

BRO NEVEZ

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

GOUEL AR BREZHONEG KREIZ-BREIZH

...ALE! 'BENN ARC'HOAZH
'VO KONTET UNAN ALL
DEOCH C'HOAZH



Go on, tomorrow I'll tell you yet another one.

27-28-29 a viz Mae 1977
KARAEZ

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

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#### FROM THE EDITOR

The image on the cover is from the magazine Evid ar Brezhoneg (No. 82, May 15, 1977) advertising a festival for (and in) the Breton language. The image where a child is telling stories in Breton to a captivated group of elders is still pretty much an unrealized dream in Brittany. While we report the present day challenges and successes for the Breton language in the pages of each issue of Bro Nevez, it occurred to me that some readers may not have a good grasp of the history that explains why Breton is an endangered language today. Why is it unlikely today to find children conversing in Breton with elderly Bretons?

While I normally try to keep articles in Bro Nevez short, on the following pages I have included a longer article about Breton as an endangered language. While this article condenses what should take several volumes to truly present, I think it will provide you with useful background. And it certainly will tell you why there is need for an organization like the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language. Please feel free to photocopy this article and pass it on to others you know who are interested in languages and their survival. Pass it along to potential members for the U.S. ICDBL who might be moved by this presentation to help us to take Breton off the endangered language list.

# Breton – an endangered language of Europe

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## The Breton Language is a Celtic Language

The Breton language is one of dozens of "lesser used" languages in Europe. It's a Celtic language. There are five others: Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, and Cornish (yes, it is alive contrary to many things one will read). Some people also include Galicia and Asturias (in Spain) in the family of Celts. While these regions have a Celtic identity based on history and traditional culture, they do not have Celtic languages, although the languages spoken in those regions today are unique.

When you hear the word "Celtic" today in the U.S., it is mostly thrown about to sell something Irish or Scottish ... a music CD or festival. The noun "Celt" or adjective "Celtic" is more precisely used to apply to people, places or things where there is a link to a Celtic language. More broadly it refers to the cultures of the places where those languages have been found.

## So why is there a Celtic language in France?

I am not a historian but we need to start with a little history to situate Brittany and the Breton language. This is a *very* simplistic summary. To understand Brittany today, it is important to study its history in much more depth.

Celts were being distinguished as a separate people by historians in the 8<sup>th</sup> through 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC based on social organization, dress, warfare methods, and especially language. Ancient Celts spread westward from the Danube Valley and a presence in Brittany was noted by the La Tene period in 500 BC. The Gauls of this period (the Latin name for people called Keltai in Greek) were a set of various peoples. Caesar named five different Celtic nations in Brittany – then called "Armorica".

The Romans invaded Brittany in the first century BC. The Celts fought them but were defeated. The Roman presence in Brittany was peaceful and this was a period when roads and towns were built. During the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century especially, but also before this, there was a great deal of travel between Celtic peoples in Britain and Armorica – especially by early Christians who were both spiritual and political leaders. The shift to the name Brittany bears witness to this travel.

This is a complicated period with settlement of a great number of Celts from Wales, Cornwall and Devon, as

well as Ireland, in Brittany. This was a period of uneasy relations between the Francs (French) and Bretons. During the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries there was constant warfare on the borderlands which are now roughly the same as the present day border between Brittany and France.

Brittany was made up of several principalities – united only in the 9<sup>th</sup> century under Nominoe who fought to keep Brittany independent. Brittany as a kingdom under Nominoe marked the peak expansion of the Breton language, but Brittany was never all Breton speaking. Those in the east spoke Gallo, an outgrowth of late Latin influenced by the Celtic language spoken by the Gauls. It developed in parallel to the French dialects now spoken elsewhere in France: that of Paris, and also Picard, Normand, Angevin, Manceau and Poitevin. Gallo is unique, but not a Celtic language.

The Breton nobility had trouble accepting a king. The 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries were marked by internal battles where Breton dukes fought each other for dominance. Competing alliances with England or France meant that the end of independence would be inevitable.

During the 12<sup>th</sup> through 17<sup>th</sup> centuries Breton nobility and higher clergy adopted French as a more international language, and cities in Brittany became largely French-speaking (although also Breton speaking). To be urban has long been viewed as equivalent to speaking French.

Thus, French was the language used by an urban elite while Breton and Gallo were languages of the countryside and smaller towns. Brittany has always been multilingual. The boundary of Brittany is not determined by the correspondence of the Breton language to a particular geographic realm, but by early religious and political boundaries – bishoprics were also administrative areas overlaid by territories claimed by Breton Dukes.

Brittany was annexed to France in 1532 through complex marriage alliances. But it retained some important independence with a parliament, and control over taxes and army conscription. Brittany was brought into the French nation-state with the French Revolution in 1789. That was the beginning of a political centralization that would force people in France to become French, and thus good citizens.

We'll get back to that idea in looking at the changing situation of the Breton language.

## Just how many people speak the Breton language?

The French government has never included questions about languages in its census so until recent times when some fairly reliable surveys have been taken, it has been difficult to know exactly how many people spoke Breton at any given period of history.

In 1914 it is said that over 1 million spoke Breton west of the border between Breton and Gallo-speaking regions – roughly 90% of the population of the western half of Brittany. In 1945 it was about 75%, and today, in all of Brittany the most optimistic estimate would be that 20% of Bretons can speak Breton. Brittany has a population of roughly 4 million – if you include the department of Loire-Atlantique which the Vichy government chopped off from “official” Brittany in 1941. Three-quarters of the estimated 200 to 250,000 Breton speakers using Breton as an everyday language today are over the age of 65. What does that say about the future for Breton?

### How did the numbers of Breton speakers dwindle?

**Image is everything**, and this has to do with why Bretons at a certain period in history decided they must speak French and spare their children knowledge of the Breton language.

**Image No. 1: Breton is a rural, backward-looking, un-modern language fit only for the barnyard.**

Fañch Elegoët, a Breton sociologist, did an extensive study of rural Breton speakers in northwestern Brittany in the 1960s and 70s – primarily through oral histories. He found that Bretons had internalized the following view of Breton:

*Breton .... Is a peasant patois, unable to insure communication even with the neighboring village, even more incapable of expressing the modern world – the world of tractors, automobiles, airplanes and television. A language only good enough to talk to cows and pigs. From that you get the refusal to transmit this language to children – a language considered to be a burden, a handicap in social promotion, a source of humiliation and shame (Elegoët 1978)*

Because Bretons learned to feel that the Breton language was vastly inferior to French, many parents in post World War II Brittany made the decision to do everything possible to insure that their children spoke French – that meant using French when at all possible to speak to children in the home. This meant that you had households where grand parents spoke only Breton, parents spoke Breton and some French, and children spoke only French (although they could understand some Breton even if discouraged from speaking it themselves, for their own good). Thus children were being cut off from grandparents and older relatives. Imagine a family gathering where all the adults are conversing and telling

funny stories in Breton. You're 12 and you can follow a little bit of it, but feel very much left out of the fun because you can't get the jokes and you can't express yourself in Breton.

But parents firmly believed that social and economic progress for their kids was dependent on mastering French and abandoning Breton.

How did that conviction come about? – The schools played a big role

In 1863, one-fifth of people of France spoke no French at all. You didn't need it. You stayed in school only a very short time and then worked on the farm and rarely traveled far enough to use anything but the local lingo. Compulsory attendance at school was introduced in 1882. Jules Ferry, the French Education Minister at the time considered Breton to be “a barbarous relic of another age.”

The impact of compulsory schooling was not immediate since in Brittany children still left school at a pretty young age to work on farms or go off to sea. But long before this, teachers had a mission which they took very seriously. In 1845 teachers in Finistère, the western department of Brittany, were reminded by the sub-prefecture: “Above all gentlemen, remember that you have no higher purpose than to kill the Breton language.”

**Image No. 2: Breton is a hindrance to good citizenship**

Not only was Breton considered a worthless language, it was also a hindrance to becoming a good citizen of France. It was the role of the teacher to turn children of France into good French citizens. That meant making them into French speakers. Non-French languages were seen as a threat to national unity. There's an often quoted line from 1927 by the Minister of National Education at that time that states: “for the linguistic unity of France, the Breton language must disappear.”

Teachers used ridicule and humiliation and corporal punishment to convince little children that they should not use Breton at school or anywhere near the schoolyard. Breton parents who made the decision not to speak Breton to their children in the 50s and 60s often cited their memories of humiliation in school as one reason.

**Image no. 3 – Breton is a language of the powerless**

For men who spoke no, or very little, French, serving in the army was a rude awakening.

Military service for Breton speakers was a lesson in what it is like to be powerless to take charge of your own life. There are some famous stories (possibly true) of how Bretons were thought to be extremely brave because they would cry out what was heard as “à la guerre” (in French “to war”) when in Breton they were pleading

"d'ar ger" ("to home"). There's another story set in World War II where a soldier unable to speak French uses the word "Ya" ("yes" in Breton). This reinforces the idea that he must be speaking German and for his resistance he is executed. Breton really doesn't sound at all like German, but it is unintelligible to a French speaker.

The army definitely made an impact on Breton speakers. Both World War I and II presented a bigger world where to be modern was to speak French. Men brought not only this idea back home, but also changes in clothing, manners and music. They also remembered that French was the language of those in charge. Sociologist Fanch Elegoet found in his oral history work that the army experience totally reinforced Bretons' negative view of their own language. He quotes an 80-year old: *"If you cannot defend yourself in French, what can you do? You can only keep quiet and let others step all over you."*

#### **Image No. 4 – To get ahead in the world, you must speak French**

In the post war period Breton farmers were increasingly drawn into a wider market where French was spoken. It was no longer sufficient to travel to the local market. Exposure to a wider world was slowed by Brittany isolation by land travel. Railroads changed that, reaching the far west of Brittany in the 1860s and smaller rural outposts in the 1880s. While roads were poorly developed, the trains opened things up a great deal.

It is important to note that when it came to the sea, Bretons had long been world travelers as explorers and as fishermen, and as a strong element of the French Navy. Thus coastal towns were also places where French might be heard.

Getting ahead in the world meant learning French. The need to emigrate to larger cities or out of Brittany to find work or a better job required learning French ... but not necessarily abandoning Breton.

#### **Image No. 5 – The "littleness" of Breton. Breton is not a true language**

It is one thing to want to improve your life by learning another language, but it is quite another to reject the language you grew up with or that your parents and grandparents speak.

Media like books and newspapers, as well as schools and military service all brought Bretons in contact with a particular attitude about non-French languages in France. These media all gave you the message that Breton was a "patois." Indeed the word "baragouin" which is used in French to note a jumble of incorrect or incomprehensible language is rooted in the Breton words "bara" for bread and "gwin" (wine) or "gwenn" (white). French people of any social standing looked at the Breton language as baragouin. It was (and still is) very easy for Bretons to get the idea that Breton is a "little language" of the "past," not

worth the effort of learning. In speaking of the teaching of regional languages in French schools, a Professor at the University of Paris III in 1975 questions *"... is it wise or opportune to urge little French children towards a bi- or trilingualism turned not toward the future of the planet, but towards the past of a little country?"*

#### **Image No. 6 The grandeur of French**

French has been promoted not only as the language of modernity and good citizenship for French patriots, but it alone can bring France world esteem and grandeur. French President Pompidou stated in 1972: *"There is no place for regional languages in a France destined to mark Europe with its seal."*

French is the language of civilization itself. Here's a wonderful quote from 1967 by Waldimir d'Ormesson, member of the Académie Française and President of the administrative council of the ORTF (Organisation for French Radio and Television).

