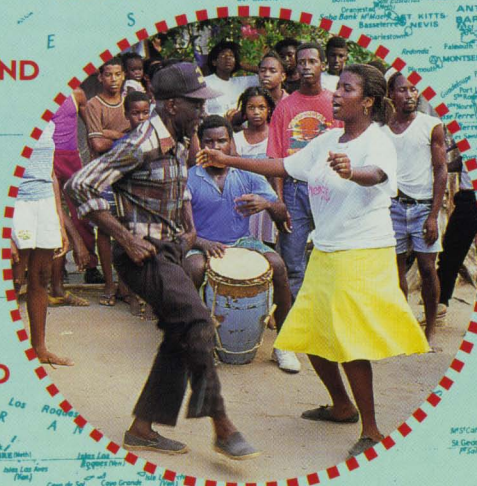


MUSICAL TRADITIONS OF ST. LUCIA, WEST INDIES

DANCES AND
SONGS FROM
A CARIBBEAN
ISLAND



Smithsonian Folkways

Musical Traditions of St. Lucia, West Indies

Dances and Songs
from a Caribbean Island

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Recordings by Jocelyne Guilbault, Embert Charles, and Manfred Kremser

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2. **Solo: "Byen, Byen Elford Mayé"** 2:26
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Musical Traditions of St. Lucia, West Indies

Jocelyne Guilbault, January 1993

The traditional music of St. Lucia, part of the Windward Islands group of the Lesser Antilles, is remarkably rich in its variety but is very little known outside the region. The people of this rugged volcanic island, with an area of only 238 square miles, are famous in the Caribbean for keeping alive their oral traditions.

They gather at night with their friends to talk about politics, sea conditions, gardens, and the daily news. But their conversations always come round to remembering, criticizing, and planning some musical event. Every holiday, political commemoration, and annual feast-day of local associations is marked by music. This recording is designed to fill a gap in our understanding of the importance of musical life in this society and the great variety of musical genres and artistic achievements in the island.

Planning for this album began more than two years ago in collaboration with Embert Charles, the director of the Folk Research Centre of St. Lucia, a nongovernmental organization that has played a key role in the development, documentation, and promotion of St. Lucian culture. Aware that any collection of field recordings reflects the researcher's own theories, knowledge, and experiences as much as the musical traditions of the people represented, we decided to combine our own fields of expertise (communications and ethnomusicology) and to make use of the three main recording collections housed at the Folk Research Centre—those of the Centre itself, those of the Austrian anthropologist Manfred Kremser, and my own. Our goal was not only to produce a comprehensive account of the traditional music of St. Lucia, but also to show how music in the island plays a principal role in the lives of St. Lucians. While I selected and annotated the pieces after long discussions with

several local musicians, Embert Charles decided on their sequence in the album. The transfer of all selections to digital equipment was sponsored by the Folk Research Centre. Copyright payments will be administered by the Centre and used for community projects.

Hard decisions on the selection of the pieces had to be made. Regional variations within St. Lucia exist, but could not be fully represented here. The pieces were selected according to the following main criteria: they had to be representative of the local musical tastes and at the same time clearly illustrate the formal structures that are judged characteristic of the various musical genres; in addition, the recordings and their duration had to meet to a certain degree the implicit norms set up by the widely distributed audio technology on the market. But beyond these constraints, the selections were made to acknowledge and celebrate the particular sensibility of St. Lucian culture.

The music of St. Lucia reflects the island's colonial history. St. Lucia changed hands fourteen times during the Caribbean wars between France and Britain, 1639-1803, and gained its independence only in 1979. In 1814, when the island was ceded to Britain, the French influence was extensive. Today, the 120,000 inhabitants are mainly the descendants of African slaves, with a less numerous but still considerable population of descendants of indentured laborers from India, brought to the

island after the emancipation of the slaves. Only a tiny number of Europeans have remained in the country. Except for the East Indian people, who have cultivated their traditions in almost strict isolation, the various European and African cultural groups have influenced all aspects of St. Lucian musical life.

The languages used in songs illustrate this. Although the official language is English, daily interactions in villages are carried on in a French-based creole—a language that is largely based on a French vocabulary but that uses a structure associated with African languages. In traditional music, songs are usually sung in creole; only a few use English.

Some musical instruments played in St. Lucia such as the violin, guitar, and mandolin originated in Europe. Others such as the *ka*, also called *bélé*, drum (a hollow, barrel-shaped drum held between the legs of the seated player and played with the bare hands), and other percussion instruments including the *baha* (a long, hollow tube blown like a trumpet to produce a percussive sound), the *chakchak* (rattle), the *zo* (bones), and the *gwaj* (scraper) are viewed locally as part of the African heritage. Still other instruments such as the banjo (the locally made *skroud* or *bwa pòyé* banjo) and the *cuatro* (a four-stringed instrument) are thought—according to the majority of musicians I interviewed—to be indigenous to St. Lucia, because they have traditionally been made on the island.

The musical genres also show various ethnic

influences. The *koutoumba*, for example, which is accompanied by the *ka* drum and uses a call-and-response form in the songs and a particular choreography, is the undoubtedly associated with Africa, whereas the quadrille (*kwadril*, in creole), with the contour of its melodies and its distinctive choreography, is unquestionably related to Europe. Given these distinctive influences, the question to be asked is the degree to which certain borrowed musical instruments and genres have been appropriated as part of the creole cultural milieu. How does one evaluate, for example, the St. Lucian *kwadril*—as an avatar of the well-known European dance or as a new reality, given a new meaning and distinctive musical characteristics within St. Lucian musical traditions? During the nationalist movement in the late seventies and early eighties, this question became a political one as it entered the debate on how to define St. Lucian identity. It was only a few years after independence that the *kwadril*, after nearly dying out in the late seventies, was revived with the help of some local organizations and recognized officially in the school system as truly representative of St. Lucian cultural identity.

In the post-slavery culture, the legitimacy of African-derived traditions as part of the national heritage has never been questioned. But this does not mean that these traditions have at all times received full support by St. Lucians. Negative attitudes toward African-derived traditions were long held by the upper-class

minority, formerly composed of the white colonial masters. The association of these traditions with unschooled people of the lowest social and economic class had dramatic consequences for the black population during the period of slavery: it served to isolate those people further within colonial society.

Critical views of African-derived traditions and related activities have also emanated from the Roman Catholic Church which, historically, has either ignored these activities or encouraged its members not to participate in them. In the same way, until the emergence of the nationalist movements preceding independence, the government disregarded African-derived music. Even though the clergy today has become more tolerant and respectful of "folk" activities and the government is now promoting these same traditions as symbols of St. Lucian cultural identity, many upper-class St. Lucians are still embarrassed to take part in them. One can only conclude that the old, negative associations may not have the power they used to have—but neither are they completely dispelled.

