VOIX DU SOL FRANÇAIS 1  Voices of French Soil

FRANCE: SONGS OF THE PROVINCES

Music and History by Emilie George
FOLKWAYS RECORDS FW 8601

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VOIX DU SOL FRANCAIS
Voices of French Soil
FRANCE: SONGS OF
THE PROVINCES
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by Emilie George

DESCRIPTION NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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Not only has music been linked with magic or divine rites for centuries, it continues to be a liturgical accompaniment today. As civilizations become more sophisticated, music no longer plays purely shamanistic, social or political roles (although these may be retained), but it becomes one of the arts. As an art form it becomes more removed from the people, but in all countries there has been a part of the ritual observances and has enlivened the distractions and pleasures. They have also been a facet of everyday life, a vehicle to express dissatisfaction with the religious, social or political conditions of the time. Music then, is an enchanting as well as efficacious means "...à la recherche de l’âme française" (in search of the French soul). Here is how Joseph Cantelouve expresses it in the preface to his enormous collection:

"In order to know, feel and understand the French soul well, or better yet, in order to awaken, preserve and extol it, one has only to study and propagate the folk songs of France. ..." 2

So then, "Here they are, like an immense sheaf of flowers gathered from all the countrysides of France!" 3

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2 Anthologie des chants populaires français, Vol. I, p. 6
3 Ibid, p. 5
"C'est bien l'ancienne que j'aime - Ann hini goz?" As the title indicates, this is a song in the Breton dialect, is known and sung in all of Bretagne, and is considered its anthem. It is in the form of a dialogue extolling the virtues of l'ancienne, the older woman who symbolizes Bretagne; la jeune, the young woman, symbolizes France.

SOURCE: J. Cantelouve, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 366-7 (French version given here.)

BÉARN

Béarn was a frontier province of southwestern France, included within the modern département of Basse-Normandie. Marguerite de Navarre made the Château de Pau (the historic capital) one of the intellectual centers of Europe during the Renaissance. Pau was also the birthplace of Henri III de Navarre, and when he became Henri IV of France, Béarn passed to the French crown (1589).

The Bearnais are circumspect and reflective, and their life in the mountains seems to have instilled in them, a seriousness of character and a high degree of poetic feeling.

"Adieu, fillette de Béarn: a soldier's farewell, is a chanson d'amour, and love songs make up a large part of the folk music of this area. Many of these songs have a certain broadness to them, as if they were meant to be carried afar when sung.


ORLÉANNAIS

Northeast of Toulouse and further upstream on the Loire is the province of Orléanais. It was settled by the Carnutes, a Celtic tribe, and well before the Roman conquest, it was the religious and political center of Gaul. Orleans (historic capital) along with Orléanais province were part of the royal domain of the Capetians, and were given at times in appanage to members of the royal family (the dukes of Orleans). The siege by the English (1428-29) threatened to bring all France under English rule until the appearance of Joan of Arc. After she had lifted the siege of Orleans, and had taken several other English strongholds, the tide of the Hundred Years' War was turned.

"D'où venez-vous si crétins?" Although France is basically a Catholic country, faith has not stood in the way of occasional anticlerical raillery. In fact, poking fun at "Monsieur le Cure", the village priest, is an old tradition. A spirit of malice often manifests itself in the folk songs of Orléanais, and is evident in this song.

SOURCE: Cantelouve, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 179

WORK SONGS

FLANDRE

French Flandre, whose capital is Lille, is located in the extreme north of France. It comprises two distinct regions separated by the Lys River: Flandre maritime, north of the Lys, where Flemish is spoken, and Flandre wallonne, south of the river, which is French-speaking. Its people have suffered interminable invasions and wars since time immemorial, and their heroism is legendary. Flandre, once a part of the Low Countries, has a complex history linked with that of Belgium and Holland. The territory of this province was annexed to France by Louis XIV in 1668. Flemish culture attained great prominence in both music and art during the 15th and 16th centuries.

"All, alic!" This is a worksong of the longshoremen of the port of Dunkirk. Apparently, it is so well known, that the melody is used for adding improvised couplets as the men work. Like many songs used to accompany hard labor, it has a leader-choral response pattern. Mancherino in the song probably refers to an unpopular boss.

