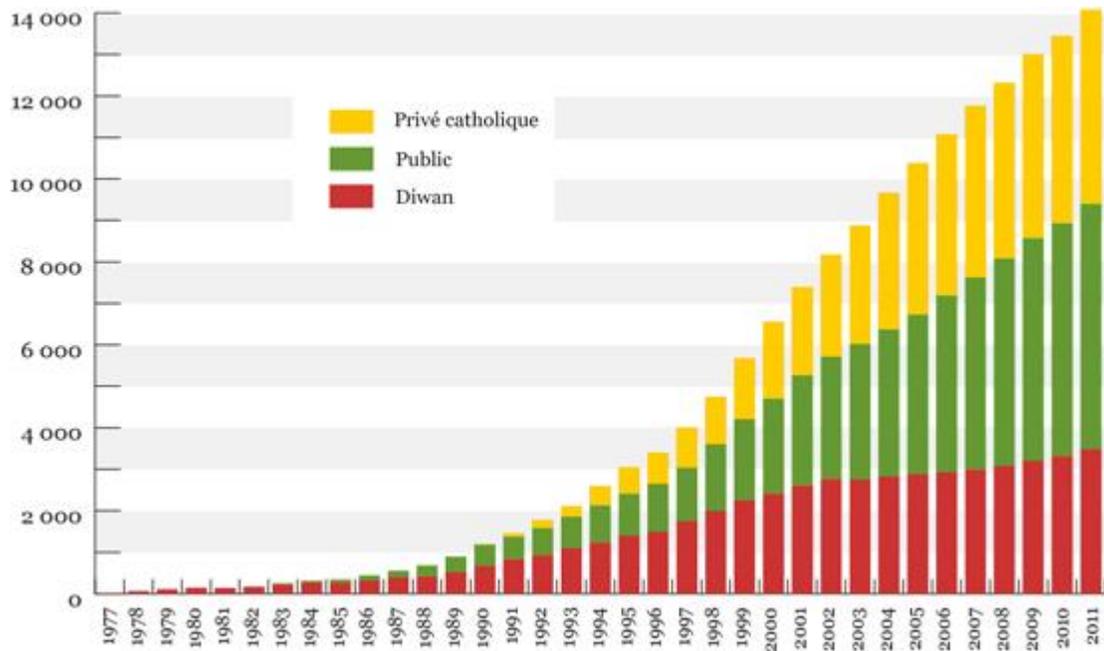


# BRO NEVEZ

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



A new year for Breton in the schools.  
The numbers continue to grow.

**KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG**

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# BRO NEVEZ 124

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The **U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)** was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on October 20, 1981. **Bro Nevez** ("new country" in the Breton language) is the newsletter produced by the U.S. ICDBL. It is published quarterly: February, May, August and November. Contributions, letters to the Editor, and ideas are welcome from all readers and will be printed at the discretion of the Editor.

The U.S. ICDBL provides Bro Nevez on a complimentary basis to a number of language and cultural organizations in Brittany to show our support for their work. Your Membership/Subscription allows us to do this. Membership (which includes subscription) for one year is \$20. Checks should be in U.S. dollars, made payable to "U.S. ICDBL" and mailed to Lois Kuter at the address above.

*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 will include just a quick note here to apologize for once again getting Bro Nevez out at the very end of the month that is printed on its cover. I cannot blame it on Hurricane Irene although this storm disrupted many lives here in what is called the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. While nearly four days without electrical power at home seemed like an eternity, my family became reacquainted with the fireplace and an earlier bedtime under a pile of blankets. We were lucky compared to many.

Putting Bro Nevez together takes far more time than I can ever predict. There is always a bit of last-minute news to add, and this issue was delayed by the recent arrival of some new books from Yoran Embanner which I wanted to review (along with several books sitting on my desk for a long time). I do try to read books cover-to-cover before reviewing them!!! This doesn't go as quickly in French as it would in English!

I hope you will enjoy this issue which demonstrates that Bretons are hard at work in support of their language, continuing to create new opportunities to use it as a modern everyday means of communication as well as a unique media for artistic expression.

Lois Kuter



## A New School Year for the Breton Language

The following information is from the website of Ofis ar Brezhoneg ([www.ofis-bzh.org](http://www.ofis-bzh.org))

This fall there are 14,709 students in the bilingual programs of Brittany.

Fourteen new sites were opened at the primary/pre-school level with an additional 627 students. The public bilingual schools have now reached 6,000 students (6,260 to be more precise) with a gain of 5.8%, the Catholic schools have 4,824 students, and Diwan has 3,625 students (a smaller number but stronger growth than for the Catholic schools this year).

This year there was growth in all five departments of Brittany. Morbihan reached 4,042 students, now in second place behind Finistère which has 6,654 students. The Côtes d'Armor has the least growth (up 2.2%) with 2,292 students total. The Ille-et-Vilaine has 1,107 students (up 5.7%) and Loire-Atlantique has 614 students (up 6.6%).

The city of Brest and its surrounding area has the highest number of students with 3,408, and students in the city of Brest rose by 17%, with an additional 56 students this school year thanks in part to the opening of a new public school. The Lorient region reached 1,092 students and the Nantes area reached 525.

Rennes is the city with the most students at 641, followed by Vannes with 555, Quimper with 554, and Nantes with 478.



## Ar Redadeg in Support of the Breton Language

This 1,500 kilometer relay run is held every two years in May, and this year was the third time for this massive event which touches every corner of Brittany, engaging all generations of Bretons. In 2008 the first run traveled just some 600 kilometers doubled in 2010 with 1,200 kilometers.

This year 146,375 Euros were raised from the run through monetary contributions for each kilometer, other donations, and sales of related products. This was a 40% increase in income and there was a 30% increase in participants in the run. 60,500 euros will go to the Diwan schools (which initiated the run in 2008), and 60,500 euros will be distributed in varying amounts to seven other Breton language initiatives. These are: *Dizale*, for video projects, *C'hoariva*, work to support Breton language theater, *Divskouarn*, for the preparation of pedagogical materials for the very youngest children, *Oaled Landelo*, for cultural center activities, *Sav-Heol*, for Breton language books, *Ti ar Vro Bro Leon*, for cultural center activities, and *Teatr Piba* for theater productions.

Keep your eye on the website [www.ar-redadeg.org](http://www.ar-redadeg.org) for information about this important fund-raiser for the Breton language in May 2012.



**Divskouarn** was founded in 2005 to foster the use of Breton with children in day care centers and homes at the pre pre-school level. Already in 1998 a daycare center in Landerneau was introducing Breton to toddlers, and by 2000 there were several others in Gouesnou, Lannilis,

Polouguerneau and Lesneven also doing activities in Breton. In coordinating efforts and pooling resources Divskouarn has succeeded in fostering the use of Breton in more formal programs and in home activities for children.

One action taken by this organization was the publication and distribution of a pamphlet in Breton, French, English, Portuguese, Arabic and Turkish about the benefits of bilingualism for children under four. This presents research, stories from parents, and lots of practical information about activities one can do at home and resources in the community for the Breton language. You can find a copy on the Divskouarn website [www.divskouarn.fr](http://www.divskouarn.fr).



## A New Public Presence for the Breton Language

On November 8, the first bilingual post-office (in France!) opened in Carhaix. Bilingual signage started to be incorporated on public signs during the 1980s – after years of peaceful demonstrations and more destructive work to tar French-only signs. Sending a letter with a Breton language address is perfectly legal but sometimes means that your letter may not reach its destination – because of ignorance or hostility on the part of postal workers.

This new post office with bilingual signage and even a uniform that says “welcome” in the Breton language is definitely a good step forward as businesses and cities find that bilingualism is not only a friendly thing to do, but can be good for business.

For more information about this new initiative as well as other initiatives to make Breton more publicly visible, visit the Ofis ar Brezhoneg website: [www.ofis-bzh.org](http://www.ofis-bzh.org)



## Deep inside a Breton skull 36: *In the town of Saint-Brieuc, Breton is not spoken...*

Jean-Pierre Le Mat

*In the town of Saint-Brieuc, Breton is not spoken.*

My parents never spoke English.

They wanted me to learn foreign languages. They wanted me to have a mind open to the world. Their aim was on the one hand to hear me speaking English and, on the other hand, to hear me speaking a faultless French.

My grandparents had lived a great and inexpressible disconnectedness. Everything they said was laughable because of the manner in which they spoke. To be sentenced to eternal silence would have been better than this fading of speech. "*Brezhoneg moc'h ha galleg kaoc'h*" they said, sadly. To express themselves, they had only "*a Breton language for pigs and a French-language of shit*".

Now, I watch my children. I imagine for them an open future. I would like to hear them speaking Chinese or Arabic, and a faultless Breton. The French language? Why not? This language is part of my heritage. But the Breton language, even clandestine, will connect them to Earth and Heaven.



Today, I live in Saint Brieuc. I hear people speechifying about linguistic borders. I hear people saying: *here, Breton is not spoken*. I even hear: *here, Breton has never been spoken*. These strange borders

are forcing a kind of prohibition for the Breton language, only for the Breton language.

A sickening submission is hiding under an apparent wisdom and a false erudition. Scent of province... Etymologically, the province is 'pro vincia', 'pro vinctis', the defeated country, the territory of the vanquished people. The concern for language borders is that of the monolingual provincial man, the fellow who, here, only speaks French. The Breton speaker is able to speak at least one other language. He is not upset by these so-called geographical ditches between languages.

A poultry farm has a very fine perception of the boundaries. The eye of the wild duck embraces large and new horizons.

*In the town of Saint Brieuc, Breton is not spoken.*

Is it a lack of imagination or a lack of ambition? Anyway, it is a disability. It commits one to be standard, grayish, invisible. It dictates one to look like anybody, and doing so, suggests the prospect of being nobody.

To turn Brittany into a French province is a deadly negation. It is the nihilism of the impoverished people, a weapon they turn against themselves.

