

# CAPE VERDEANS IN THE ATLANTIC: THE FORMATION OF *KRIOLU* MUSIC AND DANCE STYLES ON SHIP AND IN PORT

by

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Having worked closely with Cape Verdean musicians for several decades, I am tuned into the rhythms and grooves of *Kriolu* sounds. Like others who are familiar with this music, I can generally pick up on the fine points that mark it as *Kriolu*, or Cape Verdean. What intrigues me is when I occasionally hear music from a different culture that is noticeably close in style to Cape Verdean music. When this happens, it always has a variant of the *contradance* or *habanera* rhythm, familiar melodic structures, and phrasing based on call-and-response structures. The mystery song usually turns out to be from nearby Guinea Bissau, which shares a recent colonial past with Cape Verde, but sometimes I hear echoes of the styles in other syncopated, creolized works, especially in the music of the French Caribbean, Colombia, and even the Garifuna peoples.

This isn't that surprising. No one will deny that Cape Verde is a part of the greater Black Atlantic Triangle, or that transatlantic mariners carried music and dance from port to port throughout the shipping routes. These contacts undoubtedly had an influence on the development of Cape Verdean music culture and its genres. Still, few musicologists to date have tried to look for relationships between the historical travel routes and the flowering of Cape Verdean genres. There may be good reasons for this, such as a paucity of data, or simply more interest in other types of cultural studies.

Absolutes in the search for the roots of Cape Verdean musical forms in Portugal, Africa, or anywhere else are clearly unobtainable.<sup>1</sup> Musical forms don't have to be put into historical context or be derived from earlier styles in order to appreciate or understand them—Cape Verdean genres are beautiful in their own right. But this hasn't stopped me from wondering how this music relates to other world musical traditions and to island life. Some of my questions are shared by others studying island cultures (Baldacchino 2011, Dawe 2004). For example, because of the isolation of the Cape Verde islands, did the culture develop endemic musical styles that were largely devoid of outside influences, like island-specific species unique to the Galapagos? Our ears

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<sup>1</sup> For one, Portuguese musical roots are extremely diverse themselves due to the early contacts with African and the Arab cultures. Moreover, African musical sources in the Cape Verdean cultural mix are a composite of many diverse styles, representing 40 or more distinctive cultures. As there were no indigenous people on the islands when Portuguese explorers came ashore around 1454, the very people of the islands themselves are new transcultural creations.

suggest that this is not the case. Most anyone can hear the resemblance of Cape Verdean music to other Afro Caribbean and Luso African styles.

Yet the details of how Cape Verdean music came to be continue to beg an answer. What sources fed into the styles, and when did the genres reach the forms that we recognize today? Can they be linked to patterns in contact with the outside world or to key individuals? In which directions were the ideas flowing, and what respective roles did people of the Americas, Africa, and Europe play in these exchanges? Can specific musical styles or ways of making music in Cape Verde be accounted for through the exchange of ideas around the Atlantic?

These links have not yet been fully stated or satisfactorily explored.<sup>2</sup> Aside from the composer/historian Vasco Martins (1983), only a few scholars have chosen to analyze the formal musical elements in Cape Verdean musical styles, and many of the studies that do exist are written in Portuguese. There is consequently a need for works in English describing Cape Verdean musical forms and their history, and this short study is just a start. Like others who have worked to understand the relationships between styles (Guilbault 1993, Austerlitz 1997, Livingston-Isenhour and Garcia 2005), I look for clues about their formation in Cape Verde's musical past. For this particular puzzle, ethnography is of limited use, and there are unfortunately few musical artifacts that have survived in the form of written music or recordings. Nevertheless, when they are aligned with the emergence of musical genres, patterns in Cape Verde's maritime history and historical accounts can shed some light on the musical processes.

Cape Verde has been a port of call between Europe, Africa, and the Americas dating back to the fifteenth century. Because of its central location, Cape Verde served as an important (but often overlooked hub) for the exchange of music and dance within the Black Atlantic music (Fryer 2000: 137, Dunn 2000: 143–144). It seems likely that both mariners passing through the area and Cape Verdeans who returned to the islands after working abroad have had an influence on the development of Cape Verdean genres. It is not coincidental that several Cape Verdean genres emerged during a time frame from 1880 to 1910, which corresponds to periods of intense contact with the outside world. I maintain that the origins of the *morna*, *coladeira*, and *funana* are linked to nineteenth and early twentieth century Atlantic dance traditions and salon styles, especially those associated with South America and the Caribbean. As such, Cape Verdean genres are part of the complex Black Atlantic musical reiterations that became the Argentinian and Brazilian tango, as well as *maxixe*, foxtrot, *beguine* and many other popular forms whose origins date back to even earlier Atlantic cultural exchanges. This article will contextualize Cape Verdean music today, discuss significant shipping routes and

<sup>2</sup> My 1997 dissertation on *batuku* and *funana* utilized a combination of ethnographic, musicological, and historical inquiry, and most of my works have taken an ethnomusicological approach based on the analysis of data from fieldwork. There are several strong new studies of Cape Verdean culture through the lens of music, for example, Arena (2011), Tavares (2006), Brito (1998), and Nogueira (2011, 2015), but most of these scholars have not focused on traditional Western musical analysis aside from Martins (1989) and Rehm (1975).

musical life at sea, and discuss influences on several major genres, pointing out some of the connections between all of these subjects.

### **Cape Verde: the islands and culture**

Located about 370 miles from the West African coast, the Cape Verdean archipelago consists of a series of islands that extend out into the Atlantic in a V-shaped pattern. Portuguese and Italian explorers discovered the islands around 1465, and they were first settled beginning about 1500 by Portuguese as a base for further exploration and commerce with Upper Guinea (Conniff and Davis 1994: 34). Enslaved Africans were soon brought from the nearby Guinea and Senegambian coast as laborers. The settlers quickly learned that the island chain was prone to extended drought, making the it unsuitable for large-scale plantations. The colony nevertheless proved to be an asset to Portugal because of its location at the crossroads of major trade winds and currents. The islands became a regular stop in transatlantic passages, including those of slave trade vessels.

