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# Remembering Bamboula

By Robert J. Damm

Today, Louis Armstrong Park in New Orleans (just north of the French Quarter) features the “Roots of Music” sculpture garden, a permanent installation of six sculptures that celebrate the musical heritage of the Crescent City. Here you will see a life-size statue of Allison “Tootie” Montana, the chief of the Yellow Pocahontas Mardi Gras Indians. You will also find a cast-bronze relief called “Spirit of Congo Square” by Nigerian artist Adewale Adenle [see Figure 1].



Figure 1: Adewale Adenle’s “The Spirit of Congo Square”

A large plaque in the park designates Congo Square as significantly important to the history, culture, and identity of New Orleans. Perhaps most contemporary drummers have listened to and learned how to play second-line patterns, Mardi Gras Indian rhythms, and grooves by the Funky Meters as part of an education in essential jazz and rock styles. For percussionists to truly appreciate the meaning of these New Orleans drumming traditions, one might contemplate the story of African slaves and their descendants who gathered in a place called Congo Square during the 18th century and early 19th century to drum, dance, and sing their traditional music on Sunday afternoons. It is in this context that we find the neo-African dance rhythms, such as the *bamboula*, which seem to be the foundation for the second-line, jazz, and funk drumming that came much later.

The National Register plaque in the park provides a brief history:

“Congo Square” is in the “vicinity” of a spot which Houmas Indians used before the arrival of the French for celebrating their annual corn harvest and was considered sacred ground. The gathering of enslaved African vendors in Congo Square originated as early as the late 1740s during Louisiana’s colonial era as one of the city’s public markets. By 1803, Congo Square had become famous for gatherings of enslaved Africans who drummed, danced, sang and traded on Sunday afternoons. By 1819, these gatherings numbered as many as 500 or 600 people. Among the most famous dances were the Bamboula, the Calinda and the Congo. Those cultural expressions gradually developed into Mardi Gras Indian traditions and eventually New Orleans jazz and rhythm and blues.

## BAMBOULA RHYTHM

We can only imagine what the drumming sounded like in Congo Square during its heyday, circa 1800. There is evidence that a specific foundational rhythm, still pervasive in contemporary New Orleans drumming, was prevalent in the neo-African drumming in Congo Square. While attending the 2014 Congo Square Rhythms Festival, I spoke to Luther Gray about the *bamboula* rhythm. Gray was a founding member of the Congo Square Preservation Society, which led the campaign to put Congo Square on the National Register of Historic Places. A percussionist, Gray is also the leader of a New Orleans band called Bamboula 2000; he facilitates a drum circle on Sundays in Congo Square and established the annual Congo Square Rhythms Festival in 2007.

In our discussion, Gray described the *bamboula* rhythm and cited Chief Bey (1913–2004) as his source. Chief Bey, a percussionist who specialized in jazz and African music, visited New Orleans circa 1990 and presented the *bamboula* rhythm to local drummers in a workshop. The source for Chief Bey’s information about the *bamboula* is not documented. The New Orleans drummers at the time knew the rhythm as a second-line beat or Mardi Gras Indian beat, but had “forgotten its association with the African *bamboula* of Congo Square.” Gray demonstrated the three parts of the *bamboula* rhythm [Figure 2] as taught by Chief Bey.



Figure 2: Chief Bey’s *bamboula* rhythm

Gray explained that the foundation is in the bass line, which is identical to the bass drum of second-line and Mardi Gras Indian music. The bass drum is saying the word “*bamboula*.” The lead drum pattern, which Gray played on a jembe, complements the foundation and may include many variations. Finally, there is a traditional bell pattern. Luther Gray provided the same information in a panel discussion called “Haiti and the Music of Congo Square” for the 2011 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. We have no way of confirming that this particular rhythm was played by Africans in Congo Square for their *bamboula* dances in the 1800s or that they called it “the *bamboula* rhythm.” However, many New Orleans drummers and researchers (e.g., Evans and Sublette) believe that this rhythm was central to the African music played in Congo Square.