SOURCE: Cantelouve, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 32

VENDÉE

Vendée is a maritime département of western France formed in 1790 out of the province of Maine-Loire. In French, there is an important distinction between pays and province. The province dates from the Roman occupation, and their boundaries were arbitrarily changed by powerful lords, wars, etc. Apart from "country," pays also has a more delimited meaning: that of a locality that has distinct ethnic and regional characteristics, the basis of which was, most often, the old Celtic clans. Within a province, therefore, can be many pays. Such is the case with the pays of Vendée. Vendean solidarity is probably most well known because of the Chouans --- the participants in the counterrevolutionary insurrection during the French Revolution.

"C'était la fille d'un laboureur." Vendée is mainly an agricultural area, and as a result, its folk music has many chants de labour --- songs for working the land, to accompany ploughing, planting and harvesting. Linguistic regional dialectical differences are apparent in the song.

SOURCE: Cantelouve, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 62-3 (Basically, this version is given, with a few slight variations.)

AUVERGNE

Auvergne is situated in the Massif Central which is called "the roof of France." It is a land of rushing waters, mineral springs, fertile plains and volcanic peaks which give some areas a "lunar aspect" "un pays de l'eau et du feu" (a land of water and fire). Clermont-Ferrand, its historic capital, was the birthplace of Pascal, and Cantelouve believes that the conflicting elements of Auvergne seem to have been mirrored in his soul, for he tried to reconcile faith and reason and was at once physicist, geometer, poet and metaphysician.

Auvergne was also famous for its school of Romanesque Architecture from the 9th to the 12th centuries. The Auvergnats descend from the Celtic Arverni, the redoubtable ancestors of Vercingetorix, who led the Gallic revolt against Julius Caesar. According to Cantelouve: "The songs of Auvergne constitute, without a doubt, the vastest, the greatest and the most varied folkloric musical heritage in all of France." "Berceuse, si tu m'aimes!" is a chanson de fileuse, a spinning song. It may also be called a chanson de métier, a work song, for the refrain rhythmically imitates the turning of the spinning wheel. The Auvergnat dialect is given for the first verse, as an example of Languedoc, but the song is given in its entirety in the French version.


TOURAINE

Located in the Loire valley, with its fields, orchards, vineyards and cultivation of flowers, Touraine has been called le jardin de la France (the garden of France). It is the old Gallic territory of the Turones, from whom it got its name. Tours, its capital, is one of the most famous cities of Europe. Touraine has long been renowned for its wine, about which even Rabelais sang its praises! This province earned the epithet, le jardin de la France, also for an atmosphere of elegance, luxury and majesty.
FEASTS AND HOLIDAYS

QUERCY

Within the province of Guienne in southwestern France, are the pays of Quercy, Perigord and Rouergue. Quercy corresponds to a greater part of the Lot (Haute-Quercy) and part of the Tarn-et-Garonne (Bas-Quercy) départements. It has limestone plateaus and fertile valleys, and is called le pays de chênes, the land of oaks, which is perhaps the origin of its name, for the Latin quercus, meaning oak. The province was subject to Saxon incursions during the 6th century, and like many other parts of France, it was also subject to Anglo-French territorial disputes. During the 16th century wars of Religion, Quercy was part of the Protestant and Catholic battlegrounds. In the 17th century, the province was a center of Huguenot resistance, and was the site of wars and massacres.

"A la Noel" - "Ena Nàdu: This is a lovely Christmas Carol with a haunting melody from Bas-Quercy. As the title indicates, it is in the Languedoc dialect of the area, but the French version is given here.

GASCOGNE

In 57 B.C. the Romans named Aquitania, all the lands west of the Pyrenees. At this time the inhabitants of the area were predominantly Iberian rather than Celtic. Later, Gaul was divided into its principal shrines and Aquitania formed three of them. One of these was Gascony. From 561 the country was overrun by Vascons and Basques from beyond the Pyrenees, and Aquitania was ravaged by Huns. In the 13th century it passed with the Aquitanian inheritance to the Plantagenet kings of England and wasn't recovered until the end of the Hundred Years' War (1453). Gascony comprises an assemblage of old fiefs and pays, but despite this, certain typical Gascon traits seem to have remained. Basque is one of the Languedoc dialects, but Basque is also spoken, notably in the area around Bayonne. A sentiment of separation still lingers there, but the Basques are generally tolerant and to possess an extremely high sense of honor. In addition, they are said to be boastful, energetic, imaginative and ebullient. (Canteloube, Vol. I, p. 308). Le gascon is one of the Languedoc dialects, but Basque is also spoken, notably in the area around Bayonne. A sentiment of separation still lingers there, but the Basques are generally tolerant and to possess an extremely high sense of honor. In addition, they are said to be boastful, energetic, imaginative and ebullient. (Canteloube, Vol. I, p. 308). Le gascon is one of the Languedoc dialects, but Basque is also spoken, notably in the area around Bayonne. A sentiment of separation still lingers there, but the Basques are generally tolerant and to possess an extremely high sense of honor. In addition, they are said to be boastful, energetic, imaginative and ebullient. (Canteloube, Vol. I, p. 308). The Basques have a certain flavor, accent and rhythm which are distinctive, and they are quite different from the folk music of other areas. Apart from the title, only the French version is given.


