

# FOLK MUSIC OF FRANCE

Recorded in:

Anjou  
Berry  
Vendée  
Corsica  
Orléans  
Provence  
Bretagne  
Normandie  
Angoumois  
Bourgogne  
Ethnic  
Folkways  
Library  
Folkways  
Records  
FE4414

Notes by Paul Arma

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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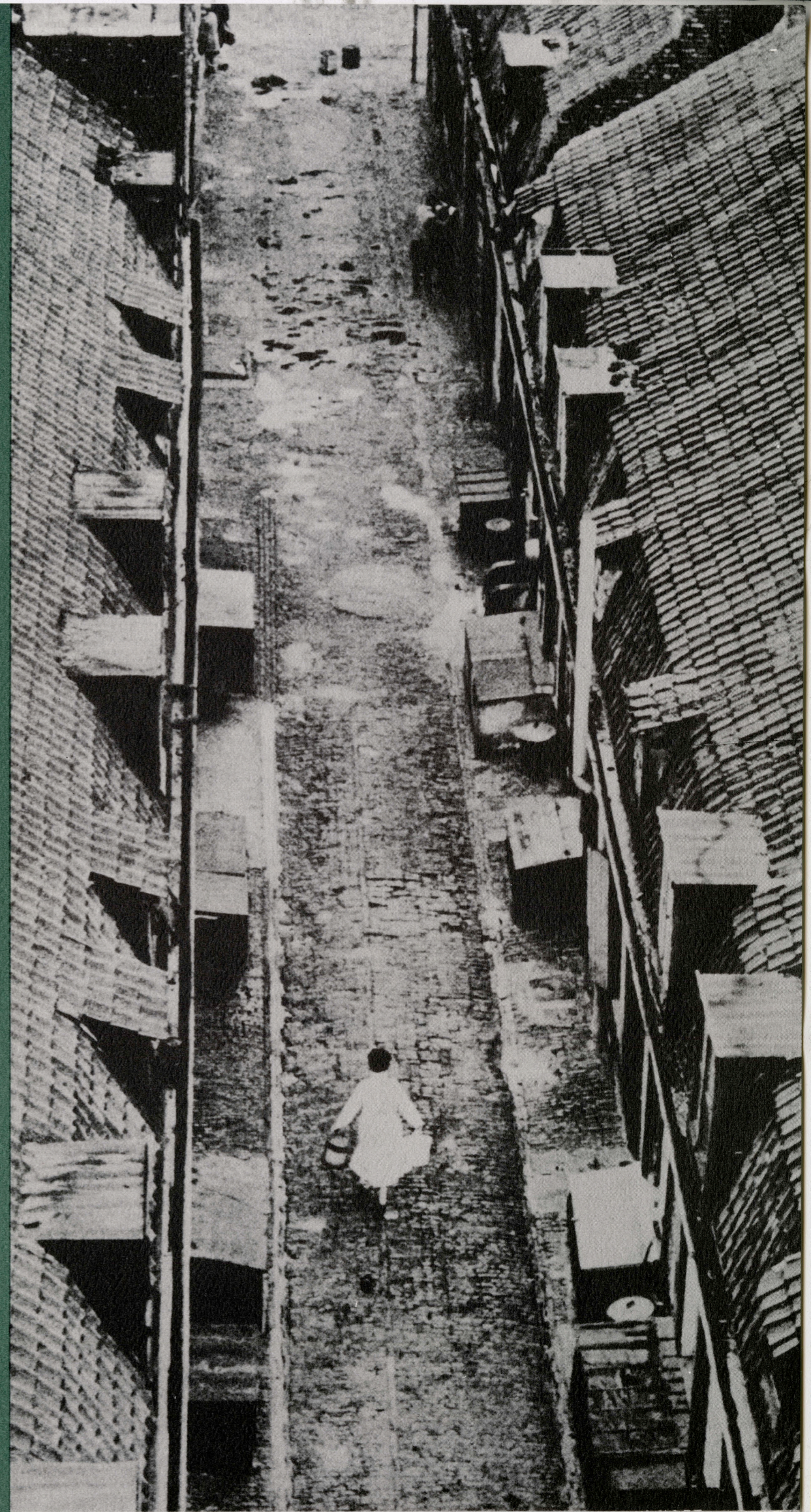
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# FOLK MUSIC OF FRANCE

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES ON THE RECORDINGS  
BY PAUL ARMA

THIS COLLECTION INCLUDES RECORDINGS OF FOLK SONGS AND DANCES FROM FRANCE. THEY WERE SELECTED FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE PHONOTHEQUE NATIONALE IN PARIS, AN INSTITUTION DEVOTED TO THE PRESERVATION OF FRENCH FOLKLORE.

