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What She Go Do: Women In Afro-Trinidadian Music (Caribbean Studies Series)



Synopsis

In the 1990s, expressive culture in the Caribbean was becoming noticeably more feminine. At the annual Carnival of Trinidad and Tobago, thousands of female masqueraders dominated the street festival on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. Women had become significant contributors to the performance of calypso and soca, as well as the musical development of the steel pan art form. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted by the author in Trinidad and Tobago, *What She Go Do* demonstrates how the increased access and agency of women through folk and popular musical expressions has improved inter-gender relations and representation of gender in this nation. This is the first study to integrate all of the popular music expressions associated with Carnival—calypso, soca, and steelband music—within a single volume. The book includes interviews with popular musicians and detailed observation of musical performances, rehearsals, and recording sessions, as well as analysis of reception and use of popular music through informal exchanges with audiences. The popular music of the Caribbean contains elaborate forms of social commentary that allows singers to address various sociopolitical problems, including those that directly affect the lives of women. In general, the cultural environment of Trinidad and Tobago has made women more visible and audible than any previous time in its history. This book examines how these circumstances came to be and what it means for the future development of music in the region.

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Customer Reviews

“Over the decades, calypso in Trinidad has been a male-dominated musical and story-telling genre, discussed in print by mostly male scholars. Now Hope Munro has written the most important book-length study of women in calypso. We are presented a detailed, century-long account, from the rare female singer in the early 1900s to today, when many female singers present their perspectives on their culture and sometimes match wits with male singers. Munro includes details about Beryl McBurnie, who promoted dance, theater, pan, calypso, and folklore of the island. In the recent era, she discusses the professional lives of such important calypsonians as Calypso Rose, Singing Sandra, and Denyse Plummer and the issues they raise. To say that this book is long overdue is a gross understatement; we are fortunate that Hope Munro chose to write it. This book should be read by everyone with even a passing interest in Caribbean music.”

Donald R. Hill, professor of Africana/Latino studies and anthropology, SUNY Oneonta

Hope Munro, Chico, California, is associate professor of music at California State University, Chico. Her work has appeared in many journals, including Ethnomusicology and Latin American Music Review.

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