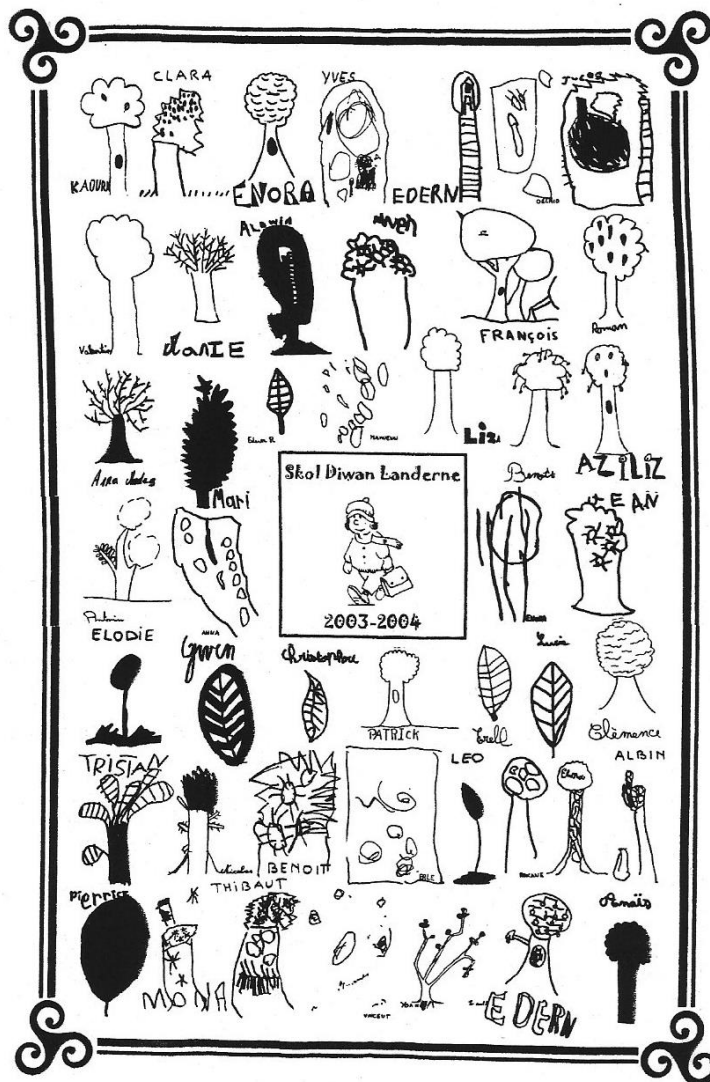


# BRO NEVEZ

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



KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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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. Dues and contributions can also be sent electronically via the U.S. ICDBL web site – see below

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

The **Canadian Branch of the ICDBL** was relaunched January 1998. For information about the Canadian ICDBL contact: Jeffrey D. O'Neill, 1111 Broadview Ave. #205, Toronto, Ontario, M4K 2S4, CANADA (e-mail: jdkoneill@sympatico.ca). Telephone: (416) 422-0748.

**U.S. ICDBL website: [www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm](http://www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm)**

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**ON THE COVER:** On the cover of this issue you will find a much reduced in size version of a "towel" with drawings of trees, plants and leaves done by the children of Skol Diwan Landerne - the Diwan school of Landerneau. We have actively supported the Diwan schools for the past 20 years, but have maintained a special relationship with the Landerneau school since 1992 when I was asked to be a "godmother." This year Skol Diwan Landerne has put a special focus on environmental themes, studying forests and water.

## THANK YOU to U.S. ICDBL Supporters

The U.S. ICDBL was founded in 1981 as a branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language, based in Brussels, Belgium, which has representatives in over two dozen countries. We are unique as a membership organization (incorporated as a non-profit) with a regular newsletter. While we have new people who join us each year, and others who must leave as priorities for their time and support change, the U.S. ICDBL has always had a very solid group of long-time members. As the instigator for the U.S. Branch, I would like to thank the following U.S. ICDBL Members on the page which follows for recognizing the importance of our role in lending support to people in Brittany who are working to keep the Breton language and culture vibrant and alive. And we welcome those who have newly joined for their equally important support.

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# The Criminalization of Breton Identity and Culture

Lois Kuter

Imagine this scenario. Dawn is breaking and you are just out of bed, having breakfast with your wife or husband, maybe even getting the kids ready for school. Hooded and armed police invade your home, turn it upside down and haul you, your computer, and piles of papers from your desk, away with them. You are taken some 50 or so miles to your state capital and held in jail. Then you are transferred to Washington D.C. to a prison where you sleep on the floor in a crowded cell with roaches and hardened criminals. After being held for four days and appearing before a judge who is an expert on terrorist cases, you are released, but not necessarily in the clear of police suspicions that you are part of a support ring for Irish terrorists. You have done nothing more than helped organize an inter-Celtic festival and you serve on a twin-city committee (your home town has a twin city in Ireland).

Would you sleep soundly at night after that? Would you wonder if your neighbors who dance in an Irish dance group and travel to Ireland regularly might be arrested any day now? Would you miss your computer? Would you be angry that your fine reputation as an upstanding citizen was sullied.

## "Terrorists" in Guingamp

In November in the small town of Guingamp three Bretons lived such a scenario and three others lived a shorter, but equally frightening and humiliating scenario.

In November commandos of a special anti-terrorist police force made a dawn raid on five homes in Guingamp and a follow-up arrest the next day of a sixth individual. The sweep of suspected terrorists included a member of the town council, people active on the twin city committee for Guingamp/Shannon, the organizer of the large Saint-Loup dance festival. Homes were searched and two computers seized. The crime? Supposed participation in a support ring for Irish members of the "True IRA" – a splinter group of the IRA opposed to a cease-fire. The location of a small cache of arms near Dieppe (Seine-Maritime) was linked to True IRA members in Ireland who were presumed to have contacts with the Bretons of Guingamp. Three of the six Bretons were released in a day or two, but three were transferred to Paris where they were brought before a special judge for terrorism affairs. There being no cause to hold them, they were liberated after four days.

Fellow citizens in Guingamp reacted immediately to the arrests by forming a support committee and there were daily demonstrations in the streets of Guingamp of 500 to 800 people who viewed the arrests as an attack on Guingamp and all those active in the Breton cultural movement. But it was not just citizens of Guingamp who were outraged by the arrests. It was clear to all in Brittany

than anyone active in any cultural activity of an inter-Celtic nature or in any of the nearly one hundred Breton-Irish twin city initiatives could see the police on their doorstep at dawn. Despite a constant rain, some 3 to 5,000 people demonstrated in Guingamp on November 22 to express indignation at the arrests which were seen as an attack on the Breton culture and a clear attempt to link Breton cultural activity with terrorism and violence.

Should Bretons be outraged? Absolutely.

## Breton Political Prisoners: Innocent Until Proven Guilty?

Imagine the following scenario. You are a member of a Breton political group that is very outspoken in its support of Breton autonomy or independence as the means to insure Brittany's cultural, economic and social future. You are arrested on suspected association with a radical Breton group called the Revolutionary Breton Army which has claimed some bombings and is suspected of being a part of one (not claimed) in which an innocent victim lost her life. You are arrested on suspicion of being associated with this bombing (which you deny). It has been over four years since you have been held "provisionally" in Paris pending a trial. Innocent until proven guilty? Imagine also that you have young children, and then imagine that you have a serious case of diabetes which is not treated properly while you are being held on suspicion. Imagine also that your father dies while you are being held on suspicion. You are escorted to the funeral under heavy (armed) guard in handcuffs and totally separated from the rest of the family attending the funeral – held in isolation and allowed no comfort in your mourning.

The following is my translation of a statement prepared by Pêr Loquet, the President of Skoazell Vreizh, and organization to support families of Breton political prisoners. This was written in October 2003 and briefly summarizes the state of six Breton prisoners who have lived the above scenarios.

### ***The ARB Trial will take place in March 2004***

*The trial of 11 Bretons under investigation in the ARB 1993/2000 case will take place from March 1 to 26, 2004. It will be presided by the Judge Alain Verleene. This case concerns some 40 bombings and attempted bombings attributed to the ARB (Armée Révolutionnaire Bretonne), of which some were claimed by that group. Among these bombings and attempts are those of Pornic, Rennes and Quévert committed in April 2000 [the MacDonald's restaurant bombing in which an innocent life was lost]*



*Of the 11 Bretons who will be judged in March 2004, 6 are still in "provisional" detention: Alain Solé (arrested October 1, 1999), Kristian Georgeault, Gaél Robin, Stefan Philippe, Paskal Laizé (arrested May 2, 2000) and Jérôme Bouthier (arrested September 25, 2001). These six prisoners deny any participation or complicity with the bombing in Quévert and the attempted bombing in Rennes.*

*During two hearings on September 12 and 16, following a demand for the release of five of the "provisional" detainees, the judges refused these releases with the argument that "the trial would take place in several weeks." But five and a half months will have gone by by the time of this hearing. March 2004 will represent four years and five months of "provisional" detention for Alain Solé, nearly four years for Kristian Georgeault, Gaél Roblin, Stefan Philippe, and Paskal Laizé, and two years and five months for Jérôme Bouthier. One almost scoffs even French laws.*

*Skoazell Vreizh, support committee for Breton political prisoners and their families, deems that nothing can justify that these six Breton political prisoners should be detained while awaiting their trial. Having not repeated any crime, having every obligation justifying a release under judicial controls, they must immediately be freed and returned to their families so that they can be with them in the months before the trial, as has been the case for others under examination in this case.*

From the web site of Skoazel Vreizh, an introduction to this organization (in it's original English but slightly edited for length):

## **Skoazell Vreizh / Breton Aid**

### **Committee for the aid to families of Breton political detainees**

History of Skoazell Vreizh : In 1969, following the repression against Breton militants by the French state, the need was felt to create an organization to aid imprisoned Bretons and their families. Thus was born **SKOAZELL VREIZH**. The first office was set up by Gwenc'hlan Le Scouezec, writer, Xavier Grall, journalist, and Yann Choucq, by then a law student.

Each time we are needed, Skoazell Vreizh intervenes. We have done so for many years, when the militants of the FLB (Brittany Liberation Front) and the ARB (Breton Revolutionary Army) were arrested and jailed – When members of Skol an Emsav (School of the Breton Movement) « *checks in Breton* » and of Stourm ar Brezhoneg (Fight for the Breton Language) « *Breton added to signs* » were prosecuted – When members of the MIB movement « *Militants de l'Insoumission Bretonne* » (French army Breton

absentees) were jailed – When the militants of the Nantes region were prosecuted for having protested against the shameful propaganda about the so-called « *Pays de Loire* », and more recently, from 1992 to 1996 – When the Breton militants were prosecuted for having sheltered or even having been suspected of having sheltered Basque militants.

The Role of Skoazell Vreizh: Our principal role is to aid the families of the accused, morally and financially, and also the accused themselves if needed, by helping them to find a lawyer when they are sent before court, by paying the honorarium of the lawyer chosen by the accused from the list of lawyers accredited by Skoazell Vreizh.

