

Editorial Introduction

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The need for resistance embodied by artistic and cultural performance in Latin America and the Caribbean has never been more crucial than right now. As I write, the world has witnessed the invasion of Venezuela by the United States after months of extra-judicial murders in the Caribbean Sea, ongoing US-imperial threats to Cuba, Mexico, and other Central American states, and the political and economic strong-arming of Caribbean nations to comply with United States' hegemonic aspirations.¹ Despite this, artists in the region continue what they have always done through their art—exposing and reimagining the world. Bad Bunny's seventh studio album *DeBí TiRaR MaS FOToS* won the Album of the Year at the 2026 Grammy Awards, making him the first Latino artist to do so in Grammy history. Recorded entirely in Spanish, the album is an unabashed love letter to the island of Puerto Rico. His September 2025 decision to exclude the US from his tour was in direct response to violent anti-immigration raids by the Department of Homeland Security. Jamaica lost two reggae legends—Jimmy Cliff and Third World's Stephen "Cat" Coore. Both artists helped to shape the sound and culture of musical protest in the 1970s, when Rastafarians were subject to political, social, and economic repression. Art is indeed resistance.

As a musician, ethnomusicologist and Caribbeanist, my intent with the Special Issue was to spotlight the rich musical heritage of Latin America and the Caribbean; a heritage forged in the brutality of genocide, enslavement, and indentureship, and the resistance and liberatory praxis it engendered. I then decided to broaden the scope of the issue to include other art forms which have not experienced the same global exposure. Thanks to the contributors, this issue has exceeded my expectations. The creative works, interviews, and critical essays are a testament to the diverse ways in which Latin American and Caribbean performance cultures have done and continue to do the work of resistance.

With eleven contributions, the Issue covers much ground: feminist and experimental theatre in Latin America, spoken word performance in Trinidad and Jamaica, oral theatrical tradition in Tobago, and three of the Caribbean's popular musical exports—calypso, reggae, and soca. Our contributors do not shy away from political commentary, addressing urgent issues of gender-based violence, migration, and diasporic identity. The issue spans the geographical breadth of the region, with contributors and content representing Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Brazil, Chile, Toronto, New York, and Finland.

"Bottle Gourd Sprout, Calabash Open Mic" and "Anthro-poets from East Port-of-Spain: Spoken Word as Arts-based Methodology for Ethnography in Urban Trinidad and Tobago" address spoken word performance from a first-person perspective and as research methodology. Sashoya Simpson's poem "REVEL" and cover art by Caleb Levy celebrate dance traditions that "dismantle the oppressive" through joyous performance.

¹ Al Jazeera. 2026. "President Diaz-Canel Slams Trump's Bid to 'Suffocate' Cuba's Economy." Al Jazeera, January 31. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/1/31/president-diaz-canel-slams-trumps-bid-to-suffocate-cuba-economy>

“Rojo is the colour of memory” nuances the words “rojo” and “red” as metaphors for the impact of migration from Chile to Canada on the artist.

Our issue features reprinted articles which are connected through calypso. “Saving Calypso” by Trinidadian-Canadian author Gloria Blizzard delves into the rich and often overlooked history of calypso music through her interview with another Trinidadian, musician Jesse Ryan. Calypso and steel pan feature in the soundscape of Vanessa Godden’s *Transference*, which they discuss in the interview “On Performance, Family, and Queerness: A Conversation with Vanessa Godden.” *Transference* explores the intersection of queerness and diasporic Trinidadian identity through immersion in salt water-filled containers. As Godden moves from larger to smaller containers, we see them embody struggles of queer subjects negotiating belonging within prescribed structures.

The critical essays featured in this issue make important interventions in the fields of theatre and performance studies, Caribbean literary criticism, and ethnomusicology. Through their work, the authors illuminate how scholarship and praxis from the region is overlooked either by scholars of the global north, or by regional hegemonies. In “Black Liberation, Culture, and Ritual,” Jamaican ethnomusicologist and curator of the Jamaica Music Museum, Herbie Miller, discusses the role that music and culture play in the wider project of Black liberation.

Working on this issue over the past year brings the same sense of satisfaction I receive when I see a composition from sketch to performance. Editing this issue is like writing for a symphony orchestra, where each piece harmonizes with others to illustrate the resilience and determination of Latin American and Caribbean peoples. I am grateful to the contributors and reviewers who donated their labour to this project. Special thanks to IYARIC’s editor-in-chief, Tka Pinnock, and the CERLAC community at York University for their support.