

# BRO NEVEZ

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

**championnat de Bretagne de musique traditionnelle**

**festival de Cornouaille**  
21 27 JUILLET 97  
QUIMPER

**FESTIVAL DES NUITS D'ARMOR MONCONTOUR**  
Vendredi 11 Juillet 97 dès 21 H  
Carré Manchot  
Akiyo  
Les Trompettes du Mozambique  
Stewart  
Favard  
Martin / Pinc  
Anne / Sbrat / Nolwen Le Buhe  
Patrick Marie / Marcel Guilloux  
Samedi 12 Juillet 97 dès 21 H  
Atr'o celt sound system  
Ar Re Yaouank  
FEST-NOZ  
La Godinette  
FME  
Dimanche 13 juillet 97 dès 15 H  
Red Cardell  
Clara's  
Folkebeat  
Casse pipe  
Kanjar'ic  
FEST-DEIZ  
Mariella  
Sorvan  
Manthazard  
Tanaw  
Office de tourisme de Moncontour : 02 96 73 50 50

**FESTIVAL KANN AL LOAR LANDERNEAU**  
du 12 au 20 juillet 1997  
10<sup>e</sup> anniversaire  
12-20 a viz gouere 97  
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14 Son et Lumière AR VRO BAGAN « 39-45 »  
16 AR RE YAOVANK • Red Cardell  
15 AN TRISKELL • 20 DIAOULED AR MENEZ (25 ans !)  
18 GILLES SERVAT • Bagad Lokoal  
12-13 Village en Fête • 13 Fest Noz Fañeur Rhesus  
15 pay Bran • 16 Kanerien St Karañtek • 17 Teatr Penn ar Bed  
17-18 Festival Enfants Chat Facha • 18 Geraint Loggreen  
19 Fête du Port La Cambuse • 18 Geraint Loggreen  
20 Cor Alawon Menai • Dawnswey Caernarfon

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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.

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# **Brittany to be Included in the School Curriculum of Brittany...*Finally!!***

Lois Kuter

The following article is translated from one which appeared in Le Télégramme on June 26, 1997, (which is reprinted afterward) It reports on the decision by the National Education System to incorporate regional culture into some subject areas of the public schools. (my English translation follows). This is a revolutionary step, but one must wait to see what real impact it can have. Given a great deal of fanfare, the initiative is limited and will only get off the ground if families insist on it for their children and if the schools do some work to let families know that this is an option they can choose. And it will require teachers to voluntarily become engaged—a step which automatically means extra work on their part to get up to speed and redo their lessons. This official sanction of a Breton content to some program areas will at least give encouragement to those few teachers who have already worked on their own in this direction. A previously locked door has at least been opened a crack.

It is presumed by the regional chief of the French education system, Pierre Lostis, the Recteur d'Academie, that students will be eager to take a second step and enroll in Breton language classes once they get a bit of Breton content thrown into their French classes, art, music, sports, earth sciences and history/geography classes. But this new development plan does not seem to address any of the concerns raised by Breton language teachers and their suggested actions to remove some of the impediments which discourage students from pursuing Breton language study. Breton teachers have expressed some sincere concern that this new program to include regional culture in the national education curriculum is just a smoke screen to avoid any real effort to insure that Breton language classes are made accessible to more students.

The quality of the pedagogical materials produced to incorporate more Breton content in the national education curriculum and the efforts made by schools to really encourage students and teachers to get engaged in this initiative will determine if this new direction is more than just another token gesture on the part of France.

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## **BRITTANY ON THE MAP FOR THE NEXT SCHOOL YEAR**

The teaching of regional culture has no official recognition [in the public schools of France], and only a handful of students are able to learn Breton in school. This will change with the new school year thanks to a development plan presented yesterday [June 25, 1997] in Rennes where primary, middle, or high school students will be able to gain a clear consciousness of their roots and a good knowledge of the land where they live.

The graders of the history-geography exams had several surprises this week in discovering maps of Brittany on which graduation candidates had to situate the cities of Brest, Quimper, Rennes or Vannes .... an illustration of gaps in the education system where regional realities have not been made the object of any official instruction.

"Some students can go through all of their schooling without ever hearing anything about their region" underlined Pierre Lostis, Recteur d'Academie, who decided to launch a development plan for the next school year's opening to "allow all students to know how to situate themselves in their region" to "lead to a study of the language by means of an interest in the regional culture."

Six areas are concerned: French, history/geography, earth science, musical education, physical education, and plastic arts. In each area, working groups have defined learning goals and have drafted instructions to aid teachers in concretely integrating the regional patrimony into their teaching as part of the national program and school schedule. "These dispositions will in no way upset the national program, but will enrich it" commented Pierre Lostis.

Teacher training will also be reinforced, while pedagogical tools will be developed by the CRDP of Brittany with a special collection labeled "Regional culture." The first of these works will address "traditional games and sports." The following volumes will be devoted to music and history/geography. Another symbolic step will be taken with the 1998 school year in giving students at the 6<sup>th</sup> level a true textbook on the history of Brittany from antiquity to the present day. This will be edited by Franch Elegoet under the direction of the historian Yves Le Gallo.

The definition of academic orientations is also an opportunity to reflect on the role and place of regional culture in teaching. "It is no longer necessary to think that access to the culture comes obligatorily through the language, but it is necessary to get a maximum of students interested in the regional culture and through that in the language," explained Mr. Lostis.

While the plan presented yesterday is an important advance by the National Education system in the area of regional languages and cultures where Brittany will serve as a pilot project, it may find its limits by the fact that its execution is dependent on a demand by families and voluntary adoption on the part of teachers—an encouragement, but no obligation, with Brittany as an offering but not on a fixed menu. "We did not want to impose this. One would get off on the wrong foot that way," explained the Recteur who strongly believes that "it will pick up steam."

"Many teachers have not been at ease because they felt their initiatives were not supported by the institution. Now it will be the reverse," added Mr. Lostis. "It will be the whole school system of Brittany which will try to give an introduction to all the students."

And there is work to be done, since, of 600,000 primary, middle and high school students in the school system, only 22,000 (3.5%) benefit now from an access of some kind (introduction, beginning classes and bilingual education) to the Breton language.

## TOPIC BY TOPIC INSTRUCTION

Knowledge of the regional culture will be favored at all levels of schooling from primary through high school. Curriculum, drafted under the direction of the IPR (Inspecteur Pédagogiques Régionaux) will allow the integration of regional material into the education national program in six areas.

In history/geography the program approach "will contribute with others to the valorization of a Breton identity" in emphasizing regional illustrations in topics taken on. the academic document develops their incorporation class by class.

In literature, teachers can use the literary patrimony as a support in lessons: Chateaubriand, Louis Guilloux, Pierre Loti, Eugène Guillevic, Youenn Gwernig, etc. The suggestions for Breton works and authors refer to the national program.

In earth sciences a knowledge of flora, fauna and economic activity will be fostered through regional documents. For middle school new programs will serve as the model. In musical education points of correspondence between the national and regional level are numerous. The range from Breton composers (Cras, Le Flem) to Celtic themes in opera, and traditional music.

In physical education a large place will be given to "combat sports" like Breton wrestling which can later be judged for the baccalaureate like judo. Also to be cited are Breton "athletic activities" (boul-tenn, palet, etc.) and "team opposition activities" such as "bazhig kamm" or rope pulls (tug of war).

In plastic arts the areas of expression are very large, but the working group has for now given only very general ideas for education.

In the contribution to be made in the area of the Breton language, the Academy recommends for the lower levels of education to "respond to the requests of families in terms of the existent programs when staffing will permit this".

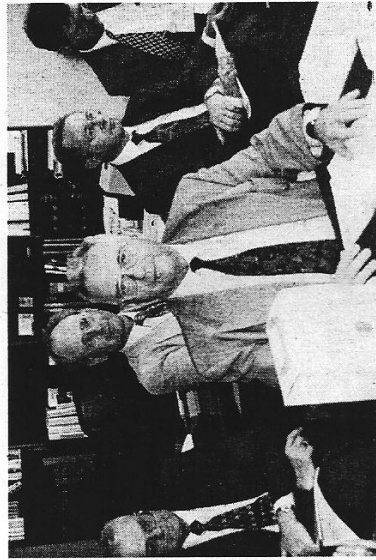
In the second level it wishes to promote training and open collaboration at all levels between regular lines of education and the Breton-speaking ones. That will be valuable especially for students in the bilingual school programs who, at the middle school level, can only continue in a bilingual program (if one exists) or take just one language option. They would have a middle path with a "second living language" option which would assure them of two or three hours of Breton a week.

Also, the management of teaching positions will be clarified. In two years all the positions to teach history/geography in the Breton language will cease to be under the regional language category. And, to respond to a strong demand, bilingual class teachers will be offered supplemental classes.

Orientations pour la culture et la langue régionales

# La Bretagne à la carte dès la rentrée prochaine

**RENNES (35).** - L'enseignement de la culture régionale ne fait l'objet d'aucune instruction officielle, et seule une poignée d'élèves peuvent apprendre le breton à l'école. Cela va changer à la rentrée grâce à un plan de développement présenté hier à Rennes afin que l'élève, le collègue ou le lycéen aient désormais une claire conscience de leurs racines et une bonne connaissance de l'espace où ils vivent.



**Pierre Lostis, recteur d'académie, a présenté ses objectifs pour le développement de la langue et de la culture régionale en compagnie des inspecteurs pédagogiques régionaux et des inspecteurs d'académie.**

Les correcteurs des épreuves d'histoire-géographie du brevet ont eu quelques surprises cette semaine en découvrant les cartes de Bretagne sur lesquelles les candidats devaient situer Brest, Quimper, Rennes ou Vannes... Une illustration des manques du système éducatif où l'enseignement des réalités régionales ne fait l'objet d'aucune instruction officielle.

## Un manuel scolaire sur l'histoire bretonne

« Certains élèves peuvent mener toute leur scolarité sans avoir entendu parler de leur région », souligne Pierre Lostis, recteur d'académie, qui, pour « permettre à tous les élèves de savoir se situer par rapport à leur région » et « amener à l'étude de la langue par l'intérêt ressenti pour la culture régionale », a décidé de lancer un plan de déve-

loppement dès la prochaine rentrée scolaire. Six matières sont concernées à tous les niveaux d'enseignement : français, histoire-géographie, SVT (sciences de la vie et de la terre), éducation musicale, EPS (éducation physique et sportive) et arts plastiques. Dans chaque cas, des groupes de travail ont défini les compétences à acquérir et rédigé des instructions détaillées pour que les maîtres et professeurs puissent intégrer concrètement le patrimoine régional à leur enseignement en fonction, des programmes nationaux et des horaires réglementaires. « Toutes ces dispositions ne perturbent pas le programme national mais les enrichit », commente Pierre Lostis.

La formation des enseignants sera aussi renforcée, tandis que des outils pédagogiques seront développés par le CRDP de Bretagne à travers une collection spécifique : « Culture régionale ». Le premier de ces ouvrages traite des « Jeux et sports traditionnels ». Les volumes suivants seront consacrés à la musique et à l'histoire-géographie. Un autre pas symbolique sera franchi à la rentrée 1998 avec la mise à disposition des élèves de 6<sup>e</sup> d'un véritable manuel scolaire sur l'histoire de Bretagne de l'Antiquité à nos jours. Il sera rédigé par Fanch Ellegô, sous la direction de l'historien Yves Le Gallo.

## Une incitation mais pas d'obligation

La définition des orientations

Fanch Olivier

## Les instructions matière par matière

La connaissance de la culture régionale désormais sera favorisée à tous les niveaux du parcours scolaire, de l'école au lycée. Les instructions, rédigées sous la direction des IPR (inspecteurs pédagogiques régionaux), permettent d'intégrer des apports régionaux aux programmes nationaux dans six matières.