Our role doesn't stop there – When necessary, we intervene with the administration (tax issues), with banks (loan deferments) and also with international and humanitarian organizations ( ACAT, Amnesty International, Human Rights League... etc. ), with the elected representatives of Brittany, the Département General Councils, and with the Breton, French and international media in order to heighten public awareness of these matters, on behalf of those we support and defend.

Support for Skoazell Vreizh : Our actions oblige us to find money, lots of money! In this also, solidarity plays a part. The assistance committees are a great help to us, in organizing various events (Festoù Noz – Dinners – Raffles – Sales of various kinds...), in giving us the greatest part of the profits, in helping us alert the media and heighten public awareness of these events.

Most important for us at Skoazell Vreizh are the bank transfers or automatic payments by persons who are concerned for our humanitarian actions on behalf of the Breton militants and their families who are harassed because of their militancy, along with the timely aid given to us by others. This way our treasury is regularly supplied, so that we are able to meet our obligations, thanks to our reserves, when repression intensifies.

Thank you to all of you who help us, because to help us financially is to help the victims of repression in Brittany.

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## EDITORIAL

Lois Kuter

I know that the Editorial I write is often the first thing you see when you open the pages of *Bro Nevez*, but I wanted to follow up the article in the preceding pages. In our focus on the Breton language and culture, I have shied away from topics of a more political nature. This is in part because political solutions to challenges for Brittany – cultural, social or economic – must be the choice of Bretons themselves. The ICDBL is not a lobbying group to promote political action.

But it is important to recognize that it is not possible to remain aloof from politics in Brittany ("I just want to play my *bombarde*"), when the fate of Breton culture is so intrinsically linked to decisions of the French government which impact critical support and the content of basic institutions such as schools and media.

Actions of a political nature that Bretons choose to take to defend and promote their culture and unique identity are linked to a long and complex history.

Bretons have used mass demonstrations to show their discontent with the way France has governed Brittany, and they have used civil disobedience such as the refusal to pay television tax to protest the lack of Breton programming. They have also engaged in illegal acts – for instance the tarring of French-only road signs. And when legal petitions and protests or milder acts of "vandalism" have resulted in no changes, Bretons have also taken up more radical methods such as bombing buildings and statues felt to symbolize French oppression. Compared to other areas of Europe (Corsica, the Basque country, and Ireland) even the most "violent" acts of protest in Brittany have been remarkable in their efforts to avoid any human injuries. Bretons have, of course, also organized political parties to try to change things at the ballot box – with limited success.

What is the solution in Brittany's fight to maintain its languages (Breton and Gallo), culture, and identity? Can Bretons work within the political structure currently in place to make changes they want? Is more political autonomy (regional decision-making power) needed? Independence from France?

While Bretons need to work that out for themselves, it is important for friends of Brittany to be aware that efforts to associate the work of Breton cultural militants with the idea of "terrorism", or just plain bad French citizenship, seem to be growing. This is exemplified in the rejection by the Council of State of Diwan as a valid public school alternative because its

immersion method allows Breton to have a larger place than French. This is contrary to Article 2 of the French Constitution ("French is the language of the Republic"). The implication is that those putting their children in Diwan schools do not respect the French constitution. Diwan schools are branded as isolationist and anti-Republic – a far cry from their actual public nature and pedagogical approach which gives children perfect mastery of French.

And in November the arrests of Bretons in Guingamp for their alleged links to the Irish "True IRA" seemed a clear attempt on the part of the French terrorism police to link the act of promoting Breton culture to terroristic tendencies.

The case of eleven Bretons to be on trial for presumed links to bombings in Brittany (one of which resulted in a death) is more complex. The people of Brittany were horrified with the blast at the MacDonald's restaurant in 2000 that took the life of an innocent worker there, and this was denounced vehemently by all in Brittany (see *Bro Nevez* 74, May 2000). But many in Brittany are equally horrified that six Bretons who are *suspected* of a link to that (and other bombings) have remained in jail for up to four and a half years before a court trial has even been scheduled to decide guilt or innocence.

Of course, the U.S. has its own Guantanamo Bay prison camp where 650 terrorism suspects face years of detention before a trial. The U.S. views these prisoners as enemy combatants in our active war on al-Qaeda, the Taliban and affiliated terrorist groups. These prisoners are viewed as threats to our national security. You may agree that holding such suspected terrorists for an indefinite detention without trial must be done in the wake of 9/11, or you may wonder if human rights or international conventions are being violated.

It would appear that France feels that it, too, is in a state of war, and that those who promote Breton culture and identity or participate in a Breton political party are potential "terrorists" and a threat to France's security. Why is France waging a war on Breton culture? Why are Bretons being given the message that to be a good citizen of France they must give up all aspirations of celebrating their Breton heritage?

Note: The opinions expressed by any contributor to *Bro Nevez* are strictly their own and do not reflect ICDBL philosophy or policy. The U.S. ICDBL is a very diverse group of people whose views on national or world politics are equally diverse. We all agree, however, that the world is richer for its cultural diversity and that the Breton language and culture must be given the chance to survive.

# A "Fact Sheet" from Ofis ar Brezhoneg / The Office of the Breton Language

The following fact sheet was prepared in English by Ofis ar Brezhoneg and presents a useful summary of information about the Breton language.

The aim of the Office of the Breton Language is to identify action which needs to be taken to promote and develop the use of the Breton language throughout society and in the public sector. The Office was established in 1999 by the Breton Regional Council with the aid of the Culture Minister. Today it receives the support of every county in Brittany. The objective of the Office is to offer services to public bodies, private enterprise, associations and individuals that use or would like to use Breton. There are five departments within the Office, which employs eighteen people. The office is based in Carhaix, Rennes, Nantes and Plomeur. It is hoped that an additional base will be opened in Côtes d'Armor.

## An Uncertain Future for the Breton Language

- The Breton language is the only Celtic language with no legal status.
- It has been classified as a language in danger by UNESCO in its Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing (Stephen A. Wurm, Ian Heyard, UNESCO Publishing, 2001).
- Breton speaking declined throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of all the regional languages of France, Breton has resisted the least. The numbers of people that spoke Breton fell by 90% during the last century.
- In 1999 there were 263,850 Breton speakers in Brittany representing 8.5% of the population aged 18 and over (source INSEE).
- The Breton speaking population is an aging population. In 1999 three quarters of Breton speakers were more than 50 years old; over half were older than 65.
- The danger to the Breton language is greater still due to the decline in the transfer of the language within the family from one generation to another. Breton speaking parents ceased to speak Breton with their children during the 50s. Since the 80s most parents speak French with their children and Breton is hardly used within family relationships.

## Breton people support their language

- 92% of Bretons want the Breton language to survive compared to 76% in 1991 (poll carried out in November 2001 by TMO for the exhibition "Parlons du Breton")
- 82% of Bretons feel that the statement "Breton is our regional language" is relevant to them. The percentage is also high in Loire-Atlantique where 67% of the respondents felt the statement was relevant to them.

## Education: More children are learning Breton

- The principal tool for increasing the number of Breton speakers is the education system. In 2003, 8170 children are learning Breton in bilingual classes either in secular private schools, Catholic private schools or state schools.
- Although the percentage of children learning Breton is quite low (1% of the 810,000 children in Brittany) the impact of such classes has been very important in

particular in changing the derogatory opinion Breton people had of their own language.

- The number of children in bilingual classes has increased fivefold in a decade and is increasing by 10 to 15% each year.
- Adults are beginning to use the Breton language once again. In 2002 about 8000 adults were learning Breton either through evening classes, language courses or distance learning.

## Breton in the Public Sector

- Many projects are being implemented to nurture bilingualism in public life. The local authorities of Côtes d'Armor and Finistère have policies of bilingual road signs.
- Districts such as Landerneau, Lannion, Lorient, Plugaffan and Quimper have launched campaigns promoting the Breton language, including bilingual sign posting.
- A trend in bilingualisation can be seen in the business sector. The Breton language is no longer a 'stranger' to business. The language is now used in advertising and public relations including bilingual websites.

## Breton in the Media

- Many projects have been set up to provide material for young people through the publishing houses and the press.
- The Breton language publishing sector represents 10% of what is published in Brittany each year, i.e., 80-100 publications.
- Breton medium radio is problematic: 95% of Breton medium radio is available only in the west of Brittany. There is need for a radio station that covers the whole region.
- On France 3 Ouest, the public service TV channel, Breton can be heard and seen every day but for only 5 minutes of news and only in the west of the region. One 45 minute program, Red an Amzer, is broadcast once a week.
- TV Breizh, a private television channel, has widened the choice of programs by broadcasting 3 hours every day through the medium of Breton. TV Breizh is available throughout France, however by satellite only, a fact which has restricted access and its rating.



# BRETON IN THE SCHOOLS – ATTACKS CONTINUE

Lois Kuter

## DIWAN SCHOOLS PERSISTING

As reported in the last issue of Bro Nevez, Diwan leaders have been working to get assistance from the Regional Council of Brittany in view of financial problems stemming in large part from the French Council of State's refusal to allow Diwan into the public school system. An exceptional show of support for Diwan in a time of need by the Regional Council of Brittany would confirm that the regional government recognizes the important role Diwan plays in offering children a unique educational method that allows them to learn Breton as a working everyday language. But, it appears that The Regional Council, like the French government, really does not care if Diwan survives or not.

Here is a letter from the President of the Regional Council of Brittany, Josselin de Rohan, to Armelle Ar C'hozh, President of Unvaniezh ar Gelennerien Brezhoneg (Union of Breton Teachers). This is in response to her letter which asks him to reconsider financial aid to Diwan as a unique immersion education option that is different from the bilingual (semi-immersive) options in the public schools and in the private Catholic schools. Because immersive learning opportunities are not offered in the public school system, Diwan has chosen from the start in 1977 to offer its services to Breton families tuition free, operating as a public service. (My translation below is from a copy of Josselin de Rohan's letter printed in Kannadig 87, December 2003-January 2004, p. 24)

Region of Brittany  
President of the Regional Council

Rennes, 11 décembre 2003

Madame Armelle Ar C'hozh  
President, UGB  
11, hent Pennkêr Bloaz Viahn  
29120 Plouvez

Madame President,

I received your correspondence, dated last October 31, concerning the Diwan Association.

The Regional Council, which intends to promote the cultural identity of our region, devotes significant grants each year to the promotion of the Breton language:

11.3 million Euros have been dedicated to this since 1999 [an average of 2.26 million Euros each of five years].

Relative to the Diwan Association, the Region has always supported it in financing 100% of its cultural activities and in assisting the Diwan high school in Carhaix in the same way it assists other private high schools under contract.

So that Diwan does not find itself in a situation of court ordered redress, the Regional Council has accorded, in a completely exceptional case, an advance of its subvention for 2004 of 100,000 Euros with the following stipulations.

- That the directors engage in a negotiation with the national Minister of Education, Luc Ferry, with the goal of an integration into the public service on the basis of a bilingualism of equal scheduling [French and Breton used in equal amounts]. I have taken the step to push for a request for a meeting with the Minister.
- That in the absence of an accord, the association takes the choice to abolish from its Charter the principle of free tuition which is not compatible with the education statute under a contract of association.