DANCE TUNES

ROUSSILLON

Roussillon in the extreme south of France included in its past, territories on both sides of the French-Spanish border (Cerdanya, Catalonia). It now comprises a large part of the Pyrénées-Orientales département. Its name is derived from the ancient Roman town of Ruscino which was settled by an Iberian people. Subsequent tides of invasions included: the Gallic Volci (3rd century B.C.), the Romans (2nd century B.C.), the Visigoths (462 A.D.), and the Arabs (720). When Pepin the Short expelled the Arabs, c. 750 Roussillon was annexed to Carolingian France. It was later held by the House of Aragon and by Spain and ceded to France in 1659. Catalonia has always maintained a strong spirit of independance, and despite its union with the House of Aragon and with Castile, it kept its own laws and cortes (representative assemblies) until the 16th century. The people of Roussillon are Catalans and share a similar culture and language (1g catalon - a Languedoc dialect) with their Spanish "brothers" across the border. A Latin vivacity and melodiousness is apparent in their folk music.

"Courante" - "Corranda: A courante is a quadrille as danced in Roussillon. Traditionally, these dance tunes were made up of a series of four line stanzas of rhymed couplets, each verse expressing a complete thought, called resenadillas. The first verse is given in catalan as a sample of the language.


BERRY

Berry, in the fertile Indre and Cher valleys, is the most centrally located French province. It is the land of the Bituriges (once the most powerful Celtic tribe), and Cæsar considered its capital, Avaricum (Bourges), the most beautiful city in Gaul. After the defeat of the Gauls by the Romans, the Bituriges and Arverni
We forbid all scribes, makers of songs..., fiddlers and other entertainers, to compose, utter or sing in public or in private any song... or song alluding to the Pope, our lord the King, the princes of the kingdom, or the ruin of a two months in confinement with rations of bread and water." 5

Usually lyrics were written for existing tunes, which included: church songs, Christmas Carols, court airs, scies or saws (i.e. familiar tunes that served for many songs) and even excerpts from operas. These songs were performed in private (e.g. the Sociétés Chantsantes, Singing Societies of 18th & 19th centuries) as well as in public places, but the favorite spot for the song-makers or chansonniers was the Pont-Neuf, the oldest bridge in Paris, whose name became synonymous with topical songs. Louis II de Condé, whose forces blockaded Paris during the Fronde, said to his soldiers before the attack on the capital: "Enfants, gare aux ponts-neufs!" (Fellows, watch out for the Pont-Neuf songs!)

"Malgré tous saints!" The Crusades gave rise to some of the earliest historical songs, and seem to have satisfied the manorial spirit and religious fervor of the time, but there were always some men who were loathe to go. There were many rallying songs written, therefore; some in sincere praise of the "Holy Mission," others excoriating the reluctant. The trouvère, Conan de Bethune, wrote many such songs, and was the official bard of King Philippe Auguste. King and his retinue (including Conan) abandoned Richard I of England (with whom the 3rd Crusade was undertaken) and returned to France, however, they were chastised in this song by Hugues D'Oray!

Sources: Castelain, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 110; and Chansons Populaires Françaises, sung by Françoise Prevost, Judson Records J3006. This variant is used here.


