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# Cariso!

The Newsletter of the  
Alton Augustus Adams  
Music Research Institute

ISSUE 6 • 2006

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## More Than A Bandmaster

### The Life and Times of Alton Augustus Adams Sr., a Cultural Odyssey

BY DR. LOIS HASSELL-HABTES

**DURING MAY 2006, THE VIRGIN ISLANDS COMMUNITY** witnessed a public celebration and acknowledgment of the life and times of Alton Augustus Adams Sr., the first black bandmaster of the U.S. Navy. The program was the brainchild of Dr. Samuel A. Floyd Jr., Interim Executive Director of the Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College Chicago, and the first director of the Alton Augustus Music Research Institute (AMRI) in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

During his past visits to the islands, Dr. Floyd met and became good friends with Adams and proposed this project to the Adams family and the AMRI Advisory Committee as a means to recognize and explore the implications of the far-reaching contributions of Alton A. Adams Sr.

Colloquium sessions were held on May 10 and 11 at the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle



*Lt. R. G. Barrett, Raoul Camus, Alton Augustus Adams Jr., and Mark Clague*

School Auditorium from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with live broadcasts on WSTA radio station, hosted daily by popular radio personality Irving "Brownie" Brown and Peter Ottley. I was honored and privileged to moderate these sessions, which opened with a presentation by Dr. Mark Clague, editor of the forthcoming book *Culture Crossroads: The Memoirs of Alton Augustus Adams Sr.* The first  
*(continued on 2)*

## CBMR Ends Tenure in the Virgin Islands

**THE CBMR TENURE** in the Virgin Islands came to its end with the More Than a Bandmaster Project. We depart with the knowledge that CBMR's stated mission—to help "young people and out-of-school adults on small islands of the Caribbean learn to document and preserve their own musical traditions"—has been materially advanced. We depart St. Thomas with feelings of sincere gratitude for the opportunity to serve the islands in that way. Particular thanks go to Alton Adams, who

hosted our project, to Myron Jackson who encouraged us to locate there in the beginning, to the members of AMRI's Advisory Committee, and to the people of the Virgin Islands who welcomed us in many ways and supported our efforts over the course of our stay, with their attendance of the cultural summits and documentation workshops that we held on all three islands and by their support of the More Than a Bandmaster Colloquium and Navy Band Concert.

Center for  
Black Music Research  
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*Alton Augustus Adams Jr. accepts the posthumous induction as a member of his father, Alton Augustus Adams, into the American Bandmaster Association. The plaque is presented by John Locke, president of the ABA.*



### **Bandmaster** *(continued from 1)*

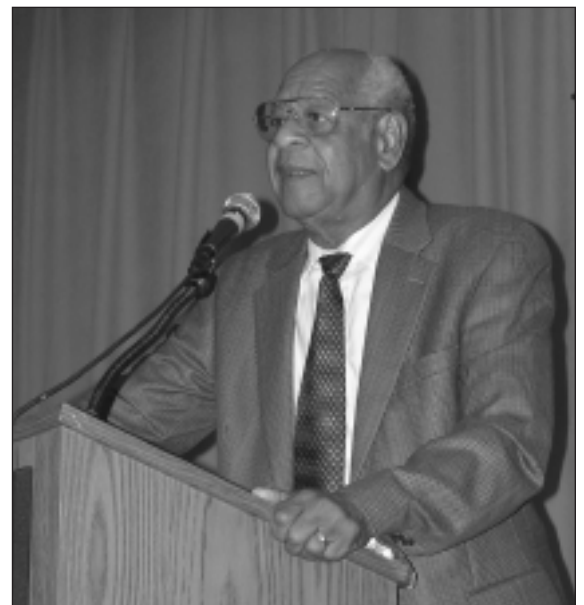
session, titled “Adams’ Early Accomplishments and Adams as a Navy Bandmaster; Adams as Journalist,” was a great beginning in sharing with the Virgin Islands community the important social, cultural, and civic contributions made by Adams to his beloved home. Dr. Clague pointed out the relevant experiences, activities, and specific nuances that shaped Adams’s life in St. Thomas. We were also treated to a PowerPoint presentation, “Adams in His Own Voice: The Contribution of the Negro to Music,” which sent shivers throughout the audience members who were listening, witnessing, and remembering. Panelists for this session included Kirsten Kienberger, who discussed her presentation about Adams’s music, and Myron Jackson, who as a young boy lived in the neighborhood of Mr. Adams’s ancestral home. Acknowledgments were given by Dr. Rosita Sands, now CBMR Director for Education and Caribbean Initiatives, and Morris Phibbs, CBMR Director for Research and Scholarship. Further acknowledgments were provided to the Virgin Islands Council on the Arts for funding assistance of the performances for the colloquium sessions.

