

Wesli Tradisyon Song Descriptions

1. “Peyizan Yo”

Opening with the thrilling call of the *koné*, a metal trumpet used in carnival parades, “Peyizan Yo” is a rallying cry for the farmers of Haiti who form the core of the island’s economy. Inspired by arrangements of voodoo music from the 1990s, the song asks people not to steal land from the farmers, who provide the nation with its sustenance, cultivating potatoes, bananas and other vital produce.

2. “Fè Yo Wè Kongo Banda”

A traditional song used in the beginning of Lakou Kongo ceremonies to call the spirits to gather. Sung by a Samba, preachers of the Afro-Haitian cultural tradition, the song often begins a Capella before the entire community lifts their voices and pounds their drums in celebration. The Kongo and the Banda rhythms featured in this song are not only used for religious purposes but also in community celebrations such as Carnival and Konbit, a term that refers to group efforts to achieve a common goal.

3. “Kay Koulé Trouba”

In “Kay Koulé Trouba”, Wesli describes a leaking house—a metaphor for his interpretation of the fragile condition of Haiti’s cultural values in the present day. The lyrics call to all members of the nation, from the voodoo practitioners to the intellectuals and the priests, to help prevent the house from sinking into the mud. The song draws on the sounds of *twoubadou*, the folk music of Haiti, which first developed in response to colonial bans on traditional Afro-Haitian music and its instruments.

4. “Makonay”

“Makonay” is song about unity, about the circle created by the coming together of people from all the provinces of Haiti who each bring their own values to create a diverse, unified culture. The song refers specifically to women, who represent bravery in the face of all challenges and who provide the core that holds the culture together.

5. “Konté M Rakonté M (Hommage à Eric Charles)”

This tells the story of Haiti’s neighborhoods and streets, told in the style of Eric Charles. Charles co-founded, along with Fabrice Rouzier, the band Haiti Twoubadou, which revived the traditional twoubadou folk style in the 1990s and made it popular for a new generation. Twoubadou, often led by banjo or accordion, is a style that blends African, European and Cuban elements. “Konté M Rakonté M” draws on this past while updating the style for Haiti’s present and future.

6. “Trouba Ewa”

"Trouba Ewa" aims to elevate the twoubadou musical style by bringing together a modern lover's story with the traditional sounds of Haitian folk music, creating a unique, captivating arrangement dedicated to present-day Haiti. The lyrics are in the romantic style that is more common to the more commercial kompas, but Wesli applies that more mainstream lyrical approach to the twoubadou to create a modern blend.

7. "Samba (Hommage à Azor Rasin Mapou)"

In Haitian tradition, a Samba is a preacher of the culture, blessed with the gift of storytelling. This song pays homage to the late Azor Rasin Mapou, one of the most popular Sambas in Haitian history, who Wesli credits with inspiring this album. "I don't want people to forget him," Wesli explains, "Because if you are Haitian and you forget Azor Rasin Mapou then you forget your own culture". The song is in the petro rhythm, which is similar to rara but is considered more prestigious in the Haitian culture. A Samba must have extensive historical knowledge in order to sing petro.

8. "Rara Mawoulé"

Rara is a form of festival music played with traditional percussion instruments including the *kata*, *boula* and *segon*, and the *konè*, a low-brass instrument similar to the trumpet. Played in Haiti's streets during carnivals, sports events and political protests alike, *rara* represents joy and shared culture. "Rara Mawoulé" is inspired by an old Haitian song in this style, which Wesli updated with new words in both Creole and Yoruba to draw on Haiti's African culture.

9. "Wawa Sé Rèl o (Hommage à Wawa Rasin Ganga)"

Another homage to a Haitian music legend, "Wawa Sé Rèl o" is a tribute to Wawa Rasin Ganga, who spread Haitian roots music from a purely religious, secretive setting to the broader community of Haiti and the world. The song is in a rara rhythm but played with typical twoubadou instruments, including bongos, maracas, manman tambou (a type of drum), accordeon and bamboo flute.

