Your notes

GCSE Music: revision notes

Rhythms of the World: Central and South America

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Calypso

- **Calypso** comes from Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean, and is sung at carnival.
- Its lyrics are witty and topical: they comment on news, politics and everyday life, often with humour. Singers are called calypsonians.
- It is in a bright major key with a 4/4 beat, lots of syncopation and simple chords. Call and response is common.
- **Steel pans** (tuned drums first made from oil drums in the 1930s and 1940s) are linked with Trinidad. A steel band has pans of different sizes, from high tenor pans to low bass pans. **Soca** (soul **calypso**) is a faster, modern version.

Samba

- Samba comes from Brazil and is the music of carnival in Rio de Janeiro. A **batucada** is a samba band made only of percussion.
- Instruments: **surdo** (big bass drums keeping the pulse), caixa (snare), **repinique** (the lead drum), tamborim (small high drum), agogô (two bells) and chocalho (shaker).
- The leader (the mestre) uses an **apito** (a whistle) and the **repinique** to signal **breaks**, when the band stops or plays a new pattern, and call and response passages.
- Samba is in 2/4, with layered ostinatos, syncopation and a build-up of energy. It is often loud and fast.

Telling them apart

- **Calypso**: Caribbean, sung, with melody instruments such as **steel pans** or guitars, and funny or topical words.

- Samba: South American, loud carnival percussion, led by a whistle, with **breaks** and layered drum patterns.
- Both are carnival music, both use syncopation and call and response, but they come from different places and sound different.

Key terms

Calypso	A sung Caribbean style from Trinidad with witty, topical lyrics.
Steel pan	A tuned drum from Trinidad, first made from an oil drum.
Soca	A faster, modern style that grew from calypso.
Batucada	A Brazilian samba percussion band.
Surdo	The large bass drum in samba.
Repinique	The lead drum in a samba band.
Apito	The whistle a samba leader uses to signal breaks.
Break	A moment when a samba band stops or plays a new pattern.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Where does calypso come from?
2. What are calypso lyrics usually like?
3. What were the first steel pans made from?
4. What is soca?
5. What is a batucada?
6. Which samba instrument keeps the pulse with deep bass notes?
7. Which instrument leads the samba band and signals breaks?
8. What is a break in samba?

Answers

1. Trinidad and Tobago
2. Witty and topical, commenting on news and everyday life
3. Oil drums
4. A faster, modern style that grew from calypso
5. A Brazilian samba percussion band
6. Surdo
7. Repinique, with the leader's apito whistle
8. A moment when the band stops or plays a new pattern

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Your notes

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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