*In the town of Saint Brieuc, Breton is not spoken.*

Refusal of the human swirl ... Before the French, Breton was the common language. The eponymous



founder of the city and his companions came from Wales. They probably spoke a Celtic language shared by the *two Britains*, the isle of Great Britain and our Brittany. In that tongue was composed *Y Gododdin*, our Iliad. It tells the deeds of Owenn at the battle of Kattræth, and it is like honey in the mouth of those who recite this epic. If we go back further in the past, along this coast carved with deep valleys, people communicated with Latin and also with a Gallic dialect. In older times, our ancestors communicated with prehistoric languages, and about them we know nothing.

While shopping at the supermarket of West-Saint Brieuc, I hear words of Turkish and Arabic. Part of my job is done in English. My knowledge about the Breton language enthralled my friends coming from Algeria and Senegal.

*In the town of Saint Brieuc, Breton is not spoken.*

Bad choice between the rich human reality and the poor administrative limitation... Sad subculture, without any past, without any future, reduced to statements of primary school, to official papers, to articles of the French constitution. "*Article 2: The language of the Republic is French*". Celtic gods, who are so numerous and so different, spare me the misfortune of being part of such a republic!

*In the town of Saint Brieuc, Breton is not spoken.*



Suicide of intellect, understanding amputated... The names of the locations here are sweating their Breton origin. Valleys of Gouët and Goëlo. Neighborhoods of Gouedic or Rohannec'h. Surrounding

towns of Ploufragan, Languieux Trégueux, Pledran, Tremuson. Is it possible to live in harmony in a place and with a place, when you refuse to hear its song?

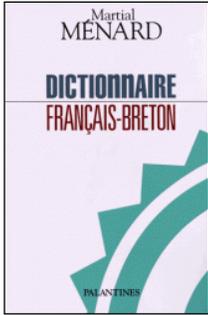
My parents never spoke English. Nevertheless, they wanted for me a place in the ebullient world they foreboded.

They are dead now. I know, through them and through others, that I am part of the Breton people. I share its angers, its dreams, its hopes, its doubts. I speak French and English, and Breton too. I also speak Spanish. I studied Chinese.

*In the town of Saint Brieuc, Breton is not spoken.*

My parents wanted me to speak English.

## A New Breton Dictionary



**Martial Ménard. *Dictionnaire Français-Breton.*** Editions Palantines. ISBN : 978-2-35678-069-0

Martial Ménard has Gallo family roots but decided to learn Breton in the 1970s by studying it on his own and through evening classes – as many Bretons have done given the lack of Breton in schools. He has

mastered this language and a love for its words and phrases. In 1983 he founded the publishing house An Here and directed it until its closing in 2002. An Here specialized in books for children – badly needed to meet the growing needs of Diwan schools and bilingual programs. In 1995 Martial Ménard co-directed the edition of the first all-Breton dictionary, *Geriadur brezhoneg* (published by An Here) which was republished in 2001.

Many French-Breton and Breton-French dictionaries have been published to assist those trying to learn Breton (or learn to read and write it). The first was the Catholicon of 1499 for Breton, Latin and French. But there have been no French-Breton dictionaries since the 1930s to take into account new vocabulary needed for a changing society. This new dictionary by Ménard is the fruit of five intensive years of work and includes 48,611 entries in its 1,472 pages.

Passionate about the need to promote the Breton language, Ménard has provided a valuable tool for those who want to express themselves fully on any topic through the Breton language.



## Daet eo genin! – A New DVD to learn the Breton Language

Kerlenn Sten Kidna An-Alre is an organization that has worked for some thirty years in the Auray area to foster the everyday use of the Breton language. They organize weekly evening classes in Auray, Pluvigner, Carnac and Locmariaquer, as well as a variety of activities conducted through the Breton language such as workshops, lectures, song, theater, and walks in the countryside. The group regularly produces a magazine

called *An Dasson* as well as other Breton language publications.

They have produced a new DVD to help those with some knowledge of Breton improve their listening comprehension. This can be used by individuals or by classes. The DVD includes fifteen different themes on contemporary life, organized in three different levels of competency for a total of 45 different video clips during 88 minutes. Speakers are from various areas of the Vannetais. The DVD includes quizzes and exercises to use, vocabulary notes and segments in Breton/French or just Breton for a mix of styles and sounds.



This can be purchased through the Coop Breizh or directly from the Kerlenn Sten Kidna for 20 euros (add some for postage to the U.S.!!!). Contact : Cercle Sten Kidna, 6 rue Joseph Rollo, 56400 Auray/An Alre / STENKIDNA2@wanadoo.fr

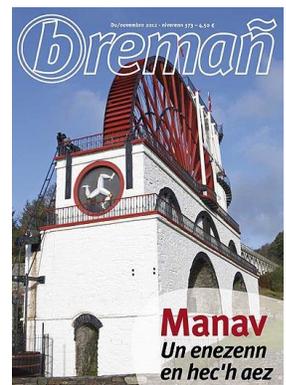
For more about the activities of this very active organization go to their website: [www.kerlenn-sten-kidna.com](http://www.kerlenn-sten-kidna.com)



## Skol an Emsav and Bremañ Magazine

Skol an Emsav has been at work since 1969 in Rennes to organize classes for adult Breton learners. It has also published a number of texts for children and adults, but is perhaps of most interest to those outside the city or Rennes (including here in the U.S) for its publication of *Bremañ*, a monthly 20-25 page magazine entirely in Breton.

Bi-monthly when it started in 1980, this magazine is now monthly and is full of information on events not only in Brittany but worldwide, with a focus on minority peoples and their work to foster cultural independence. Each issue is full of photos, articles and short notes on all aspects of Breton life – political, cultural, economic, and

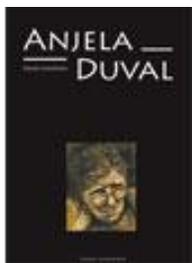


environmental. My only regret? That my Breton is not good enough to really take advantage of all the news in this publication that I can find nowhere else.

Each month a thousand copies of this magazine are printed and read by many more, not only in Brittany but in the world.

Subscription is 60 euros outside of Brittany. You might consider a bit more as a donation for this excellent publication and the work of Skol an Emsav to promote the Breton language through its classes and this very attractive magazine.

Consult the website for Skol an Emsav for more information: [www.skolanemsav.com](http://www.skolanemsav.com)



## **Anjela Duval - A Re-Edition and New Resources**

**Roger Laouénan. *Anjela Duval – Bretons témoins de leur temps.***  
Yoran Embanner. 165 pages. ISBN 978-2-916579-42-9.

This “new” book is actually an augmented reedition of an out-of-print book published in 1982 by Editions Nature et Bretagne. It is a biographical account of the Breton language poet Anjela Duval (1905-1981) which has the benefit of giving a strong voice to Anjela Duval herself.

Anjela Duval first published poetry in 1962 in the journal *Ar Bed Keltiek*. She would publish in a number of other Breton language journals like *Barr Heol*, *Imbourc’h*, *Skrid*, *Hor Yezh*, and *Al Liamm* which would publish her first collection of poetry, *Kan an douar* in 1973. Through her published works Anjela Duval would become well known among Breton militants and those fostering the Breton language. She was outspoken in her love of her language and country, but also her love of her life as a farmer, her love of nature, and her religious faith. In the 1960s many would travel to her little farm, Traoñ-an-Dour, to visit this talented poet who was so outspoken in defense of Breton identity.

But, it was a French television broadcast, “Le Conteurs,” by André Voisin on December 28, 1971, filmed at her farm, which would catapult her to national and even international attention. Thousands would visit this corner of the Tregor, curious to see and meet this authentic peasant and poet who had charmed them on that TV broadcast. It would bring another flood of admirers to her door after a rebroadcast in 1975.

The visitors were often a nuisance – interrupting farm work and stealing time from her writing – but they were also a window to a wider world, bringing interesting ideas and good conversation. Anjela Duval graciously tolerated those who showed respect and warmly welcomed those who spoke Breton or had a sincere interest in the Breton language and culture. She would write fewer poems in this period but send of hundreds of letters as an active correspondent.

Roger Laouénan, a fellow Breton speaker and inhabitant of the Tregor area of Brittany, has been a journalist for the newspaper *Le Télégramme* and is the author of a number of books on Breton soldiers in World War I. He befriended Anjela Duval in the 1960s and remained a friend until her death in November 1981. This book is the fruit of that friendship. In 1973 Laouénan recorded a number of conversations with Anjela Duval in her home and excerpts from these make up much of the content of this book, bringing her thoughts to life. Also included are twelve of her poems (in Breton with French translations) and some twenty photos.

While it is difficult to measure the impact Anjela Duval has had on the evolution of Breton language literature, it is clear that she was an inspiration to a younger generation of Breton writers and her outspoken defense of her country and language certainly had an impact.

For many who discovered Anjela Duval through the “Les Conteurs” TV program she was a novelty and attractive in the same way Native Americans are attractive to New Agers – as a symbol of something authentically rooted in the earth. But Angela Duval was authentic – truly a farmer and truly a Breton who spoke up for her nation.

It is easy to forget that in the early 1970s Bretons were in many cases just beginning to recognize that their culture and language were not old worthless remnants of a by-gone time to be discarded for modern French “civilization.” Anjela Duval certainly carried the message to all who encountered her through her writing or television and radio broadcasts that she cherished her old farm, her Breton heritage, and her identity.

## **Mignoned Anjela**

In 1998 Ronan Le Coadic took charge of the considerable collection of manuscripts, notes and (some 4,000) letters of Anjela Duval. To conserve all these documents (and others to come) he created the association Mignoned Anjela and in 2005 the group published the complete works by her (*Oberennoù Glok*).

Now a professor at the Université Rennes 2, Le Coadic has been able to mobilize resources to inventory and make copies of documents available by computer. And the documents so far scanned are accessible on the Rennes university website: [www.bibnum.univ-rennes2.fr](http://www.bibnum.univ-rennes2.fr).

