

# BRO NEVEZ

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE BRETON LANGUAGE  
NEWSLETTER OF THE U.S. BRANCH



Biniou and bombard players as photographed by  
Jos le Doaré, Éditions d'Art Jos

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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# BRO NEVEZ 120

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*Ideas expressed within this newsletter are those of the individual authors, and do not necessarily represent ICDBL philosophy or policy.*

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## From the Editor

I hope you will enjoy this November issue of Bro Nevez which arrives at your door in December. I am particularly pleased to have contributions from several members of the U.S. ICDBL who bring new and interesting perspectives on a range of topics.

Lois Kuter

## Breton and the 2011-2012 School Year in Brittany

While the school year is not so new, it has taken a little digging to find some statistics on the state of the Breton language in the schools. And the numbers vary – perhaps as students settle in and shift in the first month? The differences are not huge and the conclusion is that there is a strong growth this school year by approximately 5% - an addition of 637 to 771 students depending on whose statistics you choose to use. The combined total for the Diwan Breton immersion schools, Div Yezh public bilingual schools and Dihun Catholic bilingual schools has topped 14,000 no matter who is counting.

Here are the numbers to be found (for now) on the numbers of children in Breton language immersion and bilingual programs:

The Ofis ar Brezhoneg website has statistics currently posted that show the following for the Diwan, Dihun and Div Yezh schools: a total of 14,082 (+ 47 in Paris's Diwan school) = 14,129. These are found in over 400 sites with 6 new pre-schools in Finistère and Morbihan, and two new middle schools in Finistère (Quimperlé and Sizun). From 2010 there was an addition of 637 students for a gain of 4.7%.

One can find more of a breakdown in exploring the Dihun Breizh website ([www.dihun.org](http://www.dihun.org)) – in particular their Bulletin for the new school year (distro skol 2011). Here you find a detailed breakdown by department and school level (pre/primary and secondary) of all the Dihun schools. This gives a total of 4,666 for Dihun schools (4,107 in the pre/primary level and 559 in the middle/high school level). This same newsletter posts figures from Ofis ar Brezhoneg dated September 29 which give different totals from those cited above: 4,692 for Dihun Catholic bilingual schools, 5,983 for bilingual public schools and 3,481 for the Diwan immersion schools for a total of 14,156. This represents a growth of 3.8% for Dihun, 6.7% for Div Yezh and 4.9% for Diwan with an overall increase of 711 students and 5.3%. Of the 14,156 students, 11,799 are in the pre and primary school levels. Broken down by departments the totals (all levels) are 6,366 for Finistère, 3,910 for Morbihan, 2,259 for Côtes d'Armor,

1,045 for Ile et Vilaine, and 576 for Loire-Atlantique. The Paris Diwan school (not included in these statistics?) would add 47 more.

In the same Bulletin by Div Yezh an article from the blog of Fañch Broudig (September 22) is reprinted (<http://languebretonne.canalblog.com>). His numbers are yet again different. He cites a total of 14,174 students, with 5,995 in the Div Yezh public schools, 4,651 in the Dihun Catholic Schools and 3,528 in the Diwan schools. While noting that the growth is stronger this year than it has been in recent years, he points out that there is room for improvement at the middle school and high school levels where there is need for growth to provide more options for students.

So, totals for this new school year range as follows:

	Broudig 9/22/11	Ofis ar Brezh 9/29/11	Ofis ar Brezh website now
Diwan	3,528	3,481	
Div Yezh	5,995	5,983	
Dihun	4,751	4,692	
Totals	14,174	14,156	14,129 (incl. Diwan Pariz)

It is unclear if Diwan Pariz (47 students) is included in the first two sets of statistics.



## Ar Redadeg Relay Run for the Breton Language

The third bi-yearly relay to raise money for Breton language programs will begin in Brest on May 12, 2012 and end in Douarnenez May 19. This will cover 1,500 kilometers run day and night and passing through all departments of Brittany. The following description tests your geography and knowledge of Breton language names for towns and cities. From Brest on the western

tip of Penn-ar-Bed (Finistère) runners hug the northern coast, take a dip to Landerne, before heading northeast through Montroulez and back to the northern coast of Aodou-an-Arvor (Côtes d'Armor). They pass through Lannuon, Pempoull and dip down to Gwengamp, head back to the sea at Sant Brieg, and continue to the east through Lambal to Sant-Malo.

From there the runners head due south through Il-ha gwilen (Ile et Vilaine) through Dinan, Rhoazhon and Redon and into Liger-Atlantel (Loire-Atlantique) to Blaen, and Naoned. They follow the Loire west to the Atlantic through Sant-Nazer and Gwenrann, then on to Gwened, An Alre, and An Oriant. The route then heads inland snaking through central Mor-Bihan to Pondi, Rostrenenn and Karaez. Runners head back to Penn-ar-Bed and the Point du Raz, winding to the southeast to pass through Kemperle before heading to the coast through Kemper, Pont'n Abad to arrive in Douarnenez.

This better described as a "run" and not a race where different legs of the journey are covered by many runners – old and young. Proceeds from the run will benefit different Breton language projects – theater, books and school programs for children, and media projects. Check out the website to follow the run and learn more about it: <http://Ar-Redadeg.org>

## Breton Language Live

Natalie Novik

*Editor's Introduction:* There are a growing number of resources on the internet for those learning Breton. Many require knowledge of French or Breton to really appreciate, but being able to listen to Breton on a radio program or video broadcast is a great way to get an "ear" for the sound of the language. Do some exploration and use all the resources available to see and hear Breton speakers as they converse, do interviews, perform music and drama (and comedy), and communicate and create using the Breton language. Natalie Novik gives you a quick introduction to some of the resources you might track down and check out regularly. – Lois Kuter

### Four radio stations

- Radio Kerne (all in KLT Breton, 60 hours per week)
- Arvorig FM (all KLT Breton)
- Radio Bro Gwened (bilingual French-Breton with some Gwenedeg dialect)
- Radio Kreiz Breizh (bilingual French-KLT Breton)

These are available in FM and webradio media. Before you get all excited about listening to radio in Breton though, remember the time difference, and keep in



mind that these stations usually stop broadcasting around midnight.

The site [www.antourtan.org](http://www.antourtan.org) (the lighthouse) lists France Bleu Breizh Izel as another station broadcasting in Breton, but to my knowledge, this happens rarely. They play a lot of songs in English, though! I recommend the An Tour Tan site anyway, because it is bilingual (French-Breton) and contains a lot of information about concerts, festivals, and even organizes virtual fest-noziou (dance nights) from time to time.

**Journalist Fañch Broudig has a blog** on the Internet called “Langue bretonne” [www.langue-bretonne.com](http://www.langue-bretonne.com). He recommends among Internet sites, the site called [www.brezhoweb.com](http://www.brezhoweb.com), which has a Brezhoneg Bemdez (Breton every day) program. If you have some Breton, it's a good way to go over words. However, if you don't know the language, it's not going to be helpful, because everything is explained either in Breton or in French! But it's entertaining... and accessible on Facebook.

A recent posting by Fañch concerns the fact that the **regional TV channel FR3** has gone back to broadcasting one hour in Breton per week, in a program called “Bali Breizh” (Brittany Street). Because all this is pretty new, the archives are not yet available, but should be soon on the website of the TV station (<http://bretagne.france3.fr/>) or directly on their archive site called [www.pluzz.fr](http://www.pluzz.fr). Unfortunately, all this requires the ability to navigate the sites in French, nothing is in English or in Breton...

But, to make things confusing you can access the TV channel FR3 at <http://www.france3breizh.fr/>. On this site you can find Bali Breizh as well as other programming in Breton ... and this will link you to some of the recent Breton music recordings (in Breton or French). You will need to navigate in Breton or French, but don't let that stop you from enjoying the programming. It's great for learners to plunge right in and just listen. There is a great education section, with short sentences read without any effort to be understood by beginners! This gives one an ear for the way people talk.

As was recommended in a previous issue of Bro Nevez, [www.kervaker.com](http://www.kervaker.com) has an audio-based course, with English navigation buttons. [http://www.kervaker.org/en/courseintro\\_01\\_noid.html](http://www.kervaker.org/en/courseintro_01_noid.html). It is best used with a tutor or a teacher, because the introduction tells you that you have to “try to guess the overall meaning”. In other words, you are on your own! But it also has a useful grammar button and phrases (with the translation) and short stories (without translation), so overall, you might find a way to make it work for you.

The website for Agence Bretagne Presse [www.agencebretagnepresse.com](http://www.agencebretagnepresse.com) is a great source for all sorts of news about what is going on in Brittany and this site has Breton language and English language versions, although not everything is available on those alternatives that you find on the French site. ABP has a number of videos that are available – many short film clips from events which are not always beautiful visually but very interesting, nevertheless. And there are links to videos submitted by a number of organizations. While most will be in French you can find some Breton language documentaries as well as music performances. This won't help you master the Breton language, but it's always useful to hear a variety of people speaking the language as a living language.

A word of caution for all the Internauts out there (actually two words):

a) a lot of sites promise you everything you need to learn Breton, but actually do not deliver. The word “Breton” has been added to a very long list of languages promised by the site, and they expect you to pay a low fee to get started. Don't believe them...

b) there are probably many more sites than what is listed above. However, finding purely Breton language sites and/or sites that enable you to switch to English are still far and few in between.

