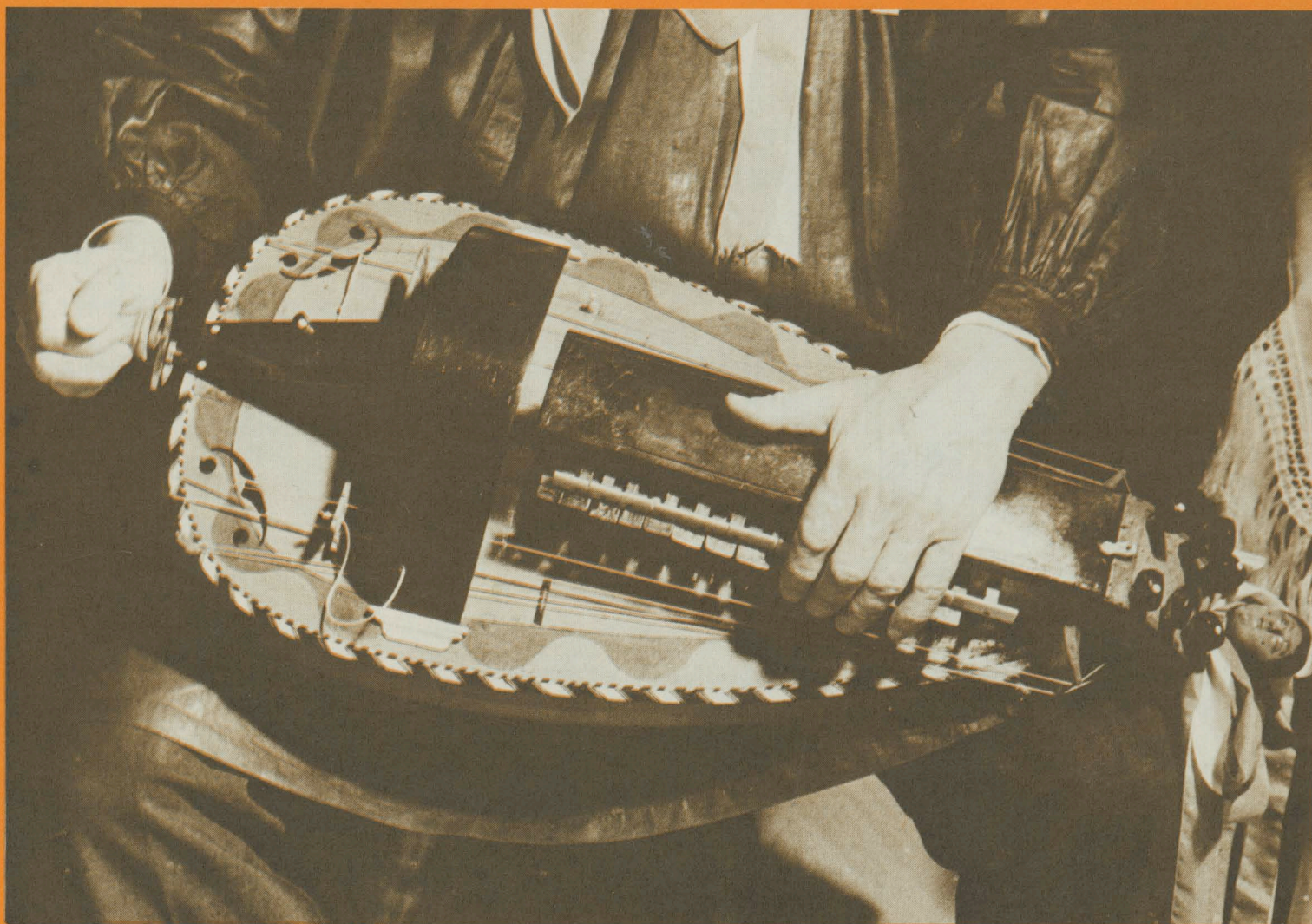


FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8747

# Hurdy Gurdy Music

LE MAÎTRE-SONNEUR HENRI VASSON



M  
1730  
V339  
H962  
1976

MUSIC LP



FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8747



SIDE 1

LA YOYETTE 2'58"  
LA BOUREE DE ROYAT 1'15"  
LA CROUZADE 1'55"  
DE QU'TSA VEGNIA TSARTSA 1'19"  
LA BOUREE DE SAINT FLOUR 1'38"  
LA BOUREE D'AURILLAC 1'11"  
LE ROSSIGNOL 1'16"  
LE TURLUTUTU 1'16"  
LE MERLE 1'30"  
LA GIGUE 1'46"

SIDE 2

BELE ROSE 1'13"  
LA QUADRETTE D' AMBERT 1'36"  
EN PASSANT PAR LE BOIS 2'50"  
LA CAILLE 1'00"  
LA CHAINE D'ORCINE 1'35"  
LA MACHARADE 1'47"  
MAVIROU QUE NA FEINNA 1'16"  
LA TOGNE 1'02"  
LA ROSETTE 1'28"  
LA POLKA PIQUEE 2'07"

HURDY GURDY: Henri VASSON  
ACCORDION: Pierre BUTTNER  
VOICES: Denise VASSON, Georges GUIPANT

RECORDED BY Dominique ALGRET  
PRODUCED AND ANOTED BY Jean Marc BERNARD  
PHOTOGRAPHES BY Giles AGUETTANT

**WARNING:** UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION OF THIS  
RECORDING IS PROHIBITED BY FEDERAL LAW AND SUBJECT TO  
CRIMINAL PROSECUTION.