The website for Mignoned Anjela [www.breizh.net/anjela](http://www.breizh.net/anjela) has a wealth of information and includes all her poetry (over 500 texts), those translated into French by Paol Keineg, and 92 poems translated into English by Lenora Timm, a founding member of the U.S. ICDBL! Also on the website are articles in French, Breton and English about Anjela Duval.

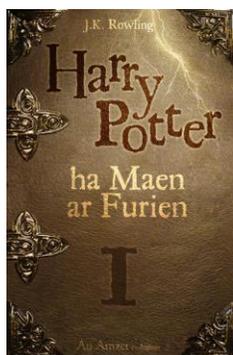
For more information about Mignoned Anjel or to support this organization contact Ronan Le Coadic [ronan.lecoadic@univ-rennes2.fr](mailto:ronan.lecoadic@univ-rennes2.fr).



## Publishing in the Breton Language

Because the Breton language was excluded from the classrooms of Brittany for so many years, the market for Breton language literature has always meant that publishers specializing in this area have been doomed to near-poverty. With Diwan immersion schools and bilingual classes in the public and Catholic schools getting off the ground in the late 1970s, children's literature has fared a bit better but publishing in the Breton language for any age of reader is a labor of love.

Nevertheless, there are publishers who persevere and there are poets, novelists, essayists and writers of every style whose language is Breton. There have also been a number of writers in Brittany who have excelled in translation work to put classics and less classic works into the Breton language. From Asterix to the Little Prince, Shakespeare to Soljenitzyn, and now JK Rowling.



The Breton publishing house An Amzer/Le Temps based in Pornic recently released a translation of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997): in Breton **Harry Potter Ha Maen ar Furien**.

Translated by Mark Kerrain, this book has already broken some records for Breton language sales with some 1,600 copies

being sold in the first few days of its release. While of clear interest to children of Brittany sales of the book are also boosted by collectors who want to add this to editions of this book already published in 74 other languages.

Marc Kerrain is a Breton teacher at the Université de Haute Bretagne in Rennes and has taught evening Breton classes for over 40 years. He is the author of the teaching method called *Ni a gomz brezhoneg* (TES editions) as well as other publications for Breton speakers, and he is the founder of the publishing group Sav-Heol which has published a number of books for children and young people.

For more information about the publications of An Amzer see their website: [www.an-amzer.com](http://www.an-amzer.com)

*Treasure Island* (*Enez an Teñzor*) has already been translated into Breton, but now Breton language readers can also enjoy the classic tale of Jekyll and Hyde.



*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), another very well known work by the Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894), came out this October in Breton translation. **Dr. Jekyll ha Mr. Hyde**, translated by Pierrette Kermoal was published by Aber Editions (115 pages, ISBN 978-2-916845-18). While this translation will not match the sales of Harry Potter, it is surely a fine addition to the classic literature available in the Breton language.

In Googling information about this classic work, an online etymology dictionary noted that "the surname Jekyll is of Breton origin and was originally a personal name." Wikipedia refers to it as a Cornish and Breton name. No denying the inter-Celtic connections in this case.



**Fañch Peru. Kan ar Stivell – dastumad barzhonegoù divyezhek.** Skol Vreizh. 2012. 262 pages. ([www.skolvreizh.com](http://www.skolvreizh.com))

*Kan ar Stivell* is not a book about the songs of Alan Stivell but about springs (fountains) which flow into the streams and rivers of Brittany. Actually it is a book of poetry by Fañch Peru with evokes the landscape, people, flora and fauna of Brittany, and especially the home area of the author, the Trégor.

Peru has published over twenty books in the Breton language (most through Skol Vreizh) since the mid 1980s. This collection includes many poems previously published in long out-of-print works, but also some 100 previously unpublished poems.

I cannot claim to understand enough Breton or French to appreciate the literary quality of poetry in this bilingual collection, but for anyone trying to learn Breton this collection provides an enjoyable way to discover new words and phrases. While rich in imagery, Peru's poetry is not so florid that one gets bogged down with a complex tangle of ideas. Phrasing is generally short and the language is down to earth. Besides a French translation for each poem, there are four poems that have English versions thanks to Suzan and Roy Eales.

These are poems about Brittany (with a few about Ireland) and the springs which feed its streams, the flowers which bloom in fields, the changing seasons, the passing of years, and the many paths Peru has traveled. Kan ar Stivell / Le chant de la source / The Song of the Spring.



### Festival du Livre de Carhaix

For the 23rd year Carhaix hosted the Book Festival of Brittany this October which attracts thousands of visitors who have the chance to meet hundreds of authors and explore new publications in French and Breton presented by a hundred or more publishing houses of Brittany.

This is also an event where several prestigious awards are presented.

The Xavier de Langlais prize for a work in the Breton language was awarded this year to Pierre-Emmanuel Marais, for *Alje 57*. (Al Liamm).

The prize for Short Stories in the Breton language was awarded to Kristian Ar Braz, for *Repetico*.

The Prize for a Novel awarded by the City of Carhaix went to Claire Fourier for *Les silences de la guerre* (Dialogues).



### 9th Festival of Books in Brittany

The town of Guerande has also been the host of an important book festival which took place November 24-25 this year. The theme for the festival was *Bretagne au Feminin* (Feminine Brittany) with a focus on women writers and women who are the topic of writing.

Invited authors included Michèle Arnaud, Thérèse Andre-Abelaziz, Anne Chate, Claire Fourier, Martine Hidoux-Roussel, Angèle Jacq, Fabienne Juhel, Liza Kerivel, Françoise Le Mer, Mary Lester, and Marie-Hélène Prouteau. The festival brings 150 authors and 60 publishers with many opportunities to meet your favorite writer.

Also featured was a conference by historian Philippe Tourault on Anne of Brittany. For more information: <http://.festivaldulivreennbretagnedeguerande.overblog.com>

### The Ankou Stars in Two New Books from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

**Anatole Le Braz. *La Légende de la mort chez les Bretons armoricains*.** Yoran Embanner. 2011. ISBN 978-2-914855-81-5.

Anatole Le Braz was born in 1859 in Saint-Servais (Côtes d'Armor) and was a well known collector of traditions, tales and legends of Brittany. He collected Breton language texts, but all his publications were in French (with many translated into other languages). *La Légende de la Mort* is one of his best known works and has remained a best-seller through the decades since it was first published in 1893.

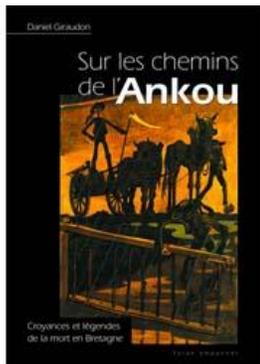


This classic has seen a number of editions and this new one (2011) by Yoran Embanner includes the full text of this work from the 1928 edition – compacted into 794 pages of paperback. As the title states, this is a book about legends about death, but not just legends – this book includes statements from Bretons – especially in the Trégor area – about their encounters with and beliefs about the dead. Topics include

portents of death, Brittany's personification of death the Ankou, and all aspects of what happens to the dead and how they reappear among the living.

The 60 page preface by Léon Marillier written in 1892 for the first edition of this book explores the more universal and unique place of death and is included in this edition. Marillier (1862-1901) was a philosopher and historian of religions. In his preface he puts into perspective the place of the dead in the lives of Bretons. He concludes (my translation):

*... This perpetual contact with death has imprinted upon the spirit of Bretons a deep mark; there is no country where those who are no longer alive remain so mixed with the living; the dead keep, it must be said, their place in the house, the cemetery is like an extension of the hearth; one goes there, if I may dare say, to chat with one's own. There is in the big cities like Paris, for example, a kind of religion of the dead, but this is, all in all, more a cult of tombs than of the dead ones; one does not get intimate with them. In Brittany it seems that those who are departed have not gone anywhere at all, that they are still there nearby, that they have just changed their address from the house to the cemetery.*



**Daniel Giraudon. *Sur les chemins de l'Ankou – Croyances et légendes de la mort en Bretagne et pays celtiques.*** Yoran Embanner. 2012. 383 pages. ISBN 978-2914855938.

Le Braz collected the stories in *La légende de la mort* in the Trégor, Goëlo and Lower Cornouaille regions, and was well aware that there was

much more to be found. And here's where Daniel Giraudon comes in with a handsome new book featuring the Ankou and beliefs and legends about all aspects of death in Brittany (with some comparison to beliefs found in other Celtic countries as well).

This book is richly illustrated with photos of people and places found in the documentation on all aspects of death and its personification called the Ankou. Daniel Giraudon is a professor at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale and researcher for the Centre de Recherche Bretonnes et Celtiques in Brest who specializes in the oral traditions of Brittany. (see Bro Nevez 116, November 2010, and 121, February 2012, for reviews of his books on oral traditions related to plants and trees and insects).

The first mention of the Ankou can be found in a 9<sup>th</sup> century glossary of a Latin text and then later in the Catholicon, a French-Latin-Breton dictionary printed in 1499. This skeletal figure who often carries a scythe also has a strong presence in early Breton language theater. In this book you can see how this figure is depicted in paintings and sculpture and learn about all aspects of the Ankou found in stories, proverbs and sayings and accounts of first-hand encounters with him.

The Ankou is most often thought to be the first person of the neighborhood who died in the past year, but could be the last death – it is a personification of death or a messenger of death. He may come with a variety of helpers to open gates as his always-squeaky cart moves along the routes a funeral cortege might take. The route is important since the deceased must be able to find their way back from the cemetery to their old home.

There are many signs that warn you when the souls of the dead are about at night – certainly the unoiled wheels of the Ankou's cart, but also rocks falling from the cart to make room for new dead. The dread of meeting the Ankou on a narrow path meant that those out late at night had to be wary and create as much distance as possible between the sound of a creaking wagon and themselves. The common knowledge that this would be the case meant that those smuggling tobacco or other goods sometimes disguised themselves as the Ankou and could more easily slip through the night with a procession of fake ghouls carrying the loot.