Cape Verde was a Portuguese colony until gaining independence in 1975, following an extended colonial war fought on the African continent. The population of Cape Verde is currently around 500,000, and Cape Verdeans today are the multi-racial descendants of Europeans, Africans, and many other ethnic groups. The primary languages spoken in Cape Verde are Portuguese and Cape Verdean *Kriolu*, a creole language based on Portuguese and African linguistic structures and vocabulary. Portuguese is used as the official language of government and schooling, but *Kriolu* is used in day-to-day interactions and in musical traditions. In terms of formal religion, most Cape Verdeans are Roman Catholic or in more recent years, evangelical Christians.

Cape Verde is very limited in its fresh water resources, making life difficult for its subsistence farmers, which have historically made up the large majority of the population, along with subsistence fishermen. Cape Verde's ports have provided economic alternate opportunities for those involved in maritime trades, especially in previous years when it was necessary for ships to dock and refuel before a transatlantic crossing.

Because of Cape Verde's frequent drought conditions over the centuries, its people have been forced to leave and find new homes abroad, creating large communities in southern New England, Portugal, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Senegal, Brazil, and in Argentina. The largest community, estimated at some 400,000 is in the United States in southern New England. Altogether, the population of the Cape Verdean diaspora far outnumbers that of the islands today.

Although these Cape Verdeans live away from their homeland, many retain a strong sense of cultural identification with Cape Verde, expressing a range of identities depending on the specific context. One important glue that binds the transnational culture together is its use of *Kriolu*, which refers not only to the language but also to Cape Verde people and culture including music, which is another important shared marker of ethnicity and identity. While Cape Verdeans may not be familiar with the term "multiple consciousness," a term used by Paul Gilroy in relation to the Black Atlantic

citizens' sense of identity (1993), simultaneously belonging to several homelands is integral to their experience of ethnicity.

Cape Verdeans were likely arriving in North America by the early 1700s as part of the whaling industry (Carreira 1982: 44, Holloway 2008: 118). Many settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, which was the center of US whale fishery. For centuries, Cape Verdean in the US have lived alongside other immigrant and ethnic groups but have successfully maintained their identity as an independent African American sub-culture in a large diaspora community which dates back many generations.

Cape Verdean Americans have often embraced the musical opportunities available to them in the nearby cities of Boston, New York, and Providence, learning the popular music of the days and working as professionals. Some Cape Verdean second generation musicians who made important contributions to the world of American jazz and pop include the tenor sax player Paul Gonsalves (1920–1974), who played with the Duke Ellington band for years as well as with the Count Basie band and Dizzy Gillespie; legendary pianist and composer Horace Silver (1928–2014), the disco band Tavares, which performed the song “More Than a Woman” in the iconic 1977 film “Saturday Night Fever;” and the blind bluesman Paul Pena, whose encounters with Tuvan music were chronicled in the prize winning 1999 documentary film “Genghis Blues.” Many other Cape Verdean musicians, including Cesaria Évora (1941–2011), the so-called “Barefoot Diva” who rose to worldwide fame as a world music star in the 1990s, have been able to move between cultures with ease, without losing their own sense of *Kriolu* identity. A solid grounding in African musical “ways-of-knowing” and sensibilities carried around the Atlantic based on Gilroy’s model may have facilitated this style shifting.

### Cape Verdean music today

Music of the Cape Verdean diaspora today<sup>3</sup> exists in a range of contexts from traditional folk music that is island specific to popular music that is part of the world beat scene. The most recognized genres—*batuku*, *morna*, *funana*, and *coladeira*—haven’t been stagnant; rather, they have been consistently updated and modernized over the decades, selectively bringing in rhythms and instruments from the outside at will. Cape Verdeans have embraced multiple waves of new styles and incorporated them into the culture over the years. These include a never-ending parade of styles from the outside world including *cumbia* and *samba* in 1960s, rock and reggae in the 1970s, and *zouk* and rap in the 1980s and 90s, a process made even faster today because of the internet. Detailed encyclopedia entries on Cape Verdean genres can be found in Groves/Oxford Online, but here is a short summary of major styles, along with links to online videos. Ideas about their influence and origins appear later in this article.

<sup>3</sup> This article’s summary of musical styles is based on my published contributions to *Grove Music/Oxford Music Online* (2000, 2006, 2014), and in versions of the *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cape Verde* (1995, 2007), as well as on my PhD dissertation on *batuku* and *funana* (1997). Note that several traditional Cape Verdean genres including religious ritual music, children’s songs, and work songs have not been the subject of much study.

The *batuku* (*batuko*, *batuque*) and *funana* traditions are associated with the island of Santiago, which was historically home to the largest population of enslaved Africans. They were brought to Cape Verde to develop plantations but this plan never amounted to much due to irregular rainfall patterns. Today, this group of subsistence agriculturists living in the interior of the island call themselves *badius*. Traditional *batuku* is still performed in rural Santiago and in some larger villages by women in community groups. They hold *batuku* sessions to celebrate weddings, christenings, and other local festivities. Traditional *batuku* is done by women seated in a circle or half-circle with a solo dancer or two in the center. The call-and-response circle organization echoes Brazilian *samba-de-roda* and many other communal old and new world African traditions.<sup>4</sup> *Batuku* incorporates many music and dance features associated with African styles (call-and-response song structures, a hip-based dance style, socio-critical lyrics of topical interest, polyrhythmic ostinatos, and so on) [DVD track 1].

The performance context of traditional *batuku* has been transformed since the 1990s. There are folklorization processes at work, and some village groups are now performing in state-sponsored festivals and tourist events in folklore shows, as interest by outsiders in this music and dance style has increased. Folkloric *batuku* groups coordinate their outfits, carefully rehearse their acts, and guard their best songs from appropriation by other groups.

In another new development, popular musicians in Cape Verde and its diaspora have merged *batuku*-style dance with *funana* accordion and mainland African “twerk-like” dance movements. The dance is now done by several women on opposite sides of the accordion player rather than in a circle formation, and it has lost aspects of its communal context.<sup>5</sup>

Since 1990 or so, musicians reworked *batuku* into a new popular style called *neo-batuku*. *Neo-batuku* is strongly associated with Orlando Pantera (1967–2001) and the singer Lura (b. 1975), among others. It uses *batuku*'s polyrhythmic structure, lyrics, and melodic contours in new commercial arrangements but retains the style's associations with the *badius* of Santiago.

