The World of Traditional Dance Music in Brittany

An exploration of the political, cultural and socio-economic reality of traditional dance music in Brittany 1992-1999

by

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A dissertation submitted in satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. by research.

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For Geneviève, Rory and Lochlainn

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I owe a great debt to the patience, understanding, friendship and generosity of many friends in Brittany - many of them musicians and experienced musicians, singers and dancers - who were willing to share their knowledge with me. I remember particularly the winter weekends I spent at Brigitte and Yvonnet Peron's house, swapping Breton and Irish tunes on the fiddle and at the home of Nanda and Ifig Troudey, my next door neighbours. It was Ifig who introduced me to the playing of the *mirepoix gaol* - the cornuchock slink* - (Breton-style clarinet) and the convivial coup de oître* (*drop of oître*). I had the great pleasure of playing, at a fast ec cev for the first time as Ifig's compère (partner) early in 1994. To those in Brittany and France who offered friendship, hospitality, information and advice, among them, Jean-Michel Veillon, Gildas Mord, Pierre Crépillon, Teckla Czerval, Jean-Pol Hoelewaer, Pat Makenna, Paddy O’Neill, Bernard et Nicole Lorieu (bibliothèque Gwalam), Daniel Givanilho, Michel Colieu, Yves Le Blanc, the Morvan family (Lacuzzo), the Babel family (Caille), the Bales family (Pazinnet), Michel Baud, Jean-Luc Doan, Charles and Pascale Quimbert - sincere thanks. To all in Brittany in whose company I’ve spent many happy hours, *Yec’hele marz* - Good health. Thanks also to the County Louth VEC for the grant which helped me to pursue my research at the University of Limerick.
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I owe a great debt to the patience, enthusiasm, friendship and generosity of my friends in Brittany - many of them talented and experienced musicians, singers and dancers - who were willing to share their insights into the Breton tradition with me. I remember particularly the winter evenings I spent at Brigitte and Youenn Peron’s house, swapping Breton and Irish tunes on the flute and at the home of Nanda and Ifig Troadec, my next door neighbours. It was Ifig who introduced me to the playing of the treujenn gaol - ‘the cabbage stalk’- (Breton-style clarinet) and the convivial coup de cidre (‘drop of cider’). I had the great pleasure of playing at a fest noz for the first time as Ifig’s compère (partner) early in 1994. To those in Brittany and France who offered friendship, hospitality, information and advice, among them, Jean-Michel Veillon, Gildas Moal, Pierre Crépillon, Teckla Coatval, Jean-Pol Huellou, Pat Mc Kenna, Paddy O’ Neill, Bernard et Nicole Loriou (librairie Gwalarn), Daniel Giraudon, Michel Colleu, Yves Le Blanc, the Morvan family (Lannion), the Ebrel family (Callac), the Eales family (Pluzunet), Michel Baud, Jean-Luc Darbos, Charles and Pascale Quimbert - sincere thanks. To all in Brittany in whose company I’ve spent ‘manys the happy hour’, Yec’hed mad - Good health. Thanks also to the County Louth VEC for the grant which helped me to pursue my research at the University of Limerick.
ABSTRACT

The World of Traditional Dance Music in Brittany

An exploration of the political, cultural and socio-economic reality of traditional dance music in Brittany 1992-1999

The concerns expressed in this work have a subtle interrelationship. They emerge from the authors background and are subsequently influenced by his experience as a performing musician and teacher in Brittany. The introduction contextualises this. This thesis offers an analysis of two important issues, the role of popular traditional dance music in shaping identity and the influence of that music on social and economic life. In the first instance it scrutinises the question of identity in Brittany and relates it to the popular dance music tradition. It then examines music professionalism and the more apparently esoteric area of Celtic music. This study is a multi-faceted look at the role of traditional music in a complex western European society.

Chapter 1 deals with the reflexive unselfconscious aspects of bretonnitude (Breton identity). Chapter 2 deals with the pro-active aspects of bretonnitude, that is Brittany’s relationship with France and the role of political and cultural activism. Depending on the situation, people mirror what is termed ‘compound ethnicity,’ this means that in different contexts they could be Trégorois, Breton, French or Celtique, (Celtic) or in some cases all at once. The theme of compound ethnicity is therefore shown to have local and global or ‘glocal’ implications. Breton traditional dance is the most accessible way in which both local identity (‘pays’) and Pan-Breton identity can be expressed. Festou noz (‘night dances’) are the keystone of contemporary cultural identity and their importance to musical and socio-economic life cannot be over stressed.

Chapters 3 and 4 are concerned with the socio-musical dynamic of Breton dance music. Chapter 3 looks at teaching structures in the contemporary environment and at the instruments most emblematic of the tradition. Chapter 4 looks at the musical dynamic involved in the performance of the vocal genres kan ha diskan and chant à répondre and of instrumental music. It also provides a look at the structure of three of the most popular traditional dance music genres played and sung at festou noz, situating them in an overview of Breton traditional music outside the context of the dance.

Chapter 5 provides the symbolic link between the themes of the local and the global. It begins by dealing with the fest noz as event. Together with French social legislation (the système d’intermittent du spectacle), the popularity of the fest noz has allowed a large body of professional traditional musicians to develop. The workings of this system are examined and the discourse provoked by the socio-economic impact of professionalism is outlined. It is within the world of professional traditional music that Breton music becomes Celtic music, moving from the dance environment to the concert stage both within Brittany and abroad.
Chapter 6 uses the concept of celtitude (‘ways of expressing or feeling Celtic’) to examine various popular understandings of the term Celtic. It documents the process by which combinations of mythic, historic, aesthetic and economic factors invest the constantly changing physical environment with reinvigorated cultural meaning. In Brittany the promotion of ‘Celtic’ music is the principal way in which this Pan-Celtic agenda is expressed. Perceptions of celtitude from both the anglophone and francophone perspectives are also looked at here.

As in other parts of the European continent, Irish music has become the international currency of folk music. In Brittany, however, because of its Celtic status, the Irish musical Diaspora significantly interfaces with the indigenous socio-musical world in a way that does not have any contemporary parallel in western Europe. Chapter 7 looks at the specific relationship between Brittany and Ireland. It considers the implications of the symbolic interfacing of Diasporic perspectives between the Irish Diaspora and the Celtico-Breton Diaspora.

The musical globalisation of bretonitude has valorised a social process and perceived reality which eclipses local and global in the term ‘glocal’. The fest noz (night dance) and French social legislation have played complementary roles over the last twenty years in the development of both music professionalism and the construction of popular celtitude. While popular celtitude must be understood in the context of Brittany and the western francophone diaspora, a sense of Ireland and Irish music has had a significant practical and symbolic role in its construction. In the Breton circumstance, the concept of place, genre and event is shown to encapsulate the parallel ideas of local and global identity as expressed through music.
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Preface

This study is based mainly on an extended stay of two full years in Brittany between September 1992 and October 1994. During this time I earned a living both as a professional traditional musician and as a teacher. I travelled throughout Brittany, performing regularly at many different kinds of musical events and I taught Irish traditional music at le conservatoire municipal in the town of Carhaix. I also taught English. My home was situated between the villages of Cavan and Prat close to the town of Lannion, an area popularly known as the Trégor (after the 9th century bishopric). For the most part this area is contained within the French governmental département of Côtes d'Armor. The map of Brittany at Figure 1 page 3 is a composite reference of use throughout the entire dissertation. The part of the Trégor that I am most familiar with is outlined in the boxed-off area on this map. This boxed-off area roughly corresponds to the detailed map - which shows the location of many of the places cited in this dissertation - at Figure 2 page 12. My knowledge of Breton traditional music is largely based on my experience of it in the Trégor.

I kept extensive field notes throughout this period and they proved to be an important research tool. Reference to printed materials in the form of periodicals, pamphlets, posters and newspapers together with photographs, was also a feature of my research methodology. I conducted taped interviews with many people,- a large number of them musicians - and I attended many distinctly Breton social events, again, for the most part in the Trégor. These events are called festou noz ('night dances'). I also attended dancing classes for a time at the local salle des fêtes in Cavan. Regular
trips to Brittany during the period of writing remained an ongoing feature of my research.

I have spent a large part of my adult life involved in playing Irish music and exploring what has came to be known as ‘Celtic music’. Another of my major interests has been the French diaspora. Brittany, at once part of the Celtic world and that diaspora, has held a fascination for me since my late teenage years. This thesis reflects a synthesis of these interests. Principally it offers an analysis of two important issues, in the first instance the role of popular traditional dance music in shaping identity, (both global and local) and in the second, the influence of that music on social and economic life. It is a multi-faceted look at the role of traditional music in a complex western European society.

Any supplementary information considered necessary to clarify some of the issues which arise during the writing, can be found in the endnotes for each chapter. This information includes the original French or Breton texts of any direct quotations. My own translations into English form part of the main text. The bibliography refers to all books and articles from periodicals, newspapers and Magazines, together with Internet sources consulted. When they first appear frequently used unfamiliar terms and words will be explained in the text, thereafter the reader may consult the glossary. The discography aims at directing the reader to some of the vast array of recordings available which pertain directly and indirectly to the musical world described in this thesis. A tapeography listing the field-tapes consulted both directly and indirectly during the writing is also provided. The time I spent in Brittany was rich in musical experience. It was a time during which I came to understand the diversity of regional dance repertories there and to appreciate the individual creative energies which go into assuring a future for Breton traditional music. Through my involvement with Brittany and its people over the years, I know that this social world and all the memories it evokes, both past, present and indeed future, are now part of my own musical identity.
Key.

Historic territorial limit.  

Ancient Bishopric boundaries and extant dialects of Breton *.

Departmental boundaries.  

'Sébillot' line.

Limit of spoken Breton in the 10th century.

Figure 1: Map of Brittany. This map was adapted from the *Atlas de Bretagne* (Skol Vreizh 1990). It shows all of the main geocultural and administrative spaces to which I refer throughout the dissertation. The boxed-off area shows the Trégor.

*The reference to 'extant dialects of Breton' applies only to Basse-Bretagne, the area west of the 'Sébillot line'. This linguistic line divides Basse-Bretagne (where Breton is spoken) from Haute-Bretagne.
Introduction

I have had a general interest in France, its language, history and culture, since I was quite young. My first contact with Brittany in particular however, was through the recordings of Alan Stivell. These recordings achieved a certain popularity in Ireland and Britain during the early 1970s and at that time they were ground breaking. They represented both a fusion of Folk and Rock genres and the first conspicuous allusion to a unified field of ‘Celtic’ music. This period also marked the beginning of my interest in the notion of a Celtic Diaspora taking in more than the vague idea of Gaeldom (essentially Ireland and Scotland) which had already taken root in my imagination. My sense of ‘Celticness’ at this time was a very personal construct, informed by conditions in my immediate environment and by a youthful grasp of European history. Alan Stivell was an ardent and successful promoter of populist pan-Celticism, responsible, in large part, for the re-kindling of notions of a Celtic world among many of the 1960s and early 1970s generation. His influence in Ireland has proved to be relatively insubstantial. However, it is in some way due to him and other Breton politico-cultural activists of that era, that Irish dance music has become part of the everyday social world of traditional music in Brittany and by extension France.

I felt no desire to question the existence of this ‘Celtic world’ promoted by Stivell and the fact that I found the music attractive strengthened my desire to find out more about it. In addition, it was clear that the musician was drawing inspiration from both Irish traditional music and from historical and political events in Ireland. This contributed to my curiosity. My interest in Brittany, therefore, began in the mid-1970s, during my formative years in the city of Belfast. My approach to understanding Brittany was and has remained an interpretative one. It is what Rice has described as the ‘hermeneutic arc’, a position which affirms ‘personal experience as the starting point for the interpretation of meaning’ (Rice 1994:10). In this ‘arc’ the
self interacts with the unfamiliar in a reciprocal exchange of information; consequently
the interpretation of events is an informed though intensely personal experience. It is
from this perspective that I examine the special relationship that Brittany and Ireland
presently enjoy. The observations I make below resonate throughout the writing of
this dissertation as reflections on the complexity of human culture.

My memories of Belfast in the early 1970s, although many of them are of happy
times spent in good company, remain tainted by an overwhelming sense of unease
and confusion. Not only were there practical difficulties for everyone in going about
their everyday business, but it was potentially dangerous for myself and many like me,
living as we did in a ‘mixed’ area to express ‘Irish identity’ in an overt way. A
‘mixed area’, in the Belfast of the 1960s and early 1970s, was an area where Catholic
and Protestant, Nationalist and Unionist lived side by side. These areas were largely
working-class in character. From the point of view of political unionism at this time,
Irish cultural identity was at best ignored and at worst actively discouraged. The
following anecdote provides a useful illustration of what I mean by this.

Among nationalists it was popularly held, that one would be excluded from
consideration for all kinds of work, if the word Irish appeared in the box marked
‘nationality’ on the application form. This included temporary civil service posts and
considerable sections of semi-state and private sector employment. All sorts of
strategies were employed in order to try to get the job and at the same time maintain
a form of street credibility amongst one’s peers. The most often suggested method for
dealing with job application forms was to write down ‘British subject’ or the anodyne
‘N.I.’, meaning ‘Northern Ireland’, instead of ‘British’ in the appropriate box. It
was argued that by acting in this way the statement of nationality became somewhat
apolitical or nebulous and therefore morally unimportant. It was considered
ambiguous enough to compromise the presumed unionist-minded individual who
would be scrutinising the forms, into fair-minded action. The question ‘School or
college attended' however, answered by ‘Saint Anything’, was cited as enough to put paid to any pretensions for employment which the aspirant (if a Catholic and therefore deemed to be inherently disloyal) may have entertained. Although among the less virulent forms of semi-institutionalised exclusion it was possible to encounter, experiences like this draw attention to the minutiae of the sense of alienation felt by all sections of the nationalist population of the city - and indeed Northern Ireland as a whole - at that time. Inevitably it served only to strengthen nationalist and republican fervour rather than discourage it.

As a result of the widely perceived necessity for the type of cultural subterfuge outlined above, expressions of Irish identity among people of like mind were intensely felt. In the context of a ‘mixed area’ in Belfast, they could perhaps be understood as a ghostly nationalist/republican mirror image of the official and unofficial iconic British empire loyalist paraphernalia, that was on prominent public display everywhere. Even though both unionists and nationalists may have got on well together on a day to day basis, on numerous occasions throughout the year many unionists unselfconsciously indulged in triumphalist expressions of identity. Alternatively no tolerance for the symbols of Irish identity was, as a general rule, extended nor expected. At that time nationalist paraphernalia, including the flying of the Irish flag in a public place, was against the law. In a ‘mixed area’, as already stated above, it was simply dangerous to display such symbols. Triumphalism was tacitly understood by all to be an ingrained part of the loyalist political heritage. One became acutely aware of this every year with the onset of the marching season.1 Sadly there are no longer any significant working-class mixed areas in urban Northern Ireland and tragically - after many years of horror and violence - these symbols are still very much a part of the confused and divided society which Northern Ireland remains.2

In the sort of climate outlined above, a sense of a greater ‘Celtic’ Diaspora, of which one could be part, was a surrogate strength, a pseudo-historical and mythic-
aesthetic alternative to the all pervasive reality of heavy provincial British *empireness* that was a defining feature of public life in Northern Ireland. In retrospect it served to nurture and sustain a contemporary sense of Irishness or ‘lightness’ in a state which seemed determined to negate even the geographical integrity of Ireland. A desire for ideological and cultural truths of a different kind helped to give Brittany and ‘the Celts’ per se, a niche in my imagination.

Much of the content of the popular Breton recordings of the 1970s, expressed a politico-cultural message, a strong connection between music, ethnicity and the expression of political opinions and social attitudes. In terms of my apprenticeship in Irish traditional dance music however, this type of connection was not significant. I was getting on with the acquisition of the musical and social skills necessary for participation in the scene. Rarely, if ever, did I think I was expressing my national identity when playing music, barring those occasions when it was implicitly unavoidable. One image which remains imprinted on my mind is that of a British army foot patrol sporting camouflage and blackened faces, scowling at locals after literally bursting into a traditional music session on one cold November night in Co. Tyrone in the late 1970s. The reels that night were played with what I can only describe as nervous though defiant gusto. On other occasions, I remember the inevitable call for a rendering of the Irish national anthem as an appropriate end to an evening of ‘Irish’ entertainment. This call, often as not, came from some bleary-eyed patriot who had been blissfully unaware of the music all night. Nationalism and the appreciation of traditional dance music are two different things, even though the former has on occasion attached itself to the latter. Traditional dance music in Northern Ireland, was and still is, played by all sections of the community. It may be culturally charged and increasingly called ‘Irish traditional music’ but it maintains an apolitical profile in the majority of circumstances. It can however involve many aspects of the individual’s psyche in its performance and this does not exclude feelings of pride in identity, be it
personal, group, local, regional or national.

In Brittany during the 1970s when Alan Stivell’s popularity was at its height, many young Bretons were drawn to Ireland for emotional and idealistic reasons. They were often viewed by other French visitors as aggressively chauvinistic, perceiving of themselves as having a greater ‘right’ to be in Ireland, (due to their status as fellow ‘Celts’) than that of a ‘French’ person per se. Most Irish people at this time did not make any distinction between French people and Breton people. After a while however, due to the insistence of these young people that they were Breton and not French, all French people in Ireland who showed an interest in Irish culture were increasingly viewed as Bretons. In my own case being Irish in Brittany and having an interest in Breton music and culture opened many doors. My status was enhanced by the fact that I was a traditional musician. In this sense the field-work process became ‘an exchange of philosophical information’ (Dumont 1992) which said as much about me, my Irish musician status and Ireland, as about Brittany, Bretons and Breton music.

Throughout contemporary Brittany many musical events are based on musique celtique. During the tourist season in particular they are commonplace. The word celtique (Celtic) is conspicuous, it is used habitually in Brittany (and indeed France in general) mostly in reference to music. Celtic music is perceived by many today as a musical category. As such it is crucial to the concept of contemporary Celtic identity and therefore a natural concern of this thesis.

For many years now Irish Music has occupied the terrain of the Esperanto of western European folk music and the ideological powerhouse of ‘Celtic’ inspiration. In order to better appreciate the contemporary genesis of notions of ‘the Celts’, the recent interactive history of Brittany and Ireland, which spans a period of around twenty years (1974 -1994) is important. Under the umbrella title of celtitude, meaning
ways of being or feeling Celtic’, chapter 6 examines the nature of contemporary Celticism, exploring the symbolic role of music, myth, history and circumstance in its formation and the socio-economic activity it generates. Chapter 7 looks at the impact of the Irish cultural Diaspora in Brittany, (as represented by Irish traditional dance music) showing how it becomes subsumed into a ‘Celtic Diaspora’ in the Breton context.

What I have endeavoured to do above is to relate my experience of growing up in Belfast and my awareness of a ‘Celtic’ Diaspora with my subsequent interest in traditional music and identity in Brittany. During this process two of the major concerns of this thesis have emerged. These are understanding contemporary celtitude ‘Celtic identity’ (chapter 6) and following on from this, situating the Irish musical Diaspora in the unique context of Brittany (Chapter 7). Before dealing with the global issues contained in celtitude and the Breton engagement with the Irish cultural Diaspora however, it is essential to understand Brittany from the standpoint of its local socio-cultural and political reality. That is, Breton dance music in Brittany itself, its relation to Breton identity and the relationship of Brittany to the French state. This involved the understanding a new locale from another perspective. Living in Brittany for over two years and experiencing the aesthetic values of its traditional music in an everyday context, focused me firmly on the Breton socio-political reality. This process has prompted the organisational logic of the writing of this thesis. Chapters 1 and 2 look at the component parts of Breton identity and how it has maintained itself within the context of the French state. Chapter 2 in particular shows how a place, (Les Monts D’Arrée) a night dance event (the fest noz) and a dance genre (the gavotte montagne) are of crucial importance to contemporary Breton cultural identity or bretonnitude.

For many generations, a popular construction of Brittany for the French bourgeoisie (Parisians in particular), showed it as an exotic rural backwater (see the
work of 19th century painter Paul Gauguin). The archetypal Breton wore clogs and dressed in a *folklorique* costume. Significantly, these costumes were associated principally with Basse Bretagne or Lower Brittany which is the area where the Breton language is still widely spoken. *Le chapeau rond* (round brimmed hats) worn by men were commonplace in Brittany until the mid-19th century and the women often wore *la coiffe bretonne*, an ornate hair adornment made of lace. All these articles of clothing are a genuine part of Breton folklore and tradition, but in the context of Parisian urbanity they were made the subject of ridicule. This attitude is best illustrated in the cartoon stories (including early films) of Bécassine, *La petite bretonne naïve* (‘the naive little Breton girl’) invented by Pinchon and Caumery. The first edition of Bécassine appeared in 1905 (*Petit Larousse* 1991:1139). These stories concerned the eccentric behaviour and antics of a young Breton servant girl working in Paris. This popular perception was constructed and cultivated, mainly in Paris, by the urban social élite of the time. The work of Theodore Botrel is often cited as the epitome of this caricaturism. Regional identity was only acceptable to the centre when it was a parody of itself. There are many examples of this in the global history of colonialism. In recent times however, this hitherto derogatory attitude has been replaced by a view of Brittany as a repository of traditional culture. Brittany and by extension Ireland occupy the same sort of idyllic Celtic terrain in the imaginations of many French people. Any understanding of how music in Brittany relates to the construction of *celtitude* and the Irish musical diaspora (the concerns of chapters 6 and 7) necessitates a prior look at Breton traditional music in its local context. This is the concern of Chapters 3 and 4 which work towards a description of the socio-musical dynamic of traditional dance music in Brittany itself. This world involves large numbers of people as musicians, singers and dancers. It has its own internal social dynamic (organisation, repertoire, learning, style and aesthetics) that has developed over many centuries. In chapter 3, teaching, learning and the social context of the dance are dealt with. It also takes a look at the musical instruments regarded as fundamental to the tradition. Chapter 4 provides information on the musical dynamic of traditional dance music and
identifies the most popular Pan-Breton round dances. A description of their basic movement motifs is also offered. This reflects the inter-relation between musical genre, place and event, identified in chapter 2. As all traditional music in Brittany is somehow related to round dancing chapter 4 closes with an overview of the pan-Breton music tradition.

Chapter 5 looks at both the social organisation and the economic implications of the fest noz. It also considers some recent performance directions which are directly related to this professionalism and the politics of musical aesthetics. The fest noz provides the link between pan-bretonnitude and pan-celtitude, the local and the global respectively, in Brittany. In its treatment of professional music, chapter 5 suggests how the fest noz together with French social legislation has helped to create the necessary conditions for this social process. Aside from the issues of identity and cultural interfacing other ethnomusicological concerns are reflected in this thesis. Principal among these are the perceived effects of increasing specialisation and professionalism on traditional musics. What I have undertaken above is to set my ethnomusicological concerns in context. I have done this by selectively condensing the historico-political process into a few carefully chosen paragraphs. These paragraphs contextualise my background as a traditional musician in Belfast during the 1970s, showing how my life experience affected my choice of study. John Blacking has commented on folk tradition in the following manner,

It is always available-for-use as a viable part of contemporary life, and can always be assigned new, contemporary meanings.
(Blacking 1987:10)

This all embracing statement reflects the concerns of this thesis precisely and the Breton musical tradition provides a vivid illustration of its implicit nuance and complexity. The following chapters examine this unique world of music.
Figure 2: References in Trégor. Adapted from the Michelin map of Brittany, (no. 230) this map locates many of the places in the Trégor mentioned throughout the thesis.
Chapter 1

BRETONNITUDE

Traditional music and round dancing are highly significant and accessible contemporary markers of pan-Breton identity, but there are other important components in the local sense of bretonnitude (Favereau 1993:124). This word effectively means - 'ways of being or feeling Breton'. During the course of the first two chapters of this dissertation, I will introduce and discuss various strands of Breton cultural identity and go on to place them in relation to traditional music for the dance.

The Pan-Celtic factor is integral to the study of modern Breton cultural identity but it is not the keystone on which bretonnitude rests. The issues of local and national/regional identities which make up bretonnitude are complex and in order to emphasise their importance I will consider them separately from the global identity arena of celtitude ('ways of being or feeling Celtic'). This is not an attempt to disentangle bretonnitude from celtitude but rather to identify the localised aspects of identity in Brittany and to show how they have found real expression in the French state.

The Breton language and the politics of language are of crucial significance to Breton identity and will be discussed below. Speaking Breton is at once a de facto reality and an expression of proactive cultural activism. For this reason it is a continuing motif in this thesis. However, this issue is of itself too complex and important to examine fully here. For a thorough examination of it, see, We are not French (Mc Donald 1989) and Bretagne Contemporaine (Favereau 1993).
The nature of Breton culture

Brittany has the same organisational structures and modern socio-political values as the rest of France but there are fundamental cultural differences, even after centuries of political union, which set it apart from France. Because of its history and cultural distinctiveness, Brittany (in common with Corsica and the Basque country) does not fit neatly into the French state. In contemporary terms, these important cultural differences are most noticeably encapsulated in the speaking of the Breton language and the continued popular practice of traditional music, song and dance. Events involving music conspicuously identified as ‘traditional’ are part of everyday life. However, contemporary Breton cultural identity is not so easily defined.

I suggest that bretonnitude should be understood as a concept which encompasses all the varying intensities of Breton ethnicity. This may range from the consciously politico-cultural to the almost reflexive and unconscious. Implicit in the above description is on the one hand the virtual absence of any sense of Breton identity and on the other, a constantly lived perceived authentic lifestyle. While there are specific historical reasons for the existence of this range of attitudes (and they will be looked in more detail below), the choices with regard to Breton identity are essentially cultural. They represent a series of binary oppositions that in some cases juxtapose the negative with the positive, resignation with proactive behaviour, the philistine with the enlightened, the sublime with the ridiculous. In the case of most individuals however, observation of such simplistic opposites is rarely possible. The Breton writer Morvan Lebesque describes the process of becoming Breton as a choice.

Brittany hasn’t got any formal identity papers, it only exists in as much as in each succeeding generation some men recognise themselves as Bretons. At this moment in time children are born in Brittany. Will
they be Breton? nobody knows. To each one when he comes of age, the choice of discovery or ignorance.8 (Lebesque 1970: 18)

Writing in 1981, Lois Kuter identified the spectrum of attitudes to Breton identity that had taken root over the early part of the 20th century as follows,

Motivated by a desired change in social and economic status, Bretons got rid of ‘old ways,’ including the Breton and Gallo languages, costume, and traditional styles of music and dance. Negative Breton identity is an identity of self-rejection. Bretons who view Breton identity positively may also reject the idea of being Breton . motivated by a belief that Breton culture...is a thing of the past...its disappearance is an inevitable result of ‘progress’. Another view of Breton identity emphasises the idea that Breton culture has always been in evolution. ....Breton traditions are by definition changing expressions of a culture rather than fixed customs passed down intact from one generation to the next. (Kuter 1981:141)

Of the three standpoints outlined by Kuter, the third, the proactive view, is that taken by people who are cultural activists.9 Such people are usually articulate and motivated both socially and politically. Due largely to the cultural initiatives and strategies begun by cultural activists in the 1950s, a new pride in Breton identity has steadily increased. Surveys carried out in the département du Finistère in 1992, indicate conclusively that positive attitudes to the preservation and promotion of Breton language and culture are now the norm in Brittany (Favereau 1993:34-35).

