

# Calypso Music



# Music of the Caribbean

Most of the Caribbean population are descendants of West African slaves and settlers from Europe, India and China. The music of the Caribbean differs from island to island, but each kind has its origins in a mixture of African and European influences.

African musical influences include:

syncopations (offbeat accents) and cross-rhythms

use of percussion

call and response

singing styles

European musical influences include:

tonal (based in a key) harmonies and melodies

instruments eg guitar

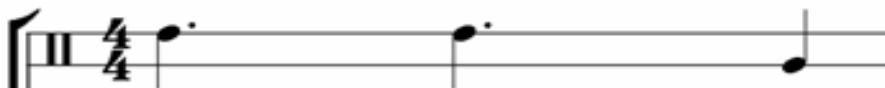
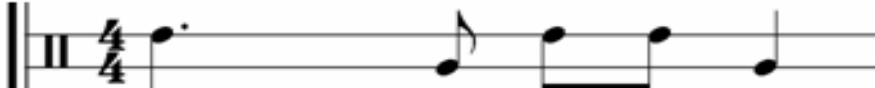


# Calypso Background

- Calypso originated in the Caribbean Islands of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Its influences come from West African Protest songs and French ballads (Calypso songs are often sung in French-Creole dialect → patois).
- It developed the most during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with colonial slaves.
- Slaves were forbidden to communicate to each other and so became united through song.
- Calypso had its greatest surge in popularity during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Key figures in this popularity surge were:
  - Lord Invader
  - Attila the Hun
  - Roaring Lion (also the most important Calypso historian).
- Calypso lasted until the 1970's, but then its popularity rapidly declined and branched off into other styles.

# Calypso Music

- It is considered mainly dance and party music (carnivals)
- The main focus is on the lyrics and the song
- It uses verse/chorus structure
- Instruments included in Calypso songs are Guitar, Banjo, Steel drum, Various percussion instruments.
- Calypso music is highly melodic (influenced from Folk)
- It uses relatively simple rhythms and is in 4/4 time
- It is usually syncopated

# Calypso Rhythms

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>A</b></p>  <p>Pine - app - le</p>        | <p><b>B</b></p>  <p>Man - go ki - wi fruit</p>  |
| <p><b>C</b></p>  <p>App - le and or - ange</p> | <p><b>D</b></p>  <p>Love - ly co - co - nut</p> |

# The Lyrics

- The lyrics usually have a sharp satirical tone (originating from the Slaves bitter lifestyles).
- Usually the satire is masked by humour and irony.
- They often feature political topics or comments on every day social lives.

# Listening Example

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMWUF3LYd88>

- Lord Invaders Rum and Coca Cola addresses the the culture of prostitution that developed around American Military bases in the 1940's in Trinidad.

And when de Yankeys first went to Trinidad,  
Some ah de young girls Were more than glad,  
Deh said that de Yankeys treat dem Nice  
and deh give dem the better Price.

Deh buy rum and coca-cola, went Down Point Cumana,  
Both mothers and daughters,  
workin Fuh deh yankey dollar.

And look, I had ah little chick De odda day,  
But her mother came and took her Away,  
Ah self and her mother and her sisters  
Went tuh make out with some soldiers.

Deh bought rum and coca-cola, went Down Point Cumana, Both  
mothers and daughters,  
workin Fuh deh yankey dollar.

# Steel Pans

**Steel band music originated in Trinidad and Tobago during the 1940s. Steel bands often play calypso tunes but also play folk and classical music.**

- Steel pans were originally made out of oil drums.
- There are many different sizes – Alto, Guitar, Cello and Bass.
- The lead instruments are TENORS or PING-PONGS.
- For pieces with a faster tempo a rhythm section is added featuring drums and percussion (tambourines, maracas).
- Simple harmony is used
- A lot of syncopation features throughout.
- The music features complex rhythms – short rhythmic phrases with chords added.
- The melodies are smooth and expressive.
- Tremolo (rolling) is often used on long notes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P996TZp25PM>



# Task

Create your own piece of Calypso based on the following chords

G (gbd) C (ceg) D (df#a) D (df#a)

Create a **bassline** using the notes of the chords- make it syncopated  
e.g. dotted rhythms

Can you create a **call and response melody** over the top- you need to  
use the g major scale GABCDEF #G