“Session II: Adams as Educator, Music Lover, and Teacher; Adams as Journalist” included Mrs. Ruth Moolenaar, preservationist; Austin Venzen, professor of music at the University of the Virgin Islands; and Rebecca Faulkner, pianist, who performed Adams’s “Doux Rêve d’Amour: Valse pour Piano” (ca. 1912).

During the third session, “Adams as Hotel Association Founder and as Inn Keeper; Adams as Journalist,” Samuel Rey, the third recipient of the Alton Adams Hotel Association Scholarship, spoke, as did panelists Dr. Linda Benjamin, retired professor of education at the University of the Virgin Islands, and Ms. Mary Gleason, a businesswoman who interacted with Mr. Adams at the Hotel Association meetings.

On May 11, Adams’s great niece Yvette Finch (vocals) and great nephew Clifton Finch (on bass) performed Adams’s “Sweet Virgin Isles” (ca. 1925), accompanied by Francis Callwood (keyboards). They received a standing ovation for their performance.

During the fourth session, “Adams as U.S. Navy Bandmaster and Composer; Adams as Journalist,” the community heard from Dr. Lawrence Benjamin, former director of the Virgin Islands National Guard Band; Dr. Ruby Simmonds Esannason, educator and former Commissioner of Education; and Mr. Ron Walker, journalist. We also heard from Adams’s son, Alton Augustus, during whose presentation Dr. Raoul F. Camus, Professor Emeritus of Music at Queensborough Community College of the City University of New York (CUNY), Director Emeritus of the Queens Symphonic Band, and honorary member of the American Bandmasters



*Alton Augustus Adams Jr. speaks at the More Than a Bandmaster Colloquium*



*MUCS Kevin T. Dines, trumpeter of the U.S. Navy Band and Unit Leader of its Ceremonial Band, presents a photo of the band and CD as a thank you gift to Mark Clague, who received it on behalf of the Center for Black Music Research.*

Association, presented the Adams family with Alton Adams Sr.'s posthumous membership into the Bandmasters Association.

Students from local schools were invited to attend the sessions so that they could enhance their sense of history and explore Adams's life's mission. Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School teachers brought their students, who viewed a photographic essay that included photos of a student band in full uniform. Georgia Francis, Charlotte Amalie High School band director, coordinated a U.S. Navy Ceremonial Band workshop for middle school, junior high, and senior high school music students. The workshop was held on May 12, 2006.

The highlight of the colloquium occurred Friday evening, when the U.S. Navy Ceremonial Band, under the direction of Lieutenant Michael S. Grant, USN bandleader, presented a free concert, performing works by Alton Augustus Adams. Master of ceremonies Athniel "Addie" Ottley guided the audience in standing to sing the "Virgin Islands March," composed by Adams. The full house of one thousand was "(as dey people dem say) bursting with proud" as they enjoyed the wonderful sounds representative of a native islander, whose record of musical achievement had reached far beyond their shores.

# Voices

## Thanks from MTOC, Inc.

Dr. Rosita M. Sands  
Director, Caribbean Initiatives  
Center for Black Music Research

Dear Dr. Sands:

The Methodist Training & Outreach Center, Inc. wishes to express our sincere thanks for your recent donation of tables, chairs, bedroom set, a living room set and kitchen utensils which you made to the Outreach Center to be used to assist clients who are less fortunate.

Methodist Training & Outreach Center, Inc. (MTOC, Inc.) is a Faith-based/Community-based Non-Profit Organization with 501c3 status. The program provides Outreach services, intake and assessment, referrals, case management, and permanent housing for homeless individuals and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Over the past four years we have rehabilitated two buildings which are now used for permanent housing, single room occupancy (SRO), for eight homeless individuals in St. Thomas. We have provided permanent housing for fourteen individuals living with HIV. Through our case management efforts we have enabled clients to acquire such services as food stamps, medical assistance, social security, veterans' benefits, employment, transportation to rehabilitation and detox centers, as well as financial counseling and a number of other services.

