

# SONIA MALKINE SINGS FRENCH SONGS

ACCOMPANYING HERSELF ON THE LUTE | FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8741



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MUSIC LP

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# SONIA MALKINE      *Sings French Folk Songs*

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## SONGS OF FRANCE BY Sonia Malkine

Americans, it seems to me, have a somewhat limited concept of French folk music. Almost every time I introduce myself with "I am French and a folk singer," someone asks, "Oh, do you know any songs from Auvergne?" Of course, I do! Who doesn't? But I also know many equally beautiful folk songs from the other thirty-five provinces of France.

I suppose the French themselves are partly to blame for the misconceptions regarding their folk music. They have as yet recorded very few of their own songs. Over and over again, opera and concert singers from all different countries have recorded the native music of Auvergne. Ignorant not only of the Auvergne dialect but also of the countryside and people from which these songs spring, they consistently record them with full orchestration and present them as "art" rather than "folk" songs. These recordings give a false impression recordings give a false impression of French folk music while at the same time implying that only in Auvergne can one find folk music worth hearing.

The truth of the matter is that France has no professional folksingers. The folk music revival that has been going full speed in America for the last few years, occurred in France about a century ago. It was Frederic Mistral, the "Prince of Poets" from Provence, who first gave impetus to the resurrection of French folklore and influenced the French provinces to explore their own cultural resources. Since then, folk songs have become a part of everyday life—learned at home, in school, workshops, colleges, and youth organizations. With everybody knowing and singing folk songs, a professional folksinger seems unthinkable.

It is important to clarify, therefore, to the American interested in French folk music, some of its many sources and styles. France is a little country with a beauty, climate, rich soil, and culture that have always been a temptation to invaders and a haven for refugees. Throughout its long history, its Gallic folk music has been influenced by Roman Legion marching songs, Latin poetry, songs of love and war from the Normans of the North, the Huns of the East, the Moors of the South, and the terrible war chants of the dreaded Franks. Most French folk songs can be found in several different versions, depending on geographical region. For instance, a story that has a dramatic ending in the North may be an amusing tale in the South, have a spiritual aspect when found in Brittany, or a mischievous twist in Burgundy. It is by the characteristics of its music, so

peculiar to each province, that the origin of a specific version can be ascertained.

It was in the fifth century A.D., that the Celts, fleeing Saxon persecution in Britain, settled in the western part of Gaul, and named it Little Brittany. Here, the Druids—so Christian in morals and philosophy—left deep traces on Briton culture. A mystical people, their poetry is noted for its imaginative creativity:

Mouchoir en toile de Hollande  
Brode avec du fil d'argent,  
Avec des fleurs dans le milieu;  
Ce sont des fleurs de cimetiére.

I gave my beloved a linen kerchief  
from Holland,  
Embroidered with silver thread,  
In the middle are flowers,  
Flowers of cemetery.

Their dances are noble and elegant, their music filled with an infinite melancholy reflecting the foggy moors and the grand and terrible jagged coasts of their terrain. The Briton is fiercely attached to his traditions, costumes, and language (Gaelic), and his music is exceptional in its purity and beauty. His traditional instruments are the bombarde and binlou, types of bagpipes with only one drone.

Auvergne is an astonishing mixture of dead volcanoes, huge forests, and swift rivers; a province of "fire and water and a people with a soul of lava." Auvergnats sing a variety of shepherd's songs called bayleros, and dance the bourree, the oldest dance in France, accompanied by the vielle (hurdy-gurdy) and the musette, another type of bagpipe.

Provence, whose coast is known as the Riviera, was first influenced by the Greeks, later by the Romans and Moors. It very early developed a refined civilization boasting troubadours and "courts of love." Like its people, its music is vivacious and sensual, passionate and witty. Its most popular dance is the farandole, a long and lively chain dance. A tambourinaire plays the accompaniment on a galoubet, a shrill little flute, with his left hand, while keeping the beat on a round drum hanging from his shoulder with his right.

In Roussillon and Bearn, along the Pyrenees and Spanish border, the dialects are directly influenced by Catalonia and Basque, respectively. Both provinces have traditions rich in poetry, art, and literature, and their folk songs are longer and show more literary polish. Melodies are expressive, meant to be thrown full-voiced from one mountain to another with long echoes from the deep valleys between. Here, in a Basque folk serenade, a night male answers a lover:

Egarr' izanagatik ezta mirakudlu,  
Igaran egunian berochko egin du;  
Uthurri hounik, heben, batere  
eztuzu:  
Zuk galhatzen duzuna, goure behar

dugu.

It is not surprising that you are  
thirsty,  
For the lover, the day is long and  
hot;  
But cool water we keep for  
ourselves:

There are no fountains to quench  
your thirst for love.

North of the Pyrenees stands Gascony, a large province consisting of several small ones. The great contrasts found in its countryside are reflected in its songs, which are severe and grandiose in the mountains, gay and vivacious in the wine country, song-dance.

