


# Panorama of Popular Haitian Music and Folklore

2017

Jean Wilner S. St Jean  
*University of Central Florida*

Find similar works at: <http://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorsthesis>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

 Part of the [Ethnomusicology Commons](#), [Folklore Commons](#), [History of Religion Commons](#), [Other History Commons](#), [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#), [Other Languages, Societies, and Cultures Commons](#), [Other Religion Commons](#), and the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

St Jean, Jean Wilner S., "Panorama of Popular Haitian Music and Folklore" (2017). *Honors in the Major Theses*. 275.  
<http://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorsthesis/275>

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the UCF Theses and Dissertations at STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors in the Major Theses by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact [lee.dotson@ucf.edu](mailto:lee.dotson@ucf.edu).

PANORAMA OF POPULAR HAITIAN MUSIC AND FOLKLORE

by

JEAN WILNER ST JEAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in French  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term  
2017

Thesis Chair : Dr. Marie Léticée

© 2017 Jean Wilner St Jean

## **ABSTRACT**

Haitian music has been influenced by the people who lived on the island from the native before the Columbus discovered Haiti to the United States occupation. This country is rich in culture which has impacted by the Creole identity. The overview of the different kind of Haitian music by categories and subcategories from the beginning to now. The government, the religion, the social class, and population play an important role in the popularity and acceptance of certain music.

## **DEDICATION**

For my family, my companion, my children (ZaDaAnDoJoJeDa), my sister, Marie-Danielle, and my brothers, Jacques-Robert and Louis-Josue, thank you for your encouragement and love.

In memory of my mother Bertha Jean Louis St Jean one of the strongest women that I have known and greatly missed, and my father Joram St Jean, the man I loved.

My late sister, Marie-Ange Guertha, a woman of faith, my friend.

For my professors, especially Dr. Marie Léticée, for pushing me to achieve my highest goals,

For my friend, Dr. Claudy Delné, thank you for the resources.

And especially, for Marjorie St Jean, my best friend and cheerleader.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the people who help me with my thesis. Thank you to my professor Dr. Marie Léticée, for pushing and encouraging to give my very best and agreeing to be my thesis chair. I appreciate all the help and resources that Dr. Claudy Delné gave me to achieve this paper. Thank you, Dr. Patrick Sacleux, Dr. Patrice Mothion, and professor Jeffrey Rupert for serving on my committee. Thank you to Marjorie St Jean for the books and typing my paper.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Folk music.....	5
Affranchi .....	5
Konradance .....	5
Meringue .....	6
Rara .....	6
Twoubadou.....	7
Popular music.....	9
Compas.....	9
Haitian Rock.....	12
Mini Jazz .....	13
Music Rasin,.....	14
Zouk .....	15
Hip Hop.....	16
Spiritual music .....	18
Haitian Gospel.....	18
Voodoo Drum.....	19
Conclusion .....	23
References.....	25

## **Introduction**

The creole is a person of mixed European and African descent, especially in the Caribbean. It is also a language that is based on French and a combination with words from the African languages. Another definition for Creole is a type of cooking with spices. There are also more originated mostly from Africa and other part of the former colonies than thirteen places where people speak Creole as a language (Merriam Webster Online). When Columbus discovered the continent of America, every little island represented a new form of resources for Spain. The colonizers were eager to exploit the land at any price. As a consequence of their European insensitivity toward the natives, many of them were dying. Also, after they overworked the Indians, they brought people from Africa as slaves to do their hard labor such as working in the sugar canes and cotton fields, searching for gold, and so on. The African slaves were from several regions of Africa; therefore, it was hard for them to communicate with each other. The birth of a new language allowed them to communicate with each other. To create that new language and culture they had to borrow words from the European colonizers and use words from their own tribes to bring Creole into existence.

The Caribbean islands are separated into two main groups which are Greater and Lesser Antilles, and Haiti belongs to the Greater Antilles. Haiti shares the island with the Dominican Republic and occupies 27,750 square kilometers of the land. Before the discovery of Haiti by Christopher Columbus, the island was called “Quisqueya or Bohio” (Dorsainvil 19). Two tribes were living there at that time: the Arawak and the Carib. After the discovery of Haiti by Columbus on December 5, 1492, Christopher Columbus and the Spanish changed the name to



“Hispaniola”, which means “little Spain” (Dorsainvil 20). Spain occupied Haiti for about 53 years, from 1492 to 1545, and forced the Indians to work in the gold mines, sugar canes fields, and cotton fields (Dorsainvil 23). The Indians could not handle the abuse and harsh labor imposed upon them, and many of them ended up dying.

According to Haitian history book by Dorsainvil, in 1620, the English and the French landed in Haiti. The French changed the name from “Hispaniola” to “Saint-Domingue,” and they started to bring African slaves to the island. In 1681, the population of slaves was about two thousand and increased to nearly half a million by the year 1789 (Dorsainvil 42). In 1785, the Affranchis, (light-skinned individuals who were the offspring of French men and African women) (Manuel and Largey 145), who were free blacks, began defending their right to keep their freedom and with the intention to become the new masters. The slaves revolted against their owners as well. On January 1, 1804, the slaves gained their independence. Later, the United States of America occupied Haiti for nearly nineteen years, from 1915 to 1934 (Dorsainvil 216). History shows that many countries occupied Haiti, and each of these countries and their different groups left their culture and heritage there. As a result of these cultural encounters, the music of Haiti is enriched by the combination of all the cultures who have settled in the country.

