

# BRO NEVEZ

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



Map from: [bretonconnection.blogspot.com](http://bretonconnection.blogspot.com)

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG

No. 132

Nov/Dec.2014

# BRO NEVEZ 132

November / December 2014

ISSN 0895 3074

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The **U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language (U.S. ICDBL)** was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation on October 20, 1981. **Bro Nevez** ("new country" in the Breton language) is the newsletter produced by the U.S. ICDBL. It is published quarterly: February, May, August and November. Contributions, letters to the Editor, and ideas are welcome from all readers and will be printed at the discretion of the Editor.

The U.S. ICDBL provides Bro Nevez on a complimentary basis to a number of language and cultural organizations in Brittany to show our support for their work. Your Membership/Subscription allows us to do this. Membership (which includes subscription) for one year is \$20. Checks should be in U.S. dollars, made payable to "U.S. ICDBL" and mailed to Lois Kuter at the address above.

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

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## On the Cover

The image on the cover is from a posting called "Independence Cymru: The Case for Brittany" posted on May 19, 2011 on the blog:



[thebretonconnection.blogspot.com](http://thebretonconnection.blogspot.com).

The Breton Connection blog is a sub blog of a Cornish blog site called An Omsav (<http://thecornishrepublican.blogspot.com/>)

The Breton Connection blog site "aims to be a portal to the Breton movement for self-determination and cultural rights." It is indeed a good English language source of information on what is going on in Brittany, with links to pretty much every Breton political group working in some way for Breton autonomy/independence/federalism, etc. – both left and right. Check it out!



## Bretons Continue to Fight for Reunification

On September 27 an estimated 30 to 40,000 Bretons took to the streets of Nantes in yet another demonstration for the reunification of Brittany. Government debate and planning continue to restructure France into new administrative regions. One option has been to keep Brittany as it is, with the department of Loire-Atlantique incorporated into the Pays de Loire. Another option is to submerge Brittany into a larger "Grand Ouest." It appears that despite demand on the part of Bretons themselves, reunifying Loire-Atlantique with the current administrative region of Brittany seems too logical culturally, socially and economically to be considered.

Bretons gathered in front of the offices of Deputies of the 5 Breton Departments this November to call for support of reunification in the redrawing of regions within France, but the response from Breton Deputies was disappointing. Ten Bretons opposed the law which keeps Brittany as 4-department region while 27 followed their Socialist Party in voting yes on the law which continues to split Loire Atlantique from the rest of Brittany. 4 abstained. The law will come under scrutiny again in December and it is hoped that Breton Deputies will be mindful of the desire on the part of the Breton

population for reunification. With a vote of 277 for the plan and 253 against it (33 abstentions), Breton Deputies can make a difference in voting in the French Assembly for a plan which would allow a reunified Brittany.

More to come ....



## **Skol Uhel ar Vro / Cultural Institute of Brittany A Conference and Ceremony for New Members of the Order of the Ermine**

Note: information for this article was drawn from a press release from Skol Uhel Ar Vro. My apologies for any mistranslations. – Lois Kuter

On November 15 the Cultural Institute of Brittany hosted a conference in Nantes at the Castle of the Dukes of Brittany – a meaningful choice of venue given the territorial reform debates and the fact that this is the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Duchesse Anne of Brittany's death.

Patrick Mareschal, former President of the General Council of Loire-Atlantique and the first President of the organization Bretagne Réunie (CUAB) served as Honorary President for the event, speaking on the theme ***Bretagne, régions européennes et démocratie participative***.

Other speakers brought an expertise in history, political analysis and European law.

Jean-Jacques Monnier, *Les réactions collectives bretonnes dans l'histoire*. Emeritus Professor of history and geography, Monnier specializes in political history. As well as a number of books on Breton history, he edited and has written a number of articles for *Le Peuple Breton* and has served as a Municipal Counsellor to Lannion for the political party Union Democratique Bretonne.

Jean-Pierre Le Mat, *Doléances du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle pour "Vivre, décider et travailler en Bretagne"*  
Well known to readers of *Bro Nevez*, Jean Pierre Le Mat is a historian as well as agronomy engineer, entrepreneur, and business manager with an international perspective. In 2012 he joined Breizh Impacte, a think tank for Breton ideas, and in 2013 he became a member of the collective *Vivre, décider et travailler en Bretagne* which was at the initiation of the contemporary "Bonnetts Rouges".

Tibor-Louis Leh, *Préconisations européennes en matière de Régions et principes européens de gouvernance à multi-niveaux*.

A Franco-Hungarian lawyer, Tibor-Louis Leh immigrated to France and studied law in Paris. He has been active in defense of Hungarian minorities and serves as President of the Council of the World Federation of Hungarians in France.

Patrick Mareschal, led a discussion on territorial reform with the participation of Jean-Patrick Gille, Deputy from Indre-et-Loire, Paul Molaç, Deputy from Morbihan, and Jean Ollivro, geographer and university professor.

Johanna Rolland, Mayor of Nantes and the Municipal Council, Patrick Malrieu, President of the Cultural Institute of Brittany, and Yves Lainé, Chancellor of the Order of the Ermine, led the ceremony – in Breton and in French – inducting new members of the Order of the Ermine.

### **A little history about the Order of the Ermine**

Created in 1381, the Order of the Ermine is one of the most ancient of the military and honorific orders of Europe. In 1344, Edward III of England founded the order Knights of Saint George, then in 1348 that of the Order of the Garter. Jean II in France created the Ordre de l'Étoile in 1351. In 1430 the Toison d'Or was founded by the Duke of Bourgogne, followed by the Croissant of René d'Anjou in 1448.

The founding of the Order of the Ermine in 1381 by the Duke of Brittany Jean IV affirmed the preeminence of the duke among the nobility and the will for unity around this sovereignty. The order was unique in being open to women and commoners. The first "chevaleresse" was Jeanne de Navarre, followed by Jeanne d'Albret, countess of Richemont, and then Isabeau of Scotland, Duchess of Brittany in 1447. As was the case for all other orders for chivalry, the Order of the Ermine was abolished with the French Revolution and the last medallion that ornamented the tomb of Jean IV in the Cathedral of Nantes was destroyed.

The Order of the Ermine had a renaissance in 1972 when Senator Georges Lombard succeeded René Pléven as the leader of CELIB and had the idea of giving this honor to his predecessor to express the thanks of Brittany for his work. This was not strictly speaking the reconstitution of an ancient "order" but more the idea of bringing back a symbol and perpetuating a tradition. This medallion was given to René Pleven on September 29, 1971.

In 1988 the Cultural Institute of Brittany took up the tradition of honoring men and women who have been exceptional in their support of Brittany.

## 2014 Members for the Order of the Ermine



**Philippe ABJEAN** (ganet e 1953) UI Leonad betek hed an neu- denn, studioù prederouriezh ha goude kelenner er C'hameroun hag en I.V. Kreiz-kêr e Kastell-Paol. Ur mennozh nevez, adsevel, e 1994, "an Dro Breizh" a-denna- doù. Er bloaz 2000 e laka ouzh- penn an hentad arouezius Nao- ned- Gwened. Bep bloaz e weler tost da 2 000 baleer o kemer

penn an hent mojennel aesaet ha skañvaet gant muioc'h a lec'hioù aveñ hag a lec'hioù relijiel evel chapelioù. Setu 5 bloaz 'zo e teu da wir ur raktres digredus e Karnoed; delwennoù bras Sent Breizh, 15 tonennad a bouez e pep hini anezho. 50 a zo bet savet c'hoazh ha 80 000 gweladennet a zo deuet eno e 2013. Evit adreñ ur vuhez speredel d'ar chapelioù en deus savet Philippe « Micherourien an Aotrou Doue » ha « Kompagnuned Breizh » evit lakaat tud hag arc'hant er jeu. Ur raktres divent all a vo boulc'het e 2015 : « Kêriadenn veur ar bed » war degadoù a zevezhioù-arat, gant traoù arouezius eus glad arkitektoù- riezha ha dizanvez ar bed.