Outside of these two requirements, no permanent solution exists for Diwan. The regional contribution cannot serve as a substitute for parents who have made an individual choice of education. If the Region would do this, it would introduce a serious breach of equality with other private establishments under contract, notably with Catholic education.

In these conditions, you need to consider well that the Regional Council has taken up all its responsibilities regarding Diwan.

That is the position, firm but open, that the Regional Council upholds on the future of Diwan.

I ask you to accept, Madame President, the expression of my distinguished salutations.

Josselin de Rohan  
President of the Regional Council of Brittany  
Hôtel de Région, 283 avenue du Général Patton  
BP 3166  
35031 Rennes Cedex



## Some Outraged Reaction

The following is reprinted with permission from the Euroalang website, and this sums up well the reaction to the suggestions by the Regional Council that Diwan “change or die.” Giving up its immersive pedagogy in order to get an “advance” from the Regional Council would mean Diwan becomes just another bilingual program. That’s not an option. Central to Diwan’s founding principles is its operation as a public (nondenominational) school open to all who want to enroll.

### **Diwan Breton-medium schools being held to ransom over public funding**

Douarnenez 12/12/03, by Yann Rivallain for Euroalang

An announcement made by the Regional Council of Brittany that it will give Diwan part of its subvention for 2004 under strict conditions, is causing major concerns to the Breton language school system.

According to a press release, the Regional Council will grant a ‘100 000 euros exceptional advance on its 2004 subvention if, in the general assembly, the association agrees to ask its administrators to enter talks with France’s Education Minister, Luc Ferry, in order to insert into the Education public service a bilingual pedagogy’. This would mean as many hours of teaching in French as in Breton.

Many fear that if it had to comply with this demand, the Diwan network, which was set up in 1977 to teach Breton through the immersion method, would cease to exist. The press release issued by the President of the Region, also indicated that ‘failure to reach an agreement [with the minister] would mean that Diwan will have to remove the principle of ‘free-for-all’ which is not compatible with its current contract of association’. From the outset, Diwan was set up as a public service, is non-denominational and free, unlike the Catholic schools which have a similar status to Diwan, but which apply small fees.

Interviewed by Euroalang, Patrick Hervé, Vice-President of Diwan said that: ‘Diwan was shocked to be asked to give up its two founding principles, the immersive pedagogy and free schooling. If we give up the immersion method to integrate into the national education system, we might as well call it the end, since bilingual classes already exist in the national education system. We defend the immersion method because we are convinced it is the only way to save Breton as a language of everyday communication.’

Scientific evaluation from across Europe (see the CILT Report link, for example) also provides evidence that the immersion method is the best way for children to become effective bilinguals. Moreover, Diwan does introduce French into the curriculum in the second year of primary school, considerably earlier than other regional or stateless language medium schools (e.g. in Wales).

Regarding charging tuition fees, the Vice-President admits that opinions on the issue are divided inside the organization, saying: ‘At our general assembly in April we will discuss the matter’.

It is not clear yet why the Regional Council is insisting that Diwan should start charging tuition fees after ten years of being free, other than an attempt to prevent Diwan from remaining a public service for Bretons and assimilating it to other schools under contract, such as the Catholic schools.

Euroalang tried to contact the President of the Regional Council to ask him why the Region had moved from a declared ‘desire to find a solution to accommodate the development of the teaching of Breton and respect for the French constitution’ to a request that Diwan gives up its teaching method. However, the head of communication at the Regional Council said that the only person who could comment on this was Mr Rohan, the President, who was not available at the time.

Diwan also expressed regret that the sum offered by the Regional Council is only an advance on next year’s subvention as opposed to a special subvention to help the difficulties caused to Diwan by the refusal of the Council of State to integrate it into the public education service. ‘It is also surprising that the region is expecting us to organise a meeting on such a short notice to decide on crucial matters such as giving up our teaching method.’

As it stands, the conditions set out for the cash advance are likely to apply to the regular 380, 000 euros a year granted by the Regional Council. This would indicate that Diwan would be left with no choice in the next few months but to renounce its principles or go fully private if it hopes to keep receiving regional funding.

Three months ahead of the regional elections, which will decide whether the current conservative majority keeps hold of the region, the announcement by the Presidency appears very ambiguous. To many observers, it looks as if the current team cannot afford to let Diwan face bankruptcy in the run-up to the elections without being held responsible for its lack of support. But by only offering conditional support based on a change in the

founding principles of Diwan, the Regional Council appears to give with one hand and take back with the other.

Meanwhile Diwan is determined to keep as much autonomy as possible before the elections and is intensifying its fundraising campaign, which has already generated 108 000 euros. (© eurolang)

## **BILINGUAL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS THREATENED**

At the middle school and high school levels of public schools in Brittany 346 students are enrolled in a bilingual program where students have 12-15 hours of teaching in Breton per week at the middle school level and 6-7 hours through the medium of Breton in high schools with some classes like history, geography, and music taught in Breton. In the Catholic middle schools some 156 students are enrolled in such a bilingual program (no high school students). But in both the public and Catholic private schools other students are able to also get exposure to Breton. In the 2002-03 school year 6,703 middle and high school students were studying some Breton this way (2% of the total middle and high school population). Over three-quarters of these students were taking "initiation" classes (an hour or two per week) or as an "option" (normally an hour a week scheduled during a lunch hour or after school). A much smaller number (a little over 1,000) took Breton as an option for their second or third language. Thus, there is a presence of Breton in the public and Catholic middle schools and high schools, but by no means a big presence. [statistics from the Mercator dossier: Breton—The Breton Language in Education in France – see below]

The option of taking any Breton in middle school or high school is certainly limited already, but in January a document from the Rectorat of Rennes disclosed the possibility that Breton classes would be closed in eight high schools and one middle school of Brittany in a step to economize. In the Côtes d'Armor students in four high schools in Guingamp, Paimpol, Tréguier and Saint-Brieuc will need to make a long commute to another high school if they want to continue Breton studies. In Ille-et-Vilaine, the Chateaubriand high school will no longer offer Breton nor will the Les Chalais middle school. In Morbihan three high schools in Redon, Hennebont and Lorient will lose classes. In Finistère news that Breton may disappear from the Kerneuzec high school in Quimperlé provoked a seven-day hunger strike on the part of young student.

Having fought for years to make Breton a viable option for students in schools of Brittany--where it is still

primarily an "extracurricular" activity offered during the lunch hour or after school--this setback to Breton at the high school level has infuriated Bretons who see it as another example of how the school system makes it as hard as possible for children to learn Breton. Adding a 20-25 mile commute for Breton classes to a student's load isn't going to make it easy for teens or their parents to pursue Breton studies. The closures are not yet set absolutely, so one hopes that hard fought-for classes will not be shut down, despite school's budget challenges.

## **AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL**

On another front, an attack on Breton education is noted with a severe cut-back in the number of teaching posts open to university students completing CAPES degrees in regional languages. In view of the very small number of teaching posts already open for such students who train to teach those languages at the secondary level, and in view of the fact that in all cases these students have a double course of studies so they are prepared to teach a second subject area, this cut-back is viewed as a sign that France has no intention of supporting languages like Breton, Basque, Catalan or Occitan in the schools.

## **GREAT BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BRETON IN THE SCHOOLS**

### **Breton – The Breton Language in Education in France, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. 2003.**

Prepared by Olier ar Mogn & Mercator Education, 1998, with updates by Davyth Hicks, 2003.. From the Mercator website: [www.mercator-education.org](http://www.mercator-education.org) (look in the section "Regional Dossiers")

It is not easy to find basic English-language material about the Breton language, but this is one source that can be relied upon for thoroughness and accuracy. Mercator-Education has produced a series of "regional dossiers" on over 20 languages of Europe intended to serve as a basic source of information that can be used by policy makers, researchers/students, teachers or journalists.

This report on Breton focuses on its place in the education system and offers an excellent introduction to the structure of French education for us outsiders. It includes up-to date statistics on Breton use in preschool through university, describing also teacher training and support for Breton language education (and the lack of support). For those who really want to go further, it includes a very complete list of institutions concerned with Breton language education in Brittany, as well as web sites for European

organizations where you can find good information on minority languages elsewhere in Europe.

I have seen no other publication that does such an excellent job of helping one understand the education system in France and the place of Breton language in it. The text I printed out is just 34 pages, but packed with helpful information.



## An All-Breton Road Map Now in Print

Ofis ar Brezhoneg has produced the first all-Breton road map available in the standard folded version you take in the car or as a colorful plastic poster. This is the result of seven years of work to study some 6,000 names of places on the map. Over 50 people served as research consultants and 300 Breton speakers were tapped for verification of names. Historical documents were also consulted, and 10,000 kilometers traversed in the research for this map.

For more information contact the following website:  
<http://ofis-bzh.org>

or : Ofis ar Brezhoneg  
8, bis strada Féliz Faure  
29270 Karaez-Plougêr  
02 98 99 30 14



## Breton lesson 2 / Kentel 2

By Natalie Novik

### Vocabulary

Geriadurig

|       |           |       |
|-------|-----------|-------|
| Deiz  | (deyz)    | day   |
| Noz   | (nos)     | night |
| Sizun | (see-zun) | week  |
| Miz   | (mis)     | month |
| Bloaz | (blo-ahz) | year  |

Many words in Breton come either from Latin or from French. In some cases, they might therefore be close to English words.

### Sounds

Distagadur

Breton is pronounced the way it is spelled. The spelling was unified during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to reflect as much as possible the main dialects of Breton. There are still

dialectal differences in the way Breton is pronounced, but in most cases people understand each other and can follow radio and television broadcasts without problem.

The sounds of Breton are quite similar to French when it comes to vowels (a, i, e, o, u pronounced like in French). However, there are short vowels (when not stressed) and long vowels: bloaz, where o is stretched a little bit more than the a. In one-syllable words, the vowel is also stretched and has a more nasal sound: in "mor" (sea), the o is closed like in moral, or like in more.

The consonants are pronounced more gutturally than in French, and include:

B  
CH (pronounced SH)  
C'H (pronounced like CH in LOCH)  
D (with the tip of the tongue on the top of your front teeth)  
F  
G (always pronounced like G in GUARD)  
H (slightly aspirated)  
K  
L  
M  
N  
P  
R (not at all like in French, more like in Italian, slightly rolled)  
S  
T (with the tip of your tongue on the top of your front teeth)  
V  
W  
Y  
Z.

No C, no Q, no X.

Y is a consonant, it is never pronounced AI or EE, but used with vowels: YEHED MAD (Yehet mat), to your health!

### Numbers

Niveriennou

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| Unan  | one   |
| Daou  | two   |
| Tri   | three |
| Pevar | four  |
| Pemp  | five  |

**To help memorization:** the "p" in Breton is a "k" in Irish and in Latin. So pevar is a distant relative of the word quarter, and pemp is related to words like quinquennial (every five years). We will find many other examples of this switch from k to p, which has led Breton and Welsh to be called "P" Celtic languages, as opposed to "K" Celtic languages like Scots and Irish Gaelic.