Currently, the new generation has a limited knowledge of Haitian music. It is very alarming to find out that the newest generation of Haitians, who live in Haiti and other countries, known as diaspora, do not experience the diversity of Haitian music. The lack of education about the history of Haitian music and the different types of music and folklore of the island may lead people to be very judgmental about Haitian music. Many people know Haiti has voodoo and

compas lover. Even educated Haitians cannot differentiate between the source of certain rhythms and trends and believe that any drum harmony is associated with voodoo.

Culture is the entire way of life of a group people (including both material and symbolic elements) that acts as a lens through which one views the world and is passed from one generation to the next (Merriam-Webster Online). The Haitian culture is unique because it is a mix of the cultures of different countries, which occupied and brought their culture to Haiti. Music plays a valuable role in Haitian culture. Merriam-Webster defines music as “vocal, instrumental, or mechanical sounds having rhythm, melody, or harmony” (Merriam-Webster Online). Haitian music has been influenced by the Indians, the settlers, and the slaves as well. Music plays a major part in the Haitian culture and folklore. On August 14, 1791, Boukman Dutty, a houngan (voodoo priest) led the voodoo ritual where the slaves played drums, and danced, which was known as the “Bois Caiman Ceremony,” and which resulted in the overthrowing of the French in Haiti (Dorsainvil, 65). The stigma of the voodoo ritual associated with drums caused many Haitians to avoid learning about the different types of music in Haiti.

The purpose of this study is to familiarize the reader with the different types of Haitian music, folklore, and with the various factors that influenced Haitian music. The study has also reviewed the research and numerous studies by many experts who have devoted their time to learning about the Haitian rhythms and culture. Daphné Lamothe is a professor and researcher who wrote about Carnival. During Carnival, Haitians play a mixture of all types of Haitian music. Haitian music is the soul of the culture; therefore, the young Haitians and anyone interested in it will benefit from this rich cultural background. To complete the study, one must rigorously research the diverse categories of Haitian music and folklore, including their origin,

and style. Then comparisons must be made regarding the different occupations. The three main categories of music to be discussed are folk music, popular music, and spiritual or sacred music. Each of these categories has several styles of music. Folk music includes the Affranchi, the Kontradance, the Meringue, the Rara, and the Twoubadou. Traditional music includes the Compas, Haitian Rock, the Mini Jazz, the Music Rasin, the Zouk, and Haitian Hip Hop (Haitian Music). The final classification of music is spiritual music. Spiritual music includes the Haitian gospel music and is where the voodoo drum originated (Haitian Music).

## **Folk music**

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, folk music is “the traditional music of the people in a country or region” (Merriam-Webster Online). Within Haitian’s folk music, there are “Affranchi, Kontradans (contra-dance), Meringue, Rara, and Twoubadou.” Influenced by several heritages, these categories of music overlap with each other. In a book titled “La Meringue Entre l’Oralité et l’Ecriture: Histoire d’un Genre Musical Haitien,” Mr. Claude Dauphin talked about the history of the different kinds of Haitian music.

### Affranchi

The Affranchi dance was popular among the Mulattoes (light-skinned individuals who were the offspring of French men and African women) or the Affranchis (free men). It combines European court patterns and European fashion with African influence (Daniel 107); it is an upright, moderate minuet, and a poised dance. The Affranchis’ dance is not as popular as it was previously (before the independence and little bit after the independence). Currently, this type of dance is performed during Mardi Gras, voodoo services, and touristic events.

### Kontradance

Kontradance, a creole word that originated from the French word contre-danse (contra-dance), came from the English word country dance. It is a French style of dance that came into existence in the 18th century. The instruments used for this music are drums and flute. This music is very popular in carnivals, folklore dances, and voodoo dance or rituals. Mr. Largey is an ethnomusicologist and folklorist who also wrote about the music and the culture of Haiti. One of his books, which he titled "*Tracing the Steps of the Meringue Contradance In Creolizing*

*Contradance in the Caribbean*" discussed some of the folkloric music of Haiti, especially contra dance. This music plays a significant role in the carnival parade. (Regnier)

### Meringue

The next type of folk music is the meringue. Meringue a combination of African-influenced movement and rhythms merged into traditionally French and English styles of dance (Haitian Music). "The mereng is based on a five-note rhythm, or quintuplet, known in French as a quintolet" (Manuel and Largey, 123). Meringue is as prevalent in Haiti as it is in the Dominican Republic. Two well-known artists who encouraged the incorporation of Haitian folk in meringue were singer Lolita Cuevas and guitarist Frantz Casseus (Cuevas and Casseus). Lolita was born in Porto Rico, but she was raised in Haiti. She published the album *Haitian Folk Songs* in 1953, it is still very famous in Haiti. It incorporated flute and drums.

In 1973, one of the works of Mr. Jean Fouchar, "*La Méringue: Danse Nationale d'Haiti*" (Meringue: National Dance of Haiti), was published by Lemeac publishing house. This book established meringue as the national dance of Haiti. This music is still popular in many communities, especially among the elite and the upper classes in Haiti. The majority of the population enjoys it at small parties and during voodoo rituals or dances. Meringue also plays a significant role in the carnival. One of Mr. Maurice Jackson's writings covered the Haitian revolution in terms of the music history and culture of the African American people. His study showed how Haitians' history has influenced their current music.

### Rara

Rara is a category of music that slaves used to fight the culture of their colonizers. During Easter, instead of celebrating the imposed culture, the Haitians mock it by putting together colorful music festivals with dancing and singing according to the traditional voodoo religion

(Largey, 15). The people walk through the streets, accompanied by Creole songs, drums, horns, vaksens (cylindrical bamboos or metal pipes), and different handmade instruments. Professor Elizabeth McAlister is an expert in Afro-Caribbean religions, including Haitian voodoo, Pentecostalism, race theory, transnational migration, and evangelical spiritual warfare. She wrote about Rara, the folk music of Haitian culture. Historically, rara has been used to celebrate Easter in the Haitian way. It is like mardi gras or carnival, but the elites discriminate against it since it rises from the general population. During Carnival, Haitians play a mixture of all types of Haitian music.

