

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 2625

BAYOU MEMORIES

LOUISIANA FRENCH FOLKSONGS AND DANCE TUNES

Gérard Dôle

Marie-Paule Vadunthun



GÉRARD DÔLE



MARIE-PAULE VADUNTHUN

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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LOUISIANA FRENCH FOLK SONGS AND DANCE TUNES
INTERPRETED BY GERARD DOLE

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Recorded at home, using a Nagra III tape recorder and Beyer mikrophones
between January 1977 and December 1978
GERARD DOLE: Fiddle, Accordion, jaws harp, mouth organ, guitar vocal
MARIE PAULE VADUNTHUN alias GEORGE MAMA COOL: guitar & vocal
All titles traditionals except: La prairie ronde - Comptines - Evangeline -
La complainte de la Nouvelle-Acadie - La valse a Johnny Doucet : Words & Music
by Gérard Dôle.

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DESCRIPTIVES NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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Notes prepared by D.S. Smith

This record gives a compressed idea of the kind of Cajun music that we especially love: music of old times and good times, home music, music of the *veillée* (evening with company). During the second half of the Seventies, Marie-Paule Vadunthun - alias George Mama Cool - and myself played it often, at every opportunity. While we toured with *Bayou Sauvage*, a Cajun group that I formed in 1975, we would always find the time, indoors or out, to "turn" some tunes and sing from the bottom of our hearts.

We sincerely hope that listening to this music will bring to you as much as it gave us in making it.

GERARD DOLE

THE CAJUNS

Down in Louisiana, on the prairies of the south-west corner and along the bayous which fringe the Gulf of Mexico, live the Cajuns. They speak French, like their main ancestors who were deported by the British from Acadia in the second half of the 18th century. Most are farmers who grow rice, cotton, corn, and sugar cane, and raise cattle and poultry. Some are trappers and fishermen. By the strange phenomenon of acculturation, they have absorbed the different waves of 19th century immigrants: Irish, German, Italian, etc... A few thousands in the late 1700's, there are today some 800,000 who claim to be Cajuns. They are deeply latin-tempered: warm-hearted, fun-loving, hard-working, proud people.

Cajun country is an astonishing "nursery" of musicians and singers. Each family has at least one talented accordion or fiddle player - not to mention singers - creating a density of music hardly credible to an outsider.

CAJUN HOME AND VEILLEE MUSIC

Sometimes, after a day's hard work, the Cajun family would get together outside on the *galerie* (porch) for the *veillée*. Some sang songs and ballads (unaccompanied), whistled, or "*reelaient à bouche*" (deedled or "mouth-reeled"). Others played music.

The instruments used on these occasions varied amongst the families. It was here the jaws harp, here the harmonica, here the fiddle, here the accordion (mostly accompanied with a triangle), here again the last three instruments together: fiddle, accordion, and triangle.

"The men sat themselves down on the big *galerie* and told stories and made music while the women prepared a chicken gumbo or sauce piquante. Of course a bottle was passed around now and again to give more pleasure and inspiration. All this time, the children played and danced in the yard in front of the musicians."

(Revon Reed, *Lache pas la Patate - Portrait des Acadiens de la Louisiane*, Editions Parti pris, Ottawa, Canada, 1976, p. 118.)

SINGING

The grandparents, parents, uncles, or aunts sang a *cappella*:

- Ballads: long vocal pieces in which the words were of prime importance. They told a story that was intended to be listened to and understood as a whole. They were of French origin (via Acadia for the most part) and often several centuries old.

- Songs: shorter, with lively verses. They could be of diverse origins and more recent composition.

THE REEL A BOUCHE CALLED "TURLUTE" OR "MUSIQUE DU PAUVRE" ("POOR MAN'S MUSIC")

"The first Acadians who came to Louisiana did not have any musical instruments because the British soldiers had destroyed them all. So, for many years, the poor Cajuns made their music only with their mouths. One still finds old people who play reels *à bouche*. It is called *faire la turlute*, or imitating the sound of the fiddle or the accordion. (.....) The custom of *turluter* continues still in several parts of New Brunswick, Quebec, and some provinces of France. It's called 'poor man's music' in Mamou."

(Revon Reed, *ibid.*, pp. 117, 118.)

THE JAWS HARP CALLED "TROMPE" (HORN)

The jaws harp was introduced into America under the French. It was particularly popular in the 18th century during the era of the trappers. In the trading posts it served as currency of exchange with the Indians who liked its brilliant colour and the strange sound that certain trappers produced from it. Later, in Acadia and Quebec, it was used to play for dancing when no fiddle was available; they "*dansaient sur la gueule*" (*reelaient à bouche*) alternately.

