

# Echoes of the Haitian Revolution

Music, Sound, and Memory, 1791-1934

Oct 5, 2024

Wu Recital Hall

125 Morrison Hall, University of California, Berkeley

## Schedule

9:15 - Welcome and Introduction

9:30 - Panel 1 (remote)

"Cultures of Music in Saint-Domingue."

**Laurent Dubois** (University of Virginia)

"Afro-French Drummers on the Bordeaux Stage: A Speculative History of Mirza & Lindor"

**Scott Sanders** (Dartmouth College)

10:30-11 - BREAK

11:00 - Panel 2

(Remote) "What Was Henry Christophe's Religion?: Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Vodou in the Kingdom of Haiti."

**Marlene Daut** (Yale University)

"Divided by a Common Dance: Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and the Carabinier"

**Henry Stoll** (University of Michigan)

"Haitian Music, Resistance, and Inter-island Organizing in the Nineteenth-Century Caribbean World."

**Benjamin Barson** (Bucknell University)

12:30-2 - LUNCH

2:00 - Panel 3

"The Tale of Two Kindred Cities: Santiago de Cuba and New Orleans. How Did Vodú and Voodoo Arrive in Both?"

**Grete Viddal** (New Orleans)

“Opéra-Comique at the Circus: Pantomime as Translation in Early North America”  
**Elizabeth Rouget** (Princeton University)

“Sound and Sentiment: Haiti’s Revolution in Early American Performance”  
**Peter Reed** (University of Mississippi)

3:30-4 - BREAK

4:00 - Panel 4

“Creole Musical Anxiety: A Mother’s Lessons on Style (1802–1811)”  
**Rebecca Geoffroy-Schwinden** (University of North Texas)

“The Paris *Conservatoire* in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions”  
**Julia Doe** (Columbia University)

“Edmond Saintonge (1861-1907) compositeur d’une Ode à l’abolition de l’esclavage”  
**Claude Dauphin** (Université du Québec à Montréal)

Project sponsored by the Mellon Foundation, the Division of Arts and Humanities, and the Department of Music

## CONFERENCE DESCRIPTION

Many scholars have traced the momentous historical consequences of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), seeking to redraw Euro-American maps of the revolutionary era, complicate the relation of imperial center to colonized periphery, and historicize modern categories of race and nation. But research into the varied and vibrant musical cultures of colonial Saint-Domingue and the Haitian revolutionary period, and the subsequent global dispersion and transformation of these cultures, are sparser, especially when it comes to Afro-diasporic traditions. The movement of thousands of French- and Creole-speaking refugees and migrants from Haiti kindled an explosion of musical genres whose echoes continue to resound today. Indeed, the mass migration of peoples produced by the Haitian Revolution could be described as a musical event of near hemispheric magnitude.

This conference brings together the latest scholarship on this vital part of the colonial and postcolonial sonic archive, to create new, distinctively musical stories about the Americas and the Atlantic world in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

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One premise of this project is that scholars will not fully understand the history of colonial Saint-Domingue, revolutionary Haiti, or the Haitian diaspora until they come to terms with the many musical practices woven through them. Music and theater were central to the French colonial project. The publicity wars of the revolutionary era were fought through anthems and songs. Music and dance served to articulate and disseminate emerging Haitian and Creole identities in the early nineteenth century, and continued to shape these identities well into the twentieth.

By the late eighteenth century, Saint-Domingue was by some margin one of the wealthiest regions in the world, its rapid economic expansion fueled by the trade in commodities (primarily sugar) and propped up by the extractive violence of transatlantic slavery. Urban centers in Saint-Domingue accordingly produced and consumed an immense cultural surplus. Over several decades, the colonial capital of Le Cap (present-day Cap-Haïtien) boasted more operatic productions and a denser concert scene even than Paris, while a range of newly hybridized vernacular dance forms and vocal genres emerged from its lively contact zones. Music imported to Saint-Domingue from France typically ended up transformed or subverted by its new Caribbean environment, while a wave of previously unheard Creole music began to reorder the sound of fashionable urban life in Europe and North America.

The social upheavals and extraordinary violence of the revolutionary period and its aftermath created the largest displacement of people the region had ever seen, from Saint-Domingue, up and down the Atlantic coast and throughout the Caribbean – to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad, Venezuela, and major cities in the United States, including New Orleans, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Savannah, Charleston, and New York. The diaspora included Africans, Europeans, and Creoles, enslavers and the enslaved – and each community spread its distinctive musical practices: white former citizens of Saint-Domingue, free Black Haitian musicians, enslaved dancers and “set-girls,” multiracial

households of French Creoles, Southern women folk singers and storytellers: all became an archive of diasporic Haitian music amid the complex, exploitative, creative cultural economies of the nineteenth century.

By the early twentieth century, and the near twenty-year US occupation of Haiti authorized by Woodrow Wilson (1915-1934), the Haitian music scene, dominated by dances such as the méringue and experiencing the earliest inrush of American jazz, had also developed an acute historical consciousness, cultivated in particular among Haitian “art” musicians – some of whom, such as the composer-pianists Edmond Saintonge and, later, Ludovic Lamothe, had studied in or adjacent to European conservatories, so absorbing ethno-nationalist conceptions of music, culture, and identity. A generation of musicians now asserted and revalorized Haiti’s African-ness, especially as it was heard to be embodied in the dances and rituals of Vodou. Such attitudes shaped the forms of Haitian musical resistance cultivated under the conditions of occupation.

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This conference, then, is dedicated to the music of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Haiti and its myriad historical reverberations – roughly from the beginning of the Haitian Revolution in 1791 until the end of US occupation in the mid-1930s.