

Haiti-Dance



by
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22648

INTRODUCTION

(Parts of article appeared in Dance Magazine and other periodicals)

I was invited to come to Haiti to teach dancing by the Bureau of Tourism and the Education Nationale in 1953, for six months. That was five and a half years ago.

I have been teaching for a long time. It all started when I won a scholarship to the Art Students' League on 57th Street in New York City. The scholarship was mine, but I needed extra money to buy art supplies, materials, etc. Because I had danced since I was three years old, I combined drawing and dancing in a course which I taught at the Urban League. I finished my art scholarship and was about to compete for another, under the advice of my teacher, the late Guy Peine DuBois, which would take me to Paris.

Meanwhile I had become friendly with one of the models at the League who was a member of Eugene Von Grona's newly organized "Negro Ballet". I wanted to make some quick sketches and drawings of the dancers in movement, and I asked the model if I could obtain permission to come to a rehearsal. She suggested that I bring along my leotard and sketch pad, since Mr. Von Grona was trying to enlarge his present company. Luckily my background in dancing had included classic ballet, acrobatic

and tap dancing. I was delighted when, after Mr. Von Grona auditioned me, he told me that I followed the "Van Laban" technique beautifully and that he would give me a spot in his ballet. I soon put down my portfolio and became a professional dancer.

The Von Grona Ballet made many appearances in and out of New York. The Ballet that I loved the most was "Children of the Earth", and the "Firebird". (I was the 13th princess.) I continued my dance courses and became quite interested in modern dancing. Anna Sokolow was very helpful to me. She offered me a scholarship and later on I went on to the Martha Graham school. I also attended "Ballet Arts", directed by Virginia Lee, and studied with Lisan Kay, etc. The Ballet Company finally broke up after three years, to my regret, but we had a very successful run in a Broadway show which starred Lena Horne: Lew Leslie's "Blackbirds".

Many of the dancers from the Von Grona Ballet were invited to join Agnes De Mille's company which she organized for Ballet Theatre. I was fortunate enough to become one of her dancers. We appeared in her presentation of "Obeah", a ballet based on the belief of "black magic" in

Dorothy Beunt

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the West Indies. During that season, Katherine Dunham came to New York from Chicago and needed dancers for her already established company. She spotted me at one of the performances at the Center Theatre, and asked Miss De Mille if I could become one of her troupe. Since Miss De Mille's plans for our future were not quite definite, she advised me to accept Miss Dunham's offer. I stayed with her company five and a half years and became the student instructor, appearing in concerts at the leading Broadway theatres. We toured America and Canada; were the featured dancers in "Cabin in the Sky", a Broadway musical starring Ethel Waters; went to Hollywood to dance in the film "Stormy Weather" with Lena Horne, and the late Bill Robinson; made a dance film, "Carnival of Rhythm"; played the Hollywood Bowl and came back to New York to sign a contract with the great impresario, Sol Hurok. When the contract terminated, I left the company.

I took leave of the company to help found the first Katherine Dunham School at Caravan Hall on 59th Street. I taught there for one year and then went to Europe with Noble Sissle's revival of "Shuffle Along" for U.S.O. I played one of the dancing roles that Josephine Baker had in the original. We met her in her "comeback" performance in Brussels. This U.S.O. show toured Italy, France, Belgium, Germany and Austria. I studied and danced with Kyra Nijinsky, daughter of the great Vaslav Nijinsky, who was in charge of the opera in Florence, Italy. She choreographed two dances for me.

I studied with Sascha Sarkoff who told me that he danced with the great Anna Pavlova. He was artistic director of the Flemish Opera House in Antwerp, Belgium. Bianca Galizia was ballet mistress at the San Carlo Opera House in Naples, Italy. She choreographed Grieg's Norwegian Dance No. 4 for me. Before I left Naples, she invited the impresario, Mr. Constanzio, and an opera critic to see me dance. They offered me a role in "Aida", but I could not accept because I was already under contract to the American Government. I had decided that I would return to Europe after my previous contract expired.

Immediately upon my arrival in New York, my union, Chorus Equity, asked me to contact Helen Tamaris who was looking for a dancer for "Show Boat" at the Ziegfeld Theatre. I auditioned for her and got the part. Meanwhile, I had practically taken care of all of the necessary papers to return to Europe, but decided I would try to do just one more Broadway show before leaving. I tried out for "Beggars' Holiday" (I was too short),

and "Finian's Rainbow". I got into "Finian's" and as Michel Kidd told me later, he liked my odd hairdo. I had one of the featured dancing roles in "Finian's" and stayed in the show one year.

It was during "Finian's Rainbow" that I married Shannon. We bought a house in Brooklyn, four stories high, and with the kind financial assistance of some very good friends, Shannon converted the basement of our home into a dance studio. I ran the school for three years and was happy that I could teach and still be at home to take care of my two daughters, Lavinia and Sara.

One afternoon during Haitian festival week, which was held at the Ziegfeld Theatre, the late "Papa" Augustin, an Haitian artist living in New York, invited a few members from the committee to watch me teach. One of them remarked that "this is the kind of basic technique that I want my people to learn". This committee included the great Haitian poet, Jean Briere.

It was about a year later, while I was dancing in "My Darlin' Aida" (it seems I was destined to dance this role in some form or other) at the Winter Garden that my good friend Alphonse Cimber, Haiti's Master of the Drums, and President of the Haitian-American Society (he was the drummer when I danced in "Show Boat"), mentioned that the Haitian Government was planning to invite a foreign dance teacher, and asked if I would be interested. After a conference with my husband, and upon the recommendation of the Haitian committee which had been to New York, and the tireless efforts of Mr. Roger E. Savain and Guy Douyon, I was fortunate enough to obtain my present position as dance teacher.

I was to give dance instruction at the Lycée, train several monitors from the Bureau of Sports, and give physical culture and body conditioning exercises to the members of the National Folkloric Troupe.

I arrived in Haiti on April 25th, 1953, with Lavinia and Sara, ages 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ and 3 years, and just enough clothing for a short stay. I was met by a committee of Haitian delegates, including Emerante de Pradines, Haiti's leading folklore singer, Roger E. Savain, Giselle Lebon, etc. That same day, I was introduced to the people with whom I would teach, by the director of the troupe, Nicholas Vincent. That night I saw a performance at the Open Air Théâtre de Verdure. There were many tourists present. Since there was no one to explain the dances in English, the tourists, as well as myself, were a little confused about the significance of the folkloric repertoire.

I began the dance instruction to the members of the troupe the next day after my arrival, and often watched their rehearsals. It was after I heard someone in the audience say that the troupe was dancing the "Mahi", when I know it was the "Petro", that I decided to suggest offering my services as narrator for the tri-weekly presentations at the theatre. My suggestion was accepted and after a few weeks, when I was helped especially by Mr. Lamartinière Honorat, Michel Aubourg and the late Lorimer Denis, I succeeded, with the generous help of Emerante de Pradines, to start my research on Haitian folklore dances. Col. Maximilien and Mr. Emmanuel C. Paul and particularly the Bureau of Tourism, were very instrumental in helping me to trace the origins of most of the dances. I became the mistress of ceremony at the theatre.

The members of the Folklore Troupe, after six months of barre work, floor stretches, leaps, progressions, etc., showed a lot of progress and their natural aptitude for movement was enhanced with this basic technique. Because of the intense heat, I had to work slowly and usually in two groups. My dance lessons at the Ecole Normale began at 6 a.m., which was a new experience for me. But 6 a.m. in Haiti is delightful. It is bright and cool and everything is so fresh. The monitors from the Bureau of Sports began to show a lot of improvement. I felt that I wanted to teach more often and give more concentrated courses. Up until that time, I used the rehearsal hall of the theatre.

It was in 1954 that I founded the Haitian Institute of Folklore and Classic Dance. I returned to New York, and Shannon and I sold our home and dance studio and I brought all of my equipment, music, barres, mirrors, etc. to Haiti.

My research of Haitian folklore started from the very beginning in the Voodoo temples themselves. Sometimes, once or twice a month, I would join the natives in their dancing and worship of their gods. In that way I understood the sense, reasons and values and learned to love and appreciate the folk dances because most of them had originated in the country of my own ancestors. I felt a close harmony with the drum beats and felt at home with the rhythms. I was stimulated by these experiences to create. The theatre already had two choreographers and there was no need for a third. I formed a small troupe from among my students, the "Haitian Voodoo Dancers". Before that I had presented a few members from the Folklore Troupe at one of the leading hotels, El Rancho. They

were a smash hit. Other hotels saw the value of presenting native shows to their guests, and after a few months of rehearsals, my troupe auditioned for the Ibo Lélé Hotel, to dance around its swimming pool. We signed a contract and when the Shango Night Club opened there, we were the featured attraction for years. It seemed that by the time I had started my troupe, the folklore had already reached an artistic peak. But when did it all start? How was this primitive expression brought to the attention of the Haitian people and foreigners alike? I asked these question very often. Finally, someone sent me to Mme. Lina-Mathon Blanchet.

She had left Haiti the same year that I came, and was in diplomatic service with her family in Washington, D.C. She came back this year to resume her artistic and musical teachings, and to head the Conservatoire of Music.

Madame Lina Blanchet was the singing and music teacher at the Jacqueline Turien Kindergarten in 1939. She taught harmony and classic songs to her young groups, and presented them in several concerts. A troupe of German artists attended one of these recitals and asked her if her chorus would sing Haitian folkloric songs. Her answer was negative, but then she decided that for her next concert, she would prepare some "Contes Haitiens", and Haitian folk songs. This she did and gradually added dance movements to go along with the songs. The public was both charmed and amazed at the way she brought this new Haitian art form to light.

For the Pan American Conference which was held in Washington in 1941, Madame Blanchet formed a men's chorus, "The Legba Singers", which included Jean Léon Destiné and Jean-Marie Durand (both of whom are now very successful in America). Ten years later, in 1951, she carried her mixed group of singers and dancers to Washington for the Folklore Festival. This troupe, "Haiti Chante", returned to Haiti and appeared at the leading theatres and hotels. Recently part of her troupe was invited to the world-wide meeting of the "Jeunesse Musicale" and the Folkloric Congress in Brussels. It was on July 12th, 1958 that the troupe "Haiti Chante" presented for the first time in Europe Haitian folklore, danced by an all Haitian troupe.

This really could be an opening for the young Haitian aspirants who are studying and preparing themselves to represent their native art.

And now, all of the members of the "Haiti Chante" troupe are advanced ballet students as well as students of other types of dancing.

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Le Théâtre de Verdure "Massillon Coicou"

I—History of the Théâtre de Verdure

Le Théâtre de Verdure, "Massillon Coicou" was created in 1949 by the former late President Dumarsais Estimé, in the attempt to make known to the foreign visitors the vast richness of Haitian folklore and Voodoo dancing. Also, to permit Haitian authors to produce their plays on a stage without too great an expense, since the theatre was to serve as a "National" theatre.

The theatre was named after "Massillon Coicou", who was one of Haiti's first dramatists, and designed by the great Haitian architect, Albert Mangones.

II—How the National Folkloric Troupe Was Organized

With the acceleration of tourism to Haiti, which started in the late '40's and reached a peak in 1949 during the Bi-Centennial Exposition, the Bureau of Tourism wanted to present to the tourists the best of its native culture and art.

Several small groups of folkloric dancers had been organized by such people as Clément Benoit, Madame Lina-Mathon Blanchet, André Narcissa and Emerante des Pradines.

