

StorySave

Rita Cox
Wit and Wisdom: Anansi Tales and Other Stories

2021

STORYTELLERS OF CANADA
CONTEURS DU CANADA



RITA COX
WIT AND WISDOM
ANANSI TALES AND OTHER STORIES

StorySave

VOICES OF CANADA'S STORYTELLERS/LES VOIX DES CONTEURS CANADIENS

Disc 1: ANANSI TALES

In these stories, Anansi, the trickster character that originated long ago in West Africa, uses cunning and wit against stronger and more powerful animals. Like other trickster characters from oral traditions around the world, Anansi uses humour, pride and innate strength to overcome adversity. Rita has seen first-hand how empowering these stories can still be.

1. **Anansi's Ridin' Horse** (10:33)
2. **How Wasp Got his Sting** (11:26)
3. **Making the Stone Smoke** (4:52)
4. **Tiger Plays Dead** (5:30)
5. **Why Brer Owl Only Works at Night** (9:24)
6. **How the World Got Wisdom** (3:45)



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StorySave is a program of Storytellers of Canada - Conteurs du Canada that preserves the voices of Canada's most distinguished storytellers as an on-going legacy.

For the podcast about Rita Cox, her life and work, and the production of this album, visit www.storytellers-conteurs.ca. On this website you will also find a complete list of StorySave productions and further information about StorySave.



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Rita Cox is an award-winning librarian, teacher, author and master storyteller who has performed across North America, in Europe, Brazil and the Caribbean, on stage, radio and television. During her 35-year career as a librarian with the Toronto Public Library, Rita created several groundbreaking community programs that remain active today. She also established the *Black Heritage and West Indian Collection*, now known as *The Rita Cox Black and Caribbean Heritage Collection*, which has become one of the most comprehensive collections of its kind in Canada. Through these and other initiatives, Rita continues to promote multiculturalism and literacy through the arts.

Rita continues to be a sought-after public speaker, and is the recipient of many awards, including the Black Achievement Award, the Caribbean Tourism Lifetime Achievement Award, and her appointment as a Member of the Order of Canada.

Rita's work preserving and promoting Caribbean and African cultural heritage has always informed her storytelling and is the inspiration for this, her first storytelling album, *Wit and Wisdom*. It's an album that demonstrates oral traditions of the African diaspora, and also celebrates the importance and universality of storytelling itself.

Disc 2: FOLK TALES AND DARK NIGHT STORIES

Rita reflects, "From my childhood I've been told stories: stories to make us think; stories to make us laugh; stories to 'scare us to death'. These stories were often told at night to enhance the experience, and we always came back for more!"

This disc features some of Rita's own published stories. It also includes traditional supernatural tales, where characters' names reflect the influence of the early French colonial masters in Caribbean history.

1. **How Trouble Made the Monkey Eat Pepper** (7:56)
(This retelling by R. Cox was first published in 1977)
2. **How the Agouti Lost its Tail** (6:56)
(This retelling by R. Cox was first published in 1986) AGOUTI: a small rabbit-like rodent.
3. **Ma Yarwood's Wedding Ring** (10:29)
(Written by R. Cox; first published in 1997)
4. **A Stranger at the Dance** (7:48)
DIABLESSE (La Disables') (jablesse): A she-devil appearing as a beautiful woman with cloven hooves. She loves to attend dances, and leads young men to destruction by luring them to her home.
5. **The Old Woman in the Village** (5:03)
SOUCOUYANT (A kind of Vampire): An old crone who can shed her skin at nighttime, turn herself into a ball of fire that flies through the air in search of victims, then lands to suck her victim's blood.
6. **The Forest Children** (6:08)
DOUENES: Spirits of children who died before they were baptized. Their feet are turned backwards and they roam the forests with large hats covering their featureless faces. With their playful shouts, they lure children deeper into the forest and far from home.
7. **Meeting the Shape Shifter** (7:00)
LAGAHOO (Loup-garou): A werewolf is a human character who deals with the devil and has the power to transform himself into many shapes and sizes.

WIT AND WISDOM

ANANSI TALES AND OTHER STORIES

RITA COX

For decades, Rita Cox shared her extensive story repertoire around the world in community settings and on professional tours. Now, this award-winning master storyteller shares some of these magical tales on her first album, *Wit and Wisdom*.

This two-disc collection of Afro-Caribbean stories is infused with Rita's Trinidadian cultural history and her captivating storytelling style. Disc 1 showcases the much-loved trickster tales of Anansi, brought to the Caribbean by slaves from West Africa and passed on orally through generations. Disc 2 is devoted to legendary tales about how and why things came to be, and to supernatural stories whose characters' names reflect the early French colonial influences.

Rita draws from her deep knowledge of oral tradition, and is beloved for her storytelling. This very special collection will resonate with those who know Rita from her long career as a librarian and literacy advocate, and is sure to captivate new fans everywhere.



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