This page will be updated now once a year to keep up with all the new sites and possibilities out there. I have faith that much more will be available in years to come, and that this is just the beginning.

## **A New Resource for the Breton language A Breton-Dutch and Dutch-Breton Dictionary**

For many years Jan Deloof, a poet and representative for the ICDBL in Belgium, has been working on a dictionary for Dutch speakers interested in learning and using Breton – likewise Breton speakers can use this dictionary to enjoy the work of Flemish writers like Deloof. While the Breton-Dutch “volume” has been completed for a while, the Dutch-Breton edition has been more recently completed. Both are accessible on-line at the following sites:

<http://users.telenet.be/jandelooft/NL-BZH>

<http://users.telenet.be/jandelooft/BZH-NL>



## **Brittany loses a true patriot Yann Fouere (1910 – 2011)**

Yann Fouere passed away this past October at the age of 101. His funeral was attended by some 400 people who recognized the life-long work of this militant for Brittany. In the May 2010 issue of *Bro Nevez I* prepared an article to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of this still very active man and I have chosen to reprint it here since it presents his thoughts and legacy. – Lois Kuter

### *A Milestone to be Noted - Yann Fouéré at 100*

Yann Fouéré has worked for the cause of Brittany and the right of Bretons to decide their own future for most of his 100 years, so it is worth presenting this important figure in the history of the Breton movement.

First it is perhaps a good idea to present some ideas that are at the core of the many books and articles Yann Fouéré has published. Fouéré has been not only a participant in and scholar of Breton history and culture, but he has also traveled widely within Europe meeting with leaders of minority language communities. Based on this Yann Fouéré has always fought for Brittany's right to be a nation within the state of France. This is certainly a workable model in many countries of Europe where culturally distinct peoples have been able to determine their own destiny while being part of a larger political entity.

Yann Fouéré has observed during his lifetime – and this is no secret – that the obstacle for Brittany and other peoples within France is that France has defined itself (and continues to do so) as a “nation-state” where everyone living in France must be “French” to the exclusion of anything else. This is accomplished by the centralization of decision-making in Paris. And the imposition of a French nation-state is supported especially by the education system which tries to “put all citizens of France in the same mold, no matter what their color race, religion, language of civilization may be.” (my translation, Yann Fouéré, *De la Bretagne à la France et à l'Europe*, Edition COB, 1956). To insure that all citizens of France become “French” – whether they live in France's African or Pacific/Caribbean island colonies, or in Brittany or Corsica - they are taught one standard version of the history of France and they are expected to speak French. Yann Fouéré has asked why can't one have a federation of nations within France ... and just as importantly, within Europe as a whole?

Yann Fouéré was born on July 26, 1910. His father, who worked for the French State Revenue administration was from a farming family in the region of Dinan and his mother's family was from the Trégor area. While actually born in Gascony, he spent most of

his childhood and youth in Brittany. He developed his passion for Brittany and its history and culture as a college student and became the president of the Association of Breton Students in Paris (1933 to 1937) while in that city to study Law and Political Science. During this period he would get to know many militants in the Breton Movement and Celtic world.

In 1934, when just 24 years old, he helped to create the organization *Ar Brezhoneg ar Skol* to petition for teaching Breton in school. Thanks to *Brezhoneg ar Skol*, by the end of 1939 some 500 municipal councils of Brittany had adopted a petition asking that Breton be officially taught in all the schools of Lower Brittany. The three general councils of Lower Brittany would also adopt the petition. While the plan was to gradually introduce Breton into the schools, the government conceded only to allowing the organization of Breton classes outside of school hours. Fouéré's active role in *Ar Brezhoneg ar Skol* would lead to his recruitment to serve as vice-president of the *Union Régionaliste Bretonne* (1939-45).

In the 1930s Yann Fouéré would also begin work with a number of organizations that would take him to other countries to learn about minority peoples. He took on a leadership role with the youth section of the Federal Union of Veterans in 1934 for which he participated in international youth congresses in Geneva (1936) and New York (1938). He became the director and main contributor to the publication *Peuples et Frontières* and worked with the *Ligue des Amis des Basques* to assist Basque exiles in France. In the 1980s his international contacts would be renewed and Yann Fouéré became involved with the Federal Union of Ethnic Communities of Europe.

Yann Fouéré was employed with the Ministry of the Interior of France in 1936 and worked with the *Sous-Préfet* in Morlaix for a short period in 1940. In March 1941 he changed careers and founded the newspaper *La Bretagne* with the hope that this would give voice to Bretons just as other minority peoples of Europe had newspapers to express their aspirations. In 1942 he took over ownership of the newspaper *La Dépêche de Brest*.

During World War II and the German occupation of Brittany Yann Fouéré felt it was important to speak about Breton interests, but also do as little as possible to provoke the wrath of either the Vichy government or German occupiers. Already noted as a leader of the Breton movement Fouéré would be appointed as General Secretary (1942 to 1944) of the *Comité Consultatif de Bretagne*, an advisory group to speak to Breton concerns and advance cultural projects and initiatives for the Breton language.

The immediate post-war period in Brittany is very complex and a large number of Breton militants and

cultural activists were arrested and accused of German collaboration simply based on their outspoken defense of rights for Brittany to decide its own future. Yann Fouéré was certainly outspoken about his desire for a decentralization that would allow Bretons to remain Breton but did not advocate separatism. He served a full year in prison from August 1944 to August 1945 before being released on bail. Shortly before his trial in March 1946 he sought exile in Wales. In absentia he was sentenced to a life sentence of hard labor. He would begin a new life in Wales – thanks to the generosity of fiends made through participation in Celtic Congresses, like Gwynfor Evans. He then moved to Ireland and settled eventually in Cleggan near Galway where he would take up a new occupation as a fish and shellfish wholesaler. It was not an easy life for him and his family who joined him in Wales and Ireland.

In 1953 a law was passed in France granting amnesty to Bretons stripped of citizenship rights in the post-war years. In 1955 Yann Fouéré gets a new trial and is acquitted of all charges. After ten years of exile he returns home to Brittany. He has not forgotten dreams and practical plans for Brittany's future. In 1956 he helps to draft a *Projet d'Organisation de la Bretagne* and in 1957 he helps to launch the *Mouvement pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne* (MOB) and its journal *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*. This organization would focus particularly on social and economic development of Brittany.

Even though active back in Brittany in working with others to strengthen the Breton movement for self-determination, Yann Fouéré maintained strong ties with those active in the defense of Celtic cultures. In 1961 he would be part of the founding of the Celtic League and he would spend much time each year in Ireland in years to come.

The MOB would disappear ... and reappear in other organizations in the late 1960s. One of these was *Strollad ar Vro* which continued publication of *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*. In the late 1960s Bretons impatient with the road-blocks set up by the French government for even the smallest measures for self-determination and cultural advancement set off a number of bombs through the FLB, *Front de Liberation de la Bretagne*. Symbolically targeting government buildings, statues, and even the Versailles Palace, the bombs are carefully planned to avoid harm to people.

Suspected of being a part of the FLB, Yann Fouéré is arrested in October 1975, along with many other Breton militants. After 105 days in prison he is released thanks to pressure from a number of organizations including Amnesty International. In efforts to discredit Breton militants it has been the practice to haul as many as possible into jail, and every effort was made to make FLB actions appear to be linked to past

collaboration on the part of a handful of Breton separatists with Nazi Germany.

In the early 1980s Yann Fouéré helped to found the *Parti pour l'Organisation d'une Bretagne Libre* (POBL) and the publication *L'Avenir de la Bretagne* would once again come out. While this party faded out in 2005, this journal continues to be published and Yann Fouéré had a regular column in it until the end of 2004. He wrote innumerable articles for this and other newspapers and journals as well as a number of books.

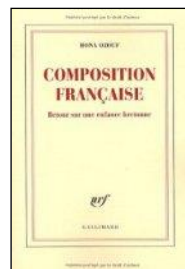
Wounds from World War II period and the post-war period in Brittany are yet to fully heal and different people will have different – and strong – feelings about Yann Fouéré as a Breton and as a Frenchman. If you want to hear from this Breton militant himself, read his books or go to his website:

[www.fondationyannfouere.org/english](http://www.fondationyannfouere.org/english) where you can find a wealth of information and learn more about his work for Brittany.