Noise of footsteps with no one present, or birds of the night with unusual cries or an unusual visibility can serve as omens that a death is coming – soon or in a more distant future. There can be mysterious lights, the sound of bells or strange smells like candles burning inside one's house. You might feel a sudden cold shiver or have a nose bleed as a sign that the Ankou is near by. There is some flexibility in interpreting whose death is foretold by encountering any one sign, or how far away that death may be.

The book underlines the fact that in Brittany the dead are never far away from the living in discussing the return of souls to atone for sins, to tell a family member of a coming death, or to just visit the old familiar places of their lifetime. There are many things one should and should not do to make sure you do not get in the way of returning souls and to make sure you do not show disrespect to them. For example, sweeping out the house and throwing the dust out into the street (and in the face of the dead) after dark is definitely the wrong thing to do.

While one can expect the souls of close family members to be present at any time, there are three times of the year when the dead (lots of them!) are out and about. Toussaint (Halloween and All Souls Day), Christmas eve, and Saint-Jean (summer solstice). On these nights there is a massive presence of the dead and it is best to stay out of their way. Leaving a nice fire in the fireplace and food on the table at these auspicious times is a good idea. The ashes of the special logs (and bonfire for Saint-Jean on the eve of June 23<sup>rd</sup>) are used in a number of ways to foretell coming events (joyful and sad) and to cure ills or make the crops grow.

The souls one meets in the *dead of night* (an expression that certainly works here) are usually safe if one leaves them space to travel freely. But many are dangerous and interacting with them – even to help them complete an unfulfilled task – is usually not a good idea. The Washerwoman of the Night is an example of a spirit to avoid at all costs. She will prey on both men and women out late at night (or up before dawn) who pass by the fountain or the place on the stream where laundry is done and engage them in the washing of shrouds...resulting in a beating or drowning. The encounter can be deadly (no pun intended). If you do not run fast enough she may hit you with the stick used to beat the laundry before you get in the door.

Souls of the dead can also take on the shape of an animal – a big black dog that roams near its old home, and rabbits, cats or crows. If you stay out late to play cards or to complete work you did not get done during daylight beware all the dangerous encounters of the night.

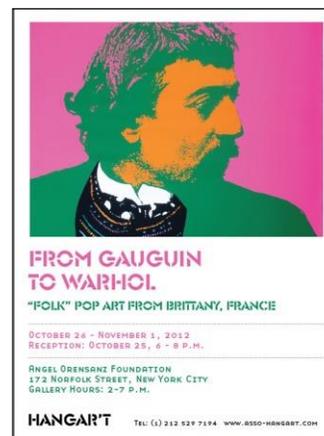
While many of the beliefs and customs documented in this book are not unique to Brittany (and there are many stories to illustrate similar themes in Ireland and Scotland), it is clear that the presence of the dead is still very much on the minds of Bretons. While Giraudon draws from collections like those of Le Braz he also includes more contemporary accounts of encounters of a supernatural kind. Indeed, I have my own account to add, although at the time of this event, I was blissfully ignorant of oral traditions related to death in Brittany. And I had little interest in supernatural events or belief that I could ever experience such a thing. The power of suggestion was not at work. In 1978 while living in just outside of Carhaix I stayed in a small converted farmhouse – two rooms on the ground floor with a barn adjoined and an open unused level on a second floor under the roof that extended the distance of the two lower rooms. One day I heard footsteps above me as I was reading (during the day) and assumed it must be the landlord who accessed the upper level by an outside stairway to

seek something. These lasted just a few minutes but were clearly the sound of steps on the wooden floor above. At that point I was not familiar with the exterior of the house. It was only later that I learned from my housemate that there was no outside stairway to access the second floor. I had been sitting near the interior stairway that was the only way to walk up to the second floor and no one had come in the house to use that stairway. My housemate noted that such “footsteps” often signaled an upcoming death. There were no deaths in my family or that of my housemate but I do not know if a relative of someone who once lived in the house may have passed away in the months or year to come after I heard the steps.

Never before or since have I experienced any omens of anything, but here in the U.S. dead souls are not out and about as they are in Brittany!

## Hangar't exhibit in New York City

Hangar't is a Breton art initiative which celebrated its 20th anniversary with an exhibition at the Orensanz Cultural Center in New York City from October 26th to November 1st. BZH New York hosted a reception on the opening night and helped to promote this unusual exhibit called “From Gauguin to Warhol- ‘Folk’ Pop Art from Brittany, France”



The following is information (in English) from the Hangar't website which describes its evolution. Check out the website for more samples of the art and additional information: [www.asso-hangart.com](http://www.asso-hangart.com)

*In 1992: Hangar't born in Nizon, under the leadership of Yves Quentel, journalist and passionate arts.*

*He launched this Hangar't adventure at the art festival "Le Mai des Avens " organized by the Junior Chamber International.*

*The idea? Work on the memory of a small rural town, Nizon (Pont-Aven). Find documents and pictures to make Pop Art's style paintings.*

*From February 1992, meetings are held every Sunday in the village of Nizon. People bring their photos found in shoeboxes or family albums.*

There were just a few members at first, but today, more than sixty people have already made at least one table in the workshop of Hangar't.



Breeders, farmers, architects, butcher-delicatessen, heating specialist, pancake maker, carpenter, retirees, etc.. All take the brush, and the only professional in the band is a painter specialized on ... car body!

The first Hangar't tables are painted in an old cannery

that suddenly takes on the appearance of "Factory", the famous Experimental "factory" of Andy Warhol. So, suddenly Nizon starts to look like New York!

2012: Twenty years later, in the footsteps of Warhol, the founders-members are still there. Their big project this year is an exhibition in New York, the city of the master of Pop Art: Andy Warhol.

The event will take place in October 2012. In New York, thirty paintings\* will be presented by Hangar't in the premises of the Angel Orensanz Foundation Cultural Center in Manhattan, and about 30 of its members will be traveling at their own expense. The budget also involves a partnership with several Brittany companies. "Hangar't New York 2012" will be thus an opportunity to show a wide range of "made in Breizh" products in New York. **And now, Nizon suddenly finds himself in New York!**

(\*) The collection of Hangar't has about 300 paintings.

## Weathering the Storm BZH New York always active

Hurricane Sandy which made a direct hit on the mid-Atlantic coast of the U.S. at the end of this October brought extensive damage to the Jersey shore communities and low laying areas around (and in) the city of New York. In inland communities like mine, falling trees and branches caused widespread power outages. With millions of people in the path of heavy rain and even more destructive winds, the clean-up will take a long time and many will be without power for

weeks. Many have lost their homes. Over 100 people lost their lives.

As is the case in any part of the U.S. when disaster strikes people step up to contribute money as well as volunteer work to help neighbors get back on their feet. BZH New York is doing its part by partnering with New York Cares to raise funds by offering a portion of the cover charge for their November 3 Interceltic Halloween Fest to Sandy recovery relief. New York Cares is now the city's largest volunteer organization, running volunteer programs for 1,300 nonprofits, city agencies, and public schools.

While attendance was impacted some by limited public transportation service and perhaps some gasoline shortages for those who live outside the city who would need to drive, this event held at Connolly's pub in Times Square is another example of the good work being done by BZH New York to foster inter-Celtic relations and a broader appreciation of Breton culture here in the U.S. \$1,000 was raised for New York Cares relief use.



Lined up for the Interceltic fest were Martin O'Connell, world-class and versatile accordion player who finished first at All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil in Cavan this summer traveling from Ireland for the event. He performed with Eamon O'Leary, Marie-Louise Bowe, and Steve Holloway. From Brittany the Thomas Moisson trio, one of the up-and-coming dynamic festou noz bands also flew into town. And other performers included The Mikey Finns, Sylvain Payot, Nosa Terra, Darrah Carr Dance and Emerald Fire Dance.

The Thomas Moisson Trio was also lined up for a Breton music session on Monday night and concerts on Wednesday and Friday nights (November 5, 7 & 9). For more about this band, visit their website: <http://thomasmoissontrio.pagesperso-orange.fr/>

For more information about BZH New York, check out their website: [www.bzh-ny.org](http://www.bzh-ny.org)

## Third Anniversary Celebration for the Bagad New York



The Bagad New York organizes an annual celebration of Breton music and dance – this year held November 17th, at the Hungarian House in Manhattan’s Upper East Side. The evening’s program began with instruction in Breton dance, with dance music provided by an impressive line-up of musicians. Here’s an introduction modified (slightly) from information on the Bagad New York website. Check

out their website to learn more about this band and the work they are doing to promote Breton music and culture: [www.bagad.us](http://www.bagad.us)

Bagad New York, from various parts of northeastern U.S. Created in the Fall 2009 by a handful of American musicians and a Breton piper, the Kerlenn grew and today is composed by 15 active musicians and trainees. Members come not just from the New York city area but more widely in the northeastern part of the U.S. The role of the organization is to promote Breton music and tradition.

Bartholomew / MacNintch, from New Palz & Beacon, NY Alex Bartholomew and Mike MacNintch have played together since before the beginning of the Bagad New York. Alex plays bagpipes, but has participated twice at the grade 1 bagadou championship in Brittany with the Kerlenn Pondi, in 2010 in the bombard section. Mike MacNintch, aside of being a professional smallpipe, Scottish bagpipe and binou player for more than 25 years, has been a guest player with the Bagad Kemperle since 2009 in Brittany.

Int e’ Ya, from Montreal QC, Canada Nolwenn Noisel, Rémy Trichet and Glen Knorr are musicians from Montreal. With a balance of traditional and modern sounds, Int e Ya offers a wide range of music for Breton dancing. The band plays frequently in festoù noz, Celtic festivals and other music & dance parties for Celtic and Breton traditions alive and well in Canada!