In the Limousin, the troubadours had a profound influence on popular taste, and here the songs are more artistic, more carefully composed. Perigord has many beautiful harvest songs to accompany the swinging of the scythe in the wheat fields. Short and powerful, poetic and slow, these have curious archaic tunes in ancient modes. The Bourbonnais was the cradle of the royal family of Bourdon, and still has many Huguenot songs. Along the Bay of Biscay, Aunis and Saintonge have songs dealing with water—these are generally sweet, tender, and lovely. Through their port of La Rochelle, many of these songs have been exported to America ("A la claire fontaine," "Mon pere a boulu m'embarquer"). "pitou boasts some of the best dancers in France. There, wedding processions are preceded by one or several musicians playing the clarinette. It was this custom, transplanted to Mexico during the reign of Maximilian, that formed the basis for the famous Mexican Mariachis (marriage). Vendee, though tiny, was noted during the French Revolution for its fierce loyalty to the king, and still has many songs about this era. Berry, with its open plains, has interesting ploughmen's songs. Which song the ploughman chooses to sing depends on the length of his furrow. For example, a farmer with a small field and one horse would not sing the grand briolage, which is meant for a team of six, eight, or ten oxen. Once considered magic incantations with powers to help the animal in its work, some songs consist only of a few notes on which the ploughman improvises.

Burgundy songs, like its wines, have an inimitable bouquet. Their poetry is rough, sometimes burlesque, and their music is strong and lively. Savoie has the loftiest peaks in Europe and its songs are as contemplative and calm as the eternal snows—lyrical, naive, and pure as the clear mountain air. Dauphine, also in the Alps, combines the seriousness of the North with the friendliness of the South, and its songs strongly emphasize melody.

Along the Loire River are Touraine and Anjou, with their magnificent chateaux built by ancient kings. They have many things in common: a past of royal splendor; light, delicious wines (often praised by Rabelais); and songs of clarity and elegant simplicity. Normandy, with its Viking heritage of

courage at sea fused with an earthy Gallic wisdom, has produced music with a great deal of spirit, rhythm, and lively charm. Though the provinces of the North have been invaded too often to make conservation of their traditions possible, Flanders has kept many of its original songs. The Flemish have a sense of association born of common struggle, collective entertainment, and such popular fiestas as the Corteges des Geants (The Giants' Parade). Flanders has many work songs and its music is often heroic in character. Its complex are of bell-ringing is well-known the world over.

Champagne is the province of the story teller par excellence and has many drinking songs, which, like its many drinking songs, which, like its

wine, are clear, light, and bubbly, and chase away the papillons noirs (the blues). These songs have greatly influenced the music of Lorraine, its hard-working industrial neighbor, a province that has often been tormented by wars and ambitions. Alasce, though tragically situated on the Routes des Barbares, has combined the best of the Germanic and Gallic influences and come up with songs touchingly naive, set to simple Germanic waltz tempos, and accompanied by the hand-clapping and foot-stomping of Switzerland and the Tyrol. The Ile-de-France, with Paris as its center, has created all the best-Clair de la Lune," "Il etait une bergere"). More sophisticated and literary than most French folk songs, the music

of the Ile-de-France mainly reflects the Parisian people - witty, spirited, lightly sentimental, and gracious.

But it is through the tunes and ballads of Paris itself that one sees clearly the history and spirit of the French people. These songs show how, through 2000 years of turbulent history, a deeply-rooted sense of humor can save a population from moral disaster; how ridicule has crushed many an enemy, and how--though torn apart by constant revolutions--a brave people can fight for its freedom to the end, though left with no other weapons than the cobblestones of its streets--and its songs.

En passant par la Lorraine (Lorraine)

A very popular song in France, about the wonderful, mythical time of "long, long ago, when kings married shepherdesses..."

En passant par la Lorraine  
Avec mes sabots,  
En passant par la Lorraine  
Avec mes sabots,  
J'ai rencontré trois capitaines  
Avec mes sabots dondaine, oh, oh, oh,  
Avec mes sabots.

Ils m'ont appelée "vilaine"\* )  
Avec mes sabots, ) bis.  
Je ne suis pas si vilaine  
Avec mes ...

Puisque le fils du Roi m'aime,  
Avec mes sabots,  
Il m'a donné pour étrennes  
....

Un bouquet de marjolaine  
Avec mes sabots,  
Je l'ai planté dans la plaine  
....

S'il fleurit je serai Reine  
Avec mes sabots  
Mais s'il meurt je perds ma peine  
....

Passing through Lorraine

Passing through Lorraine )  
In my wooden shoes ) bis.  
I chanced to meet three captains  
In my wooden shoes, dondaine, oh, oh, oh,  
In my wooden shoes.

They called me "vilaine"\*  
In my wooden shoes  
But I am not so ugly,  
....

For the king's son himself loves me  
In my ....  
And he gave me as a present  
....

A bouquet of marjoram  
In my ....  
I have planted it in the meadow  
....

If it blooms I shall be queen  
In my ....  
But if it dies I loose my chance,  
....

\*vilaine, here in the old sense, meaning  
"peasant" and/or ugly.

Dedans Marseille vient d'arriver (Savoie)

One of many versions of a very popular theme: the rapt of a maid by the handsome mariner. In the Briton version, the girl drowns herself rather than be dishonored. This version ends on a lighter vein.