Most older people unselfconsciously refer to themselves as Breton but are equally happy to pronounce their French citizenship. The life experience of the younger generation (people up to the age of 50) has been characterised by different events and elements to those through which the older generation lived. I have often heard members of the older generation say ‘We are Breton, but we’re French as well’. 10 In view of the fact that they lived through the trauma of the
second world war and Nazi occupation, this statement is neither surprising nor
ccontradictory. An elderly lady, a neighbour of mine, told me that the war
changed attitudes, “We danced in the square at Prat before the war, wearing the
côiffe...It was beautiful, after the war we were too unhappy to enjoy ourselves”
(Personal communication, November: 1993).

It is clear that the profession of Breton identity displayed by the younger
generations since the 1960s is generally more resolute, self-confident and
seemingly unambiguous, than that of their grandparents, fathers and mothers. This
in some way illustrates an important mutation in the profile of the political forces
representing bretonnité over the course of the 20th century. Although the URB
(Union Régionaliste Bretonne) which existed from the 1880s until the 1930s was
essentially a cultural regional movement, Breton autonomist movements like Breiz
Atao (‘Brittany for ever’) promoted the 19th century concept of the sovereign
nation state. This position was compromised by global events in the European
theatre of conflict during the second world war. Movements for national
independence are still an articulate and vociferous voice in Brittany, but by and
large separatism of this genre has been largely replaced by a form of politico-
cultural Euro-regionalism.

This development reflects the current western European political climate
which promotes a move away from a Europe comprised of watertight self absorbed
nation states to a Europe defined by autonomous neighbourly culture zones or
regions (see chapter 2). Groups seeking Breton independence from France still
exist, but this more fluid, more implicitly democratic type of perceived political
reality, serves to undermine or dilute the heavy presence of the 200-year-old
Jacobin centralist French state. This in turn has had the effect of negating any
perceived need for violent action (always a minority strategy) in the eyes of the
majority of Bretons. Western European regionalism appears to allow both for the
positive promotion of difference and for the development of separate socio-economic strategies.

What is true of all Bretons however, is that the politico-cultural residue of de facto membership of the French state as citizen for many generations has had its effect on their identity. When combined with strong Breton cultural traits that transcend statehood this creates a mixture that I explain as ‘compound identity’. In ‘compound identity’ merging takes place and things cultural, political and social, on a variety of levels, become at times indistinguishable. In the context of the French state this is clearly illustrated by another comment from my elderly neighbour vis-à-vis the economy, “Buy Breton ..buy French, to save our jobs ..if we buy Breton it’s good for France” (Personal communication, November 1993).

Older customs and ways of life seem to coexist in close proximity to the ultra-modern in Brittany. This is well illustrated by a sight familiar to me as I travelled to work as a teacher of English at the high-tech telecommunications centre of Pleumeur-Bodou near Lannion. Many of the older people I passed each morning on the road to work wore clogs. To view this against the backdrop of the huge white dome of the Planetarium and the satellite dishes of the centre seemed at times incongruous. Although the heavy wooden clog is by and large a thing of the past in most of western Europe, many people in rural Brittany still use it as their working footwear. The mechanics in my local garage wore the clog, not as a quaint hangover of folk-life, but as a practical and safe form of protective footwear. To the outsider this is a striking feature of everyday Breton life. A working theme village, the village gaulois, where many children participate in community life as ‘ancient Celtic villagers’ also lies in the shadow of Pleumeur-Bodou telecommunications centre. Whilst this village has an undeniable folklorique aspect, it is a commercial venture with a social conscience. It offers practical economic support to a village in Africa and allows children and youths
to take on unfamiliar roles and responsible tasks in a community environment. The collective image of the telecommunications centre, the *village gaulois* and the people wearing clogs, suggests a simplistic though powerful metaphor for one of the ways that I experienced Brittany (see Plate 1 page 19). France was the last major European power to industrialise and industrialisation came to Brittany (and the west of France in general) long after the Parisian basin and other regions. In the light of this, perhaps the image I have painted above is more understandable. The modernisation of Brittany's communications infrastructure dates only from the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{13}

These first two chapters are intended to provide essential information which constantly impinges upon any discussion of cultural life in Brittany. By drawing attention to the extra-musical ingredients which constitute *bretonnitude*, they help situate traditional music and identity within a more general understanding of the place itself. The random building blocks of Breton identity dealt with below may be compared to a configuration in a freeze-frame snapshot. Even at that they are practically impossible to pin down and have a quality akin to quicksand. When she says that "the very categories of 'French' and 'Breton' slip and slide, and might move away as fast as the researcher runs in pursuit" (1989:22), Maryon Mc Donald perfectly describes the futility of definitive categorisation and stereotyping in regard to Brittany.
Plate 1: Images of Brittany. These photographs show the village Gaulois and the telecommunications centre at Pleumeur-Bodou.
We can say that the essential differences between French and Breton identity in the Breton context can be over-simplified as, on the one hand political (read French) and, on the other cultural (read Breton), but Mac Donald's comment sums up the nature of much anthropological investigation. It illustrates that culture is an organic and shifting consensus between individuals. It has little to do with atavistic race memories carried in blood and genes. In this respect, Breton identity and aspects of French identity in contemporary Brittany are in many ways inextricable. They inevitably blend and separate with varying shades of intensity depending on the context of the moment.

Territory

Brittany is part of the territory of modern France. Its present area corresponds more or less to that already extant in the 10th century by which time it had became an independent feudal Duchy. At this time it was comprised of a group of seven comtés (counties) which were ruled by powerful local seigneurs (lords) under the loose control of one Alain Barbetorte (see Favereau 1991:10-13, Kuter 1981:43-44). In ecclesiastical terms this area was divided into nine évêchés or bishoprics, for the most part corresponding to the comtés. In geographical terms it represents the whole of the large peninsula which juts out into the Atlantic with the Bay of Biscay on its southern shores and the English channel to the north. In governmental terms it is a région (region) consisting of 4 départements, Côtes d'Armor, Ille et Villaine, Finistère and Morbihan. Although it is now no longer part of the administrative region called Brittany the western part of the modern département of Loire Atlantique (part of the Pays de la Loire region) and the city of Nantes is also included in historic Brittany. Nantes was the original seat of the Breton Parliament in the 10th century. The départements as
presently constituted date from the post-revolutionary Napoleonic era (see Figure 3 page 22).

Ever since the parliament was moved there in the 16th century, the capital city has been Rennes. It has a population of 197,536 people. The other major towns are Lorient, Quimper, Brest, and St. Brieuc. In an easterly direction Brittany extends roughly to the towns of Bourgneuf, Clisson, Ancenis, Châteaubriant, Vitré and Fougeres. I have heard this particular border line referred to on the French media periodically as le rideau d'artichauts - meaning the 'Artichoke curtain'. This allusion to one of Brittany's most famous crops, although it may be expressed in a light hearted manner, annoys some Bretons. Brittany has one of the most idyllic coastlines in western Europe and (in common with most parts of contemporary France) it is rich in local culinary specialities (see below).

The principal geocultural division in Brittany is based on the linguistic divide, that is the eastern part where no Breton is spoken, Haute Bretagne, (higher Brittany) and the western part, Basse Bretagne, (lower Brittany) which is the homeland of the Breton language (see Figure 3 p22). This line is based on research carried out by Paul Sébillot in 1886. It is often referred to as the 'Sébillot line'(Favereau 1993:40). I will deal more fully with this important issue, which I describe as geocultural perceptions of space, in chapter 2. I will also show how traditional music and dance form important contemporary local identity markers that sub-divide these larger entities. There are no high mountains in Brittany but the central upland areas of Basse Bretagne, the Monts d'Arrée and the Montagnes Noires, known collectively as les montagnes, are charged with a cultural significance much superior to their physical size.
Figure 3: Departmental boundaries. This map shows the administrative départements, major cities and towns and the ‘Sébillot’ line. (*Note that this département is administratively part of the ‘Pays de la Loire’ region).
This area is peppered with Dolmens (prehistoric tombs) and menhirs (standing stones) which, although pre-Celtic or natural phenomena, are of crucial symbolic importance in terms of popular Celtic iconography (see Chapman :1992).  

Economy

One of the mainstays of the Breton economy is agribusiness. That is intensive pig and poultry farming and the food processing industries allied to these practices. The département of Côtes d’Armor has the biggest concentration of pig farms in the region. As a direct consequence of this industry, surface water pollution is a problem and nitrate levels are often well above the norm. In general Brittany is a fertile land with a temperate climate ideal for vegetable crops such as the cauliflower and the artichoke. On leaving the port of Roscoff in mid-Summer one of the most noticeable features of the landscape is the immense hedge-less fields of artichokes which line either side of the road for some distance.

Brittany also has a substantial fishing fleet, based mainly along its southern coast in places like the port of Douarnenez. The diminution of this fleet however caused by fierce international competition and a consequent drop in fish prices, has been the cause of much social unrest since the early 1990s. From time to time fishermen have resorted to maximum effect forms of protest such as dumping entire catches on the quay-side or on the streets. Unequivocal protests of this nature - with various interest groupings showing complete solidarity - are a dramatic feature of social agitation in French society. During my stay in Brittany (1992-94) I witnessed a mountain of potatoes being heaped on the main TGV (Train à Grande Vitesse) line between Brest and Paris at Landerneau, causing major delays to train services (see Plate 2 Page 25). In a country which relies heavily on the efficiency and reliability of its trains, this sort of action hits hard. I also saw the town of Lannion brought to a complete standstill on market day when
protesting producers dumped tons of vegetables on every street corner. To achieve this a huge fleet of tractor trailers were mobilised and deployed with what amounted to almost military precision.

As indicated above, the most outstanding geographical feature in Brittany is its magnificent coastline dotted with picturesque fishing ports, rocky coves and a great variety of sandy beaches. These attract vast numbers of tourists every summer. Recent figures indicate that it is becoming by far the most popular destination for French holidaymakers, with numbers on a par with those heading to the Côtes d'Azur.\textsuperscript{16} Foreign tourism is also significant. Many people from neighbouring northern European countries flock to the south coast of Brittany in particular during the summer. Maritime-based tourism has led to a proliferation of \textit{ports de plaisance} or Marinas and as a result service industries (seafood restaurants and theme bars) have grown to cater for this seasonal influx. While these sectors provide employment during the busy holiday period many of these resorts are virtual ghost towns during the rest of the year. Tourism is however Brittany's most significant growth industry. Pan-Breton and indeed Pan-Celtic cultural identity is manifested in the proliferation of large organised events featuring various forms of traditional music. These take place during the summer months. Brittany's cultural identity is of considerable importance both to tourism and music professionalism (see chapters 5, 6 and 7).
Plate 2: Potato protest at Landerneau. These photographs show tons of potatoes heaped by farmers on the TGV train line between Brest and Paris. Landerneau is near to Brest. This protest caused maximum disruption to train services.
Recent demographic change

There has been a steady flow of people leaving the rural areas (particularly the interior) to work in the larger towns since before the First World War, with the majority migrating to Paris. With the advent of the railway, Paris became more accessible than many other parts of Brittany. This trend is shared with most of the northern half of France. Agricultural practice has become progressively less labour intensive than in the past thus constantly encouraging this exodus. This migratory trend is in the process of showing a reverse but many small villages in the centre of Basse Bretagne have literally died during the course of the last 60 years. It is not unusual to walk around a completely deserted hamlet where the houses are virtually intact maintained only for relatives who will never return except on holiday. The French Military and its transitory population of personnel is a major presence along the coast-line. All of the country’s Atlantic fleet is based at Brest, while Lorient has a large Submarine base. The majority of the Breton population with the exception of the city of Rennes, live in towns near to or on the coast. Many of the sumptuous dwelling houses to be found in the more scenic locations however, are owned by Parisians, other ‘foreigners’ and ex-patriot Bretons who are there only in the summertime.

Paris is the home of many Breton cultural organisations. It has a cultural centre, ‘La mission Bretonne’, which hosts language courses, concerts and festou noz (night dances) on a regular basis. The area around Montparnasse train station is often cited as the Breton sector of Paris. It still has a considerable number of cafés bearing conspicuously Breton family names in its immediate hinterland. During the mid-1970s I vividly remember seeing what I presumed to be Breton musicians playing bombardes, binioùs and bagpipes (see chapter 3) inside this huge train station. They were allegedly seeking to earn their fares
home. Taking a leaf from their book, I financed my first trip to Brittany at this time by busking.

In one unique movement many Bretons from the region of Gourin, emigrated to America during the latter part of the 19th century. It is estimated that upwards of 8000 people made this move over the years. The option of going to America remained in the popular imagination in this area until quite recently (Rene Couteller, personal communication, July 1989). Rene Couteller was born in New York and lived there until his early teens. It was in the 1960s when the family returned home to the Gourin area. For figures concerning population movement from Brittany to Paris and other destinations see Favereau (1993: 55-65).

Spoken Languages

The three languages found in Brittany are French, Breton and 'Gallo'. Gallo (the Breton word for French) is the name given to the dialect of the langue d'oil group spoken in the non-Breton speaking part of Brittany (see Petit Larousse 1991:459 and 614). Traditionally a non-literary tongue, it is Latin-based and one of the precursors of modern French. It is still widely used throughout much of rural Haute-Bretagne although its speakers tend to be the ageing rural population. Because of its lack of a literary tradition it is often referred to as a patois or 'rural dialect'. It has much in common with other rural dialects found throughout the northern half of France. Henriette Walter suggests that extant rural dialects throughout France are now spoken only among the ageing and sedentary populations (1988:127). By comparison with the Breton language, which is one of the Celtic languages of Europe, Gallo has received little attention. Some promoters of the language assert the integrity of Gallo and frown upon descriptions of it as a patois. Articles which reflect this concern have been published in Gallo but many regard this as the myopic pursuit of a handful of
intellectual linguists. Used by a Parisian or urban-dweller in culturally sensitive company the term *patois* can be viewed as a disparaging or politically incorrect remark. In my experience however many of its speakers would themselves refer to their local speech proudly and with great affection as their *patois*. An elderly native-speaker of Breton who was a good neighbour of mine in the Trégor, asserted that many of the people who lived on the far side of Guingamp, in the area now described by many as the *pays Gallo* (*Gallo* country), could not speak French properly and that they spoke *'une espèce de patois'* - *'a form of local dialect'* (see Figure 1 page 3).

*Gallo* can most readily be heard in the lyrics of the dance songs of the *'pays de Loudeac'* in Haute Bretagne (see chapter 4). It is acknowledged that an understanding of its nuance, its accent, is essential for proper traditional instrumental practice. When *Gallo* dance songs are turned into *'proper'* French, many maintain that they lose their rhythm and therefore their immediate instinctive impact (Michel Baud, Personal communication, May 1993). One could say they lose their meaning. It appears likely that in the years to come, it is only through the medium of these songs that *Gallo* will survive.

The Breton language is indigenous only to the area known as Basse Bretagne (lower Brittany) or western Brittany, slightly less than half of Brittany’s total area. Its continued health however is close to the hearts of most cultural activists in Haute-Bretagne, where in many cases it has not been spoken since the 16th century or was never spoken at all. Research has shown that it was spoken in what is now part of Haute-Bretagne in the 10th century (see Figure 1 page 3). Although traditional music is by its nature twinned (in Basse Bretagne certainly) with the promotion of the Breton language, many well-known contemporary practitioners are not language activists and do not speak Breton. This fact can be a periodic bone of contention between these musicians and the more zealous of the
language activists. Musicians who speak the Breton language are favoured by language activists in Basse Bretagne over those who do not. The latter say that a knowledge of Breton and by extension the texts of musical forms, is fundamental to successful instrumental performance in the bas - Breton genres. Whilst there can be no doubt that such knowledge will certainly add to the individuals cultural depth and be of great significance to the language movement, it does not hold true. Many of today's top performers in these genres cannot speak fluent Breton but this has not stopped them from attaining celebrity status in the instrumental field. Singing of course is a different matter. All bas - Breton traditional singers who perform songs in Breton, are by definition active in the promotion of the language. For details on linguistic issues concerning Breton and the history of the language see Ó hlifearnáin (Euromosaic report, 1994).

Everyone in Brittany speaks French whether as a first language or in tandem with Breton. It would now be very rare indeed to meet a monoglot Breton speaker. As the language of political power and trade French became established as early as the 15th century in the major urban centres, particularly along the coast. These urban centres housed the institutions of central government and came to be provincial satellites of Parisian culture, implicitly denigrating the local or parochial. According to Hervé Abalain the French state has operated a policy of 'linguistic repression' since the early 16th century at least and this policy was reinforced by the revolution (see Abalain 1989: 208-210). That said, although French literary norms had been established from this time, local patois remained widely spoken until well into the 19th century. In practice the population of vast areas of France was bilingual (see Lodge 1993:142 and Walter 1988:124-128). Although a potential source of enlightenment for the people, the spread of formal schooling throughout the 19th century also accelerated the process of both linguistic domination and enculturation. Lois Kuter writing on this issue says that, "French institutions emphasise an identity of 'French citizen' leaving little room
for the expression of any other identity” (Kuter 1981:3). On an anecdotal level the many forms (sometimes referred to as *paperasse* literally ‘bumph’) and procedures of the highly developed world of bureaucracy one encounters in France, are a constant reminder of this important reality.

Apart from the very proactive and significant milieu of enthusiastic and dedicated language activists, it is in the mainly agricultural communities of Basse Bretagne and among the population over the age of 40, that Breton is likely to be the day-to-day spoken tongue. Outside of the middle-aged and older rural population therefore, it is rare that anyone would not have recourse to using French in a normal working day. That said, in the case of the Breton language, we are referring to a large body of people. According to recent estimations (see Favereau 1993: 28-29 and Brud Nevez 1991: no. 143) upwards of 250,000 speak Breton regularly and more than 600,000 understand it. In addition, *bas*-Breton speech in French is peppered with Breton words, phrases and constructions. I have often heard my own children using Breton expressions picked up from their school friends in this way, unaware that it was in fact Breton they were using.

Vast numbers of people in Basse Bretagne, although they do not use the language regularly, have a passive knowledge of it. This can include anyone over the age of 35 years of age from a rural area. In the main these passive speakers do not speak Breton to their children and the language is declining in its native speaking heart-land. People in this age group have often told me that they had regular contact with ageing grandparents, who only used French on rare occasions. They learned and used Breton in this context during their childhood. Their own parents however, people who left home to work in the towns during the time of mass rural exodus in the post second world war years, no longer saw a value in continuing to use Breton. As a result this generation subsequently lost the reflexive habit of using the language and consequently did not pass it directly to
their children. Until the 1970s Breton had little or no presence in formal state education.

Arguably, because of this historic situation, many people perceived politico-cultural strategy as an issue over which they could exercise little control or as an issue which was simply not their concern. Policy in this regard was decided and imposed or initiated by an élite. During my stay in Brittany I found attitudes with regard to Breton are at the most very pro-active and at the least generally supportive.

It is the type of linguistic rupture described above that Breton language activists are attempting to reverse. Foremost among these activists in the field of education are the promoters of the *Diwan* (meaning literally ‘seed’) schools and of bilingual classes in public and private schools. *Diwan* educate students through the medium of Breton. Many Breton language activists today believe that regional autonomy and the economic empowerment of Breton, equating the ability to speak the language with upward social mobility, is the key to guaranteeing its future survival and growth. Although in the short term at least, charges of the creation of a cultural and linguistic élite may reasonably be levelled by some critics of such a vision, past experience has shown that it is precisely in this way that one language has prospered whilst others have weakened or disappeared. The examples of this are numerous world-wide.

An American linguist who spent many years during the 1970s and 1980s, learning Breton in a rural Trégorois community, told me that he believed that the demise of Breton as a popularly spoken language was at present underway (personal communication, March 1993). He suggested that the ‘francisation’ of Basse Bretagne was the inevitable price to be paid for prosperity. For him the language in its rural milieu represented an entire value system not easily translated.
into modern capitalism. He is not alone in this opinion. Nostalgic for the recent past, he said that the Diwan schools were simply mirror images of the French education system. Breton, he concluded, is increasingly spoken with a French accent. On the other hand however, language activists involved in the teaching of Breton in schools have told me on many occasions that all languages have changed in this way for similar reasons. Both bodies of opinion share a concern for the disappearance of local dialects, but activists prefer to see Breton mutating and changing rather than disappearing.

Practically all the observations made above with regard to Breton are confirmed by the findings of the very latest opinion poll carried out by the newspaper Le Télégramme, France 3 Ouest (T.V. station) and the TMO institute in 1997. This survey concluded that 240,000 people are native speakers and that there is an ongoing move in the linguistic base from rural to urban. This indicates that the language is increasingly becoming the property of the culturally-active educated middle classes. This brings up an additional fear that idiomatic local speech will be lost as Breton completely changes its social base. In this survey there is something to be gleaned for everyone, optimist and pessimist alike. Even though attitudes to the language and its preservation have never been more favourable, the final observations of the commentator Ferdi Motta vis à vis la fête de la langue Bretonne (‘The celebration of the Breton language’) held at Louargat in 1997 are telling. He says ‘Yet again this year Louargat will resonate with bitter sweet joy’. The crucial importance of the Breton language to Breton identity however, is well summed up by the words of one of Brittany’s most popular balladeers, Gilles Servat,

The Breton language is not the sum total of Brittany but without it Brittany ceases to exist. Or perhaps just a one-legged Brittany. (Le Peuple Breton 1996:15)
Considering the number of people who speak Breton, when one compares its situation to other Celtic language speaking areas like Wales or Ireland, the language is not particularly favoured by the mass-media. There is at present only 60 hours of television per year - transmitted by F 3 Ouest - devoted to Breton (Favereau 1993:215). People who speak Breton are known as bretonnants. Native speakers of Breton who are not language activists also use this expression to refer to people who have taken the decision to learn and promote the use of the language. In this way the word can be said to have two meanings. The Fête de la langue Bretonne held each May is the largest public celebration of the Breton language. It includes concerts, festoù noz, musical competitions and forums. I visited the 1994 fête, which was held at Spézet in central Finistère. The town was publicly transformed into a little Breton-speaking kingdom for the duration of the festival. The entire community appeared to collude in sign-posting the towns shops and streets in Breton. In an important symbolic gesture, all monetary transactions are carried out in the Lur, an invented Breton currency which one obtains by exchanging French francs for it at an exchange rate of one franc to one Lur on entering the town.\(^{24}\)

It may have had little or no place in the official educational apparatus of the state but the Breton language did not decline dramatically between the late 18th and early 20th centuries. This has been attributed both to the robust oral tradition of popular song and to religious evangelism in the late 17th and 18th centuries. The desire of the church to save souls fostered the publication of religious tracts and cantiques (canticles) in Breton. This in turn had the effect of promoting a fair degree of literacy among the peasantry. In terms of literacy then the sacred became the precursor of the secular. In addition peasant poets began to have access to the ever improving print medium. By the 1820s broadsheet ballads or chanson populaire sur feuilles volantes sung by noted singers at all sorts of gatherings had achieved a notoriety and popularity which was to last for well over
a hundred years. The *feuilles volantes* are a window into an older rural society in Brittany, a society which changed dramatically after the advent of the First World War. Together with religious texts they are the link between an old literary tradition and the work of modern Breton writers. In no small way they ensured that a fatal rupture between the oral and literate traditions did not occur. Daniel Giraudon has this to say concerning their importance:

> With *the Buhez ar Sent* (‘Stories of the Saints’), the broadsheet ballads represent a seed, an embryonic library, even in the houses of the very poor; they are nothing but hand-me-down copies of the original, but elementary as they are, those who are able to read them are well aware of the supplement to human dignity which they bring (1985:126).²⁵

The importance of popularly generated everyday texts to the maintenance of a culture can never be underestimated. Bearing this in mind serves to lead us into a discussion of something very basic to human existence - food and drink.

Food and Drink

Any party or *fest noz* in Brittany has a significant food and drink element, a veritable celebration of simple, delicious and plentiful gastronomic delights. The most traditionally Breton of these are pancakes or *crêpes* (*kramponnez* in Breton), cakes (*kouinn aman*), cider (*chist’r*), mead (*chouchenn*) and red wine (*gwin ru*). Many varieties of home-made *lambic* (strong alcohol made from apples) may be offered as an aid to digestion. After several glasses of *lambic* the need to dance becomes as much a therapeutic necessity as it is socially desirable. The traditional Breton stew, known as *kig ha farz*, contains three varieties of meat and a heavy helping of boiled buckwheat.²⁶ It is habitually served in copious quantities and once eaten is not easily forgotten. There is a certain *opulence de la vie* in Brittany, which is very attractive to the compulsive bon viveur. Although the consumption
of red wine is now standard for all social classes in Brittany, I was told that up until the mid-19th century the staple drink of the peasantry, apart from water and buttermilk, was cider. It was the movement of soldiers during the military mobilisations of the Napoleonic era and the first world war which gave rise to a more general use of wine. The spoken Breton language has many Frenchisms but the reverse also happened to some degree. Breton-speaking conscripts added a verb to the French language during this time. The verb is *baragouiner*, meaning to jabber or talk gibberish. In fact the starving conscripts, freshly arrived at the front from their homes in Basse Bretagne were pleading for food and drink, *barra, gwin*, bread and wine respectively.

The most obvious manifestations of Breton identity that touch all visitors to Brittany are culinary specialities and drink. This is not so surprising given the reputation of contemporary France in general with regard to food and wine, each *région* having its own *spécialité*. In France, Brittany is not known for its cuisine but this opinion could be considered as a stereotypical hangover from a declining, though still present attitude which juxtaposes Île de France (Paris) with *La Province* (anywhere-else-in-France). In this juxtaposition the self-conscious centre assigned different characteristics - both complimentary and dismissive - to the periphery. All of these characteristics were conveniently low-profile and non-threatening to the cultural integrity of the state, allowing for a colourful impression of France’s differences, without any implied tension. 27

Concerning traditional foodstuffs in Northern Ireland, Fintan Vallely makes the point that certain aspects of material culture, like food, do not have the same potential for conflict as music for example. In this context because of their assumed rootedness and importance to ethnic identity, it is essential to draw attention to folk and traditional musics in particular. He says,
In practice there is no political problem in each community identifying with low-profile cultural paraphernalia - like soda bread, potato bread and accents, but, ....the very public issues like sport and music are polarised. (Vallely 1995:25)

The North of Ireland also provides a classic case study concerning the issue of conflict over culturally charged conceptions of geopolitical space. In ‘Northern Ireland’ (emerging as the least contentious way of referring to the place) a simple, apparently unselfconscious remark, even a word, may signify a range of information about the cultural and political attitudes of the person who uses it. The Breton situation is not the same as that which pertains in Northern Ireland but the issue of ‘low-profile cultural paraphernalia’ and by implication ‘high-profile cultural paraphernalia’ does deserve some explanation. Throughout Brittany, non-divisive low-profile cultural paraphernalia, of both French and Breton provenance coexist, ingrained in daily life. For example, Breton traditional foodstuffs may be served in situations that are familiar throughout France - events like the local *concours de pétanque* (bowls tournament), the *concours hippique* (horse show) the *kermesse* or *fête du village* (garden fête) or the painful sounding *ball trap* (clay-pigeon shoot). These type of events do not have any apparent cultural meaning. Like telephone boxes, shop fronts and kitchens however, they are unselfconsciously Pan-French. The *fest noz* on the other hand, is unequivocally a popular and uniquely Breton event.

