

Play Synopsis

Danse Macabre is about a queer Trini Canadian Carnival costume designer whose creative impulse and commitment to producing a band of historical and cultural importance leads to an invocation/recuperation of key historical events of the Black diaspora experience. From the cultural amputation of the enslaved from Africa, through cultural signposts of struggle across the diaspora to the ascendancy of resistance and the Haitian revolution which then explodes on the festival stage in a celebratory dance Macabre of rebirth by fire. This finally leads to the designer's self sequestered withdrawal into becoming a spiritual vessel of repatriated/emancipated consciousness.

The play follows Cisco, a Carnival Costume Designer and maker whose designs have always been controversial. This year it's no different, except that her costume to the minds of the general public is bordering on 'Evil'. However, Cisco is determined to complete her costume and a white Trinidad French Creole descendant man is the person who would be portraying the mas.

Tantrum, her nemesis has seduced Cisco out of her twenty year marriage and now Cisco wants out of their lesbian relationship. She feels conflicted around her own sexuality, and Tantrum is not going out without a fight. In the meanwhile, the costume Danse Macabre is proving to be very difficult to construct as every step of the way the mas speaks to Cisco, challenging her to confront her own history and the choice of person dancing the mas. The memory of her ancestors' enslavement on a Martiniquan plantation and the flight to Trinidad during the Haitian Revolution comes to bear on her mind, bringing her to a state of Psychosis. Her fellow mas makers are now beginning to believe in the general public. The costume is 'evil'.

The costume by some divine intervention completes, and Marc de Leotaud dances the costume before the judges at the Carnival King and Queen of the Bands Competition. It catches a fire as he releases the pyrotechnics. The fire becomes the burning of the canes - Cannes Brulees, that signals the start of the Haitian Revolution and its ricochet through the French Caribbean colonies. This is what brings Cisco's ancestors to Trinidad. The costume is destroyed by fire as the King, Marc, perishes.