Dedans Marseille vient d'arriver )  
Trois batiments chargés de blé. ) bis.  
Trois demoiselles s'y promenant,  
C'est pour savoir le prix du froment.  
Ah! Ah! Ah! J'donn'rais bien cent sous  
Belle pour passer la mer avec vous.

"Marinier, mon beau marinier, )  
Combien vendez-vous votre blé? ) bis.  
-Mesdemoiselles, entrez dedans,  
Vous y verrez le prix du froment!  
Ah! Ah! Ah! ....

La plus jeune a le pied léger )  
Dedans la barque elle a sauté. ) bis.  
Elle n'était pas plutôt dedans  
Que l'marinier mit la voile au vent.  
....

"Marinier, mon beau marinier )  
Je ne suis que la fille d'un fermier! ) bis.  
-Quand ce serait la fille d'un roi  
Je ne l'aimerais pas mieux que toi.  
....

In Marseilles it just came

In Marseilles harbor just came in )  
Three ships loaded with wheat. ) bis.  
Three pretty maiden came to look at them  
And to ask the prize of the wheat.  
Ah! Ah! Ah! I would give 100 sous\*\*  
Pretty maid to cross the sea with you!

"Mariner, Handsome mariner, )  
Please tell us the prize of your wheat.) bis.  
-Pretty maiden come in my boat  
And I will tell you all about it!"  
Ah! Ah! Ah! ...

The youngest girl is light-footed )  
And in the ship she jumped. ) bis.  
But as soon as she was inside,  
The mariner sailed away!  
....

"Mariner, Handsome mariner, )  
I am only the daughter of a farmer!" ) bis.  
-Even if the king's daughter came along  
I wouldn't love her as much as I love you.

\*\*100 sous is worth five francs (now about  
a dollar).

Mon père avait 500 moutons (Poitou)

Mon père avait 500 moutons (bis)  
Et j'en suis la bergère,  
Lonlère, lonlère, lonlère et lonla  
Et j'en suis la bergère.

La première fois que j'les ai gardés (bis)  
Le loup m'en mangea quinze  
Lonlère ...

Le fils du roi vint à passer (bis)  
Me rendit la quinzaine  
....

Quand je tondrai mes blancs moutons (bis)  
Vous aurez de la laine,  
....

Mais de la laine je n'en veux pas (bis)  
Je veux ton coeur bergère,  
....

Mon coeur je gage vous n'aurez pas (bis)  
Je l'ai promis à Pierre,  
....

My father had 500 sheep

My father had 500 sheep (bis)  
And I am the shepherdess  
Lonlere, lonlere, lonlere and lonla  
And I am the shepherdess.

The very first time I went out to keep  
them (bis)  
The wolf ate 15 of them.  
....

The king's son came riding by (bis)  
And gave me back 15 sheep.

"When I'll shear my white lambs (bis)  
I'll give you a bag of wool.

But I do not want wool, (bis)  
I want your heart, shepherdess.

"My heart, I guess, you will not have (bis)  
I already promised it to Pierre!

Les noisettes (Bourgogne)

The tune of this song was taken from a  
XVII century "carillon" or bell-ringing  
tune in four parts, from Beaune.

Lorsque j'avais des noisettes )  
Les amants venaient chez nous. ) bis.  
Maintenant qu'il n'y en a plus  
Des noisettes, des noisettes,  
Maintenant qu'il n'y en a plus  
Les amants ne viennent plus.

Dedans le lit que je couche )  
On dit qu'il n'y a pas de draps! ) bis.  
Moi je dis qu'il y en a,  
Des couvertes, des couvertes,  
Moi je dis qu'il y en a  
Des couvertes et des draps!

J'ai trempé la soupe au jeune, )  
J'ai laissé la soupe au vieux. ) bis.  
Car pour moi, j'aime mieux  
Un jeune amoureux ma mere.  
Car pour moi j'aime mieux  
Un jeune amoureux qu'un vieux!

The hazelnuts

When I had hazelnuts in my house )  
Beaux would come a-courting me. ) Bis  
But now there are no more nuts  
They stopped coming.

In the bed I sleep in, they say, )  
There is not even sheets. ) Bis  
But I say I do have covers,  
Blankets and sheets.

I served the soup to the young man )  
I left the soup for the old man, ) Bis  
Because you see I prefer  
A nice young lover, my mother,  
Because you see I prefer,  
A young lover than an old one anytime!

Prends ton fusil Grégoire (Paul Feval)  
(Vendée)

This song is not really a folksong as we know  
his author, Paul Feval, who wrote it in 1853,  
about 60 years after the French Revolution.  
But it was typical of the Vendéen spirit, was  
used so many times and became so famous  
that by the turn of the century, everyone,  
including the people from Vendée would have  
sworn it was a real "royalist song of the  
period". Monsieur de Charette was a royalist  
leader from Vendee who lead his troupes of  
guerrillas (consisting mainly of peasants)  
against the Republican armies during the  
French Revolution until Napoleon's Consulat.  
He was finally caught and shot in 1796. I am  
sure, he would have loved this song!

Monsieur de Charette a dit à ceux d'Ancenis:  
(bis)  
Mes amis  
Le Roi va ramener les fleurs de lys.