© 1976 FOLKWAYS RECORDS AND SERVICE CORP.  
43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C., U.S.A. 10023

# Hurdy Gurdy Music

LE MAITRE-SONNEUR  
HENRI VASSON

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

COVER PHOTO BY GILES AGUETTANT

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8747



# HURDY GURDY MUSIC

LE MAITRE - SONNEUR

Henri Vasson

LIBRARY  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA



## INTRODUCTION

When I visited the U.S.A. in the summer 75, I was very pleased to meet people interested in the hurdy gurdy. Although they had no material to learn from, those people tried to learn to pay it and to make it...

This record comes to help them, and also to give a chance to many to hear how a hurdy gurdy sounds. The album is not covering the French folk music, it is just the music of the central part of France, known as the Massif Central, mainly the Auvergne. This region is quite poor and deserted by young people, with hills, mountains and lack of communication means. In many ways, it is like the Appalachian Mountains in the U.S.A. It is one of the few spots in France where the traditional music is not long forgotten. Rare are the people who can sing old songs and play correctly dance tunes, but the few people able to do it continue with faith and gather once a week or more to dance till after 12. In large towns of Auvergne, groups of tradition lovers; in the large cities, exiled auvergnats; they all want to keep the sound of the old days. This movement, along with the "folk revival among city kids" (a New Lost City Ramblers expression) is setting the traditional music alive again. It never really died, but it was treated quite bad for a while, and by 1945, many where the people trying to save it.

Mr. Vasson is one of them. He moved away to the big city, but kept in mind the country life. On this record, he is playing his hurdy-gurdy like he learned to play it as a boy, with

fidelity and faith. He is no more a farmer, he presently works in a big truck factory in Lyon, but his music still gives a feeling of love for old time life.

I asked him to write notes about him, and after having read it and tried to translate it, I find out it was stupid to put it into English: nine tenth of his message would fade away, so I suggest you learn French to read this. It may be worth it!

"La vielle, c'est beaucoup de ma vie! Né à Clermont-ferrand en 1926, il m'a fallu attendre la fin de la guerre, puis la libération pour rentrer au groupe folklorique L'AUVERGNIA DANSÀIRE, groupe de danseurs, danseuses, chanteurs et musiciens, qui a fêté depuis plusieurs années déjà son cinquantenaire. (Pendant toute la durée de la guerre et jusqu'à fin 1945, les Sociétés étaient sans vie. Les hommes étaient à la guerre, ou prisonniers, ou déportés; le peu qui restait n'avait pas envie de danser.)

C'est là que j'ai appris à jouer de la vielle, aidé en cela par les anciens. C'est là que j'ai connu celle qui devait devenir mon épouse. Etant deux à aimer le folklore, nous avons eu des enfants à qui nous avons enseigné et fait découvrir comment il est bon de danser comme au temps de nos grand'mère au son de la vielle.

Que nostre Auvergne est belle - c'est vrai, mais la vielle restera toujours l'instrument par excellence pour danser la bourrée."

Henri Vasson.

## A. PRESENTATION OF THE HURDY-GURDY

The gurdy-gurdy, as it has been built since the XVIIIth century can be considered as a fiddle with a tremendous technical evolution. The principle of the hurdy-gurdy must be understood in order to know how it happened. It will also help you if you want to build and play one.

The main and most interesting element of the hurdy-gurdy is its wheel that allows it to do what a fiddle can't do. The wheel is nothing but a bow, but instead of that upward-downward movement of a bow, the wheel has a continuous circular movement. Fiddlers may say that it limits the possibility and the versatility since the bowing allows many subtleties in the playing.

The wheel is generally of hard wood (mainly boxwood), but for the past 20 years, a few hurdy-gurdy makers who have been starting to build them, prefer to make it hollow with a hoop of a soft wood around the two lateral discs. Just like the hair of a bow, the hoop is covered with rosin.

The wheel is put into motion by an axle and a crank, in the shape of an S. Depending on the age and force of the instrumentist, the shape of this S can be bent to increase or shorten the diameter of the hand movement, which enables him to turn the wheel with an untiring effort. The wheel is always protected by a cover to prevent the touching of fingers which would remove the rosin.

