

Recorded and Produced by CAROL and TRAVIS JENKINS



ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4032  
STEREO

# **DABUYABARUGU:** **INSIDE THE TEMPLE** **Sacred Music of the** **Garifuna of Belize**



COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE



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**DABUYABARUGU:**  
**INSIDE THE TEMPLE**  
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**Side 1.**

- Band 1. ABELAGUDAHANI 4:00
- Band 2. ABELAGUDAHANI 5:40
- Band 3. HUGULENDU with shakers 1:20
- Band 4. HUGULENDU 3:15
- Band 5. Sacrifice of fowl 2:30
- Band 6. SAUSUBEY 2:58
- Band 7. ABAIMAHANI—lirun P. 2:38

**Side 2. DABUYABARUGU**

- Band 1. ARUMAHANI Au suna 1:40
- Band 2. ARUMAHANI 1:27
- Band 3. AMALIHANI (Part 1) 4:16
- Band 4. AMALIHANI (Part 2) 10:36
- Band 5. ABAIMAHANI (Ida) 2:37
- Band 6. ABAIMAHANI Aume 2:45
- Band 7. HUGULENDU 1:37
- Band 8. SHAMAN'S SONG (A) 1:50

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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# DABUYABARUGU: INSIDE THE TEMPLE

## Sacred Music of the Garifuna of Belize

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RECORDED AND PRODUCED BY CAROL AND TRAVIS JENKINS, with Nagra recording equipment on loan from American Folklife Center, Library of Congress and support from Illinois State University. Editing assistance by Don White. Our special gratitude to Sara Gongez, Sinabui of the Dangriga Dabuyaba. Recorded in 1981.

The sacred music of the Garifuna is the crystallization of Garifuna artistic expression. For the Garifuna, as for many other peoples, religious experience is a primary source of artistic inspiration. In the domain of religion a people's major values and cultural themes are symbolized, transformed into compact and flexible modes of communication, meaningful to bearers of the culture. In the dabuyaba, the Garifuna temple, these symbols come alive, blending the past with the present and expressing the continuity of Garifuna history.

Also known in the anthropological literature as Black Caribs, the Garifuna are descendants of a unique maroon society which formed on the island of St. Vincent in the Lesser Antilles during the 17th and 18th centuries. Shipwrecked and runaway African slaves, mostly from Barbados, sought refuge in the island's mountainous interior. St. Vincent was one of the last few remaining strongholds of the Island Caribs, who had migrated from the Guyana lowlands of South America only a few hundred years before Columbus discovered them in the Lesser Antilles. He learned of their reputation as fierce man-eaters from the Taino, an Arawak people who inhabited the Greater Antilles to the north. Columbus coined the word "cannibal" from the Caribs' own name Kallinago to designate any fierce Indian who resisted the Spaniards, so they might be legally taken as slaves for the Spanish crown (Sauer, 1966). The Arawaks, who has also originated in South America, in the Orinoco River area, suffered from the Island Caribs' practice of raiding their villages and stealing their women. Thus, the Island Caribs

became an ethnically mixed society, as reflected in their language, which incorporated a female Arawakan dialect (Lokono) and a male Cariban dialect (Kariña). By the 1600's, Island Carib speech was predominantly Arawakan and known as Karifuna, meaning "people of the manioc clan" (Taylor, 1977). In addition, the Island Caribs had a third tongue, a secret language known only to the elders and used in religious and warfare-related activities. A century after the arrival of the Spanish, all Arawakan cultures had been destroyed, Africans had been introduced as slaves, and the French and English were taking over the colonization of the Caribbean.

By 1700, Africans greatly outnumbered Island Caribs on St. Vincent and, taking Carib women as wives, adopted Island Carib speech patterns, manioc technology, shamanism, modes of body decoration, and numerous other features of their mixed Amerindian heritage. These traits served to make the maroons' free status as Europeans attempted to turn St. Vincent into a slave-labor plantation economy. In the late 1700's, the last few hundred unmixed Island Caribs joined forces with the maroons in an effort to drive out British settlers. They fought the British with guerrilla tactics and French military aid, but were finally defeated in 1797. The British exiled them and transported a group of about 5000 to the island of Roatan, off the coast of Honduras. From there, the Garifuna soon crossed to the Central American mainland where they prospered and their villages spread along the coast from Cape Gracias a Dios near Nicaragua to central Belize. Since then, many thousands have emigrated more or less permanently to the United States. During the second half of the 19th century in Honduras, they were converted to Catholicism, but their own religion was never totally suppressed and is practiced today, along with Catholicism, by thousands of Garifuna people.