CHORUS:  
Prends ton fusil Grégoire,  
Prends ta gourde pour boire  
Prends ta Vierge d'ivoire,  
Nos messieurs sont partis  
Pour chasser la perdrix.

dernier refrain:  
Battre nos enemis.

Monsieur de Charette a dit aux du Louroux:  
(bis)  
Mes bijoux  
Pour mieux tirer mettez-vous à genoux.

Monsieur de Charette a dit à ceux de  
Montfort: (bis)  
Frappez-fort,  
Le Drapeau blanc defend contre la mort.

Monsieur de Charette a dit à ceux de  
Clisson: (bis)

Le canon  
Fait mieux danser que ne fait le violon.

Monsieur de Charette a dit à ceux de  
Conflans: (bis)

En avant!  
Ralliez-vous à mon panache blanc.

Take your gun, Grégoire.

Monsieur de Charette told the men from  
Ancenis: (bis)

My friends  
The King is going to bring back the  
"fleurs de lys". \*

CHORUS:

Take your gun, Grégoire,  
Take your gourd to drink  
Take your Virgin of ivory  
Our gentlemen are gone  
To hunt partridges.

last chorus:  
To beat our enemies.

Mr. de Charette told the men from  
Louroux: (bis)

My jewels  
To shoot better, get on your knees!

Mr. de Charette told the men from  
Montfort: (bis)

Hit hard!  
The White Flag\*\* will keep you against  
death.

Mr. de Charette told the men from  
Clisson: (bis)

The canon  
Will make your enemies dance better than  
the violin would.

Mr. de Charette told the men from  
Conflans: (bis)

Foreward!  
Rally at the sight of my white plume!\*\*\*

\* The fleur de Lys was the emblem of  
French kings.

\*\* The white flag with Gold fleurs de lys  
was the Royal French flag.

\*\*\* Famous quotation from king Henry IV  
at the battle of Ivry in 1590.

Voici la Saint-Jean

There is still in France an very ancient cus-  
tom, of pagan origin, of building fires on  
the eve of St. John Day, which is the  
solstice of summer. In some parts of the  
country, the young people dance a ring  
around the fire; in others, the newly en-  
gaged young couples who are to be married  
within the year, have to jump over the fire  
holding each other's hand, a very symbolic  
gesture! If they let go of their hands, it  
is a bad omen for the marriage. If they  
fall in the fire, it is a disaster! This song  
is traditional and has many versions.

Voici la Saint-Jean, la longue journée, (bis)  
Où les amoureux vont à l'assemblée,  
Marchons, joli coeur, la lune est levée.

Le mien n'y est pas, j'en suis assurée (bis)  
Il est à Paris chercher ma livrée.

Marchons . . . .

Qu'apportera-t-il à sa bien-aimée? (bis)  
Il m'apportera ceinture dorée.

Alliance d'or et sa foi jurée (bis)  
Et puis le bouquet de la fiancée.

Here is Saint-John Day

Here is Saint-John Day, the longest day of the  
year

When all the lovers go to the assembly.  
Let us go, sweetheart, the moon is rising.

My lover wont be there, I am very sure,  
He went to Paris to buy my wedding  
presents.

Let us go . . .

What will he bring back to his fiancée?  
He will bring me back a gilded belt.

Also the gold wedding ring and his sworn  
faith,  
And the bouquet for the bride.

Trois Jeunes tambours. (Artois)

One of many favorite children songs. This  
one is often and very easily made into a  
lovely little song-play.

Trois jeunes tambours/s'en revenaient de  
guerre (bis)

Et ri et ran, ranpataplan  
S'en revenaient de guerre.

Le plus jeune des trois/avait une rose  
blanche (bis)

Et ri et ran . . .

La fille du roi/était à sa fenêtre.

"Joli tambour, /donnes-moi donc ta rose".

Si je vous la donne, /vous deviendrez ma mie.

"Joli tambour/demandes donc à mon père.

Sire le Roi, /donnez-moi votre fille.

"Joli tambour, /tu n'es pas assez riche.

J'ai trois vaisseaux/dessus la mer jolie.

L'un rempli d'or/l'autre de pierreries,

Et le troisième/pour promener ma mie."

"Joli tambour, /je te donne ma fille.

Sire le roi, /je vous en remercie,

Mais dans mon pays, /y en a de plus jolies"!

Three young drummers

Three young drummers/were coming back  
from war

And ri, and ran ranpataplan,  
Were coming back from war.

The youngest one/had a white rose.

The king's daughter/was at her window.

"Pretty drummer/please give me your rose.

If I give it to you/you will become my sweetheart.

"Pretty drummer, go and ask my father.

Sire, please/give me your daughter.

"Pretty drummer/you are not rich enough.

I own three ships/on the deep blue sea:

One full of gold, the other full of gems,

And the third one/to take my sweetheart along.

"Pretty drummer/Then I give you my daughter.

Thank you sire/ I thank you.

But in my country/girls are much prettier!"