### De Chateaubriand à Youenn Gwernig

En histoire-géographie, l'apport des programmes « contribuera entre autres à la valorisation d'une identité bretonne » en privilégiant les illustrations régionales des thèmes abordés. Le document académique développe classe par classe leur prise en compte.

En lettres, les professeurs pourront utiliser le patrimoine littéraire régional comme support des apprentissages : Chateaubriand, Louis Guilloux, Pierre Loti, Eugène Guillevic, Youenn Gwernig, etc. Des suggestions d'œuvres et d'auteurs bretons font référence aux instructions nationales.

En sciences et vie de la terre, on privilégiera les connaissances de la faune, de la flore et des réalités économiques à travers des documents régionaux. Pour le collège, la référence est celle des nouveaux programmes.

En éducation musicale, les points de rencontre entre les programmes et la culture régionale sont nombreux. Ils vont des compositeurs bretons (Cras, Le Flem) aux thèmes celtiques dans l'opéra en passant par la musique traditionnelle.

En éducation physique et sportive, une place importante est donnée aux « activités de

combat » comme la lutte bretonne qui pourra être plus tard évaluée au bac tout comme le judo. Citons également les « activités athlétiques » (boul-tenn, palet, etc.) et les « activités collectives d'opposition » comme le « bazhig kamm » ou le tire à la corde.

En arts plastiques, les domaines d'expression sont vastes, mais le groupe de travail rectoral ne donne pour le moment que quelques idées générales sur l'éducation du regard.

### La langue bretonne

Dans la contribution concernant la langue bretonne, l'académie recommande, dans le premier degré, de « répondre à la demande des familles dans le cadre des réseaux existants à chaque fois que les effectifs constatés le permettront ».

Dans le second degré, elle souhaite faire émerger des pôles de formation et ouvrir des passerelles à tous les niveaux entre les filières normales et les filières bretonnantes. Cela vaut surtout pour les élèves des écoles bilingues qui, au collège, n'avaient que le choix de poursuivre en section bilingue (si elle existait) ou de suivre simplement une option. Ils disposeront désormais d'une voie médiane avec la « langue vivante bis » qui leur assurera deux ou trois heures de breton par semaine.

Par ailleurs, la gestion des postes des enseignants sera clarifiée. Dans les deux ans, tous les postes d'histoire-géographie en breton cesseront d'être pris sur la dotation langue régionale. Enfin, répondant à une forte demande, des stages de perfectionnement seront offerts aux maîtres des classes bilingues.

## The International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language Elsewhere: Jan Deloof at Work in Belgium

It has been quite some time since we've reported on work by other branches of the ICDBL, but rest assured the U.S. Branch is by no means alone in its support of the Breton Language. One of the most active members of the ICDBL anywhere has to be Jan Deloof who has done considerable work to make Breton literature known through the Flemish language. A founding member of the ICDBL in January 1976 and an active participant in the branch based in Brussels, Belgium, Jan Deloof has published two books of translations into Flemish of some of the best writers and poets of 20<sup>th</sup> century Brittany: Bretanje is weer Poëzie in 1981 and Verhalen van het eind van de wereld in 1988 as a special issue of the Flemish journal Kruispunt. (See reviews in Bro Nevez 28, November 1988).

Jan Deloof is currently working with the publisher Kruispunt to put out a second edition of Bretanje is weer Poëzie in the spring of 1998. This will include a new introduction, and some new translations as well as the addition of some poems. Over 130 poems will be in the new edition, including a few texts from the Barzaz Breizh and work by poets Yann-Ber Kalloc'h, Loeiz Herrieu, Roparz Hemon, Abeozen, Jakez Riou, Youenn Drezen, Roperzh ar Mason, Anjela Duval, G. B. Kerverziou, Maodez Glanndour, Meavenn, F. Kervella, Per Jakez Helias, Per-Mari Mevel, Sten Kidna, Per Denez, Ronan Huon, Reun ar C'halan, Naig Rozmor, Per Diolier, Youenn Gwernig, Tereza Desbordes, Yann Ber Piriou, Tugdual Kalvez, Erwan Evenou, Paol Keineg, K. Kedez, Mikael Madeg, Gwendal Denez, and Jean-Luc Dey.

And that is not all. Jan Deloof also has plans to produce a CD so you can hear some of the poetry from the anthology in Breton and Dutch. And when these come out, Jan Deloof has plans to gather Bretons in Belgium for a weekend event in March 1998 focused on the Breton language. And he is also at work to establish an association (with government support) to more formally twin Brittany and Flanders in future years. And then, Jan Deloof is also thinking of a basic Dutch-Breton lexicography to be followed by a Breton-Dutch dictionary. With friends like Jan Deloof around the world, there need to no fear that the world will not know of the literary potential of Breton language.

We wish Jan Deloof well in these ambitious and important projects to make the Breton language and culture known in Belgium. He is indeed an inspiration to all who work for the Breton language and its future.

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## A 50-Year Anniversary for Kamp Etrekeltiek ar Vrezhonegerien

This July the Inter-Celtic Camp for Breton Speakers celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> summer camp. For fifty years over 100 Breton speakers have gathered during two one-week summer "camps" to plunge into Breton (no French or English allowed, but other Celtic languages are welcome). The camp was founded in 1948 when it was definitely not a stylish activity (and indeed it took some courage to promote Breton learning) by Ronan Huon, Vefa de Bellaing and Xavier de Langlais. Since 1977 the camp has been situated in Scaër and through immersion in Breton, adults and children work on improving their knowledge of Breton. There are more formal lessons but also games and activities, with evenings of music, theater and dance. Specifically aimed for those who want to improve their Breton—rather than beginners—the camp is limited to those who have taken at least two years of Breton lessons. For information contact: KEAV, 22 hent Moulouen, 29000 Kemper).

## TWO NEW BOOKS ABOUT THE BRETON LANGUAGE

Reviewed by Kevin Rottet

Broudic, Fañch. La pratique du breton de l'Ancien Régime à nos jours. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes. 490 pp. 220 francs.

This immense volume contains two-thirds of the doctoral dissertation of Fañch Broudic, which he defended in Brest in June 1993. Its primary purpose is to trace the history and decline in the use of Breton from the end of the French Revolution to the present day, and from these facts, to establish a chronology and to determine what factors, social, political, economic or otherwise, have played a role in the decline of the language. The book, divided into three parts, is extremely well documented, with a bibliography of 600 entries.

Part One ("The Facts") sets out to portray in detail the decline of Breton in terms of the declining numbers of speakers and of social contexts in which the language is used. This is perhaps the most important contribution of the work, in light of the fact that only rough estimates are available on the number of Breton speakers for the present or any time in the past, and such estimates as exist often stand in contradiction of one another. Broudic taps many hitherto unexplored sources, or he makes new uses of some old sources, including data on requests for Breton interpreters in court cases during the nineteenth century, salary suspensions of priests who continued to use Breton in sermons or catechism classes in 1902 when this was temporarily illegal, the rates of preaching and catechism classes in Breton since that time, and a survey among seminary students in Finistère in 1946.

In the second part of the volume, entitled "The Stages of the Substitution" (my translation), Broudic develops a chronology of the decline of Breton, situating the crucial turning point in the 1940s and 1950s when nearly all parents began to speak only French to their children. He goes on to evaluate eight recent surveys which have estimated the size of the Breton-speaking population. In most cases such estimates were limited to specific communes, but two of them consider Lower Brittany as a whole: TMO-Ouest (1990), which estimated 250,000 Breton speakers, and INSEE (1992), whose figure is set at the slightly higher 369,000. Broudic himself agrees with the former figure as the best estimate of the number of people who use Breton today, at least occasionally, for real communication. TMO-Ouest surveyed only people over the age of seventeen, maintaining that the number of Breton speakers under that age is negligible.

In the third part of the book, called "Analysis of the Substitution," Broudic examines the three most often invoked explanations for the decline of Breton: the role of the schools, the role of the media, and the French government's oppressive policies towards its minority languages in general, and Breton in particular. Broudic also examines the detrimental effects of the growing distance between the standard and the dialects, as well as the role played by the exodus of rural Bretons to the cities or out of Brittany, coupled with the tremendous increase in tourism in Brittany in the last few decades. Unwilling to place the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of any of these factors while recognizing that all of them must have played some part, he claims that "language shift can only take place with the profound assent of the population concerned" (p. 443, my translation).

There is little doubt that this volume represents the best and most thorough analysis of the decline of Breton to date. A few minor improvements could be made, such as some maps locating the four principal dialects of Breton and the towns and cities mentioned in the text (there is only one map in the entire book). Finally, I suspect that some readers will be disappointed in the relatively little attention Broudic pays to the Diwan schools and to some other aspects of revival attempts in his discussion of the language's chances of survival.

*Note: A French language version of this review will appear in The French Review, the journal of the American Association of Teachers of French. The English version appears in Bro Nevez with their kind permission.*

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Broudic, Fañch. 1997. L'interdiction du breton en 1902: La IIIe Republique contre les langues régionales. Spezet: Coop Breizh. 183 pp.

This 1997 volume complements the much longer 1996 La pratique du breton de l'Ancien Régime à nos jours. Both are part of Broudic's still larger doctoral thesis, defended in 1993. This 1997 text is divided into eight chapters and a conclusion, followed by a bibliography which contains a very modest 67 items (as versus the very comprehensive one in La pratique).

In this second volume, Broudic vividly portrays turn of the century Brittany, a time when Breton was still the usual language of 75% of the population. Breton and French were therefore in a relationship of diglossia, with French serving the high functions and Breton the low. However, Breton was used in certain functions normally associated with the high language, including its use in the Church for sermons, announcements, and catechism classes in most of the parishes in Lower Brittany.

The focus of the book is the intensely anticlerical three year period from 1902 to 1905 which culminated in the separation of church and state in France. In 1902 Emile Combes, then Minister of Internal Affairs and Religion, published a circular which suspended the salaries of clerics who made an "abusive use" of Breton in sermons and catechism, that is, who used Breton instead of French when the latter would have been within reach of significant portions of the population, deeming that the government should not support any activities which were not conducted in the national language. The extensive written documentation and correspondence which this period produced has never been fully documented. This is the task which Broudic set for himself in the volume in question.

In chapter two Broudic explores at length, with abundant quotes, the literature of the period showing that, in fact, French would not have been a viable option for over half of the population of Lower Brittany at that period. In the subsequent chapters the author documents the reactions of local government and police, of local elected officials, and of bishops and prefects to the enforced language policies. In the final chapter Broudic discusses at length the contribution which the documentation of the period makes to our knowledge about the percentage of Breton speakers at the turn of the century, including a comparison of the percentages of parishes in which sermons were delivered in Breton (as suggestive of adult linguistic competence) versus the number of parishes in which children were catechized in Breton. Broudic notes that, while the data do in fact suggest that a higher percentage of children were bilingual than of adults, nonetheless the administrations highly overestimated the ratio of children who would be able to follow French at as high as 4/5 (while the clerics of the period estimated

it at around 1/2). This suggests that, in addition to being anticlerical, Combes' policies were based on inaccurate linguistic data for the period.

Broudic's second volume is a very interesting companion of the much longer 1996 volume. It is well-written and insightful, and Broudic once again shows great skill and ingenuity in interpreting raw data to shed insights on the status and number of speakers of Breton of earlier times.

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## BOOKS FOR WELSH AND CORNISH LEARNERS

Yann Guehennec. Kembraeg evit ar Vrezhoneg. Plomelin: Preder. 1997. 160 pages.