A few books:

*De la Bretagne à la France et à l'Europe*, 1956  
*La Bretagne Ecartelée*, 1962  
*L'Europe aux Cent Drapeaux*, 1968 (published in English as *Towards a Federal Europe – Nations or States?* in 1980)  
*En prison pour la libération de la Bretagne (En prison pour le F.L.B.)*, 1977  
*Histoire résumée du mouvement Breton, du XIXe siècle à nos jours (1800-1976)*, 1977  
*Ces droits que les autres ont ... mais que nous n'avons pas*, 1979  
*L'Histoire du quotidien La Bretagne et les silences d'Henri Fréville*, 1981  
*Les Régions d'Europe en quête d'un Statut*, 1982  
*Problèmes bretons du temps présent*, 1983  
*La Patrie Interdite, Histoire d'un Breton*, 1987  
*La Maison de Connemara*, 1995  
*Europe ! Nationalité Bretonne ... Citoyen Français?*, 2000  
*Yann Fouéré .. des mots pour l'Avenir de la Bretagne – biographie et sélection des textes*, 2008

## New Books from Brittany



**Mona Ozouf, *Composition française: Retour sur une enfance bretonne*** (Paris, Gallimard, 2009), 270 pages.

Reviewed by Richard Herr

Mona Ozouf's father Jean Sohier was a Breton patriot. Brought up in a modest family in francophone Brittany, after the First World War he met a Benedictine monk, François

Vallée, who was preparing a dictionary of the Breton language. Under his influence, Sohier became a champion of the Breton language and a founding member of the Union de la Jeunesse de Bretagne. Socialist and laïc in outlook, in 1933 he began to publish a modest journal dedicated to the defense of the Breton language *Ar Falz* (*The Sickle*) aimed at the public school teachers of Brittany. Only some twenty issues had appeared when he died in 1935 of a sudden pneumonia. Mona Sohier, now Ozouf, hardly four at the time, begins the book with her traumatic recollection of being led to her father's casket to kiss his cold face. She would be brought up surrounded by his memory, his surprisingly rich library, and stories that circulated in Breton patriot circles of his acts of defiance against French authorities (stories that Ozouf later discovered to be mostly inventions).

Mona Ozouf has spent her professional life in Paris, becoming a distinguished historian known for her work on the French Revolution and French schools. Well into her seventies, she has turned to a different kind of writing, looking back at her own childhood as a way into thinking about the development of the French Republic, its "composition" she calls it, consciously using the term that applied to the exercise in which French children had to put their thoughts together on a page. Coming from a recognized French intellectual, the result is a significant challenge to the oppressive uniformity championed by the government in Paris. In the process, she produces a moving account of what childhood was like in Brittany in the 30s and early 40s, loaded with fascinating details and happily unburdened by any reference to her current agenda.

Her childhood was divided into three distinct environments, her household being the first. Unable to bear the pain of the surroundings that she had shared with her husband, her mother, a schoolteacher, requested to be moved to a different location. Ozouf recalls being taken to the frosty interview at the *école maternelle*, the infants' school at the nearby town of Plouha, which would accept her mother and a year later put her in charge. Part of a recently built complex beyond the town limits that included the boys' and the girls' elementary schools, it had housing for the staff, a cold isolated environment. Her maternal grandmother, also a widow, naturally joined them. Brought up as a good Breton woman to be the dominant figure in the family—Breton matriarchy was well known—she took over the house while her daughter ran her school. A proto-feminist, the grandmother looked on men with affectionate condescension. Although attached to her church, she nevertheless allowed her granddaughter to go to the local state school because it was more convenient, a decision Ozouf's mother would forever be grateful for. They spoke French at home, but her grandmother's French was awkward and Mona absorbed from her by osmosis the culture of Brittany. It was her mother, faithful to her husband's crusade, who

gave Mona lessons in Breton after nightly prayers. Few people came to visit and her mother developed few friends—remarriage was frowned upon and Breton parents did not make friends with their children's teachers. The monotony of the home was broken by summers spent at a seaside cottage her father had used his inheritance to build on a fierce coast miles to the west. Although her mother took her role as a representative of the French Republic seriously, the ambiance of the house breathed the Breton spirit her father had championed, one could say a Celtic spirit, for the Irish nationalists were admired as heroic brothers.

The second environment was the public school that Mona entered at five, walking across the courtyard from their home. Here the ambiance was what the Third Republic wanted to represent to its citizens, the equality of all persons. The teachers were fair and made the pupils feel secure. What Ozouf remembers most clearly was a sense of warmth and comfort, where she would forget the silence of her home. The children, for all their different family backgrounds, became part of one community. At the end of the day, everyone dispersed to her own home, some walking long distances to their farms; children never visited their friends. Across the town from their schools, the schools of the *Frères* and the *Soeurs* drew the children of the *bourg*, except those of the *fonctionnaires*, who were committed to laïc schools. The society of Plouha, typical of Brittany, was sharply divided between laïc and Catholic, reflected in the choice of schools, butchers, doctors, and the rest.

As she progressed through the grades, their history of France turned it into a living being, progressing through growing pains from monarchy to a *patrie* of justice and humanity. The pupils read stories about France, Alsace especially, also the Midi and other parts, but not Brittany, although there was no sense that it was being purposely excluded, it just did not come up. Nor, of course, was there ever a word of Breton in the class, and no excursions to appreciate the local sights. School preached the individual liberty guaranteed by the Republic; at home Mona absorbed the dream of the collective liberty of Brittany.

The parish church was her third environment. Mona's grandmother upheld the traditional acceptance of the Catholic faith, in her own way of course, paying little heed to the dictums of the clergy, who were of the second sex. She taught Mona her prayers and took her to catechism. But where the school breathed equality, the church breathed inequality. At services, the girls and boys of the church schools sat in the front pews, the lay pupils were placed behind them. The girls of the *Soeurs* decorated the parish crèche at Christmas and, to Mona's envy, scattered the petals for the Corpus parade. Mona came first on the catechism test, but the prize went to the daughter of the church

beadle; Mona was proclaimed number two. Mona sensed the same unjust inequality in the teachings put forth by their uninspiring priest. Her father and mother would spend eternity in Hell for their lack of faith; she, consigned to Heaven, would never see them again.

Ozouf's memories of her childhood found her caught among these three environments, three traditions she calls them, isolated from each other, only occasionally overlapping, three identities struggling in her bosom that she would carry forward. To get her a better secondary education, her mother obtained a position in Saint Brieuc. This meant the loss of the few friendships they had. It was 1941, years of German occupation and little food, but the *collège*, still a girls' school, brought her teachers who excited her intellect and opened her eyes to the best French writers and thinkers. She maintained her loyalty to her father's memory, but when liberation came she celebrated with everyone else and was troubled by her mother's lack of enthusiasm. The atmosphere of liberation incited her to become politically engaged; her reading of the press made her suspicious of De Gaulle.

So that she might go to university, her mother and grandmother moved with her to a suburb of Paris. This meant the Sorbonne and the Ecole Normale Supérieure. She became caught up in the excitement of remaking France in the post-war years, the France of justice and reason. As she found herself becoming part of this greater whole, Brittany faded into the background. She joined the Communist Party and found in its cell the warmth and equality of her school. Men treated women the same as themselves. For Ozouf Communism expanded the French ideal of liberty and equality to apply to the whole world. She had some suspicions but was comforted by the recollection that her father had admired the Soviet Union for its recognition of its national minorities. (She would later become disillusioned with the party's dogmatic intolerance.) As she left the university she was caught up in the prospect of a career studying the glorious actors of the French Revolution. The universalism of France had triumphed over the particularism of Brittany.

Her development is reflected in the changing spirit of her writing. Her description of her childhood in Plouha has a poetic quality that makes the book a delight to read. The tale of her Breton origins seems written from her heart, but as she moves away from Brittany her reason takes over her pen, and the reader loses some of the sense of warmth and inspiration.

After the end of her education, we learn no more about her life. For the remainder of the book, the autobiographer becomes professional historian. Ozouf draws on her life dedicated to the study of the history of France to explain how its contemporary "composition" came about, why the French Republic

has been determined to crush the individuality of the different communities within it. The fault goes back to the Revolution she maintains. The country that has come out of this process is the product of reason ignoring history, the long history of France that came before the Revolution. Challenging Tocqueville's vision that the Old Regime had fashioned all Frenchmen into the same spirit and ideas, Ozouf shows that the monarchy made no attempt to harm the local cultures. French diversity existed freely under the Old Regime. It was the Jacobins of the Revolution who were determined to make all Frenchmen alike, replacing local rights and privileges with universal rights that applied not only to all France but to all mankind. For all the Jacobin efforts, local particularism refused to disappear. Far from destroying local loyalties, the campaign of the Revolution made the French people more conscious of them.

Ozouf is kinder to the Third Republic. Beginning with a commitment to Jacobin centralism, it gradually introduced many concessions to local control. She admires Jules Ferry, the founder of the Republican school system she grew up in, because he had its history include the grandeur of France's pre-Revolutionary monarchy. The one thing the Third Republic's leaders could not accept was the survival of local languages. In this the Jacobin tyranny lived on.

Ozouf points out that the current Republic has become more intolerant and destructive than ever of local cultures. Republicans no longer find an adversary in the Church, so they have invented one in the particularist communities, she says. The unease aroused by the arrival of masses of Muslim immigrants from Africa has been expanded to include all communities that have an identity of their own in addition to their French identity, whether language, religion, or sexual orientation. Her dismal description fits the tenor of official French policies, yet one should recognize that Paris has slowly been making concessions to the local communities in the teaching and broadcasting of their languages. Strangely, Ozouf seems out of touch with Brittany today. She makes no mention of the Diwan schools or the other campaigns being carried on to preserve and strengthen its language and cultural heritage

The last part of her book is a meditation on the need for humans to have and appreciate both their common humanity and the identity given them by their different communities, neither to the exclusion of the other. One comes away from her book feeling that across her years devoted to the history of the French nation the memory of her father's spirit has been gnawing at her conscience preparing it to unburden itself after her retirement in this diagnosis of the malady of the French Republic. She is not alone among leading French figures, notably among the Socialists, to defend the rich patrimony of France's local cultures, but her book,



the moving autobiography of a noted intellectual that the public will read for pleasure, may be play a unique role in softening the policies of the obstinate French Republic.