#### Allez-Allez (Normandie)

This strange song is an authentic "witches' chant", to get rid of rats, snakes or what-have-you. The local witches were sometimes very useful. They could even get the milk of the neighbor's cow to come into yours! Monsieur le Prevot was one of the favorite target of the people as he was the king's tax collector, usually wealthy and hated. (You may try this song on your tax collector... and see what happens!)

Noires vipères, vilaines bêtes,  
Allez, allez,  
Noires vipères, hideuses bêtes  
Allez vous-en!

Sous terre en zigzagant,  
Allez, allez  
Sous terre en zigzagant  
Allez-vous en!

Langues avant dans vos trous  
Allez, allez  
Langues avant dans vos trous  
Allez vous-en!

Rats, taupes et mulots  
Allez, allez,  
Rats, taupes et mulots  
Allez vous-en!

Chez Monsieur le Prévot,  
Allez, allez!  
Chez Monsieur le Prévot  
Allez vous-en!

Qu'est bien plus riche que nous,  
Allez, allez,  
Qu'est bien plus riche que nous  
Allez vous en!...

#### Go away, go away

Black vipers, ugly beasts,  
Go away, go away,  
Black vipers, hideous beasts  
Go away from here.

Under ground in zigzag  
Go away ...

With your tongue striking out  
Go away ....

Rats, moles and muscrats  
Go away ....

Go to Monsieur le Prévot's house,  
Go away ....

He is much richer than we are,  
Go away ....

#### Bayléro (le Baylère) (Auvergne)

A very beautiful Shepherd dialogue from the mountains of Auvergne. I learned it from my concierge, in Paris, who use to sing those beautiful songs from her native Auvergne at 6 AM, while washing the stairs or cleaning the back yard. She was enormous with a beautiful moustache and when I asked her to teach me her songs, she was so happy, she embraced me (almost smothering me in her large bosom in the process!) and she never read my mail again!

Pastré, dè dèlay l'ayo  
As gayré dé boun tems,  
Dio, lou bayléro, lèro  
Lèro, lèro, lèro, lèro, bayléro lo?  
E n'ay pas gayré, e dio, tu,  
Bayléro, lèro,  
Lèro, lèro, lèro, lèro, Bayléro lo?

Pastré, lou prat fay flour,  
L'y cal gorda toun troupe,  
Dio, lou bayléro, lèro,  
Lèro, lèro, lèro, lèro, Bayléro, lo?  
L'herb 'es pu fino'l prat d'oyci,  
Bayléro, lèro!  
Lèro, lèro, lèro, lèro, bayléro lo!

Pastré, couçi foray?  
En obal y o lou bel riou!  
Dio, lou bayléro, lèro  
Lèro, lèro, lèro, lèro, bayléro lo!  
Espèro-mé, té bau cerca,  
Bayléro, lèro!  
Lèro, lèro, lèro lèro, bayléro lo!

#### The Bayléro

Shepherd, far over the water,  
You haven't much of a good time,  
Say, the bayléro, lero,  
Lero, lero, lero, lero, bayléro lo?  
- No, I haven't, say, what about you?  
Bayléro, lero,  
Lero, lero, lero, lero, bayléro lo?

Shepherd, The meadow is covered with flowers  
Come here to keep your sheep,  
Say, the bayléro, lero  
Lero, lero, lero, lero, bayléro lo!  
- The grass is finer in this pasture,  
Bayléro, lero,  
Lero, lero, lero, lero, Bayléro lo!

Shepherd, how to pass?  
Down below there is the river?  
Say, lou bayléro, lero  
Lero, lero, lero, lero, bayléro lo?  
- Wait for me; I am coming to get you!  
Bayléro, lero,  
Lero, lero, lero, lero, bayléro lo!

#### Passant par Paris

(Ile-de-France)

Passant par Paris

Vidant la bouteille  
Un de mes amis  
Me dit à l'oreille

#### CHORUS:

Bon, bon, bon,  
Le bon vin m'endort  
L'amour me réveille  
Le bon vin m'endort  
L'amour me réveille encore

Jean prends garde à toi  
On courtise ta belle.  
- Courtise qui voudra  
Je me fie à elle.

J'ai eu de son coeur  
La fleur la plus belle,  
Dans un beau lit blanc  
Gréé de dentelle

J'ai eu trois garçons  
Tous trois capitaines  
L'un est à Bordeaux,  
L'autre à La Rochelle.

Le plus jeune à Paris  
Courtisant les belles,  
Et le père est ici  
Tirant la ficelle.

#### Passing Through Paris

Passing through Paris,  
Emptying the bottle  
One of my friends  
Whispered in my ear.

#### CHORUS:

Bon, bon, bon,  
Good wine makes me sleepy,  
Love wakes me up,  
Good wine makes me sleepy,  
Love wakes me up again.

John, be careful  
Someone is courting your girl.  
- Court who may  
I have faith in her.

I had of her heart  
The most precious flower  
In a big white bed  
Rigged\* with lace.

I had, of her, three sons,  
All three are sea-captains,  
One is in Bordeaux,  
The other in La Rochelle,

The youngest in Paris  
A-courting girls  
And the father is right here,  
Having a hard time!

\*It is obviously a sailor talking!