Siffleurs de Nuit, from Sherbrook QC, Canada An energetic fest noz band from Sherbrook in Quebec, they sing traditional songs in French from Haute Bretagne and in Breton from Basse Bretagne. Les siffleurs de nuit are composed of four

musicians: Anthony Gerard (voice, trumpet, story telling), Emmanuelle Hélias (voice), Normand Breton (accordion) and Cedric Camier (percussions, tablas, cajon).

New York Celtic Dancers, from New York, NY NYCD highlights both traditional Scottish dance and contemporary interpretations of the tradition in their wildly spirited and engaging performances.

Sylvain Payot, from Saratoga Springs NY Rooted close to the legendary Broceliande forest, Sylvain is the third generation of an accordion playing dynasty which emerged in the 30’s. After 9 years spent playing Breton music in festoù noz with the energetic Breizh ar Dant, he has progressively evolved a style that integrates more and more elements from Klezmer, Afro-Cuban, Jazz and Funk music.

Stephen Gara, from Peekskill, NY A stalwart of the Irish trad scene in London for many years, Stephen plays Highland pipes, Uilleann pipes, whistles, Cittern and Banjo. He is a former member of the Fintan Lawlor Pipe Band of Dublin, and The Pride of Murray Pipe Band of London, and has toured Europe playing in various folk rock bands.

Calum Pasqua, from Brooklyn, NY Already on stage last year, Calum is a virtuoso Scottish fiddler from Brooklyn, New York. As a youth he learned classical violin technique, Scottish fiddle music and Highland pipes. Calum was the first American to compete in and win the Glenfiddich Scottish Fiddle Championship in 2007. He is also a New England Scottish Fiddle Champion, and winner of the Aboyné Prize given by the Marquis of Huntley. Calum is Director of Strings at Hewlett High School and performs in the trio “Parcel of Rogues” with Susie Petrov and Dan Houghton.



## October in Brittany and the Bogue d’Or

For those who want to enjoy Brittany in it’s off season, October is a month when you can indulge in one of the best festivals of Brittany – the Bogue d’Or in Redon. Describing this as a festival is a bit deceptive since the whole month of October is filled with events in this part

of Gallo Brittany where song has a particularly rich tradition. There are contests for storytelling, song, and instrumental music – for children and adults. There are festoù-noz, concerts, walks in the countryside accompanied by singers, accordion players and

fiddlers ... a celebration of tall ships and the history of Redon as an important port city, and a celebration of the bogue – chestnuts which are roasted and transformed into many culinary delights.

The highlight of the festival is the final contest for traditional song held on the last weekend of October. But this is preceded throughout the months of September and October by mini-festivals in fifteen communities throughout this area of Brittany where the final song contestants are chosen. The potential for conviviality at these more intimate gatherings is limitless. There's great music, dancing and often feasting! And rarely will you find tourists...

This is the 37<sup>th</sup> year for this important music gathering of Brittany and the Bogue d'Or is organized by the Groupement Culturel Breton des Pays de Vilaine (GCBPV). This organization is active throughout the year to foster traditional music of this area of Brittany. It has a music school whose teachers travel to some fifteen communities to teach over 500 students. It also has a resource center where collections of stories, songs, life histories, photography, film and other documents about the life of the region are cared for and made available to anyone interested in learning. And the Center produces recordings and publications as well to foster the transmission of a very rich heritage.

For all the activities of the fall Bogue d'Or as well as throughout the year the GCBPV works closely with Dastum as well as dozens of other cultural organizations active in the region who also actively foster the performance of traditional song and music. You can find out more about the work of this group as well as the Bogue d'Or on the website: [www.gcbpv.org](http://www.gcbpv.org).

## September in Brittany - the Championship for Paired Bombard and Biniou

Another highlight for those who love Breton music is the annual championship for paired bombard and biniou koz and paired bombard and biniou braz (Scottish style bagpipes) held at the beginning of September in Gourin.

This year's winners in the coveted paired biniou koz and bombard contest were Tangi Josset and Yannick Martin. This is not the first time either of these well respected musicians have been in the winner's circle. Yannick Martin, in pair with Daniel Moign for the biniou braz and bombard championship took first place in 2009, 2010 and 2011 (they were third this year). And in 2002 and 2003 Josset-Martin were winners in the Youth competition for sonneurs.



Yannick Martin, Tangi Josset and Thomas Moisson (on accordion) at the Kleg 2010 festival

Tangi Josset (also spelled Tanguy) and Yannick Martin are in fact twins born in Columbia in 1986. When they were several months old they were adopted by two different families who happened to both live in Brittany. The boys first really got together when they were eight years old and both became involved in Breton music in their own way. Eventually both would become part of the bombard section of the Bagad Kemper and this year were part of that bagad's celebration of its 20<sup>th</sup> first place title in the contest for bagadoù of Brittany. It is no small matter to be a central player in one of the best bagads in Brittany, and certainly a major accomplishment to be chosen the best of the biniou-bombard pairs of Brittany. In the Gourin competition this year where sonneurs performed in three styles – march, melody and dance - there were 17 pairs competing for the title who were chosen from some 40 eliminatory contests throughout Brittany.

Here is the breakdown of winners in three categories of the contests this year:

Biniou koz-bombard: 1. Tanguy Josset-Yannick Martin. 2. Julien Tymen-Michel Kerveillant. 3. Daniel Philippe-Jil Lehart. 4. Daniel Le Feon-Erwan Menguy. 5. Yves Bertou-Fanch Perennes.

Biniou braz-bombard: 1. Gweltaz Riolland-Julien Grellier. 2. Gildas Roger-Kevin Jubeault. 3. Yannick Martin-Daniel Moign. 4. Goulven Henaff-Alexis Meunier. 5. Fabrice Lothode-Hubert Raud.

Open duo (any two instruments in pair): 1. Émilien Robic-Romain Dubois. 2. Tanguy Pacault-Damien Tatard. 3. Claude Le Baron-Fabien Robbe. 4. Kevin Colas-Yves Marie Denis. 5. Frédéric Miossec-Jean Sébastien Hellard.

This year the organization called Dastum has celebrated 40 years of work in support of traditional Breton music, song, and oral tradition. Through collection work by hundreds of Bretons Dastum has gathered a vast resource of recordings and texts related to all aspects of the Breton cultural heritage. But most importantly, though the work of Dastum and locally based cultural groups which have partnered with Dastum, hundreds of events are held each year where young and old share this heritage and foster its future. This sounds easy but a great deal of work during the past forty years has been accomplished only through the diligence of passionate volunteers working with very small resources. One should not take for granted the wealth of opportunities today to hear traditional song and music or the opportunities for young people to learn from masters of traditional arts.

The following is just one event held early this November to celebrate Dastum's 40 years of work. You can find a full listing of all the events of Dastum's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well as a number of other upcoming events on the Infos & Actualités section of the website [www.dastum.net](http://www.dastum.net).

**Dastum souffle ses 40 bougies le samedi 3 novembre / Lidet e vo 40 vloaz Dastum e Laruen d'an 3 a viz Du.**



This November 3 event in Lanrivain featured a roundtable in the afternoon on Dastum and its future – directions to take in future work for the Breton culture.

In the evening one had to choose (or move between) two events which gathered the finest traditional singers and sonneurs of Brittany.

**A huge fest noz** brought together a large number of singers and musicians from all parts of Brittany who have collaborated over the years with Dastum: Frères Auffray, Berthou-Perennès, Berthou-Philippe, Bigot-Crépillon, Les Frères Cornic, Defernez-Dayot, Floc'h-Le Guern, Glidic-Salaun, Guéblez-Troadec, Guilloux-Le Cam, Guitton-Clérvet, Lallour-Le Corre, Loeiz Le Braz, Le Breton-Hélias, Le Corre-Fustec, Patrick Lefebvre, Le Goff-Kerjean, Le Noan-Michel, Les Chanteurs de Vilaine, Les Chantous d'Loudia, Les Mangeouses d'Oreilles, Loerou Ruz, Manglo, Marchand-Le Roux, Eric Menneteau, Les Frères

Morvan, Revault-Morel, Christian & Sylvie Rivoalen, Simon-Ollivier, Traou en Dro, Urvoy-Malrieu-Le Merdy...

At the same time a concert was held in the church of Lanrivain with Anne Auffret, Trio Barbedette-Quenderff-Normand, Baron-Anneix, Brou-Hamon-Quimbert, Ifig Castel & Annaïg Le Gorju, André & Irène Drumel, Ifig Flatrès, Léhart-Philippe, Le Hétet-Le Lu, Moal-Chaplain, Molard-Le Bihan, Tri Pichon Noz, Ifig Troadec... Organized by Kanerien ha sonerien an hanternoz and the Comité de jumelage de Lanrivain this involved a veritable "who's Who" of great Breton singers and sonneurs.

**div yezh**



skolioù publik

**Dastum and A Partnership with Bilingual Schools**

This fall Dastum launched an interesting project with Div Yezh, the association of parents of children in bilingual public schools. Div Yezh publishes a magazine every four months for parents and other supporters of the schools, and starting this fall Dastum will be providing a song text in Breton for the magazine from its archives. Sound recordings, transcriptions and translations of the text can be found on the Dastum website <http://mediatheque.dastum.net> by searching for "Div Yezh Magazine".



**Heard of, but not heard – New Music from Brittany**

The following notes are pulled from reviews and information in *Musique bretonne* (232, July-Aug.-Sept. 2012), *Ar Men* (190, Sept.-Oct. 2012 and 191, Nov.-Dec. 2012) and the Co-op Breizh website ([www.coop-breizh.fr](http://www.coop-breizh.fr))



**Michel Aumont. Le Grand Orchestre Armorigène.** Innacour INNA 11214

Originally a trio, this "orchestra" now has seven musicians including as its leader Michel Aumont on clarinet, Marc Anthony and Valentin Clastrier on electro-acoustic hurdy-gurdys (vielle-à-roue), Laurent Genty on piano, Grégoire Hennebelle on fiddle, Dominique Le Bozec on percussion, and Mathieu Letourel on tuba. The music is innovative – jazzy and contemporary – with a hint of melody and rhythms from the Breton tradition.