M  
1730  
V339  
H962  
1976

MUSIC LP

The melody strings are not set on a neck, but in a string box containing a key board, very similar by its look to that of a piano. Every key is doing what the left hand fingers' of a fiddler are supposed to do. In depressing a key, the little system of twin "sautereaux" (literally a "jumper"), a kind of small, rectangular, wooden plate, stops against the string and acts like a fret, shortening the vibration length of the string. These "sautereaux" can turn around and in this way the pitch can be adjusted.

When the note is played, the key comes back to its initial place because of its own weight and not with the help of springs.

The "sillet", the nut, can be adjusted to the proper length of the open string. This string box is covered by a lid where the musician rests his hand on and slides it up and down the key board.

The two strings contained in that box are the "chanterelles" (literally the "singing strings"), because they give the melody. From the bottom to the top of the key board, they give two octaves.

The other strings in contact with the wheel are drones and are tuned in the same chord. They are four, but rarely a musician uses them all at the same time, as it is possible to remove the strings from the wheel. It would require too much effort in the arm to make all six strings vibrate. When the musician is playing alone, he usually puts two or three drones. If he is accompanied by a band, hurdy-gurdies, pipes or accordion, he puts only one drone.

The six strings are all gut strings.

Most of the hurdy-gurdies have four additional strings, known as "sympathetic strings", just like on a viola d'amore of the XVIIIth century. They are not played by the wheel, but by the vibration of the body only. It gives better resonance to this instrument.

Out of the four drones, one is very important; it gives the hurdy-gurdy its particular sound:

The string rests upon a mobile bridge, which when vibrating, produces a snuffling noise of percussion quite surprising. It is by a "coup de poignet" or wrest jerk, that this noise is produced at a certain time.

If this explanation is not sufficient, herebelow is a more technical approach of the phenomena.

- The string S rests on the bridge B that rests itself on the table T, under the action of a force F. The bridge is made in such a way that it can revolve slightly around a point P.

- When the wheel W is stopped, the force F is alone and makes the bridge stay on the table.

- When the wheel turns, it creates a friction on the string which makes it sound. The rosin being quite adhesive, the wheel has the tendency to lift the string with an upward force U.

If we compare mathematically  $\vec{U}$  and  $\vec{F}$ , we have two possibilities:

1.  $U < F$  (U smaller than F). The bridge stays on the table, the string sing in a regular tone.
2.  $F < U$  (F smaller than U) it's more difficult:

The string S is then lifted upward by the force U. The bridge is also following that movement and gets off the table very slightly. (We call this point "step 2"). In this high position, the tension of the string is higher, the string being itself lengthened and consequently the force F increases. F, being now more important than U, brings back the bridge on the table, like a hammer on the anvil and produces a little percussion noise. (This is "step 1").

Step 1 and 2 are repeated a great number of times during a second and this forms the snuffling which characterizes the hurdy-gurdy.

It is obvious that the most important part is the mobile bridge; if it is in bad condition, the sound will be poor. This bridge is called zinzin, cigalou in the south (it means cicada, grasshopper), chien (cock) because of its shape, or sabot (wooden shoes) for the same reason, depending on the place and about everywhere known as "coup de poignet" (wrest jerk).

The drone string itself is most often called "trompette". In the middle "cordier" (tail piece) there is a kind of tuning peg to adjust the tension of this string, not for the pitch, but for the rhythm action.

To produce this rhythmic effect, the instrumentist while turning his crank, must provide jerky impulses which will determine the rhythm. It is the quality of this "wrest jerk" that determines a good hurdy-gurdy player.

In France, two main ways to turn a hurdy-gurdy are used:

- The D tuning, called "Mode Bourbonnaise" because it is mostly used in Bourbonnais, also in Berry and northern places.

1. The "chanterelles" are in D, but one is an octave higher than the other. The strings used are A of a fiddle for the high one, D of a fiddle for the low one, both in gut.
2. The "trompette" in unison with the low chanterelle. The string is a D of a fiddle, in gut.
3. The "mouche" (fly) rarely used, gives a G under the low D. String is the low E of a guitar, in gut.



4. The "petit bourdon" (little drone) is one octave below the little drone. String is a C of a cello.

This tuning allows one to play very easily in the key of G, a key very good to sing in, the vocal range corresponding for both male and female singers.

- The "C tuning" (accord en UT) also called "G tuning" and Mode Auvergnate, because it is mostly used in the Center of France, and Bresse, Dauphiné and Savoie.
1. The chanterelles are in G, at unison and the string is A of a fiddle, in gut.
  2. The trompette is in C just below the chanterelles. The string is an A of a cello, in gut.
  3. The mouche is a G an octave below the chanterelles, and the string used is a D of a cello.
  4. The petit bourdon is a C, one octave below the trompette and the string is a G of a cello.
  5. The gros bourdon is a G, one octave below the mouche, and the string is a C of a cello.

This tuning is not as high as the first one and it often gives a better tone to the instrument.

