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Michael Doucet – vocals, fiddle, or accordion (*)
David Doucet – guitar on fiddle selections

Recorded in 1989 by Michael Doucet and Chris Strachwitz

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Produced by Michael Doucet & Chris Strachwitz

Notes about the songs by Michael Doucet.

Transcriptions and translations by Sharon Arms Doucet.

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The Songs

1. GRAND TASSO (Dennis McGee): “Allons à Tasso” was the fifth song recorded by Dennis McGee and Sady Courville during their first session in New Orleans in 1929.

GRAND TASSO
On va aller dans le Grand Tasso,  
C'est pour voir des bons musiciens,  
On va aller dans la Grand Tasso,  
C'est pour voir des belles boucléées,  
On va aller dans le Grand Tasso,  
C'est pour voir des belles danseuses.  
On va aller dans le Grand Tasso  
C'est pour voir des musiciens,  
On va aller dans le Grand Tasso  
C'est pour voir des belles boucléées,  
On va aller dans le Grand Tasso,  
C'est pour voir des jolies filles.

BIG TASSO
We’re going to go to Big Tasso  
Just to see some good musicians,  
We’re going to go to Big Tasso,  
Just to see some pretty curls,  
We’re going to go to Big Tasso,  
Just to see some good dancers.  
We’re going to go to Big Tasso,  
Just to see some good musicians,  
We’re going to go to Big Tasso,  
Just to see some pretty curls.  
We’re going to go to Big Tasso,  
Just to see some pretty girls.

2. VALSE ACADIEENNE (arr. by Michael Doucet): is a medley of three beautiful waltzes by Wayne Perry, Dennis McGee and Hector Duhon.

3. ONE-STEP D'AMÉDÉE (Michael Doucet): is a tune that popped out after naming our new-born son for the primo accordion player.

4. LA VALSE D'AMÉDÉE (Michael Doucet): is sort of rambling account of an orphan's life. Anyone who has ventured into the world of creativity and gone contrary to the grain of social acceptability may well relate. There's a certain universal peace of mind somewhere in the song.
AMÉDÉE’S WALTZ
Oh, oh, say goodnight, dear.
Oh, oh, I’m going away,
I am an orphan, babe,
When I was young,
My parents abandoned me.
Oh, oh, dear babe,
I’m curious, yeah, to be there,
When misery comes, babe,
Oh, yaie, it hurts me so.
But I don’t know, my dear girl,
How you’ve caused so much misery.
Oh, I’ve cried
Yeah, when I was all alone,
When I’m sick,
I have to go there,
The three young ones are the only ones
who take care of me.
Oh, babe, I’ve cried for you.
Oh, you, Caroline.
My dear babe,
What am I going to do.
What am I going to do alone?

CONTREDANSE DE FREEMAN
( Freemán Fontenot): Freemán Fontenot was first a gentleman, then an extraordinary accordion player. It was always an extreme honor to be in his presence, to perform with him at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and to listen to his always encouraging words of wisdom. His house was first a home, then the first public school for young French-speaking blacks in the Basile area, then a zydeco club that brought forth two great duos on consecutive nights: Clifton and Cleveland Chenier, and Canray Fontenot and Alphonse “Bois-Sec” Ardoin. Freemán was born in 1900, and he remembered each of his special tunes by the years he learned them in. This particular piece is also known as “1916”.

6. BEE’S BLUES (B. Fontenot & M. Doucet): The entire theme, images and melody of this song come from the late “Bee” Fontenot, Freemán’s brother. Bee savored the styles of Amédée Ardin and Adam Fontenot. Canray’s father. He was the bluest accordion player under the sun and his booming baritone voice was rivaled only by Paul Robeson.

