

*The Roots of Zydeco*

## Amédé Ardoïn

*"I'm Never Comin' Back"*

*New Orleans—1930:*

1. AMADIE TWO STEP
2. LA VALSE A AUSTIN ARDOIN
3. BLUES DE BASILE
4. LA VALSE A THOMAS ARDOIN
5. TWO STEP D'ELTON
6. LA VALSE DE GUEYDAN
7. VALSE A ALICE POULARD
8. ONE STEP D'OBERLIN
9. VALSE DE OPELOUSAS
10. ONE STEP DES CHAMEAUX

*San Antonio— 1934:*

11. LES BLUES DE VOYAGE
12. LA VALSE DE AMITIES
13. LES BLUES DE CROWLEY
14. OBERLIN

*New York City – 1934:*

15. TOSTAPE DE JENNINGS
16. LE MIDLAND TWO STEP
17. LA VALSE DES CHANTIERS  
PETROLIPERES
18. VALSE BRUNETTE
19. TORTOPE D'OSRUN
20. LA VALSE DU BALLARD



21. LA TURTAPE DE SAROIED
22. VALSE DE LA POINTE D'EGLISE
23. LES BLUES DE LA PRISON
24. VALSE DE MON VIEUX VILLAGE
25. SI DUR D'ETRE SEUL
26. AIMEZ-MOI CE SOIR

**Amédé Ardoïn** - vocals & accordion.

# 1 - 10: with Dennis McGee - fiddle; New Orleans - November 19 & 20, 1930

# 11 - 14: with Dennis McGee - fiddle; San Antonio - August 8, 1934

# 15 - 26: New York City - December 22, 1934

All titles are given here as on original labels.

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# Amédé Ardoïn

Pioneer of Louisiana French Blues 1930-34

*"I'm Never Comin' Back"*



*The Roots of Zydeco*



# Amédé Ardoïn's Blues

*An Introduction by Michael Doucet*



ajun and Zarico music would not be what it is today without Amédé Ardoïn and his musical recordings of the late 1920s and early 30s. His fortés include his uniquely eloquent lyrics, his resonating voice, and his driving accordion virtuosity. The equanimity in which this slight black French-speaker composed, performed, and recorded his songs for and among predominantly white people from New Orleans to New York City, attests to the high regard held by those who knew him.

During the decade of the 1970s I searched out and gathered as many of his 78 rpm recordings, facts of his life and death stories, interviews with his contemporaries and any information I could find leading to better understanding of perhaps the most elusive and influential of all Louisiana French musicians. Though his contemporaries such as Dennis McGee (who recorded and performed for years with Amédé), Sady Courville, Anton Ardoïn and others who contributed their own personal glimpses into this man and his life, I began to develop a more cohesive picture of the man whose spirit lives on in the songs he gave us.

Amédé anchored the blues in Louisiana French folk songs. In Irène Thérèse Whitfield's groundbreaking book, "Louisiana French Folk Songs" published in 1939, she lists six of Amédé's recordings among the most popular French recordings of the day: "La Valse à Abe," "Two-Step de Eunice," "Tante Aline," "Two-Step de Mama," "Two-Step de Prairie Soileau," and "Madame Atchen." (Note: these 6 titles constitute all of Amédé's first recordings from 1929.) Amédé was included in the list with other "Cajuns" and she described him as follows:

"Amédé was known throughout my community [Crowley] as 'p'tit nègre' Ardoïn. He was very well respected for his musical talent and his recordings were all sought after. Being of Negro ancestry while playing for white folks must have been extremely difficult in those days (1920s & 30s) but everyone loved his music. I've heard from some Cajun musicians that 'he [Amédé] played a choppy style, not like them.' I interpreted this explanation as meaning Amédé played more of a syncopated rhythm than the white musicians."

Irène gave me my first Amédé 78 rpm recordings which included "Blues de Voyage" and "Madame Atchen." These are two of my favorite examples of the emotional blues style which Amédé developed without actually using the more common twelve and sixteen bar blues form. I subsequently began identifying this blues element threaded throughout the music of "old-timers" such as Dennis McGee, Austin Pitre, Octa Clark and traditionalists like Iry Lejeune, Will and Dewey Balfa, Blackie Allemand, and of course black-Creole musicians Canray Fontenot, Alphonse "Bois-Sec" Ardoïn, Bee and Freeman Fontenot, Delton Broussard and Calvin Carrière.

In an unpublished paper that I presented to the Louisiana Folklore Society in 1978 entitled "Cajun Music: The Black Influence" I attempted to describe and better understand Amédé's stylistic use of the blues within his music.

"His [Amédé's] singing style consisted of a fluid melody line composed of self-created lyrics and variations sung in a strong, high pitched voice. The melody, whether sung or played, is juxtaposed over the driving and uniquely syncopated I-V ('one-five') drone of the bass notes of his diatonic accordion in D major. His vocals almost always contain a pleading, crying edge and are continually pushed to the top of his range. His

accordion playing effortlessly executes difficult passages including triplets, syncopated beats, and octave intervals while building improvised choruses with graceful facility and forceful ingenuity."

Ernest Ansermet wrote in 1918 that "the blues occurs when the Negro is sad when he is far from his home, his mother, or his sweetheart. Then he thinks of a motif, or a preferred rhythm and takes his violin, banjo, clarinet, or drum [or in this case, his accordion], or else he sings or simply dances. And on the chosen motif, he plumbs the depths of his imagination. This makes his sadness pass away—it is the blues." ("The Blues People" by LeRoi Jones). Amédé's lyrical content mainly dealt with the pain women could cause a man. Moreover, Amédé's style of composing while singing his story-song resembles Wilder Hovson's later definition of the blues: "The blues may originally have consisted merely in the singing over a steady percussive rhythm, of lines of variable length, the length being determined by what phrase the singer had in mind, with equally variable pauses (the accompanying rhythms continuing) determined by how long it took the singer to think up another phrase." (American Jazz Music 1939)

In 1981, I turned all my notes, interviews,



and sources over to my friend, Barry Ancelet, to edit into the liner notes for the release of Amédé's first album (Old Timey LP 124). Our collaboration wove a cohesive interpretation of Amédé's life and times. At that time, the exact date of Amédé's death was a mystery. I had tried unsuccessfully to acquire information at the sanitarium in Pineville where he was thought to have been buried, but to no avail as I was not family. Because of jazz musician and author Austin Sonnier and his dedication to this project and to the myth, we have a death certificate of one Amelie Ardoin in 1941, who was buried in a multiple unmarked grave. The real cause of his death, whether attributed to a beating or a poisoning, whether seated in racial adversity or jealousy, will perhaps never be known. It is also unnerving how closely Amédé's story so closely resembles jazz pioneer Buddy Bolden. Both were black Louisianians, both were talented musicians, both were early innovators. Both Bolden, the creator of jazz and Ardoin the creator of French Louisiana songs in both the Cajun and

Creole (Zarico) traditions, were incarcerated in Pineville where they died in anonymity twenty years apart.

Amédé lived the blues and injected his spirit into our music. Without him we would not have the dozen or so songs Iry Lejeune interpreted and recorded in the 1950s that helped to bring about a resurgence of Cajun French pride. We would not have Austin Pitre's soulful interpretation of "Opelousas 2-Step" nor his version of Amédé's emotional "Le blues de la prison." How can we dismiss Dewey Balfa's version of "Je suis orphelin" or his brother Will's haunting "Les blues du cadien"?

Having steeped myself in Amédé's music, I constantly aspire to his level of emotional creativity and improvisational freedom. I never play without feeling his spiritual presence. My wife and I thought enough of him to name our son after him.

It is my sincerest hope that this compilation of songs breathes a deserved resurgence of life into the spirit of Amédé Ardoin.

(Michael Doucet — January 25, 1995)

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After being a student of Amédé's style for the past forty-five years, I have finally concluded that we are definitely not born equal. What Amédé did with musical notes and rhythm, Shelley, Byron, Frost, etc. did with words and rhyme. Not bad for a man who couldn't even sign his name.