One of the biggest problems for English speakers in trying to learn Breton is that most of the materials for Breton learners are in French—thus you have to go from English through the French language to get to Breton. This can be an excellent exercise if you want to brush up on your French, but it definitely makes it harder to learn Breton. Bretons who have wanted to learn Welsh have faced a similar problem with the necessity of using materials in the English language to get to Welsh. Since Breton and Welsh are both Celtic languages, the route via English is a major detour. But there is now a manuel which takes a direct route from Breton to Welsh which will be welcome to Breton speakers in Brittany and of interest to Celtic language students anywhere. This has been put together by Yvan Guehennec who has long been active in Brittany fostering links between Brittany and Wales. And now with a new tool to learn Welsh, the links can grow even stronger.

Kembraeg evit ar Vrezhoneg can be ordered from the publisher: Embannadurioù Preder, 19 Park Maen Meur, 29700 Plomelin, Brittany, for 80 francs plus postage.

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R..M. Gendall. A Practical Dictionary of Modern Cornish. Part 1: Cornish-English. Liskeard, Cornwall: Teere ha Tavaz. 1997. 198 pages.

As described in the press release: This new dictionary includes all vocabulary noted from literature and place-names after 1504 and words that survived only in traditional speech, some never before recorded. All entries are clarified by their pronunciation, authorship, and in the case of traditional survivals their cognates in other languages. It is produced for use by both the serious student and the average person interested in learning to read, write and speak the Cornish language as it was actually used by Native Speakers in its latest period as a living vernacular.

The orthography employed is a standardization approved by The Cornish Language Council and based on a choice made from existing versions in historical literature and place-names. A full explanation is made in the Introduction to the Dictionary. There are full notes on the history of the language and the pronunciation. A large Appendix contains Place-Names, Personal Names, Paradigms of Verbs, Pronouns and Prepositions, and a Summary of Mutations. It is anticipated that the second part of the dictionary, Part2: English-Cornish, will be available later in 1997.

# Youenn Gwernig: A New Collection of Poems in Breton and English

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Youenn Gwernig. Un Dornad Plu/A Handful of Feathers. Al Liamm, 1997. 208 pages. ISBN 2-7368-0050-8.

As Youenn Gwernig explains in the Forward to this new collection of his poems, he began writing in English at the urging of Jack Kerouac who he befriended during twelve years (1957-1969) in America. Youenn Gwernig's first language is Breton, but it was inevitable that he would learn French during a period when it was the exclusive language of the schools of Brittany. And Youenn Gwernig describes in the Forward that he loves the French language as the language of his mind. But Breton is the language of his heart and the one he uses most often for his poetry and songs. While in the United States Youenn Gwernig took advantage of a long commute to his factory job to read everything he could, from newspapers to the poetry of Whitman and the writings of Jack Kerouac and others of the "Beat Generation." We can all thank Jack Kerouac for getting Youenn Gwernig to write and translate his poems into English.

This bilingual collection includes poems in Breton and English. Thirty poems (most with the English translation side by side with the Breton) are drawn from An toull en nor (The Hole in the Door) first published in 1972. Twenty-four poems are drawn from An diri dir (Stairs of Steel), published in 1976. Most of the poems from these two collections were written during Youenn Gwernig's stay in New York and reflect a gritty view of big city life (and death), and urban American readers will be able to identify well with the images and emotions of these poems. But there are also more tender reflections on nature and love. The third part includes thirteen pieces from the sixties through the nineties which have not been published elsewhere.

For those learning Breton, this collection offers a nice opportunity to practice working with the language since English translations (equivalent poems) appear side by side with the Breton version. But this is really just a book for people who like poetry. In English, Breton, or French, Youenn Gwernig's work is well worth a read. He was awarded the prestigious Priz Langleiz in 1996 for his work as a poet.

*To order, try a good foreign book distributor (see the addresses included in the past few issues of Bro Nevez, or contact Editions Al Liamm, 2 venell Poulbriquen, Brest 29200, Brittany. 98 francs + postage.*

## An Introduction to Youenn Gwernig

*The following introduction is reprinted from Bro Nevez 7/8 (May/August 1983). It was part of a special issue of what was then simply called the "Newsletter" of the U.S. ICDBL about emigration. For that issue of our newsletter Youenn Gwernig contributed an English translation of his poem "Harlu" ("Exile").*

Youenn Gwernig came to the United States in 1957 at the age of 32. His reasons were not different from those of other Bretons who had preceded him or who followed later. With a sister already in New York, emigration seemed the best means to solve the difficult problem of earning a living. But there was also the problem of “feeling at home” at home—an uneasiness which was perhaps more subconscious than conscious. Although today Brittany seems alive with a youth determined to revive their heritage and create a new one of their own, in the early 1950s Bretons concerned about the future of their nation might well have felt disheartened. Some felt it would be better to feel like a stranger elsewhere.

Arriving in New York, Youenn Gwernig worked as a dishwasher and waiter, but most of his twelve years there were spent using his wood-working skills in a factory which reproduced Louis XV style furniture—a job of dull assembly line work and three hours of subway commuting each day. With the supplemental include of his wife Suzig who worked in the coat check of a bowling club, the Gwernigs were able to provide for three daughters—Annaïg, Mari-Loeiza and Gwenola—and indulge in some of the taken-for-granted comforts of American life. But the money ran out when Suzig’s mother (also in the U.S.) needed hospitalization and an operation. Without insurance, the bills piled up. In 1965, mother, daughter and granddaughters returned to Brittany while Youenn stayed behind to pay off the debts.

By the time he got back to Brittany in 1969, the debts were paid and he was as poor as when he had left Brittany, but Youenn Gwernig had also become known and respected in Brittany as a Breton language poet. If the United States holds memories of long and hard work hours, it also holds memories as a place where he really started to write—his writing was in Breton. During the years in New York, Youenn Gwernig combed the Breton collection of the New York public library and sent for books from Brittany. The return mail carried his poems and stories to the publishing house Al Liamm.

Residence on Ryer Avenue in the Bronx introduced Youenn Gwernig to the unmelted pot of urban American cultures. We meet the people of his American experience in his songs, poems and stories. But, one of Gwernig’s best known acquaintances in the U.S. was another Breton, Jack Kerouac, whose family (Le Bris de Kerouac) traces back to the Cots d’Armor before its arrival in the “New World” in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Born in Lowell, Massachusetts, Kerouac was proud of both his Breton and Native American roots (see his book *Satori in Paris* for a description of his search for his Breton roots).

Youenn Gwernig is not known in Brittany today, however, because he befriended a famous writer. He is known in his own right as a singer, poet, and wood sculptor, as well as defender of Breton freedom to be Breton. It was the desire to be Breton in Brittany as well as the desire to rejoin his family that took him back in 1969 to stay. A sense of freedom was immediate. In an article written in 1980 about Gwernig, Yvon Le Vaillant recounts how, at 6 a.m. on his first morning back in the town of Huelgoat in the Arrez Mountains of central western Brittany, Youenn ran down to the lake bordering the town and yelled “No subway today!” Reassured by the echo of the lake he went back to bed (“Le Barde des Monts d’Arrée” *Le Nouvel Observateur* 825, August 30-September 5, 1980). Since his return to Brittany, Youenn Gwernig has lived in a small village just outside Huelgoat—a singer, poet and sculptor who loves long walks in the wild countryside and forests of the area. He continues to sing and to write and to insist on the freedom to be Breton in Brittany.

Youenn Gwernig – continued

The freedom to be a Celt is an important theme in all of Gwernig's writing. It was in the anonymity of American crowds and the grayness of New York City that he came to write down many of his thoughts about his own identity, his feelings for his native country, and the experience of emigration.

Some Reading and Music—just a few recommendations

La Grande tribu. Paris: Grasset, 1980. (originally published in Breton in the Breton magazine Al Liamm as a series of short stories—the often humorous tale of a Breton who emigrates to New York and discovers he is a Celt)

Emañ ar bed va iliz. Lagon Bleu LBCD04. 1990. Compact disc.

Foeter Bro/Just a Traveler. Keltia Musique KM49. 1994. Compact disc (see review in Bro Nevez 51, August 1994).

\* \* \*

## University of Chicago Celtic Society ... In search of Breton Speakers

The University of Chicago Celtic Society is a newly formed umbrella organization for individuals interested in Celtic cultures and especially the languages. It has about 30 members and of these a half dozen or so are particularly interested in the Breton language. Scott Oser, who is serving as the group's president teaches beginning Irish but would like to learn Breton as his second Celtic language. He noted in a letter to me that he particularly enjoyed visiting Kemper and the Morbihan region this winter.

As anyone knows who has tried to learn Breton alone with just books and dictionaries, this is the hard way to go. The Celtic Society's Breton learners will form a self-study group which will use the text Brezhoneg Buan hag Aes, but they would love to hear from any Breton speakers (or other learners) in the Chicago area who might be able to assist them in any way.

Contact: Scott Oser  
5464 S. Harper, Apt. 2D  
Chicago, IL 60615

Telephone: (773) 493-4885  
e-mail: [oser@hep.uchicago.edu](mailto:oser@hep.uchicago.edu)

## **A New Book for Guitar Players ... and Others**

Soig Siberil. Musique Celtique—Partitions et tablatures pour guitare. Spezet: Coop Breizh, 1997. ISBN 2-84346-026-3. 130 francs.

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

This new collection of transcriptions for guitar includes a nice selection of 18 traditional tunes and new compositions arranged and/or created by master guitar player Soig Siberil. Included are seven marches, dance tunes and melodies from Brittany, jigs from Scotland and Ireland, a melody and dance tune from Galicia, and several of Soig's own compositions. And, Soig pays tribute to David Surette, an American guitarist who spent quite a bit of time in Brittany (see Bro Nevez 61, February 1997) with an arrangement of one of his compositions.

Soig Siberil is a master of open tuning on the guitar and for those who like his style (and who could not), this will be a welcome resource. Of particular value are the notes to the transcriptions which refer you to the recordings where you can hear Soig Siberil perform the tunes. Hearing is believing. Most tunes can be found on the CDs Digor or Entre ardoise et granit, but you can also find an O'Carolan "jig" from the wonderful recording called Blue Room by the group Orion in which Soig Siberil played, as well as the wonderful composition by Soig and Jaimie Mc Menemy called "A Trip to Flagstaff" from Kornog's album Ar Seizh Avel.

While this booklet will be of most interest to guitar players, those who are just fans of Soig—like me--will enjoy the ten photos of Soig at work (or just posing for the camera) with Kornog, Gwerz, Orion, Den, Pennou Skoulm, Gwerz, and other musicians. This book (of less than 40 pages) will not turn you into a Soig Siberil, but it will give you some wonderful music to play with.

\* \* \*

## **Brittany Loses a Master of Traditional Song Manu Kerjean (1913-1997)**

The fact that much of this newsletter is filled with news of musical events and new recordings from Brittany shows just how healthy the Breton music scene is. While more and more young singers and musicians join the older generations on stage at concerts, festoù noz and festivals, sometimes the Breton music scene loses a star. With the death of Manu Kerjean this June, Brittany lost not only a master of traditional song, but also a mentor to some of Brittany's best young singers. Best known of Manu Kerjean's "students" is perhaps Erik Marchand, but Manu Kerjean also sang with, encouraged, and shared his knowledge and friendship with a number of other young singers of the Breton language tradition, including Annie Ebrel, Yann Fanch Kemener, Patrick Marie, Laurent Jouin, Jean-Yves Le Roux and Alain Le Clere.

Manu Kerjean grew up in the song tradition and became first known at a contest of kan ha diskann in 1959 when he paried with Lomig Doniou. He has continued to perform at both the smallest festivals and festoù noz of western Brittany as well as in concerts elsewhere in France and Europe. In September 1996 he received the Prix Hervé Ar Menn in recognition of his work to foster Breton music and culture. It is certain that he will be greatly missed by those who had the good fortune to dance to his powerful voice. But, this great singers influence will continue to be present in Brittany through the voices of all those who had the privilege of learning from him and singing with him.

