



Unconventional Rhythmic Notations in the Haitian *Méringue*

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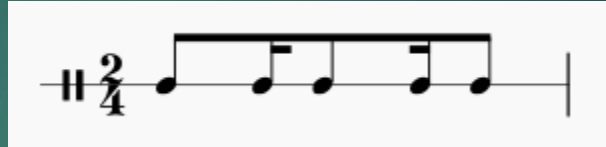
Premise



- ▶ Salon compositions of the Haitian méringue use different notations to indicate a more relaxed syncopation of the five-beat syncopated rhythm, usually codified with a sharp syncopation as the cinquillo rhythm
- ▶ These unconventional notations can be converted to cinquillo rhythms to correct the underlying fundamental tresillo rhythm to coordinate with other tresillo rhythms in repertoire

Notations of the Five-beat Syncopated Rhythm

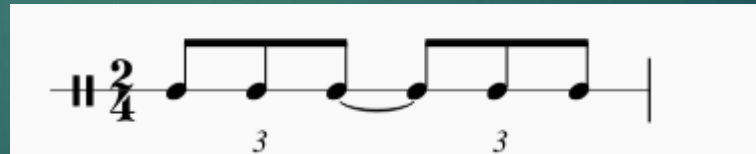
- ▶ Cinquillo
(commonly used)



- ▶ Quintolet
(Correlates with
Haitian 5/8 meter)

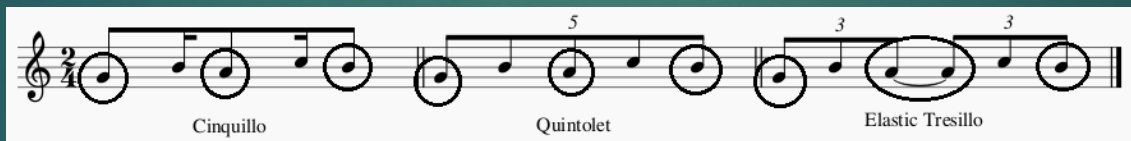


- ▶ Elastic Tresillo



Tresillo Rhythm

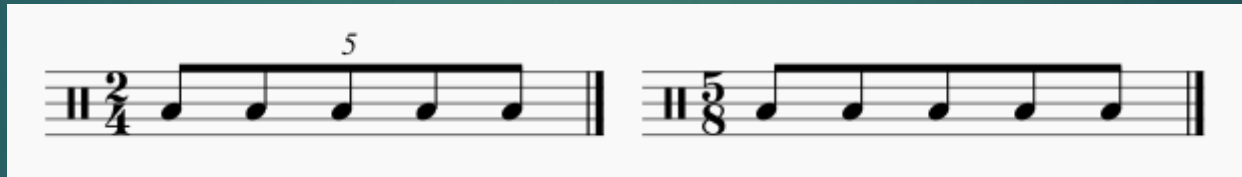
- ▶ Fundamental Rhythm of the Five-beat Syncopated Rhythm
 - ▶ Should keep integrity with all notations
 - ▶ Not accurately transcribed in the quintolet and elastic tresillo rhythms
- ▶ Common rhythm in Caribbean music
- ▶ Derived from African music and language



Reduced from:	Cinquillo	Quintolet	Elastic Tresillo
Tresillo Ratio:	3:3:2	2:2:1	2:3:1

Quintolet Rhythm

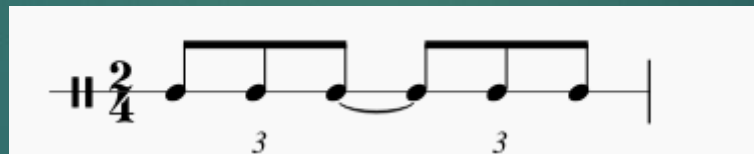
- ▶ Appears as an even quintuplet but has the tresillo rhythm embedded in the first, third, and fifth notes
- ▶ Has an execution of long-short-long-short-long¹
- ▶ Requires an elongation of the fifth note to keep integrity of the embedded tresillo rhythm
- ▶ Synonymous with the Haitian 5/8 meter
- ▶ First presented in Haitian composer Occide Jeanty's book *Petite Grammaire Musicale* in 1882



¹Manuel, *Creolizing the Contradance*, 131.

