

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

# Mademoiselle, Voulez-vous Danser?



**Franco-American Music  
from the  
New England  
Borderlands**



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# Mademoiselle, voulez-vous danser?

## Franco-American Music from the New England Borderlands

Sparkling fiddles, strong voices, and pounding feet join together in this compilation of lively dance tunes and poignant songs -- the musical legacy of French-Canadians who immigrated to New England and became Franco-Americans. Recorded 1994-1998 at informal gatherings and songfests and in small studios in New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and eastern New York, the music reveals the creativity and continuity in this unique regional tradition today. 57 minutes, 28 page booklet, map, and photos.

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| 1. The Shuttle 4:15<br>Chanterelle   | 8. Reel St. Hubert<br>1:19 Dudley and<br>Jacqueline Laufman                        | 16. Redwing 2:17<br>Marcel Robidas and<br>the Maple Sugar<br>Band   |
| 2. Devil's Dream 2:19<br>Rodney Miller and<br>Anne Percival                                | 9. <i>Les bûcherons</i><br>1:35 Paul Baril   | 17. <i>J'entends le moulin</i><br>3:55 Nighthale  |
| 3. <i>La bastringue</i> 1:48<br>Les Franco-<br>Américains                                  | 10. St. Anne's<br>Reel/Liberty 2:08<br>Patrick Ross,<br>Roland Cotnoir             | 18. <i>Soirée</i> Medley 9:09<br>Michèle Choinière,<br>Jeanne Begnoche,<br>Alberta Gagné,<br>Fabio Choinière,<br>Maurice Paquette,<br>participants in<br>soirée |
| 4. <i>Soufflons-y</i> 2:46<br>Martha Pellerin,<br>participants in<br>soirée                | 11. <i>Le grain de mil</i><br>3:38 Lucie Therrien                                  | 19. <i>Valse du temps</i><br>2:03 Michèle<br>Choinière  |
| 5. <i>La bonn' femme</i><br>Robert 2:14<br>Bernie, Normand,<br>Marc, and Michael<br>Quimet | 12. <i>Entre moi</i> 3:48<br>Chanterelle   | 20. <i>Père du mouton</i><br>1:33 Larry and<br>Henry Rieudeau   |
| 6. <i>La guignolée</i> 2:18<br>Bernie, Normand,<br>Marc, and Michael<br>Quimet             | 13. Growling Old<br>Man, Grumbling<br>Old Woman 1:54<br>Ronald West,<br>David Carr | 21. <i>Valse des pas-<br/>teux</i> 1:42<br>Rodney Miller,<br>Anne Percival  |
| 7. <i>Te souviendras-tu de<br/>moi?</i> 2:26 Maria<br>Perrault                             | 14. <i>Turlutte</i> 1:24<br>Dent-de-Lion   |   |
|  | 15. <i>Réveille-toi, belle<br/>endormie</i> 2:04<br>Claude Méthé                   |   |



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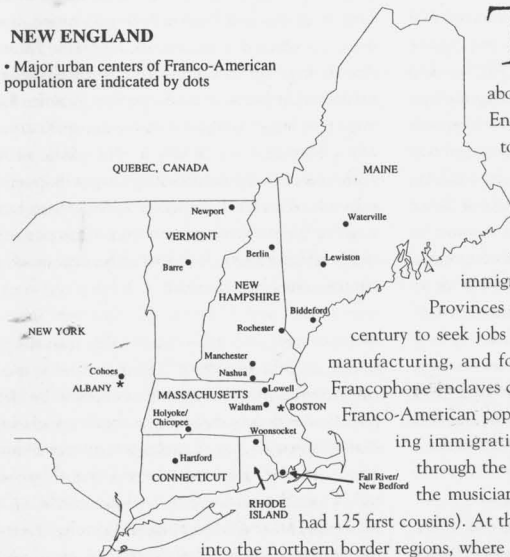
- The Shuttle**.....4:15  
(Donna Hébert/ rude girl music)  
Chanterelle
- Devil's Dream**.....2:19  
Rodney Miller and Anne Percival
- La bastringue**.....1:48  
Les Franco-Américains
- Soufflons-y**.....2:46  
Martha Pellerin, participants in *soirée*
- La bonn' femme Robert**.....2:14  
Bernie, Normand, Marc,  
and Michael Ouimet
- La guignolée**.....2:18  
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Patrick Ross, Roland Cotnoir
- Le grain de mil**.....3:38  
(Lucie Therrien/ French American Music Ent., BMI)
- Entre moi**.....3:48  
(Josée Vachon/ Ce Von Musique)  
Chanterelle
- Growling Old Man,  
Grumbling Old Woman**.....1:54  
Ronald West, David Carr
- Turlutte**.....1:24  
Dent-de-Lion
- Réveillez-vous, belle endormie**.....2:04  
Claude Méthé
- Redwing**.....2:17  
Marcel Robidas and  
the Maple Sugar Band
- J'entends le moulin**.....3:55  
Nightingale
- Soirée Medley**.....9:09  
Michèle Choinière, Jeanne Begnoche, Alberta  
Gagné, Fabio Choinière, Maurice Paquette,  
participants in *soirée*
- Valse du temps**.....2:03  
Michèle Choinière
- Patte du mouton**.....1:33  
Larry and Henry Riendeau
- Valse des pasteureaux**.....1:42  
Rodney Miller, Anne Percival