THE EXPRESSION "FRENCH POPULAR SONGS", SO FREQUENTLY USED, IS ABSURD. TO BE SURE, A FEW RARE SONGS AND TALES AND PROVERBS HAVE SPREAD THROUGHOUT FRANCE AND EVEN BEYOND ITS BORDERS. NEVERTHELESS, ALL FRENCH FOLKLORE REMAINS THE EXACT AND FAITHFUL REFLECTION OF THE DIFFERENT ETHNIC AND LANGUAGE GROUPS AMONG WHICH THIS FOLKLORE CAME TO BIRTH. THAT IS WHY WE SHOULD NOT SAY "FRENCH POPULAR SONGS" BUT RATHER "POPULAR SONGS FROM FRANCE".

NATURALLY WE ARE FAR FROM AGREEING WITH JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU WHO STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT THE FRENCH POSSESSED NO MUSIC AND WERE INCAPABLE OF POSSESSING MUSIC. BUT WE DO SAY: "THIS LAND WHICH WE CALL FRANCE DOES NOT AND CANNOT HAVE ONE SINGLE FOLKLORE. IT HAS AS MANY FOLKLORES AS IT HAS ETHNIC GROUPS WHICH FORM ITS POPULATION."

IN THE COURSE OF HISTORY, FRANCE HAS SUFFERED INNUMERABLE WARS DUE TO INVASIONS FROM THE FOUR POINTS OF THE COMPASS. ACCORDINGLY FRENCH CIVILIZATION HAS SUFFERED PROFOUND AND SUCCESSIVE UPHEAVALS; IT HAS ALSO BEEN IN INTIMATE AND ALMOST CONSTANT CONTACT WITH WHOLLY DISSIMILAR CULTURES AND CIVILIZATIONS.

WITH THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY UNDER CONSTANTINE THE GREAT, THE PLAIN-CHANT WAS ESTABLISHED IN WESTERN EUROPE. CREATED BY SAINT AMBROSE, IT HAD BEEN CORRECTED, COMPLETED AND CODIFIED BY SAINT GREGORY THE GREAT. NOW CALLED THE GREGORIAN CHANT, THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE AGES IT USED DRACONIAN MEASURES TO AFFIRM ITS SUPREMACY.

IT IS TRUE, OF COURSE, THAT THE LITURGICAL CHANT EXERCISED AN IMMENSE INFLUENCE ON THE TASTES OF THE PEOPLES AND ON THEIR MUSIC. BUT IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT THIS SAME LITURGICAL CHANT WAS ITSELF INFLUENCED BY THE INFLECTIONS OF PROFANE MUSIC WHICH GREW INCREASINGLY POPULAR IN ITS ACCENTS. A CEASELESS AND HARSH STRUGGLE ENSUED. THE BISHOPS IN THEIR COUNCILS CONDEMNED THIS PROFANE CURRENT EVER MORE FIERCELY; MEANWHILE SECULAR MUSIC, UPHELD BY THE PEOPLE AND ENCOURAGED BY THE KING, DEVELOPED APACE. THUS THE COMMON FOLK LEARNED NEW MELODIES FROM NEW PEOPLES AND THUS THE FOLK SONGS OF VARIOUS REGIONS CAME INTO BEING.

AS EARLY AS THE FIFTH CENTURY WE FIND TRACES OF MILITARY SONGS. SIDONIUS APOLLINARIUS AT THAT PERIOD TELLS US THAT KING THEODORIC ORDERED THAT MUSIC SHOULD BE PLAYED AT HIS EVERY MEAL. THIS WAS NOT GREEK OR ROMAN MUSIC "WITH HYDRAULIC ORGANS WHICH UNDER THE BATON OF A CONDUCTOR BLENDED WITH SINGING, BUT SONGS AND INSTRUMENTS OF THEODORIC'S NATION WHICH CHARMED THE EAR AND APPEALED TO THE HEART."

THE CHIEFS OF THE PEOPLES WHO INHABITED GAUL EXCHANGED BOTH MUSIC AND MUSICIANS. CLOVIS SENT THEODORIC A ZITHER PLAYER. THEODORIC REPLIED: "IN RETURN WE ARE SENDING YOU A HARP PLAYER OF CONSUMMATE ART. CREATING MUSIC WITH BOTH HIS MOUTH AND HIS FINGERS, HE WILL CELEBRATE THE GLORY OF YOUR POWER."