Once again we say thank you for your generous donation.

Louise O. Petersen

*Executive Director  
Methodist Training & Center, Inc.  
Support Services for the Homeless  
St. Thomas*



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*Editor*  
Laura Haefner

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## Lois's Notes

BY DR. LOIS HASSELL-HABTES



### Performance Forum on St. Croix Music and Dance Traditions

ON FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 2006, at 7:00 p.m., I had a wonderful opportunity to return to my childhood home of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The occasion was the Performance Forum on St. Croix Music and Dance Traditions, hosted by the Alton Augustus Adams Music Research Institute (AMRI), a component of the Center for Black Music Research (CBMR) of Columbia College Chicago. The forum was held at the University of the Virgin Islands Cafetorium on the St. Croix campus in Kingshill, St. Croix.

While traveling to the forum from the legendary Buccaneer Hotel (Gallows Bay), Dr. Rosita Sands, CBMR Director of Education and Caribbean Initiatives, Morris Phibbs, CBMR Director for Research and Scholarship, and I engaged in a discussion in which our taxi driver also participated. I was talking about my grandmother's home, an old

wood vernacular shingle-roof Virgin Islands house that survived hurricanes Hugo and Marilyn. Before we knew it, our driver drove into the neighborhood, and I had a chance to relive childhood memories and joys. This was good preparation for the forum; even though I now live on St. Thomas and am most familiar with its music and dance traditions, St. Croix provided me my foundation.

Following our arrival at the University of the Virgin Islands Cafetorium, I had a chance to witness some of the work Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights have accomplished with student apprentices from the St. Croix Central High School, the St. Croix Educational Complex Quelbe Band. This particular group of students was established in 2005 and includes Jacedon Clarke, banjo; Sacha Alexander, flute; Leah Rogers, flute; William Rogers, guitar; Leon Rogers, saxophone; Ercel Abbott, drummer; Clint Williams, triangle; Lorenzo Davis, piano; and Rashad Wilson, electric bass. The director of the music students was my former University of the Virgin Islands student Valrica Bryson. The evening's event was the second AMRI program to feature demonstrations by school-aged students of Virgin Islands music and dance traditions.

At the start of the program, I introduced Dr. Rosita Sands, who provided acknowledgments and appreciation to the University of the Virgin Islands, St. Croix campus, and professors John Munro and Aletha Baumann. She also thanked Stanley Jacobs and Angel Santos for their assistance with the local arrangements and the principals, teachers, and students of the schools participating in the evening's program. Next, Myron Jackson, director of the Virgin Islands State Historic Preservation Office and an AMRI Advisory Committee member, provided remarks about Eulalie Rivera, renowned Virgin Islands educator and tradition bearer. He highlighted the ongoing relationship between Delta Dorsch and Eulalie Rivera and how his shared experiences with them as he grew up left an indelible mark on his knowledge about our cultural traditions.

For the next part of the evening, Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights played Crucian musical selections for an appreciative audience,

*Student apprentices from the St. Croix Central High School, the St. Croix Educational Complex Quelbe Band, demonstrate Virgin Islands music traditions*



who clapped their hands, tapped their feet, and moved to the rhythms of the beat. The Ballet Folklorico of Hispanos Unidos followed, with a beautiful rendition of the *seis*, the backbone of Puerto Rican peasant music. They sang and danced, with the ladies dressed in colorful skirts and white ruffled tops and the men dressed in white with splashes of color.

The student groups also included the Pearl B. Larsen Quadrille Dancers, under the direction of Mirza Lampe and Dianna P. Osborne, who danced several St. Croix

Quadrille steps and were accompanied by Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights. The concluding performance was given by the St. Croix Educational Complex Quelbe Band, joined by Stanley and the Ten Sleepless Knights. The Ballet Folklorico then took to the dance floor, and audience members followed.

*Lois Hassell-Habtes is a member of the AMRI Advisory Committee. Formerly the music supervisor and state coordinator of arts and culture for the Virgin Islands Department of Education, she is presently the assistant principal of the Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School.*

## Thanks from St. Lucia

BY KENNEDY 'BOOTS' SAMUEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FOLK RESEARCH CENTRE, ST. LUCIA

**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**, staff, and membership of the Folk Research Centre (FRC) takes this opportunity, on behalf of the people of the Caribbean island of St. Lucia, to express our profound gratitude to the Lomax Archives and the Chicago-based Center for Black Music Research (CBMR) for a very significant act of repatriation to our country.