BEE’S BLUES
Ma vieille maman, elle était là,
On était pauvre, on était pauvre.
On a besoin de l’argent,
Mais elle n’en a pas trouvé.
“J’ai besoin de la farine, oué, de la farine,
Pour faire du pain mais dans la maison,”
Mais elle n’avait, n’a plus.
Elle a été là-bas dans le voisinage,
Mais le voisinage, elle était pauvre.
Mais elle n’a pas donné du tout.
Elle n’a pas donné du tout.
Quand ma vieille maman, elle est retournée,
Elle m’a dit, “Non, non, non, non, non,
Elle a pas donné, elle a pas donné,
Elle a pas donné, pas rien du tout.
Comment je vas faire, comment manger?”
Mais moi, j’ai dit, “Qu’est-ce que je vas faire?
Je vas prendre le vieux fusil,
On va aller dans le clos, chercher un lapin.”
7. VALSE A POP McGEE (Dennis McGee): Another original Dennis McGee tune learned by listening, closely listening, and watching the master for many years in his home on St. Joseph Street, Eunice.

8. BLUES ACADIENS (W. Perry - B. Carriere - M. Doucet): is a combination of two old-time Acadian and Creole blues by Wayne Perry and Bébé Carriere.

9. ISABEAU SE PROMÈNE (PD) is an ancient French ballad overheard by a young Lula Landry at a country wedding celebration. As she tells the story, a group of elderly men, after several bottles of wine, began singing this crying melody and somber lyrics. After that one encounter, Lula retained verbatim every word from a song that originated in France, was brought to the New World and revived 200 years later by such a wonderful woman.

ISABEAU SE PROMÈNE
Isabaeu se promène le long de son jardin.
Le long de son jardin sur le bord de l’île.
Le long de son jardin sur le bord de l’eau.
Sur le bord du vaisseau.
Elle fit la rencontre de trente matelots.
La plus jeune des trente, il s’est mis à chanter.
"La chanson que tu chantes, je voudrais la savoir."
"Embarque dans ma barque, je te la chanterai."
Quand elle fut dans la barque, elle s’est mis à pleurer.
"Qu’avez-vous donc, la belle? Qu’avez-vous pleurer?"
"Je pleure mon anneau d’or, dans l’eau il est tombé."

ISABEAU WENT WALKING
Isabaeu went walking in her garden.
In her garden on the edge of the island.
In her garden on the edge of the water.
On the edge of the ship.
She met thirty sailors.
The youngest of the thirty began to sing.
"The song that you’re singing, I’d like to learn it."
"Come aboard my boat, and I will sing it for you."
When she was in the boat, she began to cry.
"What’s the matter, beauty? Why are you crying?"
"I’m crying for my gold ring, it fell into the water."

10. GRAND MAMOU (PD): is the staple of Cajun waltzes. Whether played by Clifton Chenier, Mayeuse LaFleur, or the extremely fluid Varise Connor, this tune always makes me stop, slow down, and remember the good times (les bons temps).

11. PERRODIN TWO-STEP (PD): was originally recorded by Angelas LeJeune on the accordion with twin fiddlers Dennis McGee and Ernest Frugé in New Orleans in 1929.

12. CHEZ VARISE CONNOR (V. Connor): One of the most remarkable individuals I’ve ever encountered is Varise Connor, a truly Cajun Renaissance man. His unique approach to life and music permeates the profound wisdom this man conveys. A song is not merely a fiddle tune in the hands of such a master, but a response to time and space, then and now, precisely dissected into equal moments of truth, dedication and perseverance. I’ve also had a great time while visiting Varise at his house, usually making it home just as the dawn was breaking.

13. LA BÊTAILLE (Isom Fontenot): is from the Cajun harmonica (musique bouche) player from Mamou, Isom Fontenot, the predecessor of Cajun blues.

LA BÊTAILLE
O, la bêtaille.
Elle a montré dans le 'tit arbre,
Elle a tombé sur la hache.
Elle a fait du mal,

WILD THING
Oh, the wild thing.
She climbed up in the little tree.
She fell on the axe.
She hurt herself.
Du mal à 'tité bétaille,  
'Tite bétaille à cheveux rouges,  
'Tite bétaille à yeux bleus,  
Dis "bye-bye." chère bébé.

Hurt the little wild thing,  
Little wild thing with red hair,  
Little wild thing with blue eyes.  
Say "bye-bye," dear baby.

14. GIGUE D’ACADIE (E. Alleman): is perhaps the purest form of Acadian fiddle music to have survived the journey to Louisiana, thanks to the tenacity of Edouard Alleman of Bayou Lafourche. The fiddle is still the voice of choice over the accordion in that isolated, watery mainstay of Acadianism. Edouard raises turtles there and is not interested in winning any races. In his spare time he is a champion at pulling ancient sounds out of a fiddle.

