

Malagasy Music*

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Music plays an important part in Malagasy people's life. One Malagasy proverb says that if you do your work with music, it will be completed in a flash. So, we always mingle everything we do with music. In Madagascar, cab drivers play music all the time in their cab, kids who frolic in the backyard habitually sing and dance together, men and women in a rice field used to finish their labor with songs, people who work in an office listen regularly to music while working, and so on and so forth.

Music is everywhere. You can always catch a mixed bag of joyful music in the very heart of Antananarivo as well as in the midst of Horombe desert, thanks to thousands of exuberant rhythms that exist all over the Island. In general, musics from provinces other than Antananarivo have fast rhythms, whereas the ones from the capital are relatively cool.

What I describe below are just two types of Malagasy musics. For more information about the others, please refer to the sources at the end of this material.

Salegy It is the most popular music from Madagascar. It comes from the northern region of the Island—Antsiranana, Mahajanga, Nosy Be—in which the Sakalava and Antakarana tribes live. *Salegy* has vivacious rhythm that makes it totally uplifting. Afropop worldwide describes it as a “rich, harmonized vocals and chiming guitar lines locked, restless, animated 12/8 rhythms.”

As a Malagasy folk music, *salegy* was traditionally played during moonlight festivities with homemade instruments. Now, scores of artists play it with modern instruments like guitar, drums, keyboard, bass, etc.

If you attend a soiree in Madagascar, or go to any pub or night club, you'll always hear some *salegy* music. It was first recorded in the 1950s and has been improved and exported since then. There exist today countless first-class locally made and International *salegy* CD records.

Famous bands that play *salegy* include Jaojoby—the King of *salegy*, Mily Clement, Ninie, lego, Din Rotsaka, and Tianjama.

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Horija *Horija* originated among the Betsileo tribe of Fianarantsoa. The music is called *horija*, whereas the kind of dance that goes with *horija* is known as *kidodo*—pronounced kidood. It was traditionally played by the *mpiarakandro*—the men who watch zebu cattle—without instrument. Although numerous bands play it now with modern instruments, there exist some prominent artists that keep on using typical Malagasy ones like *kabosy*, *korintsana*, and *jeju voatavo*.

The lyrics which accompany the music play a major role in *horija* since it's a rhapsodic type of music that conveys a sense of joy, sadness, or nostalgia. It also narrates historical or folk tales replete with Malagasy proverbs, making it a source of muse backed by melody.

Horija always has breezy rhythm whether it expresses joy or sadness. This music has not yet achieved international fame like *salegy*. Nevertheless, you can find some sterling CD records of *horija* on the market.

Famous bands that play *horija* include: Senge, Tsivahiny, Jean Emilien, and Niraina.

Sources used in creating this handout:

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