Photo : Agence Bretagne Presse

**Philippe ABJEAN** (born in 1953). A true Leonard he studied Philosophy, taught in Cameroun, and then at Notre-Dame du Kreis-Ker in St-Pol-de-Léon. He had the innovative idea to give renaissance to the Tro Breizh in stages, beginning in 1994. In 2000 a symbolic leg of the pilgrimage was added between Nantes and Vannes. Each year some 2,000 walkers follow this mythic route which has been made less arduous thanks to some logistical or religious stops such as at chapels. Five years ago he launched the crazy idea to establish a site in Carnoët to erect menhir-like statues of the Saints of Brittany which can weigh some 15 tons in granite. Already 50 have been erected and 80,000 people visited the site in 2013. To give spiritual life back to Breton chapels, Philippe created the "Good Lord's Workers" and "Partners of Brittany" to mobilize people and finances. Another huge project will debut in 2015: the "Great Village of the World" on several dozen acres with emblematic elements of the world's architectural and immaterial patrimony.



**Félix ha Nicole LE GARREC** (1930 ha 1942) Sot-pitilh int o-daou gant ar foto hag ar sinema. Luc'hskeudennerien int bet

da gentañ e Ploneour-Lanvern. Labour o deus bet gant Jacques Perrin (evit « Z » gant Costa Gavras); ha goude e kavont fred evit ober kelaoua- dennoù. E 1969 o deus kenlabouret gant René Vautier hag e e krouont Unvez produiñ sinema Breizh ha diwar se « Avoir vingt ans dans les Aurès » (R. Vautier, 1972. Priz ar filmvarnourien etrebroadel e Cannes) ha « La folle de Toujane » (R. Vautier, ke- naozet gant Nicole Le Garrec). 1977 : krouidigezh Filmoù Breizh: filmoù niverus diwar-benn ar Festival Etrekeltiek, Diwan, al laboused saotret gant ar mazout, ar pesketa ha dreist-holl « Des Pierres contre des fusils » stourm Plougoñ, a vo skignet e pep lec'h er Frañs. E 1981 e teu da wir Stal Rannvroel Sinema Breizh (ARC): eno e stummer filmaozourien yaouank. Nicole ha Félix o deus graet ivez teulfilmoù niverus, « La galoche », « Les portes du Danube » ha « Per-Jakez Hélias, l'Émerveilleur », hag all.

**Félix et Nicole LE GARREC** (born 1930 & 1942) have a passion for photography and cinema, starting with photography in Ploneour-Lanvern. They were taken on by Jacques Perin ("Z" of Costa Garvas); later they would be contracted for reporting. In 1969 *l'Unité de production cinéma Bretagne* was created from their meeting with René Vautier who produced "Avoir vingt ans dans les Aurès" (R. Vautier, 1972. Prix de la critique internationale à Cannes) and "La folle de Toujane" (R. Vautier, co-produced with Nicole Le Garrec). In 1977 Bretagne Files was created. The Le Garrecs produced a number of films on the InterCeltic Festival of Lorient, Diwan schools, birds oiled in black tides, fishing industry, and most notably "Des pierres contre des fusils", documenting the resistance in Plogoff to a nuclear power plant construction, a film which was distributed throughout France. In 1981 the *l'Atelier régional de Cinéma Bretagne (ARC)* was created to train young filmmakers. Nicole and Félix would produce a number of documentaries such as «La Galoche» «Les portes du Danube», and «Pierre Jakez Hélias, l'Émerveilleur»,



**Jacqueline LECAUDEY-LE GUEN** (1948) Ur Vretonez an hini eo eus Poissy (78) el lec'h m'emañ o chom abaoe 1958. Merket eo he buhez personel ha micherel gant Breizh. Atav he deus soubet e buhez vreizhek Enez-Frañs asambles gant he gwaz Patrick Lecaudey hag o fevar bugel,

holl dañse-rien ha sonerien hag a laka startijenn e kelc'h Poissy. E-pad ar vakañsoù (e ti an dud-kozh e Kerged pe e Kerbigod e-kichen Susiniou ha goude o marv e ti an eontred ha moerebed e Lokentaz hag e Beg Ruaod, e kemeront perzh e Kelc'h Sarzhav hag e hini Lokentaz. Bez' eo ivez Jacqueline unan eus keze labour ar gengevredigezh Kendalc'h en Enez-Frañs. Merañ a ra, eus he micher, stal Coop Breizh Pariz abaoe 1973. Met neuze piv a lakao un harz etre he buhez personel hag he hini vicherel? Jacqueline a zo e pep lec'h, er c'helc'hioù keltiek, e Coop Breizh prest bepred da gelaouiñ, da reiñ alioù, da skoazellañ... e korn-bro Pariz.

**Jacqueline LECAUDEY-LE GUEN** (born in 1948). This is a Breton woman from Poissy (78) where she has lived since 1958. Her life, both professional and personal, is marked by Brittany. Bathed in the Breton atmosphere found in Ile-de-France, Jacqueline, her husband Patrick Lecaudey, and their four children, all dancers and musicians, contributed to the life of the Celtic Circle of Poissy. During vacations at the grandparents' home in Kerguet or Kerbigot near Suscinio and after their deaths at the homes of uncles and aunts in Saint-Gildas and La Pointe du Rhuault, she practiced dance in the Circles of Sarzeau and Saint Gildas. Jacqueline is as well one of the pillars in the Kendalc'h federation in Ile de France. In her professional world she has managed the Coop Breizh book store in Paris since 1973. But, in her case who can put a limit between personal and professional lives? Through Celtic circles and the Coop Breizh, Jacqueline is a center-point for all Breton news, meetings and support in the Paris region.



**Erwan VALLERIE** (1944) E vamm, Simone Kavalan, a oa ur vrezhonegerez eus Montroulez. Pêr, e dad, jeneral ha rezistant, a oa eus Breizh-Uhel, etre Komborn ha Felger. Ezel eus ar CELIB e savas ar strollad breton "Sav Breizh". E 1969 emañ Erwan gant Yann Choucq, Xavier Grall,

Gwenc'hlan ar Skouezeg hag Alan Gouel e-touez diazezerien Skoazell Vreizh (skoazell d'ar brizonidi bolitikel). Tremena a ra an aotreegezh vrezhonek e 1981. Kas a ra da benn ur pikol tezenn e brezhoneg, an eil eus ar seurt-se, anvet « Diazezoù studi istorel an anvioù-parrez » a vo embannet e 1995. Bloaz goude e tizolo un dornskrid gwenedek diembann eus penn kentañ an XXvet kantved en un isrannyezh wenedek, lakaat a ra 10 vloaz d'e studiañ hag e sav ur c'heriaoueg a 3 812 ger. Dont a ra er-maez e 2003 « Ils sont fous ces Bretons! », ur bennoberenn fentus-mat gant tresadennoù Nono. Kerkent e ra berzh: 100 000 skouerenn gwerzhet e 2012 ha n'eo ket echu.

Erwan VALLERIE (born in 1944). Simone Cavalan, his mother was from Morlaix and was a Breton-speaker; his father Pierre, an army general and Resistant, was from the Gallo counry between Combourg and Fougères. A Member of CELIB, he created the Breton party Sav Breizh. In 1969 Erwan, with Yann Choucq, Xavier Grall and Gwenc'hlan Le Scouëzec, Alain Guel, was among the founders of Skoazell Vreizh (which aids Breton political prisoners). He earned a Licence degree in Breton in 1981, taking on a demanding thesis in Breton, the second of its kind, titled "Treatise on Historical typonomy of Brittany which was produced in 1995. The following year he discovered a Vannetais Breton manuscript and he spent ten years studying this to produce a glossary of 3,812 words. In 2003 his humorous masterpiece *Ils sont fous ces Bretons !* with illustrations by Nono, was published. It had an immediate success with 100,000 copies sold in 2012, and this book's run is not complete

### Skol Uhel ar Vro Medal

Following the induction of the new members of the Order of the Ermine, two other awards were given. The Medal of the Cultural Institute of Brittany was awarded to the Comité Anne de Bretagne for the organization and coordination of over 100 events during the year commemorating the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Anne of Brittany. The Medal was also awarded to the Committee for the Cahiers de doléances des Bretons du XXI<sup>è</sup> siècle – the collection of a list of grievances against the French government from Bretons of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (see *Bro Nevez* 129, February 2014).

### Others in the Order of the Ermine

The following is a list of dates and places where the ceremony took place for Bretons and non-Bretons who have been thus honored. Names in italics are deceased.

