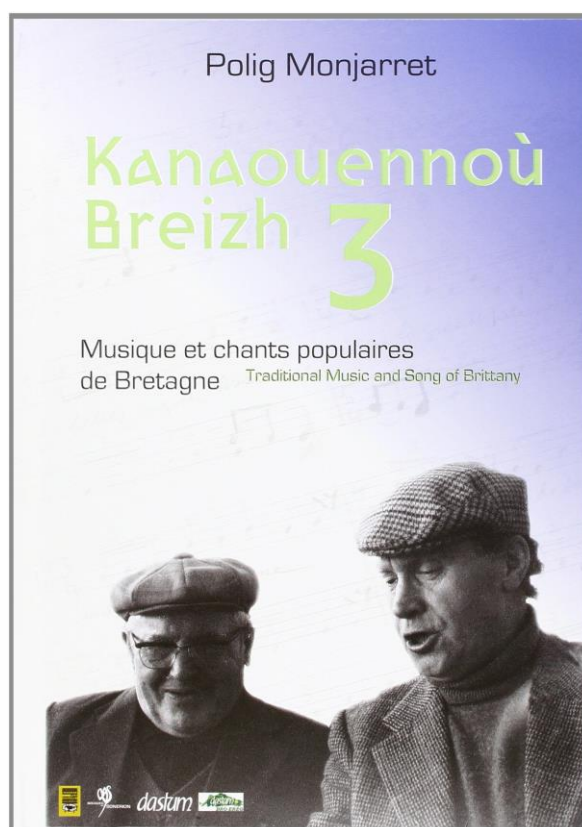


# BRO NEVEZ

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. Contributions, letters to the editor, corrections, 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 mail print copies. 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.

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Back issues of Bro Nevez can be found on the U.S. ICDBL website

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



## On the Cover

In this issue of Bro Nevez Natalie Novik has provided a translation of a very interesting interview with Polig Monjarret (1920-2003) who was a key figure in the renaissance of Breton piping traditions and the invention of the bagad, Brittany's unique style of bagpipe band. So I wanted to find an image for the cover of this issue that had some relation to this pioneer in the history of Breton music.

Pictured on the cover is Polig Monjarret's book *Kanaouennoù Breizh*, a collection of song texts he collected over many years. Polig Monjarret is better known for his two volumes of tune transcriptions he published (*Tonioù Breizh-Izel*), and this song collection would not be published until 2013, ten years after his death, thanks to a team of individuals and organizations. This included his daughters who saved his archives as well as collaborators from Bodadeg ar Sonerion, Dastum, Dastum Bro-Ereg, and Amis de Polig Monjarret.

An image of this song collection is also appropriate for this issue's cover since you will read my homage to Patrick Malrieu who passed away this winter. He was another figure of huge importance in the renaissance of traditional Breton music. In fact Patrick Malrieu is credited with the editing and annotation for *Kanaouennoù Breizh* and was a key figure in its publication.

Lois Kuter



Kuzul sevenadurel Breizh  
Conseil culturel de Bretagne  
Qonsail qhultural de Bertègn

## Languages of Brittany – Talk vs. Action

The following is my translation of a motion put forth this winter by the Cultural Council of Brittany (Conseil Cultural de Bretagne). This is an assembly created in 2009 by the Regional Council of Brittany composed of 70 members who represent the main organizations and associations focused on cultural, artistic, patrimonial and linguistic life. It is consulted by the Regional Council on all matters cornering the cultural identity of Brittany and its promotion. Beside speaking out on issues of concern, it provides some project funding and completes research studies.

62 members of the Cultural Council voted unanimously to approve the following motion at their December 1, 2018, meeting.

Motion on the Regional Council's Memorandum "Major Orientations of the New Policies for the Languages of Brittany"

Following on the Rencontres Régionales de la Langue Bretonne (Regional meetings on the Breton language) of October 2016 and the publication of the results of the sociolinguistic survey ordered by the Regional Council of Brittany, new orientations in its linguistic policies had been expected. The Cultural Council of Brittany had in addition responded to requests of the Region to send them its recommendations for both Breton and Gallo within a very constrained timeframe that did not allow for all to express themselves. In the interest of efficacy the choice was made to target ten objectives for each language.

The Cultural Council underlines the necessity of obtaining in the framework of differentiation the competence, reglementary capacity and indispensable means for a true linguistic policy.

The proposed memorandum conveys the orientations of the regional linguistic policy, for which concrete actions will come out in the framework of the next budget.

Concerning the Breton language, one can be pleased with some principles put forth in the introduction such as: "The Region's objective is very much to contribute to the creation of a bilingual society which is desired by Breton men and women" and it agrees "to pass from a symbolic co-officialization to a co-officialization in fact." The Cultural Council will pay close attention to see that this will is really put into effect, with translation into concrete actions. The proposition for a territorial public discussion uniting the five departments, the Pays de la Loire Region, the EPCI (établissement public de coopération intercommunale) and top representatives from its groups, the Public Office of the Breton Language (Ofis ar Brezhoneg), and public establishments, heads in the right direction since the future of the Breton language will be insured through a mobilization of the whole of those engaged. The Cultural Council, representing civic society though organizational mobilization, must be involved. Community actors, the creators themselves, are the vectors in the transmission and vitality of the language. It is necessary to fully engage them in public policies. The principle of putting into place a global strategy in the framework of a homogeneous bilingual marking of roads and public signage is to be saluted, along with the putting into place of conditions for support by the Region in order to broaden bilingual signage and communication in the areas of sports, patrimony and culture.

The Cultural Council supports the objective fixed by the regional collectivity for the development of teaching Breton at all levels, from early childhood through adulthood. It approves and supports the objectives for a progressive broadening of bilingual teaching (public and private) from preschool through high school in the whole of Brittany. Along these lines, it fully supports support brought to the Diwan associative network to result in a statute which fully recognizes the public service mission it

serves. Conjointly, the Cultural Council invites the regional collectivity to make a serious engagement to put into place the plan proposed by the federation Dao (Deskiñ d'an Oadourien / Teaching for Adults) which will contribute significantly to the significant and needed augmentation of people trained. Because, without the development of teaching of adults, the preceding objectives cannot be obtained. Developing teaching for adults is thus indispensable for the development – even the survival – of Breton as an everyday language.

The Cultural Council has underlined the need to support the development of everyday use of the language. It thus appreciates the announcement of reinforced support for the action of the Ententes de Pays in this area. Likewise, family transmission must be made a target for particular attention since it is indispensable to insure the perpetuity of the language – as was shown in the recent conference organized by the Cultural Council and the Université de Bretagne Sud, and a renewal in this area was noted in the survey and INSEE research in Central Brittany.

On the other hand, in the areas of media, publishing and cultural practices – with the exception of an interesting proposition for the creation of a Breton language academy of theater – one still has statements and intentions without real perspectives for development, despite knowing the importance of media in the transmission of language.

Concerning the Gallo language, the sociolinguistic study by the Region gives a new statistical tool on the practice of Gallo in Brittany. This work is grievously lacking in putting into place a policy adapted to the situation of the language. The report of the Cultural Council on Gallo in 2015 and the work of the first Assises du Gallo in 2016 have allowed a formalization of bases for a coherent policy and especially for the advancement of practical tools for Gallo speakers.

The document presented by the Regional Council marks a new step in the process for a better accounting for the expectations of Gallo speakers. The Cultural Council is pleased with the project to put a Gallo Language Committee in place and hopes that the different associations working in different sectors of regional linguistic policy will be represented in this structure to plan in concert.

Three objectives have been fixed: to promote, transmit and make the Gallo language more visible.

The Cultural Council can only subscribe to this will to raise the power of Gallo in the grand symphony of languages of the world. All the leverages for revitalization for the language are written into the linguistic policy for Gallo. The framework is thus fixed for the years to come.

The Cultural Council hopes that the particular situation of Gallo will be taken into consideration in budgetary

priorities for the year 2019. Communication and meeting expectations are two capital points in recognition and accommodation of Gallo for and by the population of Upper Brittany. Introduction in schools, actions on the part of municipalities, support for Gallo associations, and prestigious events like the Prix du Gallo, would allow a significant improvement for the reputation of the language.

The Cultural Council invites the Regional Council to reinforce the means and missions of the Institut du Gallo in order to reinforce the place of this language in society and institutions, and to be a driving force in the synergy and dynamism of associative initiatives.

The Cultural Council supports the strong will on the part of those engaged with Gallo for a massive collection of the language's richness from speakers. This first stage will allow for a better knowledge of local speakers and would enrich pedagogical materials offered for use in schools. It must also facilitate and involve university research, a keystone in this vast work. On this subject, the Cultural Council brings up the absence of engagement in the development project for a linguistic inventory of Gallo proposed by Chubri in 2017, aiming among other things for the creation of an on-line lexicographical database.

The Cultural Council salutes the will of the Regional Council to revise its "Charter for the Use of Languages of Brittany" to respond to expectations of the Breton population for public signage materials in Gallo. In this area, a coherent policy for the two languages of Brittany seems necessary. As a reminder, the Cultural Council adopted a motion on January 21, 2012, in which it proposed that in the context of renovation of TER stations, "That signage be at minimum French-Breton in Lower Brittany, and French-Gallo in Upper Brittany." This motion further proposed "In compliment, it is foreseeable that in the framework of an arrangement for the whole regional territory (for example on criteria for the size of a station's town) the other language of Brittany would be added in the third position."

The Cultural Council hopes that Gallo will be better taken into account in new discussion of the State/Region Convention to move towards a policy for academic centers which will be fruitful for Breton and which will be put into place progressively for Gallo.

On a wider scale, the Cultural Council of Brittany suggests that beyond the specific policies for each of the two languages of Brittany, the Regional Council be more attentive to coherence for the two policies.

It is clear that expressions such as "the Region will continue to support ... pursue its policies," so many times repeated, do not constitute a response suited to the situation of our languages, that one cannot be content with only "adaptation" of policies followed. The putting

into place of these new orientations will thus necessitate an important augmentation of the budget dedicated to the languages of Brittany.

The Cultural Council gives a reminder of its proposal for periodical evaluation of the Region's linguistic policies in which it is willing to participate.

### **Putting the Money Where One's Mouth Is ...**

As the above statement shows, the Cultural Council of Brittany supports to positive directions proposed by the Regional Council of Brittany for the development of Breton and Gallo.

But when the preliminary Regional Council budget was posted at the end of 2018, it became clear that much of the talk could not lead to action without more of an investment of funds.

The 2019 budget adds 150,000 euros to the budget for Breton and Gallo from the amount of 2018 – a 2.3% increase. This this does not make up for the drop of funds from 2017 to 2018 – 250,000 less for 2018 or a 3.9% drop in finances.

In a motion passed by the Cultural Council of Brittany at its January 26, 2019, meeting, it reinforced its support for Regional Council initiatives, but it strongly noted its deception with the budget decisions. "The Cultural Council thus considers that given the urgency of the situation, the proposed budgetary response is totally misaligned and unacceptable."