Breton farmers enjoy the right to brew their own cider for personal use and they also sell off their excess product. Practically everyone in rural Brittany either makes or knows how to make cider. *Lambic* or *eau de vie* (‘water of life’) is the preserve of a smaller number of farmers and not to be indulged in without expert local guidance. As in practically all cultures, among the first words or salutations learned are those associated with food, drink, greetings and farewells. Many non-Breton speaking Bretons in both Haute and Basse Bretagne use Breton language
words habitually - they are important expressions of identity, well embedded in popular culture. *Kenavo-* goodbye, *yec'hed mad* - good health!

Varieties of *bretonnité*

It is true that to say that a considerable section of the population of Brittany live their lives unconcerned with the more pro-active aspects of Breton culture. However, anyone who has had any involvement with Breton culture, be it through Breton language, music or dance, is certainly touched by culturally-charged definitions of space and is likely to refer to them unselfconsciously. Before moving on to deal specifically with pro-active politico-cultural activism in the next chapter, it is important for perspective to return briefly to the possible ranges of identity that are to be found in Brittany. I do this in order to re-draw attention to its nuances and complexities. I began by mentioning the concept of compound identity and I will now return to it briefly. This concept more adequately encompasses *bretonnitude* than sectioning off degrees of ethnocultural identity. The examples cited below present a complex ethnographic scenario.

Many people have some aspect of *bretonnitude*; the *BCBG* (*bon chic bon genre* - translates as yuppie) in a downtown area of Rennes, the Breton speaking elderly lady whose favourite singer may be Edith Piaf and who takes little interest in *festoù noz*; the callow youth from the suburbs of Brest, Nantes or Paris who follows the *fest noz* trail every weekend sporting appropriately Celto-Breton regalia. The passage of *bretonnitude* into youth culture is very conspicuous. Recently a young Breton friend of the family, my son and I spent some time discussing the youth culture scene in Brittany (personal communication, June 1997). Among the usual ‘techno-heads’ and ‘grunge rockers’ which make up part of the perceived alternative (to pop)
music scene, another group emerged. This grouping is known as the *baba breizoù*. This translates roughly as ‘Breton heads’ and it refers to the youthful partisans of Breton/Celtic culture who frequent festoù noz regularly and demonstrate their cultural choices in the way they dress. They might wear Triskel (Celtic Spirals) earrings or features from the *Gwen ha du* (‘white and black’ - a reference to the Breton flag) such as a necklace with a heraldic *hermine* suspended from it. In speaking of this group in the third person our young friend looked at his own clothing and surprised, exclaimed - ‘In fact I’m a *baba breizoù!*’ Following traditional music and its attendant generic developments is very popular and ‘cool’ among a large section of the younger population all over Brittany and beyond. While this has been the case for many decades, the naming of the group so to speak, is a new development. The *baba breizoù* or *breiz* are recognised as a distinct youth grouping by their peers.

The features of interaction between people, such as the preamble to meals (the *apéritif*) the friendly discussions centred around the relative charms of *un bon petit vin* (‘a nice little wine’) and the like, are no different from the social mannerisms which are general throughout French society (see Ardagh 1977:685). I have attended *aperitifs* hosted by Breton separatists. Although all these features can be considered as low level cultural paraphernalia, it does not make them unimportant, they are an unequivocally Pan-French, indeed Pan-Mediterranean, aspect of life in Brittany. A feature of compound identity. I suggest that compound identity is the only way to consider the question of identity in the context of a complex society, where the socio-cultural and the political bleed into each other and become, at times, indistinguishable.
The identity markers referred to above are apparently undemanding or low profile, they are nonetheless of immense importance to the sense of place which Breton people have. In referring to the proposed creation of an autonomous region (Nunavut) for the Inuit people in Canada’s Northern Territories in 1999, Mme Michèle Therrien, Professor of Inuit studies at INALCO (L’Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales - Paris) has this to say,

The Inuits have repeatedly said that they have a language, a culture and a territory. Without saying any more they offer a positive image of themselves, explaining that they have strong identity markers in the way they eat, the way they talk to children and how they dream. The relationship they have with the game that they hunt goes far beyond the needs of survival.29 (Le monde diplomatique, August 1997:8)

This statement puts forward an interesting and inclusive view of cultural markers. It makes no attempt to rank them in order of importance.

This chapter has looked at the extra-musical, localised socio-cultural and economic realities in Brittany. The main aim of the next chapter is to clearly identify the proactive elements of bretonnitude; the elements which more obviously and directly effect cultural expression. Chapter 2 examines the history of Brittany, the nature of the French state and Breton political activism. It draws attention to the crucial importance of this activism for the promotion of Breton culture. The last important task which chapter 2 undertakes is to identify cultural space and relate it to dance music in particular.
1 The month when most loyalist demonstrations - including those of the Orange order - take place is July. It is known as 'the marching season'. It is the tradition of the Orange order to parade in order to celebrate the victory of William of Orange and the Protestant ascendancy during the Williamite wars of the 1690s. This is also the time when - 'traditionally' - the Nationalist population have either taken their holidays or put up with widespread intimidation and provocation. The so-called 'Drumcree stand-offs' have brought these parades to international attention during the past few years (1996-98).

2 The recent peace agreement however and the principle of 'parity of esteem' it espouses vis-à-vis the two main political traditions (April 10th 1998), does offer a glimmer of hope. The possibility of magnanimity and generosity triumphing over suspicion and intolerance on both sides is now present.

3 Due to the biggest 'loyalist workers' strike ever to take place, a Stivell concert due to take place at Belfast's Ulster hall (1974) was cancelled. Although entirely circumstantial, this was an ironic twist of fate given my state of mind at the time.

4 A famous example of this type of signalling was the weather map used until recently by Ulster television which showed a map of Northern Ireland in an apparently unattached island setting.

5 The playing of what are called in Ireland, 'Party songs' is another matter. Party songs in the context of political groupings in N. Ireland and indeed Ireland in general, are partisan songs which represent either the 'Orange' or 'Green' traditions. In most cases - excepting perhaps some of the songs which pertain directly to the 1798 rebellion - they are associated with Protestant Unionism and Catholic Nationalism respectively.

6 A cabaret artist, Botrel made a career of being a professional Breton in Paris during the latter part of the 19th century. Whether this was a clever survival strategy on Botrel's part or simply a reflection of the cultural attitudes prevalent in the urbane society of La belle époque is not clear. It was probably a bit of both. Some Parisians still refer to La Province (anywhere else in France) as something distant and implicitly less important.

7 I use bretonnitude in this instance much as it is used by commentators and writers in Brittany itself, as an alternative to bretonnité. Bretonnité can perhaps be viewed as concentrated on the political aspect of being Breton, whereas bretonnitude is the sum total of the range of cultural identity. Essentially however the two terms often mean the same thing, 'ways of being or feeling Breton' - Breton identity markers.


9 Some examples of clearly outmoded viewpoints concerning Breton identity, the 'self rejection' Kuter spoke of, could still be detected as late as 1994. One local trader in the Breton-speaking community in which I was living, refused to speak Breton with her elderly customers, at least in view of strangers like myself, sometimes admonishing them for using the language.
10 On est Breton, mais on est Français aussi.

11 Some Breton political activists collaborated with the Nazis during the war. This contributed to a rejection of Breton autonomist movements after the war (see chapter 2).

12 Achète Breton ...achète Français, pour sauver nos métiers...si on achète Breton c’est bon pour La France.


14 “Brittany has a population of 3 847 663 persons according to the 1990 Census. Some 1 052 000 of these live in the heavily urbanised Loire Atlantique area which is not part of the administrative Région, whose own population is then approximately 2 800 000. The surface area of the whole of Brittany is 43 462 km². This is slightly higher density than the French average.” (O hFeurnáin 1994).

15 La roche tremblante (the trembling rock) is one such symbol. This huge boulder can, if pushed at the right spot even by a child, be made to rock gently. It is to be found in an ancient wooded area close to Huelgoat near Carhaix, the largest town in central Brittany.

16 For detailed information concerning population and economy see the QUID (annual encyclopaedia) Éd. R. Laffont, Paris 1996.

17 Industrialisation happened much later in France than in Britain or Germany and later in Brittany than in most other parts of France. The movement of people from the land reflects this reality.

18 The various langue d’oil dialects of the northern half of France - heavily influenced by the Francs - became the basis of modern French. The langue d’oc, including Occitan and Provençal, are the dialects of southern France. ‘Oil’ and ‘Oc’ meant ‘Yes’, hence the two appellations. Today’s various dialects of langue d’oc have more in common with Catalan than modern French (see Walter 1988: 52-53).

19 According to research, Breton was spoken throughout at least half of what is now Haute Bretagne during the 9th and 10th centuries (see Favereau 22-40: 1993). In layman’s terms the Breton language place-names dotted throughout western Haute-Bretagne are clear evidence of this. Many Breton language scholars, including Francis Favereau, are natives of the Haute-Bretagne region.

20 One local Trégorois farmer to whom I spoke about language matters and education in September of 1992, expressed confusion over the attitude of what he evidently perceived to be the educational establishment. He implied that there was a certain irony in the fact that while many teachers in the 1950s and early 1960s actively discouraged the use of Breton, this grouping were now among its most ardent promoters.

21 This research can be accessed on the internet at http://www.bretagne-online.tm.fr/telegram/suplemen/lb1/Comp.htm

22 Louargat sera une nouvelle fois cette année la caisse de résonance d’une joie amère (Ferdi Motta 1997) see http://www.bretagne-online.tm.fr/telegram/suplemen/lb1/Comp.htm

23 La langue bretonne n’est pas toute la Bretagne mais la Bretagne n’existe pas sans le breton. Ou alors une Bretagne cul de jatte.
24 This is quite different from the time not so long ago in the 19th century when the local préfets (government civil servants) were instructed to undermine the Breton language among the peasantry and to encourage them to use French only (see Piriou 1971).

25 Avec Buhez ar Sent, la feuille volante représente, même dans la maison du pauvre, une amorce, un embryon de bibliothèque; ce ne sont là encore que des écrits de seconde ou de troisième main, mais tout élémentaires qu’ils sont, celui qui est en mesure de les lire en reçoit un supplément de dignité dont il est bien conscient (1985:126).

26 The Kig ha farz is normally eaten at large gatherings of people to mark some local event. It is an occasion for joke telling and singing songs. If you are known to sing or play you are likely to be asked to perform, sitting or standing beside your place at the table. In my experience the songs can be old ballads (sonioù) in Breton or French, but they can also be variété - a popular genre of French song equivalent to the Irish 'come all ye' and common at similar gatherings all over France.

27 France’s much vaunted cuisine culture stems originally from the contempt of a relatively small urban élite for rural ways.

28 Perhaps partly drawn from the expression ‘les babas cool’ - French hippies in the 1970s.

29 Les Inuit ont répété qu’ils avaient une langue, une culture et un territoire, sans demander plus, offrant une image positive d’eux même, expliquant qu’il y a une marque identitaire forte dans leur façon de manger, de parler aux enfants, de rêver, d’avoir avec le gibier des rapports qui vont au delà de la chasse à des fins d’autosubsistance. (Le monde diplomatique, August 1997:8)
Chapter 2

HISTORY, POLITICS AND CULTURAL SPACE

Historical perspective

Bretons are deemed to be descended from ‘Celtic’ speaking migrants from across the Channel in Britain who arrived en masse in or around the Fourth Century BC. The remnants of the social order they found there were also Celtic speaking Armoricans whose tribal society had been smashed by Julius Caesar. From this standpoint alone it can be suggested that Bretons are doubly Celtic because their roots are to be found in an imagined symbolic fusion of the continental and insular Celt (see Rivoallan 1958:2). Equally of course, from this perspective, the French (as Gauls) can also claim to be Celtic. Napoleon often cited this Gallic myth of origin in order to speak of the greatness of the French nation although Napoleonic iconography is reminiscent of imperial Rome. It was only around the early part of the 19th century that French post-revolutionary thinkers began to favour Latin origins. Before this Brittany represented the remnants of the Celtic world and as such it was regarded as ‘supremely French’ (Ni Earcain 1995:9).

By the 10th century Brittany had become a political unit. This happened as a direct result of an earlier intercession by Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne: an intercession aimed at ending the incessant squabbling among the area’s rival leaders. In territorial terms the linguistic divide among the Breton population was already much as it is today. The eastern half of the country had ceased to be Breton-speaking (if indeed it ever was in the complete sense) and the western half, corresponding to the bishoprics of Trégor, Léon, Cornouaille, and Vannes (Vannetais), was Breton-speaking. These bas-Breton (lower Breton) bishoprics roughly correspond to the four
still extant dialects of the language. They also remain a popularly used description of identity. Lodged between the competing dynasties of England and France, Brittany's position as an independent Duchy was skilfully managed by constant strategic alliances and intrigue.

By the end of the 15th century, from the point of view of the French monarchy, this state of affairs had became untenable. Brittany and France were effectively united in 1491 by the symbolic marriage of Anne, Duchess of Brittany and the King of France, Charles the 8th. The act of union which followed was signed at Vannes in 1532 and effectively it made Brittany a province of France. Although the Breton parliament did retain a military levy and some important administrative and tax-gathering powers, there was constant friction between it and the central seat of power in Paris. Some Breton historians have tended to present the Ducal period as some sort of golden age, bestowing upon it 19th century concepts of the nation state, emphasising its independent sprit and giving it indisputable myths of origin. Analyses such as the one quoted below served to strengthen and legitimise, if it were needed, a singular Breton identity,

"... This strange country, peopled by emigrants chased from their island of origin, and whom, at one time, constituted a state in the modern sense of the term, this strange country was reduced to the rank of a province. Breton history could stop at 1532. However, if Brittany ceased to exist on paper, there have always been the Bretons." (Markale 1977:184)

The land of origin referred to here is southern Britain. Other commentators suggest that the Breton aristocracy was on reasonably good terms with the French court. By the 16th century many of them had the social profile and values of the up-and-coming French aristocracy. Brittany lost any remaining vestige of its autonomy with the
The advent of the French revolution in 1789. The revolution heralded a complete change in the socio-political order. The older administrative units of the *ancien régime* - the bishoprics - were replaced with the new *départements*. Divided into new segments, Brittany’s position in the new French Republic was more inclusive than ever before (See Ardagh 1977 and McDonald 1989).

Disparate autonomist movements of various political hues have existed since the act of union, throughout the 19th century and up until the present day. It must be said however that coherent support for complete political independence from France has always been the preserve of a small, highly politicised, minority of the Breton people. Brittany’s Celtic identity began to reassert considerable importance firstly in the early decades of the 20th century and then again in the late 1960s and 1970s. This second flowering of *celtitude* happened largely through the medium of music (see chapter 6). On these two occasions however Celtic identity was heralded in opposition to French identity. This cultural movement has subsequently been strengthened by the notion of a Europe of the regions that has emerged from Brussels over the course of the 1980s and 1990s. To better appreciate the current political reality I will now take a look at the intrinsic nature of the French state. This is followed by an examination of ‘the Breton movement’ in the 20th century undertaken in order to assess its role as a political and cultural force.

The Nature of the French State

The French revolution gave the world the Jacobin model of the highly centralised state. French embassies and cultural institutes (*Alliances Françaises*) around the world are adept at promoting the teaching of French and the image of France as a sophisticated modern state. They have not been over-enthusiastic in
recognising the country's cultural diversity in a meaningful way until lately however. The expression *La France c'est un discours* (‘France is a discourse’) is well-known, but that ‘discourse’ has traditionally been approved of by central government only when it remains internal. That is strictly a national discourse where the assumed integrity of the state cannot be an issue. Recent trends indicate however that the French cultural establishment (representing the Parisian view of the world) is taking pride in the cultural identities of the régions or *La Province*. The ethnic diversity of the country is increasingly being seen as something to be flaunted with pride. This change of heart it could be argued, is at the core of France’s perception of itself as an entity and marks what at face value is an interesting development.⁴

From the days of Clovis (the founder of the Frankish Royal dynasty in the 5th century until the recent past), geopolitical and linguistic integrity were the cornerstone of French centralism both monarchical and Republican. Regional identities do not sit easily in such a world view. From its outset France (in common with many large nation states) has been a shaky entity constantly legislating for its continual political survival from its centre in Paris. Moves towards cultural harmonisation within *L' hexagone* (a reference to the hexagonal shape of France) were implicitly ongoing.

The national unity formula in reality papered over a polysemic aspect, that is, on the one hand it spoke of an extant nation and on the other a project to be completed.⁵ (Nicolas 1986:9)

From the 19th century on, only low level cultural paraphernalia (culinary allusions concerning *la spécialité de la région*) could be talked about enthusiastically in an a-political sense. As historian Jacques Vassal has pointed out from this perspective Brittany was allowed to be a folklore region. According to him, some
Paris-based Breton entertainers - among them Théodore Botrel (1868-1925) whom he calls *le mauvais chevalier de la Bretagne* ('Brittany's false knight') - pandered to this. In a scathing attack on the unfortunate Botrel, Vassal says that all his works “should be thrown into the dustbin of history as quickly as possible and without pity” (1973:46). Prestige and power became linked in the Île de France (Paris). In 1790 a nation-wide survey revealed that only one fifth of the population of France could confidently speak French (McDonald 1989:74). The French language itself became an educational necessity linked to upward social mobility and political clout. In his seminal work on the nature of Breton identity *Comment peut-on être breton?* (How can one be Breton?) which draws little upon notions of Celticism and more upon class politics, Morvan Lebesque explains how the concept of political power exerted through linguistic or dialectical hegemony took root in France,

Seventeenth century society barricaded itself into a certain idea of the French language. A long reign commenced whereby demented grammarians set to with a will, with the express purpose of rarefying the spoken tongue rather than assuring its future survival, because one doesn't need many fine speakers, in much the same way as one can't have a multitude of rich people. This language must be difficult, secret, an aristocratic tongue. *Speak but don't say anything.* ⁶ (1970:89)

The language which has political, and, more importantly, economic power, will inevitably dominate in any bilingual situation. Educational policy implicitly legislated against regional identities. Hence the Breton language, the Basque language and all other languages and diverse Romance dialects were excluded from the state school system. As recently as 1992 an amendment to article 2 of the constitution of the 5th Republic underlined that *la langue de la République est le français*, ‘French is the language of the Republic’ (Le peuple Breton, 1996:6). Implicitly contained in this comment is a back reference to revolutionary days when French was *la langue de la*
liberté - 'the language of liberty' and when 'feudal idioms' other than French were allied to the forces of intrigue and reaction. French, in this sense, was the safeguard of the revolution and of the social changes which accompanied it (see McDonald 1989:27-35).

Present-day governmental attitudes regarding the status of the regional languages and dialects of France do not appear to mirror the unequivocal stance of article 2, in addition the changes in attitude to regional languages and dialects hinted at by François Mitterand in the 1980s (and re-iterated by Jacques Chirac in the late 1990s) have as yet to be enshrined in the constitution of the French Republic. Any perceived threat to the political integrity of the French state is not well tolerated. Many people point out that knee-jerk reactions on the part of the security forces have been evident in Brittany recently. In the Autumn of 1994 a number of Breton cultural activists were arrested and held in detention - sometimes in dubious conditions - for receiving Basque people in their homes. Some of the individuals affected by these events have told me that the police systematically arrested people according to the milieu to which they belonged (August 1996), for example teachers, artists, ecologists and so on. Expensive court cases ensued to defend these people against the serious charges levelled against them. That is harbouring members of a terrorist organisation (ETA the 'Basque Liberation army'). In some cases these are still being paid for by money raised by Skozall Vreizh (Secours Breton). It was admitted after the event that no members of ETA were in fact arrested in the swoops and that none of the Breton people detained were supporters of ETA. Citing the fact that Basque people were also sheltered in other regions of France without provoking the same reaction, Le Peuple Breton points out that Breton cultural activists in particular were targeted (October 1994:5).
l'idéologie française or the French state’s conception of itself is in question today. Francis Favereau suggests that questions concerning the nature of modern France and the francophone (French-speaking') world in general have superseded older perceptions of national integrity. The necessity to safeguard it from subversives within is therefore outmoded. He says,

It must be recognised that today these type of questions appear to be slightly irrelevant when compared to others concerning French identity itself, now in a period of crisis. 9(1993:70)

This outmoded ideological attitude may in part explain the state security force’s reaction to the activities of smaller identity groupings within its boundaries, but at the same time it highlights how seemingly pointless these actions are. Whichever interpretation is put on events such as what has come to be known as L’hébergement des Basques, (‘Basque guests in the home’) they are certainly awash with convoluted political motives on all sides.10 Recent actions by ETA in the Spanish Basque country have further isolated this grouping, even in the eyes of many who would have supported its political agenda.11

To recap briefly then, in historical terms the political organisation of the French Republic most immediately relevant to today’s situation, was based on the Jacobin model. It dates back to the French revolution over 200 years ago. All regional cultural identities were eclipsed by the perceived overall importance and desirability of becoming a citizen of the Republic. Whilst some of the reasoning behind this development was no doubt laudable, certainly in view of the misery in which the majority of the population lived at that time, the generality of the centralisation process touched every area of life in a way hitherto unknown.
According to Jacques Vassal, it was during the 19th century that the 'francisation' of Basse Bretagne began in earnest. The military mobilisations which characterised Napoleon's reign were at the root of it. He says that the policy of keeping young conscripts from the same areas apart, was the chief factor in the process (1973:53). It is in a sense the deconstruction of this monolithic centralising entity, the Jacobin French Republic (the bureaucratic legacy of the revolution of 1789), that is the concern of the various strands of what has came to be called 'the Breton movement'.

**EMSAV - The Breton movement**

The 'Breton movement' is not an extant organisation. It is simply a way of referring to all those individuals, groups and associations that in some way promote Breton cultural identity. Language activists, musicians, teachers or ecologists and political activists. They may adhere to or belong to European regional federalist movements or to parties seeking independence from France. All manner of people find common ground in the promotion of Breton cultural identity. This includes those who are quite happy with the de facto political reality. **EMSAV** (‘movement’) is the early 20th century Breton word often used in French texts to describe the many manifestations of the Breton movement. Its development is explained in the following way on the back cover of *le séparatisme en Bretagne* by Michel Nicolas,

Its often tormented evolution gives it many very different faces. At the same time however its main discourse rests on one invariable point: exercising the right of Breton ethno-cultural identity, it claims a Breton capability destined to make sure of an autonomous political direction, together with administrative and economic powers.12 (Nicolas 1986)
Of the people who loosely constitute EMSAV therefore, some belong to the mainstream French political parties, others may be political separatists or regionalists and yet others may be nominally apolitical. An extreme right-wing presence in contemporary Breton cultural politics is practically non-existent. Some of the more politically unsound radical movements are, however, considered by some commentators to be open to pernicious influence. This is said to be because of their naivety rather than anything else. The most strident political voices in support of Breton cultural identity today are those of the left-wing. They are generally regional federalists or separatists of varying degrees.

In general therefore ‘the Breton movement’ has a culturally proactive and a politically left-wing profile. A more de-centralised Europe favouring regional autonomy and socially conscious good neighbourliness, is the preference of most liberal Breton-cultural activists today. Since the Treaty of Rome in 1957 the proto-institutions of the European Community began to develop the idea of a ‘Europe of regions’. While the EU is suspected by some as being the work of a ‘rich man’s club’ seeking to financially homogenise Europe by default, the basic idea of a community which underwrites the cultural autonomy of its regions regardless of which nation state they belong to, is attractive. Partly as a result of this development but also as a direct result of organised local agitation from the cultural activists of the ‘Breton movement’ in the 1970s and 1980s, visible markers of a distinct identity are more evident in Brittany today in the 1990s than they were twenty years ago. These are concessions which had been sought since early in the century. They include the erection of bilingual signs and the creation of the Diwan school system.13
Breton Political Parties

Outside of the stated positions of the mainstream French political establishment (which represent the majority in Brittany), regional federalists are the most significant group wishing to alter radically the political status quo. Their views are best articulated by the UDB (Union Démocratique Bretonne). The UDB have some political representation at local level. The initiative vis à vis bretonitude has passed to the culturally-motivated federalist as opposed to the politico-cultural separatist, (see Favereau 1993:19-21). Breton separatism found its most extreme expression in the FLB (Front pour la Libération de la Bretagne). This now defunct physical force movement had its hey-day in the late 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s, violent separatist movements have become slowly marginalised. This is in sharp contrast to the significant degree of tacit youthful support organisations like the FLB enjoyed in the late 1960s and 1970s.

Organised and highly motivated political groupings - such as EMGANN (Combat) and POBL (Parti pour l'Organisation d'une Bretagne libre) - still ardently promote formal Breton independence from France after the model of the nation state. At the moment these parties represent a tiny minority viewpoint. Combat Breton (EMGANN's monthly magazine) robustly argues for Breton independence from France - the main concern of the pre-war Breton political movement. In its political tracts EMGANN states that regional status does not go far enough and that the greater 'French national interest' still holds sway. It rejects the Maastrict treaty and promotes historic and economic reasons for Breton independence, dismissing the idea that autonomy could ever be an end in itself,
France is not historically a community of people who have freely decided to unite. It is rather, the end result of a monarchical system which negates these same people. Autonomy is little more than a transitory staging post which falls like an over ripe fruit before the march of a people towards their independence. ...It can never be considered as a long term objective.¹⁴ (EMGANN - promotional literature 1996)

EMGANN appears as a left-wing grouping with a clear and detailed social philosophy, an economic vision and a strategy for the promotion of Breton language and culture. Their position may be strengthened by unfolding events in Scotland for example, where, in the late 1990s, independence appears to be a realisable possibility.

The POBL on the other hand, judging from its monthly publication L'Avenir de la Bretagne, takes a more traditional nationalist stance and tends to be less clear on socio-economic issues. Whilst justifiably pointing out the importance of history for a people’s identity and well-being, it cites the party’s contemporary demands for Breton national sovereignty against a backdrop of historic events which happened in the 9th and 15th centuries, rather than recent events. Some articles are jingoistic in their assertion of Breton territorial integrity. Language evocative of ancient hosts and flowing robes was used in one of their recent periodicals. Here the writer draws attention to the teaching of French myths of origin in schools in Brittany, denying to the Breton people its own ‘heroes’.