1972 in Pontivy - *René PLEVEN*  
 1973 in Rome - Gabriele PESCATORE  
 1973 in Rennes - *Jean MEVELLEC*  
 1988 in Rennes - *Vefa de BELLAING, Pierre-Roland GIOT, Polig MONJARRET, Henri QUEFFELEC*

1989 in Nantes - Bernard de PARADES, Maryvonne QUEMERE-JAUEN, Per DENEZ, Louis LICHOU  
 1990 in Auray - Charles LE GALL, Chanig LE GALL, Emile LE SCANV (GLENMOR), Joseph MARTRAY, Albert TREVIDIC  
 1991 in Quimper - Georges LOMBARD, Robert LEGRAND, Pierre LAURENT, Pierre-Jakez HELIAS  
 1992 in Saint-Malo - Michel PHILIPPONNEAU, Ronan HUON, Yvonne JEAN-HAFFEN, Jordi PUJOL  
 1993 in Dinan - Sœur Anna-Vari ARZUR, Herry CAOUISSIN, Yann POILVET, Jean TRICOIRE  
 1994 in Vannes - Ivetig an DRED-KERVELLA, Pierre LEMOINE, Yvonig GICQUEL, Alan STIVELL  
 1995 in Guérande - Jacques BRIARD, Loeiz ROPARS, Jean FREOUR, Ivona MARTIN, Lois KUTER  
 1996 in Pont-L'Abbé - Pierre LE TREUT, Rita MORGAN WILLIAMS, Joseph LEC'HVIEN, André LAVANANT  
 1997 in Quintin - Jean-Jacques HENAFF, Jean L'HELGOUACH, Dodik JEGOU, Raymond LEBOSSE  
 1998 in Vitré - Goulc'han KERVELLA, Henri MAHO, Pierre LOQUET, A. CORRE (Naig ROZMOR)  
 1999 in Nantes - Jean-Bernard VIGHETTI, Riwanon KERVELLA, Patrick MALRIEU, Denise DELOUCHE  
 2000 in Pontivy - Tereza DESBORDES, Lena LOUARN, René VAUTIER, Pierre-Yves LE RHUN  
 2001 in Landerneau - Pierre TOULHOAT, Rozenn MILIN, Frère Marc SIMON, Dan ar BRAZ  
 2002 in Lannion - Henri LECUYER, Yves ROCHER, Michael JONES, Robert OMNES  
 2003 in Saint-Malo - Jean-Louis LATOUR, Gilles SERVAT, Angèle JACQ, René ABJEAN  
 2004 in Châteaubriant - Albert POULAIN, Yannig BARON, Marie KERMAREC, Yann GOASDOUE, Pierre-Yves MOIGN  
 2005 in Loctudy - Jean OLLIVRO, Ewa WALISZEWSKA, Pierre LE PADELLEC, Jean KERHERVE  
 2006 in Ploemeur - Jean-Pierre VINCENT, Claudine MAZÉAS, Xavier LECLERCQ, Claude STERCKX  
 2007 in Saint-Brieuc - Rhisiart HINCKS, Martial PEZENNEC, Job an IRIEN, François LE QUEMENER  
 2008 in Rennes - Roger ABJEAN, Gweltaz ar FUR, Yvonne BREILLY-LE CALVEZ, Viviane HELIAS  
 2009 in Ancenis - Jean-Christophe CASSARD, Tugdual KALVEZ, Yann-Fanch KEMENER, Jean-Guy Le FLOC'H, Mona OZOUF  
 2010 in Lorient - Catherine LATOUR, Annaig RENAULT, André CHEDEVILLE, Donatien LAURENT  
 2011 in Quimper - Andrea ar GOUILH, Yann CHOUCQ, Joseph Le BIHAN, André POCHON  
 2012 in Guingamp - Yves LAINE, Albert BOCHER, Ivonig Le MERDY, Frères MORVAN  
 2013 in St Nicolas de Redon - Jean-Jacques MONNIER, Yves-Pascal CASTEL, Martial MÉNARD, Tangi LOUARN

students to bring the total to 15,840. There are 462 different sites for bilingual education (not including a Diwan school in Paris which has 11 children). 211 of these are pre-schools.

Diwan schools are immersive with the majority of school and recreational activities conducted in the Breton language. The public schools and Catholic schools have bilingual programs where roughly half is in French and half in Breton. Diwan schools have a total of 3,854 students (plus 11 in Paris); public schools have 6,887 and Catholic schools have 5,099.

The following charts break down numbers by Department, level of education and type of school.

Number of students by type of school and level

	Presch.	Elem.	Middle School	High Sch.	Total	Growth
Diwan	1,315	1,368	838	333	3,854	+149 4%
Public	2,936	3,017	733	201	6,887	+225 3.4%
Catholic	2,063	2,456	516	64	5,099	+128 2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,314</b>	<b>6,841</b>	<b>2,087</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>15,840</b>	
<b>Growth</b>	<b>+94</b>	<b>+272</b>	<b>+93</b>	<b>+43</b>		<b>+502 3.3%</b>
	1.5%	4.1%	4.7%	7.7%		

Number of students by Department and type of school

	Diwan	Public	Catholic	Total	Growth
Finistère	2,078	3,334	1,967	7,379	+294 4.1%
Morbihan	556	1,413	2,247	4,216	+87 2.1%
Côtes d'Armor	684	1,305	406	2,395	+71 3.1%
Ille-et-Vilaine	195	611	411	1,217	+45 3.8%
Loire-Atlantique	341	224	68	633	+5 0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,854</b>	<b>6,887</b>	<b>5,099</b>	<b>15,840</b>	
<b>Growth</b>	<b>+149</b>	<b>+225</b>	<b>+128</b>		<b>+502 3.3%</b>
	4%	3.4%	2.6%		

Number of students by Department and level

	Presch.	Elem.	Middle School	High Sch.	Total	Growth
Finistère	2,803	3,095	1,009	472	7,329	+294 4.1%
Morbihan	1,828	1,918	444	26	4,216	+87 2.1%
Côtes s'Armor	897	1,054	391	53	2,379	+71 3.1%
Ille-et-Vilaine	501	522	147	47	1,217	+45 3.8%
Loire-Atlantique	285	252	96		633	+5 0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,314</b>	<b>6,841</b>	<b>2,087</b>	<b>598</b>	<b>15,840</b>	
<b>Growth</b>	<b>+94</b>	<b>+272</b>	<b>+93</b>	<b>+43</b>		<b>+502 3.3%</b>
	1.5%	4.1%	4.7%	7.7%		



## The Breton Language and the New School Year

2014 marked the 37<sup>th</sup> consecutive year for an expansion of school sites and numbers of children in bilingual education programs in Brittany, with a growth of 502



## 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary for the Diwan High School

The Diwan High School celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this October with a day of events starting with a picnic, a hike accompanied by singing, an inter-generational soccer tournament, speeches, and both a fest deiz and big fest noz to close the celebration. Diwan graduates

have gone into a number of fields, and there have been a number of singers and musicians among them. The evening fest noz featured groups composed of Diwan students, parents, teachers and staff including Loerou Ruz, Adnoz, les Diaoulezed, Eien, Startijenn, Barba Loutig, Kedal, Marcel Guilloux and Alan ar Rouz, Dom Jo and Markus ... to name a few.



### Deep inside a Breton skull 43: Lost in the aeons of time

Jean Pierre Le Mat

How can such a strange meeting be? I have no idea. Nevertheless, I can certify that I saw the two men. They were sitting next to each other on the stones of a ruined wall. The chilly wind was announcing a winter sunrise. Everything should have separated them, and first of all the time period during which they lived. Yet their clothes, their features, their gestures looked alike.

Yves came here, to the little hamlet of Folle-Pensée, in the Broceliande Forest, to taste an instant of peace and loneliness, far from the tumult of his bishopric. Local people whispered that he was on the path of holiness. For the priest that he was, it is a real promotion. For the lawyer that he was also, it is a wonder. Mixing the sense of justice with boundless charity is both a mystery and a miracle.