From local traditions and practices have emerged the principles by which music in general is conceived and valued in St. Lucia. In the many interviews I conducted over the past twelve years, it became clear that most people assumed music includes singing, and at any rate it must include dancing. For a music to be well received, it needs to be loud and intense. The popularity of a musical genre is largely dependent on

whether it encourages participation: the more participants, the more successful the presentation. In general, musical performances are perceived as public entertainment; they must therefore be spectacular, colorful, and expressive. They must connect with and react to the public.

Other qualities more directly associated with individual musicianship can elicit varying points of view, even controversy. While a high register and a distinctive, thin vocal texture is preferred by some musicians and participants, for others a talent for improvisation is far more important in evaluating a performer. Having a good sense of rhythm often ranks higher than intonation in determining good musicianship among instrumentalists. Accomplished musicians, I was told, are recognized by their exceptional sense of timing, convincing interpretations, and controlled rhythmic and melodic improvisation. Although a certain knowledge of several instruments and repertoires is part of West Indian tradition and therefore to be expected, versatility is still highly regarded.

As is generally the case in the West Indies, the roles of women and men differ greatly in musical traditions. Women often take the role of *chantwèl* (song leader) and habitually participate in choruses of responders. They also take an active part in dances, but are almost never seen playing instruments in public. (It is paradoxical that many male musicians, in conversations with me, have admitted it was their mothers who

taught them at home to play their instruments.) Men have traditionally been responsible for all instrumental accompaniment, but they also participate in chorus singing and dancing and can act as *chantwèl*.

Children learn about local traditions by observation and imitation. Except at funeral wakes, where they are rarely seen because the celebration lasts all night, they are usually present at all musical activities. Whereas they often join a chorus of singers spontaneously, children are especially encouraged by adults to take part in the dancing, and those who learn to perform at an early age are greatly valued and admired as adults.

The selections on this recording introduce most of the musical genres found on the island. They are grouped by local categories based on the kinds of activities in which the music is performed (such as game or work songs), the seasonal occasions on which the music is played, the religious cults with which the music is associated, the instrumentation required to play the particular dances, or the names of the social organizations that feature a specific musical repertoire.

In the commentaries that follow, only a few lines of the song texts or a summary of the lyrics are provided. For the original versions in French-based creole with their English translations, please see boxed note.

Play-Song-Dances

A play-song-dance in St. Lucia is an entertainment as well as an opportunity to demonstrate skills and to make public commentaries. St. Lucians "play" through singing, performing on musical instruments, dancing, acting out their songs, or telling stories. Through these various media, St. Lucians "play on" certain feelings or weaknesses of others, and "play up" what they value most. Everybody, from children to adults, is welcome to "play," doing many things that could otherwise hardly be done at all. They can laugh at social conventions, criticize new laws, gossip about people, or tell the story of some interesting sexual encounter. They can act or look silly, interact with a wide range of people, and make contact with those who in normal conditions are difficult to approach. All this is performed with great spontaneity, genuineness, and high spirits, in order to minimize the possibility of causing offence.

Play-song-dances are performed mostly by people living in the countryside. Although the dances might be enacted on any occasion and be invoked for any reason, they are especially appropriate for beach parties, full-moon gatherings, and *débòt* evenings.

Beach parties and full-moon gatherings occur spontaneously and can be loosely organized by a few volunteers. Conversely, a *débòt* evening, which consists primarily of performing the *débòt* dances (see below), is organized by an individual

for personal pleasure, or, as is often the case, by the owner of a rum shop or a bar who wants to make money through the sale of drinks. The organizer's only expense is hiring a drummer and a song leader for the evening. The performers usually receive only a meager amount of money, but they are offered plenty of free drinks and food. The dance normally takes place in a clear space near the rum shop or by the house of the organizer.

The play-song-dances include four musical genres: the *débòt* (also called *djou*), *yonbòt*, solo, and *fwé pòté*. (The *yonbòt* repertoire, based on a rhythmic pattern nearly identical to that of the *débòt* but played over two beats instead of four, has been almost forgotten and I was able to find only two tunes, which could not be included here. See Guilbault 1984: 115.) All four are accompanied by the *ka* drum, when available, and also occasionally by the *tibwa* (a pair of sticks played against the rim of the drum).

The texts of the four play-song-dances most often report events well known to the participants and can focus on sex, individual personal problems, and human relationships in general. Since the song leaders allow themselves to sing things about people they could not otherwise say, the use of the label "play" for these types of songs is in fact most convenient: it not only frees the singers from many social conventions but also protects them against reprisals by the church or the law. However, to further protect themselves from getting into

trouble, the song leaders typically use such verbal tactics in their texts as *lang déviwé* (saying the opposite of what you really mean), metaphor (using a word to refer to something else), ellipsis (consciously omitting certain names or parts of the story), or periphrasis (rendering an idea through circumlocution).

Most of the texts, based on call-and-response, are elliptical from our point of view and presuppose that the hearers need only a few cues to reconstitute the whole story. By repeating them throughout the song, the song leaders present only the elements of the story they want to stress.

To increase the participation of the audience, the song leaders continually interact with the participants by inserting spoken commentaries. At one point, a singer may congratulate the drummer on his good playing; at another, tell the audience to sing louder; at still another, encourage and praise the skills of the dancers.

The four musical genres use duple meter (that is, two or four units to the measure). In all cases, two or three melodic motifs form the basis of the melody: while the chorus sings a fixed part, the song leader alternates freely between the two other melodic motifs. The song leader usually begins his songs by singing the first line alone before the musical accompaniment comes in.

Although the four play-song-dances share many characteristics, they each have unique features. The *débòt*, for example—unlike the

other three which normally use only a few words to evoke a picture, an impression, or a story—occasionally contains a first part in which the whole story is told in verses before the song leader switches to the call-and-response form for the rest of the song. Whereas the solo and *jwé pòté* song-dances typically employ different tunes for different texts, the *débòt* songs, in my collection of thirty-three, use only four melodies (as noted earlier, the paucity of *yonbòt* examples makes generalization impossible here). Most important, each “play” can be easily recognized by its distinctive rhythmic patterns and choreography.

The *débòt* and *yonbòt* dances require the participants (1) to form couples and make a circle; (2) to go around the circle during the introductory part; and (3), at the drum signal, to begin the dance. In each dance the partners, facing each other, swing their bodies from left to right and perform a *blòtjé* movement at the end of each swing. A *blòtjé* movement involves thrusting the pelvis forward and doing a *touché* (making contact) with the partner. Before concluding the dance, the drummer returns to the rhythmic pattern of the introductory part, which signals the dancers to go back around the circle for the finale.

The *jwé pòté* dance also begins with couples going around the circle before the dance starts and employs the *blòtjé* as the main dance figure. Here, however, the *blòtjé* is not executed by all the dancers but only by two at a time. One

dancer stands in the middle of the circle and, at a given point in the text of the song, goes to a person of his or her choice and performs a *blòtjé*. Although they are free to perform as many *blòtjé* as they want, the dancers usually choose to do only one during the entire dance.