On Sunday, June 18, 2006, copies of the St. Lucia recordings and field notes from the Alan Lomax Collection of Caribbean Music Field Recordings, done in the early 1960s, were donated to St. Lucia to be housed in the library of the local Folk Research Centre. From there, these recordings will be more easily accessible to Caribbean students, researchers, folklorists, cultural workers, and all St. Lucians. The official donation took place in a ceremony involving live folk music and dance, culturally sensitive speeches, an informative audio-visual presentation on the tremendous cultural research work of Alan Lomax, and some good island food. Joining the many local artists and cultural leaders who attended the ceremony were Dr. Rosita Sands of the CBMR and the Alton Augustus Adams Music Research Institute (AMRI) in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Jeffery Greenberg representing the Alan Lomax Archives.

The donation was a particularly significant one for the FRC, which has been campaigning

for over thirty years to promote national awareness on the importance of repatriating much of the cultural wealth and information that has continuously been taken out of St. Lucia in a variety of forms since colonial times. The FRC has been particularly focused on the hundreds of researchers who visit the island and leave with important local information that never makes its way back into the national development processes but is instead used for narrow academic and other goals of individual researchers.

The donation by the Lomax Archives is a great example of the kind of the necessary repatriation of such information. The Alan Lomax recordings of St. Lucian communities from as early as the 1950s and 1960s will make a valuable contribution to the understanding of local cultural heritage, identity, and the processes of local creative expression. The FRC applauds the cultural sensitivity of the Lomax Archives and the Lomax family, which made the donation possible.

The FRC is also very happy with the relations that have developed from this donation with the CBMR in Chicago, and AMRI in the Virgin Islands. Dr. Rosita Sands graciously participated in a St. Lucia television discussion and an informal public dialogue on cultural documentation. We can now safely say that we have added another link to strengthen the chain of our beautiful black nation across the diaspora.

### Alton Augustus Adams Music Research Institute Advisory Committee

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St. Thomas  
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Gwendolen Adams  
St. Thomas

### Quadrilles (continued from 12)

Contemporary quadrille performance groups still perform variations of the contredanse and demonstrate the care Africans must have taken to learn European quadrilles in particular. (Examples of these historical dances are available on video, which were collected for several islands and stored at the Alton Augustus Adams Music Research Institute in the U.S. Virgin Islands, formerly a unit of the Center for Black Music Research.) In such historical representations, we see bona fide elements of European contredanse, for example, dancing that is divided into sets or sections, parading and promenading, followed by a series of alternating slow and fast repetitive figures, and ending with a semblance of a parade or a final curtsy and bow. We find this dance structure throughout the Caribbean: within Puerto Rican *seises*, Dominican *jacana*, Trinidadian and Tobagonian *belair*, Virgin Island quadrilles, Curaçaoan *kuadria*, Martinican *bélè* and *haut-taille*, and Guadeloupean *kadril*. Everywhere, the dance form aims for a sense of elegance and propriety, as well as social entertainment and fun.

Musicologist Dominique Cyrille (2002) and others suggest that as time passed, many

African-Caribbean performers happily learned the dances along with their young European and Creole masters and mistresses and became adept at the exacting steps and figures that the European dancing masters and American missionaries taught. Like European performers, African performers who danced the complicated figures were exhibiting their social education and good manners. Freed African performers also used European dance structure to project a differentiated status over enslaved or field Africans. Eventually, however, both house and field, enslaved and free, imitated and thereby promoted European movement, structure, and values within quadrille performance.

All seven islands in the present study (Trinidad, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Curaçao, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and the U.S. Virgin Islands or St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands) show evidence of quadrille performance. Is this pervasiveness simply evidence of the limits within the African-Caribbean consciousness to possible change within the oppressive colonial social situation? Did continuity in circum-Caribbean performance indicate simultaneously what was utterly impossible (e.g., revolution, except at critical moments) and what was minimally possible much more often (e.g., resistant symbolic strategies of dance performance)?

Until social conditions allowed for successful and beneficial change, an undercurrent of hidden sabotage punctuated behaviors of the enslaved throughout the Americas, including dance. In musicologist Noel Allende-Goitía's (n.d.) terms, Africans began to "colonize European social or everyday life"; dance historian and critic Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996) notes that Africans and African definitely American here instigated "Africanist" practices within outstanding and revered mainstream performance.