(Marc Savoy)

## Searching For Amédé Ardoin

by Michael Tisserand



Amédé Ardoin shut his eyes until he couldn't see the white faces that loomed over him like two bright lights in the dark Sunday sky. *Dead in the ditch*, he told himself. *You're dead, and that is why they will leave you alone.* Why hadn't he seen these two when he left the car to walk the rest of the way to Mr. Marcantel's farm? There was just a short path ahead of him, filled with leaves from a recent high wind. He was used to hitchhiking these roads, with nothing but his accordion, which he carried in an old twenty-five-pound flour sack.

Mr. Marcantel hadn't hired five-foot-tall Ardoin for his ability to work on this farm—the musician was known for his habit of falling asleep in the fields. Mr. Marcantel, like so many other black Creoles and white Cajuns in the area, was drawn to Ardoin's music. But he told Ardoin he couldn't take him home in his horse and buggy tonight, the way he often did when Ardoin played his accordion for the white

people. *I can't stay for the dancing*, he had said. *I'm sick. Somebody is going to bring you back.* And when the car got to the road with the leaves, Ardoin told his driver to stop, not to drive over the leaves, he'll walk a piece. But the two men—had they followed him in a car or by horseback, or had they been waiting for him to arrive?—were watching Ardoin. They had been watching him all night, looking with hatred at the little man who never worked the way other men did. They had been hearing the high-pitched cry that marked Ardoin's singing, and they may have even heard him brazenly make up lyrics on the spot about people who were there that night—that was one of Ardoin's talents.

It's doubtful that the two men were listening to the plaintive words Ardoin was singing. No, they probably heard nothing after they saw the musician ask the man of the house for a rag to wipe his head, and then accept a handkerchief from the pale hand of one of Celestin



Marcantel's own daughters.

For there were rules about white Cajuns and black Creoles, and everyone was supposed to know them. On occasion, black players did perform with and for Cajuns, eventually bringing to the ancient French melodies an African sensibility that exists to this day. But a hired musician is one thing, and a tiny white hand on a small black man's face is something else, at least for two men in Eunice on that Sunday night.

So nothing got in the way of the men's plans, not until they were finally standing over the tiny, crumpled body of Ardoin, which they had beaten with their own hands until it had fallen into the ditch.

They stood quietly at first, then one man broke the silence. *That damn nigger there, that white lady ain't going to never wipe his face,* he said. Then they were gone. And Ardoin half-walked, half-crawled down the road with the leaves, until he reached Mr. Marcantel's door.



That is how Creole fiddler Canray Fontenot heard the story, when he was a young boy, hanging on every word during one of Ardoin's many visits to see his father, Adam Fontenot.

Like Ardoin, the elder Fontenot was a popu-

lar accordionist, and the two were close. In fact, at times it was hard to tell where one player began and the other one stopped. One night, recalls Canray Fontenot, his father was playing a dance at his grandfather's house when Ardoin made a memorable entrance: "When he came back my daddy was playing, and he took his left hand off the accordion, and slapped his in there, then took his right hand, and the tune never stopped! My daddy went in the kitchen, but the people never stopped dancing, they never noticed they had exchanged the accordion. How can that player do something like that?"

This was during a period when Ardoin lived about a mile from the Fontenots, and young Canray was used to seeing the two men together, trying to repair some beat-up accordion that someone had handed down to them, going at it with Ardoin's gas torch until it came out right.

Canray Fontenot loved his father's and Ardoin's music, and he had already built his own fiddle, using a wooden cigar box and wires from a screen door. So he listened closely when Ardoin told his father what had happened on the road to Mr. Marcantel's farm: "He says, 'They thought I was dead.' He says, 'I wasn't

dead...' So he got there and he said to his boss man, they had beat him so bad that he couldn't walk. The man got in his car and he brought him to see the doctor, and the doctor said, 'Well, they ruined his life whoever done that thing...they done hit him so hard he's not going to have his right mind.' And that's just what happened—he started losing his mind. Crazy, crazy."

Ardoin continued to play music following the beating, but by the end of the 1930s, he was committed to an asylum in the central Louisiana town of Pineville. Following that, the only news that the Fontenots heard about their sick friend came from one of Ardoin's older brothers: "He told me, 'I went to Pineville to see him, and he never could remember who I was.' He said, 'That's what you call stone crazy.' He said, 'That man there, there's no need for nobody to go see him.' He says, 'They told me over there in Pineville, he ain't never going to ask for a drink, he ain't never going to never ask for something to eat.'"

There seems to be some sort of merciless precept in traditional American music that decrees that at least one progenitor be touched by genius and suffer a tragic end. So it was for Robert Johnson with the blues and Buddy

Bolden with jazz, and so it is with Ardoin, whose music, as Ann Savoy writes in her book, **Cajun Music: A Reflection of a People**, "laid the groundwork for Cajun music as we know it today." Cajun, Creole and Zydeco (the latter a term that would surface years after Ardoin's death) are all touched by his urgent vocals and pulsing, syncopated accordion work. And when Iry LeJeune reintroduced the accordion back into Cajun music in the 1950s, he was inspired by many hours spent listening to old 78s of Ardoin.

But with the music, the story of Ardoin's life has resonated across generations for musicians in Louisiana. It has served as a cautionary tale told by parents to their children, to warn against the pitfalls of picking up an instrument. This is why Ardoin was, as Canray Fontenot says, "both a good example and a bad example."



"I think what they hated the most is this habit that he wouldn't work, you know?" continues Canray Fontenot. "They would call Amédé a bum, and in another word, that's what he was. Amédé would go someplace and play and take up a collection—he always had some money in his pocket, when some of them were killing themselves working with no money."



There was no such job description as a professional musician in Ardoin's time—except for Ardoin. "He never married, he didn't want to work," says Fontenot, "Amédé would put his accordion in that sack and every day would get to the gravel road with his accordion, hitchhike, and he didn't give a damn which direction it was—he'd go somewhere where he could pick up a few nickels."

When he was young, Ardoin lived and worked with the rest of his family on another man's farm near Basile. Fontenot remembers that Ardoin's brother gave him an accordion, but according to Ardoin's cousin, accordionist Bois-Sec Ardoin, the first instrument was a cast-off from some white musicians.

Even as a child, says Bois-Sec, Amédé refused to work, in part due to his size. "His father died," he recalls, "Amédé's mother was poor and old, too. He tried to help a little bit after he was big enough, but after somebody found an accordion for him, he'd go and play. He didn't help his mama no more—he stayed with the white people." Amédé's brothers made several futile attempts to get him to work in the cotton fields, but as Bois-Sec puts it, "he didn't sweat much."

His family never owned a phonograph,

adds Bois-Sec Ardoin, but they were nonetheless proud when Amédé traveled to New Orleans to record his music. Since few people owned record players, communities would gather together to hear these early discs, which were often played on phonographs set in the middle of a town's main street.

Amédé Ardoin was reportedly very proud of his voice, and he would typically carry a lemon in his pocket to soothe his throat, according to Savoy. His accordion playing was highly stylized and individualistic—it was "kind of jumpy," remembers Canray Fontenot, not smooth like his father's.

And for a little man, adds Fontenot, Ardoin "had a lot of nerve." He was always composing new songs about what he'd observe, which was another reason often given for his unpopularity: "Some of them fellas, them and their wife was in a feud or something, and would go sit there and play, and he'd sing about a certain thing the man done to his woman. And whoever it was, they knew what he was thinking about, and they didn't like it. Said he had a bad mouth."

Cajun fiddler Wade Fruge also knew Ardoin, and he'd often witness the direct results of these improvisations. "He'd leave the accor-

dion and he'd run across the fields many a time," he once told Savoy.

By the end of his life, Ardoin had made so many enemies that he was risking his life whenever he performed. Remembers Fontenot: "One time they had a dance hall in Basile, and what saved him was some white guy who was learning how to play the guitar. Somebody threw a big ol' rock—whoever done it wanted to hurt him bad—and the guitar player put this guitar in front of Amédé, and the rock went through the guitar. But you know, he would take chances—and what they [dance hall owners] done, they kept on hiring him. They went and took some chicken wire and they made a pen there, and they would go get Amédé, and they had a bunch of men walking around him, and he would get in the pen there, and he would play."

Fontenot recalls his father warning Ardoin not to play in the Basile club anymore. Ardoin replied that it was good money. Adam Fon-

tenot, who farmed all his life and never recorded for religious reasons, tried in vain to convince his friend that money wasn't everything.