### **Recognizing the Gallo Language**

Because the ICDBL was created to support the Breton language, the pages of Bro Nevez have not included much information about the Gallo language of eastern Brittany

and the work of Bretons to strengthen its presence. According to the recent TMO Régions survey conducted on the use of Breton and Gallo, some 191,000 people speak Gallo (some 207,000 estimated for Breton).

Gallo is one of the Oïl languages which also includes Norman, Picard and Poitevin dialects. In the western part of Upper Brittany Gallo has been influenced by contact with Breton but it is not a Celtic language. Like Breton, the French Revolution marked the beginning of France's efforts to make all citizens of France equal by imposing a single standard French language. The decline of Gallo has been parallel to that of Breton but its renewal has been a bit more complicated. Not only did people of Brittany see Gallo (and Breton) as languages of the past to be discarded in the interest of modernity, but with a renewed pride in "Breton" identity, many viewed Gallo to



be less “Breton” than the Breton language. “Real Bretons” spoke the Breton language. Thus a double negative stigma has not been helpful in insuring the future of this unique language which is now viewed as a valuable part of Brittany’s cultural heritage.

Times are changing and Gallo speakers of eastern Brittany have created a number of organizations and initiatives to support this language. As the Cultural Council of Brittany noted in its motion on the Regional Council of Brittany’s plans for support of Breton and Gallo, the future of both languages needs to be better insured.

One initiative that the Regional Council of Brittany has undertaken in recent years is the Gallo Prize (Priz du Galo) which recognizes five categories of action for the transmission and everyday use of Gallo. Just as prizes to recognize innovative action to support the Breton language lend prestige to the language and encourage Bretons to creatively incorporate the language into their lives, this one for Gallo is one type of supportive action that is very welcome.

The 2018 winners of the Prix du Galo were recently announced as follows:

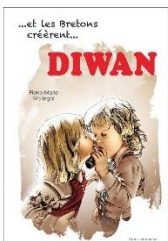
Priz de l’aguerouéy (Prize for a community government):  
La Mairie de la Prenessaye / La mérierie de la Pernessae  
(the Mayor’s office of Pernessaye)

Priz de l’enterprinze ou de la souéte (Prize for a company or association):  
Cllâsiers / Cllâsiers

Priz de la fezerie qhultura (Prize for cultural action):  
Bertran Obrée / Bèrtran Obrée

Priz de l’aviendr du galo (Prize for the future of Gallo):  
Lycée de Brocéliande à Guer / Licè de Broceliande a Ghè (The Brocéliande high school of Guer)

Priz du galozou ou de la galozouère de l’année (Prize for the Gallo-speaker of the Year):  
Jean-Luc Ramel / Jean-Luc Ramel



## A New Book on the Diwan Schools

**Pierre-Marie Mallégol, ... *Et les Bretons créent .. Diwan*.** Yoran Embanner, 2018. 163 pages. ISBN 978-2-36785-013-9.

Inspired by the Ikastola immersion schools for the Basque language and well aware of past work to establish Breton language programs in the schools of Brittany, Bretons carefully laid the groundwork to open

the first Diwan preschool in 1977 in Lampaul-Ploudalmézeau.

Pierre-Marie Mallégol, a now retired school teacher, gives his first hand account as the parent of Alan, one of the five children of that first school. Working outside of the French Education system that shut its doors to languages other than French took courage and a huge investment of time to create a whole new school system – Diwan – where Breton would be the language of instruction and play. The challenges were enormous to find classroom space and both the moral and monetary support for the school. And the challenges would continue.

This book is not only a personal account of the trials and tribulations of launching the first Diwan preschool but an interesting look at everything else happening in Brittany during the 1970s especially. The late 1970s was a period of some trauma with the wreck of the Amoco Cadiz in the spring of 1978 off the coast of Portsall, a stone’s throw from the new Diwan preschool in Lampaul-Ploudalmézeau. But, this was also a period of cultural growth and the Diwan schools offered artists an opportunity to create songs, theater, literature and other activities in the Breton language for children. And artists were fully engaged in supporting Diwan with appearances at festivals, festou noz and fund-raising events. This collaboration and new creativity in the Breton language sparked by Diwan is also eloquently documented in Fanny Chauffin’s book, *Diwan, 40 ans déjà* (see Bro Nevez 142, June 2017).

For the Lampaul-Ploudalmézeau Diwan school there was a particularly close relationship with the Breton language theater troupe Strollad ar Vro Bagan who included Diwan parents and were ardent supporters. In a preface to this book, the director Goulc’han Kervella evokes the impact Diwan had on this theater group and the doors that opened for it to create works not only for the Diwan schools but also for bilingual programs in public and Catholic schools (programs initiated in 1983 and 1990 respectively).

The personal account by Pierre-Marie Mallégol of action to sustain and grow the Diwan schools gives a very good idea of the difficulties parents faced during the pioneer years of the 1970s as well as into the 1980s and 90s as Diwan and bilingual programs developed. It is an important story which illustrates the many challenges as well as victories Bretons have encountered through their persistent work to insure that schools would foster the Breton language. With numerous photos and illustrations, Mallégol’s vivid account of events and people are brought to life.



## Skol Diwan Landerne – The Landerneau Diwan School

A welcome back to the pages of *Bro Nevez* by Lois Kuter

The U.S. ICDBL has supported the Diwan Breton language immersion schools of Brittany since we were founded in 1981 - morally if not much in the way of financial assistance. But, in 1992 we entered into a special relationship with the Diwan school in the town of Landerneau with my first visit there in 1992 and again in 1995, 1998 and last in 2007. And there have been visits by other U.S. ICDBL members as well to maintain our friendship – Richard and Valerie Herr in 2001, Kathi Hochberg in 2005 and David Brûlé in 2010 and 2012 (and maybe other years I have not noted!)

While we maintain our relationship to this day, we have not been very good about passing along news of Skol Diwan Landerne in recent years. I am pleased to have regained contact with Patricia Quéré who has recently returned as Director of the school, and I hope to share news of the school more frequently in the pages of *Bro Nevez*. Patricia has sent news of the school and some exciting projects coming up this year.

The school currently has 82 students – preschool through primary school – and 5 teachers. This year the school is celebrating a 30 year anniversary (in fact 33 years) with a big festival and fest noz in Landerneau on June 15, 2019. We are invited! And it is hoped that this event will gather former students and parents and community supporters of Skol diwan Landerne. Projects are now being developed for the anniversary celebration, including involving children in song with the Breton language choir Hekleo presided by Jean-Pierre Thomin, former mayor of Landerneau. The anniversary festival will also involve a musical project with Maria Desbordes, a former student who was part of the celtico-electronic group Awen Magic Land in 2007 and then worked with Carlos Soto and the group Celtas Cortos in Spain. And the celebrations will also include the group Startijenn which includes two former Skol Diwan students, Tangi Oillo (guitars) and Youenn Roue (bombardes). This band was created in 1997 when its members were Diwan middle school students and continued through their Diwan high school years.



## The Landerneau Daoulas area celebrates the Breton Language in March

The activities below are being organized throughout March by Ti ar Vro Landerne Daoulaz which is a federation of 16 cultural organizations and individuals of the region.

As you will read below the Vannes area also has lots of activities planned, and this month-long focus on the Breton language is not unique or brand new. But in both cases the events planned show how creative Bretons can get in fostering opportunities for children and adults to speak and learn about the Breton language.

Activities for Landerneau-Daoulas include :

Koazedenn e brezhoneg – A conversation in Breton with writer Maiwenn Morven.

Sinema e brezhoneg – Showing of the film “Hentoù 70” documenting work of Bretons in the 1970s for Brittany, with discussion with coauthor Mathieu Herry.

Tanvañ da'ar Brezhoneg – An introductory class for the Breton language (one of four offered during the course of the year on a Saturday)

Abadenn margodennoù e brezhoneg – a marionette show “A ran bras he beg hag istorioù all” in Breton.

Film e kafe chanter – showing of film “Pa gazh an heol” by Ronan Hirrien about singers of Brittany (Yann-Fañch Kemener, Brigitte Kloareg, Loïc Jadé) and Finland (Pekka Huttuhti Hunen, Kirstina Kuusisto) followed by a concert.

Kejadenn gant skol sonerezh Landerne – visit to the music school of Landerneau.

Sonadeg gant Skol Sonerezh Bro Baoulaz – concert by the music school of Daoulas.

Dorioù digor e Landerne – Open houses at the Diwan school and Breton language programs at St. Julien, Tournou, and Jean Mace-Jule Ferry schools.

Film “Yoann an Nedeleg, sorc'henn an ilin-pib” – Showing of film by Ronan Hirrien about Breton uilleann piper Yoann an Nedeleg and his encounter with Irish piper Davy Spillane and other musicians of Ireland. Followed by a music session with Yann an Nedeleg.



## The Vannes Pays celebrates the Breton language in March

Like the activities planned for the Landerneau Daoulas area, the following show the diverse ways Bretons create fun activities for children and adults to learn and practice the Breton language.

Here are some examples of activities being offered during the month of March in the Vannetais region.

Ar brezhoneg e Bro Gwenrann / The Breton language in the pays de Guérande - An exhibit put together by the Musée des Marais Salants based on research of the historical presence of the Breton language in the area between the Loire and Vilaine rivers. A conference will also be given on this subject by Gildas Buron

Kaozeadenn e brezhoneg / Conversation in Breton - Thursday gatherings to use Breton in conversation and song.

Staj brezhoneg / Breton language classes - Three levels of Breton classes for beginners, those who have been taking evening classes for several years, and advanced learners offered by Emglev Bro Gwened

Dorioù digor / Open houses - A number of schools open their doors to show what they do: Skol Diwan Kistreberzh (Questembert). Skolaj Diwan Gwened (Diwan middle school of Vannes), and bilingual public schools Rohan and Cliscouët.

Abadenn lenn e brezhoneg evit ar vugale – Reading and stories for children in Breton - Div Yezh Gwened hosts book events for children in Vannes.

Abadenn sinema e brezhoneg / Movies and animation in Breton for children.

Abadenn c'hoarioù a-stroll e brezhoneg / Game playing in Breton - An afternoon at Ti ar Vro in Vannes to play games together through the Breton language for children and adults at all learning levels.

Nozvezh krogad rugbi etre brezhonegerien / Breton at a rugby match - Breton speakers can cheer on the Rugby Club of Vannes as it takes on the Basques of Bayonne.

Kwiz e brezhoneg / Quiz in Breton - Teams of Breton speakers of various levels compete in quizzes on a variety of categories

Conference on the book *Help, mon enfant parle breton !* - The author will talk about this book for families whose children are learning Breton and for adults taking that step.

Conference on Breton language literature in the Vannes Pays - Scholar Jorj Belz will discuss "La production du Vannetais bretonnant aux XIXe et XXe siècles" - 19th and 20th century Vannetais Breton writing.

