

Reviews / Comptes rendus

Concert

Calgary Chinese Orchestra University of Calgary, November 6, 1999

I have to begin with a confession. At several times during the work on my photohistory of Alberta music, I thought about the Chinese presence here, which begins as early as extensive European settlement in the province. My sources (primarily the Glenbow and Provincial Archives, but also the many local histories written by Albertans themselves) provided next to nothing, and I made do with a couple of old photographs of parades and the cast shot of a dorky musical play, entitled *The Geisha Girl*, from 1920, which demonstrates quite clearly the stereotypes which Europeans imposed on Asians. (I only wish it were truly past tense!) Lethargically, I wondered whether any documentation might be available and speculated on the musical activities, past and present, of Chinatown in my home town. But I did nothing about it.

Preparing our Society conference for Calgary this year, I asked myself what might be a suitable sort of performance for our opening night. The obvious tags for this burg are Cowboys and Indians, but Walter Bonaise provided such a wonderful presence and insight into Cree culture last year that I felt we should leave that simmering in our minds. Cowboys? Well, as I suggest in the book, the cowboy aspect of provincial culture, while certainly genuine and significant, has been overblown and deserves a vacation. In this context, I remembered the Chinese, whose presence in the west may have been ignored, but was constant; indeed, even a stereotypical hint of that presence can add some valuable reality effect to a western movie (*One-Eyed Jacks*, for instance) or tv show (*Have Gun, Will Travel*). The Chinese helped build our railways, washed our clothes, and fed us. Fred Wah, a western Canadian poet (Saskatchewan, BC, and now Alberta), has written of his father's life in the Elite Café (in *Waiting for Saskatchewan*, Turnstone 1985, if I remember correctly). (By the way, say *eee-light*, pard—Anglo Canadians didn't know how to pronounce the word any better than the Chinese!)

Besides, I'd left an unpaid debt here, and I felt it was time to get off my lethargic butt. In fact, finding the Calgary Chinese Orchestra was so easy that I was humiliated all over again. It took—what?—two phone calls before I reached David Yin, the Orchestra's conductor. Within two weeks, I was visiting a rehearsal. (They actually invite the public to their rehearsals, by

the way.) A week later, I brought my camera....

And two months later they helped to open our conference. I'd discovered by then that, in addition to giving them exposure to a specialized and well-prepared audience, this one-hour gig was in fact a dress rehearsal for their own recital, a week later.



photo by Fozia Khan

Their full concert began with a showcase by the Children's Orchestra. At one of the rehearsals I attended, a gum-chewing sweetheart solemnly informed me that Mr. Yin had said they were better than the adults. Well, perhaps we all make extravagant comments to children, but if half of these kids keep at their musical studies, this orchestra will be stunning in just a few years. Several of the adults laughed modestly to me about their own abilities; at least one said, "I didn't start until I was 50. That's too old." But some of the children are very young and have already reached levels of prowess that I envy. Not all of them were as impressive as some others, and I don't see any purpose in singling children out for excessive praise or criticism. The first half of the evening was a delight; let's leave it at that.

A similar caveat should apply to the adult orchestra, I believe. CSTM board member Alan Thrasher pointed out in his introduction to the group's performance for the AGM, this sort of mixed wind/string ensemble has a history in China that predates the European orchestra. But there's also a prairie tradition behind this particular ensemble. In many prairie towns, citizens early set about the creation of town bands (and sometimes operas, symphonies, and other cultural groups); farmers, white and blue collar workers, and businessmen coughed up the dough to buy instruments (possibly uniforms) and music and sometimes to lure in a maestro to instruct them. (I have, by the way, read of at least one town in which fatcat businessmen who did not seek to join in the music making were shaken down on the street for contributions! Not a bad idea....)

Members of the Calgary Chinese Orchestra pay a monthly fee to participate, attend weekly rehearsals, and work very hard at their instruments (several of them double). As I've noted, some of them have begun from scratch within the past two years. What they have to offer Calgary's communities (Chinese

and otherwise) far outweighs anyone's technical deficiencies.

Without slighting any other soloists, I'd like to note that I was particularly moved by Holly Yeung-Yin's performance on the long zither, *shē*. This instrument, which is very similar to the more familiar Japanese *koto*, begs comparison to the European harp; the latter has more strings but (arguably) fewer ways of manipulating those strings. Many of us have seen (at least briefly when the *koto* has appeared on tv) the bending of strings on the performer's left side of the instrument's bridges—I'd never realized how many different effects can be achieved by this technique, depending on how the strings are struck to the right of the bridges. Nor was I aware that players bring their left hand over to the right side of the bridges to make complex musical tapestries. Stefan Grossman used to joke that his guitar was a 6-string piano; the *shē* surely could be called a 25-string piano! (Except that the player gets to touch the strings!)

It's easy to understand why such zithers were considered philosopher's instruments—one feels like one could fall into the eddying pools of sound.... Indeed, the audience, which had been quick (too quick, once!) to leap into applause at the end of each piece, sat in absolute silence for many seconds after Yeung-Yin's piece was complete. No one, I suspect, wanted to break the spell. I hope I get the opportunity to hear more of her playing.

In many ways, the centrepiece of the Orchestra is David Yin's innovative Double-Tone Flute. It's obvious that Asians have never felt the need to make their flutes mechanically complicated, as we have. (Why did we do that? To make it easier to play? To enhance the opportunity to play chromatically or at least in different keys? Or because Europeans like to mechanize things and claim that this makes us superior?) Anyone who has heard a serious player of the Indian *bansuri* knows that a simpler flute—a stick of bamboo with six or seven holes—does not necessarily make for simpler music.

I'm beginning to get the impression that Asian flutes are not all that simple. The Vancouver Vietnamese ensemble *Khac Chi* feature a long bamboo flute being played by three people all at once! The picture is on the cover of their CD, *Spirit of Vietnam*. I haven't really had time to investigate that disc or the flute itself, which I gather is itself a modification of a traditional transverse flute—made for only two people. (However, a review of the disc is in the works.)

I have not had the opportunity to ask Mr. Yin about his innovation. In fact, the Double-Tone Flute works two ways, one of them quite obvious. The blow hole is about a fifth of the distance from the left of the pipe, and an extra set of holes are

drilled into the left side. Presumably the hole reaches over a barrier, and the player can blow on either or both sides as necessary. When the musical moment is right, the player crosses hands and (I assume) shifts her embouchure to blow into both sides. *Voilà!* Two melody lines at once! (Remember those Etruscan wall paintings of the shepherds with the double recorders?)

But the player can also return to the right side of the hole and double the notes of the regular six holes. Exactly how, I'm not sure. To my ears, these seem somewhat more difficult to keep in tune. Indeed, sometimes the effect, particularly in the alto flutes, is a bit like the mouth organ *sheng*, almost as if a mirliton membrane had been inserted somewhere, though I don't

believe that to be the case. (When I visited the Orchestra informally, Mr. Yin was conducting, and these fascinating instruments never surfaced. Orchestra members did say that he is also an authority on some sort of antique lithophone....)

If Mr. Yin really did invent the Double-Tone Flute, I hope that he's gotten an ironclad patent on it. It's certain to be a big hit; even when he plays relatively classical music, the moment he crosses his hands across his chest is a showstopper. I hate to think of the cornball theatrics to come, when the Elektrik Soodough-Keltoids get hold of these flutes, which they surely will.

But the Double-Tone Flute is not a gimmick to Mr. Yin and his students. (Solos where played by three children and one adult member of the Orchestra, as well as by Yin himself.) For hundreds of years, windplayers have wanted to be able to

play more than one note at a time, and, witness those Etruscan shepherds, they've been finding ways of doing it. I found Mr. Yin's own composition, "The Clear River Water," to be mature and lovely.

Even if I had gotten off my buns earlier this decade, I don't suppose I'd have found photographic evidence of an historic predecessor to the Orchestra. After all, there were a large number of restrictions on Chinese immigrants in those days, to our shame. I doubt that many of them were able to bring such delicate instruments as the *shē*, but there must have been flutes around, and perhaps the odd *erh-hu* violin. It's not hard to imagine a lonely worker playing a pentatonic melody in the prairie twilight. The idea fits—much Native music is pentatonic, after all—so is Scottish music, for that matter! The Calgary Chinese Orchestra shows us that Chinese classical music is being composed and is growing in western Canada. I suspect that its roots are deeper than we know.

—GWL



photo by Fozia Khan

Recordings

David Parry. *The Man From Eldorado* Borealis BCD 106. Borealis Music Ltd., 67 Mowatt Avenue, Suite 233, Toronto, Ontario M6K 3E3; <brc@interlog.com>; <www.interlog.com/~brc>

What happens when one combines the talents of contemporary performers of the modern folk revival with the literature and poetry of well known and not-so-well known poets, who themselves contained the very seed and soul of music in their various prose and rhymed compositions? Some of the most innovative collaborative work to be found anywhere in contemporary music today! Examples of this include Joseph Daniel Sobol's interpretation of the work of Yeats, the renderings of short stories and poems of Poe by both Joan Baez and the late Phil Ochs, Priscilla Hurdman's beautiful renditions of the poetry of Australian Henry Dawson, and perhaps the best examples, Jean Redpath's extensive musical journeys into the poetry of Burns, and the late Peter Bellamy's musical love affair with the poetry of Kipling. The late David Parry's own musical involvement with the poems and ballads of Robert Service began somewhere around 1975, when Parry heard Shelley Posen recite "The Cremation of Sam Magee" one night at the now defunct Fiddler's Green Folk Club in Toronto.

David Parry proudly wore many artistic hats: actor, theatrical producer, singer of all manner of intriguing songs, tunesmith, morris dancer, and storyteller extraordinaire. The current offering was originally recorded and issued in 1993 on Parry's own label, Bonanza Creek, and thanks to the good folks at Borealis, the original recording has been remastered and improved. As if Parry's own talents were not enough, the recording includes some of the best musicians on any side of a concert stage, including Jim Strictland, Ken Whiteley, the late Graham Townsend, Ian Robb, and Alistair Brown, on a host of instruments, including melodeon, English concertina, fiddle, piano, string bass, tenor banjo, tenor mandolin, and guitar.

The poems and ballads cover three periods in Service's life: his wanderings and sojourns throughout Canada's far north, his days in both the Yukon and Northwest Territories, his time spent living the bohemian lifestyle in Paris just before World War One, and his term during that war as an ambulance driver.

North of South. *The Cochrane Lake Sessions*, vols. 1 and 2. North of South, Box 61132, Kensington Road PO, Calgary, Alberta T2N 4S6; <rawright@cadvision.com>; <www.cadvision.com/rawright>

A few issues back, I penned a requiem for the cassette tape, believing—and regretting—that this form of recording was dead. It seems that requiem was premature, for odd cassettes still keep coming for review. Will these two be the last and, if so, do they write a worthy finis to that genre of recordings?

Those are both questions that I find hard to answer. On one of the J-cards, North of South proclaim their style as being "characteristic of the late 1950's early 1960's folk Music [sic] revival." Further, they state

The lyrics of the music we like to sing paint pictures, tug at our heartstrings, make us laugh and cause us to reflect.... These are songs of the world about love and lost love, life and death, protest and celebration.

The title piece is a storyteller's joy, and Parry gives this ballad of a prospector's wealth turned to ashes a superior performance. In "Athabasca Dick," done *a cappella*, Parry tells the tale of a man who risked his very life to save a keg of precious whiskey (and who says there's nothing worth dying for!). "The Atavist," in which a man searches for and finds the very heart of the primitive and the primordial, must be heard to be believed. "In the Heart of the Sourdough," the haunting evocation of the vast, lonely, and desolate Yukon is even more amplified by the chilling (no pun intended) fiddle accompaniment of Graham Townsend. With all the majesty and grandeur of the northern settings, Service loved all the little things, the ordinary joys and pleasures of life, and these come through quite nicely in several musical paeans, poems in praise of everything from playing the accordion to revelling in non-work, and from a strong, comforting pot of tea to "In Praise of Alcohol."

Two pieces that deserve special mention are "The Volunteer" and "Song of Winter Weather," both reflecting the horrors and despair of modern warfare, reflecting Service's own ambivalence even as he participated in the first World War. Performed *a cappella*, "The Volunteer" is one of the most poignant and gut-wrenching anti-war songs to be found in or out of literature, and Parry brings tears to the eyes in this rendition. The addition of Strictland's snare drum makes "Winter Weather" sounds like a marching song. Why not? The song, after all, evokes the tedious gloom and terror of trench warfare.

For lovers of storytelling and singing, this collaboration between David Parry and Robert Service is a stunning, rousing success. I can hope that if there are still unreleased recordings of David Parry, they are well guarded and that perhaps someday Borealis or another kind agency will make them available to Parry's fans. I believe that if Service ever heard his poems and ballads as set by Parry, he'd be a fan as well.

—Robert Rodriguez
NYC

They state also that they are "done in North of South's own unique style," which rather contradicts the previous—and, I would say, much more correct—claim that they are in the style of the late 50s to early 60s. As for being songs of the world, not so; all but two are North American. Moreover, most were written in the last fifty years: of the twenty-four tracks, only four are from the earlier tradition and only one predates 1900.

Let us be quite clear that the personnel—Fred Thom, Gord Cumming, Greg Black and Ron Wright—are all competent singers and more-than-competent musicians. The trouble, for me, is their "own unique style" which is, all too often, a jog-along, dum-de-dum-de-dum. This fits some songs excellently, the gospel songs in particular ("Will the Circle be Unbroken?", "We're Only Here for a Little While"), plus the cheerful party

song "There's a Meeting Here Tonight" and the joke song "To Tomorrow."

If you like John Denver, you won't be disturbed by their renditions of "Back Home Again" and "Follow Me." Tommy Makem's "Red is the Rose"—new words to the tune of "Loch Lomond"—works well and so does Joni Mitchell's "The Circle Game." The instrumental opening and the vocal to Gordon Lightfoot's rueful reminiscence "The Last Time I Saw Her Face" give it special quality.

There are other instances where the instrumental accompaniment come close to redeeming quite dreadful lyrics, giving interest to the fatuities of "Seven Golden Daffodils" and distracting one's attention from the confused imagery of "The River." ("I'll sail my vessel till the river runs dry"—what, even with no wind? "The waters are my sky"—boat capsized?). However, "Maria," with its "whining clouds," is beyond redemption, vigorously though they try.

In contrast, their style does not suit the three Bob Dylan songs; it is altogether too cheerful to properly put across the bitter appeal inherent in the lyrics of "The Times They Are A-Changing" or to embody the yearning inherent in "If Tomorrow Wasn't Such a Long Time" and "When the Ship Comes In." The two Stan Rogers songs fare better: "The Field Behind the Plow" is, at times, oddly enunciated and has a superfluous coda, but

Penny Lang & Friends. Live. Fleming Artists' Management, 5975 avenue du Parc, Montreal, Quebec H2V 4H4;
[<http://www.interlog.com/~cpreal/penny_lang/pl_recordings.html>](http://www.interlog.com/~cpreal/penny_lang/pl_recordings.html)

Well, here's a pleasure for us all, another CD from Penny Lang. First off, you should know that I have never much cared for live recordings. Invariably they detract from my pleasure in listening to the uncluttered songs or music of an artist or band. Yet, as much as I enjoyed a previous CD of Penny's (*Ain't Life Sweet*, reviewed 29.1, March 1995), and I enjoyed it a lot, I enjoyed this one even more—it really *rocks*—even the slow numbers! Clearly the audience and the musicians are in complete accord and there is joy and life in the recording. Both feed Penny their energy and in consequence Penny's renowned vocal ability and musicianship are displayed to full effect, just as they are at festival venues.

In one form or another, with one or two exceptions, the blues idiom is maintained throughout the CD, even with the country songs "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes" and Eddy Arnold's 1948 hit "Bouquet of Roses." As all performers know, the distribution of tempos during a performance is critical. The programme here begins with Brownie McGhee's driving, straight-ahead blues "I've Been Living With the Blues" and appears to slow down with the opening stanzas of the second number, the traditional "Twelve Gates to the City." This is just an illusion. The song takes off when the rest of the musicians join in after a couple of verses and the third number, the lilting "I'm Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes," continues the smooth flow that typifies the CD's content. Penny lets her hair down (so to speak) with "Frankie and Johnny," which she considers to be

was quite acceptable to this listener, while "45 Years From Now" is one of the best tracks on the two cassettes.

Other songs fare variably. Ed McCurdy's "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream" is altogether too jog-along for my taste; "Will Ye Go, Lassie, Go?", that song from Ulster so popular at the end of drunken parties, starts well but also quickly subsides into jog-along, while the splendid song of the "Greenland Whale Fisheries" is wholly destroyed by the "One-two-three, let's see how fast we can sing" approach. (The change of pace near the end is too great to make matters better).

At the other extreme is the self-parodying murder ballad "Ellen Smith"—yes, it is sung fast, but somehow that fits and Ron Wright's banjo is at its best—an excellent track, this.

Well, how to sum up the two tapes? Though I liked some tracks, there were more where I felt the musical renditions too monotonous; I shan't be playing these tapes often. Yet the approach is designed to echo the style of forty years ago. That is not a style that thrills me; maybe I'm too much of a traditionalist and there's too strong a country-and-western element in it for me. If you enjoy that style better than I do, well then, you'll enjoy North of South.

—William A.S. Sarjeant
 Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

one of the best songs for the display of her voice. "Bouquet of Roses" follows, with "Jailer Bring Me Water" coming afterwards. As the reader can already see, the recording is full of traditional and semi-traditional songs and, from a singer's point of view, is a good source for the less accessible words of songs we sort-of know. Even though the words are not included in the liner notes, Penny's diction is clear and they are easily transcribed. There are definitely a couple of numbers I will be adding to my repertoire for singing at Labour Day Picnics and similar events.

Next in line, in amongst all these good time songs, is Penny's own "Song for Bridget's Film," which gives one breathing space and room for thought. Written for and based on the content of a documentary, it tells some heart wrenching, hard truths from the lives of four women. "Bye Bye Blues" is track eight with "We Shall Not be Moved," sung as the concert's closing number. Penny's ad lib encore song "Penny's Blues" winds up an all too short-seeming CD (actually about 51 minutes) with the musicians as well as the audience plainly having a ball.

Among the 13 musicians and back-up vocalists on the two sessions are the Whiteley brothers, Martin Boodman on harmonica, Penny's son Jason on guitar, and Judy Golick on sax. Penny surely should be dubbed Canada's "First Lady of Folk Blues."

—Mike Ballantyne
 Cobble Hill, BC

December Wind. Sacred Voices. CR-7038. Canyon Records Productions, 4143 North 16 Street, Suite 6, Phoenix, Arizona 85016, USA; 1-800-268-1141; <canyon@canyonrecords.com>; <www.canyonrecords.com>

This first recording of December Wind is introduced with the Iroquoian language and then the lyrics "Do not live in the past," which is in accord with the group's description of their music as "Native American Alternative Folk Rock." Their songs provide a rich listening experience. The rhythms are strong, the tunes memorable and the studio production skilful.

The Native American heritage of the singers infuses the sounds and words of the songs. For example, in "Gentle Thunder," thunder sounds blend with drum, rattle and guitar, and become part of the entire accompaniment. The lyrics, all by the leader, Atsiaktonkie, inspire a range of images of Native life: fast, light songs ("It's All Right to Share My Blanket with You"); powerful yet sad songs ("She Likes Flowers"); a dramatic song with violent images and percussive sounds ("High Noon"); a haunting song sung on vocables and chant-like words:

"No matter what they say, no matter what they do, we will still survive" ("Where Are My People?").

The five writers and performers of this music are Mohawk, and their goal, as expressed by guitarist Donald Sharow, is "to express the positive spirit towards mankind and our Creator." All say they are travellers on the "Red Road," which means a life of no alcohol or drugs, of simplicity and kindness.

One has the feeling that this is "generous" music. Each song is long enough to create a mood and thoughtful enough to express a story in sound. Even the notes are sufficiently detailed to show the provenance of the music. Overall, the group's sincere approach to expressing Native ideals through music has fostered a meaningful work.

—Lynn Whidden
Brandon, Manitoba

Black Lodge. The People Dance. CR-6293. Canyon Records Productions, as above

As one would expect of the Black Lodge Singers, this powwow music, recorded live, is intense and exciting. The group are truly a team, able to change abruptly rhythms and dynamics and remain in total unison. The accompanying notes tell us that Black Lodge was recently named "Artist/Group of the Year" at the first Native American Music Awards.

This Blackfoot group builds upon their traditional music. (For those interested in Blackfoot traditional music, Bruno Nettl

has written *Blackfoot Musical Thought*.) But Kenny Scabby Robe and his sons are musical innovators as well as traditionalists. For example, they use their voices to create percussive accents which interplay with the drum beats, and the songs have names such as "Elder's Groove," "Memories" and "Litefoot." Their dynamic approach ensures that powwow music will continue to be a vibrant music genre.

—Lynn Whidden

Quelques nouveautés au Québec à l'automne 99

Les têtes de violon. Airs tordus / Crooked Tunes. Violon traditionnel québécois / Traditional fiddle music of Québec. Trente Sous Zéro / Thirty Below, 1108, rue Dollard, Val-Bélair, Québec, Canada G3K 1W6 ; tél. & fax : (418)847-9815 ; <thirtybe@qbc.clic.net>; <<http://www.qbc.clic.net/~thirtybe>>.

Liette Remon et Guy Bouchard. Airs tordus - 25 - Crooked Tunes. Airs de violon du Québec Fiddle Tunes, 2 volumes. Trente Sous Zéro - Thirty Below, 1996 et 1997, 51 p. et 35 p. (sans pagination).

Guy Bouchard, guitariste et violoneux bien connu de Québec et ancien membre du groupe La Bottine Souriante, a mis sur pied, il y a quelques années, une maison de distribution de disques de musique traditionnelle québécoise fort dynamique : Trente Sous Zéro / Thirty Below. En 1977, avec la violoneuse Liette Remon, il a publié deux excellents recueils de vingt-cinq airs traditionnels québécois pour le violon, des airs d'origines irlandaise et française, et de grands violoneux, tel Louis «Pitou» Boudreau, Aimé Gagnon et André Alain. En introduction, le premier recueil présente un excellent texte sur «Le répertoire des violoneux du Québec».

Pour accompagner ces recueils, Guy Bouchard fait maintenant paraître un CD qui reprend dix-sept de ces airs, plus quel-

Sophie Pomerleau. *Toutouic la la, berceuses traditionnelles / traditional lullabies.* Sophie Pomerleau, 1613, Chemin du Fleuve, Saint-Romuald (Québec) G6W 6Z7 ; (418)834-6778.

Ce disque contient une douzaine de berceuses tirées de l'Anthologie des chants populaires français de Joseph Canteloube,

ques autres. Pour ce faire, il s'est adjoint des musiciens et musiciennes américains, cinq violonistes et un mandoliniste. Pour faciliter l'apprentissage de ces pièces, le rythme est légèrement plus lent et les arrangements sont dépouillés au maximum; le seul accompagnement est la podorythmie ou parfois une seconde mélodie à l'alto. Cela n'amoindrit en rien l'écoute. Les Airs tordus se laissent très bien goûter ; Les têtes de violon génèrent une énergie vivifiante qui vient du plaisir de jouer ensemble une musique et un répertoire d'une extrême richesse. L'été dernier, j'ai eu le plaisir de les entendre à la fin juillet à Joliette, au Festival Mémoire et racines, où ils ont remporté un vif succès.

publiée en 1950, de même que trois berceuses traditionnelles québécoises. Jeune ethnologue, Sophie est issue d'une famille de

chanteurs et chanteuses. Elle possède une voix énergique qu'elle doit, sur ce disque, bien entendu, retenir. Pour l'accompagner dans cette entreprise, elle s'est adjoint le guitariste Michel Borgeat.

En consacrant un disque entier à des berceuses, Sophie Pomerleau s'est imposée un dur défi à relever. Pour calmes et

Les Chauffeurs à pied. Rue Lavigueur. LCAP 99-2. Les Chauffeurs à pied, 547, rue Lavigueur, app. 5, Québec (Québec) G1R 1B7 ; tél. : (418)523-5336 et (418)527-4530 ; <<http://members.xoom.com/chauffeurs>> .

Ce jeune groupe est composé de quatre jeunes musiciens de Québec et, depuis près d'un an qu'il se produit à Québec et dans différents festivals dans la province, remporte un succès enviable et mérité. Sur ce premier disque, *Les Chauffeurs à pied* offrent un répertoire de musique instrumentale et de chansons apprises auprès des meilleurs jeunes musiciens traditionnels québécois. Se promenant de la chanson à répondre à la chanson de chantier,

Monique Jutras. Complaintes médiévales. Chansons traditionnelles épiques et tragiques / Medieval Ballads. Epic and Tragic Traditional Songs. Musiciens invités : L'Ensemble Claude-Gervaise. Arrangements de Jean-Claude Bélanger. PMJ-022. Productions Monique Jutras, 184, rue Aberdeen, Québec (Québec) G1R 2C8 ; tél. : (418)525-7538 ; téléc. : (418)525-4712 ; <jutragbi@globetrotter.net> .

Monique Jutras a derrière elle une longue carrière d'interprète de la chanson traditionnelle québécoise. Elle s'est produite dans de nombreux festivals et en milieu scolaire, auprès des enfants, tant au Canada qu'aux États-Unis. Après *Chantons et tur-lutons. La chanson folklorique québécoise* (livre et cassette) en 1994 (*Bulletin* 30.4, 1997) et *La Turlutte des Little-Delisle* en 1997, Monique Jutras récidive avec ces *Complaintes médiévales*.

Ce disque fait suite à une recherche qu'elle a effectuée au niveau d'une maîtrise en ethnologie sur les chansons tragiques et épiques de tradition française, et publiée en 1997 (*Vision d'une société par les chansons de tradition orale à caractère épique et tragique* par Conrad Laforte et Monique Jutras, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval). Soutenues par des arrangements et une instrumentation de style médiéval (cromorne, viole, vièle, flûte, saqueboute, cervelas, chamélie, douçaine, guitare et autres), Monique Jutras propose à notre écoute une douzaine de complaintes épiques et tragiques venues en terre d'Amérique depuis la mère patrie par la transmission orale.

Tenant parfois de l'épopée, ces complaintes évoquent les mœurs rudes des chevaliers, une époque où l'honneur d'une fille

Autres parutions à signaler :

Barachois. Barachois. Musique Acadienne de L'Ile-du-Prince-Édouard / Acadian Music from Prince Edward Island. Distribué par House Party Productions Ltd, Boîte postale 24, R.R. #1, Wellington, I.-P.-É., COB 2E0 ; tél. : (902)854-3019.

Barachois, ce sont quatre musiciens, 2 gars et 2 filles, de la région Évangéline à l'Ile-du-Prince-Édouard. Composé de pièces traditionnelles des Maritimes, ce premier disque est d'une énergie débordante et met en valeur le savoir-faire des membres du

Bertrand Deraspe. Contre vents et marées... Traditions musicales des Îles de la Madeleine. Bertrand Deraspe, C.P. 486, Havre-aux-Maisons, Îles de la Madeleine (Québec) G0B 1K0; tél. : (418)969-2639.

Disque fort sympathique d'un chanteur et musicien traditionnel madelinot des plus actifs. Il nous propose un répertoire de ses îles d'une grande richesse, interprété avec un magnétisme in-

douces que sont ces berceuses, le disque pâche nécessairement par un manque de variété. Mais elles sont cependant très efficaces pour endormir les enfants. Un disque tout simple d'une chanteuse chaleureuse, munie d'une voix prometteuse et qui ne demande qu'à mûrir et à s'affirmer.

Les Chauffeurs à pied, 547, rue Lavigueur, app. 5, Québec (Québec) G1R 1B7 ; tél. : (418)523-5336 et (418)527-4530 ; <<http://members.xoom.com/chauffeurs>> .

celles-ci nous rappellent parfois *Les Cailloux*, le premier groupe de « French Canadian Folk Songs Singers » avec les harmonies et le banjo. Même si les voix sont encore jeunes et pas tout à fait placées, les instruments (violon, guitare, banjo, mandoline, flûte, musique à bouche) sont bien maîtrisés ; une belle jeunesse transpire des enregistrements. De jeunes musiciens à surveiller, ils peuvent nous résérer des surprises.

et de sa famille est incarnée par sa virginité, où l'autorité paternelle et les vengeances sont terribles. Quelques titres : *Dame Lombarde*, *La belle qui fait la morte pour son honneur garder*, *La maumariée vengée par ses frères*, *La fille tuée par sa mère*, *La courtisane brûlée*, *Le chevalier à la claire épée*. Par jeu, Monique Jutras nous propose également une composition dans le même style, *La princesse de l'Albion*, sur la princesse adulée morte il y a quelques années de façon tragique.

Monique Jutras possède une voix au timbre riche et claironnant et une technique vocale sûre. Cependant, on doit malheureusement reprocher à ce disque sa rigidité : rigidité de l'interprétation et rigidité classique des arrangements. Choix d'autant plus singulier que, depuis quelques années, on constate une tendance chez les groupes de musique ancienne de se rapprocher de l'interprétation de la chanson traditionnelle. Malgré cette réserve, ce disque présente un répertoire d'une grande richesse et sélectionné avec le plus grand soin. Il devrait compter parmi les classiques du genre et connaître une bonne carrière.

Mentionnons enfin un feuillet de 38 pages bien documenté, comprenant les textes des chansons et leur traduction anglaise.

groupe comme animateurs, chanteurs et musiciens, dans la parfaite lignée des Irish Rovers et compagnie. Un second CD est en préparation.

Bertrand Deraspe. Contre vents et marées... Traditions musicales des Îles de la Madeleine. Bertrand Deraspe, C.P. 486, Havre-aux-Maisons, Îles de la Madeleine (Québec) G0B 1K0; tél. : (418)969-2639.

comparable, avec une voix et un coup d'archet bien gaspésiens. Produit avec la collaboration de CBGA Radio-Canada, Gaspésie-Les Iles à Matane en 1997.

Sébastien Dionne. *L'accordionne*, Volume 1. DIOS-9901 (Cassette). Sébastien Dionne, Québec (Québec) 694-0224.

Originaire de la Gaspésie, Sébastien est un jeune accordéoniste qui a appris auprès de Marcel Messervier, accordéoniste et facteur d'accordéon réputé, de Montmagny. Il nous présente

Enfin, je ne saurais passer sous silence la parution toute récente d'un recueil d'articles sur la danse et la musique traditionnelle québécoises : *Les Cahiers Mnémo. Danse et musique traditionnelles du Québec*, Vol. I, Drummondville, Éditions Mnémo, 1999, 101 p. ; <mnemo@9bit.qc.ca> ; <<http://www.mnemo.qc.ca>>. Les articles que regroupe ce recueil ont été auparavant publiés dans le bulletin de l'organisme. Vu le manque flagrant d'écrits sur la danse et la musique traditionnelles québécoises, Pierre Chartrand, le directeur de Mnémo, avec son équipe, ont décidé de regrouper les meilleurs articles

New Québec Releases for Autumn 99

Les têtes de violon. ("Fiddleheads") *Airs tordus / Crooked Tunes. Violon traditionnel québécois / Traditional fiddle music of Québec*. Trente Sous Zéro / Thirty Below, 1108, rue Dollard, Val-Bélair, Québec, Canada G3K 1W6; Tel. & Fax: (418) 847-9815; <thirtybe@qbc.clic.net> ; <<http://www.qbc.clic.net/~thirtybe>> .

Liette Remon and Guy Bouchard. *Airs tordus - 25 - Crooked Tunes. Airs de violon du Québec Fiddle Tunes*, 2 volumes. Trente Sous Zéro - Thirty Below, 1996 and 1997, 51 pp. et 35 pp. (without page numbers).

Guy Bouchard, the well-known Québec guitarist and fiddler, and former member of the group La Bottine Souriante, set up, a few years ago, a distribution house for discs of traditional Québécois music: Trente Sous Zero / Thirty Below. In 1997, with violinist Liette Remon, he published two excellent collections of twenty-five traditional Québécois airs for the violin, airs of Irish and French origins, and by great fiddlers, such Louis "Pitou" Boudreau, Aimé Gagnon and André Alain. As an introduction, the first collection presents an excellent text on "the repertory of the fiddlers of Québec."

To accompany these collections, Guy Bouchard has now released a new CD that presents seventeen of these airs, with

Sophie Pomerleau. *Toutouic la la, berceuses traditionnelles / traditional lullabies*. Sophie Pomerleau, 1613, Chemin du Fleuve, Saint-Romuald (Québec) G6W 6Z7; (418) 834-6778.

This disc contains a dozen lullabies taken from l'*Anthologie des chants populaires français* of Joseph Canteloube, published in 1950, as well as three traditional Québécois lullabies. Sophie is a young ethnologist from a family of singers. She has an energetic voice, which she had to restrain on this disc. The guitarist Michel Borgeat accompanies her.

Les Chauffeurs à pied. *Rue Laviguer*. LCAP 99-2. Les Chauffeurs à pied, 547, rue Laviguer, app. 5, Québec (Québec) G1R 1B7; Tel: (418) 523-5336 and (418) 527-4530; <<http://members.xoom.com/chauffeurs>> .

This young group is composed of four young Québécois musicians, who for about a year of performance in Québec and at different festivals have achieved a well-deserved and enviable success. On this first disc, Les Chauffeurs à pied offer a repertory of instrumental music and songs learned from the best young Québécois traditional musicians.

Moving from response songs to work songs, with their

des pièces tirées du répertoire traditionnel, de Messervier et quelques-unes de ses compositions. Un talent prometteur.

pour permettre une plus large diffusion auprès des professionnels et des passionnés. Mentionnons quelques titres : «Au delà du reel (Introduction à la musique traditionnelle instrumentale québécoise)» ; «Du set au cotillon ... (Introduction à la danse traditionnelle québécoise et à ses genres)» ; «A propos du rigodon» ; «La transmission de la musique traditionnelle par la radio» ; «Origine du set Carré» ; «Portrait d'un chercheur - Marius Barbeau (1883-1969)».

—Donald Deschênes
Beauport, Québec

others. To do this, he brought together several American musicians, five violinists and a mandolin player. To facilitate the learning of these parts, the rhythm is slightly slower and arrangements are stripped to the maximum; the only accompaniment is the foot or sometimes a second melody with the viola. This does not reduce the listening pleasure. Les Airs tordus are quite tasty; The "Fiddleheads" generate a lively energy which comes from the pleasure of playing as part of an ensemble a music and a repertoire of an extreme richness. Last summer, I was pleased to hear them at the end of July in Joliette, at the Festival Mémoire et Racines, where they were quite successful.

By devoting a whole disc to lullabies, Sophie Pomerleau has set herself a hard challenge. For as calm and soft as are these lullabies, the disc necessarily sins by a lack of variety. But they are however very effective in putting children to sleep. A very simple disc by a warm singer, with a promising voice that only requires time to mature and to affirm itself.

harmonies and banjo they are reminiscent at times of Les Cailoux, the first group of "French Canadian Folk Song Singers." Even if the voices are still young and are not completely placed, the instruments (violin, guitar, banjo, mandolin, flute, and mouth music) are well controlled; the recordings are redolent of a beautiful youth. Young musicians to be watched, they could have some surprises in store for us.

Monique Jutras. Complaintes médiévales. Chansons traditionnelles épiques et tragiques / Medieval Ballads. Epic and Tragic Traditional Songs. Invited Musicians : L'Ensemble Claude-Gervaise. Arrangements by Jean-Claude Bélanger. PMJ-022. Productions Monique Jutras, 184, rue Aberdeen, Québec (Québec) G1R 2C8 ; Tel : (418)525-7538 ; Fax : (418)525-4712 ; <jutragbi@globetrotter.net>.

Monique Jutras had a long career of interpreting traditional Québécois song. She has appeared in many festivals and has worked in educational circles with children in Canada and in the United States. After *Chantons et turlutons. La chanson folklorique québécoise* (booklet and cassette) in 1994 (Bulletin 30.4, 1997) and *La Turlutte des Little-Delisle* in 1997, Monique Jutras repeats with these medieval Laments.

This disc followed upon research that she carried out for a Masters degree in Ethnology on traditional French tragic and epic songs, and published in 1997. (*Vision d'une société par les chansons de tradition orale à caractère épique et tragique* by Conrad Laforte and Monique Jutras, Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval). Supported by arrangements and an instrumentation of medieval style with period instruments, Monique Jutras offers for our listening a dozen epic and tragic laments brought to North America from the motherland by oral transmission.

Tending at times to the epic, these laments evoke the harsh moral standards of the knights, a time when the honor of a girl

Other releases to note:

Barachois. Barachois. Musique Acadienne de L'Île-du-Prince-Édouard / Acadian Music from Prince Edward Island. Distributed by House Party Productions Ltd, PO Box 24, R.R. #1, Wellington, PEI, C0B 2E0 ; Tel : (902)854-3019.

Barachois is four musicians, 2 guys and 2 girls, from the Evangeline region of PEI. Composed of traditional pieces from the Maritimes, this first disc is overflowing with energy and

Bertrand Deraspe. Contre vents et marées... Traditions musicales des îles de la Madeleine. Bertrand Deraspe, C.P. 486, Havre-aux-Maisons, Iles de la Madeleine (Québec) G0B 1K0; TEL : (418)969-2639.

A very pleasant disc from one of the most active Madelinot singers and musicians. He offers us a rich repertoire from the islands, interpreted with an incomparable magnetism, with a

Sébastien Dionne. L'accordionne, Volume 1. DIOS-9901 (Cassette).

Originally from the Gaspé, Sébastien is a young accordionist taught by Marcel Messervier, an accordionist and renowned accordian maker from Montmagny. Sébastien presents pieces taken

Finally, I could not let pass in silence the recent release of a collection of articles on traditional Québécois dance and music: *Les Cahiers Mnémo. Danse et musique traditionnelles du Québec, Vol. I.*, Drummondville, Éditions Mnémo, 1999, 101 p.; <mnemo@9bit.qc.ca>; <<http://www.mnemo.qc.ca>>.

These articles were previously published in the bulletin of the organization. Considering the obvious lack of writing on traditional Québécois dance and music, Pierre Chartrand, the director of Mnémo, with his team, decided to gather together the best articles to permit a larger distribution among professionals and

and her family was incarnate in her virginity, where paternal authority and vengeance were terrible. Some titles: "Dame Lombarde," "La belle qui fait la morte pour son honneur garder," "La maumariée vengée par ses frères," "La fille tuée par sa mère," "La courtisane brûlée," "Le chevalier à la claire épée."

By turn, Monique Jutras also proposes to us a composition in the same style, *La princesse de l'Albion*, on the adulated princess who died a few years ago in such a tragic way.

Monique Jutras has a voice with a rich and resonant timbre and a sure vocal technique. However, one must unfortunately reproach this disc for its rigidity: rigidity of interpretation and the classic rigidity of its arrangements. A choice all the more singular since, for a few years, one has noted a tendency among early music groups to approach the interpretation of traditional songs. In spite of this reservation, this disc presents a repertory of a great richness, selected with the greatest care. It should count among the classics of the genre and do well.