# Short Notes on New Publications in or about the Breton Language

Notes for the following were prepared based on information found in: Al Liamm, No. 340 (Here 2003); Ar Men, No. 137 (Nov.-Dec. 2003); Bremañ, No. 267 (Genver 2004); Bretagne Hebdo No. 81 (Nov. 12-18, 2003), No. 82 (Nov. 19-25, 2003), No. 84 (Dec. 3-9, 2003), No. 85 (Dec. 10-16, 2003) and No. 87 (Dec. 24-30, 2003), and from information e-mailed from the Ofis ar Brezhoneg.

**Fañh al Lay. Bilzig.** Skol Vreizh. 2003. 354 pp.  
This is the third edition of a novel by Fañh al Lay (1859-1937) first published in 1925 and then reedited in 1965. This novel is set at the eve of the French Revolution and its hero is an orphan named Bilzig. It evokes the area of Locquirec, the author's home town, and pulls upon memories of his childhood as the son of a fisherman. This reedition includes essays about this important Breton language work as well as Breton language literature on a wider level.

**Yann-Baol An Noalleg. Geriadur ar Jedoniezh.** Preder. 2003. 168 pp. ISBN 2-901 383-59-0.  
Preder Editions has been working since 1958 to create Breton language references for use by students for new topics where vocabulary has not been well developed in Breton. This Breton-French/French-Breton dictionary for mathematics includes some 4,400 terms used in four math manuals published by Preder for high school and first year university students.

**Paol ar Meur. Trefn-buzhug.** Skol Vreizh. 2003. 147 pp.  
This is a novel about a Breton living a miserable life in Paris who dreams of returning to Brittany.

**William Calin. Minority Languages and Modernism: Scots, Breton and Occitan, 1920-1990.** University of Toronto Press. 2003.  
This book compares the development of modern literature in Scotland, Brittany, and Occitanie with a look at some of the key players in the period of 1920 to the 1990s. The study focuses on poetry, novels and theater as the genres where new literature in Scottish Gaelic and Scots (Lallans), Occitan, and Breton were being developed. This study was written by an American professor of Romance Languages at the University of Florida (who is a U.S. ICDBL member).

**Yves Pascal Castel, Job an Irien & Bernard Tanguy. Saint-Yves en Finistère / Sant Erwan e Penn-ar-Bed.** Embanadurioù Minihi Levenez. 2003. 176 pp.  
2003 was the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Saint Yves, considered to be Brittany's patron saint. This book looks at his life and impact in Finistère.

**Yann Gerven. War un ton laou.** Skol Vreizh. 2003. 214 pp.  
This is a humorous but complicated novel about a man researching his family history, involving tracking down a song and those who might know it throughout Brittany.

The author plays with subtle dialect changes within the Breton language which might make it tough reading for beginning learners but fun for those who would appreciate the richness of expression in Breton.

**Angèle Jacq. Ma Langue au chat.** Editions du Palémon. 2003. 345 pp.  
This is a personal account of cultural, economic and linguistic changes in the period of and after World War II. This account focuses particularly on changes in the use of Breton in the post war period when parents who grew up in rural Breton-speaking households chose to bring their own children up in French – to help them get ahead in the world.

**Yann-Fañh Jacq. Tomm eo bet deomp.** Keit Vimp Beo. 2003.  
This is a novel about Bretons today and sometimes difficult relations between generations – with some understandings as well as misunderstandings and communication gaps.

**Jean-Paul Kermarrec. Silences des Femmes / Sioulderioù maouez.** Emgleo Brewiz. 2003. ISBN 2 911210-36-0.  
This is a bilingual French/Breton collection of poetry focused on women of all kinds. The poems, originally in French, were translated into Breton by Naig Rozmor and Bob Simon who definitely know their way around Breton verse as poets/writers themselves. The collection also includes illustrations by Sylvie Bozec.

**Mikael Madeg. Pemdez-dibemdez.** Emgleo Breiz. 2003 ISBN 2-911210-34-4.  
This is a collection of 14 short stories on a variety of themes both universal and uniquely Breton. It is the fifth collection of short stories by a prolific and fine writer who has also written novels and done extensive studies on Breton place names – especially of the coasts and countrysides of Leon in northwestern Brittany.

**Gilles Pouliquen & Lan Tangi. Bretagne des Hautes Terres.** Coop Breizh. 2003.  
This is a collection of black and white photographs of the people, places, and life of the Monts d'Arrée of central western Brittany, accompanied by texts by poet Lan Tangi in Breton, French and English. Both photographer and poet live in this part of Brittany and know its soul.



Jarl Priel. An Teigwern Pembroke. An Here/Al Liamm. 2003. 260 pp.  
First written in French (Les Trois-mâts errants, 1930) this novel was then written in Breton and published in 1949. Inspired by the tale of the ghost ship, the Flying Dutchman, this Breton version is now available again in a new edition.

Bianca Silvestri (translation Aline Gleoneg). Avel draezh. Al Lanv. 2003. 80 pp.  
A collection of short stories based on the author's experience as a grandmother with stories told to her in her childhood.

Jañ-Mari Skragn. Rimodellou 'kostez Huelgoad. Ar Skol Vrezoneg/Emgleo Brez. 2000. ISBN 2-906373-78-2.  
This is a retelling of 23 short tales – cautionary, humorous and fantastic – that were told by people in the region of Huelgoat (central western Brittany) at evening gatherings ("nozveziou") before the days of television and in times when radios were scarce and cinema too far away or too expensive. There are still quite a few occasions for storytelling in Brittany, an Jañ-Mari Skragn is a master.

Stumdi. E Brezhoneg pa gari! – Niv 2. Stumdi. 2003  
After two years of work, a second volume of the learning method for Breton is out on CD ROM for more advanced learners. It includes over an hour of video – a play including well know Breton language actors Bob Simon, Goulc'han Kervella, Marthe Vassallo and Manu Mehu. Learners are given 600 phrases to work on pronunciation and 500 interactive exercises for vocabulary and grammar. A dictionary (you can listen to) includes 2,500 words. This is a great resource for the many adult learners in Brittany.

## Available for Purchase: Breton-English / English-Breton Mini-Dictionary

David ar Rouz. Geriadurig / Mini-Dictionary: Brezhoneg-Saozneg / English-Breton. Yoran Embanner/Liligast. 2003. ISBN 2-914855-03-6.

This is a truly pocket sized dictionary (actual size below) which might look like a novelty item, but is in fact a very useful tool. We have purchased a number of these for sale to ICDBL members and Bro Nevez subscribers in the U.S. and Canada. Including postage, we are selling these at cost for \$6 (and hope to sell some at festivals at a higher price to raise some money for Diwan). If you would like to purchase a dictionary, make out a check to the "U.S. ICDBL" for \$6 and mail it to me at the address on the cover page of this newsletter. – Lois Kuter



## A FEW WEBSITES TO EXPLORE

[www.jacques@quat-cheminees.com](http://www.jacques@quat-cheminees.com)

The association called "Par les Chemins de Rencontre" was created in 1995 with the aim to study local tradition in the region around Auray, and this group has collected photos, inventoried historical sites in the area, studied place names, collected songs, and gotten people living in this area – old and young – involved in all of this. On this web site (still in progress) you can find out about the work of this group and the culture of the Auray region. And you can see some of the art work of Jacques Le Tallec, one of the founders of this organization.

[www.bertaeyn-galeizz.com](http://www.bertaeyn-galeizz.com)

This is the site for the organization Bertaeyn Galeizz which has been very active in supporting Gallo—Brittany's "other" language. Visit this site to learn about the linguistic uniqueness and richness of eastern Brittany.

[www.eurolang.org](http://www.eurolang.org)

This is the website for Eurolang, which is a European news agency for minority languages. Short articles on this site provide up-to-date news on politics, public policies and events that impact the languages of Europe – like Breton. It often has articles about Breton (like the one reprinted earlier in this issue of Diwan). I have had some difficulty logging onto the site, but be persistent. It's worth checking in for news on a regular basis.

# DEEP INSIDE A BRETON SKULL

## 1 - The prophecies of Merlin

Jean Pierre LE MAT

During the Middle Ages, the prophecies of Merlin spread all over Europe through the "History of the Kings of Britain", of Geoffrey of Monmouth. The book was published in England in 1136, and Geoffrey was said to have translated the prophecies from a Welsh original. Before him Sigebert, Abbot of Gemblours, who died in 1112, had also reported some of the prophecies. At the end of the twelfth century, John of Cornwall put Merlin prophecies in Latin verses. He was said to have found them written in Breton language.

The tradition was not created by the writers. At this time, it was deeply rooted in the Breton people. In 1188, Alanus de Insulis, "doctor universalis" of the Paris university tells a tasty story : "Pass through Brittany, and go by the places and crossroads, and maintain that Arthur, the king of Britain, is dead like all the others. You will serve the proof that it is true, according to the Merlin prophecy, that the death of Arthur must be questioned. If you can escape safe and sound, it will not be without being cursed and booed by the mob, but the biggest hazard is to be stoned to death".

It is difficult to believe that, long before Gutenberg, a book written in Latin and published far away, could have given birth to such a forceful tradition.

Anyway, during the European Middle-Ages, the Prophecies of Merlin were a kind of best-seller among the literate people. In 1315, when the king Robert Bruce of Scotland contacted the Welsh rebel Llewelyn, the Scot envisioned a pan-Celtic alliance as prophesied by Merlin. "*Albany will be angry; calling to her near neighbours to her, she shall give herself up entirely to bloodshed.*"

During the fourteenth century, King Henry III of England asked for the French crown basing his argument on the Prophecies.

A century later, during the trial of Joanne of Arc, the prophecies were one of the arguments in defence. "*Ascendet Virgo dorsum Arcitenentium (Sagittarii)*", i.e. "*The Virgin will ride on the back of the bowmen*".

The clerics were quite worried by the success of the prophecies. The monk Gildas, centuries before Geoffrey, considered that the prophet was inspired by Satan himself. Later on, William of Mamesbury agreed thoroughly. Girald of Cambria even gave a proof of the demonic origin of the prophecies and of the entire book of Geoffrey. He put the Bible on the breast of a poor man possessed by the devil, and the man was relieved. Then he put the "History of the kings of Britain", and the demons came back more furious than ever.

The bishop John of Salisbury asserted solemnly that the prophecies were false. Peter of Blois, Archdeacon of Bath, considered Merlin to be the Antichrist's prophet. In the end, the Council of Trent (1545 - 1563) declared that the prophecies of Merlin were wrong and even forbade their interpretation.

We have located the European impact of the prophecies; now let us see their link with Brittany. Merlin got visions of the future of the Celts when seeing a strange scene. It was a fight between a red dragon, which represents the Celts, and a white dragon which symbolises the foreigners. He had visions of the future until the end of the world, when "*the winds shall do battle together with a blast of ill-omen, making their din reverberate from one constellation to another*". How did the prophet describe the first Arthur?