## Prizioù ar Brezhoneg

The 22nd Prizioù awards were given out March 1 in Bruz. Organized annually by France 3 Bretagne, the Région Bretagne and l'Office Public de la Langue Bretonne (Ofis ar Brezhoneg) these recognize Bretons who advance the

Breton language in creative (and practical) ways. The winners and runners-up for 2019 are as follows.

### Kevredigezh / Association

Winner: Radio Kerné - Breton language radio station celebrating a 20th anniversary and preparing a Breton language radio service for the city of Nantes.

2. Ti ar vro Gwengamp, an arvor hag en argoad - center for Breton language activities launched in 2017 with regular Breton language activities for children 4 and up on Wednesdays.

3. *Daoulagad Breizh et Emglev bro Douarnenez* - film contest "Filmoù chakod" ("pocket films") for short 5-minute or less films made using a telephone or camera that fits in one's pocket.

### Levr faltazi / Fiction book

Winner : *Ouzh skleur an noz (A la lueur de la nuit)*, novel by Jerom Olivry (éditions *Al Liamm*).

2. *Distro Jarl eus ar brezel*, (le retour de Charles de la guerre), novel by Goulc'han Kervella (éditions Skol Vreizh)

3. *Galnys pe priz ar gwad*, (Galnys ou le prix du sang), four-act theater piece by Yann-Fulub Dupuy (éditions *An Alarc'h Embannadurioù*).

### Strollegezh / Collectivity

Winner: Mayor's Office of Carhaix for its bilingual booklet for families, the presence of bilingual education options in all its schools, and bilingual signage for its center for virtual archeology Vorigum.

2. Mayor's office of Rennes for its bilingual signage, its support for a bilingual nursery, and new location found for the Breton teaching center Skol an Emsav.

3. The museum of the ancient Abby of Landévennec in Finistère for its translation into Breton of the exhibit *La Bretagne au temps des rois*.

### Kleweled / Audiovisual Creation

Winner : *Gwallzarvoud ar fisel (L'accident de M. Fisel)*, 26 minute documentary by Sébastien Le Guillou. (France 3 Bretagne)

2. *Ar pevarad kerniel*, (le quatuor à cordes,) animated film series by Benjamin Botella and Arnaud Demuyne (Vivement Lundi !)

3. *Zao !* Documentary series by Perynn Bleunven and Mai Lincoln (Kalanna productions).

### Embregerezh / Business

Winner: Lorcyber, a cyber-security business based in Vannes which translated its website and marketing materials into Breton.

2. Diazeadur Kef Labour-Douar Penn-ar-Bed / Crédit agricole du Finistère Foundation for its support of initiatives in Finistère favoring the use of Breton.

3. Penn ar box which offers kits of Breton products via its website which is translated into Breton

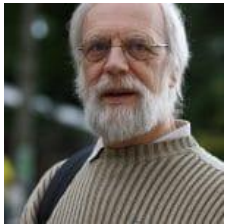
### Pladenn kanet e brezhoneg / Album sung in Breton

Winner: Denez Prigent for his album *Mil Hent* (Mille chemins, Coop Breizh).  
 2. *Kan ar bed*, a CD-book of songs of the world translated into Breton (éditions *Bannoù-Heol*)  
 3. *A-drenv ar vrumenn*, metal music by Möhrkvith (Asgard Hass).

#### Brezhoneger ar bloaz / Breton Speaker of the Year

Winner: Arno Elegoed who fulfilled the project of the book-CD *Kan ar Bed* with the publishing house *Bannoù Heol* (in Quimper)  
 2. Ismael Morvan, President of the association *Bak e brezhoneg* which fought for authorization for all the baccalaureate tests to be completed in the Breton language.  
 3. Paskal Nignol who developed Breton language use in the Musée de Bretagne in Rennes with guided visits, workshops and discussions in Breton.

### Losses for Brittany



**Patrick Malrieu**  
1945-2019

Patrick Malrieu passed away on January 6 to the great shock and sadness of the Breton world where he had played a major role in promoting not only traditional music of Brittany, but also language and culture.

Patrick Malrieu was born in Amboise in 1945 and grew up in Paris where he studied for a career in the printing industry. Starting with the Brodard et Taupin printing company in La Flèche before moving to the Châteaulaudren printing company, then Oberthur in Rennes and Publihebdos / Ouest France. From 1999 to 2004 we worked with the Auger-Mauger printing company in Lannion which published *Le Trégor*.

Growing up in Paris in no way limited Patrick's engagement in Breton culture. Like many Bretons living in Paris he took full advantage of a very active cultural community, joining several Cercles Celtiques (Cercle bugale Breizh in Tours and Tud an Hent, Nevezadur, and Jabadao in Paris), and beginning his engagement with Breton music and piping when he was just seven years old. Like others of the Paris community he would study Breton at the Ker Vreizh center, and had the opportunity to learn about Breton music and culture from eminent fellow Bretons of Paris including Yvon Palamour, Donatien Laurent, Michel Prémorvan, Hervé Le Menn, and others who would bring their enthusiasm and expertise back to Brittany.

Patrick Malrieu is perhaps best remembered for his pioneering work to create Dastum. Here too, he collaborated with other young musicians in the Breton emigrant community who shared a dream of pooling resources – music recordings and texts they had

collected from masters of Brittany's traditional repertoire – and making it accessible to all. Dastum would be founded in 1972 with co-conspirators Yves Berthou, Pierre Crépillon, Guy Jacob, Daniel l'Hermine and Michel Prémorvan who Patrick met in Paris. The Dastum project was brought to Brittany when Patrick moved there at the age of 28. He would serve as the President of Dastum for 23 years and remained active with the organization throughout his life.

But Patrick Malrieu's engagement for Brittany did not stop with Dastum. He served as President of the Cultural Council of Brittany from 2003 to 2009. For his lifetime commitment to the Breton culture he was inducted into the Order of the Ermine in 1999 and served in a leadership role with the collective of fellow inductees. Since April 2011 he has served as President of the Cultural Institute of Brittany (Skol Uhel ar Vro). Patrick Malrieu not only served as a leader in promoting Breton music and culture, but was active in supporting the reunification for Brittany to include the department of Loire-Atlantique, and engaged in actions to promote the Breton language and opportunities for Bretons to learn their history and traditions.

But his real passion was for traditional music - not only that of the Breton language tradition of western Brittany, but also Gallo Brittany where song remains so vital. Dastum's vast collection of music, song and texts related to Brittany's oral tradition has spanned all of Brittany. Patrick was a scholar of traditional song in the Breton language, investing an enormous amount of work in the completion of his doctoral thesis *La chanson populaire de tradition orale en langue bretonne: contribution à l'établissement d'un catalogue* (Université Rennes 2 Haute Bretagne, 1988). This was not to be a catalogue lost on a dusty library shelf, but to be put on-line (kan.bzh) giving free access to thousands of song texts.

Patrick Malrieu was a life-long learner, enthusiastically travelling to meet other scholars and explore musical archives and music traditions. Like most Bretons I have met who had a true love for and deep knowledge of their cultural heritage, Patrick Malrieu had an international perspective and appreciation of cultural diversity.

I first met Patrick Malrieu during the summer of 1975. I had contacted him before my trip to Brittany with the hope that he might help me locate resources about Breton music – inexistent in the U.S. – and I had lots of questions I hoped he might help me with as I tried to determine the feasibility of planning a doctoral dissertation on Breton music and Breton identity. I was starting nearly from scratch in my knowledge of Brittany and its music with a beginner's knowledge gleaned from a few issues of *Ar Soner* and *Breizh* (Kendalc'h's excellent magazine), a few LP jacket notes, and rare other articles accessible in the U.S. I wanted to learn what Bretons considered truly "Breton" music, and how "traditional music" was defined. And I did not understand



the controversies of the period surrounding “traditional” vs. “modern” Breton music.

The mid 1970s was truly an interesting time in how Bretons were creating music and a positive identity. Some Bretons were still fleeing a Breton identity they had learned was backward and outdated. Others were seeking bridges to the future for what they believed to be a unique and beautiful heritage. Others sought roots in traditions but wanted to “modernize” them – sometimes successfully in keeping the spirit intact, but sometimes less successfully in creating “pop-rock” shadows more rooted in American or British styles.

Patrick Malrieu responded immediately to my letter offering to meet with me when I came to Brittany that summer of 1975 in Plouvara where I could consult the Dastum recordings. True to Breton generosity I would find in my travels that summer, he would put me up in his home where the Dastum collection was then located. Traveling alone and struggling to master French (and begin some study of Breton) I very much appreciated becoming a temporary part of the Malrieu family (Patrick, Magdy, and children Goulc’hen and Koulmig) for a week that summer.

I would begin a long exchange of letters with Patrick Malrieu upon my return to the U.S. in August 1975. He would offer invaluable advice on my outlines for a study of Breton music and identity. Welcoming the perspective of an outsider on such an immense topic, he was always encouraging and helpful.

The letters we exchanged were not frequent – always with our apologies for not responding sooner – but they were often long, full of information about what was going on. Patrick was enthusiastically immersed in his project to catalogue Breton song, but he was also active in support of anything that would advance the Breton culture. In a letter of January 1978 He had a particularly optimistic view of the development of the Charte Culturelle for Brittany which would bring resources to organizations like Dastum, but, more importantly, bring official recognition on the part of France of the importance of Breton culture. My letters would report on my progress in completing my PhD and then on my unsuccessful efforts to find a university position. I would also report on more successful projects – the founding of the U.S. branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton language and various conference presentations and lectures I gave on the topic of Breton music and identity, as well as the series of Breton music radio programs begun in 1984.

Through a long correspondence and visits on my all-too-rare trips to Brittany I maintained a friendship and continued to learn from Patrick Malrieu during the over-40 years since first meeting him in 1975. For his tireless work for Brittany and its rich cultural heritage, he was a

hero to me as I know he was to hundreds of others in Brittany.



**Andreo Ar Mercier / André Le Mercier**  
1923-2019

Andreo Ar Mercier passed away December 31 at the age of 95. From the town of Saint-Quay-

Perros in the Côtes d’Armor department, he did his high school studies in Brest and became an instructor there in 1944. While teaching at the public school of Glomel he was one of the first to take advantage of the 1951 Deixonne law – the first French law to authorize voluntary teaching of regional languages in France. He offered his students an introduction to the Breton language, created a bilingual school magazine (*Fiseled Groñvel*) and organized a Breton language theater group.

He was active with the organization Ar Falz as well as Ar Skol Vrezhoneg, giving Breton language correspondence courses as well as offering an evening class in Brest. He also provided a weekly Breton language lesson for the newspaper *Ouest France*. He was part of a pre-Diwan initiative called Skol er Merher in Brest in the early 1970s – a Wednesday school in Breton for primary school students.

Andreo Ar Mercier was president of the federation Emglo Breiz from 1987 to 2002 which was a major publisher for books in the Breton language and he directed the Breton language journal *Brud Nevez*. He himself was the author of pedagogical materials for schools – a Breton grammar, collection of popular sayings, and a dictionary.