Both freed and enslaved Africans—urban and rural dwellers—took a valued cultural item from the dominant group: their imitations of European quadrille dancing. They learned to execute the dance figures with as much aplomb as European performers; in the most extreme case on Martinique, they consciously usurped its European content, changing the dances

Petticoats and "butterfly" dress for *bélè* dance in Heritage Festival, Tobago, courtesy of Dayne Job.







Edwin Davis and  
Rubina Leonard with  
delicate fingertip  
partnering, May 2006,  
St. Thomas  
U.S. Virgin Islands

through abbreviation and embellishment, appropriating the figures as their own. Adoption and appropriation are key to understanding deeper meanings within quadrille performance.

An analysis of two contrasting types of quadrille form that are found on Martinique, *haut-taille* and *bélè*, illustrates a dichotomy between rural and urban forms and between lower and higher classes: the rural and lower-class types of *bélè* explore African stylization, whereas the objective of the urban and upper-class types of *haut-taille* is European imitation. Both dances have a European structure, and therefore, both remain descendents of the European contredanse. The dance materials of *bélè*, however, include a grounded stance, fully articulating body parts, a divided torso, polyrhythmic body and music, use of percussion, and call-and-response song form—mostly African dance characteristics. The dance materials of *haut-taille* consist of an upright and lifted body stance, undivided torso for stability, arms and legs in codified balanced positions, use of string and wind instruments, and expressive formality—mostly European dance characteristics.

In the performance of European structure,

Africanity was not lost. First and foremost, Africans and African Caribbeans performed the quadrilles. Not only did “black” bodies execute the graceful steps, but they also repeated in space the exacting configurations of French contredanse imitations. Percussion often dominated the musical ensemble, as violins, flutes, and accordions carried the song line. Despite the timbre of strings and woodwinds (it is the “light” timbre that I am talking about, not just the presence of certain instrumentation), which often identified the musical genre, the deep accented tone of a *siyak* or bass tambourine or the ostinato rhythm played on the side of the drum, both African musical references, also characterized quadrille music. Thus, while there was attention to charming and dignified performance, there was also irony in the simultaneousness of “from less means and yet just as good” or “with denied access, still flourishing examples.”

The appropriation of quadrille music by African ancestors must have created a most incredible, if not most uncomfortable, situation for plantation masters, as slaves played European instruments adroitly and

(continued on 8)



*Edwin Davis, caller, checks foot positions as dancers prepare a quick polka practice, May 2006, U.S. Virgin Islands*



**In dancing the quadrilles, they subtly and persistently challenged domination, superiority, and power.**

### **Quadrilles** *(continued from 7)*

danced exquisite quadrille configurations. The music was more Creole than was the dancing, whose structure was primarily European. There was no contradiction for performers, however. For them, their quadrilles were hardly “European.”

According to (again) contemporary performers of quadrille and *bélè*-related forms, they perform these dances in a particular style because so many of their ancestors did. In other words, Caribbean quadrilles are part of the Creolization process; they are African-Caribbean performances that exhibit European movement values most often but also, and simultaneously, exhibit Caribbean identity and ownership. This is a forceful and intimate act on the part of many Caribbean performers, both past and present.

Instead of letting their inhumane treatment dictate the quality of their daily outlooks, actions, and social activities, quadrille performers, past and present, demonstrated liberation of self and mind by expressing

socio-spiritual happiness through dancing and music making. They took what would otherwise be an aversion, European dance structure and musical form, and adopted and adapted them; they had fun with and within the dance. In dancing the quadrilles, they subtly and persistently challenged domination, superiority, and power.

Quadrille dancing today speaks to a continued, tenacious Caribbean endurance and agency. Performers interviewed for this study stated almost unanimously how much they love the elegance, gracefulness, and fun of quadrille performance. They relish parading “in style,” the dressy attire of head-ties and formal wear in processions, and the organization within king and queen pageantry. What everyone deemed most important was keeping this dance form alive to commemorate their ancestors.