**Arz Nevez. *Canntaireachd.***

Marzelle MARZ 013.

Arz Nevez is a “string ensemble” led by Yves Ribis which has been performing for a dozen years in different variations. The strings of the violin, viola and cello have the

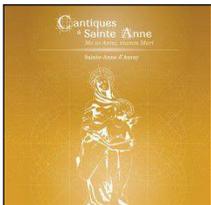
addition of guitar and percussion on this new CD. The music is Breton and Celtic in theme with compositions and international flavors in the percussion. The group is made up of Yves Ribis on guitars, Faustine Audebert with song, Grégoire Hennebelle on violin, Christophe Péliol on viola, Eric Nedellec on cello, and Jérôme Kerihuel on percussions.



**Miss Blue. *Breizh'n Bass.***

This is an unusual mix of live vocals with the studio collaboration of Eric Marchand paired with Yann Fañch Kemener or the Frères Guichen and Jerry Cornic. Even more surprising in

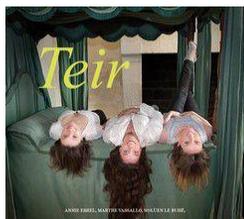
this DJ mix by Miss Blue is the use of samples of Kan ha diskan singing by the Goadec Sisters and the Morvan Brothers, and recordings by Alan Stivell and the group Ar Re Yaouank. Titles include “Breizh in your face,” “Jump lamm,” “Blodeuwedd,” “Funkibreizh,” “Star tijenn,” to give an idea...



***Cantiques à Sainte Anne - Me zo Anna, mamm Mari - Sainte Anne d'Auray***

Sainte Anne d'Auray is the site of a major pilgrimage in Brittany and a center for sacred music. This CD includes well known cantiques as

well as more modern compositions. There are cantiques in French and in Breton, Gregorian chants as well as some previously unrecorded songs. Choirs of Sainte-Anne d'Auray and the surrounding area perform with a number of soloists and accompaniment by the two organs of the basilica of Sainte-Anne, uilleann pipes and bombard.

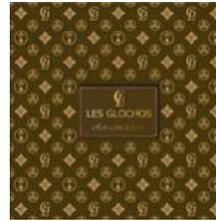


**Ebrel – Le Buhé – Vassalo.**

***Teir.*** L'Oz Production.

Three of Brittany’s finest singers of the traditional Breton language song repertoire of Brittany interpret a number of well known and lesser known ballads and songs for dance.

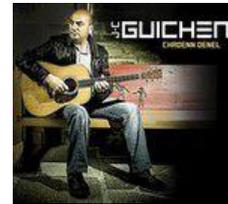
Nolùen Le Buhé, Marthe Vassalo and Annie Ebrel, each perform solo on the CD, but most of the 17 selections are done in trio giving a new sound to some old songs. The CD includes a 7-minute bonus song as well. The CD includes all the songs texts with French translations.



**Les Glochos. *Rien à fout' de la crise.***

This group (Franck Jegoux and Dominique Milhaus) is known for its satirical texts in French on contemporary issues, and especially politics and politicians.

This CD includes 12 new songs with a variety of musical styles from salsa and country to classical, rap and Breton tradition.



**Jean Charles Guichen.**

***Chadenn denel.***

[www.jcguichen.com](http://www.jcguichen.com)

Jean-Charles Guichen is a well known guitarist of Brittany who rose to attention as part of the group Ar Re Yaouank. He has

since performed solo and with his brother Fred. Rooted in a Breton repertoire, this master of rock style guitar incorporates a variety of sounds in this CD of 11 selections.



**Erwan Hamon & Janick Martin.**

***Black and Blue Zebra.***

[www.duohamonmartin.com](http://www.duohamonmartin.com)

This CD includes 11 selections rooted in Gallo Brittany where Hamon and Martin are well known for flute and accordion duo

performances. But included are selections from the Breton tradition more widely and compositions with various musical influences. Erwan Hamon plays wooden flute, bombard and sings, and Janick Martin provides button accordion. They are joined by Gilles Chabenat on hurdy-gurdy (vielle à roue) and Julien Stevenin on bass fiddle.

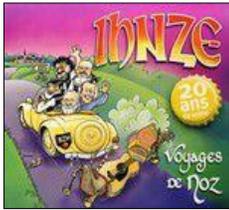


**IMG. *Interdit de cracher gallo!***

Mass Productions.

At its origins this band was made up of high school students who wanted to blend the rhythms of Breton fest noz dances with music like reggae and ska. They

take on a punk-rock sound here with a reggae beat still present in this second CD. The Gallo roots of the band are evident in the choice of dances – ridées, aeroplanes, ronds, and polkas, with texts by the singer of the group Gurvan “MCGur” Molac who also plays bombard. Other members of this group are: Martin Chapron on guitars, Victor Simon on bass, Régis Boucard on drums, Julien Daniéolo on accordion, Jean-Marie Gautier on trombone, and Julien Vrigneau on saxophones.



**Ihnze. Voyages de noz.** Co Le Label.

For 20 years this band has been a favorite at Breton festoù-noz for its songs and dance music. Here they pull out a selection of 16 dance tunes including an dro,

polka, laridé, ronde de Loudéac, Scottish, riquenée, and more to celebrate their anniversary. .



**Kaloneu derv bro Pondi / Choeurs d'hommes de Pontivy. Trois siècles de chants sacrés en Bretagne, Vol. 1.** CD KD13P.

This men's choir from the Pontivy area was founded in 2007 and they focus on religious song and

the rich repertoire of the Vannetais country. Many of the 18 cantiques on this recording are well known in Brittany but others are much less heard, including the 16th century "Veni creator," thought to be the oldest Breton cantique to be passed down to the present. The choir is accompanied by Jorj Belz on organ and Dominig Mahé on bombard. A DVD takes one on a tour of four churches of this area of Brittany: Pontivy, Kernascléden, Quelven (in Guern) and Sainte Anne d'Auray.



**Konogan an Habask. D'ar Pevarlamm.** Paker Productions.

First CD by this Breton musician who uses bombard, biniou koz, ulillian pipes and low (tin) whistle for Breton melodies and dance tunes, with a style that borrows

from Galician, Irish, Balkan and Scottish traditions as well as jazz and rock. Konogan an Habask played with the Bagad Kemper and with the fest noz band Startijenn but here takes center stage. Invited artists on the CD include Thibault Niobé (guitars, bouzouki, banjo), Erwan Volant (bass), Jean-Marie Nivaigne (percussions), Gabriel Faure (fiddle), Tangi ar Gall-Carré ( button accordion), Youenn Chapalain (biniou) and Elsa Corre (song).



**LEA. Le Vieil amant.**

Laurence Meillarec (LEA) was a pianist who accompanied Glenmor in the late 1970s and 80s. On this DC this artist brings a new life to 11 songs of this well known militant singer of Brittany.



**Youenn Le Berre. Heol Noz - Loar Deiz.** Keltia Musique

This is a double CD of new arrangements by Youenn Le Berre, a flute/bombard/sax player and a founding member of the band Gwendal in 1972. This CD includes

selections from his repertoire with compositions as well by Robert Le Gall, Daniel Darras, François Ovide, Jérôme Gueguen, Christian Leroux, Nasrédine Dalil, Hughes De Courson.



**Maïon et Wenn. Zamouresses.**

Accompanied by Blunty Blunt and a number of guest artists on this CD, Maïon Gwenn and Gwenn Jouin (Maïon et Wenn) give us 13 songs (most in French) on a wide variety of topics – love, lies, emotions and

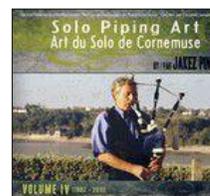
fear, ex-husbands, and more. The musical accompaniment is as wide ranging in style as the texts with Balkan rhythms, swing, waltz, hip hop, and "soul."



**Nautilus, Nautilus.** Marmouzig MAR08.

Nautilus is a jazz octet big on innovation and improvisation. The group is made up of Christophe Rocher (director and clarinet), Nicolas Peoc'h (sax), Philippe Champion (trumpet), Grégoire

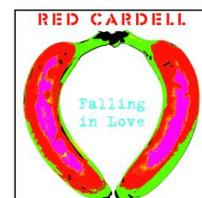
Hennebelle (fiddle), Christopher Bjurström (piano), Frédéric Briet (bass fiddle), Nicolas Pointard (drums) and Vincent Raude (electronics).



**Jakez Pincet. Solo Piping Art, volume 4 - L'art du solo en cornemuse**

This CD includes 24 performances of piobaireachd (pibroch) performed by Jakez Pincet which he recorded between 2007 and

2011. Sometimes referred to as a "classical" music for the Scottish Highland bagpipes, piobaireachd involves the performance of a long variation upon a theme where the music builds in complexity as the piece proceeds. There is no foot-tapping rhythm (although there is definitely a rhythm). This style takes a great deal of skill on the part of a piper, and attention on the part of a listener.



**Red Cardell. Falling in Love.**

Keltia Musique RSCD 546 M301 ([www.redcardell.com](http://www.redcardell.com))

This new CD includes 13 titles by this well-loved band which has been on the Breton scene for 20 years. Despite some changes in make-up

of the group, it maintains its rock beat. Singers Jean-Pierre Riou and Manu Masko are at the heart of the band which is joined for this CD by the Bagad Kemper. A highlight of the CD is a bluesy interpretation of the traditional gwerz “Ar Sorserez.”



**Rok – 1964/1989**

This CD brings together rock bands active in Brittany from 1964 to 1989. Groups included are: Les Atlas, Les Inutiles, Les Strollers, Les Vénètes, les Gaelic, Les Jerrys, Zig Zag, JLC-35 BZH, Storlok, Salaun ar Foll,

Nicolas Cruel, Cambouis, Frakture, Marquis de Sade, Mickeynstein, Ticket, Les Nus, UV Jets Boys, End of Data, Splashh, Josevilor et ses Royals Cones, Franz Kultur et les Kramés, Les Collabos, Wart, Kalashnikov, Animatorz, Coyote Pass, Les Shtauss, and Hot Bugs.