Ardoin's life was short and his end was tragic, but his songs can still be heard from the musicians who loved him best. Both Canray Fontenot and Bois-Sec Ardoin began their musical careers by playing triangle behind Ardoin. "When I was young I was watching how he was playing, and listening to his tune and learning the words," explains Bois-Sec.

Every two years, the Ardoin clan holds a reunion, where young and old play and sing for each other. One of the latest family members to lead a band is Bois-Sec's 14-year-old grandson, Chris Ardoin, who performs with his brothers. This younger Ardoin prefers contemporary Zydeco, but at the most recent reunion, Bois-Sec took out his accordion and showed him some of the songs that he once learned from his cousin Amédé.

*(Michael Tisserand – early 1995)*

*(Michael Tisserand is a freelance writer whose book about Zydeco music will be published by Faber & Faber in Spring 1997. This article originally appeared in the September 1994 issue of OffBeat Magazine.)*



# Amédé's Recordings

by Jared Snyder

**A**médé Ardoïn was a Creole-French or Cajun speaking African American singer and accordionist from the Eunice area of Louisiana. He recorded a total of 34 songs at four different recording sessions between 1929 and 1934. Cajun fiddler Dennis McGee accompanied him at three of his four recording sessions. Interracial groups were not uncommon in the local area, but Ardoïn and McGee are the only recorded example of such grouping.

Ardoïn was the master of the one row German style diatonic accordion, which Cajuns had begun to use in the 1890s. He favored the Monarch brand, locally known as the "tit noir," tuned in the key of D. His staccato, imaginative style featured his unique syncopations of standard Cajun rhythms (listen to the playing of two of his Cajun contemporaries, Amadie Breaux and Angelas LeJeune for comparison) which he anchored with a steady left-hand accompaniment and tapping feet.

His recorded repertoire features the popular Cajun dances of the time, one-steps, two-steps, and waltzes. The older dances like the mazurka, polka, valse en deux temp, and contre danse were falling from favor, but the newly popular blues songs do make an appearance on these recordings. People thought of his songs as new though they contained scraps of traditional tunes and lyrics. It was his ability to synthesize these elements into something new to make a song that was respected. His passionate singing and his ability to create a song on the spot were held in as high esteem as his enormous talent on the accordion.

Ardoïn's first recording session was in New Orleans on December 9, 1929, for Columbia. These six sides were beautifully recorded and have been reissued by Sony on the CD: **Fais Do Do**. McGee, who accompanied Ardoïn on these discs, believed Ardoïn was invited to record after winning an accordion contest. Such a contest with representatives

of Columbia, Okeh, Victor, and Brunswick present, was held in Opelousas at the end of September. Musicians with prior recording experience, such as Joe Falcon, the Breauxs, Leo Soileau, and Moise Robin were excluded. The grand prize of fifty dollars and a recording contract attracted at least thirty-three accordionists to the two day competition. The winner, Angelas LeJeune, was accompanied by McGee and Ernest Fruge. If a Columbia representative also chose Ardoïn at this contest, he was the only one selected because Dewey Segura, the only other accordionist recorded by Columbia, had secured his inclusion through lobbying at the Columbia sales office in New Orleans.

Columbia's recording director was Polk Brockman, who regularly traveled the Mississippi Valley area with talent scout Speir, ostensibly looking for blues talent. Speir thought Brockman was one of the few recording directors that "had a feeling for" the music he recorded, but Cajun music must have presented a different set of challenges. For example, the recording team did not understand Cajun French and demanded explanations of the lyrics before recording. They also warned the singers not use any dirty lyrics.

## *The 1930 Session in New Orleans*

The second recording session also occurred in New Orleans, almost a year later on November 19 & 20, 1930. All ten selections recorded are heard on this CD. Unfortunately the company which made these recordings used inferior equipment which resulted in overmodulation and distortion. The field unit rented out of a floor of the Roosevelt Hotel as they had on prior visits to set up the portable studio. McGee's role with Ardoïn was also changing. At the 1929 session he had been Ardoïn's equal, a musical peer whose fiddle carried equal weight with Ardoïn's accordion. His fiddle often played the melody, in unison with Ardoïn's voice or with his accordion. For this session his fiddle rarely rises from driving steady rhythm to carry the lead, and instead plays the role of superb accompanist.

Three of the up-tempo tunes at this session, "Amadie Two-Step," "One Step D'Oberlin," and "Blues de Basile" were played in key of A. This is called the "cross" key on the accordion and is a free reed technique used by blues harpist as well as diatonic accordionists. The "cross" key begins on the fifth step of the scale that the instrument is tuned in and the scale includes a flat seventh or blues note. A modal quality occurs because



the bass keys can't play the chord needed to resolve the scale and the accordionist relies on the chords implied by the accompaniment.

On "One-Step D'Oberlin" the simple eight bar melody is repeated over and over in endless small rhythmic variations while McGee basses a single chord. Ardoin layers triplets and thickly syncopated runs, making extensive use of the technique of bouncing from low to high notes. "Blues de Basile" is the first blues recorded by Ardoin. Tunes with "blues" in the title had already been recorded by a number of Cajun singers, but these tunes were generally based more on the feel of the blues rather on format or scale. Like the 1929 recordings, the two musicians play the melody in unison, and then Ardoin sings in unison with McGee's fiddle. The melody makes extensive use of the flat seventh sound of the cross key.

The remaining two up-tempo pieces "Two-Step D'Elton" and "One-Step de Chameaux" are both in the accordion's standard key of D. The melody for "Two-Step D'Elton" is similar to "Eunice Two-Step," which was played in A, but the key change gives the tune the feel of an Anglo-American fiddle tune transferred to the accordion. "One-Step de Chameaux," features Ardoin's staccato playing against McGee's driv-

ing accompaniment. Ardoin was beginning to push the parameters of the music, dropping a dramatic melodic variant between the 4th and 5th verses without losing a beat.

At the first session, waltzes featured unison instrumental passages and Ardoin singing in unison with McGee's fiddle. At this 2nd session McGee provides a steady rhythmic accompaniment on the waltzes which left Ardoin to stray from the melody into variations and with more freedom to shorten and lengthen his vocal lines. Only "Valse a Alice Poulard," in the cross key of A, needs the fiddle to state the chord progression while the other waltzes, played in D, barely need McGee's contribution to work. Ardoin's singing seems unaffected by the event of recording. He sings in the same high, strong, unamplified voice which he used to be heard over a room full of dancers.

#### ***The August 8, 1934 Session in San Antonio***

The recording industry was hit hard by the depression, and regional field trips to record music were sharply curtailed or canceled outright between 1930-33. All recording of Cajun music had ceased by the end of 1930.

By 1934 several labels chose to reenter the Cajun market via their by-then cheap 35 cent

records. In two rooms at the Texas Hotel in San Antonio, the engineers used two microphones for these recordings, moving the singers and musicians farther or closer from the microphones for the best balance. Texas-Mexican singer Lydia Mendoza, who recorded two days later, recalled that "a light bulb would signal the moment to begin recording (the recording apparatus would begin to cut masters into 16 inch wide discs of wax) and when the light went off the tune had to be over."

Eli Oberstein, who was in charge of the recordings, chose not to damp the sound of Ardoin's foot tapping in time to the music. Foot tapping was a critical part of the performance and was something normally eliminated by recording on carpeted floors. On "Les Blues de Voyage," the first tune, his foot taps the first beat of each measure even against the most difficult triplet passage. At some house dances a table would be set up in the corner of the room to function as a bandstand. This would serve the double purpose of projecting the unamplified instruments and vocals over the dancers and amplifying the foot tapping of the musicians which would accompany the music. On the following waltz, "La Valse de Amities," Ardoin's

foot can be heard tapping the standard 3-1 beat of the Cajun waltz.

A second blues, "Le Blues de Crowley," was recorded next. With blues accounting for two of the six tunes recorded shows the growing influence of this African American musical form on Ardoin's music. Like "Les Blues de Voyage," this blues was played in A, the same technique used by blues harpists. McGee plays the role of the *segondure*, providing just bassing behind Ardoin's improvisational performances.