The Louisiana Cajuns, in their turn, play the jaws harp. They call it "*trompe*." Johnny Doucet (1900-1978), of Basile in Evangeline parish, told me about its use. He related how he could "*sonner la trompe dans les deux sens*" (sound the *trompe* both ways) on an instrument of "*quatre pouces*" (four inches). Mrs. Amélia Doucet, his wife, informed me,

"What can John play with the trump? He play all kind of old song; he was good. What I mean is old French song like Nathan (Nathan Abshire (1913-1981), accordion player of Basile) plays."

THE DIATONIC HARMONICA CALLED "MUSIQUE À BOUCHE" ("MOUTH MUSIC")

The Cajuns began to play the harmonica - which they called "*musique à bouche*" - at the same time as the accordion (about 1885?).

"The only instrument that the poor Cajun could buy was the harmonica or what is called *musique à bouche*. Almost all the young Cajuns learned to play this instrument, and also the girls and the women."

(Revon Reed, *ibid.*, p. 118.)

THE FIDDLE

Along with the jaws harp, the fiddle is the oldest instrument used by the Cajuns. In the line of *violiniers* (fiddle players) of Acadia, those who were first deported to settle in Louisiana could not devote much time to make instruments and begin to play again in the new land.

In the traditional playing style, there is constant use of double strings: drones, octaves, unisons. As well as standard tuning (GDAD), there are many other variants; a few of them are given here as examples: GCGD - GDGD - GDBDD - DDGD - GDGB - and so on.

THE ACCORDION

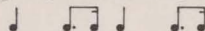
The Cajun accordion or melodeon is a small diatonic accordion with four stops. For the right hand, there is a "melody" keyboard with one row of ten buttons. Each button controls two different notes according to whether the bellows are pushed inwards or pulled outwards. This system is called "*bi-sonore*" or "single action." For the left hand, there is a combined hand-grip and "bass" keyboard with two buttons that give respectively two bass notes and two chords, and one air button controlled by the thumb that enables the rapid opening or closing of the bellows while playing.

The introduction of the melodeon into Louisiana (the instruments were initially made in Germany) dates approximately to 1885. Today it is still the most popular instrument - the trade mark of all kinds of Cajun music.

Accordion technique has evolved with time. The old rhythmic pattern



gave way to the more syncopated



in the late Twenties and players have found new embellishments for melodies formerly played in a more choppy style.

SIDE 1

ALLONS A LAFAYETTE (traditional)

Joseph Falcon (1900-1965) and Cléoma Breaux from Rayne (who were to become husband and wife) were the first two Cajuns to make commercial recordings of the instrumental and vocal French music of south-west Louisiana, on Friday April 27th, 1928. A certain George Burr, who seems to have assumed the role of local talent scout, took them, along with Léon Mèche, to New Orleans and managed to introduce them to the Columbia staff who were holding a recording session in town. Joe Falcon later related,

"Well, the one supposed to sing *Allons à Lafayette* was Léon Mèche from Bosco. He got all ready, and he buttoned up his coat and this and that, and he was getting pale as a sheet, and he looked at me and said, 'You better sing it yourself, I might make a mistake'; so I took over, and that's how we made it and it went over big."

A year and a half later, about October 1929, the fiddler Dennis McGee (born January 26th, 1893) of Eunice (St. Landry parish) recorded *Jeunes gens campagnards* for Vocalion, probably accommodating a set of older words to a tune somewhat similar to that of *Allons à Lafayette*.

The present version is a blend of the two plus a quatrain taken from *Oh si j'aurais des ailes* (see Side 2, Track 1). This tune is dedicated to Marie-Paule Vadunthun - alias George Mama Cool - who plays guitar and sings to the memory of Cléoma Breaux.

Allons à Lafayette
C'est pour changer ton nom
On va t'appeler Madame
Madame Canaille comme moi
Tite fille t'es trop mignonne
Pour faire ta criminelle
Mais gardez donc catin
Tout ça t'as fait avec moi

Let's go to Lafayette
For to change your name
You'll be called Madame
Madame Naughty like me
Little girl you're too cute
To be so cruel
But look here doll
All that you've done with me

Oh si j'aurais des ailes
Comme toutes ces hirondelles
Moi j'm'en irais tit monde
T'rejoindre chez ton papa
Oh ya! mais gardez donc
Catin ça t'après faire
Yé ya! mais chère poulette
Yé ya! mon cher coeur tendre

Allons à Lafayette
C'est pour changer ton nom
On va t'appeler Madame
Madame Canaille comme moi
Tite fille t'es trop mignonne
Pour faire ta criminelle
Mais gardez donc catin
Yé ya! dans Grand Buci

Oh if I had wings
Like all these swallows
I would go, little folk
To join you at your papa's
Oh yai but look here
Doll what you're doing
Ye yai dear chicken
Ye yai my dear tender heart

Let's go to Lafayette
For to change your name
You'll be called Madame
Madame Naughty like me
Little girl you're too cute
To be so cruel
But look here doll
Ye yai in Grand Buci

LA PRAIRIE RONDE (words and music by Gérard Dôle)

A few years ago, I heard an amateur field recording of Edius Naquin (born March 16th, 1901) of Reddel (Evangeline parish) who sang and played on the harmonica a tune he called *La valse de la Prairie Ronde*. Later, I could not remember the tune at all, just a few words I had picked up:

Chère Jolie
Allons à la Prairie Ronde
Allons chercher la jug

Dear Pretty
Let's go to the Prairie Ronde
Let's go look for the jug

.....