**Stelenko. Kan ha Swing.**

This young band won the Kan ar Bobl contest in 2011 and here they offer 13 selections of music for traditional Breton dances with a bit of “musette” and a flavor of jazz. Dances include a gavotte

suite, waltz, rond de Loudia, scottish, riquegnée, rond de Saint Vincent, cocihchine and hanter-dro.



**Strollad. Yec'hed mat.**

This new CD includes 12 songs and instrumental pieces by a well-loved rock band which originated in the Vendée.



**Zebra et Bagad Karaez.**

Zebra is a DJ well known in France and the Bagad Karaez is a bagad with the mix of bagpipes, bombards and percussion typical of this ensemble found in Brittany. Zebra’s songs are in French and

they are not intended to have any roots in Breton tradition – this is a rock band. But, with the addition of the unique sound of a bagad, how could this not have a Breton flavor. Some of the titles on the CD include: “Space Breizh,” “Funk sur mer,” Celtic suckers,” Zebreizh,” and “Gone with the Wind.”



**[Zõn]. [Zõn].** Klam Records. KR 03.

At the heart of this group is the fresh young voice of Faustine Audebert with traditional ballads of Brittany As a graduate from the Kreiz Breizh Akademi, one can

expect that she would respect the traditional spirit of a song but give the performance an interesting twist. She is joined by Grégoire Hennebelle on fiddle and Youenn Paranthoën on button accordion. This CD received a strong review in Brittany.

**And two new books on Music in Brittany ...**

**Robert Le Gall. La Gallésie en fête: Monterfil.** Editions Au Carrefour de la Gallésie.

Since 1976 the Monterfil festival has been held on the last weekend of June to showcase instrumental and vocal traditions of Gallo Brittany. To celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this festival which also includes food and drink, games and activities for children, this book of 129 photographs has been published. It captures well the music and dance as well as the feasting and roast pig which is a highlight of this festival (and many Breton festivals).

**Gilbert Cariou. L'Épopée du rock au pays bigouden.** SEB Editions. 160 pages.

Brittany has fostered music of all styles and this book celebrates the explosion of rock and roll in the 1960s and 70s in the far southwestern corner of Brittany – the Pays Bigouden. Local bands flourishing at this period as well as some of the night clubs that hosted them are presented in anecdotes, photos, and documents of the times.

**Travels in Brittany in 1870**

**“Life in Brittany: II – Breton Peasants – Their Traditions and Customs”** Harper’s New Monthly Magazine Vol. 42, No. 247, December 1870.

The following is an excerpt from observations by G.M. Towle on the Breton peasantry in the 1800s. To put this writer in the context of his times, just a bit, Wikipedia gives the following background about George Makepeace Towle (1841-1893):

*Towle graduated in arts from Yale University in 1861 and in law from the Harvard Law School in 1863, and practiced in Boston in 1863–65. He was United States consul at Nantes, France, in 1866–68, and in the latter year was transferred to the consulate at Bradford, England, where he remained until his return to Boston in 1870. One of his many prominent friends was Charles Dickens, to whose periodical, "All the Year Round", he contributed several articles on American affairs.*

*Towle became president of the Papyrus club in 1880, and was a delegate to the Republican national convention at Chicago in 1888. He was managing editor of the Boston "Commercial Bulletin" in 1870–71,*

and foreign editor of the "Boston Post" in 1871–76, and became a contributor to many foreign and American periodicals and took an active part in the literary life publishing over 50 books and articles and giving public lectures on topics of the day.

In early 1873 Towle started collaborating with the American publisher James R. Osgood on translations of Verne [who was from Nantes]. He continued to translate the Verne novels until the bankruptcy of the firm in 1876. The translations are of a uniformly high quality.

On September 16, 1866 in Paris, Towle married Nellie Lane of Boston, who survived him. Towle died in Brookline after a long illness culminating in paralysis of the brain, and was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery. He had no children.

In the issue of Harper's New Monthly Magazine where this article is printed, no author is cited. But, G. M. Towle is noted in the Harper's index as the author. Given his stint in Nantes and then in England (from which many tourists traveled to Brittany in this period of time), it would have been easy for Towle to do a little traveling and write the article which follows here. As you will read he had a low opinion of the Breton peasantry and the "customs and traditions" he describes. While he notes that the Breton language is spoken by the peasants he encounters, he also notes that they walk through vineyards and wine is the common drink – which would be the case in the regions surrounding Nantes. Where in Brittany did this author travel to glean his observations? One can only wonder how much time he actually spent among the peasants he seems to despise!

## Life in Brittany

One who has long lived in Paris, on going into Brittany, finds himself in the midst of a strange language. Should a Welsh rustic, however, find his way there, he would find that he had more than "half a notion" of the Breton tongue. Old Welsh and old Breton are alike modifications of old Celtic. One who travels, first in rural Wales and then in rural Brittany, will find a likeness in not a few of the habits of the two communities, and even in their physique. In passing through a crooked-streeted, thatch-roofed, musty-looking old Breton village, one observes, first of all, the women; what a tough, hardy, baked look they have, and the quaint costumes with which they adorn themselves! They are as brown and brawny as the Welsh farmer's lass; not so brisk, however. Their faces are too often blank expanses of rugged flesh. The expression is essentially animal, hardly a spark of human intelligence lighting them, not even, alas! when they smile. If you, perchance, have a smattering of the

Breton patois, and talk to them, you will find that, beyond their immediate work, their excessive superstition, and their blind reverence for the priest, they know absolutely nothing.

It is recorded in the histories how Brittany, now the most Catholic of the French provinces, was the last to submit to the domination of the Merovingians, and also to that of Roman Christianity. It held to Druidism to the bitter end. When once Catholic, however, it stuck to Catholicism with the same stout vigor. The most Catholic, it is far the most ignorant of French provinces. The ignorance of common people almost passes credence. Many have never heard of Paris. One village oracle whom I met, a revered man of vast and varied learning, opined that America was an English colony; and thought I could not possibly be an American, as my skin was white and my hair straight. There are whole villages where they think France to be the world; and you might put the question, whether France were an empire or a republic, to the whole population, and there would be no answer; unless one, alarmingly inquisitive, should ask, What is an empire?

The women are short, thick, sinewy, with dusty brown hair, which is thin and ill dressed; broad faces, with high cheek-bones, dark, almost leather-like skins, large feet and hands, short muscular limbs, superior, if anything, to the men in strength. It may be that nature has thus provided them for good reasons, for they perform masculine labor quite as much as do the men themselves. Travelling through Brittany, you see as many women as men plowing, digging, sowing, and reaping in the fields.

The dress of the female peasant is quaint and tasteful. They have pinafores, which are of various and brilliant colors, reaching from the waist half-way to the neck, whence to the neck is a snow-white frill. Their dresses are not made with narrow waists; indeed, to look at them, you would imagine their bodies to be built square. Chains of silver, of curious workmanship, extend from their pinafore in front to the shoulder; sometimes are hung about the neck. These are, however, only displayed on Sundays, when they go to church, and walk with their husbands and children through the vineyards and along the shrub-bordered roads. Their feet are deformed by huge wooden shoes, turned up at the end, in Turkish fashion, and are woefully clumsy; but as they cost but ten sous a pair, and wear ten years, they are fain to temper themselves to them. How sharply does the clattering of these sabots over the rough village street break in on the prevailing majesty of rustic stillness!

The smallest female children are dressed much like the adult women. They have, like the latter, long white caps, extending horizontally back from the head,

waistless long dresses, pinafore and bib, uncouth sabots; and they look like little old women, in a race of pygmies, stopping short, full-grown, in infancy. The training of the Breton peasant children is so curious an art that we must dwell upon it before passing on to their sires.

Schooling is seldom or never thought of. They are inured to the hard realities of life from toddling infancy. There are many traditions and customs regarding children which have come down from times which were long before Capet or Bourbon reigned. At the birth of a child, not only the husband, but all the relatives and near neighbors of the parents, are present; these remain outside the door until the birth, and are then admitted en masse. They busy themselves in performing such services as the situation may require. One presents the mother, according to immemorial tradition, a glass of warm wine. A voluble dame, erudite in long-practiced family history, gives a long account of kindred scenes at which she has assisted – little heeded, because often heard. Another waits upon the husband, which is usually in a state of happy inebriety, and prevail upon him to make his toilet; a fourth takes vicarious charge of the newly born babe for the while.

The superstitious peasant is in great haste to have the baptism over; it takes place in the village church by the curé, in the presence of a few intimate friends, and invariably in the morning. Were noon passed, and the baptism not over, there would be a shadow on the child's life ever after. Following the ceremony is the christening feast, at the father's behest and expense. A lusty meal this, of cabbage and fish and sour bread, and wine which unhabituated mortals might call vinegar. To drink unto drunkenness is the inflexible rule at the christening feast; a man is no man who fails in it. The women, however, stop before the reasonable stage of hilarity is exceeded, and depart to provide resting-places for their lords, who are apt to spend the ensuing night prone on the floor.

Superstition in these parts has, it seems, no terrors for the man who makes himself a beast. In these orgies the baby is, of course, the hero, or heroine; he is handed from one to the other in his swaddling-clothes, and receives, if not the tenderest, at least the most affectionate, treatment from the inebriate guests. The feast is held at one of the little village cabarets; water is strictly and severely forbidden; forks are banished; the guests must eat with spoons. It is the traditional custom to commence the repast in profound silence; and the feaster may only break into articulate merriment when the red wine, which from the second potable course, circles around and fires up the thick peasant brains.