15. WADE’S WALTZ (Caillette East Crève) (Wade Frugé): comes from the original stylist himself, Wade Frugé of Eunice. Although I’ve loved this tune for some time now, I promised Wade that I would not record it before he did. You can find this master musician’s version on Arhoolie (LP/Cassette 5044).

16. SEPT ANS SUR MER (PD): is practically the only Acadian ballad that deals with the turmoils of life at sea, and loosely of the Acadian deportation from Nova Scotia.

SEPT ANS SUR MER
On a resté six ans sur mer.  
Sans pouvoir border la terre.  
Au bout de la septième année.  
On a manqué de provisions.  
On a mangé souris et rats,  
Jusqu’à la tourbe du navire.  
On a tiré la courte paille,  
Pour voir lequel qui serait mangé.

On a mange  
On a res t c  
Au  
Pour voir lequel qui serait mangé.

SEVEN YEARS AT SEA
They had been at sea for six years,  
Without coming near land.  
At the end of the seventh year,  
They ran out of provisions.  
They ate everything, mice and rats,  
Down to the hold of the ship.  
They drew for the shortest straw,  
To see who would be eaten.

O. voilà à 'tit Jean qu’il tombe le sort.  
a serait ’tit Jean qui serait mangé.  
O. ’tit Jean, ça lui fait du mal,  
Il crie. ’ ’Courage, mes camarades!  
’Je vois la terre sur toutes cotés.  
Trois pigeons blancs qui sont à voltiger.  
’Je vois aussi trois filles du roi  
Qui se promenaient le long du rivage.  
’O. si jamais je mets les pieds sur terre,  
La plus jolie, je l’épouserai.”

17. CREOLE FRENCH BLUES (Michael Doucet): A tribute to two greats of the diatonic blues, Amédée Ardoin and Nathan Abshire.

CREOLE FRENCH BLUES
O. chère bébé, gardez donc les paroles,  
Les paroles que tu m’as dit il y a pas longtemps.  
Oué bébé, depuis l’âge de quatorze ans,  
Tu m’as dit tu veux me marier souvent.  
Oué, astre, moi je t’ai guettée avec un autre,  
O, bébé, quoi tu fais avec ton homme?  
Oué, chère catin, dans le fond de mon coeur,  
Tu connais t’était la seule, malheureuse.  
Oué, chère catin, gardez donc les conseils.  
Les conseils que moi je vas dire, c’est la vérité.  
Si tu continues comme ça, chère bébé malheureuse,  
Malheureuse, t’es jolie mais t’es pas bonne.

CREOLE FRENCH BLUES
Oh, dear baby, keep your word.  
Your word that you gave me so long ago.  
Yeah, baby, since the age of fourteen  
You’ve often told me you wanted to marry me.  
Yeah, just now, I saw you with another.  
Oh baby, what are you doing to your man?  
Yeah, dear darling, at the bottom of my heart,  
You know that you’re the only one.  
Wretched woman.

Yeah, dear darling, keep your word.  
The word that I’m going to say, it’s the truth.  
If you keep on like that, wretched dear baby,  
Wretched woman, you’re pretty but you’re no good.
You went through the back door,
Dear darling, in misery. I'm always there.
Your parents aren't happy, your parents are angry.
Oh baby, what are you doing to me?
I'm going to say bye-bye, it's bye-bye for always,
Dear baby, it's my last goodnight.
But my love for you, my love for you.
Dear baby, I never think of another.

TWO-STEP D’AMBROSE (Ambrose Thibodeaux): Ambrose Thibodeaux is the master at creating new segments to older songs by taking chances with different ideas. This music always has his timeless edge stamped on it.

21. LA VALSE D’AUGUSTE BREAUX (Auguste Breaux): One of the earliest and most demanding examples of the Acadian accordion style.

22. TWO-STEP DE MAMAN (Amédée Ardoin & Michael Doucet): A predecessor in style to the great Iry Lejeune’s “Lacassine Special.”
Michael Doucet
BEAU SOLO

Over 60 Minutes of Classic CAJUN MUSIC

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