*"The race that is oppressed shall prevail in the end, for it will resist the savagery of the invaders. The Boar of Cornwall shall bring relief from the invaders, for it will trample their necks beneath its feet.*

*The islands of the Ocean shall be given into the power of the Boar and it shall lord it over the forests of gaul.*

*The house of Romulus shall dread the Boar's savagery and the end of the Boar will be shrouded in mystery".*

Arthur is the "Boar of Cornwall". He is born in Tintagel, Cornwall ; His mother is the Cornish Ygernna. Arthur means "Big Boar" (in breton, "arzh" means boar). In Europe before the Crusades, the king of the animals was not the lion, but the boar.

And how did the prophet describe the return of the king ?

*"Cadwallader shall summon Conan and shall make an alliance with Albany. Then the foreigners shall be slaughtered and the rivers will run with blood.*

*The mountains of Armorica shall erupt and Armorica itself shall be crowned with Brutus diadem. Kambria shall be filled with joy, and the Cornish oaks shall flourish. The island shall be called by the name of Brutus and the title given to it by the foreigners shall be done away with.*

*From Conan there shall descend a fierce Boar, which will try the sharpness of its tusks in the forests of Gaul; for it will lop down all the larger oak-trees, taking care however to protect the smaller ones.*

*The Arabs shall dread this Boar and so shall the Africans, for the impetus of his onslaught will carry it into the remotest parts of Spain".*

Let us try to clarify this obscure language. Cadwallader is the last descendant of Arthur and the last Celtic king of Britain. Strangely enough, he is also a divinity of war in welsh mythology. Conan is the legendary founder of Brittany, and several dukes bore this name. Brutus is the legendary ancestor of the people of Britain, according the Geoffrey's version. The Brutus diadem is the crown of sovereignty over the Brittonic peoples.

How can the return of the king unfold according to the prophecies ? A warlord (Cadwallader) will visit a Breton chieftain (Conan) who will make alliance with the Scots. The war will burst in Brittany and the fate will be favourable to the Celts. The second Arthur will not be of Cornish, but of Breton extraction (*"From Conan there shall descend a fierce Boar..."*). He will carry on a pitiless but just war (*"it will lop down all the larger oak-trees, taking care however to protect the smaller ones."*).

Let us stop. A prophecy is only a legend. Even if it is pleasant to hear, we should not let it tame our spirit nor corrode our heart. It is only one of the threads that the Bretons have followed, generations after generations, to find their way in the labyrinth.

Fifteen centuries after Merlin, we have changed a lot. We don't dream of Arthur coming back. We speak of democracy, pluralism. We struggle for our old tongue. We want to see our black and white flag streaming among the coloured ribbons of the peoples of the world. We dream of...

Well, maybe we have not changed so much.

NOTE : Jean Pierre LE MAT lives in Dirinon, Brittany, and is the author of The Sons of the Ermine—A History of Brittany (An Clochán, 1996) and auther of the 8<sup>th</sup> reedition of Henri Poisson's Historie de Bretagne, to which he added a 100-page addition, Les Texans de l'Europe : 1960-1990 (Coop Breizh, 1993).



# Polig Monjarret

## (1920-2003)

### Brittany Loses a True Hero

It is impossible to summarize a life so rich in experiences as was that of Polig Monjarret, and this note is intended to give just an idea of this pioneer in the Breton cultural movement of the past 50 years. By force of his strong personality and determination to make the impossible happen, Polig Monjarret has had an impact on Breton culture that cannot be calculated. He had the ability to give people the tools they needed not only to understand and appreciate their heritage but to celebrate it and build a rich new one, rooted in Breton tradition and open to a world of inspiration.

Polig Monjarret was born in 1920 in Pabu, near Guingamp, and spent lots of time as a child with grandparents in a setting where Breton was the everyday language but French the language used to communicate with him. It was only later that he realized that he had been denied access to this language and thus to a full knowledge of his family. He was to learn also as a young man that France had eliminated Breton history as well from any formal education he would receive. A passion for scouting led in 1940 to a job with the Jeunesse et Sports in Mordelles, near Rennes, and in his free time Polig attended the Kelc'h Keltiek Roazhon (Celtic Circle of Rennes). It was at this period that he enrolled in Skol Ober, a correspondence course for the Breton language which continues today in its work to help thousands of Bretons learn or perfect Breton. And it was at this period that Polig met Dorig Le Voyer (1914-1987), a young musical instrument maker who taught him bombarde and biniou braz (Scottish style bagpipes imported to Brittany and adapted for playing in pair with the bombarde and for the bagad). Dorig had been a co-founder of Kenvreurezh ar Viniouerien (Brotherhood of Biniou Players) in Paris in 1932 and would work with Polig and a small group of Breton musicians to found the Bodadeg ar Sonerien in Brittany in 1943. A life-long friendship between Polig and Dorig was solidified by their marriage to two sisters who were themselves fine singers.

During the war years, intent on staying in Brittany and avoiding forced labor in Germany, Polig (and many other young men in France) falsified ID papers. But, he was arrested with Dorig Le Voyer by occupying Gestapo in Brittany and sent to Austria to work. In 1945, after 14 months of forced labor, Polig escaped and was able to get back to Paris where he was demobilized and returned to Brittany. There he was arrested because of past associations with Breton nationalists. He spent over four months in jail cells and an internment camp before his father was able to liberate him. Although Polig was not a political activist, and had done nothing more than promote Breton music and culture during the war period,

he was never ashamed to say that he was a "French citizen of Breton nationality – thus, Breton first."

In the post war period Polig took up his trade as upholsterer/interior designer, and settled in Carhaix. He was behind the formation of the first bagad to hit the streets: the Kevrenn SNCF Karaez in 1948 which was made up of railroad employees. This was to spark a wave of enthusiasm for this new ensemble patterned on the Scottish pipe bands which added bombardes to bagpipes and a drum section. During the 1940s and 50s Polig was very active collecting tunes from singers and older masters of the biniou koz and bombarde – resulting many years later in a published collection of over 4,000 tunes in two volumes: Tonioù Breizh-Izel (see references below). And in this work Polig was always mindful of the need for young Bretons to get a knowledge of traditions, ideally in a direct transmission from older masters.

Ever conscious of the need for a structure that would foster learning and leadership, Polig Monjarret was a cofounder of Kendalc'h in 1950 which was a federation of bagads, Celtic circles and other cultural organizations. But in 1955, discouraged by a lack of progress and exhausted by the work he had taken on for Kendalc'h, Polig drew back from the Breton cultural movement to work in Africa for a year before returning to Brittany to devote himself to his trade. But it did not take long before he was lured back to the forefront of the cultural movement and he became president of Bodadeg ar Sonerion (BAS) in 1960. He would serve as its president for 22 years and as general secretary for 18, and also was the editor for Ar Soner, the BAS magazine, for over 30 years.

You can be sure that Polig Monjarret was a part of BAS's organization of bagad contests for the annual Festival International des Cornemuses (International Festival of Bagpipes) held in Brest first in 1953. He was a strong backer for the launching of the Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient in 1971 which was a reinvention of the Brest festival, and which has featured the annual championship competition for bagadou of Brittany.

A long-time passion for Ireland led in 1971 to the creation by Polig of SPI – Secours Populaire Interceltique – which brought children from the violence of Northern Ireland for a stay in Brittany. Inspired by Ireland's music contest/festival, the Fleadh Cheoil, Polig was behind the creation of Brittany's version, the Kan ar Bobl, in 1973. With local contests to select finalists this festival continues today to foster traditional song and instrumental music as well as new ensembles of all kinds. Polig's passion for Ireland



was also behind the first twinning of cities between Brittany and Ireland, that of Lorient and Galway in 1974. Since then, over 100 cities and towns in Brittany and Ireland have been twinned and Polig was instrumental as the match-maker for many of these.

Polig Monjarret was also a strong supporter for the opening in 1981 of the "Conservatoire Régional de musique, chants, danses, et sports traditionnels de Bretagne" – a cultural center in Ploemeur (just outside of Lorient) which was operated by the cultural federation Amzer Nevez. Like Ti Kendalc'h, the cultural center for the federation Kendalc'h in Saint-Vincent-sur-Oust (near Redon), the Amzer Nevez center would host thousands of Breton music classes and workshops, meetings and concerts, theater performances and conferences over the years.

For his enormous role in fostering Breton music and culture, Polig Monjarret was inducted into Brittany's Order of the Ermine in 1988.

Over 1,000 people attended Polig Monjarret's funeral on December 11, 2003, at the church Notre-Dame de Larmor-Plage to wish him well on his journey to the "Baradoz ar sonerion," the Paradise for Pipers. This included many leaders in Brittany's cultural movement who had worked with Polig through the years on the many projects to support Breton music and culture that he helped to launch. And it also included young singers and musicians who recognized the tremendous impact he has had on their lives and the course of Breton music.

In interviews with him published over the years, Polig could be rather sharp-tongued about the things young musicians had failed to learn from older masters, or their neglect in learning more about Breton culture in a pursuit of technical virtuosity. But in interviews with him in recent years, it was very clear that he was proud of and very pleased with the high quality of Breton piping and the Breton music scene more widely, and of the youth of Brittany who are claiming their heritage.

There have been many Bretons who have literally devoted their lives to supporting and promoting Breton culture, but few have had such a strong impact on Brittany's future as Polig Monjarret.

Lois Kuter



Information for this note was taken from:

Yves Labbé, "Un pionnier du renouveau musical" Ar Men 53 (August 1993):45-57.

Christian Giraudon, "Polig Monjarret, l'art d'être irlandais" Ar Soner 369 (May/June/July 2003):16-17.

Christian Giraudon, "Polig Monjarret: "Il ne s'agit pas d'essayer mais de réussir" – Bretagne et

insoumission" Bretgne Hebdo 86 (Dec 17-23, 2003):6.

And many years of intermittent personal correspondence

### **Some works by Polig Monjarret:**

Polig Monjarret wrote hundreds of articles for Ar Soner, the magazine of the Bodadeg ar Sonerion. A series that stands out for me as particularly interesting was his portrait of Dorig Le Voyer which also had quite a bit to say about Polig Monjarret himself and the renaissance of piping in Brittany in the 1950s. This appeared as a three part interview with Polig: "**Polig Monjarret parle de Dorig Le Voyer (1914-1987)**" Ar Soner Nos. 299 (Dec 1987, pp. 16-20), 200 (Jan/Feb/March 1988, pp. 8-11) and 301 (April/May/June 1988, pp. 19-22).

**Polig an diaoul, souvenirs d'un chenapan trégerrois.** [Polig the devil, memoirs of a rascal from Tregor] Coop Breizh. 1997. 316.

An autobiography covering Polig's childhood and youth. A biography covering his work as an adult in post-war Brittany and the Breton movement of those very important years is yet to be written.

**Douze Contes pour Youna – Tad-kozh, raconte-moi une histoire.** Coop Breizh 1999. 236 pp.

This is a delightful collection of stories (in French) by Polig – versions of stories he told his granddaughter which are inspired from Breton tradition but also the world's classics in children's tales that he read as a boy. Each story has a little melody and song to go with it (composed by Polig), and there are wonderful illustrations by Erwan Seure Le Bihan for each story. A glossary at the end of the book explains the dozens of Breton language words and names for characters and places found in the stories.