The troupe "Haiti Chante", directed by Madame Blanchet and featuring Jean Léon Destiné had been invited to perform in the National Folk Festival in Washington, D.C. in the year 1944.

the Theatre on the green

Destiné returned to Haiti but then went back to America where he planned to continue his dancing. He became a teacher, and then formed his own company.

He was recalled to Haiti along with his then famous partner, Jeanne Ramon, an American dancer who was on scholarship at the New Dance Group and had danced and studied with Pearl Primus and Lavinia Williams.

Jean Léon Destiné selected the best dancers from such small troupes as "Damballa Dance Troupe", "Lecocia Dancers", "Aida Troupe", "Erzulie Dancers", "Dantor Dancers", and the "Macaya Folk Group". He formed the National Folkloric Group with the aid of Mr. Robert Baussan, who was then Director of the Bureau of Tourism, Mr. Jean Brierre and several others.

There were 25 dancers, a full orchestra "The Jazz des Jeunes", directed by Mr. René St. Aude, a choir of folk singers, including 15 members, etc.

The first director of the theatre was Mr. Charles de Catalogne. It was his devoted and untiring efforts which made the theatre an immediate and popular success. He invited such personalities as "Marion Anderson", the great American Negro singer, to perform there in 1949. "Katherine Dunham" and her famous troupe danced there in 1950. "The Choir and Folkloric Dance Troup of Spain", Marcel Sylvain, Morisseau Leroy, Lubin, Dauphin, Pierre Blain, Théodore Beaubrun, Antoine Salgado, and many other well-known personalities have honored the stage of the Open Air Théâtre de Verdure with their presence and presentations.

III—Personnel of the National Folkloric Group and Théâtre de Verdure

Choreography by—Mr. Jean Léon Destiné
Mr. André Narcisse
Mr. André Germain
Mr. Louinès Louinis

A—Director of Theatre	Commentator
Director of Group	Director of Choir
Assistant Director	Director of Jazz des Jeunes
Professor of Dance	Stage Manager etc.

IV—Types of dances at the Théâtre de Verdure consist of:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1—Ritual Dances of the Rada rite | 7—Voodoo Incantations |
| 2—Congo and Social Dances | 8—Comic Songs |
| 3—Petro Dances | 9—Sacred Songs |
| 4—Contra Dances | 10—Sacred Voodoo Ceremonies |
| 5—Carnival and Festival Dances | 11—Modern Choreographie |
| 6—Comic Dances | |

V—Explanation of "Voodoo" by Harold Courlander

Voodoo means many things. It means dancing, singing, rituals for the living and for the dead, drums; it means an attitude toward life and death, a concept of ancestors and the afterworld, and an understanding of the forces which control man and his activities; it has subtle meanings beyond the understanding of anthropological observers; it is, in short, something which is infused into the very essence of living.

In an archaic sense, voodoo means diety, or spirit. It came from the language of the Fon-speaking peoples who lived in the region of Dahomey, where the word was used to designate superhuman beings.

The Yoruba people had a word, "orisha", which meant the same thing. The Ishi tribes said "bohsum", and the Ga tribes "wong". Somehow the

Fon word stuck, while the others died out, having no particular use, since "voodoo" had the same implication. All supernatural beings, however, called "voodoo" by the Fon peoples, came to be called by the Congo word "loa", so that today the Fon word designates the whole conception of the supernatural, and the Congo term is used to identify the spirit, or supernatural being himself.

VI—Some Voodoo terms

ABOBO (pronounced ah-bo-bo) comes from the Ibo dialect and is probably known to other West African tribes. It signifies "the end" and in Haiti practically is never used except to mark the end of a song. It also implies appreciation for a good performance, a sort of vocal applause which is used at Voodoo ceremonies.

ASSON—The ritual gourd rattle made of calabashes and filled with snake vertebrae. It is the property of "Mambos and Houngans", and is used in all important ceremonies.

BAMBOCHE—Any social dance having a good time as its primary objective.

CRÉOLE—To the Haitian, Créole means one of Haitian nationality, or the patois of Haiti. Broadly, it signifies anyone born in any of the old French colonies, or the common patois of Haiti, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Louisians (U.S.), etc.

HOUNFOR—(pronounced hoon-for). The sacred building of the Houngan, containing the paraphernalia of the service. "Houn" is the Dahomean word for spirit, synonymous with the Dahomean Voodoo.

HOUNGAN—(pronounced "hoon-gone"). 'Ngan: Voodoo priest from the Fon, "houn", meaning spirit, and "gan", chief. Generally synonymous with "gangan" and "bocor".

HOUNCI—(pronounced "hoon-see"). Servants or followers of the Houngan. "Hounci Bossale", the lowest order of neophytes. "Hounci Kanzo", the level above "Bossale". "Hounci" is a Dahomean word. The "hun-so" of Dahomey were the "wives" of the deities. "Houn"—spirit; "so"—wife.

LA PLACE—apprentice of the Houngan.

LOA—(pronounced "lwa")—means deities of Haiti.

MAMBO—Voodoo priestess. Does not serve under a Houngan except by her own volition. She is permitted to use the Asson, but is clearly below the Houngan in rank. She has risen in Voodoo as far as a woman may go.

MÉRINGUE—There are three types of Meringue: slow, medium and fast (or Carnavalesque), danced mostly in ballrooms and at carnival time. Here is the origin of the term "Meringue":

The Meringue is the national music and dance of the Haitian people. During the colonial period, following the many celebrations which were in honor of successful expeditions, the buccaneers, well stocked up with Spanish gold coins, with wine in their hands, excited the dancer's enthusiasm by these words, "Merry-ring", which meant a joyous dance, dance something gay, a happy round. The slaves of Africa obeyed this command. Then everyone developed the habit of saying "Merry-ring". The corruption of this word, as was used by the African slaves, became "Meringue" (pronounced the same as meringue pie).

There were a great number of expressions left by the English which were included in the patois of Haiti as a result of the frequent visits of the English buccaneers of Levassuer.

OUANGA (pronounced "Wanga"). A fetish; also called "pouin" and "Ga'de".

VÉVÉ—(pronounced "veh-veh"). Ritual maize flour drawing.

ZOMBIE—Properly the spirit or "soul" of the person who dies. In another sense, Zombie may be the "dead" body reclaimed from the grave and installed as a slave by those who practice witchcraft.

VII—Some Repertoire of the National Folkloric Troup

A—SACRED DANCES OF THE RADA RITE

1—Yenvalou Doba

A ritual dance originating from Nigeria and Dahomey. It is in honor of Maître Agué, God of the Sea, and also the dance of Damballa, whose symbol is a snake.

This dance is characterized by the movements of the waves as they rise and fall. The dancers also imitate the movement of the snake, in honor of Damballa.

The word "Doba" is from the French "dos bas", which means low back.

2—Dahomey-Zépales, or Yenvalou Debout

As the name indicates, this dance is a mixture of steps from the dances Voodoo and Yenvalou-doba. It was probably brought to Haiti by the Aradas. It is interpreted in honor of all the divinities of the Rada rite. In this dance the shoulders are most important.

3—Nago

This dance derives its name from the Nagos of the interior of the slave coast. This is a war dance in honor of the "Ogouns" who are war gods. There is Ogoun Badagris, Ogoun Feraille, Ogoun Balinjo, Ogoun Panama, Ogoun Batala, etc.

In executing this dance, the thrusting forward of the chest is the basic movement. It seems that the dancers are trying to tear the body apart, throw it into space in search of a mystic or magic force to assure themselves of invulnerability.

This dance symbolizes courage, force and strength of man who, in his human adventures wants to control the forces of nature, and direct the course of his existence.

4 **Mahi** (pronounced "my-ee"). This is a Voodoo dance in honor of St. Jacques, who in the Voodoo pantheon is Ogoun Feraille. The Mahi

can really be called the dance of the feet. This dance has many variations. The Mahi Déréal, Mahi Dété, Mahi Ciyé.

5—**Le Pas Rigol**—The Pas Rigol is like a slow, simple Mahi. It is soft and majestic, as is the divinity in whose honor it is interpreted. "Atiassou yangordor". Being a rare dance it is found mostly in the Northern part of Haiti and in the Artibonite Valley.

6—**La Danse "Ibo"**—(pronounced "eee-bo"). The Ibo dance seems to have originated among the Ibo tribes of Nigeria. This dance expresses the majesty and the cynism of the former Ibo slaves who were brought into St. Domingue.

The captured slaves from the Ibo tribes were famous for their refusal to be subjected to slavery by the French colonists. Their pride made them prefer suicide, rather than be held in bondage for the rest of their lives.

Consequently, the French colonists gave special instructions to slave carriers not to bring too many Ibos into St. Domingue.

The Ibo Gods have the same characteristics as the old Ibo slaves, and sometimes because of their severity one can almost identify these divinities with those of the Péto rite.

7—**Danse Juba, or Martinique**—The Juba or Martinique seems to be one of the most ancient dances in Haiti; a very sophisticated dance of flirtation. It shows the elegance of the peasant man and the whims of the peasant woman. This dance is in honor of "Zacca", a peasant God.

The Juba can also be interpreted as a dance of divertisement, after a Coumbite or a hard day's work. The boys are expected to buy refreshments for the girls after dancing for a while, and usually hold out a paper note to tease them into dancing harder to earn their soft drinks. The song is . . .

"Deboussé, jeunes jens, fai l'honneur ou!
Deboussé, enhe oh! Fai l'honneur ou! . . . etc.
Pay out, young men, save your honor!
Pay out, enhe oh! save your honor! . . . etc.



8—*Danse des Ombres et Guédé Zarien*—(The dance of the Shadows and the Spider Dance).

The first part of the dance represents the shadows of death. These death shadows attract the attention of the Guédés, spirits of death. Soon a group of boys and girls become possessed by Guédé Zarien, the Spider Spirit. They become almost inhuman. Their bodies and fingers contract like those of the spider. They crawl on the floor and make the running, uncertain gestures of that insect, about to attack.

But before they can attack anyone, the Banda Spirit appears. Since he is a more important and powerful spirit of death, he chases the "spiders" away with his cane and stamping movements. He tries to hit them and finally succeeds in getting rid of all of them. He remains on the stage all alone, while he interprets his erotic death dance with much clowning and conceit.

9—*Banda*—This erotic dance belongs to the Voodoo ritual. It is a symbolization of man's rebirth as he rises from the dead. It is man's second life. Such beliefs recall the Osirian rites in which life and love are fused together. It is a symbol of Prosperina's descent into Hades; a symbol of the dead buried in the earth and of its germination into the new plant life with the rhythm of the seasons.

All of this is acted out in this dance except that the changes taking place in nature may not exclude certain ludicrous, if not altogether pornographic, traits, having to do with the generation of the world and the fecundity of Mother Earth.

◁ *Bamboche after Juba dance performed by Jeanne Raymond and Pierre Desrameaux*

Duraque, King of the Carnival of the „Mazon'ne Bande” ▷



This is a dance of the Guédé divinities of the kingdom of death, and particularly of Baron Samedi, the Chief. Baron Samedi is the keeper of the cemeteries, the personification of death. In Haiti, as in Africa, death is not a man dying, or a used-up, unliving body; it is an entity, a positive power in nature. Death is Papa Guédé.

The cross of Baron Samedi is in every cemetery. The Banda, his agent, is lord of eroticism and pokes fun at man with his lascivious sensual gestures.

The second day of November, "All Souls' Day", is the annual feast and fête of the dead for the Guédé divinities.