#### Les trois fendeurs (Franche-Comté)

The lyrics of this beautiful ballad were written by the famous XIX Century author George Sand in one of her novels. But the tune is traditional of Franche-Comte. G. Sand had collected a great deal of folk music herself.

Trois fendeurs y avait  
Au printemps sur l'herbette,  
J'entends le rossignolet,

Trois fendeurs y avait  
Parlant à la fillette.

Le plus vieux s'écriait,  
Celui qui tient la fende,  
J'entends le rossignolet,  
Le plus vieux s'écriait:  
"Quand j'aime je commande!"

Le plus jeune chantait,  
Celui qui tient la rose,  
J'entends le rossignolet,  
Le plus jeune chantait:  
"Moi j'aime... mais je n'ose!"

Le troisième disait,  
Qui tient la fleur d'amande,  
J'entends le rossignolet,  
Le troisième disait:  
"Moi j'aime et je demande!"

"Mon maître ne serez,  
Vous qui portez la rose,  
J'entends le rossignolet,  
Mon maître ne serez,  
Amour ne se commande."

Mon ami ne serez,  
Vous qui portez la rose,  
J'entends le rossignolet,  
Mon ami ne serez,  
Si vous n'osez... je n'ose."

Mon amant vous serez,  
Vous qui portez l'amande,  
J'entends le rossignolet,  
Mon amant vous serez:  
On donne à qui demande!"

#### The three wood-cutters

Three wood-cutters there were  
In the spring on the grass,  
I hear the nightingale sing,  
Three wood-cutters there were  
Talking to a young maid.

The oldest one shouted,  
The one who carried the cleaver,  
I hear the nightingale sing,  
The oldest one shouted:  
"When I love, I command!"

The youngest one sang,  
The one who held the rose,  
I hear the nightingale sing,  
The youngest one sang:  
"I do love... but I don't dare!"

The third one said,  
The one with the almond blossom,  
I hear the nightingale sing,  
The third one said:  
"I love... and I ask!"

"My master you shall not be,  
The one with the cleaver,  
I hear the nightingale sing,  
My master you shall not be,  
One cannot command to love!"

My friend you shall not be  
The one with the rose,  
I hear the nightingale sing,  
My friend you shall not be:  
If you don't dare... neither do I!"

My lover you will be,

You with the almond blossom,  
I hear the nightingale sing,  
My lover you will be:  
One gives to the one who asks!"

#### Le jeune grenouille (Orléanais)

This charming nonsense little song could be called "Froggy went-a-courting French style"! I learned it in Provence, (where I spent much of my childhood), in a summer camp. In my innocence, it took me quite a while to realize that perhaps there was some other reasons to build the Eiffel Tower!

Jadis vivait au fond d'un marécage,  
Laitou, laitou, laitou, la la  
Une jeune grenouille aussi belle que sage  
Laitou, la la, Laitou la la (bis)

Un jeune crapaud à peu près de son âge,  
Laitou ...  
S'en vint un jour lui parler mariage  
Laitou, la, la ...

"Moi je veux bien, lui dit-elle avec âme,  
Laitou, ...  
Mais mon tuteur veut de moi faire sa femme,  
Laitou ...

"Ça ne fait rien, ce soir je vous enlève,  
Laitou, ...  
Nous irons loin vivre notre beau rêve"  
Laitou ...

Mais le tuteur, Vieux lézard à l'oeil louche  
Laitou ...  
Lui dit va-t-en, morveux où je te mouche.  
Laitou ...

Le jeune crapaud, à cette insulte mortelle,  
Laitou ...  
Tire son sabre et lui brûle la cervelle,  
Laitou ...

Mais poursuivi, partout par la justice,  
Laitou ...  
Il s'asphyxie au fond d'un précipice  
Laitou ...

La jeune grenouille ainsi abandonnée,  
Laitou ...  
Alla se noyer auprès de la cheminée,  
Laitou ...

C'est en mémoire de cette histoire cruelle  
Laitou ...  
Que l'on a fait construire la Tour Eiffel,  
Laitou ...

#### The Frog

Once upon a time there lived in the bottom of  
a swamp  
Laitou, laitou, laitou, la la  
A little frog as pretty as she was modest  
Laitou, la la, laitou la la (bis)

A young toad just about her age  
Laitou ...  
Came courting her one day  
Laitou ...

I'd love to marry you, she said, sincerely,  
Laitou ...  
But my guardian wants to marry me himself!  
Laitou ...

No matter, said the toad, tonight we will elope

Laitou ...  
And we will go far away to live our beautiful  
dream!

Laitou ...

But the guardian, an old squinting lizard,  
Laitou ...  
Came in and said to him: "Get out; you drip,  
or I'll wipe your nose!"  
Laitou ...

The young toad, at this mortal insult,  
Laitou ...  
Pulled out his saber and shot him through the  
head!  
Laitou ...

But pursued relentlessly by the police,  
Laitou ...  
He finally died asphyxiated in a ditch!  
Laitou ...

The poor little frog thus completely abandoned  
Laitou ...  
Went to drown herself in the back of the fire-  
place,  
Laitou ...

And it is in memory of this sad and cruel story  
Laitou ...  
That we have built the Eiffel Tower!  
Laitou ...