The solo dance focuses on sexual “play” to an even greater extent than the other three. Although it does not employ the *blòtjé* figure per se, it is inspired by it. Couples dance one at a time. The steps of the dance are relatively free and only have to match the basic rhythmic patterns of the drum. The man rests his hands on his hips while the woman holds her dress a little above her knees or, like the man, puts her hands on her hips. Standing close together, they follow the rhythm of the drum with their feet and undulate their hips and sway their pelvises forward and backward. After dancing for a while, the first couple yields to the second, and so on.

Not all play-song-dances enjoy the same degree of popularity. People at certain villages, for example, enjoy the *débòt*, *yonbòt*, and *jwé pòté*, but find the solo dances too “hot,” too “sensual” for their taste and try to avoid them. The choice might simply be due to the particular taste of an influential person at a given time. But it means that, while the song leader and drummer are no doubt influenced in their playing by their own aesthetic preferences, they have also to respect the ethical values of the group.

Beach Party and Game Songs

1. **Débòt: “Isabel-o,”** sung by Germain Bebey, accompanied by Lawrence Flavis (*ka* drum) and Remy Joseph (*tibwa*), Bellevie, 3 December 1982 (2:35)

This song, based on a true story, tells of a man named Champagn who is stabbed by his woman during a quarrel. In typical fashion, the song begins without accompaniment. After a few phrases during which the call-and-response pattern becomes well established, the *ka* drum and the *tibwa* come in. As is often the case, the dancers here do not go around the circle before the dance begins. They immediately go into the *débòt* proper when the drummer, on the first beat of each phrase, plays a *vap* sound—that is, a damped sound, though it is not always accentuated clearly in this recording—which signals the dancers to perform the *blòtjé* figure. The final move around the circle was omitted on the occasion of this performance.

2. **Solo: “Byen, Byen Elford Mayé,”** sung by Elford John, accompanied by Leonard John (*ka* drum), Piaye, 1 November 1982 (2:26)

This song employs the technique of *lang déviwé*, saying the opposite of what one really means. The singer ironically tells of his good marriage, when everyone knows that he and his wife are now separated. At the beginning, in a spoken voice, he invites four couples (in creole, “*kat kavalyé, kat danm*”) to dance. Note how the

drummer signals the dancers when to yield their place to other couples. Two series of five well-marked strokes of identical pitch and duration stop the entire movement and allow the next pair to get into position. In this selection, three couples have already performed when, before the fadeout, the last series of strokes is heard.

3. **Jwé Pòté: “Ki Bèl Bato,”** sung by Zita Celise (song leader) and by Ives Simeon, Peterson Celise, and Christiana Jean-Paul (chorus), Morne Cayenne, 12 June 1983 (0:38)

A drummer is not always available when people decide to do a *jwé pòté* on a full-moon evening. The song is then simply accompanied by clapping hands. The lyrics here are based on only a few words: “Look at the boat/how beautiful it is/Bétilya is on board.” Every time the dancers hear the ostinato pattern based on the words “*adan’y*” (on board) sung by the chorus, they perform a *blòtjé*. This is thus a fast-paced dance.

4. **Jwé Pòté: “Mangotinn Lababad ka Bwilé,”** sung and accompanied by Leonard John (*ka* drum), Playe, 14 August 1981 (2:24)

This song is about two people who have been sexually teasing one another, while a *mangotin lababad* (a dessert made of *mangotin*) is being prepared and is now burning. This *jwé pòté* can be performed as described above or by partners in a circle, men and women facing each other

and swaying their bodies back and forth on each beat as they reproduce the actions referred to in the lyrics: “Hold me by the neck for us to see/hold me by the waist for us to see,” and so on to the leg, the thigh, and then the whole body. When the singer sings “*ay yay yay...*” the dancers change partners and the game starts over. Note how the distinctive, guttural vocal timbre of the singer (who is also the drummer) combined with his expressive inflections are used to enhance the liveliness of the performance.

Seasonal Music

The *chanté abwè* (drinking songs), rarely heard nowadays, were performed mainly during the Christmas season on evenings called *wibòt*. Friends formed a group and took turns receiving the others at their homes and paying for the food and drinks. The singing was organized as a game. Guests were seated at a long table in the middle of a room and each had to sing a new song as their turns came around. Those who could not remember or improvise any new songs were dismissed from the table. Singers who were able to last until the end of the evening won a bottle of rum or some small gift.

There was no musical accompaniment at a *wibòt*. The entire performance relied on complete participation, since every two lines of sung text were repeated by the group. The *chanté abwè* songs were also distinguished by their texts, which included a mixture of old

French and creole words and expressions. Many of the song texts also dealt with topics of French origin, which would indicate that the tradition might be one of the oldest legacies of the French who intermittently occupied the island.

The masquerade and *séwinal* (serenade) are both nearly extinct. The masquerade was a celebration organized around holidays such as Christmas, New Year’s Day, and Easter. The instrumental ensemble included the same instruments used in merry-go-rounds, cockfights, and the *séwinal*—a *tanbou tenbal* (a large, barrel-shaped drum covered at both ends by a skin stretched by cords and held on the side by a strap passed around the player’s neck and struck by a stick covered by a piece of cloth), a snare drum (in St. Lucia called a kettledrum), a *chakchak*, and a bamboo flute. The musicians would leave their homes early in the morning to play, sing, and dance. While they walked around playing their instruments, two costumed male dancers, one playing a woman’s role (female *mas*), the other a man’s (male *mas*), livened up the crowd by performing incredible contortions. Besides performing for entertainment, the group also aimed to earn some money through voluntary donations from the spectators. The *séwinal* was usually performed during the two weeks of Advent and, except for Lent, at any other time of the year—such as Sundays, full-moon evenings, or during the Christmas period. The *séwinal* ensemble could be composed of the instruments used in the *kwadril*, or the following:

a bamboo flute, and any variable number of *goun banbou* (a hollow bamboo tube stamped on the ground), *bônin* (a saucepan struck by two sticks), and *chakchak*. Unlike the masquerade, the *séwinal* was performed only during the night or at dawn; no one wore a mask or costume. It was organized solely for pleasure and consequently with no hope of earning any money. The musical genres played in both the masquerade and the *séwinal* were the same: *merengue*, march, and *maynan* (another name for *manpa*, a fast and lively dance).

5. **Chanté Abwè: “Marianne,”** sung by Steve “Foumi” Theodile, recorded by Manfred Kremser, Castries, 24 August 1985 (1:48)

This song is about Mr. and Mrs. Mèro who go to the seashore, and their daughter Marianne who, left with St. Rose, becomes pregnant. The question is, who is the culprit? The silliest possibilities are here proposed. St. Rose says that it is not she who caused Marianne’s belly to get “bloated.” Maybe, she says, it is because of the special dance that Marianne danced or the white peas that Marianne ate.

6. **Séwinal song: “Nou Ka Pasé,”** sung by James Arthur (song leader), and “Bèl” Arthur, Ives Simeon, and Bèl Arthur’s sister (chorus), Auger, 20 July 1983 (1:25)

Groups of singers, by custom, go from house to house on holidays in the hope of getting some

free drinks and food. In this song, the singer asks the owner of the house to open his door to let his group come in. It is the 25th of December and they are just passing, he says, and he asks the owner to give them all he owns, a piece of meat with a bottle of rum. He adds: "I came to see you, my good comrade/you know me well/open your door/we want to eat/we came to see you/we did not come to stay."

