



# **Vodou Nation: Haitian Art Music and Cultural Nationalism (Chicago Studies in Ethnomusicology)**

*Michael Largey*

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While the Haitian musical tradition is probably best known for the Vodou-inspired roots music that helped topple the two-generation Duvalier dictatorship, the nation's troubled history of civil unrest and its tangled relationship with the United States is more intensely experienced through its art music, which combines French and German elements of classical music with Haiti's indigenous folk music. *Vodou Nation* examines art music by Haitian and African American composers who were inspired by Haiti's history as a nation created by slave revolt.

Around the time of the United States's occupation of Haiti in 1915, African American composers began to incorporate Vodou-inspired musical idioms to showcase black artistry and protest white oppression. Together with Haitian musicians, these composers helped create what Michael Largey calls the "Vodou Nation," an ideal vision of Haiti that championed its African-based culture as a bulwark against America's imperialism. Highlighting the contributions of many Haitian and African American composers who wrote music that brought rhythms and melodies of the Vodou ceremony to local and international audiences, *Vodou Nation* sheds light on a black cosmopolitan musical tradition that was deeply rooted in Haitian culture and politics.

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