#### La jambe me fait mal (Provence)

An unusual Christmas carol. I learned it in  
school, in Provence. I could never sing this  
song again without automatically reversing to  
the French southern accent I picked up as a  
child in sunny St. Tropez!

Beaucoup de gens vont en pèlerinage,  
Beaucoup de gens s'en vont à Bethléem.  
Je veux y aller, j'ai assez de courage,  
Je veux y aller, si je peux bien marcher.

Refrain:  
La jambe me fait mal,  
Boute selle, boute selle,  
La jambe me fait mal,  
Boute selle à mon cheval. (1)

Tous les bergers étant sur la montagne,  
Tous les bergers ont vu un messager,  
Qui leur a dit: "Mettez-vous en campagne"  
Qui leur a dit: "Noël est arrivé!"

(Refrain)

Un gros berger qui fait seul le voyage,  
Un gros berger s'en va à petits pas,  
S'est retourné au bruit de mes paroles,  
S'est retourné, lui ai dit d'm'espérer. (2)

(Refrain)

J'ai un roussin (3) qui vole sur la terre,  
J'ai un roussin qui mange le chemin.  
L'ai acheté, d'un ancien de la guerre,  
L'ai acheté, le payant cinq écus.

(Refrain)

- (1) Boute selle: Bouter (placer) la selle sur le cheval.
- (2) Espérer: Mis pour attendre.
- (3) Roussin: Cheval de forte taille qu'on montait surtout à la guerre.



Le roi a fait battre tambour (Saintonge)

As you will notice, the unfortunate little  
marquise never had a chance to say anything!  
It looks like the story of Gabrielle d'Estrée,  
favorite of Henry the IVth, who died mysterious-  
ly, supposedly poisoned by the queen, Marie de  
Medicis. But this is only my own hypothesis, I  
don't really know the real origin of this sad and  
beautiful ballad.

Le roi a fait battre tambour (bis)  
Pour voir toutes ses dames  
Et la première qu'il a vue  
Lui a ravi son âme.

"Marquis, dis-moi, la connais-tu (bis)  
Qui est cette jolie dame?  
Et le marquis a répondu:  
"Sire roi, c'est ma femme."

"Marquis tu es plus heureux que moi, (bis)  
D'avoir femme si belle.  
Si tu voulais me la laisser  
Je me chargerais d'elle.

"Sire, si vous n'étiez pas le roi, (bis)  
J'en tirerais vengeance,  
Mais puisque vous êtes le roi  
A votre obéissance."

"Marquis ne te fâches-donc pas (bis)  
Tu auras ta récompense.  
Je te ferai dans mes armées  
Beau Marechal de France

Adieu ma mie, adieu mon coeur (bis)  
Adieu mon espérance!  
Puisqu'il nous faut servir le roi  
Séparons-nous d'ensemble.

La reine a fait faire un bouquet (bis)  
De belles fleurs de lyse,  
Et la senteur de ce bouquet  
A fait mourir marquise.

The King called his drummers

The drums are rolling in the palace (bis)  
For the king went to see all the ladies there,  
And the very first one that he saw  
Stole his heart away.

"Marquis, tell me, do you know her (bis)  
Who is this pretty lady?  
And the marquis answered:  
"Sire, it is my wife ."

"Marquis, you are an happier man than I (bis)  
To have such a beautiful wife.  
If you gave her to me  
I would take good care of her.

"Sire, if you were not the king, (bis)  
I would take revenge on you,  
But as you are the king,  
You will be obeyed,

Marquis do not be angry, (bis)  
For you will be rewarded,  
I will make you in my armies  
A Marechal of France.

"Farewell my sweetheart, farewell my love,  
(bis)  
Farewell my only hope,  
As we have to obey the king,  
Let us part from each other.

The queen has ordered a bouquet to be made  
(bis)

Of beautiful, white lilies,  
But the scent of the bouquet  
Has killed the pretty marquise.

Les Trois marins de Groix (Bretagne)

Groix is a little island on the coast of Brit-  
tany... My mother use to sing this song  
(and still does) and I have known it as long  
as I can remember! It is a sea-shanty  
from some of my Breton ancestors! There  
are other versions of this song but this one  
will always be my favorite.

Nous étions deux, nous étions trois, (bis)  
Nous étions trois marins de Groix,  
Montra deri tra la, lala,  
Montra deri tra lalère.

Embarqués sur le Saint-François (bis)  
Gagnant quarante-cinq francs par mois,  
Montra ...

Le vent du Nord vint à souffler (bis)  
Le capitaine donne un coup de sifflet.

"Pare à serrer les perroquets (bis)  
Faut prendre un ris dans les huniers.

Le marche-pied vint à casser (bis)  
Le matelot tomba dans l'eau.

On n'a retrouver que son chapeau (bis)  
Son porte-pipe et son couteau.

Et son sabot flottant sur l'eau (bis)  
Plaignez le pauvre matelot.

Three sailors from Groix

We were two, we were three (bis)  
We were three sailors from Groix,  
Montra deri tra la lala,  
Montra deri tra lalere.

Enlisted on the Saint-Francois (bis)  
Earning forty-five francs a month.