To prevent the strings from being worn out too quickly, they are protected in the place where the wheel comes in contact with them, by a little piece of cotton. The cotton fibres must be wound up all around every string. This operation must be observed and practiced lots of times before being done properly.

The wheel is coated with a very thin film of rosin. To do this, the instrumentist turns the wheel quite fast, and grazes it with a rosin stick. It seems that the hurdy-gurdy player must put rosin on his wheel much more often than the fiddler on his bow.

#### B. HISTORY OF THE HURDY-GURDY

The principle of a strummed or plucked string seems to be the oldest, as it dates from the prehistorical days. The principle of the string sounded with a bow is almost as old as the other one. Its traces can be found in many relieves done by Romans, Grecs, Egyptians of the antiquity, and even by the Assyrians. In Africa, a few instruments looking like Banjo-gourd are played with a bow, but the system of the wheel replacing the bow is quite unique, as far as we know. Herebelow is what has been found: +

The first time a wheel instrument is ever mentioned, is in the Middle East, in the Ihwan - as - Safa Treaty in the Xth century. In the same part of the world, the same instrument is quoted in the Ign Gaibi Treaty in the XVth century. It is called a dulab and following the description, it is quite similar to the hurdy-gurdy.

Two important studies, one from the end of the IVth century by St. Jérôme, the other from the IXth century by Aymeric de Peyrac, give a description of any instrument used at that time, but none of them mention a hurdy-gurdy type of instrument. We are therefore forced to admit that officially this instrument was not existing in France.

In Europe, a sculpture from the year 1150 has been found in the church of Saneto Domingo, in Soria (Spain). It shows people playing music on a hurdy-gurdy. Many other Spanish churches, from the end of the XIIth century have similar sculptures: Toro, Estella, Santiago de Compostella.

The construction of a church taking a long time, the hurdy-gurdy could be found at least 50 years before the completion of these churches.

The localization of these evidences make believe that the principle of the wheel, spread out in Europe via the Islamic world, by the pilgrims crossing both France and northern Spain. It may have even further origins.

This instrument is quickly adopted in France, many a trace shows it in the XII century.

- Stained glass windows in the Cathedral of Laon
- Pillars in the Cathedral of Bourges and Chartres
- Gate frame of the Abbey of St. Denis and Church of Vermanton in Burgundy.
- Capital of the Church St. Georges de Boschville (Normandy)
- Illustrations on psalters and bibles.

+ All these information have been gathered from many books, speeches, magazines.

All the documents are dating from the end of the XIIth or XIIIth century. All are from religious subjects taken, and this can be explained by the popular music's situation at this time. The popularity of the hurdy-gurdy can be explained by the same reason.

The church of every village, every town, was the only cultural center of the place, and where people would practice music. The Sunday office, musically very rich, was quite representative of any kind of music played in the country, the castle and the farm. Its influences reached the whole population with a strict authority.

The monodine music (only one kind of voice at unison) has been played with an organ accompaniment since the VIIth century, and the first attempt to play polyphonic music began during the XIth century. This style of singing is called "organum"; it is composed by the leading voice, a voice at the perfect fifth and another voice one octave higher. Sometimes, but very rare, comes a major third. The voices sing in parallel their part, in a choir, with the same vocal interval, in the same rhythm. The organ, too difficult to handle (musically of course), is used just for the main offices. It is rather the "organistrum" that plays during the musical training.

The "organistrum" is a rather large instrument, for it needs two men to play it. Set on the laps, it must have one man to turn the crank and one man on the keyboard (some have no keyboard). A specialist of the hurdy-gurdy, René, Zosso, says it was tuned in C, with a G five halve tones higher, and a C, one octave higher. Furthermore, the keys were on the side of the musician, and there were no drones yet.

The instrument is used as a master singer, and guides the voices of the three parts. Its advantage, in comparison with other string instruments, is that, because of that wheel, the sound produced is continuous, weak in rhythmic effects, but regular in its volume.

It is known that the organistrum spread out all over France very quickly, every little church having one. Soon it was to leave the religious music and enter the popular and aristocratic one.

The minstrels adopted it and changed its name into "symphonia". The "symphonia" is largely used in castles and farms. And by the middle of the XIIIth century, there are so many minstrels that they form a "corporation" (union) called "la menestranderie". This symphonia is much smaller than the organistrum, and moreover it is a portable instrument. The vibrating length of the strings being shorter, they produce notes of higher pitch, more suitable to singing and dancing, sounding lighter and happier in playing. To back up the melody, drones are added, and perhaps it is at this time that this rhythm effect is created.

As far as I know, only the "trompe marine" has a similar beating system, and it dates also from that period.

The invention and development of printing, damaged seriously the system of transmission of culture formed by the "menestranderie". The minstrel area is soon over, but if the lords in their castles prefer to pass the time with books rather than hearing complaints and ballads, their serfs (slaved farmers) still enjoy this kind of music.