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Franco-American Music from the New England Borderlands

## NEW ENGLAND

• Major urban centers of Franco-American population are indicated by dots



The history of French settlement in New England is written in its telephone directories. Open just about any phone book in northern New England, especially in one of the old mill towns and cities that grew up along the rivers, and you'll find veritable lists of Benois, Benoires, Dulacs, and Gosselins. It was to these riverine communities that French-speaking immigrants from Québec and the Maritime Provinces came in the second half of the 19th century to seek jobs in New England's burgeoning textile, manufacturing, and forestry industries. Living largely in Francophone enclaves centered around Catholic parishes, the Franco-American population expanded both from continuing immigration and traditionally large families through the early and middle 20th century (one of the musicians on this recording, Martha Pellerin,

had 125 first cousins). At the same time, other immigrants moved into the northern border regions, where they farmed small plots of land. These days, New Englanders of French-Canadian descent comprise some 20 percent of the region's population. While the term *Franco-American* might in some sense be applied to any American who acknowledges French cultural or ethnic roots, it has been appropriated in particular by New Englanders of French-Canadian ancestry (who sometimes call themselves simply "Francos"), in contrast, for example, to the Cajuns of Louisiana or to immigrants who came to the United States directly from France.

In the rural farming communities of Québec and the Maritimes to which Franco-Americans trace their roots, homemade music was the standard fare for an evening's entertainment. Such evenings were called "soirées" or "veillés." A typical *soirée* featured songs (*chansons*) traditionally sung a cappella by a single singer; "response songs" (*chansons à répondre*), in which a group of singers (*répondeurs*) antiphonally repeats part or all of a refrain sung by a soloist; and "mouth music" (*turlutte*)—lilting to fast dance tunes or improvised melodies. Fiddlers, harmonica players, and, more rarely, accordionists contributed reels, waltzes, and jigs, often accompanying themselves in the faster tunes with rhythmic foot tapping. In this tradition, widespread in Québec, foot-tapping is used as a deliberate percussive accompaniment rather than simply to mark the beat. This was the music that French-Canadian immigrants carried with them across the border and that for a century and a half has been abundantly stirred into New England's ebullient musical melting pot.

The present compilation surveys the musical legacy of Franco-America as it existed in 1996 and 1997. Initiated as a class project for an undergraduate seminar in ethnomusicology at Dartmouth College, our ethnographic work was conducted within a radius of about two hours' drive from our

home base in Hanover, New Hampshire. This geographical range gave us access to many of the finest performers of Franco-American music; however, it excluded a number of important Franco-American urban enclaves as well as the entire border region of northern Maine, where Acadian heritage (the legacy of French colonists expelled from Nova Scotia by the British in the middle of the 18th century) is particularly strong, and deserves separate treatment. Notwithstanding these lacunae, we hope that our recording illustrates the richness and variety of Franco-American music in contemporary New England.

What, in fact, constitutes Franco-American musical tradition in the late 1990s? These days, many musical traditions in the United States tend to be identified less with an ethnic group bound together by shared language, culture, and territory than with an ethnically heterogeneous community united by common musical interests. Franco-American music is no exception. It is at root the social eclecticism of its performers and listeners that has gradually created a tradition with its own identity: not a clone or a geographic extension of the music of Francophone Canada, but a tradition that, while linked to the cultural geography of a borderland region, is distinctively American. The performers we recorded

include some, like Maria Perrault and Bernie Ouimet, both powerful *chanson* singers, who grew up in French-speaking households, sing songs they learned in childhood from family members, and are actively bilingual. By contrast, singer-songwriter-fiddler Donna Hébert, of the ensemble Chanterelle, comes from a Franco-American family that no longer spoke French. Now, through music, Ms. Hébert is trying to reestablish a link with her family heritage. Another musician, Dana Whittle, who performs with her husband Claude Méthé as Dent-de-Lion, has no French blood but learned French as a teenager, married a Québécois musician, and has become essentially bicultural. A few months after we recorded Whittle and Méthé at their home in Vermont, they sold their house and moved to Québec. Still other performers, like Rodney Miller and Dudley Laufman, make no claims to French ancestry, have not married into a French family, and do not speak French. For these musicians, being in a tradition has been a personal aesthetic choice. Rod Miller, an accomplished fiddler and professional violin maker, chose as his musical mentor the great Québécois violin player Jean Carignan. Miller never met Carignan (he came face to face with him once at a festival but out of shyness didn't introduce himself). Rather, Miller studied Carignan's recordings and, in the spirit of an authentic traditional