For musicians:

**Toniou Breizh-lzel – Musique populaire de Basse-Bretagne / Folk Music of Western-Brittany.** Bodadeg ar Sonerion. 1984. 638 pp.

A massive collection of 2,365 tunes for Breton dances, marches, melodies and cantiques. This includes a 30-page introductory essay on Breton music and dance, maps detailing all the place names from which a tune was collected (which is really part of the "title" for any tune), and a list of hundreds of pipers, singers and other musicians from whom Polig collected tunes.

**Toniou Breizh-lzel 2 - Musique populaire de Basse-Bretagne / Folk Music of Western-Brittany.** Bodadeg ar Sonerion & Dastum. 2003.

Another 700 pages with over 2,000 more tunes collected in the 1940s and 50s by Polig. (see note in Bro Nevez 87, August 2003).

## Music from Brittany - Reviews of some new and older CDs

**Denez Prigent, Me'zal'ch ennon ur fulenn aour** (Rosebud PY 900, Distr. Polygram, 1997) and **Irvi** (Barclay-Universal 5436472, 2000).

Reviewed by Natalie Novik

One of the most beautiful voices in Brittany today, Denez Prigent comes from a pure tradition of "gwerz" and "kan ha diskan" a capella singing. He collects awards at the Kan ar Bobl music competition like others collect butterflies, because not only is he graced with an amazing tenor, but he has also learned to master his voice to the fullest, almost like an opera singer. He sings in Breton and composes his own songs in Breton (sometimes using traditional melodies to illustrate contemporary themes).

But the difference between, let's say, Yann Fanch Kemener and Denez Prigent is the latter's repertoire: a number of years ago he moved away from simply performing traditional music to incorporating rock and other ethnic musicians into his compositions. This makes the meat of two very interesting CD's:

**Me'zal'ch ennon ur fulenn aour** (I keep in me a golden sparkle) features 12 pieces, 11 of which have words composed by Denez. The golden sparkle is the title of a song dedicated to young prostitutes in the Philippines. sad and haunting, with original music by Denez. It is not the only song with a political or social message on this CD. Another one is dedicated to the Nyambuye massacre in Rwanda (An Iliz Ruz, the red church), and another one to female infanticide in India. Then there is Copsa Mica, sung together with Romanian singers, about industrial pollution in Romania. So what is the 12<sup>th</sup> piece not composed by Denez? It is one of the most ancient and most difficult pieces in the Breton repertoire: "Ar Ranou" (The Series), believed to be what is left to us of druidic teachings. The series are sung one

by one and then repeated until the last verse includes all twelve. Denez sings it very differently from anybody else who has tried it. He incorporates rock, changes rhythms, and gives it suspense and color. For non-Breton speakers, it is a hard song to follow, especially since the CD jacket plays with languages and sometimes gives you a French translation (and no Breton text for Ar Ranou), or no French translation at all, or just the translation of the title. Overall, though, the texts of the songs are a delight: Denez is a great poet, full of surprising images, and he plays with the sounds of Breton, with rhymes and rhythms till he has you completely surrounded. The instrumentation is also very imaginative, and not really what I would call rock, but rather a departure from tradition in a very creative way (not unlike other Breton groups today, but with its own character). Pipes and bombarde, harp and hurdy-gurdy are mixed and matched with the addition of synthetic sounds and exotic instruments like the zarb to create a rich sound palette. Since Denez is soloing beautifully over the instruments, it's rather like weaving a sound tapestry around his voice.

**Irvi** (low-tide causeways): the reason I got **Irvi** is that I was listening to APRN one evening, and suddenly heard Breton being sung. This caught my full attention, and the song was "Gortoz a ran" (I am waiting), and I could not figure out why APRN was playing it. Then the commentator came on the air and explained we had just listened to the music of the movie "Black Hawk Down". Now I was tickled pink, and did a little research. It turned out that the music gurus for the movie were mostly of Celtic stock, and so, somewhere, somehow, they had found this piece. If anybody knows how, I would really be interested. Anyway, like the previous CD, **Irvi** is a mixture of traditional melodies with words by Denez Prigent and original compositions like "Gortoz a ran". The latter is so typical of the Breton gwerz with its dignified and yet wrenching sadness you'd think you know the melody, and yet this is one he

wrote. Other pieces I enjoyed very much and have the same poetic quality are "Melezeriou-glav" (the rain mirrors), and "Daouzek huñvre" (twelve dreams). This last one has the same repetitions as the Series, but the text was written by Denez on the music of "Golvan". Denez sings it both in Breton and French. Once again, the jacket is not bilingual, some is translated into French, and some is not. And Denez does not always sing the whole song, but excerpts from it. "Ar chas ruz" (The red dogs), dedicated to the plight of the Tibetan people, is another poignant piece on this CD. The variety of instruments used all though this recording is greater than in Me'zal'ch ennon ur fulenn aour, and it features Davy Spillane on the uilleann pipes among others.

If you are learning Breton, these are great CD's to listen to, if you want to learn how to pronounce Breton. Denez Prigent learned the language with his grandmother, and while his diction is amazingly clear, his pronunciation is textbook Breton... His talent is to combine very traditional music and poetry with a contemporary interpretation which does not take anything away, but gives it a new dimension, enhanced by the beauty of his voice.



**E.V., Reuz \*** (Devastation). Créon Music. 2002.

Reviewed by Natalie Novik

This is a compilation of 20 plus years of Breton-Finnish rock. Yes, you read correctly: Finnish. E.V. was created in Nantes in 1981, and features not only Breton musicians, but also a Finnish singer, Andy Lyden. The group is famous for some of its calls to war like "War sav" (Rise!), included in this CD. The languages featured here are Breton, French and Finnish. Since I am not really fond of this kind of percussion-guitar-harsh singing type of music, I asked a young Finnish colleague to give me his rating of this CD. He liked very much some of the pieces, in particular the Finnish ones which are inspired by the "joike" singing of the Lapland reindeer herders. We both agreed that, since this

reflects 20 years of E.V., it shows that their style has remained rather unchanged over the years. I would add that this is good music for dancing since some of the pieces are very long, the last one, "Anne Mulle", going on for seven and some minutes.

\* Not to be confused with an earlier recording of the same name released in 1994.



**Maëlstrom. Maëlstrom Quartet.** Keltia Musique KMCD 142. 2003. 45'36

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Maëlstrom is an extraordinary string quartet composed of three violinists - Jean-Pierre Andrieux, Pierre Stephan and Laurent Dacquay - and a cellist, Thierry Moreau. These are not recent grads from a music conservatory who just happen to live in Brittany, but musicians who have been part of the Breton music scenes in groups such as Skeduz, Hastan, Hudel, Filifala, and Cabestan to name just a few collaborations.

They are clearly at ease with the type of tight interplay of strings that one finds in a classical string quartet, but this repertoire is of a quite different nature - new compositions and arrangements of music from very diverse traditions in eastern and western Europe. You will hear what you swear is the rich tone of a Hardanger fiddle in their interpretation of three Scandinavian waltzes. You also travel to eastern Europe with the arrangement of a composition by Pierre Stephan of Balkan inspiration. And one of the highlights on the CD is "Mr.Ivanov!" in which Leonardo Ivanov, a gadulka player living in Brittany, joins the quartet for a suite of Bulgarian dances. This is a wonderful blend of strings with the earthier toned gadulka, a pear-shaped fiddle with ancient roots in eastern Europe, backed by the "fiddles" and cello.

And then there's the other invited guest for the CD, singer Annie Ebrel, who sings in Breton a song from the repertoire of Hungarian singer Iren



Lovasz. While the melody of the song may be Moldavian, it has the same slow free-flowing form of a Breton gwerz, and the theme is one that is very common in the Breton tradition: death. Annie Ebrel is a master singer and the quartet accompaniment enhances this dramatic song and beautiful melody. (The full text in Breton and French translation is included in the notes to the CD).

While this CD takes you on a tour well beyond the borders of Brittany, compositions also pull from the Breton traditions with a *ronde de Loudéac* composed by Cédric Leroy ("La souris dans l'évier") leading off the CD, and a melody from Tregor ("Ur plac'h diwej ereujet") also included. And you also find an unusual arrangement of songs used in the old days at markets in the Vendée/Breton border region where employers would hook up with seasonal workers. That suite ("Les Maux de ventre") closes with a *ridée* composed by Breton accordion player Jannick Martin.

The Celtic traditions are not forgotten in this musical tour, with a composition ("Panlou") by cellist Thierry Moreau inspired by Irish and Scottish marches. One travels also to the south of France with a *bourée* followed by a traditional English tune from Lancashire ("Gradalvax") for a high energy finale to the CD.

Maëlstrom shows that it is not just a group that arranges traditional tunes in a new way, but it is an ensemble that is not afraid to tackle new compositions. "Absynthe" is a dissonant and complex work by Pierre Stephan with challenging plucked and bowed work evoking a somewhat sinister mood.

When you catch your breath at the end of this dazzling CD, don't jump up right away to turn off the CD player. If you hang on for a minute or two you get a very short but lovely little gadulka solo.

In tackling a variety of styles, sounds, and rhythms - jazzy, classical, plucked, bowed, slow melodies or lively dances - it is clear that these string players are masters of their instruments and masters of

quartet performances where each instrument meshes perfectly together. These are great musicians and this CD includes great performances of very interesting compositions and arrangements.

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**Orchestre de Bretagne with Loeiz Guillamot. Perig hag ar bleiz / Pierre et le loup, by Serge Prokofiev. L'OZ Production. L'OZ 43. 2003.**

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Who has not heard Sergei Prokofiev's (1891-1953) composition for children "Peter and the Wolf"? Composed in 1936, this work designed to introduce children to symphonic music has traveled the world and has been translated into dozens of languages. Now it is available in Breton (and also French) on this new CD. You begin with an introduction to the musical instruments which represent the various animals and characters in this dramatic tale about the capture of a wolf by young Peter. Peter (Perig) has the voice of the string section, the grandfather (an tad-kozh) is the bassoon, the bird (al lapous) a flute, the duck (ar c'hanig) an oboe, the cat (ar c'haz) a clarinet, the hunters (ar chasourien) percussion, and the wolf (ar bleiz) French horns. Without much narration it is easy to follow the action once you know who is who.

The performance here by the Orchestre de Bretagne is a fine one. This orchestra was created in 1984 at the initiative of the Regional Council of Brittany, the French Ministry of Culture, and the City of Rennes (where it is based) with support from the City of Brest and the departments of Finistère, Côtes d'Armor, Morbihan and Ile-et-Vilaine. Its conductor and musical director is Stefan Sanderling. The orchestra tours widely for performances and music festivals and has recorded over twenty CDs of symphonic music, 20<sup>th</sup> century compositions, French composers, and Breton composers such as Le Flem, Ropartz, Ladmirault and Didier Squiban's "Symphonie Bretagne." The guest



conductor for this performance was Scott Sandmeier who has often worked with the orchestra. Born in Los Angeles, he studied at Julliard as well as in France where he works with a number of orchestras. He also teaches both in the U.S. and Germany.