Yves began his clerkship among the harsh fishermen of Tredrez. From this first experience, he had kept the simple pleasure of walking near the sea, along the wild trails. When he came to the city of Landreger, in addition to his religious duties, he had to be a judge and a lawyer. He liked to argue with his fellow humans. His hand was like the helpful hand of God, stretching

towards the poor people. During his vigils in the dark church of Landreger, the Creator let him see the beauties of the other world. But in his eyes, the visions of paradise mingled, like a remorse or perhaps a hope, with the colors of heather on the cliffs of Beg-Ar-Forn.

The presence of Eon de l'Etoile, in the hamlet of Folle-Pensée, was even more amazing. He spent many years in this remote place. But he died a hundred and fifty years before Yves' time. It was a strange fantasy of the divine providence to let him come back here.

Since he left, a bad fate was upon the place. The condemnation of the Pope, the refutations of the theologians, the preaching of the missionaries, all this was not enough. To fight the heresy, the disciples of Eon were killed or burned alive. His teaching was obscured by labeling it madness. The monastery of Barenton, which hosted so many devout pilgrims, had been destroyed and renamed "Folle Pensée", "crazy thought".



Eon and Yves were sitting among the ruins of the monastery. They smiled. Yves had a bright smile, the smile of those who received a divine knowledge. Eon had a tired smile. It was the smile of those who know too much.

- The Lord allowed me to meet you, Yves began softly. And without doubt this is to dissipate a doubt that haunts me. This doubt makes me dream, and this bad dream disturbs the divine service.

The people around Landreger call me "Yves" in French, and they also call me Yvon, Erwan, Eozenn or Youenn. My real name is Ezwon. You and me, we bear the same name. A common burden binds us. It pushes me to you. Who are you, my heretical namesake, my dark brother?

- What can I say? Eon replied. The Council of Reims said that I was crazy. Did you study the reports and the outcome of my trial?

- Oh yes, of course! I read them carefully. I studied them. I am a lawyer. When a crime is unforgivable, I know that the best thing to do is to consider that the offender is crazy. So, it is useless to look for justification, which would be dangerous for everyone. The judges willingly take the case and they are inclined to moderation. Eon, have you committed an unforgivable crime?

- You're a subtle mind, Eon replied, and his eyes narrowed with mischief. Tell me then why bother with these reports? And why did you study and read them carefully?

- Because I know the influence you had on crowds, in Brittany and along the sea, from Normandy to Gascony. The threat was real for the Church. I want to discover the secret of this influence. Studying your trial, I was hoping to understand. In the affectations of madness, I searched the dark passion. What were your true teachings, Eon, and the secret of your power over the people?

- Yes, Ezwon, you're not mistaken. It is a teaching that is close to my heart. It spread and echoed along the ocean coast. It is the sacred words that the priest says during the mass: "Per Eum qui venturus est judicare vivos and mortuos." The church translates these words as follows: "From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead." The true meaning of the phrase, so important, is: "Through Eon, who will come to judge the living and the dead." I proclaimed that in front of the Council.

- The good prelates burst out laughing and I understand them. Come on, Eon, how can you imagine that? You are not the Supreme Judge!

- Oh, my lawyer brother, my namesake saint of the courts! Do you not judge the living? The dead, it is another matter, I agree. Do you not think your parishioners could hear: "Per Ivo qui venturus est judicare vivos and mortuos"?

Ezwon, you are like these good prelates, under a Roman influence. You're a good Latin scholar, but a poor Greek connoisseur. However, the prayers and holy books are dotted with Greek words. The name of "Christ", or the prayer "Kyrie Eleison" are sacred formulas, charged with a formidable power. And pious translators preferred to keep them in Greek language. It is the same for Eon.

- What do you mean?

- Eon is a proper name: it is mine, and yours too. But it is also a common name, αἰών. Latin translators did not know what to do with this word. They sometimes translated it by "saeculum", "century". αἰών evokes the passage of time. For those who believe that there is only one time, one God, one life, one world, it can be translated by "eternity." For those who admit a greater diversity, αἰών can mean "age", "generation", "cycle". The inept formula "for centuries of centuries" can be replaced by "cycles of cycles". And the phrase then is meaningful.

Yves stood for a moment thoughtfully. Multiple aeons were not unknown to him. He had met them in the writings of St. Irenaeus dealing with Gnostic heresies.

Unfortunately, when only the prosecution is known, the case remains unclear. The multiple aeons formed the frame of the heresy of Valentinus, a Gnostic who was living in Egypt during the second century.

Valentinus taught his disciples that the world had experienced a succession of aeons, appearing in pairs. The thirtieth aeon, which was also the last, is called "Wisdom". But this one, by its foolish desire, caused the fall of the world. The restoration of harmony was, or will be, the work of Jesus...

What connection could there be between this remote heresy and the Breton mystic? Yves sensed that there was a mystery, a true enigma. He asked Eon bluntly: - Are you a distant disciple of Valentinus the Gnostic? I cannot imagine how the heresy was transmitted from Alexandria to Barenton ...

- It is the church that transmits heresies, Eon replied quietly. I was an Augustinian monk. Augustine was first a Gnostic, and they are not unknown to me. The thought of Valentinus excited my mind because this term of "aeon". But I did not stop on this coincidence. Valentinus began to propagate his ideas after a stay of twenty years in Rome. Let us go ...

Around them, the ruins of Broceliande faded. The sounds and colors were transformed. The smell of gorse disappeared and they heard the hooves of a horse on the pavement.

- Here we are, Ezwon, in Rome under the reign of Antoninus. It is a cosmopolitan city. And, as usual, free spirits are turning towards those who challenge the established order, the too well established order. Rome discovers the manners and customs of the North men. There were Germans here. They can practice their religion. The empire relies on them, like an old man relies on a young man.

Look! Valentin wanders in Rome. He is a mystic. A man like you and me, Ezwon. He seeks his way in this materialistic world.

The Germans taught that, at the beginning, was the Abyss, with the frozen North and the South of fire. Then, at the junction between North and South, appeared the race of giants. Then the Gods appeared, divided into two tribes, the Aesir and the Vanir. The gods fashioned the world and created men.

The Germans and the Egyptian heretic have similar teachings. They announce the chaos, without any Last Judgment. After the fall of the ancient world, harmony will be restored by Baldur, son of the God Odin.



Yves spoke, and they came back to “Folle Pensée”. They could smell again the gorse and the fresh air of Broceliande.

- I repeat my question. Are you a disciple of Valentinus?

- I'm not a disciple of Valentinus, Ezwon. I am Valentinus. Well, a rural Valentinus, somehow...

- What do you mean? Were you influenced by the Germans? What is this riddle?

- Not bad. You know that my influence was great, from Normandy to Gascony. Alberic, legate of the Holy See, and Hughes, archbishop of Rouen, went forth and preached against me in Nantes, facing heretic crowds. Who are these fearless missionaries and why did they go to Nantes? They should have come here...

- That's right... Why did they go to Nantes?

- Elementary. This town is the place where the Vikings stayed. The North men had not destroyed the city. They lived there, for years, spreading their old beliefs to the local population. The Vikings were defeated after bitter fighting. Emigrants returned, with the Duke of Brittany and his court. But the Breton Landlords were now foreigners. The people, who had lived without them, now lived under them.

The Church did not send ordinary people to fight against me. Alberic is a German, according to his name. And Hughes, in charge of the Church in Normandy, was knowledgeable about the beliefs of the Vikings. The ambassador and the expert, somehow...

- So, Eon, you preached a return to pagan beliefs?

- No ... They were surviving only as legends and superstitions. But I was inspired ... I felt these old truths deep in my skull and they gave me eloquence, authority and courage. I felt them in my heart. Among these poor people reduced to serfdom since the return of the Lords, my words awakened old dreams of freedom. The judges accused me of preaching "Everything to everybody". Actually, the people I met told that before I did.

- I understand, Eon. I do not share your dream, but I understand that a lot of people followed your teachings. The last Vikings rose, once again, in a world that was not theirs. The old truths had been buried deep inside their skull.

God allowed my soul to be soothed. May He be thanked. But He does not offer my spirit any rest, because I know what has been buried alive, deep inside the skull of my dear Bretons.