### **Éric Louis Mélénez - A Tribute by Yvo Peeters**

Ten years ago we prematurely lost Éric Louis Mélénez at the age of barely 50 years.

The son of a Breton engineer who worked in the petroleum industry posted for his job notably in Africa, Éric Louis Mélénez had a passion for maritime affairs from an early age and worked for a time during the 1980s as an advisor with the CRPM (Conférence des Régions Périphériques Maritimes d’Europe), the CEDRE (Centre d’Etudes et de Documentation Régionale Européen) and l’Arc Atlantique.

During these years he acquired an in-depth knowledge of port and maritime spheres, and during more than twenty years served as an untiring advocate for the cause of coastal trade, running into indifference and even hostility for a long time on the part of administrators and economic leaders.

It is important to remember that coastal trade is still very important in Northern Europe, that a modern ship can transport a cargo the equivalent of a dozen heavy trucks,

and that the savings in fuel realized on a trip of 3,000 to 4,000 kilometers from one end to the other of the European Union is considerable when one opts for the maritime route, not even considering the upkeep of road networks, the risk of accidents and the impact on the environment (noise, air pollution, etc.). The principal obstacles to the development of European coastal trade are in the administrative, financial and psychological areas.

Eric Louis Méléneec slowly got the feeling of no longer preaching in a desert, in next creating with Yvo Peeters the Association pour la Promotion du Pavillon Européen (APPE) / European Shipping Registry Association (ESRA). In 1994 the European Maritime Cooperation Agency was created in Brest and Éric Louis Méléneec became its director. This agency next moved to the Ploemeur Lorient Technopole. As a member of the board I could entrust Eric with various studies on behalf of the Maritime Administration of Flanders.

Éric Louis Méléneec, who also became a specialist in problems of maritime security, participated in numerous seminars, colloquia, and congresses focused on questions of maritime transport where his contributions were always appreciated. He thus achieved a real fame in the maritime sphere in France, as well as in Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and other regions of Europe. In the new century he focused on the Black Sea Ports.

Very much attached to his community of Camaret where he ran several times as a candidate for the municipal council, he was also an ardent federalist, having been active with POBL (Parti pour l'Organisation d'une Bretagne Libre) and the OBE (Organisation des Bretons de l'Extérieur) where he promoted especially the idea of the organization of a European coast guard (which would have been very useful during the migration crisis!).

His loss was a deep one for the cause of the maritime development of Brittany and for the cause of Brittany more generally.



### **Polig Monjarret, a Pioneer in the revitalization of Breton music**

Today as Breton music flourishes with a growing number of young singers and musicians who are part of an ongoing transmission of traditional songs and tunes, it is easy to forget that at one point in time Breton traditions were on the brink of

disappearance, and Breton music and traditions were viewed as outdated worthless relics to be discarded. Those who recognized that priceless treasures of the oral tradition could be lost and worked to reverse this in the

1940s and early 1950s were viewed not only as a bit crazy, but perhaps dangerous!

The following interview by Polig Monjarret (1920-2003) from the magazine *Tradition Vivant* in 1987 serves as an interesting reflection on the challenges of those times. And it provides insight into the thinking of one of the major figures in the rejuvenation of Breton piping traditions. And, one has to wonder how Polig Monjarret's observations might have changed in the thirty-plus years since that interview was conducted were he still alive today to share his thoughts.

To provide some context for the interview it is useful to have a bit of biographical information about Polig Monjarret. Born in 1920 in Pabu near Guingamp, Polig spent lots of time as a child with grandparents in a setting where Breton was the everyday language, although French was the language used to communicate with him. It was only later that he realized that had been denied access to this language and thus to a full knowledge of his family. He was also to learn 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 Modrelles, 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 bombard and biniou braz (Scottish style bagpipes imported to Brittany and adapted for playing in pair with the bombard and for the bagad). Dorig had been a co-founder of Kenvreuriez ar Vinioerien in Paris in 1932 and would work with Polig and a small group of Breton musicians to found the Bodadeg ar Sonerion in Brittany in 1943.

During the World War II 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 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 and then Brittany. He was then arrested because of his past association with Breton nationalists. He spent a number of months in an internment camp and jail 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."

During the 1940s and 50s Polig was very active collecting tunes from singers and older masters of the biniou koz and bombard, resulting many years later in a published collection of over 4,000 tunes in two volumes: *Tonioù Breizh-Izel* (1984 and 2004). 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 bagadoù, Celtic Circles and other cultural organizations. In 1955, discouraged by the 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 as an upholsterer/interior designer. He would soon be lured back to the forefront of the cultural movement, becoming president of the Bodadeg ar Sonerion in 1960. He served as its president for 22 years and as general secretary for 18 years, as well as serving as the editor of *Ar Soner*, the BAS magazine for over 30 years – to which he contributed thousands of articles. Polig was instrumental in the organization of annual piping contests and the Festival International des Cornemuses held in Brest first in 1953. This would be the base for the Inter-Celtic Festival of Lorient launched in 1971. Inspired by the Irish Fleadh Cheoil which celebrated traditional music and song, Polig was behind the creation of Brittany's version, the Kan ar Bobl, in 1973. He was also a strong supporter of the Conservatoire Régional, a cultural center opening in Ploemeur in 1981.

As you will see in the interview which follows, Polig Monjarret was not timid in voicing his views and opinions – negative and positive – about the state of Breton music past and present. But his voice comes from a deep knowledge of Breton music as well as the music of Celtic neighbors – especially Ireland. And the interview gives an important insight into a period of Breton musical history when the extinction of uniquely Breton song and piping was ominously present.

Lois Kuter

The following article from *Tradition Vivante*, Issue No. 13, July-September 1987, was translated by Natalie Novik.

### Interview of Polig Monjarret

**Tradition Vivante: is Breton music Celtic music? And is it important to you?**

**Polig Monjarret:** Generally Celtic music is what is found in Ireland and the Hebrides Islands. I don't see what Breton music can have in common with these musics, apart from the fact we all use the pentatonic scale, but then Irish music takes many other forms, just like Breton music, and they have nothing in common. For me, today's Breton music is a substrate of medieval music from Western Europe. There are many and obvious similarities between these medieval songs and the music from Lower Brittany: the use of musical modes, and also very importantly, some principles of musical constructions that are very close to the poetry of the words, particularly in the melodies. Some want at all cost Breton music to be

Celtic: I am ready to believe them, but they need to bring me some proof.

**TV: For many, the bombard-biniou couple is intrinsically Breton, but you also find oboe-bagpipe couples all over as well.**

**PM:** People who believe that have probably never traveled. In various regions of Europe, there is an oboe-type instrument, - the bombard itself being merely a rustic form of small oboe – that is played together with an air bag type instrument. You find that in Italy, in the Friuli as in Sicily, in Greece, I also saw that in Slovenia. Ancient Swedish documents, some two-three centuries old, show a bagpiper playing with an instrument in the oboe family, etc.

**TV: The Scottish bagpipe (pib mor) is often called biniou braz, but some are saying there used to be a large Breton bagpipe which was replaced at some point by the Scottish instrument.**

**PM:** If we rely on iconography, it is possible to agree that there indeed was a large bagpipe in Brittany. But what proof do we have? What is known is that an instrument of that kind has survived in Loire Atlantique: the veuze, also known in Poitou under the name of bousine. The levriad (chanter) is longer than the one on the biniou kozh, which gives it a lower tonality. Unfortunately, we don't have any other references, no trace of the instrument, of a player, or anything that would give us the slightest hint.

**TV: But iconography can also be misleading. Ask someone today to draw a bagpiper, and the results can be quite astonishing! Even here, where people often get to see bagpipes.**

**PM:** That's true. However, I think in particular of a sculptured piece of furniture in the Kernuz castle in the Bigouden region. It is a Renaissance Breton piece of furniture, where a panel features pipe players in Renaissance garb. The work of the artist has given way to all kinds of fantastic theories. The "bragou braz" (traditional Breton brogues) look like kilts, and they are carrying on their side claymore-style swords! Based on this, and some celtomaniacs have quickly jumped to that conclusion, the idea would be that Renaissance Breton pipers were wearing kilts and carrying claymores. Anyway, the point here is that these pipers were playing large pipes. Even if the artist has not gone into too much detail, he could not have been wrong to the point of doubling the size of the chanter and the drones. Can we deduct from this that, at that time, Bretons were using an instrument the size of the large bagpipe and had not yet invented the biniou kozh? I would be very careful before giving a positive answer to the question.

**TV: Do you have any idea why the biniou kozh has remained (or has become) so small and so high pitched?**

**PM:** Truly, I don't, I don't have the slightest idea. What I believe is that the bombard has always been the primary instrument of the couple, yesterday as much as today. Its tonality varies depending on the region from G/G sharp to A and sometimes even slightly above A. It is true that the biniou kozh is quite primitive, which is why it works so well for dancing. The difference of one full octave with the bombard – also called talabarde – is a powerful way to excite the dancers. This excitement is much more difficult to reach when the bombard is accompanied by the large bagpipe. The constant unison of the instruments, even if the talabarder jumps from time to time one octave, does not allow for this contrasted sound which generates the dancers' enthusiasm.

**TV:** Just like in rock music, it is the very shrill guitar solo which is exciting, and with jazz either the clarinet or alto sax; it is never a low-toned instrument.

**PM:** During the war and just after, I knew a group of musicians in the Finistère, the Menez orchestra from Scrignac. Five or six musicians who each played at least two other instruments: saxos, fiddles, accordions, clarinets, etc. When they added the bombard, it was extraordinary! Then the dancers were really swept up! I need to say that at the time, people were mostly dancing waltzes, tangos, the samba, the swing... and in the course of a ball, the gavotte would happen only once or twice. And it was danced mostly by people in their fifties. These people were the first faithful supporters of the pipers when we started the first bombard/biniou braz couples in the 40's. Nonetheless, their enthusiasm paled by comparison with what happened when we started bringing back the biniou kozh at the beginning of the 50's. They brought us proof that the biniou kozh, the only genuinely traditional biniou in Brittany, was their favorite.

**TV:** Some look at this biniou as a minor instrument, like it simply accompanies the bombard.

**PM:** These people are mistaken. It is an instrument in its full right which is an equal with the bombard. The two are a pair, as they say, and one does not go without the other, they complement each other. One only needs to look at one of the rare scores we have collected from old-generation pipers to be convinced (see example: extract of "Toniou Breizh Izel". The air is also featured on the Chieftains' album "Celtic Wedding").

**TV:** In your book, you write that Breton music started getting influenced from abroad at the time of the French Revolution.

**PM:** There had been some foreign influences even before, but it is mostly starting at the time of the Revolution that intrusions take place in the repertoire, for instance on the themes of songs, often common to those used everywhere in France and in Europe at the time.