# **A LOSS FOR BRITTANY AND THE BRETON COMMUNITY OF CANADA**

**Yann Plunier (1924-1997)**

With Yann Plunier's death on May 2, 1997, Brittany loses one of its strongest defenders. Originally from Baud, Yann spent the last 44 years in Canada, but never ceased to work for Brittany. He wrote dozens (hundreds?) of protest letters to French politicians and published newspaper articles whenever possible to bring Canadian and world attention to Brittany. And he also spoke at conferences and produced both radio and television programs about Brittany and its cultural heritage. I can think of no one who had a larger and wider knowledge of Breton music than Yann Plunier--from traditional song and piping (which he practiced himself) to classical composers of Brittany.

I began a long correspondence with Yann Plunier in November 1979--several months after I had returned from a year in Brittany to do research for a doctoral dissertation on Breton identity and its expression in music. Claude Sterckx had suggested I contact Yann, and I was seeking both his feedback on my study of Breton identity and culture and his advice on starting up a U.S. Branch for the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language. He had already been at work on this in Canada and was also active with the Canadian Celtic Congress, serving as its president until he had to cut back on activities in 1980 due to poor health. Despite health problems, Yann Plunier worked long hours beyond a demanding job to write and educate us all about Brittany. He was often frustrated with the North American Breton emigrant community--especially in the those in the U.S. ("...their only concern is to elect a duchess, to dance tangos and vases, and to drink" he wrote to me in 1979). But he never ceased sharing his knowledge with anyone who could recognize how much he could offer. He was always generous in his letters to me, giving very useful criticism and suggestions to improve things I was writing (including my doctoral dissertation), and he spent an enormous amount of time adding to and correcting a discography of Breton recordings I put together (thankfully a task now obsolete with the computerization of data done by Dastum). In the pre-internet years of the 1970s and 80s, he was sometimes frustrated by the of getting up-to-date news from Brittany. But, this never seemed to stop him from doing everything possible to support the cause of the Breton language and to share his extensive knowledge of Breton history and culture.

The last letter I received from him was dated March 13, 1997, and while he had cut back on his militant actions in defense of Brittany, he was certainly still hard at work in the educational area. He reported on the work he was completing on two books about the Lanleff Temple and the coming of Celts to America before Columbus ... a task that was proving difficult to complete since Yann seemed determined to find every scrap of information available before calling an end to his research.

Although I only met Yann Plunier once--briefly--I am thankful for a friendship through a 17-year correspondence. His encouragement and patient efforts to answer my questions about Brittany were invaluable both in allowing me improve my knowledge of the Breton culture and in sustaining the earliest years of the U.S. Branch of the ICDBL. And I know that the Breton community of Montreal shared my respect and admiration for the enormous amount of work he did for Brittany.

Lois Kuter

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## The Bretons In Canada

*The following article by Yann Plunier is reprinted with the kind permission of the editor of Keltica, Kevin Gilligan. While only two issues were ever produced of this fine (American) inter-Celtic quarterly publication, these contain some excellent articles that are still as interesting and informative as they were when published in the early 1980s. Other than Cam, the magazine of the Celtic League, Keltica is the only publication I have encountered which has been truly inter-Celtic in its depth of coverage. Each 100+ page issue included a variety of articles and notes on all of the Celtic cultures, arts, history and languages.*

*Yann Plunier's article for the first issue of Keltica (Vol. 1, no. 1, Winter 1979-80), provides a wonderful introduction to the history of Breton emigration to Canada. And Yann Plunier also presents his own particular view of Celtic versus Latin civilization. This paper was originally presented by him at a symposium called "Canada and the Celtic Consciousness" held in February 1978 at the University of Toronto. At that time, Yann Plunier was Vice-President of the Canadian Celtic Congress--an organization which Yann enjoyed very much since it offered him the opportunity to learn more about the Celtic world and share his extensive knowledge of Brittany and its culture.*

### The Bretons in Canada

Yann Plunier

(reprinted from: Keltica Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter 1979-80, pages 6-8.)

As a Breton saying goes: "E-lec'h ma tremen an heol a dremen ar breizhad/where the sun passes, Bretons also pass." It is not surprising, therefore, to find some Bretons in Canada. But what role have they played in its discovery? and what role have they played and are they still playing in its settlement? Finally, what role can they play, as a group, or jointly with other Celts, on a short and long term basis?

The first contribution of Bretons to Canada was in its discovery. We know that this country was officially discovered by the Breton, Jacques Cartier, in 1534; but what is less well known is that many other Bretons came before him, among them Coatanlem who met Christopher Columbus in 1484 and is said to have told him about the New World. Another contribution was made in 1511 when Jeanne de Castille sent Jean d'Agramonte to Brittany to recruit Breton pilots to sail westward, probably toward Newfoundland. One can also mention a map drawn by the Portuguese Fagundes and dated 1520, 14 years before the Jacques Cartier trip. On this map one can read "Cap Breton" and "Belle-Isle."

To me these three facts alone indicate that Bretons came to Canada before Jacques Cartier. The Breton Louis Kevran goes much farther and claims that Celts came to North America 1000 year before Christopher Columbus, and he quotes to support his thesis, Norwegian Sagas written around 1180. These Sagas say that crossing the North Atlantic was common practice at that time and, what is more important for our purpose, that Celts had already established settlements in America.

The second contribution of Bretons to Canada has been in its settlement. Three large waves of migration can be easily identified. But if these migrations were important for Brittany, they do not appear that significant, numerically at least, for Canada. From 1534 to 1763 some Bretons came to New France. It seems that at the very beginning of the colony they formed a relatively high percentage of the immigrants since a study of the population indicates that, in 1628, of 153 persons

whose origin is known, 25 were Bretons. But other studies covering the 17th century mention 4% and 3.3.% of those who immigrated to New France as being Breton and 8% is quoted for the period of 1700 to 1770.

The percentage of Bretons was therefore small and the percentage of those who spoke Breton must have been still smaller since they have left little trace of their language or their culture. Even Breton craftsmen were scarce. There is a very small Breton influence on furniture and houses; nothing very important. Nevertheless, it is possible that Breton immigration during that period was more important than statistics show. In any case, popular tradition says so, for a lot of Quebecers claim that they are of Breton origin. Where does that conviction come from? I feel it has been inculcated in them by the many priests, nuns and friars who came to Quebec during the 19th and 20th centuries or by the genealogical institutes, which did not hesitate to invent origins for those whose genealogical tree was incomplete.

Then what can we trust? Patronyms? These are useless. Girls changed their surnames when they got married and men often changed their too when they came here. Can we rely on written records of birth, marriage and death? Partly only, since many documents have been lost or destroyed by fire. I, myself, became interested in sales and work contracts as a possible source of information. By compiling them I confirmed two hypotheses which seem to me to be very plausible. The first was that very few immigrants bearing Breton names came to Canada. Secondly, I discovered a migratory phenomenon which has not yet been studied. This is that some Breton fishermen came to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland with their families, or a part of them. While men were fishing, women and children were landed ashore where they proceeded to smoke the fish, an operation which, for obvious reasons could not be done on board. What happened to those families? Have they left an descendants? As nobody has yet researched this field, we do not know how many of these early visitors stayed behind and became settlers.

If the number of Bretons who came to Canada during the period 1534-1763 is not very high, how can we explain it? The reading of work contracts are, on this score, very revealing. Settlers were looking mainly for coopers and carpenters. Cooper came from the French Vineyard regions (therefore outside Brittany) and carpenters from the area of origin of the settlers because the settlers wanted their homes in New France built like the ones they left in their homeland.

This explanation obviously is only partial. Alan Heusaff has proposed a more global one.

"Perhaps the clearance of new land and the active sea trade provided the most enterprising of our compatriots with sufficient additional employment. Due to their autonomous status our people enjoyed a more liberal regime than the French, and hence perhaps a greater desire to stay in the home country."

Acadia also deserves a special mention, because Alexandre Leborgne, on his father's request, developed the Annapolis Valley by granting land to 45 Breton families bearing Celtic names. It is, as far as we know, one of the rare settlements in Canada in the 17th century which was made of families originating from Lower Brittany.

From 1763 to 1867, under the English regime, and even until 1900, only a few French speaking emigrants came to Canada. Some of them were Bretons, who initially settled in St. Pierre & Miquelon; the remainder were missionaries. If the first ones have contributed to settlement in Canada, the second ones have only left Breton names to a few lakes, rivers or villages in areas populated by Indians or Eskimos.

We must wait for the period between 1900 and 1914 to observe a second migratory wave of Bretons to Canada. Indeed, from 1880 on the economic situation deteriorated seriously in Brittany, Numbers of Bretons began to emigrate, mainly to Paris. This alarmed the clergy, for many Bretons abandoned all religious practice when going to that large city. Therefore the clergy looked for means to rectify the situation by organizing Breton immigration to rural areas. When, around 1900, the French state entered into open conflict with the Catholic Church, some religious congregations, expelled from France, took refuge in Canada where they were to have an influence out of all proportion to their number; mainly in Quebec, where the Catholic Church benefited from an extraordinary prestige, to a point where it was almost a theocratic province.

The coming of these congregations had another effect. Having been made aware by members of their congregations that land was available to immigrants on the Prairies, a few priests, mostly non-Bretons, began to organize the emigration of Bretons to Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan. By doing so they expected to achieve two objectives: to protect the Catholic faith of the Bretons and to stop the expansion of Protestantism in Western Canada.

If some Breton place names still exist and if Canadians of Breton origin continue to form a relatively important part of the population, unfortunately almost nothing remains of their language and their culture. Much too isolated, they have quickly been assimilated by the nearest Anglophone or Francophone community.

This wave of immigration stopped in 1910 when the French government decided to abandon its official anti-clerical policy. However, in 1945 there was a resumption of Breton immigration based on economic rather than religious grounds and this we may regard as the third wave. In the absence of official statistics, some have put forward the figure of 10,000 people immigrating almost exclusively to Ontario and Quebec between 1945 and 1975. This figure seems realistic.

What remains to be seen, in order to complete our overall view of Breton influence in Canada, is the short and long term influence they might have in the future.

On a short term basis they can introduce to the public the notion of the Celtic origin of the great majority of the population of this country. This could be a useful contribution to Canada's unity. If the Celtic origin of the Irish, Scots, Welsh, Manx, Cornish and Bretons is well known, then that of some Belgians, Swiss, Germans, Spanish and French is much less known. Interest in this common origin could perhaps be stimulated. One cannot rely on the French to encourage French-Canadians to discover their true origin and culture. For too long a time Frenchmen have turned their back on their Celtic heritage. Obviously, they do not come from the Celtic insular brand and, for that reason, are not Celtic in the same sense as Scots, Irish or Bretons; but their ancestors were continental Celts, whether they like it or not, since they are all descended from the Gauls. This basic make-up was not changed because a few Gaulish girls gave their favors to some Roman legionnaires.

But what is more important is the invaluable contribution that, on a long term basis, the Bretons, jointly with other Celts, could exert not only on Canada but on the Western World and even on the entire world. Celtic civilization has been relentlessly attacked, defeated and ignored but contains values our modern world badly needs to counterbalance the ill-fated effects of civilizations which have replaced it, above all the Latin civilization.

It is well known that people project in their gods the qualities they propose as an ideal to their descendants. And what did we inherit from Rome? Jupiter (etymologically the god of the yoke, the

god of slavery), Mars (the god of war) and Janus. Those three gods are ill-fated, and perhaps Janus more than the two others, because Janus is the state, the monster that Celts would have been unable to invent, the one which must see everything and see to everything; along he is the police and the administration. A people which places such a god at the head of their pantheon can only become, and I quote Pierre Lance, "an anti-nation, an anti-civilization" and, in fact this is what we have become, after having endured that Latin civilization for almost 2000 years.