master, developed a personal style that referred to his mentor's but went beyond simply imitating it. The virtuosic, jazz-tinted rendition of "Devil's Dream" on our CD is the result of Miller's "apprenticeship." By contrast, Dudley Laufman, who began the New England contradance revival in the 1960s, did not set out to master the style of a single mentor but has learned French tunes from a variety of sources during his long career: recordings, radio and television, printed collections, and directly from other musicians. In the music he plays to accompany country dancing, Laufman mixes French tunes with tunes from Scotland, Ireland, England, and New England. "Reel St. Hubert," which he fiddles on this recording together with his wife, Jacqueline, is a tune he learned from a Québec television program that he regularly watches at his home in Canterbury, New Hampshire, a hundred miles south of the Canadian border.

The blending of French and non-French tunes and songs by performers who may or may not be of French descent is a defining feature of contemporary Franco-American music. Just as Rodney Miller and Dudley Laufman fiddle tunes they learned from Québécois musicians, Marcel Robidas and Patrick Ross (shortened from Rossignol) perform "Redwing" [track 16] and "Liberty" [track

10]—old chestnuts of the southern Appalachians that found their way to French Canada and, subsequently, to Franco-America through fiddle contests, recordings, radio, and television. Ross, 14 years old when we recorded him, learned French tunes from his late father but is equally devoted to the Nashville sound that he absorbs during summer sojourns to a fiddling camp run by Nashville fiddler Mark O'Connor. Vocal music no less than instrumental tunes reflects the migration of melodies and texts from one language and culture to the other. Country-western music is extremely popular in rural Québec, and song collections used by *chanson* singers in both Québec and New England typically include American country songs translated into French. In turn, some Franco-American *chansons* incorporate lines of English text, for example “I Went to the Market” [track 18], performed by the oldest singer on our recording, Alberta Gagné, of Highgate, Vermont, who died in 1999 at the age of 90.



Alberta Gagné at a *soirée* in Highgate, VT

Not all song texts, however, reflect modern influences. Among the *chansons* we recorded is “*La guignolée*” [track 6], which Bernie and Normand Ouimet learned at childhood *soirées* in Québec, filling in lines of text they had forgotten from a late 19th-century collection of Québec songs. In that collection, Ernest Gagnon’s *Chansons populaires du Canada*, the author traces elements of the song text back to the time of the Druids!

The survival of the *chanson* tradition, and of the family *soirées* where they were performed, of course depends not only on a community of performers and listeners but on a language community: on singers who know French and listeners who understand the words. As the primacy of the French language has receded among the descendants of immigrants, and neighborhood enclaves have given way to assimilation and intermingling, this community has been sharply reduced. The shrinking number of French-speakers has in turn affected cross-border contacts with rural Québec, where English is not widely spoken. Canadians and Americans move freely across the border, but the disappearance of bilingualism among Franco-Americans will surely lessen their feeling of connection to the culture of Francophone Canada. Nowadays, it is mostly older Franco-Americans who feel at ease in French, and *soirées* like those excerpted on this recording [tracks 4, 9,

and 18], which provide venues for egalitarian and participatory music-making, seem increasingly anachronistic. Indeed, the social role of Franco-American music has shifted: it has become one among many elements of New England’s folk music culture that can be heard at regional folk and folk heritage festivals, on recordings, and at clubs and cafés that feature traditional folk music. At the same time, however, Franco-American tradition provides an expressive outlet for a small but active group of younger artists who are striving to revive and reimagine a sense of Franco-American identity in the face of diaspora, assimilation, and language loss.

These days, a rising generation of Franco-American singer-songwriters continues to add to the *chanson* repertory, turning out compositions that often dwell reflexively on the experience of being Franco-American in an Anglophone society. Bilingual performers like Michèle Choinière [track 19], Lucie Therrien [track 11], and Josée Vachon with her ensemble, Chanterelle [tracks 1 and 12], all compose and record their own material in addition to singing traditional songs. Performing frequently for listeners who cannot be assumed to know French, they adapt their performance to English-speakers. In the same spirit, Martha Pellerin (1961–98), a singer turned folklorist and cultural activist who acknowledged that the disappearance of French among younger

Franco-Americans is inevitable, organized bilingual *soirées*. French heritage festivals have become annual events in many centers of Franco-American population in New England, and their popularity reveals a growing interest among assimilated Franco-Americans in learning about their cultural roots.

Franco-American music, like other contemporary traditional musics, will survive to the extent that it remains responsive to the tastes and the concerns of its community. This community has suffered losses, but it has also realized gains. It is not simply a community defined by language and ethnicity, but a community that welcomes all who share a love of joyful song and dance and a respect for the spirit of a people who have made a vital contribution to New England culture.