During this time, French culture dominated Europe and even North America. It is therefore not unlikely that Brittany and even Lower Brittany had received its share. It started of course in the cities, and then from the cities to the countryside where musicians adapted them to their needs, depending on their own understanding of music.

Bretons were staunch Catholics: church music, called plain-chant, was at one with traditionally practiced Breton music. The eight modes of Gregorian music are widely used in church and outside of it. By the way, the Breton clergy often took popular airs, with sometimes rather saucy texts, to turn them into hymns. Now with sacred words, these airs became church hymns. One was committing a serious sin by singing the original version. How many texts have disappeared this way? Those that have survived, and there are very few of them, were airs lacking originality most of the time, which the clergy did not think were worthy of becoming church music.

The other day, at the last Kan ar Bobl in Lorient, I heard some clarinetists from the Côtes-du-Nord, Le Lay, Thomas and others. What were they playing? Airs that were fashionable in France in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century: Travadja la Moukere, which dates back to the conquest of Algeria (1830). Of course, they were "bretonizing" it, and it has served as a nuptial march in the Mael-Carhaix region for many decades. The repertoire of these "trujenn-gaol" players, which I had collected in 1942-1943, was in its wide majority made up of airs (adapted to Breton taste) of popular airs from all regions of France in the middle of the last century: Cadet Rousselle a trois maisons, J'ai du bon tabac dans ma tabatière, Compère Guillery, La fille de Madame Angot, Bon voyage Monsieur Dumollet, and more. Often these airs are found in the form of Baladaw or Jabadaw in the south Finistère region. But what is important to stress is what happens to this music. Unable to comprehend music this way, the musicians felt mandated to adapt it to their own ways, as they felt it, and in their mind, the point is not to "bretonnize" foreign songs, or play Breton music, but just play music. It is the strength of Breton music: it has its own rules and those who practice it respect them and apply them every time unconsciously, which of course entails modifications of things like the dance rhythms.

**TV:** Let's talk about the clarinet.

**PM:** Its home is mostly the southwest area of the Côtes-du-Nord, where it had completely replaced the bombard at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I met the last bombard players in the area about fifty years ago: the Le Gall brothers from Gouarec, for instance, but they were not originally from this part of Cornouaille, their home was from the nearby Pourlet region, which belongs to the Vannetais region. Another one I knew was Le Mignon. He was from Glomel and had a reputation at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a maker of bombard and biniou. But he had not played in a long time: in truth, he was a bit ashamed, surrounded by clarinetists who were favored



by the public. He considered himself as “out”, belonging to a lost world. There was another one, Dall-Korle, the blindman of Corlay. It had been a long time since he had a biniawer to play with him when I heard him for the first time in 1926 (I was six) at the Saint-Loup festival in Guingamp. He was playing by himself, and his only companion was a drum played by a teenager. One can say that the clarinet has completely erased the bombard in this region. What has probably contributed to its success was the new sound it brought and the new repertoire played by these “modern” musicians, which had nothing to do with the one played by traditional pipers, but which, as I just said, due to the inventive “bretonization” they used, answered their customers’ needs and musical concepts.

When I am told “But you did not collect clarinet airs”, I answer that I collected what was worth collecting. Why would I have spent time noting down polkas, mazurkas, scottishs, waltzes, which made up the brunt of their repertoire? From a man named Moign from Plouguernevel, I collected three airs for dañs-tro. I also collected practically all the nuptial marches played by the clarinetists, often unbeknownst to them. In all, that’s probably about fifteen original airs, maybe twenty at most. Anyway, they are in my book. Etienne Rivoallan collected more than I did, he performed incredible work! He wrote down clarinet airs, arranged them, put them end to end and thereby created medleys, which are today the basis of the “plinn” repertoire; because, before Etienne’s work, this repertoire was rather basic. People knew a dozen airs in all. Bretonized polka music, for the most part. Because the plinn, which is a local variation on the fañch, is nothing else than a polka. You find this same dance on both sides of the linguistic border: for the Gallos, the dance is a polka, for the Breton-speakers, it has become a fanch or a plinn. The same airs fit both forms, with few adaptations to the common rhythm.

There are other Breton dances that we know came from afar. The Dérobée, called in Finistère Montfarine, comes from Italy; most of the airs used for this dance are known in the South of France, even in Piedmont. On both sides of the Lorient harbor, you find a three step dance, probably introduced in Brittany following the Crimean war. In Finistère, it is called Jimnaska, which does not mean a thing either in Breton or in French. The ending – ska (Slavic feminine ending) might be an indication; besides the step is the one of the horo in the Balkans. However, at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, no six-stepped dances were known in Brittany. The same dance is found in Morbihan under various names: hanterzans, hanterdro, Demi-Tour. It can also be found mixed with other older dances: hanter-dro/An dro, for instance, alternating beats in 4/4 and ¾.

**TV: Therefore it can be said that the Breton tradition did assimilate foreign elements by “bretonizing” them. But because of the language barrier, Lower**

**Brittany probably remained relatively immune from new songs coming from somewhere else.**

**PM:** This might have been true at a time when Lower Brittany was exclusively Breton-speaking, although in the towns and particularly in the ports (in particular Brest and Lorient), there was always a significant percentage of bilingual speakers. In my opinion, I think one should take into consideration the important role played by the Gallo region in this perspective. It served more or less as a buffer. Many things got into Lower Brittany already tempered by their passage among the French or Gallo speakers of Upper Brittany, who had their own Breton tradition, most notably in the Gallo region of Vannes. The Vannes region is certainly the one in Lower Brittany which has received the least foreign influences in its music. Foreign airs are rarely found there, even “bretonized” ones. On the other hand, and that will always be a mystery to me, hunting horn airs are quite numerous. Was it because hunting parties were held so often in the past that traditional musicians felt they had to adopt their airs?

**TV: You are blamed sometimes, and not only you but other collectors of the past, for bypassing a scientific approach, and going to the field with certain ideas in mind, and having collected only the music that fit those ideas.**

**PM:** It’s easy today to say this. When we took things in hand in 1942, it was too late, there was practically nothing left. So on one hand, you had to hurry and note everything you could collect from old pipers who already had a foot in the grave. On the other hand, our will was to propagate anew only genuinely Breton airs, and therefore ignore what was not such, which represented 80% of the repertoire of the pipers and musicians. Where there was nothing Breton to gather, we had to satisfy ourselves with what existed: some dance suites from the Aven country or the Bigouden country, for instance.

When it comes to vocal music, we were invaded by Welsh, Irish, Scottish, Flemish, English or German airs.... The whole Breton movement at the time had this strange mania of adapting Breton texts to airs borrowed from our Celtic brothers and cousins! Even our national anthem, which is Welsh! It would not have been so bad if at the same time, the genuine Breton repertoire had not been neglected. It’s easy today for those professional critics to say that what we did was not scientific! I will answer simply this: if we had not done what we did, in the worst possible conditions, then today there would be nothing, because there would be nothing left.

**TV: So it was not purely collecting, but more work to safeguard a tradition and activism.**

**PM:** That’s what it was at the start, because we had to work fast, all the old generation pipers being very aged. When I conducted a census of these pipers between

October and Christmas 1942, I put together a list of about sixty names. There were probably more than that. So I wrote to the mayors and priests of about a hundred villages to ask them for the names and addresses, and if possible the date of birth of pipers around them. I started by visiting the older ones, thinking they would be the ones to go first. My mistake! Many of the younger ones died before their elders. Finally, I was able to write down the repertoire of only seventeen of them. The others were playing the accordion, the saxophone, the clarinet, the fiddle, sometimes people whistled or sang pipers' airs. A great number of those I included in the census could not play the pipes, or whistle or sing. I even know one who was missing an arm, Le Gall, the old friend of Magadur.

And then I could not collect everything. We did not have tape recorders at the time. Today you press a button and it's in the box. In my time, you had to know music and be able to write it down. Today, the first guy who knows how to plug in the recorder and install a mike calls it "collecting". I would have liked to see them forty years ago! I wonder how they would have done that "scientifically".

**TV: This was quite a tumultuous time to collect music, right during the war!**

**PM:** It was worse than war, it was under the occupation, with all the related difficulties this entailed. In order to travel, I was using my old bicycle: most of the roads were all pot holes, carved out not only because of a lack of maintenance but also by the heavy German vehicles. At the time, many country roads were not asphalted. The telephone? It was still a rarity and I was often stood up for interviews arranged by mail, because the letter had not arrived. I covered hundreds and hundreds of miles on foot and spent so many nights on haystacks or in barns. No, it can't be said that this was "scientific" collecting...

**TV: And then, on top of this, you had problems with the occupation force, the French government in Vichy, and further with the new government after the Liberation?**

**PM:** I refused to serve for the S.T.O. (mandatory work service in Germany). I was therefore "on the run" for two years. I was actually more fearful of the French gendarmes than of the Germans. The latter had other fish to fry than to run after some guy collecting music. Whereas the gendarmes were following the orders they were getting from the Vichy government: at least the majority of them, but you had no way to know who were the fair ones, so you had to be on the lookout for anybody wearing a police hat.

The B.A.S. (pipers' association) organized its first workshop in secret in September 1943 at Port-Coblanc near Gouezec. The gendarmes from Pleyben came to see what we were up to. I fled at the last minute and saved myself by swimming across the canal... Then I

was arrested by the Germans and sent to Germany. The day I came back to St. Brieuc, I was sent to jail for six months! I agree that I was freed after six months, but it does not change the fact that, while I was in Germany and then in jail in Brittany, or from July 44 to November 45, a dozen old pipers passed away. I cannot forgive that! How many hundreds of airs have therefore disappeared forever when I could have noted them down.

**TV: During this period, there was not only fear, violence, hatred but also misunderstanding. Breton music was despised. You had not chosen the best time to collect it!**

**PM:** I did not choose anything. It had to be done fast because time was a concern. Today, collecting happens in completely different conditions. There is electricity everywhere, tape recorders, cars, and Breton music has been rehabilitated. In my time, the old pipers were not willing to give me their airs. Their repertoire was their own, a patrimony they had to defend their whole life against other pipers avid to fluff up their own repertoire, and to do it to their detriment. Many of them did not understand why I had such a passion for stuff nobody was interested in. I am sure that some of them thought I was a moron! I remember Gus Salaun of Bannalec. He was 40 or 45 years old when I met him: for me, he was not an "old" piper in the meaning we had at the time. When he saw me with my lined paper and pencil, either he changed the air or stopped playing. In the end, I noted very few airs from him, because the majority of his repertoire was made up of non-Breton airs, and those Breton airs he played – and God knows he played them so well – I got them mostly from Bodivit of Fouesnant, who was his partner, or from the Sciallour brothers from St.-Yvi. Gus is certainly the greatest bombard virtuoso I ever heard. I remember hearing him at a festivity on August 15<sup>th</sup> at Port-Manec'h: he took to the stage at least twice, but apart from a suite of Aven gavottes he played with great mastery, all the other interpretations were foreign, like "Crystal Pearls" and the "Tyrolian". He mastered his instrument like few do today. He also played very much in tune. But although he had a very rich Breton repertoire, he preferred these foreign airs which gave him a chance to show off his mastery.