## A Few Other New Books on Breton History

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

While the history of Brittany does not receive the place it deserves in the schools of Brittany, Bretons have written a number of excellent books about the history of their country. New ones appear all the time, but here are a few sent to me by Yoran Embanner that are worth presenting. Books can ordered directly from the publisher's website: [www.yoran-embanner.com](http://www.yoran-embanner.com)



**Jean-Pierre Le Mat. *Histoire de Bretagne – Le point de vue breton.* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.** Yoran Embanner, 2010. 302 pages. ISBN 978-2-914855-75-4.

This is the second edition of Le Mat's history which chronologically presents the basics of events and actors in Breton history from prehistoric times to the present day. Each short chapter begins with a list of dates to give an idea of major events in the world and in the Celtic countries in particular during that time. From the author's point of view, Brittany is not the far western dead-end of France or Europe, but the center of action – historically and potentially in the future.

Besides the basic events and their analysis, the book includes 12 maps to illustrate the shifting borders of France and the independent place Brittany has had. A short annex includes basic information on the Breton national anthem, flag, and symbols associated with Brittany, as well as a quick bibliography.

In a thought-provoking 43-page postscript, "Les Nations insuffisantes," Le Mat discusses the role of history and its writing and teaching in the formation of identities, both for Bretons and French.

Those who want to learn about Breton history but don't have a mastery of the French language are in luck since Le Mat published an English language version of the first edition of this history in English in 2006: *History of Brittany – The Breton Point of View*, including the postscript "the Insufficient Nations" (also Yoran Embanner ISBN 2-9914855-24-9).

If German is your language, a new German language version is also now available: *Die Geschichte der Bretagne*. (ISBN 978-2-914855-76-1).

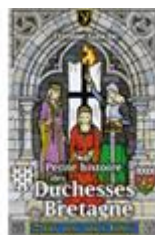


**Hervé Le Bévillon. *Comment la Bretagne est devenue française – Des origins à la naissance de la république.*** Yoran Embanner, 2011. 200 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-36-8.

This too is a history from a Breton point of view and Le Bévillon describes in this book the process by which Brittany went from an independent country – far older than France and with a language older than French – to be swallowed by France. 132 pages of this book take you from the 5<sup>th</sup> century through the early 1790s when Brittany was broken into five departments and ceased to enjoy autonomy.

This is a book loaded with documents to support Le Bévillon's conclusion that the presence of a French army and administration in Brittany is illegal under terms of international law. France has simply annexed Brittany to continued protests of and battles by Breton dukes and kings, peasants and parliament, and associations of Breton citizens. A 50-page annex includes yet more documents – treaties, edicts, contracts, protests and letters – which form the basis for the author's analysis of how Brittany became French.

Recent related books by Le Bévillon also published by Yoran Embanner are: *Le traité meurtrier: Bretagne-France, l'union qui tue*, 2010, and *Colonel Armand, marquis de la Rouërie – de la révolution américaine à la Chouannerie bretonne*, 2010.



**Etienne Gasche. *Petite histoire des duchesses de Bretagne.*** Yoran Embanner, 2011. 125 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-35-1.

Historian Etienne Gasche has written a number of books for youth and several short books for the general public on Breton kings and dukes.

Realizing that women are not just the wives of kings and dukes, this book presents duchesses of Brittany and the role they have played in Breton history.

In just 125 pages this pocket-size book takes you from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century to briefly meet some of the women of Brittany who impacted its history. One is well known - Anne of Brittany. Some are better known – Jeanne de Penthièvre and Jeanne de Flandre who were key actors in the War of Succession for the Montforts and Blois during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Others are much less known but none the less important in shaping Breton history.

The author admits that the Middle Ages were messy times and sorting out names and relations is no easy matter for a historian. A long string of names and dates can certainly be tedious for a reader, but Gasche writes in an enjoyable manner (not without a sense of humor) and succeeds in making the book enlightening and interesting. An annotated index of major names cited is very helpful, and a bibliography is included to guide a reader to more information.

## Samhain in Alaska

Natalie Novik

Samhain (pronounced Sah-wain) is one of the four annual fire festivals observed by the Celts throughout Europe, and it marks the start of the Celtic New Year. When Christianity established All Saints Day on November 1<sup>st</sup>, in an effort to replace the pagan celebration, the eve, on October 30<sup>th</sup>, gradually became All Hallow Even, what we know today as Halloween.

But the observance of Samhain still continues in the Celtic countries, November 1<sup>st</sup> being known as the Day of the Souls or the Day of the Dead. From time immemorial, this has not been a time to go bumping in the night begging for candy... It is on the contrary a very quiet, dignified evening, when people gather at home and listen to stories of their ancestors.

The Samhain celebration in Brittany is called Kala Goañv (Winter Calends). It is part of the season called "miziu du" (the black months), with November being Miz du in Breton (the black month) and December Miz re zu (the very black month), the season when all things fold back on themselves before the sun comes back at the end of December.

Samhain or Kala Goañv is the one night during the year when the veil between this world and the otherworld is lifted, and it allows the ancestors, an Anaon (literally "the souls"), to come back and visit, but mortals can also get in trouble by crossing the veil. Perhaps because it is known "they" might come, it encourages tricksters to mischief...



The Alaskan reaper's hands

It is interesting to note that, just like in other Celtic countries, the average folk take the visits of ghosts as a natural occurrence, but some might be influenced by church teachings in seeing devils everywhere and are

quite easy to scare. And in Brittany, one character is

very much the subject of fear: *an Ankou*, death itself, a long and lanky character with a large brimmed hat

hiding his face, riding a creaky cart, and holding the scythe with which he reaps the souls. The grim reaper on wheels...



So one thing the Breton tricksters loved to do was to light not pumpkins, but beetroots, carved to represent a human head with a lighted candle inside. The beet was easy to place on a window sill or on the doorstep, preferably at the house of an old maid. The tricksters would then knock on the window, hide nearby and triumph at the screams of their victim. In some areas, the beets were replaced by rutabagas, equally easy to carve. It also appears that the tricksters tended to be disguised so as not to be recognized, and in some parishes, wearing a disguise that night was common among young people.

Other customs show how deeply the ancient pagan rituals run in the church beliefs. "Krampoenig an Anaon", little breads made especially for the occasion, were baked by the church and distributed from door to door for whatever people could pay (very much the equivalent of the soul cakes). In the church itself, the evening vespers on October 30<sup>th</sup> called "gousperoù an Anaon", were followed by bellringing as everybody was going home.

In the countryside, before going to bed that night, the lady of the house leaves on the table a white tablecloth, some pancakes, cider, and the man of the house places a special log in the fire to keep it going ("kef an Anaon"). This is to show compassion and respect to those Anaon that might come visit. And to facilitate the coming and going, both front and back doors are left open.

Strange things may happen that night, particularly if you are stranded outside. Stories abound of lonely travellers assailed by wandering souls, and how the Ankou travels around the countryside looking for victims. These traditions are common to all Celtic countries to this day, although in the cities, Halloween tends to supplant Kala Goañv or be a modern version of it, with costumes, masks and trick or treating. Perhaps the Ankou and the wandering souls are less attracted to the city lights...

The Celtic Community of Alaska (CCA) started celebrating Samhain in 1999, and has done so annually since. The celebration this year revolved around the theme of the air (one of the four Celtic elements), reinforced with the vision of the King's Hunt or Magic Hunt, which in Brittany is the ghostly band of hunters on horseback following King Arthur across land and sky, hunting for the magic boar.

As every year, the evening involves an elaborate dinner, which was centered on Breton dishes prepared by Antoine Amouret, the local Breton chef, with rock hens and Arctic cod prepared along old Breton recipes and an airy dessert called “Meringué aux pommes”, a layer of custard supporting slices of caramelized apples and a meringue top.

The members of the Celtic Community try to incorporate into the evening as much as they can of the ancient rituals, including an Old and a New Fire, which is rekindled to start the New Year, and from which, in Ireland and Scotland, people take an ember to relight the fire at home. The Celtic Community had to find a venue in Anchorage where fires can be lit outside for the night, and also let the audience know that if they want to go to the fire, they need to get their coats! This is Alaska, after all... The Anchorage Senior Activity Center has served as such a venue for many years now. Nancy Lee-Evans, who works on Celtic spirituality, conducted a remembrance ceremony at the fire, after doing a roll call of all the clans present at the ceremony.

Every year, the participants cast wishes in the fire, which this year took the form of clooties or bands of cloth, which had adorned a tree the whole evening and were burned at the conclusion of the night. There was also an Ancestors' Table, with some objects symbolizing the air theme and an offering of food and drink.



Nancy Lee-Evans (left) and other participants burning the clooties

There was a costume contest, recalling the disguise tradition of Kala Goañv, the winner costumed as Raven. A silent auction featured prized items from the Celtic countries, with some members of CCA just back from a trip to Scotland and Ireland having brought back items for the auction. There was a lot of entertainment that evening too, with musicians, harpists, singers, dancers and games.