*This recording is dedicated to the memory of Martha Pellerin, charismatic musician, community leader, and visionary cultural activist, who made vital contributions to our project.*



# Recordings and Performers

For complete song texts in English and French, go to [www.si.edu/folkways/40116/lyrics.htm](http://www.si.edu/folkways/40116/lyrics.htm) or send \$2 to Smithsonian Folkways Mail Order.

## I. The Shuttle

(Song text & music by Donna Hébert; fiddle tune: traditional)

### **Chanterelle:**

**Donna Hébert, lead vocal, fiddle (b. 1948)**

**Josée Vachon, vocal, clogging (b. 1960)**

**Liza Constable, vocal, guitar (b. 1960)**

**Alan Bradbury, bass (b. 1950)**

Donna Hébert wrote the following about her inspiration for “The Shuttle”: “I spent all my summers as a child (1950–62) at my grandparents’ home in Ashland, New Hampshire, and every day we walked up by the woolen mill to the town center. You could see the stream that ran through the mill turn whatever color they were dyeing the wool. My Nana spoke French and smoked Marlboros, was the town ‘sewing lady’ and town gossip. She and her friend, Josie Lemon from across the street, would sit on their porches at the end of the day and swap the news they’d gleaned from their respective jobs—all

in French. My mother’s family gave up French when my mom entered grade school in Haverhill, Massachusetts, in 1927. The teacher sent her home the first day and said not to return until ‘you can speak white.’

“My mother’s family (Blair/Belair) was from the Sutton area of Québec. My mother’s mother had seventeen children, and seven lived past infancy. It’s my mom’s side who are musical, although my father’s grandmother played violin. My father’s mother’s people were Acadians who emigrated from Trois Rivières in Québec to Franklin, New Hampshire, to work in the sock mill there. All my grandmother’s family worked there, including her mother, two-sisters, and a brother. My school years were spent in Naugatuck, Connecticut, home of US Keds and US Rubber Co. My dad was a chemical engineer there—first working-class family member to attend college (the GI bill). The center of Naugatuck backed up on the footwear mill where they made Ked sneakers. So I heard it all year round.”

Chanterelle is a young group based in Amherst, Massachusetts, that is seeking to establish a contemporary cultural identity for Franco-American music and musicians. Josée Vachon, who founded Chanterelle, grew up in northwestern Maine in a

family that retained its French-Canadian heritage. She is a fluent French speaker and before forming Chanterelle hosted a Franco-American cultural program on regional cable television. Donna Hébert, by contrast, reconnected with her French heritage as an adult and now composes and performs songs that explore the social history of Franco-America. Vachon, Hébert, and vocalist/guitar player Liza Constable are all full-time musicians. Alan Bradbury, a professional furniture restorer, is the most recent addition to the group.



Chanterelle: Donna Hébert, Josée Vachon, Alan Bradbury, Liza Constable

## 2. Devil's Dream

**Rodney Miller, fiddle (b. 1951)**

**Anne Percival, guitar (b. 1958)**

“Devil’s Dream” is one of the most widely known fiddle tunes. Scottish in origin, it has long been in the repertory of North American fiddlers from the southern Appalachians to Nova Scotia. In this rendition, Rodney Miller literally “jazzes up” a version of the tune that he heard from the great Québécois violin player, Jean Carignan.

Rod Miller, raised in upstate New York, listened as a youth to both classical and country music, developing a passion for fiddle tunes at the same time that he was studying at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. He has also had a longstanding interest in jazz, and on this recording, Anne Percival accentuates the jazz influence in Miller’s playing with her harmonically inventive guitar accompaniment. The two musicians have played together for several years and often get together to perform at contradances in New England.

### 3. *La bastringue*

#### Les Franco-Américains:

Carole Levesque, vocal (b. 1950)

Leo DuFresnè, piano (b. 1927)

Lionel Oullette, fiddle (b. 1926)

Gordon Muise, bass guitar (b. 1935)

Harold Meuse, snare drum (b. 1929)

As a song, “*La bastringue*” has been traced back to 17th- or 18th-century France. These days, it is performed in the style of the “play-party” tunes of the southern Appalachians, in which instrumental music alternates with sung verses.

Les Franco-Américains is an ensemble of five to seven musicians who live in and around Lowell, Massachusetts, and perform throughout New England at venues such as fairs, festivals, and events organized by Franco-American social clubs. The current group has been together for five or six years, but several of its members have played together for as many as 20. All of the musicians describe themselves as “self-taught,” with a repertory that includes tunes and songs of French and Québécois origin as well as popular songs and tunes from Ireland, Scotland, and the United States.