On the other hand, the Sciallour brothers were amazingly out of tune! Particularly the biniou kozh! For me, though, it did not matter: the airs they gave me are being played in tune today, and that's what matters.

I pursued taking down music after I came out of jail and until 1953, when the last "old" pipers died, and he was really old: Tanguy de Melrand. He died when he was 93 or 94. I must add that I could do this collecting work only on Sundays or late in the evening after my professional work. I had to earn a living for myself and my family.

**TV: And these old pipers, how did they live, how did they make a living?**

**PM:** Till the first World War, most of them were professionals. Piping for them was a job. Between the two wars, there were some who had a job which left them enough free time to pipe. Guillaume Leon, in Carhaix, was a barber... and a piper. Gus Salaun was himself a moonshine distiller, and a piper. Many of them were millers, particularly in the Vannetais area.

**TV: And who was manufacturing the instruments?**

**PM:** In the 1940's, there was practically no manufacturer left, because there was no demand. Le Mignon, in Glomel, had not had a client in 20 years. Douguet, the miller in Dinéault, stopped manufacturing at the start of the first World War. Nonetheless, I met a clog maker in Guéméné-sur-Scorff, by the name of Hubert, who was still manufacturing upon request bombards and bagpipes on a carpenter lathe he had put together using an old Singer sewing machine. The gimlet was an old bayonet from I won't even remember which war, 1870 or 1914-18. There were others, including one I will not name, who was mass producing instruments for tourists that were not even pierced! In Paris, Maison Gabard started manufacturing bombards at the request of Herve Le Menn, from Kenvreureiz ar Vinioerien (Bagpipers Association). I have held some of them: the least I can say is that they were not exactly outstanding. They were also in a very low tone, too low for the usual tonality of biniou kozh in Brittany, in flat G or A. It is Dorig Le Voyer who, in 1931 or 1932, decided that this tonality was too low: he made a first bombard in B flat, a tonality that was further imposed on all pipers in the new generation, starting in 1941. Actually, the most common tonality in Brittany was the natural B, but the ones that matched the big bagpipes the best were in B flat. Today all the bagads and most of the couples of pipers are playing in B flat. Some preferred at some point to go back to the tonality of their home region, i.e. in C in Lower Cornouaille, in A in the Vannetais region along the coast. Dorig Le Voyer was spending most of his time, and I did the same, looking for wood. We were visiting lathe operators, looking for gaiac wood (*gaiaacum officianalis*), we were buying old jointers out of service, tree wood, and considered ourselves lucky when we were coming upon boxwood that was not too green (25 years drying it in the shade!). It seems that the old guys were also using fossilized wood, but I have never come across any of it.

**TV: In the old days, traditional musicians used to play what the public was asking them to. It's not in the tradition to say: "We play only traditional tunes, no waltzes, no tangos, no disco, etc."**

What you say is so true: all the old pipers I met were constrained to add modern dances to their repertoire, one day or another, to avoid dying of hunger. They were making their last attempt. But they were always missing what the young ones wanted, at least when it came to fashionable airs, new and richer sounds.

**TV: And what were orchestras like the Menez doing?**

They were playing all the dances of the time, rumba, samba, swing, etc. on top of Breton dances of course. Menez played chromatic accordion: he has composed a number of gavottes with three and even five parts, where the chromatism allowed by the instrument is very often present. Some of these airs are not possible to play on the bombard, and even less on the biniou or the bagpipes. The first time I heard them was at a wedding in Poullaouen in December 1943. I was flabbergasted. Needless to say, these airs have not been piped since, or only under a simplified form, which deprives them of the character the composer wanted.

**TV: Did you memorize some of the airs that Jeff Le Penven censored?**

**PM:** Not all of them. In the beginning, I was submitting them to Jeff, who was mercilessly getting rid of what was not absolutely Breton. I was keeping copies. When I noticed he threw anything that was in doubt in the garbage, I decided to keep copies. And I think I was right to do so, because several of these airs were found later by others who started playing them, sometimes with much less interesting variations. So I told myself that these airs, while doubtful from the point of view of whether they were really Breton, were very pleasant anyway and deserved to be played. Anyway, they are much better played today than at the time. But how many non-Breton airs have been thrown away? Surely several hundreds.

**TV: Your book features scottichs, pas-de-quatres, polkas, waltzes, mazurkas, counterdances, square dances...**

**PM:** Yes, that's what I saved from Jeff's garbage can! They are there to prove that, at a certain time, the pipers played them, so they would not completely disappear, like a last jolt in their professional life and to prove they were just as able as others to play the Parisian "hits". The scottichs, the mazurkas, the square dances were played at all the weddings in my childhood.

**TV: When were the Celtic circles getting formed?**

**PM:** At the turn of the century, but in a very informal way. In 1905, the "Blue Nets Festival" was created in Concarneau, and it is still going on, with a goal to help the families of seamen lost at sea. Almost the same year, Pont-Aven saw the birth of the "Gorse Flower Festival" and Douarnenez the "Seagull Festival". All the events had a humanitarian goal: to help the seamen's families and poor people. At the time, there was no need to "costume" people: everybody was wearing their Breton outfits. When I use the word "costume", it's in the noble meaning of the term, changing outfits. Men left for World War I dressed as Bretons; those who came back (about a

quarter million Bretons did not make it), they were wearing the Clemenceau “porpant” (vest). “Tiger” Clemenceau had given each soldier going home a vest and a cap! World War I not only killed men, it also killed the Breton male outfit.

The first Celtic Circle was born in Paris in 1917. The Bretons in Paris deemed it necessary to create a kind of welcoming center for the men who were wounded, convalescing, or on leave and did not have time to go all the way to Brittany. Those Bretons coming back from the war front loved to dance; evenings were organized for them where Breton dancing was the highlight of the event. The name “Celtic Circle” was given to this by folk dancing organizations. Before WWII, there were about a dozen of them in Brittany. Between 1945 and 1955, another two hundred were created both in Brittany and in the centers where the Breton diaspora were located in France, but also in its previous colonies and its maritime territories.

The Celtic Circles have surely committed and propagated quite a lot of choreographic mistakes! A lot of them did not have pipers; sometimes the dances were not taught properly and even completely invented. I think that it was the renewal of the Festoù noz starting in 1955 which has allowed a correction of these mistakes.

#### **TV: Let's talk about this renewal.**

**PM:** We owe it to Loeiz Ropars. Actually, he never thought of reviving festoù-noz. His starting idea was to revive kan-ha-diskan, and with this aim, to organize contests for singers everywhere in central Brittany. In the old times, the kaner and diskaner singers were dancing as they sung, or singing as they danced, as you will. The kaner led the dance and the diskaner was at the end of the open chain of dancers. In order to avoid any distortion in the rhythm, the head and the tail of the chain stayed close to each other. In the contests that Loeiz Ropars organized, the singers were on stage and had microphones. In order to keep the rhythm, they held each other by the shoulders and vibrated in sync. To help them further, a few people in the room were asked to come and dance in front of the stage. Progressively, the number of dancers grew to the point it reached the opposite goal: people were paying to come dance and not just to listen to the singers: the fest-noz was revived. And this is where Loeiz Ropars' genius really showed: he understood immediately that he should catch this wave. In a matter of months, the number of festoù-noz astonished everybody. There were hundreds, rather thousands, of people of all ages, coming every week here and there to dance till midnight gavottes, bals, plinn, fisel, etc...

Because of this, a good number of unknown singers came out. The piper couples found work, and when small music formations also tried, they got included in the fest-noz programs. Some very old people like Catherine

Guern for instance became something like stars. She was over 90 when she was awarded the Charles Cros Academy award... Not to mention the Goadec Sisters from Treffrin, the Morvan Brothers from St. Nicodème, Lomig Donniou and his singing companion, Mrs. LeVeve from Rostrenen. While the geographic center for festoù-noz remains central Brittany, they are found everywhere today, in the Gallo country as well as in all the places where the Bretons have emigrated. Why not after all! It is yet another proof of the interest Bretons of all ages have for their traditional culture.

#### **TV: Can the same air be played as a gavotte or a plinn, for instance?**

**PM:** Yes, certainly! But some airs are associated with particular dances, and it would not come to the mind of the pipers to transform them to adapt them to other steps. Since we are dealing most of the time with 4-beat bars, 4/4 or 12/8, It is easy to impart to them the style and rhythm required by the dancers. Several “fisel” are also known as gavottes, and the reverse is also true.

Etienne Rivoallan took airs from most everywhere, fisel, gavottes, fañch, even polkas, to make plinn medleys which built his reputation. His adaptations are always perfect from every point of view. Because of this, the plinn has gained favor in an unbelievable way, compared with what I knew forty-five years ago. In the old days, the plinn was danced exclusively in the villages of Maël-Pestivien and Bulat-Pestivien. Everywhere else it was called fañch. It was propagated thanks to the festoù-noz towards the west and the southwest. There were several ways to dance the fañch. It was danced differently in the fisel country from the fañch country. There were also variations, like the Fañch-Plonné or the Kreajet, a combination of fañch and fisel steps which arose nobody knows where or when, probably in the Trébrivan region between the two wars. Truthfully, I have never seen men aged 20 to 30 practice it. It was a very difficult and exhausting step. The same men are today 60 or 70, and it would be interesting to find out whether they continue to dance the Kreajet.

But to get back to your question, I would say that a gavotte air, which includes a ton simple (first movement) or ton double (second movement) works everywhere in Central Finistère and all the way to the fisel region; it can also be used in southern Cornouailles as in Pays Pourlet and even in the region west of the Scorff river. But you need to adapt to the rhythm and to respect the tempo and beat of the region where it is being played.

Like my old professor from Carhaix Guillaume Leon (known as Leon Braz, a famous piper) used to say: “You need to talk with the bombard. You must explain with the bombard what you want to say. If you don't talk to them with your bombard, they will never understand you.” They, of course, meant the dancers!



The bombard player is the master of the dance. During weddings, the guests often came from a variety of choreographic regions; therefore they did not necessarily dance the same way. The leader of the dance imposes his step on the rest of the dance chain. Everybody must follow him; first, from common courtesy, particularly if it is an older dance leader and he is not as agile as he used to be. The bombard player, also out of courtesy, adapts his playing to the abilities of the dance leader. It is not done today anymore, which is very regrettable. You just need to watch a fest-noz in town to see this; each dancer tries much more to impress his neighbors with more or less acrobatic steps than to respect the sober style of the dance leader, or, on the contrary, will be satisfied with barely formed steps, when the leader is a skilled dancer with a complicated step.