In fostering the growth of amnesiacs, slaves and yes men are created. Are we still to continue being the well tamed “Negro’s” of a foreign state, or will we uncover our lost memory? Will we continue to bend the knee or do we wake up? Will we listen to the lesson of Nominoë, our “Tad ar vro” (father of the country), and dare to decide our future for ourselves conducting our own affairs as a sovereign people?¹⁵ (L'Avenir de la Bretagne 1996:10)
The Nominoë mentioned above is an early Breton leader. He is famous for inflicting military defeat on the French under Charles 'the bald' in 840 at the battle of Ballon, thus extending and defining the territory of Brittany. The POBL are perhaps the one separatist/autonomist voice with right-wing tendencies in contemporary Brittany. Some commentators point out that both EMGANN and POBL have sounded dangerously celtomane ('Celto-maniacal') in some of their discourse, showing an unhealthy preoccupation with issues of race. As Vassal points out, this dilemma has always haunted EMSAV.

This question of the two forms of patriotism (Is it a liberating or repressive force? Progressive or reactionary?), this issue is a recurring theme at every cross-roads in the history of the Breton movement. 16 (1973:52)

As mentioned above, one of the main reasons for the drop in support for unequivocally nationalist/separatist parties and the emergence of a highly articulate regional federalist grouping like the UDB, is the perceived weakening of the concept of the nation state. The European model has lent credence to the notion that the creation within Europe of culturally autonomous regions (having considerable influence over their own socio-economic strategy) is a real possibility. The UDB supports the creation of culturally autonomous areas which are mutually supportive in the area of overall socio-economic well-being. An editorial comment in Le peuple Breton (official organ of the UDB) indicates what I have found to be quite a widespread attitude, a guarded welcome for European re-construction. It does however, include a warning note,

If we support the principle of European construction, it is in following the clear objective of a federal Europe, this means as decentralised as possible, near to its people and mindful of the fundamental principles of democracy at every level of decision making. Anything other than this kind of Europe means that Maastricht represents a new reverse.17 (January 1992:4)
The *UDB* represents perhaps the largest body of opinion among cultural activists in Brittany today.

A cursory look at several covers of the *UDB*’s regular reviews *Le Peuple Breton* or *Pobl Vreizh* (Breton) meaning ‘the Breton people’, indicates the organisation’s heavy investment in the promotion of Breton culture as something vibrant and inclusive (see for example the July/August 1996 and October 1996 issues). These issues include in-depth interviews with popular singer Gilles Servat and the current favourites on the *fest noz* circuit the group *Ar re Yaouank*. The same importance is often attached to traditional music as to political and language issues. Detailed reviews of new recordings and events together with personality profiles are a feature of the general content of the magazine. Although some of this coverage is linked to a straightforward economic reality (the magazine obtains necessary revenue from advertisement), an inclusive and robust Breton cultural identity is clearly what they wish to espouse.

The *UDB* are also mindful of the danger that all emerging regional movements are not necessarily benign and democratic and with this in mind they are quick to censure and urge vigilance. They vehemently attacked the symbolic proclamation of auto-determination by Umberto Bossi on September 15th 1996 in Venice of the ‘soi-disant’ (so called) state of Padua. A proclamation founded on the principle that the rich states in Italy should secede from the poor and crime-ridden south of the country. Following on from Bossi’s political stance Padua would then take the lead in setting up a rich ‘Northern league’, for its own betterment and to the possible detriment of other less favoured areas in Italy. In the same article the writer was quick to criticise the POBL’s lack of vigilance in lauding the Bossi incident as a ‘new step towards a
people's Europe'. He concluded by restating the position of the UDB vis à vis their vision for Europe,

Regionalist claims do not rest upon a distinction between rich and poor, and it is this principle which must be kept in mind if Europe is to succeed.¹⁸ (Le Peuple Breton, October 1996:7)

According to some, the political and social conditions that pertained in Brittany after the Second World War eventually allowed the Breton movement to achieve notable successes in the areas of Education (through the medium of the Breton language for example), and the attraction of public funding for the promotion of Breton culture. McDonald accounts for the proliferation of ethnicities which now characterise the map of Europe by suggesting that 19th century European nationalism spawned ethnogenesis in the late 20th century. The situation in Brittany may bear no resemblance whatever to the former Yugoslavia or Northern Ireland, but the real horror of the mindless sectarianism experienced by these places, underpins the danger of ignoring questions of ethnic identity.

In direct relation to this an often-voiced critique of the EC is its inability to empower European cultural diversity in a coherent and positive way. That is, to implement successfully the concept of unity in diversity. Referring to what the writer in an Irish Times editorial calls the ‘void at the heart of the project for European integration’, the following comments attributed to Prof. Brigid Laffan appeared,

Generally, the basis for cultural policy remains “weak, ambiguous and contested and the decision making processes involved are “cumbersome and time consuming”... Cultural policy is highly sensitive and the progress of some proposed programmes has been “tortuous and difficult”.

(Mac Dubhghaill 1996, Sept 30:2)
The article in question goes on to suggest the possibility of ‘cultural impact assessments’ concerning certain projects. This is important to the question of who can best maintain and represent Breton (or any other) cultural identity in the terms of the new European context; the skilled professional fund raiser, the subsidy seeking neo-cultural Eurocrat, or the socio-political regional-separatist. Who will control access to the budget for cultural activities, who is this likely to benefit and are these mediators likely to be creative individuals with vision in any event? Nothing definitive can be said for the moment - only time will tell.

*Breiz Atao* (‘Brittany For Ever’) was the umbrella grouping which represented a miscellany of Breton cultural and political self-determination movements during the pre-war and Nazi occupation periods. It became tainted with the stigma of collaboration as a result of the pro-German stance taken by some of its leading personalities. It has left a residue which McDonald points out is an embarrassment for today’s movement.

*Breiz Atao* (‘Brittany For Ever’) is still alive in associations of fascism and the war, and presents an awkward passage in the history which the movement constructs for itself. The most popular histories of the moment, oral and written, mention *Breiz Atao* only in passing if at all. ...More generally, we are dealing here with common modern social fact in Brittany: *Breiz Atao* ‘collaborated’. (1989:122-123)

McDonald has made a perfectly valid point here but it is important to complete the picture. Even if one had not had any association with the Nazi’s during the Second World War (in fact many Breton separatists were active in the French resistance), in the immediate post-war climate it was simply ‘not done’ to profess politico-cultural separatism. At this time Charles De Gaulle was rebuilding the French Republic after a long period of foreign occupation. Anything likely to be perceived as undermining...
this ‘national’ effort at such a crucial time was open to serious criticism at the very least. In such a political climate it is no wonder that the ‘Breton movement’ was guarded and circumspect in the diverse aspects of its re-organisation. Clearly it had also learned from the lessons of the past. That is, that the restrictive nationalism of the kind which adopted the maxim “the enemy of our enemy is our friend”- which the PNB (Parti Nationaliste Breton - the pre-war nationalist party) did- is dangerous nonsense.\(^2\) A map that appeared in the newspaper *Libération* (Tuesday 27th May, 1997:8) showed the distribution of support for Jean Marie Le Pen’s FN (Front National) after France’s most recent elections to the assemblée nationale (parliament). It indicates what has already been suggested above.\(^3\) That is, that the regions of France which have strong cultural and autonomist movements (notably Brittany, the Basque country and Corsica), have little time for the fascist opinions of Jean-Marie Le Pen and his ilk.

Some shades of opinion in France would still seek to identify separatist movements with right-wing extremism. In this respect the *Peuple Breton* is also quick to censure what it refers to as *la presse parisienne* (‘the Parisian press’). It accuses it of concentration on the rightist ‘solidarity of the rich’ profile of some autonomist groups such as those found in Northern Italy and conversely of making scant reference to the fact that the majority of European regionalist movements are liberal left-wing groupings (October 1996:7). Regardless of their ideological profile, it is now useful to consider afresh the implications of contemporary global politico-economic trends and to speculate what they could mean for small regions and autonomist movements. To do this, a look at Mexico and the case for a form of regional autonomy for the impoverished and ethnically distinct Chiapas region, provides an interesting case study.
Global capitalism and small peoples

The analyses and reflections of commandant Marcos (among others), leader of the ‘The Zapatist Army of National Liberation’ outline a disturbing scenario. Marcos implies that the case in support of new Régions-Etats (autonomist region states) that favours the total disappearance of the old imperialist nation states - convincingly argued for, in the European context, by Yann Fouéré, a prominent figure in the post war EMSAV in 1968 (see L'Europe aux Cent Drapeaux) - is now overshadowed by a new global political and economic circumstance. For Marcos this new reality calls into question the desirability of the fragmentation of the existing nation states. He argues for a restructuring of the old entities rather than total change.

Writing in Le monde diplomatique (August 1997) from his safe haven in the Chiapas region of Mexico, Marcos renames the Cold War the 3rd world war. He suggests that the defeat of totalitarian communism has left no clear victory and that it has merely altered the field of play. He depicts this new scenario as the start of a 4th world war; an era when ‘neo-liberal’ global commerce undertakes the total undermining of all national economies. This leads to the effective destruction of the nation state as we now know it and gives rise to a situation where the line between law-breaker and law-enforcer becomes irrevocably blurred. According to Marcos,

In this new war, politics, as the driving force of the nation-state no longer exists. It serves only to direct the economy... politicians become no more than company directors. ... Unable to resist competition from the giant transnational companies, local and regional markets, deprived of any protection will simply disappear. Millions of workers will find themselves out of work. The absurdity of the neo-liberal agenda is that far from creating employment, unbridled growth in production actually destroys it - the UNO already speaks of “economic growth without employment”. 22 (1997:6)
In the case of Chiapas, Marcos does not see political separation from Mexico as the way forward. He views a new relationship within the Mexican state - a reformed Mexican state - as the greater guarantor of cultural identity and socio-economic progress for the indigenous people he represents. He believes this strategy to be a better way for ordinary people to be able to resist a new world order ruled by profiteering transnationals. He argues that in the world of global capitalism, democracy is subverted and that everyone will eventually be a loser. His thesis is echoed in a number of ways by Lester Thurow (1996) who, as a prophet of doom, predicts a new dark age with a surfeit of cheap labour and growing illiteracy throughout the developed world. Clearly the type of world which will emerge in the next millennium has enormous implications for both the individual and all collectivities, be they ethnic, economic or political. It is now that an on-going popular discourse on the type of scenario depicted above is an absolute necessity. It is true that Chiapas may be considerably different from anything in Western Europe, but it does give autonomist movements - wherever they may be - an alternative perspective on what 'self-determination' may mean in the 21st century.

In spite of the fact that the majority of voters in Brittany still vote for mainstream French political parties, the various cultural and political groupings which constitute the Breton movement are very important. These cultural associations and small political parties, through constant agitation and enthusiasm, have had a considerable influence throughout the 1980s and 1990s, particularly on cultural affairs. They are fervent lobbyists who constantly commune with politicians in the mainstream parties. Many of the latter may be suspicious of independence and radical autonomy, but they are sympathetic to many cultural and linguistic concerns. We can say that the influence of EMSAV far outweighs the actual number of people actively involved in it. It remains of considerable importance to the future of cultural, political and economic
life in Brittany. In the event of an increase in regional autonomy within Europe, parties like the UDB are likely to play an even greater part in governing Brittany, either directly or indirectly.

EMSAV culture and music

Allied to the political forces which currently constitute EMSAV are a multitude of prolific professional cultural concerns which - individually and collectively - are the standard bearers of bretonnitude. The main Breton based publishing houses (Coop Breizh, Skol Vreiz and Chasse Marée/Ar Men), add to the body of available resources in both French and Breton on a yearly basis. Their activities also include the production of textbooks for the teaching of the Breton language. Record labels such as Keltia musique and Coop Breizh produce and distribute a vast amount of Breton musical offerings, often with the financial assistance of one or other of the conseil régional (regional councils). The visually impressive revue Ar Men (Ar Men review) provides high quality contemporary coverage of all aspects of Brittany's heritage. The output of these cultural concerns is sold in most of major towns, whether in specialist shops, book-shops, record shops or newsagents both in Brittany and throughout France. Their produce can also be found at the many bookstalls and forums which accompany most large festivals and events throughout the year, among them the festival interceltique de Lorient and the fête de Cornouaille at Quimper.

DASTUM (to gather) is an organisation concerned with the collection, archiving and dissemination of Breton Traditional music. It was founded in 1972 by a handful of young musicians (among them Pierre Crépillon and Patrick Malrieu) and has a vast archive of field recordings which it puts at the disposal of all interested parties. Recent publicity describes its aims and objectives as follows,
The collection, conservation, diffusion and development of Brittany’s ethnological heritage with particular emphasis on oral traditions and traditional music. 24 (Musique Bretonne, 1994 December: 2).

It now has an extensive archive and a formidable organisational structure. Part funded by the state and other public bodies, its headquarters in Rennes employs several full-time staff, including two archivists and many part-timers. It produces a bi-monthly magazine concerning traditional music called Musique Bretonne. DASTUM’s attitude to the collecting work it has undertaken is best summed up by the words of its first President Patrick Malrieu. Malrieu said that ‘... collecting serves to make things live on vigorously. The material is not meant to be stacked away in a fridge’ (Musique Bretonne 1992:5). 25 In the same interview he acknowledges the positive inspiration of earlier structures like the cercles celtiques (Celtic circles), notably that of Redon, towards formulating DASTUM’s strategy.26 For a complete overview of DASTUM’S organisational structure and its many activities in the area of traditional music and oral traditions from its inception until the present time, see Musique Bretonne, December 1994.

Some argue that the 1970s generation of cultural activists have received too much credit for the ‘renaissance’ of Breton music. They suggest that the music was in a continual state of adaptation to new situations with each passing decade and that there was no need to juxtapose the extreme standpoints of ‘death’ and ‘rebirth’(See Becker and Le Gurun 1994, Malrieu, Musique Bretonne 1981). However the fact remains that it was during the 1970s that - fortified by a reinvented celtitude - increasing numbers began to play and dance to traditional music and large numbers of people engaged in the collection process for the first time. According to Pierre Crépillon, one of Brittany’s finest sonneurs (traditional instrumentalists), a collector...
and a founder member of DASTUM, the organisation is essentially apolitical. Its members may hold widely divergent political viewpoints, but this has not interfered with the organisation’s work (Personal communication, Quimper July 1997).

One could speculate that because of the pivotal importance of the Breton language to Breton identity, the non-Breton speaking population, who are in the majority in Brittany, are viewed as less Breton than Breton speakers. However, practically all of the cultural activists that I have spoken to do not adopt this attitude. It is at the level of the local - dancing the local round dance for example - where Pan-bretonnitude in the cultural sense begins. To ‘feel Breton’ therefore is to experience a sense of belonging to a locality that has its own emblematic particularities and through this to relate to the general geocultural area which is Brittany.

As we have seen in chapter 1, the definition of being Breton extends from someone whose only identification with bretonnitude is the fact of having been born in Brittany and no more, to a myriad of ways, some unconscious, some deliberate, of living that identity. Having re-iterated this reality I will now return to the more proactive aspects of ‘being Breton’. The aspects which are central to the concerns of this thesis. It is the culturally charged spaces - the pays - which are used to express a uniquely Breton reality. In my experience, many people who settle in Brittany from other parts of France (and elsewhere) have elected to become Breton. They do this by participation in cultural life, in particular by involvement with dance and music at the fest noz. This leads us directly to the central importance of the musical event to bretonnitude.

Territorial geocultural space is multifaceted in contemporary Brittany. Indeed it is a very important part of regional geography throughout France in general.
different conceptions of this space exist, sometimes they are concretised as part of a cultural tourism strategy and sometimes not. The words pays (country) and bro (Breton for pays) have much nuance attached to them. Mon pays can refer to anything from mon coin - 'my neck of the woods', to 'my nation or country'. In the context of scholarly Breton folklore, it may refer to the area where a particular type of dance originates. In some instances it can be a reference to something current in the administrative département, much depends on the issue under discussion. Whilst common in many other countries, proud references to a place of origin have multiple implications in the Breton context which are noticeable to the curious outsider. It is this important issue of the definition of cultural space which is dealt with in the next section.

Defining cultural space

As indicated above, in political and administrative terms Brittany is made up of four French départements. These are Côtes d'Armor, Morbihan, Ille et Vilaine and Finistère. Nantes was part of the historic Duchy of Brittany but it is now administratively part of the Pays de la Loire region. However it is still popularly considered as part of Brittany and cultural activists in the Nantes region value their Breton identity. As part of a pan-European initiative, Brittany is also divided into tourist areas. Like other parts of the EC, large brown-coloured signs erected beside the roadways indicate which tourist space you are entering. The sign for the côtes de granit rose ('coastline of pink granite') which includes the evocative image of a Puffin, draws attention to the rugged coastline of the Trégor. An economic initiative in the early 1970s called Vers de nouvelles solidarités ville campagne ('towards a realignment of town and country') also created economic pays. Some of these were new and some based on the older 'traditional' pays (see Kuter 1981:11).
In terms of cultural space, there is a marked similarity between the meticulous way that it is talked about by cultural activists in Brittany and the vocabulary of categorisation common to French socio-economic and political discourse. Witness for instance expressions like ‘zones of influence’ and *Aménagement du territoire* (‘re-organisation of the territory’). Many French people say that their education has followed a logical Cartesian or carré (square) format. In some ways this may serve to explain what seems like a pre-occupation among folklorists, collectors and academics with the application of logic to the folk map of Brittany and the delineation of *pays* as watertight culture zones. This taxonomic idea is a feature of discourse in Breton folklore. Whilst essential (a necessary abstraction) from an historic and folklore perspective, this way of thinking tends to obscure the day-to-day musical reality. In this there are exceptions to the rule and certain genres and instrumental practices have prospered while others have practically disappeared. It can be understood as a useful research tool, but as Bourdieu has pointed out, this type of “electoral logic treats opinions which differ in both their intentions and their reasons as identical” (1988:453).

As established in chapter 1, the two most significant geocultural divisions of land are based on the territorial spread of the languages. Breton (together with French) is still a widely spoken language in Basse Bretagne. French and to a lesser extent *Gallo* are the spoken tongues of Haute Bretagne. Although some dance genres inevitably cross the line, Breton music is viewed within Brittany, as being either Basse Bretonne or Haute Breton. This follows the guidelines of the Sébillot line (see Figure 3 p22).

It is the performance and enjoyment of Breton traditional music rather than language, that is the most evident form of Pan-Breton identity today. This is more
important in a contemporary sense than any cultural and linguistic differences between haut-Bretons and bas-Bretons. If bretonnitude was defined solely by the ability to speak the Breton language, then the majority of the population of Brittany could not claim to be culturally Breton. That said however, the principal reason why Brittany has a vibrant contemporary traditional music community, does, in large part, come down to the presence of the Breton language. It is clearly associated with a perceived historic Celtic Diaspora. The revalorization of the Breton language singing tradition of Kan ha Diskan (chant and response) which took place in the Monts D’Arrée area during the post Second World War years was a crucially significant event. I will return to this issue later when we come to take a look at the origin of the modern fest noz and its importance to popular bretonnitude.

Bishoprics as ‘pays’

The 9th century bishoprics of Trégor, Cornouaille, Léon and Vannes are the largest cultural pays. They are popularly used in Basse Bretagne only. People often describe themselves as being Léonard, Cornouaillais, Trégorois or Vannetais, no reference to the département is made. In so doing they make a clear distinction between political territorial space and cultural territorial space (see Figure 4 page 67). Character traits are associated with areas - Léonard are reputed to be tight-fisted and Calvinistic, Trégorois stoic yet ripailler (revellers), Cornouaillais impulsive and irreligious and so on. A gathering of bas-Bretons from different areas usually guarantees lively banter based on these much loved stereotypes. The older diocesan boundaries are more easily associated with history and tradition. They also roughly correspond to the four extant dialects of spoken Breton.
Figure 4: Bishoprics of Basse Bretagne. This map shows the bishoprics and of Basse Bretagne, their episcopal centres (Tréguier, St.Pol de Léon, Quimper and Vannes) and the ‘Sébillot’ line. Note that a large area of the Vannetais bishopric lies in Haute-Bretagne.
The dialects are called after the bishoprics. In much popular discourse about Breton, particularly among older country people, mutual misunderstandings between dialects are often referred to. All agree however that the Vannetais dialect is different to the other three dialects. Sufficiently different as to make it difficult to have a flowing conversation in Breton with a Vannetais. The greater number of texts in Breton have been based on a unified literary form. Vannetais is excluded from this form (see Hardie 1948).

Pays is also the significant unit of localised cultural space in Haute Bretagne, but the bishopric as pays has little relevance there. In Basse Bretagne, the significance of the bishopric in linguistic terms, indicates that the language has had a very strong association with the Catholic church. Whilst there is widespread awareness (at least in rural areas) of the home place and of its particularities, official communications and regional governmental matters remain firmly in the realm of the département. The département is the modern political territorial space, where and about which, various administrative decisions are taken. Each département has a conseil régional (regional council). This body has a section which allocates money to activities in the cultural domain. Administrative and culturo-historical pays can bleed into each other occasionally and people may mix the designations. For instance a Cornouaillais may say ‘I live here in the pays Vannetais, but I come from Finistère’. Or a Trégorois might explain, ‘yes we speak Breton here in the Trégor, but the real pure tongue is to be found in Finistère’. Finistère is referred to in this way more often than the other départements however.
Local identity: ‘Pays’ Dance and Music

Pays is used on wine bottles from various parts of France, ‘vin du pays de Gard’ (‘wine from the ‘gard’ country’) for example. This shows that use is made of the term in France in general. Its most commonplace usage is with regard to food and drink. Until relatively recently, Basse Bretagne - because of the Breton language - has received more attention as an area worthy of research than Haute Bretagne. Folklore researchers readily admit that more remains to be done among the non-bretonnant Bretons. A pays can be quite a large area (as in the case of the bas-Breton bishoprics discussed above) or it can be a small rural village or town-land. Very often it can be quite arbitrary depending on where the group or individual place it in relation to themselves. We will now look at some other designations of space as ‘pays’.

Both Linguistic and Folklore research have identified areas by distinctiveness in costume, language or dialect. Used in this way it often re-energises very old designations of space. The Pays Gallo for example is a linguistic pays. It refers to the area where Gallo is spoken. In terms of costume, the delineation of pays may come directly from the type of lace headgear traditionally worn by women (see Creston 1995). The most striking coiffe (lace head adornment) is that of the pays Bigouden an area south-west of Quimper. The coiffe bigoudène is an intricate, tall, funnel-like structure. Because of its impressive proportions, it is perhaps the most photographed of all the traditional Breton coiffes. In direct relation to music the older title of the pays is used to describe the dance performed in that area. The gavotte Pourlet for example, describes the type of gavotte danced in the pays Pourlet.
Although as pointed out above the names of pays go back many centuries, for many today dances have become the most important association of pays. A prime example of this is the pays fañch plinn; the plinn is a dance form found in the pays fañch. The word fañch is seldom used now and the entire area is now simply called the pays plinn.

Pays, in association with music and dance may be a relatively new delineation dating from the late 1960s, but in this way the old names have been re-cycled, regenerating them as important contemporary local cultural marks of community. For further information on this issue (see Musique Bretonne 1996:142-143). I have heard people using complex and precise descriptions to situate where a melody (or a person) comes from. A musician may say ‘this is a melody from the pays Gallo Vannetais’; meaning a tune from the part of the non-bretonnant Vannetais where Gallo is still spoken in a rural milieu. A useful way of conceiving of the concept of pays in the Breton cultural context is to visualise a mathematical diagram that explains the concept of sets, showing sets within sets or overlapping to create sub-sets.

The modern fest noz does two important things vis à vis identity. It celebrates local identity expressed as dance pays (for many Bretons the most meaningful way of being Breton) and it exemplifies Pan-Breton identity in both a cultural (through music) and socio-political sense. At its most basic level, bretonnitude exists on both a pan-Breton level and a local level. The fest noz therefore, is both a vehicle where localised dances and music can be celebrated - thus maintaining local social cohesion - and a melting pot where choices are made and a symbolic Pan-Breton repertory in dance and music emerges. In this way, the modern fest noz with the danse en rond or daïs tro (round dance) is the most important public expression of bretonnitude today. For this reason a look at its genesis and development is essential.
We are living through a period in human history where political and social units are becoming on the face of it more amorphous than ever. Never before have there been more uncertainties concerning who we are and the world we live in. One could at times be forgiven for concluding that the feared ‘cultural grey out’ is looming on the horizon (see Lomax 1963). In such a scenario western anglo-pop commodity culture (for example) leads the legions of the culturally passive to an abyss of eternal blandness and predictability. Beneath this monolithic, totally market driven facade, however, many forms of music continue to catch peoples imaginations. Traditional music (in the case of Brittany and indeed many other parts of western Europe) still occupies an important niche, charged with cultural significance. A downside of this is that it is easily aligned with inter - ethnic struggles. The music is music but its perceived symbolic authenticity and rootedness has meant that it can be unscrupulously manipulated more easily than ‘international’ genres. In most normal contexts however it fulfils a more everyday yet infinitely more profound role, that of a communal and aesthetic rallying point. This means that through the act of participation in the social life attached to traditional music, people who are not Bretons are included without question. This way of expressing ethnicity regularly over-rides ideas of the patriotic or nationalistic. The latter is something invoked at certain periods and in politically charged situations only.

*Kan ha diskan* is a vocal performance technique, it is the hallmark of a specific area of Basse Bretagne (Les Monts d’Arrée/Montagnes Noires), known as *les montagnes* (‘the mountains’) for short. This area is contained mostly within the bishopric of *Cornouaille* but it also includes a part of the *Trégor*. That is, the area in
and around the town of Bourbriac known to cultural activists as the *pays plinn*, after the local dance genre the *plinn*. Much of Breton instrumental technique and expression is modelled upon *kan ha diskan* (see chapter 4). There are at present more musicians than singers and as a rule the musicians belong to the younger age group. Both musicians and language activists stress the importance of the vocal tradition as the bed-rock of Breton traditional dance music. Music however is more immediately accessible. It is not easier to perform successfully, but it is a more popular cultural direction than the decision to learn a minority language in a bilingual situation. Many younger singers of *kan ha diskan*, people like Louis-Jacques Suignard and Jean-Do Robin, are prominent Breton language teachers and activists. These days the two roles are entirely compatible. It is largely due to the efforts of enthusiastic and energetic individuals like these singers and by extension their predecessors, that *kan ha diskan* is being taught to young people in the Diwan Schools and in the bilingual classes which are now gaining ground in the state and public (Catholic) sectors. It may only be the specific hallmark of the Montagnes region, but *kan ha diskan* (singing for dancing in the Breton language) has a symbolic importance to Breton identity which far outweighs the number of its actual performers. It resonates throughout Brittany.