The narration of the story is very well done by Loeiz Guillamot who has done Breton language radio broadcasts for Radio France for some twenty years. He is a native speaker of Breton from Dineault in Finistère. The translation of the narrative text into Breton was done by Remi Derrien.

Wolves were once common throughout Europe - certainly in the Russia of Prokofiev where wolves still thrive - but also in places like Brittany where they were a terrifying presence for shepherds in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. As forests and habitats dwindled wolf-human interactions no doubt increased, and the popularity of the sport of hunting in Brittany meant certain doom for this creature. The wolf population dropped sharply in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and by the 1920s the wolf was gone from Brittany, and probably no tears were shed. However, the big bad wolf has a strong presence in folk tales and memory.

A very colorful 23-page booklet comes with the CD which includes the narration in both Breton and French as well as an introduction to the Orchestre de Bretagne, conductor Scott Sandmeier and narrator Loeiz Guillamot. The best part of the jacket notes are the abundant and wonderful illustrations of all the animals and action of this tale provided by schools which participated in a contest organized by L'OZ Productions and the newspaper Ouest-France. From a large number of entries, a selection was made of drawings by primary school children in bilingual programs of Saint-Michel of Rennes, Sainte-Anne of Ploudalmézeau, Saint-Gilles of Hennebont, Notre Dame of Redon, Saint-Thérèse of Vannes, and schools of Guérande and Questembert.

This is a wonderful gift for children learning Breton in schools of Brittany or for families that want to enjoy some memorable music and a good story.

Note: Bro Nevez subscriber Keith Jones from Manitoba, Canada, has pointed out to me that Prokofiev is said to have composed a substantial portion of his 3<sup>rd</sup> Piano Concerto during a summer holiday stay in Brittany in 1921.

Note 2: Some might find it interesting that a recording of a performance of Peter and the Wolf (and a composition by Beintus called "Wolf Tracks") by the Russian National Orchestra under the direction of Kent Nagano won the Grammy Award this year for "Best Spoken Word Album for Children." Some might find it even more interesting that the narrators for "Peter and the Wolf" were Bill Clinton, Mikhail Gorbachev and Sophia Loren (English/Russian/Italian??).

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Patrik Ewen, Gérard Delahaye, Melaine Favennec. Kan tri. Production Dylie DY 230-1. 2003. 47'38

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Patrik Ewen, Gérard Delahaye, and Melaine Favennec began their musical careers in Brittany in the 1970s and were part of a very interesting music cooperative called "Nevenoe," founded in 1973. This group of singers, musicians and poets took a militant stand against commercialism and "show business," producing their own recordings and expressing themselves as they wanted without concern for sales. They were not concerned about getting rich (and certainly had no fear of that happening), but their seriousness about their art and professionalism meant a success that was not measured in money. Although the cooperative disbanded in the early 1980s many of the exceptional talents in this group are still very active and prominent today on the Breton cultural scene. Besides Ewen, Delahaye and Favennec, the cooperative included the group Pilhaouerien, harpist

Kristen Nogues, poet Yvon Le Menn, singer Annkrist, and piper Jakez Pincet, one of Brittany's finest masters of Scottish style piping. And then there was the rock band Storlok which included the likes of Breton language singers Bernez Tangi (well known for his poetry), Denez Abernot (one of Diwan's first teachers), Mona Jaouen, and Bob Simon (whose niche has become theater). These are performers who do not pander to commercialism and who definitely speak their mind when it comes to texts. They are not angry fanatics but people who compose texts and music for all topics of life whether that be love or war, or anything between.

Some of the texts composed by Ewen, Desbordes and Favennec are sharp commentaries on human injustice, exploitation, corruption or greed - like the selection "Serafina Elf" on this CD which castigates Total Fina Elf for its role in putting profit above the prevention of "black tides" on Brittany's coastline. And the song "Le Soldat d'Algérie" which speaks to the madness of wars where "poor people are sent to fight other poor people." But, most of the songs these performers have composed and recorded on this and other CDs of their own are of a gentler nature. They are songs of love - of people and countryside and coast - sometimes with a touch of melancholy or wistfulness, but also simple joy.

Most of the songs are in French, but Breton is nicely represented in "E kreiz an noz," a text by Youenn Gwernig interpreted by all three singers, and in "Luskellerez evit ur bugel koz" ("lullaby for an old child") where Ewen sings in Breton with the Delahaye and Favennec responding with the French version of the text. There is also a very short "Sound bite" of traditional song for a "Boked Eured" with lots of crowd noises and some doodling of biniou and bombarde in the background. Without the notes to this CD (which I received as a promotional copy in cardboard slip) the thinking behind this inclusion is a bit mysterious. And then there's one selection in English (see below)...

Some of the melodies have a hint of Breton tradition (and these singers are no stranger to

traditional styles of song and dance since they have made their home for many years in the region around Morlaix and in central western Brittany). Others are clearly borrowed or inspired by Irish and Scottish rhythms and melodies, like "J'ai voyagé en Bretagne" where all three performers pull out fiddles for a reel. And you also find both an Irish and Scottish swing in "Noce à Marie" ("Mairi's Wedding"), a song which has been interpreted by many Bretons.

But most of the songs have a feel of the folk song revival of the 1960s and 70s with a rather standard loping rhythm (like the slow and irregular Breton marches, with a touch of waltz or polka). The melodies are lovely but there is a certain sameness to the relatively slow pace of the CD overall. Perhaps influenced by the performances these three have done for children (especially Delahaye), the style invites one to sing along. Those who baby-boomers who came of age in the late 60s and early 70s will enjoy the overall sound of this CD and will find the selection "Kisses sweeter than wine" (sung in English) especially charming.

While the style of some of the music in these selections may take one back in memory, these guys are not stuck in a time warp by any means. They are very much a part of contemporary Brittany and their texts are new and current. Each has a distinctive and strong voice (my personal favorite of the three being Gérard Delahaye), and all three continue to create and compose. While each singer also plays fiddle, they are all fine guitar players and that is the instrument of choice in the accompaniment here. But you'll hear some bluesy harmonica from Patrik Ewen, and some percussion and a bit of flute or tin whistle sometimes carefully included to enhance a particular song's mood. In a few cases the words get a bit obscured by a bit too much prominence of the accompanying instruments, but this could be the challenge of a live recording. Not having anything more than a slip of cardboard with the promotional copy I received, it is hard to determine if the recording is all from a live "reunion" tour by these three singers, or if some of it is studio recorded.

It is clear from this CD that these three long-time friends are consummate professionals who very much enjoyed performing together to reinterpret some of their favorites from each singer's repertoire.

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## HEARD OF BUT NOT HEARD

The following short notes are based on notes/reviews found in the following publications: Ar Men No. 137 (Nov./Dec. 2003); Armor 406 (Nov. 2003) and 407 (Dec. 2003); Ar Soner 374 (Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 2003); Musique Bretonne 181 (Nov.-Dec. 2003), and 182 (Jan.-Feb. 2004); Al Liamm 341 (Dec. 2003); Bretagne Hebdo 79 (Oct. 29-Nov 4., 2003), 81 (Nov. 12-18, 2003), 82 (Nov 19-25, 2003), 84 (Dec. 3-9, 2003)

### **Dan ar Braz. À toi et ceux.**

Columbia SAN 513782-2

After the massive productions of "Heritage des Celtes" where the fine guitarwork of Dan ar Braz is somewhat submerged in a cast of greats, this is a more "intimate" recording featuring songs - some composed by Dan and others composed by some new names who join him on this CD. A strong review was given for this CD from one of Brittany's most innovative artists..

### **Bagad Beuzeg & Hughes Germain. Diston.**

Coop Breizh BCS001.

First CD by the Bagad Beuzeg ar C'hab (Cap Sizun)

### **Bagad Landerne. Bagad Landerne. BL001. 2003.**

First CD by thos bagad, featuring contest performances from 2001-2003.

### **Michel Collet & Nathalie Couilloud. Chants de Marins - À la découverte d'une tradition vivante. Chasse-Marée. 2003.**

This is in fact a book on the maritime song tradition of Brittany including a collection of song texts and music, beautifully illustrated with photographs and drawings. It is accompanied by a 73-minute CD with 25 well known maritime songs of Brittany performed by some of Brittany's best in this genre.

### **Dastum Bro-Dreger. Langaj al legumaj - Les métiers maraîchers.**

Dastum Bro Dreger DBD 042-12.

This double CD set is the first of a series of recordings in a "Sound encyclopedia" for the Tregor-Goëlo region produced by the branch of Dastum active in that region. For those interested in the Breton language this is focused on oral accounts rather than music, with interviews and stories about vegetable farming and workers - beets, potatoes and cauliflowers. As is the case with all Dastum productions the abundant documentation is well researched.

### **Dastum 44. Chants à la marche.**

En Loire-Atlantique No. 1. Dastum 44.

This is a collection featuring some 50 "counting songs" collected in the Loire-Atlantique area and performed by some of the great traditional singers of that part of Brittany (Sylvain Girault, Roland Brou, Mathieu Hamon). A 31-page booklet includes texts as well as background information on the "radonnée chantée" ("singing walks") where such songs might be featured. The walks where singers and hikers join have become a regular feature of many festivals in Brittany and allow a wonderful exploration of flora and fauna as well as cultural traditions and landmarks.

### **Yann Dour & Diaoulezed. Kenavo. Caruhel.**

Yann Dour has composed music designed for children with roots in the Breton tradition. He is a great button accordion player immersed in the tradition of Gallo Brittany and he performs here with a quintet of young singers.

### **Armelle Gourlaouen. Récital de harpes.**

Self-produced.

This harpist performs on classical harp as well as Celtic and the small Troubadour harp with a varied repertoire ranging from Irish jigs to Dave Brubeck, Scott Jopin and Handel.

### **Groupement culturel des pays de Vilaine. Chants traditionnels des environs de Saint-Cognard.**

This is a CD with 26 of some 600 traditional songs collected in the area of Saint-Cognard by Louisette



Radiocytes in the 1960s. Her books with this collection were published in two volumes in 1995 and 1997.

**Nolwenn Korbell. N'eo ket echu.** [It's not over]  
Coop Breizh CD 948-DB 5X2.

This CD includes 12 songs by one of Brittany's young up and coming Breton language singers - most of the Breton language texts and music are compositions by this singer who grew up speaking Breton and who believes firmly in the future of this language. This is a CD that's gotten lots of good press in Brittany.

**Pierrick Lemou & Dominique Trichet. Reabaterien.** Coop Breizh CO 03/15-DB10.

This is a duo of fine fiddlers in an interplay reminiscent of the pairing of binioù and bombarde, with traditional tunes and compositions by Lemou.

**Daniel Le Noan & Alain Michel. An eured ou la folle journée.** An Naer.

This recording recreates a traditional wedding in Brittany, with all the sounds and music that are a part of such an event - and the music and song is plentiful and rich with songs, marches and dances. Jacket notes are well done and nicely document wedding traditions.

