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## FACULTY RESEARCH NOTE

### Henry Santos

For music aficionados New Orleans is often associated with jazz and the local brand of rhythm commonly called zydeco. But Professor Henry Santos of the Music Department has been engaged in a research project that seeks to examine a group of six composers from a unique racial and cultural minority called free persons of color or black Creoles. This group was joined together by their affiliation with the Catholic Church, the French language and culture and African ancestry. Each of these composers and musicians made significant contributions to classical and popular music of 19th century New Orleans.

As a result of attending a Conference in New Orleans sponsored by the Center for Black Music Research Professor Santos became intrigued by the stories of these six composers of color and their struggles to make their mark on the New Orleans music scene. These six men - Basile J. Barès, Edmond Dédé, Lucien Lambert, Sidney Lambert, Eugene Victor Macarty and Samuel Snaër - were highly regarded composers and musicians who studied under some of the great masters in Europe and then returned to the United States to write and perform. Professor Santos is particularly interested in exploring these six men as writers of dance music - polkas, mazurkas, waltzes, marches and quadrille - that made them quite popular in pre and post civil war New Orleans.

Professor Santos is also examining these six men in terms of their position within New Orleans society, which was structured along racial lines. Although these men occupied positions at the high end of the social stratum in the black community, they did not enjoy full economic and social rights. In fact after the Civil War these men experienced heightened racial discrimination, forcing some to leave the country in order to pursue their profession and others to send their children abroad to receive a more equitable education.

Basile Barès was born a slave, but was sent to Paris where he studied piano. He eventually returned to New Orleans and worked under the Music Director of the French Opera. During his lifetime he wrote many kinds of dances including his most famous, the "Louisianaise Waltz." Edmond Dédé, a master violinist and conductor left the United States because of racial conditions and became the first African-American to study at the Paris Conservatory. He eventually was named the director of the Bordeaux Orchestra. The Lambert brothers, Lucien and Sidney, were the sons of a New Orleans music teacher, who also studied in Paris and became quite well known outside the United States. Although they were popular in Europe, Lucien became associated with the Emperor of Brazil and served as musician in the royal court, while Sidney became pianist in the Court of the King of Portugal. Eugene Victor Macarty was a noted singer, pianist, actor and comedian who was admitted to the prestigious Imperial Conservatory in Paris. He returned to Louisiana to become a successful businessman and legislator. Samuel Snaër was a conductor and brilliant pianist who wrote a range of music including polkas, waltzes and orchestral overtures. His most famous work is "Rappelle-Toi."

Gathering the story of each of these six New Orleans composers and musicians

has been something of a detective investigation for Professor Santos. Most of the research was done at Tulane University at the Amistad Research Center and at the Schomberg Center in New York City. Using a grant from the Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching at the college, Professor Santos was able to piece together the story line of these men. His major objective in conducting the research is to bring to life the contributions of African-American musical artists and to show that there is a rich heritage of African-American music and musical artists. Professor Santos is passionate about the need to inform young people about how composers and musicians of color, like the six men from New Orleans, overcame great economic and social barriers to reach the height of their craft.

Because this is a detective story Professor Santos still has to track down more information about these six composers and musicians from New Orleans. When completed he hopes to publish his findings in the Black Music Research Journal. But perhaps more importantly, Professor Santos intends to play many of the works of these black Creole composers in his many public concerts so that their musical contributions will live on. ❧