7. **Mascarade**, played by George Michael (kettledrum), Fred William (bamboo flute), Gustin Louis (bass drum), and Wilkinson Girard (*chakchak*), recorded by the Folk Research Centre of St. Lucia, Derniere Riviere, 2 January 1975 (1:44)

This is a typical *maynan*, a fast-tempo music in duple time played by the traditional masquerade instrumental ensemble. Note the nonstop, driving rhythm of the percussion section accompanying the flute.

Work Songs

8. **Siay song: "La Volé Mèlo,"** sung by Lawrence Clifton (song leader), and Michael Gaspard, Hebert Constantine, Semphar Lima, and Blaze Cadet (chorus), recorded by Manfred Kremser, Fond Assau, 13 August 1985 (1:02)

The *chanté siay* are work songs that accompany woodsawing, which can be clearly heard on this

recording. Performed by a song leader and usually no more than two responders, they are typically accompanied by the *ka* drum and a pair of *tibwa*. Instead of holding the barrel-shaped drum in the normal upright position, the player here lays the instrument on the ground and sits on the barrel while playing on the single skin with his bare hands. The pair of *tibwa* are not struck against the rim of the drum as is usual, but are instead played against a bamboo tube or wooden log resting on a stand. These two techniques, associated with the Martinican style of playing are, not surprisingly, encountered mostly in the northeastern region closest to Martinique.

Almost any lively musical genre that uses call-and-response can be used to accompany work activities. The song selected here is usually associated with the *bélé anlé* genre (see below under "Funeral Wakes"). It tells the story of a landowner who has planted his garden and wild black birds (in creole, *mèl*) keep coming to eat everything. He asks a man to watch over his garden, and when the man sees the black birds, he yells, "*Chou mèl*" to scare the birds away, "*mach mèl*" (go away). There is no drumming in this recording, but you will hear the *tibwa* join in to accompany the singing. This is a staged recording because, since the advent of the chainsaw, this tradition has died out.

9. **Work song: "Jan Pyè Woulo,"** sung by Elford John, accompanied by Leonard John (*ka* drum), Playe, 16 November 1982 (1:13)

Organizers of a working bee used to invite a drummer and a *chantwèl* to encourage workers to keep up a brisk pace at their task or to help them coordinate their movements in particular chores—such as hauling a canoe to the sea or moving a house by drawing on ropes. The song featured here was composed for house moving and was performed especially for this recording.

The song lyrics for such an occasion could be about anything, as long as they kept the people working. This text, based on a true story, is about a man named Jean-Pierre Rouleau who stole an ox, and about the reaction of people who no longer wanted to buy their meat from him. The chorus's part here is totally independent of the song leader's story, and is based on words solely connected with the task at hand: "*hennsé*," meaning "lift the house." Note how well the main singer reproduces the traditional role of a song leader in a bee, making lively interjections to summon, direct, and encourage the drummer and the imaginary workers in their respective tasks: "Tighten the rope, you there/don't let the rope get slack/nice drumming, nice drumming/let's go, the rum is just behind the market."

Kélé Music

The *kélé* religious tradition is particular to a small group of people from the Babonneau region, who call themselves *djiné*, descendants of Africans who arrived around the mid-nineteenth

century. Unique to St. Lucia, *kélé* is strongly connected to the Ogun festival in Nigeria, though it is concerned not with one deity but with three—Ogun, Shango, and Eshu (Anthony 1986:114). Repressed by the Roman Catholic Church until the early 1960s, it had been practiced underground. It was held "at the New Year or the anniversary of the death of a recent ancestor" (Crowley 1957:8), or to ask African ancestors for protection in all matters of importance, including "good crops, good health, and good fortune" (Simpson 1973:110). In the entire island, only one family from Resina, Babonneau, holds *kélé* and "claim[s] to have authority to perform the ritual and to pass on that authority to their kin" (Anthony 1986:106). The ritual includes the display of smooth stones (Shango's worship emblem) and of iron-and-steel tools (in honor of Ogun), the washing of the ram to be offered to Shango, the smashing of a calabash at the end of the ritual (to appease the Yoruba deity Eshu), prayers and incantations (mostly addressed to Ogun), eating, singing, dancing, and the playing of two drums called *tanbou manman* (mother drum—a large, double-headed drum played with one stick) and *tanbou ich* (child drum—a long, narrow, cylindrical wooden body, covered at one end by a skin and played with one stick). These two drums, used only during this ceremony, play four different song-dance rhythms—*kogou*, *èrè*, *kéré*, and *adan*—each of which is played at a specific moment during the ceremony.

10. **Kogou: “Fago Ribì,”** sung by Etienne Wells Joseph and Edna St. Mart, accompanied by Noah Delaireon (*ich* drum) and Etienne Wells Joseph (*manman* drum), recorded by Manfred Kremser, Chassin, 13 January 1985 (1:35)

This music is played at the beginning and throughout the *kélé* ceremony. According to Etienne Wells Joseph, who is the last remaining high priest authorized to conduct a *kélé*, this music produces drumming sounds that are meant to make everyone happy. “People here call what we do [during the ceremony] ‘sacrifice.’ We prefer to call it ‘thanksgiving.’ We are thankful for what we have received, and we say our grace. This is why the *kogou* drumming sound is *djéwilas* [a lively kind of music]....I do not know the meaning of most of the songs. Our fathers used to speak the *djiné* language as a secret language. So we were not really taught to learn it” (Etienne Wells Joseph, 3 June 1983). Most lyrics of *kélé* music are therefore not translatable, but listen for: (Leader:) “*Fago ribi!*”(Chorus:) “*ribi a yoyol....*”

11. **Èrè: “Olagogo Ogon,”** sung by Georges “Démou” Sitotte, accompanied by Noah Delaire (*ich* drum) and Etienne Wells Joseph (*manman* drum), Chassin, 10 April 1983 (1:35)

The *èrè* is performed when the head of the sacrificial sheep is cut off. “Note that it is always

the same songs we sing. Our grandfathers and fathers used to compose new ones because they knew more about these songs. We can only sing what we learned from them” (Etienne Wells Joseph, 3 June 1983). The text is untranslatable and is rendered as follows: (Chorus:) “*Olagogo ogon!*”(Leader:) “*wè cholo mibi o!*”(Chorus:) “*lagogo gon!*”(Leader:) “*wè cholo mibi ol....*”

12. **Kéré,** played by Noah Delaire (*ich* drum) and Etienne Wells Joseph (*manman* drum), Chassin, 10 April 1983 (1:34)

The instrumental *kéré* genre is played when the high priest steps over the blood where the ram was killed.