#### Twoubadou

The final kind of folk music is Twoubadou, which is a Creole word originating from the French word “troubadour.” “Troubadour,” according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is “one of a class of lyric poets and poet-musicians.” Twoubadou came into existence in “the late eighteenth century when Haitian workers routinely traveled to Cuba to participate in the sugarcane harvest” (Manuel and Largey). The Twoubadou music expresses emotion, and the artist is usually accompanied by an acoustic guitar (Haitian Music). Usually, they have two guitars, maracas, tanbous (Haitian drums) and a pair of vocalists to serenade dancers (Manuel and Largey). This kind of music is played in bars, nightclubs, hotels, and tourist areas. Some of the most famous artists are Jean-Gesner Henry, known as Coupé Cloué from 1925-1998; Emmanuel Charlemagne, who identified as Manno, from 1948 to now; and Beethova Obas from 1964 to now.

Coupé Cloué’s first album came out in 1973 and his songs are about sexuality, infidelity, and love. Beethova Obas is well-known among Haitians and the Caribbean. He has also won several festival awards. He published his first album in 1990 titled “*Le Chant de la Liberté*” (*the*

*song of liberty*). In this album, he sang a few songs in honor of the many people who got killed by the Duvalier. Duvalier were dictators father and son, who ruled Haiti for 29 years. The father known as François Duvalier “papa doc” got elected in October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1957. Before died he passed the leadership to his son Jean Claude Duvalier “baby doc” to be the president for life.

Mr. Ralph Boncy is a composer, songwriter-producer, writer, commentator, and columnist who created new trends in Haitian music. He wrote about Haitian music especially in these articles: “*Nouvelle Musique Haïtienne: De Nemours à Beethova*” (*New Haitian Music: From Nemours to Beethova*) and “*La Chanson d’Haïti*” (*The song of Haiti*). He referred to new Haitian music that was created with mixtures of rhythms that the artist adds to music that is known, such as rhythms. For example, One of Beethova’s songs “*Kèm Poze*,” which means “*I am serene*” showed a mixture of Cuban flavors and Haitian rhythms, Emmanuel Charlemagne a political activist singer who got involved in politic who sing his songs without any reserve while using many Haitian proverbs. He went into exile twice because of his lyrics, but he came back and was eventually elected mayor of the capital of Haiti, Port-Au-Prince.

## **Popular music**

There is some music which has become part of Haitian life regardless of an individual's social class. Everyone dances to this music; Christians, non-Christians, Haitians living in Haiti, Haitian living abroad, those participating in voodoo, as well as those who do not. "Music is the Haitian soul," says Canadian journalist and DJ, Étienne Côté-Paluck. These traditional melodies have a historical story. In 1987, Celhomme Bienvenu voiced his concerns regarding the population's lack of knowledge about the history of Haitian music (Bienvenu, 14). It is a challenge to bring about a new style of music without the imprint of culture. This traditional music encountered several obstacles before becoming prevalent in the Haitian community. This category, which is known as popular music, includes Compas, Haitian Rock, the Mini Jazz, the music Rasin, the Zouk, and Haitian Hip Hop.

### Compas

One of the most popular types of music in Haiti is Compas or, as it is called in Creole, "Kompa". It is a genre of music "with African and European roots popularized in Haiti during July of 1955 by Nemours Jean-Baptiste" (Hall 14). Every new movement faces challenges, therefore, Compas was not spared its own challenges, just like hip hop in the United States of America. It seemed when the movement of compas came into existence that people were complaining about it because of the lack of theory (Bienvenu 12). Compas has several types of compas within the movement: For instead compas machiavel, compas roussi, compa mamba, compas direct, cadence compas, and later, in 1980 compas love (Bienvenu 13). Many did not accept compas at first because it was considered to be an insult to the previous music played in Haiti. As Celhomme Bienvenu stated in his book, " Je ne dis pas que le compas n'a pas une



valeur en lui-même, mais j'estime que ce ne soit pas une valeur proportionnelle aux autres rythmes de musiques.” (I do not say that the compas does not have a value itself, but I think its value is not as equal as the others musical rhythms.) (Bienvenu 13). Currently, every Haitian living in and outside of Haiti knows about compas. The author, Michael Hall, did a great job explaining “what compas is and its origin”. Nemours Jean-Baptiste, the father of compas, would have been proud to find out that compas has become appreciated, and it is represented all over Haiti and everywhere there are Haitians. The instruments utilized in the compas are bass, drums, tanbou (Haitian drum), conga, guitar, and keyboard.

There have been numerous compas artists since the time this music came into existence. The groups like Tabou Combo, Magnum Band, Les Frères Déjean, Volvo, Top Vice, and Missile 727 are the oldest, and they stole the hearts of the Haitian public. The youngest groups such as Zin, Zekle, Zenglen, T-vice, Harmonik, Disip, Alan Cave Carimi, Klass, Mass Kompa, Nu Look, Kreyol La, and Djakout have made themselves known to the new and old generation. One of the most successful Compas festivals is the one in Miami, Florida. Last year was the 18th Annual Haitian Compas Festival, which hosted several compas groups who came together to promote Haitian culture in the community. The Haitian compas festivals bring Haitians from different states and countries together to celebrate their heritage.

