):

<https://youtu.be/cMsihDYhQyw>

Wotless on steelpan, performed by Crossfire Steel Orchestra:

https://youtu.be/rJUI_DqwaMA

Chutney

Kanchan – Kaise Bani (based on Bhojpuri folk) (1983):

<https://youtu.be/JDduRCIBAGU>

Kaise Bani on steelpan, performed by LoveSound (2021):

<https://youtu.be/kBU4sSAX4Bc>

Chutney Soca

Drupatee Ramgoonai – Roll Up D Tassa (Mr. Bissessar) (1988): <https://youtu.be/GM931PXhk2l>

Roll Up D Tassa and chutney medley on steelpan, performed by Supernovas Steel Orchestra: <https://youtu.be/QiGbSpiPLIE>

CARNIVAL

Origins of Carnival

In most Christian denominations, Lent is a 40-day period of prayer and reflection before Easter in commemoration of Jesus' forty days fasting in the desert in the Bible. Many Christians choose to fast and give up certain luxuries. Catholics were historically required to give up eating meat during Lent. Today, this tradition survives in abstaining from meat on the Fridays throughout Lent.

Because of Lenten restrictions, Catholic communities developed the custom of eating all of their decadent food right before this time of penitence and restraint—a custom which grew into general celebration and revelry on the eve of Lent. Before Lent's austere prayer and fasting, people threw an enormous party in which all the usual rules and hierarchies of society were upturned and lampooned. Many places with a significant historical Catholic presence have a Carnival tradition—like New Orleans in the United States, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, and Venice in Italy. Trinidad's Carnival is one of the largest and most famous worldwide, attracting tens of thousands of international visitors each year.

Carnival in Trinidad

Before British takeover at the end of the eighteenth century, Trinidad was under (Catholic) Spanish colonial rule. In 1783, the Spanish crown offered land grants to Catholics who immigrated to Trinidad, hoping to spur immigration and economic growth. As a result, Catholic planters from French Caribbean colonies migrated to Trinidad, bringing their enslaved workers with them. French Caribbean planters brought with them their culture, customs, and Carnival masquerades.

Simultaneously, enslaved people held their own celebrations, adapting West African traditions over generations to a new Caribbean environment and European cultural influences. Canboulay, the precursor to Trinidadian Carnival as we know it today, took place on the Sunday night before Lent and featured kalinda stick-fighting, drumming, masks, torches, and dancing. It comes from the Kikongo word *kambule*, meaning parade or procession.



Carnival Costume in Trinidad. Jean-Marc.

Satire and social commentary featured prominently in the developing Trinidadian Carnival celebrations. “Old mas” characters (mas from “masquerade”) like the Dame Lorraine and the Jab Jab made fun of elaborately dressed French Caribbean planters as vain, cruel, and hypocritical.

Once slavery was abolished in the 1830s, formerly enslaved people took their celebration to the streets. As Indian indentured servants and others immigrated to Trinidad, new flavors were added to the festivities. Trinidadian Carnival has changed a great deal since the days of Canboulay. Lavish and sultry “pretty mas” costumes, dancing, and soca music are incredibly popular in today’s Carnival. However, it remains a time of inversion, “bacchanal,” and a community uniting and taking possession of public space.

There are still some people that consider Carnival too lewd because of the wild costumes and behavior. Nevertheless, it has evolved into a festival celebrated by young and old of every class, creed and color, in a grand spectacle of creativity and an exposition of all of society’s strengths and weaknesses. Carnival is an international phenomenon and the signature event on Trinidad’s cultural calendar. The preceding months make up a whole Carnival “season”. Anticipation builds as steelbands practice their performances for the Panorama competition, calypsonians test out their lyrics in calypso tents, masqueraders prepare or purchase their costumes, and partygoers dance to the new batch of soca music at a series of Carnival “fetes” (parties). Finally, the long-awaited week arrives.

CARNIVAL, CONT.

Carnival Saturday

The Saturday before Lent kicks off with Children’s Carnival parades throughout the afternoon—an opportunity for younger masqueraders to show off their colorful costumes and moves.

That evening, Trinidad hosts Panorama, the largest steelpan competition in the world. Spectators crowd into stands in the Queen’s Park Savannah in Trinidad’s capital, Port-of-Spain, to listen to steelbands play their exciting arrangements of soca and calypso songs. This is the final stage of the competition in the “large band” category (featuring 75 to 200 pannists per steelband). Whole days of preliminary competitions and steelpan contests in other categories are held in the weeks leading up to this big event on Carnival weekend!