The roots of traditional Garifuna religion

are found in the rituals and beliefs of the Island Caribs, their Arawak women, and the West Africans who joined them. Central to all three culture areas was the belief in ancestor spirits who were held responsible for the well-being of their descendants. Through offerings and prayer, these spirits could be placated and their power re-directed toward healing instead of punishment. Although drums, rattles, trance, and spiritual mediums were common to all three sacred traditions, emphasis and ritual details differed. Over time, Garifuna religion has developed into a communal cult under the direction of a buyei or shaman, incorporating multiple post-mortem rituals, possession trance, shamanistic healing, and an extensive corpus of sacred music.

The West African emphasis on drums is primary in Garifuna sacred music, although the drums themselves are constructed differently from African drums and are never played with sticks. In ritual contexts, drummers are addressed as dangbu, possibly derived from the Dahomean Dambala, an ancestral snake spirit carried in the drum. But the Garifuna drum does not house a spirit. It can only call spirits with the aid of a special buzz created by attached snares—a South American Indian practice. Well-known sacred drummers are spiritually-called for their profession and very often specialize in ritual drumming. They must maintain a state of ritual purity during ceremonies. When temple drums are first constructed, their heads are anointed with hiu, a traditional cassava wine, and throughout their use, they are blessed with the smoke of buwe, a sacred herb. In Belize, three drums are used in the temple and, for certain types of song, the buyei plays a pair of gourd shakers. There is only one beat, played in unison in triple meter, unlike the poly-rhythms of Africa and Garifuna secular music. The basic sacred dance step, known as hugulendu, is a somber, tightly bound shuffle, reported among the Island Caribs as early as 1665 (see Wells, 1980). But, when possessed (not by gods, as in vodun and other West African-derived religions, but by ancestors), Garifuna dancers' movements change dramatically. They become far less repetitious, less bound and move into the kinesphere more actively, taking on African-style body movements. Drummers never change the



beat, even in response to trance dancers, but subtly shift the accents, which, in turn, shift the weight of the dancers' steps.

Women predominate as singers in Garifuna rituals but never sing in harmony, voicing every song in unison. The role of women in developing and maintaining Garifuna sacred music is very great and recently they have begun to take on the role of shaman as well. Garifuna shamanism is primarily Amerindian in nature, with spirit-helpers called by special songs and sacred rattles. Songs are usually conceived through dreams and often include esoteric words unknown to the singers. This unique syncretism permeates Garifuna religion, including its sacred music. With remarkable tenacity, the Garifuna have retained specific details of ritual observances reported to exist among their Caribbean forbears nearly 500 years ago. Whereas, females maintained sacred song styles, it appears that male African drummers were never able to insert their characteristic polyrhythms into the blend that ensued. Cantometric analysis of the entire corpus of Garifuna music reveals both African and Amerindian stylistic elements and demonstrates the specific retentions of Amerindian song style in religious music (Jenkins and Jenkins, 1982).

Most of the music recorded for this album was performed as part of dugu (adogorahani), the Garifuna major ancestral feast. A dugu is called for whenever someone is seriously ill and the spirits indicate to the buyei that a great effort at placation is needed. The ritual lasts two weeks, requires a year of preparation, and involves great quantities of food and rum (Jenkins, 1983). Long periods of time are spent singing and dancing. Songs are performed in even-numbered sets, never less than 4 at a time, and, as singers move directly from one melody to the next, the dancers reverse their direction as they move in a circle in one part of the temple. Song sets usually last 20 to 30 minutes. For 4 or 5 nights, including 3 or 4 full days as well, participants dance and sing almost continually. At midnight, the drums cease for a while and a genre of song known as uyan is performed. These are semi-sacred gestured songs, differentiated into male and female sub-types. They are sung a capella in irregular meter by women standing in lines and linked by their little fingers. The female version, known as abaimahani, is far more commonly heard today than is the male version, arumahani. The Garifuna refer to uyan as their "soul music",

since these songs are generally mournful and serious. Although arumahani appears to be dying out, the abaimahani is very much alive with new ones created yearly. The dugu itself is gaining in popularity in Belize. Every summer, between 6 and 12 of these ceremonies are held, drawing participants from as far away as Honduras and Canada. Though children contact with spirits, they are now frequently seen at dugu and included in ritual roles. In this fashion, the Garifuna are responding to the threatened demise of their culture and attempting to teach the next generation how to propitiate their ancestors with a sumptuous feast and a rich musical heritage.

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Photo 1. "Bubusin" Castillo, the leading heart-drummer in Belize today.