The pattern Chief Bey demonstrated to Luther Gray as “the *bamboula* rhythm” [Figure 3] is representative of the universal 3+3+2 pattern, which Jerry Leake called “The World’s Most Famous Rhythmic Structure” in a *Percussive Notes* article.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 3: *Bamboula* rhythm

Leake wrote that this ancient pattern is “found in nearly every music tradition on the planet.” In Ghana, for example, this pattern serves as an iron bell timeline for the Ewe *sowu* dance.<sup>2</sup> This pattern is also a common foundational structure in the North Mississippi fife and drum tradition. Evans identified the 3+3+2 pattern as “the *bamboula* rhythm,” equated it with the New Orleans beat and second-line beat, and wrote that it entered New Orleans “with enslaved Africans who had been brought to Louisiana directly from Africa and from the Caribbean—primarily Haiti and Cuba.”<sup>3</sup>

The pattern Chief Bey demonstrated to Luther Gray as “the *bamboula* bell rhythm” was referred to by Stanton Moore and others (e.g., Evans and Sublette) as the Haitian *cinquillo*. In his *Take It to the Street* method book, Moore wrote that this Mardi Gras Indian rhythm (the bell rhythm in Figure 2) can be traced back to the Indians’ Haitian roots. Similarly, Moore referred to the 3+3+2 pattern (the bass drum rhythm in Figure 2) as the Haitian *tresillo*. Moore explained that in New Orleans it is common for musicians to pick up a cowbell or tambourine and play while they are singing or during drum/vocal breakdowns.<sup>4</sup>

Black men wearing feathers and horns goes back to Africa, and Africans dressing as Indians at carnivals is as old as slavery in the hemisphere. Dressing as Native Americans is a statement about how Africans survived and how cultures mixed, especially in Louisiana. Mardi Gras Indians stress in their oral tradition a connection to Congo Square. If this is so, the tambourines that accompany their songs as they parade down the street might be a direct historical African American link to African hand-drumming tradition.<sup>5</sup>

Johnny Vidacovich in *New Orleans Jazz and Second Line Drumming* demonstrated a drumset pattern [Figure 4] for second-line music in which the 3+3+2 structure is played on the bass drum and emphasized with accents on the snare drum.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 4: Johnny Vidacovich’s second-line rhythm

Joseph “Zigaboo” Modeliste played a variation of this pattern [Figure 5] for The Meters’ recording of the Mardi Gras Indian chant “Hey Pockey A-Way.”



Figure 5: Zigaboo’s “Hey Pockey A-Way” rhythm

Zigaboo, known for his drumming with The Meters and The Wild Tchoupitoulas, released an educational DVD about New Orleans drumming in which he demonstrates the 3+3+2 pattern. In the video it is simply called a “general New Orleans-style street beat.”<sup>7</sup>

## BAMBOULA INSTRUMENTATION

Having been convinced of the historical importance of Congo Square and the lasting impact of its musical heritage, a visitor might seek further enlightenment from the sculptures and plaques in the area. However, both the sculptures and plaque are artist renderings created by individuals who did not witness historical activity; their content must be critically examined.

Information about African music at Congo Square consists of descriptions of the dances, music, and frequently played instruments in writings by numerous visitors and journalists (notably Henry Latrobe, William Wells Brown, Lafcadio Hearn, and George Washington Cable). These narratives of the African festivities that took place during the 1800s were not recorded by ethnomusicologists but by an architect and visiting journalists. Widmer cautioned that Hearn and Cable “had little or no firsthand experience of the Square,” and that their accounts represent “invention” for reasons ranging from “exoticism to nostalgia to journalistic opportunism.”<sup>8</sup> This warning must extend to the drawing on the Congo Square plaque. Artist Edward Winsor Kemble created his magazine illustration based not on his own experience, but on Cable’s prose descriptions.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, the cast-bronze sculpture “Spirit of Congo Square” [Figure 1] is based on narrative. The depiction of two drummers framing a dance couple is contrary to historical narrative, although the positioning provides a pleasing symmetry attributable to artistic license.