IN 1227 PIERRE DE CORBEIL, ARCHBISHOP OF SENS NEAR PARIS, INAUGURATED AND CONDUCTED A SOMEWHAT ECCENTRIC CEREMONY WHICH LATER BECAME A TRULY POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT. IT WAS CALLED "LA FETE DE L'ÂNE - THE FEAST OF THE ASS" AND WAS CELEBRATED AT NOYON, AT BEAUVAIS, AT LAON AND ELSEWHERE. A GIRL RODE UPON AN ASS WHICH WAS DECKED OUT IN MAGNIFICENT TRAPPINGS; IN HER ARMS SHE HELD A CHILD, FOR SHE REPRESENTED THE HOLY VIRGIN. AS SHE RODE UP TO THE PORTALS OF THE CHURCH, SHE WAS LED TO THE CHOIR AND STOOD TO THE RIGHT OF THE ALTAR. THE INTROIT, THE GLORIA AND THE CREDO WERE ANSWERED BY BRAYS FROM THE CONGREGATION; THE FINAL DEO GRATIAS ALSO MET WITH CRIES OF "HEE-HAH, HEE-HAH!" THE PROSE OF THE MASS WAS DEVOTED ENTIRELY TO THE DONKEY.

SECULAR EXPRESSION AND SECULAR SUBJECTS GAINED CONSIDERABLE GROUND IN PUBLIC FAVOR. TABLE SONGS, DRINKING SONGS, COMPLAINTS, EPIC SONGS, EPIC POEMS, PASTOURELLES, LAYS, SIRVENTOIS AND LOVE SONGS WERE IN EVERY EAR AND ON EVERY LIP THANKS TO THE CAUSE INDICATED, AND THANKS ALSO TO THE TROUBADOURS IN THE SOUTH, THE TROUVERES IN THE NORTH, AND MINSTRELS EVERYWHERE.

THE CONCERTS GIVEN WERE NUMEROUS AND VERY VARIED. JEAN DE GARDANE HAS LEFT US PICTURESQUE ACCOUNT OF THEM: "IN THE HOUSE OF WEALTHY MEN," HE NOTED, "I HAVE SEEN VIOLS, PLAYERS OF LYRES AND FLUTE PLAYERS; I HAVE SEEN VIELLE-PLAYERS WITH THEIR HURDY-GURDIES AND OTHER PLAYERS WHO PERFORMED RESPECTIVELY ON THE ZITHER, THE FIDDLE, THE DULCIMER, THE HURDY-GURDY, THE PSALTERY, THE TABOR AND CYMBALS; I HAVE EVEN SEEN COURT-IEERS AND LADIES DANCE TO THE TUNE OF SERPENT-HORNS."

DURING THE SUCCEEDING CENTURIES A NEW, DEEP AND IRREVOCABLE BREAK MARKED THE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC IN FRANCE. WITH THE RENAISSANCE CAME A BRUTAL DIVORCE WHEREBY ON ONE HAND SCHOLARLY POLYPHONIC MUSIC SOARED TO REMARKABLE HEIGHTS, AND, ON THE OTHER HAND, MONODIC POPULAR MUSIC AFFIRMED ITS EXPRESSION POWERFULLY AND DEFINITELY.

NOW THE FOLKSONGS OF THE PEOPLES INHABITING FRANCE WERE CREATED AND HAVE BEEN PRACTISED MONODICALLY. IT IS MONODY WHICH VOICES THE INNUMERABLE WEALTH OF SONG THAT RISES FROM ITS PROVINCES, FROM ITS VARIED ETHNIC TYPES, FROM ITS

LANGUAGES AND ITS DIALECTS, FROM ITS TRUE, SIMPLE AND HUMAN MANIFESTATIONS. ALL THE DIVERSITY OF FRANCE'S POPULAR MUSIC IS EVIDENCED BY A BRIEF VERSIFICATION AND DELICATE AND PEREMP- TORY AWKWARDNESS WHICH TELL OF THE WORKS, THE THOUGHTS AND THE LOVES OF MAN. THESE REFRAINS MAY OFTEN BE UNRESTRAINED BUT THEY ARE RICH IN THE SINCERITY OF THEIR INSPIRATION. THUS WITH IMMENSE CREATIVE POWER, THEY SEIZE, TRANSLATE AND UTTER THE JOY OF MAN, HIS VEXATION AGAINST SUFFERING, HIS EVERY HOPE AND ALL THE GRANDEUR OF MORTAL EXISTENCE.