B—DANCES OF THE CONGO RITE

1—**Congo, simple.** The Congo is more like a contra-dance than most of the dances of Haiti of African origin. This dance expresses the temperament and the character of the tribe after which it was named,—the Congo tribe of Africa.

The dance Congo is symbolic of beauty and love and is considered to be one of the most beautiful and gracious dances in all of the Haitian folklore.

2—**Congo Paillette.** This dance of the Congo rite is, more or less, a variation of the Congo dance proper. The songs for the Congo Paillette are practically the same as those of the simple Congo, but the rhythm is different, the main drum being a Tymbal.

This dance is done more in the countryside among the peasants, especially around carnival time and in South Haiti.

The flags that the dancers use in the Congo Paillette are sometimes the flags from the hounfor with the symbols of the Gods, done in embroiderie and sequins. The sabers and machetes are those that are used in the Voodoo ceremonies.

3—**Round Congo.** The Round Congo is like the simple Congo but everything is done in a circle, almost like a child's game. The dancers walk around in a circle, teasing one another. All try to grab hands and outdo each other, (almost like the game where one is left out, who cannot keep up with the steps).

This dance ends with a "Bamboche".

C—DANCES OF THE PETRO RITE

1—**Petro dances,** of the Petro rite, are the liveliest and most rapid of all the Haitian dances. The name may have derived from one Don Pedro, a former slave and Houngan in the Léogâne hills.

Moreau de St. Mery, the early writer on whom we must draw for much of our material on 18th Century Haiti, wrote:—

"Don Pedro is the name of a Negro of the section of Petit Goâve, of Spanish origin, and who by a strong character and certain superstitious practices, had acquired among the Negroes a reputation so great that he was denounced in the courts as the head of alarming activities."

This dance, as well as the whole Petro rite, seems to be symbolic of the ancient magic practices of the old African ancestors of Haiti, done in honor of the terrible divinities "Loa Boulette and La Poudre". The Petro is the dance of "Ti-Jean Pied Fin". Red is the customary color for the Petro rite and black pigs are used for sacrifices.

2—**Danse Quitta**—The dance Quitta (pronounced "kee-ta") is faster than the Petro. It is in honor of the divinity, "Ti Quitta", a Petro loa. The songs which are sung use such words as "Ti Quitta vaillant garçon", meaning "Ti Quitta is a brave boy".

There are two types of Quitta dances:—Quitta Mouille (wet Quitta), and Quitta Seche (dry Quitta). They are both variations of the Quitta proper.

3—**Danse Boumba**—The Boumba is another variation of the Petro dance. The movements, songs and drum beats are almost the same, except that the movements of the feet are more spread apart. The arms also move with less rapidity.

D—VOODOO CEREMONIES OF THE RADA RITE

1—**CEREMONIE DE AÏZAN VÉLÉGUÉTÉ** (pronounced "ah-ee-zan vel-eh-get-tay"). The Mambo Aïzan Véléguété, the wife of Atibo Legba, is the goddess and protector who watches over the doors, gateways, markets and public gathering places in general. She is a very old Negress and is

sometimes called "Gran" Aizan. She is the patron of the ritual stages of initiation which culminate finally in the Canzo ritual, a ritual of initiation by fire into the Voodoo.

Her symbol is the royal palm which represents force, power, authority and purification, when it is shredded into a fringe. Before an initiate can become eligible for Canzo, or be accepted into the Voodoo proper, he must take part in the ceremony to Mambo Aizan as a sign of his purification. The color for Mambo Aizan is white.

2—**Remise des Colliers.** The giving of the sacred necklace is a part of the Canzo ritual. During this long ritual, the Houngan gives a string of beads to the Houncis.

3—**Canzo ritual**—Canzo is a Dahomean word which means "fire ordeal" and the red hot iron bar is symbolic of Canzo. The one who passes the fire test is said to be Canzo. From the African dialect "can", means to tie, and "zo", fire.

The Houngan, who is to preside over the ceremony, is escorted in by "La Place", (the apprentice of the Houngan who will, in time, probably become a Houngan himself), who has a sacred saber in his hands. He is followed by two Houncis who are flag bearers. These fine silk flags are richly designed and full of brilliant sequins. The symbols on the flags are those of the loa or deity who is the patron of the hounfor, or sacred meeting place.

Everyone makes his proper salute to the Houngan. The Houncis come in with some sacred beads and a bowl of fire, along with the initiates. The Houngan gives each of them a string of beads, accepts their salutes and takes the bowl of fire. He himself "bathes" in the "fire", dances over it and around it, then "serves" the "fire" to each initiate by holding their hands over the large bowl. They all pass the fire test and become "Hounci canzo".

The dance in this ritual ceremony are the Yenvalou and the Voodoo Zépaules. Pure white is used for the ceremony.

4 **Sacrifice à Damballa**—(pronounced "Dom-bah-la"). Damballa is one of the most ancient and important of all Haitian loas, and one of the most

venerable. He is the husband of Ayida Wédo, and both of them were known throughout Dahomey. While Ayida is recognized in Haiti as a long, thin green snake, Damballa is known as a heavy, thick red constrictor. "Da", or "dan", in Fongbe dialect means snake or snake-like. Sometimes like Cymbie, Damballa is seen in the springs. He is also a patron of the spring and of rain. Damballa and Ayida Wédo are great forces for fertility and virility too. The most common sacrifices to Damballa in West Africa are chickens. This is equally true in Haiti; the constrictor itself is generally known to be a raider of poultry. Sometimes a white pigeon is used.

This ceremony in honor of Damballa starts when the Houncis enter, led by a main singer who carries a live white chicken. One of the other singers carries a bowl to catch its blood. The leading singer chants an incantation to Damballa. The choir responds. Then the Houngan enters, armed with a knife. He approaches the gathering, withdraws his knife and kills the chicken. The blood is caught and is used to bless the worshippers.

The Houngan begins to dance the Yenvalou and then he becomes possessed. He dances Voodoo zépaules, falls on the floor and crawls all around and between the Houncis, like a snake, honoring the symbol of Damballa. He then arises and passes his foulard over the men. They leave the ceremony to find the sacred Assotor drum. The Houngan and the girls continue to dance with the chicken. The Houngan leaves and is brought back into the ceremony atop the Assotor drum. Everyone dances around the sacred spot where the chicken was sacrificed.

5—**Autour de L'Assotor**—around the Assotor drum. The Assotor drum is the king of all the Rada drums. It stands as high as six feet and is known for its careful construction. This dance around the Assotor includes the main ones from the Rada rite. Yenvalou, Dahomey, Pas Rigole, Mahi Dété and Voodoo Zépaules.

6—**Cérémonie de L'Assotor**—Since the Assotor is the king of all the Voodoo drums, a special ceremony is given in its honor sometimes on Christmas Eve. Often a cow or a goat is sacrificed. The drum is dressed and decorated mainly with kerchiefs of various colors. The worshippers execute the dances such as Mayoyo, Yenvalou, Nago and Voodoo Zépaules. The men carry sticks and toward the end of the ceremony jump up at various times to beat the top of the drum. The main dancer becomes possessed.

The large drum is laid down. The possessed dancer jumps over and around the drum with frenzied movements. He finally falls on the drum and is taken away from the ceremony atop the Assotor.

7—**Danse Mayoyo**—A dance executed around the Assotor drum during the large ceremony or the Fête of the Assotor.

E—CEREMONIES OF THE PÉTRO RITE

1—**Le Pilé Feuille** (pronounced "Pee-lay Fay-ee"). Every Christmas Eve this ceremony is given among the worshippers of Voodoo.

This is one of the largest and most important ceremonies in all of the Voodoo, and the most symbolic.

The whip which is used, signifies the lashings that the slaves received in the old days, and the brutalities of the slave system. The "crack" of the whip calls the "Petro" spirits, concentrating and releasing the power of the active and violent loas. The whistle is believed to have spiritual and magic powers.

In the huge African markets of Negro slaves, the drums had ceased beating for their religious ceremonies and dances. Where the ships loaded their human cargo, the harsh crack of the whip and the shrill command of the whistle were ever present reminders to the captured Negroes that their deities had abandoned them.

During this ceremony many green leaves and herbs are crushed and used to make a bath. It is believed that this bath will purify the worshippers. The sword, whose blade is thrust into the ground in front of the altar of the Hounfor, is part of a traditional African ritual to halt the spirits so that they may go no further.

According to some Houngans, the machetes are symbolic of the same thing when used in the ceremonies, except they are used to "cut the evil spirits out of the air" and purify the air, leaving a "passage" for the right spirits to enter the Hounfor. Also the machetes are used to prepare the sacrifices during the ceremonies.

Rum and clarin at the ceremonies are used to stimulate the worshippers, and sometimes to please certain loa who enjoy alcohol.

When the people become possessed or mounted by a Petro loa, a handkerchief is tied around the arm so as to give the possessed person more strength and power, and to trap and keep the Petro loa from leaving. Other dances, the Boumba and Quitta are also interpreted during "Le Pilé Feuille" ceremony.

2—**Cérémonie à Bois Caiman** (pronounced "Bwa Kah-ee-mahn"). On August 14th, 1791, a Voodoo ceremony was conducted at Bois Caiman, in the Northern part of Haiti by a Houngan named Boukman. (He is sometimes called a "bocor".) It seems that in the middle of the ceremony a great storm arose and there suddenly appeared an old Negress whose body was trembling violently and who danced a "wild" dance, holding a large knife over her head. As a climax of the dance she sacrificed a black pig. All the participants drank the blood of the pig and swore to follow Boukman to do wholesale burning of plantations and slaughter the colonists.