In personal communication with me, Adawale Adenle described the inspiration for his sculpture; responded to questions about the influence of Latrobe, Cable, and Kemble; and explained the sources of information for the details in his work:

Being a son of a traditional title-holder in the Yorùbá culture of southwest Nigeria, I grew up within the construct of religious and traditional ceremonies where languages and actions were verbalized or dramatized through the sound of musical instruments. From the ceremonial drumming to the religious incantations, African musical instruments/performances were voices that resonated beyond the boundaries of the continent, to become an effective tool for communication among some African slaves in the West. The structure of these ceremonial activities converged with the lyrics of the songs to make salient statements that may have been lost to a distant observer like Benjamin Latrobe. One could, therefore, sympathize with Latrobe’s 18th Century description of the performances as “savage.” The writings of Latrobe and drawing of Kemble inspired additional research. Their work raised a lot of questions as to what and who may have been present at those 18th Century gatherings. For instance, I chose to include a Native American (Indian) in the gathering after extensive research into the friendly co-habitation of the Indians with the slaves. In addition, I included a man with an African tribal mark (scarification) on his face. The idea came after I studied the presence of several slaves of West African descent with tribal marks in New Orleans. Kemble created images of drummers in a row but with assorted drums. However, in settings like this, one would expect that a “bembe” drummer will effectively play the drum while standing; the reverberation of the sounds could be well articulated and distributed with the separation of the drummers. Traditionally, many African drums, especially those of the Yorubas, were played with bare hands (the exception being the “Gangan” or talking drum). The playing of drums with bare hands connects to an African adage that “your hand cannot deceive you.” Moreover, hands connect the spirit directly to the drum thus eliminating the middle influence of the sticks. Though Latrobe/Kemble conveyed the generosity of the Spanish/French slavers, by emphasizing the “freedom” given to these slaves on Sundays, the presence of a violin was a patronizing construct. I chose to include a “Goje” or “Banjo” instead.

A review of the commonly cited descriptions of Congo Square activities, coupled with reflections of historical (typical) African music practices, helps provide a more likely image of the musicians of Congo Square. The earliest description is that provided by Moreau de Saint-Méry in 1789, regarding the instruments used by Africans in the French colonies, and giving a name to the drums used for this purpose:

When they are ready to dance, the negroes take two barrels of unequal length; one end of each remains open and the other is covered by a tightly stretched lamb skin. These drums (the shorter of which is called the *Bamboula* because it is fashioned from a large bamboo which has been dug out) sound out as they are given fist and finger knocks by each player bent over his drum. The larger drum is struck slowly, while the smaller is used for fast rhythms. These monotonous and low tones are accompanied by a number of *Calebasses* containing gravel which is agitated by means of a long handle.<sup>10</sup>

All of this information about drums and rattles would be included (nearly verbatim) in George W. Cable's article about Congo Square. Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764–1820), a British architect who immigrated to the United States, wrote this journal in February 1819:

On emerging from the house onto the Common [Congo Square],...[a most extraordinary noise] proceeded from a crowd of 5[00] or 600 persons assembled in an open space or public square. The music consisted of two drums and a stringed instrument. An old man sat astride of a cylindrical drum about a foot in diameter, & beat it with incredible quickness with the edge of his hands and fingers. The other drum was an open staved drum held between the knees & beaten in the same manner. They made an incredible noise.<sup>11</sup>

Latrobe included detailed sketches of the instruments he saw [Figure 6]. The two types of drums he identified are representative of two commonly used methods of drum making in the New World. The cylindrical shaped drum reflects the traditional and most universal method of construction: the hollowing out of a log. The barrel-shaped staved drum (resembling the Cuban *conga* or *tumbadora*) reflects a New World adaptation that allowed for the use of nearly any kind of wood and did not require the intense labor necessary to carve a drum from a solid log.