BRANLE CARRE (DANCE), PLAYED ON A VIELLE. FROM BOURGOGNE (AIN). ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR FRENCH DANCES, THE BRANLE, WAS ORIGINALLY AL- MOST ALWAYS DANCED IN A CIRCLE BUT SOMETIMES IN TWO LINES FACING EACH OTHER. IT ALMOST AL- WAYS WAS THE FIRST DANCE PERFORMED AT BALLS.

IN THE FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES, THIS VERY SPRIGHTLY DANCE TOOK ON A PARTICU- LARLY TUMULTUOUS PACE AND CAME TO ACQUIRE A LO- CAL CHARACTER ACCORDING TO THE REGIONS WHERE IT WAS PERFORMED.

THE BRANLE EVEN SPREAD TO FOREIGN LANDS WHERE IN ITALY IT BECAME THE BRANDO, AND, IN ENGLAND, THE BRANGILL OF POITOU OR THE BRAWL.

THE "ORCHESOGRAPHY", A MANUAL WRITTEN BY THOINOT D'ARBEAU IN 1588, DIVIDES THE BRANLES INTO FOUR CATEGORIES: THE DOUBLE OR COMMON BRANLE, THE SIMPLE BRANLE, THE GAY BRANLE, AND THE BURGUNDY BRANLE. THESE CATEGORIES INCLUDE TWENTY-SIX SORTS OF BRANLES, NAMED AFTER A PROVINCE OR AFTER A SONG.

THE VIELLE (IN ENGLISH HURDY-GURDY), WITH STRINGS, WHEEL AND KEYBOARD, IS OF VERY ANCIENT ORIGIN. AS EARLY AS THE NINTH CENTURY, IT WAS KNOWN AS THE ORGANISTRUM; IT WAS THEN AN INSTRUMENT OF THREE STRINGS ONLY AND WAS PLAYED BY TWO PEOPLE WHO HELD IT ON THEIR KNEES, ONE USING HIS FINGERS TO DETERMINE THE SOUND DESIRED, THE OTHER TURNING THE CRANK. IN ABOUT THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY, ITS NAME WAS CHANGED TO CHIFONIE, THEN, FROM THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY ON, IT WAS KNOWN AS VIELLE. AT THAT TIME IT WAS PLAYED BY ONE PERSON ONLY, THANKS TO THE ADDITION OF A KEYBOARD WHICH SERVED TO REGULATE THE STRINGS TO THE SOUNDS DESIRED.

THE VIELLE, OF WIDESPREAD USE IN THE MIDDLE AGES, LOST ITS CHARACTER AS A POPULAR INSTRUMENT UNTIL THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. IT THEN CAME INTO FAVOR AMONG THE NOBILITY AND EVEN REACHED THE COURTS OF LOUIS XIV AND LOUIS XV.

UNDER LOUIS XVI ITS VOGUE DECLINED RAPIDLY AND IT WAS BANISHED FROM COURT USAGE AND BECAME THE INSTRUMENT OF COUNTRY FOLK IN VARIOUS REGIONS OF FRANCE, PRINCIPALLY IN BERRY AND IN THE CENTRAL PLATEAU REGIONS OF MORVAN AND FOREZ.

IN ITS FINAL FORM, SINCE 1700, THE VIELLE CON- SISTS OF A BELLY OVER WHICH ARE STRETCHED SIX STRINGS: FOR MELODY, TWO CHANTERELLES (UPPER STRINGS) TUNED TO SOL. FOR THE PEDALS, TWO DRONES IN DO AND SOL; ONE MOUCHE IN SOL, AND ONE TRUMPET STRING IN RE. A WHEEL WHICH, BEING ROSINED, HAS THE FUNCTION OF A VIOLIN BOW, IS TURNED BY THE PLAYER'S RIGHT HAND AND PASSES OVER ALL SIX STRINGS AT ONCE. THE RANGE OF THE VIELLE IS TWO OCTAVES.

THE "BRANLE CARRE OR SQUARE BRAWL" WHICH YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR IS FROM THE BRESSE REGION IN

EASTERN FRANCE, FAIRLY CLOSE TO THE SWISS BORD- ER. IT IS PLAYED BY THE VIELLIST JANE PARAYRE, BORN APRIL 2, 1925. THIS DANCE IN 2/4 TIME IS COMPOSED OF TWO SHORT MUSICAL PHRASES WHICH ARE REPEATED WITHOUT VARIATIONS.