Tabou Combo de Pétion-Ville is one of the oldest and is still a very popular compas group for old and young Haitians living in Haiti and the Haitians in the diaspora (Haitians who live outside Haiti). Apparently, this group was created in Pétion-Ville, one of the elite towns of Haiti. The band published many compas albums and is known as the ambassador of compas since they push compas to the world and traveled many countries to perform. This group has

been around since 1968. Another band which still exists is the Magnum Band. This group started about eight years after the Tabou Combo. They originated in little Haiti, Miami, Florida. They published over twelve albums, traveled the Caribbean, and performed at the Summer Olympics opening ceremony in Atlanta in 1996.

The band T-Vice began in Port-Au-Prince Haiti. The name originated from the television show *Miami Vice* created by Anthony Yerkovich and executive produced. Initially, the name of the group was Miami Top Vice, which then changed to Top Vice, and finally the group settled on the name T-Vice. “Their hit song from the 2002 carnival “‘Elikopte’ (Helicopter)” (Manuel and Largey 168). The band Carimi was created in New York City in 2002 by three friends. The name came from the first two letters of each of the creator’s names “Ca from Carlos, Ri from Richard, and Mi from Mikael.” They wrote about sex, love, passion, and relationships. They were the first Haitian group to come out with a compas mobile app. The 41<sup>st</sup> president of Haiti Michel Martelly is one of the promoter of the Haitian compas. He has been playing compas under the name of “Sweet Micky”.

Some bands like 4x4, 5Clan, Classik, 100degree, Ozo, and Jam did not make it past their first album. The industry of compas music has not encouraged women artists. Since 1950, only two Haitian female only groups existed: 4x4 and Riské. The group Riské was very popular at the start but did not last long. They only released one album, and one of their songs “ALFABE” (The Alphabet), is still popular in Haiti. A lot of work still needs to be done to promote female groups. The diaspora needs to teach the newest generation about Haitian heritage, with the hope that, one day, they adopt the legacy of Haitian compas and take it to the next level.

### Haitian Rock

The Haitian rock movement began in the early 1960s with ye-ye bands. Upper-class Haitians adopted Haitian rock, but it was not as popular as other music styles since the majority of the population did not have access to radio. Ye-Ye, created by the children of aristocratic families, was also known by the Haitian term “moun anwo yo” (those on top) or la bourgeoisie (the bourgeoisie); the band members named their group in imitation of lyrics of English group The Beatles’ hit song “*She Loves You*.” The group Ye-Ye adopted the “yeah yeah” from the song titled: “*She Loves You*”. Haitian rock band Ye-Ye did not make it since their music was not too popular. The Boukman Experyans, a band with many fans in Haiti and abroad, brought rock into existence by mixing it with voodoo drums. As the author described: “This band’s blend of rock music with Haitian folk rhythms and Vodou lyrics.” (Filan) One of their albums titled *Boukman Eksperyans- Live At Red Rocks* published in 1998. In this album, they have about twelve songs, and one of the hit songs is titled “Sa m' Pedi Pou Sa” (What I have lost for that). Authentic rock ‘n roll does not exist in Haiti because Haitians do not readily embrace a culture which does not contain at least a little mixture of their heritage.

Rock Kreyòl (Rock Creole) is a substitute movement of rock ‘n roll in Haiti, and it is a combination of the Caribbean flavor and rock. The artist, Yohann Doré, introduced this new style of rock, and published two albums. In 2009, his first album was titled “*By My Side*” and in 2011, he released “*Ayiti Men Rock*” (Haiti here is the Rock). In an interview by “*Le Matin*” (The Morning), a Haitian newspaper, he was asked “ Est-ce que c’est difficile de vous imposer dans ce genre de musique en Haïti? ” (Is it difficult for you to impose this kind of music in Haiti?) His answer was that when we bring a new style to the industry, it sometimes takes time to

adapt (Le Matin). To end the interview, Yohann Doré said, “Anmwey! Kite Rock La Mache!” (Help! Let the Rock Move on!) (Le Matin). The singer was crying loudly and publicly for help.

Six years after the singer Yohann Doré published his last album, no other bands tried to play the Rock Kreyòl (Rock Creole), and he has not released any new albums since that time. On the other hand, groups like Boukman Eksperyans, Boukan Ginen, and RAM, which have incorporated rock into songs are very successful. One can easily deduct that rock itself is not popular in Haiti, but when it is added to the Haitian rhythms or the voodoo drum, the population will show some interest.

#### Mini Jazz

One of the Haitian president, “Nord Alexis, was so fond of the new ‘American style’ that he hired Ford Dabney, the popular American Jazz band leader, in 1904 for a three-year stint as an official music adviser to the Haitian presidential band” (Manuel and Largey). The occupation of Haiti by the United States of America somehow brought jazz to Haiti, but the Haitians considered jazz an invasion of Haitian music. The jazz bands created in 1920 were Jazz de Louis Scott, Jazz Duvergé, Jazz Dugué, Jazz Hubert, Surprise-Jazz, Jazz Annulise Cadet, and Dynamique Jazz, and these bands played for the elite, the middle class, and the United States of America soldiers (Averill, A Day for the Hunter, a Day for the Prey: Popular Music and).

Jean Price-Mars, physician, ethnographer, and politician, wrote: “ainsi parla l’oncle (so Spoke the Uncle)” in 1928. (Manuel and Largey) Dr. Jean Price-Mars wanted Haitians to discover the folktales, music, and religion of the masses. He desired to inspire a national artistic movement with the goal to contest the Europeans. It is not a surprise for Haitians to integrate voodoo into jazz. One of the Voodoo Jazz groups was Jazz des Jeunes (Youth Jazz), which was

one of the most famous brands. Voodoo Jazz is associated with the voodoo rhythms like Ibo, Kongo, And Yanvalou (Manuel and Largey).