.....

C'est à la Prairie Ronde
Qu'il y a le plus de jeune monde

It's at the Prairie Ronde
That there are the most young people

So I composed the present *La Prairie Ronde*. It tells the story of a young lad who intends to go on horseback to the *Prairie Ronde*, a small community north of his place, to ask for a girl he is in love with. As could be foreseen, the girl's parents turn him down as he is a stranger to the place. So in despair he gets drunk, then decides to go fight, if he must, with his local rival. Finally he goes away, broken-hearted after saying farewell to his fair blonde.

C'est là-bas à la Prairie Ronde
Qu'y a les filles les plus charmantes
Tit monde passe moi la jug
J'suis parti m'saouler

It's over there at the Prairie Ronde
That there are the most charming girls
Little folk pass me the jug
I'm going off to get drunk

C'est là-bas à la Prairie Ronde
Ya des bêtaites si méchantes
Chère passe moi ma féraïlle
J'suis parti batailler

It's over there at the Prairie Ronde
There are rogues so bad
Dear pass me my knife
I'm going to have a fight

C'est là-bas à la Prairie Ronde
J'ai quitté ma jolie blonde
Adieu cher coeur tendre
J'ai l'pied dans l'estrier

It's over there at the Prairie Ronde
I left my pretty blonde
Farewell dear tender heart
My foot is in my stirrup

LA VALSE DU GRAND BOIS (traditional)

I learnt these delightful words set to the tune of *La valse du grand bois* from Raymond François, a fiddle player and singer from Eunice, who said that this version comes from around Church-Point (Acadia parish).

Oh! Moi j'm'en vas au long du bois
Pour attendre les chouettes crier
Tous les soirs

Oh! I'm going by the edge of the woods
To hear the owls hoot
Every evening

Oh! J'ai nagé sept coulées
Et trois bayous pour t'avoir
J'ai pas pu

Oh! I swam seven streams
And three bayous to have you
I couldn't

Une coulée is a small bayou. In order of increasing size, water courses in Louisiana are called: un fossé, une coulée, un bayou, and une rivière. Un canal is an artificial stream.

CHERE TITE VAILLONNE (traditional - additional words by Gérard Dôle)

Very little is known about the life of the singer-guitarist Blind Uncle Gaspard. He took part in two Vocalion recording sessions along with the fiddler Delma Lachney, the first in Chicago in February 1929, the second in March of the same year in New Orleans. Of particular interest are the two sides of one disc from the second session on which he sings, hums, and whistles while accompanying himself with guitar.

Dennis McGee, who also took part in the March 1929 session, relates,

"His name was Gaspard, but I can't remember his other name any more. I've forgotten the name of the place where he lived, but it was in Avoyelles parish, over there in the north, somewhere around Bunkie. He sang for his wife; she had blue eyes. Vaillonne, he called her, Vaillonne! He said,

Chère tite Vaillonne
Tu m'as quitté
T'es partie t'en aller
Tu m'quittes moi tout seul
Comme un pauvre vieux malheureux

Dear little Vaillonne
You've left me
You set out to go away
You leave me all alone
Like a poor old wretch

J'y vois pas
J'peux pas t'avoir dans l'oeil
J'voudrais t'avoir
Mais j'peux pas t'avoir
J'y vois plus

I don't see anything
I can't see you in my sight
I'd like to see you
But I can't see you
I don't see any more"

According to Michael Doucet, singer and fiddler of Lafayette (Lafayette parish), Blind Uncle Gaspard lived between Ville Platte (Evangeline parish) and Eunice. Marc Savoy, accordionist of Eunice, says that Blind Uncle Gaspard *faisait la charpente* (was a carpenter) and *travaillait dans les forts d'armée alentours Alexandria et Forest Hill* (both in Rapide parish) during the war (World War I or II?). He was not completely blind and could see a little. At the end of his life he lived in Mamou (Evangeline parish).