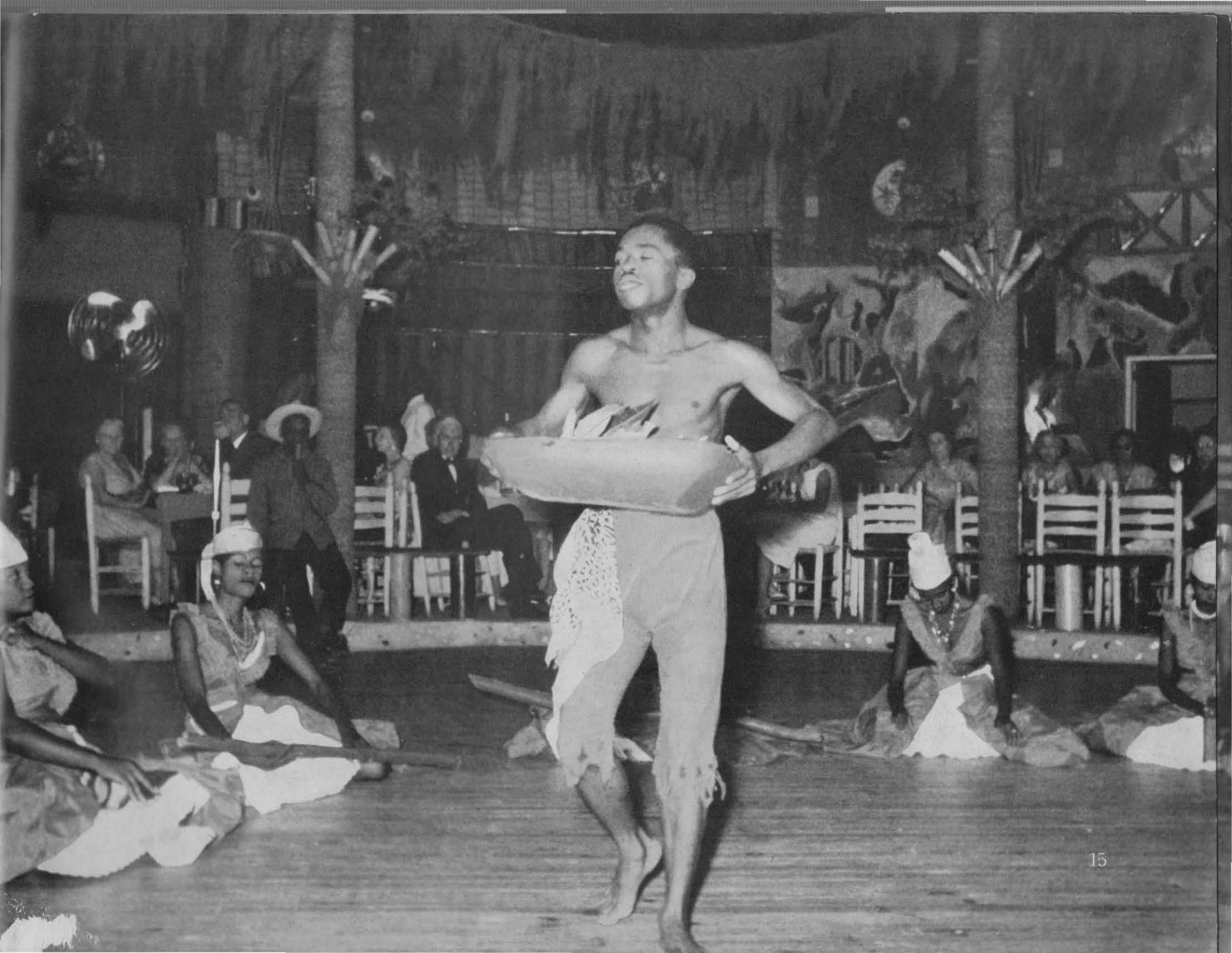
A week later the revolution was in swing. In 1804, Haiti gained its independence.

It is quite possible that the woman was the original "Marinette", or was possessed by "Marinette", the major and violent female of the Petro nation.

F—CARNIVAL DANCES

—**Explanation of Carnival.** There are two types of Carnival festivals in Haiti. The city carnival, called a Mardi Gras and the peasant carnival called Rara. The city carnival takes place during the months of late January, February and sometimes the first week in March. Before the Grand Mardi Gras which lasts 3 days, every Sunday is exciting because little "bands" and groups go from town to town and house to house to entertain and plan for the big festival.

Louinès Louinis distributing green leaves to the hounsies in the "Pilé Feuille" ceremony 





*Drummers playing
a potpourri of voodoo rhythms
(Jobolo, Joseph Romulus
and Willie)*

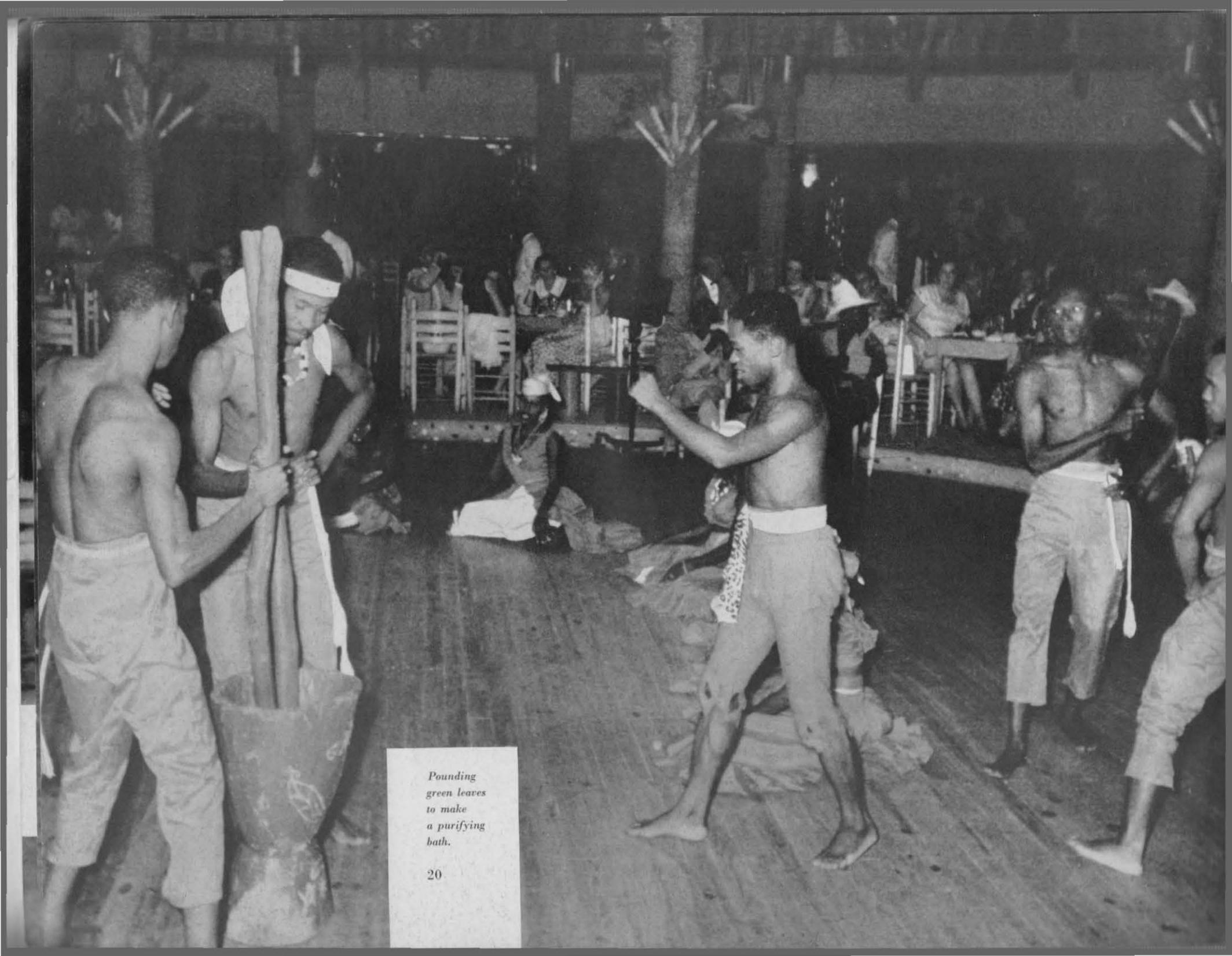
*Invoking Pétro
God with
magic powder
(Arnold Elie)*



*Laplace passes
rum to
Houngan
(Louinès Louinis
and Arnold Elie).*

*Hounsi possessed
by Pétro Loa
dancing with
Houngan
(Andrée Contant
and Arnold Elie)*





*Pounding
green leaves
to make
a purifying
bath.*



*Hounsi having been sprayed
with rum to stimulate
possession (Andrée Contant
and Arnold Elie)*

*Cutting the evil spirits
out of the air
(Joseph Romulus
and André Gentil)*



*Joseph Romulus
igniting
the magic powder*



The city carnival or Mardi Gras is a very luxurious and gala affair. Usually six beautiful Haitian girls are chosen with one queen, and the fattest, most jubilant Haitian man, who has been the outstanding citizen of the year, is chosen as the king of the carnival. They have their consorts and fabulous floats. The businessmen, various private citizens, and city hall, all join together to construct floats, extravagant costumes and masks. Carnival bands, amusements and typical Haitian music for this important yearly event are planned far in advance. Everyone dances at Carnival time. Even the foreign visitors and tourists join in the gaiety.

Masked balls are held in every nightclub and ballroom. Prizes are offered for the most original costumes. The past year, the first prize was given to two tourists from Brooklyn and one from the Bronx.

The Department of Tourism has a special float, featuring the outstanding drummer, Ti Ro Ro, and a group of folklore dancers from the Théâtre de Verdure.

After the city carnival or Mardi Gras, the peasants exhibit their festival called Rara. Rara takes place a few days before Easter. Bands of people gather together along the roads of the plains and of the hills. Each band is headed by three men playing vaccines, or bamboos, their way lighted by torches or ornate candelabra; the crowds surge forward, stopping to receive money, perhaps food, at each place. Rara ends the morning of Easter Sunday.

Rara is very old. The word itself may come from the Yoruba adverb "rara" meaning loudly; it was used only to modify the verb "ke", meaning to make sound or noise. This festival dance was known early in the history of the colony. It may claim an even older origin. Aubin says that on "Mi-Carême" day, the Negroes of the plantations dressed in masquerade and celebrated with drums and dances. One of them carried a money basket, decorated with ribbons, suspended from a long thin bamboo pole. At midnight, after a gay time, they appeared before the master of the plantation. Someone would recite a speech to him; perhaps they would sing a song in his honor, and the master would place a gift of money in the beribboned money basket held forward for his convenience. Today the money basket, gaudily decorated with ribbons is an inevitable and necessary part of Rara.

There is always a "king" of the carnival called 'Roi Lwalwadi'. He is frequently dressed in a great towering headdress and crimson clothing, and usually he is a belly-dancer or juggler of the highest order; his title

was ordained in the middle of the 19th Century by the Emperor Soulouque. Imbued with half-clear ideas of Christian crusade and with plans to assassinate one Judas, the Lwalwadi sometimes develops into a mammoth parade of sensual exhibitionism.

Rara means simply 'loud noise', and everyone is having fun.

C—SPECIAL CARNIVAL DANCES

1—**Tressé Ruban—Baton-nise.** Braiding of the ribbon, African stick dance. This is a combination of two dances on round.

The Braiding of the Ribbon is like the old Maypole dances which seem to have originated in Peru, recalling the "May-Pol" or "Areytos" of the Aborigines.

The African stick dance seems to have originated in Africa and was brought to St. Domingue by the slaves.

The leader or king of the band blows a whistle to signal the couples when to begin and end the braiding of the various-colored ribbons around the pole. During the braiding the couples face each other, holding their sticks in their right hand and the ribbon in the left. They hit each other's stick one time while dancing and weaving in and out. When the signal is given, they hit their partner's stick 1- and 1-2 and with another signal, hit their partner's stick 3 times. The signal is given to turn around and unbraided the ribbons. The dancers face the opposite partner and start to beat their stick 3 times, weaving and dancing in and out to unbraided the ribbons; the rhythm continues 1 and 1-2, and finally 1. When the ribbons are completely unbraided, the dancers seem to jump for joy at their perfect execution of such an intricate dance and go off the stage in a happy mood.

2—**Danse Mazon'ne**—There is a special carnival group called Bande Mazonne. The king is usually dressed in a costume of velvet and sequins, long white stockings and a towering headdress which is made out of everything, including Christmas tree decorations, old pieces or mirror, etc. He carries a cane and executes a very refined dance which resembles the quick battements in classic ballet, only the whole dance is done in a low plié. (Bent knee position.)

3—**Rara**—Sometimes the Rara celebration presents two kings who challenge each other in their juggling abilities, to the delight of the crowd.

One dances and juggles the jonc, which is a piece of wood covered with metal with seeds in both ends which produce a rattling sound. The other does acrobatic tricks and twirls a machette, and both execute the dance "Chaille-aux-pieds", or "hot feet".

