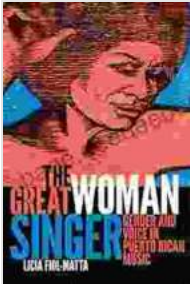


Gender and Voice in Puerto Rican Music: Refiguring American Music



The Great Woman Singer: Gender and Voice in Puerto Rican Music (Refiguring American Music)

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 7677 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 312 pages
Screen Reader : Supported



Puerto Rican music is a vibrant and diverse genre that has played a major role in the development of American music. From the Afro-Puerto Rican rhythms of bomba and plena to the salsa and hip-hop that emerged from New York City's Puerto Rican diaspora, Puerto Rican musicians have consistently pushed the boundaries of musical expression.

One of the most striking features of Puerto Rican music is the way in which women and non-binary musicians have used their voices to challenge traditional gender roles and reshape American music. Throughout history, Puerto Rican women have been active participants in the creation and performance of music, from the early days of bomba and plena to the present-day hip-hop and reggaeton scenes.

In this article, we will explore the relationship between gender and voice in Puerto Rican music, examining how women and non-binary musicians

have used their voices to both challenge and reinforce traditional gender roles. We will also discuss the ways in which Puerto Rican music has influenced the broader American musical landscape, and how it continues to shape our understanding of gender, voice, and music.

Gender and Voice in Early Puerto Rican Music

The roots of Puerto Rican music can be traced back to the African and Spanish influences that shaped the island's culture. Bomba and plena, two of the most popular and enduring genres of Puerto Rican music, emerged in the 19th century as expressions of the island's African heritage. These genres are characterized by their use of call-and-response vocals, with a lead singer or group of singers singing a line or verse, and a chorus or group of chorus singers responding with a refrain or answer. In traditional bomba and plena, the lead singer is typically a woman, and the chorus singers are typically men.

The gendered nature of bomba and plena reflects the traditional gender roles that existed in Puerto Rican society at the time. Women were seen as the primary bearers of culture and tradition, and they often played a leading role in religious and cultural ceremonies. Men, on the other hand, were seen as the providers and protectors of the family, and they typically held positions of authority in society.

However, the gendered nature of bomba and plena was not always rigidly enforced. There were many cases of women who sang lead in male-dominated groups, and there were also cases of men who sang chorus in female-dominated groups. This flexibility in gender roles reflected the complex and fluid nature of Puerto Rican society, and it allowed for a wide range of musical expression.

Women in Puerto Rican Music: Challenging Traditional Gender Roles

In the 20th century, Puerto Rican women began to challenge traditional gender roles in a number of ways, and this challenge was reflected in the music they created. In the 1940s and 1950s, a number of female singers emerged who sang lead in salsa bands, which had previously been dominated by men. These singers, such as Celia Cruz and La Lupe, became icons of the salsa genre, and they helped to pave the way for other women to enter the music industry.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a new generation of Puerto Rican women began to emerge in the music industry, and they brought with them a new wave of feminist consciousness. These singers, such as Lucecita Benítez and Roy Brown, used their voices to speak out against sexism and discrimination, and they helped to raise awareness of the issues facing women in Puerto Rican society.

The challenge to traditional gender roles by Puerto Rican women musicians has continued into the 21st century. In recent years, a number of female musicians have emerged who are pushing the boundaries of musical expression and challenging the status quo. These musicians, such as iLe, La Dame Blanche, and Ileana Cabra of Calle 13, are using their voices to speak out against gender violence, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination.

Non-Binary Musicians in Puerto Rican Music

In addition to women, non-binary musicians have also played an important role in the development of Puerto Rican music. Non-binary musicians, who identify as neither male nor female, have often faced discrimination and exclusion from the music industry. However, in recent years, there has

been a growing movement of non-binary musicians who are challenging traditional gender roles and creating their own space in the music world.

In Puerto Rican music, there are a number of non-binary musicians who are making significant contributions to the genre. These musicians, such as Lynn Cruz and Luar de Terra, are using their voices to speak out against gender discrimination and to raise awareness of the issues facing non-binary people.

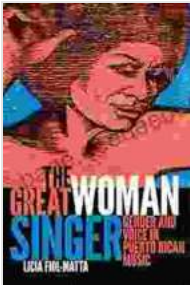
The Influence of Puerto Rican Music on American Music

Puerto Rican music has had a major influence on the development of American music. The rhythms and melodies of bomba and plena have been incorporated into a wide range of American musical genres, from jazz to hip-hop. Salsa has become a global phenomenon, and it is one of the most popular dance genres in the world. Hip-hop, which emerged from New York City's Puerto Rican diaspora, has become one of the most popular and influential genres of music in the world.

The influence of Puerto Rican music on American music is not just limited to the rhythms and melodies of the music. Puerto Rican musicians have also had a major impact on the way that American music is performed and produced. For example, the use of call-and-response vocals in Puerto Rican music has been incorporated into many American genres, from gospel to R&B.

The influence of Puerto Rican music on American music is a testament to the power of music to transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries. Puerto Rican music has not only enriched American music, but it has also helped to shape our understanding of gender, voice, and music.

Puerto Rican music is a vibrant and diverse genre that has played a major role in the development of American music. Throughout history, Puerto Rican women and non-binary musicians have used their voices to challenge traditional gender roles and reshape American music. Their contributions have made Puerto Rican music a powerful force for social change, and they continue to inspire musicians and audiences around the world.



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