“It is half-five, six in the morning, and the colour of dawn coming through and all these people all paint up in different colours, a riddim going and all of a sudden you feel this sense of suspension. You see all these people, all these people are your community and you realise, you feel a strong sense of love and you realise that what you are really doing is renewing a vow to love these people for the year coming.

—Tony Hall,
Trinidadian playwright

Quoted in *Discover Trinidad & Tobago*, “Trinidad Carnival: The Birth & Evolution,” <https://www.discovertrnt.com/articles/Trinidad/The-Birth-Evolution-of-Trinidad-Carnival/109/3/32>.



Carnival Sunday

The Calypso Monarch competition takes place on Carnival Sunday—the main event for Trinidadian calypso music. Master calypsonians perform their new, topical tunes in hopes of winning the crown.

The carnival Kings and Queens competition is held on Carnival Sunday night. These individual masqueraders have the largest and most elaborate costumes, intricate handmade constructions that require wheels or stilts to maneuver. In 2024, Roxanne Omala won Queen of Carnival with her gigantic spider costume, “Queen Tarantula”!

Though the Kings and Queens have now been crowned, the biggest celebrations of Trinidadian Carnival are still ahead—on Carnival Monday and Tuesday.

CARNIVAL, CONT.



Carnival band, taken by Dr. Ted Hill in Port of Spain, Trinidad in the early 1950s

J'Ouvert

Each year, J'Ouvert begins under a cloak of darkness—before 4 a.m. on the Monday before Lent begins. Fueled by exhilaration and the energetic rhythms of soca music, revelers take to the streets for the predawn party of J'Ouvert.

J'Ouvert (from the French *jour ouvert* or “day open”) is a time for loosening inhibitions. In contrast to “pretty mas,” this is “dirty” or “dutty mas.” Daubed in mud, oil, paint, and even chocolate, bands of revelers depict characters like the fire-breathing Blue Devils and Jab Molassie (“jab” from the French *diable* for “devil”) who terrorize spectators and fellow masqueraders. These “devil mas” characters, sometimes chained or wielding whips, have been a part of Trinidadian Carnival from its earliest inception and are one of the “old mas” traditions that remain especially vibrant today. The devils have been said to express the violence of slavery as well as to parody the brutality of planters and overseers.

Masqueraders’ costumes are sometimes accompanied by a satirical placard—usually of something socially or politically topical. Puns are a mainstay for the placards and costumes. Festivities continue throughout Carnival Monday, and traditional satirical “old mas” characters like Sailors, Baby Dolls, the Dame Lorraine, and the Midnight Robber also roam the streets.

Carnival Tuesday

Carnival Tuesday begins bright and early. By 8am, thousands of masqueraders are already arranged in full costume, waiting for the chance to strut along the parade route to the main stage in the Queen’s Park Savannah. Each “band” of masqueraders has its own historical, mythological, or nature-inspired concept, with various sections depicting aspects of the main theme. Trucks of speakers blasting soca music provide a booming bass line as they “wine” or “chip” down the road. In contrast to J'Ouvert, this is “pretty mas”—beads, sequins, feathers, rhinestones, and bright colors, a more recent addition to Trinidad’s Carnival celebrations.

Bands of masqueraders are judged in three categories—small, medium, and large—and the champion Band of the Year is announced after all bands have crossed the stage.

The party goes on until it is officially Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.

What Do You Think?

- Are there any events and activities you are familiar with that resemble Trinidad and Tobago’s Carnival? For example, consider social commentary involving humor and costumes, or times when the usual rules of polite behavior get thrown out the window.
- Which elements are similar to Carnival? What is different?
- Both Carnival and steelpan are the result of resistance and resilience in the face of colonial efforts to prevent people from expressing their culture. Why were drumming and Canboulay/Carnival so important to Trinidadians? Can you think of a tradition in your own culture that people struggled against the odds to preserve?

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

Discover Trinidad and Tobago

Virtually explore the twin islands of Trinidad and Tobago—history, culture, and tourist attractions!

www.discovertnt.com

Trinidad and Tobago, by Sean Sheehan, Jui Lin Yong, and Vanessa Oswald (Cultures of the World Series, Cavendish Square Publishing, 2020)

Learn about Trinidad and Tobago's geography, history, food, and festivals in this accessible book for younger audiences.