10. "Kadja Kadja"

Sung in a mixture of Fon and Ewe, two languages spoken in Benin, the homeland for many of the enslaved Africans who were brought to Haiti, "Kadja Kadja" is a tune that Haitians sung to the king of Dahomey (present-day Benin) when he visited the historic colony. "We are here, we're hanging in here, we didn't die, and we're very happy you've come to see us", they sing to the king.

11. "Simbi"

In voodoo belief, "Simbi" is a god found in the powerful force of flowing water. This song sings of the richness this spirit brings to its people and its ability to wash them clean of

misconceptions and wrongdoing, leaving them cleansed inside and out. Backed by a soulful *yanvalou* rhythm, the song features the sounds of a *calabash* played in a pail of water to achieve an ethereal, underwater effect.

12. "Le Soleil Descend"

Featuring Canadian singer-songwriter Paul Cargnello, "Le Soleil Descend" praises the power of the sun, which, notes Wesli, "breaks down all cultural, social and political borders and barriers. Under this sun we are all one people because it is this same light that inspires us and illuminates our paths." Backed by a reggae groove blended with the catchy *nago* rhythm and the sounds of the *cajón*, the Haitian *asson* (bell) and the Cuban *tres*, the two artists sing about unity, joy, and bridging differences to create a shared global culture.

13. "Ba Li Lavi"

Wesli intentionally stripped down the traditional percussion on the Dahomey-rhythm song "Ba Li Lavi" to feature the guitar and emphasize the meaning of his impassioned lyrics. In this fresh arrangement, Wesli sings of the difficult path Haiti is currently on, imploring people to grant Haiti a renewed life and exciting future.

14. "Peze Café"

A classic Creole hymn, "Peze Café" tells of a child sent to buy coffee for his family before being wrongfully arrested on his way home. In response, the child merely laments what he will tell his mother about the lost coffee. Sung in Haiti during the dictatorship of François Duvalier to protest military brutality, this age-old song and the parable it tells gathers new meaning and power each time it is performed. Congolese drummer Kizaba joins Wesli on this rendition.

15. "Ibo Ibo Msé Toro"

Played in a rhythm imbued with the spiritual power of the voodoo religion, "Ibo Ibo Msé Toro" features the full percussion of a traditional *igbo* song supported by the breathy melodies of a *manding*, or Peul, flute from West Africa. Often sung during the dictatorship of François Duvalier, "Ibo Ibo Msé Toro" protested the lack of justice during this dark time in Haiti's history with the lyrics "I am a king, and I am not going to die without talking."

16. "Ay Lina"

A classic twoubadou song first sung by Haitian icon Ti Paris in the 1950s, "Ay Lina" is ripe with double-entendres and tells of a man asking a girl he loves to come and dance with him. "My ideal is to have you, Lina / To calm my madness / Fulfill my desire."

17. "Soufle Van Yé"

A traditional opening ceremony tune in Nago culture, "Soufle Van Yé" is a deeply spiritual

song that serves as a shared community prayer. Put to a new rhythm and arrangement, Wesli's jazzy rendition demonstrates the magic created by combining new, modern sounds with authentic voodoo music.

18. "Azouké An Yanvalou"

Although "Azouké" is a traditional *Lakou Dahomey* song, Wesli has given the tune a new *yanvalou* rhythm to connect different parts of Haiti—Dahomey in the center and Yanvalou in the north—in a single track. The lyrics sing about valuing culture over money, since money can be a corrupting, destructive force, while culture is sustaining and unifying.

19. "Tifi A Leve"

"Tifi A Leve" is an homage to Orchestre Tropicana d'Haiti, one of Haiti's most celebrated orchestras, who played a range of musical styles from *rumba* to *cadence* and *koupe*. Wesli's tribute honors their original approach to Haiti's popular music by remaking one of their songs, which tells of a girl standing up against the Catholic religious restrictions leveled against women at the time the song first came out in the 1960s. "Stand up, little girl," it advises, "Go out and have fun."