Les Franco-Américains

### 4. *Soufflons-y* (Let's Blow on It)

Martha Pellerin (1961–98),

lead vocal, clogging

participants in *soirée*, antiphonal response

Martha Pellerin learned this *chanson à répondre* from a relative in Québec while working on an oral history project. In 1988, she began leading *soirées* in the Barre, Vermont, area with the goal of stimulating interest in Franco-American culture. According to local sources, a third of Barre's population is Franco-American, with the biggest influx of immigrants arriving in the 1920s and 1930s to work in the granite industry. “*Soufflons-y*” was recorded during a *soirée* at the home of Amedée and Louise Arguin, attended by about a dozen people. Some *soirées* come together spontaneously, while others are organized in advance, for example, by the Union de St. Jean le Baptist Club, a center of Franco-American social events, or by local heritage festivals.



A *soirée* in the Arguins' kitchen, Barre, VT

### 5. *La bonn' femme Robert* (Old Lady Robert)

Bernie Ouimet (b. 1941)

Normand Ouimet (b. 1953)

Marc Ouimet (b. 1975)

Michael Ouimet (b. 1980)

Bernie Ouimet first heard “*La bonn' femme Robert*” on the soundtrack of a video, *Bien des mots ont changés* (Lots of Things Have Changed), about the life of a Franco-American family in Worcester, Massachusetts. The melody and text on this recording are as he remembers them. A Québécois group, *Légende*, sings a variant of the song on a cassette entitled *Retour aux sources*. The song title used by *Légende* is “*Si j'avais ma fronde*” (If I Had My Slingshot).

The melody of “*La bonn’ femme Robert*” (transcribed below) illustrates a metrical feature characteristic of many Québécois songs and tunes: an “extra” note, or group of notes, which momentarily distorts the metrical regularity of the downbeat and thus the flow of the melody. In the transcription, the extra note (indicated by an arrow) is metrically interpreted as a momentary shift from 6/8 to 9/8 time. Metrically irregular tunes are known as crooked (*air crôche* or *air tordu*).

La Bonn' Femme Robert

Mon père n'a ja - mais por - té de casse car - ré  
 sur sa té - te Mon père n'a ja mais chan - té  
 ni de mes - - - ses ni de vé - pres Ouich to gais si j'a -  
 vais ma fron - de Sap - re gai j'te l'a - rais fron - dec Ouich to gais si j'a -  
 vais ma fron - de Sap - re gai j'te l'a - rais fron - dec

Bernie Ouimet, his brother Normand, and their nephews Marc and Michael perform as a quartet, mostly in the greater Albany, New York, area, where they all live. In 1953 Bernie and Normand's parents immigrated from Québec to the Franco-American enclave in Cohoes, a manufacturing town at the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson rivers, about 10 miles north of Albany and 30 miles west of the Vermont border. Bernie recounted that “we sang music in the family... We

kind of got it by osmosis.” For years, however, the Ouimets kept their music-making to a small circle of family and friends. It was in the early 1980s that a French professor, Eloise Brière, of SUNY Albany asked the Ouimets to perform at an evening of French theater and songs to cap a course on the Franco-Americans

of the Albany area. Since then, they have performed actively in festivals, university programs, and folk clubs. Bernie Ouimet says that one of the reasons they kept their music within the family for so many years was their feeling that, while the music meant a lot to them, it couldn't have been meaningful for a mainstream American audience. “The government and media do not encourage diversity,” says Bernie. But he acknowledges that nationwide respect for cultural diversity is increasing, and he feels that audiences these days are more prepared to respect the value of the music he performs with his family. The Ouimets want to thank Prof. Brière and also George and Vaughn Ward for encouraging them to perform publicly.



Marc, Bernie, Norman, and Michael Ouimet

## 6. *La guignolée*

Bernie, Normand, Marc, and Michael Ouimet [cf. track 5]

Bernie Ouimet learned the melody and a partial text of “*La guignolée*” from the singing of his family in Québec and filled out the rest of the text from a version of the song published in Ernest Gagnon's classic, *Chansons Populaires du Canada* (Montreal, 1880). Gagnon, quoting earlier sources, linked “*La guignolée*” to a calendar ritual brought to Canada from France that, during Gagnon's lifetime, had all but disappeared in both Canada and France.

In parts of France it was once the custom on the last day of the year for a group of revelers to visit each house in a neighborhood or community and ask for alms for the poor. The object of choice was *l'echignée*, or *la chignée*—literally, “backbone of pork.” Neighborhood children escorted the procession, yelling “*La guignolée qui vient!*”—“The *guignolée* is coming!” *Guignolée* seems to refer both to the procession and to the alms. At each house, the revelers would sing a refrain which contained some variation of the word *guignolée*, as, for example, in the text sung by the Ouimets: “*La guignolée, la guignoloches, mettez du lard dedans nos pochets!*”



(*Guignolée*, *guignoloches*, into our sack, salt pork do pack!). According to Gagnon, *guignolée* derives from *gui-[de] l'an-neuf* (New Year mistletoe) and represents a Christianized vestige of the Gallic Druids' veneration of the feisty plant.