The point is to bring people to have fun and at the same time provide them with an opportunity to think about their ancestry and learn about their origins. With a strong population of Scots and Irish in Alaska eager to find out about their background regardless of the

remoteness from their ancestor countries, the Celtic Community finds ways to fulfill their longing and pass on the traditions.



## Music Brings Bretons and Massachusettsians Together

Nym Cooke

My name is Nym Cooke, and I'm a musician who directs two community choruses in the center of Massachusetts. For Christmas 2002 or 2003, my wife Daphne gave me a wonderful CD: *Noëls Celtiques*, or *Nedeleg*, by the superb Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde (ECBM henceforth), which draws its ca. 100 members mostly from western Brittany (Cornouaille) and sings only in Breton. (The chorus was founded in 1977, and has been directed since 1989 by Christian Desbordes; they have partnered with some of the greatest contemporary Breton singers, including Youenn Gwernig, Gilles Servat, and Alan Stivell, and appear on nine CDs, four entirely their own.) My entire family fell in love with this music, and though we are Christmas-music fanatics, *Nedeleg* quickly took pride of place among our Christmas CDs. Released in 1998, the disc had quickly won the Indie Award in the USA for Best Seasonal Music, and it was easy to see why. It is an extraordinarily effective mix of traditional Breton carols, brand-new Christmas songs by Breton musicians, Welsh and Cornish hymns newly texted in Breton, and instrumental pieces. The singers are accompanied throughout by organ and other keyboards, guitar, flutes, percussion, bagpipes, and the magical and extremely tasteful synthesized sounds created by conductor Desbordes. The music is deeply spiritual, and deeply Christmasy.

I quickly resolved to perform this wonderful music with my choruses here in America. But how to get a hold of the scores? Luckily, a member of my "Band of Voices" chorus, Patrick Beret, was returning just then to his home in France, and he offered to contact the ECBM for me and see if scores could be sent. A few months later a large brown envelope arrived from ECBM President Sylvie Pennors, containing the choral scores for all the pieces on *Nedeleg*, and several from another of the chorus's albums, *Buhez (Vie / Life)*. Great excitement! My daughter Thalia and I immediately set to work making English singing versions of all the Christmas pieces; the booklet accompanying the *Nedeleg* CD had literal English translations of the texts, but these weren't in meter or rhyme. By the end of



summer 2004, new scores for all the *Nedeleg* songs, with English texts (and an occasional verse in Breton for flavor), had been prepared; and that autumn I started rehearsing the music with my two choruses--first separately, and eventually together. To accompany the 80 or so singers, we found a wonderful organist and recorder player, along with a fine guitarist and percussionist. The three performances of "Celtic Noël's" we presented that December were generally agreed upon by choristers and audience alike to be among the highpoints for both choruses to date.

The two choruses combined again in 2008 to repeat our "Celtic Noël's" program. By then, my family and I had resolved to travel to Brittany, to hear and meet the ECBM, and to research Breton (Celtic) choral music further. But our income and budget are limited, and by the early autumn of 2010 we'd reluctantly concluded that we simply couldn't afford the trip--that we might well never hear our beloved Ensemble Choral in person(s). We mentioned this sober decision to a few friends on a walk one October day... Cut to the end of the Band of Voices' Winter Solstice concert, in the Town Hall of Barre, Massachusetts, 21 December 2010. The audience was filing out, and a large group of us were stacking chairs and sweeping up. One of our friends--in fact, one of those on that October walk--asked my wife and I and our two daughters to come to the center of the Town Hall floor. As we stood there, we noticed that we were becoming surrounded by a large circle of dear friends and friendly acquaintances. One of our friends (another veteran of the October walk) made a brief speech about how they all really wanted us to be able to travel to Brittany, and we were presented with a check--an extraordinarily generous check, generous enough to make our long-dreamed-of trip to Brittany a reality. We went home, read aloud the wonderful letter someone had written about our family, and cried for joy.

So, to Brittany the four of us went, for three weeks in July of this past summer! Although quite a list of places to see and things to do had accrued by the time we left the USA--Mont-St.-Michel, Carnac and other megalithic stone monuments, the seaside village of St. Marc where *M. Hulot's Holiday* was filmed, the Pointes du Van et du Raz, Quimper and Dinan, the *Petite Troménie* at Locronan, the singing of the monks at the Abbey of Sainte-Anne in Kergonan, etc. etc.--naturally, a concert by the ECBM was at the top of the list. We checked the chorus's website and found they'd be giving one concert while we were in Brittany--in the church at Kerlouan, 'way up near the northwest coast, about three hours northwest of where we'd be staying in Dinan. The distance was no deterrent--we'd be there! On my daily walks in the weeks before the concert I rehearsed the speech in French I hoped to be able to give when we met the chorus--about how much we loved their music, about how dozens of choral singers in central Massachusetts loved it too, about

how their music (and our friends' generosity) had brought us to Brittany, and so on. Sylvie Pennors, President of the chorus, had asked us to arrive at 8 p.m., an hour before the concert, and we did. We approached the side door of the old stone church, where a large group of audience members had already gathered, and asked for Sylvie--there she was! She gave us an envelope with two special passes inside, each permitting two people to attend the concert free of charge, and ushered us to seats near the front of the church, where we could hear the chorus's final warm-up rehearsal.

As the rehearsal wound down, Sylvie briefly addressed the chorus, telling them who we were and why we were there. There were appreciative murmurs. Such a treat to be introduced to "our chorus"! Christian Desbordes, the director, came over, and I was thrilled to have a chance to meet one of my absolute heroes in the musical world. We assumed that was it for socializing, and settled back to await the 9 p.m. concert. Unsurprisingly, it was magnificent. Many of the pieces were from the chorus's just-released pop- and folk-influenced CD *Deiz al Lid (Jour de Fête / Festival Day)*, but there were several from *Nedeleg* and *Buhez* as well (the preceding month, my Band of Voices had included three *Buhez* pieces in a program of Celtic music for spring and summer). As seems to be their custom, the singers were fronted by a stellar instrumental line-up, this time consisting of an organist, a stand-up bassist, two acoustic guitarists, a bagpiper, two players of the Celtic harp, and a player of the bombard. (I think I've remembered them all...) The time flew by; it was about 11:15 p.m., and the concert was over. Weary from our long day of driving and excitement and concert-going, we were ready to head for our digs in Meneham--a five-minute drive away, right on the coast. So it was quite a surprise when Sylvie came over to tell us that we were invited to have a meal with the chorus in a "salle" across the street, and would we please wait while she closed up, etc.?

We hung around for about half an hour while Sylvie took care of the many details that any chorus president must handle. For awhile we chatted with a few of the chorus members and instrumentalists, but the church was steadily emptying, and they eventually left. Finally Sylvie appeared, now in her street clothes, and led us outside and across the street into a very plain large rectangular room, lit by fluorescent lights and containing two immensely long tables. There sat most of the chorus members, probably with some family and friends as well--well over a hundred people--enjoying a midnight repast of meat-and-cheese sandwiches, *cornichons*, wine, juice, and incredible chocolate éclairs with chocolate-cream filling. There





were further introductions, and we sat down at the end of one table, next to Sylvie and Christian, and dug into the food and conversations (our verbal contributions were in quite halting French, but spirited and heartfelt nonetheless). What a joy! Sylvie made some further remarks to the assembled company, saying that we had come to France expressly to hear the chorus sing - and I found myself jumping to my feet to make my much-rehearsed speech. Of course what I said was entirely different from what I'd practiced! I mentioned that one of my choruses had just sung three numbers from *Buhez*, and named the songs. "Aaaaahhhhhh!", they said. I ended by saying that although I knew next to no Breton, there was one word I knew well that was appropriate to my feelings at the moment, and I would end with that word: *garantez* (love).

"AAAAHHHHHHHHH!!!," they said, and applauded. Shortly afterwards, Charlez An Dreo, who writes many of the chorus's Breton texts, who served for awhile as their President, and who traditionally leads the singing at their after-concert repasts, jumped on top of a table, gave out pitches, and led spontaneous performances of two of the three *Buhez* pieces I'd mentioned. This was late at night; the singers had no music in their hands, and wine in their bloodstreams; the music is quite complex, and in four-part harmony; and they sang those pieces just *beautifully*. The ECBM rocks!!

We had resolved to stay at the party "just for fifteen minutes," but we were among the last to leave, at 1:20 a.m. Walking across the town square, past the old church to our car, we looked up to see a dazzling display of stars. Nights can certainly be dark in northwest Brittany! We agreed later that it felt that night as if we had made over a hundred Breton friends.

Of course I've told this story to both of my choruses; and when it did, it felt as though I was reporting on the current doings of our "sister chorus" in Brittany, the Ensemble Choral du Bout du Monde. I have the strong sense that this is an unfolding story, and that further chapters are coming up. Where will this lead? Will all three choruses sing together some day? Who can say? What I do know is that further English-language versions of ECBM pieces are going to be sung here in Massachusetts...

