



HAITIAN FOLK SONGS

sung by
LOLITA CUEVAS

arrangements and guitar by
FRANTZ CASSEUS

FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP. N. Y.

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MUSIC LP

HAITIAN

Harvest Song • Little Bird • Angelique O! • Nan Guinin

FOLK

Choucoune • Lullaby • Haiti • Sobo

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SONGS

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Lolita Cuevas was born in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, and at the age of two was taken by her parents, both of Puerto Rican birth, to Haiti, where the Cuevas family thereafter lived for many years. During her youth, Lolita Cuevas was educated in Haitian schools and there learned to speak, read and write fluently the native Creole and French languages. Her friendship with the Haitian people provided an excellent opportunity to learn the authentic music of the country and her love for the land of her childhood lends power to her interpretation of Haitian music.

Lolita Cuevas' artistic career began at the age of 15, when her first concert was given at Port-au-Prince, Haiti. In her ensuing professional career, she has appeared on radio, in theatre, and in night clubs in Venezuela, Mexico, Haiti, Martinique, Curacao, Puerto Rico, Reno and Philadelphia.

Composer-arranger-guitarist Frantz Casseus was born in Haiti of a well-known family. His musical interest became centered on the guitar, which at that time in Haiti was used only as a group instrument for dance accompaniment.

To Casseus, it seemed there was a tremendous undeveloped potential in the instrument in Haiti. And, at a very early age, he started to experiment with increasing the scope of guitar music... both extending the possibilities of the guitar itself, by building and constructing his own instruments, and also by working up simple folk themes of Haitian music into more serious art forms... arranging and composing his own melodies, some of which are heard in this album.

Frantz Casseus for many years studied as a classical guitarist and started concertizing at the age of 23. His first concert offered a new experience to the Haitian audience, their introduction to classical guitar music. Since that time, he has concertized widely in South America and the United States, frequently playing his own compositions, such as the well-known "Haitian Suite."

But for many years, some of Casseus' favorite works were not heard. These were the specially composed and arranged melodies, based on folk tunes, that were designed for voice and guitar. They awaited the arrival of a singer whose range and quality, in Casseus' opinion, could best interpret them... and these were found in the voice of Miss Lolita Cuevas.

HAITI

This song describing the beauties of Haiti is in the form of the Salon Meringue. This was a slow and stately dance of Haiti's past. With a delicate flavor, almost that of the minuet, the meringue de salon faded into history with the coming of the phonograph, lost out in the competition of the onestep and the foxtrot brought to Haiti by the Americans with the occupation in 1915. The haunting melody has been arranged by Frantz Casseus for single voice and guitar.

Creole:

Moin faite nan yun bel ti pays
Qui bainyain nan Mer des Antilles.

Pays'm cila moin rainmain li
Li tellement douce, tellement tranquille.

Haiti, c'est con ca'l rélé
C'est li qui la Perle des Antilles
Yo met' ba'm moin l'ore ba'm diamant
Moin pa'p jam' quitté'l.

Haiti! Haiti!
Moin raimain ou pou toute la vie
Haiti! Manman chérie!
C'est nan bras ou pou' moin mourir.

English:

I was born in a beautiful little country
Which is bathed by the Sea of the Antilles.

This country of mine, I love it,
It is so sweet and so serene.

Haiti, that is its name
It is she who is the Pearl of the Antilles.
Even if they give me gold and diamonds
I will never leave it.

Haiti! Haiti!
I will love you all my life
Dear mother! It is in your arms that I will die.

CHOUCOUNNE

This song, about a beautiful young girl named Choucounne, was arranged for guitar and voice by Frantz Casseus, and was based on music written by Maulear Monton, a Haitian composer, some fifty years ago; with words by the famous Haitian poet, Oswald Durand. Durand might almost be called the Dante of Haiti, because he raised to a position of prestige the popular language; he gave to Creole the "dignity of literature," by using it in much of his poetry. With his poem "Choucounne," written in the language of the people, he gained his reputation as the creator of "poesie tropicale" -- "tropical poetry."