Even on the melodic waltz, "Oberlin," McGee remains the sure and steady accompanist. Ardoin and his contemporaries were always more concerned whether a fiddler could provide a solid rhythm, than with their skills playing the melody. But the initial recordings with Ardoin had shown McGee in a much more prominent role. Now he basses just low chords on the violin and provides a driving, loud, dance rhythm with the sweeping "figure eight" bow motion. Even more telling was that McGee was not even invited to record under his own name at these sessions. Unfortunately the metal masters from this session no longer exist and the 78s in good condition are incredibly rare and two sides remain un-reissued.



### *Amédé's last session in New York*

Amédé's last recordings were made just before Christmas 1934 in New York City. All are heard here on this CD. From the Cajun country only Joe and Cleoma Falcon, besides Ardoin, were invited to New York. McGee was not at this session, in fact, for Amédé there was no accompanist at all, but this does not seem to be what Ardoin had intended. He had asked seventeen year-old fiddler, Canray Fontenot, to accompany him. Fontenot's father, Adam, was a well-known accordionist and a close friend of Ardoin. The plans, however, were squashed by Canray's mother who would not allow her teenage son to take such a long trip. Ardoin's style was already moving farther towards a more open ended format, one in which the fiddler, if any, played only the role of rhythm accompanist. Unencumbered by fiddle accompaniment, he stretched out the phrases, both vocally and instrumentally. His able left hand had always provided steady accompaniment for dancers so he was quite comfortable playing solo.

The three musicians travelled by bus to New York City. Because of the strict segregation of the time Ardoin would have had to sit in the back of the bus with the other black passen-

gers, while the Falcons were seated up front in the "whites only" section. Ardoin, who understood, but did not speak English must have found this difficult. To add to the arduous quality of the trip, as their bus approached New York, it boarded the Hoboken ferry, and while out in the cold winter waters of the Hudson river, the boat began to sink. Freezing water was up to their knees inside the bus before another ferry arrived to rescue them. Cleoma Falcon was so relieved, that she wrote the "Crowley Waltz," thanking God for allowing her to see her daughter again.

The recording director obviously had difficulties with the language. The words "Tostape" or "Turtape" in the titles of selections are thought to be phonetic spellings of two-step. But both "Tostape De Jennings" and "La Turtape De Saroiéd" are waltzes. They seem to have thought that they were releasing two-steps because both songs were backed with a waltz. "Tortape D'Osrún" is actually a two-step and is similar to a 1929 recording by Joe Falcon who called it "Osson" (two step). It was, like all the other up-tempo songs from this session, played in D which allowed for a consonant accompaniment regardless of the lack of fiddle accompaniment. Only two waltzes, "Valse de Pointe

D'Eglise" and "La Valse a Chantiers Petroliperes," were played in A. Even the most straightforward waltzes "Valse de Mon Vieux Village" and "Si Dur D'Etre Seul" show Ardoin playing much looser, with an almost improvised quality around the words and melody.

"Les Blues De La Prison" is unique in the repertoire of Ardoin. It is not a blues in either the 12 bar African American context or in the 8 or sixteen bar Cajun context ("French Blues," "Les Blues de Voyage," etc.). The melody is actually in D, and has a bright major spirit. The

blues quality appears only in the singing of Ardoin. The lyrics are free form, loosely based on an ancient French ballad theme of the condemned prisoner. Ardoin utilizes the open format to extend or contract the melody to fit his lyrics, while each accordion break takes the basic melodic theme into a different direction.

The records probably started appearing shortly after the three musicians arrived home from New York and continued to be doled out over the next two years.

*(Jared Snyder)*



## The Songs:

*(All transcriptions & translations by Barry Jean Ancelet, Ann Allen Savoy, and Marc Savoy. Titles here are corrected from the original label. Original label titles are given on the booklet back and tray card.)*

### 1. AMADIE TWO-STEP

O, bonsoir, catin, ouais, je m'en vas, jolie,  
Moi, je m'en vas, donc, moi tout seul, droite à la maison.

Moi, je voudrais si vous-autres peuvent faire, ouais  
pour toi, qu'es aussi mal.

Tu t'en vas à ta maison, toi, tu me quittes derrière.

O, bonsoir, catin, quoi tu veux je peux faire?

Moi, je te vois, mais, t'en aller, ouais, ça me fait du mal.

### AMADIE TWO-STEP

Oh, good evening, doll, yes, I'm going, jolie  
Me, I'm going, me, all alone, straight to the house.

I'd be willing, if y'all would, to let you, who are so  
hurting,

Go back to your house, and you'd leave me behind.

Oh, good evening doll, what do you want me to do?

Me, I see you going off, yes, that hurts me bad.



Si tu vas, comment je peux faire? Quand je jongle à toi.  
Toi, peut-être j'aurais le courage, ouais, de m'en aller.

O, bonsoir, catin, peur tout le temps fait ça,  
C'est pour faire plaisir, catin, à tes parents.

Quand ton neg' radotte sur moi, je crois, toi, tu me fais ça,

Tu me fais du mal, c'est toi, catin, assez pour moi pleurer.

## 2. LA VALSE À AUSTIN ARDOIN

Donc, bye-bye, je m'en vas, mes parents.

Moi, je m'en vas. C'est rapport à la catin.

Donc, jamais j'aurais crû fallait je m'en vas

Moi, tout seul et la quitter derrière.

'Gardez donc, aussi loin, crois vous-même, moi, je suis  
après aller.

Moi, je la quitte, jamais encore je vas la rejoindre.

Donc, bonsoir, bonsoir, mes parents,

Je suis orphelin il y a beaucoup des années.

Mais il faut je prends mes misères comme ça vient.

Mes parents, il y en a pas un qui veut me voir.

Quand je suis malade, il faut je vas chez les étrangers,

Ça pris eux-autres pour me soigner dans ma souffrance.

O, yé yaïe, toi, petite fille,

Je serais curieux te rejoindre quand même une autre fois

Pour moi être capable te dire comment dur ça c'est  
être orphelin.

"Tite fille, marie-toi, quand toi tu seras capable.

If you go, how can I make it when I think of you?  
You, maybe I'd have the courage to go, yes, to go off.

Oh, good evening, doll, fear always does that  
It's just to please, doll, you, your parents.

When your boyfriend talks about me behind my back  
I think you're putting him up to it.

You hurt me, it's you, doll, enough to make me cry

## AUSTIN ARDOIN'S WALTZ

So, bye bye my family, I'm going off,

Me, I'm going because of my girl

Yeah, I never would have thought I'd have to go

Me, all alone, and her left behind.

So, look, how far, you better believe, how far I'm  
going

I'm leaving her, never again to reunite with her

So, good evening, good evening, my family

I've been an orphan for many years

But I have to take my miseries as they come.

Of my relatives, there is not one who wants to see me

When I'm sick I have to go to strangers

It takes them to care for me in my suffering.

Oh, y yaïe, you, little girl

I'd be curious to see you even one more time

For me to be able to tell you how hard it is to be an  
orphan.

Girl, get married when you, you're able.

## 3. BLUES DE BASILE

O, comment je vas faire, catin,

Mais, ouais, 'tite fille je m'en vas à la maison tout seul

Comment tu veux, dis, ouais, je peux faire, 'tite fille,

Si tes parents veulent pas, je te demanderais pas

Dis, ouais, c'est toi, éou c'est tu veux je peux aller

Mais, ouais, mon nèg, chaque fois que je vas pas c'ez toi.

O, mais, oui, catin, comment

Si vous-autres peuvent faire m'en aller de toi, 'tite fille,

Moi, je te vois pas, c'est beaucoup rarement

Je serais contente te rejoindre, te rejoindre, 'tite fille.

O, comment je vas faire, catin,

Dis ouais, je vas tout seul éou c'est je vas aller,

Que tes parents veulent pas, comment je vas faire,

'tite fille

(accordion sings line)

## 4. LA VALSE À THOMAS ARDOIN

O, y yaïe, moi, j'ai pas de femme,

Oui, ses parents ça veut pas je se vois, malheureuse.

O, y yaïe, mes parents, éou je vas aller

Moi, j'suis tout seul, mon j'ai pas de place d'aller

O, y yaïe, mon j'ai pas d'argent, moi, j'ai pas de maison

Mes parents veulent pas me voir.

O, 'tite fille, mais éou toi, tu vas

Toi, t'es pas la seule qui est contraire à ta mouman

O, catin, ton coeur fait du mal,

Mon je m'ai aperçu pour la manière tu fais avec moi.