5 Barbeau and Sapir, Folk Songs of Canada, p. 1

In September of 1415 he took Harfleur and depended the inhabitants; in October he was victorious at Agincourt, and in 1420 (Treaty of Troyes) he was proclaimed regent and heir of France. Bitter feelings towards the British became manifest in the legend that English fishermen were "sons of hell," and had tails like the devil! There are a few historical inaccuracies in the song: (2nd verse) Henry V died at Vincennes in 1422, not at Saint Fiacre. The line should read: "Il est mort du mal de Saint Fiacre" (he died of Saint Fiacre's malady); (4th verse) the battle won by Admiral Pregent de Cocty actually took place later, in 1450.

Sources: J. B. Weckerlin, La Chanson populaire, pp. 24-25; Barbier and Vernillat, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 27-28 (This version given here).

"La chasse donnée à Mazarin..." As early as 1646 Paris was in a process of rebellion. The uprisings of this period are called the Fronde. This was during the minority of Louis XIV, and two foreigners were governing France: a Spaniard (his mother, Anne d'Autriche, the Regent) and an Italian (Cardinal Mazarin). Causes and factions of the Fronde: 1) A movement in the Parlement of Paris against royal absolutism; 2) Taxation of the Peers and property owners as well as the people; 3) Discontent of the great nobles whose power had been broken by Richelieu. Although there were opposing factions and changings of sides by some, all seemed to concur on one thing--their contempt for Mazarin. So great was this hatred that 6,000 pamphlets and songs were written against him! These dialects are called mazarinades; they are most significant, perhaps, as an expression of the esprit frondeur (spirit of revolt) --- the vanguard of the French Revolution.

Sources: Barbier and Vernillat, op. cit., Vol. 2, pp. 33-35

"Le bonnet de la liberté:" Here is one of the many songs of the French Revolution, preaching the motto of the new Republic: liberté, égalité, fraternité (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). "Liberty's bonnet" has a metaphorical meaning, certainly, but it also refers to an actual hat: le bonnet phrygien --- soft, red cap worn by the sans-culottes, the revolutionaries. The common people wore pantalons, trousers, rather than culottes, the knee-breeches identified with aristocracy. Even Louis XVI, maintaining his good intentions to the end, was seen at a window wearing this cap and drinking a toast to the nation, before his execution had been decided.

5. The old one's hair is frosty white
   And the young one's hair is golden blond...
6. The old one has a grey pallor,
   The young one's skin is white as snow...
7. She is cold as snow,
   Neither speaks nor looks at anyone...
8. However, and I don't know why,
   My heart goes thump, thump...
9. Thump, thump goes my heart
   When I knock on her door...
10. Go away, away, I say!
    Because the old one is a hundred times better...
11. Because the old one is a hundred times better
    And is not like the younger girls...
12. The old one is a Bretonne
    And the young one is a Frenchwoman...
13. I abhor the lousy Celt,
    The devil abides within her!
14. And I abhor the Frenchwoman,
    With her fine stockinged feet!
15. If you speak of marriage,
    Ah! Speak to me of the Bretonne...
    'Tis the old one I love;
    Yes, it is she!

   ADIEU, FILLETS DE BAYONNE (Chanson d'amour)

2. Auparavant que je m'en aille, 
   je te ferai mon testament;
   Je te ferai riche héritière
   De tous mes biens les plus valants.

FAREWELL, MY BAYONNE SWEETHEART
(LOVE SONG)
1. Farewell, my Bayonne sweetheart!
   Farewell, the flower of my spring!
   I'm leaving for the army;
   You won't see me for many a day!

2. But before I go,
   I'll write you my last will and testament;
   I'll make you the rich heiress
   Of all my most precious things.
2. --Que m'avez-vous apporté,} bis
   Monsieur le Curé?
   Des souliers blancs pour danser,
   Simone, ma Simone,
   Des souliers blancs pour danser,
   Ma petite mignonne!

3. --Quand est-ce que vous m'êtes donnés,} bis
   Monsieur le Curé?
   Quand tu sauras travailler... etc.

4. --Je voudrais me confessier,} bis
   Monsieur le Curé?
   Quel est ton plus gros péché?... etc.

5. --C'est d'un peu trop vous aimer,} bis
   Monsieur le Curé!
   Il faudra nous séparer... etc.

6. --Oh! Oh! alors je m'en mourrai,} bis
   Monsieur le Curé!
   Eh! bien! je t'enterrerais... etc.

7. --Est-ce que vous me pleurez,} bis
   Monsieur le Curé?
   Non, puisqu'il faudra chanter,
   Simone, ma Simone,
   "Requiescat in pace"
   Ma petite mignonne!

