**Congo Square**

I dance with the ghosts of Congo Square

Meet and marry what isn’t there

O’ the full moon in Congo Square

Shining on what isn’t there!

The laughter and the tongues from far away

That echo in the present day

O’ the joy and the freedom in Congo Square

Of the women and children who are not there!

The cakewalk and Bamboula is all the rage

How they mimic and mock their master’s talk!

Guinee and Congolese can do as they please

In Congo Square

Rhythms can live for a day before going underground

To be put away

Tongues are loosened with some rum

But always there is no drum in Congo Square!

They come in rags and they come in tails

To share their woes and wails

They shimmy and they shake and they jump around

Make the dirt under their feet holy ground

I dance with the ghosts of Congo Square

Meet and marry what isn’t there

So powerful is their glee, so powerful is their pain

It reaches across centuries for descendents to claim!

O’ the full moon in Congo Square

Shining on what isn’t there!

Echoes in the present day

Of what was there and gone away

Holy ground and sacred bones

History and dust cosmic phones

I dance with the ghosts of Congo Square

Meet and marry what isn’t there!

*Lamont Steptoe, 2006*

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**Meditations in Congo Square**

There are children here running in and out of their mother’s

skirts dusky feet of joy pearly white smiles in African masks of

sorrow

There are old ladies bowed puffing on corn cob pipe heads

wrapped in scarlet bandanas whiskered like old men

Someone’s speaking in Ba-kongo another answers a question

asked in English with a phrase of Wolof

Someone is telling a joke in Mandingo a young man—salt

Water African—becrys his fate in Swahili

A ring shout is underway someone whose taken too much rum

bewails the absence of drums

Bushy black curls and frenzied feet move in rhythm to a Congo

beat

House slaves tip they hats to free-men-of-color another day of

Jubilee with some of us free

When dark begins to fall we’ll leave this weekly ball pray that

Another sun will bless us pray for the death of those that

oppress us

We ain’t got no gold but the riches we have money can’t buy

We just grin and groan and laugh and moan

*Lamont Steptoe, 2007*

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