## BASILE BLUES

Oh, what am I gonna' do, doll?

But, yes, little girl, I'm going back to the house all alone.

How do you want, yeah, me to make it, little girl,

If your parents don't want I won't ask you.

Say, yeah, you, where do you want me to be able to go?

But, yeah, my man, each time I can't go to your place.

Oh, but yes, doll, what can I do

If you all can make me go from you, little girl?

Me, I see you so rarely

I'd be happy just to go meet, to go meet you, little girl.

Oh, what can I do, doll?

Say, yeah, I'm going all alone, where I'm going

Since your parents don't want me, what can I do,

little girl?

(accordion sings line)

## THOMAS ARDOIN'S WALTZ

Oh, y yaïe, I don't have a woman

Her parents don't want me to see her.

Oh, y yaïe, my relatives, where can I go?

Me, I'm all alone, me, I have nowhere to go.

Oh y yaïe, me, I have no money, no house,

My relatives don't want to see me.

Oh, little girl, where are you going?

You're not the only one who disagrees with your mother.

Oh, dear, your heart is hurting

I noticed that by the way you acted toward me.



## 5. TWO-STEP D'ELTON

O, joli 'tit monde, comment je vas faire?  
Tu m'abandonnes, catin, éou je vas aller, 'tit monde?

O, c'est toi, catin, ô, comment je vas faire,  
O, tu m'abandonnes, comment je vas faire, catin,  
Ta maman et ton papa, ô, ils n'ont pas voulu  
Mon, je peux perdre, qu'ils ont trouvé, toi, t'étais trop  
jeune.

O, mais, toi, catin, comment je vas faire, toi, 'tit monde?  
Eoù je vas aller si tu m'abandonnes? Comment je vas  
faire, catin?  
Mais tes parents, ça veut pas moi.  
Oui, toi, jolie, qui c'est qu'a fait tout ça, catin?,  
(C'est) la faute à ta maman.

## 6. LA VALSE DE GUEYDAN

Comment je vas faire, malheureuse  
Il faudra moi, je m'en vas  
O, catin, mais, ouais, t'es tout seule  
Mon, je connais, c'est pas ta faute  
C'est pas toi qui fait tout ça  
O, 'tite fille, toi, jamais tu brailles.

Fais pas ça, 'tite fille, fais pas ça t'après me faire  
O, catin, fait pas ça t'après me faire.  
Donc, cependant je t'ai rien fait  
Toi, aperçois, toi, tu me fais  
O, catin toi, tu me fais autant du mal.

## ELTON TWO STEP

Oh, pretty little one, what will I do,  
You're abandoning me, doll where am I gonna' go, little  
one?

Oh, it's you, doll, oh, what will I do  
O, if you abandon me? What will I do, doll?  
Your mama and your papa, oh, they didn't want.  
Me, I can lose, but they figured you were too young.

Oh, but you, doll, what am I gonna' do?  
Where will I go if you abandon me? How will I  
make it, doll?  
But your parents don't want me.  
Yes, pretty one, who is that did all that?  
It's your mama's fault.

## GUEYDAN WALTZ

How am I gonna' do it?  
But I have to go, all alone.  
I know it's not your fault  
Make believe you were all alone.  
Oh, little girl, don't you ever cry.

Don't do that, little girl, don't do what you're doing to me  
Oh, doll, don't do what you're doing to me.  
Since I haven't done anything,  
You, look at what you're doing to me  
Oh, doll, you hurt me so badly.

Toi, 'tite fille, catin, comment je vas faire, moi, je m'en  
vas  
À la maison, catin, toi, jolie, dimanche au soir.  
J'ai jamais d'agrément de rentrer, toi, et de m'assir  
à la table pour moins manger quand t'as déjà venu  
faire, à rapport à toi.

## 7. VALSE À ALCÉE POUILLARD

O, y yaie, je m'en vas.

Moi, je m'en vas, malheureuse, moi, je m'en vas, catin,  
Je m'en vas, mon, tout seul à la maison.

Comment je vas faire, toi, 'tite fille, éou je vas aller,  
jolie,  
Pour moi être capable t'rejoindre, ouais, encore,  
Moi, je connais tes parents, ça veut pas, catin,  
Eoù moi je vas aller pour t'rejoindre?

Toi, jolie, fait pas ça, y yaie  
Comment moi je vas faire, c'est si dur.

## 8. ONE-STEP D'OBERLIN

Comment je vas faire, catin, tu m'abandonnes, jolie,  
Mais où je vas aller pour moi te rejoindre  
Eoù je vas aller, catin.

Eoù je vas aller, joli 'tit monde, tu m'abandonnes,  
catin,  
Moi, je crois pas je t'ai rien fait, catin  
Pour toi, faire ça tu me fais.

You, girl, how will I make it? Me, I'm going  
To the house, you, doll, pretty one, on Sunday night.  
I never thought I'd be able to enter the house and sit  
down  
At the table to eat, when you had already and done  
your part.

## ALICE POUILLARD'S WALTZ

Oh, y yaie, I'm going!

Me, I'm going wretched one, me, I'm going, doll  
I'm going all alone to the house.

What am I gonna' do, little girl, where am I gonna'  
go, pretty one,  
For me to be able to go meet you again?  
Me, I know your parents don't want me, dear,  
So where can I go to be with you?

Don't do that to me, pretty girl, y yaie,  
What am I gonna' do? It's so hard.

## OBERLIN ONE-STEP

What'll I do, dear? You're abandoning me, pretty one.  
But where can I go to be with you? Where can I go,  
doll?

Where can I go, pretty little one, you're abandoning  
me, doll.  
Me, I don't believe I did anything to you, doll,  
For you to do all that you did to me.



Comment je vas faire, catin, mignonne, mon coeur  
me fait un tas de mal

Ouais, parceque n'importe éoù j'ai été,  
Je t'ai pas vu, catin.

Toi, 'tit monde, quoi faire tu me fais tout ça, catin.  
Mon, je connais c'est ta maman  
Pour faire plaisir à tes parents, toi, tu me fais de la  
misère.

### 9. VALSE DES OPELOUSAS

O, jolie, comment je vas faire, tu m'abandonnes  
O, 'tit monde, qui je vas faire, 'tite fille.

O, jolie, comment je vas faire, Madeleine  
Moi, j'ai connu mais ton papa et ta maman  
Ouais, ça veut pas catin, ça veut pas moi je vas  
Ouais, donc, chez toi, je vas faire plaisir à tes parents.

O, 'tite fille, si tu m'aimerais, comme t'as voulu me  
dire  
Si ça serait pas dessus les rapportages ils sont après  
te dire.

O, catin, tu devrais toi, te rappeler, jolie,  
Quand t'étais c'ez toi, tu vas quitter moi, tout seul.  
O, 'tite fille, t'as passé dimanche après midi,  
T'as passé me donner ta main, t'as partie en pleurant.

O, 'tite fille, mon je t'ai dit je m'aurais jamais marié,  
O, c'est toi la porte de voir ça t'avais fait avec moi.

What can I do, doll, cute one? My heart hurts so bad

Yeah, because no matter where I've been  
I've never seen you, doll.

You, little one, why do you do all that to me, doll?  
Me, I know it's your mother.  
To make your parents happy you make me miserable.

### OPELOUSAS WALTZ

Oh, pretty one, what am I gonna' do, you're  
abandoning me?  
Oh, little one, what can I do, little girl?

Oh, pretty one, what am I gonna' do, Madeleine?  
Me, I knew your papa and your mama  
Yes, they didn't want, doll, didn't want me to go  
Yes, to your house, so I'll please your parents.

Oh, little girl if you had loved me like you wanted to  
tell me...  
If it just hadn't been for all those stories they were  
telling you.

Oh, doll, you must remember, pretty one,  
When you were at your house, you were going to  
leave me all alone.  
Oh, little girl, you passed by on Sunday,  
You passed to give me your hand, but you left crying.

Oh, little girl, I told you I'd never marry  
Oh, you're the reason, seeing what you've done to me.

### 10. ONE-STEP DE CHAMEAUX

O, maman, catin,toi, comment je vas faire?  
N'importe éoù je vas, mon coeur me fait du mal, jolie.

O, dis, ouais, 'tite fille,toi., comment je vas faire?  
O,ouais, ça me fait de la peine,j'oubliais, ô, ça toi  
t'après me faire.