The Ouimet version of "*La guignolée*" is an accretion of two texts, one evidently much older than the other. It follows Gagnon's published text for the first ten lines, but then segues to a description of a woman without a lover. The Gagnon text ends on the *guignolée* theme, with the New Year's revelers at the door of an almsgiver continuing to heckle the household.

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7. *Te souviendras-tu de moi?*  
(Will You Remember Me?)

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**Maria Perrault, vocal (b. 1921)**

*Te souviendras-tu de moi?* is a lyrical song that Maria Perrault remembers her father often singing to himself as he shaved in the morning.

Maria Perrault was four years old when her parents moved to Rochester, New Hampshire, from Robertsonville, Québec. Her earliest musical memo-

ries are of singing at home. "I learned all the songs I sing from my father, who learned most of them from his mother. They are the songs that everyone would sing. In those days, people didn't get out as much; people would just get together and make up songs." Perrault soon began performing at events for the sizable Francophone community in southeastern New Hampshire and regularly sang as a soloist at the local Catholic church. In 1991, Perrault performed at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, D.C. She still resides in Rochester with her husband.



Maria Perrault with her husband

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8. *Reel St. Hubert*

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**Dudley Laufman, fiddle, clogging (b. 1931)**  
**Jacqueline Laufman, fiddle, clogging (b. 1952)**

Dudley Laufman's interest in French music began when he was a teenager and was linked to his nascent career as a contradance caller. Laufman called his first con-

tradance in 1947, accompanying his dance prompting on the accordion. Instead of drawing on the repertory of standard western and southern square dance tunes popular among dance enthusiasts, Laufman chose tunes played by an older generation of rural New England musicians. Among these were many tunes from French Canada, and in the 1960s and early 1970s, when Laufman's contradances became popular around northern New England, the music of his Canterbury Country Orchestra became part of the repertory of a younger generation of folk music revivalists. Since the mid-1980s, Dudley and Jacqueline Laufman have performed as Two Fiddles in a style which they call "rough fiddling." This was the style, says Mr. Laufman, that was characteristic of early New England dancing masters who provided their own musical accompaniment for dance calling. In this recording of "Reel St. Hubert," the Laufmans both clog and fiddle. The same tune appears in a printed tune collection published in Québec as *Cache tes Fesses* (Hide Your Bottom) (Liette Remon and Guy Bouchard, *Air Tordus du Québec*, Vol. 2).

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9. *Les bûcherons* (The Lumberjacks)

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**Paul Baril, lead vocal (b. 1927)**  
**participants in *soirée*, antiphonal response**

Paul Baril learned this song as a youngster from his father, a stonemason in Barre, Vermont. "I come from five generations of stonemasons," said Mr. Baril. "I used to hear my grandfather sing, and my uncles. I got a lot of songs when I was young. I heard songs on the job [in the granite sheds]. They sang when they were working—when things went good, of course." "*Les bûcherons*," recorded during the same *soirée* in Barre, Vermont, as track 4, recounts the exploits of a lumberjack. The timber industry has long been one of the principal sources of employment in eastern Québec and New Brunswick, and the exploits of loggers and lumberjacks have been recounted and hyperbolized no less in the folklore of French Canada than of the United States.

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 IO. *St. Anne's Reel/Liberty*


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Patrick Ross, fiddle (b. 1982)  
 Roland Cotnoir, guitar (b. 1939)

"St. Anne's Reel," a Québec tune, and "Liberty," a tune from the southern Appalachians, have long been paired in a medley by Québécois and Franco-American fiddlers. Ross's style is a mixture of French and Nashville—the result of two summers at a fiddling camp run by Nashville fiddler Mark O'Connor.

Patrick Ross, a second-generation Franco-American, began fiddling at the age of eight by learning Québécois tunes from his father. A Vermont state champion fiddler, Ross has competed in and won several competitions. Ross attributes his fresh approach to French tunes to his work with Mark O'Connor: "The first time I went to Nashville, all I knew [were] the Canadian tunes.... So the next year I went prepared and I studied southern styles, and it got me interested. So then I tried jazz and some blues and now some of each. I can't play just a basic tune. I have to play it differently—jazz it up. Everyone has their own way of interpreting a tune."



Patrick Ross

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 II. *Le grain de mil* (The Millet Seed)
 

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Lucie Therrien, vocals, spoons, bodhrán

"*Le grain de mil*" is a traditional Acadian song which Lucie Therrien first heard on a recorded collection of French music. In this rendition, produced in a recording studio, she overdubs her own voice and adds wooden spoons and bodhrán—the latter to evoke the Celtic influence in Acadian music.