A brief very brief note from the Editor on these two historical figures of Brittany for those who might need one to better appreciate their conversation:



Sant Erwan or Saint Yves, Saint Yves Hélyory de Kermartin, Saint Yves in French and Sant Erwan (and other variations) in Breton was born around 1250 and died in 1303. He is often considered the Patron Saint of Brittany – akin to Saint Patrick for Ireland. St Yves is also the patron of the lawyers in France, helpful to the poor people. Every 19th of May, the skull of St Yves is carried in the streets of Treguier (Landreger) by the lawyers

Éon de l'Étoile was born in a noble family near Loudéac in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and died in 1150, He was briefly an Augustinian and took up a monk's life in the forest of Broceliande. He gained a following as a prophet and messiah, and attacked the church for its worldliness. He led a “Robin Hood” like life stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. His movement was condemned as heresy and he was tried and imprisoned.

## BRETON COSTUMES BRO BY BRO # 3

### Bro Fouen (the Region of Fouesnant)

Natalie Novik

Of all the Breton *giziou* (or outfits), this is certainly the most spectacular, at least as far as the women are concerned. In the southern part of Cornwall, from the Odet river, south of Quimper, to the Laita river by Lorient, lays a rich and lush region, with lush pastures, great farms, fisheries, oyster beds and a scenic coastline.

Here, it looks like the women, as soon as they could get hold of lace, silk and velvet, did their best to emulate the princesses of the past. With elaborate lace coiffes matched by elegant upturned collars, they evoke white birds flying away, like a flock of seagulls over the waves.

While the male costume remains very sober, the extravagance of the female outfit has inspired poets like Anatole Le Braz and artists like Gauguin. It is no coincidence that one of the most colorful villages in the region, Pont-Aven, became a haven for artists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continues to this day.

### The men's outfit

Photo above from: <http://guennbretagne.centerblog.net/rub-costumes-traditionnels-.html>



While it is generally very sober, the *jiletenn* (vest) and the *chupenn* (jacket) are adorned in a great variety of ways, depending on the village. In Concarneau, Rosporden, Elliant and nearby villages, the embroidery is reminiscent of the other parts of Cornwall (Cornouaille), in gold, yellow, sometimes red, but limited to narrow bands along the

sides of the *chupenn* and across the chest on the vest. A double row of buttons is displayed prominently. Pont-Aven, on the other hand, decorates both male and female outfits with bands of red, yellow, blue narrow ribbons interspersed with narrow white lace. For the men, another characteristic is that the brim of the hat is slightly upturned on both sides, and a large and ornate buckle holds the ribbon in the back of the hat.

In Elliant, the dominance of the yellow ornaments (the color of the local bird, the European finch), has given the men their name "Melenig", i.e. the yellow ones. Unfortunately, perhaps because of its simplicity, the male costume has disappeared altogether, kept alive only by the Celtic Circles to wear during festivals and pilgrimages.

### The women's outfit(s)

The complexity is mind-boggling, but some constant elements are to be found in the entire region.

Photo from <http://www.panoramio.com/user/3026493>



a) The headdress (*coiffe* or *koef* in Breton) is made of several components:

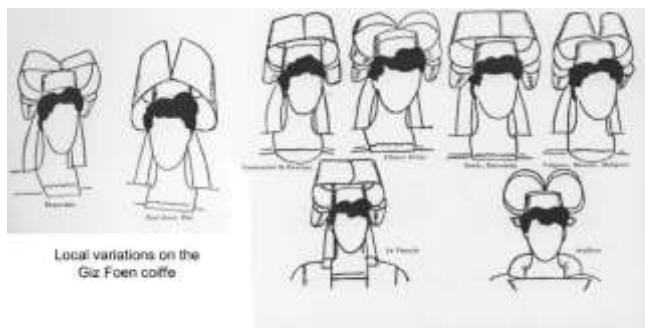
- a cloth band, about 6 inches tall, usually blue or green, attached to the chignon with pins;
- two wide bands of starched lace, affixed to the

front of the cloth band and going backwards, for the everyday coiffe

- two additional bands of starched lace, affixed to the side of the cloth band and going towards the back of the head for the ceremonial coiffe
- two long bands of looser lace in the back might be added in some cases, or a wide velvet knot might hold the lace in the back.

The collar can be very simple, just a band of ornate lace around the neck, but it can also be reminiscent of 17<sup>th</sup> century courtly dress collars: in that case, you need to find one of the last ironing women who knows how to do this. The collar is made of thin cloth (sometimes cotton or even lace), which has to be ironed into minuscule parallel pleats (between 300 and 500 of them per collar), using one of those heavy small irons dating back to the early 1900's. The pleats are created by pressing the cloth against thin straws made with an herb that grows in the region. In most cases, the art of ironing such a collar into shape involves curving it upwards, so that it frames the neck of the wearer. It takes between 6 and 8 hours to take care of one collar...

As you can tell from the illustration below, there are various ways of folding the lace and wearing the collar, but in all cases it requires a lot of patience and preferably very long hair to hold the coiffe in place.



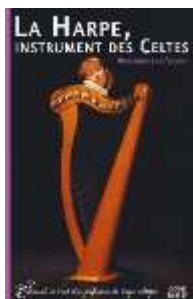
c) The dress itself is made today of black velvet (the color has evolved with time), usually embroidered or decorated on the sleeves and the bottom of the dress with colorful bands. The other piece that adds to the beauty of the costume is the silk apron, very wide, with or without a chest piece. It is also embroidered or decorated with lace on the sides. The length of the dress has varied slightly with time, but it is often just above the ankle. Another characteristic of the costume is a thin waist, which of course flatters the width of the collar.



The Giz Foen is probably the most admired *giz* in Brittany, both for its intricacy and its rigorous rules. Local Celtic Circles proudly wear their own variation of the costume at festive occasions. Smaller versions are made for children, and there is hope that today's little girls will continue the tradition in the future. The last two ironing ladies left in the region have just received local and regional grants to allow them to continue their exceptional craft and pass it on to the next generation.

## New Books about Breton Music

Several new books about Breton and Celtic music have come out in the past months and are worth noting here. Information about them has been pulled from *Musique Bretonne* 239 (April/May/June 2014) and *Ar Men* 202 (Sept/Oct 2014)



**Mariannig Larc'hanteg. *La harpe, instrument des celtes.*** Coop Breizh.

Mariannig Larc'hanteg is a harpist, composer and teacher of numerous Bretons who have taken an interest in this instrument. This book traces the history of the harp in Brittany and in Paris during its revival and reinvention during the past 50 years. Told from a personal perspective, this is an interesting window on the renaissance of Breton music in the 60s and 70s especially. Any, you get a look at Larc'hanteg's own pioneering efforts to teach harp and bring respect to the teaching of Breton music.



**Jean-Pierre Van Hees. *Cornemuses – un infini sonore.*** Coop Breizh. 414 pages.

Scholar and musician Jean-Pierre Van Hees inventories the diversity and history of bagpipes – primarily in Europe but also on other continents.

The book incorporates abundant images – photos and reproductions of paintings depicting pipes and pipers. The technique to play various pipes are explored and two DVDs present performance and styles. This is a thorough exploration - for music scholars and bagpipe lovers both.



**Martial Le Corre. *Les Sonneurs Bretons – mémoires en images.*** Editions Alan Sutton.

Their exotic sound and central role at picturesque Breton festivities made *sonneurs* – players of the bombard and

*biniou koz* - favorite subjects for early 20<sup>th</sup> century post cards. This left a rich documentation of *sonneurs de couple* – paired bombard and biniou – as well as other combinations with drum or clarinet. Also documented is the *biniou braz* – Scottish bagpipes introduced first in 1895 before its use in pair with the bombard and later as part of the bagad in the early 1950s.



**Tangi Le Gall-Carré. *Jig an diaoul – 30 ton evit an akordeons diatonek.*** Paker Productions.

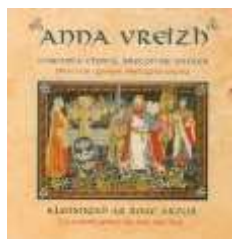
In English, the Breton title to this book translates as “Jig of the devil – 30 tunes for diatonic accordion.” Button accordion player Tangi Le Gall-Carré has played with groups Startjenn, Kadja Trio, and in the Le Gall-Moal duo. Here he presents 30 transcriptions of compositions for diatonic accordion. The book is divided into three parts: Breton dances (including an dro, ridée, ronds de Saint-Vincent, suites for plinn..), Irish tunes, and waltzes and other dances. An accompanying CD with each piece will surely help learners who count more on an ear than a written score.