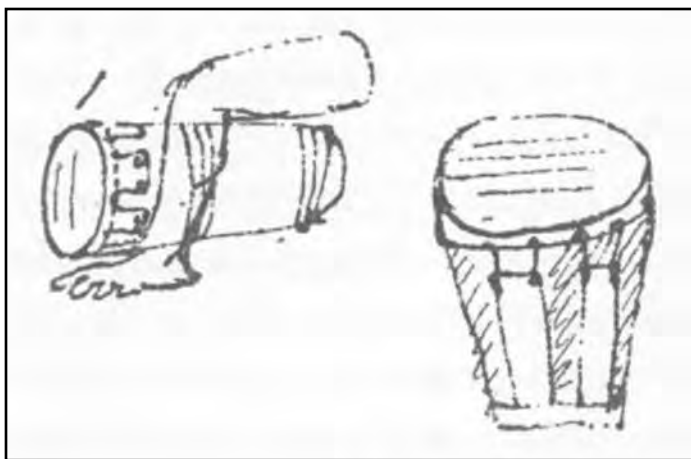


Figure 6: Latrobe's illustration of cylindrical and staved drum

Latrobe noted that one drummer placed a drum on the ground and sat upon it as he played. "The *bamboula* is associated with transverse drumming—that is, the drums are lying on their side, the drummers sitting astride them, sometimes pressing one heel on the drumhead to change the pitch."<sup>12</sup> Latrobe went on to describe the use of three other percussion instruments: "One [musical instrument], which from the color of the wood seemed new, consisted of a block cut into something of the form of a cricket bat with a long & deep mortice down the center. This thing made a considerable noise, being beaten lustily on the side by a short stick. In the same orchestra was a square drum, looking like a stool, which made an abominably loud noise. Also a calabash with a round hole in it, the hole studded with brass nails, which was beaten by a woman with two short sticks."<sup>13</sup>

Latrobe made sketches of these instruments, whose origins are African [Figure 7]. The woodblock, also called a slit drum or log drum, is made

from a hollowed piece of wood in which a narrow groove serves as a sound opening. Slit drums are fairly common in Africa.<sup>14</sup> Square frame drums (e.g. the *tamalin* in Ghana) are played in Africa, and a square frame drum with legs like a table is found both in Africa and in Jamaica where it is called a *goombay*.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, Latrobe depicts a woman playing the calabash idiophone. This is culturally appropriate to African practice. Musical instruments made of gourds—such as the *shekere* in Nigeria, the *gita* in Mali, and the water drum (e.g., *ji dundun*) throughout West Africa—are frequently played by women. African women have easy access to gourds because they are used in domestic roles for storing milk, water, and millet powder.

Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904) was a writer known best for his writings about New Orleans and his books on Japan. Through his writings for national publications such as *Harper's Weekly*, Hearn helped create the popular reputation of New Orleans as a strange and exotic city. In 1883, *The Century Magazine* published his article about New Orleans, "The Scenes of Cable's Romances," which included a paragraph about Congo Square. Hearn used the word *bamboula* to refer to the gatherings there as well as to the participating dancers.<sup>16</sup> He noted that the barrel drums were beaten with two large bones, which was repeated by Cable.

An American novelist, George W. Cable, received recognition for his portrayals of Creole life in his native New Orleans. His often-cited article "The Dance in Place Congo" was published in the February 1886 issue of *The Century Magazine*. Cable was not a witness to the festivities of Congo Square because city authorities had banned them in the 1840s.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Cable cobbled together previous authors' work to describe the event:

The booming of African drums and blast of huge wooden horns called to the gathering. The drums were very long, often hollowed from a single piece of wood, open at one end and having a sheep or goat skin stretched across the other. One was large, the other much smaller. The tight skin heads were not held up to be struck; the drums were laid along on the turf and drummer bestrode them, and beat on them on the head madly with fingers, fists, and feet—with slow vehemence on the great drum, and fiercely and rapidly on the small one. Sometimes an extra performer sat on the ground behind the larger drum, at its open end, and beat upon the wooden sides of it with two sticks. The drummers, I say, bestrode the drums; the other musicians sat about them in an arc, cross-legged on the ground. At times the drums were reinforced by one or more empty barrels or casks beaten on the head with shank-bones of cattle. One important instrument was a gourd partly filled with pebbles or grains of corn, flourished violently at the end of a stout staff with one hand and beaten upon the palm of the other. Other performers rang triangles, and others twanged jew's harps an astonishing amount of sound. Another instrument was the jawbone of some ox, horse, or mule, and a key rattled rhythmically along its weather-beaten teeth.<sup>18</sup>

Cable designated the gourd rattle as an important instrument in the ensemble. As in the report by Brown, he mentioned the jawbone but he

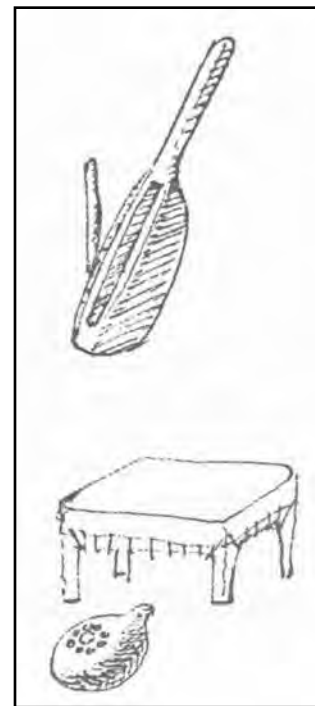


Figure 7: Latrobe's illustration of woodblock, square drum, and gourd idiophone

recounted an alternative technique of scraping the instrument with a key in guiro fashion. Both Hearn and Cable described the role of drums to call people to the gathering; this is a typical function of drums in Africa. Cable specified that a third drummer played on the shell of the larger drum, perhaps providing a timeline function similar to *cascara* in Cuban music. Squatting to play on the side of the drum with sticks is a method used by Congolese drummers.<sup>19</sup> Cable described the role of the barrel drums as reinforcing the ensemble with supporting rhythms. The practice of assigning specific roles to different types of drums is consistent with the polyrhythmic drumming in Africa. “The open-bottom barrel drums played upright with the hands, commonly associated with the *bamboula* dance, are associated with central Africa.”<sup>20</sup>

Cable’s article included a sketch [Figure 8] by Edward Windsor Kemble titled “The Bamboula.”



Figure 8: Kemble’s “The Bamboula”

Kemble (1861–1933) was an American illustrator who contributed his illustrations to magazines and books such as Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Kemble’s sketch of “The Bamboula,” based on Cable’s descriptions, depicts the drummer on the right using large bones to play his drum. This description does not appear in any of the earlier reports (e.g., eyewitnesses Saint-Méry and Latrobe). The other drummers are shown using their fists to beat the drums, which is inaccurate for typical hand drumming technique. A second-row drummer appears, based on her clothing, to be a woman. Latrobe mentioned that women played gourds, not drums. Finally, the standing figure shown swinging a five-foot stick with a gourd loosely attached to one end represents Kemble’s gross misinterpretation of a gourd rattle. Therefore, a visitor cannot stand before the historical plaque in Congo Square and accept Kemble’s drawing as an accurate depiction of events that occurred in Congo Square 200 years ago. It is only accurate to say that drums and rattles were used to accompany Sunday afternoon dances.

As with many rhythms of African origin, *bamboula* refers to the rhythm, the particular drum on which it is played, and its associated dance. Saint-Méry identified the shorter drum used in the *bamboula* dance as the *bamboula*. His was the first known source to propose that the name of the drum was due to its being made of bamboo. This assertion is suspect. In a personal communication with me, Anicet Mundundu, ethnomusicologist and performer-scholar of African music, provided the etymology and meaning of the word *bamboula*:

The term “bamboula” or “bambula” is in Kikongo language, meaning to remember, or remembering. It makes a lot of sense that when those slaves found themselves in that situation, they resorted to singing remembrance songs and dances from their culture, in order to build their morale and sanity. Although this cannot be compared to displaced communities inside Africa, there are similarities when people from one ethnic group or area meet in urban areas; they organize in socio-cultural associations where they can sing remembrance songs of their culture of origin. This can be observed during funerals, weddings, and other ceremonies that require traditional practice.

