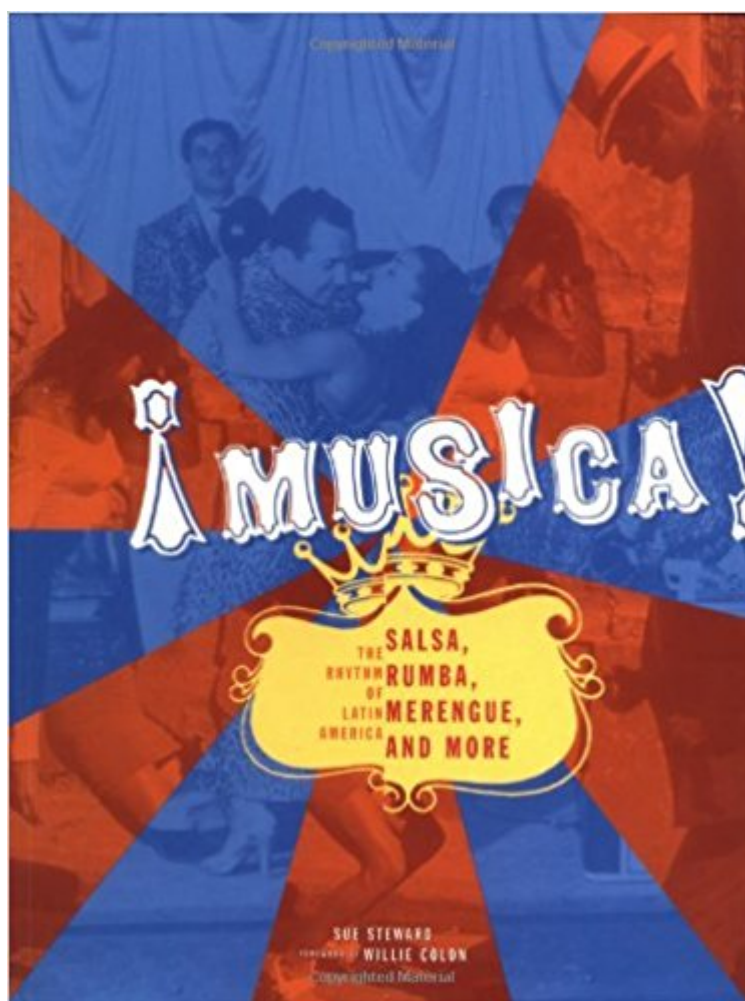


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# Musica!: The Rhythm Of Latin America - Salsa, Rumba, Merengue, And More



## Synopsis

Salsa, the irresistible dance music of the Spanish-speaking world, has made its way into the lives of millions around the globe. But salsa is only one of many popular Latin rhythms. The first comprehensive guide to the music, its history, and its legends, *Musica!* charts the vast territory of this lively Latin heritage, which began in Cuba and spread throughout the Caribbean and into North and South America. Illustrated with contemporary and vintage photos, *Musica!* features a gallery of legendary musical performers, plus sections on the musical styles and dances including the rumba, mambo, cha-cha, and merengue. A discography and bibliography complete this comprehensive story of Latin America's extraordinary rhythmic tradition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Sue Steward is a writer and the producer of highly acclaimed television programs on popular music. She lives in London. Willie Colon is a Puerto Rican New York-based songwriter, bandleader, and trombone player, who has played a major role in shaping contemporary salsa music.

Very pleased !!!

I love to listen to my Puerto Rican music on week ends when I am doing my week end chores. Latin music is part of my culture and keeps my soul alive. I dance as I clean and enjoy myself. What a great way to entertain oneself and stay connected with our music.

An excellent book, very informative. A must for any fan of salsa or afro-cuban music in general who wants to know more about history of this nice music.

Having read "Musical!....." I am dismayed at the customer reviews I just read praising this work. To the reviewer who wrote "this is the book I've been waiting for" I suggest you keep waiting or look to some less flashy, sexy works for correct information (try Manuel's (Caribbean Currents")) because you won't find much of it here. The reviewer who "wants to know a bit more about the history" will find just that--only "a bit more." But don't trust that the bit more you find will be correct. I wish the reviewer who said this work was "surely the product of painstaking research" were right, but the research is, at best, shoddy. Journalists (and Ms. Steward is one) are accustomed to fact-checking their work or having it done for them. This work was not fact-checked. Open this book to nearly any page and one can find one error after another. The errors are either of a factual nature that any journalist concerned with fact can check, or of an interpretative nature but which are presented as fact. The great salsero (and so much more) Willie Colon who wrote the forward to this work is presented as having been born and raised in Brooklyn. Mr. Colon has always been from the Bronx, is very self-identified as a Bronxite and even ran for public office from the Bronx. This is not some fuzzy concept open to interpretation. If the author can't even get right the simplest, most public fact about one of the most well-known salseros whom she got to write her forward, what can we possibly trust about any of her other information? In another glaring example, Ms. Steward refers to NY born and raised Puerto Rican percussionist Steve Berrios as a marielito (Cuban who came to the US from Mariel, Cuba in the early 1980s) who, she claims, as a young man in Cuba secretly listen to the presumably banned US jazz. This musician was never a young man in Cuba and all it takes is 5 seconds of listening to him talk to know he is a born and bred hard-core New Yorker. The interpretative information is equally subject to question, including who "invented" mambo, who recorded the first mambo, what constitutes the ensemble for PR plena music, etc. Additionally, the author mis-identifies people in many of the photos. And in talking about Abakua, an African religion still practiced in Cuba, the author claims the "costume looks like a flamboyant version of Ku Klux Klan dress." Is it possible to be more offensive to a people of African descent than to claim their ritual dress resembles that of the oldest hate group in the Americas? In summary, this is a very disappointing work given the money that backed such a glitzy tome and the potential it had for filling a gaping hole in the popular literature about this music. But even worse, it is a DANGEROUS work in that what Ms. Steward has written will become accepted as historical fact by unsuspecting people

