

PLAY SYNOPSIS

Danse Macabre follows Cisco, a queer Trini-Canadian Carnival costume designer whose uncompromising artistic vision drives her to create a mas rooted in the buried histories of the Black diaspora. What begins as a bold creative act becomes a spiritual and psychological unraveling, as the costume invokes ancestral memory—from the violent rupture of enslavement in Africa, through centuries of resistance, to the catalytic fire of the Haitian Revolution.

Cisco is no stranger to controversy, but this year's design unsettles even her. Rumours spread that the costume is "evil." Undeterred, she presses on, choosing Marc de Leotaud—a white Trinidadian man of French Creole descent—to play the mas, a decision that deepens the work's tension and provocation.

At the same time, Cisco is entangled in a personal rupture. Her lover, Tantrum—who once drew her out of a twenty-year marriage—refuses to let her go. As Cisco struggles with desire, queer identity, and autonomy, the emotional stakes mirror the chaos of her artistic process.

The costume itself begins to speak. With each stage of its construction, Cisco is forced to confront the legacy of her ancestors: their enslavement on a Guadeloupe plantation, their exodus, and their migration to Trinidad in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. These visions intensify, pushing her toward psychological collapse. Even her fellow mas-makers begin to fear what she is creating.

On the Carnival stage, the mas is finally revealed. As Marc performs before the judges at the King and Queen of the Bands competition, the costume ignites—its flames evoking *Cannes Brûlées*, the burning of the cane fields that signaled the uprising and revolution in Haiti. In this moment of fire and spectacle, history, memory, and resistance converge. The ancestors are appeased. The costume is consumed. Marc perishes in the blaze.

Danse Macabre ends in destruction—but also in reckoning, release, and rebirth through fire.