The symphonia is forsaken by many artists of quality and becomes an instrument for beggars, roamers, blinds, the farmers being too busy to play it. Its name changes into "chifonie" or even "chifoine" (chiffon means rags, locks). It keeps this name full of prejudice for a long time.

The chifonie remains in this condition until the XVIIIth century, when it becomes again up to date, under the name of "vielle" (hurdy-gurdy). Some hurdy-gurdy academic are found all around France, in the main towns. The kind of music they play is brilliant, most of the compositions being difficult. The composers are many: Braun, Boismoutier, Michon, Buterna, Chédeville. Menuets, contre danse (from country dance), vaux de vire (become vaudeville) bloom, but this fashion got complicated with emulation, causing a decrease in its popularity. Then it is more fashionable to play "divertissements champêtres" (country games). The high aristocracy, the "Tout Versailles" fall in love with the country music and even the

Queen plays hurdy-gurdy. It is during this period that the "facture" (old french word for manufacturing) is getting the finest and that the musical qualities of the instrument are increasing very steeply.

A violin maker from Versailles, Baton, being unable to get rid of a large stock of parlor instruments, decides to change them into hurdy-gurdies. He begins with the guitar, cutting off the neck, setting a wheel, a keyboard, a tail piece and bridges, and sells it well.

The "vielle plate" (flat hurdy-gurdy) is born. It can play on two octaves, its sound is much higher, its noise is more singing.

Four years later, Baton does the same with the body of a lute and a theorbé, making what people call today "vielle bateau" (boat hurdy-gurdy), or "vielle ronde" (round hurdy-gurdy). The keyboard is now chromatic, except for the high F. The hurdy-gurdy has acquired its definitive shape.

A reminiscence from the formal organistrum is also known at time: the "orpheon", a kind of spinet, the strings being not plucked, but rubbed (bowed) by a wheel. It is made like a parlor instrument, just like the piano and the clavichord. The sound of the orpheon is too poor to stay in a parlor, and it could not be taken anywhere because of its size. It is soon forsaken by the few people who played it.

One day, someone got the idea to add to the usual hurdy-gurdy a bellow and organ pipes; it is the birth of the "vielle organisée" (organized hurdy-gurdy). It is quite a commercial success, but it is hard to tune both strings and pipes, and therefore few people play it.

The hurdy-gurdy is in its golden ages, both for its popularity among rich and poor, and for its quality of manufacturing. Hurdy-gurdies from the XVIIIth century are richly decorated with ivory, ebony, mother of pearls, heads are sculptured in the peg head, with a particular refined baroc art.

Pierre Louvet is considered as the best hurdy-gurdy maker of that time.

But the classical musicians accuse the hurdy-gurdy of being a barbaric instrument. Criticisms and pamphlets reject it in such a way, that before the French Revolution, the hurdy-gurdy returns to the blinds and the beggars, farmers and mountaineers.

From the XIXth century, the hurdy-gurdy is widely known in the country. Hurdy-gurdy makers become numerous in the Central Mountains (Massif Central) of France. A dynasty arises when Gilbert Pajot makes his first hurdy-gurdy in 1740. The last Pajot who made hurdy-gurdies died in 1967.

During more than 200 years, this family has been making instruments and also trained many hurdy-gurdy makers. Pimpart, Tixier, Décante, Nigout, Cailhe have also learned from the Pajots.



Now a new generation of manufacturers (or rather artists) is growing, but the instrument is still the same.

The hurdy-gurdy is widely known in the Central Mountains (Auvergnès, Berry, Bourbonnais) and also in Bresse, Dauphinée, Savoie, and the Flanders, but has been forsaken a long time ago elsewhere.

Before 1940 country dances were usual, and the hurdy-gurdy was still well played. Now, a few people can "sound" it properly.

A revival among city people appeared ten years ago and is getting quite stronger every day, reaching now the rural places.

#### 1. LA YOYETTE

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion - male and female voices.

La Yoyette is a march largely known in Auvergne. In the little village, people used to parade to go to a wedding, to a baptism or just a party. The musician would start playing that kind of tune, and the people would follow him in couple through the village to go to the place. The tempo is quite fast, but for those happy march, people would often walk even faster. This tradition is out of use since the turn of the century.

De bon matin, le grand Pierrou se lève, (bis)  
Met son chapeau sur le côté, chez la Yoyette s'en est allé.  
(bis)

Bien le bonjour, beau père et belle mère,  
Bien le bonjour vous soit donné, à la Yoyette il faut parler.

Apportez donc ici sur cette table,  
Du bon vin blanc, du saucisson pour régaler ce bon garçon.

Je ne suis pas venu-z-ici pour boire,  
Et non pour boire ou pour manger, de mariage il faut parler.

Mais la Yoyette, elle est à la grand messe,  
A la grand messe a St. Denis, tardera pas à revenir.