Creole

Dèyè yun gros touffe pingouin,

L'autre jou' moin contre Choucounne.
Li souri lè li oué moin,
Moin di ciel a la bel mounne.

(repeat last two lines)

Ti zoizeau nan bois qui t'apé coute, (repeat)
Pitôt blié ca c'est trop grand la peine.
Car depuis jou' la deux pieds moin nan chaine.
(repeat last two lines)

Choucounne c'est yun marabout,
Jé li claire com chandelle.
Choucounne gain tête doubout.
Ah, si Choucounne té fidèle (repeat)
Moin rete' cause' longtemps.

English

Behind the great hedge,
The other day I met Choucounne.
She smiled when she saw me.
I said, "Heavens, what a lovely creature."
(repeat last two lines)

The little birds in the forest were listening. (repeat)
It's better to forget it, it's too much pain,
For, since that day, my feet have been in chains.
(repeat last two lines)

Choucounne is a marabout,*
Her eyes were bright as candles.
Choucounne has a beautiful bosom.
Ah! If she were only faithful (repeat)
I would stay to speak about it.

* In the Creole language, a beautiful, very dark-skinned girl.

THE HARVEST SONG

Words and music composed in the folk idiom by Frantz Casseus. This song is based on a harvesting custom in Haiti called the coumbite, when neighbors gather to help each other harvest the crops. It is a happy time, a time of dancing, singing, drinking, drums and laughter -- and deep gratefulness for the crops that have been harvested.

Creole

Meci Bon Dieu,
Gade tout ca la natu' poté pou' nous.
Meci Bon Dieu,
Gadé couman la mizè fini pou' nous.

La pli tombé,
Mais poussé,
Toute ti mounne qui grand gout prallé mangé.

An nous dansé Congo,
An nous dansé Pètro,
Papa Bon Dieu dit nan ciel là
Mizè fini pou' nous.
etc.

English

Thank you, God,
Look at all that nature has brought us.
Thank you, God,
Look how misery has ended for us.

The rain has fallen,
The corn has grown,
All the children that were hungry are going
to eat.
Let's dance the Congo,
Let's dance the Petro,
God said in Heaven
That misery has ended for us.
etc.

IN GUINEA (Nan Guinin)

In this song, words and music for which were written
by Frantz Casseus, are expressed the longing and
feelings of the slave taken from his homeland in
Africa. In the simple language of the people, the
Vodoun god of the oceans, Agué, is called upon for
help and comfort.

Creole

Nan Guinin manman moin yé!
Nan Guinin enhé!
(repeat)
Agué, oh,
Nan Guinin rélé'm Agué oh,
Agué, oh!

Dleau monté, dleau descend,
Na jambé jambé Nan Guinin.
(repeat first two lines)

Cou la pli tombé
C'est misé.
Cou l'orage grondé
Nan Guinin rélé'm
Nan Guinin.
(repeat first two lines)

English

In Guinea my mother is!
In Guinea, an' ye! (alas!)
(repeat)
Agué, oh,
Guinea is calling me.
Agué, oh!

The water rises, the water goes down,
We will jump, jump to Guinea.
(repeat first two lines)

When the rain falls
It's misery.
When the storm rages
Guinea calls me.
Guinea.
(repeat first two lines)

A HAITIAN LULLABY

This is a simple slumber song, a folk tune that
Haitian mothers have crooned to their babies for
more than a hundred years. Precisely who the

General referred to in the words was and on what
adventure he was bent are lost in the long ago from
which this folk melody came. Obviously, his army's
passage through the country left the people poor
and needy. Arranged for guitar and voice by Mr.
Casseus for this recording.