Elastic Tresillo Rhythm

- ▶ Elastic label allows for fluctuation in its execution²
- ▶ Execution requires an elongated final note, like the quintolet rhythm
- ▶ First used in salon compositions of the danza in Puerto Rico³
- ▶ Used by Haitian composer Ludovic Lamothe



²Manuel, *Creolizing the Contradance*, 122.


³Ibid.

Syncopation Factor

- ▶ Ratio of the first two notes in the Cinquillo Rhythm indicates a 2:1 Syncopation Factor for a sharp syncopation
- ▶ Ratio of the first two notes in the Quintolet and Elastic Tresillo Rhythms indicates a 1:1 Syncopation Factor for a relaxed syncopation to evenly split the first two notes of the tresillo rhythm


2:1 Syncopation Ratio

Cinquillo Rhythm




1:1 Syncopation Ratio

Quintolet Rhythm (5/8)



Elastic Tresillo Rhythm



Conversion Method

- ▶ Because the quintolet and elastic tresillo rhythms do not accurately convey the embedded tresillo rhythm, I have devised a method to correct the tresillo rhythm in these notations to coordinate tresillo rhythms in the other hand
- ▶ Steps of the method
 - ▶ Step 1: Convert quintolet and elastic tresillo rhythms to cinquillo rhythms
 - ▶ Step 2: Coordinate common tresillo rhythms
 - ▶ Step 3: Return relaxed syncopation by relaxing the syncopation of the second and fourth notes

Conversion Example 1

- ▶ Opening phrase of Monton's *Choucouné*⁴
 - ▶ One of the first salon méringues from 1884
 - ▶ Commonly known as Yellow Bird

The image displays a musical score for the opening phrase of Monton's *Choucouné*. The score is written in 2/4 time and features a piano accompaniment and a vocal melody. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The lyrics are in French and are written below the vocal line. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system containing measures 1 through 5 and the second system containing measures 6 through 8. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady bass line with chords, while the vocal melody is characterized by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped with a '5' above the staff, indicating a five-finger scale. The lyrics are: "De ie yon gwotouff pin goin L'aut joumoin con-tre Chou-coune; Li sou-rit l'heur li oue moin Moin dit: "Ciel! a la bell mouné!" Moin".

⁴Mauléart Monton, *Choucouné*, (Montréal: Société de Recherche et de Diffusion de la Musique, 2015), 2.

Conversion – Step 1

- ▶ Focusing on the antecedent phrase, the first step converts quintolet rhythms into cinquillo rhythms

The image displays a musical score for a song in 2/4 time, featuring a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The score is written for a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line consists of five measures. The first measure contains a quarter rest. The second measure contains a quintolet of eighth notes. The third measure contains a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The fourth and fifth measures contain cinquillo rhythms, which are groups of five eighth notes. The piano accompaniment consists of five measures. The first measure contains a quarter rest. The second measure contains a quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note. The third measure contains a quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note. The fourth and fifth measures contain eighth notes followed by chords. The lyrics are: De - ie yongwo touff pin - goin L'aut jou moïn con - tre Chou coune; Li

Conversion – Step 3

- ▶ The third step returns the relaxed syncopation to the second and fourth notes of the five-beat syncopated rhythm. The circled notes should be placed earlier, which will also add cross-rhythms with misalignment to the duple meter.

The image shows a musical score for a piece in 2/4 time, featuring a five-beat syncopated rhythm. The score is written in a key with three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: "De - ie yongwo touff pin - goin L'aut jou moïncon - tre Chou coune; Li".

The score is annotated with four black arrows pointing left, indicating the movement of notes to earlier positions. The first two arrows point to the second and fourth notes of the first five-beat syncopated rhythm (the notes for "yongwo" and "touff"). The next two arrows point to the second and fourth notes of the second five-beat syncopated rhythm (the notes for "moïncon" and "tre"). The notes being moved are circled in black.