Mais la Yoyette, elle est encore jeunette,  
Faites l'amour, en attendant que la yoyette elle est vingt ans.

Non, non, l'amour, je ne veux plus la faire,  
Garçon qui fait l'amour longtemps risque fort de perdre son temps.

#### Translation:

Early in the morning, tall Pete rise up,  
Put his hat on the side, to the Yoyette he goes.

Good morning, my sir and my lady,  
Good morning is given to you, to the Yoyette I must talk.

Let's bring down on this table,  
Good white wine and sausage, to feed this good boy.

I didn't come here to drink,  
Neither to drink nor to eat, about marriage we must talk.

But the Yoyette, she is at the church office,  
The church office of St. Denis, she won't be long.

But the Yoyette, she is still young,  
Make love to wait when the Yoyette will be 20.

No no, love I won't make any more,  
For a boy that make love too long may waste his time.

#### 2. LA BOUREE DE ROYAT

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

The bourée is the traditional dance of Auvergne, and there every town has its favorite bouree. In this case, it is the town of Royat. The title refers of the dance more than it refers to the tune. Bourée are in 3/4 time, a little bit syncopated on the first step. It has several forms, since it has been taken from many others dances. Some look like a quadrille, others like menuets, others like vauz de vire (mimic satirical dances). The origin of the bourée is unclear. It is quite sure it was danced by the XVth century, but how? Some people say that the Gaulois used it as a war dance: in a "party", after they had killed their challenger, they would stamp their feet on the dead bodies with rhythm, but this has not been proved true.

The bourée may have 2, 3, or 4 parts, each one being repeated twice. Then this ensemble is repeated 2, 3 most often 4 times, following this kind of pattern, with, for instance, parts A, B and C:

A A B B C C A A B B C C A A... I have not found yet a thing like: A A B B A A C C A A B B A A... Those mixtures seem to be very rare. There is no calling during the dance, the dancers are supposed to know all the figures. The lead musician just gives a call "Un deux", to give the signal for the other musicians.

In the old days, a band was composed by two or three hurdy-gurdies, one bagpipe and latter, one clarinet. Since 1920, the accordion is the more versatile instrument of the band and takes the first place.

This dance is played the first two times, by the hurdy-gurdy with accordion accompaniment bass, then in unison by accordion and hurdy-gurdy.

#### 3. LA CROUZADE

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

The title is not in French, but in Auvergne dialect. It means "the cross". The dancers, two couples, are forming a square, and the gents and ladies appear in diagonal, are moving toward the center to face and meet their partner, thus tracing a cross on the ground. There are three parts (A,B,C) and to

each part there is a figure. From one place to another, the dance changes slightly, but the basic form remains. At the end, there is a "Poutou", it means that the dancer is allowed to kiss his partner to thank her for accepting to dance with her.

#### 4. DE QU'TSA VEGNIA TSARTSA

Hurdy-gurdy - solo

This is the most widely known tune of Auvergne, and it is whistled in the streets everywhere in France. The title means "What did you come for?" and the words, rarely sung are:

De qu'tsa vegnia tsartsa, garcous de la mountagna,  
De qu'tsa vegnia tsartsa, che voullia pas dansa.

Oh! tsa ya pas veugni, garcous de la mountagna,  
Oh! tsa ya pas veugni, che voullia ma dourmi.

#### Translation:

What did you come for, boy from the mountains,  
What did you come for, if you won't dance.

You shouldn't have come, boy from the mountains,  
You shouldn't have come, if it was just to sleep.

This recording is very close from what can be heard in the local dances among people who still like the bourée. "Paya la, paya la" is the call for the poutou, it means "pay her". This tune is not specific to one dance; even in a same place, people know two or three ways to dance it. In a particular way, the gent has two ladies, and as he can kiss just one for the poutou, the other lady go and kiss the musician. This may be why the dance is played so often.

#### 5. BOUREE DE ST FLOUR

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

The previous tune was performed in a very old way, but this one is more modernized. The style of accordion is "musette". It consists in fast up or down runs to start every phrase. The Style Musette can be considered as a bluegrass kind of evolution of the old music. It appeared around 1945, with the development of local radio shows, recordings and a little "star system". It is still largely used in the country ballroom, mixed with rock and roll.

#### 6. LA BOUREE D'AURILLAC

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

This bourée is quite short, and the tune has only two parts. It is one of the dances the most often used. The rhythm of the hurdy-gurdy, seeming to be annoying, is very helpful in a dancing hall, for it gives the rhythm and cover

the noise all around. Bourées are danced with a heavy foot stepping, and it is a must that the rhythm is clearly given.

#### 7. LE ROSSIGNOL

Hurdy-gurdy

I first heard the Rossignol (the nightingale) not long ago. I didn't know too much about this tune rarely played. The melody is quite rich for a hurdy-gurdy, and then it may have been a bagpipe tune.


