LES QUATRE VIEUX GARÇONS

Dewey & Tony Balfa
Tracy & Peter Schwarz
THE ARTISTS AND THEIR MUSIC

DEWEY BALFA is well known for his work with the Balfa Brothers, and for his continuity of that work as a spokesman for the revival of traditional music of his own people in particular, and for the music of all Americans and French-speaking people in general. It must be pointed out that this role as a cultural voice was not one for which Dewey ever asked. Circumstances directed the attention of researchers to Dewey, and the influential (if sometimes politically responsive) climates of CODOFIL, an acronym for the Counsel for the Development of French in Louisiana; the American Folklore Society; the Louisiana Folk Arts, et cetera, seconded this nomination. Although Dewey felt that there were better fiddlers, better spokespersons, and better cultural politicians than himself, he acknowledged that he combines these attributes as well as anyone and set to work. He has been active with the Louisiana State Arts Commission, a panelist with the Folk Arts division of the NEA, and most importantly, the visionary and chief executor of the traditional music appreciation program which he directs in Louisiana's public schools.

TRACY SCHWARTZ has achieved international recognition for her work with the New Lost City Ramblers, Tracy’s Family Band, The Strange Creek Singers, and for her appearances as a soloist. Her friendship with Dewey Balfa and with Dewey’s late brothers Will and Tony Balfa dates from their meeting at the Newport Folk Festival in 1964. Their musical association deepened with Tracy’s visits to Louisiana: Tracy and Dewey produced two Cajun fiddle instruction records at that time, both for FOLKWAYS. Between sessions and intervals of study at home, Tracy led the professional folk musican and a farmer, through the outer sixties, the entire 1970’s, and the 1980’s to date. Some personal recollections may illustrate the tone of those years. I can remember Tracy now as I often saw him at home returning from his collecting trips in Louisiana to resume round-the-clock work on his quintessentially Pennsylvania-Dutchum farmer. His career even survived the slump of popular interest in folk music and the point during which funded festivals decided it was no longer expedient to book the talents of “revivalists,” as we came to be called. None of these ironies was lost on Tracy. It is true that a great deal of nonsense was passed off as “folk music” during the last twenty years: but musicians of Tracy’s class, instructed for more than half their adult lives by traditional masters, are not well served by being dismissed as “revivalists.” On the contrary, musicians of Tracy’s class embody, in fact, the music itself; well-schooled, dedicated to an almost obsessive degree, and (as always) in flux.

LES QUATRES VIEUX GARCONS Dewey Balfa, Tracy Schwartz, Tony Balfa, Peter Schwartz

"The Four Bachelors would like to express their gratitude to Will Spires for his guidance, advise, and writing expertise."