Today, almost all couples of pipers are able to have people everywhere dance very uniformly. This happened with the loss of the nuances that used to exist between villages in the old times. Because then the pipers knew mostly their own activity sector, defined by a day's walk (25 miles at most). While there, they were comfortable and nobody was giving them lessons. The pipers from Bannalec or Rosporden were not able to perform a dance well in Carhaix. The Bigoudens, once out of their region, were not much appreciated. Leon Braz was from the Poher region, but he would rarely go to the Côtes-du-Nord. His favorite territory was the Braspartz region. At the end of his life, he associated himself with one of the Le Nouveau from St. Tugdual in the Pourlet country, who had also lost his companion. This is how he got to play the repertoire of the Pourlet country, a very different one from his own. That's how he mixed up the styles. By the end of his life, he was not able to play correctly for dancers from the Poher or even from Carhaix, his own native town. Leon Braz had a huge repertoire. In the work published in 1913 by Marcel Duhamel, which contains over 400 songs, a quarter of them were given to him by Leon Braz. Besides these, Duhamel noted down about 600 songs from the Leon region. There is reason to believe that the manuscripts are at the National Library in Paris, because they were never published. Leon also knew a great number of modern dances.

**TV: Your father played the diatonic accordion.**

**PM:** Yes, or at least that's what I was told by his younger brother, my godfather, in 1901. My father did not know how to read music: he played by ear. His repertoire was exclusively made up of fashionable airs from the turn of the century: quadrilles, pas-de-quatre, mazurkas, scottishs, polkas, waltzes, and the Dérobée de Saint-Loup. He also knew some Breton songs from Goelo. He was born in Squiffiec in 1891. His father died when he was thirteen, so he apprenticed as a carpenter, and started playing accordion at weddings to earn some money to help his mother bring up his six siblings.

**TV: Therefore folk music was honored in your family?**

**PM:** Actually not really. I heard my father play only three or four times, and I have not kept a lasting memory of it; actually, by then, he had not touched an accordion for forty years. My godfather was much better than him, but he was already playing the repertoire fashionable after the war: malchiche, tango, one-step and others... No, I can't say that folk music occupied a special place in my family. However my father gave me some songs in Breton: most of them cannot be published because the texts are quite dirty! The Tregor region has a reputation for this kind of song.

**TV: Let's go back to the B.A.S. It was created in October 1942, so it has been around for almost 45 years.**

**PM:** We are indeed getting close to the half century. Over 35,000 young Bretons have gone through its ranks. It's true that some have stayed only a few months, but there are some who have been active since the beginning. In general, B.A.S. has 2,500 to 3,000 active members, most of them playing in bagadoù. Some years, the total number went over 3,000, but I don't believe that quantity is a better sign of vitality. Quality is what's better. In the period 1950-55, there were up to 120 bagadoù. Now there is about 70 of them, and it's better because they are all at a higher level.

*[Editor's Update: The B.A.S. has existed now for over 75 years and has some 10,000 members of which 4,500 are learners. There are 150 bagadoù – 125 in Brittany and 25 outside of Brittany]*

B.A.S. was for over twenty years the locomotive for the Breton cultural movement. It was this organization which picked up the torch after WWII, when everything seemed to be definitively compromised. There were very few at the time who would declare themselves Breton since anything Breton was branded as "collaboration" with the occupying forces. As if Brittany had waited until 1940 to speak Breton and play Breton airs. It was not easy to impose ourselves, our convictions and our faith in the rebirth of our popular culture. However, we found a few friends along the road, who, like us, accepted to brave the imbecility and the acrimony of clueless foes.

**TV: Breton culture was prohibited then?**

**PM:** No, they did not dare go that far, but it was worse because it was insidious. You were despised, we were accused of organizing dark plots! Never openly, although certain local papers, whose copies I keep precious, took less precautions to scapegoat us. And then, these petty scribblers went to the cemetery, and nobody after that thought of bothering us.

**TV: In your book, you explain the loss of interest in becoming a piper.**

**PM:** It is true that the craft started to decline as soon as it stopped feeding a man. Therefore, the young ones were reluctant to embrace a compromised career. They preferred to learn other instruments, more appreciated.

Any profession where for 40 or 50 years, no apprentice is formed, is irreversibly condemned to disappear. And we know, based on the average age of older pipers still alive 1940, that they had not been able to ensure their succession. There were indeed a few young pipers, often, by the way, the sons of old pipers, following in their fathers' footsteps, but you could count them on your fingers, which, at the scale of Brittany, is quite insignificant.

I have always been amazed by the idea that Gus Salaun is considered by the young pipers as an "old" piper. When I met him, he was 45 years old. Lanig Gueguen from Fouesnant was barely 30; the Louet brothers from Elliant, were not yet 20! When I talk about old pipers, I am thinking of people who were over 80 between 1942 and 1950, i.e. they had practiced their trade as pipers according to the rules inherited from their predecessors. When Pierre Tangy from Melrand was talking about his teacher, that brought us back to the Napoleonic era! His teacher was born at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**TV: What can you say about the military bagadoù?**

**PM:** I think we should see them as a kind of official blessing of instrumental Breton music, and the work of B.A.S. as well, since these formations recruit the best elements every year from among the contingent who are active in the bagadoù, at least most of them. The most surprising fact is that these bagadoù manage to satisfy, both in numbers as well as quality, two existing military formations: the one at the Aeronaval Base in Lann-Bihoué for the Navy, and the one of the 41<sup>st</sup> infantry regiment based at Ty-Fougeret near Châteaulin. The bagad at the Apprentice-Mechanics for the Navy, based at Saint-Mandrier near Toulon, has another type of recruitment. And about twenty years ago, there was also a bagad at the Naval Health School in Bordeaux.

**TV: All these people should be saying "Thank you Polig" for this. It must be quite better to spend your military service playing Breton music than being incorporated in a commando, for instance.**

**PM:** To everybody his own, and there surely are some who prefer to be in a commando than in a bagad. What I know is that the Navy, through its bagad, has a formidable outreach tool. A tool which has not always been appreciated for its real value.

What I also know is that there are 311 pipers who have done their military service at the B.A.S. of Lann-Bihoué

during the Algerian war. These guys were surely happier to be there than going to crawl in the djebells and risk their lives.

**TV: You mentioned earlier the old instrument makers. There is today a number of manufacturers, and what they make is often of very high quality.**

**PM:** That's true. What they make is without doubt much better than what was to be found in the old times. What I understand less is that some good pipers remain faithful to the use of ancient instruments, with a lesser quality, at least when it comes to the resonance. If it is a good instrument – and they were not all failures – all the better, but some of the ones I hear sometimes would do better as a decoration nailed to the living room wall, rather than have music lovers grind their teeth.

I should mention that many instruments were made earlier by woodturners, who had no notion whatsoever about musical instrument making, and they were not even pipers. You could not find two identical instruments in their production. Tuned (?) with the same original chanter, they changed into devils the day you had to replace it. I know what I am talking about because I have (vainly) tried to adapt a chanter to these instruments for weeks and weeks.

## LEXICON

*Breton departments* (or districts): Finistère, Morbihan, Côtes-du Nord (today called Côtes d'Armor) and Ille-et-Vilaine, plus Loire Atlantique which was separated during World War II. Older divisions in Lower Brittany reflect the bishoprics before the French Revolution, and include Vannetais in the South, Trégor and Léon in the North, and Cornouaille in the west. Further divisions are called Pays in French (Bro in Breton), like for instance Bro Bigouden in Southwest Cornouaille.

*Biniou kozh*: small bagpipe, with a shrill sound, typical of Brittany

*Bombard* (also called *talabarde*): a type of oboe, usually coupled with the *biniou-kozh*. The name has nothing to do with the bombarde, a small cannon. Except both are deafeningly loud!

*Trujenn-gaol*: translates as cabbage stump, and is the name of the clarinet used in Breton music

*Bagad* (pl. *bagadoù*): a formation of a dozen or more musicians, playing the Scottish style bagpipes, bombards and drums. Other instruments are often added such as the *biniou kozh*,

*Celtic circle*: a club where people learn Breton dancing and singing, traditional crafts like embroidery, Breton language lessons, and other activities relating to Breton

culture. Most every large village and town in Brittany have one.

*Kan ar Bobl*: Song of the People festival in Lorient.

*Fest-noz* (pl. *festoù-noz*): night dance, starting around 11 pm and ending at dawn, where dances are played all night for the audience, who comes specifically to dance to the music performed by several performers during the night, each set featuring a couple of pipers or singers. There are also *fest-deiz*, done during the day, usually during a parish or a language festival.

*Kan-ha-diskan*: the type of singing used during a fest-noz, where a “kaner” starts the song, which is picked up on the last few syllables by the “diskaner” who repeats the previous verse and starts a new one. Then the “kaner” picks up the end of the new verse and continues. The same principle is used for the pair biniou-bombard

*Compère*: the piping or playing companion of a pair of pipers or singers.

*Plinn, gavotte, fisel, an dro, hanter-dro* : traditional chain dances from Lower Brittany. The differences are in the steps.

*Jabadaw* (or *baladaw* or *jabadao*): dance from Southwest Brittany, with acrobatic jumps. It was forbidden by the church as “too salacious”.

*Son* : a musical piece, often a dance tune, a joyful song, maybe even a comic one.

*Gwerz* : a vocal song, mostly melancholy, often sung a capella or with a light harp accompaniment. Piano, guitar even flute can also be used to back the singer, but it always remains as a support.

World War I: the 1914-1918 conflict. Non French-speaking Bretons were forcibly recruited, and either shot as deserters or sent to the front.

World War II: the 1939-1944 war. By then, French had been imposed as the only language in France.

### ***Want to Know More? – A Few Suggestions from the Editor***

Yves Labbé / Ar Men, “Polig Monjarret – un pionnier du renouveau musical” *Ar Men* 53, Aug. 1993, pp. 44-57.

Hoel Louarn, “Polig Mopnjarret – Regard sur un siècle de musique bretonne” *Musique Bretonne* 158, Jan-Feb 2000, pp. 32-33.

Various, “Polig Monjarret 1920-2003” *Ar Soner* numéro special, No. 372, Jan-Feb 2004, 24 pages.

Bob Haslé “Une affaire classée il y a soizante ans” and Kristian Hamon “30 octobre 1945 – le procès de Polig Monjarret” *Ar Soner* 379, Fall 2005, pp. 24-27.

Polig Monjarret, *Tonioù Breizh-Izel, Volumes 1 and 2, Musique Populaire de Basse-Bretagne*. Bodadeg ar Sonerion and Dastum, 1982 and 2003

Polig Monjarret, *Kanaouennoù Breizh, Volume 3, Musique et Chants populaires de Bretagne*. Dastum. Bobadeg ar Sonerion Amis de Polig Monjarret, 2014,

*Ar Soner*, 1949-1980 – this magazine of the Bodadeg ar Sonerion includes hundreds of articles by Polig Monjarret.

### **New Music Publications - Two Masterpieces from Dastum**



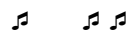
**Dominique Jouve – Poatr an dreujenn-gaol, sonneur de clarinette**. Dastum, 2019. Collection “Passeurs”. 60 selection CD, 32-page booklet, 58-page PDF document.