who know little or nothing and sincerely want to learn something.

I've had this book for well over a decade and have to admit that I never deep dived into it. However, the mix of written and visual content made it a nice item to browse through occasionally. When Sue passed away on August 23rd, 2017 following a cerebral haemorrhage in the previous week, I reached for it and also wondered what the going rate for it is on . It's currently cheap as chips as they say in England and I would recommend it to anyone who wants to have an entertaining musical history and quick reference book. However, I now see some of the really critical reviews posted on US highlighting factual and interpretation errors which surprise me, but which you should be aware of as a valid criticism. Maybe an alternative: Latin Jazz: The Perfect Combination/La Combinacion Perfecta by Raul Fernandez Latin Jazz: The Perfect Combination/La Combinacion Perfecta (Text)

Poorly organized and inaccurate, this book should not have been brought to print in such a state. Furthermore, for one who respects the constituent dance forms of this music, I was particularly appalled by the confusing and misinformed section on dance. We do need more well-researched, english language resources on this subject--this unfortunately cannot be defined as such.

It is hard to imagine that "Hall of Famer" Willie Colon, who wrote the foreword to this book, actually read it and gave it an endorsement. He writes, "...this book has helped put a face on some of my heroes". What Mr. Colon should have written was that this book has helped to distort the truth and put a mask on some of his heroes. Musica is a book full of misinformation. Some examples: Musician turned dance promoter Federico Pagani was not Italian, he was Puertorican. Chick Webb did not die in 1932, he died on June 6, 1939. "Hall of Famer" Mario Bauza and Dizzy Gillespie did not move together into Cab Calloway's orchestra, nor did they play with Calloway in 1932. It was in 1938 that Bauza joined Calloway's band. Pretending to be sick, and without warning to Calloway, he sent Gillespie to play in his place...that is how the great Gillespie got into Calloway's band. On page 41 a huge blunder is committed. Here it is stated that "Hall of Famer" Maria Teresa Vera was the first Cuban woman on record. Her supposed debut recording was in New York with Sexteto Habanero in 1918. Nothing could be further from the truth. The facts are that the first Cuban singer on record was "Hall of Famer" Rosalia "Chalia" Herrera Diaz. Not only was she the first singer of Latin origin on record, she is also the very first to record a "habanera". She manages to do all this with the famous "Habanera Tu" in New York in 1901!! I doubt very much that Maria Teresa Vera did any recordings with the Sexteto Habanero in 1918...first, this is the year in which the Sexteto Habanero

was formed and secondly, those who have done their research indicate that the Sexteto Habanero's first recording was realized on October 29, 1925 with a tune titled "Maldita Timidez"...Maria Teresa Vera was not part of this recording. However, Maria Teresa Vera was probably the first female to direct a group in Cuba and probably in South America. She did this with the famous Sexteto Occidente that did recordings for Columbia Records around 1925 in New York. She also recorded for the Brunswick and Odeon labels. She later sold the group to "Hall of Famer" Ignacio Pineiro who renamed the group Sexteto Nacional. The book goes on and on with countless errors. It is a shame, because Sue Steward is a very good writer and the book has a great colorful layout, with dozens of great photos. It also has a good amount of solid information. But how is the reader supposed to decipher fact from fiction? You can see the confusion by the reviews written on this book. People who have no knowledge about the history of Latin music gave this book good reviews...they assumed everything was true and they enjoyed and believed that its content was accurate. That's the sad part of this book...people are going to read it and be persuaded that it is accurate and perpetuate the misinformation on to others. I do believe that all is not lost...perhaps Sue Steward would take the responsible high-road and issue a revised accurate edition. Careful and meticulous research can make this book a winner. In the meantime I would hope that Sue Steward does not attempt to produce a television program based on the information in this book...that would be a great disservice to those who contributed so much to this great music and to those who work so hard at researching the truth.

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