13. **Adan: “Chòbiyo Man Karaki,”** sung by Etienne Wells Joseph, accompanied by Noah Delaire (*ich* drum) and Etienne Wells Joseph (*manman* drum), recorded by Manfred Kremser, Chassin, 13 January 1985 (1:08)

This music is played when a designated person breaks the calabash at the end of the *kélé* ritual. This is an important moment, as it is by looking at the pieces of the broken calabash that the initiates determine whether it was a good or bad ceremony, one that fulfilled the requirements. If the ceremony is judged to be bad, it must be rescheduled and performed again. The only words used in this song, now untranslatable, serve here to identify the music.

Kwadril Dancing

The traditions associated with the St. Lucian *kwadril*, offshoot of the European quadrille, have changed over time. In the past, a *kwadril* heightened the prestige of every participant. Unlike most other performances based on only a few easy steps and allowing room for spontaneity and improvisation, the choreography had to be learned, memorized, and practiced before being performed. These three different stages of apprenticeship, which did not correspond to the usual norm of “learning-through-doing,” were highly valued. They symbolized a particular type of knowledge believed by many to be of higher quality and of a more complex nature than the other local traditions. The intricate choreography which, if performed correctly, was thought to demonstrate control over behavior, decency in manners, and skills, symbolized for the dancers a set of special values that had been traditionally linked with the higher social classes.

Until the mid-1980s, the *kwadril* tradition had been losing popularity; around the time of independence in 1979, it was simply seen as being out of fashion. The general belief, particularly among young people, was that all traces of colonialism and of colonial values needed to be relegated to the past. Several years after independence, however, some people began to realize that the St. Lucian *kwadril* had long ceased to be simply the reproduction of a European dance, and it has now been

transformed to the point of having acquired an identity of its own that is distinctively St. Lucian.

Although the St. Lucian *kwadril* still bears some resemblance to its European model, the “first set” quadrille, it also differs from it in many ways. Both are composed of five dances, and the five are played in the same key and employ the chord progressions I-(II)-V-I, or I-(IV)-V-I, or I-(V/V)-V-I. The dances also employ a similar driving rhythm composed almost exclusively of eighth and sixteenth notes. The tunes are very lively and are based on phrases of four measures. The first three dances are usually played in compound meter, whereas the last two employ duple meter. The two quadrilles keep the same overall choreography—that is, using four couples in a squared-off position. But the similarities between the two dances stop there.

The St. Lucian *kwadril* is distinguished from its European counterpart by the constant “*détaché*” style of violin playing, the great emphasis on syncopated rhythms, and the rapid alternation of meters from duple to triple in the course of one phrase or the repetition of the same melodic motifs. It does not have any “fixed” melody but rather emphasizes improvisation, especially evident in the unpredictable sequence of melodic patterns and the *chakchak*’s varied rhythms and percussive effects. Its orchestration is unique, and today includes a violin, banjo (the locally made *skroud* or *bwa pòyé* banjo), *cuatro*, guitar (which plays the bass line), mandolin (whenever possible), *chakchak* (rattle), and, occasionally, *zo* (bones).

The five compulsory dances are named *pwémýé fidji*, *dézyèm fidji*, *twazyèm fidji*, *katwiyèm fidji* (first, second, third, and fourth movements; the fourth movement is also called *avantwa* or *lanmen dwèt*), and, finally, *gwan won* (grand round). To these are added two or three ballroom dances of the musicians' choice: usually a polka, *schottische*, *lakonmèt*, *moulala twa fasad*, or *manpa*. Whereas the compulsory movements are performed in a square by four couples not joining hands, the other dances are performed freely around the room by the same dancers in a closed-couple position.

Most *kwadril* evenings are organized by one person and performed at a private house or rented hall. Invitation cards specifying the location, date, hour, and fees are sent to the invitees. The number of guests is limited to the number of dancers required for the event—that is, eight or twelve couples. The musicians are hired by the organizer and are paid. A *kwadril* evening can be organized at any time during the year, though never during Lent. The favorite times are during the dry season (January to June), because in the rainy season the entire evening might be cancelled because of bad weather.

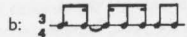
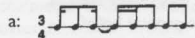
The selections heard here were all recorded in a staged setting, in the traditional wooden houses or rum shops where *kwadril* music used to be performed. The rented halls used today, with cement floors and aluminum-sheet walls

and rooves, produce too much reverberation for successful recordings.

All the pieces were played by Rameau Poleon's group from Morne Cayenne. One of the most renowned groups in the island, it has been repeatedly selected to represent St. Lucia at international festivals. Rameau's intonation, incisive rhythms, and improvisatory skills, in particular, are greatly admired by the local population.

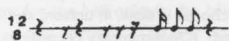
14. **Lakonmèt dance**, by Rameau Poleon (violin), Henry Sinais (guitar), Francis Ashdale (banjo), Francis Geffraid (*cuatro*), and Peterson Celise (*chakchak*), Bellevie, 9 August 1987 (2:33)

To warm up the dancers, a closed-couple dance is often played before the *kwadril* begins. The *lakonmèt* (also called *mazouk*) is the only closed-couple dance believed to be indigenous to St. Lucia. It is characterized by the rhythmic pattern, played here on the banjo, illustrated in the simplified transcription (a), and sometimes on other occasions by the rhythmic variant (b):



15. **Kwadril—pwémýé fidji**, by Rameau Poleon's group, Bellevie, 9 August 1987 (2:45)

Note the role of the various instruments. While the violin plays the main melody, the guitar is used in a picking style to play the bass line. The banjo and the *cuatro* both use a strumming style and provide the harmony. Listen for the rhythmic figure on the banjo that characterizes the end of each phrase. The same rhythmic figure occurs in the almost identical second dance, which is not included here. Both the first and second dances are in 12/8 time.



16. **Kwadril—twazyèm fidji**, by Rameau Poleon's group, Bellevie, 9 August 1987 (3:01)

Note the alternation between simple and compound meters characteristic of the third movement of a *kwadril*. The fiddler begins his tune in 3/4 time and then, after nine bars (1 + 4 + 4 or 1 measure + 2 complete harmonic cycles) with full accompaniment, switches to 6/8. Listen also for the typical riff used in *kwadril* improvisation, which consists of repeating a single pitch in syncopated rhythms during a whole passage.

17. **Kwadril—avantwa**, by Rameau Poleon's group, Bellevie, 9 August 1987 (3:12)

The *avantwa* is always played in duple (4/4) time. Rarely do St. Lucian musicians begin a fast dance in its actual tempo; rather, as is demonstrated here, they start in a slower tempo to establish the tune, then gradually move into full swing. Note how the fiddler continually transforms his tune with syncopated rhythms and how, as in the previous example, he uses the strategic repetition of a single pitch to improvise. It is also common to hear the soloist stop playing for a few measures (up to 16, in this case) to let his group take over.