A study of Blind Uncle Gaspard's discography seems to confirm that he came from Avoyelles parish (since one of his recordings has that name), that he had a wife that he called Baillole (spelt Baillie on the record label), and that he lost his mother at an early age since he sings:

Oh chère, ma chère vieille maman
Tu m'as laissé ici
Comme un pauvre orphelin du pays

Oh dear, my dear old mother
You've left me here
Like a poor country orphan

I recorded this present version with the name Vaillonne, quoted to me by Dennis McGee, still in my memory, and unfortunately without listening again to the recording by N'onc' Gaspard that I had known for a long time. In imitation, I whistle some verses of the song.

Oh chère, chère tite Vaillonne
Viens avec moi là-bas aux Avoyelles
J'peux pas chanter la tite chanson
Toi t'aimais tant
Juste pour toi
Ma chère Vaillonne

Oh dear, dear little Vaillonne
Come with me over there to Avoyelles
I can't sing the little song
You loved so much
Just for you
My dear Vaillonne

Oh chère, chère tite Vaillonne
Chaque fois je chante
J'vas plus jamais voir
Tes chers yeux bleux
Ta tite figure
Que moi j'aimais tant
Ca m'fait mal au coeur, chère

Oh dear, dear little Vaillonne
Each time I sing
I will never see again
Your dear blue eyes
Your little face
That I loved so much
That hurts my heart, dear

Oh chère, chère tite Vaillonne
La place que moi j'voudrais mourir
C'est dans tes bras, chère
Tu passes ta chère main blanche
Dessus mon front

Oh dear, dear little Vaillonne
The place I'd like to die
Is in your arms, dear
Pass your dear white hand
Over my brow

Oh chère, chère tite Vaillonne
Jongler qu'moi j'vas jamais plus
t'avoir
Ca m'casse mon coeur, chère
Pauvre n'onc' Gaspard
Qu'après brailler pour toi

Oh dear, dear little Vaillonne
To think that I'll never see you again
That breaks my heart, dear
Poor Uncle Gaspard
Who is weeping for you

LES TALLES DE RONCE (traditional)

I learnt this old two-step from Mr. Cyprien Landreneau (1903-1981), accordion player and singer from Mamou. The words, when sung, are somewhat naughty as they tell the story of a young man who invites his sweetheart to meet him *par derrière les talles de ronce* (behind the thorn bushes) while his parents are away.

COMPTINES (words by Gérard Dôle)

Many ditties like these were taught to the children by their grandparents. Here are three that I made in Cajun style.

Baril chawis
Du bois joli
Lache pas la patate
Oh non madame

Barrel full of racoons
Made of fine wood
Don't let go the potato
Oh no madam

Bêtaites amoureuses
Tout plein ma vareuse
Couturez mon sac
Béquez l'écrevisse

Love bugs
All inside my coat
Sew up my bag
Kiss the crawfish

Serpent mocassin
Coquin, vaurien
Chiquez mes souliers
Moi j'm'en vas nu-pied

Mocassin snake
Naughty, no good
Chew my shoes
I'm going bare-foot

EVANGELINE (words and music by Gérard Dôle)

The cruel deportation of the Acadians by the British in the 18th century inspired a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow which he called "*Evangeline*." According to the book *Acadian Reminiscences* by Felix Voorhies, Evangeline's real name was Emmaline Labiche. She had been engaged to Louis Arceneaux in the town of Grand Pré in Acadia. Just before the marriage, British soldiers came and gathered the French population. They loaded the men and women on separate ships and deported them to various British colonies on the east coast of America.

Emmaline and Louis were separated a long time. Louis gave up hope of seeing her again and married someone else. Supposedly, they finally met under an old live oak tree that still stands on the bank of Bayou Teche in St. Martinville (St. Martin parish). The encounter and realisation of her hopeless future were too much of a shock for Emmaline, who became insane for the rest of her life.

C'est pas la peine tu pleures
Belle Evangéline
Dessous le grand chêne vert
Où tu venais le soir
C'est plus la peine t'espères
Mes beaux yeux noirs
Là bas dans la Louisiane
Moi j'vas pas jamais t'revoir

It's useless to cry
Fair Evangeline
Under the big live oak
Where you go in the evening
It's useless to wait any more
My beautiful black eyes
There in Louisiana
I'll never see you again

Y a des chandelles de glace
Dessus les feuilles
Y a des chandelles de glace
Dedans ton coeur
Y a des chandelles de glace
Dans nos campagnes
Bye bye mon tit bébé
Moi j'vas pas jamais t'revoir

There are candles of ice
On the leaves
There are candles of ice
In your heart
There are candles of ice
In our countryside
Bye bye my little baby
I'll never see you again

Ca dit tout là bas
Dans l'pays de la Louisiane
Y a du monde bien vaillant
Ca parle le français
J'vas descendre tout en bas
Bâtir ma vie
Dans ces campagnes
Mais avec d'autres Acadiens