Creole

Dodo, dodo, titite
Dodo sou bras manman ou.
General Lacaros rété Anse à Veau
Pas quitté anyien pou titite à moin.
M'obligé coupé jupon moin
Pou'm fait casaque pou' titite a moin.

English

Sleep, sleep, little one
Sleep in your mother's arms.
General Lacaros in Anse à Veau
Didn't leave anything for my baby.
I had to cut a piece from my slip
To make a dress for my little one.

ANGÉLIQUE, O

This is one of the most popular of popular Haitian
songs. Its rhythm and melody both are so character-
istic of West Indian music that it has not only en-
deared itself to the Haitian people, but it has gained
world-wide acceptance -- as a prototype of the gayety
and spirit of the West Indies. This song has also
been arranged for guitar and voice by Mr. Casseus.

Creole

Angélique, oh, Angélique, oh,
Allé caille manman ou!
(repeat two lines)

Ti fi qui pas conné lavé passé,
Allé caille manman ou.
(repeat)

Alle caille manman mon chè,
Alle caille manman mon chè,
Alle caille manman mon chè,
Pou' pas bam'm désagrément.

etc.

English

Angélique, oh, Angélique, oh,
Go back to your mother!
(repeat two lines)

Little girl who doesn't know how to wash and iron,
Go home to your mother.
(repeat)

Go back to your mother, my dear,
Go back to your mother, my dear,

Go back to your mother, my dear,
So I will have no more arguments.

etc.

LITTLE BIRD (Ti Zoizeau)

This song, which tells the tale of a young and much too adventurous little bird, was based on a simple Haitian folk tune. Only a few of the words, telling a part of the sad saga, existed in the original; and both melody and words were expanded and developed by Frantz Casseus for the current version. The main interest in this folk tale lies in the ominous figure of Fillette LaLeau, a wicked witch, whose main purpose in Haitian folklore is to attract and then devour little birds.

Creole

"Ti zoizeau, coté ou prallé?"
"Moin prallé caille Fillette LaLeau"
"Fillette LaLeau conn' mangé ti mouné,
Si ou allé là mange ou tout."
Bri colo bril
Bri colo bril
Rossignol mangé corossol!
(repeat last three lines)

"Fillette LaLeau, bonjou'
M' c'est ti zoizeau.
Fillette LaLeau, bonjou'
M' c'est ti zoizeau.
Manman moin allé chèché paille
Papa moin allé chèché dleau.
Main mangé moin poté pou' ou,
Fillette LaLeau."

(repeat first seven lines)

"Fillette LaLeau mangé pitite moin,
Pitite moin, ti zoizeau!"
(repeat above two lines)
Bri colo bri!
Bri colo bri!
Rossignol mangé corrossol!

English

"Little bird, where are you going?"
"I am going to see Fillette LaLeau."
"Fillette LaLeau eats little birds,
And if you go, she will eat you, too."
Bri colo bri
Bri colo bri
The nightingale eats the corossol (fruit.)
(repeat last three lines)

"Fillette LaLeau, good morning
I am the little bird.
Fillette LaLeau, good morning
I am the little bird.
My mother went away to look for straw
My father went away to look for water.
And I am here with something to eat for you,
Fillette LaLeau."

(repeat first seven lines)

"Fillette LaLeau ate my little child
My little child, little bird!"
(repeat above two lines)

Bri colo bri!
Bri colo bri!
The nightingale eats the corossol (fruit.)

SOBO (Instrumental)

This selection was originally written as a piano solo by the late Ludovic Lamothe, an outstanding Haitian concert pianist and composer. In the left hand of the piano, he endeavored to imitate the effects and sounds of Haitian drums.

Since Haitian music is characterized to such a large degree by the extensive use of drums, many other musicians have attempted to create drum effects with their instruments.

In arranging this material for solo guitar, the same challenging problem was faced by Frantz Casseus. After considerable experimenting, the techniques heard in this album were developed.

Recorded by Moses Asch
Edited by Harold Courlander
Cover by Socolov