Lucie Therrien describes herself as an "eclectic" artist. She first played piano with her father, a traditional fiddler, at family music gatherings. Subsequently she received B.A. and M.A. degrees in music, as well as classical training in voice. She performs a variety of music—traditional, pop, jazz, and classical—throughout New England and in Québec, and has recorded 10 CDs and cassettes which include many of her own song compositions. In Therrien's view, her professionalism is fully compatible with being a traditional musician. "You never lose the traditional once you have it," she said. "I can learn just as well from listening to music as from reading it." Therrien speaks passionately about keeping Franco-American music alive, and considers herself part of the important process of moving the tradition forward through musical innovation.

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 12. *Entre moi* (Between Me)
 

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(Text and music by Josée Vachon)

**Chanterelle: lcf. track 1**

Josée Vachon, lead vocal, guitar  
 Donna Hébert, vocal, fiddle  
 Liza Constable, vocal, guitar  
 Alan Bradbury, bass

"*Entre moi*" was written by Josée Vachon. The lyrics and melody express Vachon's feelings about being caught between the traditions of her French heritage and contemporary American culture.

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 13. *Growling Old Man,  
 Grumbling Old Woman*


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Ronald West, fiddle (b. 1925)  
 David Carr, guitar (b. 1940)



Ron West and David Carr

"Growling Old Man, Grumbling Old Woman" is a Québec reel that has become a standard among New England fiddlers. Ronald West (Anglicized from Ouest) learned it from his father, who was also a fiddler and played regularly at contradances in northern Vermont. Besides his father, West considers the formative influences on his style and repertory to have been phonograph records of such well-known Franco-American fiddlers as Don Messer and Joe Allard. West lives in Richford, Vermont, literally a stone's throw from the Québec border, where he is still an active fiddler and teaches fiddling to several young students.

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 14. *Turlutte*


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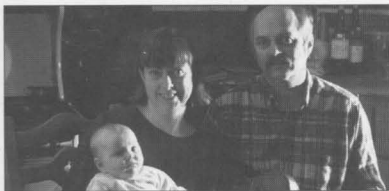
**Dent-de-Lion:**

Claude Méthé, fiddle (b. 1952)  
 Dana Whittle, vocal, clogging (b. 1956)

*Turlutte* is the Québécois form of a vocal style known generically in English as "mouth music." Mouth music is widespread in the Celtic world, where it is variously called "lilting," "diddling," and "*port a beul*." The basic technique is in all cases the same: a singer uses improvised vocables to represent the melody of a fast dance tune. This *turlutte* comes from a fiddler named André Alain, who lives near Québec City. Originally a fiddle tune, it was creatively trans-

formed into mouth music by Dent-de-Lion, though it is not usually “turluttet.”

Claude Méthé is a French-Canadian who began his musical life playing American folk music on the guitar and later began to explore more traditional French-Canadian music on the fiddle. Méthé formed Dent-de-Lion with the late Martha Pellerin [cf. track 4] and Dana Whittle, who came to French music from a musical background in bluegrass and American folk music. Dent-de-Lion was originally based in Vermont but is now operating out of Québec. Méthé says of the couple’s music, “I like it when an ethnic group goes back to its roots and creates its own particular sound, but for sure, in this music we have absorbed influences from both sides of the border.”



Dent-de-Lion

15. *Réveillez-vous, belle endormie*  
(Wake Up, Sleeping Beauty)

Claude Méthé, vocal [cf. track 14]

Claude Méthé learned this lyrical *chanson* from the singing of a Mr. Grenier of St. Hélène de Chester, Québec.

16. *Redwing*

Marcel Robidas and  
the Maple Sugar Band:

Marcel Robidas, fiddle (b. 1930)  
Bob Mazziotti, piano and fiddle (b. 1945)  
Bill Zecker, guitar (b. 1950)  
John Saucier, guitar (b. 1948)

Marcel Robidas, a first-generation Franco-American, has been strongly influenced by both traditional Canadian tunes and popular music. As he says, “You can take a simple melody and jazz it up and swing it—you’d be surprised what you can do with it, just jazzing it up.” In this recording, Robidas jazzes up “Redwing,” a tune from the southern Appalachians that has become an almost canonical part of the Franco-American tune repertory.

17. *J’entends le moulin* (I Hear the Mill)

Nightingale:

Jeremiah McLaine, accordion (b. 1957)  
Becky Tracy, fiddle (b. 1962)  
Keith Murphy, mandolin,  
piano, and clogging (b. 1965)  
with André Marchand, back-up vocals

“J’entends le moulin” is a French folk song that is as well known in France as is “She’ll Be Coming ‘Round the Mountain” or “Red River Valley” in the United States. In this contemporary arrangement, Nightingale leads into the song with “Louis Cyr,” a tune recently composed by Québec guitarist Jean-Claude Mirandette in honor of a mythic giant of the same name.