They say right down there
In the land of Louisiana
There are good people
That speak French
I'll go right down there
Build my life
In that countryside
With other Acadians

C'est pas la peine tu pleures
Belle Evangéline
Dessous le grand chêne vert
Où tu venais le soir
C'est pas la peine tu pleures
Mes beaux yeux noirs
Là bas dedans Grand Pré
Tu n'me r'verras jamais

It's useless to cry
Fair Evangeline
Under the big live oak
Where you go in the evening
It's useless to cry
My beautiful black eyes
There in Grand Pré
You'll never see me again

Y a des dentelles de givre
Dessus les feuilles
Y a des dentelles de givre
Dedans ton coeur
Y a des dentelles de givre
Tout l'entour nos terres
Bye bye mon cher coeur tendre
Moi j'm'en vas jamais r'venir

There are laces of frost
On the leaves
There are laces of frost
In your heart
There are laces of frost
All around our lands
Bye bye my dear tender heart
I'm going never to return

C'est plus la peine t'espères
Belle Evangéline
Au bord de la rivière
Où tu venais le soir
C'est plus la peine tu pleures
Mes beaux yeux noirs
Là bas dans la Louisiane
Moi j'm'en vas jamais t'revoir, tite
fille

It's useless to wait anymore
Fair Evangeline
On the bank of the river
Where you go in the evening
It's useless to cry anymore
My beautiful black eyes
There in Louisiana
I'm going never to see you again,
little girl

LA VALSE DU GRAND CHEMIN (traditional)

This sad-worded waltz was on the reverse side of Joe Falcon's 78 recording of *Allons à Lafayette*. It was spelt *La valce qui ma portin d'ma fosse* (sic) on the record label - read *La valse qui m'a portée dans ma fosse* (The waltz that carried me to my grave). After, in the late Forties or early Fifties, the accordion player and singer Iry Lejeune (1928-1955) from Point Noir (Acadia parish) recorded it in his turn, rebaptising it *La valse du grand chemin*. My own interpretation is more in Falcon's line.

Dis bye bye, cher
A ton papa, yaï
Dis bye bye à ta mom
Viens m'rejoindre
Ton papa y voulait pas
Ta maman non plus
Ca fait pas rien tite fille
Viens avec moi

Say bye bye, dear
To your papa, yai
Say bye bye to your mom
Come rejoin me
Your papa didn't want it
Neither your mother
That doesn't matter little girl
Come with me

LA COMPLAINTÉ DE LA NOUVELLE-ACADIE (words and music by Gérard Dôle)

The method of dispersing the Acadians, who were a threat to the British who had taken Acadia, has scarcely had an equal in history. The deportation was cruel in itself; the vessels were few, inadequate, and unseaworthy. There were many pitiful separations of families and shiploads even perished in mid-ocean. A historian tells how men, absent at their trapping in the woods for some weeks, came back to find their homes burnt down and their families already deported on ships out to sea.

Here is the story I wrote of a young "course-la-bois" (trapper) who, finding everything in ruins or under British rule, decides to march down to Louisiana (some Acadians really did make this incredible journey on foot or on rafts floating down the Mississippi) where he has heard that some French folks live.

Qu'il est beau ce pays de l'Acadie
Tout tout rempli
De ces vaillants Acadiens
J'en ai eu des nouvelles
Hier au soir
Garde ici, garde là bas
Le v'la tout envahi

How beautiful is this land of Acadia
All filled
With these good Acadians
I had news of it
Last night
Look here, look there
It's invaded all over

Par derrière chez moi
Y a-t-une jolie fontaine
L'eau est si claire
J'en boirais un 'tit brin
Par derrière chez moi
Y a-t-une jolie fontaine
Ca m'fait dur jongler
C'est un anglais qui la tient

Behind my place
There's a pretty fountain
The water is so clear
I'd like to drink a little of it
Behind my place
There's a pretty fountain
It's hard to think
That it's an Englishman who owns it

Les champs sont déserts
Les granges sont brûlées
Les maisons sont pillées
Le monde dans les misères
Garde donc mon bébé
Moi tout seul après pleurer
A chercher mais y où toi t'es
Tite fille moi j'connais pas

The fields are deserted
The barns are burned
The houses are plundered
The world in misery
Look here my baby
I'm crying all alone
Trying to find out where you are
Little girl I don't know

J'vas prendre mon archet
J'vas prendre mon violon
Ma rosine, mon tabac
J'vas coursailler dans les bois
Ca dit au Missouri
Y a des tites sauvages
Sont mignonnes, sont aimable
J'vas en prendre une avec moi

I'll take my bow
I'll take my fiddle
My rosin, my tobacco
I'll roam the woods
They say that in Missouri
There are little Indian girls
They're cute, they're lovely
I'll take one along with me

SIDE 2

OH SI J'AURAIS DES AILES (traditional)

I learnt this song from Mme. Agnès Bourque (née Frugé) of Eunice, born October 25th, 1896, at Lewisburg (St. Landry parish), and from Mr. Edius Naquin of Reddel. My version is a compromise between those of Mme. Bourque and Mr. Naquin, with some small personal additions.