For 2019 Dastum has launched a new series of CDs with booklets called “Passeurs” to feature the work of musicians, singers and storytellers who not only collect from masters of Breton tradition, but are outstanding performers themselves, and pass their knowledge along to others.

The first in this series is a double CD featuring Dominique Jouve, a clarinet player and teacher at the Kreiz-Breizh music school in Rostrenen. The first CD, called “Dec’h,” presents recordings from 1984 to the present of clarinet players from whom Dominique Jouve collected and learned. The second CD. Called “Hiriv” includes his own performances as well as other clarinet players with whom he shared his repertoire.

As is the case for all Dastum productions, this one comes with a wealth of information. Besides a 32-page booklet in which Dominique Jouve recounts his experiences, one has access to a 58-page PDF document with details about the repertoire presented, musical analysis and transcriptions, and lots of photos.

To launch this CD (as is done for others) a fest noz was held on February 10 including an all-star line-up of clarinet players and other musicians.





**Marcel Le Guilloux – Chanteur, Conteur, Paysan du Centre-Bretagne.** Dastum / Presses universitaires de Rennes. 2019. 464 page book with CD.

Traditional singer Marcel Le Guilloux has been a mentor to several generations of younger singers and is known not only for his mastery of Breton language song – gwerziou and songs for dances – of Central Brittany, but also for his generosity in passing this on to others.

The book was put together by Marthe Vassallo and is based on interviews conducted over the past ten years. It presents Marcel Le Guilloux's life as a farmer in rural central Brittany as well as his experiences as a singer, story teller and mentor. Some 75 song texts are also included in the book. The CD, prepared by Ifig and Nanda Troadec, presents 30 performances by Marcel Le Guilloux with thirteen of his most frequent song partners.

## Heard of but not heard ... a few new CDs from Brittany



### Hiks, *Bezañ en e vutun*.

This is the 5th album by this well known fest noz band made up of Gaëtan Lefèvre on bombarde, Yann Le Gall on guitar, Stéphane de Vito on electric bass, Pierre Droual on fiddle, and Benoît Guillemot on drums. This CD

includes a fisel suite and Loudia suite, rond de Saint-Vincent, hanter dro, mazurka and Kas a-barzh.



### Yann-Fañch Kemener. *Roudennoù / Traces*. Buda Prioductions. 7715525

This double CD presents poetry in recitation, song – melodies and dances – and instrumental arrangements drawn from Breton language and French

language poets of Brittany. These include Xavier Grall, Anjela Duval, Maodez Glanndour, Yann Sohier, Gilles Baudry, Jean Lavoué, Jakez Riou and Yann-Ber Calloc'h. Yann-Fañch Kemener's voice is partnered with Erwan Tobie (accordion), Heikki Bourgault (guitar), Anne Auffret (harp and voice), Achille Grimaud (narratives), Aldo Ripoché (cello) and Eric Menneteau (voice) – all partners for many of his past concert creations and CDs.



### Marion Rouxin, *L'Autre*.

This CD features eleven songs in French by Marion Rouxin evoking "the other"- dualities of all kinds, with a focus on women and refugees. She is accompanied by Edouard Leys on

piano.



### Arnaud Royer. *Arnaud Royer*.

This self-described "folk guitarist" provides a selection of his own compositions, some of which are drawn from the tradition of Gallo Brittany. He is accompanied by Erwan Volang on bass,

Yvan Knorst on electric guitar, and Gabriel Jégo on keyboards.



### Talec-Noguet Quartet. *Dindan dilhad dindan*.

Rozen Talec with vocals has paired with Yannig Noguet on accordion for several years. Here they add Julien Padovani on keyboards and Timothée Le Bour on

saxophones for a new quartet. The CD includes a melody and a song but features dances: a gavotte suite, tour, mazurka, hanter dro, laridé, and a plinn suite.



### Titom, *V*.

This is the fifth album by this fest noz band with an electric buzz. The band is made up of Thomas Lotout on bombarde, Gaëtan Grandjean on bouzouki, Yannig Alory on flute,

Stéphane Rama on electric bass, and Jean-Christophe Boccou on drums. The CD includes several melodies but features dances" polka, circle circassien, ridee, pach pi, waltz, gavotte, laridé and laridé gavotte.



### Les 3 Fromages. *Live à Quiberon*.

This is a DVD and CD with 19 selections (in French) from a live performance by "the 3 cheeses." The group is called "Rock'n'drôle" in reference to their rock style and penchant for comedy skits. Formed in

2006 in Quiberon, the group is composed of Éric Brison on electric bass, Thibault Mayer on guitar, and Willy Gachet on drums.

## Deep Inside a Breton Skull 59 Marks, signs, symbols

Jean Pierre Le Mat



Standing on a stone, the archidruid was celebrating an ancient rite. Around him, two dozen druids, dressed in white, made a circle. A little further, a hundred outsiders, too puzzled to be ironic, were listening to Breton words, which most of them did not understand.

After the ceremony, a dark-haired young man went to encounter the archidruid. The old man was not surprised, because their eyes met several times during the ceremony.

- Would you like to know the meaning of our symbols? -  
The old man asked him in a gentle way.



- Symbols are trivia for old religions and for old people -  
The young man answered baldly.

Worried and stimulated by the passion of the other one,  
the wise man interrupted him.

- Oh, but I know who you are, young tiger! You are an  
activist. You have even stayed in prison for our shadowy  
nation! Tell me... You discard the symbols, but have you  
never looked with fever our black and white banner? Did  
you never wear a red bonnet, with a triskell on it? That  
would surprise me a lot...



- The triskell or the Gwen-ha-du flag are  
not symbols, but marks. I don't mind  
about the shapes, the colors, and all the  
subtle meanings you find about them.  
What is important is that these marks  
make the Breton people gather around  
them.



- Oh! Things are not so simple ... The  
past generations shaped these marks.  
They figured the features of our  
immortal gods. Through these marks,  
they impose -or propose- divine  
requirements.

- Come on! These marks were  
composed by our most valiant fathers,  
or by the best inspired among them, to  
rally their companions. The gods of heaven, and the  
druids entangled in their robes, have nothing to do with it.

- We, druids, we just interpret the signs of heaven. And it  
is indeed the most gallant and inspired men who make  
them visible. I recognize that it is through them that the  
gods express themselves, not through us.

The young man, slightly astonished by the modesty of the  
druid, did not resist the pleasure of arrogance.

- And what happens if, by fancy or madness, I would  
create new marks? If I change the old ones?

- Well, for the Bretons, it would be an innovation. And by  
fancy, they would accept or reject it. But would it be really  
fanciness? Would it be what is called "the popular genius"  
or "the collective unconscious"? Aesthetic judgments are  
not rational; no doubt it is necessary to relate them to  
something else than human reason. They can be linked  
with our national gods ... or with the collective  
unconscious... which can be the same thing. Maybe what  
you name fancy or madness is divine inspiration. Your  
fate then would be lucky: Only a few people deserve to  
be the messengers of Avallon.

- My rallying signs can exist without your interpretations!  
My actions and my ideas too, fortunately! -The young  
man was vaguely irritated by the turn of the discussion.

- Yes, for sure... said the old druid smoothly. The body  
can exist without clothing, the number without  
computation, the animal without hunting. We can define  
the first without the second, and not the second without  
the first. Nevertheless, men greatly appreciate clothes,  
computation and hunting. It happens that clothes are  
splendid and the body neglected. All these diversions, all  
these secondary inventions, all these interpretations  
constitute what is called a culture. Although we can do  
without it, we are doomed to culture. We are doomed to  
always invent, always entertain, always interpret. And so  
we are brought closer to our gods.

- Is it the gods who condemned us to culture?

- Probably. On the other hand, men have condemned the  
gods to look like them, and to submit them to duties  
within their reach.

- That's a circle of reasoning that does not make sense ...  
-The young man sighed, looking at his interlocutor with  
disappointment.

- It is not a circle, -replied the druid- but another  
geometrical figure I allow you to guess. You will find the  
model on the aprons of our nice girls.

The young man remained silent for some time. His face  
reflected a deep reflection. Then he turned again to the  
archidruid:

- And what happens if, together with the world of men  
and the world of gods, I add another world, the world of  
external reality? This world whispers under my human  
eyes, and under divine beards. It moves backward and  
forward, leaving us a triangle of freedom...

The old druid drew a smile of collusion and satisfaction.

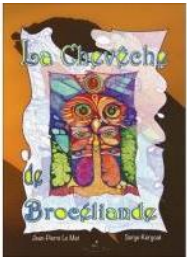
- You have just implemented a  
new figure of reasoning. The  
geometric representation is  
familiar to you, marked on your  
red bonnet. And you understood,  
at the same time, that our Breton



marks must be studied. The druid's role is to explain to  
kings and heroes, and today to our modern Bretons, the  
sense behind human actions. Gathering people around a  
flag is easy enough. But the gathering can be fertile and  
beget a holy gift. This gift, we call it life. There is no point  
in assembling sheep with bulls, cows with rams. This  
would not be coherent with the logic of humans, nor with  
the fantasy of gods, nor with the reality of our planet...

Nor with the design of your insignia ...

## Another New Book of Note



**Jean-Pierre Le Mat and Serge Kergoat, *La Chevêche de Brocéliande*.** Serge Kergoat Editions, 2018. 85 pages. ISBN 9782919359202.

This collaboration by author Jean-Pierre Le Mat and artist Serge Kergoat is unusual in a number of ways. First of

all its size – it is not thick, but “long.” With its 9 ½ inch width and 13 inch height this book is a challenge for most bookshelves. So much the better, since this is a hardback book whose unusual beauty will make you want to leave it on a table where you can enjoy it.

Readers of *Bro Nevez* are already familiar with the writing of Jean-Pierre Le Mat through his series “Deep Inside A Breton Skull.” This book includes twelve stories – in French - where the human and supernatural worlds co-exist and where one explores the legends of the Breton forest of Broceliande. A few of the characters you will meet and themes explored have appeared in the English language contributions Jean-Pierre Le Mat has sent to *Bro Nevez*. But in this new book the text is not simply printed on blank white pages. The truly unusual aspect of the book is the partnership of words with illustration.

Jean-Pierre Le Mat met artist Serge Kergoat in the early 1980s and they discussed working together on a book those many years ago. Here the book is, nearly 40 years later. While Le Mat’s texts are entrancing, it is their immersion into the illustrations of Kergoat which brings out the magic. There are some 20 full-page drawings to enjoy as well as numerous smaller illustrations bordering the texts – all colorful and evocative of the Celtic legends and themes presented. But it is the full pages of color that lie under the printed texts which I found intriguing – brown, green, blue, yellow – natural and architectural patterns of trees, the sea, rocks, fields, buildings or indistinct figures and designs left to one’s imagination. This “background” draws one beyond the printed words so that you linger on each page to enjoy the words and the color and textures of the illustrations.

This is a book of unusual visual beauty where author and illustrator have successfully partnered their creative talents.

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