For lots of information about the Chorale du Bout du Monde, visit the website: [www.premiumorange.com/ecbm/](http://www.premiumorange.com/ecbm/)



## November Celebration in New York - Bagad New York Celebrates its 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary

On November 5 the Kerlenn New York held a fest noz to celebrate the

second year of this American bagad. Composed of pipers, drummers, and newly transformed bombard players, many of the musicians in this group have experience in Scottish-American bagpipe bands. They all share a love for Breton music and want to infect fellow Americans with this passion.

The celebration this October was held at the Hungarian House on East 82<sup>nd</sup> Street in Manhattan, beginning with a class on Breton dance to insure that everyone was ready to go. In true Inter-Celtic style a demonstration of Irish and Scottish dances was included and the fest noz was held from 6 to 11:30 pm. While this may seem horrifying to Breton readers of this newsletter who are familiar with festoù noz which are just getting warm at 11:30, this "American" timing insured the participation of celebrants traveling from a distance. This includes members of the bagad who travel quite a distance for rehearsals as well as performances. You can be assured that everyone who came to this 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary had a great time.

For more information about the Bagad New York see: [www.bagad.us/](http://www.bagad.us/)

## Coming up in Washington D.C. – Crepes and Dance

A morning of Crepes and Breton Dance at Hillwood Estate in Washington DC will be sponsored by the Alliance Française who team up with the Hillwood Estate Museum to present a bit of France and Brittany for children from 10am to 1pm on Saturday February 4, 2012. For more information contact Alliance Française DC (202) 234-7911, [www.francedc.org/](http://www.francedc.org/) or the Hillwood Estate, Museum and Gardens [www.hillwoodmuseum.org/](http://www.hillwoodmuseum.org/)



## Heard of, but not Heard – New Music from Brittany

Notes are based on reviews and short presentations found in the magazines *Ar Men* 184 (Sept-Oct 2011), *Armor* 500 (Sept. 2001) and *Musique Bretonne* 228 (Sept-Oct 2011) and from the Coop Breizh website

**Airs emblématique du monde celtique.** Coop Breizh CD 1052.

This CD includes a variety of performers and well known melodies from the Celtic countries in new arrangements that breathe some fresh air into sixteen old standards. Performers from Brittany include Soldat Louis, Didier Squiban, Denez Prigent, Dan ar Braz, and Gilles Servat. Those representing the rest of the Celtic world are equally well known and include Carlos

Núñez, Dubliners, Simple Minds, and the Red Hot Chili Pipers.

**Catherine Amice. *Des mots curieux*.** Association Gribouille.

Catherine Amice interprets songs set to music by Serge Gamany. She is accompanied by Gamany on piano and by Ronan Pinc on fiddle.

**Dan ar Braz. *Bretagne(s), ici, ailleurs, la-bas*.** L'OZ Production.

This CD includes fifteen selections from Dan ar Braz's last three albums (*La Memoire des Volets Blancs*, *A Toi et Ceux*, and *Les Perches du Nil*). These showcase his virtuosity on electric and acoustic guitar as well as his talent as a composer. While not new, this is a great selection for those who might need an introduction to this very well known musician of Brittany.

**Association Festival du Chant de Marin. *Festival du Chant de Marin / Gouel Kan ar Vartoloded*.** Wagram 3246942.

This is a double CD from the Paimpont festival for maritime song with 34 selections. Performances include a variety of voices, with modern compositions and traditional tunes, melodies and the rhythm of work songs and dances. This is a great sample from ten years of a festival that has show-cased the best of maritime song.

**Dominique Babilotte. *En Public – un double voyage*.**

This is a DVD and two-CD set of live performances by singer Dominique Babilotte. The first CD (Chante Reggiani) features his performance of fifteen songs by Serge Reggiani and the second CD (Pianoviolonissimo) includes a mix of songs from Babilotte's repertoire.

**Bagad Kemper. *Breizh Balkanik*.** Keltia Musique KMCD 536.

The Bagad Kemper and other bagadoù of Brittany often delve into world traditions to create complex suites of music for this ensemble of bombard, bagpipes and percussion. Kemper has had a Latin beat and a Celtic swing, and this time looks to Eastern Europe. They work with Erik Marchand who lends his voice as well as an expertise from long and successful collaborations with Balkan musicians. The result is up to all one could hope from one of Brittany's best traditional singers and one of its top bagads.

**Yann Bertrand. *Dibedoup*.** Coop Breizh

Singer and harp player Yann Bertrand has been working with children in schools on arrangements of traditional Breton language songs as well as new songs using texts by Breton poets. This CD uses a full palette of musical colors for songs children and adults will enjoy. Instrumental accompaniment includes, guitar, flute, keyboard and organ, and the children's

choir of Bugale Div Yezh Bro Rhoazhon is to be heard. The CD jacket notes are in Breton and French and a booklet includes the Breton song texts.

**Xavier Boderiou, Sylvain Hamon, Herve Le Floch, Alexis Meunier. *A Unan*.** Paker Production.

This CD gathers four masters of the biniou braz (Scottish style bagpipes) who are well seasoned in bagad performance. Here they go solo with Scottish, Irish and Breton dances and tunes as well as some compositions. They are joined by Dominique Molard (percussion), Thibault Niobé (guiatar), Julien Ryo (sax) and Kenan Sicard (keyboard).

**Jean Cras. *Flûte, harpe et cordes*.** Timpani C1179.

Here is another recording by Timpani of the work of Breton composer Jean Cras – this one of chamber music. It includes string trio, flute and harp duet, quartet for flute and strings, and two harp pieces not previously recorded. Timpani draws on some of the best French classical musicians for this recording.

**Antoine de Févin. *Requiem d'Anne de Bretagne*.**

Zig-Zag Territories. CD 110501

This CD features the Ensemble Douce Mémoire directed by Denis Raisin Dadre in a program of music that might have been performed for the funeral of Anne of Brittany in 1534. The performance includes the courtly music of the period but also two traditional gwerz (Breton language ballads) sung by Yann Fañch Kemener which provide a down to earth contrast to the pomp of the polyphonic classical pieces.

**Gérard Delahaye and Siobhan Gately. *Chez Gérard tout est rare!*** Beluga / Dylie

This is a CD of nine well-loved children's songs by Gérard Delahaye who always manages to make music interesting for adults as well. Besides the CD this package includes 9 booklets, one for each song, written by Delahaye and richly illustrated by Siobhan Gately, an Irish artist living in Nantes. Each booklet includes the song text and music as well as a bit more information about the songs.

**École de Nouvelle-Ville. *Le Swing du lundi*.** L'Oz Production. L'OZ 67.

This is a CD of students from the Nouvelle-Ville school who collaborate in an innovative project with Morwenn Le Normand (song), François Chapron (bass), and Fred Miossec, Christian Hellard and Erwan Raoul (clarinet and guitars). As the title implies, there is a jazzy swing to the songs which are in English, French and German.

**Ewen-Delahaye-Favennec. *Kan Tri Men*.** Dylie Production.

This is the third album by this trio which includes Patrick Ewen, Gérard Delahaye and Melaine Favennec. Included are songs in Breton, French and English set to fiddle, electric and acoustic guitar, banjo,

accordion and harmonica. A children's choir also joins in, and bass and percussion are added by Simon Mary and Patrik Boileau.

### **Glenmor – l'intégrale.**

This is a 6-CD set of recordings of the militant bard Glenmor. His poetry was at times ferocious but always on the mark in its defense of Brittany and attack of French oppression. Glenmor had a unique voice and style and a great deal to say. Unfortunately this CD set lacks biographical information to introduce new listeners to this influential "chanteur engagé" of the 1960s, 1970s and 80s.

### **Dominique Jouve and Yann Goas. *Hent kozh 164.***

This CD takes its name from "old route 164" which traverses the center of Brittany. Jouve and Goas are a duo of clarinet and chromatic accordion and they draw from the traditions of central Brittany through which route 164 passes – Rennes through Loudéac and the Méné regions to Haute Cornouaille and the "pays" of Fanch, Pourlet, Koste'r Hoët and Fisel for traditional dance suites from and bearing names of these areas.

### **Kreiz Breizh Akademi, Présenté par Erik Marchand. *Elektridal.*** CD Innacor 2111

The Kreiz Breizh Akademi (Central Brittany Academy) is a music center for young musicians to explore modal music from many countries – including the traditional music of Brittany. Voices and a variety of instruments are used in new ways to combine new and ancient musical scales and rhythms. On this third CD a new group of musicians combine voice and an electric sound for a fusion of Breton gwerz (ballad) with jazz and oriental flavors – a music not so easy to describe but certain to be of interest to those who enjoy new yet traditionally rooted musics.

### **Krenigenn. *Peseurt mood?*** Coop Breizh.

This CD includes twelve selections of Breton dances one might find at a fest noz (fisel, plinn, pilé menu, kas-a-barh ...) but performed by an unusual combination of trumpet, electro-harp, and electronic sound-making.

### **Roger Le Contou, Fred Le Disou. *On va pas s'priver.*** Coop Breizh.

Roger and Fred are storytellers who draw on the traditions of Gallo Brittany and the Gallo language to address contemporary life conundrums – health, retirement, food, and everything else – with comic humor. This CD includes 20 three-minute sketches broadcast on a weekly program for Radio France Bleu Armorique.

### **Maxime Piolet. *Si tu est mon ami – L'Homme qui venait d'Assise.***

This CD includes eleven songs in celebration of those who work for social justice and a kinder human environment.