I am not pleading for complete anarchy and the destruction of the state. The only point I want to stress is that the pendulum of Western civilization has moved for too long in the direction given to it by the Romans and it is time for the Celts to give it a push in the other direction, because Celtic civilization which is still alive contains all those values needed to fight the excess of interference with individual freedom which overwhelms us. Even our weaknesses of the past are our strength today: the clan structure will oppose the oversized state. Celtic individualism will oppose over-powerful government.

The evolution of the world is governed by the interaction of existing civilizations. This is why cultures are so important. This is why Celtic culture has not only to be preserved but encouraged. To be able to influence events Celts must remain what they are because, and I quote again Pierre Lance,

"A man who negates his principal vocation, who forgets his idea and the dreams of his adolescence prepares his own downfall. A nation which does not live in harmony with its myths of origin, slips into defeat, disorder and decadence. And this is also true for civilizations. The Western World can only last if it remains faithful to Prometheus."

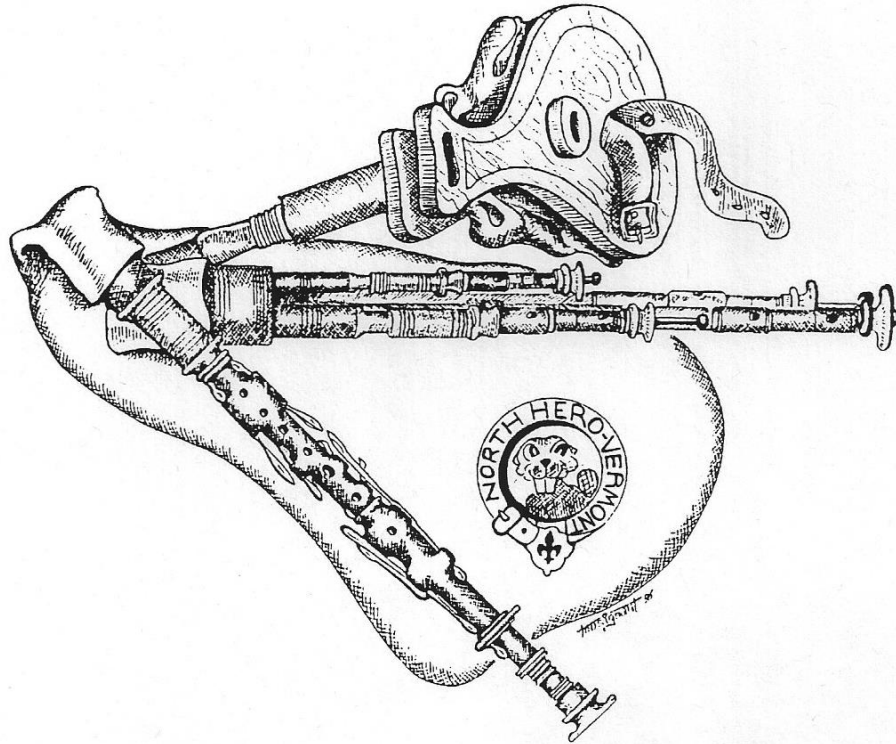
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## **The 12<sup>th</sup> North American Northumbrian Pipers' Convention**

Although known for many other talents, Yann Plunier was a piper, and he was a frequent participant at the North American Northumbrian Pipers Convention – which included many different types of bagpipes. In honor of him and the wonderful lectures and workshops he did for the convention, there are plans for an annual "Yann Plunier Memorial Lecture/Workshop"—a fitting tribute to a man who was so generous with his knowledge.

On the following two pages you will find information about this annual gathering of bagpipe enthusiasts (who would probably admit to being called fanatics in some cases). I am afraid that by the time this newsletter gets to you this event will be over, and I have tried to send information in advance to the pipers I know among the ICDBL members and Bro Nevez subscribers. This is a great event and if you might be interested in attending in a future year make sure you get on the mailing list with Alan Jones.

# THE 12TH NORTH AMERICAN NORTHUMBRIAN PIPERS' CONVENTION



THE WEEKEND OF 23<sup>d</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> OF AUGUST 1997 IN NORTH HERO VILLAGE HALL,  
NORTH HERO, THE LAKE CHAMPLAIN ISLANDS, VERMONT, U.S.A

INCLUDED IN THIS YEARS EVENT ARE: COLIN ROSS, PADDY KEENAN, GORDON MOONEY,  
JERRY O'SULLIVAN, LANCE ROBSON, ADRIAN SCHOFIELD, CILLIAN VALLELY, JON SWAYNE,  
JULIAN GOODACRE, BENEDICT KOEHLER, MICHEAL DOW, BRIAN MacCANDLESS, MIKE MacNINTCH,  
MARK CUSHING, MICHEAL MacHARG, BRUCE CHILDRESS, JOHN LIESTMAN, GLEN SHULTZ, CARMEN  
GUERARD, PAUL LEGRAND, PIERRICK SAUVAGE, VINCENT RONDEL, GAETANE BRETON, DOROTHY  
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of many different kinds of bagpipes.*

*This is an educational weekend set in the beautiful Lake Champlain Islands.  
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GRAND PIPING CONCERT - featuring many different pipes, pipers & other traditional musicians.

LECTURES, WORKSHOPS, SURPRISE GUESTS & much much more throughout the weekend.

For further info: contact Alan Jones, P.O. Box 130, Rouses Point, N.Y. 12979 ; Tel.: 514-849-2944 (97 only) OR 802-372-5683



## NEW RECORDINGS FROM BRITTANY

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Annie Ebrel, Marie-Aline Lagadic, Lydie Le Gall, Klervi Rivière. Femmes de Bretagne/Women of Brittany. Keltia Musique KMCD 74. 1997.

I have always wondered why there are so few women in Brittany who play musical instruments (other than the harp). While the rough and tumble life of a musician in earlier times meant that no respectable or sane woman would ever consider picking up a biniou, bombarde, or fiddle, the social barriers of the past are no longer a real excuse today. But, I suppose that women of Brittany are just not interested in picking up a new instrument when they already have one—the voice. Unaccompanied vocal music—to tell a story or to get people dancing—is at the heart of Breton music, and women have always had an equal role in the song tradition.

There are a number of recordings already out which feature Brittany's women of song, but this new "sampler" presents four wonderful singers of a younger generation who rival the legendary voices of the past such as the Goadec sisters. Annie Ebrel is a master of the Breton language gwerz and kan ha diskan singing for dances of her native area of Brittany where the Upper Cornouaille region meets the regor region. She has recorded a solo CD of traditional song ('Tre ho ti ha ma hini, Gwerz Pladenn GWP 012, reviewed in Bro Nevez 59, August 1996) as well as a CD with the band Dibenn (reviewed in the May 1997 issue of Bro Nevez). Marie-Aline Lagadic and her daughter Klervi Rivière (just 17) are from the Bigouden region of southwestern Brittany—another Breton language area—and they pull their songs from a rich family repertoire. Both are featured along with Marie-Aline's aunt Lisette Floc'h, who is the source for many of their songs, on a wonderful recording by Dastum (Tradition familiale de chant en pays bigouden, DAS 114, reviewed in Bro Nevez 39, August 1991). The fourth woman featured on this new CD, Lydie Le Gall, has not previously recorded to my knowledge and the notes do not say more than to tell you that she lives in Ploermel and her songs come from the French language song tradition in this Gallo-Vannetais area of Upper Brittany.

Notes to the CD give each song text (in Breton or French as appropriate) with a descriptive summary in French and a shorter one in English. Included also is a sentence in French and English for each singer and photos of them. There is also one full-page reproduction of an old photo of a woman and four children which is not identified anywhere. I suppose if I knew my Breton coiffes and costumes better, I might be able to guess if these mysterious ladies in the photo are related to any of the singers.

The only fault I can find with this wonderful gathering of Breton singers is that it is too short—just 40 minutes. But it does clearly show how strong a role women play in Brittany's song tradition and is a good introduction to four great voices. Bravo to Arnaud Maisonneuve—a singer himself—who was behind this production.

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Fest Deiz/Fest Noz—Printemps de Châteauneuf. Coproduction, Printemps de Châteauneuf/Coop Breizh. 1997.

The fest noz is an event that was reinvented by Bretons in the early 1950s to give traditional singers and musicians a new incentive to pass along their heritage, and to give Breton dances a much needed context for performance in a society that was changing rapidly. With the growth in popularity of Breton music and the creation of new groups arranging traditional tunes in the early 1970s, the fest noz seemed to regain a popularity again in that decade. But the fest noz (and its day-time version, the fest deiz) are not just stylish fads. They have served as enjoyable and meaningful social events where Bretons can

celebrate their heritage of dance and music. In the 90s once again, there is a resurgence of the fest noz and fest deiz as new generations take pleasure in dance.

The fest noz has been an important part of Breton festivals, used to close an evening of concert entertainment or to finish off a day of contests between musicians and dancers. And the festoù noz and festoù deiz of the festival called "Printemps de Châteauneuf" have always included some of Brittany best traditional singers and paired players of the biniou-bombarde. This spring festival has been taking place for twenty years in the small town of Châteauneuf-du-Faou in central western Brittany on the weekend of Easter—a timing and location that insures that very few tourists will find it. But, thousands of Bretons eagerly await this event each year, so it will probably go on for another twenty years ... or more.

This CD is a selection of performances from the past twenty years—a very difficult selection from among many memorable performances. Unfortunately the jacket notes do not identify the year for any of the selections, nor is any information given on any of the performers (although they are all well-known names to anyone who has followed traditional Breton music). The jacket notes, do, however, include some wonderful essays by Yann Le Meur, who had been involved in organizing (or disorganizing, as the notes say) this festival over the years. His commentary gives a good flavor of the festival as well as a more factual history of it and a good presentation of the fest noz and what this event is. The CD notes also include some wonderful photographs of the dancing and some of the performers.

Dances included on the CD include several varieties of the gavotte (*the* dance of Châteauneuf), fisl, plinn, laridé, an dro, hanterdro, and rond de Loudéac. Traditional singers include the pairing of Manuel Kerjean and Erik Marchand, Yves Le Calvez and Albert Bolloré, Jean Yves Le Roux and Jacques Dilasser, Yves and Robert Bastard, the Morvan brothers, Trouzerion, Bastien Gwern and Jean-Claude Talec and Alain Leclere, and the Chantous de Loudia. Bombarde-biniou pairs included are: Daniel Le Féon and Gil Léhart, Gaby Kerdoncuff and Youenn Le Bihan, Jean Pierre Helias and Bernard Le Breton, Gilbert Hervieux and Jacques Beauchamp, Daniel Philippe and André Thomas, Jean Louis Le Vallegant and Daniel Miniou, Yann Le Meur and Michel Toutous, and Guy Madec and Herve Irvoas. And there is one pairing of accordion with hurdy gurdy with Gerard Bavouzet and André Maillet. While most of these singers and musicians have not recorded a great deal (if anything) they are all masters of their art.

This is a wonderful selection of traditional song and paired bombarde-biniou playing for Breton dances recorded live where the energy of such unique music can really be captured.

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Fest Noz Live. Keltia Musique KMCD 76. 1997.