FROM WHERE DO YOU COME, SO FILTHY

1. From where do you come, so filthy} repeat
   Father?
   From the fair and the market,
   Simone, my Simone,
   From the fair and the market,
   My little darling!

2. --What have you brought me,} repeat
   Father?
   Some white dancing shoes, ... etc.

3. --When will you give them to me?} repeat
   Father?
   When you know how to work... etc.

4. --I'd like to confess,} repeat
   Father.
   What is your worst sin? ... etc.

5. --Loving you a little too much,} repeat
   Father.
   We will have to part ... etc.
1. Bergère, si tu m'aimes,
Soulage donc mon mal;
Tu asuras une robe,
Un joli tablier,
Et les autres pastourelles
N'auront pas un si beau! Refrain

2. Bergère, si tu m'aimes,
Soulage donc mon mal;
De toutes fleurs nouvelles
Te ferai un rameau,
Et les autres pastourelles,
N'auront pas un si beau! Refrain

3. Entends crier les pies:
Bergère, réveille-toi!
—En! Laisse donc les pies,
Aussi les ajassons;
Et tenons notre promesse
Et aimons-nous tous deux! Refrain

SHEPHERDESS, IF YOU LOVE ME
(Spinning song)

1. Shepherdess, if you love me,
Then please relieve my pain;
You shall have a dress,
And a pretty apron.
And all the other maidens
Will have none so fine! Refrain

2. Shepherdess, if you love me,
Then please relieve my pain;
I will make you a bouquet
Of every freshly blooming flower,
And all the other maidens
Will have none so fine! Refrain

3. Hear the magpies chirping:
Shepherdess, awake!
—Oh! Do not talk of magpies,
Nor of other birds;
And let us keep our promise
And love one another! Refrain

LE VIN EST NÉCESSAIRE
(Taverne)
(Chanson de vendange)

1. Le vin est si-bien-aimé,
Dieu ne le défend pas.
Il nous eût fait des coeurs de pierre
S'il eût voulu qu'on n'aimât pas.

2. L'amour est nécessaire,
Dieu ne le défend pas. (bis)
Il nous eût fait des coeurs de pierre
S'il eût voulu qu'on n'aimât pas. (bis)
ON CHRISTMAS EVE

1. On Christmas eve, at midnight, (2X)
The shepherds rose from their beds;
Quickly they went to the sheepfold
To watch over their flock:
"Shepherds, God have you in his keeping!"
Said an angel on high.

2. The angel then continued: (2X)
---There is something wondrous here!
The Savior has just been born,
Close by, in Bethlehem;
So leave the pasture,
And let us go, it is not far."

3. When all had arrived,
They fell down upon their knees;
They saw a light
Shining over the Child
And the Virgin, his mother,
Queen of all the saints.

4. Shepherds, we must pray to God,
So that he will save us, in life or death;
And so that his holy will
Will be triumphant in the war
Against the host of demons
Here on earth.

CATHÉRINE
LYONNAIS
(Ronde)
(Guitar chords: R. George)

2. Un jour, à sa prière,
Son père l'attrapa:
"Que fais-tu là, ma fille,
Que fais-tu donc ques là?
Ave Maria.....
Ave Maria....

3. —J'adore Dieu, mon père,
Que vous ne faites pas!
—Apporte-moi mon sabre
Et mon grand coutelas!
Ave Maria.....

4. —Pourquoi faire ce sabre
Et ce grand grand coutelas?
—C'est pour couper la tête
À cette fille-là!
Ave Maria.....
CATHERINE
(Ronde - Dance)

1. Catherine was the daughter,
The daughter of a great king.
Her mother was a Christian,
Her father was not.
Hail Mary, Saint Catherine!

2. One day, her father
Caught her saying her prayers:
"What are you doing, my daughter,
What are you doing, there?
Hail Mary, ....

3. —I am worshipping God, my father,
Which you do not do!
—Bring me my sabre
And my big cutlass!
Hail Mary, ....

4. —Why do you want that sabre
And that big cutlass?
—To cut off the head
Of this wretched daughter!
Hail Mary, ....

5. An angel arrives from on high,
Singing alleluia;
He took hold of Catherine
And carried her away with him.
Hail Mary, ....

6. The angel took Catherine,
And carried her away with him;
As for her wicked father,
To hell, he will go!
Hail Mary, ....