*Funana* is an accordion-based dance music style that exists today in traditional and popular versions. Traditional *funana* uses a diatonic two-row button accordion, called *gaita*, and a homemade iron scraper played with a kitchen knife called *ferrinho*. Two people, usually men, play the instruments and one of them doubles as a singer, presenting songs of topical interest. [DVD track 2]. Like *batuku*, *funana* was originally a *badiu* folk tradition from the interior of Santiago. In the 1970s, the style was updated

<sup>4</sup> Others have pointed out the similarities and attributed them to an Angolan influence. See “Cape Verdean Batuko and Brazil’s Samba de Roda.” Tonya’s Blog site, The Drum’s Voice (drumsvoice.wordpress.com). <https://drumsvoice.wordpress.com/2013/03/08/cape-verdean-batuko-and-samba-de-roda> Accessed Jan. 9, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Links several types of *batuku* that range from fairly tradition to new popular styles that merge *funana* and *batuku*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4e9zR5iLMpg>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlxP-5p06tYh>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLAyWC4is60>.



into a popular style performed in a rock band configuration by Bulimundo, Norberto Tavares, Finason, and other performers. Since independence, both *funana* and *batuku* have become symbols of Afro Cape Verdean cultural pride. Since the 1990s, the Praia band Ferro Gaita has represented one strand of popular commercial *funana*, with considerable international success.

In traditional village settings, couples danced together to the songs of *funana* musicians. Along with the musical style, the dance went through considerable changes in recent decades as it moved into the dancehalls of the Cape Verdean diaspora. Recent videos feature *funana* musicians surrounded by dancers who are doing *batuku*-like gestures mixed together with mainland African dance styles.<sup>6</sup> This is a significant change in style and context.

The most familiar Cape Verdean music and dance genres are the *morna* and *coladeira* (*koladera*). Although each island has distinctive musical traditions, the *morna* and *coladeira* were symbols of Cape Verdean identity even before independence in 1975. Like other Cape Verdean genres, it is still possible to find acoustic folk versions of these styles, especially in the villages of the northernmost islands. *Morna* and *coladeiras* feature a solo singer or instrumentalist supported by a string-based instrumental ensemble.<sup>7</sup> [DVD track 3]. Depending on the context, commercial Cape Verdean bands play this repertoire with strings, a full rhythm section, and solo winds. The *morna* comes the closest that Cape Verde has to an art music tradition because of the genre's poetic, romantic lyrics, complex harmonies, and associations with middle class aspirations. In performances, slow *mornas* alternate with lively *coladeiras*, which is dance music in duple meter and based on the exchange of choruses and verses. [DVD track 4].

Both of these styles were brought to the attention of international audiences through the recordings and concert tours of singer Cesaria Évora and her bands. Her repertoire was largely based on songs that she learned firsthand while growing up in the port town of Mindelo, São Vicente. Aside from Cesaria, a short list of *morna* recording artists since the 1960s includes Bana, Ildo Lobo, and Titinha, among others. In contrast to the poetic *morna* style, the lyrics of typical *coladeira* often involve light-hearted social commentary. Top *coladeira* singers include Maria de Barros (who is still actively touring), Manuel d'Novas, and Tito Paris, as well as Cesaria.

Cape Verde also has a repertoire of music that is associated with eighteenth and nineteenth century European social dance and military band melodies that were popular in overseas colonies (Manuel 2009). These include creolized variations of the *contradance*, *schottische*, polka, march, *mazurka*, and waltz forms, as well as the *toada*, *bandera*, and *lundu* that are strongly linked to Portuguese colonial history (Hurley-

<sup>6</sup> Links to several types of *funana* that range from traditional to new popular styles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOCVtXhSUII>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ76neBLQAY>; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa9tb\\_iY7vs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa9tb_iY7vs).

<sup>7</sup> For examples of *mornas*, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78li5r-a07E>; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb\\_17xDtA7w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb_17xDtA7w); For examples of *coladeira*, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTQozEKyB98>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkqzM9LljCU>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-OrxiuWbRg>.

Glowa 2013, Brito 1998). This music today can still be found in the rural villages of the Barlovento islands, especially in Santo Antão. Some of this quadrille-like string music has been reworked and performed by the recording artist Bau (born Rufino Almeida in 1962 in São Vicente). Bau is the son of a string instrument maker, and in his household, he learned to play violin, guitar, and *cavaquinho*. His repertoire includes old tunes from Cape Verde's social dance heritage, as well as *mornas*, *coladeiras*, *mazurkas*, and more.<sup>8</sup>

### **Cape Verdean connections**

Constructing a history of Cape Verdean musical traditions is complicated by the fact that music was rarely preserved in notation. Music in Cape Verde is an oral tradition, leaving few written artifacts. Early recordings are also very limited (Cidra 2008). Although the sounds of the music may be unrecoverable for this reason, historical accounts can provide some glimpses of Cape Verdean music cultures, albeit from an outside perspective. It was possible to piece together some details on the history of *batuku* based on travel logs and descriptions of music made by island visitors (Hurley-Glowa 1997). *Batuku* shows significant influences from Africa, and historical records show that it is quite old, dating back several centuries if not to the earliest days of the colony. As mentioned above, *Batuku* incorporates many music and dance features associated with Pan-African styles. In this regard, a style like *batuku* is a model of a generic African participatory music and dance style that could maximize contributions from diverse ethnic groups who were thrown together as a result of slavery, but that could be made local in its linguistic, kinetic, and musical details.

A study of historical accounts of early “*batuku*-like” music-making suggests that the style went through many changes over time. A flexible, communal form of informal music-making, at various points in the nineteenth century it included hourglass-shaped drums typically found in mainland Africa and other instruments on a regular basis as well participation by both women and men (Hurley-Glowa 1997: 165–172, Nogueira 2011: 25–28, 30–31). Its melodic structures and tonality today shares traits with music from Europe as well as Africa (Hurley-Glowa 1997: 217–244), supporting the idea that *batuku* is a transatlantic colonial hybrid like other Cape Verdean traditions. It is likely the earliest one that was created from the mixing of musicians and dancers on the islands.

