Ayiti Cheri
traditional Haitian folk song, transliteration and translation by Don Fallick

line 1 = kreyòl lyrics;  line 2 = pronounced like (stressed syllables in bold face);  line 3 = translation

Gentle Calypso rhythm:

G7                                      C                                      F                                      G7
1  A - yi - ti    cher - i,_____ pi    bel   pe - i    pa - se     ou    nan   pwen____
2  Eye - yee - tea   sher -ee    pee   bell   pay -ee poss -    say     oo    non   pwa
3  “Hai - ti Cher - i,”_____ for beauty, no other country can match you a bit____

C
1  Fòk mwen te    ki - te ou____ pou mwen te ka - pab    com - pran     va - lè    ou____
2  Folk mwa    tay    key -    tay    oo    poo    mwa    tay   kah -    pahb    comb -    prahn     vah -    leh    oo
3  I had to leave you________ in order to understand how to value you________

F7
1  Fòk mwen te    le - se ou____ pou te    kab    a -    pre - si - e    ou____
2  Folk mwa    tay    less - say    oo    poo    tay    cob    ah -    pray - see - eh    ooh
3  I had to miss you________ before I could appreciate you____

C                                      G7                                      C
1  Pou m’    san - ti    vre - man_____ki    sa    ou   te    ye   pou    mwen____.
2  Poom  sonn -tee  vray - manh    key sah    oo    tay    yay    poom   wan
3  So I could really feel____ what you meant to me____

C                                      G7                                      C
1        An - ba    pye    bwa_____ki    tou - jou    gen____    bon    lon -    bwaj____,
2  On - bop    yay    bwa    key    too - zhoo    genn    bone    lone -    bwazh
3  Beneath the trees____ there’s always good shade____.

C7                                      F
1  Gen    bon    ti    van_____    ki   bay    nou    bon    ti    fre -    che_____.
2  Gen bone    tee    vanh    key    buy    new    bone    tee    fresh - eh.
3  There’s a nice breeze____ that gives us a bit of cooling____,

C                                      G7                                      C
1        A    la    yon    bon    pei______,   O    bon - dye    se    A - yi -    ti____!
2  Ah    la    yone    bone    payee   O    boned-yay    say    Ah    yee    tee.
3  What a good country,____ Oh God, is Haiti____!
Ayiti Cheri

traditional Haitian folk song, arranged by Don Fallick

Gentle Calypso rhythm: 1/4 note = 100

Instrumental Intro:

G7

( DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up / DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up )

Verses:

G7

A-yi-ti cher - C

Gen 

pi

/ DAMP / DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up /

F

bel pe - i - F

pa - se ou nan pwen____

bon riv - ye e bon pye bwa____

/ DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up / DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up /

Fòk mwen te - C

te ou_____ pou mwen

An - ba pye bwa____

/ DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up / DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up /

te ka - pab com - pran

ki tou - jou gen____

va - lè ou

bon lon - bwaj____

/ DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up / DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up /

Fòk mwen te - C7

le - se ou____ pou te

Gen bon ti van____

/ DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up / DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up /

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
F kab a - pre - si - e ou____
     ki bay nou bon ti fre - che____
/ DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-Down - up / DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-Down-up /
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Pou m'/ san - ti vre - man______
A la yon bon pei______
ki sa
/ DOWN-down - up, down - DOWN-up-DOWN-up / DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up /
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

G7
do dye se A - yi - ti!______
/ DOWN-down-up, down - DOWN-up-DOWN-up / DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up /
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

CHORDS:

G7
-----
X-----
-----

C
X-----
-----
-----

F
XX-----
-----
-----

C7
X-----
-----
-----

NOTES:

1. Most kreyòl words are accented on the final syllable. Example: ayiti (Haiti) is pronounced “a-yi-TI.” This does not work out well when joined with the following word “cheri”, so it is deliberately mispronounced “a-YI-ti cher-I” in the title and at the very beginning of the first verse.

2. The accented vowels are pronounced differently. Accented O’s are pronounced like the English word, “awe”. Accented E’s are pronounced like the “eu” in the word, “entrepreneur,” followed by a French R, which is gargled in the back of the throat. There is no equivalent sound in English, so if you don’t speak French, just skip the final R sound.

3. In written kreyòl, only the first letter of a sentence, or of a person’s name, is capitalized. Thus, the word “ayiti” (Haiti) is only capitalized at the beginning of a sentence. Of course, kreyòl is mostly a spoken language, as the schools are taught in French, not in kreyòl.
How to play the Calypso Strum:

The rhythm is syncopated in three phrases per measure (stressed beats in CAPS):

DOWN-down-up  down-DOWN-up  DOWN-up

To get the timing right, you have to run the three phrases together fluidly. Strum some of the down beats with your middle finger, and some with the thumb, like this (two measures):

/   DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up   /   DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up   /
 F   T   F   F   T   F   F   F   /   F   T   F   F   T   F   F   F
 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

It works more smoothly if you move (or twist) the entire right hand, in time with the “finger” strokes.