*"All Frenchmen are conscious of the importance of the language that is common to them. When they remember the role it has played for ten centuries in the slow formation of the nation, they feel a great respect for it. Secondly, French is not only our language: it was, it is, and it must remain one of the instruments of civilization. In this respect it represents an international public service."* (Haut comité pour la défense et l'expansion de la langue française 1967)

And it was this kind of thinking that the French took to every part of the world they colonized. In a 1969 article called "Francophonie: The French and Africa" Pierre Axedandre sums it all up as follows:

*"Whether in Indochina or in North Africa or anywhere else, little was left for the local languages, which were expected to be eventually as thoroughly obliterated by French as Breton, Basque or Provençal. French was taught not so much as a more efficient instrument of modern, wide-ranging communication: it was taught as the key to a new way of life, or even as a way of life itself."* (Alexandre 1969)

#### **Image No. 7 – Breton is not legal**

Making French citizens of people living within its borders happened on a number of levels. Language change was also on the personal level of naming your children. A law in 1803 obliged parents to choose children's names from one of several authorized calendars of names of Catholic saints, revolutionary heroes, or historic figures (real, not mythical) living before the Middle Ages. Thus it was illegal to name your child Gwendal, Soazig or Erwan. People of course continued to use non-official names for each other, but these were not your official name. As a French citizen you were Maurice; among your Breton friends and family you were Morvan. In 1966 the statutes were eased up a bit and in 1987 "local custom" was taken

into consideration if your local civil servant was willing to allow this. In 1993, parents were finally free to enter any name (within reason) on a birth certificate.

Breton names have become very popular – a mark of pride in identity, but also just a choice of a nice-sounding name.

### **So why hasn't Breton been obliterated yet?**

Bretons have fought for their language

There has long been a core of people in Brittany who have felt that Breton was a language worth defending.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it tended to be Romanticists, aristocrats, and clergy who collected oral traditions – songs and tales, and popular theater texts. Magazines were published in Breton and by the end of the century it was not just oral literature that was promoted but social and economic topics were also being presented in Breton.

While the 19<sup>th</sup> century collectors gave Breton an image of being a bit dusty and certainly ancient, it also brought prestige to Breton as a language capable of great literature.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the creation of a new literature was promoted – particularly through the organization called Gwalarn. The scholars and writers associated with this were out to prove that Breton was a modern language, with an international outlook, capable of standardization and the creation of new vocabulary.

The study of Breton and the creation of teaching materials and dictionaries has tended to be primarily outside of the university – amateur scholars studying the Breton of their own neighborhood or working more widely on the problem of creating a “national” language.

Bretons have sometimes been their own worst enemy. The promotion of Breton as a language for schools and literature has suffered from factions. There are four major dialects within Breton. Local pride and identities meant that Breton speakers often chose to not understand other dialects. However, when it came to making money in the marketplace, they had no problem communicating with Breton speakers using a different dialect. And onion sellers from northwestern Brittany crossed the channel and had no problem communicating as brothers with Welsh speakers.

The rift between dialect speakers has been enhanced in arguments over the formation of orthographies. How do you standardize Breton and still represent the specific nature of the dialects. Standardization has been bogged down particularly in personal factions – the most important one still persistent from World War II based on the pitting of Breton nationalists against Resistance participants in WWII. I'll get to that a little later. Using a

particular orthography has sent a strong political message at times.

Another problem area has been a rift between “native speakers” and what are called “Neo-bretonnants” – those learning it as a second language. It is felt by those who have had the good fortune to grow up speaking Breton that those learning it as a second language can never master Breton. Second language learners have been stereotyped as an urban elite with no interest in understanding the purer and more expressive Breton of rural Bretons – the true “people.” It is felt by some that second language learners are doomed to speak a Breton that is highly influenced by French. There has been resistance on the part of native speakers to the creation of new vocabulary – viewed as “chemical” Breton. Sadly, those who do have a richer mastery of Breton have not always been in the forefront when it comes to teaching Breton or speaking up in its defense, and have preferred to spend time criticizing and belittling second language learners who have recognized that you can't always wait for perfect mastery to move forward.

Some of the factioning is rooted in Brittany's particular political history and this is very complicated. Understanding what happened during World War II in Brittany (and France more widely) is key to sorting out the factions in the Breton movement of today.

Those defending the Breton language in this period or promoting its acceptance into schools, etc. were of all political persuasions. But what is remembered are the Breton nationalists who chose to collaborate with Germany with the idea that Germany would grant Brittany independence. These Bretons felt that Brittany and the Breton language were clearly doomed under French rule. Germany looked like a hope for Bretons to gain control of their own destiny. Once Germans realized that the Breton nationalists seeking independence were a very small minority in Brittany, they quickly lost interest in the idea of granting these allies political power. But the public presence of the Breton language did make some significant gains during the war period with publications being supported, Breton language radio broadcasts implemented, and a Celtic Institute established. Thanks to a more extreme element – some 100 Bretons who took up arms with Germany to fight the French Resistance (which was stronger in Brittany than anywhere else in France with an estimated 30,000 participants), Breton nationalists and action for the Breton language and culture as a whole became labeled as “pro-Nazi” when the war ended.

The old wounds are still there. With German occupation of Brittany, the war was on the doorstep and neighbors were fighting neighbors. It was a horrible period for France and bitter memories remain.

But today this “Nazi” link is still used to discredit Breton militants. Long-dead Breton language activists cleared of collaboration charges after the war are still dragged up as

examples of Breton Nazis when convenient. And today the word "terrorist" is also tagged on to political activists who want more autonomy for Brittany. And in the past year Bretons were outraged when cultural activists were hauled off in the wee hours of the morning for questioning and stigmatized for having terrorist associations.

The link of pro-Breton language activism with Nazis or terrorists continues to be cultivated by those who do not want the Breton language to survive

### **Is Breton doomed? – What is being done for it's future?**

#### Breton in the Schools

You've heard of how the schools were used against Breton, but in more recent times, schools have been used to reintroduce Breton.

The first petition on the part of Bretons to get Breton into the schools dates to 1870 and petitions have continued since. But the presence of Breton in the schools is VERY recent.

The Loi Deixonne of 1951 finally allowed Breton into the schools – if a teacher was willing to volunteer to teach it for an hour a week. The Savary law of 1982 was the first real support for Breton in the schools – still as an optional subject taught 1 to 3 hours a week, usually outside of regular class time.

The limited time Breton was given in classes was clearly not going to help children master Breton – especially when the vast majority of their parents did not speak it at home. Based on the example of immersion schools elsewhere in Europe and in Canada for French!), the Diwan schools were opened in 1977. These are schools where preschool children are immersed in Breton, and French is gradually introduced at the primary level. From one preschool in 1977 Diwan has grown to include some 2,700 children. The first of three middle schools opened in 1988 and a high school opened in 1994. The idea has always been that Diwan schools must be public schools open to all – tuition free – and Diwan has always worked to get this immersion style incorporated into the regular public school system. While Diwan schools have a contract with the National Education system where some teacher salaries are paid by the state, budgets are always in crisis and parents invest heavily in fundraising. Educationally, the Diwan schools are highly successful. Children master Breton and their test scores for French and other subjects are as good, if not better, than scores for children in the public monolingual French schools.

Diwan's success has sparked an interest in bilingual programs in both the public and private Catholic schools of Brittany. The first public school bilingual program opened in 1982 and the first Catholic program started in 1990 and they have grown by 10-15% each year. But these are bilingual programs – half of the teaching is in

Breton and half in French, and they do not give children the same ability as the Diwan schools do to use Breton as a language for all leisure time activity.

Today there are some 8,170 children in Diwan, public and Catholic schools. This is just 1% of the children of Brittany, but the success of these programs has been key in changing the image of Breton – it's now a language for youth.

### **Challenges in the schools.**

While Breton is *allowed* in the schools, its growth is limited. Teacher training has always been a problem. The first university degree to certify Breton teachers was only established in 1985. The National Education system establishes the number of posts to be open for new teachers in any particular subject area, and those for Breton are not a large number. There is also the case of what appears to be plain ill-will on the part of the French education system. This past year a half dozen teachers qualified and interested in teaching Breton were named to teaching posts in the Paris area and even in Martinique and Guyana – French territories.

Breton is still mostly present in the schools as an extra-curricular activity. This year, with budget problems, high school classes are being cut back – the few that there are – and many students who want to take Breton as a foreign language option will need to commute 20-30 miles to the nearest high school which offers it.

To have your children take Breton in school, parents need to be militant about insisting that classes get established and they must remain militant so that classes are maintained from one year to the next.

Diwan's attempt to be recognized as a public school has been blocked by the high courts of France who hold up Article 2 of the French Constitution: "French is the language of the Republic." That means it must be used no less than half of the time as the language of instruction or lunch/recess in public schools. The immersion method of teaching Breton has been branded as anti-constitutional, giving Diwan schools a radical image of being anti-French.

#### Breton for Adult Learners

The growth of Breton in the schools has inspired adults to take classes – evening or weekend classes now have some 8-9,000 adults enrolled.

For a long time, the only way to learn to read and write Breton was in catechism classes of the Church. But as the church abandoned Breton, and parents in the post war period discouraged their children from learning Breton, those who wanted to learn to read and write Breton had only a few tools to do this – one was the Skol Ober correspondence school founded in 1932. Other organizations like Skol an Emsav organized classes for

adults in the 70s and 80s, and today classes are well-organized and widely available.

### The Role of the Church

Brittany is a strongly Catholic area, and the Church has been mostly on the side of Breton. Indeed, many Bretons learned to read Breton through catechism classes and through the reading of tales of the saints (and there seem to be thousands of saints in Brittany). But the church has been somewhat opportunistic. When Breton has been the mainstream language of a community, Breton was used for catechism, hymns and sermons. When French began to be more widely used, Breton was abandoned. Individual priests have been strong supporters of Breton, doing scholarly studies, collecting oral literature, writing and promoting religious plays in Breton. But, depending on the period of history, Church support of Breton has also helped give an image of Breton as a conservative, anti-Republican language.

By the 1950s only exceptional services were given in Breton.

### Media – A problem area, and an area of some promise

The growth of Breton language programs in the schools has stimulated a growth of Breton publications for children – books and magazines as well as games and pedagogical materials for school activities.

But because Breton has only been recently introduced to schools, most Breton speaking adults (an older population) cannot read or write Breton. The reading public is limited – estimated today to be perhaps 10,000 potential adult readers. That means that publishing is a labor of love – 1,000 to 2,000 copies of books are normally published. But as the number of adult learners continues to grow, the market for books and magazines will also grow. There is a diversity of reading materials being produced – news magazines and literary journals as well as literature of all kinds, including murder mysteries and comic books.

Financial support is always an issue for future growth. Rumor has it that grants are more available now for bilingual publications to the detriment of Breton only books.

### Radio

During World War II a weekly and then daily 1-hour broadcast in Breton was produced, but this all ended at the end of the war. However, in 1946 airwaves opened to a half-hour program on Sundays. In 1964 daily 5-minute news bulletins were added. In 1982 people in western Brittany could get 5 hours a week of Breton language programming. In the 1980s and 90s the airwaves opened up so that a number of volunteer-run radio stations could be established which broadcast all or much of their daily programming in Breton. These have limited geographic

range, but are being made available via computer internet.

### Television

Public television in Brittany (which does not reach all of Brittany) has 5 minutes of news daily and one weekly 45-minute program in Breton.

Efforts to launch a cable channel, TV Breizh, in 2000 had lots of promise – 3 hours of Breton a day with a focus on Brittany in French programming also – but efforts to get public status have failed. Fees eliminated the growth of much of an audience in Brittany, so the Breton language content has been trimmed back for more generic programming.

Campaigns for a truly Breton television channel continue, however.

### The internet

There is promise here and the Breton language is very much present on the internet – including online dictionaries, radio programming and Breton lessons. But how many people in Brittany have access to the internet? This is clearly a tool that can bring Breton to a world audience and can play a very important role in linking Bretons emigrants far from home. And this is a tool for youth.

### Breton in public space

When traveling in Brittany, Breton language place names have always been noticeable, but many towns and even tiny villages have seen their names “Frenchified” and transformed into meaningless syllables. Seeing Breton on the street in larger cities is a new phenomenon but definitely a growth area with the establishment of Ofis ar Brezhoneg in 1999. They have launched a strong campaign to get businesses and organizations to use Breton in signage and encourage employees to learn and use it. Banks and commercial enterprises, for example, are using bilingual websites. People are finding that bilingualism is good for tourism – a big industry in Brittany.

There have been challenges in making Breton visible. Bilingual road signs were erected in the 1980s and 90s only after years of campaigns by Breton militants. Petitions are never enough in Brittany, so those working to get bilingual signs in the 1970s eventually modified them themselves with sticky-backed letters. More radical action was taken with tar, and this seemed to force change as signs needed to be replaced and costs got higher. Progress is slow in some areas of Brittany and tarring of signs continues.

## **Attitude is everything ...**

In stark contrast to indifference of the 1950s and 60s polls show that 90-95% of Bretons today want Breton to survive and are proud of their Breton identity.

Putting that into action is a bigger problem. Breton is no longer seen as a worthless language, but it is not seen by all in Brittany as a necessity.

While it is difficult to get Bretons to enroll in Breton classes on a massive scale, there has been a great deal of success in promoting a positive identity and the practice of unique Breton music and dance traditions.

Music has not completely escaped the negative social and political stigmatization attached to language. Many Bretons believed that to get ahead in the world it was not only necessary to speak French but to be French. The old songs were all right for old people, but not to be passed on to one's children. Fortunately many Bretons did not believe it was necessary to abandon their heritage to get ahead in a modern world. Others who had immigrated to Paris learned first-hand that "the French" were not necessarily a more civilized people. Emigrants returning to Brittany were frequently leaders in creating new contexts and institutions to foster Breton traditions. In the 1950s older performers were urged to dust off their repertoires, young Bretons learned traditional line and circle dances in "Celtic Circles" or joined a bagad – a newly invented version of a Scottish pipe band for Brittany. You joined for purely social reasons, but left with a new knowledge of Breton culture and history hidden from you in the schools.

In the 1960s Bretons were also inspired by the "roots" and folk revival movements going on in the U.S. and Britain, and older melodies and rhythms were being rearranged in groups that blended harps and bagpipes with electric guitars and keyboards. By the mid 70s and throughout the 80s Breton musicians were taking a closer look at traditions – collecting music directly from older masters and organizing local festivals to foster the unique traditions rooted in different areas of Brittany. This has fostered new generations of traditional singers and instrumentalists who strengthen an ongoing oral tradition by respecting the essentially social nature of learning music from older masters. While not replacing it, learning has been expanded beyond a face-to-face transmission to include use of recordings and written materials, and now the internet.

The creation of new sounds rooted in older melodies and rhythms continues, and Brittany has one of the healthiest music traditions of Europe. The transmission from one generation to the next has remained intact, but has not prevented Bretons from creating new performance contexts or composing new music. Never have so many people in Brittany been engaged in performing Breton music or dancing Breton dances. Today there are an estimated 8,000+ amateur and professional performers of

Breton music - not counting the learners and people who simply perform at home. This boils down to 1 of 500 Bretons taking an active role in passing along a unique heritage. And when a hip new band uses the Breton language for its songs, that inspires a few more young Bretons to learn this language.

## **Does the Breton language have a future??**

On March 22, 2003, an estimated 15,000 people took to the streets of Rennes in the largest-ever demonstration for the Breton language. This was not only a confirmation of the support for the Breton language in Brittany, but a reaction of grave concern in view of the continued threats to this language on the part of the French government. A hastily organized demonstration on May 15, 2004, brought 6,000 Bretons into the streets of Nantes to express support for the cause of the Breton language as well as to demand that the department of Loire-Atlantique be reunified with the officially defined region of Brittany. Cut off from Brittany by the Vichy government in 1941 government efforts to convince Bretons that this department is a natural part of a region called "Pays de Loire" infuriates those living in this department who identify themselves as Bretons. In five surveys made of the population of Loire Atlantique between 62 and 75% have expressed the desire to have their department reattached to Brittany.

Bretons realize that demonstrations are not enough to save the Breton language or reunite Brittany, and have taken France to the European court for its language policies and practices. Time will tell if this has any positive impact.

The road blocks continue to be built by France – despite its efforts to present itself as the land of human rights. France has signed but not ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Just as Article 2 of the French Constitution ("French is the language of the Republic") blocks the expansion of Breton in the schools, and public support of Diwan immersion schools in particular, it also blocks the signing and enactment of international conventions on language rights in France. Despite growing interest on the part of families for Breton in the schools, cutbacks in teacher training continue and parents must work hard to open new classes for Breton. In comparison to the money invested in museums and cultural institutions of Paris, the resources available for the development of the Breton language and culture are pitiful.

In May 2003 French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin traveled to Quebec, Canada, and declared during his visit: "Cultural diversity is for us a political project. It is at the heart of our fight" [to combat globalization]. The Prime Minister praised Quebec on its success in protecting its values, language and culture during four centuries of Anglo-Saxon domination. Wouldn't it be nice if Mr. Raffarin was really talking about France when he talked about fighting for cultural diversity.

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## OTHER RESOURCES

### **Ofis ar Brezhoneg**

[www.ofis-bzh.org](http://www.ofis-bzh.org)

The Office of the Breton Language promotes public use of Breton in various ways.

### **Diwan Breizh**

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

Immersion schools for the Breton language founded in 1977 which go from pre-school through high school, including some 2,700 students.

**Div Yezh** (the association of parents of children in the public schools)

e-mail: [paul.molac@wanadoo.fr](mailto:paul.molac@wanadoo.fr)

The bilingual programs in public schools including some 3,000 students are enrolled in these programs from preschool through high school in all five departments of Brittany.

**Dihun** (association of parents of children in the Catholic schools)

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

The first bilingual programs in the Catholic schools started in 1990, and today there are close to 2,500 in these schools.

### **Unvaniezh ar Gelennerien Brezhoneg**

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

The Union of Breton Teachers was founded in 1982 and includes some 200 teachers from Diwan as well as the bilingual public and Catholic school programs.

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

[www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm](http://www.breizh.net/icdbl.htm)

Publishes a quarterly newsletter, Bro Nevez, with current information on the Breton language and culture. Website has good list of links to learn more.

# Ofis ar Brezhoneg – Some projects of the Office for Breton in Brittany

Presented by Lois Kuter

## Brezhoneg 2015 – a development plan for the Breton language

At the end of 2003 the Ofis ar Brezhoneg developed an action plan to coordinate work to promote the Breton language.

Three main objectives were proposed:

- Stabilize the number of Breton speakers between now and 2015. This is an ambitious goal given the high percentage of older Breton speakers.
- Open new areas where Breton is used in everyday life beyond “cultural” activities such as literature and music.
- Improve the quality of Breton by helping new learners – children and adults – learn from native speakers. This means enabling a direct transmission of a living language, full of spirit and expression.

Fifty-two specific actions to be achieved in the next ten years are laid out to meet these objectives. For each action the key players and potential costs are identified.

The refinement of the development plan relies on close ties between those in the Ofis ar Brezhoneg and native speakers as well as those promoting Breton throughout Brittany.

## Ya d'ar Brezhoneg (Yes to Breton)

The Ofis ar Brezhoneg already has strong experience in working at a grass-roots level with its “Ya d'ar brezhoneg” campaign in which it assists various businesses and organizations to incorporate Breton into their daily operation. So far, 550 enterprises and groups have signed on, and a new campaign is underway to get community governments (the commune level) to also sign on to put Breton into office operations, documents and signage.

Ofis ar Brezhoneg proposes twenty-six different actions the commune can take and assists them with the information necessary to carry them out. And the Ofis ar Brezhoneg proposes a system where various levels of certification can be given to a commune depending on what they accomplish – a “label” of achievement.

## TermBret

TermBret is the section of the Ofis ar Brezhoneg that focuses on developing new terminologies for aspects of life where they might not already have evolved naturally. And without squelching local color, they also hope to bring some standardization to vocabulary.

A series of small pamphlets to introduce vocabulary for various topics has thus been developed. These are 18 to 22-page pocket-sized booklets (approximately 3 x 6 inches) including lists of French terminology with one or more Breton language equivalent. The gender of the Breton word is indicated.

|                                |                                              |                        |                                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| accord (parfait, consonant...) | [concordance] klotad, [ajustement] songeldad | appel à la danse       | galv da zañsal                             |
| accordéon                      | akordeoñs, akordeon, [fam.] boest' an diaoul | apprendre              | deskiñ                                     |
| accordéon chromatique          | akordeoñs kromatek, akordeon kromatek        | archet                 | gwaregig                                   |
| accordéon diatonique           | akordeoñs diatonek, akordeon diatonek        | argent (matière)       | arc'hant, argant                           |
| accordéoniste                  | akordeoñser, akordeonour, soner akordeoñs    | arrangement            | kempennadur                                |
| accorder (instrument)          | kendonlañ                                    | arranger               | kempenn                                    |
| accordeur (instrument)         | kendonier                                    | artiste                | arzour                                     |
| acoustique (adj.)              | klevelandiel                                 | assemblée des sonneurs | bodadeg* ar sonerion, bodadeg* ar sonerien |
| acoustique (subs.)             | klev, klevelandiezh*                         | auteur                 | oberour, oberer                            |
| adapter                        | kempenn                                      | bag                    | sac'h                                      |
| agrémentation                  | kinklañ                                      | bag cover              | goloenn-sac'h*                             |
| aigu                           | skintin, skiltr                              | bagad                  | bagad                                      |
| air (musique)                  | ton                                          | bagadig                | bagadig                                    |
| air (souffle)                  | aer (b/g.), [souffle] c'hwezh                | bagpipe                | binioù-bras                                |
| air à danser                   | ton da zañsal                                | bague                  | gwalenn*                                   |
| album                          | albom, pladenn*                              | baguette               | bazh-taboulin*, bazh*                      |
| altération                     | sonverkadur, sonverkan                       | baïonnette limée       | baionetez' levnet                          |
| aluminium (matière)            | aluminium                                    | bal à deux             | bal a zaou, bal daou-na-daou               |
| amplificateur                  | amplae                                       | bal en rond            | bal a-dro                                  |
| amplifier                      | amplaat                                      | balai                  | balaenn*                                   |
| anche                          | lançhenn*                                    | ballade                | balladenn*                                 |
| anche double                   | lançhenn* doubl                              | bambou                 | bambouz                                    |
| anneau                         | ruilhenn                                     | barre                  | barrenn*                                   |
| anneau de bourdon              | ruilhenn* korn-boud                          | baryton                | usvoud                                     |
|                                |                                              | basse (adj.)           | boud                                       |
|                                |                                              | basse (subs.)          | gitar-boud                                 |
|                                |                                              | bassiste               | soner gitar-boud                           |

Benel eo an termenou merket gant an arouez \*.  
Les termes marqués du signe \* sont féminins.

b/g. : benel pe gourel.  
féminin ou masculin.

Topics for the booklets I have on hand include Ar sonerezh / music (including music making, danse, instruments, music makers, music events, etc.), Ar c'hirri-tan / The Car, Ar marc'hoù-houarn / Bicycles (literally "iron horse"), An dilhad / Clothing, An dafar burev / office materials, and Ar pep retañ e Breizh / The indispensable words in Breton (vocabulary and phrases perfect for a tourist!).

I had one additional booklet – Ar pesked-mor / Fish of the sea – which I gave to the President of the Academy of Natural Sciences, the museum where I work. An oceanographer, he was on his way to a conference in Brest on maritime matters this May. So I decided he should take this little booklet with him as a way to break the tedium of travel and perhaps learn a few Breton or French fish names. He was delighted with the little booklet and kept it handy in his shirt pocket throughout the conference, showing it proudly to other participants.

Future topics for these little vocabulary guides include games, golf, fashion, trains, the environment, computers, administration, and hunting. Something for everyone.

TermBret has also published larger studies and I have in hand an 100+ page booklet called Anvioù bronneged Europa / Names of the Mammals of Europe. This is quadri-lingual – Breton, French, Welsh and English – and includes also the scientific names for the over 200 animals included from bats to bears, bison, seals and squirrels.

Each species of animal is presented by order and family and its presence in Brittany (or not) is noted). An index to the book helps locate an animal you may be seeking in any of the languages. While not all animals are pictured (this is not meant to be a naturalists guide to identifying animals) there are nice color and black and white illustrations throughout.

In the Foreword, the layout of the book is explained and it is emphasized that while standardization of names is sought for Breton names, this does not mean there are not other Breton names for a particular animal that can be used. As is the case also for all the short pamphlets of terminologies, a clear invitation is given to the reader to contact Ofis ar Brezhoneg with any comments or corrections. These are works in progress to be furthered developed and improved.

For more information about the very interesting work of TermBret and the Ofis ar Brezhoneg you are urged to consult their website: [www.ofis-bzh.org](http://www.ofis-bzh.org).

## Resources for Breton Learners ...

### Radio recordings and a new grammar ...

Jean-Claude Miossec noted that he has some resources for Breton learners that he would be happy to share. This includes 29 CDs, each one hour long, which include radio programs in Breton put together by G. Kervella. These are especially helpful in giving learners an ear for natural conversation between native speakers on a variety of topics. Mr. Miossec would be willing to send them to anyone interested at cost: 43 Euros plus postage.

Jean-Claude Miossec also notes a newly available Breton grammar by Visant Favé, Notes de grammaire de Monseigneur V. Favé, published by the town of Cleder. He recommends this highly as a study that will help learners avoid the problems of borrowing from French in mastering Breton. He has also offered to send this to anyone interested for the cost of 9.5 Euros plus postage.

For either of these resources it is best to write in advance concerning complete costs and methods of payment:

Jean-Claude MIOSSEC  
Kerret  
29430 PLOUESCAT  
FRANCE

### An Internet Magazine - Bremaik

[www.bremaik.free.fr](http://www.bremaik.free.fr)

As described on the webiste itself: *Bremaik (soon) is a news magazine in the Breton language on the internet. The monthly news magazine Bremañ – published since 1980 – is its elder brother. Each week on Mondays, Bremaik will propose short news about sports, cinema, arts, fashion, cooking ... Bremaik's two pages of short news will be composed of seven headings. It will put leisure and everyday life in sight, because it's pretty rare to read about those subjects in Breton! The tone and style of the magazine will rather be fun and light. Only "Darvoud ar sizhun" (event of the week) will spot on Brittany's current events in a more serious manner. Our aim is double. First, we want to give short news in Breton. Second, we want to propose those short texts in Breton very regularly. So that it will encourage new Breton speakers to read each week, as well as young pupils in high schools, or as Breton speakers who live abroad. The Bremaik writing team is constituted of volunteers. Most of them take part in working our monthly magazine Bremañ.*

Bremañ (now) is a 20-page monthly magazine published since 1980 and directed by Lena Louarn. It includes more in-depth articles on world events as well as Breton politics, economy and culture, with interviews with musicians, environmentalists, sports figures, writers and politicians. This magazine also includes lots of short notes on current events in Brittany, music and book reviews. It covers the world – all in Breton. There are lots of photos and the magazine has a colorful and attractive format. Take a look at [www.breman.org](http://www.breman.org).



## Summer University at the Festival de Cornouaille 2004 in Quimper

Kerne: identelezh, broioù, sevenadur / Kerne: identity, countries, culture

During the course of the Festival de Cornouaille a series of free lectures, discussions, presentations, and guided visits are being organized by Ti ar Vro Kemper to introduce festival-goers to traditions of the Cornouaille (Kerne) region of Brittany. These will be held from July 19 to 24, twice a day (at 10 am and 4 pm) at the Musée départemental breton and at different sites in Quimper.

Topics to be explored in the presentations during the “summer university” include:

- Max Jacob (a Jewish writer of Brittany who died 60 years ago in a German concentration camp)
- The sense identity for the different “bro” (“countries”) of the Kerne region
- Everyday life of Kerne
- Cinema and images of Kerne from the 1950s and 60s
- Traditional and contemporary music from the perspective of bombard player Youenn Le Bihan
- The song tradition of Kerne
- Traditional costumes of Kerne
- Dance traditions of the different “bro” of Kerne
- Famous bombard player of the past century, Matilin an Dall
- The legends of the City of Ys and the Dame Blanche
- A guided visit conducted in Breton of the Musée Breton
- A guided tour of the exhibit “Polish painters in Brittany (1890-1939)”

More information about the summer university and its program can be found on the website: [www.teuliaoueg.org](http://www.teuliaoueg.org) in the section “Actu”, or contact Ti ar Vro Kemper: [tiarvro-kemper@wanadoo.fr](mailto:tiarvro-kemper@wanadoo.fr)

**La Cornouaille - Kerne**  
Identités, territoires, culture - Identelezh, broioù, sevenadur  
**19 - 24 juillet 2004 KEMPER**  
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Conférences  
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# New Books from Brittany: Breton History and Biography

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

**Jean-Loup Avril. 1000 Bretons – Dictionnaire biographique. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Portes du Large. 2003. ISBN 2-914612-10-9. 495 pages.**

Jean-Loup Avril is the head of a hospital bacteriology/virology lab in Pontchaillou and has taught on hospital faculties. He has studied the history of medicine in Brittany and so it is no surprise to find a number of scientists in the medical profession in this book of 1000 Bretons. But nearly every profession is represented: scholars and teachers, writers and artists, musicians and composers, explorers and navigators, statesmen, diplomats and politicians, sportsmen, theologians and religious leaders, business leaders and heads of industry, inventors, craftsmen, architects and builders, naturalists and scientists, and a strong showing of military leaders and war heroes.

Avril published his first biographical dictionary, 500 Bretons à Connaître, in 1989 which has long been out of print. The author notes that his choice of people included is not always based on world fame, but on the fact that he felt these were people worth being remembered. Most were born in Brittany or of Breton family, but also included are some individuals, with close ties to Brittany. One might question why there are mere 65 women among the 1,000 people worth noting in this edition, but hopefully future research will reveal more for a future edition.

Besides a nice variety of professions represented, there is also variety in the time periods in which these people made their mark. Some lived before the 16<sup>th</sup> century and during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries but it appears that the bulk of biographies are for more contemporary individuals active in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Each entry – usually two to three per page – gives birth and death dates and places, as well as a short biography and a bibliography of books or articles which include more information about the noted individual. Most profiles include a photo or drawing. An index includes all those with an entry in bold type as well as even more names that are noted in some way – family or associates of the person profiled and authors of works about them. Such a detailed index is very useful since entries often include some meaty information about spouses and children or people associated in some way with the individual profiled – teachers, students, business partners, etc.

To give an idea of the style of this reference work I have chose two entries from this work where the individual has a tie with the U.S. (my translations).

*Marie de Kerstrat, official name, Marie-Anne Tréouret de Kerstrat*

*Pioneer in cinema. Born July 25, 1841, in Briec (Finistère). Died in Pont l'Abbé, December 20, 1920. Descendant of Mirabeau, she married the Count Gustave de Grangsaignes d'Hauterives in 1868. In 1897, a widow stripped of wealth, she left Point l'Abbé for the New World with her son Henri. In her baggage she took a film projector and reels of film. She produced travelling film shows in the U.S.A., Canada, Bermudas and Saint-Pierre et Micquelon islands. She opened a movie theater on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue in New York as well as in Boston and Atlantic City. Protectionist laws of the U.S. obliged her to fix her residence in Montreal. In 1915 she returned to France and opened a movie theater in Saint-Malo called "Les Saint-Perrais" which had some limited success. She then retired in Pont l'Abbé.*

*References: Gérard-Louis Gautier, Dictionnaire cinématographique de Bretagne, Rennes, Tétragram édition, 1995. 480 p. Serge Duigou, Germain Lacosse, Marie de Kerstrat, l'aristocrate du cinéma. Quimper, Editions Ressac, 1987, reedition Rennes, Ouest France-France Edilarge, 2002.*

*François-Marie d'Aboville*

*General, Born in Brest, January 23, 1730. Died in Paris, November 1, 1817. He participated in the American War of Independence as a colonel in charge of artillery under de Rochambeau and played a decisive role in the victory at Yorktown. He was named brigadier general in 1789. As general of a division [in France] he commanded the armies of Nord and Ardennes in 1792 and took part in the victory at Valmy. Named inspector general of the artillery and senator under the Empire, he was sent to Brest in 1809 with the title of governor. In 1814 he entered the parliament in Paris.*

While another author might include a slightly different mix of people, Avril has definitely found 1,000 individuals worthy of note. This is an important biographical reference work to find a quick profile of Bretons active in all aspects of Brittany history.

**Bernard Le Nail. L'Almanach de la Bretagne.** Larousse/Éditions Jacques Marseille. 2003. ISBN 2-03-575106-3. 183 pages.

This is a delightful presentation of people, places, and events in Breton history arranged on a day-to-day basis. Thus, for each day of the year you find a page with a short presentation of an event, custom, or – most often – a person who has marked Brittany's history. These are writers, politicians, sportsmen, heads of industry, scientists, inventors, explorers or musicians and artists. Each page is attractively formatted and includes a photo or illustration. On each page you'll also find the name and very brief description of the saint who is honored in Brittany on that day, and on most pages you'll find a quick list of dates and events for that day and/or a proverb in Breton and French. Occasionally you'll also find a "did you know" box with a few statistics, or a recipe.

Among other topics for the month of May you can learn about the Reliquary containing the heart of Anne of Brittany (who died in 1514), writer Auguste Brizeux (1803-1858), the wife of François-René de Chateaubriand, the practice of collecting seaweed, the Breton "Pie-Noire" breed of cow, the launching of the ship "France" in 1960, Breton whiskey, doctor and scholar of the Far East Victor Segalen (1878-1919), Brittany's patron saint Saint Yves, a revolutionary socialist Jean-Louis Pindy (1840-1917) who set fire to the Hôtel de Ville in Paris, and writer Auguste le Breton (1913-1999).

Although it doesn't come up until December 6, I wanted to pull up the following sample sketch from the almanac since it focuses on a link in history between the U.S. and Brittany.

***"Benjamin Franklin, Brittany and the Bretons"***  
(my translation)

*Born in Boston in 1706 and died in Philadelphia in 1790, Benjamin Franklin is known especially for the political role he played in the United States' fight for independence. But he was also a dynamic entrepreneur, creating an important printing press in Philadelphia in 1729; he was an editor of gazettes and almanacs, including Poor Richard's Almanac; and he had a creative scientific mind, inventing the lightening rod and a system of heating known as the "Franklin stove."*

*Charged with the task of negotiating an alliance with France, he arrived in Nantes on December 7 [1776]*

*and was warmly greeted by the world of Nantes's ship owners and traders. He stayed a dozen days, lodging with the ship owner Barthélemy-Jacques Gruel, and left his nephew John Williams to pursue American interests and keep an eye on the departure and arrival of boats going to and coming from the United States in particular. Next he departed for Paris where he met Jacques-Donatien Le Ray de Chaumont, a Breton fully won over to the cause of American independence. Born in Nantes in 1725, Le Ray de Chaumont was a powerful financier, often more influential than a government minister. It was he who housed Franklin during his stay in Paris, at his property in Passy, which served in a certain sense as the Embassy for the United States in France. It was Le Ray de Chaumont who knew how to lead other powerful businessmen to financially support the American cause. He himself committed a very large part of his fortune. With his simplicity and friendliness, Ben Franklin rapidly won hearts. On February 6, 1778, Vergennes, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed an official recognition of the independence of the United States. Franklin fulfilled his mission.*

Whether you consult this almanac of Brittany each day or randomly page through it, this book is a mine of information on famous and less famous (some infamous) personalities of Brittany. An index of proper names helps relocate biographies and references to people through the almanac.

This is not a definitive work on Breton history, biography, or culture, but an enjoyable presentation of very interesting events, people, places, and pieces of the Breton heritage.

For review in the August issue of Bro Nevez:

Hervé Gourmelon, Le Chevalier de Kerlérec – L'affaire de la Louisiane (Les Portes du Large, 2003). This is dense work on the life of Louis Billouart de Kerlérec (1704-1770) who was the last governor of French controlled Louisiana. This offers an in-depth biography not only of a Breton worth knowing, but also an interesting look at the politics of his day in France and the displacement of Indians in this region of the U.S. with settlement of French, Spanish and English.

## While we're on the topic of Bretons and American history ...

Announcing the reedition of Les Bretons et l'Indépendance Américaine, by Henri d'Yvignac

Originally published in 1920 this 120-page book is due to come out again in June (for details on ordering information contact Lois Kuter). The following is my translation of the press release I received this May.

*Without the Bretons the United States would not exist!*

*On July 4, 1776, the American colonies, subjects of His Majesty George II, King of England, proclaimed their independence. Seven years of war were necessary to make this a reality.*

*In 1777 the Marquis de la Rouërie sailed for America to enlist on the side of the rebelling colonies fighting for their liberty. Lafayette would join him, several months later.*

*On February 6, 1778, France "officially" enters in war against England with the signature of a treaty of alliance with the American revolutionaries. The latter will count on the assistance of France which will furnish support that is cruelly lacking: a flotilla of ships, arms, several thousand men, over half of whom are Bretons.*

*And so to engage in a thankless struggle; civil war between British, and an international war where France, playing a determinant role, draws in its wake an alarmed Holland and reticent Spain.*

*Finally, with the Treaty of Paris of September 3, 1783, defeated England officially recognizes the independence of the thirteen American colonies.*

*Six year later, in 1789, as Washington is elected president, the United States asserts itself as the first great republic of the world.*

*But what has been retained of the history of the participation of Brittany, which threw itself in the American war with a cry of enthusiasm, marking its imprint, and whose sons would fulfill so many campaigns deserving of the slogan "Malo mori quam foedari! (Better death than dishonor).*

*From Brest to Dinan, from Nantes to Saint-Malo, and also Vannes to Quimper, senior officers on one hand, naval officers on the other, volunteers, sailors or simple cabin boys, of all ranks and social classes, the Bretons*

*came from everywhere. Armed with a renowned and ancient maritime experience, they took on this war with determination.*

*It was this determination that the author describes in the first part of his work. Through tales, anecdotes, and bibliographical notes, he leads us to meet these Breton heroes, some of whom have unjustifiably become forgotten. The important participation of the corsairs is also evoked: from 1778 to 1783 nearly 58 corsairs were armed in Saint-Malo.*

*An alphabetical dictionary of 450 Breton officers, soldiers and sailors having taken part in this war makes up the second part of the work. For each combatant the author gives his rank, name of ship or regiment, origins and death if they are known, and dates of service. A list of Breton officers who were members of the the Society of Cincinnati ends the study.*

*An homage to all these fighters, who, for the most part, have numerous descendants today. May their names take a place finally in the glorious history of Brittany.*

### A FEW STATISTICS

(From Bremañ Niv. 270, ebrel 2004)

#### Departments and Population of Brittany

|                                   |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Aodoù-an-Arvor (Côtes d'Armor)    | 550,462   |
| Penn-ar-Bed (Finistère)           | 860,776   |
| Il-ha-Gwilen (Ile-et-Vilaine)     | 889,923   |
| Mor-Bihan (Morbihan)              | 658,336   |
| Liger-Atlantel (Loire-Atlantique) | 1,164,298 |
| Breizh                            | 4,123,795 |

#### Cities and Populations in Brittany

|                            |         |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Naoned (Nantes)            | 544,932 |
| Roazhon (Rennes)           | 272,263 |
| Brest                      | 210,055 |
| Sant-Nazer (Saint Nazaire) | 136,886 |
| An Oriant (Lorient)        | 116,174 |
| Sant-Brieg (Saint Briuc)   | 85,849  |
| Kemper (Quimper)           | 77,256  |
| Gwened (Vannes)            | 60,062  |
| Sant-Maloù (Saint Malo)    | 50,675  |

## OTHER NEW BOOKS

Reviewed and Noted by Lois Kuter

**John Aitchison and Harold Carter. Spreading the Word – The Welsh Language 2001. Y Lolfa Cyf, 2004. ISBN 0 86243 7148. 160 pages.**

The authors of this study are both Professors Emeritus of the University of Wales Aberystwyth who have extensively researched demography and the Welsh language. This book is a study of the state of Welsh based on information from the 2001 census. As promised, it is a dispassionate presentation of statistics with clear explanations of caveats in evaluating numbers. While pointing out the problems in comparing numbers from 1991 and 2001 censuses, there is an interesting study of changes in Welsh language use, as well as an overview of the bigger picture over history. After a good introductory chapter to put things into historical perspective, various chapters outline census questions and the breakdown of numbers according to different categories of knowledge of Welsh (understanding versus reading and writing and speaking Welsh).

The authors present geographic distribution of Welsh speakers, urban versus rural concentrations, age profiles, and social and economic categories of Welsh speakers. They also analyze what the census says on Welsh literacy, and they look at how the census tells us about ethnic identity – a feeling of Welshness.

Here are a few statistical highlights from the 2001 census.

28.4% of the population of Wales over 3 years old has some knowledge of Welsh ranging from being able to understand spoken Welsh to the ability to speak, read and write it. 4.9% of this 28.4% (138,416 people) "understand spoken Welsh only" and do not indicate ability to speak, read or write it. These are likely people in the process of losing Welsh or just learning it.

Broken down by ages, 31.2% of the population 3 to 15 years old have some knowledge of Welsh (understanding through full use), 32.3% of those 16 to 44 understand Welsh, 19.5% of those 45 to 64, and 17% of those 65 and up. The strong numbers in the lower age levels is in contrast to the situation in Brittany where a very small percentage of young people have any knowledge of Breton. Youth seems to be on the side of Welsh. The authors also point out that there is a strong move of Welsh speakers into

professional occupations – education and media especially – where Welsh speakers can have an impact on public opinion and a positive status for Welsh.

The authors note that while there is a growth of people speaking Welsh, they are more dispersed. There is a continuing decline of Welsh speakers in the "heartland" areas - strong territorial bases where 80% or more of the people speak Welsh and it is passed down in families and used in all social community interaction. This is caused both by people moving out for jobs and others moving in who do not speak Welsh.

Solving the problem of jobs and affordable housing to give incentives for Welsh speakers to stay in the heartlands is difficult. But a growth of speakers elsewhere in Wales is promoted by support in media with Radio Cymru and S4C (Sianel Pedwar Cymru) as well as the publication of books and newspapers in Welsh, and support for Welsh medium schools.

While speaking specifically about the Welsh language, the authors pinpoint challenges that are even more daunting for the Breton language:

"The vitality of a language rests upon three bases which can be thought of as a three-legged stool. The first of them is status, for it is necessary for a language to have an effective social status backed by a clear legal status for it to thrive. The second is economic status, for if a language is seen as of little value then the incentive to reproduce it, to retain or learn it, is threatened. The third is ethnic identity, the close association of the language with ethnicity which gives strength and meaning to the population speaking the language, a badge of significance and belonging." (pp. 138-39)



**The Red Leaf Welsh Course**  
**Cwrs Cymraeg Y Ddeilen Goch**  
Carleton University, Ottawa, July 18-25, 2004

Cwrs Cymraeg is an annual week-long residential course which emphasizes the spoken language. It provides instruction at seven levels, ranging from the absolute beginner to those quite advanced in the language. While places may already be full for this summer, contact Cymdeithas Madog for more information: [www.madog.org](http://www.madog.org). Cymdeithas Madog, the Welsh Studies Institution in North America Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping North Americans learn, use and enjoy the Welsh language.

## DEEP INSIDE A BRETON SKULL 2 - MARY DE COATELAN

Jean Pierre LE MAT

During all the evening of September 27th, 1602, the wolves of Brittany were howling death. Strange day. The wind did not rustle any more in the branches of the old trees, the rivers ran without noise. The night fell, and the wolves howled death.

The wind carried the shouts of Guy Eder's agony, Lord of Fontanela. For a month, the executioner had tortured him in his prison. Exhausted, mutilated, bloodless, Guy Eder was dragged on a grid in the mud of Paris, up to the Place of Greve. He was hoisted on the wheel and his arms and legs, one by one, were broken. The executioner took his time. The torture lasted one hour and a half before death.

In Brittany, near the town of Lannion, the old owl of Coatfrec stayed motionless. Ten years before, the castle had been the stronghold of Fontanela and his troop of plunderers. The war of religion between the Catholic League and the partisans of Henry IV, the Protestant French king, plunged France and Brittany into a bloodbath. Fontanela, then aged 18, was one of these warlords who devastated the country in the name of one or another party. The place is now ruined and deserted.

Near the town of Carhaix, the stag of Granec was on the watch. Near him, his fawn shook with terror. The tree which shelters them has not borne any fruit since the time it was loaded with hanged men and women. After Coatfrec, Fontanela and his troops seized the castle of Granec. They killed hundreds of peasants of the area who rebelled against them. In 1594 the Duke of Mercoeur, governor of Brittany, burned the lair of the bandit. But if the wallow was destroyed, the boar was still alive.

After leaving the castle of Granec, Fontanela settled on Tristan island, a fortified islet not far from Douarnenez. From there he devastated all of southwestern Brittany where he could find his feed of loot and blood. No wonder that the wolves are now howling around Quimper, Pont-Croix, Penmarc'h. They had eaten their fill when these towns were plundered. Thousands of corpses were left to them.

In Brittany the wolves are howling and somewhere in Paris a young lady is mourning. Day after day, the young Marie de Coatelan asked king Henry for mercy. She poured gold in the pockets of his councillors in a desperate attempt to save Guy Eder. She paid gangs of criminals to help him escape. And now everything was coming to an end.

Mary de Coatelan and Guy Eder! A love story between a creature of hell and an angel of heaven. Was Brittany out of divine control at this time, forgotten at the same time by God and by Satan ?

In 1595, Fontanela raided the castle of Mezarnou near Landerneau, and abducted the daughter of Renée de Parceveaux and the late lord Lancelot Le Chevoir de Coatelan. At this time, Mary was 12 years old and Fontanela 21. He took her to his fortified islet. What happened between the two young persons ? The prisoners of the bandit usually died rapidly. But the bloodthirsty Fontanela protected her and she appeared rapidly as the mistress of the place when the condotierre was in expedition outside.

A few months after the abduction, during the autumn of 1595, Fontanela was imprisoned by the Royalists, and the islet was besieged for six weeks. Young Mary was at the head of the

terrible warriors and did not weaken. The Royalists abandoned the siege.

Fontanela was freed in January 1596.

Was it the influence of Mary ? After that, the raids of Fontanela were integrated in a broad political strategy. Spanish troops, lead by Juan de Aguila, had landed in Brittany to support the Catholic cause. The Breton clergy lead by George d'Aradon, Bishop of Vannes, had made a deal with the king of Spain, Philip II. They asked him to restore Breton independence, and in return they would strive to install his daughter Isabela on the ducal throne. The Duke of Mercoeur, the Catholic governor of Brittany, also had political ambitions for himself but he could not prevent the king of Spain from sending troops to Brittany. Fontanela acted as the flying column of the Spanish cause. Together with Juan de Aguila, he attacked the fort of Primel, on the north coast of Brittany, during the month of April 1596.

One year later, the Tristan island was besieged again by the Royalists. Mercoeur did not move. But the bishop of Vannes, leader of the Spanish party, raised a troop and attacked the Royalist army in September 1597 between Bannalec and Quimperlé. The siege of Fontanela's den was thwarted once again.

Things were moving fast in France. Henry IV had abjured Protestantism in 1593. He entered in Paris and was a Holy king in 1594. Little by little the Catholic League lost his popular support. King Henry negotiated the departure of the Spanish troops in 1597, and gave his pardon to the warlords who asked for it. Mercoeur negotiated his submission in March 1598. The negociation between Fontanela and the king of France lasted from March to July 1598, but the Breton parliament never registered the agreement. The Toleration Act for Protestants, the Nantes Edict, was signed by Henry IV in the main town of Brittany on April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1598. That same year Mary and Guy get married.

Fontanela was imprisoned again in 1600. The fortifications of the Tristan island were destroyed. But Mary bribed the judges and had Fontanela freed.

In 1602, Fontanela was accused of intelligence with the Spaniards. More than all his other crimes, this one was unforgivable. He was convicted of "high treason and conspiracy against the State". His fate was then fixed. Mary of Coatelan, the loving and bold wife of Fontanela, performed incredible feats to try to save him. She will die of grief less than one year after the capital punishment of her husband.

Nowadays, when Bretons are accused of conspiracy against State, as it was the case recently, we are disturbed at night by ancient howlings of wolves. We look at the women of Brittany with a renewed respect. And we see inexplicably, in their blue eyes, fleeting flames of love for a fiery warlord.



#### EDITOR'S NOTE

As one might expect for such a dramatic story, the tale of Fontanella has been immortalized in Brittany's ballad tradition. Many versions have been collected and one of those is found in Hersart de la Villemarqué's famous Barzaz Breiz.

A beautiful version sung by Claude Lintanf can be heard on the 1989 recording Tradition Chantée de Bretagne - Les Sources du Barzaz Breiz aujourd'hui. Produced by Dastum and Ar Men (SMC 013), this 79 minute CD includes a number of ballads from La Villemarqué's classic collection, and is accompanied by a 73-page booklet with notes and song texts. (see review in Bro Nevez 34, May 1990).

# New Music Recordings from Brittany

Reviewed by Lois Kuter

Jean Baron & Georges Epinette. Texts by Yves Labbé. War Roudoù en Arboulet. Tradition Vivante de Bretagne 18. Dastum DAS 146. 2004. 50'52.

This new CD features the paired bombard and biniou playing of two of Brittany's masters on these instruments: Jean Baron and Georges Epinette. They perform just a few of some 140 songs and tunes collected by Jean-Louis Larboulette (1878 to 1951) between 1902 and 1907 in Vannetais Brittany. Jean-Louis Larboulette was perhaps not the most prolific or important collector of traditional Breton language song in the early 1900s but the four notebooks of texts and music are an important collection for the Vannetais region. The work by a number of Breton musicians to bring the long hidden - nearly lost - notebooks to light is a cause worth celebrating with a CD. This, along with the publication of Larboulette's notes, will help pass along the tunes he noted down 100 years ago to new generations of Breton singers and musicians.

Song melodies dominate the 17 selections on this CD which range from two to four minutes. Some of the song melodies from Larboulette's collection are regular in rhythm like the Breton marches, and others are clearly in the style of the gwerz with a slow irregular rhythm. Dances include two *an dro*, two *laridé*, and a *kas a-barh*. I'm no expert but have listened to a lot of traditional Breton music over the years and would guess that most of these selections are not widely known or performed by Breton musicians. There were a few wonderfully "dissonant" melodies ("Er servitour," "Pe oen doh teul é koenien," and the *laridé* "Kervignagis eu danserion"). The Vannetais tradition is renowned for the beauty of its song melodies and this is underlined by those found on this CD.

It is peculiar to have a bombard-biniou pair interpret a collection that focuses on song - why not have some of Brittany's fine singers from the Vannetais area interpret this repertoire? The jacket notes explain that this CD is intended to be an enticement to others to explore the collected texts which have been up until

now unavailable. This will change when Dastum Bro-Ereg publishes the collection and it will also be available to those who visit the Dastum offices.

The performances by Baron and Epinette give a taste for the sound of the melodies and dance tunes Larboulette collected, but the jacket notes are key in giving an introduction to this man himself, the cultural milieu in which he worked, and the content of the four notebooks of material he collected. Yves Labbé is the primary researcher and author of 47 dense pages of text which accompany the CD. He begins with a biography of Larboulette from his birth to vegetable farmers in Plouhinec in 1878, through his schooling at the Petit Séminaire of Sainte-Anne d'Auray and the Grand Séminaire of Vannes (roughly middle school through college levels) to his ordination as a priest and movement through various job posts (including Rome).

The second section of the notes "Vannetais language and culture: End 19<sup>th</sup> to beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century" focuses on the role of priests in the Breton cultural movement and the influence of other Breton scholars on Larboulette. And there seem to be a wealth of clergymen with a passion for the Breton language, oral traditions, and history at this time. These are teachers at the seminaries as well as Breton writers and publishers of magazines like the Abbé Cadic (*Paroisse bretonne de Paris*). Also influencing Larboulette was Loeiz Herrieu who was a key promoter of Vannetais Breton with his magazine *Dihanamb*. This was the period when the Union Régionaliste Bretonne (URB) began (in 1898) which fought to protect the Breton language and culture and which organized annual contests to promote song, theater and literature in the Breton language. A number of clergymen were active in the URB, and like Larboulette, priests were anxious to engage young people in morally wholesome—and Breton—activities.

A third section of the CD notes, "The Collection notebooks of J.-L. Larboulette," describes their recovery - mostly in photocopied form - after nearly

100 years of obscurity, and gives a look at their contents. This includes a very interesting discussion of the types of song included - and not included. Despite a strong presence in the Breton repertoire, satirical songs that criticized the church or drinking songs would not be shared with a collector like Larboulette or any other priest. The CD notes give a fascinating window on the attitudes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which influenced the work of those promoting the Breton language and culture.

The CD notes close with a page introducing each of the musicians, Georges Epinette and Jean Baron. While not a complete review of all of the accomplishments of these two, this is a very good introduction to their musical careers and engagement with this CD project. Throughout all of the CD text one finds wonderful photographs of the people discussed..

Those who love traditional paired playing of the bombard and biniou will love this CD for the fine performances by Baron and Epinette of a little known repertoire. Those with an interest in the Breton song tradition and the history of the Breton movement and work to promote the Breton language will find this an insightful look into the significant role priests in the Vannetais region played in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As is the case for every CD in Dastum's series called "Tradition vivante de Bretagne" (Living Tradition of Brittany), this is a beautifully produced CD based on solid research and presented with artistry. It is totally in line with Dastum's mission stated on the CD cover: "Since 1972 - to gather, preserve and impart the oral and musical heritage of Brittany."

**Note:** This is the latest in a series of CDs by Dastum which celebrates the work of earlier Breton musicians, singers, and collectors. See Bro Nevez 85, February 2002, for a review of Yves Berthou & Patrick Molard (also bombard/biniou) War Roudoù Leon Braz, which evokes the repertoire of bombard player Guillaume Léon (1870-1950).

Jean-Pierre Le Cornoux & Christian Lemaître.  
Affinités. Production Rouge-Gorge RO 01.  
(distribution Keltia Musique). 2003. 49'

Here's a wonderful duo of fiddle and piano featuring a variety of Breton dances, marches, slow song melodies, and original compositions with a taste of Ireland and quick trip to Bulgaria. Fiddler Christian Lemaître has been at the top of the game in Breton music since the early 1980s. He has played with Storvan, Archétype, Gilles Servat, Tantad, Ortolan, Héritage des Celtes, and Jean-Jacques Goldman. He toured here in the U.S. with Kornog and Pennou Skoulm, and with the Celtic Fiddle Festival in trio with Kevin Burke and the late Johnny Cunningham.

Pianist Jean-Pierre Le Cornoux is newer on the Breton music scene, and certainly a new name for me. He's classically trained but that hasn't impeded him in any way in immersing himself in jazz or the traditional music of Brittany and Ireland. He shows on this CD that he can play any style he chooses on a piano.

Both Lemaître and Le Cornoux composed a number of selections on this CD - traditional style Breton gavottes and Irish reels, but also non-traditional melodies including Lemaître's "Ballet des Elfes" dedicated to Johnny Cunningham, and Le Cornoux's "Stibidenn" which evokes one of many small islands in the bay of Morbihan.

As a true duet fiddle and piano alternately take the melodic lead in most tunes. Both Lemaître and Le Cornoux are able to draw a variety of sounds and styles from their instruments. Le Cornoux's piano playing ranges from the pounding percussive thump of the piano in a set of Irish reels to a very light touch of the keys to surround the melody of a gavotte or slow air. He also shows great talent on accordion with Irish reels and the demanding quick pace of a "Gavotte Pourlet." Lemaître can easily evoke the intense emotion of an Irish slow air ("Her Mantle so Green") and nimbly plucks and bows through the quick pace of a Breton dance. His performance in "Thracian Melody and Dance" is a highlight for me and shows off his full virtuosity.

Christian Lemaître's straight-forward attack on Breton dances and his swing on rambling marches has the perfect emphasis on rhythm, and Jean-Pierre Le Cornoux's draws out a surprisingly broad spectrum of sound from the piano. Perhaps the most interesting selection on the CD is a composition by Alain Michel, "Ar batrioted" in memory of men of Dault in central Brittany who fought in the Resistance during the German occupation of Brittany in World War II. The lower tone of Lemaître's viola and some vocal "humming" by Le Cornoux in addition to a dramatic use of piano give a dark feel to this somber but beautiful melody.

Jacky Molard, a fine fiddler himself, is the sound engineer for the CD but joins in on a few selections with guitar, viola and def - a Middle Eastern drum. I have to say that the sound quality of this CD is exceptional. Both fiddle and piano are perfectly balanced and sound like they are in the same room with you. You can catch every subtle change in volume and touch of piano key, and hear every scrape of the fiddle bow. And there is a certain little rasp to Lemaître's playing which gives it character and uniqueness. This is a great recording by two masters of their instruments, and a master of mastering recorded sound. Great stuff.



**Skolvan. Live in Italia.** Keltia Musique KMCD 150. 2 CD set. 2004. 45'38 & 54'46.

Since its origins in 1984, Skolvan has been one of the most consistently great bands of Brittany. The make-up of the band has changed some, but guitarist Gilles Le Bigot and bombard player Youenn Le Bihan remain at its heart. Le Bihan is a bombard player, but that is not the instrument he plays here. Instead you will hear an instrument he invented called the "piston" - a cross between the very loud and strident bombard and the gentle orchestral oboe. This instrument still has the punch of a bombard, but a softer tone that works well in an acoustic group like Skolvan. Bernard Le Dréau is the sax player for Skolvan and he has some nice exchanges with Le Bihan in the style of the traditional paired bombard and biniou koz. Also part of the group is Dominique Molard who works with a variety of percussion instruments, and Loig Troel on diatonic

accordion who is the newest member of the group. All five in the band are well versed in Breton tradition which gives them the ability to rearrange a traditional melody or dance in a way which is new and unique but perfectly in tune with its Breton roots.

This CD is a recording of a concert given June 26, 2003, in Ostiano (Cremona), Italy. Roughly a third of the 17 selections in the two-CD set are compositions - especially by Gilles Le Bigot and/or Youenn Le Bihan. These are often in a traditional style for a melody or dance that sounds as if it could have been passed down through several generations of Bretons, but also melodies inspired by other cultures and experiences.

Most selections on the CD can be found on earlier recordings by Skolvan - nine, for example, are also found on the 2000 CD Cheñchet'n eus an amzer ("Times change"). But the fact that these have been recorded before doesn't mean you'll be bored if you're a die-hard Skolvan fan and have listened to all their CDs before. This is a live performance and the selections are much longer. Indeed, most cuts on this CD are at least four minutes with three about eight minutes or more and another three selections seven minutes or more. This allows the musicians to develop some variations on the themes, and for each one to show off in some solo work - especially evident in "My favorite things," the Rogers & Hammerstein song from the Sound of Music which Youenn Le Bihan arranged from a jazzier John Coltrane version. This is close to nine minutes in comparison to the four minutes it gets on their 2000 CD.

The longer length of performance time also allows the band to fully play out slower melodies as a gwerz (ballad) singer would do. And for dancers, you can really get into the groove in seven to eight minutes of a *gavotte*, a *ronde de St-Vincnet*, *laridés*, two *an dro* selections, *hanter dro*, *plinn*, *scottishe*, and *ridées*. The perfect rhythm, tempo and drive beg you to get up and dance. This CD is highly recommended for those in the U.S. who might teach Breton dance or who want to practice dances they have learned, but have no access to live music or a fest noz within 3,000 miles. One can see why Skolvan would be a favorite band for festoù-noz in Brittany - a sure bet for great dancing.

Skolvan's style is unique - thanks in great part to the inclusion of the "piston" - but also thanks to a certain

airiness and freedom to the playing. There is a strong feeling of improvisation in the group. Album covers always come up with somewhat unbelievable phrases to market themselves, but in describing their music "as light as a dancing flame, as free as air and as water ..." the PR guy for Skolvan wasn't far off. This is a great group and this is a good showcase of their work.



David Hopkins. Parallel Horizons. Keltia Musique. RSCD 261. 2004. 76'08 ([www.onemantribe.com](http://www.onemantribe.com))

David "Hopi" Hopkins is an Irishman of Brittany who plays dozens of percussion, wind and stringed instruments from all over the world. He has made Brittany his home for many years and has played with a variety of groups and musicians: Barzaz, Bleizi Ruz, Didier Squiban, Jean-Michel Veillon, Myrdhin, Elixir, etc. He knows his Breton music well. But, this CD is not about Brittany. It's about the world, with a bit of an emphasis on Ireland as jigs and reels find a large place in the compositions.

Eighteen other musicians - most from Brittany - join for one or more of the fifteen selections. To name just a few you have Ronan Le Bars on uilleann pipes, Jean-Luc Thomas on wooden flute, Vincent Burlot on saxophone, Hervé Berthou and Gerry O'Connor on fiddle, and Ronan Bléjean and Fred Guichen on accordion. Another dozen musicians add various acoustic and electric guitars, flutes, concertina, bass fiddle, and voical sounds to the rich mix.

Then there are the contributions from the natural world patched in ("sampled") - a thunderstorm, crickets, seagulls and the melodious "musician bird" of the Amazonian rain forest. And in a tribute to Hopkins pet cat "moon" there are some purrs and meows from Moon her/himself.

But the star of this CD is David Hopkins who is described as a percussionist. And percussionist he definitely is, playing some sixty different instruments from Africa, the Middle East, South America, Australia, India, and Pacific islands. These include a variety of cylindrical, hour glass and goblet-shaped drums, as well as frame drums like the bodhran of Ireland. Drums come from North and Central Africa,

New Guinea, the Philippines, Turkey, and various cultures of South America. You also have a tuned clay pot from India (ghatum), wooden xylophones from Africa, "finger pianos" (mbira), cymbals, gongs, chimes, belles, triangles, clapping sticks, bullroarers, horse shoes, rainstick, goat hooves, whirley tube, flower pots and keyboard representing all continents but Antarctica. Those are just the percussion instruments. Hopkins can handle strings - electric bass and lap steel guitars, as well as the North African rebab, a bowed fiddle played like one does a cello. Wind instruments include the ghaita (a Moroccan oboe), Tibetan horn, harmonica, tin whistle, pan pipes from Oceania, bara (bamboo flutes from Nicaraguan Indians), keña (flutes from the Andes), naal (a shepherd's flute from Balochistan, a region bridging Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan), suling (bamboo flute from Indonesia/Philippines), Wayapi tulé (a single reed "clarinet" native to Northern Brazil and French Guyana). And of course there's the didjeridu which we used to think was so exotic but is now almost commonplace in Celtic bands.

Instruments are listed in the jacket notes for the CD for each selection, but you need to listen carefully or do some research to know what the instruments are. For example, for "The Marakesh Jig" which features wooden Irish style flute playing jigs set against a Moroccan rhythm, the instruments listed for Hopkins are: "rebab, ghaita, darbuka, djembé, tabel, bendir, cajoñ, qarqabou, rainstick, crickets." These happen to be (mostly?) North African instruments, but the mix often crosses continents for other selections. I can tell you that I spent considerable time tracking down these instruments in a ten-volume encyclopedia of world music, and there were a number I never found. No matter. Only an ethnomusicologist like me would feel compelled to and enjoy spending time this way.

This CD includes a very exotic mix of sounds in each selection and you definitely travel around the world even if Irish tunes travel with you. I particularly liked "Wiñay wayna" composed by Viviane Biez who contributes some vocals and a number of compositions on the CD. This evokes an ancient site in the Andes equivalent to Ireland's Tir na n'Og (land of eternal youth). Different notes of the melody played on panpipes and flutes popped out of each of my speakers in an echo effect very true to the traditional use of

these instruments. One also gets a taste of Mali with "Ozone n'Goni," a composition inspired by a visit to Hopkins from a Malian singer which features sanza (mbira) and the earthy notes of a wooden xylophone (the dozon n'goni - I think). Also in Africa, Hopkins borrows the voices of Pygmies in a jig he composed inspired by the very free and melodious songs of the Pygmies. You also travel to Polynesia with "Atoll at all" which uses pan pipes and drums native to that area of the world. "The Offering of Tsok" in an arrangement of a traditional Vajra melody first heard sung by a Tibetan lama that reminded Hopkins a bit of sean nos singing.

Hopkins love of animals is found in three compositions (by Viviane Biez and himself) which pay tribute to pets. "Zephyr" is a rambling composition in honor of four now-deceased goats, "Rex" is in honor of a lost dog, and "Moon" is for a still-living kitty.

Those who have ever tried playing Irish uilleann pipes will very much enjoy "The Plumber's Ghost" - a series of arrangements of "Jenny's Welcome to Charlie", the last of which is said to have "conjured up the image of a phantom trapped in a labyrinth of tubes and pipes." Ronan Le Bars is masterful in this performance and the pairing of uilleann pipes with didjeridu and bullroarer adds a ghostly feel.

This is one of the most interesting CDs to come out of Brittany and a good example of "world music" where a fine musician very successfully plays around with tones and percussive textures to evoke a wide range of emotions and sounds. Jacket notes speak of Hopkin's "longtime passion for the planet's musics and instruments ..." and that is very evident in the way he uses the dozens of instruments he has collected. It is clear that David Hopkins is a man rooted in his own tradition of Ireland but very much in tune with, knowledgeable about, and respectful of traditions around the world.

CG

**Alain Genty. Une petite lanterne. Keltia Musique KMCD 152. 2004. 51'16.**

Alain Genty is another musician with roots in the 80s who gets better and better with time. His style is hard

to describe - jazzy, rocky, avant garde at times, with some roots in Breton melodies or rhythms or inspired by other world traditions, and sometime otherworldly in sound. Genty is a guitarist and on this CD he plays fretless bass and electric bass guitars, acoustic guitars, keyboards, and "programmation" (which I assume to mean studio sampling to insert other sounds such as thunder). He is center stage on this CD and the composer for most of the selections, but a number of other top musicians of Brittany are also involved - as the press release from Keltia Musique says (quoting from Bro Nevez!!!), musicians "who are up to his level of innovative genius." Yes, I did say that in my review of his 1998 CD Le Grand encrier (Bro Nevez 67, August 1998). The five innovative geniuses joining Genty on this 2004 CD are Jacky Molard (fiddle), Jean-Michel Veillon (flutes), Patrick Boileau (percussion), and Laurent Genty - no relation - (keyboard). Singer Yann Fañch Kemener makes a brief entry in a spooky two-minute selection called "Ravam" where it sounds like a recording of his voice played backward.

In contrast to the 1998 CD Le Grand encrier that includes short but revealing notes to introduce each selection, the notes to this CD are sparse - just the list of selections and cast of characters performing and helping to produce the CD. The "notes" fold out to a 9 x 9 inch square (quadrupling the size of the standard CD case) so that one might consider framing or hanging the great photo that dominates it - a very fuzzy shot from offshore of rain (?) obscuring a short stretch of Breton coast. One would assume that this was an oil painting or water coloring but the jacket credits note only a photo by Luc Bonfils. Very nice. I tend to enjoy plentiful jacket notes, but the lack of words here doesn't detract in any way from the music - indeed, you are forced to use your imagination and draw your own conclusions.

There's a lot of music swirling around on this CD and the selections are not always clearly cut one from the other which creates interesting transitions and swings in moods. You don't always know if you are listening to the beginning or the end of a particular cut - and that's all the more interesting. As all CD press releases do, the one from Keltia Musique includes a list of quotes from various reviewers of Genty's past CDs (along the likes of "Astounding" - Centerville Courier; "Superb" - Podunk Times). And Bro Nevez is cited once again (along

with Folk Roots, Rock 'n' Reel and others). I am quoted from my 1998 review of Le Grand encrier: "I liked this CD the first time I listened to it, but I hear something more each time I put it on ... while starting with a great cast of musicians is key, Genty's ability to put them all together in unique and changing combinations is what makes his music so interesting ... Provocative and challenging." That goes for this CD too. Lots of color. Never boring.



## Heard of, but not heard

Short notes on the following music CDs are based on reviews and notes found in the following publications: Musique Bretonne 183 (Mar.-Apr. 2004), Ar Men 138 (Jan.-Feb. 2004) & 139 (Mar.-Apr. 2004), and Armor Magazine 409 (Feb. 2004), 410 (Mar. 2004), 411 (Apr. 2004) & 412 (May 2004). Unless otherwise noted the CDs were released in 2003.

Additional notes that make this a much bigger listing than usual were made possible thanks to information in a special supplement (February 27, 2004) of the newspaper Le Télégramme who sponsored the Grand Prix du Disque. A jury of 15 including music professionals, newspaper staff, and readers who came up with a listing of 63 CDs released in 2003 by Breton artists or musicians closely linked to Brittany in competition for the grand prize. The prize went to Denez Prigent for his CD Sarac'h

### **Arvest. Distaol bras.** Coop Breizh.

This first CD by this group from Lorient features two singers and two guitarists who perform Breton dances such as the laridé, kas a barh, and plinn, in a "pop-acoustic" style.

### **Bagad Sant-Nazer. QM2.**

Self-produced CD SNA 0324.

At the end of 2003 the bagad of Saint-Nazaire celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a third CD. QM2 refers to the ship Queen Mary 2 constructed in this city. This is one of Brittany's top bagads.

### **Basta. Le grand cirque.** Avel Ouest.

This is described as a "rock-surrealist" group from the Monts d'Arée who compose songs in French with guitar back-up.

### **Cap Horn. Escales marines.** Keltia Musique.

This is a quartet from the Brest area with old and newer songs of the sea and about maritime life on both land and sea. The music is influenced by folk tunes of Ireland, Scotland and Scandinavia as well as Brittany.

### **Jean Cras. Polyphème.** Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg. Directed by Bramell Tovey. 3 CD set. Timpani 3C3078.

First performed in 1922, this opera by Breton composer Jean Cras is inspired by a lyric poem by Albert Samain written at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It features the Cyclops found in the epic Odyssey. Cras uses this text for this rediscovered and newly recorded work.

### **Dastum Bro Dreger. Bergen-Belsen - Paotr Plouared distroet deur an ifern / Mouvoir des camps de concentration Nazis.** Dastum Bro Dreger EST02. 2004

This is the second in a series called "Encyclopédie Sonore du Tregor-Goëlo" which features spoken accounts and oral histories (in Breton). This is the story told by Yves Léon of Plouaret, a Resistance fighter in World War II who was captured and sent to the Sachsenhausen Camp and then to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. His account is accompanied by and interspersed with a musical composition by Philippe Ollivier.

### **EV. Dizehan.** Créon Music 5966652.

EV is a rock band with Finnish and Breton participants whose music is inspired by Breton tradition and whose song compositions are in Breton, French and Finnish.

### **Gargouilles. Vilaine.** AKABAB/Avel Ouest.

This is a quartet with voice, saxophone, percussion and other instruments with new compositions and a Gallo beat. It includes "swing-rock" and traditional Breton dances.

### **Le Goristes. Sale temps pour les gros.**

Keltia Musique.

This is the fifth CD by this group of eight men who comment on (and mostly poke fun at) life in their home town of Brest and elsewhere. Music of all styles is used effectively to set off their texts.

**Pierick Houdy. Oeuvres pour harpe. Oeuvres pour harpe et orchestre.** Integral Classic 221 131.  
Houdy is a composer who studied under Darius Milhaud. He has lived both in Quebec and Brittany and is now settled in Etel. These are among a number of compositions for harp - avant garde in style but quite approachable for any music lover who enjoys a contemporary style of "classical" music.

**Jolie Vilaine. Jolie Vilaine.** Galad G2704183.  
This group features Gallo ballads from the Redon area. Its members are: Yann-Fañch Perroches (accordion), Véronique Boujout (vocals), Erwann Beranger (guitar), Jean-François Roger (percussion) and Vincent Guérin (bass fiddle).

**Kanerien Sant Karenteg. Tonkadur Mazhin.** Coop Breizh.  
This choir based in Carentec features new compositions like "Tonkadur Mazhin" (Merlin's destiny) which has nine sections evoking a different scene in Merlin's life. The music is composed by choir director Thierry Bara with text by poet Jeanne Nicholas-Saout.

**Kirjuhel. Firescan.** Revue RK 1412. 2004  
This is the 14<sup>th</sup> recording by this Breton instrumentalist uniting Kirjuhel's harp with percussionist Khalid Kouhen. Included are compositions with Breton, Irish, Greek and other world influences.

**Marcel Le Guilloux. Un Devezh 'ba kerc'h morvan.** Coop Breizh. 2004.  
This is a CD by one of Brittany's greatest (Breton language) traditional singers, Marcel Le Guilloux, who has inspired and taught new generations of younger singers. Paying tribute to him as partners for some kan ha diskan singing are three great voices he has influenced: Annie Ebrel, Yann Fañch Kemener and Erik Marchand. Marcel Le Guilloux is also a fine storyteller and two tales are included here. This is a must-have CD for those who love traditional song of central western Brittany.

**Hervé Lesvenan. Ars 'Ys.** Epona Production.  
This CD includes compositions by Lesvenan which have a classical, jazzy and Celtic accent. Musicians include Loïc Bléjean (uilleann pipes), Marla Gliozzi (organ), Hélène Callonnec (violin), Eric Lavarec (alto sax),

Kristina Omnès (cello), Vincent Guérin (bass fiddle) and Ronan Bléjean (accordion).

**Loened fall. Gouez - Æ l'État sauvage.** An Naer 702.  
At the heart of this group is kan ha diskan singing of Marthe Vassallo and Ronan Gueblez, with strong instrumental work on bombarde, fiddle and guitar by other members of the group. This CD was recorded live at a fest noz and features dances of central western Brittany.

**Erik Marchand. Pruna.** Harmonia Mundi 274 1260. 2004.  
This is a world mix that only Erik Marchand knows how to create without any compromise to the genius of the traditional singers and musicians he brings together. This CD includes musicians from Moldavia, Serbia, Romania and Turkey. The Breton gwerz (Breton language ballads in which Marchand excels) is set to some other rhythms to give a very interesting flavor.

**Les Marins d'Iroise. Autour du Monde.** Keltia Musique.  
This is a choir of 30 singers from the Brest area who interpret well known maritime songs - sometimes *a cappella* and sometimes with accompaniment by a variety of instruments.

**Noma's Afro-Celt Groove. Aventure.** Siam/Coop Breizh ACG 01.  
Brittany meets Africa, with African percussion as well as bombardes, bagpipes, and a mix of keyboard, guitars and flutes.

**Ôbrée Alie. Vente sou léz saodd.** Coop Breizh.  
This is the second CD by this group headed by singer Bertrand Aubrée who composes songs in Gallo. The group includes guitars, fiddle, trumpet, tuba, percussion, sax, cello and more. There's a variety of rhythms and sounds with roots in the Gallo tradition of eastern Brittany.

**Les Potes Flor'. Dirak an Dud.** Ar Men Du Productions.  
Two women, both named Florence, from Tregor and Leon, use button and piano accordion as well as song for dances they have composed or arranged from the

traditional repertoire of Brittany - gavottes, scottische, pilé-menu, an dro, etc.

**Red Cardell. Sans fard.** Cashabar/Avel Ouest RK 007.

Seventh CD by this unique "ethno-rock" band featuring compositions by singer and bombard player Jean-Pierre Riou, with Jean-Michel Moal on accordion, and Manu Masko with percussion and "programming."

**Soldat Louis. En vrai 2 vrai.** Créon Music/EMI

This is a live concert performance which includes some of the earlier hits by this Breton rock group which began performing in 1988

**Yann Tiersen. Good bye Lenin!** Labels.

This is the sound track composed by Yann Tiersen for the film "Good bye Lenin!" by German filmmaker Wolfgang Becker. It features piano and orchestra in a series of eighteen themes. This follows Tiersen's composition of the sound track for the film "Amélie Poulain."

**Triskell. Telenn Vor.** Le Chant du Monde.

"Harps of the sea" features twin brothers (and harp players) Pol and Hervé Quefféléant who have composed the tunes on this CD. This is the sixteenth recording in 35 years of performance by this duo.

**Les 6 Toncs. Infusion.** Kerig KCD 181.

This is a group of 5 clarinetists: Charles Quimbert, Yves Le Blanc, Laurant Clouet, Erwan L'Hermenier, and Stéphane Ledro. They feature Breton tunes, but also music from Romania, Bulgaria and the Kletzmer tradition of Central Europe. There is some song (from the Gallo tradition) by Charles Quimbert and guests Roland Brou and Mathieu Hamon - all strong voices.

**Michel Tonnerre. Kanaka.** Créon Music.

Known as a "maritime" singer with a distinctive gravelly voice, Tonnerre is a talented composer of new texts. In his fifth CD he follows the life of John Kanaka who starts his adventures as a seaman travelling the world in 1830. The music is rock, country, and electronic with African and Chinese influences according to Kanaka's port of call.

**Yez ha Sevenadur. Ton ha kan.**

Yez ha Sevenadur YS 0103.

Five singers interpret twelve well known songs by Youenn Gwernig, Gilles Servat, Yvon Etienne, Maxime Piolet and Tri Yann (among others) with a simple instrumental back-up. Then you get just the instrumental back-up so you can sing the songs yourself.

## FESTIVALS TO NOTE

### Potomac Celtic Festival

June 12 & 13, 2004 - Leesburg, Virginia

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

For the 11<sup>th</sup> year the U.S. ICDBL will have a presence at the Potomac Celtic Festival. We have grown from a single card table to a bank of tables with lots of free hand-outs of information about Brittany, a coloring area for kids, and a display of maps, posters and information about Brittany. Contact Lois right away if you can come and help out a bit (some free passes are available)

### Celtic Colours - Cape Breton Island, Canada

October 8-16, 2004

"Celtic Colours is a Cape Breton Island-wide festival with a wide array of events ranging from square dances in intimate community halls to grand concerts at some of the island's larger venues. Each year over 300 artists from all over the Celtic world, including Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Brittany and Canada perform at over 30 venues around the island. Besides the nightly events, there is a full schedule of workshops that allows the visitor to be an active participant in the Celtic culture."

### Finding Festivals in Brittany - Gouelioù

**Breizh - [www.gouelioubreizh.org](http://www.gouelioubreizh.org)**

Gouelioù Breizh is a federation of committees that organize dance and music festivals in Brittany. Their web site lists names, dates, and locations for festivals coming up in Brittany this year: 27 for August alone, most of which are at least two or three days in duration. The site also features a map which will link you to the website for the festival found there for more detailed information.

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