GAGÒT

Haitian Creole and French – English Poetic Translation

Depi maten m leve m ape monte desann,	Since I woke up this morning, I've been up and down,
Mwen kouri toupatou tankou yon chyen ki fou.	Running around in circles like a dog gone mad.
Mwen pale, mwen chante, mwen dòmi, mwen leve;	I speak, I sing, I sleep, I wake;
Mwen priye, mwen rele… se gagòt sou gagòt.	I pray, I scream… it's mess upon mess.
Gagòt isit, gagòt lòtbò.	It's a mess here, it's a mess there,
Gagòt anwo, gagòt anba,	A mess up, a mess down,
Gagòt toupatou… se gagòt sou gagòt.	A mess everywhere… it's mess upon mess.
Gagòt nan lide mwen,	My thoughts are messy,
Gagòt nan zak mwen yo,	My actions are messy,
Gagòt nan pawòl mwen,	My words are messy,
Gagòt nan vizyon mwen.	My vision is messy.
Tout bagay yo mele:	Everything is entangled:
Lapenn ak lajwa, ledout ak lafwa,	Pain and joy, doubt and faith,
Degoutans ak lespwa, le byen avèk le mal.	Revulsion and hope, good and evil.
Tèt mwen vire, li vire,	My head is spinning and spinning,
Tout bagay yo mele.	Everything is entangled.
Gad'on gagòt!	What a mess!
Maten apre maten, m ap livre yon batay;	Morning after morning, I fight a battle;
Kontredans lavi-a rekòmanse chak jou.	The contredanse of life begins again each day.
Mwen chante, mwen danse, mwen rele: "Viv lavi!"	I sing, I dance, I shout: "Life is wonderful!"
Bridsoukou sanzatann, mwen tounen nan gagòt.	But suddenly, without warning, I am back in a mess.
Nan mitan gagòt sa mwen deside chèche,	In the midst of this mess I decide to search,
Chèche, chèche konnen, konnen sa k ap pase.	To search, to understand what's happening.
Mwen fouye, mwen mande, mwen fini pa trouve	I dig, I seek, and I finally find
Jouk andedan kè mwen	Deep within my heart
Solisyon gagòt sa:	The solution to this mess:
La vie d'ici-bas est un combat de tout instant	Life here on earth is a battle at every moment,
Que l'on ne peut gagner qu'un moment à la fois.	A battle that can only be won one moment at a time.
Apre lannuit se la jounen.	After the night comes the day.
Apre lapli solèy leve.	After the rain the sun rises.
Apre gagòt, apre gagòt… se kè poze.	After messes, after messes… the heart settles.
Se jefò nan soufrans ki pote delivrans.	It's striving in the midst of suffering that brings redemption.
Jefò nan soufrans ki pote delivrans.	Striving in suffering brings redemption.
Ah! Ainsi soit-il!	Ah! So be it!

-Gabriel T. Guillaume
Oct. 2012
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Program Notes

En tant qu'être humain, je suis le siège du combat infernal entre le Bien et le Mal. Je lutte sans répit pour trouver une solution définitive à cet imbroglio. La vie m'apprend que ce combat fait partie intégrante de mon aventure existentielle; je ne peux le gagner qu'un moment à la fois. La victoire finale se trouve dans l'effort continu et la persévérance.

-Gabriel T. Guillaume

It's always fascinating to me how our life struggles can be a catalyst for the creation of new works.
While he was suffering from writer's block, I called my father to ask when he would finally send me a poem for my new piece. His response was: "Mwen nan gagòt!" *I'm in a mess!* I then said, 'Well, why don't you write about that?' And there it was - the inspiration for *Gagòt*. That same day he emailed me a new text and I began to set it to music. His original text paints a vivid picture of the struggles I often experience in my own life. Writing this piece was quite an awakening journey for me.

Reflecting on the theme of his original text, my father writes:

"*As a human being, I carry within me the infernal battle between Good and Evil. I struggle endlessly to find a final solution to this imbroglio. Life teaches me that this battle is an integral part of my existential journey; I can only win it one moment at a time. The ultimate victory is found in continuous effort and perseverance."*

-Sydney Guillaume

About the Composer

Sydney Guillaume (b. 1982) is an active member of the choral community as a composer, clinician and conductor. In 2017, he was honored by the top music school in Haiti for his "great contribution in the expansion and the promotion of the music and culture of Haiti around the world."

Praised by the Miami Herald for their "impressive maturity and striking melodic distinction," Sydney Guillaume's compositions are known to be intricate, challenging and yet highly spirited. They promote human values and are full of heart and passion. Many of his choral works set original poetry by his father, Gabriel T. Guillaume, in Haitian Creole and French. Guillaume also writes film music – he has written original film and documentary scores for the Los Angeles-based company Loyola Productions.

His recent activities as conductor include the 2026 All-Virginia SATB Honor Choir, the 2024 ACDA Southern Region Conference Advanced SATB Honor Choir, the 2022 Georgia All-State Senior Treble Choir, the 2019 Florida All-State Middle School Treble Chorus, the 34th annual Idaho State University Choral Invitational Festival, and performances with his chamber ensemble, Imbroglio Sextet, at ISME World Conferences in Azerbaijan and Helsinki, Finland.

Sydney Guillaume graduated from the University of Miami in 2004, where his earlier choral works were performed by the University of Miami Chorale conducted by Dr. Jo-Michael Scheibe. Originally from Port-au-Prince, Haiti, he currently resides in Portland, Oregon, working as a full-time composer, conductor and clinician.

Find out more at: sydneyguillaume.com