

# Origin of calypso essay



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Calypso is one of the most significant traditions in Caribbean music. Calypso began on the twin island nation of Trinidad and Tobago. The rhythms of calypso can be traced quite back to the seventeenth century. This was when the first enslaved Africans were brought to Trinidad to work on the sugar plantations. While the Africans worked in the sugar field plantations, they were forbidden to speak to one another. So, by means of communication, they began to sing songs similar to those they knew in West Africa. The African call-and-response chant called “kaisos”, was the earliest calypso music that was developed. These songs, were quite boastful and often, they were accompanied by the traditional African drums and a chorus. In Trinidad, early Calypso music was sung in French patios and they were used in ways to mock and ridicule the upper class and slaveholders.

Since the appeal for Calypso music broadened, it became a tradition for Calypso singing competitions to be held annually, during the Carnival season. But, Calypso's popularity generally soared after slavery was abolished in the 1830's. Also, the music genre became similar after the Afro-Trinidadian struggle against colonialism. In the past, and sometimes now, calypsos typically involves storylines about current events, politics and social commentary. Since Calypso music gathered a widespread popularity, socially and politically conscious calypsos influenced many of Trinidad's most important social and political events.

In 1954, Calypso music made a huge breakthrough to pop music. Nowadays, calypso music is sung in English. Also, the African drums have been replaced by brass band and steel pan. Since Calypso music is always considered as

the heart of Trinidadian music, it is highly commercialized. The musical genre of Calypso continues to shape the social consciousness of Trinidad.

In the year 1912, calypso music was recorded for the first time. In the following decade, we saw the arrival of calypso tents during the Carnival season. Calypsonians competed for awards like the Carnival Road March, National Calypso Monarch, Calypso Queen, Junior Monarch and Extempo Monarch in contests.

During the 1970's, calypso's popularity waned throughout the world, including the Caribbean. As Calypso grew, they mixed with it musical styles from the Indians in Trinidad and Tobago. This was called Local Chutney. It then grew into soca, and a hip hop and dub-influenced style called "rapso". They both became popular in Trinidad and many other islands. Soca was by the most influential in terms of international sales, but rapso helped make calypso the world-famous, innovative art form it has become.