This *chanson strophique* has been collected many times in France, also in Quebec in the county of Charlevoix by Catherine Perrier - French musicologist - in 1970. Conrad Laforte cited it seven times in his *Catalogue de la Chanson Folklorique Française* (University Press Laval, Quebec). Its first publication - which does not rule out an even greater age - dates to 1607.

Oh si j'aurais des ailes
Comme toutes ces hirondelles
Auprès de toi ma belle
J'irais me reposer
Ce s'rait pour tu m'conterais
Tes peines et tes tourments
Ce s'rait pour tu m'conterais
Z'avec tes amitiés

Oh if I had wings
Like all these swallows
By your side sweetheart
I would go and rest
So you could tell me
Your troubles and your torments
So you could tell me
Of your fondness

Y en a qui aime la blonde
Y en a qui aime la brune
Mais moi ne suis de même
Moi j'aime que ma chère rousse
Oh parlez nous de boire
De boire et bien rire
Et de se divertir
Avec nos camarades

Some like a blonde
Some like a brunette
But I'm not like that
I only love my dear red-head
Oh let's talk of drink
Of drink and good laughter
And enjoying ourselves
With our friends

Oh si j'aurais des ailes
Comme toutes ces hirondelles
Auprès de toi ma belle
Oh! j'irais me reposer
Ce s'rait pour tu m'conterais
Tes peines et tes tourments
Ce s'rait pour tu m'conterais
Aussi tes amitiés

Oh if I had wings
Like all these swallows
By your side sweetheart
Oh! I would go and rest
So you could tell me
Your troubles and your torments
So you could tell me
Also of your fondness

Mais tout partout y où j'vas
Non ça n'me convient pas
Oh si j'aurais ces ailes
De toutes ces hirondelles
Auprès de toi ma belle
J'irais me reposer

But everywhere I go
I'm not at ease
Oh if I had these wings
Of all these swallows
By your side sweetheart
I would go and rest

LA VALSE DU BAYOU NEZ PIQUE (traditional)

I learnt this waltz from the Balfa Brothers in 1975. They played it one time on the banks of Bayou Nez Piqué, a stream which borders the western part of Evangeline parish; hence the title I gave it. It is usually known as *La valse du dimanche après-midi*, after Iry Lejeune's version.

For the record, the *Nez Piqués* were a tribe of Indians who lived in the area two centuries ago. Their name came from their custom of tattooing (*piquer* in ancient French) their nose (*nez*).

Oh, catin, c'était dimanche après-midi
T'es passée m'donner ta main
Tu m'as pas dit et y où t'étais partie

Oh, doll, it was Sunday afternoon
You passed by to give me your hand
You didn't tell me where you left to

Oh, jolie, ça m'fait drôle et ça m'fait dur
Tit monde, toi t'es si loin
Tite fille tu t'en r'viens pas

Oh, pretty, it's strange for me and it's hard
Little folk, you're so far away
Little girl, you don't come back

Fais pas ça!

Don't do that!

Oh, bébé, quoi faire donc t'es si méchante?
Y a pas personne dans grand Paris
Tite fille, pour mon qu'aimerais
Oh chère, chère catin, mais garde donc
Gardez donc, tu m'as quitté
M'as quitté, j'mérite pas ça

Oh, baby, why are you so wicked?
There's no-one in big Paris
Little girl, for me to love
Oh dear, dear doll, look here
Look here, you've left me
Left me, I don't deserve that

DERRIERE CHEZ MOI (traditional)

I learnt this waltz from Mme. Horace Guillory (née Loriccia Frugé) of Mamou, born November 1898. She had it from her grandfather Ulysse Billeaudeau. This song has been recovered from the four corners of France and also from French Canada. It is cited in *Chansons Populaires dans le Bas-Berry* by Barbillat and Touraine (1930).