H—DANCES OF THE COUMBITE

1—**La Coumbite de Maïs**—(Kum-beet de Mah-ease). Coumbite means cooperative work among the Haitian countrymen. It is common to all Haitian communities. Out of the need for everlasting work has come the "coumbite". They say it descended from African communal labor societies, such as that known in Dahomey by the name of 'Dokpwe'.

A coumbite is called with a lambi or conch shell. Someone blows it to give the signal that a Coumbite will be held that day. For instance, the Maïs, or corn, is ripe for harvesting, and there are many hands needed to get the job done.

The proprietor furnishes entertainment and has a real "fiesta" for the workers. There are vaccines, drums, a singer who takes delight in making up original words to songs which sometimes turn out to be the latest gossip about the neighbors.

At the end of the day, the workers themselves have a "bamboche" and dance the Juba. They are assured of a good meal and drinks, and failure to answer a neighbor's Coumbite can be very harmful because no one will respond when the one who failed is in need of help himself.

2—**La Corvée** (Kor-vay). La Corvée was an old agricultural society based upon mutual aid, also known as Coumbite. In a special sense Corvée means the compulsory road gangs, an old institution long since abolished. The men work in the fields, hoeing the ground. The girls pass to sow the seeds. The men try to flirt with them, but the girls refuse to respond. A beautiful young girl comes in to bring cool water for everyone to drink.

Renée Miraud and Gérard Dorsinville perform the erotic dance of death called Banda. ▷



She sings happily and is followed by her sweetheart. Everyone drinks the water, and the two lovers start to dance the Juba, a peasant flirt dance. The others watch and get the idea, and then they join the lovers, forget about their work and have a good time. The crowd demands that the boy pay the water girl for her dance. He draws a bill from his 'djacoute' (a peasant man's pocketbook) and then everyone is happy when he finally gives it to her, after teasing her and making her dance to "earn" the money.

3—**Au bord de la Rivière**—At the riverside. Monday is the big wash day in Haiti. Women can be seen carrying large bundles of laundry on their heads, on their way to the riverside. When they reach the stream they undress themselves to sit in the water while they beat the clothes with a stone.

Just as the peasant girls are the busiest, a group of young men pass and try to flirt with them. The girls refuse to look at them. They continue to wash and gossip. Later on the belle of the village comes in to bring fresh water and of course the latest news. The girls leave their washing and gather around her. Her sweetheart has followed her all the way and finally catches up with her at the water's edge. He is very tired, so she caresses him and gives him some fresh water, then they begin to dance a flirt dance, the "Juba", in honor of the peasant God "Zacca". When the other boys see that the wash girls are amused and interested, they reappear and again invite the laundresses to dance with them. They accept this time and they all dance the "Juba" and the boys pay the girls for dancing with them. Then they do an old fashioned "Meringue" and end with a "Bamboche".

4—**Le Triage de Café**—This work dance shows a group of coffee workers who are busily preparing coffee for export. The men enter with heavy bags of coffee beans over their shoulders, singing and joking. Then the girls come in with trays. The chief distributes the coffee beans among the girls and they separate and clean the beans. After the work is completed the chief calls the girls up, one at a time to examine their work and to empty their trays. He is satisfied with all but one of the pretty girls. Her work is not satisfactory. He throws her tray with the coffee beans on the floor and then challenges the girl to dance the "Banda" with him. Everyone is amused because they see the big boss enter. He watches what is going on for a while and then chases the chief out and dances with the

girl himself. The other workers are afraid to stay, so they leave while the two dance together the "Banda", and have a very good time.

5—**Banda Laye**—(Bahn-dah Lah-ee). The story of Banda Laye is the same as that of Le Triage de Cafe. The choreography varies a little.

I—DANCES WITH A EUROPEAN BACKGROUND

1—**Le Bal des Affranchis**—The Ball of the Freed People, gens de couleur, based on the French Quadrille of the 18th Century.

The history of the Quadrille is that in the 18th Century the beautiful old social dances disappeared in France or were modified and took more or less of their present form. Grave and difficult dances were given up, and "la contredanse", which was easier, came into favor. The contredanse is said to have originated in Normandy when it is supposed to have passed into England with William the Conqueror. It spread all over Europe and was usual in 1600. Long forgotten and neglected, it reappeared suddenly in 1745 in the Fifth Act of an opera-ballet of Rameau and so charmed the Parisians that from the stage it came into the drawing room. The name Quadrille is supposed to be a corruption of country dance.

While the French occupied Saint Domingue they entertained very royally and often danced the Quadrille. The slaves and the Affranchis, while watching their masters and the colonials dance the Quadrille, tried to imitate them but added something of their own in the last figure, the Meringue.

This dance is similar to the contra dances of America and other countries. There is a "caller", who announces the various figures. The costumes are early 18th Century, of the French, with a touch of the African's exaggeration. Ladies' hats are as high as two feet tall, with a peasant straw hat attached to the top.

The calls are a mixture of French and Créole, and so is the dance. The caller is usually a man with a clamorous voice who mimics every movement and says amusing things to the dancers to make them laugh. The dancers execute the original figures of the Quadrille with elegance and grace until the caller announces the Meringue. They throw off their elegance and feel at home with their native dance and execute a "hot" Meringue until the dance is over.

2—**Le Bal Champêtre**—This contra-dance has the same meaning as the Ball of the Freed Men. In the country under the thatched roofs, to the sound of flutes and drums, the peasants still dance the contra-dance of the old colonials, their masters. These countryfolk interpret the various figures of the Quadrille with a little distortion but when they close the dance with the Meringue, they interpret the movements with less restraint and more abandon.

3—**Le Menuet**—Done in general in the countryside.

4—**Les Lanciers**—Done in general in the countryside.

5—**La Polka**—Done in general in the countryside.

J—DANCES OF DIVERTISEMENT

1—**Danse Coyé** (Kaw-yeé). This dance is from Gressier, a small town not very far from Port-au-Prince. A dance of divertisement in honor of a divinity called "Nan-tion" in the category of the Guedes and Rada Rite.

K—MODERN CHOREOGRAPHY by André Germain

Based on Haitian Folklore and Voodoo Dances

1—**Peasant Alcuis Redoublé** (Time-near Easter)

The old peasant Alcuis Redoublé lives up in the mountains of Haiti. He invites his friends and neighbors to a "Coumbite de Mais", which is to take place in his field. The work is completed in no time at all and before leaving, the peasants amuse themselves, as well as Alcuis, by dancing the Juba.

Later on, Alcuis, along with his two daughters, crush the corn and make little bundles of it to sell. While crushing the corn, Alcuis sings and dances with his two beautiful daughters. In the meantime, a group of peasant boys and girls enter the yard, dancing the "Danse Coyé", to bargain and then purchase the corn. All of the corn is sold and the merchants leave happily.

At the end of the day Alcuis prepares a Bamboche for his friends and

neighbors under his tonnelle, this being Saturday night. They start off by dancing the "Congo" and then the "Bal Champêtre".

After the dance everyone rushes to the bar to buy refreshments. The "Banda", who came uninvited (as he always does, he being the spirit of death), orders a drink, but refuses to pay for it. The girl at the bar starts an argument with him; then he finally pulls out a bill and says he will pay her if she dances the Banda with him. She accepts, to the delight of everyone at the party, but the whole party is interrupted by a band of Rara carnival dancers who have been going from village to village. They are very glad to see so much gaiety and good refreshments. The major-jone and juggler give exhibitions, then everyone forgets about the party, joins the Carnival Band and leaves Alcuis Redoublé, alone.

2—**Haiti Chérie** (Based on the song of Marcel Sylvain).

This is a typical street scene of Haiti. It shows a mixture of the peasant and city folk on the street. There are the school children, the young couple who made a date to meet on the corner, the peasant women with baskets on their heads, being stopped to sell their wares, there is the woman of the streets, trying to pick up a date, and the city drunk who annoys everyone by running into them. He sings 'Haiti Chérie', takes a drink of rum from his bottle, offers everyone a sip and finally stumbles off of the stage.

3—**Ballet Milocan**

The Ballet Milocan is a mixture of the sun-myths' powers. The ritual diagram represents a combined cooperative action of the forces of Voodoo. This dance, with the male dancers only, is a choreography of several of the dances of Haiti including Juba, Mahi, Mahi Ciyé, Nago, etc.

VIII— Drums of Haiti

In Africa, and still here in Haiti, the drums are an integral part of the peoples' life. No dance or ceremony would survive without these ancient sacred instruments. In the Western Congo, the "Ngoma" drum plays a part in most of the significant happenings in the Bambala community. The drum is necessary for dancing, singing and mourning. There are different types of drums, and one must play the proper drums called for by the occasion.



Beating Assotor drum in air

Thus there is the small drum which is the property of the chief, with which he speaks to the dead, sends messages and news to other villages and begins and ends rendering of legal judgement. When he plays, the people must stand silently and listen. Those who violate the rule are punished. Some of the drum tones are actually stylized simulation of words, which are understood by those of the tribe who hear.

The essentials of African rhythm were transported to Haiti in Voodoo songs. When the Negro slaves were brought into Haiti (Hispaniola at that time), they kept their highly formalized and sophisticated attitude towards life which is today called Voodoo.

In spite of tribal separations, misery and persecution, the Negroes never forget the drum rhythms of their own countries, or tribes, nor their ancestors and deities. There were no conspicuous shrines with carven gods, but they learned to do without. They carried their gods with them. The slaves never forget how to make fine drums. Whether the drum was of a Congo pattern, or Ibo, or Ararda, all men listened to it and danced in the light of smoking oil lamps. The Ibos learned the dances and drum rhythms of the Congos, the Aradas of the Senegalese, etc.: and yet one culture came to dominate the whole, that of the Dahomeans. Their music, drums, lore, permeated the island. A repertoire of drum beats had accumulated over the centuries from Africa, and others sprang from the Haitian soil.

In Haiti, the drums are housed according to type and importance. For instance, under a canopy adjoining a hounfor, one might see three Rada drums suspended from a single peg. At a respectable distance might hang a Martinique drum, a Congo drum or a Petro drum. The drums of one "nation" are never mixed with those of another. If a man possesses Rada, Congo and Petro drums, they are each kept in a separate room. There are three important rites in Voodoo, Rada, Congo and Petro, and there are special drums for each rite.

The Rada drums are played in sets of three. The "maman", "seconde" and "bula", or "bebé". The maman is the largest, usually being 32 to 36 inches high and 10 to 12 inches in diameter. The seconde (known as papa drum), is about 22 inches high and 8 or 9 inches in diameter; the bula is about 18 inches in height and 8 inches in diameter. The drumheads are of heavy cowhide held tightly to the drum by strong pegs. The drums are hollow cylinders carved from a tree; the mouth is comparatively small, so that the percussion is strong. The "bula" is played with two thin sticks;

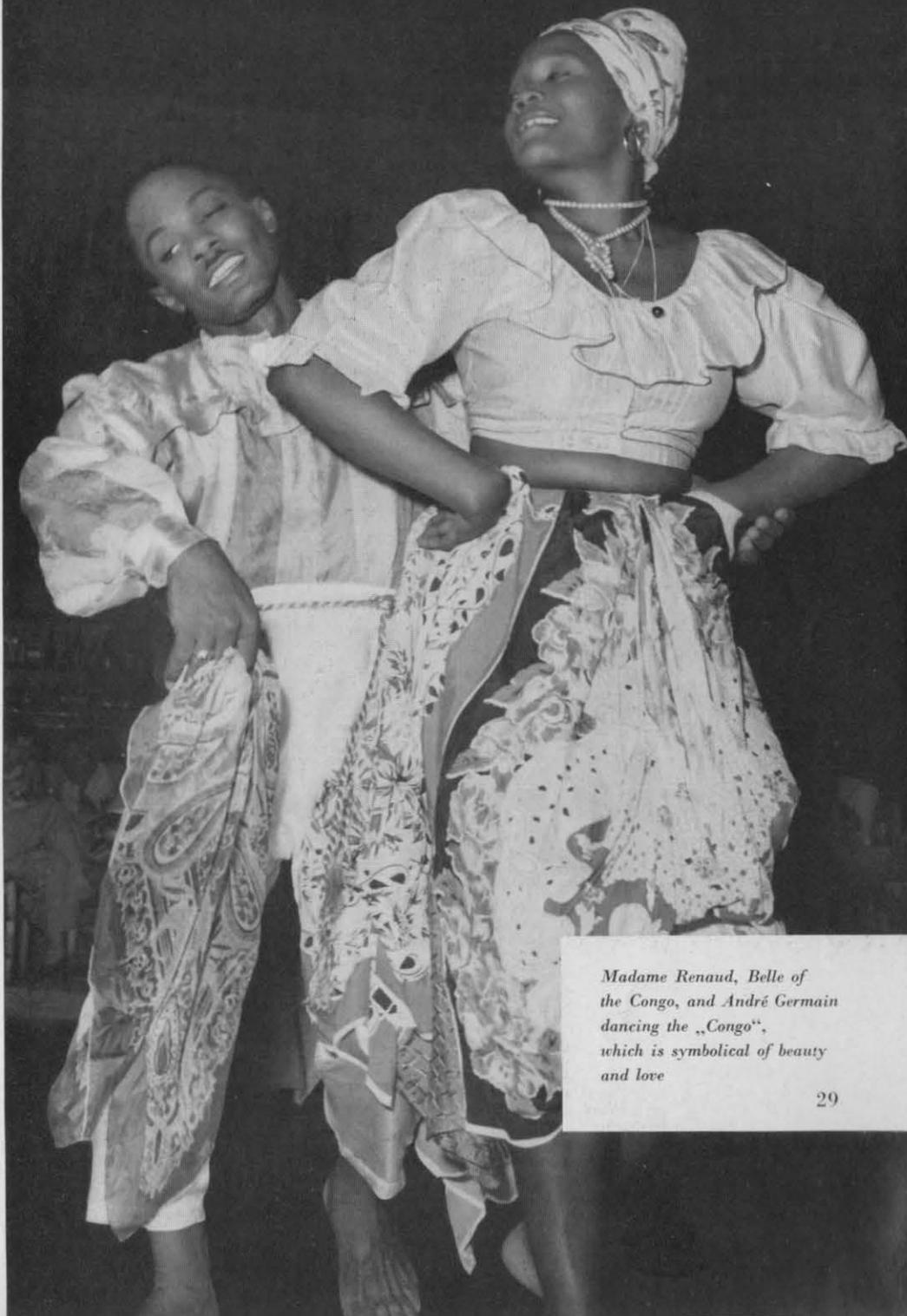
the "seconde" with two hands, or one hand and a bowed stick called an "agida", and the "maman" with one hand and a heavy stick like a mallet. For the Congo rite, there are usually three drums, and sometimes a tymbale. The tymbale has two heads and is carried around the neck, beaten with two sticks. The player of the first drum, the "maman", works in "ciyé" by rubbing his fingers over the drumhead; it makes a wailing sound. The Congo drums are constructed the same as the Petro drums. Drums are called "maman", "gronde" and "katabou".

The Petro drums are associated with the Petro rites and with a strong "nation" of stern Petro loa. The music is usually played on two drums which differ from the Rada drums in that the heads, of goatskin, are held to the bodies by cords fastened to the base. They differ in tone quality from the Rada drums and they are played with the hands.

The king, or roi of all the Voodoo drums is the Assotor. This is a large ritual drum used for rare ceremonies. The drum is dressed in a skirt, often of various colors. This Assotor drum is made like the Rada drums and stands as high as 6 feet tall. Ceremonies are planned for the Assotor sometimes on Christmas Eve.

Other drums include the "rabordage", a miniature drum said to be the only drum that can be played by a woman; the "Juba" or "Martinique", a big drum with a small mouth, used for certain death rituals. It is shorter than the Petro drum, although constructed in the same way; its diameter is much greater at the belly, and the mouth and the base very much smaller. The large air chamber within produces a hollow-sounding tone not given by any of the other Haitian drums. And unlike the others, it is laid on its side and straddled by the drummer who uses the heel of his foot as well as his hands in the playing. Behind him a "catalieu" plays with sticks on the sounding board affixed to the body of the drum, or on the wood of the drum itself.

Drums are baptized in the name of the loa to which they are especially dedicated, before they can be played at a ritual. Sometimes this requires a special ceremony, since the drums are said to be used as a mean of "communication" between humans and the spirits. A drum which has been baptized is then used for sacred purposes. Since the drummer has no particular position in the religious hierarchy, the drums can be played by other drummers, as long as he understands the sacred voice of address to the loa and knows who they are.



Madame Renaud, Belle of the Congo, and André Germain dancing the „Congo“, which is symbolical of beauty and love

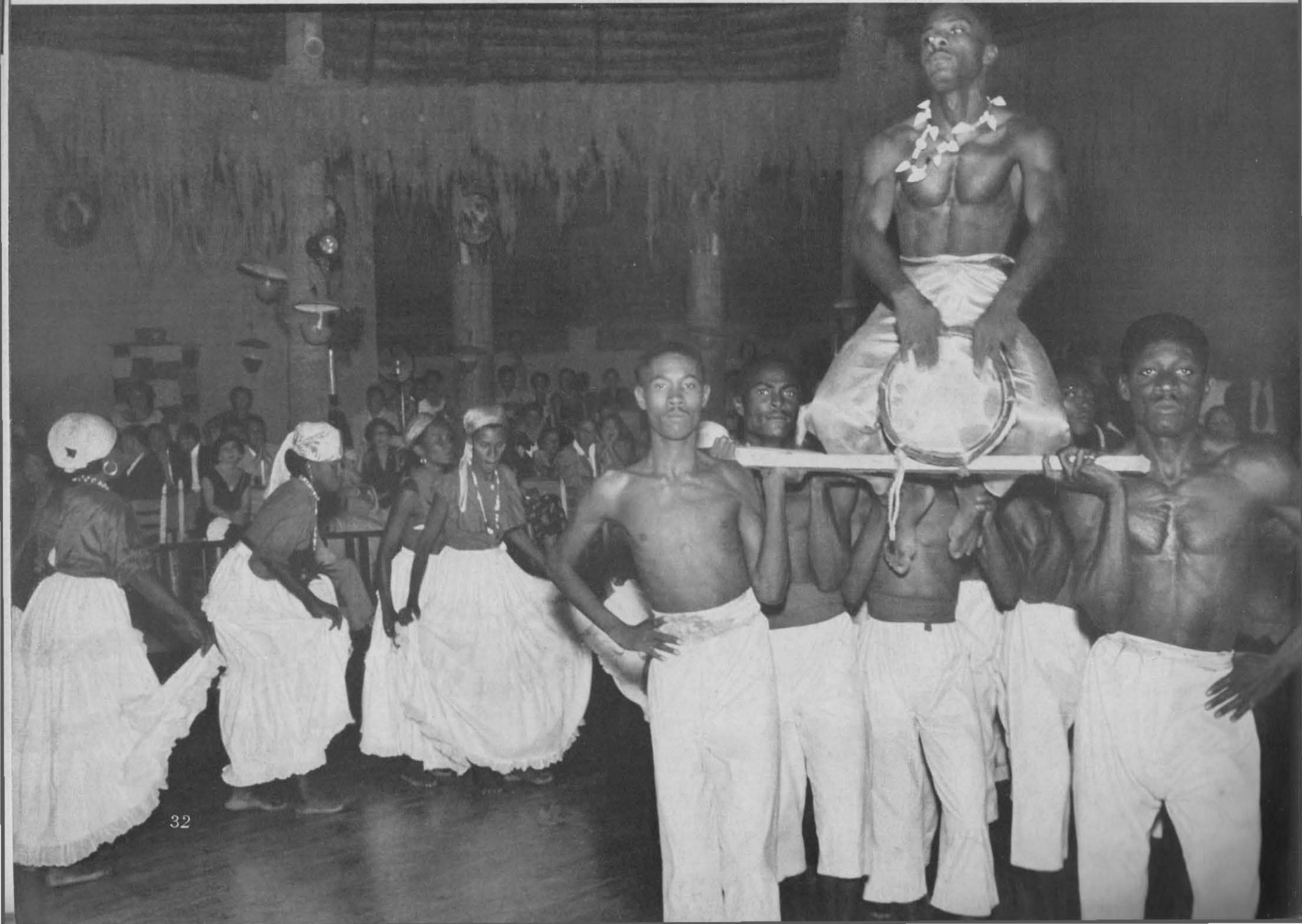
*Bamboche after the Coumbite
de Maïs
(Jeanne Raymond and
Pierre Desrameaux)*





Jean Léon Destiné performing

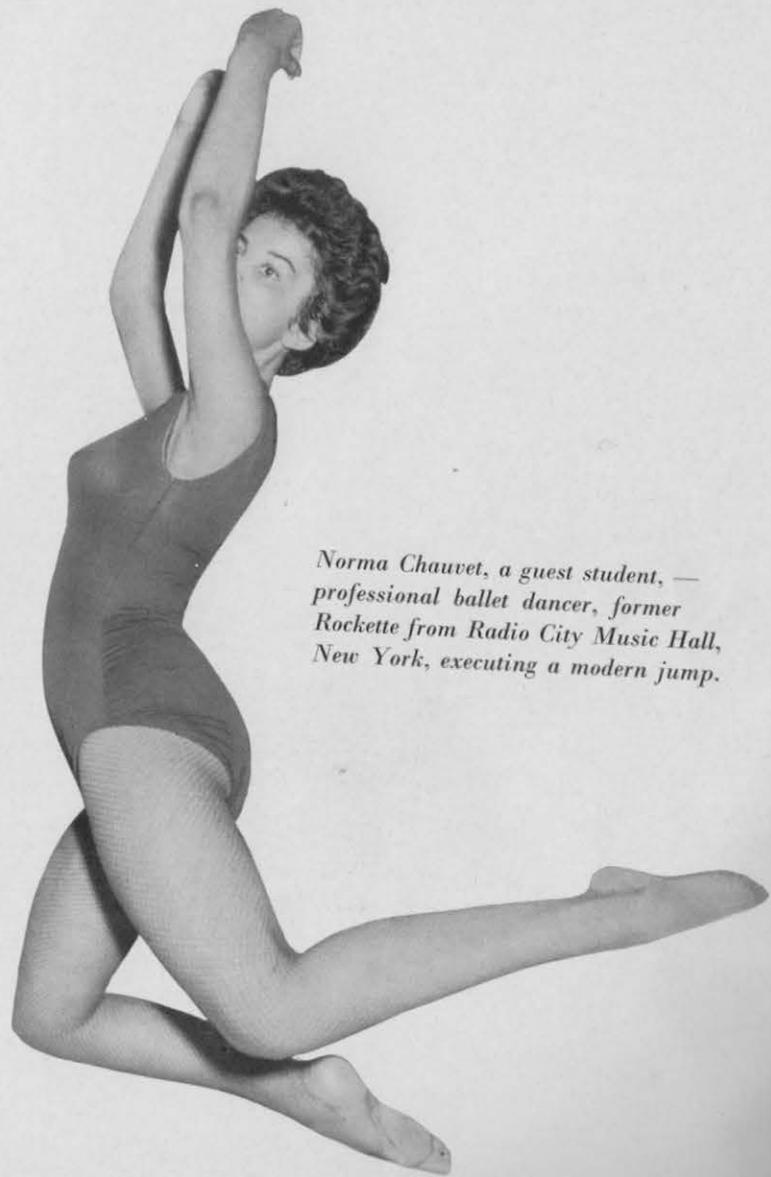
Sacrifice to Damballa







Gérard Dorsinville practising a jump for the Assotor Dance.



