

FOLKWAYS RECORDS RBF 111

# MASTERS OF FRENCH CANADIAN MUSIC 2

Alfred Montmarquette, accordion

SELECTED AND ANNOTATED BY GABRIEL LABBE

PRODUCED BY RICHARD CARLIN



COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

M  
1678  
M423  
1972  
v. 2

MUSIC LP



**Side One; Face A**

- 1) Marche des Collegiens (The Collegian's March)  
(Recorded/enregistres Septembre 1929)
- 2) Valse des Pyrenees (Pyrenees Waltz)  
(Septembre 1928)
- 3) Clog de William Durette (William Durette's Clog)  
(Septembre 1929)
- 4) Marche St-Jean  
(Novembre 1928)
- 5) Marche Montmarquette (Montmarquette's March)  
(Novembre 1927)
- 6) Valse du Peril (Peril Waltz)  
(Octobre 1927)
- 7) Polka Chinoise (Chinese Polka)  
(April 1928)

**Side Two; Face B**

- 1) Reel de Chicoutimi (Chicoutimi Reel)  
(Janvier 1928)
- 2) Virginia Valse  
(Fevrier 1928)
- 3) Alexandrine - Marche  
(Juillet 1929)
- 4) Reel de Valleyfield (Valleyfield Reel)  
(Juin 1929)
- 5) Valse des Nations  
(Novembre 1939)
- 6) Rose Alma Polka  
(Decembre 1929)
- 7) La Guenille  
(Decembre 1927)

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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The Alfred Montmarquette's biography.

Following with respect, the traditional Quebec pioneers in the musical field, most of our to-day's adepts of the accordion, are playing some pieces of the repertory of one of our most famous accordionist, namely: Alfred Montmarquette.

Born in Montreal in 1870, Alfred was the son of Maurice Montmarquette married to Thorsille Lessard, both to have many other children. On his 12th. birthday, Alfred received from his father, a special gift, an accordion, which was to become his lifetime working tool. From this very moment, he started to thicken and thin the given instrument, on a practically full evening time basis. Thanks to his exceptional ability and remarkable perseverance, he was soon to become a specially noted artist, keeping in mind, he was strictly playing "by ear", unfortunately his parents not being in a position to afford the cost of musical courses, neither could they provide him with elementary courses at school. He could hardly write his own name, which directed him to learn the basics of masonry, resulting with a double occupation.

In 1894, he got married to Miss Léa Pelletier. Unfortunately, no children resumed from this union. To this effect, Alfred has dedicated a record, which was titled: "Léa Valse".

In 1923, Alfred made acquaintance with a Mr. Conrad Gauthier. A very reputed Name in musical "Folklore", who invited him to join himself to participate to the "Veillées du Bon Vieux Temps", on a regular basis. The action to take place at the "Monument National", (the best known variety Theatre existing in those days, in Montréal. Montmarquette assiduously performed at the shows till 1932. He then contacted a great friendship with a Mrs. Bolduc, another well-known musician-singer "Folklorist". They have produced some records together.

In 1927, Alfred joined the "Starr Record Company", along with him, a pianist named Henri Langlois, and Adélarde St-Jean, a "Bone player". (An arrangement of dried ribs, usually pairs, played with one or both hands, resulting like the possible sound of wands applied to a piece of hardwood). He has then produced other records with "Columbia Records" along with "Brunswick Records" companies. For the later mentioned, the threesome operated under the name of: "Le Trio Du Vieux Québec". The records production by Montmarquette situates in the neighbourhood of sixty, at the time called 78 R.P.M., and considered as above average, selling items.

Since he was very well known in Montreal and its vicinity, he, at many occasions would perform openly at the "Bonsecours Public Market", to the great pleasure of the many people attending to, or visiting the market. Alfred had such a great passion to play accordion, that he used to play while going around, (on a nowhere basis), creating by this fact, even major traffic jams, in most occasions. By himself Alfred was rather timid, generous, and considered good, may be too good.

Circumstantially, due to rare or no facilities to find employment, poverty and distress soon invaded Alfred. Being lonely, he then was inclined to alcohol. Some people even said he was hitting the bottle too hard. The situation going from bad to worst, the following years, serious illness affected Alfred, resulting to a no way out issue. He then found refuge at the "Hospice Gamelin" of Montreal, (a well known pension house for the incurables) from where he passed away on May 24, 1944 at the age of 74.