The band, Jazz Guignard band led by Francois Guignard, was popular in the 1930s. His band was known as the first to record Haitian music. The American occupation ended in 1934, but the heritage of jazz lived on. “Jazz Chancy opened the new dance hall in Pétion-ville the Miraflores, in February 1942.” (Averill, A Day for the Hunter, a Day for the Prey: Popular Music and Power in Haiti) In 1941, the Haitian government sent a troupe of folkloric performers led by Lina Fussman-Mathon to the National Folk Festival in Washington, D.C. (Manuel and Largey 160) This type of music is very popular and is played in nightclubs and hotels. (Holder) The Port-Au-Prince International Jazz Festival has been celebrating jazz since 2007. Emeline Michel, known as “the Queen of Haitian Song” (Keyes), takes jazz to the next level. She studied her craft at the Detroit Jazz Center. Emeline Michel returned to her native country as an experienced singer, and has currently released sixteen albums. She has traveled to many countries to play her music and introduced others to Haitian culture.

#### Music Rasin.

In the 1980’s, the music, type Rasin, was introduced in Haiti. Rasin Mizik, which means musical roots, originated from a mix of Rara, voodoo, and popular music, such as zouk and rock. The groups, such as Kanpech, Boukman Ekspeyrans, RAM, and Boukan Ginen, are very popular. Rasin musicians often sing political lyrics which speak of the struggle of Haitians, the leaders, and spiritual redemption. They are considered engage artists, meaning that they use their songs to express critiques of the government regardless of consequences. Most of these musicians end up in jail or exiled. Many of the leaders of Rasin music are involved in the voodoo

religion. Currently, Rasin music is very popular in Haiti and among the diaspora. This kind of music is played at carnivals, concerts, cultural expositions, and parties.

Boukan Ginen started in 1990 while singing against the Duvalier (father and son), and the first female president in Haiti, “Ertha Pascal-Trouillot.” She was accused of bringing the Duvalier's corrupted people into the White House. The song "Manman Poule La" (The Chicken Mother) was a big hit for them and popular all over Haiti and the diaspora. "Manman poul la gade pintad ou kite rante nan kaloj mwen" (the chicken mother let Guinea fowl get inside the cage). Boukman Ekspeyrans is a popular Haitian group who sings "Rasin," folkloric music, and the voodoo drums. Their first album is titled “*Vodou Adjae*”. Robert Grenier, a music professor at South Carolina State University, wrote an article that he published in the *Black Research Journal* in which he went over the melody of voodoo. He described the composer Werner Jaeberhuber's work and contribution to Haiti's musical culture. His article "*La Mélodie vaudoo—Voodoo Art Songs: The Genesis of a Nationalist*" is an excellent piece that analyzes and reviews four contemporary composers: Ludovic Lamothe, Justin Elie, Alain Cléirié, and Nicolas Geffrard, the composer of the Haitian national anthem.

### Zouk

Zouk originated from the French Caribbean, “Guadeloupe and Martinique” from the group, Kassav, which is a band from Guadeloupe. The Haitian population was attracted to zouk music because it sounded better than Compas (Allan, Balascheff, and Cattau). There was competition between Compas, which is from Haiti, and Zouk, which was introduced to the Haitians. Many believe that it is a mix of Haitian Compas direct and Cadence-lypso from Dominica and St Lucia. “the Queen of Haitian Song” Ms. Emeline Michel is also known to be an excellent zouk singer. Most Haitian artists sing zouk and have at least one song in their albums.

### Hip Hop

The final popular Haitian music to be discussed is hip hop. This was started in the late 1970's by African-American and Latino teenagers (English Club). Hip hop came to Haiti in the early 1980's and was embraced by young Haitians. On April 21st, 2011, journalist Erin Wildermuth published an article in the Washington Times and stated: "Far less certain is whether Haitian music can survive the invasion of American hip-hop" (Wildermuth). Hip hop was accepted by the younger generation, but the older generation did want anything to do with this movement. Haitian hip hop or rap kreyol started with the groups like Orginal Rap Staff, King Posee, Rap Kreyol S A, Fighters, Fam Squad, Sup Adeno, and Masters of Haiti to list name just a few (Manuel and Largey, 171).

The one who earns the title of Father of Haitian rap and hip hop is George Lys Herard, also known as Master Dji. He was the DJ of the group, "Haiti Rap' N Ragga", and the founder of Creole hip hop. His first album, released in 1980, was entitled "*Master Dji*". He was trying to make a name for himself. He published several albums such as "*Politik Pam*", "*Haiti Rap' N Ragga*", "*Match La Red*", and "*Maximum Respect*". His second album was published about ten years after the first. He pushed hip hop and rap to the next level for those who came after him. Since he worked at "Radio Métropole and Tropic FM", he was able to introduce his generation to different types of music, such as his hit album, "*Politik Pam*" (*This is My Politic*). His song "Tann Pou Tann" (You Have to Wait), received first prize from the annual African Haitian video awards in 1995.

Wyclef Jean is a gifted singer who is well known in the United States of America and all over the world. He incorporated some Haitian rhythms in the music of his group, the Fugees. He also released the album, "*Carnival Volume II*" in 2007 and then "*Memoirs of an Immigrant*".

Jean Wyclef's family has the typical Haitian story. His grandfather was a voodoo priest, his father was a pastor, and he is a singer (Jean, Purpose An Immigrant's Story). He exposes the Haitian cultures and rhythms all over the world. In April 1997, Wyclef Jean brought the group “Fugees” and several artists to Haiti. He is the founder of the charitable organization Yéle Haiti. In 2010, he was a candidate for president under his political party by the name of “ Viv Ansanm” ( Live Together).



## Spiritual music

The final category of Haitian music, which is spiritual music, includes Christian and non-Christian or voodoo types of music (Haitian Music). Gospel music came to Haiti when Columbus discovered Haiti, later when the French occupied Haiti, and lastly when the Americans invaded Haiti. Currently, Haiti has Catholic, Protestant, and Voodoo as their religions of practice. “The Catholic religion was recognized as the official religion of Haiti until Jean-Claude Duvalier recognized Protestantism” (Delné). The president, Francois Duvalier, was not much of a fan of the Catholics at that time since the priests had large groups of people following them, and they were preaching what he called “revolution” against him. As result of this, Duvalier's father welcomed the Protestant missionaries to Haiti (Averill, 11-14). Jean-Bertrand Aristide, one of Haiti's past presidents, legalized voodoo as a religion in Haiti. (BBC NEWS)

### Haitian Gospel

Haitian gospel style as other types of gospel music except for the inclusion of voodoo rhythms (M. Butler 50). In the Catholic church, the population incorporated certain voodoo rhythms, including the voodoo drum, which Haitians had inherited from their African ancestors. Haitians did not want to accept the spiritual music offered by the colonizers; therefore, they used what they remembered from their ancestors to create their own. Dr. Melvin Butler's articles, “*Nou Kwe Nan Sentespri (We Believe in the Holy Spirit): Music, Ecstasy, and Identity in Haitian Pentecostal Worship*” and “*The Weapons of our Warfare: Music, Positionality, and Transcendence Among Haitian Pentecostals*” were published regarding the study of music and identity of the Haitian Pentecostal churches.

The Protestant practice is mostly in the middle class. People converted to Christians as the last resort to fight sickness when the voodoo spirits did not do anything for them or reverse their misfortune. Unfortunately, some of those who converted are still practicing voodoo. As far as the Haitian gospel music goes, all of the different types and styles of music previously discussed are included especially the *compas*.

#### Voodoo Drum

Like many students who studied ethnology, she was fascinated by Haitian voodoo and wanted to know more about it. Dr. Kate Ramsey is an associate professor at the University of Miami who has done a lot of research on Caribbean history and culture. Her first book is about the Spirits and the Law. In her article, “Without One Ritual Note: Folklore Performance and the Haitian State,” she focused on the early history of Haitian folklore performance and the persecution of voodoo by the church and the government. There was an interdiction of performing any forms of popular ritual or dances during the presidency of Elie Lescot from 1941 to 1942. In the article, she also talked about the impact of the United States forces on Haiti's folklore after the departure of the American military. Apparently, “during the occupation, an intense nationalist concern for the ethnological study and literary representation of the folk developed in Haiti among young urban intellectuals and writers.” (Ramsey 8). Haitians sought to gain their Creole identity back.

Voodoo drum belongs to the category of spiritual music. The drum (*tanbou*) is the main instrument in rituals, ceremonies, and celebration. The slaves were forced to accept Catholicism, so they had to camouflage the voodoo spirits with the saints; for example, *Loa Legba* is associated with Saint Anthony. President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a former priest, legalized voodoo as a religion. Voodoo as a religion has two types: domestic from family heritage and

ancestral family land (lakou). The place for worship named “Péristyle” requires to have an "oungan" (voodoo priest), “mambo” (the female version of priest), and “Hounci Canzo” the person who follows the priest. The oungan and mambo are the ones who lead the rituals. Loas refer to the spirits. Chwal is the person processes by the loa.

Each loa has their own style of drum rhythms. For example, the Rada Dahomey is a spirit that originated from the Dahomey, the previous name for the country of Benin, in West Africa. The loa has its own responsibility. For instance, "Marassa" (twins) represents childhood; "Dambala" is energy and life and associates with the serpent; "Lasiren" (mermaids) is in charge of the sea; "Papa" represents the guard of the crossroads; "Elzili Freda" represents love and feminism. The loa Dambala's specific rhythm associates with Yanvalou (dance like a snake), Parigol, Zepol (shoulder dance) Mahi Fla Voudou, and Daome (leg up) (Averill, *A Day for the Hunter, a Day for the Prey: Popular Music*). Other loas are Nago, Djouba, Petwo/Petro, Kongo, Ibo, and Gede. After researching several sites, reading numerous books, and interviewing many people on the matter of voodoo drums, it seems that the voodoo drum is incorporated in every music in Haiti. Also the voodoo drum itself has many categories. Rada contains three pitches: maman (mother) is the largest low pitch; there is a medium-sized middle pitch; and bula is the high pitch. There is also the loa Petro, which requires two drums (G. Fleurant).

Dr. Nicole Beaudry of Montreal, Canada, published an article “*Le Langage des Tambours Dans La Cérémonie Vaudou Haitienne*” (On the language of the drums in the Haitian Voodoo ceremony) (Beaudry 125-140). She explained the parts of various rhythms in the Voodoo rituals, including the musical aspects and the ritualistic terms. Ms. Yvonne Daniel's book, “*Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou*”, is concentrated on the dance

behavior of Haitian Voodoo. She studied several performance terms in the dance. Ms. Maya Deren was an ethnologist and an ethnomusicologist; she wrote the *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, in which she talked about dance and possession in Haitian Voodoo. Mr. Claude Dauphin is an expert musicologist who wrote several articles and books about Haitian music. In *“Musique du Vaudou: Fonctions, Structures et Styles”*, he discussed Voodoo music, functions, structures, and styles.