#### Side 1. Band 1. ABELAGUDAHANI (BRINGING IT ALL IN)

Dugu proceeds by stages. After a long period of preparation, lasting nearly a year, the ceremony begins with the arrival of participants from distant places and the gathering of the major ingredients of the feast. Specially selected men and women are sent to the cays to procure fish and crabs. Others bring in the products of the land, especially areba, or cassava bread, rum, and the makings for hiu, a light cassava wine, produced at the temple during the early days of dugu. The sacrificial fowl and pigs are tied up at the temple and huge loads of flour, plantains, sugar, and other foods are brought to the kitchen. During this phase, certain songs are sung which are inappropriate at later phases. The congregation, led by the buyei and the drummers, escort the fishermen to the seaside and greet their return a few days later. This session was recorded after their return on Monday morning. They sing:

This is the way we will be, making a fiesta:  
They are coming to us, our grandchildren, my people. They have come to us, granddaughter. Where is our headwrap? It will be our flag. This is the way we will be, feasting.

The second melody in the set goes on: Barbara, granddaughter, my hammock keeps rocking slowly with you. Hang up the hammock, granddaughter. Take hold of my catch. I am poor with raising you, Barbara, granddaughter. The fowl is crowing.

#### Side 1. Band 2. ABELAGUDAHANI

This is another example of a "gathering in" song. During this phase of dugu, the ancestor spirits are called and invited to attend. In this recording, the drums' buzzing snares can be clearly heard. The caller sings out a short introductory line and is then drowned out by the responding gayusu, or chorus. The group moves smoothly from one melody to the next, cued by the song leader and the shifting accents of the drums.

#### Side 1. Band 3. ABELAGUDAHANI WITH BUYEI

In this song, the leader calls for the shaman, addressing her as Sinabui, the chief buyei. In response, she emerges from her altar room with her sisira, gourd shakers filled with seeds, and plays along with the drummers. The people sing "Help us, Sinabui. We are playing



tonight". Although the dugu is a very serious occasion, combining post-mortem honoring of the ancestors with an effort to heal someone who is very ill, the feeling of the event is joyful and elated. Everyone, including the ancestors, is expected to have a good time.

#### Side 1. Band 4. HUGULENDU

This abelagudahani song makes specific mention of the ancient shuffle step known as hugulendu. Breton, writing in the early 1600's of the Island Caribs, speaks of "the movements they with their feet, joined and as if dragging themselves along, which are very arduous, and without every springing or leaving the ranks." The name of the rite, dugu, is shortened from adogorahani, literally meaning "treading down". The symbolic action of the ceremony, treading down the personalities of the troublesome ancestor spirits, hearkens back to the Island Carib custom of treading down the grave with their feet, reflected today in the sacred shuffle step.

#### Side 1. band 5. WALA GAYO (THE FOWL IS CROWING

Animal sacrifice is one of the most ancient forms of veneration. Unlike West African animal sacrifice, blood is not spilled or used in the ceremony, though it may be saved to be cooked into a tasty "blood sausage". The fowl are brought by family members and ritually slaughtered with a crack on the head against a post or stone block, while the congregation sings: Here is the fowl, your meat, for my drummers. Silence, granddaughter.

#### Side 1. Band 6. SAUSUBEY'S SONG

This dugu song has a known history. A man known as Sausubey lived in Seine Bight over 80 years ago and was a defiant non-believer in ancestor spirits. Even when he became very ill, he refused to see the buyei and the doctors told him he would die. He continued to refuse spiritual healing until his niece also became sick. His niece consulted a buyei and was told to hold a dugu. When she was leaving her house, on the way to harvest manioc to make areba for the dugu, the spirits gave her this song. In it the spirits say they are looking for that non-believing man. The song is almost purely a repeated descending line, quite typical of Amerindian melodic structure.

#### Side 1. Band 7. ABAlMAHANI-LIRUN PASCUA

During the liminal period between midnight and 3 A.M., the drums cease, but the party doesn't stop. Women sing abaimahani, cut up, and generally have a good time, as the temple steward serves them rum ("aceite"). This song tells of personal sorrow: It is a sad foreign Christmas.

There is a feast in my home today. O Juana, I call you, my sister. I have shed tears on account of death. Now I walk about because of my troubles. The curse of death keeps me walking about, trying to cool my heart.

#### Side 1. Band 8. HUGULENDU MEDLEY

This set of 4 melodies typifies the easy movement from song to song one hears at dugu. The words of the first song say: The donors are coming. Let's go and meet them, everybody. Let's make a move, one after the other. I don't want a song. It's money I want, for me. The last song in the set is a light-hearted litany, designed to entertain and keep the party going. The words may refer to someone's less-than-flattering nickname. They are: This feast is for you, Chicken Nose.