**Dominique Méguet. *Ghitarr dë Brtêgn – Dé danss du Péyiz Galot.***

In English, the Gallo title to this book translates as “Guitar of Brittany – Dances of the Gallo Country.” This is a collection of dances from eastern Brittany transcribed for guitar. The author also provides his performance of each piece on CD. This is suitable for beginners as well as those more practiced guitarists.

**New Recordings from Brittany – Notes on 18 New CDs from Brittany**

Information for these short notes was gleaned from the Coop Breizh website, *Musique Bretonne* 240 (July/Aug/Sept 2014), *Ar Men* 202 (Sept/Oct 2014) and 203 (Nov/Dec 2014) - Lois Kuter



**Ensemble Choral Anna Vreizh. *Klemmigan ar Roue Arzur.***

This CD features a 29-minute composition “Klemmigan ar Roue Arzur” (Battle of King Arthur), a composition with text by Jeva Omnès. The choral ensemble also performs Breton language texts composed by Tudgual Kalvez, Jean-Pierre Boulic (translation by Job an Irien), and Tri Yann, and the CD includes two instrumental arrangements by René Abjean of an Irish melody and a song from the *Barzaz Breiz*. More about this choral ensemble can be found on [www.annavreizh.gwalarn.org](http://www.annavreizh.gwalarn.org).



**Bernard Benoit. *Et pendant ce temps là, la mer...***

Acoustic guitarist Benoit has been on the Breton scene for many years and continues to present a varied repertoire inspired by Brittany and the Celtic lands in styles that can have a

classical, folk, traditional or New Age quality. This CD includes 12 selections.



**Samuel Carré, Mark Sweeting, Kevin Colas. *Breizh China***

This CD features 8 compositions and arrangements of traditional Breton and Chinese airs and dances performed by organist Samuel Carré with Mark

Sweeting and Kevin Colas on bombard, percussion and keyboards. Breton musicians have commonly explored world traditions, but this is a more unusual direction in sound. More information can be found on [www.breizhchina.sitew.fr](http://www.breizhchina.sitew.fr).



**The Celtic Social Club. *The Celtic Social Club***. Keltia Musique

This is an experiment launched at the 2014 Vieilles Charrues festival inspired by the Buena Vista Social Club, but with a Celtic twist. With Breton, Irish

and Asturian themes, the musicians take things further in exploring each other's traditions. There's a blues harmonica backing up Louise Ebré's song "Martolod Farw," and a rap sound to Steven Bodenes' bombard playing. Manu Masko arranges all the ingredients which also include Pierre Stéphan on fiddle, Ronan Le Bars on uilleann pipes, and the voices of Jean-Pierre Riou and Jimmie O'Neill – a fine club.



**Keyvan Chemirani. *Avaz***. Innacor 11417

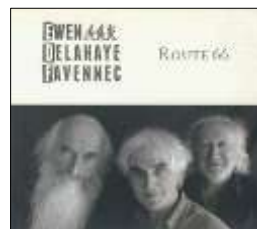
Avaz is a musical exploration led by percussionist Keyvan Chemirani where musicians and singers explore the gwerz (Breton language ballads) and

Persian mystical songs of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries – with the voices of Annie Ebré and Maryam Chemirani, both masters of their respective traditions. They are joined by Sylvain Barou on flute and Hamid Khabbazi on tar, a Persian long-necked "guitar."



**André Drumel – *Chanteur du pays de Pontivy***. Grands Interprètes de Bretagne 6. Dastum.

This is another in a series of CDs produced by Dastum to present a master of traditional song or storytelling. In this case it's André Drumel from the Pontivy region. The CD includes a selection of 19 songs in Breton and French recorded at a variety of occasions – evening gatherings, song contests, or in his home. Also included is an interview in Breton. As is always the case for Dastum productions, this includes ample notes with biographical information, texts and translations for all songs, and a presentation of the tradition and language of this area, with lots of photos to bring the singer to life visually.



**Ewen, Delahaye, Favennec. *Route 66***

This trio of singers, known briefly as EDF, includes Patrick Ewen, Gérard Delahaye and Melaine Favennec. They travel the roads of Finistère to present

12 compositions evoking the countryside and people along their Route 66.



**Elie Guillou. *Chanteur public***

Guillou is described as a modern troubadour and indeed his songs are born of travel and meetings with people not only on Breton roads but international travels as well. As

a Public Singer he is available to compose a song for any occasion you may wish – a birthday, anniversary, or everyday desire. Check out his website [www.elieguillou.fr](http://www.elieguillou.fr) for more information.



**Gwennyn. *Beo***. Seniproduct GW2013.

This is the fifth CD by singer Gwennyn who composes and interprets songs of others in Breton, French and English, evoking a range of emotions and telling a lot of interesting stories.



**JMK. Astronoz.**

This is a trio made up of Tristan Jézéquel on bombard and clarinet, Baptiste Moalic on button accordion, and Thomas Kerbrat on drums. They include 9 Breton dance selections on

this CD including a suite for plinn, kost ar c'hoat, rond de Saint-Vincent, cercle circassien, avant-deux, scottish, and a waltz. For more see [www.zikcard.com/triojmk](http://www.zikcard.com/triojmk)



**Le Bour – Bodros Quintet. 5.**  
Paker Production 015

This CD includes a selection of 12 composed and traditional Breton dances including polka, crcle circassien, hanter-dro, gavotte, waltz, rond de Loudéac, Scottish

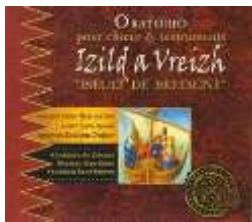
and ridée. The group is made up of Timothée Le Bour on saxophones, Youen Bodros on button accordion, Erwan Moal on acoustic and electric guitars, Erwan Menguy on flutes, and Erwan Volant on electric and fretless bass guitar.



**Anjela Lorho-Pasco and Maude Madec. LaLa.**

This is the first recording by two young singers Anjela Lorho-Pasco and Maude Madec, from the Vannetais area who sing traditional songs for dance and for

just listening in the Breton language. They bring a fresh sound while being faithful to the beauty of the Vannetais song tradition.



**Mouez Bro Konk, Kanerion an Oriant, Kanerion Sant Meryn. Izild a Vreizh/Iseult de Bretagne.**

This is an oratorio for choir, Celtic harp, violin, alto cello, flute, uilleann pipes, and percussion

composed by Jean-Yves le Ven. It is a suite of 13 choral selections and 3 instrumental pieces which incorporate the melodies and rhythms of Ireland and Brittany. The story features Isolde of the White Hands of Brittany, the wife of Tristan, whose lover Isolde from Ireland is usually the feature of this tale of tragic love. This is the recording of a performance of April 2013 in Quéven.



**Red Cardell and Bagad Kemper. Gwenn-ha-Du.**

This is a performance of music composed for the presentation of a line of clothing by designer and master of Breton embroidery Pascal Jaouen. The basic black

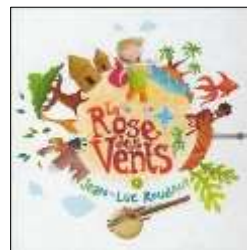
and white of the collection (gwenn ha du) gives this composition its name and it evokes the mix of Breton roots and internationally inspired creativity in the fashion of Jaouen and music of the group Red Cardell and Bagad Kemper. The 20 selections on the CD also benefit from a number of guest performers: Armel an Hejer and Tanya Morgan with song, the Hurtopravci choir, Ronan Le Bars on uilleann pipes and Scottish pipes, Thomas Moisson on accordion, Pierre Sangra on violin and cello, and Pierre Stéphane on violin.



**Rhapsodya. N'int ket deuet a-benn da ziwriziennañ ac'hanomp... / Ils n'ont pas réussi à nous déraciner...**  
Paker Production 014

This group compses song texts in Breton in a rock/rap style expressing defiance to efforts

to de-Bretonize Bretons and a call to action against the domination of the state in its control of media, education and industry. The group includes singer Youenn Roue, Erwan Moal on electric guitar, Erwan Volant on bass, Klet Beyer on drums, and Tangi Le Gall-Carré on button accordion.