O, moi, j'aurais le courage, ouais,de pas me  
promener, jamais,  
D'abord à tes misères tu me fais  
Je crois pas je mérite ça, catin.

O, mais, toi, catin, toi,  
Ouais, quand je vas c'ez toi, toi,  
Ta mom est jamais,jamais, donc, satisfait, 'tite fille.

Rappelle, donc, toi, catin, 'tite fille,  
Quand j'étais chez toi,  
Le dimanche, après midi, ça a pas eu la peine  
A me dire bonsoir et s'en aller.

### 11. LES BLUES DE VOYAGE

O, tous mes parents veulent pas  
O, qui c'est je vas faire avec toi  
O, j'suis pas proche près partir,  
O,c'est mon tout seul, moi, tout seul,  
Je sais pas quand jamais que je vas revenir  
O, toi, tu me fais de la misère  
Je vas pas 'venir te voir.

### CAMEL ONE-STEP

Oh, mama, doll, you, what am I gonna' do?  
No matter where I go, my heart hurts, pretty one.

Oh, yeah, little girl, you, what will I do?  
Oh, yes, that hurts me, I'd forgotten all you were  
doing to me.

Oh, I'd have the courage, yes, to not walk, ever  
Because of all these miseries you've caused me.  
I don't think I deserve that, doll.

Oh, but you, doll, you,  
Yeah, when I go to your place  
I see your mom is never, never, satisfied, little girl.

Remember , doll, little girl,  
When I was at your house Sunday afternoon  
They never even took the trouble to tell me  
"Good evening" and leave.

### TRAVEL BLUES

Oh, none of my relatives want anything to do with me  
Oh, what am I gonna' do with you?  
Oh, I'm not nearly ready to leave  
Oh, it's me all alone, me all alone  
I don't know when I'm ever gonna' come back  
Oh, you cause me so much misery  
I'm not gonna' come see you.



O, tous mes parents veulent pas  
O, que moi je vas c'ez toi  
O, c'est par rapport à toi  
Mon je m'en vas  
N'importe éou je vas aller, catin  
Tous les autres veulent pas me voir  
Boy, j'ai pas d'argent.

O, toi, 'tite fille je m'en vas  
O, dans la maison tout seul  
O, c'est pas la peine tu me fais tout  
Ça t'as fait avec moi  
J'ai pas d'argent  
J'ai pas de maison pour aller  
J'ai pas d'ouvrage pour moi rester  
O, éou je vas rester.

## 12. LA VALSE D'AMITIÉS

O, 'tite fille, je m'en vas à la maison  
O, 'tite fille, je (crois je vas revenir) pas jamais.  
He, quoi qu'il y a à faire mon je m'en vas à la maison  
Mais ouais, j'ai du chagrin, rapport à toi et tes  
manières.

O, vilaine manière, toi, 'tite fille,  
Comment, moi, je m'en vas  
Comment je m'en vas à la maison moi tout seul.  
O, maman, après quereller aussi souvent  
Moi, je jogle à toi, je connais pas si tu vas revenir.

Oh, none of my relatives want me to  
Oh, go to your place  
Oh, it's all your fault  
That I'm leaving  
No matter where I go, doll,  
Nobody wants to see me  
Boy, I don't have any money.

Oh, you, little girl, I'm going  
Oh, back to my house all alone  
Oh, it's no use for you to do  
All you've done to me.  
I have no money  
I have no house to go to  
I have no work to help me stay  
Oh, where will I stay?

## LOVE WALTZ

Oh, little girl, I'm going to the house  
Oh, little girl, I don't think I'll ever come back.  
Oh, what is there to do, I'm going to the house  
But yes, I have sorrows, because of you and your  
ways.

Oh, ugly ways, you, you, little girl  
How am I gonna' go, how am I gonna' go  
To the house, me all alone.  
Oh, mama, we were quarreling so often  
Me, I think of you, I don't know if you're gonna'  
come back.

O, y yaie, o malheureuse,  
Comment, moi, je vas faire, ô, ta mom veut pas.  
Qui moi je vas faire toi t'es trop jeune pour toi, te  
marier?  
O, 'tite fille, je vas jamais rentourner c'ez toi.

## 13. LES BLUES DE CROWLEY

O, je m'en vas, je m'en vas-z-à la maison  
Tout seul, j'ai pas conné éou c'est  
Demander pour moi te voir.

O, je m'en vas, m'en vas à la maison  
M'en vas, ô moi tout seul  
Quoi faire, c'est moi je vas à toi?  
T'es après partir toi tout seul.

O, moi je m'en vastous les Samedis au soir  
O, je m'en vas à la maison  
(cries out), Ta mom est après me quereller!

Tes parents ça veut pas de moi  
Ça veut pas me voir tout seul.

O, pourquoi, ils sont après me quereller pour  
ça?... (fades out)

## 14. OBERLIN

O, boys, mes parents, y yaie  
Comment mon je vas faire, mon je m'en vas  
'Je vas faire, 'je vas faire, mon je m'en vas, catin,  
Eou c'est t'es après aller, malheureuse?

Oh, y yaie, oh, wretched one  
What am I gonna' do, your mom doesn't want  
What am I gonna' do, you're too young to get  
married  
Oh, little girl, I'm gonna' never come back to your place.

## CROWLEY BLUES

Oh, I'm going, I'm going to the house  
All alone, I didn't know where to go  
To ask to see you.

Oh, I'm going, I'm going to the house  
Me, I'm going all alone  
Why should I go to your place?  
You're leaving all alone.

Oh, I'm going, every Saturday night  
Oh, I'm going to the house  
(cries out) Your mom is fussing at me

Your parents don't want me  
They don't want to see me, all alone.

Oh, why are they fussing at me... (fades out)

## OBERLIN

Oh, boys, my family, y yaie,  
What will I do, I'm going  
What am I gonna' do, (2X), I'm going, doll.  
Where are you going, girl?



O, quoi faire, t'as me fait ça, mouman,  
Comment mon je vas faire, mon je m'en vas  
Mon je m'en vas, je m'en vas à la maison, mouman.  
O, mon coeur fait si mal de jongler.  
(cries) O, chère!

Mon je m'en vas, mes parents, mon je m'en vas,  
O, c'est tous les dimanches au soir,  
Mais les samedis, tous les samedis au soir,  
Mouman, j'après aller pour mon te voir.

O, ô, y yaie, y yaie,  
J'suis assez loin de la maison  
Je connais pas équand je vas me retourner, y yaie.  
Je m'en vas, mon tout seul, mais 'tit coeur,  
Mes parents veulent pas je reste jamais avec toi.,  
Quique chose va rester, j'ai pas d'argent.

#### 15. TOSTAPE DE JENNINGS (*not a two-step*)

O, catin, tes parents ça veut pas  
O, jolie, éou moi je vas aller pour être capable, donc,  
te voir,  
Toi, tes parents veulent pas moi je vas là avec toi.

O, y yaie, comment je vas faire, j'suis tout seul  
O, catin, si toi, tu jonglais, toi, sur les misères tu m'as  
fait.  
Y a déjà pas longtemps tu me ferais donc, pas ça.  
O, c'est beau!

Oh, why do you do that to me, mama?  
What am I gonna' do, I'm going  
Me, I'm going, I'm going to the house, mama.  
Oh, my heart hurts me so to think about it.  
(cries) Oh, dear!

Me, I'm going, my family, I'm going  
Oh, every Sunday evening  
But the Saturdays, all the Saturday evenings  
Mama, I'm going to see you.

Oh, oh, y yaie,  
I'm far enough from the house  
I don't know when I'm gonna' come back, y yaie,  
I'm going, me, all alone, but little heart,  
My family doesn't want me to ever stay with you.  
Something's gonna' stay, I don't have any money.

#### TOSTAPE DE JENNINGS

Oh, doll, your parents don't want  
Oh, doll, where am I gonna' go to be able to see you?  
You, your parents don't want me to go there with you.

Oh, y yaie, What am I gonna' do, me all alone  
Oh, doll if you would think on all the miseries you've  
made me  
It's not so long ago that you wouldn't have done that to me.  
Oh, it's beautiful!