Critical analysis of quadrille performance shows that identity issues—a longing for their African ancestors and customs, and later, a sense of national, regional, Caribbean representation—are pervasive. For example, the early colonial parading referenced African

heritages and identities. Also, royal pageantry, which often characterized performances, pointed to remaining African hierarchical roles within the celebratory calendar of the early Roman Catholic Church. Quadrille, line, and round dances were noted almost everywhere—in Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, St. Lucia, St. Croix, St. Thomas, Curaçao, Martinique, and Guadeloupe—and have persisted into the twenty-first century as historic symbols of island identities. Contemporary performers also stress quadrille performance as “their own” or “their ancestors’ dance.”

Each island’s history reveals roughly the same dance form, Caribbean quadrille, although with varying types. The dancers—*kuadria* couples with their raised arms and elegant attire, *jacana* couples who repeatedly bow and curtsy to one another, *bélè* couples who circle and partner flamboyantly, *tumba francesa* and *affranchi* promenading lines in elegant salutation, and stately *lanciers* performers lowered to their knees with head and arms held high—all demonstrate that the performers and their ancestors were of great value—especially in the presence of domineering captors and prejudiced power holders. The colonial and contemporary performances signal historical agency in the midst of limited circumstances. The appropriation of European performance values point to African underscoring and promotion of their human and, later, national and regional identity.

Thus, quadrille dances are examples of the Creolization process that historically have represented the African and African-Caribbean elite. Eventually, however, they became indicative of the national and regional collective and as such warrant their own category in the organization of Caribbean dance types and forms. Even though category boundaries are blurred (as in most attempts to abstract the practices of reality), the study’s results indicate the following organization of Caribbean dance categories:

## Circum-Caribbean Dance Typology

1. Social and popular dances
  - a. Parading dances (carnivals, saints’ day processions)
  - b. Contredanse-derived dances (e.g., *bélè*, *belén*, *kadril*, *haut-taille*, *kwadril*, *kuadria*, *cuadrilla*, *jacana*)
  - c. National dances (e.g., rumba, *meringue* and *compas*, merengue, *gwoka*, calypso, reggae, *bomba*, salsa, *mazouk*, *zouk*)
  - d. Fad dances (e.g., dance hall, *soca*)
2. Sacred dances
  - a. Native American traditions
  - b. European traditions
  - c. African traditions
  - d. Asian traditions
  - e. Creolized traditions
3. Fighting dances
  - a. Stick-emphasized dancing
  - b. Non-stick dancing
4. Concert performances (every type and form in the region’s dance vocabulary)
5. Tourist performances (every type and form in the region’s dance vocabulary)

I conclude that the types of quadrille form under investigation (e.g., *bélè*, *belair*, *belén*, *kadril*, *kwadril*, *kuadria*, *cuadrilla*, *quadril*,  
(continued on 10)

*Even in shorts at rehearsals, dancers hold skirt edges, and straight backs are pointed out by Doreen Freeman as Edwin Davis and Rubina Leonard instruct, May 2006, St. Thomas U.S. Virgin Islands*





Lead accordion player Jean José Ambroise of traditional music ensemble *Bienveillance Abymienne*, with noted singer and researcher Marie-line Dahomay after kadril interview, April 2006, Guadeloupe

### Quadrilles (continued from 9)

and *quadrille*) comprise a subset of historical social dance forms. I base these conclusions on well-defined African dance characteristics (which these dances do not exemplify generally), on library research of individual Caribbean island histories, and on fieldwork spread among seven islands. The data thus far indicate both historical and contemporary functions of dance within the Hispanic, French, Dutch, and former British, former Danish, and U.S.-Creole Caribbean. Specific consideration of bodily posture, gestures, sequences, and overall public display support these conclusions, but the pervasiveness and historic national regard of varied quadrille performances outweigh all other significances.

A more detailed version of this summary report is available at the Center for Black Music Research. Special thanks are sent first to the many Caribbean research librarians who assisted the investigation, to Dr. Dominique

Cyrille and Dr. Julian Gerstin for their generosity and their attention to French Caribbean quadrille, and to Dr. Brenda Dixon Gottschild and Dr. Noel Allende-Goitia, who acted as insightful discussants for the study's unabridged report. I take full responsibility for the analytical content of this condensed study. It could not have been completed, however, without my dancing collaborators and cultural informants: Mágdalis García Sánchez, Awilda Sterling-Duprey, Jesús Cepeda Brenes, Gilda Hernandez-San Miguel, Lizette Carillo, and Jasmine in Puerto Rico; Dr. Martha E. Davis, Xiomarita Perez, Edis Sanchez, Grupo de San Juan Bautista La Vereda, Roberto Cassá, Victor Carillo, and Pedro in the Dominican Republic; Dr. Molly Ahye, Dayne Job, and Caroline Congeley in Trinidad; Richard Doest, Jeanne Henriquez, Astrid Doran, Cesario Jean Louis, Rosemary Allen, Dr. Rene Rosalía, and Ricardo in Curaçao; Marie-line Dahomay, Jean José Ambroise, Allen Jean, Gustav Michau-Vige, and Guinguan Gwenelle in Guadeloupe; Philippe Bourgade, Lucien Peter, Ester Elodin, Josienne Antourelle, Christien Vallejo, and especially Sonya Marc in Martinique; and Laurel Samuels, Dr. Vincent Cooper, Anise Canton, Edwin Davis, Carlos Woods, Bradley Christian, Doreen Freeman, Rubina Leonard, Dr. Aimery Caron, Dr. Gilbert Sprauve, and Dr. Lawrence Benjamin in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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## Discography

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*Zoup, zoup, zoup.* Compact disc. (Virgin Island *quelbe* or “scratchband” traditional music.)



*Rehearsals inside gazebo of Emancipation Gardens, St. Thomas*

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*Calypso Band, Caneel Bay Plantation, St. John, Virgin Islands, U S A. Hibbs Photo*

## Vintage Calypso

*A picture of a 1950s V.I. calypso band tells a story of yesteryear. Standing, left to right: Ludwig Sprauve, Basil Harley, Warren Smalls, and Herman Sprauve. In front: Eustace Richards*



# Come with Me and Let's Talk about Caribbean Quadrilles

BY DR. YVONNE DANIEL

Come with me, my sisters and brothers.  
 Come with me for one moment.  
 Let's talk about *bélè, belair, belén, kadril,*  
*cuadrilla, kuadria, mason, yuba, haut de taille—*  
*toutes les contredanses americains vraiment—*  
 All the true "American" contredanse forms.  
 Venez-moi mes amis caraïbes (French);  
 Bin ku mi, mi ruman muhe nan (Papiamentu).  
 Vámonos juntos mis hermanos (Spanish);  
 Ann pale yon ti moman (Kreyol).  
 Let's look AT the variety, but also,  
 let's look FOR the connections that make us family.  
 Vámonos a examinar la variación y las conecciones,  
 las cuales que nos hacen familia.  
 We talk now  
 across geopolitical borders,  
 we look from above connect the following: a bird's  
 view of ourselves and our evolving CREATIVE  
 cultures.  
 Come with me for a moment.

EUROPEAN LINE, CIRCLE, quadrille, or square dances, originally called contredanses, and saints' day processions reached the Americas throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, and enslaved Africans observed Europeans of varied backgrounds performing these dances. During the few public celebrations where the enslaved were allowed to dance (e.g., processions and parading in patron saint celebrations, Carnival festivities, the Three Kings celebrations, church events), however, Africans flaunted ethnic group affiliations, with each group vying for recognition and thereby acknowledging multiple African heritages. If we presume that their movement vocabulary was predominantly or entirely African, their dancing would have characteristically emphasized bent knees and forward tilting backs, isolated body parts in rhythmic display, and divided torso explorations. The dances were controlled



*The ethnographer, Yvonne Daniel, dances a polka-mazurk (a late round dance in the history of Caribbean quadrilles) with St. Thomas Heritage Dancers, May 2006*

and their further development was curtailed, however, by European hegemony: Africans were intermittently forced to relinquish the drums of their own *bamboulas, djoubas, calendas*, and *chicas* and were not always permitted to dance their religious or sacred dance forms in public.

The African-derived population eventually adopted the stances, rhythm sequences, and repetitive patterns of the colonial dance forms. Indeed, colonial Europeans on Guadeloupe and Martinique sometimes sent Africans to other plantations to learn new steps and to teach their masters. In Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Trinidad, Curaçao, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Africans were sometimes required to dance like Europeans, with limited hip movements and straight backs.

During the colonial period, Roman Catholic clergy, exploring scientists, and traveling colonial elites on most Caribbean islands often described watching contredanses (French court dancing), mostly quadrilles (the square types), danced by both the European and African populations.

*(continued on 6)*

**Colonial Europeans on Guadeloupe and Martinique sometimes sent Africans to other plantations to learn new steps and to teach their masters.**