Alfred Montmarquette was surely one of the top "Folklore" accordionist in Quebec. Following his own particular style, he really knew exactly how to produce each and every one of his records, mostly due to his agility. His self-developed technic, surely permitted him to finally specialise in the interpretation of his famous waltzes, and marches.

The key to professional apogee of Alfred was created by the constant lively rhythm of his own.

Whatever melody you may be hearing from his records, will surely confirm the already given appreciation to this rare talented accordion Virtuoso.

Gabriel Labbé

Montréal, octobre 1979.



## La biographie d'Alfred Montmarquette.

Respectueux de l'oeuvre des pionniers de la musique traditionnelle québécoise, la plupart de nos musiciens contemporains interprètent les pièces du répertoire de celui qui fut l'un de nos accordéonistes les plus fameux: Alfred Montmarquette.

Né à Montréal en 1870, Alfred était le fils de Maurice Montmarquette et de Thorsille Lessard qui eurent une famille nombreuse. A l'âge de douze ans Alfred reçut de son père un présent qui devait définitivement marquer sa vie: son premier accordéon. Dès lors, il se mit à jouer "par oreille", pratiquant pendant des soirées entières. Grâce à son talent et à sa persévérance, il devint rapidement très habile. En effet, ses parents ne purent jamais lui offrir la moindre formation musicale, pas plus qu'ils ne purent lui payer d'autres études. En fait, Alfred Montmarquette ne fréquenta pas l'école bien longtemps. A peine savait-il écrire son nom. On lui fit cependant apprendre le métier de maçon qu'il pratiqua alternativement avec la musique.

En 1894, il épousa Mademoiselle Léa Pelletier: de ce mariage ne naquit aucun enfant. Il lui a d'ailleurs dédié une pièce qu'il mit sur disque: "Léa Valse".

En 1923, il fit la connaissance du fameux folkloriste Conrad Gauthier qui l'invita à participer régulièrement aux "Veillées du Bon Vieux Temps" au "Monument National (grand théâtre très populaire à l'époque où se donnait différents spectacles). Montmarquette prit une part active à ces spectacles jusqu'en 1932. Il se lia à ce moment-là d'une grande amitié avec Mme Bolduc. Ils firent quelques disques ensembles.

En 1927, il commença à enregistrer pour la compagnie: "Starr", il était alors accompagné par le pianiste Henri Langlois et le joueur d'os Adélard St-Jean. Par la suite il fit des disques sur étiquettes: "Columbia" et "Brunswick" sur cette dernière marque, Montmarquette, Langlois et St-Jean prirent le pseudonyme: "Le Trio du Vieux Québec". La discographie de Montmarquette comprend environ soixante disques 78' tours qui se vendirent beaucoup.

Montmarquette était très connu à Montréal et aux environs. Il a souvent joué au "Marché Bonsecour", au plaisir des gens qui s'y rendaient. Il nourrissait une si grande passion pour l'accordéon qu'on raconte qu'il se promenait parfois sur la rue en jouant, ce qui provoquait des attroupements qui nuisaient à la circulation. Alfred était un homme timide, généreux, bon et même bonasse. Les engagements rémunérés étant rares, il vécut dans la pauvreté et même dans la misère. Il était très solitaire et se laissait bien des fois aller à boire exagérément. On dit même qu'il leva le coude plus souvent qu'à son tour.

A cette misère qui le harcela nombre d'années vint bientôt s'ajouter la maladie. Montmarquette trouva refuge à l'hospice Gamelin de Montréal où il mourut le 24 mai 1944 à l'âge de 74 ans.

Alfred Montmarquette fut un des meilleurs accordéonistes folkloriques québécois. Suivant un style qui lui était propre il savait exécuter chacune des pièces de son répertoire avec agilité. Sa technique, habilement développée, lui avait permis de se spécialiser dans l'interprétation des valse et des marches. C'est ainsi qu'il fit d'un rythme toujours entraînant la véritable clé de son succès professionnel.

Les mélodies que vous entendrez sur ce disque vous donneront un aperçu du savoir faire de ce virtuose de l'accordéon, et vous permettront d'apprécier son grand talent.

Gabriel Labbé,

Montréal, octobre 1979.

For Additional Information About

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