### **Raggalendo. *Du reuz dans L'Bourg.*** Coop Breizh.

This is the third album marking the fifth anniversary for this women's rock/rap band. With texts in French and Breton set to rap and rock beats, and electric guitars, this is a very colorful quartet of "cousines" where coiffes collide with newer modes of dress. It's definitely Breton in look and sound. This is a group that knows how to have fun, as their little logo might imply.



### **Jean-Luc Roudaut. *La Complainte des petits matelots.*** Planete Momes.

This is a compilation of twenty-seven short songs for younger children by Jean-Luc Roudaut. While this singer has done a number of Breton language song projects with children in the Diwan and bilingual schools, this CD includes primarily French song texts about boats and trains, whales, rabbits, birds ...

### **Didier Squiban. *Le piano, la mer, la Bretagne.***

This is a selection of ten solo piano performances by Didier Squiban who combines long experience with classical and jazz piano with a love for Breton song and dance. These selections are from his albums *Molène*, *Porz Gwenn*, *Rozbras*, *Ballades*, *Concert Lorient* and *Tournée des Chapelles*. If you don't already know the work of this pianist, this is a great place to get an introduction.

### **Steven Vincendeau and Thomas Felde. *Samajhima – violon et accordion diatonic.*** Paker Production.

This is a duo of fiddle and button accordion with eleven compositions and arrangements of Breton dance tunes and melodies. They are joined by flute player Erwan Hamon.

## **Deep Inside a Breton Skull 32 They Wear Round Hats**

Jean Pierre Le Mat



"They wear round hats  
Cheers to Brittany!  
They wear round hats  
Cheers to the Bretons!"

Thus is sung, at weddings and banquets, by the most drunken guests. What is Brittany? It is a past dress fashion. Brittany cannot exist without men wearing round hats and women wearing headdresses, just as Paris cannot exist without the Eiffel Tower.

The Breton costume is an obvious feature. It is an essential condition of the popular imagery about Brittany. The tourist doesn't come here in search of sunny days. He is looking for picturesque spots and picturesque people. I know that. I don't wear a round hat, but I am one of these picturesque people.

It is relaxing to judge a man by his clothes. The costume is a necessary element of any acceptable folklore. The costume is linked with the idea of dress uniform, and therefore with order and security. On the other hand, it is not a soldier's dress. The shimmer of colors and dance of laces in the wind are a delight to the eye. It's an escape to a naive and happy world. This is a friendly world where women are living carelessly in the frills. It's a world of brotherhood, which allows men to wear amazing hats and clothes. They challenge the anonymity, the dust and the dirt of everyday life. It's a world of childhood, radiant and generous.

For sure, the Breton costume is not short in brilliance. For men, large hats with silver buckles, jackets loaded with buttons, baggy trousers and wooden clogs. For women, dresses with laces, shawls, blouses, shirts and dresses heavily embroidered.



The eyes of our tourist friends sparkle. The folk parades are a real pleasure for them. The various costumes play a dazzling symphony of shapes and colors. We teach

them that the costume of Quimper is different from those of Carhaix or Fouesnant. There exist in Brittany a hundred "giz", geographical fashions.

But soon the parade ends. The dressed Bretons are back in their buses on their way home. The magic is gone. With a little luck, some of us will show you a photograph of a grandmother wearing headdress or the hat of his grand-grandfather hanging against the wall of the dining room. That will show you that if the Breton costume has disappeared, at least it once existed. So it's not a total illusion.

I have kept the hat of my grandfather, with its silver buckle. Sometimes, while meditating in front of this relic, I feel myself as the last gatekeeper of Jurassic Park. Sometimes, I curse the fate of living in a sad world of blue jeans and uncovered heads. But I am not desperate. If traditional fashions existed here in the past, there is a chance to see a new Breton fashion blowing in the future. The Breton costume was a reality. It is now a nostalgia. It can be a challenge.

Let us look at this Breton singularity more carefully. According to anthropologists, the traditional Breton costume does not have a specific Breton origin. Actually, until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was no real difference between the cloth worn by the bourgeois or Breton commoner and the cloth of French or even European creatures of the same kind. The Breton peasants wore clothes that were not very different from the garment of peasants in Poitou or Normandy. During the eighteenth century, they appeared only a little outdated. The Breton peasants and the women had indeed kept clothing styles dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Everywhere else, these clothing traditions had been abandoned and replaced by new fashions.

Until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the French Revolution, the sumptuary laws prevented the ordinary people from wearing the same cloth as the aristocrats. These laws regulated or imposed, not only the dress, but also food and furniture, according to social categories. They made the social order visible. The lower classes, but also the urban bourgeoisie could not compete with the nobles on their appearance. When the sumptuary laws were abolished, the Breton costume began to diverge from the neighboring clothing habits. The different Breton territories asserted their particular personality. They used the cloth they could find in their markets. People of Quimper found a large amount of blue cloth and launched their local fashion of "Glazik", that means "little blue". People of Pont l'Abbé, in the Bigoudène country south of Quimper, embroidered on their costume the drawings they could see in their churches, on their grain chests, on their closed beds.



After the French Revolution and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Breton costume reached a status of an identity branding. Peasants and countrymen were no longer submitted to a style which pointed them out as second-zone people. The new styles no longer marked a social status, but now a territory. The Breton artistic spirit found a new means of expression. The different fashions were strange, enthusiastic, audacious. They



adopted bright colors, ornaments, embroidery. Local variations were not betraying a unity of inspiration and a continuity of Breton artistic style. The Breton costume is not characterized by a mythical origin, nor by the material it uses, but only by the Celtic inspiration which led to its blossoming.

Now, the inspiration has seemingly dried up. Bretons are wearing the same dress as every civilized person in the world. Sometimes, I feel that Civilization is lacking colors and fancy.

From our short trip into the history Breton traditional dress, we can make a few remarks. The first is that the local dress fashions drew borders that did not exist officially at this time. This popular art movement which flourished during the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth fell within geographical units that were part of the former duchy of Brittany. Sometimes, inside these old territories, it drew new sectors and new identities that cannot be explained.

The second observation is that the most daring inspiration bloomed in the most remote areas. In the Mountains of Arrée and the Black Mountains, the variants are the most numerous. It should be noted that, as the French language progressed and moved in space and time, the artistic exuberance faded. From the deep West of Brittany to the borders with France, the headdresses become shriveled, the ornaments become wise. And over the years, together with the penetration of the French language and customs, the bright colors darken, the embroidery disappears. In my youth, the old women with traditional headdresses, widows or not, usually wore black or grey dresses.

The last observation is the incredible happiness we have, we Bretons, to see the parade of these old costumes. We are even more fascinated than our tourist friends, with pride on top of our pleasure. Why? I am not certain to give the right reason. Maybe we feel the artistic boldness of our ancestors. Maybe, deep inside our skulls, we dream of such a colorful and dancing Brittany.



## Some American Observations from 1920 on Costumes and the Spirit of Samhain

**Ange M. Mosher, *The Spell of Brittany*** (New York: Duffield and Company, 1920)

*To follow up Jean Pierre Le Mat's observations on Breton costume, and Natalie Novik's account of Samain, I am including several excerpts from Ange Mosher's 1920 book *The Spell of Brittany*. The first confirms the delight travelers take in discovering Breton costume. The second (which was also reprinted in *Bro Nevez* 81, February 2002) describes a Breton wedding in Vannes where one's finery is definitely worn and music and feasting go on for days. This passage is interesting also in pointing out that the dead are ever-present in Brittany, even at a joyful event like a wedding.*

*From Chapter XVIII – Breton Costumes, Landerneau, La Garde Joyeuse*

In Lower Brittany the costumes of the people are more interesting and unique. The coif worn by the women is a strong feature of the costume, each canton having its own special style, and any Breton woman knows the home of any other from the fashion of her headdress. How many delightful talks do we recall, sitting on a bench in some public square in Paris, with some Breton woman, won into this privilege through my having accosted her and placing her home-parish by means of her coif. There are over one thousand different coifs in Brittany. I have seen seven hundred in a single collection. Each style seems more interesting than another, and the laundering of these airy bits of finery would place many a Parisian laundress at a disadvantage. In some sections the peasant woman wears a black skirt scarcely reaching the ankle, a jacket of the bolero order and a chemisette which, like the coif, gives a touch of freshness to the costume. For fête-days, the jacket of the women, as well as the waistcoats (called gilets) of the men, are richly embroidered. And lastly, the apron! The apron of silk! What endless economies have been practiced in order to possess this culminating feature of the costume. It is sure to be of the most vivid colors – such unrelenting purples and crimsons and apple-greens as even the rankest impressionist never imagined! And be sure the creases in the silken bit of adornment are always in evidence and are held as so many lines of beauty. Once accomplished, the apron of the Breton peasant lasts a lifetime, and is transmitted to posterity. Arriving home from the fête, the entire costume, saving the coif which is always worn, is carefully packed away in the carved family chest, there to repose until the occurrence of some other festivity,

In order to see the ancient costumes of the men one should attend a large fair or Pardon. At such times the

old men come out in the toggery of their ancestors. Accordion-pleated trousers confined at the knee with silver buckles, leggings and sabots, white chemisette, embroidered gilets, velvet jackets ornamented with many buttons, a broad belt with ponderous buckle, the hat broad-brimmed, low-crowned, with long, floating ends of velvet ribbon fastened by a silver buckle. The young Breton to-day holds to the gilet, chemisette and low hat with floating ribbons. But in order to get a true idea of the costume our Breton should be inside it. It all goes together. Much time and zeal are expended in the embroideries employed in the costumes. Usually this ornamental work is done by the men, the women going into the field, leaving her lord at home at his embroidering! To-day the costume is worn only by the peasants. Formerly the nobility wore the same, and it was thus that the Breton lords went to the Parliament and to the Royal Court at Paris.