18. **Kwadril—gwan won**, by Rameau Poleon's group, Bellevie, 9 August 1987 (4:00)

This last dance of the *kwadril* set is always in duple time. It is a fast dance, but, as in this recording, it reaches its normal tempo only about halfway through. The *gwan won* dance is characterized by a special kind of variation called *ba*. To do a *ba*, the fiddler makes a full stop at the end of a strain and repeats the melody a fifth higher (for example, a strain played in the key of C is then repeated after a full stop in the key of G) or repeats in the same key, as in this selection. Here, the fiddler plays two *ba* before concluding the piece.

19. **Moulala twa fasad**, by John Jacobs (mandolin), accompanied by Napoleon Henry (*cuatro*), recorded by the Folk Research Centre, 2 August 1986 (2:25)

This closed-couple dance in 4/4 time is based on melodic phrases of two measures each, the second phrase always ending on the third beat. The choreography matches the melodic phrasing: the partners sway their hips on the eighth notes of the first measure while marking the first and third beats with their feet. In the second measure, the dancers stop their body movements and mark the first three beats by touching the ground with the right foot three times, moving it out, in, and out again. On the fourth beat, the dancers remain still, before the pattern is resumed. On the rest beat, listen for the dry sound produced by a person in the audience knocking two pieces of wood together.

Music at Funeral Wakes and for Entertainment

Wake celebrations in St. Lucia are performed on the first and eighth nights after a person has died (why the eighth night rather than the ninth, as in most other Caribbean islands, remains a mystery). Depending on the deceased person's musical tastes and religious affiliation, the celebrations are accompanied by different kinds of music—drumming or hymn singing—or by no music at all. Most often, however, music is performed inside and outside the deceased

person's house. While the music performed inside is said to be for the dead, the music played outside (tracks 20-26) is intended to make the grieving family forget their sorrows and to keep the guests *djé* (merry) and awake.

In the house, a group of men and women sing hymns and *sankeys* (gospel songs, a legacy of American revivalist singer and hymn-writer Ira D. Sankey). Since these songs have been learned in church, all the texts are sung in English. One person, usually a male singer, "lines out" the words for the audience, saying or chanting the next line for those who do not know the words or who cannot read. The delivery of the improvised chorus is slow, in unison, and unsyncopated. (Documentary recordings of *sankeys* have yet to be made.)

The music performed outside can include drumming music, the unaccompanied vocal style *kont*, or both. The drumming can incorporate some *débôt* and some *bélé*. *Bélé* are creole song-dances, including *bélé atè*, *bélé anlawis* (also called *bélé tjèpi*), *bélé anlè*, and *bélé matjé*, performed by only one couple at a time. (The term *bélé*, according to many people I interviewed, comes from the French "bel air," or "nice songs," which are said to be the invention of the *ladjablès*. This is a mythical figure identified as a beautiful white woman with a human foot and a cow foot, who, in former times, used to come at night—trying to remain anonymous—to dance and sing with people who were celebrating.) The partners stand facing each other and perform similar

movements, several couples replacing one another in the performing space.

All four *bélé* are sung by a song leader and a chorus. Except for the *bélé anlawis*, which uses a verse-refrain form, all the others are responsory. The lyrics usually deal with the daily preoccupations and sorrows of life—such as unhappy relationships or unacceptable behavior. The four *bélé*, like the *débôt* song-dances, are characteristically accompanied by the *ka* drum and sometimes by the *zo* or *tibwa*. At a wake, the players are usually paid, in addition to receiving food and drinks, since the activities of the evening and night depend entirely on them.

Except for the *bélé anlawis*, the *bélé* dances consist of two sections. The first serves as a warm-up for the drummer and the dancers. While the drummer plays a smooth, repetitive rhythmic pattern, the dancers do an *alé mouté*—that is, a movement back and forth at the sound of the drum, without any set steps. The dancers do not try to match each other's movements but stay apart, not necessarily facing each other. The second section begins on a signal from the drum, which indicates that the dance proper begins. The couples stand close, facing one another and coordinating and matching their steps. The second section contrasts with the first by its very fast tempo.

The *bélé anlawis* dance, in contrast with the three other *bélé*, is performed in only one segment, with choreography based on undulating the hips in a relaxed tempo.

The unaccompanied vocal style *kont* (not to be confused with *listwa*, which in St. Lucia, refers to storytelling) is also often performed at funeral wakes. *Kont* songs deal mostly with death, reporting the deceased's last words or relating various events surrounding the death. Other *kont*, such as the one on this recording, are used to comment publicly on events that have affected or disturbed people's lives.

The *kont* formal structure normally consists of two sections. The first contains a number of four-line verses introduced by the song leader alone and sung back immediately afterward by the participants. The chorus in *kont*, unlike that in other St. Lucian music, often sings the ending notes of the first section in parallel thirds. In the second section, the same melody and text are repeated, but each phrase is divided into two parts. The first is sung by the song leader and the second by the chorus. In the last section, the alternation between soloist and chorus can become quite rapid.

The *kont* singers who demonstrate keenness and wit in their lyrics are particularly appreciated by the audience. Other *kont* singers are admired not so much for the quality of their lyrics but for their clear vocal tone and the involvement they show in their singing—demonstrated, as was explained to me, by the way they sustain high notes with great intensity and sing with maximum volume throughout the song.

In several villages of the southwest, including La Grace, Laborie, and Piaye, a particular funeral

song-dance called *koutoumba* was always performed at the death of a member of a particular group of people who, like some residents of the Babonneau region, call themselves *djiné*. (Note that *koutoumba* also refers to the wake at which this music is performed.) The tradition disappeared in 1986 with the death of the last drummer who could play this music. The *koutoumba* differed from all the traditional dances by being performed by only one dancer at a time and by its high degree of improvisation. It used always to be preceded by three or four performances of a song-dance called *alé liwon*. Performed in a circle with dancers moving clockwise in single file and moving their forearms up and down, the *alé liwon* was used as a warm-up to the *koutoumba* and also to end the *koutoumba* wake.

20. **Bélé Até: “Léo Malad an Lopital,”** sung and accompanied on the *ka* drum by Leonard John, Piaye, 18 June 1981 (2:06)

The lyrics are based on only a few words: “Leo is sick at the hospital, Leo will die/Leo suffers at the hospital, poor Leo.” Listen for the song leader imitating the moaning of the patient. The *kont* text is first presented by the song leader and then sung back by the chorus, after which it adopts the form of call-and-response. Because this introduction is based on the *kont*, the *bélé* is actually called *kont bélé até*.

Note that the first dance section ends with a series of strokes on the drum. Then the rhythm

accelerates and the dance proper begins. The drummer ends the second section by leading the dancers to perform three *blòtjé* at the sound of three *vap* (damped sounds) on the drum. After these movements are completed, the next partners take their places and the entire performance starts over. Two couples have completed their dance before the music fades out.

21. **Bélé Anlawis: “Pwémyé Ich Mwen,”** sung by Germain Bebey, accompanied by Jules Popo (*ka* drum), Germain Bebey (*tibwa*), and Joseph Walter (*chakchak*), Bellevie, 6 February 1983 (1:34)

This is a verse-refrain song about a woman who explains that, after having had her first child, she was still able to find enough food to eat, such as crayfish from the river. After her second child, she adds, she was reduced to eating only soup, implying that she did not have enough money to buy anything else. By the way things are going, she is predicting that soon she will have only water to fill her stomach. The tempo of the song accelerates gradually until the musicians find the appropriate one for this dance. In this staged recording, as the tempo became more stable, two observers, unable to resist the moment, started to dance with smooth, undulating hip movements.