Specifically, *bamboula* was a neo-African cultural expression in the New World based on African modes of performance practice. Sublette affirms that, “When the same word is used to refer to a genre of music, its characteristic rhythm, the drum it’s played on, the dance associated with it, and the party where it happens...that clearly comes from African usage.”<sup>21</sup>

## BAMBOULA DANCE

Records of the bamboula dance predate descriptions of the instruments used by musicians. The earliest reference occurs in *Histoire de la Louisiane*, a memoir of the time (1718–1734) author Antoine-Simon Le Page du Pratz (1695?–1775) spent in Louisiana. He stated: “In a word, nothing is more to be dreaded than to see the negroes assemble on Sundays, since under pretense of Calinda or the dance, they sometimes get together to the number of three or four hundred, and make a kind of Sabbath...”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to documenting the large number of participants on Sunday afternoon festivities in Congo Square, historical sources corroborate several other characteristics of these dances; the dancers most often established circle formations, the *bamboula* was a couple’s dance, and *bamboula* originated in the Congo. Regarding the circle formation, Latrobe observed:

They were formed into circular groups in the midst of four of which, I examined (but there were more of them), was a ring, the largest not 10 feet in diameter. In the first were two women dancing. They held each a coarse handkerchief extended by the corners in their hands, & set to each other in a miserably dull & slow figure, hardly moving their feet or bodies. Most of the circles contained the same sort of dancers. One was larger, in which a ring of a dozen women walked, by way of dancing, round the music in the center.<sup>23</sup>

Although numerous 19th-century descriptions of the dances in Congo Square specifically referred to the *bamboula*, terms such as Guinea dance, Congo dance, and *bamboula* seem to be generic descriptors for any of the “African” dances performed by the slaves. “A specific description that distinguishes it [*bamboula*] from other dances, particularly the Congo dance, has not surfaced.”<sup>24</sup> Moreau de Saint-Méry described the interaction of couples in the *Chica* dance, which, a contemporary source has stated, is “also referred to as bamboula.”<sup>25</sup>

Saint-Méry wrote: “When *Chica* is to be danced, several instruments will play a certain melody, which is devoted uniquely to this kind of dance, and in which the rhythm is strictly observed. For the danseuse, who holds the corners of a handkerchief or the two ends of her apron, the art of this dance consists mainly in moving the lower part of the torso, while keeping the rest of the body motionless. To speed up the movement of the *Chica*, a dancer will approach his danseuse, throwing himself forward, almost touching her, withdrawing, then advancing again, while seeming to implore her to yield to the desires which invaded them...”<sup>26</sup>

The slave community of New Orleans was made up of a diverse mix of African ethnic groups. During the Spanish Period (1770–1803) and the early U.S. Period (1804–1820), most of the slaves in Louisiana were from Congo/Angola.<sup>27</sup> Brown explained in 1880 that various groups of dancers represented specific traditions: “About three o’clock the negroes began to gather, each nation taking their places in different parts of the square. The Minas would not dance near the Congos, nor the Mandringas near the Gangas. Presently the music would strike up, and the parties would prepare for the sport. Each set had its own orchestra.”<sup>28</sup>