**Jean-Luc Roudaut. La Rose des Vents.**

Known for his compositions for and with children, Jean-Luc Roudaut's new CD includes 37 short selections for over an hour of travelling and exploration of other countries – primarily in

Africa. You accompany a little boy named Nono to discover new musical traditions and to take a joyful sea voyage back to Brittany again. Fun for children, Roudaut's music is also interesting for adult listeners.



**Silly Brothers. Silly Brothers.** Editions Alain Pennec.

This is a Breton trio based in Nantes which includes singer Roland Brou, a master of traditional Gallo song, Jean

Michenaud on banjo and guitar, and Alain Pennec on tin whistle and button accordion. They reinterpret classics

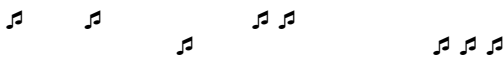
from the Anglo-Saxon folk renaissance with tints of Fairport Convention, Pentangle and Planxty. While the accent of their English may be a bit odd to American or British ears, these are three very talented musicians enjoying a new interpretation of popular folk songs.



**Vincendeau Felder Quartet. Affinité's.**

This new CD includes 11 selections – one traditional tune and ten compositions rooted in Breton melodies and rhythms. The group is made up of Stevan Vincendeau on

button accordion, Thomas Felder on fiddle, Gweltaz Hervé on saxophones, and Erwan Volant on guitars.



**Yaouank 2014**

Yaouank means young in Breton but this month-long “festival” of music was created in 1999 at the initiative of Skeudenn Bro-Roazhon, a federation of cultural organizations in the city of Rennes and surrounding area. *Miz du* is the Breton name for the month of November, the black month. Indeed the days are short and the sun

might not be seen a lot, but in Rennes this month is packed with performances of music, dance, cinema and theater which reflect well the ability of Bretons to use their rich cultural heritage to create new and innovate works.

For this 16th year, new creations by Fred Guichen, Sylvain Barou, and Donal Lunny made their debut. Erik Marchand directed *[R]Evolution*, a performance featuring 50 dancers from the best of Brittany’s Cercles Celtiques. The *kan ha beat box* quartet presented “one shot” with singers Krismenn and Alem. There was no lack of opportunity to hear and dance to some of Brittany’s best new acts as well as established performers trying out new ideas. The month closed with a huge fest noz which drew thousands of participants making it the biggest in Brittany and the world (in 2013 some 7,000 Bretons danced). This was certainly not be a dark month for Rennes.

For more information check out [www.yaouank.com](http://www.yaouank.com)

**An American Geographer’s View of Brittany from 1930**

**Harold S. Kemp, “Brittany: The Backward Child of a Stern Environment.”**

The Journal of Geography, Vol. XXIX, No. 6, September 1930

*The following is an excerpt from a longer article by Harvard University professor Harold S. Kemp. He perpetuates many of the negative stereotypes of travel writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, declaring that Brittany is an isolated land of “simple, backward people” and the Breton language is an “archaic survival.” His ignorance of Brittany’s history as a land of explorers and adventurers is particularly evident in his assertion that because Brittany is a peninsula its people have remained isolated and remote from the world. He notes that, of course, the most isolated of them would be the ones to look the French as foreign tyrants!*

... The Breton people, as a social group, reflect, as surely as does the landscape, the environment which is theirs. Farming, they are as poor as other farmers the world over where the land is as unyielding as this. Fishing, they are no more prosperous – no less hard-working – than the fishermen of Norway, Nova Scotia, or Portugal. Townsfolk, almost without exception, are the folk of little towns – of villages; and there is almost nowhere a sophistication which is more than that of little villages.

But the story of Breton character and habit is more than that of a hard land and uncertain hauls; of little, scattered farms, and meager, long-stunted hamlets. It is the story of a people who, in the midst of the world, are out of it; mewed up, like monks in a monastery, on a peninsula. It is the story of a remote people.

Brittany’s remoteness lies chiefly in the fact, common to peninsulas, that the province leads nowhere. No great trade route has ever led across it, because to cross it is but to go to, or come from, the sea; and cargoes today, as always, sail the length of its northern or southern coast to reach harbors closer to the busy world of France; to Le Havre on the north, or Nantes, on the south.

In olden days, English armies sometimes slipped cross the Channel to strike France over the shoulder of Brittany; and here France was wont to meet the invader and drive him out, leaving the Bretons to recover from the despoiling, harrying hands of both. Such experiences often repeated and often prolonged, made the Bretons distrustful of the foe across the water and the “ally” to whose land his peninsula was attached. Today he will

exclaim, bitterly, “*Oo! Les cochons Anglais!*” And, if he is one of the more rabid, racially self-conscious of the Bretons (i.e., one of the most isolated ones), he may add, as bitterly, “*Et les tyrans Français!*” actually forgetting, in his provincial egoism, that he too is French.

“Granite in their muscles and their brains” – New Hampshire song

An aloof, remote, proud and stubborn man, the Breton, only half guessing the likeness of the outer world, and not well liking that half, Because then, past contacts with the outer world were in the nature of bitterly resented, relentlessly remembered military invasions; and because the busy movement of modern trade finds no use for, or need of, tis peripheral, little-producing land and its simple, backward people, change have come slowly here, and folk-survivals are common. It is only in such backwaters of a modern world for instance, that women still wear the identical dress and gargantuan, inexplicable head-gear of long-past generations – centuries, even; and that men trim their oddly-fashioned clothes with vivid yellow and scarlet embroideries and big brass buttons; their unwieldy, velvet-trimmed hats with silver buckles and three-foot velvet streamers. It is a fact that the ruff – wide, tightly-fluted, stiffly starched – is still in the height of fashion in this land, where it is universally worn by a peasantry to whom “fashion” is an unknown word, while “tradition” is still all-powerful.

It is only in such rare, isolated spots that one finds peasants humbly pulling their hats from their heads as a stranger passes by, and standing respectfully aside in a fixed, traditional posture. Such peasants recognize in the attire of the stranger the dress of their “betters,” and accord such betters the identical courtesy that long dead ancestors once offered a liege lord.

It is only in such still wells of surviving medieval custom that whole villages still march in rapt, chanting, candle-bearing procession, or kneel unwaveringly, untiringly, thru hours-long wayside services, feeling themselves a part in some terrific mystery which is to better the coming year.

It is only in such twilight zones of naiveté that young men, at their most self-conscious age, march on their wedding day from church door round and round about the town, an increasingly wilted bouquet held stiffly in one hand – an increasingly agonized bride, limping in her unaccustomed shoes, on the other arm. Ahead, a strident accordion or shrilling *biniou*; behind, relatives and friends in formal procession – orderly enough at eleven in the morning when they emerge from church, but often a staggering, ribald crew by six, when all the drinking places have been visited and the groom’s pockets are empty.

It is these same procession-loving folk who people the weekly markets, driving in to the village from far-off, recessed farm-hamlets on high, two-wheeled carts which survive as the universal conveyance in this region where poor roads form a quite natural exception to the elsewhere splendid highways of France. For such roads, wheels must be heavy, and strongly built, if they are not to fall apart as the cart rattles down a hill. On the other hand, four such wheels, plus the cart’s load, are more than one horse can draw up the succeeding ascent; and one horse, rather than two, fits the size of these Breton farms, however useful an extra beast might be on market day.

The market, itself, with its puppet-show, crude merry-go-round (for the grown-ups, who have earned such luxuries, rather than for children, who, indeed, have been left at home), trinket booth and tart-stand, offers endless examples of artless naiveté, while the great fête-days, with their dancing on the green – a wild revel never-to-be-forgotten – display these gentle folk at their adolescent best. Again it is the grown-ups who disport themselves; hauls are too long, and conveyances too scant, to justify even short trips among the children. And so again the granite roads act that children may stay – children.

