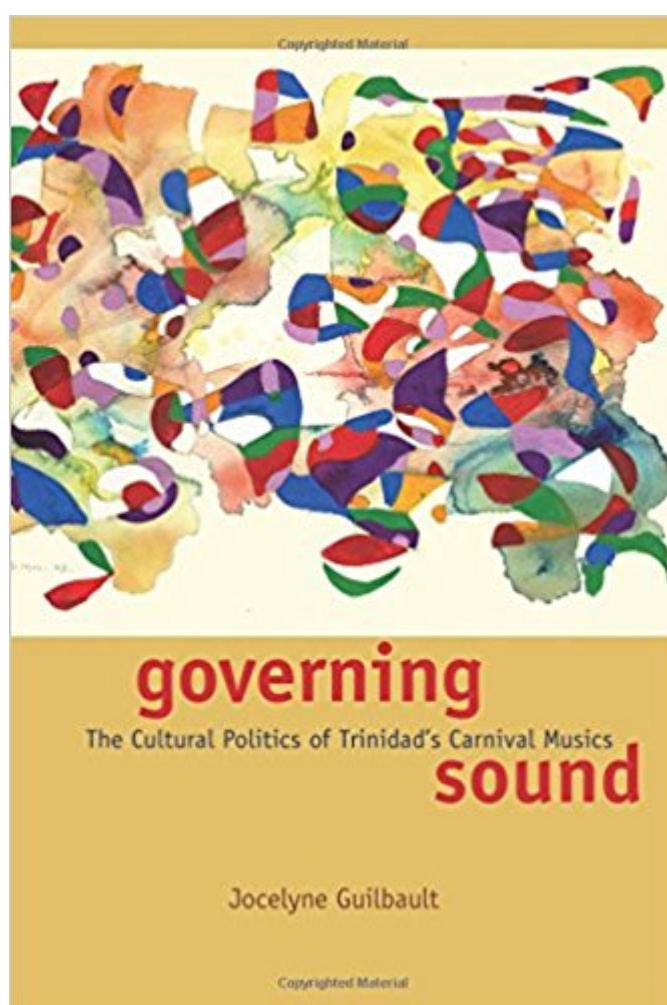


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# Governing Sound: The Cultural Politics Of Trinidad's Carnival Musics (Chicago Studies In Ethnomusicology)



## Synopsis

Calypso music is an integral part of Trinidad's national identity. When, for instance, Franklin D. Roosevelt asked the great Trinidadian musician Roaring Lion where he was from, Lion famously replied "the land of calypso." But in a nation as diverse as Trinidad, why is it that calypso has emerged as the emblematic music? In *Governing Sound*, Jocelyne Guilbault examines the conditions that have enabled calypso to be valorized, contested, and targeted as a field of cultural politics in Trinidad. The prominence of calypso, Guilbault argues, is uniquely enmeshed in projects of governing and in competing imaginations of nation, race, and diaspora. During the colonial regime, the period of national independence, and recent decades of neoliberal transformation, calypso and its musical offshoots have enabled new cultural formations while simultaneously excluding specific social expressions, political articulations, and artistic traditions. Drawing on over a decade of ethnographic work, Guilbault maps the musical journeys of Trinidad's most prominent musicians and arrangers and explains the distinct ways their musical sensibilities became audibly entangled with modes of governing, audience demands, and market incentives. Generously illustrated and complete with an accompanying CD, *Governing Sound* constitutes the most comprehensive study to date of Trinidad's carnival musics.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Interrogating all the mythologies of the nation-state, authorship, individual and collective

agency, *Governing Sound* is the first effort at bringing key concepts of Foucauldian thought to bear on an ethnomusicological topic. This book will be received as a milestone in ethnomusicology. – Veit Erlmann, University of Texas at Austin (Veit Erlmann 2006-09-27) – “*Governing Sound* is a brilliant and original work, a vivid, accessible, and engaging book about calypso music and the cultural politics of Trinidad-Tobago. Guilbault’s deft blend of interviews, observations, and analyses reveals how popular music serves as a sensitive register of historical change, as a crucible of new social identities and identifications, and as a vital repository of collective memory. – (George Lipsitz, author of *Footsteps in the Dark* 2007-04-02) – “In David Rudder’s memorable lyrics, calypso can “make a politician cringe or turn a woman’s body to jelly. – Jocelyne Guilbault’s *Governing Sound* captures that full range of expressive potential – from social critique to party conviviality – in Trinbagonian calypso and its successors. But more importantly, Guilbault has delivered the first work to thoroughly assess the cultural politics of carnival, demonstrating brilliantly how calypso emerged as a contested emblem of the state and of postcolonial governance and how it struggles within the current neoliberal sonic environment. – (Gage Averill, University of Toronto 2007-04-11) “*Governing Sound* stands as an incredibly rich work that successfully engages complex questions of music history, politics, gender, and culture.” (Andrew G. Wood *The World of Music*) “There is much to recommend in this important book. Guilbault carefully illustrates that calypso and its offshoots perform work in Trinidad and that their work – their sound – is disciplined, marshalled, and made meaningful through a network of governing technologies extending from the state to the individual artist, from arranger and entrepreneur to fans both in Trinidad and abroad. Her commitment consistently to identify the limits to the power of any individual regime and her ability to point out the ways that power is negotiated and/or consolidated in dialogue with other regimes of power combine to offer a crucially important contribution to the literature on calypso and Carnival. . . . Guilbault’s book will undoubtedly find a prominent place on the bookshelves of ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, and scholars working on Caribbean cultural formations.” (Timothy Rommen *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*) “This absorbing, thoroughly researched and well-written volume is the most in-depth study of Trinidad’s carnival music forms to date. . . . A thought-provoking and original study not only of calypso but also of other more recent Trinidadian carnival music forms . . . and their place at the centre of competing sets of demands from governing bodies, audiences and the market place. It is a valuable contribution to popular music studies that will be of interest to any scholar concerned with the links between political behaviour, popular

culture and the articulation of ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality." (Hazel Marsh Popular Music)

Jocelyne Guilbault is professor in the Department of Music at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Zouk: World Music in the West Indies*.  
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