O, y yaie, catin  
Eoù c'est moi je vas aller, 'tit monde  
Je m'en va à la maison, toi, je vas en demandant  
O, catin, eou je vas aller pour moi te rejoindre, 'tit  
monde,

Dimanche matin, toi, moi j'avais coutûme  
Penser te rejoindre pour te ramener à quique part

Sûre, ta maman veut pas que je t'emmène en nulle  
part.

#### 16. LE MIDLAND TWO-STEP

O, toi, catin, ô tous mes parents  
O, mon je connais ça veut pas me voir c'ez toi.

O, toi, 'tite fille, comment ça se fait avec toi  
Tu me fais tant de la misère sans jamais je t'ai rien  
fait.

O, je m'en vas en quelque part, ouais, pour mon je te  
voir  
Ouais, pour mon je te voir mais  
Tes parents veulent pas que mon je te vois.

O, y yaie, toi, catin, ça peut passer  
Tu sais que ma marraine connais que mon j'ai pas  
cinq sous.  
O, mon je m'en vas, ô, j'ai pas d'argent,  
O, mon papa et ma maman m'en a pas donné.

Oh, y yaie, doll,  
Where am I gonna' go, little friend?  
I'm going to the house, you, I'm going, asking,  
Oh, doll, where can I go to meet you, little friend?

Sunday mornings I was always in the habit  
Of thinking about going to get you and take you  
somewhere.

Surely, though, your mom doesn't want me to bring  
you anywhere.

#### MIDLAND TWO-STEP

Oh, you, doll, oh, all my family  
Oh, they don't want to see me over at your place

Oh, you, little girl, how's it going with you?  
Yeah, you in all that misery when I haven't done  
anything to you.

Oh, I'm going, yes, to see you,

Yes, to see you, but  
Your parents don't want for me to see you.

Oh, y y aie, you, doll, it'll all pass  
You know that my godmother knows I don't have five  
cents  
Oh, I'm going, oh, I don't have any money,  
Oh, my papa and my mama never gave me any.



O, y yaie, catin, éoù c'est je vas aller  
O, pour mon te voir toutes les heures dimanche matin.  
O, mon j'allais, là-bas éoù toi, t'étais,  
Mon je m'aperçois, mais ta maman veut pas me voir.

### 17. LA VALSE DES CHANTIERS PÉTROLIERS

O, moi je m'en vas, moi je m'en vas  
Moi je m'en vas à la maison moi tout seul  
Moi je m'en vas, moi j'après dire  
Toi, ouais, tu fais, ô, viens donc, me voir.

Pour ça tu me fais moi je m'en va  
Moi, j'suis parti à puit d'huile, pour aller au bal,  
Pour aller au bal, c'est voir, ô, ouais, les jolies femmes  
C'est là-bas il faut tu vas.

O, c'est beau!

O, pour ça tu me fais moi je m'en vas, ouais, à puit  
d'huile,

Pour moi être capable aller me promener  
Je vas au bal pour me voir des jolies femmes  
O, c'est là-bas il faut tu vas pour t'amuser.

Toi, tu me fais, toi, ouais, catin,  
Moi, j'suis tout seul, mon je m'en vas à puit d'huile,  
Je vas jamais encore revenir pour moi,  
je te voir, pour ça toi t'après me faire.

Oh, y y aie, doll, where will I go  
Oh, so I can see you all Sunday morning.  
Oh, me, I'm going, over there where you are  
Me, I don't see you, but your mama doesn't want to  
see me.

### WALTZ OF THE OIL FIELDS

Oh, me, I'm going, me I'm going  
Me, I'm going to the house all alone  
Me, I'm going, I'm telling you  
You, yeah, oh, come on and see me.

I'm going because of what you did  
Me, I'm going to the oil wells  
To go to the dance, to see the pretty women  
Oh, it's over there you'll have to go.

Oh, it's beautiful!

Oh, for what you've done I'm going off to the oil field

For me to be able to go walk  
I'm going to the dance to see the pretty women  
Oh, it's over there you have to go to have a good  
time.

You, for what you've done, doll,  
Me, I'm all alone, me, I'm going to the oil wells  
I'm never gonna' come back  
To see you, because of all you've done to me.

### 18. VALSE BRUNETTE

O, malheureuse, moi j'après m'en aller  
Toi, 'tite fille, moi, c'est pas à ta maison.  
O, joli coeur, éoù c'est que moi je vas aller  
Tu t'en vas, toi, tout seul, malheureuse.

O, chère, je m'en vas, m'en vas à la maison  
Toi, catin, tes parents veulent pas de toi,  
O, éou je vas aller pour être capable mais, donc, te  
rejoindre,

Toi, jolie, ta mom veut pas me voir.

O, jolie fille, rappelle toi, éou t'es t'assis, y yaie,  
Donc, aussi haut dans la porte de ta maison  
O, t'après me 'garder, toi, quand moi, m'après passer  
Dans le grand chemin, toi, moi, c'est moi, tout seul.

O, y yaie, y yaie, toi, tes parents  
Ils t'ont 'gardé, toi, toi, 'près me dire bonsoir,  
Mais malheureuse, t'aurais pas du faire tout ça  
Tu m'as fait en passant devant ta porte.

### 19. TWO-STEP DE OSSUN

O, ô, quoi faire, je m'en vas  
Tu m'abandonnes, y yaie, tu m'abandonnes.  
Eoù je vas aller, chère, n'importe quel bord qu'il va,  
T'es pas là, y yaie, ça me fait de la peine.

O, y yaie, ça me fait de la peine à mon  
Eoù je vas aller, pour être capable te voir  
Quand tu me passes, toi, tu reviens jamais  
Avant samedi au soir, après midi.

### THE BRUNETTE'S WALTZ

Oh, sad one, me, I'm going  
You, little girl, It's not to your house.  
Oh, pretty heart, where am I gonna 'go?  
You're going, you, all alone, sad one.

Oh, dear, I'm going, going to the house  
Oh, doll, your parents don't want you,  
Oh, where am I gonna' go to be able to meet you?

You, pretty one, your mom doesn't want to see me.

Oh, pretty girl, remember where you were seated, y yaie,  
Oh, just so high in the door of your house.  
Oh, you were looking at me, you, when I was passing by  
In the big road, me, all alone.

Oh, y yaie, y y aie, you, your parents  
They watched you telling me good evening,  
But, sad one, you didn't have to do all that  
That you did to me as I was passing by your door.

### OSSON TWO-STEP

Oh, what will I do, I'm going,  
You're abandoning me, y yaie, you're abandoning me,  
Where I go, dear, no matter on which side I go  
You're not there, y yaie, that hurts me.

Oh, y yaie, that makes pain for me  
Where am I gonna' go to be able to see you?  
When you pass by me, you, you never come back  
Before Saturday evening, the afternoon.



O, y yaie, comment je vas faire  
 Comment je vas faire, y yaie'  
 J'suis après partir, tous les samedis au soir  
 Ta mom veut pas  
 Que mon je t'emmène en nulle part  
 Comment je vas faire?

## 20. LA VALSE DU BALLARD

O, moi je m'en vas, moi je m'en vas moi tout seul  
 O, je connais pas quand jamais  
 Que moi je sera capable, donc, te voir.

O, comment je vas faire  
 O, comment je vas faire, moi je m'en vas.  
 O, c'est temps moi je m'en vas  
 Pour coucher éou je vas aller?

Quoi je vas faire  
 Moi, j' suis bien, mon tout seul, elle veut partir  
 O, mes parents ça veut pas croire en ça je vas dire.

O, éoù je vas aller, moi, je m'en vas  
 Tout seul à la maison, comment je vas faire?  
 Toi, oubliais tous les misères toi t'as fais  
 A ton nèg, il y a déjà pas longtemps.

## 21. TWO-STEP DE SAROID (SAVOY)

Aie y yaie, moi je m'en vas  
 O, ouais, moi je m'en vas  
 Ouais, je m'en vas à Church Pointe  
 O, je m'en vas.

Oh, y yaie, how can I make it?  
 How can I make it, y yaie  
 I'm leaving, every Saturday night  
 Your mom doesn't want  
 Me to bring you anywhere.  
 How can I make it, y yaie?

## BALLARD'S WALTZ

Oh, I'm going, me, I'm going all alone  
 Oh, I don't know when ever  
 I'll be able to see you.

Oh, how am I gonna' make it?  
 Oh, how am I gonna' make it, me, I'm going.  
 Oh, it's time, me, I go  
 To sleep, where will I go?