Scholars have chosen to describe the flow of ships, people, and goods around the greater Atlantic region using diagrams with triangles, circles, and webs, but they share a vision that, as result of the legacy of slavery, former colonies in the Atlantic with slave, plantation and colonial histories are linked together by web of cultural, historical, and musical connections (Gilron 1993, Guilbault 1993, Rehm 1975, Fryer 2000, McMahon 2007). Some of the region's shared traits, ideas, and performance practices have been distilled to a list of musical survivals associated with “Musical Africanness.”<sup>9</sup> A basic

<sup>8</sup> For a sample of Bau's music, see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KI-4qg26\\_7s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KI-4qg26_7s).

<sup>9</sup> For studies of African influences and retentions in Brazilian music, see Melville J. Herskovits, *The New World Negro: Selected Papers in Afroamerican Studies*, ed. Francis Herskovits (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966); José Jorge de Carvalho, “Music of African Origin in Brazil,”

premise is that Black Atlantic cultures (including Cape Verde) share features as the result of the shared circumstances of their histories: in the case of music, new styles will be similar to other traditions but they will manifest themselves in distinctive local ways.

A new project by Kahn and Bouie presents this web in a very visual, immediate way through an animated interactive map called “The Atlantic Slave Trade in Two Minutes.”<sup>10</sup> As the slave route activity gradually unfolds from 1583–1883 in this animation, it is telling to see the extent of Portugal’s involvement throughout these 300 years. Many ships picked up slaves that were “broken in” in Cape Verde before sailing on to the new world, and as Portuguese colonials, early Cape Verdeans were involved in virtually every stage of this trade. They were middlemen working the African coast, mariners, slave owners and of course, many ancestors of today’s population were enslaved Africans themselves. Myriad of these slave ships stopped in Cape Verde with their cargo on route to Spanish Central America (1.3 million slaves); to Spanish, French, Dutch and Danish holdings in the Caribbean (4 million); and to Brazil (4.8 million). Of course, music and dance traditions flowed along as well. The animation helps us to envision these routes around the triangle, and shows that Cape Verde was a pivotal hub. This flow is of particular interest when one thinks of the effect that these waves of displaced Africans would have had on Cape Verdean “proto-*batuku*” music making, as the form accommodated musicians and dancers from different regions of mainland Africa in Santiago from 1553–1883.

Historian Ben Schmidt has created a similar animated study based on whaling voyage records from a slightly later period, from 1830–1853. This time-elapsed three minute video visualization map shows the known whaling routes beginning around 1830 and ending in 1853 (Schmidt 2013).<sup>11</sup> What the visualization very clearly shows is just how frequently whaling boats sailed from New Bedford to Cape Verde before catching the trade winds west to Brazil and on down the South American coast, often with a another stop on the return leg of their extended voyages. The visualization also shows that the expeditions went to more remote whaling grounds over the course of the mid-nineteenth century, as closer waters were depleted. Music flowed along with the seaman, of course, but the real point here is just how continually Cape Verde was part of the circuit.

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in *Africa in Latin America: Essay on History, Culture, and Socialization*, ed. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, trans. Leonor Blum (New York: UNESCO, 1984); Gerhard Kubik, *Angolan Traits in Black Music, Games, and Dances of Brazil: A Study of Cultural Extension Overseas* (Lisbon: Junta de Investigações Científicas do Ultramar, 1979); Peter Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil* (Hanover, NH.: Wesleyan University Press, 2000); and John Storm Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds* (Tivoli, N.Y.: Original Music, 1972).

<sup>10</sup> The Atlantic Slave Trade in Two Minutes by Andrew Kahn and Janelle Bouie [http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the\\_history\\_of\\_american\\_slavery/2015/06/animated\\_interactive\\_of\\_the\\_history\\_of\\_the\\_atlantic\\_slave\\_trade.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_history_of_american_slavery/2015/06/animated_interactive_of_the_history_of_the_atlantic_slave_trade.html).

<sup>11</sup> See “American Whaling Mapped by Ben Schmidt.” <http://kcslluis.tumblr.com/post/72597710244/american-whaling-mapped-by-ben-schmidt>.



A similar animation showing the routes of merchant and ocean liners to and from Cape Verde from, 1853 to 1920, doesn't yet exist but records indicate that transatlantic ships routinely made the island harbors a refueling stop, facilitating extensive opportunities for cultural exchanges. Peter Fryer noted that the process of musical communication typically happens on the personal level; for example, through sailors sharing a tune to pass the time at sea, through encounters in harbor dancehalls, or by transmissions from returning friends and families (2000). While these new studies based on ship voyages can't tell us much about individual musical exchanges, they do help illustrate the routes and directions that people and their ideas followed over several centuries, and can help to explain why Cape Verdean music shares rhythms and melodic affinities with the Caribbean and Brazil—the musical ideas flowed with the people and the connections are audible. These animations reinforce the reality that Cape Verde was an unusually active port of call during the past five hundred years. Like its transatlantic musical relatives, Cape Verdean music is certainly not a product of one early static mix but is rather the result of ongoing cultural contacts and multiple layers of cross-fertilizations from Africa, the Americas, and Europe.

### **Transatlantic connections: harbors and travel**

The animated maps can place Cape Verdeans in the right places at the right time to be influenced by the Black Atlantic flow of musical ideas, but can we pin the development of genres to specific times, places, or individuals? Because Cape Verdean culture is not one that has emphasized notation of music and words, written artifacts are few and far between.<sup>12</sup> We know that many ships stopped in Cape Verde on transatlantic voyages, and that Cape Verdean sailors and migrants participated in the maritime circulation patterns. What are some of the contact details?

The most historically significant Cape Verdean harbors are located in Brava, Santiago, and São Vicente.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, Cape Verde was a stop for international whaling ships, and important networks were established between Brava and the whaling industry center in New Bedford, MA, facilitating a flow of people between them. By the nineteenth century, up to 50% of all American whaling crews were made up of Cape Verdeans—from harpooners to cabin boys, cooks, and later, even masters (Lobban 2007: 241, Creighton 1995: 9, Farr 1983: 167- 168).<sup>14</sup> These numbers

<sup>12</sup> Writing in general can be a complicated act for Cape Verdeans: *Kriolu*, the creole language of song and daily life, was not taught in school or used in official functions, and colonial opportunities for schooling were limited, in any case. Between this hindrance, and that fact that Cape Verdeans frequently had to quickly learn new languages while working on multi-national ships rather than through formal study, writings by Cape Verdean seaman are hard to come by.