Original with Common Tresillo Rhythms Indicated for entire excerpt

The image shows a musical score for piano and voice. The score is in 2/4 time and features a common tresillo rhythm, which is a three-beat pattern (quarter, eighth, eighth). This rhythm is indicated by circled annotations around the notes in both the piano accompaniment and the vocal line. The lyrics are in French and describe a scene with a character named Moin.

De - rey on g'notouff pin - gain L'air jou moin con - tre Chou - coure; Li sou - rit l'heur li oue

6
moin Moin dit: "Ciel! a la bell mounet" Moin

Conversion Example 2 with Elastic Tresillo Rhythm

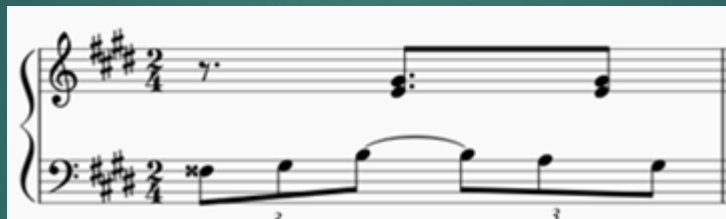
- ▶ An excerpt from Lamothe's *La Dangereuse*⁵, mm. 37-46 has questionable alignments between the elastic tresillo and tresillo rhythms in mm. 38 and 42

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 37 to 41, and the second system covers measures 42 to 46. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including elastic tresillo and tresillo rhythms, which are indicated by the number '3' below the notes. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, and various note values and rests.

⁵Ludovic Lamothe, *La Dangereuse*, in Robert Grenier, ed., *The Piano Repertoire of Haiti*, Vol. 8 (City: Publisher, forthcoming), 229.

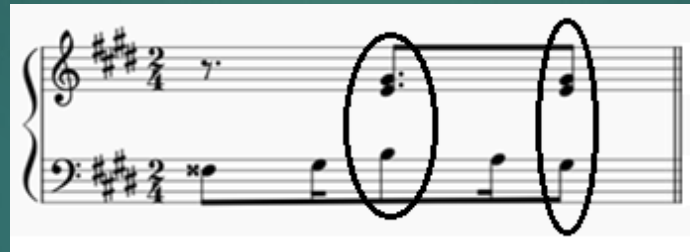
Conversion Method Step 1

- ▶ Focusing on m. 38, we apply Step 1



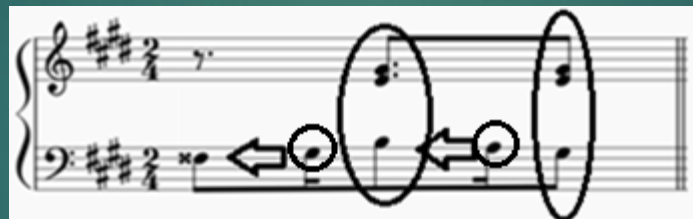
Conversion Method Step 2

- ▶ Step 2 – Coordinate common tresillo rhythms



Conversion Method Step 3

- ▶ Step 3 – Return relaxed syncopation to second and fourth notes



Original with Common Tresillo Rhythms Indicated



SRDMH

- ▶ All editions were retrieved from the Société de recherche et de diffusion de la musique haïtienne (SRDMH) in Montreal
- ▶ They plan to release a nine-volume set entitled *Haitian Piano Music* in the next two years
- ▶ Current editions of Haitian classical music can be purchased from the catalog at <http://www.srdmh.com>



References

- ▶ Élie, Justin. “Méringues Populaires 1-6.” Robert Grenier, Ed. *The Piano Repertoire of Haiti*, 9vv. City: Publisher, forthcoming.
- ▶ Jeanty, Occide. “Les Masques.” Robert Grenier, Ed. *The Piano Repertoire of Haiti*, 9vv. City: Publisher, forthcoming.
- ▶ Lamothe, Ludovic. “La Dangereuse.” Robert Grenier, Ed. *The Piano Repertoire of Haiti*, 9vv. City: Publisher, forthcoming.
- ▶ Manuel, Peter. *Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009.
- ▶ Monton, Mauléart. *Choucouné*. Montréal: Société de Recherche et de Diffusion de la Musique, 2015.