The Monts d’Arrée are viewed by many as a symbolic Breton cultural heartland. When people speak of *les montagnes* as ‘the centre of Brittany’ the implication is more spiritually subliminal than geographic. In geographic terms it is the centre of Basse Bretagne only. It was in les Monts d’Arrée that the by now traditional *fest noz* was re-invented. It dates back in its present form to the late 1950s. It has become the main popular cultural event concerning the performance of traditional music throughout Brittany. The generic Breton term *fest noz* is now habitually used in non-Breton speaking areas. *Festoù noz* (plural) are often attended
on a weekly basis by large cross-sections of the community and can increasingly be viewed, both symbolically and practically, as the accessible social glue of contemporary Breton identity. In general, the fest noz does not convey the heavy burden or exclusivity of heritage, sometimes associated with the celebration of a cultural identity; it is a socially inclusive event. Not only are festou noz of the utmost importance to the performance of traditional music in Brittany, (see chapter 5) but in a more global sense, they are a highly visible expression of bretonnitude.

The contemporary fest noz is a direct spin-off of earlier events like harvest festivities, pardons (religious processions) and the many other socio-religious occasions typical of pre-industrial agrarian society. They were organised in the mid-1950s to revitalise traditional music in the central Montagnes area of Basse Bretagne. They have since spread to Haute Bretagne and indeed beyond as the quintessential Breton event. The older traditional fest noz was not actually called a fest noz. It was a dance attached to a specific event at fair days, weddings or harvests. It was an intimate community occasion, everyone knew one and other and the performers were for the most part local. With the advent of industrial farm machinery the tasks which required vast amounts of people working together in the fields or at the construction of new buildings, were no longer labour intensive. The occasions for singing and dancing declined. The dancing was linked to the land and the community. The suite plinn (see chapter 4) in particular, is cited as the dance traditionally used to tasser la terre or flatten out and compress the earthen floors of homes and outbuildings (Ifig Troadec, personal communication, March 1993). The vast changes in lifestyle brought about by the upheaval of the second world war, changing social attitudes and the advent of farm machinery, were viewed by cultural activists, (like Loeiz Ropars and his companions) as a serious threat to the continuation of valuable local musical forms such as as Kan ha diskan. The key purpose of kan ha diskan was to get the
community dancing together in a round. The _danse en rond_ or _dañs tro_ (Breton) is the most important form of dance throughout all of Brittany. The various forms of round dance dominate the contemporary _fest noz_. They have come to symbolise, in the dance, the most important corporeal marker of Pan-Breton identity (see chapter 4).

People have a tendency to view the _fest noz_ as something that is as old as the hills. It is not. But much as the pub session is widely perceived in Ireland today, the question of its antiquity seldom arises. At its inception near the village of Poullaouen in 1955 (chiefly under the direction of Loeiz Ropars), it was intended as an occasion for the performance of the purely vocal form, _kan ha diskan_. Effectively its promoters sought to encourage the creation of a new social context for the performance of _kan ha diskan_ and in addition to promote afresh the art of the _bombarde_ and _binioù_ duet (see Chapter 4). As a direct result of this important initiative, many older performers started to sing and play again. They re-lived the songs, music and ambience of their youth. _Kan ha diskan_ and the _binioù/bombarde_ duo are now charged with symbolic significance for Breton identity.

These more ancient traditional outdoor instruments had already been losing some ground to more recent imports, such as the Clarinet (introduced in the last decades of the 19th century) and the Highland bagpipes introduced during the 1950s. The accordion in all its manifestations had also been present from the turn of the century. The upheaval caused by war and changes in farm practice had a profound effect both on the music itself and its hitherto habitual social context. Dances were increasingly held indoors and the accordion and saxophone began to replace the older instruments because the latter were unsuitable in these new surroundings. Recordings of music - hall favourites (including the paso doble, tango and waltz) became more
familiar to the younger people in the late 1940s and 1950s than the older dance genres. This period marked the beginning of modern mass popular culture. Becker and Le Gurun suggest that it was this very 'standardisation of lifestyle' which provoked the events of the next two decades,

Paradoxically it was precisely this standardisation of lifestyle which during the 1960s and '70s was to instigate both the renaissance of today's sonneurs and tentative inclinations towards ethnomusicological research.\(^3^5\) (1994:34)

*Festoù noz* received a major boost during the 1970s Celtic folk-revival period (see chapter 6) and they have become the cornerstone of traditional music activity.

It is the act of clasping hands or linking arms with the small finger and dancing in a circle - symbolic of - which is central to the *fest noz*. All *festou noz* throughout Brittany are characterised by the *danse en rond* (the circle dance). They remain essentially community events. The *danse en rond* or *dañs tro* (in Breton) is not the sole preserve of les montagnes. However it was in this particular location - specifically the Monts d'Arrée - and involving a particular genre - the *gavotte montagne* - that the event as we now know it was first constructed. Many people have told me that they cannot envisage living without this event, they need to participate in round dancing regularly. Others say that attendance at the *fest noz*, even without dancing, is central to their sense of self and belonging. *Festoù noz* are a significant focal point for social activity throughout the year. The following quotation comes from a handout given to participants during the *stage de danse bretonne et irlandaise* at Confort-Berhet in the Trégor in August 1996,

Since the beginning of the 1970s, the *fest noz* has adapted itself to modern life: along with the language it has become the principal expression of
Breton identity. It has an important social, cultural and bonding role; it doesn't have a lot to do with staged performance—such as concerts (from time to time of excellent quality) or costume parades which evoke a bygone age for a passive public: the fest noz is an inclusive celebration in which everyone participates, from the singer, musician or dancer to the server or client at the bar.\textsuperscript{36} (Author unknown, Confort-Prat: 1996)

The fest noz as it is presently known is a modern phenomenon developed from Ropar's original idea. Its association with kan ha diskan and les montagnes provides it with an historic authentication and a traditional pedigree. For a map showing the location of les Monts d'Arrée ('Les Montagnes') see Figure 5 page 77.

For some time there was controversy about the validity of calling events outside the area of the 'traditional' fest noz, a fest noz. It was argued that bal Breton or Breton dance, echoing the title bal folk or 'folk dance'—events which I remember attending in Brittany in the mid 1970s—was more suitable in these instances. The issue has since fallen out of public debate, as most people are not concerned with the semantic implications of the two designations, valid though they are. The generic description fest noz seems to be here to stay. Some commentators in the recent past (like Patrick Malrieu, one of the founders of DASTUM), have expressed serious concerns about the large Pan-Breton fest noz. He refers to them as fest noz 'braz' (big). These events have become the norm over the last twenty years. Malrieu suggests that they have affected the quality (both musical and social) of the event. He and others like him have been critical of the anonymous throngs that attend these events and of the tendency for one age group—namely the young—to dominate (see Musique Bretonne 1981:17-18).
Throughout the late 1990s, local events like vitelés (house parties) and smaller local fest noz (which are more respectful of local custom and tradition) have begun to catch the public imagination. The potential growth in popularity of such events may have significant implications for the future (see chapter 6).

The 'centre of Brittany' (Les montagnes)

Les Montagnes, or 'Kan ha Diskan', is the heartland of fest noz (that is, place, musical genre, and event). It is the area of Breton consciousness - certainly key symbolic features of the cultural identity of the region. It is a highly energized multi-ethnic composite of cultural points of contact and enjoyment in traditional and modern life. In these areas, many people perceive of the region as a distinctive and cultural area of France. In these areas, many people perceive of the identity of the Breton as a representation of Breton identity. They are also events of breton musical and cultural consciousness - the cultural life's blood of the region. They happen all year round, not just during the festival season. Fest noz may be organized by political parties and committees of all kinds, as well as by a myriad of small scale groups. The fest noz de Kérity ("Kem ar Ball ar moc") is a classic example of how to organize festivities.

Figure 5: Les Monts d'Arrée. This map shows the location of the Monts d'Arrée. It is the area of the 'traditional' fest noz and remains the heartland of kan ha diskan.
Throughout the late 1990s semi-private events like veillées (house parties) and smaller local festou noz (which are more respectful of local custom and tradition) have begun to catch the public imagination. The potential growth in popularity of such events may have significant implications for music professionalism in the future (see chapter 5).

*Les Montagnes, Kan ha Diskan and the fest noz (that is, place, musical genre and event) are - if not the sum total of bretonnitude - certainly key symbolic features of Breton cultural identity.* Brittany has been culturally energised from this composite focal point. No comparable development in the enjoyment of traditional music and dance has taken place in the adjoining areas of France. In these areas many people perceive of Brittany as a place of high social and cultural activity. They cite the celtitude of the Bretons as a reason for this (see chapter 6).

*Festou noz* are by far the most important public celebrations of both local and Pan-Breton cultural identity. They are the prime vehicle for the aesthetic expression of bretonnitude. They are also events of immense social and economic importance - the cultural life's blood of many communities. They happen all year round but are particularly abundant during the tourist season. Festou noz may be organised by political parties and groupings of all hues as well as by a myriad of single issue pressure groups. The fest noz de soutien ('support fund raiser') is a common feature of life in Brittany.
Travelling around rural Brittany from Springtime until well into the Autumn, one cannot fail to notice the number of signposts and posters advertising festou noz. The local fête des oignons (onion festival) or fête des moules (mussel festival), or any other type of event for that matter may have a fest noz attached to it. The scale of these events ranges from a local village-centred celebration with a few hundred in attendance, to the central activity of a large festival like that of the week long festival interceltique de Lorient which has over 2000 people in attendance each evening. Performance contexts for Breton musicians and singers have, arguably, never been as plentiful or as potentially lucrative as they are at present. Many professional musicians, playing some form or other of traditional music in Brittany today owe their living almost entirely to the popularity of the fest noz.

Aside from providing an overall perspective on Brittany in general and identity in particular, this chapter has introduced the fest noz as the primary public identity marker by which bretonnitude is expressed. Chapters 3 and 4 are primarily concerned with the socio-musical dynamic of Breton dance music. The main aim of chapter 3 is to consider how traditional music and dance are passed on in the contemporary environment. It also looks at instrumentation. Chapter 4 is concerned with the musical dynamic of Breton music, this includes the performance of kan ha diskan, chant à répondre and instrumental music. It also provides an examination of the structure of three of the most popular traditional dance music genres performed at festou noz. Chapter 5 deals with the economic implications of festou noz and their integral importance for professionalism in traditional music. Taken together with
innovative French social legislation, the fest noz provides a possible career path in professional music for many. This music scene in turn, is the main location for the expression of contemporary celtitude (see chapter 6). Ireland and Irish music in particular has played an important role in this construction (see chapter 7).

1 The cartoon character, Asterix the Gaul made famous by Goscinny and Uderzu is situated in this period of history. Asterix’s village (appropriately located on the tip of north Finistère) is presented as the one part of Gaul which resolutely resists the Roman onslaught.

2 Cet étrange pays, peuplé d’émigrants chassés de leur île d’origine, et qui, à une certaine époque, constituait un véritable État au sens moderne du terme, cet étrange pays en était réduit au rang d’une province. L’histoire de la Bretagne pourrait s’arrêter à la date de 1532. Cependant, si la Bretagne n’existait plus sur le papier, il y avait toujours les Bretons (Markale 1977:184).


4 France has displayed its diversity in a very public way in recent years. Both its recent Eurovision song contest entries (1996 and 1997) have been inspired by North Africa and Brittany respectively. Dan Ar Bras sang in Breton for the 1997 entry ‘L’heritage des Celts’. In addition, France’s World Cup winning soccer team of 1998 was the most ethnically diverse in the competition. This showed the country’s cultural diversity in a very positive light. Far from the xenophobic perspective of the front national and its leader Jean Marie Le Pen.

5 La formule unité national recouvre en réalité un aspect polysémique, du fait qu’elle traduit à la fois un état de fait et un projet à réaliser (Nicolas 1986:9).

6 “La société du xvié se barricade dans son français. Un long règne commence, du grammairien et de son fol, le bel esprit, moins pour assurer la pérennité de la langue que sa raréfaction, car il faut peu de bien-disants comme il faut peu de riches : il importe que cette langue soit difficile, secrète, une aristocratie, Ne dites pas mais dites” (Lebesque 1970:89).

7 In March 1993 demonstrations and hunger strikes (some lasting up to 12 days) were held all over Brittany to urge ratification of the charter (see Carn 1993:9).

8 Skozall Vreizh meaning ‘aid for Bretons’ is a fund raising body specifically set up to pay for the enormous judicial costs involved in defending the people arrested in the hébergement des basques (‘putting up Basques’) controversy.

9 Aujourd’hui, il faut bien le reconnaître, ces questions semblent bien dépassées par d’autres interrogations sur l’identité française,elle-même en crise (Favereau 1993:70).

10 The state may argue that it is arresting terrorist sympathisers. It is also selecting cultural and political activists in Brittany for special attention, which they too can exploit. Given the extent of popular reaction to these arrests, in the form of large demonstrations in many towns and from local government, it would
seem that the state’s attitude is seen as heavy handed. It was also suggested that the state is acting at the behest of the Spanish authorities.

After a series of political assassinations a popular young government official, Miguel Angel Blanco, was abducted and executed by members of ETA’s military wing on July 12th 1997. This almost universally condemned action against the expressed wishes of the majority of the Basque people caused widespread popular revulsion (in Bilbao alone 500,000 people demonstrated against the abduction). This was manifested in mass demonstrations. ETA offices were attacked and in a number of cases set on fire.


Diwan schools are Breton language medium primary schools (there is now one secondary college in Brest). They began as bilingual public schools in 1977, surviving on donations and fund-raising. They are now part subsidised by the state in the same manner as Catholic schools. Bilingual classes also exist in many Public schools. There is some controversy among Breton language educationalists and activists as to the value of the bilingual class. Some say that the linguistic environment is artificial and it tends to mark the children out from their schoolmates. The bilingual group is often from the better-off section of the community. In addition, in some cases the children have shown signs of a developing superiority complex towards their fellow monoglots in other classes.

La France n’est pas historiquement une communauté de peuples qui a librement consenti à se regrouper....mais un état issu d’un système monarchique négateur de ces même peuples. L’autonomie n’est bien souvent qu’une étape transitoire qui tombe comme un fruit mûr lors de la marche d’un peuple vers son indépendance. ... elle ne peut en rien constituer un objectif à long terme (EMGANN - promotional literature 1996).

En fabriquant des annoméhas, on crée des esclaves et des bien-pensants Alors serons-nous encore les “nègres” bien dressés d’un État étranger ou recouvrirons nous notre mémoire? Continuerons-nous à plier sous le joug ou nous réveillerons-nous? Entendrons-nous, par delà les siècles, la leçon de Nominoë, notre “Tad ar vro”, et oserons nous décider nous-mêmes de notre avenir et gérer nos affaires en peuple majeur? (L’Avenir de la Bretagne 1996:10)

Cette question des deux formes du patriotisme force libératrice ou répressive? Progressiste ou réactionnaire ?) n’arrête pas de se poser à tous les carrefours de l’histoire du mouvement Breton. (1973:52)

".. si nous soutenons le principe de la construction européenne, c’est en poursuivant l’objectif d’une Europe fédérale, c’est-à-dire décentralisée autant que possible, proche des citoyens et respectueuse des principes démocratiques fondamentaux à tous les niveaux de décision. Or cette Europe-là, loin d’avancer, a subi un nouveau revers à Maastricht. " (Le Peuple Breton 1992:4)

La revendication régionaliste ne se résume pas à un clivage pauvres-riches, et c’est bien ce qui la rend incontournable pour réussir l’Europe. (Le peuple Breton, October 1996: 7)

La lune brûle sur le Dolmen - ‘The moon shines on the Dolmen’. In 1984 someone from Roscoff told me that this phrase was the secret code used by the French Resistance in Nord Finistère. This information was confirmed by a radio broadcast on RBO in 1994, concerning the resistance movement in Brittany.

This maxim was adapted from an utterance attributed to the early 20th century Irish revolutionary figure Padraig Pearse - ‘Englands difficulty is Irelands opportunity’.
21 Jean-Marie Le Pen is the leader of the Front National, France's most right-wing political party. This party - known for its racist views - is presently fragmenting (1999). Libération is a prominent French daily newspaper.

22 Dans cette nouvelle guerre, la politique, en tant que moteur de l'Etat-nation, n'existe plus. Elle sert seulement à gérer l'économie, et les hommes politiques ne sont plus que des gestionnaires d'entreprise...... Avec la disparition de marchés locaux et régionaux, celles-ci, privées de protection, ne peuvent supporter la concurrence des géants transnationaux. Des millions de travailleurs se retrouvent ainsi au chômage. Absurdité néolibérale: loin de créer des emplois, la croissance de la production en détruit - l'ONU parle de "croissance sans emploi". (Le Monde diplomatique 1997:6)

23 Coop Breizh produce a catalogue of their books every year. Besides literature about Brittany, they have over 300 titles concerning Ireland in this catalogue. Wales, Scotland and all the other Celtic countries are also well represented. The number of titles concerning Ireland however, outnumber these titles taken together. In linguistic terms, books on the Welsh language are popular. For details contact Coop Breizh 17 rue Penhoet BP 2542 35036 RENNES, Brittany, France.

24 Collecte, conservation, diffusion et mise en valeur de patrimoine ethnologique de Bretagne avec un accent particulier placé sur les traditions orales et la musique traditionnelle (1994 December:2).

25 Collectage pour servir, pour vivre et non pas pour l'entasser dans un frigo (Musique Bretonne 1992:5).

26 The cercle celtique is the Breton equivalent of the cercle folklorique common to all regions of France. These associations, usually started by enthusiastic individuals, are dedicated to the preservation of folkways in dance costume, music and the like. They form a very conspicuous part of the staged entertainment for tourists during the holiday period. A group of robust dancers performing the acrobatic gavotte Pourlet in traditional dress on a hot summers day is, it has to be said, an impressive sight. They have existed since the 1930s. Because of their concentration on colourful pageantry, stagecraft and choreography the activities of the many cercles celtiques that exist in Brittany are trivialised by some. However, it is incontestable that they contributed in a very practical way to the promotion of Breton culture during the lean years between the end of the second world war and the early 1970s. Many of today's finest Breton musicians began their musical careers as part of a cercle celtique (see Chapter 3).

27 Geographers Elisee Reclus and Paul Vidal de la Blache studied the relationship between natural elements and humans. Their publications reflected this relationship. Réclus, a figure of boundless energy, was an anarchist and an outspoken non-racist and anti-imperialist socio-political commentator. The early 20th century French academic establishment were not as reverential in their attitude to him as to the aristocratic La Blache who steered clear of politics. It is only in the last few years that Reclus's passionate magnum opus L'homme et la Terre (1906-1908) has been revisited and recognised for its comprehensive erudition. For an overview of his work see Elisee Reclus l'homme et la Terre edited by Béatrice Giblin (1982 and 1998). La Blache is the author of the Tableau de la géographie de la France (1903). His maps graced most French classrooms throughout the first half of the 20th century.

28 Favereau points out that Morbihan has 'le seul nom indigène de tous les départements français' - 'the only indigenous name of all the French départements' (Favereau, 1993:13).

29 The economic re-organisation known as the Aménagement du territoire was begun by DATAR (Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale) in the early 1960s. It marked a significant move towards de-centralisation in France (Ardagh 1977:194-5).
We had an unfortunate example of this phenomenon recently during the Bosnian war. The discredited Bosnian Serb leader and war criminal, Radovan Karadzic, himself a traditional singer, made extensive use of beautiful Serbian melodies to stir up emotions and incite ethnic hatred (Channel 4 film 1994).

The trend of late in terms of recent compositions in the Montagnes genres is that they tend to be quite challenging instrumental pieces for the most part. This points to a decline in the spoken language in the Basse Bretagne region which causes widespread concern among Breton language activists.

It is true that to learn another language to a reasonable degree of fluency does require quite a commitment in terms of time. This situation is not helped when the native speakers are a relatively small and sometimes unmotivated bilingual population. Not everybody is ready to make the necessary commitment.

Per Jakez Helias speaks of this in his book Le cheval d'orgueil (Plon, Paris 1982). The book concerns his memories of growing up in a peasant community in the pays bigouden, south west of Quimper. It is a valuable window into rural life in a Breton speaking community during the first decades of the 20th century. He is greatly admired for this work by many but criticised by some (i.e. l'Avenir de Bretagne) for the implication - which they read into his work - that the loss of Breton identity is inevitable.

Alternatively the image of the biniou was often denigrated by the Parisian and provincial 'politico-cultural elite' (their own impression of themselves) who used the term biniouserie during the late 19th and early 20th centuries to imply rustic triviality or nonsense.

C'est paradoxalement cette uniformisation des modes de vie qui provoquera dans les années 60-70 la renaissance de l'activité des sonneurs actuels, et les velléités de recherche ethno-musicologique (1994:34).

Depuis le début des années 70, le fest noz s'est adapté à la vie moderne; il est devenu, avec la langue, la principale expression identitaire bretonne. Il joue un rôle social, culturel et relationnel important: il n'a pas grand chose à voir avec les manifestations-spectacles (parfois d'excellente qualité), avec démonstrations scéniques, défilés ou présentations de costumes, retraçant une époque révolue pour un public passif; le fest noz est une fête collective, à laquelle tous participent, du chanteur ou sonneur, au danseur, en passant par le serveur ou le consommateur de la buvette. (Author unknown 1996)
Chapter 3

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF BRETON DANCE MUSIC

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the socio-musical dynamic of Breton traditional dance music. For me the term socio-musical dynamic describes how people organise themselves to sing and play music. It also refers to the instruments they use and to how musicians and dancers relate to each other. The descriptive terms used are mainly those employed by the dancers and musicians within the tradition. Transmission is implicitly contained within these parameters and so too are the basic aesthetic considerations deemed necessary for good ‘traditional’ performance. Chapter 3 is divided into three parts. The first part looks at teaching and the learning process, the second, instrumentation and the third dance in context. Teaching is also a source of income for many musicians (see chapter 5).

Passing on the tradition

Before looking at the actual social organisation of performance and the music itself (see chapter 4) it is important to consider how people impart and access the skills necessary to play music for dancers in today’s environment. In a minority of cases the skills of musicianship are still passed on - entirely in the oral tradition - within families and communities. After the Second World War however, industrialisation and urbanisation caused profound changes. Becoming a traditional musician in this new social context required a conscious decision to choose Breton music. It was no longer the reflexive choice that would have been made by the prospective musicians of earlier times.
The old context

In the pre-industrial past learning took place almost entirely during actual performance. Younger *sonneurs* (traditional instrumentalists) or singers acquired the skills and aesthetic values of the music by carefully watching and imitating the older *maître sonneurs* ('master musicians') some of whom were travelling musicians. Normally they could do this within their own immediate communities. Together with the musical and social skills required for the job, instruments were made locally and in many cases passed down within the family from father to son. Unless the lessons were given by a family member or close friend, some form of payment was the norm. In rural society this was more likely to have been in goods or labour rather than money. During the Second World War payment for singing at a wedding or other such local occasion was in tobacco or some such 'luxury' item (interview with Emmanuel Kerjean, July 1990).

The type of experience outlined above was similar to the way in which a significant number of today's accomplished singers and musicians learned their art during the 1960s and '70s. In some cases if they were not born into a 'traditional music environment' this required great single-mindedness. Musicians now in their late thirties or forties will often mention a particular *ancien* ('old one') whom they consider to be their main influence. In many cases this reference may have been within the relatively new context of the classes run by both the *cercles celtiques* and BAS ('Bodadeg Ar Sonerion') throughout the 1960s (see below). The link with the previous generation of singers and musicians is valued by people in this age group and much of the writing in the most recent book on Breton music shows great admiration and respect for the older generation of *sonneurs* (see *Musique Bretonne* 1994:31). This context is no longer commonplace for the majority of young
traditional musicians today. The passing on of traditional song however remains more substantially similar to the older model of transmission.

Clearly the ‘traditional’ context of learning current in the 19th and early 20th century rural milieu cannot accommodate the wide cross-section of people who want to learn Breton music today. Both the context in which traditional music is played and the sociological profile of the people who play it have changed significantly over the years. Traditional music in an urban environment is not unusual these days and in the absence of the older system of apprenticeship within the family or community, new contexts for teaching and learning have evolved. The avid learners of the tradition in the 1970s now find themselves fast approaching venerable status and the art of the sonneur is now more likely to be passed on in the classroom for a wage.

The new context

Breton traditional music is not an integral part of the general education system. It may however be included in a school curriculum as a reflection of the personal skills and interests of individual staff members. Some schools have skilled traditional singers and musicians on their staff. The Lycée Felix Le Dantec in Lannion - a school which I visited on several occasions - enthusiastically promotes Breton music and dancing and organises musical events at which all the players are pupils or ex-pupils of the school. We can say therefore that individual teachers in public and private sector schools may teach traditional music. It is circumstantial rather than systematic however.

In addition to the already established structures (such as those provided by the cercles celtiques and BAS) many new teaching and learning situations have evolved in
response to popular demand. Notably instrumental traditional music is becoming a regular feature of the music services provided by many local authorities. Also, local social associations like the amicale laïque (parents group) in smaller villages and communes (rural districts) often organise and fund their own traditional music classes. A group of friends may get together to pay a musician to teach them for a hour or two every week. At the conservatoire municipal in Carhaix traditional music lessons accounted for over half the classes offered. The music schools at Carhaix, Rostrenen and Pontivy each have a department of traditional music which coexists with the department of classical music. I have taught music in all of the circumstances cited above, which are commonplace throughout contemporary Brittany. In the case of the conservatories, the students who attend these courses add significantly (if not crucially) to the financial viability of the institution. They come from all age groups and social classes.

Master-classes in dance music and song tend to be part of a local festival or a special event in the music school’s calendar. The musicians and singers who are invited to teach the master-class, are always those whose professional profile and status is high. These classes are advertised in the local press and in cultural publications. While the master-class may contain up to 10 participants and last up to 6 hours, the emphasis in the conservatoire is on short lessons. Lessons which are conducted on a one to one basis and which last for half an hour. Some teachers use basic tonic solfa, but most teach by example relying heavily on oral transmission. Effective teaching can have many idiosyncrasies. The lesson is ideally a social event as well as the passing on of a skill, where process is every bit as important as product. Most mature traditional musicians do some teaching, either within an existing structure or organisation or through their own contacts.
The *stage* (workshop) is yet another way by which students are taught by well-known musicians and singers. *Stages* and master-classes are organised by a wide cross-section of institutions and associations. They may be part of the activities schedule of a large festival (as in the festival at Lorient) or they may be marketed as a yearly event in the calendar of a music school. Like master-classes, the artists who are invited to lead *stages* are usually well-known professionals with high profiles in Breton music circles. The learners in both of these contexts must already be competent musicians. The *stage* may last several days and involve about 5-6 hours teaching per day. They are highly social events, consisting of communal meals, informal music sessions and a *fest noz*. The *stage* is not just an occasion for learning music, it is also a window into the life style and the social attitudes of musicians - the 'musicians way' so to speak. The *stage de la Chapelle Neuve* (begun in the late 1980s) which takes place in late spring every year at the village of La Chapelle-Neuve, in the Trégor, has become a well-known event in the Breton musical calendar.

**Teaching strategies**

In essence the skills of Breton dance music are learned aurally. It is important to point out however that many traditional musicians, even well back into the 19th century, were musically literate. Matilin an dall (Blind Matilin), a famous *sonneur* from this period, is said to have been able to 'understand solfa very well' (Le Penven 1974:1). Many people involved in the teaching of traditional music today emphasise oral transmission to a greater degree than may have been the case in previous times. In the 19th century literacy of any sort was a form of dignity (see Giraudon 1985). While DASTUM's bi-monthly magazine, *Musique Bretonne* has often published song texts, musical transcriptions are now a rarity on its pages. According to those involved with DASTUM the reason for this is simple and straightforward. They argue
that in view of the number of musicians living and teaching in the community and in view of the easy access to quality recordings and recording equipment, it is simply unnecessary to transcribe the tunes. In the past, transcription was more valuable as it provided the essential link between the late 19th century and today. Aside from academic musicological analysis, the use of transcription has less everyday application in traditional music than was previously the case.

Learning by ear may be the preferred option for the transmission of traditional music in Brittany today, but tonic solfa or staff notation are also used. In my experience a combination of aural learning and writing down the bare structure of the tune is what suits the greater number. Many of the learners value the skill of musical literacy. In a one to one situation, the learners’ aptitude will dictate the teacher’s strategy. The teaching methods of the BAS reflect a situation where class teaching has become a necessary reality.

Today a federation like BAS is comprised of over 3500 musicians: How does one teach these thousands of young people? In the bagadoù, tonic solfa and instrumental technique are taught at the same time to enable work on style and expression to follow.5 (J.Bouchet in Musique Bretonne 1993:14)

Later on in the same article, Bouchet expresses the concern that a negative attitude among traditional musicians regarding literacy would merely ‘reflect the hostility of many classical musicians to oral transmission’.6 There is no doubt however that in contemporary traditional music circles, ability to learn by ear is more esteemed than musical literacy.
Together with Polig Montjarret, Jef Le Penven was one of the few people to undertake the transcription of Breton traditional music this century. He had a resolute attitude as to how a tradition should be passed on. In the introduction to his ‘Collection of airs for the bombarde and biniou’ - which he describes as ‘not a folklore study’ - he offers the following advice,

Young sonneurs, the airs which follow are deliberately noted down in the simplest fashion possible: no tonguing instructions, no ties or slurs, just the naked tune. It is not in a book that one learns the skill of interpretation. Only the oral tradition will give you the right idea of both the style and the job of a perfect sonneur. (Le Penven, Introduction 1974:2)

Clearly in practice, all forms of transmission are employed to a greater or lesser extent. This depends upon the strategy of the individual teacher, the learning situation and the wishes or disposition of the learner or learners. A Diplôme d'Etat or recognised state diploma which qualifies one as a teacher of traditional music in the eyes of the state has been in existence for some time now. It has both supporters and detractors.

Diplôme d'Etat

The Diplôme d'Etat (DE) is the result of an initiative by a working group of traditional music teachers and performers from all the regions of France. It was set up in the late 1980s, under the auspices of the FAMDT (Fédération des Associations de Musiques et Danses Traditionnelles). The DE in traditional music is aimed at setting good teaching standards in the specific area of traditional music. According to its newsletter-proposal of 1994, a candidate for the DE can follow any form of
traditional music from anywhere in the world as long as he/she is resident in France. They must also be practitioners of the music they want to teach and have a good general education. Initially they must be assessed and recommended by the office of cultural affairs in their home region, the DRAC (Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles). While a high degree of musical competence in the chosen tradition is desirable, a thorough knowledge of the history and social context of the music in question is also essential. Heavy emphasis is placed on good communication and teaching skills. The fact that most traditional musics are orally transmitted is the prime guiding principle. According to a recent FAMDT newsletter,

The first responsibility of a teacher is to be a guide who is able to open a window for the pupil into the heritage which he - the teacher - possesses, in order to empower that pupil to begin to form his own style." (1994:3).

Towards this end, an applicant must undergo a series of tests before being admitted to a course programme. The course is intended to develop the skills necessary for effective communication. It takes place intermittently at a number of centres over a three year period. Non attendance at any of the courses on the programme, automatically excludes the applicant. The test centre for bas-Breton instrumental music in Brittany is Pontivy where the principal examiners include two founder members of DASTUM, Pierre Crépillon and Laurent Bigot. Haut-Breton traditions are examined by ethnomusicologist Yves Defrance. Because of its concentration of expertise in ‘Celtic’ music, Brittany is where the examination in Irish music is held (Patrick Mc Kenna, personal correspondence 1996).

When I first heard of this diploma in the early 1990s some musician friends of mine were critical of it. They suggested that competence in traditional music did not need the imprimatur of the state. In the charged politico-cultural context of Breton
music, they questioned why people should need a French state recognised diploma to teach Breton music? They also suggested that this diploma offended the anarchic spirit of the music, setting certain individuals up in judgement of their peers or in some cases their betters. How can a living icon of music fail to get such a diploma if they wanted it or why should any self respecting traditional music expert want it in the first place? These were the type of reflections I noticed at the time. On the other hand, the advocates of the programme suggest that it does not seek to test the cultural or musical depth of the individual, but that it seeks to guide him or her in pedagogic skills. Pierre Crépillon argues that a good performer is not necessarily a good teacher (Personal communication, Quimper July 1998).

The Diplôme d’État does not guarantee a job but it is increasingly viewed as a benchmark of pedagogic competence by many teaching establishments - notably musical conservatories. Many individual musicians and other cultural organisations continue to promote their own classes and teach without any deference to it. Whether or not it will become a standard or essential strategy for traditional musicians who want to be teachers cannot as yet be assessed. It has not been in place for long enough. Detailed information on the Diplôme d’État in traditional music can be obtained from the FAMDT or the Ministère de la culture et de la francophonie in Paris. A higher diploma can also be taken by people who have already completed the DE.

Competitions

These are key events at local and regional level and involve both music, song and dance. Since they first appeared in the latter part of the 19th century, competitions in the area of Breton music have remained popular. They compliment the learning
process and in some cases serve to launch professional careers bringing talented performers to public notice. If all the various types are taken together, from those specifically for the couple sonneurs (‘pair of traditional dance musicians’ - see chapter 4) to those for bagadoù, there are presently in excess of seventy per year. Many of these have been annual events since 1949 when they were set up by the founders of BAS. Becker and le Gurun reflect the opinion of many when they state, “Where would Breton music be now without the stimulating effect of competitions” (1994:80). The competitions for couple sonneurs and singers draw attention to musical endeavour in a particular style or genre. They take place in both Haute and Basse Bretagne and have important local cultural significance. Sonneurs of all ages, including acknowledged masters of the tradition, continue to participate in competitions throughout their performing lives.

I have never heard a negative comment passed within the musical milieu concerning competitions. Many of my friends regularly participated in them. The competitions which I attended - such as that for sonneurs of the treuenn gaol (clarinet) at Glömel in May 1994 - are conducted in a serious manner, but they are also social events in which socialising and entertainment are as important as the competition itself. Festou noz are integral to all competitions. At the fête Plinn, which takes place in mid-August at Danouët near Bourbriac, competitions for dancers, singers and musicians form the main part of the day. Prizes ranging from household goods to luxury items are given to the winners. Occasionally, as in the past, a goat, a pig, or (as on one occasion that I witnessed at Danouët) several live turkeys, are offered as prizes. The fest noz which accompanies all competitions is still the preserve of the couple sonneurs or singers and may in the future come to represent the ‘real’ traditional fest noz, free from the influence of groups (see chapter 4).
Modern repertory development

Like the bagadoù, the cercles celtiques (see below) are another important context in which many of today’s players first learnt to dance and play during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In general, the cercles celtiques and bagadoù taught the repertory of Basse-Bretagne. This was done not only because of the suitability of the repertoire for bagpipes but also because of the perceived antiquity and degree of celtitude the bas-Breton repertory possessed. Until relatively recently all bagads and dance classes run by les cercles celtiques (including those based in Haute Bretagne) concentrated on the bas-Breton repertory.

The quotation below serves to illustrate what I have been dealing with above. In this instance, prominent Breton musician Jean-Michel Veillon talks about an evening of dance and music that took place regularly near his home in Fréhel (near St Brieuc, in Haute Bretagne). It clearly illustrates the favoured position of the bas-Breton repertory with regard to bretonitude and celtitude. He was a youngster at the time (late 1960s early 1970s) learning traditional music and dance with his local cercle celtique.

“When I was at the cercle celtique in Pléhrel, the old people of the area who came to the fest noz ... they came to look at the Breton dances ... I began to ask myself questions after a few years.....Why are these people, families whom I’ve known for years ... I knew everybody .. it was my village ... why are they coming to see Breton dances? Why do they not get up and dance themselves? Their children danced because they had been attending the cercle ... it was later on that I realised ... when I saw a whole bunch of people with Indian skirts and lads with long hair coming in the door. They began to dance Schottisches and the like. I was very surprised, where did all these dances come from? It was some sort of folk-club that had been founded ... I didn’t know the milieu, but they were all locals. Schottisches, Mazurkas, even some Polkas, all played on the hurdy-gurdy. In fact these were the old dances of the area. After that I
did some collecting in my own home place.” (Interview in Prat, February 1994).12

The revival of interest in haut-Breton genres has clearly been influenced by the bas-Breton example. The haut-Breton genres are now included in the musical expression of bretonnitude.

The sound of bretonnitude

My intention here is to concentrate on describing the instruments that I most regularly came across at festoù noz in the Trégor. That is the instruments which are (with one exception) most widely perceived as emblematic of bretonnitude. As music is about people however, musical instruments without performers - or people investing them with cultural significance - are nothing more than attractive inanimate objects. It is not the aim of this section to talk in isolation about the morphology of instruments. The intention here is to show how people in contemporary Breton society perceive of and use these instruments and not to address complex structural information of interest to specialist instrument makers only. I place some emphasis on the clarinet here because it is the instrument that I chose to learn during my stay in Brittany.

Practically every modern musical instrument is now used in Breton music. Acoustic instruments like the fiddle and accordion (chromatic and diatonic), that are found in practically all western folk-music traditions, are commonplace. Some, like the timber flute and Uillean pipes, which are habitually associated with the Irish tradition, began to be used in Breton music in the early 1970s. The tin whistle - now known throughout Brittany as La flûte irlandaise ("the Irish flute") - is used both for teaching (including preliminary instruction in bombarde) and performance purposes.
A six-holed tin whistle of sorts called a ‘pif’ was used by learners in the early years of this century (J.M. Veillon, personal communication, May 1994). Today’s generation of professional Breton fiddle players, musicians like Fañich Landreau and Jacky Molard, are much inspired by the techniques of Jazz and the Irish fiddle. The quasi-folk ‘Celtic harp’ (or Celtic music on the Harp), much revived by Alan Stivell in the late 1960s and early 1970s, enjoys an ambiguous status somewhere in between mythic folk and musique savante. It is connected more to the category of ‘Celtic music’, than to that of Breton music per se.

**Bombarde**

The **bombarde** is a double reeded aerophone akin to the pastoral oboe or shawm. It has many similar cousins in other cultures, among them the Turkish zurna. The *bombarde* reed is around 43 mm in length and although much shorter, resembles a bagpipe chanter in shape. The instrument has seven holes and a conical bore narrow at the end nearest the reed and widening to a horn shape at the other. The last hole is covered by a key mechanism. If the basic open scale of the instrument begins on Bb, this last note is a semi-tone below it, giving the note A.14 It is made mostly from rosewood, ebony or boxwood. The finger holes may be decorated with tin and ivory or more modern imitations of these materials. Some authorities maintain that the *bombarde* has its origins in ancient Egypt around 2000 BC, but this is debatable. It survives in Brittany today (together with the *biniou*) as the oldest archetypal Breton instrument. Given its extensive use in the *bagadoù* it is also the most popular. The use of two octaves in *bombarde* playing dates from the early 19th century and is attributed to the innovative playing of *maître sonneur*, Matilin An Dall. It is now standard practice (Becker and Le Gurun
1994:45). Most modern players have several instruments in a variety of pitches and although this is not a new development, it is more common now than in the recent past. In addition the modern instruments are invariably fashioned to a tempered western scale. Some Breton musicians (and instrument makers) have made deliberate efforts to continue to use archaic tunings for certain repertories. Jean-Michel Veillon and Pierre Crépillon both cite the repertory of the Vannetais region in particular.

To get a sound from the bombarde requires considerable practice. The reed is placed between the lips and the mouth pursed. Strain and concentration are evident on most players faces with veins sometimes standing out on the neck. The bombarde is a very physically demanding instrument and most players of note work very hard to produce good tone and volume. The reed can be worked upon using the pressure of the lips to bend notes thereby varying the pitch and changing the tone colour. This technique is used frequently by today’s maîtres sonneurs. During l’appel à la danse (’the call to the dance’) the bombarde player will explore the full range of the instrument. Arpeggios are the base of these improvisations. In general the musician will not play an entire cycle of a tune (AA BB in most cases) both because of stylistic considerations and the virtual physical impossibility of doing so. He/she will double up with the biniou last time around on the last phrase normally finishing with an impressive flurry of higher octave notes (see chapter 4).

Biniou koz

The biniou or biniou koz (‘old bagpipe’) to give it its full title, is a single drone bagpipe. It has the smallest chanter of all bagpipes (about 14-15 cms) and is a
singly bas-Breton development. It is pitched one octave higher than the bombarde and has six to seven holes along the front of the chanter, two sound holes at the bottom and another covered or uncovered by the thumb at the back of the instrument. The drone is tuned to the tonic note on the scale of the chanter, two octaves below the fundamental. The chanter is normally made from boxwood. The bag is made from sheep skin or another suitable animal hide. During the 1930s it was largely supplanted by the increasing use of the highland pipes (biniòù braz) but it has since made a moderate comeback. This comeback is due to the success of the fest noz and an interest on the part of players to re-discover the instrument. The biniòù has a more intuitive chanter technique unencumbered by the precise ornamentation used on the bagpipe chanter. It has a high-pitched sound admirably suited to outdoor situations. Again several interchangeable chanters are often used by the sonneur in order to be in tune with the bombardes of his partner (see chapter 4). In modern instruments the drone length can be adjusted accordingly. Bombardes and biniòùs are made by experienced craftsmen, usually accomplished sonneurs themselves. For photographs of the instruments and some players see Plate 3 page 102. The pages of Musique Bretonne (1997) are full of detailed photographs of these instruments.

Clarinet (treujenn gaol)

Since the early years of the 19th the clarinet (a single reeded instrument), has been used to play traditional music all over Brittany. It was around this time that it first began to appear in shops in the cities and towns. Because of its resemblance to a head of cabbage which has 'shot' or grown a long stalk it is often referred to in Basse Bretagne as the 'treujenn gaol' (Breton) or 'trognon de chou' (French) meaning 'cabbage stalk'. The standard 24 keyed boehm system wooden instrument, pitched in Bb is the most common today. The keys are metal levers used to obtain accidentals.
In the past the simple (open-holed) system made of Boxwood was most common. From the examples I have seen the number of keys on this instrument vary from 6 to 13 (see Plate 4 page 103). The *treuenn gaol* is generally played at *festoù noz* both outdoors and indoors. Normally traditional musicians use only the high register giving an open scale of one octave in A. To obtain the high register the back key is continually depressed by the thumb. This too is difficult to sustain and many quacks and squawks are typical of the novice *sonneur*. In didactic contexts and in other more intimate indoor situations, the lower register - open scale of Bb - is used. It is both quieter and much easier to obtain. This practice leaves tunes in modalities which fall roughly into the keys of Bb, and C (lower octave) and A and B (higher register) the easiest to finger and therefore the most common. The above information reflects my own learning experience - that of practice in performance - whereby I endeavoured to imitate the gestures and sound quality produced by my teacher Ifig Troadec. There are no standard rules of ornamentation and no cross fingering is used in the older 6 to 13 keyed instruments making the tonal relationships untempered and relative rather than absolute. Musicians have suggested to me that this is in keeping with the survival of older scales rather than false practice. There are vocal examples in *kan ha diskan* to indicate the likely origins of this older tuning system.

Style, as already indicated, is a very personal thing and it is in this spirit that generations of *sonneurs* have transmitted their art. In my experience, tonguing and ‘cutting’ the notes - by this I mean playing a grace note above the main note of the melodic line - are a feature of Clarinet playing. So too is moving the reed between the lower lip (on reed) and upper front teeth (on mouthpiece) to produce vibrato. A thin piece of rubber may be glued to the mouthpiece to aid the player in this matter. The tradition of clarinet playing, particularly in central Brittany and its adjacent *Gallo* region, has continued without rupture since the last century. Older players who are still
active, such as Arsène Cozlin, have become the main source of stylistic reference for
today’s younger musicians. Apparently clarinet players did play solo for weddings and
other local celebrations but this is no longer common today (Musique Bretonne
1997:312).

In the early 1970s when I first visited Brittany, many of the younger
traditional music enthusiasts whom I met shunned the clarinet as an import. On the
one hand they associated it with French (i.e. ‘non-Celtic’) music and on the other, they
preferred to support the renaissance of the *bombarde* and *biniou* (perceived as the
more authentic Breton sound) at the expense of the clarinet. Surprisingly this same
group had no problem with such newcomers as the guitar, bouzoukis of all types,
Uillean pipes, Flutes and the like. In this they were simply reflecting the prevailing
climate of this period, the heyday of Breton Pan-Celticism. They were validating
their own cultural and aesthetic choices over those of the preceding decades. Today
however it is recognised by many that although the instrument usurped the *bombarde*
and *biniou* in the 19th century, it continued to carry the old style and repertory.
Today’s older players of the clarinet - although neglected by researchers until the mid
1970s - represent a living link to this older aesthetic of playing.

**Flutes**

The rise of the simple-system pre-Boehm wooden concert flute (and its
relatives pitched in Eb and F) is both recent and dramatic. It was during the early
1970s that the instrument borrowed from the Irish example began to be used in the
performance of Breton music. Foremost among its exponents at this time were
Patrick Molard and Alain Kloat’r. Stylistic features learned from the practice of Irish
music were inevitably part of the borrowing. Due to popular demand, simple-system
concert flutes can now be bought from reputable makers. Craftsmen copy them from 19th century proto-types now rare in the market place. They may or may not have keys (a maximum of 8, or a minimum of 2).15

Sonneur de bombarde turned specialist flute-player, Jean-Michel Veillon - together with others like Hervé Guyot - developed a truly Breton aesthetic on the instrument during the early 1980s. These players have taught the flute to many young musicians throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. Kan ha diskan is sometimes played by two flute players, but the instrument has made it physically unnecessary. Singers, bombarde and treujenn gaol players require a partner (or partners) to sustain the momentum of the dance. As it is often accompanied by a Guitar, the rise of the flute to a position of prominence in Breton music marks a different kind of dialogue in the tradition; that of the melody instrument together with an instrument capable of playing chords. This is viewed by some as untraditional as it detracts from the ideal of the couple sonneurs so fundamental to the tradition (see chapter 4).16 Despite the phenomenal rise in the popularity of the flute, the latest literature available on Breton music does not mention the instrument nor elevate the flute-player to the rank of sonneur, the word specifically used for traditional musicians in Brittany. The comprehensive book Musique Bretonne issued in 1997 makes no mention whatever of the flute as used in Breton music. Practically all other acoustic instrumentalists, both bas-Breton and haut-Breton, are described as sonneurs. In conversation, however, I have often heard flute-players described as sonneurs. This indicates that for many musicians it is the successful interpretation of the aesthetic values of the music that counts most, not the instrument. It may only be a matter of time before the flute gets authenticated as a ‘traditional’ instrument.
Plate 3: Bombarde and binioù. Stephan Morvan (Bombarde) Youenn Peron (binioù) Stephan Foll (binioù).
Plate 4: The *trejenn gaol*. Older and more modern versions of the Breton traditional Clarinet.
In contrast with most parts of France, where indigenous traditional music belongs essentially to the realm of self-conscious folklore, traditional music and dancing are a vibrant living tradition in Brittany. As there are many more dancers than singers and musicians, the dance event or fest noz is the lifeblood of the music. It also represents a particularly Breton form of social glue (see chapters 1 and 2). A look at the contemporary social context in which these dances are learned is a necessary backdrop to any consideration of the music and dancing per se. In endeavouring to contextualise my own experience of learning to dance, I wish to illustrate the circumstances in which the dance flourishes and interacts with the community of musicians. The last part of this chapter has sections on ‘folklore’, ‘cercles celtiques’, ‘dancing for all, ‘local colour’, ‘dancing classes and music’ and ‘the Trégor: dance, musicians and community’, which seek to address this issue.

**Folklore**

Many regions of France are rich in indigenous traditional music. However it is only in Brittany that it appears as a genuine part of popular culture with a numerous and broadly-based following among the population. There can be no doubt that the unique cultural and socio-political inheritance outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 has had a lot to do with this flowering of activity. In most other parts of France, indigenous forms of traditional folk music and dance are either associated with laudable though somewhat atrophied ideas of preservation or they are entirely absent. Efforts at preservation and revival can appear quite self-conscious. The musicians and dancers concerned are often a select grouping or association that hold discreet meetings and
do some teaching at local conservatories. These associations may also be in receipt of 
départemental subsidies which are used to run one or two keynote events during the 
year. One criticism I have heard levelled at these organisations is that they are not 
very proactive and that they appear to seek to rarefy their chosen ‘local music’ rather 
than popularise it.

*Fêtes folkloriques* (celebrations of folklore) are quite commonplace in many 
parts of France during the summer. They involve traditional music, costumed dancers 
and food in the form of traditional fare. They provide an occasion for the local *cercle 
folklorique* - or in the case of Brittany (and the Breton Diaspora), the *cercle celtique* -
to perform the dances they have learnt, choreographed and rehearsed during the year.
Interestingly, *folklorique* or *folklo* are words commonly used by some French people 
to describe what they perceive to be quaint behaviour or questionable organisation.
The word *folkeux* was also commonly used during the late 1970s. To use the jargon 
of that period in France, *Baba cools* (literally ‘Cool heads’) used it in a mildly derisory 
way to describe some Folk revivalists. It was not used in reference to the members of 
a *cercle folklorique*. The term *Folkeux* conjures up an image of a group bathed in a 
distinctive aura of gravitas; an aura that can, on occasion, surround self-conscious 
culture bearers. French *folkeux* are perceived to be quite serious studied types.
Although not an accurate translation of the concept, the nearest equivalent to this 
word in English is ‘folkies’.17

*Cercles celtiques*

The performance of traditional dance in Brittany for tourists during the 
summer months has a strong *folklorique* element. It involves pristine traditional 
costumes and skilful choreography. It is aimed at a passive public and it is undertaken
by members of the local cercles celtiques. During the summer of 1997 one of the major attractions of the fête de Cornouaille at Quimper was the evening devoted to la danse bretonne. In this show dancers resplendent in traditional costume danced to the music of the bagad kemper (The Quimper bagpipe, drum and bombarde band) and to some of Brittany's best known professional singers and sonneurs. This was an impressive grand spectacle (big show) which involved around 200 people on stage at the same time. It played to well over 2000 spectators. This event is typical of the scale of many of the productions that are a feature of outdoor summertime entertainment in Brittany. Such shows are colourful and highly professional displays of folk bretonnitude. These events first appeared during the early part of the 20th century. They marked the first signs of the celebration of what became increasingly known as folklore.

The 'cercles', as they are habitually called, are well-established local cultural organisations which were founded in significant population centres in the early 1930s (Musique Bretonne, 1996:395). They are now found all over Brittany and beyond. At international celebrations of folklore it is usual for a cercle celtique to represent Brittany. Essentially apolitical, they are dedicated to the teaching and the promotion of traditional music, dance, costume and custom. Their collective contribution to cultural life is (as pointed out in Chapter 2) highly significant. Throughout the 1950s and '60s, together with the bagadoù (see chapter 4), they provided the learning and performance structures in which many of today's well known musical personalities began their careers. Their headquarters in Brittany (at Ti Kendalc'h, near Redon) has an extensive archive with study and research facilities. In addition, workshops in instrument making and playing, together with concerts and dances, are important features of the centre's activities.
Traditional round dancing at festou noz throughout the year, however, is a popular part of regular social activity. At these events no folklore costumes and the like are on display (see plate 5 page 107). Unlike the fête folklorique, which celebrates the folk-life of past generations, the local festou noz are part of what Tokumaru has termed ‘the total network of life’ (1991:141). What many people in Brittany describe as a human need for community is reflected metaphorically in the traditional round dance with people moving in a circle hand in hand (see also Brinson 1985). Nonetheless, the influence of the ‘cercles’, has played and continues to play, a substantial role in sustaining and nurturing interest in traditional music and dance. Members of a cercle can sometimes be conspicuous at festou noz, not because they are dressed in traditional costume but because of the rigour of their dancing. I have often witnessed the members of an enthusiastic cercle forming their own rond (circle) and dancing so robustly and precisely (sometimes with a step or two extra) as if to discourage implicitly any less proficient dancers from joining their circle.

Although the Breton round dance is inclusive and encourages mass participation, there are, of course, inventive dancers who like to spice things up a little in order to animate the round further or to express their own personal or (in some cases) sub-group identity. For a large number of dedicated dancers who enjoy choreography and contests, the cercles celtiques provide the learning and practice structures that enables them to perform in front of appreciative audiences and prepare for competitions. All sorts of ‘new wave’ rockers have developed variants to some of the dances. In one such variant of the Plinn (see chapter 4) I have seen the ‘pogo’ like movements of punk rock used by leather-clad dancers with shocks of spiky hair. A mixture of all these different dancers in one circle can be an interesting spectacle.20
Plate 5: Round dancing at festoù noz.
Dancing for all

Traditional dance and music in Brittany continue to enjoy a renaissance since the 1950s. Furthermore they have been given global value by the popularity of ‘Celtic music’. This is best illustrated by the success of Alan Stivell in the 1970s (see chapter 6). By regular attendance at festoù noz people are exercising a clear cultural choice that would not have been available to them in the agrarian peasant society of the late 19th century. This latter period was a time of rapid demographic change and cultural diversification however and it is acknowledged that the 19th century was the source of the material which serves as the touchstone of repertoire and style for today’s performers (Becker et Le Gurun 1994:48).

Since the 1970s, both in the local context and in terms of larger Pan-Breton celebrations, the fest noz has been the key event in the all year round Breton musical calendar. The printemps de Chateauneuf (‘the Spring of Chateauneuf’) marks the start of the cultural festival year. It takes place on Easter Sunday and lasts from midday until well into the following morning. At its main festival tent it celebrates a large cross-section of all the Breton dance traditions. In the more intimate concert platforms which cluster around this central tent, it provides a context for the performance of genres other than dance music. In all well over one hundred performers take part, the fest deiz (‘day party’) passing seamlessly into the fest noz. It is practically a 24 hour non-stop feast of music song and dance. The contemporary fest noz is without doubt the single most important context for singing, playing music and dancing in the world of Breton traditional music today. The simpler round dances, which I (like many others) first learned by attending festoù noz, are the part of this musical world which is immediately accessible to large numbers of people. The modern fest noz is essentially an environment for dancing and the dance is the
motor of this tradition. Many musicians began as dancers. They consider the ability
to dance as essential to the ability to play well.

Many people attend festou noz not only to dance but also to hear their
favourite singers, sonneurs and groups. That is, the performers who will make them
want to get up and dance. A well danced suite of round dances will in turn bring out
the best in the performers. Complicity between dancers and performers can be a
powerful thing to witness, but the best way to experience this is to join the round
oneself. If all conditions, such as music, ambience and company are right, the Breton
round dance can invoke a quasi-trance like state among the dancers. In this ambience
fifteen minutes may pass unnoticed. The convivial atmosphere, the drinking and
talking at the buvette (‘bar’), the joking, indeed the flirtation and courting that can all
be part of a good fest noz, add to their attraction as composite social events (see
chapter 5 for more detail).

Regarded as up-to-date and risqué in the 1940s and 50s, the relative absence of
couples dances is ironic. It can be suggested that without the constraints of the
clerical surveillance which was current in the 19th century - and effectively contributed
to the popularity of imported couples dances - the symbolic communal power of the
round, viewed for a time by many as archaic, has been re-discovered (see Giraudon
1985).

Local colour

Outside of the tourist season, most local festou noz feature the type of
traditional dance genre specific to the area. In this way, a fest noz at Poullaouen or
Berrien in the Monts d’Arrée will feature the suite gavotte montagne and a fest noz at
Sel de Bretagne in Haute Bretagne will feature the local *rond de St Vincent*. Certain dances from Basse Bretagne however like the suites *gavotte montagnes* and *plinn* have become standard at practically all *festou noz* (see chapter 4).\(^{21}\) This is due chiefly both to the association of these genres with the ‘centre of Brittany’ (*Les montagnes*, the symbolic cultural heartland of musical *bretonnitude*) and to contemporary musical choices. In the Monts d’Arrée region in particular, many of the older dancers will dance the *gavotte* all night. On a visit to Berrien in the late 1980s I witnessed *gavotte* steps being danced unselfconsciously to many other tune types. Friendly cat-calling from the dancers ensued when the visiting musicians did not place enough emphasis on ‘la *gavotte*’. It is also a fact that at the time of writing, *festou noz* remain more frequent throughout Cornouaille and in the Trégor - the areas bordering the ‘traditional’ heartland of the *fest noz* - than elsewhere. The most popular and ubiquitous *haut-Breton* dance suite is the *rond de Loudeac*. The Loudeac region is not far from the Monts D’Arrée.

Dancing classes and musical repertories

My participation in dancing classes at Cavan under the tutelage of dance teacher Yves le Blanc, throughout 1993, suggests to me that ever more dances are likely to be required by the dancing public in the future. The class I went to took place every Friday night in the local *salle des fêtes* (community hall) at Cavan. Organised by local associations, classes like these are commonplace all over Brittany in both urban and rural contexts. These classes happen in addition to those run by older organisations like the *cercles*. Many of the dance teachers themselves, like Yves le Blanc, are likely to be members of a *cercle celtique*. My dancing class was a social event where people met, got to know one and other and sought to maximise their participation as dancers at *festou noz* in general. The participants ranged from locals...
(youngsters in their early teens and people in their seventies) to ‘blow-ins’ like myself who had came to the Trégor to work or study either in Lannion or Guingamp. Taped music was used and most of the dances learned were round dances. The teacher remained part of the round while demonstrating the steps. He then led the practice of the steps and movements. When the gestures were complex (arm movements are a feature of the An dro and practically all the haut- Breton genres), they were practiced slowly without music. Each movement was given a count, slowly accelerating to proper dance tempo. A small fee was collected from the participants to cover the teachers expenses. This was done on a monthly basis by a member of the organising committee who attended the class.

Yves Le Blanc is a native speaker of Breton and firmly attached to his locale. However like many involved in the teaching of dancing, he feels that traditional musicians do not diversify enough in the number of dance forms they play and that this frustrates the new dancing public. They don’t get the chance to dance many of the steps and figures which they learn during the year at class. Praise was often reserved for groups (as a rule) who played many differing dance genres from everywhere in Brittany and beyond. To the chagrin of some of my bretonnant friends, this included the bouree. The bouree is the archetypal French figure folk-dance. During the course of the year I learned to dance at least 10 different dances from throughout Brittany - and the bouree.

Some dance teachers then tend to favour the introduction of more dance forms at all festou noz. From their perspective as dance specialists, they can be critical of the narrow local choice of repertoire favoured by many sonneurs. It is reasonable to assume that these dance teachers wish to maintain their new role in the tradition by adapting to the contemporary environment. There can be no doubt that the sheer
number of folk dance classes, teaching an increasingly pan-Breton repertory, are informing the expectations of the ever growing numbers attending festoù noz. A glance at the titles on the recordings of well-known fest noz groups (most of the younger instrumentalists and other professional musicians) will show clearly that many do not stick to one or two genres. This points both to an on-going response in favour of the demands of the fest noz patrons and to the musicians natural curiosity concerning the exploration of the whole traditional dance music corpus which presents itself.

The stage de danse bretonne (workshop on Breton dance) tends to be a seasonal addition to festivals or a once-off local event. It is partially aimed at tourists but it also attracts people who want to perfect their style in certain regional genres. In this sense it is different in character to the regular class. Stages de danse, often run in conjunction with stage de musique, are usually led by well-known experts in the chosen dance type. They are another important learning context.

Groups playing dance music currently dominate the platform on the fest noz circuit. They are perceived by some as a danger to local music and the tradition of the couple sonneurs. Groups appeal to many as they cover the maximum number of dance genres. Musical trends in the fest noz circuit are influenced by interaction between the players and those who dance. The current popularity of dance classes therefore is an important influence on the choice of repertoire made by groups. Younger people tend to know a pan-Breton dance repertory, not just the local repertoire. Greater ease of communication and affluence - dating from the late 1960s - and a new perception of Breton music as a musical genre per se and not an exclusively local colour, also contribute to this reality. The couple sonneurs on the other hand tend to have a more specialised local repertoire and pay close attention to
local lyrical and stylistic features than either groups or most dancers. Many musico-
cultural activists that I have talked to throughout my stay in Brittany argue that a
certain degree of specialisation leads to better performance and to more intense
enjoyment of and involvement in both dance and music. Their contention is that a
plethora of dances at a fest noz results in non-committal pas mou (’soft or limp
step’) dancing, where people go through their paces rather than trying to understand
the nature of the dance. There is no doubt that ideas of continuity and community
cohesion are expressed most strongly by the danse du pays - the local dance.

The perspective of the dance teacher cited above and the specialist sonneur or
activist can be understood and appreciated. Will the danse du pays become less
important and the pan-Breton repertory even more significant? Only time will tell as
to how this situation develops. In all likelihood the two attitudes will continue to
exist side by side as they do now. These vital tensions show that the tradition is robust
enough to allow for the existence of such a discourse.

The Trégor: dance, community and musicians

My intention in this section is to look at the unique situation in the Trégor. Whilst I would describe the repertoire favoured by Trégorois musicians as Pan-Breton
in as much as it draws on dances from several areas of Brittany, it is implicitly
weighted in the direction of the popular genres of Basse-Bretagne.

During my apprenticeship at the local dance class in Cavan, many older
Breton speaking Trégorois were also there to learn traditional round dancing. I
thought that these old timers should have been teaching variants of the local steps to
the youth. Most of the dances we were being taught however came from other parts
of Brittany and although their sons and daughters knew them from their contemporary fest noz experience, the older people were unfamiliar with traditional dances from outside their home area. In the part of the Trégor where I was living (close to the areas of population concentration on the coast), round dances had ceased to be part of the active traditional dance repertoire. They were revived in the early 1970s during the popular renaissance of bretonitude symbolised by the spreading of the fest noz out from the Monts d’Arrées. This explained why the older people were not sure of them. The Monts d’Arrées, the heartland of the gavotte, is just a few kilometres away but the traditional dances remembered by the older locals were couples figure dances, called simply ‘Trégorois dances’.

Most people who attended festoù noz in the Trégor were quite happy with the long-established fact that they borrowed the gavotte from the neighbouring montagnes region. The pays plinn is located mainly in the Trégor in any case and Folklore scholars have established that Trégorois have been playing and dancing la gavotte montagne for a long time, at least 100 years (see Lasbleiz 1994). They are currently composing new airs and working on their own style. The well-known duos of Gildas Moal (bombarde) and René Chaplain (biniou) - together with Gilles Léhart (bombarde) and Daniel Le Feon (biniou) - are popular exponents of the Trégorois repertoire and style in the plinn and gavotte genres. In a recent publication by Dastum Bro Dreger (‘Dastum Trégor country’) the reasons for the adoption of the Cornouaillais genre are outlined,

In fact, the Gavotte was generally accompanied by singing, (Kan ha Diskan) free and accessible to everyone. The dañs Treger on the other hand needed musicians, and these had to be paid in the main. The appropriation of their dance by the Trégorois was to become yet another jibe for the Cornouaillais to get at their neighbours.” (Lasbleiz 1994:51)
Musicians from the neighbouring *montagnes* area have been known on occasion to adopt the moral high ground vis à vis this ‘borrowing’. They say that the *Trégorois* have the *Cornouaille* genre - the *gavotte* - second hand and as a consequence do not have a clearly recognisable style. This is, however, generally expressed on the level of good-natured hair splitting.24

The environs of Lannion where I lived is relatively well populated. It is an agricultural area but due to the fact that many people of various backgrounds have opted to live in its rural setting, it is urbane in character. It is the part of the ancient bishopric that is often referred to as the ‘*Trégor économique*’ (*Dastum Bro Dreger* 1991:9). In this sense, it is the contemporary economic epicentre of the area. It is also currently perceived as a place of intense musical and cultural activity. Regular *festou noz* and other cultural events happen throughout most of the year. This is a reflection of the many people active in the cultural arena - both in language and music - who live there. Of these many are not originally *Trégorois*, they are either migrants from other areas or in some cases foreigners. Many people who moved into this region in recent times got involved in cultural activity. In so doing, they implicitly contribute to a more heightened awareness and valorisation of local identity. Their influence has been felt most strongly among the group of local activists already there and their presence has undoubtedly bolstered interest in the promotion of the Breton language and traditional music.

As stated above the *Trégor* is not the area originally associated with the *fest noz* but because of its situation in Basse Bretagne and its socio-economic profile, I suggest that the region can be taken as a barometer of the socio-cultural wave which has been ideologically generated from the symbolic *Cornouaillais* centre - les Monts d’Arrée. In recent times the *Trégor* has undergone a renaissance in terms of its
particular identity within the Breton cultural world. When many of my friends spoke of the region they pointed out that up until the recent past, it was not clearly defined in musical terms to anything like the same extent as the neighbouring region of les Monts d’Arrée. Festoù noz were not a regular feature of life in the Trégor until the mid-1980s. One of the principal reasons why the Trégor has attracted traditional musicians from elsewhere — particularly the younger generation of Breton professionals — was the existence, throughout the 1980s, of a famous café cabaret at the village of Confort-Berhet called the Seizh Avel (the ‘seven stars’). The existence of this social and cultural focal point certainly encouraged some important Breton musical figures (among them Jean-Michel Veillon) to settle in the Trégor. He has since taught many young flute players in the region. Run by prominent cultural activist Daniel Thénady the Seizh Avel hosted concerts, Breton language theatre and informal music sessions during the late 1970s and 80s. It no longer exists but in its heyday this venue-cum-social club and pub became known as a place where events happened regularly. People came from everywhere to play there. Many prominent Irish musicians active in professional traditional music today have played at the ‘Seizh’. The presence of the Seizh Avel served to further energise the immediate area of the Trégor helping to create a dynamic focus, for the culturally active community in its environs.

In the chapter above I have talked mostly about the social context and material culture surrounding dance and music. In this discussion I included a look at how traditional music is taught at the present time and the instruments which are most symbolic of bretonnitude. In direct relation to this issue the sub-section on the use of the flute in Breton music suggested how authenticity may follow from popularity. The last section looked at how people learn to dance and how dancing
classes affect repertory. The closing sub-section located my own experience of dance in the Trégor and suggested some reasons for the cultural dynamism of this region. In chapter 4 the main focus is centred more firmly on the singing, playing and dancing itself. It concentrates for the most part on traditional performance combinations and on the popular pan-Breton dance genres I regularly encountered at festoù noz in the Trégor.

1 Emmanuel Kerjean - who died in 1998 - was one of the most significant figures in traditional singing in the Breton language this century. He told me during this interview that very often the "fee" for performance at a dance or gathering in the 1930s and during the second World War was a pouch of tobacco or some such perceived luxury item.

2 Some, like the well-known professional singer Eric Marchand, lived and worked on the farm with their teachers. In Marchand's case this was Emmanuel Kerjean.

3 Bodadeg Ar sonerien means 'the association of sonneurs'. The 'cercles celtiques' are folklore associations which in some cases provide music lessons.

4 I taught Breton and Irish music to children in the village of Tréglandus under the auspices of the local parents association. I also taught at the conservatoire municipal in Carhaix.

5 Aujourd'hui une fédération comme BAS regroupe plus de 3500 musiciens: comment former ces milliers de jeunes? Au sein des bagadoù, solfège et technique instrumentale sont enseignées en même temps pour ensuite travailler l'expression, le style (J. Bouchet 1993:14). Many musicians suggest that to play for dancers and to play in a bagad is not the same and require a different style and sense of aesthetic. It is a fact however that many of today's seasoned sonneurs began playing Breton music as members of a bagad.

6 Some traditional musicians can be sensitive to the charge that they can 'read music' and on one occasion I nearly lost a friend in an older singer. He had shown me a collection of songs a relation of his had made, asking me to see if I could make out the tunes. I asked him if he read music. This seemingly banal statement precipitated an incident whereby another musician had to intercede to calm things. I was confused about the insult; was it that he felt undermined that he couldn't read music? Apparently not, the reverse was the case - a good singer or musician doesn't need to 'read music'. I had heard him sing brilliantly - which is true - and from his perspective, this should have made it obvious that he didn't read music. Thankfully the issue was resolved amicably.

7 Jeunes sonneurs, les airs qui suivent sont volontairement notés le plus simplement possible: pas de coup de langue, pas de liaison, la mélodie toute nue. Ce n'est pas dans un livre qu'on apprend l'interprétation. Seule la tradition orale vous donnera l'allure et le métier d'un parfait sonneur. (Introduction 1974:2)

8 La responsabilité première d'un enseignant, c'est d'être un passeur, apte à mettre à disposition de l'élève le patrimoine qu'il possède, afin que l'élève puisse construire son propre style (FAMDT 1994: 3).
9 He also suggests that if some of the detractors, themselves professional musicians, are unhappy with the state imprimatur in this context they should also refuse to benefit from the intermittent du spectacle system (see chapter 5) because it too is operated by the French state.

10 FAMDT (Fédération des Associations de Musiques et Danses Traditionnelles) 79380 St Jouin De Milly, France.

11 They do not have the glum severity which I have at times witnessed at bagpipe competitions in Ireland and Scotland for instance. The pipe band milieu in Britain and Ireland has been heavily influenced by military style pedagogic methods. Bagpipe bands were first invented by the military in late 18th century Scotland to reflect the inclusion of Scottish highlanders in the British army after the 1745 rebellion. The instrument had been banned for several decades in the interim period. For detailed information on this topic see John Gibson’s ‘Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping 1745-1945’ (1999).

12 “Quand j’étais au cercle celtique de Pléhrel, les vieux du coin qui venaient au fest noz- ils venaient regarder des danses bretonnes.... et je me posais la question aux bouts de quelques années.... Pourquoi ces gens là.... des familles que je connaissais - Je connaissais tout le monde.... c’était mon village quoi. Pourquoi ils venaient voir les danses bretonnes ....pourquoi ils ne dansaient pas ? Leurs enfants dansaient parce que ils étaient au cercle.... et c’est plus tard que je me suis rendu compte.....donc.....j’ai vu arrivé tout d’un coup une vague de gens avec des jupes indiennes et les mecs habillés....avec des cheveux plus longs et qui dansaient la Scottische et tout ça. J’étais vachement surpris , Je me demandais de où ça venait .... c’était des folk-clubs des trucs comme ça qui se sont créés....mon je ne connaissais pas ce milieu là mais c’était les gens du coin....Scottische, mazurka, Polka, en fait tous les vieilles danses du coin. Après j’ai fait un peu de collectage dans mon coin.” (Interview in Prat February 1994)

13 Interestingly the term ‘piffling’ is used by many older traditional whistle players in the North of Ireland to describe their staccato style of playing the instrument. The notes are articulated lightly by the tongue only.

14 People like Pierre Crépillon who teach the bombarde, use a tin-whistle for beginners on the instrument. They observe that the fact that the whistle does not have this seventh hole is a problem for teaching. This seventh note is often used in Breton music, particularly as part of the improvisatory flourishes at the end of a melody.

15 In the 1970s and 1980 many Breton flute players obtained their instruments from craftsmen in Ireland or Britain but there are now several Breton based craftsmen making them among them Gilles Léhart, Peter Marbeth and Hervieux and Glet. These instrument makers also make bombarde and biniou.

16 Instruments like the flute, the fiddle and the accordion have all encouraged the development of solo monophonic playing in the bas-Breton tradition. The development of the fest noz group with a wide variety of instruments has proved to be detrimental to the tradition of the couple sonneurs. The groups are perceived by the younger generation in particular (those with expendable incomes) as more modern and therefore more attractive and accessible than the older vocal and instrumental duets or ensembles.

17 The English word refers to the friendly though often satirised persona, of the pipe-smoking, woolly-sweater-wearing, community- singing, off-duty teacher. That is, the supposed typical patron of a British folk-club.

18 Further information on the activities of the cercles celtiques can be obtained directly from Ti Kendalc’h.

19 The members of a cercle celtique dress in colourful costumes for all their performances.
Youth identity markers are inextricably linked to the wider world of popular culture. The value systems and conventions of pop and rock music (and to a lesser extent art music) influence traditional music, particularly within the commercial and professional world. Most significantly in terms of performance context, tempered pitch and type of instruments, the aesthetic of group arrangements and style.

The An dro and hanter dro, which can be sung in Breton, French and Gallo are also fairly standard. These dances are associated with the pays Vannetais. Genres, which originate outside les Monts d’Arré tend to be more confined to their particular locality. In some cases these dances and the musical repertoires which accompany them are being re-introduced enthusiastically. Charismatic performers like Charles Quimbert and Mattieu Hamon are key figures in this movement in and around their own area of Sel de Bretagne.

Some well-known musicians are renowned for their preferences and ability in specific dance forms. Often the specialist musician is not necessarily from the musical pays he represents. For example Jean-Michel Veillon is often complimented on his ability in the interpretation of the Laridé, a dance from the pays Vannetais, even though he lives in the Trégor and hails from Fréhel a peninsula near St Brieuc in Haute Bretagne.

En effet, la Gavotte était généralement accompagnée du chant (Kan ha Diskan) gratuit et accessible à tous, alors que la dans Treger nécessitait des musiciens, rémunérés la plupart du temps. L’appropriation de leur danse par les Trégorrois deviendra d’ailleurs un sujet supplémentaire de moquerie pour les Cornouillais...... (Lasbleiz 1991:51).

Throughout the time I spent in the Trégor attempts to re-teach the older figure set dances which had dropped out of practice after the First World War were on-going. Only time will tell if they take hold in the popular imagination of the fest noz going public and if the tune styles themselves appeal sufficiently to the musicians. If the cassette dedicated to the practice of the clarinet in the Trégor is anything to go by, the local dance repertory includes very attractive schottisches and mazurkas.

After his tenure at the Seizh Avel, Daniel Thénady became director of Ti Kendalch and is now director of the Des Arcs theater near Lorient.
Chapter 4

MUSIC AND SONGS FOR DANCING

The previous chapter concentrated on three issues. Firstly an overview of how the tradition is passed on in contemporary circumstances was offered and secondly an overview of the instruments most clearly associated with bretonnitude was provided. The third section, entitled 'Breton dance in context' drew heavily upon my own experience of learning to dance in the Trégor. This chapter concentrates exclusively on performance practice and dance genres. It too is divided into three sections.

The first section entitled 'traditional combinations' concentrates on the older performance practices describing the main vocal and instrumental combinations in Brittany. The vocal traditions described in the sub-heading 'singing for dancers' are the oldest form of music making for Breton dance. According to many prominent musicians, they represent the heart and soul of the music. In this tradition vocal timbre and improvisatory techniques serve as the basic aesthetic guidelines for good instrumental performance. The sub-section 'playing for dancers' pays particular attention to performance practice (touched on in the previous chapter) on the instruments that are currently perceived as the most emblematic of bretonnitude. Some information on musical groups is included here, because it is groups which currently represent the norm on the fest noz circuit. Groups have to a large degree replaced the more traditional duos. In introducing group playing to the discussion of

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Breton performance practice, I wish also to draw attention to professionalism in traditional music. Most Breton professional traditional musicians owe their living to the success of the group phenomenon. The issue of professionalism is the chief concern of chapter 5.

Section two concentrates on a description of three of the most popular Breton dances suites, the gavotte, the plinn and the rond de Loudéac. The musical examples in each case are taken from my own field tapes (see pages 150-156). They represent one skeletal cycle of the tune or song. As they deal only with basic form and structure they do not provide a detailed description of improvisation, performance ritual or dynamic features. The basic motifs of the round dances for one person are given in labanotation (see Figure 8 page 149). I have included these motifs because I suggest that they are the basic corporeal expressions of bretonnitude. Where necessary, the dance figures are described in the text. The intention is to provide an accurate basic ethnographic description of the dance. I draw attention to these particular dances because they typify pan-bretonnitude as expressed in festoù noz.

Music for dancing is the main concern in this chapter but in terms of sources, themes and melodies, other genres interlock with the dance tradition to such an extent that it is impossible to disentangle them from it. Section 3 is a necessary overview of these important genres. It is included in order to complete the taxonomy of traditional music in Brittany. Available written sources concerning Breton traditional music will be cited as they relate to the text.
Practically all music for the Breton round dance and a considerable body of the traditional music repertory in general, from any part of Brittany, is based on the premise of *chant et déchant* (meaning call and response). If we consider the folk-song tradition of the western *francophone* world in general (essentially France and Québec), this song structure features predominantly. The fact that many of the original inhabitants of Québec came from North-Western France is particularly significant and useful comparisons can be made between the French language *chansons à danser* from the *pays Gallo* and the older song types still found in Québec.

It is also interesting to note that in the late 18th century when the British assumed control of North America, large gatherings among the French population were discouraged (Johanne Trew, Personnal communication, May, 1997). One can speculate that although this move was designed to monitor large assemblies and to control political activism, it was also destined to weaken the sense of separateness which this community maintained and for which the circle dance was a tangible and powerful metaphor. Well-known Québécois musicians, Gervais Lessard and Claude Morin told me that although some circle dances survive in Québec, the more popular figure dances current among the French speaking population in Canada resemble North American ‘country dancing’ or Irish and Scottish dancing more closely (Personnal communication, March 1997).

Traditional instrumental music in Brittany has always taken its lead from the vocal tradition. With the exception of the performance of epic songs and lyrical ballads, Breton traditional music does not have a strong tradition of solo performance. It was (and still is) traditionally performed by vocal and instrumental duos. The learning process excepted, dance music is seldom played outside the context of an
actual dance. The duo has been and remains the fundamental combination in the performance of Breton music. In the *haut*-Breton and *Vannetais* singing traditions, however, it is commonplace to have one lead singer taking the lead and a large group singing the response. Performers usually live in the same community and play or sing together over a long period of time. As well as being musical partners, they are often close friends. In some cases, what starts out as a teacher-pupil relationship develops naturally into a professional performing combination - this is especially true in the case of singers. In this way people cultivate not only a strong musical empathy but a lasting friendship. The listings on the poster below illustrate this (see Figure 6 page 125). It is not unusual for duos to stay together for their entire performing lives. On rare occasions many *sonneurs* join together in a grand parade in order to lead people to the dancing area symbolically. The *St Loup* in Guingamp or the *festival interceltique de Lorient* both of which take place in August, are contemporary examples of this.

The apparently accessible ‘session’ after the Irish model in folk music rarely happens in Breton music. The repertory is usually well rehearsed in advance of a specific event. This method of working also holds true for the groups which currently dominate the modern *festou noz*. This is not to say that individual performers of note are not remarked upon, nor does it imply that of-the-moment improvisation or impromptu combinations, do not occur. The point is made merely to stress that traditionally the singers and players rarely perform solo and in general they know their musical partners fairly well.
FEST-DEIZ

Dimanche 19 Septembre

à TREMARGAT dès 14h00

Organisé par l'Association des Sonneurs et Chanteurs des Pays Plinn, Fisel et Trégor

SONNEURS
CASTELL & GALOPIN - MOAL & CHAPLAIN
PAMPANAY & LACHATER - JAGUIN & MARIUS
MORVAN & MICHEL - FRÈRES LE BRAZ
BARS & TRÊMEL - HUITOL & JEGOU

CHANTEURS
LE CHEQUER & LESTIG - KANEREZED PLISTIN
MARCHAND & GUILLOU - CASTELL & GORJU
RIOU & OLLIVIER - PERIOU & CONNAN
GLOAN & GUÉGAN - LE LOUARN & THOMAS
LE LAY, TROADEC & PIRIOU - SIMON, CALVEZ & DUBOIS
ROBIN, LINTANFF & SUIGNARD

Figure 6: Musical partners. The list of names on this poster advertising a fest deiz illustrate the idea of partnership - le compère in Breton music.
Singing for dancers

Up until the early part of the 20th century singing was by far the most common method of leading the people to dance in Brittany. All occasions - be they religious festivals or Pardons (processions), weddings or end-of-harvest gatherings - featured singing for dancing. According to authors Becker and Le Gurun the narrative content of the song was as important as its delivery. They point out that nowadays however,

...Good singers are no longer appreciated for the story that they tell, but for the strength of their voices in moving the dancers into action, to ‘lead the dance’ in a strongly marked tempo. (1994:11)

This statement is clearly a reflection on the decline in the number of people capable of understanding vernacular Breton. French language songs are more accessible.