<sup>13</sup> Many well-known travelers stopped in Cape Verde for provisions including Columbus (1498), Sir Francis Drake (1585), and Charles Darwin (1832). From early on, the islands harbored slavers, pirates, smugglers, and sailors of all kinds. British, American, and Portuguese ships made regular stops throughout the seventeen and eighteenth century for trade, which included salt, animals, dyes, textiles, fresh water, and enslaved Africans (Meintel 1984: 37–46).

<sup>14</sup> W. Jeffrey Bolster has written about the plight of black seamen in the whaling industry, but doesn't

increased until the whaling industry declined and then gradually came to a halt in the early twentieth century. Before that happened, enterprising Cape Verdeans bought up the unwanted whaling ships and continued to sail them between the US and the islands well into the twentieth century, partially controlling their own means of migration (Halter 1993: 5).

What can be learned about the nature of Cape Verdean musical development from whaling artifacts? Cape Verdeans were clearly aboard the ships, but learning more about their repertoire is difficult for several reasons. Firstly, on paper Cape Verdeans tend to be an invisible ethnic group. Crew lists didn't differentiate between members of the Portuguese-speaking crew: they were all called *Portugees* or *Gees*, whether they came from Portugal, the Azores, Brazil, or Cape Verde (Holloway 2008: 121-125). Secondly, the words and melodies of Cape Verdean songs were rarely notated so they don't turn up in archives. Thirdly, Cape Verdeans often took the lowest paid and most difficult jobs, situating them at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder aboard ship where they didn't receive much attention or mention, although a significant number eventually became boatsteerers and harpooners, requiring a high level of skill<sup>15</sup> (Halter 1983: 5, Creighton 1995: 29).

By 1850, crews were extremely diverse, with a significant number of African Americans, Native Americans, Cape Verdeans, and South Sea islanders working alongside Yankee men (Bolster 1990, Creighton 1995, Farr 1983). Cape Verdeans then and afterward likely took part in the musical events in some capacity. Revell Carr has written about the international work force on nineteenth century whalers and the music the crew made together for entertainment, and notes that sailor culture was open to a wide variety of ethnic and national groups as equal participants. (Carr 2008: 141-142).

Alaskan scholar Paul Krejci's research on musical encounters in the Arctic uncovered one clue that suggests that Cape Verdean whalers quickly adapted themselves to songs in English. Krejci writes:

While operating in the waters of the Bering Strait in 1890, the crew of the whaler *Alexander* sang shanties as they cut into a whale. On this occasion, the second mate, a Cape Verde Islander named Gabriel, led his crew at the windlass in well-known work songs such as "Whiskey for the Johnnies," "Blow the Man Down," "Rolling Rio" ("Rio Grande"), and "Blow, Boys, Blow" (Burns 1913: 206 in Krejci 2010)

An exhaustive archival search of logs, journals, and accounts of life aboard whaling ships would likely reveal more small details about Cape Verdean whalers (cf Davis 1874, Starbuck 1878, Whitecar 1864). In the end, it is clear that Cape Verdean genres

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speak about the Cape Verdean' sailors role in much detail (1990, 1997)

<sup>15</sup> Some descriptions of Cape Verdean whalers are negative and show the racial discrimination and stereotyping that Cape Verdeans encountered within the industry (Hohman 1928: 126, 300, Halter 1993:5). Other accounts recognized Cape Verdeans for their ability to do hard work under the worst of onboard conditions. Some were able to rise in rank as a consequence, despite their background or color, especially in the last decades of commercial whaling, when Cape Verdeans became a majority on the vessels (Holloway 2008: 115-125, Hohman 302-308).

don't sound like typical Anglo sea chanteys, and despite the persistent presence of Cape Verdeans on whaling ships, most music associated with whaling culture doesn't reference them. What was much more significant for the development of Cape Verdean styles was the sharing of musical styles between Atlantic Triangle peers on these ships (especially interactions with black sailors from other places), and the seamen's visits to ports where new Black Atlantic genres were emerging. Figure 1 provides an example of that kind of significant interaction in the form of an impromptu dance accompanied by an accordion player.

*Kriolu* music and dance aboard the packet fleet plying between New Bedford and Cape Verde in the early nineteenth century is better documented than on whaling ships. Passage on these aging vessels was risky but the Cape Verdeans were at least surrounded by friends, family, and familiar music. Marilyn Halter quotes from a Cape Verdean traveler's journal:

The trip had been a hazardous one, but sometimes the ocean was calm. The passengers, anxious to reach America, grew impatient . . . The amateur musicians, always a violinist and a guitar player, occasionally a mandolin or a violão strummer would play the sweet nostalgic mornas. Possibly, the slow-paced sentimental morna would be replaced by a fast waltz. Not that there was much room for dancing, since the miniscule lounge barely held a dozen people (Halter 1993: 69).



Figure 1. The boatsteerer's dance. Vessel: Charles W. Morgan. Kendall-Gifford Collection, G-330 (Courtesy of the New Bedford Whaling Museum)

Other accounts describe harbor side dance parties that were quickly thrown together when the ships came into port.

Whaling ships were not the only ones that stopped in Cape Verde. By 1838 when the British built their first coal storage station in the deep-water harbor of Mindelo, the Cape Verde islands were important stop for salt, cheap manpower, and coal on transatlantic voyages. From 1825 to 1875, an average of 100 ships per year stopped in Cape Verde for supplies, men, and recreation (Almeida 1978: 3). By 1879, some 669 ships per year stopped in Mindelo for coal on transatlantic voyages. In 1885, Mindelo became the switching station for the first transatlantic telegraph cable, making it even more important. In 1890 alone, some 2,264 ships stopped in Mindelo harbor to refuel with coal transported from Cardiff, Wales, where a small Cape Verdean community exists to this day (Lobban 2007: xi).

All of these visitors spent time eating, drinking, and relaxing in Mindelo harbor, resulting, among other things, in plenty of cosmopolitan musical exchanges. Indeed, Mindelo was one of the busiest harbors in the world by 1850, and its settlement history is different than Praia, which was home to many African immigrants. In contrast, Mindelo had extensive European contacts over the years, and this European connection is audible in its musical traditions. As an example of this influence, beginning in the seventeenth century, the northern Cape Verde islands were first settled by waves of southerners, and then by a series of newcomers from Portugal, Madeira, Spain, England, and finally France (Britto 1998: 28).

The legacy of these settlers survives in the eighteenth and nineteenth century European social dance music described earlier, as well as other forms like the *morna* and *coladeira*. Some traditional fiddle tunes are featured in the repertoire of the contemporary artists Bau and Ramiro Mendes, both of whom arranged music for Cesaria Évora's band. While it may be a bit of a stretch to call this fiddle music a "Green Atlantic" influence (in contrast to a Black Atlantic influence), *Kriolu* string dance band music demonstrates the variety of styles that have influenced the sound of Cape Verdean music today.

Cosmopolitan Mindelo is where first the *morna* and then the *coladeira* styles matured in the twentieth century. In both cases, there is a clear "paper trail" showing how key individuals like Eugenio Tavares, Luis Rendall, and others went out into the world via ship to Brazil, North America, Europe, and around the globe, and brought new musical ideas back with them (Martins 1989). When it comes to music developments, the Cape Verdean story is a transnational one for this reason. As a case in point, I recently corresponded with Amandio Cabral (1935-), the contested composer of the song 'Sodade,' made famous by Cesaria Évora, asking him about influences on Cape Verdean musical style via ship travel. He replied:

I don't have to go far to answer [your questions]. I'll stay with me and you. I was born there, and you spent some time there. It's not too difficult to understand a Capeverdean: what you see is what you get. In my days, everybody wanted to play guitar, cavaquinho, violão, or

violin, some bad, some ridiculous and others if you don't know better, you might say, he or she is very good. I am quite sure you went through that.

My father, Antonio Cabral was a good example for your historical accounts. He had no schooling in music, and yet he was a serious musician in São Nicolau, on violin and piano. Nobody get paid—it was all for fun. In fact, it was considered an insult to handle money for playing. Some times the musicians got a basket of goodies from the land, and that's all.

To come closer to your thoughts, my father was also machinist on a ship where he died of pneumonia on a trip to Dakar. I began learning in a Baptist church, Paulino Vieira in a Silesian organization . . . Toy Vieira, Manuel di Novas . . . We all had influences: it all depended on what direction we went [in our travels] (A. Cabral pers. comm. 13 Oct 2013).

The musicians that Amandio Cabral lists were major figures in the late twentieth century Mindelo musical scene, and several still perform in Portugal today. Cabral now lives in San Francisco, but he spent time in Mindelo and Lisbon along the way. It is the same story time and time again: Cape Verdeans went out into the world by ship and brought musical ideas back to their communities, influencing styles directions from tango to *cumbia* and beyond.

### **Transatlantic flows and the development of genres**

In contrast to some isolated islands, such as Tristan de Cunha, the Cape Verde islands have clearly been part of busy shipping lines for centuries. The origins and subsequent development of Cape Verde's first unique genre, *batuku*, correspond with the ebbs and flows of the slave trade, and it is likely that this flexible form accommodated practices from new ethnic groups as they arrived in Santiago.

Not surprisingly, Cape Verde's maritime history is directly reflected in its preference for instruments favored by seafarers for their portability and flexibility.<sup>16</sup> These include the fiddle, the button accordion, and the many forms of guitars, including the *cavaquinho* whose migration from Portugal throughout the world as the ukulele serves as a classic illustration of the diffusion process in music based on maritime commerce and exploration. Granted, the violin, accordion, and guitar were among the most popular instruments of the day during the late nineteenth century when the Cape Verde was a regular stop for transatlantic ships, but so was the piano, which has never played a major role in traditional music. The piano's size and expense likely made it out of reach for most of the islanders. The most common instruments used in colonial Cape Verde were also typical to Portuguese folk music, but they were eventually used in new creolized performance styles by Cape Verdeans.

The portable one-string bowed lute was once prevalent in Cape Verde. It found its way from mainland Africa to Cape Verde where it was called the *cimboa*, along with a variant of the *berimbau* found in Brazil (Brito 1998: 84–85, Fryer 2000: 32–39). Military-style snare drums from Europe and horns made from conch shells not indigenous to the islands were used in Cape Verde as well. Altogether, Cape Verde's most typical musical instruments are those that arrived by ship, and were often played aboard ship.

<sup>16</sup> See Brito 1998 for a short study of Cape Verde's musical instruments.



The button accordion likely arrived with sailors, clergyman, and migrant workers returning home in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, but music played on it didn't develop into *morna* right away. In my 1991 field interviews with accordionist Toi de Barros (b. 1921), he told me that accordion music was a favorite for dances in the interior of Santiago dating back to the 1920s and perhaps even earlier. (Hurley-Glowa 1997: 303–305). De Barros said that the button accordion was initially used to play music in a variety of tempos and styles, both secular and sacred, and said that it was only later, in the 1950s or so, that accordion music from Santiago began to be called *funana*. Legend has it that it was often used in church services as a substitution for piano or organ before it made its way into secular music. Another widespread story links its name to a team of performers called Funi and Nana (together, *Funana*). Others have suggested that the *funana* style arrived in Cape Verde in the mid-1900s via laborers returning from São Tomé in times of drought; but like the other stories, this isn't substantiated.

What is clearer is that a whole family of new, syncretic accordion styles emerged throughout the Atlantic triangle between roughly 1920 and 1940, and *funana* is part of this trend. The pairing of button accordion with scraper or triangle occurs throughout the transatlantic region, for example, in Portuguese folk music (*malhão, corridinho, vira.*); Dominican Republic (*merengue típico*); Brazil (*forró*); Louisiana (*zydeco*) and elsewhere (Snyder 1995, Bermúdez 2012). There are also some similarities in the couples dances done to this accordion music. Although the accordion was popular worldwide between 1880 and 1920, the new world button accordion styles correspond with trade routes.

Egberto Bermúdez's chapter on the history of accordion traditions in Colombia explains the sources and forces that shaped music there; most significantly, he chronicles the distribution of diatonic button accordions from Germany in Colombia around 1900 (Simonett 2012: 205). The arrival of accordions in Colombia in the early decades of the twentieth century (and the subsequent development of *cumbia* as the result of this cosmopolitan transatlantic commerce) suggests that Cape Verdean accordion styles may have been born of similar commerce contacts (Bermúdez 2012: 205–206). The article also brings up the flexible meanings of the word *gaita*, which is most often associated with bagpipe music internationally but refers to the button accordion in Cape Verde and to flute music in Colombia (207).

Other chapters in *The Accordion in the Americas* (2012) provide the histories of transatlantic accordion traditions in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, and Dominican Republic. Cape Verdean *funana* draws on similar musical sources. For example, traditional *funana* repertoire includes songs that players call *samba, lundu, mazurka*, polka, march, and *maxixe* (Hurley-Glowa 1997). The survival of these now rare *maxixe* pieces (sometimes called Brazilian tango) suggest that *funana* developed when these styles were still popular, in the first decades of the twentieth century. Like the rest of the emerging accordion styles above, *funana* was a creolized mixture of European and Afro Caribbean/Luso African styles and repertoire.

The *coladeira* also emerged in the early twentieth century. Its basic *cinquillo*-like rhythmic structure (variations on a dotted eighth note and sixteenth followed by two

eighth notes, often juxtaposed with a hemiola triplet) and simple diatonic harmonies are found in many other two-step dance music styles ubiquitous throughout the Caribbean including the *habanera*, *bolero*, *maxixe*, *beguine* (Manuel 2009: 19–23). Because they are close cousins, *coladeira* easily moved towards a more Latin *cumbia* sound in the 1960s, and has been strongly influenced by *zouk* from Martinique in recent years.<sup>17</sup> These similarities have facilitated a mixing of many other dance styles with *coladeira* over the years.

As far as *coladeira*'s emergence as a Cape Verdean genre, it is mentioned as early as 1916 (Vasconcellos). The author describes several music and dance styles he observed in Cape Verde. He writes that both genders participated in *batuku* and it was accompanied by a violin as well as handclapping and stomping, comparing *batuku* to *modinhas*. According to Vasconcellos, the favorite Cape Verdean dances were the lascivious *coladeira*, the *taca* (described as a tap/clog-like dance) and the *landum*. He goes on to describe the "more civilized" *morna* tradition, comparing it to the Portuguese *moda*, and Argentine *tango*.

It is of interest that Vasconcellos makes a connection between the *morna* and early tango styles. In the Alfama publication of early *mornas* excerpted later in this article, the music does indeed resemble the so-called Brazilian tango (Alfama 1910), and this makes sense. Cape Verdean composer/scholar Vasco Martins persuasively argues that the *morna* is a local hybrid form that fused together nineteenth century Luso African song forms, primarily the *modinha* and the *lundu*; and the *morna* and *fado* share common musical ancestors (1989). The *modinha* was generally slow and sentimental in character. It derived from the Portuguese *moda*. The *lundu* had both Portuguese and African influences, including a fast and lively tempo and a sensual dance. Both genres shared structural characteristics derived from European folk models; arched melodies, conjunct melodic movement, and strophic forms. Their pervasive use of syncopated rhythms made them distinctive and popular forms in the colonies and in Europe.

A new Cape Verdean form combining aspects of the *modinha* and *lundu* was gestated in the early 1800s, and took the name "*morna*" by around about 1840. The early *morna* was in duple meter with syncopated rhythms like those associated with the *biguine*, *habanera*, and the Brazilian tango or *maxixe*.

The Alfama collection of Cape Verdean music published in Lisbon in 1910 provides illuminating glimpses into the flexible early *morna* form.<sup>18</sup> It contained the words and music for 10 songs, along with an introduction by Alfama, dated 1909 in Praia. Many of the songs are labeled at the top as *mornas*, and identified by date, island, and in some case composer. The songs range in age from 1893 to 1907, and several are either dedicated to or composed by noted early *morna* composer Eugenio Tavares. A selection of two pieces typical of the collection give us clues to what the *morna* was like in these early decades.

<sup>17</sup> Recent Cape Verdean and French Caribbean popular styles are very closely aligned. See Hoffman 2008.

<sup>18</sup> I made these photocopies from the collection while visiting the library in Praia in 1991. Since then, a new edition was published but I have not been able to obtain better copies from it. These will have to suffice.

There are several noteworthy points about *Maria Adelaide*: namely, the piece is clearly labeled as a *morna*, it is in duple meter rather than the quadruple meter used in the modern *morna*, and the melody line is systematically syncopated using common Brazilian tango/*maxixe*/ragtime patterns (see Figure 2) [DVD track 5]. It has a moderate tempo, rather than the slower tempo of modern *morna*. The tonality is D major with simple diatonic chord progressions, in contrast to most modern *mornas*, which are usually in minor keys with some secondary dominant chords. Finally, it uses the binary form typical of modern *mornas*. The composer is not listed but he/she is likely from Boa Vista, Cape Verde.

A second piece *Indjetadinha* tells us a little more (see Figure 3) [DVD track 6]. This love song with *Kriolu* lyrics is from the city of Praia in 1907 and it was either written by or dedicated to Eugenio Tavares. Like the first example, it is notated in duple meter, has systematic syncopation, and a binary form. This work is slower than the first one, and in a minor key, like the modern *morna*.

The pieces in Alfama's collection show us a *morna* in transition: the genre hasn't acquired all of its typical characteristics yet. Several of the *mornas* in the collection have quite fast tempo markings in duple meter, some are in major keys, and the songs strongly resemble popular dance forms like the *maxixe* or Brazilian tango. Between 1890–1908, the *morna* style was still in flux. The style went through several more transformations before it reached the form we recognize today. This is not surprising: the early decades of the twentieth century were rich, experimental times when lines separating musical styles were being negotiated, and Black Atlantic sounds were integral to many of them. Ragtime, jazz, *choro*, and *samba* were all developing – Pixinguinha and his friends in Rio were working out the differences between *maxixe*, *samba* and *choro*, mixing together polkas, marches, Brazilian tango, and *habaneras*, while musicians like Jelly Roll Morton were working things out in New Orleans. While challenging the value of rigid chronological classification systems in her research on *maxixe*, Siegel points out that there were influences from many international popular styles feeding in at each stage and that the transitions in style were gradual:

In the multiple simultaneous, uneven steps from batuque to lundu to maxixe to samba, one cannot set the exact point at which each set dance ceased being lundu and became maxixe, or when the transition to samba effectively occurred (Siegel 2005: 21)

The stylistic transitions in Cape Verdean music were also muddy and uneven, drawing and flowing from the same sources and complex reiterations as Brazilian and North American music. After emerging in Boa Vista around 1870 in a style that some refer to as the first period, the *morna* form ripened into the second period style in the hands of cosmopolitan, seafaring individuals in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its chord progressions become increasingly chromatic and complex, as new ideas from Brazil, Europe, and North America made their way into the genre (Martins 1989).

Some of these changes may be directly attributed to the influences, experiences, and travels of Eugenio Tavares (1867–1930), a poet, composer, civil servant, and journalist

CANÇÕES CRIOULAS E MUSICAS POPULARES DE CABO VERDE

*Maria Adelaide* (Morna)

*Moderato*

*p*

*mf*

1<sup>a</sup> 2<sup>a</sup>

1<sup>a</sup> 2<sup>a</sup>

Figure 2. “Maria Adelaide” from *Canções Crioulas e Musicas Populares de Cabo Verde* (Alfama 1910).



CANÇÕES CRIOULAS E MUSICAS POPULARES DE CABO VERDE

*Injetadinha*

*Lento*

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The second system includes first and second endings, marked '1ª' and '2ª'. The third and fourth systems continue the piece. The score is printed in black ink on aged paper.

Figure 3. "Injetadinha" from *Canções Crioulas e Musicas Populares de Cabo Verde* (Alfama 1910).



from Brava.<sup>19</sup> His *mornas* are representative of the second stage of development, and many of songs from his 1932 collection have become mainstays of the repertoire. As he worked out new pieces, Tavares used the *guitarra portuguesa*, an instrument commonly found in Portuguese *fado* performances, and was said to be a great admirer of the *fado* sound. This likely influenced his Brava-based *morna* style, which was slower and more romantic in nature than earlier works. Tavares also spent time in Southern New England around 1900, working as a journalist in Fairhaven, Mass. for a Portuguese paper. During this time, he undoubtedly heard early jazz, ragtime and popular American dance forms, which may have influenced his composition style. At various times in his life, he lived in Mindelo and Praia, as well.

The *morna's* third period is associated with innovations by composers from São Vicente, especially B. Leza (Francisco Xavier da Cruz, 1905–58). During the 1930s and 40s, the *morna* became increasingly harmonically complex. B. Leza loved Brazilian music, and this influenced that way that he composed new songs. He made the use of seventh chords, chord substitutions, circle of fifth progressions and secondary dominants in *morna* harmonic progressions, and used the São Vicente dialect in his song texts because of its sonorous sound (Martins 1989). The *morna* has continued to evolve since the 1940s, with worldly musicians behind the innovations. Most of these innovators have been based in Mindelo.

In closing, working from the premise that Cape Verde is a member of the Black Atlantic musical family whose styles flowed freely from port to port, this study has delved deeper into the styles and time frames that figured into the mix, verifying that periods of intense transAtlantic port activity correspond to the emergence of new genres. Cape Verde's musical history might be viewed as a sandbar on the beach that is continually reshaped and born a new by waves of musical influences circling between the continents. The ideas of individual Cape Verdeans ultimately created the music, of course, and a comparative approach is not meant to lessen those musicians' importance, or detract from the beauty and perfection of Cape Verde's greatest treasure. The footprints of transatlantic connections in Cape Verdean musical styles can be found in its rhythms, instruments, vocabularies, scores, and ship route patterns. People create styles, and musical communication happens on the personal level – through sailors sharing a tune at sea, through encounters in harbor dancehalls, and through ideas brought back home. Generations of seafarers found safe harbor in Cape Verde, carrying music round and round the Atlantic, and this process is still shaping the local forms, although the travel is now by jet, and the exchanges are often over the worldwideweb. While some details about musical communities on the high seas may be lost to us, there is still information to be gained about Cape Verdean musical forms through a study of the multi-directional movements of musicians, artifacts, repertoires, and ideas around the Atlantic rim.

<sup>19</sup> See website dedicated to Tavares: <http://www.eugeniotavares.org/docs/pt/fundacao.html>.

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### Filmography

Hurley-Glowa, Susan

2010 *Journey of a Badiu: the Story of Cape Verdean-American Musician Norberto Tavares*. Documentary Film. Vancouver: Villon Films.

### Notes on media examples

All media examples on the accompanying DVD are field recordings by Susan Hurley-Glowa, included with full permission of the musicians.

DVD track 1. Video example of traditional *batuku*. Features villagers from Matinho, Santiago, Cape Verde. Shot in 2005 while filming documentary on Norberto Tavares (Hurley-Glowa 2010).

DVD track 2. Video example of traditional *funana*. Features Nito Frere from Picos, Santiago, Cape Verde playing *gaita* (diatonic button accordion) with Norberto Tavares on *ferrinho*. Shot in 2005 while filming documentary on Norberto Tavares (Hurley-Glowa 2010).

DVD track 3. Video example of traditional *morna*. Features the Praia Mar Trio. Shot in Praia, Cape Verde in 2005 while filming documentary on Norberto Tavares (Hurley-Glowa 2010).

DVD track 4. Audio example of traditional *coladeira*. Features Cape Verdean American musician Norberto Tavares playing his coladeira “Bu Sabura é un Disgraça.” Field recording by the author, Feb. 19, 1990.

DVD track 5. Audio example of “Maria Adelaide” (Alfama 1906). Performed by Dr. William Wright in 2006.

DVD track 6. Audio example of “*Indjetadinha*” (Alfama 1906). Performed by Dr. William Wright in 2006.