

## Art Music by Caribbean Composers: Martinique

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### INTRODUCTION

Originally colonized by the Dutch, Martinique was sold to France in 1635 and remains today an overseas department of France. During the period of colonization, the island was settled by European landowners and the African slaves introduced to work on plantations, mainly of sugar cane. After the abolition of slavery, East Indians were brought in as additional sources of labour (Cyrille, 2005).

Along with its political affiliation, the island maintains cultural ties to France. French is the official language and Creole is also widely spoken (Cyrille, 2008).

The “dance repertoire of nineteenth-century French ballrooms” influenced the local styles of music in Martinique (Cyrille, 2005, para. 3). “French contradances, waltzes, polkas and mazurkas were frequently played by bands composed of black musicians who gave them a new twist. They evolved into the Creole waltz, the polka and the mazouk” (Cyrille, 2005, para. 3). The biguine is another musical genre native to Martinique but inspired by French ballroom music. “Characterized by a lively 2/4 meter and an eight-bar structure, the biguine merges rhythmic elements of African origin with European-style harmony” (Cyrille,

2005, para. 3). Other musical styles, such as mazonn and bélé, were inspired by the African heritage of Martinique. Casinos and ballrooms with entry fees, long provided popular performance venues for local musicians (Cyrille, 2005).

Zouk, a popular music genre that blends sounds from a variety of Caribbean musical styles, first appeared in Martinique in the early 1980s and quickly flourished internationally (Cyrille, 2005).

Although better known for his artistry as a jazz musician, pianist Chyco Jehelman has also composed piano works in a more classical vein. In his piano solo, “Bélie manmay la”, Jehelman evokes elements of the folk dance of the same name, typical in rural Martinique.

Another important musical figure in Martinique is the soprano Christine Eda-Pierre. Born in Fort-de-France, she attended the Paris Conservatory and graduated with honors in 1957. In addition to performing and recording extensively, she served on the faculties of the Paris Conservatory and Académie Musicale de Villeroze (de Lerma, 2013).

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## COMPOSERS

Jean Bordin (ne André Bordes)

Mario Canonge (1960- )

Chyco Jehelmann (also spelled Gehelmann, Jehelman)

Fernand Laporte (1842-1913)

Paulette Nardal (1896-1985)

## COMPOSITIONS, by composer

### Bordin

*Biguine*

### Jhelmann

*A katel*

*Ale maye*

*Bélia manmay la*

*Belia Simaoba*

*Cinq poemes d'A. Cesaire*

*Un cri Abraham*

*De l'exteriorité*

*Edwao Koumande*

*Epousailles*

*Fecondité*

*Laida*

*Pani pase lanmen*

*Piano tanbou*

*Réponse*

*Resonanterieure*

*Sesaki bel*

*Transparences*

### Laporte

*Les caprices d'une poete créole*

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