

In loving memory of my grandmother, Ipheta Fortuma



This journey started in late 2015, shortly after the passing of my maternal grandmother. She and I spent many a cherished moment underneath the mango and coconut trees in her yard in Haiti – and in my childhood home in America – singing songs with one another. It was our way of telling each other stories, and her way of passing on a centuries-long cultural practice of oral history. She taught me to embrace and share my heart freely through song, without fear of judgment. This honesty and absence of judgment is how she lived her life, as can be heard in her own words on “Madan Bellegarde”.

Her absence ignited a deep desire for understanding in me. In what ways did our voices connect with the voices of other Haitian women? What did our songs tell us about our past, and what might they mean for the future?

The foundation of *Fanm d’Ayiti* began to reveal itself readily through conversation: with my family, and with others willing to share their piece of our cultural puzzle. These exchanges led me to learn about dozens of Haitian female artists, each committed to carrying forward the story of the first free black republic – people known for making treasured somethings out of nothing. These women used their voices to uplift future generations by celebrating our strength.

In *Fanm d’Ayiti* I share recordings from my conversations with three women: Emerante de Pradines, a prized voice of Haiti’s Golden Age; Milena Sandler, daughter of the late, famed chanteuse Toto Bissainthe; and celebrated vodou songstress Carole Demesmin.

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Emerante, at 98 years old, speaks of our connection to one another as female Haitian artists and a deep need to return home and help our people. This is one of her final recorded interviews prior to her passing in January 2018. Milena speaks of her mother’s devotion to authentic artistry and social justice, driving her to sing freedom songs fearlessly in the face of notorious Haitian dictator François Duvalier. Carole speaks of using her songs to offer light in a time of darkness in Haiti, and of advancing the work of Emerante and Toto into the next generation.

These voices and my grandmother’s are intertwined with recordings of the girl’s choir from my family’s farming village of Dantan, sending their voices into heaven with hope for tomorrow. I feel lucky to be joining my voice with theirs, bringing listeners a sonic portfolio of my originals and arrangements of historic Haitian songs, woven together in a musical celebration of activism and hope.

The entrance to my grandmother’s yard was a beautiful archway of red hibiscus flowers - her favorite, and a national emblem of Haiti. Walking through that archway into her light was a rite of passage. This album has also welcomed me into a space of self-discovery and historical reckoning, guided by the irrepressible spirit of my ancestors...a revelation now given voice through *Fanm d’Ayiti*.

Nathalie Joachim

PAPA LOKO

Traditional Haitian song, arranged by Nathalie Joachim

Papa Loko ou se van
Pouse n ale
Nou se papiyon
N ap pote nouvèl bay Agwe

Papa Loko, you are the wind
Pushing us to go
We are butterflies
Bringing your news to Agwe

E tout sa ki di byen
Je m la e
E tout sa ki di mal
Je m la e

And all that you say is good
Belongs to me
And all that you say is bad
Belongs to me

Papa Loko ou se van
Pouse n ale
Nou se papiyon
N ap pote nouvèl bay Agwe

Papa Loko, you are the wind
Pushing us to go
We are butterflies
Bringing your news to Agwe

Pawòl papa Loko
Pawòl anpil

The words of Papa Loko
So many words

SUITE POU DANTAN: PRELID

Lyrics from a traditional Haitian song, music by Nathalie Joachim

Lanmou Bondye gen pou nou
Ap dire toutan gen tan

The love that God has for us
Will last forever

Menm si yon manman ta bliye pitit li
Mwen menm Granmèt la
Mwen p ap janm bliye ou

Even if a mother forgets her children
I, your God, will never forget you

Mòn yo met kraze
Plenn yo te mèt tranble
Amou mwen pou ou pa gen dwa disparèt

The world may be breaking
The earth may be shaking
But my love for you will never disappear

SUITE POU DANTAN: ALLÉLUIA

Lyric from a traditional church hymn, music by Nathalie Joachim

Je t’ai tant cherché
mon seigneur et mon roi
Je t’ai tant cherché
dans la nuit
Et moi tu m’as dit que tu étais la vie Alors
je chante, Alléluia

I have searched for you so much,
my God and my king
I have searched for you so much through
the night
And you told me that you were life
So, I sing Alleluia

SUITE POU DANTAN: RESEVWA LI

Lyrics from a traditional Haitian song, music by Nathalie Joachim

Men n’ap proche devan ou Granmèt
Avèk tout ti kado n yo papa
Li mèt tout piti kou li ye,
Tanpri resevwa li

We come before you, God
With all of our little gifts, Father
As little as they may be
Please receive them

Adye papa souple
Kisa pou m ta ba ou
Ou ki fè tout bagay
Ou ki mèt tout bagay

Oh father, please
What should I give you
You, who makes everything
You, who creates everything

Kado nou pot pou ou
Se tout jefò n ap fe
Pou peyi n devlope
Pou lavi nou pi bèl.