#### 8. LE TURLUTUTU

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

Le turlututu (nonsense) is a waltz well known in the country, and very often played by the country people living in town. This performance is also close from the style musette. The waltz is also danced in Auvergne, probably since a long time ago. It spread around pretty well because it is a dance where the partners are close together, a thing rare in the previous dances.

#### 9. LE MERLE

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

Le Merle (the blackbird) is a lively tune not as old as the others on this record. It is a polka, rarely danced but well-loved in Auvergne. The polka has been imported from eastern Europe by migrant workers around 1850, but it was also known via the classical music. This could be a very easy tune to play if it was not so fast. The drone, quite heavy to play, can be heard, seeming to be painful and slowly following the tempo. As a result from this, the rhythmic effect  is not always clear.

#### 10. LA GIGUE

Hurdy-gurdy and male voice

The gigue (jig), although it is a british dance, is known in France. In Auvergne, this is about the only jig they dance. The fact that it is sung in French can prove it appeared after the XVIIth century. Mr. Vasson gives a call to the dancers and then starts the tune. He is singing himself the song: allex les gars, allez chercher vos cavaliers et en place pour la gigue!

C'est la fille de ma meunière,  
Qui dansait avec Lucas  
Elle a perdu ses jartières,  
Ses jartières qui n'tenaient pas.

Ah lève donc, lève donc, lève donc la gigue,  
Ah lève donc, lève donc, lève donc plus haut.

Y en a trois qui veulent la fille,) bis  
Y en a deux qui l'auront pas! )



Translation: Come on boys, and take your partners, get ready for the jig!

It's the miller's daughter  
Who was dancing with Lucas,  
She lost her socks,  
Her socks not tight.

Ah lift it, lift it, lift it the jig,  
Ah lift it, lift it, lift it higher.

Three want the girl,  
Two won't have her!

Half of it is danced like a polka, half is danced by stepping on one foot, the other foot being lifted as high as possible.

## SIDE TWO

### 11. BELLE ROSE

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

This is the kind of tune that is not really from Auvergne, but that was played in this part of the country, then keeping to be in use there, while it is forgotten elsewhere.

### 12. LA QUADRETTE D'AMBERT

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

A quadrette is performed by four dancers, almost like a quadrille. This form of dancing is present everywhere in France, but in Auvergne, it changes its 2/4 rhythm into the bourée's 3/4. The accordion is, in this recording, really out of tradition, attacking the beginning of each phrase with a typical musette way, and covering the melody of the hurdy-gurdy. The tune itself is quite old and primitive.

### 13. EN PASSANT PAR LE BOIS

Hurdy-gurdy

The instrument is played in what they call "fiddle imitation". The musician takes off the wheel all the strings but one chanterelle, producing a very light melody, without the rhythmic effect and the drones. This type of music is rarely done by home musicians, but rather by the "professionals" who used to go from a village to another until the turn of the century. Mr. Vasson, who is a "home musician" don't give a very good idea of how the hurdy-gurdy is close from the fiddle, as he plays in such a way every ten years or so. Furthermore, his instruments produces many harmonics, the string being a little bit too high on the bridge. I have tried to make him play on another instrument, but even the devil can't change the mind of an Auvergnat. The tune played here, "Walking Through the Wood", is a "regret", a sorrow. It is the expression of blues they have there. Regrets are as long, sad and lonesome as the bourée's are fast, happy and lively. They generally have words, but the musicians proclaim people would cry if they hear them!

### 14. LA CAILLE

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

The Caille (quail) is a comic dance, not in the way it is danced, but in the spirit it was made in. This bird is considered as the symbol of the silly woman, or a woman enjoying too much being with men. After a few steps, the gents stamp their feet to call their partner, and the ladies answer signs meaning one time yes and one time no. After the following steps, the ladies are getting closer to their partner, but aren't taken away by them. There is a lot of meaning in this dance favorite among the children.

### 15. LA CHAÎNE D'ORCINE

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

This is an old tune with a good danced part. It is twice better to hear it performed with the dancers, their feet and yelling creating a lively atmosphere. The hurdy-gurdy player have little bells on his ankle, jingling when he stamps on the ground.

### 16. LA MACHARADE

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion - male and female voices

This is also a typical bourée, that can be adapted to any dance figures. It has many verses, but for a strange reason that nobody knows, it is the use to sing, for the dance tune, just one verse and the chorus. In Auvergne dialect, macharade means dirty girl, with a face full of mud and dirt.

Vaï, vaï, vaï macharade	Go, go macharade,
Vaï, vaï, vaï te lava.	Go, go and wash.

Quand tournara macharade,	When you'll be back, macharade,
Quand tournara dansara.	When you'll be back, you will dance.

### 17. MARIVOU QUE NA FEINNA

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion

This may be, along with song number 4 on this record, one of the best known tune of Auvergne. The meaning of the title is "unhappy the man with a wife". There are about six good verses about this subject in this song, but I never heard any one sing at least one verse. Originally in dialect, it has been adapted in French with words completely different.