QUE TA LUMIÈRE, Ô BELLE LUNE
GASCONGE

(Angelus belge)

Dormez-vous donc, jolie dormeuse, dormez-vous donc!
Si vous ne dormez pas, à la fenêtre venez me voir!
Et vraiment dites-moi, ô ma belle étoile,
Si votre mère est éveillée ou si elle dort encore.

Oui, la maison est embelli par un four placé auprès.
Quoi? Ne pouvez-vous donc rester seule sans gardien:
Bien-aimée, moi je ne puis dire la vérité,
Parfois les gardiens eux-mêmes se trompent bien.

Entré, entré dans la maison, venant du dehors,
J'étais près de ma bien-aimée, oh! bien content,
Quand sa mère, nous entendant, se lève soudain;
Elle descend tout en colère, elle entre et nous surprend.

—Ah! Je n'aurais pas cru qu'il pût s'agir de vous!
Que vous puissiez vous trouver, pour notre honte, ici!
De ce qu'on dit, comment pourrais-je donc m'étonner,
Maintenant que j'en puis constater la vérité?

—Je dois donc m'en aller en vous disant adieu,
Et un adieu sans aucun espoir de revenir!
Mais si vous me gardez un peu de souvenir,
Je trouverai bien le moyen de venir vous voir!

Les gens racontent tant de choses, dont aucune n'est vraie,
Nous concernant, charmante étoile, vous et moi,
Dinant que l'un pour l'autre nous sommes pas faits.
A qui cela importe-t-il, si tous deux nous sommes d'accord?

1. Let your light, oh beautiful moon, brighten my path:
Because I still have a long way to go;
I would like to reach my beloved tonight.
Light my way to her door!

2. Sleep on, my pretty one, sleep on!
If you are not sleeping, come see me from your window!
And tell me truly, my beautiful star,
If your mother is awake or if she still sleeps.

3. Yes, this the house, with a bakehouse nearby.
What? Can't you be alone without a chaperone?
Beloved, I can not speak the truth,
Sometimes even chaperones misinterpret things.

4. Having entered the house from outdoors,
I was near my beloved! oh! so happy,
When hearing us, her mother suddenly arose;
She came down, furious, and took us by surprise.

5. —Ah! I wouldn't have believed that it could have been you!
That you could be here, to shame us!
How could I be surprised at what people say,
How that I know the truth of the matter?

6. —I must go then, bidding you farewell,
And a farewell, with no hope of returning!
But if you cherish, a little, the memory of me,
I'll find a way to come see you!

7. People say so many things, none of which are true,
About you and me, oh star of my delight,
Saying that we are not meant for each other.
Whose concern is that, if we are of one mind?

COUCANTES
ROUBILLON

(Arranged for guitar: R. George)

1. Si vous dansez la courante,
Venez dans notre quartier;
Les jeunes filles s'amourachent
Des garçons qui dansent bien!
2. Toute la nuit danseraient
Les filles du Roussillon;
Et nous autres chanterions
Si elle nous donnait un baiser!

3. Les prés sont pleins de fleurettes,
Et le temps se met au beau;
Allons danser, mignones,
Pour enjoler les galants!

4. A Perpignan elles sont belles,
À Cérét coupl-coupl;
Mais à Arles sont les laides
Et à Prats les séraphins!

5. Les jeunes filles du Roussillon
Dissaient qu'elles ne boivent pas de vin;
Mais un jour que j'y passais
Je les vis qui buvaient au pot!

6. Les courantes sont des courantes,
Les courantes sont des chansons;
Pour les femmes pain et fromage
Et aux hommes coups de bâton!

COURANTE

1. If you dance the courante,
Come to our neighborhood;
The girls all fancy
Fellows, who dance well!

2. The girls of Roussillon
Would dance all night long;
And we would sing,
If they gave us a kiss!

3. The meadows are thick with flowers,
And the weather's turning fair;
So and dance, then, all you maidens
To entice the gallants there!

4. In Perpignan the girls are pretty,
In Cérét, not so much so;
But in Arles, they are uncomely,
And in Prats, they're heavenly!