The gifts we bring to you
Are all of our efforts
To benefit our country
For our lives to be the most beautiful

LAMIZÈ PA DOUS

Traditional Haitian song, arranged by Nathalie Joachim

Mwen malad m kouche m pa ka leve
Palmannan o, m pa moun isit o
Bondye rele m m prale

I'm sick, I'm resting, I can't get up
Palmannan, I'm not from this place
God is calling me, I'm going

Mwen malad Palmannan
Bondye rele m m prale
Gade m malad Palmannan
Bondye rele m m prale
Palmannan o
M pa moun isit o
Bondye rele m m prale

I'm sick, Palmannan
God is calling me, I'm going
Look, I'm sick, Palmannan
God is calling me, I'm going
Palmannan
I'm not from this place
God is calling me, I'm going

O Sãn o lamizè pa dous o, ago e
Lamizè pa dous o, ago e
M pral chache lavi en lòt kote o.

Oh spirits, misery is not sweet
I'm going to find life in another place

Nanpwen lavi ankò o
Mezanmi mwen nanpwen lavi ankò o

There is no life anymore
My goodness, there is no life for me any-
more

Vire isit se dlo
Vire lòtbò son lòt dlo
N ap pote wòch yo konble lanmè o
Nanpwen lavi ankò o

Turn here, there's water
Turn the other way, there's other water
We will carry rocks to fill the sea
There is no life anymore

MANMAN M VOYE M PEZE KAFE

Original song by Emerante de Pradines, arranged by Nathalie Joachim

Manman m voye m peze kafe o
Annarivan mwen sou pòtay la mwen jwenn
jandam arete m
Mezanmi anmwe sa ma di lakay lè ma rive
Mezanmi mesye sa ma di lakay lè ma rive
Mezanmi anmwe sa ma di lakay lè ma rive

My goodness, what am I going to get the coffee
pressed
When I got down to the road, a policeman
arrested me
My goodness, what am I going to say
when I get home?
My goodness, sir, what am I going to say
when I get home?
My goodness, what am I going to say
when I get home?

LEGBA NA KONSOLE

Original song by Emerante de Pradines, arranged by Nathalie Joachim

Legba na konsole
Apibo na console
Wawa vodou nèg a Legba na konsole

Legba will console us
Apibo will console us
All of you vodou spirits, Legba will console
us

MADAN BELLEGARDE

Lyrics by Ipheta Fortuma, music by Nathalie Joachim

Madan Bellegarde kondane
Wi, li kondane
Li kondane devan pechè
Li pa kondane devan Bondye

Madan Bellegarde is condemned
Yes, she is condemned
She is condemned before sinners
She is not condemned before God

FANM D'AYITI

Traditional Haitian song, arranged by Nathalie Joachim

Se nou ki bay lavi
Se nou ki te chanje li
San nou latè ta vid
San nou lavi ta tris
Depi latè fleri
Fanm toujou ap redi
Nan peyi d'Ayiti
Konbit pa fèt san nou

It is us who give life
It is us who changed it
Without us, the world would be empty
Without us, life would be sad
Since the world began blooming
Women have always worked hard
In the country of Haiti
Community can't be created without us

Nan bwa kayiman sonje n te la
Lè lendepandans o n toutan la
Lè l t ap fè drapo sa
Se nou ki te koud li
Jodi a fò n kanpe vanyan di Ayibobo

Remember that we were at Bwa Kayiman
We were also there at the time of inde-
pendence
When the flag was made
It was us who sewed it
Today we valiantly stand and say Ayibobo

Nan peyi k gen lefwe
Se nou k te Kòmande
Kou l sizè di swa
Tout gason monte bwa
E si yo pa t gen zèl
Se nou ankò k ba yo
Nan peyi k gen lefwe
Se nou k te Kòmande

In countries that have been captured
We are the Commanders
After six o'clock
All the boys climb their branches
And if they don't have wings
It is also us who gives provides them
In countries that have been captured
We are the Commanders

Fanm d'Ayiti kanpe
Tankou tout fanm vanyan
Pou reklame dwa nou
Pou n di viv libète
Pou n di viv libète

Women of Haiti stand
Like all valiant women
To reclaim our rights
To say freedom lives
To say freedom lives

Produced by Nathalie Joachim, Tony Maimone, and Allison Loggins-Hull

Performed by Nathalie Joachim (voice, flute, and electronics)
and Spektral Quartet: Clara Lyon (violin), Maeve Feinberg (violin),
Doyle Armbrust (viola), Russell Rolen (cello)

Special Guests: Emerante de Pradines (*Interlude: September 24, 1918; Interlude: The
Ones I Listened To*), Michelange Lundi and the Girls Choir of Ecole Presbyterale
Fatima de Dantan (*Suite pou Dantan*), Milena Sandler (*Interlude: Couldn't Tell Her
What To Do; Interlude: The Ones I Listened To*), Ipheta Fortuma (*Madan Bellegarde*),
Carole Demesmin (*Interlude: The Ones I Listened To*)

Engineered by Dan Nichols,
assisted by Rachel Frazier and Qi Yu at Electrical Audio in Chicago, IL

Mixed by Tony Maimone,
assisted by Mark Schwartz at Studio G Brooklyn in Brooklyn, NY

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Design by Drew Dir

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