Derrière chez moi
Y a-t-une jolie fontaine
Toute entrelacée
De ces beaux rosiers d'amour
A y où c'que les amants
Se met a l'ombrage

Behind my place
There's a pretty fountain
All entwined
With lovely roses
Where lovers
Set themselves in the shade

C'est pour entendre
Les ronsingols chanter
Les ronsingols
Dans tout leur beau langage
Souvent nous disions
Les amours malheureuses
J'aim'rais bien mieux
Trente-six millions de flèches
Par le travers du profond de mon
cœur

For to hear
The nightingales sing
The nightingales
In all their fine language
Would often tell us
Of unhappy loves
I'd much rather have
Thirty-six million arrows
Across the depth of my heart

Je pleure la mort de vot' grand-père
Que les loups avient mangé
Comment voulez vous donc qu'je gigue
Z'et digue don don
Tous mes moutons sont épaillés
Z'et digue don dé

I'm crying for the death of your
grandfather
That the wolves have eaten
How do you want me to dance then
And diggy don don
All my sheep are scattered
And diggy don day

MON AIMABLE CATIN (traditional)

I made an adaptation for jaws harp of this song sung by Mr. Caesar Vincent and recorded by Mme. Catherine Blanchet in Abbeville (Vermilion parish) in October 1953. For the record I quote the words of the first verse below:

Oh dis moi donc mon aimable catin
Quoi fais tu dans ton jardin?

Oh tell me then my sweet doll
What do you do in your garden?

J'après cuillir des fleurs
De toutes couleurs
C'est pour mon serviteur
Mais encore donc mon petit cœur
Je t'en ferai ton bonheur

I'm picking flowers
Of all colours
For my man-servant
But once more then my little heart
I will give you your happiness

This *chanson en forme de dialogue* has often been collected in France. Sister Marie-Ursule quoted it in her book *Civilisation Traditionnelle des Lavallois* (Laval University Press, Quebec). In addition, Catherine Perrier collected a version in Vendée with melody line and words that are very close to that from Louisiana.

LA VALSE A JOHNNY DOUCET (words by Gérard Dôle - music traditional, arranged by Gérard Dôle)

Mr. John Doucet was "un bon cajun pieds plats" as he jokingly called himself. He had warmly welcomed me into his small house in Basile and I would often go to pass my Sundays in the company of him and his wife. Over cups of coffee we would talk, laugh, sing. I can picture him still, sitting on his old creole chair, as he chewed his tobacco.

I composed this song spontaneously one evening and recorded it at once in his memory.

Cher Johnny
Et y où toi t'es?
Moi j'connais
J'vas plus t'revoir
Dans la Louisiane
Cher Johnny
Ca m'fait du mal
Moi j'connais
J'vas plus jamais t'revoir

Dear Johnny
Where are you?
I know
I'll not see you again
In Louisiana
Dear Johnny
That hurts me
I know
I'll never see you again

Cher Johnny
Johnny Doucet
Moi j'après jongler
Aux bons temps
Aux bons temps on a y eu
Dans Grand Basile
Toi et moi
Moi j'voudrais, cher
Encore te r'voir

Dear Johnny
Johnny Doucet
I'm thinking
Of the good times
Of the good times we had there
In Grand Basile
You and me
I'd like, dear
To see you once more

Cher Johnny
J'après jongler
Toi tu dors
Dans la grande terre
Dans la Louisiane
Moi j'voudrais encore
Pouvoir t'voir
Z'après chiquer
Assis sur ta vieille chaise créole

Dear Johnny
I'm thinking
You are sleeping
In the broad earth
In Louisiana
I'd like once more
To be able to see you
Chewing your tobacco
Sitting on your old creole chair

Cher vieux Johnny Doucet!

Dear old Johnny Doucet!

PAR DERRIERE CHEZ MON GRAND-PERE (traditional)

I learnt this song from a recording by Caesar Vincent (see Side 2, Track 4). This *chanson en laisse* was originally a *chanson à danser*. It has been collected fifty-two times in France, also several times in Belgium, New Brunswick, Quebec, etc. Its first publication was in 1548.

Par derrière chez mon grand-père
Y avait z'une fille à marillier

Behind my grandfather's place
There was a girl ready to be married

Comment voulez vous qu'j'me marie
Z'et digue don don
Tous mes moutons sont épaillés
Z'et digue don dé

How do you want me to marry
And diggy don don
All my sheep are scattered
And diggy don day

Alors j'ai pris ma turlutute
Et je m'suis mis à turluter

So I took my turlutute
And started to turluter

Comment voulez vous qu'je turlute
Z'et digue don don
Tous mes moutons sont épaillés
Z'et digue don dé

How do you want me to turlute
And diggy don don
All my sheep are scattered
And diggy don day

Y avait qu'une seule et vieille
grand-mère
Qui ne voulait pas gigner

There was but one old grandmother
Who didn't want to dance

Et pourquoi donc la vieille grand-
mère
Z'et digue don don
Pourquoi voulez vous pas gigner
Z'et digue don dé

And why then old grandmother
And diggy don don
Why don't you want to dance
And diggy don day

MON MECHANT IVROGNE (traditional)

I learnt this song from Mr. Edius Naquin (see Side 2, Track 1). There exist numerous versions on the same theme also in France and Quebec. This *chanson sous forme de dialogue* recalls another mocking duet between husband and wife, *Le vieux soulard et sa femme*, recorded in 1928 by Joe and Cléoma Falcon.