“Taíno—Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean,” Gallery Guide, National Museum of the American Indian

Informational and approachable introduction to Taino culture and history in the Caribbean region.

<https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/pdf/Taino-Gallery-Guide-English.pdf>

“Taínos & Caribbean Indigenous Peoples,” by José L. Marrero-Rosado, UC Berkeley Office of Resources for International and Area Studies

More detailed information on Caribbean indigenous societies for teachers and students, diving into what archaeology tells us about Taino culture, society, and history.

<https://orias.berkeley.edu/resources-teachers/societies-americas/ta%C3%ADnos-caribbean-indigenous-peoples>

“A ‘new system of slavery’? The British West Indies and the origins of Indian indenture,” by Michael Mahoney for the UK National Archives Blog (2020)

Learn about the nineteenth-century system of indentured servitude in the Caribbean.

<https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a-new-system-of-slavery-the-british-west-indies-and-the-origins-of-indian-indenture/>

“Tamboo Bamboo Tradition in Gasparillo,” TTT Live Online

Listen to the sound of tamboo bamboo music and learn about how these instruments are made today!

<https://youtu.be/JIONmh3voys>

“Tamboo Bamboo: The Rebellious Sound of Music in Trinidad,” by Avah Atherton for *Folklife* magazine (2024)

This article explores tamboo bamboo's history and its cultural significance in Trinidad, as well as the development of steelpan and steelbands from tamboo bamboo music.

<https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/art-of-rebellion-tamboo-bamboo-trinidad>

“‘Calypso is We!’ Life Lessons in the Music of Trinidad and Tobago,” by Kimberley Watson for *Folklife* magazine (2023)

An exploration of calypso music and its social commentary in Trinidadian culture and everyday life.

<https://folklife.si.edu/magazine/calypso-music-trinidad-and-tobago>

Steel Pan/Steel Drum Listening Library

Listen to different styles of steelpan music and learn about the steelpan's evolution over time.

<https://www.steelpan-steeldrums-information.com/steel-drum-music.html>

The Pan Page: A Forum for the Steel Pan Instrument

Learn more about the process of making and tuning steelpans!

Explore the website to find steelbands all over the world and more informational resources.

<https://stockholmsteelband.se/pan/tuning/index.php> <https://stockholmsteelband.se/pan/resources>

Traditional Mas Archive

Explore Carnival's cultural significance and meet different “old mas” Carnival characters!

<https://traditionalmas.com>

Virginia Standards of Learning

History and Social Science: Skills K-3, WG; WG.1, 4, 14

Dance: K.1, 3, 5-6, 11; 1.3-6, 11; 2.3-6, 18; 3.3-6; 4.3, 6; 5.3-7; 6.3-7, 11; 7.3, 5-7; 8.3, 6; DI.3-7; DII.3-4, 6; DIII.3-4, 6; DIV.3, 6

Music: K.3-7, 9; 1.3-7, 9; 2.3-7, 9; 3.3, 5-7; 4.3-7; 5.3-7; EI.3-7, 10-11; 6.3-7, 10-11; 7.3-6, 11; 8.3-6; MIB.3-7, 10-11; MII.3-6, 11; MIAD.3-6; MCB.3-7, 11; MCI.3-6, 11; MCAD.3-6; HM.3-6, 11; HMT.3-6, 11; HIB.3-6, 11; HII.3-6; HIAD.3-6; HIAR.3-6; HCB.3-6, 11; HCI.3-6; HCAD.3-6; HCAR.3-6

FEEDBACK FORM

We need your feedback to make our Education Programs even better! Please take a moment to complete this form and either return it to the Virginia Arts Festival office at 440 Bank Street, Norfolk, VA 23510, fax it to (757) 605-3080, or e-mail your answers to education@vafest.org.

Event: _____

How did your students respond to the performance?

How did you prepare your students for this performance? Did you use the Education Guide? If so, how?
Did students enjoy the materials?

How did this performance contribute to experiential learning in your classroom?

What role do the arts play in your school? In your classroom?

If you could change one thing about this experience, what would it be?

Please include quotes and comments from your students as well!

(Optional)

Name: _____

School: _____ City: _____

Would you like to be part of our database? Yes No