22. **Bélé Anlé: “Bwa Yo Lésé,”** sung by Elford John, accompanied by Leonard John (*ka* drum), Piaye, 17 June 1983 (1:48)

This song evokes a particular scene with the help of only a few sentences: “These arms [his lover’s arms] I must leave/leave [because] the rooster is singing/leave [because] it is sunrise.” The two different tempi and drum rhythms correspond to the two different *bélé* sections described above. In the second section, the dance proper, the two dancers raise their arms in the air and skip to the sound of the drum on one foot, alternating left and right, while the free leg is lifted to the side as high as possible. Notice that there are no *vap* sounds and therefore no *blòtjé* at the end of the dance before the performers change turns. In this recording, two couples performed the entire dance and one other couple had started to dance the first section when the song leader decided to end the dance there, by shouting “*aboubou*,” to which the crowd answered “*bwa*”—a traditional way of ending a song.

23. **Bélé Matjé: “Laklé Cho,”** sung and accompanied on the *ka* drum by Leonard John, Piaye, 18 June 1981 (1:43)

The lyrics here refer to a woman who lost her mother’s house [because of disagreement?] in order to follow her lover, Laklé. She says that Laklé gave her everything she owns—a nice dress, a nice scarf. There are no *blòtjé*

movements in this dance. At each *vap* on the drum, the partners, matching their movements (the man with his hands on his hips and the woman holding her skirt slightly above normal length) alternately lift the right and left leg at knee level.

24. **Kont: “Dépi on Fanm Kamawad’w,”** sung by Jeanine Simonne (song leader), and by Zita Celise, Mary “Youbotte” Polemis, “Titinn,” Jones “Mòyò” Ferdinand, and Nelson Flod (chorus), Bellevie, 6 April 1983 (2:21)

Here is a good example of a singer who is esteemed for her clear and powerful voice. In the middle of the night during the wake, she began to sing this sad song about women’s fears of losing their husbands, even at the hands of their best friends. In this selection, the chorus, almost exclusively women, forms a particularly tight group with the female song leader by singing their parts with the same vigor and involvement as she does.

“Once [you have] a woman [as] a comrade/she comes at your house/she sees your room/she sees your kitchen/she goes back to her house/she asks herself questions/she goes back without your knowledge/she takes your husband/she goes back without your knowledge/she takes your husband.”

25. **Alé Liwon: "Yang Miki Yang,"** sung by Clifton Joseph, accompanied by Leonard John (*ka* drum), Piaye, 25 June 1981 (2:23)

The *alé liwon* are animated, dynamic song-dances. Most of the lyrics are generally based on African words passed on from generation to generation, though their meanings are no longer understood. Listen for the song leader giving the call to "*kinan, kinan*," asking the dancers to lower their bodies until he tells them to "*lévé*"—return to their initial position. This call is characteristic of this type of dance.

26. **Koutoumba: "Lésé Manman Mwen,"** sung and accompanied on the *ka* drum by Leonard John, Piaye, 14 August 1981 (2:41)

This song evokes the split-up of many families during the slavery period: "[They] left my mother/we do not have a mother/our mother is in Africa/our mother is not here/our mother will die [before we can see her again]." A few African words, such as "*katapolo*" or "*yangé yanga*," whose meanings are not known, are inserted in the song.

In the middle of a circle, the *koutoumba* dancer begins by performing a figure called *bwété*, taking a few steps forward before he suddenly steps back, as if he were stumbling. Some dancers like to embellish the figure with extra steps, and allow the drummer to become more expressive, as will be heard toward the end of the excerpt. Other dancers prefer to

perform this figure only once and then quickly go to someone else in the circle and, with a nod of the head or a single handclap, give that person the signal to take his or her place. The pace at which the dancers exchange roles then becomes very rapid and the dancers are said to "work fast." By special rhythmic strokes, the drummer follows the various movements of the dancer, and by producing the particular *vap* sound he accompanies the nod of the head or the handclap of the dancer.

Lamargrit and Lawòz Songs

The St. Lucian societies, *Lamargrit* (La Marguerite) and *Lawòz* (La Rose), which have existed at least since the early nineteenth century, are two rival organizations found in almost every village. Although they have always declared themselves to be rivals, the two organizations share a number of features. They both call their organizations "societies," and they share the characteristics of a society on a small scale. Following the English model, the members create specific roles by electing a king and a queen, a prince and a princess, and also by designating more common roles, such as nurses and soldiers. As members of an idealized society, the adherents share similar religious and economic status. Both societies celebrate their annual patron saints' days with one-day festivals—the *Lawòz* on August 30 and the *Lamargrit* on October 17. Except for Lent, both

groups meet weekly, the *Lawòz* on Saturdays and the *Lamargrit* on Sundays. On these occasions, the *Lamargrit* members sing together in a sitting position, except for the song leader who stands. The *Lawòz* members add dancing and instrumental music, including a *tambouwen* (tambourine), *chakchak*, *baha*, sometimes a *gwaj*, and a guitar. Members of both organizations enjoy themselves at these meetings and thereby multiply their social activities. Like most local organizations, the societies function as a social support system, and the members help each other in case of sickness or death.

Apart from the two characteristic *lakonmèt* and *kwadril* song-dances performed by the *Lawòz* members—both rhythmically similar to the dances found in *kwadril* music—the two societies share similar musical genres such as *omans* (a type of waltz), *manpa* (a lively dance in duple rhythm), and marches, all consisting of a verse-refrain sung by a leader and chorus. The lyrics deal with the same topics, namely, their origin and patron saint, their own society and adversaries (the other society), and their flower.

No historical document describes the origins of the two organizations or the circumstances that initiated the rivalry between them. Today one can only observe the profound differences between the two: whereas the *Lamargrit* members favor reserved behavior, controlled pace of events, discipline, and order in their performances, the *Lawòz* members encourage exuberance, movement, and innovation. This

can be observed particularly in the conduct of their respective performances.

The *Lamargrit* weekly meetings (called *séances*, meaning in St. Lucia to sit or meet together) are always conducted in the same way. The members gather at about eight o'clock in the evening and sit on benches placed in parallel rows in a corner of the hall. A *chantwèl* begins to sing. There is no dancing and no playing of instruments. The songs are sung one after the other by different *chantwèl* in turns. At the end of each *séance* a collection is taken up. As the annual celebration approaches, the members prolong the *séances* to discuss the arrangements for the *fête*. Toward 10:30 p.m., everybody goes home.