Dr. Lois Wilcken is an ethnomusicologist who did a great deal of research on Haitian folklore. In the book *“The Drums of Vodou Performance in World Music Series”*, the author studied a master drummer and discovered the primary rhythms Haitians used in their Voodoo ceremonies. Dr. Rebecca Sager, a faculty member at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, researched Haitian Voodoo singing in the northern part of Haiti. She compared the rhythms in Haiti with those in the Dominican Republic and Martinique. Dr. Fleurant is a Haitian professor and founder of the organization the Gawou Ginou Foundation, Inc and the Léocardie and Alexandre Kenscoff Cultural Center. He wrote several books that were about ethnomusicology. In his books and articles, he talked about the rhythms, the rituals, and voodoo as the voice and vision of Haiti.

Dr. Donald Cosentino's book, *“Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou”* talks about the different voodoo divinities and their roots. *“Histoire d'Haiti”* (History of Haiti) is a book that every Haitian must study at a very young age in Haiti. This book talks about the rise and fall of Haiti, and describes the dance performed by the first inhabitants of Haiti, which were the Indians. Mr. Harold Courlander, an American novelist, folklorist, and anthropologist, is an expert in Haitian life. Some of his works, *“Haiti Singing”* and *“The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the*

*Haitian People*” discuss the life, the lore, the songs, and the origins of Haitian instruments. He differentiated the instruments used by the peasants and the bourgeoisie. The Haitian drum itself is vast and reveals much about the cultures and origins. There are many ethnologists, ethnomusicologist, sociologists, anthropologists have been attracted the voodoo aspect of Haiti .

## Conclusion

Haiti has been exposed to many cultures from the time Christopher Columbus discovered the island until now. Once upon a time, the island was known as "La Perle des Antilles" (the Pearl of the Antilles). Haiti was occupied by several countries from the continents of Europe and America because of the numerous resources it had. Despite the country being known as one of the poorest financially, it is rich in cultures and rhythms. There are many rhythms even though compas is known to be Haiti's main genre of music.

Many books and articles discussed folk, popular, and spiritual music, which are the three categories of Haitian music. It talks about the subcategories of the three main categories while discussing their origins and what influenced them. To better understand Haitian music, it is imperative to listen to several compact discs by various artists and various Haitian songs in Creole, French, and English from the past to now. Many studies explain the path of Haitian music and folklore and its importance in the formation of a Haitian Creole identity.

Haitian music has been influenced by the people who lived on the island, particularly by the Spanish, the French, Africans, and a few native people. Haitian music can be categorized into three different genres: folk music, such as affranchi, kontradans, rara, twoubadou, and meringue; popular music, such as compas, rock, mini jazz, rasin, zouk, and hip hop; and spiritual music, which is composed of Haitian gospel and the voodoo drum (Haitian Music).

This study helps to examine the different cultures which have influenced Haitian music, learn the diverse types of Haitian music, the path of each category, and how they overlap. The creole identity is showed in every style of Haitian music and rhythms. The voodoo drum is included in every Haitian rhythm and piece of music, and carnival is a festival of every kind of

Haitian style of music that exists from the natives until now. To understand the rhythms, one has to be open-minded or nonjudgmental.

## References

*Folk Music of Haiti*. 1951. 2016.

Allan, Olivier, et al. *Encyclopédie Des Musiques Sacrées, Volume III*. 1970.

Artists, Various. *Creole Songs of Haiti*. By Creole Songs of Haiti. 2012. Folkways Records. 2016.

Averill, Gage. *A Day for the Hunter, a Day for the Prey: Popular Music and*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

—. "Anraje to Angaje: Carnival Politics and Music in Haiti." *Ethnomusicology: Journal of the Society for Ethnomusicology* (1994): 217-247.

—. "Mezanmi, Kouman Nou Ye? My Friends, How Are You?" *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* (1994): pp. 253-271.

Beaudry, Nicole. "Le Langage Des Tambours Dans La Cérémonie Vaudou Haitienne." *Canadian University Music Review / Revue de musique des universités canadiennes, n° 4*, (1983): 125-140.

Biennvenu, Celhomme. *Chronologie Musicale Haitienne*. 1988.

Boncy, Ralph. *La Chanson d'Haïti. I (1965-1985)*. Montréal: Centre International de Documentation et d'Information Haïti, Montréal, QC, , 1992.

Boncy, Ralph. "Nouvelle Musique Haïtienne: De Nemours a Beethova." *Conjonction* (1987): 160-176.

Boukman Ekspeyrans. "Vodou Adjae." 1991.

Butler, Melvin L. "Nou Kwe Nan Sentespri (We Believe in the Holy Spirit ) : Music, Ecstasy, and Identity in Haitian Pentecostal Worship." *Black Music Research* (2002): : 85-125.

Butler, Melvin. "The Weapons of Our Warfare: Music, Positionality, and Transcendence among Haitian Pentecostals." (2008): 23-64.

Cosentino, Donald J. *Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou*. Los Angeles: UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1195.

Courlander, Harold. *Folk Music of Haiti*. 1951. Folkways Records. 2016.

Courlander, Harold. "Haiti Singing." New York: Cooper Square, 1973.

—. *The Drum and the Hoe: Life and Lore of the Haitian People*. University of California Press, 1973.

Cuevas, Lolita and Frantz Casseus. *Haitian Folk Songs*. n.d.

Daniel, Yvonne. "An Ethnographic Comparison of Caribbean Quadrilles." *Black Music Research Journal* 30 (2010): 215-239.



- . *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou*. Champaign: University of Illinois, 2005.
- Dauphin, Claude and Devieux, Liliane. "Conte Et Musique En Haiti: Le Cas De 'l'Os Qui." *Études Créoles: Bulletin International Des Études Créoles* 8, no. 1-2 (1985): 23-39.
- Dauphin, Claude. "La Meringue Entre l'Oralité et l'Écriture: Histoire d'un Genre Musical Haitien." *Association Canadienne Des Ecoles Universitaire de Musique* (1980).
- . *Musique du Vaudou: Fonctions, Structures et Styles*. Sherbrooke: Collection Civilisations, 1986.
- Dean, Kris. "Caribbean Music." *Crisis* (1991): 21-24, 47.
- Deren, Maya & Campbell, Joseph. *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*. New Paltz: McPherson, 1984.
- Dorsainvil, Dr. J. C. "Histoire D'Haiti." Port au Prince: Joseph, Archeveque, 1942.
- Dumervé, Constantin. *Histoire De La Musique En Haïti*. Port-au-Prince: Imprimerie des Antilles, 1968.
- English Club*. n.d. <https://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/music-hip-hop.htm>. 15 November 2016.
- Filan, Kenaz. *The Haitian Vodou Handbook: Protocols for Riding with the Lwa*. Rochester: Destiny Books, 2007.
- Fleurant, Gerdès. *Dancing Spirits: Rhythms and Rituals of Haitian Vodun, the*. Westport: Greenwood press, 1996.
- Fleurant, Gerdes. *The Ethnomusicology of Yanvalou: A Study of the Rada Rite of*. Lebanon: University Press of New England, 1987.
- Fleurant, Phyllis Galembo & Gerdes. *Vodou: Visions and Voices of Haiti*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press , 2005.
- Fouchard, Jean. *La Méringue: Danse Nationale d'Haiti*. Ottawa: Lemeac, 1973.
- Gray, John & Julian Gerstin. *From Vodou to Zouk: A Bibliographic Guide to*. n.d.
- Gray, John. *From vodou to zouk : a bibliographic guide to music of the French-speaking Caribbean and its diaspora*. 1962.
- Grenier, Robert & Dauphin, Claude. "Werner Jaegerhuber's Messe Sur Les Airs Vodouesques: The Inculturation of Vodou in a Catholic Mass." *Black Music Research Journal* 29, no. 1 (2009): 51-82.
- Grenier, Robert. "La Mélodie voodoo—Voodoo Art Songs: The Genesis of a Nationalist." *Black Music Research Journal* 21, no. 1 (2001): 29-74.
- Haitian Music*. 2014. 15 11 2016.
- Hall, Michael. *Historical Dictionary of Haiti*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2012.

- Hebblethwaite, Benjamin. *Vodou Songs in Haitian Creole and English*. Ed. Joanne Bartley , et al. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011.
- Holder, Jean. *The Cultural Patrimony of Haiti and Its Role in the Tourism Product*. 1983.
- Jackson, Maurice. "Friends of the Negro! Fly with Me, the Path is Open to the Sea: Remembering the Haitian Revolution in the History, Music, and Culture of the African American People." *Early American Studies* 6, no. 1 (2008): 59-103.
- Jean, Wyclef. *Carnival Vol. II: Memoirs of an Immigrant*. 2007.
- . *Purpose An Immigrant's Story*. New York: HarpersCollins, 2012. book.
- Juste-Constant, Voegeli. *La musique dans le carnaval haïtien : aspects urbains et ruraux* . 1994.
- Keyes, Allison. *NPR music*. 16 November 2004. Article.
- Laguerre, Michel. *Voodoo Heritage*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980.
- Lamothe, Daphne. "Carnival in the Creole City: Place, Race, and Identity in the Age of Globalization." *Biography* 35.2 (2012): 360-374.
- Largey, Michael. "Composing a Haitian Cultural Identity: Haitian Elites, African Ancestry, and Musical Discourse." *Black Music Research Journal* 14.2 (1994): 99-117.
- . "Ethnographic Transcription and Music Ideology in Haiti: The Music of Werner A. Jaegerhuber." *Latin American Music review/ Revista de Musica Latinoamericana* 25.1 (2004): 1-31.
- . *Haiti, Tracing the Steps of the Meringue Contradance In Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean*. Ed. Peter Manuel. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011.
- . "Politics on the Pavement: Haitian Rara as a Traditionalizing Process." *Journal of American Folklore* 113 (2000): 239-254.
- . "Rhythms of Rapture: Sacred Musics of Haitian Vodou; Angels in the Mirror: Vodou Music of Haiti." *Ethnomusicology* 46.1 (2002): 184-186.
- . *Vodou Nation: Haitian Art Music and Cultural Nationalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Le Matin*. 29 06 2012. newspaper.
- Manuel, Peter and Michael Largey. *Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae*. 3rd. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2016. book.
- McAlister, Elizabeth. *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and its Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California, 2002.
- Merriam Webster Online*. n.d. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/>. 19 November 2016.

- Préval, Guerdy Jacques. *La Musique Populaire Haitienne De l'Ere Coloniale à Nos Jours*. Montréal : Editions Histoires Nouvelles, 2003.
- Ramsey, Kate. "Without One Ritual Note: Folklore Performance and the Haitian State, 1935-1946." *Radical History Review* 32.1 (2002): 7-42.
- Sage, Rebecca. "My Song is My Bond: Haitian Vodou Singing and the Transformation of Being." *The World of Music: Journal of the Ethnomusicology Programme- The University of sheffield* 51.2 (2009): 91-118.
- "Tabou Combo De Petion-Ville." *8th Sacrement*. 1974. Mini Records B0003BMSWW.
- Torres, George, ed. *Encyclopedia of Latin American Popular Music*. Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2013.
- Wilcken, Lois and Frisner & Augustin. *The Drums of Vodou Performance in World Music Series 164*. Crown Point: White Cliffs Media, 1992.
- Wildermuth, Erin. *The Washington Times*. 21 April 2011.  
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/apr/21/us-hip-hop-haiti-musical-fusion-cultural-conquest/>. 20 November 2016.
- youtube.com*. 28 July 2011. <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJLjXGze\\_IE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJLjXGze_IE)>.