### 18. LA TOGNE

Hurdy-gurdy duo

In a band, when several instruments would play the melody, the second hurdy-gurdy would play in the key of the perfect third, i.e; five half tone higher than the others instruments. This has been done in this dance, when the partners are supposed to bow and salute each other. The two hurdy-gurdies being from different qualities, the result is not as good as expected.



# 19. LA ROSETTE

Accordion - hurdy-gurdy accompaniment

This tune from the end of the last century is performed here in quite a modern way. The hurdy-gurdy has just a rhythmic role.

# 20. LA POLKA PIQUÉE

Hurdy-gurdy - accordion - male and female voices

The polka piquée is the favorite polka of Auvergne. If the way to dance is not really from France, the tune is 100% French. This polka has the particularity to be danced like a waltz during the A part, and the dancers point their feet toward the ground in the B part.

Marie Madeleine, ta robe qui traîne,  
Marie Madelon relève la donc.

Tiens donc Marie Madeleine,  
Tiens donc Marie Madelon.

Marie Madeleine, your  
dress' lagging  
Marie Madeleine, keep  
it up

Hold on Marie Madeleine...

## Miscellaneous Notes

This music was recorded in Lyon (France) by Dominique Algret, with the help of Claude Delorme and Gerard Chagneau, his assistants. The tape machine was a Revox Studer A 77 modified, and the microphones were two AKG C 451 S, with two pre-amps Prodisc. A Dolby system B type was also used.

Mr. Henry Vasson's hurdy-gurdy has been made by Décante. I think it dates from 1880-1890, but it may be older. Décante learned to make his instruments from one of the numerous Pajots, so famous in Auvergne. Some people say their pupils were even better than them, so the price of a Décante is quite high. Furthermore, a Décante is much rarer than a Pajot for the only reason that there have been five hurdy-gurdy makers named Pajot, and just one Décante.

The hurdy-gurdy used for this recording has a very good rhythmic effect, clear and strong, but the melody has no volume. The reason is that it was designed for a D tuning, id est, with the two "chanterelles" supporting a high tension. The G tuning, used by Mr. Vasson on the record, is lower, and the string vibrations may be improper in comparison of the body. This resulted in a great difficulty in the recording. You may have noticed it when you first listened to that record. As it was impossible to make Mr. Vasson play on another hurdy-gurdy, we tried our best with what we had, without using electronic system to modify the natural sound.

The accordion, played by Mr. Pierre Buttner (alias Bubu) is a chromatic Cavagnolo. Mr. Cavagnolo came from Italy to Lyon in 1924, but started building accordion before the turn of the century. He died in the 60's, but his children are still running the workshop. Cavagnolo is one of the three remaining accordion factories of France.

The second hurdy-gurdy played on the duo has been made in 1973 by Maxime Boireaud. It is more powerful in the melody. During the recording, this hurdy-gurdy was twice far away from the microphone than the other. The new made hurdy-gurdies are often better than the old one, only the decorations are not as refined as they were long ago.

It is hard to find a hurdy-gurdy, either an old or a new made one. Prices are from 3,000 Francs up to...much more! About a dozen of people make good ones and sell them. Many people try to build their own. It may be worth it if you know some about fiddle making. If you want to make one, don't buy any book or kit, just localize a good hurdy-gurdy and copy it with the improvement you want to add. Here are the names of the three best hurdy-gurdy makers still living I have ever met:

1. (and best) Marcel Soing  
34 rue du 14 juillet  
36400 La Chatre

You can't find better, but you may wait ten years to get it. Last time I heard of him, was because he refused to make one to one of his friends (too busy!).

2. Maxime Boireaud  
68 rue St. Jean  
69005 Lyon

Very good hurdy-gurdy for playing in a band. Strong rhythm and loud melody. He makes his living making old time instruments.

3. Gaston Rivière  
24 rue d'Alembert  
03100 Montluçon

He is a hurdy-gurdy virtuoso and his instruments fit him! He also makes bagpipes, and wrote a book to learn how to play the hurdy-gurdy.

There is a museum just for hurdy-gurdies and it's worth the trip if you are in France: Musée de la vielle, Vielle Ville, 03100 Montluçon.

Most of the tunes are very short: 1 or 2 minutes. It is because they are dance tunes and the musician preferred to follow the steps and figures of the dances. It could have been possible to keep on playing the tune longer, to have more music, but we choose to record those pieces as they are actually performed.

In working on this record, I had a particular thought to many people who help me in discovering folk music. Among them are Tracy Schwarz and Mike Seeger, Ralph Rinzler and Dewey Balfa. I thank too Mr. Asch for accepting having hurdy-gurdy music in his collection.

Photographs have been taken by Giles Aguetant at the home of Mr. Vasson. Mr. and Mrs. Vasson and Mr. Buttner are wearing traditional cloth of Auvergne.

LITHO IN U.S.A.  159