BOURRÉE A DEUX TEMPS (DANCE), PLAYED ON A VIELLE. FROM LOWER BERRY. THE WORD BOURRÉE COMES FROM A VERB MEANING "TO BEAT ONE'S WINGS." IT IS ONE OF THE MOST ANCIENT DANCES WE KNOW. VESTIGES OF THIS DANCE ARE ALSO FOUND IN ALBANIA, IN BUL- GARIA, IN HUNGARY, IN RUMANIA, IN SPAIN, AND IN ALL THE COUNTRIES WHICH ONCE WERE UNDER GRECIAN RULE.

THIS DANCE SEEMS TO HAVE SPRUNG FROM THE SACRED MUSIC OF ANCIENT GREECE. IT HAS REMAINED POPULAR IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES OF FRANCE AND IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY WAS FAVORED AT COURT.

IT WAS THEN THAT ITS ORIGINAL RHYTHM WAS MODI- FIED, AND IT WAS HENCEFORTH USUALLY DANCED IN TRIPLE-TIME.

THE BOURRÉE WAS ALSO INTRODUCED IN THE THEATRE WHERE IT ENJOYED LITTLE SUCCESS. IN THE SEVEN- TEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES IT SPREAD FROM PROVINCE TO PROVINCE, UNDERGOING TRANSFORMATION ACCORDING TO LOCAL CHARACTERISTICS, AND RE- ASSUMING ITS TRIPLE-TEMPO RHYTHM. THE FIRST BEAT IS EMPHASIZED BY A STAMP OF THE HEELS.

THE DOUBLE-TEMPO BOURRÉE OF SOUTHERN BERRY, HEARD IN THIS SELECTION, IS PLAYED BY THE VIELLIST GEORGES SIMON. IT IS COMPOSED OF TWO MUSICAL PHRASES, REPEATED WITHOUT VARIATION, AND ORNAMENTED WITH MANY FLOURISHES.

QUAND LA MAISON EST PROPRE (COURTING SONG). FROM BERRY (INDRE). THE SUITORS, FOUR BY FOUR, ENTER ANY HOUSE WHERE THERE ARE MARRIAGEABLE GIRLS - PROVIDED THAT HOUSE IS "CLEAN". AS IF BY CHANCE, THEY SIT DOWN ON THE MAIDEN'S HOPE CHEST AND KICK THEIR HEELS AGAINST IT IN ORDER TO FIND OUT IF IT IS FULL. IF THE CHEST "RINGS HOLLOW," IT MEANS IT IS EMPTY; THE WOOERS THEREFORE DO NOT SPEAK TO THE MOTHER TO ASK FOR HER DAUGHTER'S HAND.

"QUAND LA MAISON EST PROPRE - WHEN THE HOUSE IS CLEAN" COMES FROM NEAR CHATEAUX-ROUX IN BERRY. IT IS SUNG BY PIERRE PANIS (BORN AT PELLEVOISIN IN 1911) IN MOCKING TONES AND WITH A COMIC LOCAL ACCENT. THE MELODIC LINE IS FA DIÈZE MAJOR; THE FORM IS BASTARD -- A-A-B- WITH A SHORT CODA DRAWN FROM A; THE ENDINGS ON I, I, V, I ARE MORE COMMONPLACE.

QUAND LA MAISON EST PROPRE  
LES GALANTS I(L)S Y V'NONT.  
I(L)S Y V'NONT QUAT' PAR QUAT(R)E,  
MADAME, OUVREZ-NOUS DON(C). (BIS)  
LA DESTINÉE, LA ROSE AU BOIS,  
MADAME, OUVREZ-NOUS DON(C).

I(L)S Y V'NONT QUAT' PAR QUAT(R)E,  
MADAME, OUVREZ-NOUS DON(C).  
I(L)S S'ASSITONT SU(R) L'COFFRE,  
EN TAPANT DU TALON. (BIS)  
LA DESTINÉE, LA ROSE AU BOIS,  
EN TAPANT DU TALON.

## ad la maison est propre

Berry (Indre).

1. Quand la mai-son est propre Les galants i(l)s y v'ont. I(l)s y v'ont  
quat' par quat(r)e, Madame, ouvrez-nous don(c). Madame ouvrez-nous  
don(c), la desti-né, la rose au bois, Madame ouvrez-nous don(c).  
\*) ici, dans le 4<sup>e</sup> couplet.