#### Side 2. Bands 1 and 2. ARUMAHANI

The man's type of uyan is performed in a line with bending and swaying much like abaimahani. But today groups of men seldom perform arumahani, yet the songs are still alive, carried on chiefly by women. The first example here relates: On account of papa, she almost frightened me. I am finished walking from side to side. Now I am going to leave because I am in need. The second song refers to the key Garifuna values of reciprocity and generosity: Favors (charity) keep on making it for the children of God. With him there is a big grace for you.

#### Side 2. Bands 3 and 4. AMALIHANI

Amalihani or mali is the most sacred dance of the Garifuna. Tracing its history, our main clues are linguistic, i.e. Carib-speaking shamans in South America today refer to the songs sung to call their spirit-helpers as malik and Arawak-speakers in Guyana dance a sacred piece called mari-mari, in which they move first clockwise, then counter-clockwise in a 3-beat shuffle step. The Garifuna mali is a complex group dance led by the buyei and drummers. The congregation forms lines behind the buyei who

faces the drummers. This configuration moves around the dabuyaba first counter-clockwise, then clockwise, halting at positions that mark the four cardinal directions. At these stations, dancers maintain the shuffle step but do not move on while the buyei directs her shakers to each drum, alternately in a lowered position close to the earth and in a raised position. These motions signify the directions from which power is drawn and in which spirits may reside. The dance is at once a message to the ancestors and a drawing together of earthly power through the living congregation. After a warm-up introductory drum section, the song begins, led by the heart-drummer, who, in this case, does not play. The main verse is followed by 30 bars of drumming, during which the crowd is silent. This sequence is repeated 7 times, moving directly into the second part (Band



Photo 2. AMALIHANI, the sacred dance of placation.

4), "idenderu", when the entire configuration prances around the cardinal positions rapidly, without halting for the blessings as in the first part. After returning to the original position, the buyei stops playing. It is customary for a third part, the cheruroot, to be added. This is simply for a change of pace, to add a lighter piece of music to one that is so heavily meaningful. Each performance is dedicated to an ancestral spirit. No less than 4 and up to 30 or more mali may be called at dugu. The drummers receive a portion of rum for each mali perfor-



med. The words to mali include many that are esoteric, used as part of the religious language only. They are translatable as: Grandmother, you are being placated. O Great Ancestral God, you are being placated, The fowl is crowing, Our Grandmother. We are placating her, O great-grandmother of us all, I am for you, you are for me. Ancestral spirit power of past times.

Typically, it is during mali, if at no other time, that dancers are possessed and enter trance, signifying that the ancestors have arrived at the feast.

#### Side 2. Band 5. ABAIMAHANI

During the liminal period between midnight and 3 A.M. the drums cease and uyanü are performed. In this abaimahani, the repeated refrain asks: How will it be, on my!

#### Side 2. Band 6. ARUMAHANI

Sung by women, this arumahani refers to the post mortem 9-nights celebration called beluria: O me, how will I go out, hey-ho? O how about me, ah me. Will I walk to the home of Lusina? I have seen misery here. O where is the mother of Tani? O, my beluria partner.

#### Side 2. Band 7. HUGULENDU

Deep in the night in the later phase of the dugu, singers get weary but push on with songs appropriate to the stage of ritual. This song states: O mama, it is sad to see the sun go down in the temple. O mama, we are not given anything, no one gives to us in the temple.

#### Side 2. Band 8. SHAMAN'S SONG

As in both African and Amerindian shamanistic healing traditions, the Garifuna buyei is called by the spirits to the profession. This calling manifests itself at first as severe illness, untreatable by Western biomedicine. After a period of struggle and suffering, the newly-called shaman may be healed and undergo a personality transformation, thereby developing into a full-fledged medium for the spirits. Because of the restrictions placed on their behavior and the great demands on their time and energy, taking on this profession represents



Photo 3. ABAIMAHANI at the temple.

a great sacrifice, especially for a woman with children. New World shamans are typically given power songs by their spirits, used to call their personal spirit-helpers. The song recorded here and sung by Sara Gongez and her devoted temple helper, Margaret Vicente, was given to the sinabui at her time of struggle and transformation. In it

several of her personal spirit-helpers are named. The words are: My poor supporter, my people. My poor sister, o my, brother-in-law is on her. You can still hold your shaker in our temple, my child. Come to me, Rusiya Gurinedu, come to me with Irineya. You are going to nurse my support for me. I am downhearted. I keep crying, my tears keep dropping.



Photo 4. The last mali danced under the hammock shed outside in front of the temple.