The poor baby, whose entrance upon worldly sorrows and joys is thus inaugurated, begins life in a most uncomfortable manner by being wrapped tightly in coarse clothes, and bound with stout hands crossing each other in all directions, thus being made up into a compact bundle, its head only protruding. Thus it is laid in the cradle and borne about on its mother's back for months altogether. A Breton superstition referring to infants is, that if they are ever passed over a table, from one person to another, it is a sign of certain misfortune. The weaning, among the peasants, is long post-poned; some infants are not weaned till their fourth year. Almost as soon as they can walk, however, they are put into the fields to work, performing such slighter labor as their strength permits. If you go abroad into the fields at harvest-time, you will see groups of little children under the trees playing, or perhaps assisting in the work and young women carrying the infants about in their arms. At that season, when the parents go forth a-harvesting, all the family goes with them, and the mid-day meal is partaken in common under the trees and alongside the brooks.

The Bretons are a prolific race; hardly a family but has half a dozen children, some fifteen or twenty. But these, far from being burdensome to their parents, are often their best practical treasures. I have seen a boy of three tending a herd of cattle, turning them out to graze in a distant field in the morning; going to fetch them at nightfall; penning them into the cow-yard, and giving them their evening fodder; then securing them under the farm-sheds for the night. This kind of labor is represented to the child as a trust and privilege, as something which he must feel proud and honored to do. The little fellows are then anxious to begin and perform the tasks with a pride and relish very amusing to see. In fact, the promise that he shall tend the herd assumes the shape of a reward, and as a bribe to persuade him to be weaned. Armed with a long pole or switch in one hand, and a crisp buckwheat biscuit in the other, the little fellow struts out and shouts shrilly at the beasts, with all the importance of one to whom a new and great trust has been confided. He wears a long coarse gown reaching nearly to his feet, the toes peeping out from the thick stockings with which they are enveloped, while on his head is one of his father's old hats.

One of the peasant customs with regard to their children is unpleasant to name, but affords a striking illustration of the degradation in which they live. When a boy reaches his seventh or eighth year, it is the ancient custom to make him drink to intoxication. It occurs on a festal occasion, to which the relatives or friends are patriarch is present, and receives the fiery white wine from his father's hands, mother and friends looking approvingly on. The boy drinks heartily, thinking and encouraged to think it manly, and soon

becomes crazily uproarious. This is his first lesson in drunkenness; he is expected to follow it up for the rest of his life, his future instruction being confided to his own judgment.

“Evit buhen!” (drink quick!) is the exhortation of the company; and he needs no further prompting. He is narrowly watched; for the peasants say that man in liquor betrays himself, and thus they judge of his character according to his actions while intoxicated. If he be hilarious and playful, well; if savage and morose, not so well. This is the boy’s inauguration into the pleasures of the peasant life. Henceforth he joins in all the fêtes and merry-makings. It is not wonderful that the prevailing vice of the Breton peasantry is drunkenness. It is a thing, both with the men and with the women, rather to be applauded than rebuked. The physical ill effects of the universal habit are, indeed, to some degree counteracted by the necessity under which they live, to work hard and constantly. Their toughness of constitution, their hardy peasant blood, the early age at which they begin to labor, render the effects of their orgies less obtrusive. The penchant for drink is universal. Infants drink; old men drink until their rough and withered throats are paralyzed in death. The cause is not obscure. Privation produces excess. The peasant has but few joys. He works hard; he must enjoy his leisure moments. This one bad luxury, drink, is his. Wine is cheap; most peasants make it themselves. It is within the reach of all.

When, after sundown, they have at last laid down their implements of toil, the first thing thought of is the cabaret, and the warm wine waiting there. Fêtes and church holy-days are an excuse for a day’s drunkenness instead of the evening’s. Besides the ordinary wine of the country, they have cider and perry, and eau-de-vie, simply made, yet very strong. Add to this the universal joy of the poor man – the pipe – and you have the sum of happiness for the Breton peasant.

Dancing is another very favorite amusement; it is not less so to the looker-on observing this pastime. They dance as if their life depended on their nearly shaking it out of them, swinging their arms about, their hair all over their faces, the perspiration covering their foreheads, and their great wooden shoes clattering loudly upon the stone floors. All their amusements, as all their thoughts, are traditional. They got both from their parents; they transmit both to their children. They look upon all innovation both with fear and with contempt. No inventions ever reach them. They spin with the old wheels, draw water with the old buckets from the old wells, work with the old hoes and rakes, wear the old garments, live in the old mud and beamed huts, drink the old beverages, dance the old dances, and cling with superstitious ardor to the old religion. In their curates and their notaries they have confiding

trust; those two have all the learning necessary to soul and body, and beyond them they respect no man.

They are parsimonious. They save carefully their trifling earnings, and it is very hard with them to lose a jot of what they save. Even in their moments of “jollity,” when most men relax the avaricious in their natures, these peasants keep a sober-lookout on their pockets. The only symptom of generosity is their almost universal sympathy with the very poor, and their contributions to the Church. To the very poor they are seldom inhospitable; the wandering beggar, if he but reaches a village, is seldom in want of a place to lie in, and a morsel of homely food to eat. Take the peasant in his sober moments, interrupt him while working in the fields, and engage him to talk, and you will find him serious, even disposed to melancholy. Offend him, and you will find him fierce, savage, brutal. The quarrels of the peasants are often terrific, and result in tragedies. On the other hand, you find him resigned to his sphere and his state, patient under disappointment, and never despairing. Rosseau has said, wisely, that “the first law of resignation comes to us from nature.” The peasant of Brittany is perhaps as near to nature as any human being to be found in the civilized parts of the world. The peasant is not wanting in rude courage; he will not seek danger; but in danger thrust upon him he is intrepid and pertinacious in dealing with the exigency.

He rises at dawn, and hastily eats his breakfast immediately after dressing. The meal consists of hard, sour bread, made in great fat loaves, two or three feet long, and fish-shaped; cabbage soup, of which the peasants are very fond; hard cakes of buckwheat (which is only used as food by the peasants, and, being considered plebian, is never to be found on the table of Breton gentlemen); some white wine; and once in a while a preserved sardine or salt fish. At noon one of his children brings him a homely lunch of much the same sort; and he eats his third meal at sundown, when his work is over for the day. Much can not be said in praise of the cleanliness of the Breton peasantry; they use cold water once in several weeks. But the women are less slovenly than the men; for they take great pride in dressing themselves after the traditional fashion of their locality, and appear, on Sundays, very neat and gorgeous.

... *The author goes on to describe marriage arrangements and weddings, but that will need to wait until a future issue of Bro Nevez.*



## **An Introduction to the U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)**

The Breton language is spoken by an estimated 220,000 people in Brittany, but it is threatened with extinction as older speakers are not replaced by younger ones. The Breton language is no longer forbidden in schools or totally hidden from public view, but France continues to withhold the resources necessary for its development as a healthy living language, despite demands from an ever widening Breton population for its support and growth in the schools, media, and public life.

### **Who are the Members of the ICDBL?**

Some U.S. ICDBL members are of Breton heritage, but the U.S. ICDBL is intended to be a group of “anyone and everyone” showing support for the Breton language rather than an organization for Breton-Americans like so many other “ethnic” organizations in the U.S. We do have quite a few members with Irish, Scottish or Welsh heritage, so there is a strong inter-Celtic element to our work. Most of our members speak neither Breton nor French and most have never been to Brittany. But we all have some reason to help fight for the survival of the Breton language.

### **What the does the U.S. ICDBL do?**

With Members of the U.S. ICDBL dispersed in 35 of the 51 States of the U.S.--from Maine to Florida, from Alaska to California, and lots of states in between—we do not hold meetings or have the ability to carry out many projects as a group.

### **Quarterly Newsletter for Members and Subscribers**

Our central activity is the publication of a quarterly newsletter called **Bro Nevez** (“new country” in the Breton language). It’s not slick and glossy, but includes 20 pages of current information about what is going on in Brittany related to the Breton language, and short articles on a range of topics, from music and dance, to sports, travel, the economy, or history. In November 2006 we published our 100<sup>th</sup> issue.

In the 3,000+ pages of **Bro Nevez** produced so far, over 800 books from Brittany have been reviewed or noted, and over 300 Breton music recordings have been reviewed and an additional 700 new releases briefly described.

### **The U.S. ICDBL Web Site: [www.icdbl.org](http://www.icdbl.org)**

On our website we have published a guide to Breton music (updated in 2006), a guide to learning materials for the Breton language, an introduction to and map of

the Celtic languages, a presentation of the Diwan Breton language immersion schools, and two documents presenting the Breton language and why it is endangered and what is being done about it. Bretons themselves have created many great websites to present their country and its culture, and we provide links to a large number of excellent and reliable sites created by Bretons themselves.

### **Other Action**

We assist people from the U.S. and all over the world with requests for information about the Breton language and culture. We have had an annual information booth at the Potomac Celtic Festival (Washington, D.C. area) since 1994. ICDBL Members throughout the U.S. have been ambassadors for the cause of the Breton language by distributing information at Celtic cultural events and music festivals or concerts, and by simply discussing their concerns with friends and acquaintances.

More direct support for the Breton language ...

The U.S. ICDBL has supported Diwan—Breton language immersion schools-- for over ten years with a small contribution from our Members. We have maintained a personal link with the children of one particular Diwan school—Skol Diwan Landerne—since 1992 when Lois Kuter, the U.S. ICDBL Secretary, was invited to become the school’s “godmother.”

As is the case for all branches of the ICDBL, our support of the Breton language is mostly symbolic—the fact that outsiders care at all offers encouragement to people in Brittany who are working to sustain the Breton language and find new and creative ways to use it. And we know that this has been noticed and much appreciated in Brittany.

### **PLEASE JOIN US. YOUR SUPPORT SHOWS THE PEOPLE OF BRITTANY THAT THEIR LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT TO THE WORLD**

A yearly membership (including subscription to our newsletter) is just \$20. If you would simply like to subscribe to our newsletter, without becoming a Member, that is also \$20. Make out a check to “**U.S. ICDBL**” and mail it to the address below.

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