I(L)S S'ASSITONT SU(R) L'COFFRE,  
EN TAPANT DU TALON.  
SI L'COFFRE I(L) FAIT LA SOURDE  
LES GALANTS I(LS) RESTONT. (BIS)  
LA DESTINÉE, LA ROSE AU BOIS.  
LES GALANTS I(LS) RESTONT.

SI L'COFFRE I(L) FAIT LA SOURDE  
LES GALANTS I(LS) RESTONT.  
ILS CARESSONT LA FILLE  
A LA MÈRE, I(LS) CAUSONT. (BIS)  
LA DESTINÉE, LA ROSE AU BOIS.  
A LA MÈRE, I(LS) CAUSONT.

ILS CARESSONT LA FILLE  
A LA MÈRE I(LS) CAUSONT,  
MAIS SI L'COFFRE I(L) RÉSONNE  
LES GALANTS I(LS) S'TAISONT. (BIS)  
LA DESTINÉE, LA ROSE AU BOIS.  
LES GALANTS I(LS) S'TAISONT.

MAIS SI L'COFFRE I(L) RÉSONNE  
LES GALANTS I(LS) S'TAISONT.  
QUAND LA MAISON EST SALE  
LES GALANTS I(LS) S'EN VONT. (BIS)  
LA DESTINÉE, LA ROSE AU BOIS.  
LES GALANTS I(LS) S'EN VONT.

QUAND LA MAISON EST SALE  
LES GALANTS I(LS) S'EN VONT.  
I(LS) S'EN VONT QUAT' PAR QUAT(R)E  
EN TAPANT DU TALON. (BIS)  
LA DESTINÉE, LA ROSE AU BOIS.  
EN TAPANT DU TALON.

I(LS) S'EN VONT QUAT' PAR QUAT(R)E  
EN TAPANT DU TALON.  
LA MÈRE, AL LES RAPPELLE:  
GALANTS REVENEZ DONG. (BIS)  
LA DESTINÉE, LA ROSE AU BOIS.  
GALANTS, REVENEZ DONG.

LA MÈRE, AL LES RAPPELLE:  
GALANTS, REVENEZ DONG.  
NON PAS, NON PAS LA MÈRE,  
VOT' COFFRE IL EST PLEIN D'ISON! (BIS)  
LA DESTINÉE, LA ROSE AU BOIS.  
VOT' COFFRE IL EST PLEIN D'ISON!

## Chanson de la mariée

Berry (Indre).

1. Nous som'm' venus vous vouer — de dans no-tre vil-la — — ge. — C'est  
pour fé-ter le jour — de votre mari — — a — — ge, A Monsieur votre é-  
-pour, Aussi bon comme à vous. — A Monsieur votre é-pour aussi bon comme à vous.  
\* dans les divers couplets, les variantes sont diverses. etc.

CHANSON DE LA MARIÉE (WEDDING SONG). FROM BERRY (INDRE). WEDDINGS IN FRANCE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY SONG, AND VERY FEW PROVINCES ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH THIS CHARMING TRADITION.

OF OLD, IN THE COUNTRY, THE BRIDE AND GROOM AND WEDDING GUESTS WERE CONDEMNED TO SEVERAL CONSECUTIVE DAYS OF INDIGESTION FROM BANQUETING. THE CUSTOMS AND RITES OF BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE -- NATURALLY ASIDE FROM THE CHURCH CEREMONIALS -- VARIED FROM ONE PROVINCE TO ANOTHER.

AS EARLY AS THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, THE PROVOST LED THE HORSE ON WHICH THE BRIDE RODE BY THE REINS; AFTER THE WEDDING, THE HORSE BELONGED TO HER. THE ANCIENT USAGE OF PLACING A YOKE OVER THE NECKS OF THE BETROTHED COUPLE HAS BEEN PERPETUATED IN A FEW REGIONS SUCH AS THAT AROUND CASTRES IN THE LANGUEDOC HALFWAY BETWEEN TOULOUSE AND MONTPELLIER.

TO QUOTE VIDAL, "AUTHOR OF THE STANDARD WORK ON THE TAMBOURIN: "THE GALOUBET HAS A CLEAR AND SHARP SOUND WHICH COMBINES HAPPILY WITH THE SONORITY AND VIBRATIONS OF THE RESONANT TAMBOURIN, THUS PRODUCING A MOST PLEASING ENSEMBLE: