

Forgotten Voices: An Examination of Black Louisiana Creole Folk Song Through the

Works of Maud Cuney-Hare and Camille Nickerson

Jessica Foy Long, D.M.A.

1. What is Creole?
 - Term has evolved
 - French- Born in the Americas
 - Louisiana- of French or Spanish, and African Descent
2. Creole Origins
 - Slaves were said to have arrived in Louisiana around 1722 and continued through the middle of the 18th century
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ of slaves were imported from Senegambia region
 - Senegambia region's land was similar to Louisiana
 - Slaves were very intelligent and considered "easy going" and "not prone to revolts"
3. Key Contributors
 - a. Maude Cuney Hare (1847-1936)
 - Born to a wealthy Creole Family in Galveston, TX
 - Studied at the New England Conservatory of Music and English Literature at Harvard's Lowell Institute
 - Pianist ,teacher, writer, and activist
 - Married in 1898 to Dr Mckinley; he convinced her to move to Chicago and "pass" for Spanish
 - Had daughter Vera in 1900(died 1908)
 - 1904 Moved to Boston and Married William parker Hare; remained there until her death
 - Known chiefly for contribution to Black scholarship through her book Negro Musicians and Their Music
 - Created her own arrangements out of her desire to spread the music of African-Americans
 - b. Camille Lucie Nickerson (1888-1982)
 - Born March 30, 1888 (New Orleans, LA) - Died April 27,1982 (Washington D.C.)
 - Never Married; no children
 - Studied at Oberlin Conservatory
 - Pianist and teacher
 - Taught at her father's school in new Orleans
 - Principal pianist for the all-female symphony formed by her father
 - Later she accepted a position at Howard university in which she stayed until retirement
 - Known as the "Louisiana Lady"
 - Was not satisfied with the progress of creole music, so she began to tour in tradition creole attire and perform the repertoire
 - Leading Contributor to Creole Scholarship
 - 1927 Thesis-Oberlin

Text and Translations

Six Creole Folk Songs

For Medium voice and piano

By Maude Cuney Hare

Carl Fischer, 1921

IV - "Quand mo-té jeune" (Bal fini)

Quand mo-té jeun'
Mo-té jonglé Michieu;
A c't'heur ma-pé vini vieux
Mo-pé jonglé bon dieu.
Ma-pé jonglé bon temps passé,
Ma-pé jonglé bon temps qu'est passé,

Le bal fini bonsoir, Messieurs,
Le bal fini bonsoir, Mesdam',
M' al- lé , parti,
La, la, la, la, la!

When I was young
I was jolly, Mister
and now that I'm old
I'll still be jolly.
I will be jolly, "good times"[will] pass
I will be jolly, "good times" will pass

The final dance goodnight, Sir
The final dance goodnight, Ma'am
I go, we part[ways]
La, la, la, la, la!

VI - "Dialogue d'Amour"

Si l'amou à vou si grand, Michié la,
Si l'amou à vou si grand, Michié la,
Si l'amou à vou si grand, ,
Faut donné plein l'argent.

Toutes mes cann' sont brulées,
sont brulées, Mariann'
Toutes mes cann' sont brulées,
Et je suis ruiné.

Si cann' à vous brulé, Michié la.
Si cann' à vous brulé, Michié la.
Si cann' à vous brulé,
L'amou à nous flambé!

If your love is so great Mister
If your love is so great Mister
If your love is so great
Then give me your silver

All of my [sugar] cane is burned
it's burned, Marianne
All of my [sugar] cane is burned
I am ruined.

If your [sugar] cane is burned mister
If your [sugar] cane is burned mister
If your [sugar] cane is burned
[then]Our love is in the flames!

Five Creole Songs

Harmonized and Arranged by Camille Nickerson
Boston Music Company, 1942

IV - "Fais Do Do"

Fais do do, piti so mamman
Si bébé pas fait do do
Charette a mouton a vini mange li
Fais do do, piti so mamman
Si bébé pas fait do do
Gran Lou-Lou va mang' li!

Go to sleep, child of mama
So baby won't go to sleep
A wagon of sheep will come (and) eat you
Go to sleep, child of mama
So baby won't go to sleep
The "boogey man" will eat you

V - "Garde Pitti Mulet Là" (Mr. Banjo)

Gardé piti mulatte là, Mischieu Banjo
Comment li insolent
Chapeau su' côté, Michieu Banjo,
Badine a la main
Mouchoir dans so poche, Musieu Banjo,
cigar dans so gros la bouche.
Gardé piti mulatte là, Mischieu Banjo
Comment li insolent
Cheveux bien glacé, Musieu Banjo,
(Crävat, rouge assez)
Pantalon plein plein 'tit Banjo,
Bottes qui apé fait "crinc-crink"
Gardé piti mulatte là, Mischieu Banjo
Comment li insolent
Yeux qui apé roulé, Musieu Banjo,
Fleur dans so boutonniere, 'tit Banjo,
Joué li meme capab
Mais laid jus' comme le Diab'
Gardé piti mulatte là, Mischieu Banjo
Comment li insolent

Look(at) the little mullatto there, Mr. Banjo
How he(is) rude
Hat on the side Mr.; Banjo
wasting time at hand
handkerchief in the pocket, Mister Banjo
cigar inside his large mouth
Look(at) the little mullatto there, Mr. Banjo
How he(is) rude
Hair very glazed(smooth), mister Banjo
Necktie, red very
Pants full full little Banjo
Shoes that go (at the) top "crink crink"
Look(at) the little mullatto there, Mr. Banjo
How he(is) rude
Eyes that go rolling mister Banjo
Flower in the buttonhole little Banjo
Playing (you) the same old things
But ugly as the devil
Look(at) the little mullatto there, Mr. Banjo
How he(is) rude

Additional Information

4. Musical Characteristics
 - a. General characteristics
 - i. Prior to late 19th century-early 20th, Black Creole music was solely passed down orally
 - ii. Simple melodic structure
 - iii. Secular in nature
 - iv. Text is ranges from amorous to satirical
 - v. Constant use of refrain(repetition)
 - b. Forms
 - i. Strophic
 - ii. Song form ABA
 - c. Dance rhythms
 - i. Dance important aspect of Black Creole culture
 - ii. Was used to preserve African culture
 - iii. Spanish Influence (habanera)

Diction- Quick Guide

5. What is patois?
 - a. A patois is a hybrid or “corruption” of a particular vernacular. As the vernacular of eighteenth-century Louisiana territory was French, out of necessity, slaves had to adapt to the language of their masters without the use of education or written aides.
6. Vowels
 - a. Generalization-More open and relaxed
 - b. Mixed Vowels
 - i. Lack of lip position versus tongue position
 - c. Nasal Vowels
 - i. Only [ɛ̃] and [õ]
 - ii. Again , anything suggesting a closed lip position is eliminated- this may be due to the African languages as their might have not been similar sounds
7. Consonants
 - i. Generalization- consonants are soft
 - ii. No [r]
 - iii. In certain conditions(singing) I have found it necessary to lightly flip the [r], but it is almost nonexistent in Louisiana Creole language
 - iv. Final consonants are often dropped
 - v. C and qu followed by a vowel = Changes to [tʃ]
 - vi. Gu = Changes to [dʒ]
 - vii. d followed by a vowel =[dʒ]

Further Reading and Bibliography

- b. Jessica Long, “Forgotten Voices: An Examination of Black Louisiana Creole Folk Song through the Works of Maud Cuney-Hare and Camille Nickerson.” DMA lecture Recital document. Shenandoah University, Winchester, Virginia 2016, Worldcat (969298635).