It seems as if the Breton CD producers and distributors are taking full advantage of the strong resurgence of interest in the fest noz to market new CDs. So be it! Here's another wonderful selection of performances recorded live at two different festoù noz held at the end of 1996 in Bannalec and Quimper. This includes two wonderful, long, performances by traditional singers: a suite for the plinn by Annie Ebrel and Noluen Le Buhé and a suite for the gavotte by the Quéré brothers. Paired bombarde and biniou is represented with Jean Baron and Christian Anneix who perform a kas a barh, a laridé in 6

time, and a suite of polkas. The group Storvan contributes four cuts with a ridee in 6 time, an an dro, scottisches, and a rond de Saint Vincent sur Oust. And the Bagad Kemper contributes a suite de Loudéac and a suite Pourlet.

Both for the variety of dances and the variety in styles—from traditional song to bagad and acoustic group—this is a really nice sample which reflects the variety of music used in Brittany to get people dancing.

The jacket notes provide a nice introduction to the fest noz (in Breton, French and English) as well as long biographical notes on all the performers. (in French and English). Of less interest are the descriptions of the dances. For those who have done the dances, these give a very quick description of the basic movement which, like a musical transcription, might jog the memory just enough to remember how the dance goes. For someone who has never seen the dances, they won't allow you to visualize them. But, describing dances with words is like describing the sound of music—a rough estimate at best. The descriptions of the dances do identify the area where they are traditionally found in Brittany very nicely, and even pinpoint this with a map. Because the selections are all fairly long (four to twelve minutes) this CD will be enjoyed especially by those who want to practice their dancing.

Given the attempt to provide some depth of information on the performances in the jacket notes, I was surprised not to find any identification of the songs—a title and summary of the tale being told—if not the text—would have been welcome. But, despite that lack, the notes are some of the best I've seen to introduce the performances and performers to those not familiar with Breton music. And this is a CD that will be attractive to a summer tourist market. That is good, since it reflects well the high quality and variety of Breton music.

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Au coeur de la musique bretonne. Escalibur CD 874. 1997.

While we're on the subject of the tourist market, here's a CD clearly designed for those seeking just a sample of Breton music., And this is a very good sample that will serve the purpose of introducing newcomers to some of the sounds of Brittany., Like Fest noz/fest deiz (reviewed above) this selection reflects the high quality of Breton music as well as the variety to be found. All selections are pulled from recordings put out in the past few years, and thus available for anyone who really wants to hear more of any particular artist.

Traditional styles are perhaps the one area that is under-represented on the CD with just one song by Annie Ebrel and the Roland Becker Trio (bombarde, binioù and drum). But the line between "traditional" and less-traditional is a fuzzy one (as Becker's Trio shows). Also on the CD are the groups Gwerz, Ar Re Yaouank, Sonerion Du, Glaz, Gwenfol, Carré Manchot and Djiboudjep. Duos and trios include Yann Fañch Kemener (voice) with Didier Squiban (piano) and Kristen Nôgues (harp); Jean Michel Veillon (flute) with Yvon Riou (guitar), and Marc Pollier (uilleann pipes) with Dominique Manchon (piano). Also to be found are selections by singer Glenmor, harpist Gwenola Ropars, and guitarist Soig Siberil. Two bagadoù are included: Bagad Brieg and the Bagad de Lann-Bihoué. To close the CD you have a choral rendition of Brittany's national anthem "Bro goz ma zadou" from the Breizh a Gan contest for choral groups.

The notes to the CD are in both French and English, and are an interesting effort to introduce some of the basic elements of Breton music to novice listeners. Called “Journey to the heart of Breton music: a glossary of terms,” the notes describe “bagad/bagadoù,” “Concours/contests,” “Music played in couples: biniou/bombarde, kan ha diskant,” “Cornemuse écossaise,” “Uilleann pipes,” “fest noz/fest deiz,” “gwerz,” “treujenn Gaol,” “Pays Gallo,” and “Nouvelle tradition.” While all these things should be explained to newcomers to Breton music, the very short paragraphs in the notes could be improved to add more substance without adding any more length. Accompanying each description is a short list of suggested CDs for those who want to hear more, and a bibliography is added listing two good books to begin some reading.

On the back of the CD each performer and the title of the selection is listed, and in the notes you find a small reproduction of the CD cover and catalog number of the CD from which the selections were taken. Having both the number and visual image would make it easy for someone to go into a store in Brittany and locate the CD.

This is an excellent sample of Breton music for those new to it who are not sure where to start in building a collection. And this sample reflects very well the wonderful diversity and high quality of music in Brittany today. While not perfect, the notes are a refreshing attempt to educate new listeners to Breton music and to provide the means to look further for more information and recordings.

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Bagad Ronsed Mor (rencontre La Marmite Infernale). Coeff 116. Arfolk CD 441. 1997.

The Bagad Ronsed Mor of Lokoal Mendon is one of Brittany’s top ten bagadoù, and this is just their third recording (see Bro Nevez 50, May 1994, for a review of Dalc’h da noz). As one has come to expect of the bagadoù, this includes some highly innovative arrangements of traditional Breton airs and dances, performed by the full bagad or just the bombarde or bagpipe section, or even a more traditional sounding pairing of biniou and bombarde. The first half of the CD offers no real surprises from this outstanding bagad.

It is about half-way through that the bagad works in collusion with an ensemble called “La Marmite Infernale” (“the infernal cooking pot,” among other possible translations). This band includes trumpets, trombones, saxophones, piano and percussion, and is part of a collective of musicians called the Association à la Recherche d’un Folklore Imaginaire (ARFI). Throwing the bagad into this cooking pot can at first have some scalding effects on the listener. The jazzy sounds produced are often quite dissonant and jarring with some screeching and squealing of reeds and horns. You have to be ready for a more avant garde style of jazz with La Marmite Infernale, and I have to admit that it took me (and is still taking me) some time to get used to the dissonance. You need to keep an open mind and listen to this CD more than once—the first time to just get used to the sounds, and the second to really appreciate how interesting they can be. Let the music stew a bit, and relax. This encounter between the Bagad Brieg and La Marmite Infernale is an interesting one which will definitely unclog your ears.

The CD includes arrangements of ballads from both the Gallo and Vannetais traditions, dances (laridé, gavottes, dans rond, derobée, kas a barh), and a few compositions. Jacket notes introduce the bagad

and the band (in both French and Breton), listing all the participants, and there are some fun photos of the musicians digging at low tide on the beach. Each selection is listed on the back of the CD. And just to make life a bit more interesting, they are all numbered, but listed in random order.

If you like the music of the bagad, you will like this very innovative new release by the Bagad Ronsed Mor. Relax and enjoy it as a successful experiment in sound.

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Kevrenn Alre. La-ri-don-gé! Arfolk CD 442. 1997.

And, if a new release by the Bagad Ronsed Mor wasn't enough for bagad fans, the Kevrenn Alre has also just released a new CD. And this is a truly wonderful selection from some of this band's recent years of competition music. Four different suites of traditional melodies, dances, and marches orchestrated by the musical director of the bagad, Roland Becker, are included.

The first suite is called "100 Years of contests for biniou/bombarde: Brest 1895 to Lorient 1995," This was performed at the championship contest for bagadoù held in Lorient in 1995 and helped the Kevrenn Alre tie for first place. It includes arrangements of melodies and dances collected by Roland Becker from traditional singers, pipers, and dancers, as well as tunes drawn from the Dastum archives, Ar Men anthologies of older recordings, and printed tune collections.

The second suite is called "Treujenn-gaol" (Breton for "cabbage stump" which is what they call the clarinet). This helped the Kevrenn Alre win first place at the championship contest for bagadoù held in Brest in 1996—the first of two contests to determine the final winner for the year. This draws on the repertoire of clarinet players of the fisel country of central western Brittany, and Becker draws on anthologies of earlier recordings put out by Ar Men, Dastum and Paotred an Treujenn Gaol.

The third suite of tunes is called "Plijadur a dañsal" (pleasure to dance) and was used by the Kevrenn Alre to take first place at the national championship of bagadoù for 1996. It includes a variety of dances (kas a barh, laridé, dans fanch) collected from the repertoires of accordion players of Brittany.

The fourth suite is called "Hommage à Marc'harit Fulup" and this was played at the first part of the 1997 competition for bagadoù which took place in February. The Kevrenn Alre took first place at that competition and as I write this review, they have just completed the final leg of the competition held in Lorient at the Inter-Celtic Festival. Music for this suite is drawn from a wax cylinder made of singer Marc'harit Fulup in 1900, from song collections published in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century by collectors such as Bourgeois, Quellien and Duhamel, and from the performance of more contemporary singers and pipers.

It is Roland Becker's depth of knowledge and immersion in the traditional styles of Breton song and instruments that allows him to successfully weave together melodies and tunes in a totally new way for the bagad. But the success of the performance is based on the skill of all the musicians in the Kevrenn Alre. Besides the work of the ensemble as a whole, there are numerous solos by individuals or small groups of bombarde players, pipers or percussionists. There is a free-wheeling quality to the performance where absolute precision of tempo is alternated with a more ambling and free rhythm.

As the music flows from melody to dance or as soloists interweave with the full band, there is never a falter or false note.

The jacket notes to this CD are as good as the music. Roland Becker and Laure Le Gurun provide a very nice introduction to the evolution of the bagad. Included are observations of how the bagad at first threatened the traditional pairing of biniou and bombarde and how the image of the biniou and the Scottish style bagpipes influenced the evolution of their use in Brittany. And the text presents very well the changing focus of the bagad as it has returned to more traditional roots for inspiration. The notes give a short but good description for each selection which shows very clearly the many sources from which tunes and melodies were drawn in creating the four suites on the CD. The names of all the musicians are listed according to the instruments played, and the notes close with a chronology showing the progression of the Kevrenn Alre to a championship bagad.

This is a great recording which presents well the full potential of the bagad with some championship performances by one of the best, the Kevrenn Alre.

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Yann-Fañch Perroches. An droug hirnez. Keltia Musique KMCD 79. 1997.

The jacket notes to this first solo recording by Yann-Fañch Perroches reminds us that while Brittany is most often associated with bagpipes, the accordion also has a big place in Breton music. As one who particularly loves the rich and varied tradition of piping in Brittany, it takes someone like Yann-Fañch Perroches to convince me of the merit of the diatonic or button accordion. A core member of the group Skolvan since its beginning in 1984, Perroches is one of the five accordion players featured on the 1992 CD called Cocktail Diatonique which remains one of my favorites (see review in Bro Nevez 45, February 1993).

This new solo CD is indeed a wonderful addition to a growing number of excellent recordings by Brittany's accordion players. Included are a variety of traditional dances (in not so traditional arrangements): gavottes pourlettes, gavottes of the mountains, ridees and laridés, and ronds de Saint Vincent sur Oust. The overall mood is set by a number of slower melodies and marches which show the finesse and expression an accordion can have in the hands of a master. As the notes explain very nicely, the sources of the tunes and melodies are quite varied. All are part of Brittany's oral tradition—tunes Perroches heard at festivals and piping contest, on Dastum archive recordings, or from traditional singers and from a few accordion masters. Notes are in French with an English summary ... except for the 13<sup>th</sup> track which took me by surprise when I thought the CD had ended and did not bother to get up to turn off the CD player. I blamed the sounds which floated into the apartment on the electric guitar player down the street I had heard diddling around from time to time, until I realized the sounds were coming from *within* the apartment. It took me a little while to identify the phantom musician. You can't say that accordion players have no sense of humor.

While this is a "solo" CD, part of its success must be credited to the inclusion of a few other excellent musicians in the arrangements. Guests include Gildas Boclé on bass fiddle, Bernard Le Dréau on saxophones, Dom Molard with percussions, Thierry Moreau with cello, Stephane Morvan with wooden flute, and Didier Squiban on piano. This CD shows well how a great accordion player can squeeze lots of wonderful sounds and varied moods from a little box.

Gwenfol. Berdadaou. EOG Productions/Diffusion Breizh. EOG 102. 1997.