5. The girls of Rosier
Said they don't drink wine;
But one day as I passed by,
I saw them drinking from the jug!

6. Courantes are dances,
Courantes are songs;
For the ladies, bread and cheese
And a thrashing for the men!

He was so voracious,
He left only the hide
And the fleece of the animal
With which to make me a coat. Refrain

From its bones,
I made myself a flute
To make the ladies dance
In the new spring. Refrain

MUSIC AND HISTORY

Actually, politicians and the common people perpetually scheme to try to maintain the balance that is constantly threatened by that impassioned force called History. We probably tend, today, to identify "protest" songs with the civil rights or anti-war songs of the sixties or early seventies, but France has had a phenomenal tradition of topical songs that dates back to the Crusades and perhaps even earlier, and has continued up to the present. Songs were the newsmongers of the times, expressed praise of monarchs as well as scathing criticisms of those in power, and left no area untouched—including the private amours of the court. They ranged from elegant, courtly airs to the most ribald ditties. There were numerous laws forbidding them, but an edict of 1395 attests to their early existence. It was passed to suppress comments on the insanity of King Charles VI:

We forbade all composers, songsters and those engaged in entertainment, to compose, utter or sing in public or in private any saying...or song alluding to the Pope, our lord the King, the Prince of the Kingdom...under pain of...the penalties in conformity with rules of bread and water.

Usually lyrics were written for existing tunes, which included:

court airs, "scies" or saws (i.e. familiar tunes that served for many songs), and even excerpts from operas. These songs were performed in private ("Sociétés Chantantes"—Singing Societies of 16th & 19th centuries) as well as in public places, but the favorite spot for the song-makers or "chansonniers" was the Pont-Neuf, the oldest bridge in Paris, whose name became a synonym for topical songs. Louis II de Condé, whose forces blockaded Paris during the "Frondes," said to his soldiers before the attack on the capital: "Enfants, gare aux ponts-neufs!"

(Fellows, watch out for the Pont-Neuf songs!)

2 Barbeau and Sapi, Folk Songs of French Canada, p. 1
"Maléry tous saints!" The crusades gave rise to some of the earliest historical songs and seemed to satisfy the martial spirit and religious fervor of the time, but there were always some men who were loathe to go. There were many "propaganda" songs written, therefore; some in sincere praise of the "Holy Mission," others, exhorting the reluctant. The "trouvere," Conon de Béthune, wrote many such songs, and was the official bard of King Philippe Auguste. When the king and his retinue (including Conon) abandoned Richard I of England (with whom the 3rd Crusade was undertaken) and returned to France, however, they were chastised in this song by Hugues D'Oisy!


"La mort d'Henri V." This song was written during the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) between France and England, which began with Edward III's claim to the French crown (as grandson of Philippe 77). French territories were lost, and then most of them recaptured. Henry V of England renewed the war. In September of 1415 he took Harfleur and deported the inhabitants; in October he was victorious at Agincourt, and in 1420 (Treaty of Troyes) he was proclaimed regent and heir of France. Ritter feelings towards the British became manifest in the legend that Englishmen were "sons of hell," and had tails like the devil! There are a few historical inaccuracies in the song: 1) (4th verse) Henry V died at Vincennes in 1422, not at Saint Fiacre. The line should read: "il est mort du mal de Saint Fiacre" (he died of Saint Fiacre's malady). 2) (4th verse) The battle won by Admiral Prétet de Coëtivy actually took place later, in 1450.

**SOURCES:** J. R. Weckerlin, *La Chanson populaire*, pp. 24-25; Barbier and Vernillat, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28. (This version given here.)

"La chasse donnée à Mazarin!" As early as 1648 Paris was in a process of rebellion. The risings of this period are called the "Frondes." This was during the minority of Louis XIV, and two "foreigners" were governing France: a Spaniard (his mother, Anne d'Autriche, the Regent) and an Italian (Cardinal Mazarin). Causes and factions of the "Frondes:" 1) A movement in the Paris Parliament against royal absolutism; 2) Taxation of the peers and property owners as well as the people; 3) Discontent of the Great Nobles whose power had been broken by Richelieu. Although there were opposing factions and changing of sides by some, all seemed to concur on one thing—their contempt for Mazarin. So great was this hatred, that 6,000 pamphlets and songs were written against him! These distiques are called "mazarinades;" they are of much significance, perhaps, as an expression of the "esprit de revendait," (spirit of revolt) ---the vanguard of the French Revolution. (Repeat melody of first two lines)

"Le bonnet de la liberté!" Here is one of the many songs of the French Revolution, preaching the motto of the new Republic: "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity). "Liberty's bonnet" has a metaphorical meaning, certainly, but it also refers to an actual hate: "le bonnet phrygien" ---a soft, red cap worn by the "sans-culottes," revolutionaries. The common people wore "pantalons," trousers, rather than "culottes," the knee-breeches identified with the aristocracy. Even Louis XVI, maintaining his good intentions to the end, was seen at a window, wearing this cap, and drinking a toast to the nation, before his execution was decided.