In 1798, Saint-Méry had identified the origins of the *chica/bamboula*, stating, “The *Chica* comes to us from African lands, where it is danced by nearly every tribe, particularly in the Congo.”<sup>29</sup> Cable also gave a long list of the ethnic groups represented at Congo Square, and pointed out that most of those gathered were Congolese: “For here come, also men and women from all that great Congo coast...these are they for whom the dance and the place are named, the most numerous sort of negro in the colonies, the Congoes...”<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, the word “Congo” in the square’s name referred to the Kongo or Congolese people.<sup>31</sup> This part of Africa is now called the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Angola. “Slaves from the Congo brought their dances of successive couples within circles to the New World.”<sup>32</sup> The earliest identified use of the term “Congo” to refer to Congo Square occurred in 1786 when Bishop Cyrillo issued a pastoral letter that denounced “Negroes who at vespers hour, assembled in a green expanse called ‘Place Congo’ to dance the bamboula and perform rites imported from Africa.”<sup>33</sup> Given that so many slaves in New Orleans during the 1800s were from the Congo and that the place where they danced was called Congo Square, it makes sense to postulate a Congolese connection to the *bamboula* dance.<sup>34</sup>

The combination of circles, couples, and the Congo origin are found in what is perhaps the most well-known description of dance in Congo Square, Cable’s magazine article. Despite its not being an eyewitness account, Cable’s style of writing evokes a stirring image of what might have occurred during the *bamboula*:

The gathering throng closed in around, leaving unoccupied the circle indicated by the crescent of musicians...Yonder brisk and sinewy fellow has taken one short, nery step into the ring, chanting with rising energy. Now as he takes another, and stands and sings and looks here and there, rising upon his broad toes and singing and rising again, with what wonderful lightness!...He moves off to the further edge of the circle, still singing, takes the prompt hand of an unsmiling Congo girl, leads her into the ring, and leaving the chant to the throng, stands her before him to dance. Will they dance to that measure? Wait! A sudden frenzy seizes the musicians. The measure quickens, the swaying, attitudinizing crowd starts into extra activity, the female voice grows sharp and staccato, and suddenly the dance is the furious Bamboula.<sup>35</sup>

## CONCLUSION

It is highly remarkable that African descendants gathered in Congo Square on Sundays to perpetuate their African drumming traditions. “Congo Square may have looked like it was nothing but a party, but to play a hand drum in 1819 in the United States, where overt manifestations of ‘Africanness’ had elsewhere been so thoroughly, deliberately erased, was a tremendous act of will, memory, and resistance.”<sup>36</sup> Today, plaques and sculptures designate Congo Square a significant historical site. Congo Square is even called sacred ground because of the deep emotional attachment of the people of New Orleans to its history. Before these physical markers were placed, the *bamboula* rhythm and dance had left an enduring stamp on New Orleans. The 3+3+2 *bamboula* pattern persists in Mardi Gras Indian music and second-line brass band styles. The African music performance practices (e.g. syncopation, swing, improvisation, call-and-response, etc.) enacted in Congo Square may have contributed to the development of jazz and other American musical genres. Today, numerous festivals and rituals celebrate the enduring spirit of the African slaves and their descendants, who, for more than one hundred years, gathered to remember Mother Africa through music and dance.

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35. Cable, 7.
36. Sublette, 282.

**Robert J. Damm** is Professor of Music and Director of Music Education Partnerships at Mississippi State University. He has studied music and dance in Cuba, Ghana, and Mali. His original compositions are published by HoneyRock and HaMaR. He has served as President of the Mississippi PAS Chapter. **PN**

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- Andy Akiho** The New York Times describes this life-long percussionist turned composer as “mold-breaking,” “alert and alive,” “dramatic,” and “vital.” Akiho’s composition portfolio has grown exponentially over the past few years to include works for numerous combinations of instruments, many of which feature the steel pan, his primary instrument. Akiho’s recent engagements include commissioned premieres by the New York Philharmonic, Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, and National Symphony Orchestra.

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- Hot Licks** Fun with the “Bolero” rhythm

- Drumset Solo** Treading Water

- Be Fearless** Don’t be afraid to be a woman in percussion

- 5 Reasons to Start Your Own Percussion Ensemble**

They don’t just have to exist in a school setting

- 10 Tips for Band Directors to Help Their Percussion Section**

- Committee Spotlight** PAS World Percussion Committee

- From the Rhythm! Discovery Center** Zapotecano (Buzz Marimba)

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- Upcoming Events**



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