What am I gonna' do?  
 Me, I'm all right by myself, she wants to leave  
 Oh, my family doesn't want to believe what I say.

Oh, where am I gonna' go, me, I'm going,  
 All alone to the house, how will I make it?  
 You had forgotten all the miseries you caused  
 Your nègre, not so long ago.

## TWO-STEP DE SAROID (SAVOY)

Ah y yaie, me, I'm going  
 Oh, yes, me, I'm going  
 Yes, to Church Point  
 Oh, I'm going

O, je m'en vas moi tout seul  
 Oui, je m'en vas moi tout seul  
 Y a ouais, pas personne, ouais, qui veut venir avec  
 moi, à Church Point  
 O, y yaie, c'est la valse de Ballard.

O, y yaie, moi j'après m'en aller  
 Je m'en vas là-bas, ô à Church Pointe.  
 Y en a pas personne qui veut venir avec moi  
 Pour la voir, c'est la valse de Ballard, y yaie.

O, y yaie, moi je m'en vas c'ez moi, mon tout seul  
 pour aller  
 Droite sur la route aujourd'hui  
 C'était un dimanche matin j'ai parti, je vas aller la  
 rejoindre  
 O, la Ballard, je crois je vas aller, pense c'est dur le  
 dimanche,  
 Elle toute seule.

## 22. VALSE DE LA POINTE D'ÉGLISE

O, moi, je m'en vas à la maison  
 Moi, donc, je m'en vas, jolie, je m'en vas  
 O, catin, y yaie, moi je voulais pour te rejoindre, jolie.

O, c'est à Church Pointe, eux-autres s'en aller  
 O, c'est là-bas, c'était l'heure je m'en vas.  
 C'était l'heure aller à Church Pointe.

O, allons, allons à Church Pointe pour voir  
 O, pour la voir, ô, c'est là-bas chez Ballard.

Oh, I'm going alone  
 Yes, I'm going, me, all alone,  
 There is, yeah, not nobody who wants to come with  
 me, to Church Point  
 To see her, it's Ballard's waltz, y yaie.

Oh, y yaie, I'm going  
 I'm going over there to Church Point  
 Nobody wants to come with me  
 To see her, it's Ballard's waltz, y yaie!

Oh, y yaie, I'm going to my place, me, all alone, going

To hit the road today  
 It was a Sunday morning I left, left to go meet her  
 Oh, Ballard, I believe I'm gonna' go, Yeah, it's so  
 hard, on Sunday

She'll be all alone.

## CHURCH POINT WALTZ

Oh, me, I'm going to the house  
 Me, oh, I'm going, pretty one, I'm going.  
 Oh, doll, y yaie, me, I'd want to meet you again,  
 pretty one.

Oh, to Church Point, they're all going  
 Oh, it's over there, it's time I go  
 It's time to go to Church Point.

Oh, let's go, let's go to Church Point to see  
 Oh, to see her, oh, it's Ballard's waltz.



O, mouman, éou moi je vas aller pour passer  
A, ouais, quand j'ai arrivé, ô, j'arrive à la porte  
Ils sont toujours la pour me recevoir à la porte  
Quand moi j'arrive et ça veut pas moi je rentre  
Parceque ça trouve moi, j'suis saous à mourive.

### 23. LES BLUES DE LA PRISON

O, à la prison, je suis parti à la prison  
Moi, tout seul, j'suis parti à la prison  
Je vas m'ennuyer. Quand moi je vas arriver à la porte  
Je voudras pas rentrer.

O, parti à la prison pour être condamné  
La balance de mes jours, toi, la balance de mes jours  
Ma pauvre maman va s'ennuyer autant  
Peut pas me voir.

O, jusqu'à yaille, ô, la porte de la prison fermée sur  
moi  
Ils ont oublié la clef, je crois ils l'ont jetée  
Ils vont jamais la retrouver encore.

O, la porte de la prison est fermée Vendredi au soir à  
six heures  
Ils l'ont pas rouvert avant lundi matin, la première  
fois.  
Quand ils l'ont rouvert, c'était trop tard  
J'étais déjà condamné au forçat.

Oh, mama, where am I gonna' go to pass  
Oh, yes, when I arrive, oh, arrive at the door  
They're always there to receive me at the door  
When I arrive and they don't want me to come in  
Because they find that I'm totally drunk.

### THE JAIL HOUSE BLUES

Oh, I'm going off to prison  
All alone.  
I'll be so lonely  
When I get to the door I won't want to enter.

Yes, going off to prison to be condemned  
The rest of my days, the rest of my days  
My poor mama's gonna' be so lonely not to get to  
come see me.

When the prison door closed on me

They forgot the key  
I think they threw it away and will never be able to  
find it again.

Oh, the prison door is closed Friday night at six  
o'clock  
And they don't open it again until Monday morning

The first time they open it it will be too late  
I'll already be condemned to jail.

### 24. VALSE DE MON VIEUX VILLAGE

O, bonsoir, moi je m'en vas  
Je m'en vas à la maison  
Dis bonsoir, mouman, moi je m'en vas, catin,  
O, j'après m'en aller  
Moi je m'en vas tout seul à la maison  
Je m'en vas, je m'en vas moi tout seul.

O, y yaie, je m'en vas, jolie,  
O, j'suis après m'en aller  
Moi j'ai été pour te voir à la maison, catin,  
Toi, t'étais encore pas revenu.

O, t'es pas revenu, y yaie  
O, toi, t'es pas revenu  
Quand j'étais te voir à ta maison, toi,  
Ta mouman disait t'été pas là.  
Quand j'ai arrêté moi j'ai demandé pour toi,  
O, pour toi, Caroline.  
T'étais pas là, toi, Tante Carole, y yaie.  
Tante Carole j'ai demandé éou tu t'es.

### MY OLD HOMETOWN WALTZ

Oh, good evening, me, I'm going  
I'm going to the house.  
Say good evening, mama, me, I'm going, doll,  
Oh, I'm going  
Me, I'm going all alone to the house  
I'm going, I'm going, me, all alone.

Oh, y yaie, I'm going, pretty one,  
Oh, I'm going  
Me, I was there to see you at the house, doll,  
You, you hadn't gotten back yet.

Oh, you hadn't come back, y yaie,  
Oh, you hadn't come back.  
When I was there to see you at the house, you,  
Your mama said you weren't there.  
When I stopped, I asked for you  
Oh, for you, Caroline,  
You weren't there, Aunt Carole, y yaie,  
Aunt Carole, I asked were you were.

*(All transcriptions & translations by Barry Jean Ancelet, Ann Allen Savoy, and Marc Savoy)*



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*The Roots of Zydeco*

# Amédé Ardoïn

*"I'm Never Comin' Back"*



## *New Orleans — 1930:*

1. AMADIE TWO STEP
2. LA VALSE A AUSTIN ARDOIN
3. BLUES DE BASILE
4. LA VALSE A THOMAS ARDOIN
5. TWO STEP D'ELTON
6. LA VALSE DE GUEYDAN
7. VALSE A ALICE POULARD
8. ONE STEP D'OBERLIN
9. VALSE DE OPELOUSAS
10. ONE STEP DES CHAMEAUX

## *San Antonio — 1934:*

11. LES BLUES DE VOYAGE
12. LA VALSE DE AMITIES
13. LES BLUES DE CROWLEY
14. OBERLIN

## *New York City — 1934:*

15. TOSTAPE DE JENNINGS
16. LE MIDLAND TWO STEP
17. LA VALSE DES CHANTIERS PETROLIPERES
18. VALSE BRUNETTE
19. TORTOPE D'OSRUN
20. LA VALSE DU BALLARD

21. LA TURTAPE DE SAROIED
22. VALSE DE LA POINTE D' EGLISE
23. LES BLUES DE LA PRISON
24. VALSE DE MON VIEUX VILLAGE
25. SI DUR D'ETRE SEUL
26. AIMEZ-MOI CE SOIR

**Amédé Ardoïn** - vocals & accordion.

# 1 - 10: with Dennis McGee - fiddle; New Orleans -  
November 19 & 20, 1930

# 11 - 14: with Dennis McGee - fiddle; San Antonio - August  
8, 1934

# 15 - 26: New York City - December 22, 1934

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