The members of Nightingale describe themselves as a “Vermont-based trio whose music travels through Québec, Newfoundland, Ireland, France, Scandinavia, and beyond to produce a blend of Northern music.” None of the musicians comes from a French background, and while French music provides only one of several musical themes in the group’s work, Nightingale has been well received by Franco-American audiences, who appreciate their interest in French-Canadian heritage.



Alberta Gagné at a *soirée* with friends

18. *Soirée Medley*

Michèle Choinière,  
lead vocal and piano (b. 1965)  
Jeanne Begnoche, lead vocal (b. 1938)  
Alberta Gagné, lead vocal (1908–99)  
Fabio Choinière, harmonica (b. 1928)  
Maurice Paquette, accordion (b. 1934)  
participants in *soirée*, antiphonal response

This medley of three *chansons* and two instrumental tunes was edited from some five hours of music recorded during a *soirée* at the Highgate, Vermont, home of Norman and Georgette Gagné. In editing, we tried to provide a sense of the spirited and informal mood of the evening. Songs were interspersed with conversation and jokes in French, and tunes gave rise to spontaneous dancing and much merriment. Throughout the *soirée*, Norman Gagné acted as an informal master of ceremonies, inviting one after another of the 30-odd guests to lead a *chanson* à

*répondre*, sing a solo *chanson*, or play a tune. Many of the singers came with homemade song books containing the words to their song repertory. Average age of those present: over 60.

The medley begins with a tune that the Choinière family learned from Québec relatives of their friends, the Gagnés. The Choinières never learned its name and simply call it “the Gagné tune.” (Recently Michèle Choinière identified it as “L’Oiseau bleu”). Next is “Festin de campagne,” a song that Jeanne Begnoche remembers from her childhood years in Swanton, Vermont, when she often attended *soirées*, both in Vermont and at the homes of relatives in Canada.



Michèle Choinière and her father,  
Fabio Choinière, at a *soirée*.

Next in the medley is “La genille” (The Rag), a tune which Fabio Choinière learned as a child in Highgate, Vermont, from his father, a fiddler who immigrated from Québec. After “La genille,” Michèle Choinière leads “Par un samedi matin” in a version created for the wedding reception of her parents, Lucille and Fabio, who were married 40 years ago in Swanton, Vermont.

The last *chanson à répondre*, led by the then 89-year-old Alberta Gagné, illustrates a distinctive feature of the Franco-American *chanson* tradition: mixed-language texts in which French is interspersed with English. Mrs. Gagné moved from her birthplace in Roxton Falls, Québec, to Vermont in 1913, when she was five years old. She didn’t remember where, or from whom, she learned this song. “My family all liked to sing,” she said. “If we heard some songs, we tried to learn and sing them. Most of them were French songs, but some were mixed English and French.”

## 19. *Valse du temps*

(Words and music by Michèle Choinière)

Michèle Choinière [cf. track 18]

Michèle Choinière was raised in a Francophone household in northern Vermont. She studied piano from an early age and began singing and playing traditional Franco-American music with her father, an accomplished harmonica player [cf. track 18]. Choinière is an avid composer of songs in both French and English. Her poetic lyrics often focus on nature, though she also writes of romance and of social issues related to being a young musician in the Franco-American tradition. “*Valse du temps*” uses the image of a flower to symbolize the blooming and fading of Franco-American culture. The song is reflexive: “I try to catch time, I try to remember....” But as Choinière sees it, the tradition is slowly fading away. Choinière plans more recording in the future. She is presently a high school French teacher.

## 20. *Patte du mouton* (Mutton Leg)

Laurier “Larry” Riendeau,

fiddle, clogging (b. 1927)

Henry Riendeau, guitar (b. 1928)

“*Patte du mouton*” is a version of a fiddle tune known in both New England and the southern Appalachians as “Paddy on the Turnpike.” In this performance, Larry Riendeau clogs while playing the fiddle.

Henry and Larry Riendeau are the sons of the late Louis Riendeau, in his day a well-known New England fiddler. Growing up in Berlin, a small city in northern New Hampshire whose economy centered around the timber and pulp industry, the Riendeaus were exposed to a variety of American music in addition to the Québec fiddle tunes they heard from their father. As Henry Riendeau says, “We kind of mix [it] all up and make some kind of a pea soup. If it sounds good to your ear, that’s what we like to play.”



21. *Valse des pasteureaux*  
(Shepherds' Waltz)

Rodney Miller, violin [cf. track 2]  
Anne Percival, guitar

Rod Miller learned this waltz from an old phonograph recording of a Québec fiddler. Waltzes were traditionally played at country dances to end the evening, and in that spirit, we also end with the poignant "Valse des pasteureaux."



Franco-American children's dance ensemble,  
*Les Danses des Enfants*,  
at Barre, VT, on French Heritage Day

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Performers on this recording who have produced self-distributed CDs and cassettes are listed below:

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