*Norma Chauvet, a guest student, —
professional ballet dancer, former
Rockette from Radio City Music Hall,
New York, executing a modern jump.*

CHAPTER II HAITIAN INSTITUTE OF FOLKLORE AND CLASSIC DANCE

Founded November 15, 1954 by Lavinia Williams on the Champ de Mars.

COURSES OFFERED

1. HAITIAN FOLKLORE AND VOODOO DANCES, their background, history, significance, technique, drums.

2. BALLET—Classic, as a foundation, and progressive training toward a mastery of body mechanics to increase the grammar and vocabulary of the dance for individual students. Since classic ballet is a highly specialized universal language, students are prepared to follow classic ballet instructions given in any school in other countries.

To develop choreographers: Choreography is the supreme contribution of the dancer; its invention, even more than its execution, for without design there could be no concerted dance.

3. MODERN—Based on Martha Graham's technique and Louis Horst's methods of choreography. Movements and some types of exercises from

Eugene Von Grona, Agnes de Mille, Katherine Dunham, Michael Kidd, Helen Tamaris, Kyra Nijinsky, etc.

In the early days of this country, Haiti looked to foreign shores for art and tended to copy foreign customs instead of developing an art form of her own. Today, the painters, writers, dancers, etc. have put down roots of their own. They are delving into their own heritage as never before. Now, with formal dance training, the young people are discovering *the traditions of their own country and soon will be able to make a new dance out of what they see.*

The use of modern dance technique has only one aim: to make the dancer's body an adequate instrument for the expression of idea and feeling.

4. TAP DANCE AND BALLROOM. SPECIAL COURSES IN HAITIAN MERINGUE.

5. TEACHERS TRAINING

Added Facts about the Folklore Dance Course

I. HAITIAN FOLKLORE, SACRED AND RITUAL DANCES DRUMS, SONGS, etc.

This course gives the students a real knowledge of their heritage in dance. If we go back to the earliest times, we find that primitive man is believed always to have danced. Dancing was and still is in Haiti, involved in practically every important experience in the lives both of individuals and of the people as a whole. There are dances of birth, of death, of courtship and marriage, of fertility, of festival, of casting out evil, of curing the sick, of religious ceremonies, etc. Each of these dances and ceremonies has

its own choreography, music, songs, rhythms and special significance, and each is dedicated to its own particular loa or spirit.

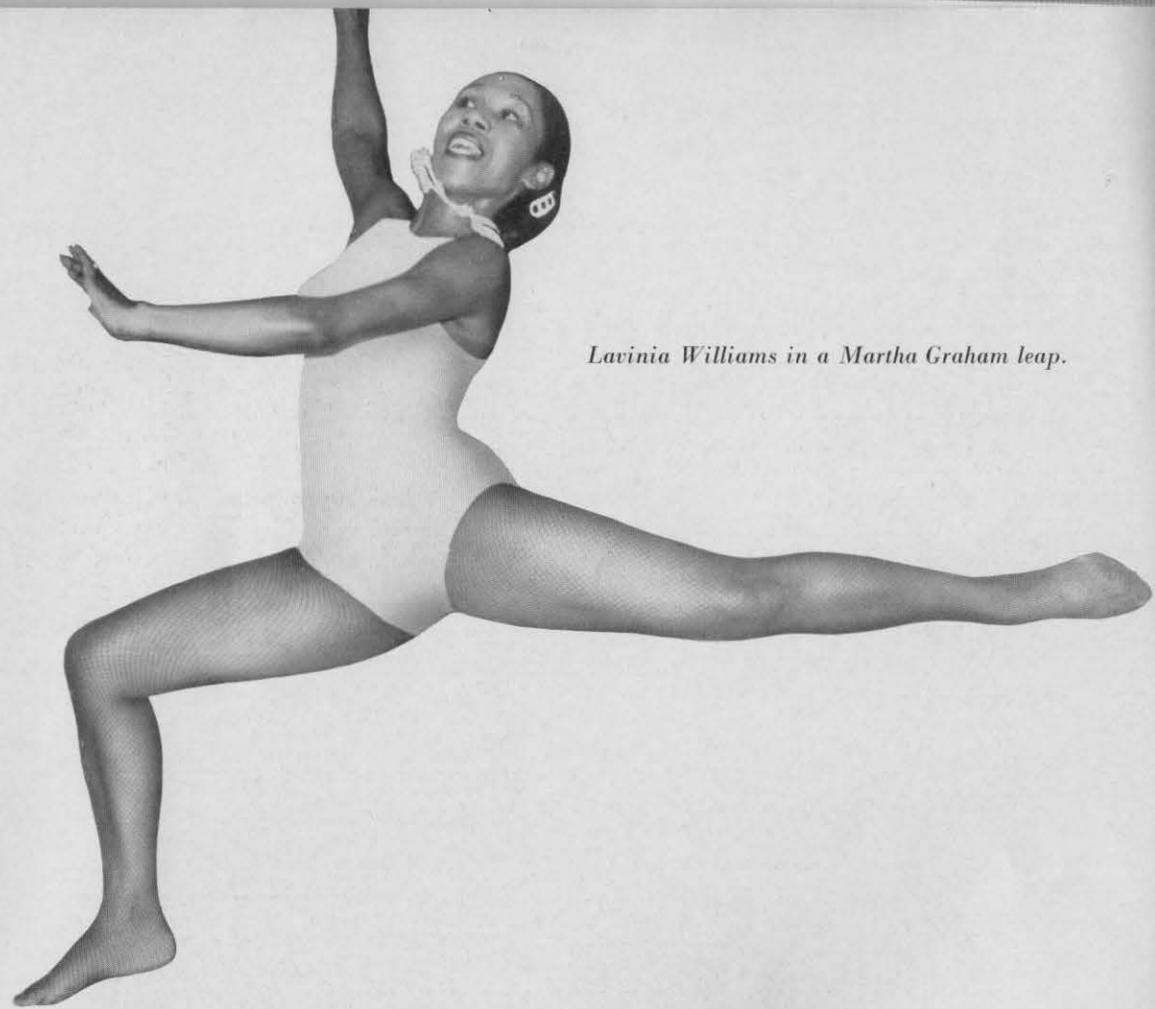
Among the common people, most of their dances do not raise questions of grouping. They are not given objective consideration. They are a habit pattern in experience and so are accepted.

The Haitian Institute strives to carry this "dance of the people" beyond its present "accepted" stage and develop it so that it can be interpreted, classified and appreciated by all students of the dance and art lovers in general.

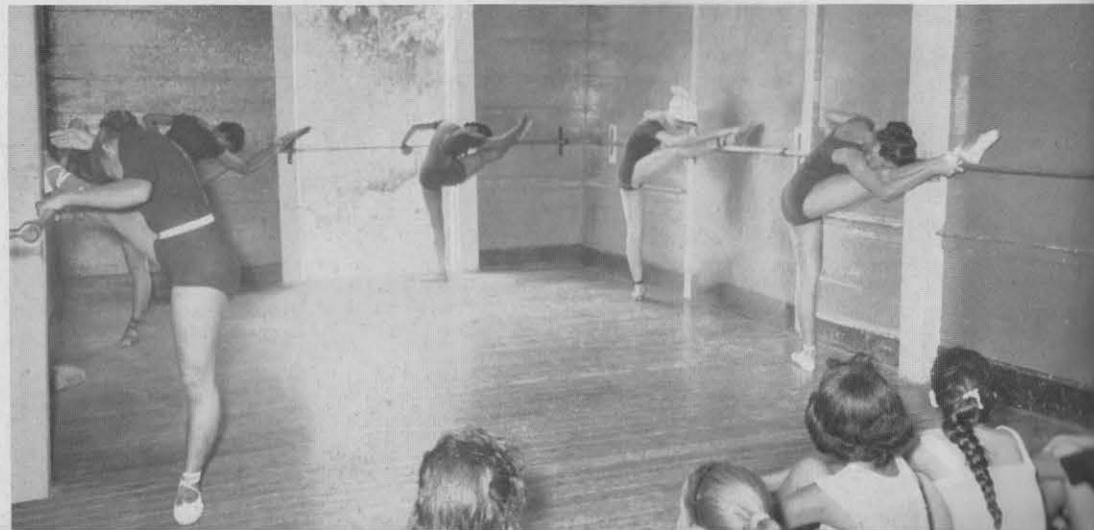
The drum rhythms and songs are studied for the same reasons.



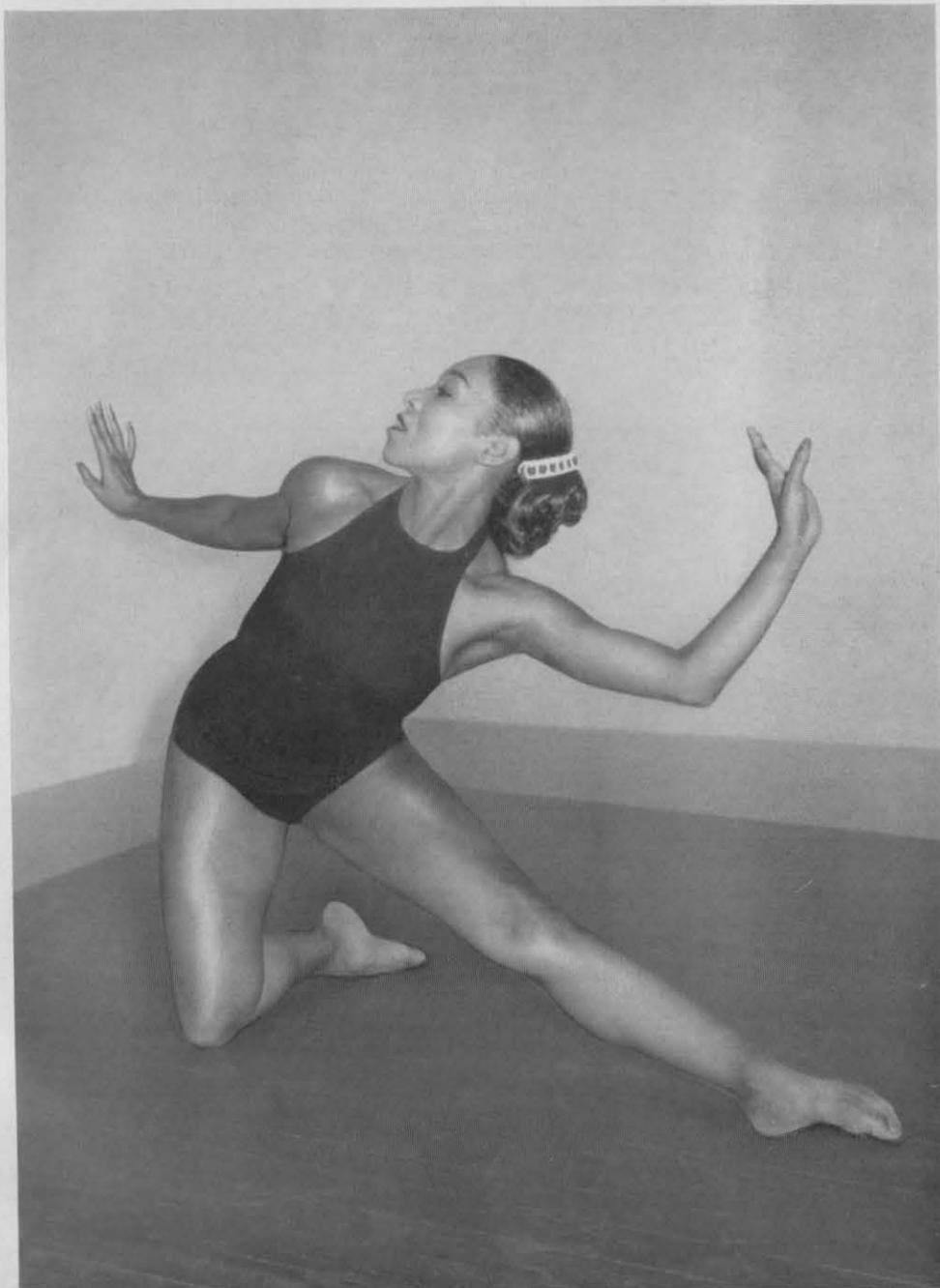
Advanced ballet students executing "Développé à la Seconde".



Lavinia Williams in a Martha Graham leap.



Ballet students flexing for ballet "à la barre".



*Ballet Class practising
"Echappé sur les pointes".*

*Lavinia Williams showing
a movement for her
new choreography based
on Haitian Voodoo en-
titled "La Poule Blanche"
(The White Chicken).*



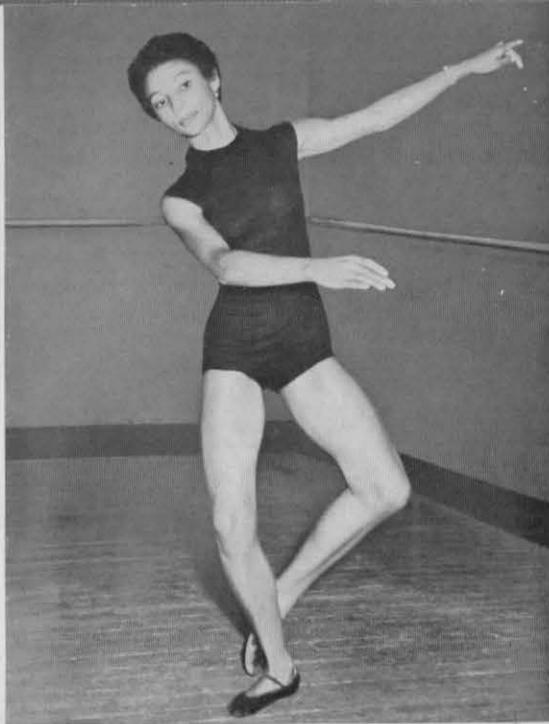
Lavinia Williams executing a leap from an African dance.

A Haitian Folklore Class. The drummer "Djobolo" gives drum lesson at the school.



Lavinia Williams demonstrating a gesture in the "Dance Juba".

Nicole Morita and Eddie William practising the "Dance Mahi" before a performance.



Rose-Marie Joseph received a scholarship to Carnegie Hall (Ballet Arts) and studied five and a half years at Lavinia Williams' School of Dance



Linda Barreyre, one of the youngest soloists in Lavinia Williams' Dance School. She is an advanced ballet student, also an outstanding dancer of Haitian folklore.





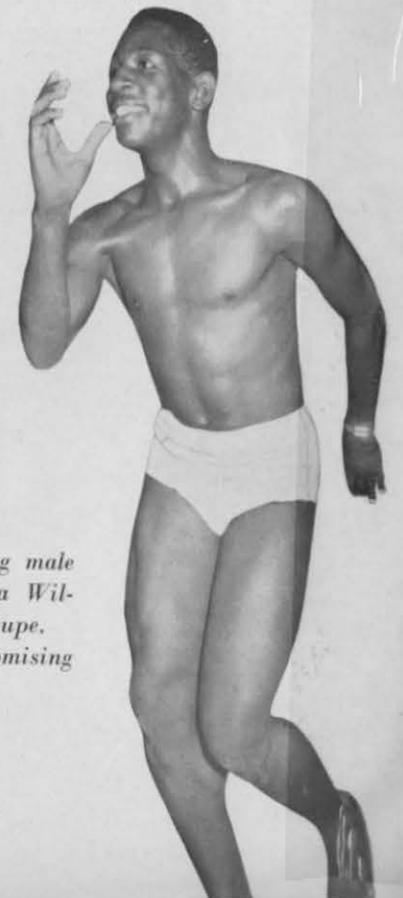
Modern class in floor stretch.



Ballet students doing the "grand écart".



Ballet student flexing for ballet "à la barre".



Jo Archer, leading male dancer in Lavinia Williams' Dance Troupe. Also a very promising ballet dancer.



Ballet students preparing to do a "grand écart".

Gisèle Lebon (left) and Norma Chauvet (front). Gisèle Lebon is Lavinia Williams' Assistant Teacher. She studied the Teachers' Training Course for five and a half years.



Norma Chauvet stretching at the bar.



Gisèle Lebon and Norma Chauvet in an advanced modern class.



Rose-Marie Joseph, Elizabeth Héraux and Nicole Huttenot, Linda Barreyre and Sara Yarborough in "Danse Congo".



Petite Michèle Anson, five years old. One of the most talented baby ballerinas in Lavinia Williams' School.



*Gladys St. Albin as boy
and Lynn William as girl
with group in "Danse
Congo".*

*(Left to right) Lynn Wil-
liam, Nicole Huttenot,
Rose-Marie Joseph and
Elizabeth Héraux in the
Dance of the Persian
Slaves from the Opera
"Khovantschina".*

*Jo Archer and Gilberte
Lavache in the dance
"Yenvalou".*





Soloists Lynn William, as girl, and Gladys St. Albin, as boy.

(Seated left to right)

Lavinia Yarborough, Jr.,

Linda Barreyre and

Sara Yarborough.

(Standing)

Rose-Marie Joseph,

Elizabeth Héraux and

Nicole Huttenot,

— in the "Danse Congo".

Little eight year old Cassandra Marshall, one of the most versatile students, shows a great talent for ballet, tap and Haitian folklore. She started pre-ballet courses at three years old.

Lynn William shows a great talent for jazz and boogie woogie. She specializes in ballet.





Lynn William finishes a jazz routine in a split.



Lynn William practising before a performance.



Rose-Marie Joseph in an arabesque from her comic dance "The Lazy Doll".

*Talented Rose-Marie
Joseph in a ballet pose.*



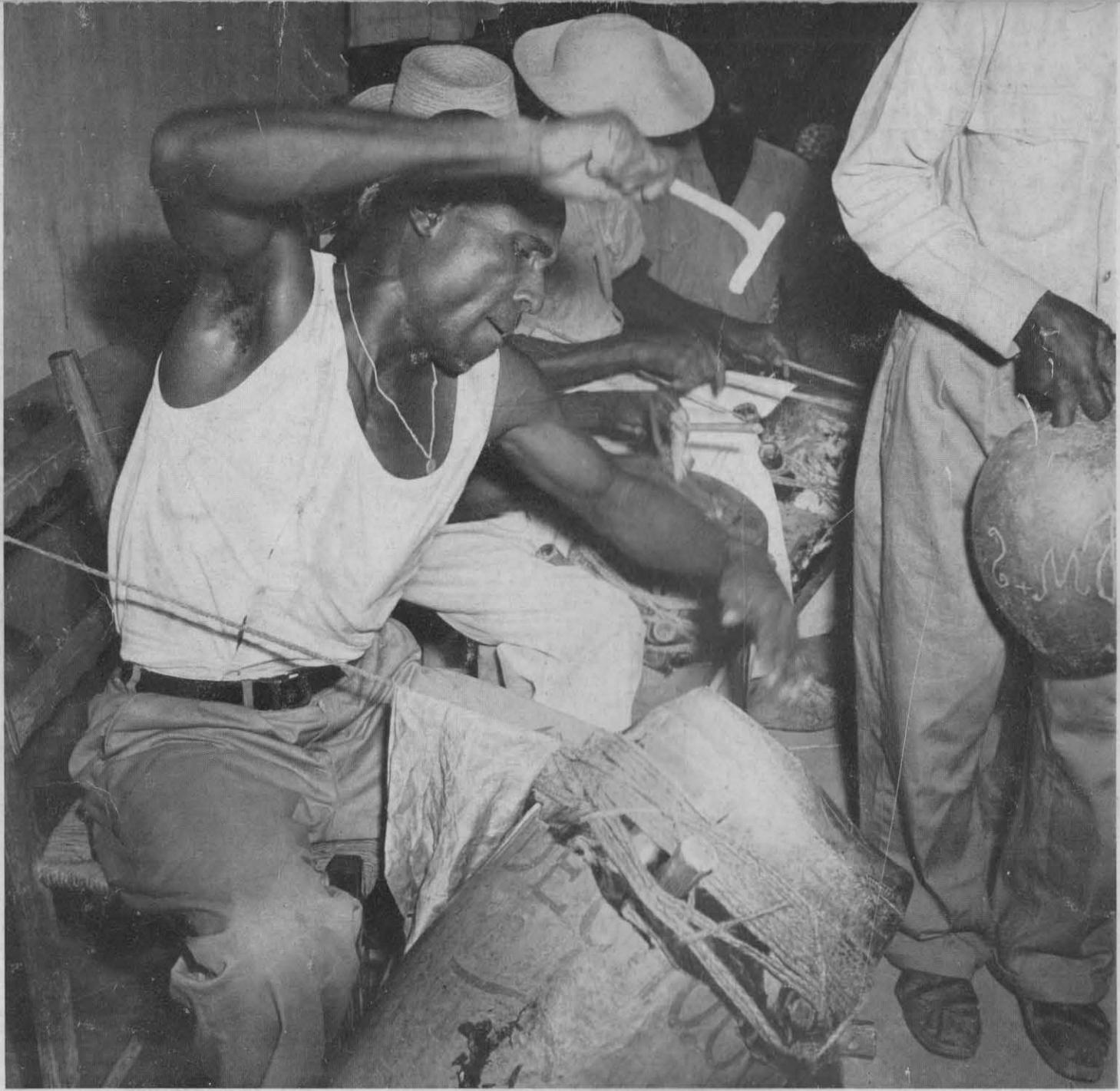
*Linda Barreyre dances a
Persian slave girl in a
concert which won her a
prize.*

RESEARCH NOTES FROM:

- 1—HAITI SINGING Harold Courlander
- 2—DIVINE HORSEMAN Maya Deren
- 3—LES DANSES FOLKLORIQUES . Michel Lamartinière Honorat
- 4—LE VOODOO HAITIEN Milo Rigaud
- 5—LE VOODOO HAITIEN Louis Maximilien
- 6—NATIONAL LIBRARY Emmanuel C, Paul
- 7—BUREAU OF ETHNOLOGY . . . Lorimer Denis (dead.)
- 8—DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM . . Mme. Mallebranche
- 9—"TOMORROW" MAGAZINE



Port-au-Prince, Haiti, West Indies



Cidika

Drummer