Et oh dis donc mon méchant ivrogne
Tu penses donc de m'ner ce train
Te voila saôll comme un ivrogne
Dis donc moi quoi qu'y faut faire?

And oh tell me then my wicked
drunkard
When will you be through with that
There you are sozzled like a drunkard
Tell me then what's to be done?

Oh ma chère femme n'y pense donc pas
Moi et ton papa Nicolas
En revenant de faire affaire
On avait bu aucun tit brin
Chacun trente et six filets
Ça ce n'est pas trop boire

Oh my dear wife don't think of it
Me and your papa Nicolas
Coming back from doing business
We had a few small drinks
Each one thirty-six tots
That's not too much drink

Oh dis moi donc mon méchant ivrogne
Tu m'as mis dans la misère
Quatre enfants dessus les bras
Dis donc moi quoi qu'y faut faire?

Oh tell me then my wicked drunkard
You've put me in misery
Four children in my arms
Tell me then what's to be done?

Oh ma chère femme n'y pense donc pas
Si je t'ai mis dans la misère
Quatre enfants dessus les bras
Y faut les flanquer par terre!

Oh my dear wife don't think of it
If I've put you in misery
Four children in your arms
You should throw them on the ground!

Et oh dis donc mon méchant ivrogne
T'as vendu mes bois de lit
Mes couvertures ensuite mes draps
Dis donc moi quoi 'y faut faire?

And oh tell me then my wicked
drunkard
You've sold my wooden bed-frames
My blankets then my sheets
Tell me then what's to be done?

Oh ma chère femme n'y pense donc pas
Si j'ai vendu tes bois de lit
Tes couvertures ensuite tes draps
C'était par crainte des puces!

Oh my dear wife don't think of it
If I've sold your wooden bed-frames
Your blankets then your sheets
It was for fear of the fleas!

THEOGENE DUBOIS (traditional - additional words and music by Gérard Dôle)

This song is a free adaptation, that I improvised while recording, of *Je me marie dans quatre semaines* sung by Paul Touchet who recorded it for Mme. Catherine Blanchet at Meaux (Vermilion parish) in May 1948.

Guette donc ici
Guette donc là-bas
Qui c'est qui vient
Mais c'est Théogène Dubois
Prends le ma fille
Mais prends le donc
Théogène Dubois
C'est un vaillant garçon
Y bamboche pas
Y gamble pas
Y coursaille pas
Ca f'ra un bon mari
Y garoche pas
Y coursaille pas
Y s'défonce pas
C'est un vaillant couillon
Oh Théogène Dubois
Avec ses deux mains dans ses poches!

Look here
Look there
Who is coming
But it's Théogène Dubois
Take him my daughter
But take him then
Théogène Dubois
He's a fine boy
He doesn't go drinking
He doesn't gamble
He doesn't court other girls
He'll make a good husband
He doesn't hang out drinking
He doesn't court other girls
He doesn't go astray
He's a good simple fellow
Oh Théogène Dubois
With his two hands in his pockets!

Oh y ai Théogène Dubois
Avec ta grande casquette sur tes
oreilles!
Fais attention, elle va capoter,
cher!

Oh y ai Théogène Dubois
With your big cap on your ears!
Look out, it's going to tip up,
dear!

BAYOU POMPON (traditional)

This one-step, very popular in Southern Louisiana, was recorded about October 1929 by Angelas Lejeune and re-recorded after the Second World War by Iry Lejeune, his nephew, under the title *Bayou Pompon special*. My version is along the lines of that of Nathan Abshire.

Oh j'suis misérable
J'suis misérable
Sur l'bord du Bayou Pompon
Oh mais viens m'rejoindre, cher
Oh viens m'rejoindre
Tout l'temps dans les tracas

Oh I'm miserable
I'm miserable
On the bank of Bayou Pompon
Oh but come rejoin me, dear
Oh come rejoin me
All the time in worries

Oh mais gardez donc, cher
Mais gardez donc
Tout ça t'as fait à ton nèg'
Oh ya!, ça m'brise le cœur tite
fille
Ça m'brise le cœur
Tout ça t'as fait avec mon

Oh but look here, dear
But look here
All that you've done to your darling
Oh ya!, that breaks my heart little
girl
That breaks my heart
All that you've done with me

My thanks to all the Cajuns who taught me to sing and play the songs and dance tunes presented on this record. Thanks to Mme. Catherine Blanchet of Abbeville, and to Catherine Perrier of Paris who searched for the sources and derivation of many of the songs for me. Special thanks to Dave Smith of London for helping with the English translation and preparing this text.