In the time of Louis XII, Anne of Brittany, his queen, made many Breton families popular at Court. The large trousers worn to the knee, of the later period of Henry II to Henry IV, originated in the Keltic *baies*, *brago bras* in Breton, the same that Caesar describes in his Commentaries (*Gallica braccata*.)

But here we are talking of frills and furbelows, as our train is arranging in Landerneau. From Landerneau the river Elorn winds its way to Brest, a dozen miles away, between bold rocks on the left and the forest on the right bank. The bridge which spans the river, in the heart of the town of Landerneau, is of medieval origin, and is the only example of its kind in France. One of the two rows of buildings erected on the bridge remain – among these a mill, Gothic in style, with an inscription in Gothic attesting that it was built by the Rohans in 1510. The Lords of Landerneau were great in their day. Madame de Sévigné, whose château was in Northern Brittany, was not familiar with the elaborate costumes of Lower Brittany, and in one of her letters tells of a blunder on her part, owing to this ignorance. One imagines this clever woman was not often guilty of a *faux pas*!

It occurred in Vitré, during the sessions of the Breton Parliament, at a house where she was intimate. She writes: "I saw before dinner at the end of the room, a man whom I took to be a steward. I went to him and begged of him, 'Do let us dine, I am dead with hunger.' This man looked at me and replied with great politeness: 'My dear madame, I wish I might be so happy to offer you dinner at my house. My name is Récardière and my château is only two leagues from Landerneau.' It was a gentleman from Lower Brittany," adds Madame de Sévigné.

Landerneau has been immortalized by her moon. A Sire de Landerneau, at Versailles where the spendours of the Court failed to impress him, remarked that the moon at Landerneau was much larger than that of

Versailles, and his saying passes still for a joke upon the Breton town.

From this place we make various excursions. That to the ruins of the Garde Joyeuse of Arthur, celebrated in the romance of the Round Table, is most interesting. Only the subterranean vaults, the walls outlining the château and the gateway, wreathed with ivy, remain as a souvenir of that magical Round Table, about which the middle age grouped its ideals of heroism, beauty, love and loyalty. So the Breton, backed by savants, claims that in the Forest of Landerneau Arthur at one time held his Court.

As for ourselves, sitting on the greensward where once may have been the Court of Honor of this Garde Joyeuse, we are at least grateful that through this Legend we are possessed of that gallery of fine old pictures – the good King Arthur, Merlin the Enchanter – the wise Councillor Gervain, Parsifal, Champion of Spiritual Knighthood, as are the gallant Launcelot and Tristram of secular chivalry – and in this soft color of a September afternoon we evoke the image of the proud and beautiful Guinevère, the tender Ysult with the blond hair, the sweet and patient Enid and the fairies of the company, Vivian and Morgan.

The drive from Landerneau to Plougastel is delightful, the route following the windings of the river Elorn. Plougastel is noted for its wonderful calvary. This, one of the finest in Brittany, is of the sixteenth century, massive, crowned with two large square tablets one above the other. On these are sculptured scenes from the life of Christ – the Flight into Egypt, the Marriage of Cana, the Foot Washing and the drama of the Passion being elaborately set forth. Over two hundred figures are sculptured, inartistically, but with a certain force and with great naïveté. In the scene of the triumphant return of Christ to Jerusalem, our Lord is preceded by Breton peasants in national costumes, playing bagpipes.

#### *From Chapter XVII: A Breton Wedding*

... The wedding ceremony was, as always, in Breton. The wedding feast and dancing were to take place in a field near by. Thither the procession moved from the church, passing along a beautiful shady lane. At the wide-open gate of the field a halt was made, and immediately the chief cook and master of ceremonies advanced with a dish on which was a huge piece of beef – smoking hot from the cauldron. This was offered to the bridegroom who, taking from his pocket his knife (as all Breton peasants do), cut a morsel and offered it to the bride, who ate it, he cutting another for himself. Next came another man with a large loaf of bread. The bridegroom cut a bit from the loaf and served the bride and himself in the same manner. Lastly came dancing up a pair of handsome young Bretons, gaily decorated with flowers and ribbons, bearing between them a

large two-handled vase or jug. We note the fine old Roman shape of the jug and recall that Caesar conquered Gaul and made headquarters in Morbihan where many of the Roman forms of pottery linger. The two wine-bearers – (only the wine is plain Breton cider) as they advance in dancing, rhythmic step, sing an ancient Breton drinking song. The especial duty of the wine-bearer is supposed to be to “cheer the bride.” They approach the young couple, always in this dancing fashion, and each offers a glass of cider to the pair. Afterward cider was offered to us, as we were placed next to the bride. Then the procession moved through the gate and into the field. Seven cauldrons – each in charge of a cook – the chef in charge of the whole – were steaming at one end of the field, and I recalled the beeves to be slain in the invitation. Two long tables – placed twelve feet apart, extended to the farther end, and at the upper end connecting the two – a table covered with damask and decorated with bouquets, was arranged for the bridal company. Benches ranged along both sides of the tables furnished seats for the company. The first course consisted of the soup of the *pot-au-feu*, the second, beef and vegetables. For the third we were served personally by the bride’s mother, who displayed special pride in the ragout, which she informed us had been prepared in her own kitchen under her personal supervision. Mountains of bread placed at intervals on the tables completed the menu. But the wine bearers were ever active, up and down – back and forth in the space between the two long tables they danced and sang and served – I begged from one of them a translation of one of the drinking songs – as it was sung in the Breton language. It was Horatian in sentiment, with a touch of Breton lugubriousness: “Let us drink and be merry to-day, for to-morrow we shall die and our bodies be food for worms-” Just *how* this could “cheer the bride” he did not attempt to explain. No dessert was offered at table, but women with baskets of cake and other sweets, which could be bought if desired, made their appearance in the field after the repast.

At the close of the feast the bride rose, turned her back to the table, the others following her movements – and then followed a most impressive incident – an aged woman, all her life a servant of the family, knelt on the ground at the feet of the bride and uttered a long prayer. It was a prayer for the dead - those of the family – whose presence at this marriage fête she invoked. For the Breton is never far removed from his lost ones, and each family fête and event is shared by them.

As the prayer ended the sound of the binious was heard, and in the centre of the field two players of bagpipes were stationed. The bride and groom and the bridesmaid and best man begin the dance – the gavotte being the favourite dance at weddings. Gradually the circle grows larger and presently the

entire field is in movement – meanwhile the wine-bearers are always serving – the “cheering of the bride” seems to succeed in spite of the mortuary suggestion of the song. For when she leaves the dancing at five o’clock to join us at her mother’s house for a farewell glass of wine, she seems radiant, and, although she has been dancing for five hours, she is unflushed by the effort. At the mother’s house we all drink to the health of the newly married, and they to ours – the bride disappears for five minutes and returns resplendent in another apron – this time of pale blue brocade; after all, why possess the trousseau of two aprons if the invited guests be unaware of the fact! And so we depart – another banquet, precisely like the first, is to be served and the dancing will go on until midnight; on the second day the programme will be like that of the first, and on the third day, given up to the poor, the final ceremony of carrying the bride’s wardrobe to her husband’s house will close the wedding fête.

The invocation of the dead at the wedding feast illustrates one of the strongest traits of Breton character – the cult of the dead – *voilà la Bretagne!*

On All Soul’s Eve, in Breton homes, a bright fire is kept blazing on the hearth when the family retires for the night – a table covered with a white cloth (“article de luxe chez les Bretons”) is set forth with cider and crêpes (a kind of wheat cake), all ready in case some family ghost chance to visit the familiar place, hungry! For on that night it is prudent to avoid going outside, as the dead are walking hither and thither on the highways, and like not to be interfered with, so the Breton prudently retires early – taking no chances of harm from any stray malignant ghost – but hospitably providing for the entertainment of his own family wraiths. If, however, a Breton is forced to go abroad on that night any implement of labor carried on his person serves as a protection – even a thimble or a needle suffices.



The Veillée with the Bretons is a becoming and dignified function – in other Keltic countries, notably in Ireland, the best-intentioned Wake has been known to come to an unworthy end. But with the Bretons the Veillée has retained its discreet and tender element. I have shared several such in Brittany. Near relatives and friends gather at nightfall and sit through the night – their dead is in their midst – they talk of the departed – recall this or that deed or quality – recite souvenirs – now and then some one kneels and prays in silence. Sometimes certain songs are sung – all is tender, affectionate and sympathetic. At midnight coffee (never anything stronger) is served with simple refreshments, and the watch continues until dawn – and thus on each night until the burial takes place.

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