The *Lawòz* members, by contrast, focus on the innovation and liveliness of their performances. They eschew the complex melodies characteristic of *Lamargrit* singing and employ simple melodies readily accessible to the participants, concentrating their energy on syncopated phrases and rhythm. These performances, as noted above, include both percussive and strummed harmonic instruments. They also include entertaining nonmusical events as well, such as mock arrests and faked medical visits (for which the members have to pay a small fee), and even formal speeches. Although these activities may be devised to raise funds for the big *fête*, they are also used, I was told, as a means of controlling members' behavior. For the *Lawòz*, the more actions and the more sound, the better.

Occasionally, and only for a big *fête*, the *Lamargrit* members use musical instruments, and the social status of the instruments affects their selection. Whereas the violin, banjo, and guitar are judged adequate for accompaniment, they would never use the *baha*—a simple hollow tube from which only two or three buzzing sounds are produced—as most of them regard the instrument as primitive and unrefined. In contrast, although the *Lawòz* groups welcome such melodic and harmonic instruments as the violin, guitar, and banjo in their ensembles, they prefer percussion instruments (including the *baha*) because they consider rhythm of primary importance. The *Lamargrit* groups realize they are not as “hot” as the *Lawòz* groups, but they take pride in their display of restraint and decorum. By contrast, the *Lawòz* members pride themselves on demonstrating their prowess in whatever they do.

These rival organizations are said to crystallize major tendencies in St. Lucian society. After independence, the government recognized these two organizations as symbols of St. Lucian cultural identity. Since then, it has sponsored every *Lawòz* and *Lamargrit* group on the island and has allowed them to meet at central locations on the days of their annual celebrations.

Lamargrit Songs

27. **March: “The Flower, the Flower, The Rose Are in Dismay,”** sung by Julita Louis (song leader) and the members of the *Lamargrit* Society of Laborie, Laborie, 12 September 1982 (1:29)

The call “*Viv Lamargrit*” by the song leader, echoed by the chorus, precedes and ends the songs performed during a *séance* (the same holds for the *Lawòz séances*, except the words are “*Viv Lawòz*”). This not only alerts the chorus to listen for the next song, but also confirms members’ support for their society. Often, however, after the calls and responses are made, one or several minutes can elapse before the next song actually begins. The following selections, therefore, do not always begin with “*Viv Lamargrit*” or “*Viv Lawòz*.” The refrain of this song speaks about the superior beauty of the marguerite flower and the resulting supposed dismay of the *Lawòz* members. The verse reminds members why they are there: for unity, peace, justice, and right, and for the celebration of their *fête*. In this 1982 *séance*, a guitar player can be heard in the background—a rare occurrence—accompanying the song.

28. **Manpa: “Anmizá Nou Wadlo,”** sung by Lydia René Louise, Laborie, 13 October 1982 (2:06)

This old *Lamargrit* song, performed as a solo by a woman in her late sixties, is a beautiful example

of some of the intricate melodies heard in this society. The text recounts how the *Lawòz* members come to watch the *manmay wadlo* (the *Lamargrit* members) on the day of their annual feast-day and how the latter wish the *Lawòz* people would wear more decent clothing. It also, ironically, acknowledges the *Lamargrit* people’s desire to see their rivals at fault.

29. **Omans: “Byen l’Bonswè,”** sung by Fidèle Emmanuel, accompanied by Clide Clery (guitar), Laborie, 12 September 1982 (1:51)

This song, recorded at the same *séance* in which the faint sound of the guitar accompaniment could be heard (track 27), is performed in 3/4 time and waltz tempo. The text begins with a greeting to everyone present and tells how St. Marguerite descended from heaven to enlighten the *Lamargrit* people.

Lawòz Songs

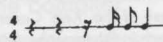
30. **Manpa: “Lè Mwen Té Ja Di,”** sung by Nora Son, accompanied by Ives Simeon (*tanbouwen*), Maké Joseph (*baha*), and François “Difé” Fanis (*chakchak*), Laborie, 29 January 1983 (3:30)

This song features one of the favorite song leaders of the southwest region of St. Lucia. Her strong voice and superb sense of rhythm, demonstrated by her recurring and insistent use of syncopation and her particular way of lagging slightly behind the beat, aroused the admiration

of all who heard her during her lifetime. Note that the instruments played at a *Lawòz séance* depend on the availability of musicians. The *baha*, for example, is not played in this recording. The song text states that even when people say they will not participate in the *séances* or the *fête*, when the celebrations begin, they can never resist.

31. **Kwadril Lawòz song: “Tann Wadlo Palé,”** sung by Eric Theodor, accompanied by Ives Simeon (*ka* drum) and François “Difé” Fanis (*chakchak*), Laborie, 12 July 1986 (3:19)

Here is an example of a *kwadril* song, a genre that is rarely heard nowadays. Note that the *ka* drum replaces the tambourine normally used in the *Lawòz* pieces. Listen for the characteristic rhythmic pattern of the *kwadril* dance on the drum, played here in 4/4 time:



32. **Lakonmèt: “Alé Di Wadlo, Mi Mwen Mwen Ja Wivé,”** sung by Nora Son, accompanied by Ives Simeon (*tanbouwen*), Maké Joseph (*baha*), and François “Difé” Fanis (*chakchak*), Laborie, 19 June 1981 (2:13)

This is a perfect example of the elliptical texts one can hear in the *Lawòz* songs. It refers to a fight, but we do not know why or how it started; it mentions people without giving any

information about them. The entire text is based on the next few lines: "I arrived, people, I arrived/I arrived with honor and rights [law]/go and tell the *Lamargrit*, look at me, I already arrived/give me blows, people, give me blows/and touch me, but don't touch my queen." This type of text, typical in oral tradition, relies on people's memories to reconstitute the event. In this instance, however, the song was passed from generation to generation, but the singers had forgotten the incident to which it refers. The *lakonnèt* rhythm used here is based on the closed-couple dance of the same name.

[Portions of this text also appear in Guilbault, "St. Lucia," in press. See References.]

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The recordings by Jocelyne Guilbault were made with a Sony TC-D5M cassette recorder and two hand-held microphones TEAC ME-120. The recordings by Manfred Kremser and the Folk Research Centre of St. Lucia were made with, respectively, a UHER and an AKAI 4000 DB open reel recorders. The transfer of all the selections on digital equipment was made at CANARTISTE Studio, supervised by sound engineer Marc Parizeau with his production assistant, Marc Lafortune.

This project would not have been possible without the close collaboration of several people and institutions. Selections 5, 8, 10, and 13 were recorded by Manfred Kremser; 7 and 19 by the Folk Research Centre of St. Lucia; all the others by Jocelyne Guilbault. The album was edited and annotated by the principal investigator, Jocelyne Guilbault.

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About the compiler

Jocelyne Guilbault is an ethnomusicologist who has been studying St. Lucian traditional music since 1980. She is currently associate professor in the Music Department of the University of Ottawa, Canada.

Credits

Mastered by Airshow

David Glasser, engineer
Editorial assistance by Ed O'Reilly
Designed by Carol Hardy



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Kwadril Musicians, Rameau
Poleon's group (from left to right):
chakchak, *skroud* banjo, violin,
cuatro, and guitar.