However, the words do not begin on the first beat of the measure. There’s a damped strum, and an instrumental rest first:  (stressed syllables shown in CAPS)

[----introduction----] / [strum] [--------- rest---------] [start Calypso strum]
(D-d-u, d-D-u-D-u ) / DAMP /   DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up

A-YI-ti  cher    -    I   ______  pi
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8

The damped strum is done as a regular, DOWN, accented strum, but damp it off, short, with the palm of the right hand, to give a staccato effect. Then, begin singing, but don’t start the strum until indicated.

The lyrics are slow, but the Calypso strum is fast. In 8/8 time, each measure / shown between slashes / contains 8 eighth-notes. Two eighth-notes = 1 quarter-note, and it’s the quarter-notes that are counted on a metronome. In this song, there are 100 quarter-notes, or 200 eighth-notes per minute! There are fewer than three syllables per measure, so the guitar is going more than four times as fast as the lyrics, which makes them seem very slow and lazy:

Intro:
/   DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up   /   DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up   /
 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

Verse:
G7  C
/ D AMP /   DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up   /

B E L  pe -    I pa - se  F  O U  nan  G7  P W E N
/   DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up   /   DOWN-down-up, down-DOWN-up-DOWN-up   /
 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>kreyòl</th>
<th>sounds like</th>
<th>French root</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a la</td>
<td>ah la</td>
<td>voila</td>
<td>behold!, What a...!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anba</td>
<td>on-BAH</td>
<td>en bas</td>
<td>beneath, under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apresie</td>
<td>a-pray-see-EH</td>
<td>apprécier</td>
<td>appreciate</td>
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<tr>
<td>ayiti</td>
<td>a-yee-TEE</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>Haiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bay</td>
<td>buy</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>to give</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bel</td>
<td>bell</td>
<td>belle</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bon</td>
<td>bone</td>
<td>bon</td>
<td>good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bondye</td>
<td>bone’d-YAY</td>
<td>Bondieu</td>
<td>God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheri</td>
<td>sher-EE</td>
<td>cherie</td>
<td>dear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compran</td>
<td>comb-PRAWN</td>
<td>comprendre</td>
<td>understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>eh</td>
<td>et</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fòk</td>
<td>folk</td>
<td>il faut que</td>
<td>must</td>
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<td>freche</td>
<td>fresh-EH</td>
<td>fraiché</td>
<td>coolness</td>
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<tr>
<td>gen</td>
<td>genn (hard G)</td>
<td>gainer</td>
<td>there’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>kapab, kab</td>
<td>cop-OBB</td>
<td>capable</td>
<td>can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ki</td>
<td>key</td>
<td>qui</td>
<td>who, which</td>
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<tr>
<td>kite</td>
<td>key-TAY</td>
<td>quiter</td>
<td>to leave, to depart</td>
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<tr>
<td>lese</td>
<td>less-EH</td>
<td>laisser</td>
<td>to leave alone</td>
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<tr>
<td>lonbwaj</td>
<td>lone-BWAZH</td>
<td>l’hombrage</td>
<td>shadow</td>
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<td>mwen, m’</td>
<td>mwa (a as in cat)</td>
<td>moi</td>
<td>I, me, to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nan pwen</td>
<td>non-PWA (a as in cat)</td>
<td>n’en point</td>
<td>not a bit</td>
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<tr>
<td>nou</td>
<td>new</td>
<td>nous</td>
<td>we, us, you (plural)</td>
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<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>oh</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Oh</td>
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<tr>
<td>ou</td>
<td>ooh</td>
<td>tu</td>
<td>you (singular)</td>
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<td>pase</td>
<td>passAY</td>
<td>passer</td>
<td>exceeds</td>
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<td>payEE</td>
<td>pais</td>
<td>country</td>
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<tr>
<td>pi</td>
<td>pee</td>
<td>plus</td>
<td>more</td>
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<td>for</td>
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<td>pyebwa</td>
<td>p’yay-BWAH</td>
<td>pied-bois</td>
<td>trees</td>
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<td>rivye</td>
<td>reeve-YAY</td>
<td>rivière</td>
<td>river</td>
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<td>sa</td>
<td>sah</td>
<td>ça</td>
<td>that</td>
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<td>santi</td>
<td>sahn-TEE</td>
<td>sentir</td>
<td>feel</td>
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<td>se</td>
<td>say</td>
<td>c’est</td>
<td>is, am, are</td>
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<td>sole</td>
<td>so-LAY</td>
<td>soleil</td>
<td>sun</td>
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<td>past tense indicator</td>
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<td>ti</td>
<td>tea</td>
<td>petit</td>
<td>little, a little</td>
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<td>toujou</td>
<td>too-ZHOO</td>
<td>toujours</td>
<td>always</td>
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<td>valè</td>
<td>vah-LEH</td>
<td>valez</td>
<td>value</td>
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<td>vent</td>
<td>wind</td>
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<td>vreman</td>
<td>vray-MANH</td>
<td>vraiment</td>
<td>true, truly</td>
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<td>ye</td>
<td>yay</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>to mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>yon</td>
<td>yone</td>
<td>un</td>
<td>a, one</td>
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