**SOURCES:** Barbier and Vernillat, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, pp. 97-99
4. Mettes-vous sur vos gardes,
Chargé bien vos mouquesets,
Armé-vous de balbardes,
Si piques et corcelles. (Refrain)

5. —Vertublu, se dit Pierre,
Je n‘y veux pas manquer!
Car j‘y vendus mes terres
Pour les talons payer. (Refrain)

6. —Poin de cette bataille,
Chez moy, il n‘y a plus
Que les quatre murailles,
Tout mon bien est perdu. (Refrain)

7. Pour payer les subsides,
J‘ay vendus mon godel,
Ma pille, ma marotte,
Juments et ses vaches. (Refrain)

8. —Nay, pour payer les tailles,
J‘ay vendus mes moutons,
Je l‘ay faire tonnet. (Refrain)

9. — Qui y vendrac donc,
J‘ay vendus mes chevaux,
Ma charue et ses vaches,
Pour payer les impôts. (Refrain)

10. Coules prit son épée
Et ses pieuvres en sa main,
Dit: "Faut à la pipe!
Prendre cet imbécil!" (Refrain)

11. Guillaume prit sa fourche
Et trop de son chevalet,
Il dit: "Faut que je couse
Masarin au bateau!" (Refrain)

12. Notre France est ruinée,
Pauvres de ce Cardinal
Abrèger les années.
Il est auteur du mal." (Refrain)

THE CHASE IN PURSUIT OF MASARIN
BY THE PARLIAMENT
OF THE TOWNS AND VILLAGERS AT THE ALARM

1. Heurets, towns and villages,
You must sound the alarm.
End all the toils he wanted to decree.
REFRAIN: Sound the alarm
Din, din,
To get Masarin.

2. By night, this perfidious man
Carried off the King;
This cruel one deserves
To be put at bay. (Refrain)

3. This outrageously wicked man
Has completely ruined
All you village people
By levying taxes against you. Refrain

4. Put yourselves on the alert,
Load your muskets well,
Arm yourselves with halberds,
Fires and armor. Refrain

5. "Christi!" says Pierre,
I don‘t want to miss!
Because I‘ve sold all my land
To pay the taxes." (Refrain)

6. "To hell with this struggle,
At my house, there‘s nothing left
But the four walls,
I‘ve lost everything I own. Refrain

7. "To pay the taxes,
I‘ve sold my mug,
My frying pan, my pot,
Even my bellows." Refrain

8. "To pay my taxes,
I‘ve sold my sheep;
I sleep on the streams,
I haven‘t got nickel left." Refrain

9. "What the devil," said Rastache,
I‘ve sold my horse,
My plough and my cows
To pay the taxes!" Refrain

10. Colas picked up his sword
And some stones in his hand,
Said: "We‘ll have to get
That animal by some ruse!" Refrain

11. William picked up his pitchfork
And ran it through his hat;
He said: "I must put Masarin
To sleep in his grave!" Refrain

12. Our France is ruined,
We must shorten the years
Of this Cardinal,
He is a source of evil." Refrain

LIBERTY‘S BONNET
1. How this bonnet
Busts over benefits upon the good people of France!
How closely this bonnet
Is upon our heads!
Upon aristocratic faces,
Nothing causes such grumbles
As this bonnet?

2. Let this bonnet
Be your adornment, oh women,
Let it be the cap
Of little children,
To your husbands, I beseech you,
Give no other head-dress
But this bonnet.

3. Our bonnet
Will embellish all our celebrations.
Our bonnet
Will be kept spotless and clean,
Great God! How stupid the Bourbons are
For not having donned
Our bonnet!

4. By a bonnet,
Oh France, be assured of victory.
By a bonnet,
Your triumph will be complete.
Let the enemies of your glory
Be driven from your land
By a bonnet.

"Tesson" - actually, a French silver coin,
worth about 10-14 sous.