Called part of the “new fest noz generation,” Gwenfol is indeed a newer band on the Breton scene. With the incredible popularity right now of the dance event called “fest noz,” musicians of the twenty-something generation have a good opportunity to perform and perfect their art. And this first CD by Gwenfol is focused on dance with a rond de Saint Vincent sur Oust, a ridee, a suite for the dans plinn, a suite for fisel, a tune for the newly introduced Cricle Circassien, a suite (ronde, baleu, ronde) for the rond de Loudéac, and a tune for the kas a barh.

This band lacks some of the finesse of an older generation (musicians of the forty-something generation) such as Skolvan, Barzaz, Gwerz, or Storvan. But, what it lacks in subtlety, it certainly makes up for in energy and creativity. One can easily see why Gwenfol would draw dancers to a fest noz. The instruments are quite varied and combined in some interesting ways with didgeridoo providing a comforting drone, or cello responding to bombarde on a slow melody, or fiddle playing the part of the high pitched biniou in pair with bombarde. Jean-Pierre Andrieux plays not only fiddle, but also hurdy-gurdy, darbouka and kobza. Gurvan Dréano is present in most cuts with bombardes, Olivier Guénégo provides guitars and piano, Stephane Le Dro plays both clarinet and didgeridoo, and Yannig Nouguet plays diatonic accordion. A few guests also add to the mix, including one song by Matthieu Hamon.

Like most groups, Gwenfol pulls its tunes from Brittany’s rich oral tradition, but a large number of the tunes on this CD are composed by the members of the group. Notes provide the minimum of information on the tunes, but include some good photos of the musicians. A bit more description for each selection would be welcome, but I would have especially appreciated a little biography on the group and its members. A short paragraph would have been nice.

It is always a pleasure to discover yet another new band thriving in Brittany. And just when you think that you’ve heard it all, a band like Gwenfol comes along to add a new sound to the wonderful mix.

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Skeduz. Rag ar plinn. Keltia Musique KMCD 72. 1997.

Like Gwenfol, the group Skeduz is presented as part of a new generation of Breton groups, and this group has been in existence for just two years. But, some of the members have been on the Breton music scene for quite a bit longer—in particular biniou player Dede Thomas and bombarde player Yvon Lefebvre. Their paired playing is at the heart of this group, and their mastery of the Breton tradition is evident. The other musicians of the group are certainly no slouches, with Ronan Pellen on cittern and cello, Laurent Dacquay on fiddle, and Nicholas Quemener on guitar and flute. The balance of the strings with the bombarde and biniou is particularly good. One can suspect that the fact that Gilles Le Bigot is the artistic director for this CD has a bit to do with the fact that the strings do not get lost or serve as mere rhythmic accompaniment.

There is nothing spectacularly new or revolutionary about Skeduz. They take traditional tunes and melodies and rearrange them just enough so that you hear some familiar sounds in a new way. “Tequila Pourlet” and “Rag ar plinn” both make use of some “other” percussion and rhythms, but in no way take away from the Breton character of the dance or melody. With both traditional tunes and compositions,

dances make up the majority of the selections with laridé/ridee, gavottes in both the Pourlet and mountain styles, a suite for the dans fisel, ronds de Saint Vincent sur Oust, and a kas a barh. Also included are a march and melody to lead of the CD, and I particularly liked the “Rag ar plinn,” an exquisite melody composed by Dede Thomas.

Jacket notes are trilingual (Breton-French-English) and give short but adequate information about the source of each selection. There is a short paragraph about the group’s philosophy, but some information about the musicians would have been welcome.

Anyone who likes the paired playing of biniou and bombarde will really enjoy this group since these instruments are the rock on which Skeduz builds its music. While not as flashy as some newer groups, Skeduz succeeds where others struggle in capturing the essence of Breton traditional dance and melody. They are just plain good.

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Kouerien. Folk Revival 1973-1974-1975. Reedition., Escalibur CD 871. 1997.

In a time when there quite a few new bands are responding to a peaked interest in Breton music and dance, it is sobering to hear a band from the early 1970s—another period when young people were rediscovering their rich heritage. One finds the same infectious enthusiasm and all-out energy in the dance music of Kouerien that one hears in the new bands today.

But the 70s are not the 90s, and there has been a definite advance in musical quality (tuning of instruments included) since that period. And this is perfectly natural since musicians have had a much greater opportunity to research traditional roots and to hone technical skills in the decades since groups such as Kouerien took to the stage. And, instead of drawing on guitar and fiddle styles of American bluegrass and the sounds of the folk revivals in the U.S., Britain and France of the late 60s and early 70s, Breton musicians today are drawing on a much wider world of sounds available on CD as well as on their own traditional roots heard in live performance and on CD.

Kouerien only lasted a few years, breaking up in 1975. And while most of the fifteen musicians and singers featured in this CD of Kouerien have gone on to non-musical careers, there are several exceptions. The most notable is Alain Pennec, bombarde player for Kouerien, who has played in a number of groups since then and has carved out a solo career with diatonic accordion in most recent years.

The selections on this reedition are pulled from three Kouerien albums (Arfolk SB 315, SB 330, and SB 345). Besides bombarde, biniou, guitar, banjo, fiddle, accordion, cello and bass, the group went in for a song or two. The participation of a group of four women in response style singing for several dances on the CD feels much less dated in style than the instrumental selections. Indeed, the repertoire from the Nantes region where the group was based is a bit fresher than the arrangements of dances from elsewhere in Brittany.

The jacket notes include no information about the selections other than the list of them. A list of the musicians and their instruments is also given, and this includes two members of the group who provide “truck and muscadet” and “muscadet and truck” respectively (muscadet is the white wine produced in

the Nantes region of Brittany). The photo of the band as it was in the mid-70s and the musicians as they look today is fun to see, as is the cartoon depiction of theme by Nono which clearly shows the cask of muscadet and the truck among the musicians.

The 1970s were a very fertile time in the renaissance of Breton music and the creative rearrangement of it by groups such as Kouerien. A look back is always interesting.

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Diaouled ar Menez Chauffe la Breizh! Escalibur CD 875. 1997.

And while we're on the subject of the 1970s, the group Diaouled ar Menez ("Devils of the Mountains") has just released a compilation of oldies-but-goodies. But, unlike Kouerien and a number of other groups of the 70s, Diaouled ar Menez is still growing strong and can still pack dancers in at festoù noz. Having heard them in 1995, I can testify to the fact that, while the band has a few grey hairs, it hasn't lost any of its energy. As the jacket notes explain, the name "Devils of the Mountains" was suggested by poet/singer Youenn Gwernig when he first heard them at their very beginnings in reference to their diabolical ability to impel one to dance. And in 1972 when they first took stage, their repertoire was centered on the gavotte, plinn, and fisel of the mountains of central western Brittany.

Like many young musicians of the early 1970s, hearing Alan Stivell served as a catalyst to form a band to play Breton music. But Diaouled ar Menez soon became a model itself, mixing traditional Breton instruments like the bombarde and accordion with electric guitar. Always ready to try something new, the group was one of the first to invite jazz musicians and brass instruments into the group to create a fusion of Breton traditional tunes with world musics.

The sixteen selections on this CD are described in the jacket notes as "rare but essential" recordings of the group. While the 1973 record by Diaouled ar Menez (Arfolk SB 318) has been released more recently on CD (CD 318), the other recordings are indeed hard to find. The CD leads off with an an dro from their first 45 rpm recording made in 1973, followed by a 1973 recording of them at the famous Kertalg Festival. Other selections are from the records Atav ez eomp (Arfolk SB 364, 1978) and Merc'h an Diaoul (Escalibur BUR 817, 1978).

The five founding members of the band (Yann Goasdoue, Jean-Yves Le Corre, Philippe Le Balp, Bruno Le Manac'h and Tangi Le Dore) form the core of Diaouled ar Menez. But a number of other musicians have popped in and out of the group during its 25 years of performance and are listed in the jacket notes (which carefully note the source of each selection and who was part of the band for that recording). While different musicians have added a new flavor and influence to the band, they have never altered the distinctive style of the group. Jacket notes give a very good history of the evolution of Diaouled ar Menez, a group which is ever-young and welcome at any fest noz to fire up the dancing.

Those who have long worn out their Diaouled ar Menez lps from the 70s (and 80s), as well as those now discovering this great band, will find this a very welcome release. The press release for the CD includes a little sticker—a sort of warning label—that reads in my very literal translation: "the true music which will knock your coiffe off." While here in the States we try to "knock your socks off," it seems the Bretons aim for women's heads.

## SPRING AND SUMMER FESTIVALS OF BRITTANY

Festivals in Brittany provide an important medium for music of all styles. Festivals can range from one day and can have a very specific focus (such as a contest for paired biniou and bombarde) or they can span ten days. In most cases events are concentrated in the afternoons and evenings and for most festivals a fest noz to cap each day's events is inevitable. Larger festivals can also include exhibits and workshops or speakers, as well as art and craft exhibits, traditional sports, and activities for children.

The following list is by no means exhaustive, and is particularly thin for the fall and winter months, simply because I don't have good information yet for those months. But it does include the major festivals of the spring and summer and July and August are particularly busy months. While the listing will be too late for planning travels in Brittany this summer, hopefully it will be of use to any of you planning for a future year. The dates will obviously change, but are usually fairly consistent from year to year. The place where the festival is held (this year) follows the name of the festival.

While the listing below gives only a very brief description of any festival, I would be happy to supply more details if I can to anyone interested. And, if you do have plans to go to Brittany, I would be happy to send information on other events such as museum shows and art exhibits.

The information for this listing has been gleaned from several different Breton magazines which include good listings of events in Brittany: Musique bretonne (essential for locating festou noz, concerts and music classes as well), Ar Soner (for those really into piping), Ar Men (which gives good information on the cultural scene more broadly), Armor (which also has a good listing of events), and Horizons Bretons (which, as a magazine designed for the Breton emigrant community, also includes a good listing of events in Paris).

### March

- 7-9 **5ème Festival du cabaret à domicile** – St. Laurent-sur-Oust.  
160 musicians and singers perform in different small settings throughout town.

### March/April

- 3/15-4/13 **Kan ar Bobl**  
One-day contests for all styles of Breton song and music held as a series of smaller regional festivals from mid-March through mid-April with the final held in Pontivy (this year on April 13).

### April

- 18-20 **Fête du chant de Haute-Bretagne** – Bovel  
A festival featuring traditional singers from all parts of Brittany.

### May

- 7-10 **Festival An Arwen** – Klegereg  
9<sup>th</sup> year for this festival of concerts and festou-noz which attracts the best musicians and singers of Brittany.
- 8-11 **9e Rencontres Internationales de la Clarinette Populaire** – Glomel  
A festival featuring the clarinet and its various uses in traditional music from around the world

May - continued

- 17-18 **Gouel Broadel ar Brezhoneg** - Louargant  
10<sup>th</sup> year for this festival featuring the Breton language—in writing, story and song. This festival includes lots of music but also talks and book exhibits.
- 17-18 **Assemblée de la Bouèze** – Hédé  
A major festival for music of Gallo Brittany (the east) with lots of feasting, dancing and activities for children.
- 18 **Fest Yves** – Nantes  
A street festival of Breton traditional music held in the Graslin section of Nantes for its first year.
- 19 **Fête Bretonne/La Dérobée de Moncontour** – Moncontour  
Revived from a place in the past at the Pardon of St.-Mathurin, this festival is in its second year. Featuring the dance called dérobée, it's organized by the Académie de musique ancienne du Pays de Moncontour and the Comité des fêtes de Moncontour.

