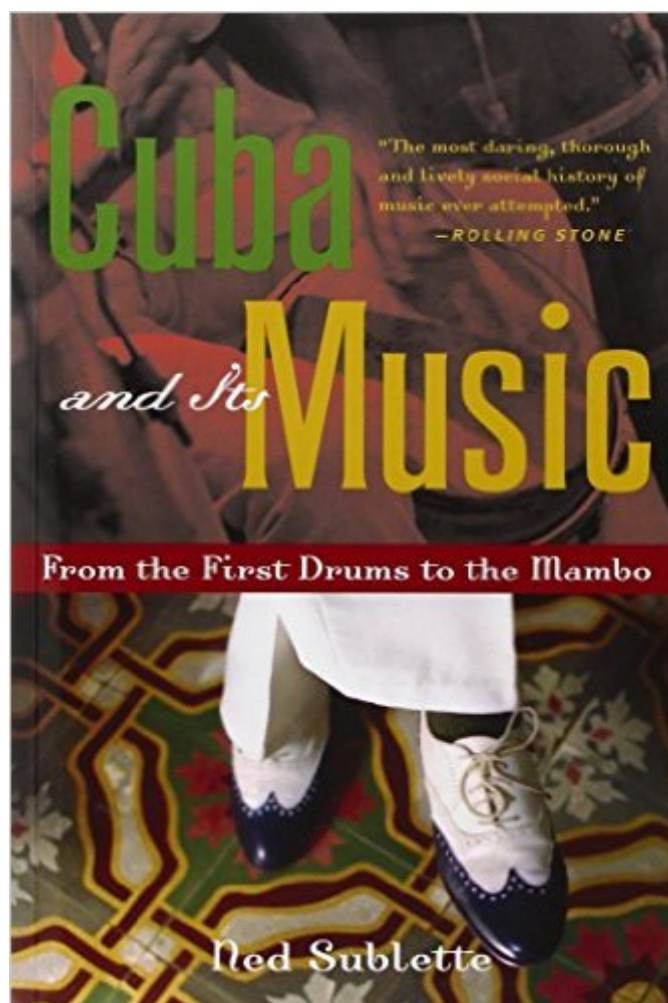


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Cuba And Its Music: From The First Drums To The Mambo



Synopsis

This entertaining history of Cuba and its music begins with the collision of Spain and Africa and continues through the era of Miguelito Valdés, Arsenio Rodríguez, Benny Moré, and Pérez Prado. It offers a behind-the-scenes examination of music from a Cuban point of view, unearthing surprising, provocative connections and making the case that Cuba was fundamental to the evolution of music in the New World. The ways in which the music of black slaves transformed 16th-century Europe, how the claves appeared, and how Cuban music influenced ragtime, jazz, and rhythm and blues are revealed. Music lovers will follow this journey from Andalusia, the Congo, the Calabar, Dahomey, and Yorubaland via Cuba to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Saint-Domingue, New Orleans, New York, and Miami. The music is placed in a historical context that considers the complexities of the slave trade; Cuba's relationship to the United States; its revolutionary political traditions; the music of Santería, Palo, Abakuá, and Vodún; and much more.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There is nothing written in English that compares to the scope and depth of this book on Cuban music. (Leymarie's Cuban Fire comes close in volume of information, but it lacks the cogent overview and insight that Sublette masterfully weaves into the details.) This is a history of Cuban music written by a musician (!) who understands the importance of credible research when defining context and cultural antecedents. Furthermore, he uses his perspective as an outsider--he is a North American--to our advantage. Coupled with his examinations of the complexity of a Cuban identity and aesthetic, our North American culture also becomes more transparent. This is

particularly true when it comes to dissecting the story that most conventional Western Hemisphere histories neglect—the profound cultural influence of West Africa. As Sublette notes, "the drum...what an African would call a drum—is conspicuously missing from European music before the sixteenth century." Was it the creolized cultures of the New World that finally gave Europeans license to return to the dance floor after centuries of Church proscription? Sublette presents a convincing case for this, while simultaneously providing an explanation for those among us who are rhythmically challenged...Readers also benefit from the full spectrum Sublette's perspective—that of a musician who migrates comfortably between the music of the concert hall and the dance hall. "Dancing," he writes, "is an intense listening state. Dancing can be complex and it can be spiritual. African music is almost always music for dancing; and so is Cuban music, which is African music's grown-up child." No armchair scholar talks like that.

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