The north wind blew in a storm (bis)  
The captain blew his whistle.

"Tie up the top-gallant sail, (bis)  
Take in a reef in the main sail!"

One of the ropes happened to break (bis)  
One of the sailors fell in the water.

All we found was his hat (bis)  
His pipe-holder and his knife.

And one of his wooden-shoes floating on the  
sea (bis)  
Pity the unfortunate sailor!

Mon père m'a donné un mari (Touraine)

This bitter-gay little song sounds very much  
like a song written by a girl to avenge her-  
self of a poor match!

Mon père m'a donné un mari,  
Mon dieu quel homme, quel petit homme,  
Mon père m'a donné un mari  
Mon dieu quel homme, qu'il est petit!

Il ne me venait qu'au nombri,  
 Mon dieu ...

Je le perdis au fond du lit.

Le cherchai avec une bougie.

Dans la paillasse le feu a pris.

Je l'ai retrouvé tout roti.

Dans une assiette je le mis.

Le chat l'a pris pour une souris

Au chat! Achat, C'est mon mari!

Ah! S'il pouvait tomber dans le puits!

Garni ...

Aux quatre coins du lit, (bis)  
 Des bouquets de pervenches, lonla,  
 Des ...

Dans le mitan du lit (bis)  
 La rivière est profonde, lonla,  
 La ...

Tous les chevaux du roi (bis)  
 Pourraient y boire ensemble, lonla  
 Pourraient ...

Et là, nous dormirions, (bis)  
 Jusqu'à la fin du monde, lonla,  
 Jusqu'à ...

On the Palace's Steps.

On the palace's steps (bis)  
 There is a beautiful maiden, lonla  
 There is a beautiful maiden.

My father gave me a husband

My father gave me a husband,  
 Lord, what a man, what a little man!  
 My father gave me a husband  
 Lord what a man, how small he is!

She has so many suitors (bis)  
 She doesn't know which one to choose, lonla,  
 She ...

He only came up to my navel,  
 Lord ...

It is a little shoemaker (bis)  
 Who finally had her preference, lonla,  
 Who ...

It is while fitting her shoes on (bis)  
 That he proposed to her, lonla  
 That ...

"Beautiful maid, if you wanted to (bis)  
 We would make love together, lonla  
 We ...

"In a big four-poster bed (bis)  
 Adored  
 Adorned with white pillows, lonla  
 Adorned ...

"At the four corners of the bed (bis)  
 There would be bouquets of perriwinkle, lonla  
 There ...

"And the middle of the bed (bis)  
 The river is deep,  
 The river is deep, lonla  
 The ...

"All the king's horses (bis)  
 Could drink there together, lonla  
 Could ...

"And there we would sleep (bis)  
 Until the end of the world!

I lost him in our bed.

I looked for him with a candle.

But the mattress caught fire!

When I found him he was roasted!

I put him on a plate.

The cat mistook him for a mouse.

Stop the cat! stop the cat! It's my husband!

If he could only fall in the well!

Sur les marches du palais

One of the most lyric of all the French love ballads. There are many version of it, all over the country. This one is certainly one of the most melodious! I can't help wondering what happened to these beautiful, old-fashion proposals!

Sur les marches du palais, (bis)  
 Y a une tant belle fille, lonla,  
 Y a une tant belle fille.

Elle a tant d'amoureux, (bis)  
 Qu'elle ne sait lequel prendre, lonla  
 Qu'elle ne ....

C'est un petit cordonnier, (bis)  
 Qui a eu sa préférence, lonla,  
 ....

Et c'est en la-chaussant, (bis)  
 Qu'il lui fit sa demande, lonla,  
 ....

"La belle, si tu voulais (bis)  
 Nous ferions l'amour ensemble, lonla,  
 Nous ...

Dans un Grand lit carré, (bis)  
 Garni de taies blanches, lonla

I was born in Paris from Breton-Normand ancestry and I grew up in Provence where my step-father was a fisherman. Back in Paris, my formal schooling was ended when the Germans invaded France and still in my teens I worked for the French underground for two years, traveling all over the country. My mother had a beautiful voice and from her I learned many of her native Briton songs, many other songs I learned in the Youth Hostels as a youngster; others with the French folklorist Paul Arma, singing in his chorus for a year, but mainly traveling extensively through France and collecting folk songs wherever I went. After the war I married a well-known French artist, George Malkine; we came to this country with two children, added two more to the family, left New York City and moved to Woodstock, N. Y. where we live now. It was in Woodstock that I met a very important American folklorist, Sam Eskin, who encouraged me greatly to sing professionally, and suggested the lute as my instrument. Since then I have sung my French songs in schools, colleges, benefits, resorts, coffee-houses and radio programs. In 1959 and for 18 months I had my own radio show on WKNY-CBS in Kingston, N. Y. in which I sang, played records and interviewed other folk-singers, among them Sam Eskin, Oscar Brand, Billy Faier and Pete Seeger. This last interview, however, brought about a rather abrupt end to my program.

My only ambition is to bring to the American public a broader broader and better idea of French folk music, singing these songs as honestly and lovingly as I know how!

Sonia Malkine