June

- 1 **Trophée Per Guillou** – Carhaix  
A contest for paired biniou and bombarde which is one of the classic events of its kind.
- 2-7 **Festival des Arts de St-Grégoire** – St.-Grégoire  
Second year for this festival featuring theater, classical music, modern dance, marionettes and jazz.
- 7-8 **Konkour Sonerien Bre** – Péderec/Menez Bre  
Contests for accordion and paired biniou and bombarde, including festoù deiz and festoù noz
- 7-8 **Poellgor gouel Ballon/Fête de la victoire de Ballon** – Bains sur Oust  
Annual celebration of the victory of Brittany's "first king," Nominoë, in battle against Charles the Bald in 845. Of a definite militant tone, this commemoration also includes lots of music and dancing.
- 21-29 **Festival Anne de Bretagne** – Pornic  
The third year for this festival which rotates to different towns of the Loire-Atlantique. Included are lectures and exhibits as well as music and dancing.
- 27-29 **Gouel Rosko** – Roscoff  
Festival with a focus on local history with tours of historic sites and old houses; also includes an agricultural market as well as musical performances.
- 28 **Fête de Monterfil** – Monterfil  
A one-day festival with a focus on music of the Gallo country; includes contests and concerts for all instruments and for song with lots of dancing and food.

## July

**6/30-7/5 Festival des Tombées de la Nuit – Rennes**

A showcase for new creations with jazz, poetry, storytelling, contemporary theater and dance as well as traditional music from Brittany and other parts of the world.

**4-6 Les Vieilles Charrues – Carhaix**

Features popular music, but there's also a place for more distinctively Breton styles. This year's festival includes a celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the group Diaouled ar Menez.

**4-6 Riboul al Lin – Pays des enclos (central western Brittany)**

A festival focused on architecture and the history of the enclosed churchyards and Calvaries of central western Brittany. Music is also included.

**4-14 Fêtes de Bocage Vitréen – Vitré**

Most of the program of this festival is not Breton, but the organization la Bouèze insures a bit of presence for traditional Gallo culture.

**5-8 Festival des Voix des Pays – Fougères**

An international festival of song (classical to folk).

**9-14 Festival International d'Auray – Auray**

Notes indicate that this large festival of international arts, music and dance was not held this year, but hopefully it will be back.

**10-17 Rencontres Internationales de Harpe – Dinan**

A very well established festival including contests and concerts for Celtic and other folk harps from around the world.

**11-13 Festival des Nuits d'Armor – Moncontour**

A focus on Breton groups and traditional musicians with concerts and festoù deiz/festoù noz.

**12-20 Kann al Loar – Landerneau**

10<sup>th</sup> year for this festival which includes concerts, theater, and festoù noz, the focus is on Breton traditions and new creations and this festival is described as "one of the most Breton of the festivals."

**14 Festival de la Digue - Malestroit**

A one-day festival for culture of the Pays d'Oust.

**15-20 Les Folklories – Quintin**

A festival for choral groups of all styles, including those from Brittany.

**15-20 Assemblées Gallèses – La Chèze**

A major festival for Gallo Brittany with concerts, dance, theater, storytelling, art exhibits and workshops.

July - continued

- 16-20 **Festival des Arts Traditionnels – Mûr-de-Bretagne**  
Organized by the Cercle Celtique de Mûr, this event includes music, dance, storytelling, and traditional crafts. Like many festivals in Brittany a world presence is also found with performance groups from Canada and Mongolia.
- 16-20 **Festival Mondial de Folklore et d'Arts Traditionnels – Plozevet**  
A festival of music and dance from all over the world; this year traditional musicians and singers from the Bigouden area (where the festival is held) are also show cased.
- 17-20 **Musiques Mosaïques - Quimperlé**  
Includes everything from Celtic rock to children's music with a focus on Breton expression.
- 18-20 **Festival de la mer 'Quai des Artistes' – Saint-Brieuc**  
A festival featuring maritime song.
- 19-20 **Fête de la Crêpe – Gourin**  
As well as concerts, dancing and classes and contests for dancing the gavotte, this festival includes classes to make crêpes and tripes, and opportunities for tasting.
- 19-21 **Festival de la Lande – Pleumeur-Bodou**  
A festival featuring traditional music and dance.
- 21-27 **Festival de Cornouailles – Quimper**  
One of two huge festivals long established in Brittany with something for everyone. This year has a focus on traditional flutes from around the world. The festival also includes exhibits, workshops, concerts, festoù noz, dance classes and workshops on Breton cooking, embroidery and costume and the Breton language.
- 25-27 **12e Festival des Tertres – Saint Guéno**  
A festival featuring Celtic and Breton music in concerts and festoù noz.
- 26 **Festival Sonerezh ar Vro – Saint Barthéléme**  
A contest held for the first time for pipers and dancers of the laridé of the Baud area.
- 28-8/1 **12e Stage International de Musique et Danses Bretonnes et Celtique – Ploemeur**  
This is not a festival but an annual week of classes for people from all over the world for biniou, bombarde, Scottish pipes, flute, guitar, harp, fiddle and dance—a great lead-up to the Lorient Festival just next door the following week.

August

- 1-3 **Festival des Quatre Clochers – Confort-Meilars**  
A festival of contemporary as well as traditional styles of music.
- 1-10 **Festival Interceltique de Lorient – Lorient**  
The biggest festival of Brittany, including the championship of bagads, many concerts by the biggest names in Celtic and Breton music, festoù noz and smaller concerts, arts, sports, and lots of dancing.

Festivals – continued

August – continued

- 8-10 **Digouzk d'ar Vro Pourlet** – Le Croisty  
Second year for a festival focused on traditional music and dance of the Pourlet area with lots of dancing and concerts throughout.
- 9-10 **Festival de la Cité des Hortensias** – Perros-Guirec  
Includes a variety of musical styles from all of Brittany.
- 9-15 **Festival Folklorique du Menez-Hom** – Plomodiern  
Features traditional music and dance.
- 9-16 **Festival Plinn de Danouët** – Bourbriac  
A highly recommended gathering focused on traditional song, piping and dancing for the plinn, including contests which attract the best musicians and dancers of Brittany.
- 10-17 **Festival de la Danse Bretonne et de la Saint-Loup** – Guingamp  
A major contest for dance troupes of the Cercles Celtiques, with concerts and festoù noz throughout. Music includes everything from Tri Yann and the Dubliners to the Breton rock group Soldat Louis.
- 15-17 **Fête du Chant de Marin** – Paimpol  
A “shanty festival” with maritime music from all over the world as well as hundreds of old ships and boats.
- 15-30 **Le Chant des Chapelles** – Plougastel-Daoulas  
Focus on vocal music from Brittany and the world.
- 16-24 **20e Festival de Cinema/Gouel ar Filmoù** – Douarnenez  
Features cinema from a different minority group each year, as well as new Breton productions. Besides talks and film viewings there is also lots of music and dancing.
- 21-24 **Festival Fisel** – Rostrenen  
Another high quality competition event (like the plinn festival) focused on a particular traditional dance—the difficult fisel in this case. Singers, pipers and dancers all show off their stuff.
- 21-24 **Fête des Filets Bleus** – Concarneau  
One of Brittany’s oldest festivals which includes traditional and less traditional styles of music, dancing and food.

September (just two that I know of at this time ... but September and October are by no means empty!)

- 5-7 **Championnat de Bretagne de Musique Traditionnelle** – Gourin  
In its 41<sup>st</sup> year, this championship for paired players of the bombarde and biniou koz and bomarde/binou bras has brought the best of Brittany pipers together. The three days also include concerts, festoù noz and festoù deiz as well as a presentation of Breton horses. In the year 2000 this wonderful festival may be coming to New York or Montreal!
- 6-7 **Fête de la Vielle et du Violon** – Saint-Carreuc  
A new festival for hurdy-gurdy and fiddle organized by the Collectif Vielle et Violon en Bretagne.

## Festivals – continued

### October

mid    **Fête de la veuze** – Loire-Atlantique

Festival for the veuze, the bagpipe of southeastern Brittany and the northern Vendée. Concerts and dancing also include singers and other instruments. I don't have the exact dates, but this should be the eighth year for this festival held in mid October.

end    **Bogue d'Or** – Pays de Redon

I don't have the specific dates for this, but this is a wonderful series of contests/festivals for traditional song (and storytelling) held in different towns of the Redon area throughout October. These lead to a final contest held as part of a chestnut festival in Redon at the end of October.

### **“NON-FESTIVALS”**

As if there was not already enough to do during the summer months in Brittany, more and more concert/performance series seem to be on the calendar to fill up not only weekends but also week day evenings! Here are a few of these series.

#### End June-End August

**Dre ar Wenojenn** – central western Brittany

Musical events of all styles organized by a partnership of 25 cultural organizations. Includes smaller concerts held throughout the area as well as well known artists.

#### End June-early September

**Les Festimusicales** – Fouesnant

Various concerts of various musical styles.

#### July and August

**L'Été à Ty Pikous** – St. Nicodème

Eclectic selection of music performed in small rural cabarets.

**Les Lundis Musicaux de Camaret** – Camaret

Monday evening series of diverse musical styles from all over the world.

**Les Mardis de Morgat** – Morgat

Contemporary and traditional music concerts held on Tuesdays in Morgat.

**Les Jeudis Contés de Beauport** – Paimpol

Four Thursday evenings in August featuring storytellers and singers.

**Les Jeudis du Port** – Brest

Weekly Thursday evening concerts of all styles.

**Les Vendredis du Port Rhu** – Douarnenez

Weekly Friday evening concerts of all styles and festoù noz.

**Les Vendredis de Lannilis – Lannilis**

Weekly Friday evening concerts of various musical styles (except traditional Breton music)

**Les Nocturnals de l'Abbaye Saint-Sauveur – Redon**

Classical and early music concerts as well as newer compositions by Breton ensembles.

**Jazz à l'Amirauté – Pléneuf-Val-André**

A series of jazz concerts from July 8 through August 26.

**Animations de la Chapelle Saint-Antoine – Plouezoc'h**

Mini-festival from July 15 through August 17 featuring Breton music.

**Nuits Musicales du Golfe du Morbihan – Bro Gwened**

A series of programs from July 18 through August 8 featuring renaissance and medieval music

**Dinan en Fête – Dinan**

Four mini-festivals: "Jazz Errance," July 9-10; "Musiques de Bretagne," July 22-24; and "Théâtre sous les remparts," August 15-17.

July through September

**Rencontres Musicales en Pays Bigouden – Pont l'Abbe**

Series of concerts of all styles, from jazz to traditional Breton

**Festival des Chapelles du Cap Sizun – Cap Sizun**

Concerts of all styles held in the small chapels of Cap Sizun.

**WANT MORE INFORMATION??**

Probably the best source of regular listings for Breton music is the bi-monthly magazine Musique Bretonne put out by Dastum (16 rue de la Santé, 35065 Rennes; fax: 02 99 30 91 11). Subscription is 110 francs for six yearly issues. The July/August 1997 issue (no. 144) includes not only a well-annotated listing of summer festivals, but also some essays about festivals that really give you a good way to evaluate the different styles of festivals and the range of music you find.

And for planning purposes, the internet is a very good source for up-to-date information on dates—at least for the major festivals. Breton music seems to have a growing presence on the net. An article about the various sites for Breton (and Celtic) music would be welcome from any readers who would like to provide a guide to the best sources for information.

I can recommend the site for the Championnat de Bretagne de Musique Traditionnelle held in Gourin in September. This site gives a summary of the festival events, as well as a very interesting history of the contest and a listing of all the winners from 1956 to 1996 in the biniou koz/bombarde and biniou bras/bombarde competitions. I thank Daniel Le Goff of the Comité des Sonneurs for sending me information about the Championnat and alerting me to this website:

<http://www.odyssee.net/~jfcois/coz-bras.htm>

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