Finally, let us mention the well-documented booklet of 38 pages, including the texts of the songs and English translations.

spotlights the know-how of the members of the group as leaders, singers and musicians in the perfect lineage of the Irish Rovers and company. A second CD is in the works.

voice and bow that are distinctly Gaspésian. Produced with the collaboration of CBGA Radio Canada, Gaspésie-Les îles at Matane in 1997.

Sébastien Dionne, Québec (Québec) 694-0224.

from the traditional repertoire, by Messervier and some of his own compositions. A promising talent.

lovers of the music. To mention some titles : "Au delà du réel (Introduction à la musique traditionnelle instrumentale québécoise)" ; "Du set au cotillon ... (Introduction à la danse traditionnelle québécoise et à ses genres)" ; "A propos du rigodon" ; "La transmission de la musique traditionnelle par la radio" ; "Origine du set Carré" ; "Portrait d'un chercheur-Marius Barbeau (1883-1969)."

—translated by Steven Méthot,
Calgary, Alberta

Cordes en Folie. Ô Expresso. C 2536-01. Festival Distribution, 1351 Grant Street, Vancouver, BC, V5L 2X7; see page 33 for complete address

Cordes en Folie (*Crazy Strings*) is a Vancouver trio—Pierre Imbert, hurdy gurdy, André Thibault, flamenco guitar and *oud*, and Steve Lazin, percussion. In fact, all members double on various percussion instruments, which makes it impossible to single out Lazin's contributions for praise, but given the high quality of musicianship here, there's no doubt about his worth. Thibault and Imbert also sing; Sid Perez and André Lachance, vocal/percussion and double bass, sat in with the group for this session.

Readers will perhaps remember Imbert for his brief tenure with Daniel Thonon's Montreal based Ad Vielle Que Pourra and perhaps, even earlier, for the two records (and Canadian appearances) of Lo Jai, the group with which he played before moving from France to North America. The current disc opens with a drum roll and some Latin-rock riffs, the bass line taken by the *oud*, which alternates the lead with Imbert's millennial, electrified hurdy gurdy—when you note that the tune is in fact a 16th-century *branle*, "Le Pélerin libertin," you realize that, like Ad Vielle Que Pourra, Cordes en Folie is into cultural miscegenation in a big way.

But the two groups have very different sounds and techniques. Though many of the tunes have the same historical, continental provenance as AVQP favors, not all are of this style, and Cordes en Folie features a darker, more Latin and Arabic flavor, which I guess is obvious, considering the instrumentation. Also, as much as I admire Daniel Thonon's musicianship, and that of all the players he gathers together, I feel like Imbert and his partners here have a better grasp of rock idioms, possibly of swing, and certainly of pop music atmospherics than does AVQP.

Imbert has been interested in the latter for quite some time—Lo Jai's second LP, *Acrobates et Musiciens* (Shanachie 21009) sounded like the soundtrack for a movie one never got to see. To be honest, I found that disc rather less interesting than their more folky first recording and less interesting than the current outing. Why? I'm not sure. Perhaps because there's more of a constant sense of the dance roots to the music here, perhaps it's because of the few songs which break it up, or perhaps it's just my own peculiar taste.

Or perhaps there's more of a *live* feeling to this effort, which may be the reason Mr. Lazin has earned his bow. That's what a good percussionist is supposed to do, no? Not just keep the beat, but force the leads to step lightly on it?

Finally, I find this recording delightful because of the variety it offers. I won't discuss every title, but comments on a few of them should give some indication of what I'm talking about.

"Rumba Calabria," as its name suggests, is an Italian-flavored Latin dance number that wouldn't be out of place in a Fellini film. It opens with Thibault's lovely, sweet guitar, to which Imbert later adds something a bit more fiery—a touch of Jimi Hendrix, perhaps even of post-Coltrane jazz. Imbert really is taking his instrument into striking new territory.

In "Un Momentito," Thibault has the opportunity to show off his flamenco chops, the Moorish nature of which demonstrates clearly what drew him to the *oud*. (The *oud*, by the way, is the Arabic cousin to the lute; like the latter, it is pear-shaped and strung with double courses of nylon string. Unlike the lute, it is fretless and is played with a plectrum!) When Imbert enters this time, he evokes the reedy vocalists of *cante hondo*—almost. Given that the hurdy gurdy lacks the dynamic range of the voice, I'm not sure it can compare in power to a flamenco singer. (But give him time and some electronic whizzes, and I expect he'll work around that problem.) Still, he does manage some bent notes that I didn't realize the instrument could produce, and his work here is rhythmically quite exciting.

The title cut is less a paean to its subject than an expression of an addict's state of being:

*Chaque matin, j'en ai besoin,
Sans toi je n'suis qu'un bon à rien....*

The music is suitably irritable. Imbert as a singer is a Gallic Rex Harrison—someone who's turned the act of speech into a kind of song. The husky effect is put to particularly good use here.

After the abrupt ending of "Ô Expresso," the group eases listeners with Thibault's gentle "Berceuse pour Lala." But it'd take a pretty unhip baby to fall asleep during this interesting music.

—GWL



It isn't unusual to walk into Fred Meilleur's hotel on the village's main street [in Chapeau, Ottawa Valley, Ontario] on a Saturday afternoon and find a couple of "the old lads" singing the old songs to each other over endless beers and Coke glasses full of white wine. Across the street at Keon's and later on at Fred's, touring bands play Irish or country music or rock & roll or all three.

I. Sheldon Posen Bulletin 19.4 (December/décembre 1985)

Readers may remember that Barry Luft wrote a contest into his tribute to Pete Seeger in our last issue, weaving 14 Seeger titles into his text for readers to pluck out. We had, alas, only one entrant, who found 11 of them. The prize (a copy of Luft's CD *Lean a Little*) goes to—who else?—Jon Bartlett! (Pure coincidence, we assure you!)