Medieval Paintings Come to Life in Brittany

Here, of course, the wooden shoe, or *sabot*, more generally used than in Holland, still suffices among the peasants on all but the greatest fête-days. The peasant bread is made of buckwheat, the local grain; the dough mixed in great brass bowls, no longer made, but surviving from some epoch – some mist-hung economic invasion – of the eighteenth century; the baking done, often enough, in bread “pans” of woven willow, wet down to keep them from catching fire in the oven. Such wine as is to be bought comes from French Algeria, rather than southern France, since boats bring wine into this land of many harbors from coastal Africa more cheaply than railroads can bring it from interior France. Here the grain and hay is cut by scythe – an unbelievably cumbersome, heavy, locally-made contrivance – or by the slower, even more back-breaking sickle, the women following the men and gathering the crop into bundles, while children trail behind to cull every last grain or blade.

Hand in hand with all these archaic survivals lives that most striking one of all – the Breton language; not a French patois, but a distinct language, branch of the Celtic tongue. One frequently runs across peasants who have no single word of French. While a more progressive friend acts as interpreter, they shrug, as tho to say, “that foreign language? No!”

Travelers in African jungles have made familiar the picture of naked savages gathered about a phonograph,

hearing “canned music” for the first time. It is the accepted proof, this picture, of a virgin people; isolated, remote, untouched by modernity. Last September, in a Breton town of 7,000 inhabitants, and one of the larger towns of remote Brittany, the writer saw a similar picture. Clothed, and no more “savage” than the rest of us, the people of that town gathered to hear a strange device which a local grocer had brought to town on approval.

Filling the cobbled street from wall to wall they stood, hushed and thrilled, from seven in the evening until ten, while orchestral music and operatic arias poured out of the little shop’s open door. Between numbers they whispered a little, but there was no whisper while that magic was in the air. They faced the open door as they might have faced an altar; seeing nothing, but turned worshipfully toward that music, which was so different from their own biniou or their own ancient chants. For three nights the town poured out to savor this miracle. And each evening, promptly at ten, the music stopped, and the people, still hushed and wondering, faded away into the neighboring streets and their homes. For at ten, in the villages of Brittany, all “noise” must end; it is the law of the peninsula. One sleeps at night in this strange land!

#### Brittany Smells Gasoline – for Awhile

In the long run, geography is dynamic, not static. Human activities have never yet been so nicely adjusted to a given environment that an improvement in technology, a new appreciation of some earth element, or new relationship to another environment, has not sufficed to set the puppets dancing in new patterns.

The Brittany pictured here is the Brittany of today, not of tomorrow. Like to his ancestors as is the present Breton, he is about to change – has, indeed, entered the transitional stage between two phases – two epochs – in his geographic history. His peninsula has again been invaded; his remoteness breaking down; his individualism is swiftly on the wane. Tourists and their autos, hunting out remoter and remoter spots – quaint and more quaint places – bring hotels and garages in their wake. The choicest old houses are being turned into antique shops or tea-rooms, with defacing English signs across their ancient lintels. Sails will soon give way to motors; natives will become, first, self-conscious, and then, imitative; and costumes and customs will swiftly go into the discard as they have already done in the least remote, north-shore port towns. It will pay to improve the roads, and the sturdy, jolly carts will disappear. New ideas as to buildings will creep in (Breton conservatives are already ranting about the “French” architecture which is going up here and there), and picturesque old bits will be “improved” beyond all interest or liking. The modernization – standardization - of Brittany will have taken place.

And then, some day, remoteness, one suspects, will take hold again. For, its unique quality gone, the invaders will pass Brittany by, and an ephemeral prosperity will have ended. The old Breton will be gone, but again will Brittany stagnate. Again only a land of thin crops and lean hauls, Brittany; the granite peninsula, will rest where it finds itself when the tide turns. A hundred years from now, unless there is some “new technology, a new use for one of its elements, or a new relationship to outside regions,” Brittany may well be on its way toward quaintness again; toward a new local integrity.

But alas for the present breakdown of its isolation – its dawning day of tourist prosperity. For a hundred years from now, the “quaint” Breton will be “picturesque.” Not in ruff and embroidery, stone and thatch, pardon, and wedding procession: he will be perpetuating, worse luck to him, the costumes and customs of today, when he wakes for a little, sees and copies the world he finds knocking at his door, and then goes back into his long sleep.

For Brittany, always a land of granite, little harbors, and humid, cool-summer climate, will again, as far as one can now see, be also a land of peninsular isolation.

#### *Editor’s Note:*

*The 100 year in the future the writer projects would take Brittany to 2030. New technology has indeed impacted the development of the Breton economy but Brittany certainly did not hibernate to become a land of peninsular isolation.*

*The author could not foresee the kind of changes tourism would bring to Brittany in the 1930s, and his prediction that an onslaught of tourists would eventually lead Bretons to toss their old costumes out to take on the cultural trappings of the invaders was only partly correct. The growth of tourism in this period led to the development of festivals featuring Breton costumes, and pardons were clearly tourist destinations where one expected to see a wealth of costumes.*

*Meeting the tourist expectations certainly led to the creation of events that were “folkloric” in the worse sense of the word. But Breton festivals have grown to be less about tourists and mostly about Bretons creating opportunities to express uniquely Breton music, dance, language, theater, etc.*

*Costume continues to be worn as an expression of pride in one’s heritage while it still lures tourists in quest of the “quaint.” Festivals offer the perfect opportunity to show off costumes to appreciative tourists as well as fellow Bretons. As Natalie Novik’s series of articles on Breton costume for Bro Nevez clearly show, Breton costume*



serves as a thoroughly modern and sophisticated expression of identity... certainly not a desire to cling to centuries-old traditions. Indeed the distinctive Breton costumes Professor Kemp witnessed in 1930 are not ancient and evolved primarily during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See Natalie's article in *Bro Nevez* 130 for a basic introduction.

Those interested in the history of tourism in Brittany and its impact on Breton culture are recommended to seek out the book: *Enacting Brittany: Tourism and Culture in Provincial France, 1871–1939*, by Patrick Young (available online).



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

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The Breton language is spoken by an estimated 175,000 to 200,000 people in Brittany, but it is threatened with extinction as older speakers are not replaced by younger ones. The Breton language is no longer forbidden in schools or totally hidden from public view, but France continues to withhold the resources necessary for its development as a healthy living language, despite demands from an ever widening Breton population for its support and growth in the schools, media, and public life.

### *Who are the Members of the ICDBL?*

Some U.S. ICDBL members are of Breton heritage, but the U.S. ICDBL is intended to be a group of “anyone and everyone” showing support for the Breton language rather than an organization for Breton-Americans like so many other “ethnic” organizations in the U.S. We do have quite a few members with Irish, Scottish or Welsh heritage, so there is a strong inter-Celtic element to our work. Most of our members speak neither Breton nor French and most have never been to Brittany. But we all have some reason to help fight for the survival of the Breton language.

### *What the does the U.S. ICDBL do?*

With Members of the U.S. ICDBL dispersed throughout the U.S. -- from Maine to Florida, from Alaska to California, and lots of states in between—we do not hold meetings or have the ability to carry out projects as a group.

### *Quarterly Newsletter for Members and Subscribers*

Our central activity is the publication of a quarterly newsletter called **Bro Nevez** (“new country” in the Breton language). It’s not slick and glossy, but includes 12 to 15 pages of current information about what is going on in Brittany related to the Breton language and culture. In November 2006 we published our 100<sup>th</sup> issue. In the 3,000+ pages of *Bro Nevez* produced so far, over 800 books from Brittany have been reviewed or noted, and over 300 Breton music recordings have been reviewed and an additional 850 new releases briefly described.

### *The U.S. ICDBL Web Site: [www.icdbl.org](http://www.icdbl.org)*

On our website we have published a guide to Breton music (updated in 2006), a guide to learning materials for the Breton language, an introduction to and map of the Celtic languages, a presentation of the Diwan Breton language immersion schools, and two documents presenting the Breton language and why it is endangered and what is being done about it. Bretons themselves have created many great websites to present their country and its culture, and we provide links to a large number of excellent and reliable sites created by Bretons themselves.

### *Other Action*

ICDBL Members throughout the U.S. have been ambassadors for the cause of the Breton language by distributing information at Celtic cultural events and music festivals or concerts, and by simply discussing their concerns with friends and acquaintances.

Our support of the Breton language is mostly symbolic—the fact that outsiders care at all offers encouragement to people in Brittany who are working to sustain the Breton language and find new and creative ways to use it. And it shows that the Breton language is important to the world.

For information about membership, contact:

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