**Jean-Louis Le Vallégant & Patrick Lefebvre. Swing Noz.** Coop Breizh CD 949.

This features an interplay of saxophone and accordion by a great duo of musicians. There's a jazzy interplay of musicians who have strong roots in Breton tradition.

**Lik ha lik. Brezhoneg ain't gonna die!** Kerig.  
There are four selections on this CD by a Rennes-based rock group whose texts are in Breton. I like the CD title. (website: [www.likhalik.lautre.net](http://www.likhalik.lautre.net))

**Loeroù Ruz. Evit gouzout hiroc'h.**

This is a group of great women singers from Vannetais Brittany who perform traditional and more newly composed songs of that region.

**Jean-Claude Normant. Land's End.**

Normant is the former singer/composer with groups such as Glaz, Tyfa, and Strakall and Gilles Servat. He is joined here by some of Brittany's great instrumentalists.

**Les Oisives. Salto arrière.** Pudding / M10.

This is a duo composed of Sylvie Jourdan (song and accordion) and Soazig Le Lay (song and cello) where these two "jam" and improvise in a variety of styles - jazz, classical, rock...

**Denez Prigent. Sarac'h.** Barclay 9811540.

Prigent is one of Brittany's best known young "traditional singers" in the Breton language. He is capable of blending a striking voice with electronic accompaniment - old and new texts, all relevant to today. This fourth CD is a bit more acoustic in music but as worldly in expression as the rest. (see the review above and visit his web site [www.denezprigent.com](http://www.denezprigent.com))

**Rocquiou. Quai du Roi Baco.**

Alain Pennec Edition. CAP 20

This is an innovative CD focusing on popular music of Nantes - songs that present the urban and maritime life of this large city on the Loire River. This group is made up of Alain Pennec, Hervé Lorre, Patrick Couton and Roland Brou - tried and true singers and instrumentalists.

**Joseph-Guy Ropartz. Oeuvres pour Orgue.**

Drop Studio DS 105-031.

This CD includes a dozen shorter works for organ by a Breton composer in the classical style, Joseph-Guy Ropartz, who was a student of César Franck. The CD shows off some of the great church organs of Brittany.

**Soïg Siberil/Digor. Du côté de chez Soïg.**

Siam Productions/Coop Breizh CD 946.

This is a recording of a concert by guitarist Soïg Siberil with Karl Goriou and Alain Genty and two new additions to the group "Digor" ("open") who bring instruments and traditions of Africa. Soïg's one of the best acoustic guitarists around, so you can't go wrong with a CD like this.

**Tri Yann. Marines.** Marzelle/Sony 5720862.

Tri Yann has been on the Breton music scene since the early 70s and doesn't seem to run out of steam. This latest recording focuses on a maritime theme.

# A quick trip to Landerneau and Landivisiau in 1906

From: Francis Miltoun, Rambles in Brittany.1906 (Boston: L. C. Page & Company).

*In reading this brief excerpt from Miltoun's 371-page book, it is good to keep in mind his own advice to the reader from the "Apologia" at the beginning of the book: "This book is a record of many journeys and many rambles by road and rail around the coast, and in no sense is it put forth either as a special or as a complete survey of things and matters Breton."*

## Chapter VII- Finistère - North, pp. 224-228

Nineteen kilometres from Brest is Landerneau, and the junction of the railway lines to Kerlouan and Folgoët in the north, and to Quimper and Concarneau in the south. Landerneau from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries had a distinct feudal administration.

The folk of Landerneau have opinions of their own, as witness the remark, made at Versailles under the regency by a Breton noble hailing from this place: "The Landerneau moon is larger than that at Versailles."

Again there is a Breton proverb which runs thus: "There will always be something to talk about in Landerneau." Mostly this is used when a widow marries again, which may be taken to mean much or little, as one chooses.

Landerneau has a fine little tidal harbour, and its streets and wharfs are busy with the hum of coastwise traffic and river life, and with its Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury and its "best and cleanest inn in the bishopric" (Hôtel de l'Univers), as a traveller of a century or more ago once wrote, it has no lack of interest for travellers.

One is not likely to be met with a statement by his host, as was the century-old traveller, that a respectable man begs to know if he may eat at the same table, and accordingly one will not have to reply, "With all my heart," for most likely there will

be twenty at the common table, and all will sit down to a meal of all the good things of life, "sea food" and golden cider and apple sweetmeats predominating.

It is all excellent, however, and the abundance of deliciously cooked fish will make one think it were no hardship to make a lenten sojourn here. A great church and a good hotel are indeed all-sufficient attractions for a market-town of perhaps eight thousand souls.

The town borders upon a picturesque little river, the Elorn, which finally flows into the harbour of Brest. From the fifth century until the sixteenth, it was far and away a more important place than its now more opulent neighbour at the river's mouth. Then it was the chief town of Léon, the domain of the De Rohans, one of the ancient Breton baronies.

At the entrance of one of the principal streets - Rue Plouedern - are two curious ancient pieces of sculpture, - a lion and a man armed with a sword, bearing the inscription "Tire Tvu." They came from an old house which existed here in the sixteen hundreds, and are fitting examples of that curious mediaeval symbolism which so often crops out in domestic and religious architecture. Although the chief of Landerneau's ecclesiastical monuments is the sixteenth-century edifice dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury, the Church of St. Houardon is a contemporary work of some pretension; its base Renaissance portico was added at a later time. The arms and emblems of the De Rohans are conspicuous in both edifices.

July fifteenth is the great Fête-day here-around, when the horse-races, boat-races, and illuminations attract the peasantry from the inland country and the workmen from the dockyards at Brest.

Five kilometres away is the Chapel of St. Eloi of the sixteenth century. The sainted personage is represented throughout Finistère with the

attributes of a bishop and of a horse-shoer. Horses are placed under his protection, and the Pardon of St. Eloi is celebrated in various parts with much merrymaking, and always with much firing of guns. A motor-car is not beloved here, and if one incidentally or accidentally come upon a festival of St. Eloi, he had best forthwith make tracks in retreat. The actual religious ceremony consists of a mounted cavalier riding up to the chapel door and making a sort of salute or obeisance three times from the saddle without putting foot to the ground, after which he deposits on the altar a packet of horse-hair, or even the tail of a horse.

In the Forest of Landerneau, six kilometres southwest, is the Château of "La Joyeuse Garde," celebrated in the romance of the chivalry of King Arthur's time, wherein King Arthur, Lancelot of the Lake, and Tristan of Lyonesse played so great a part.

Landivisiau, on the main railway line from Paris to Brest, has a remarkable church under the protection of St. Turiaff, - which in Breton is Tivisian, - who was the Archbishop of Dol in the eighth century.

This fine church is a sixteenth century work, and exhibits all the notes of the early period of the Renaissance, but, in spite of this, the richness of its portal, its bell-tower, its fine spire, and its nave and choir rebuilt in the best of the late Gothic, make it a building to be remarked among the churches of Brittany, which, as a rule, have not the ornateness and luxuriance of ornament of those of Normandy and other parts of France,

The cemetery of Landivisiau has a remarkable ossuary, supported by most fantastic shapes, among them a skeleton armed with two arrows, a woman in an unmistakably Spanish costume, and a most diabolical Satan.

The fair-day at Landivisiau is the great celebration of these parts. It is not so ambitious as many of those held elsewhere, but it will give the visitor the opportunity of making an intimate acquaintance with the Bas Bretons in a manner not possible in the larger towns.

The dress of the people is peculiar, with the great baggy trousers of the men, the coifs of the women, and the general display and love of the finery of bright colours which seem inherent with a people living upon the seacoast.

In general their features are heavy and their expressions more or less sullen, although this does not often indicate bad temper. Unquestionably their carriage indicates hard labour, and the furrows and ridges of their countenances come only from continuous contact with the open air. Still, their bodies are stout and broad, and men and women alike have none of the softness and langour of the southern provinces, albeit the Armorican climate is mild throughout the year.



*Among the Appendices to this travel book one finds the expected list of Pardons of Brittany, and conversion tables for metric to English measures, but there also appears this table for Breton speakers found below.*

#### XI. THE BRETON TONGUE IN BRITTANY TO-DAY <sup>1</sup>

| Département   | Individuals<br>Understanding<br>Only Breton | Individuals<br>Understanding<br>Breton and<br>French |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Côtes du Nord | 145,000                                     | 150,000                                              |
| Finistère     | 352,000                                     | 302,000                                              |
| Morbihan      | 182,700                                     | 190,000                                              |

It is a regrettable fact that the Morbihan has the greatest number of illiterates of any of the departments of France. Among a hundred conscripts for the army, often thirty or forty are classed as illiterate, while in Finistère and the Côtes du Nord, the number falls to thirty or less, and in Ile et Vilaine to less than twenty.

<sup>1</sup> This table takes no cognizance of those speaking French only and not Breton, whilst the three departments given are those only in which the knowledge of the Breton tongue is in excess of that in other parts.



## **“The possible successor of Bush knows Brittany well”**

In an article posted on the Agencebretagnepresse.com website on January 29, 2004, the Philippe Argouarch (for the Agence Bretagne Presse) reports that Democratic Party candidate John Kerry has a link to Brittany. This information was gleaned from an article in the Boston Globe which noted that Kerry's father spent some time in Saint Brieuc in 1937 taking a sculpture class. John Kerry's mother, Rosemary [Forbes] is from a wealthy family of Massachusetts which had a sea coast property in Saint Briac-sur-Mer. This was destroyed in 1944 during World War II by German artillery fire, but the house was reconstructed and still belongs to the Forbes-Kerry family. John Kerry's mother, Rosemary Forbes-Kerry was the sister of the mother of Brice Lalonde, who has been Mayor of Briac-sur-Mer since 1955. Mayor Lalonde, cousin of John Kerry, noted on a TV interview that Kerry often came to vacation in Saint Briac-sur-Mer – especially when he was a youth.

That is all rather complicated, but food for thought ...

## **While we're on the topic of Washington, D.C. ...**

From January through April 2004 the Kennedy Center of Washington D.C. is featuring a variety of performance styles in a “Festival of France.” This winter several Breton artists have been part of this series at the Millenium Stage of the Kennedy Center. Those of you living in the D.C. area received a note from me on these, and I hope some of you had the chance to attend one or more of these.

January 29 – Arissa & Marsdrive

Described as traditional and Breton songs with electronic music.

February 10 – Didier Squiban

Squiban is a pianist who does arrangements of traditional Breton tunes and compositions – jazzy and melodic.

February 16 – Yann Fañch Kemener and Aldo Ripoché

Kemener is one of Brittany's masters of traditional Breton language song (gwerz and kan ha diskan). He was in concert here with cellist Aldo Ripoché who has also been touring with him in Europe. I have gotten rave reviews of this concert from ICDBL members who attended.

As you will see below U.S. ICDBL members in the D.C. area were able to give Yann Fañch a warm welcome and a wave of the “gwenn ha du.” From left to right, Susan Baker, Yann Fañch Kemener, Philippe Berthier and Alain Berthier.



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