In all Breton singing for dancing, the verses are driven along by the inclusion of repeated refrains at alternate intervals. These are made up of a great variety of lilt syllables or nonsense words. Tra la la la len o (in Breton), gué gué (pron. ‘Jay Jay’ in Gallo), Lon la, dondaine laridon and laridaine laridé (in French), are a representative sample. All the musical phrases are monophonic in their basic form, although heterophony is a more accurate description when referring to answering phrases sung by a group of people. The vocal delivery is forceful, strident and often nasal in quality and the lilt syllables are organised in different ways to suit the rhythm of the song. Singers use a vibrato effect which is generated in the throat or in some cases controlled from the diaphragm. The level of vibrato depends on the individual. Singing is the older way of leading the dance in Brittany and although instrumentalists
are now more commonplace, the talented singer still enjoys considerable prestige in the traditional music world. Singing for daïs-tro or ronds (‘circle dances’) takes two basic forms. I will now describe them.

*Kan ha diskan*

This quintessential Breton form of singing for dancers is, as pointed out in Chapter 2, associated exclusively with central Brittany and with the dance genres of gavotte (and all its variants) and plinn specifically. It is performed in the Breton language and follows the chant et déchant format. It is usually performed by two singers on a stage or platform. They may simply stand side by side or their arms may be either linked around each other’s shoulders or behind each others backs at waistline level. Occasionally there can be two or more diskaner. The pays plinn singers, the three Frères Morvan (Morvan brothers) are the most famous example of this (see Plate 6 page 128). As Bernard De Parades points out in the sleeve notes included on the LP ‘Twenty-five years of kan ha diskan’, things were different in the past. "The singer-dancers always led the rond which they were a part of" (De Parades, 1980). At smaller gatherings this can still be seen today. The skill and stamina which this demands is admirable as a dance suite may last from 15 to 20 minutes. In a very recent development, radio microphones attached to the singers by headsets have allowed this practice to take place at larger gatherings. In kan ha diskan the lead singer is called the kaner and the respondent (or sometimes respondents) is called the diskaner. The diskaner sings the response chevauché (‘shouldered’) to the kaner, forming what is called a tuilage (I. Troadec, 1994). This means that he/she overlaps with the kaner on the last phrase. This could be as little as one word and it is always sung in unison. The diskaner then sings the same verse as the kaner but may well
Agé : les frères Morvan A comme dans la chanson ne regrettent rien. Yvon a aujourd'hui 64 ans, Henri 67 ans et François 75 ans. Ils ont vécu, travaillé, partagé les joies et les peines et s’adressent très vite.
C’est d’ailleurs certainement la race de cette longévité sur scène. Leur seul regret, c’est de vieillir !

Bref : c’est sur leurs terres qu’ils ont levé le quadrilatère anniversaire, à quelques dizaines de mètres de leur ferme de Botcol. Leur village natal a beaucoup changé ces dernières années. Les frères Morvan ont recruté pour retenir l’ensemble des habitants. Ainsi, ils ont recruté uniquement la majorité principalement en pierres. Une réussite.


Cependant, depuis 40 ans le repertoire des frères Morvan a fait l’objet de centaines d’enregistrements. « Parfois dans les grandes fêtes nous avons des situations de miracles à nos pieds. »

Plate 6 : Les Frères Morvan. Celebrating 40 years of performance. These pictures are taken from the free supplement to L'écho de l' armor et argoat number 2576 of the 27th of August 1998.
improvise on the melody and vary the rhythm. There is never a break in the song and it is continually pushed forward with impressive sustained momentum.

The call to the dance (appel à la danse), referred to as the prélude by Bernard de Parades, has no fixed rhythm. It continues until enough dancers have gathered to form a circle. The prélude is utilises the same melody as the dance that follows. The dancers often recognise the dance genre from the melody of the prélude. Some tunes and words are well-known and regulars at the fest noz are aware of the steps to be commenced without any announcement from the musicians or singers. It is only when a newly composed tune is introduced or when the performers are in unfamiliar territory, that the forthcoming dance genre needs to be announced.

In kan ha diskan the subject matter of the songs may be an old story. The visit of an errant tailor to a household when the man of the house is away is typical. This story is said to come from the pen of Prosper Proux who lived in the 19th century (Hardie 1948). According to singers Annie Ebrel and Ifig Troadez, kan ha diskan may also be adapted from epic song and balladry (see below). The text may also be a newly-composed song of immediate local significance. The words to the prélude of the first set of gavottes on the Vingt-cinq années de kan ha diskan record evoke the trance-inducing quality of kan ha diskan which many dancers claim to experience. They singers invite the dancers to “Frappons nos pieds contre le sol jusqu'à tremble ce village-ci” (Batter our feet against the earth until this village quakes’). The appearance of pounding the earth is a feature of the Plim in particular. Most singers of kan ha diskan are men but a considerable number of the new generation of singers are women. The legendary soeurs Goadec (Goadec sisters), at their zenith in the 1970s and still active in the early 1980s, set a strong precedent for today’s younger
generation of female *kan ha diskan* performers. These performers include singers like Nanda Trooadec, Annie Ebrel, Noluen Le Buhé, Marthe Vassalo, Solene Piriou and Jakeza Le Lay.

Chants à répondre

*Kan ha diskan* is traditionally performed only in the Breton language and only in the context of the *montagne* dance genres, *gavotte* and *plinn*. It is not associated with Haute Bretagne where *ronds* are sung in *Gallo* or French. Neither is it a feature of the *Vannetais* and *Léonard* traditions of Breton language singing for dancers. In the genres originating in the Léon, the *pays Vannetais* and Haute Bretagne, the lead singer is usually supported by an answering group of anything from two to ten or more singers. This often depends on who happens to be there on the night. Traditionally - as with *plinn* and *gavotte* - the singers formed part of the round, but in the context of the modern *fest noz*, they sing as indicated above. The principle of *chant* and *déchant* remains the performance guideline but with one main difference (other than the language in Haute Bretagne). That is, the response is sung end to end as an echo with no overlap or *tuilage*.

In general nowadays the singers leave no gaps between the phrases, so the responding group or individual begins to sing the instant the lead singer ends his/her phrase. The *rond de Loudéac* and many of the other *haut*-Breton genres (such as the *pilée menu* and the *rond de St Vincent*) are in the main lyrical songs of country life dating from the last century. Their subject matter is love, humour, work and other aspects of the human condition. One well known *rond*, noted down from the singing of Charles Quimbert has a repeated rhythmic refrain which evokes the transience of youth,

la fleur du, la fleur du, la fleur du genêt s'envole,
vole, vole, vole du genêt s'envole -
('the flower of, the flower of, the flower of the gorse bush fly’s, flies, flies, flies, from the gorse it flies).

The rond de Loudéac (see below) is rich in lilt syllables. They are a vehicle for the lead singer to demonstrate mastery of the genre. This is best illustrated by the vocal style of Michel Baud and other chantous de Loudia (the Loudéac singers). The only guideline for improvisation is the dance metre. This must be adhered to rigidly. Occasionally some singers of the rond de Loudéac slip (some say untraditionally) into kan ha diskan format. All Breton singers for the dance tend to repeat the last phrase or chorus for emphasis at the end of the song. New words may be added to old airs so that airs and texts are interchangeable after agreement has been reached among singers in advance of performance. This is also the case in kan ha diskan. Some of these songs are ribald in nature with references to making hay and sowing oats. For example after describing each stage of the process of planting, growing and gathering oats, the ritournelle (refrain) of one well-known rond de St Vincent exclaims,

"Avoine, Avoine, que la terre t’ammène!" (Oats, oats, how the earth leads you!)

Many of the dance songs in the haut-Breton tradition are versions of French folk-songs found in other parts of France. The famous ballad ‘Aux marches du Palais’ is one such song.⁹

Playing for dancers

Kan ha Diskan and the other vocal forms are the basis of Breton instrumental music. An awareness of the aesthetic values associated with the vocal tradition is regarded as essential to the ability to play instrumental dance music with any degree of authenticity and competence. The strident timbre of the voices and the use of a traditional vibrato, described by sonneur and traditional composer Youenn Bihan as a
chèvrement or ‘goat like sound’ serve as the basic sonic guideline for all traditional instrumentalists (personal communication, Brest, May 1996). 10 Players make a distinction between the instrumental repertoire (called airs à sonner) and the older vocal repertory (referred to as airs à chanter). Many dance songs are played as instrumental pieces but purely instrumental pieces - whether old or newly composed - are usually more melodically complex than the vocal repertory. In the past according to singer Yann Thomas most songs and tunes in the suite of dances were given names (Personal communication, Bollezec February 1993). However, in my experience (from the 1970s until the present day), musicians have tended to describe their tunes as sets of plinn or gavotte and so on. One need only glance at the sleeve notes of most contemporary recordings to notice this.

Sonneurs de tradition

The sonneur de tradition is an ‘old style traditional musician’. Someone who carries on the old traditions. The word sonneur is used mostly with reference to players of the bombarde, biniou koz and treujenn gaol. Sonner is a French verb meaning ‘to ring’. The act of playing music is more often referred to using the verb sonner than the standard French verb jouer, which means ‘to play’. ‘Il a sonné au fest noz hier soir’ (‘he played at the fest noz yesterday evening’) is the standard description of a musician’s activity. The word sonneur has a stronger connection with the instruments traditionally used out-of-doors - the bombarde, the biniou and the clarinet for example - than with other instruments. The Petit Larousse describes a sonneur as a ‘bell-ringer’ or ‘horn player’(1991:199). To ‘ring out’ or ‘ring in’ (the act of celebrating the New Year in English) in order to announce something, is evocative of the role of the sonneur in the Middle Ages. The word minstrel
(ménestrel or ménétrier) is a more appropriate historical reference to musicians who play quieter instruments.

Although it is clearly of French origin, the word sonneur (‘soner’ in Breton) is used mainly in Brittany at present. Among musicians themselves I have heard sonneur used almost exclusively with reference to players of binioù, bombarde and treujenn gaol: instruments which are all shrill and strident (see Plate 7 page 134). In the most comprehensive book about Breton music to date however, all traditional instrumentalists - except flute players (see above) - from both Basse and Haute Bretagne, are described as sonneurs (Musique Bretonne 1997:447). The fiddle, the hurdy-gurdy (vielle) and the accordion are viewed as the popular traditional instruments of Haute Bretagne. Apart from the Loudéac region, the bombarde and binioù is a bas-Breton practice. It is not unusual today however for the haut-Breton repertory to be interpreted on these instruments.

Instrumental music has tended to be a male preserve. This is a legacy of the socio-economic structure of traditional agrarian society and the role of women as mothers and home makers. Although this situation has changed considerably, women are still under-represented among today’s sonneurs. This fact is clearly illustrated in the pages of Musique Bretonne (1997). A few female players are shown in some of the more recent photographs of bagpipe and bombarde bands (bagadoù) and in an accordion ensemble, but no famous female sonneurs of the past are mentioned. There are an increasing number of talented young female musicians today, but no women have as yet, it seems, reached celebrity status as sonneurs.
Plate 7: Sonneurs de tradition. The top photograph shows Jean Baron (bombarde) and Youenn Peron (binioù). The second shows Youenn Peron and Ifig Troadec (treujienn gaol).
Various forms of bagpipes and pastoral oboes played in combination were in use throughout continental Europe up until the late 17th century. Stone carvings from many 15th and 16th century churches in Brittany certainly show that this combination of instruments was popular during this period (see Musique Bretonne 1997). It is often suggested that Brittany became a repository for old forms of music and instrumentation which had declined in other areas by the end of the 18th century. Besides being the oldest form of musical accompaniment for dancing in Basse Bretagne, the couple sonneurs of bombarde and binioù are the most representative and emblematic traditional dance musical ensemble in Brittany. Their image is used everywhere from cultural publications and tourism, to straightforward commercial trading. They appear as an immediately recognisable logo on the labels of many types of traditional foodstuffs and drinks associated with the country.

The binioù player works in tandem with his compère (partner) the bombarde player playing one octave above the bombarde. The polyphonic binioù plays continuously during the dance but as a rule it is the bombarde player who introduces the melody and leads the refrain. This does not imply that their relationship is unequal however. The bombarde takes the role of the kaner and the binioù the diskaner (see above). The finger ornaments are essentially idiosyncratic or intuitive. There is no universally established technique for ornamentation and most players agree that this permits nuance and allows considerable scope for the individuals personality to emerge from the performance. Becker and Le Gurun describe the dialogue between the two instruments in this way,
The alternating playing between the *biniou-bombarde* combination does not rest upon a systematic repetition of the melody, rather it is a dialogue. The *bombarde* and *biniou* don’t play the same thing yet they melt into one and other in exemplary compliment: one plays the *bombarde* (he rolls the notes), the other plays the *biniou* (he taps them out)... the raison d’être of the *biniou* is to give rhythm to and animate the *bombarde*, paying attention to the balance of his drone and the flourishes on the chanter. (1994:49)

Quoted in Becker and Le Gurun, folklorist Per Jakez Hélias says of this combination,

The *biniou* and the *bombarde* have the power to touch the deepest sensibilities of Bretons of good roots. They precipitate at times truly collective frenzy....When they talk to us now about the passions of jazz, we have known better. (1994:26)

He may be referring to the agrarian past but the same ambience can be created in the open air by this duo today. It can also ‘touch the sensibilities’ of many guest Bretons. The pages of ‘La Musique Bretonne’ (1997) include many detailed photographs of *sonneurs* and their instruments (see also Plate 7 page 133).

Clarinet performance practice

According to Patrick Malrieu, the clarinet was played in duo with violin, accordion or hurdy-Gurdy in the *haut*-Breton context. The practice in Basse Bretagne where it has by far the largest number of practitioners today, emulates that of *Kan ha diskan* (Dastum/Chasse Maree:1987). Clarinet players of *kan ha diskan*, however, adopt a different method of performance to that of singers or *sonneurs* of *bombarde* and *biniou*. They tend to play longer phrases in unison. This practice reflects the nature of the instrument. Some players say that this method of elongating the *tuilage* allows the tension of the *gavotte* and *Plinn* to stay at a level which the older duet
cannot attain. They suggest that the tension falls when the *binioù* takes the refrain.

Malrieu describes the ground rules to traditional playing as follows,

> In any case there are no strict rules for interpretation, it's a very personal thing. Very often the reply of the second *sonneur* will carry a variation which could be an ornamentation, a few extra notes, a silence, or a completely new melodic phrase...these transformations go from the simple nuance of the *sonneurs* own style to the variant becoming established by constant use in performance." (1987:11)

Many tunes particularly in the *plinn* and *gavotte* genres are specific to the *treujenn gaol*. They take melodic turns which are not typical of the vocal repertory. The *sonneurs* of *treujenn gaol* are often accompanied by a *tambour* or side drum player. This addition accentuates the wild abandon of the sound. It is well illustrated by the playing of G. Malrieu, I. Troadeck and O. Urvoj (Clarinets) with Charles Lucas (*tambour*) on the *Dastum bra Dreger* (see Discography).

**Groups**

Musicians playing in groups at both *fest noz* and concert became commonplace throughout the 1970s and their popularity has continued up to the present day. Groups use an almost infinite variety of old and modern instruments (both acoustic and electric). Bands have to a large degree supplanted the *couple de sonneurs* and singers at the *fest noz*. In some instances, the influence of village dance bands of the 1950s is discernible, but essentially this influence has been eclipsed in favour of the 1970s ensemble. New performance contexts, standardisation in the pitch of instruments and mediatization have all influenced ensemble practice. For many young people (the *baba breizou* for example) groups are youth identity markers.
Groups tend to play a cross-section of pan-Breton dances; a mixture of recently-composed tunes and older melodies. *Kan ha diskan* provides the basic model for those who play music from *les montagnes* but what they do thereafter in terms of instrumentation, improvisation and arrangement is the subject of animated debate among all enthusiasts of Breton music. I have heard dancers make the comment that *fest noz* groups tend to be more lightweight than the *couple sonneurs* or singers. These dancers maintain that in group playing the immediacy of the music is diminished and that they have difficulty ‘feeling’ the rhythm. I have also heard the opinion that groups have been influenced too much by Irish music (see chapter 7). The emergence of melodic instrumental performance with chordal accompaniment is, as pointed out in chapter 3, a comparatively recent phenomenon in this tradition. It first began in the 1930s during the era of the dance bands. The introduction of the piano accordion (*le piano à bretelles* or ‘the piano on braces’) as a virtual one man band created a precedent for accompaniment.

During the ‘Celtic’ folk renaissance of the 1970s, Breton musicians began to use instruments chiefly associated with the Irish tradition. That is, instruments like the tin whistle, the concert flute and the uillean pipes. Concurrent with the rise of the *fest noz* group of today, guitar accompaniment and the use of bouzoukis and mandolas also became widespread. The fiddle had always been commonplace, particularly in Haute Bretagne, but the Irish example encouraged greater use of it. Although musicians began by playing Irish music on these instruments in time these same instruments have become incorporated into the Breton tradition. Groups like the Bothy Band travelled to Brittany throughout the 1970s. Their guitarist, Micheál Ó Domhnaill, made extensive use of open tunings (DADGAD and variations). In a new turn of events many younger players of the guitar in Ireland today follow the example of Breton players such as Dan Ar Bras, Soig Siberil and Gilles Le Bigot. These
musicians came to specialise in open tunings. Open tunings are now standard practice in the accompaniment of Breton dance music.

**Popular Pan-Breton fest noz dance forms**

I propose to concentrate on the music and dance genres that formed the greater part of my own experience learning to play and dance to Breton traditional music in the Trégor. The descriptions of the dances provided below are based on a combination of my own observations and the way people in Brittany explained them to me. The genres chosen here - gavotte montagne, plinn and rond de Loudéac - are genuinely representative of what I consider to be a popular pan-Breton fest noz repertory. They are the most widely known and immediately accessible versions of these dance forms. I attended dance classes during my stay in Brittany but these particular suites I learnt by attending festou noz and simply joining in. The map at Figure 7 page 140 shows the areas where these dance forms originate. Before going on to concentrate on these dance genres however a brief explanation concerning the general features of the dance tradition is necessary.

**The dance music tradition**

Most Breton dañs-tro or ronds (round dances) lead-off in a clockwise direction starting with the left foot. They are generally danced on the flat of the feet and (with the exception of the plinn) have a light bouncing quality. Up until the early 1970s - the time when the pan-Breton fest noz began to catch the public imagination - all these dances were highly localised.
It was during the 1970s that sound dancing began to be perceived as a genre representative of Brittany in general. DASUV has collected and archived over a thousand regional dance forms, including localised variants of well-known dances. This work underscores the opinion that in the past (up to the 1950s), most people in any given locality knew at least one old traditional set of movements and steps - that of the local round dance. There are as many variants of these dances as there are townlands.

We have included a map from metropolitan sources, which follows the tradition of using maps to illustrate the spread of cultural practices. Figure 7: Les danses du pays. Literally ‘dances of the country’. This map shows the areas where the dance genres of gavotte montagne, plinn and ronde de Loudéac originate. It also includes the Sébillot line. It is adapted from the web site http://www.bmol.imfini.fr/culture/danses/gavotte.

Figure 7: Les danses du pays. Literally ‘dances of the country’. This map shows the areas where the dance genres of gavotte montagne, plinn and ronde de Loudéac originate. It also includes the Sébillot line. It is adapted from the web site http://www.bmol.imfini.fr/culture/danses/gavotte.
It was during the 1970s that round dancing began to be perceived as a genre representative of Brittany in general. *DASTUM* has collected and archived over a thousand regional dance forms, including localised variants of well-known dances. This work underscores the opinion that in the past (up to the 1950s), most people in any given locality knew only one old traditional set of movements and steps - that of the local round dance. There are as many variants of these dances as there are townlands. With regard to imported dances from metropolitan France and elsewhere, people followed the fashion of the era of their youth.

Since the 1950s certain forms have attained widespread popularity. Besides being a time of greater mobility and affluence, the 1970s was a period of intense activity in the collection and dissemination of music. Some dance forms - like those of the *montagnes* region - became better known and more culturally charged than others. As these were the genres associated with the creation of the modern *fest noz* in the 1950s and 60s and this process displays a certain continuity (see chapter 2). Today there are at the most 6 different round dance forms in any given *fest noz* be it in Basse Bretagne or Haute Bretagne. These may differ in frequency of performance, depending on the location, but they are nonetheless present at the majority of contemporary pan-Breton *festou noz*. It is important also to note that the *fest noz* is an event where circle dances pre-dominate. As a rule there are very few couple or figure dances at *festou noz*. This is significant as it illustrates the success of the strategy adopted by some cultural activists which sought to discourage any dance genres perceived as vaguely non-Breton (polkas, mazurkas and bourées for example).
It is a strategy that has further confirmed the round dance and the *fest noz* as the most important popular expression of *bretonitude*.\(^{19}\)

The circular nature of the dances notwithstanding, it is nonetheless common nowadays to see long twisting lines of people threading their way rhythmically through a hall. These serpentine lines tend to develop when large numbers of people are at a *festou noz* and space on the floor is at a premium. Many people involved in the dissemination of Breton dance are not enthusiastic about this development. They urge people to form circles within circles as an alternative to the cumbersome serpent, arguing that this better maintains the symbolic and communal nature of the dance.\(^{20}\)

Traditionally one is meant to form part of the round with a partner (*cavalière/cavalier*). This ensures that the male-female balance in the dance is maintained. Older dancers in particular may insist on this. Reality however does not always conform to tradition and the sight of a hazy-eyed line of male youths at a large *fest noz* being dragged along at the end of one of these serpents, provides a vivid illustration of this. Although creative dancers may introduce their own nuance in the steps, the basic patterns, figures and steps of the Breton round dances are very old and date back to medieval times (see Guilcher 1963). There is much evidence to suggest that Breton traditional dances were adopted continually by the French court from the early middle ages until the reign of Louis XIV (‘Le roi soleil’) and his antecedents at least. Becker and Le Gurun cite the letters of the 17\(^{th}\) century aristocrat Madame de Sévigné in the following manner,

Mme de Sévigné...describing the dances of the *bas-bretons*... is enchanted to see the Sénéchal de Rennes, and ‘les marquis’ of Coëtlogonnet and Locmaria, dancing a sort of dance which is completely ignored in Versailles: “It is something extraordinary to see such a flurry of different steps with that wonderful cadence so short and correct” (1994:107).\(^{21}\)
This observation flies in the face of the notion that all peasant dances are impoverished versions of courtly dances.

What follows are my own basic descriptions of three dance suites, two from Basse Bretagne and one from Haute Bretagne. These dances are the suite plinn, the suite gavotte montagne and the suite de rond de Loudéac. Transcriptions of representative musical examples (one complete cycle) can be found at the end of this section on pages 150-156. I learned these tunes by ear from singer and treujenn gaol player, Ifig Troadec, flute and bombarde player, Stéphane Morvan, and singer Michel Baud (together with the chantous de Loudia). As stated above, the transcriptions are intended to illustrate the basic form of the music; tonality, rhythm and tempo. The metronome indication refers only to the tempo of the basic rond and not the slow dance or bal which is a feature of all the suites, it is directly related to the labanotation motifs given at Figure 8 (page 149). The tempo is gauged from my own participation in the dance. These motifs represent the basic individual movements of each genre in respect of a single dancer - in this case myself. All general figures and movements in the tamm kreiz or bal (middle section) are described in the text and all the transcriptions cited below are two part tunes. There are also three and four part tunes in the repertory. In all cases the first dance is introduced by the playing or singing of a prélude in tempo rubato. It is the same melody as the subsequent dance tune. This gives the dancers time to take the floor.

Suite gavotte montagne

The gavotte montagne has its origins in the rural areas around the town of Carhaix, specifically Les Monts d’Arrée. There are many variants of the gavotte throughout Cornouaille and some are so significantly different as to be referred to as
separate dance genres. The fisel (from the Gourin area) and the gavotte pourlet are two such examples. Together with the kost ar c’hoat these are all relatively common forms of the gavotte.\textsuperscript{22} The gavotte pourlet and the fisel have evolved into intricate and athletic dances that require a lot of practice to arrive at any reasonable proficiency. They also require a different musical approach. The fisel has its own store of tunes which must be played plus saccadé (Ifig Troadec 1994) than the gavotte montagne. This means in a more jerky and staccato manner. The dance steps of the fisel, where the men appear to kick themselves vigorously on the behind with their heels at regular intervals and the leaping gavotte pourlet are spectacular to watch. These dances are not for the beginner and anyone who can successfully understand them on joining the rond is by implication an expert.\textsuperscript{23}

The gavotte montagne (as indeed the fisel or plinn) is in three stages. My description of it uses the terms employed by traditional musicians and singers. It also follows the most common practice in the tradition. The counts refer to the number of movements made by the feet in the dance. Arm movements are not an integral feature of plinn or gavotte.

The first gavotte in a suite is referred to as the ton simple - or gavotte à 8 temps (gavotte in 8 counts). It normally has two repeated parts of 4 bars in length. The second is the tamm - kreiz or the middle dance (bal), and the third is the ton double. In the ton double, the second part has 16 counts instead of 8, it is twice as long as the second phrase of the ton simple. With the exception of the bal, several tunes can be put together (fisélée) to form a set. This is also the case with the plinn and the rond de Loudeac. Essentially there are eight foot movements in the basic gavotte. The legs are always bent at the knees giving each step a bouncing quality. The count sequence habitually used to teach the dance is 1-2-3-4 and 5-6-7-8.
Consequently it is referred to as a ‘danse à huit temps’ (a dance of 8 counts). In both gavotte and plinn the hands are clasped. In the case of your cavalier or cavalière (partner) the man holds the lady’s hand to (or near to) his chest. Ones partner is always to ones right if a man, to ones left if a woman. The man or woman who is not your partner is ‘traditionally’ held in a looser hand clasp although in contemporary practice this convention is often ignored.

During the bal the dancers remain in circular formation but the hands are unclasped and re-linked at the little finger. The first part is walked around at a leisurely pace with the arms hanging loosely and lightly swinging to and fro. The circle expands and contracts. In the second part, the dancers stand in position in a wide circle, hands still joined at the little finger. They point their right-foot and extend their forearms horizontally towards the centre of the circle following the rhythm of the B part of the tune. Each cycle of the bal finishes with a cadential stamp of the right foot. In the B part of the bal theme the rhythm is more marked and regular than the first. The circle remains intact and moving clockwise. Musically the second part of the bal melody is divided between the Kaner and the Diskaner. The bal Plinn follows this arrangement. Musically the Gavotte is considered to offer more space for melodic variation than the Plinn. For an example of the Suite Gavotte see musical example 1 at pages 150-151.

Suite Plinn

The pays plinn is the region surrounding Bourbriac straddling the southern edge of the Trégor and the beginning of the Monts d’Arrée in Cornouaille. Like the gavotte the suite plinn consists of three stages. It has a more rapid tempo however and is more rhythmically regular. It is referred to as a dance à quatre temps. This
means that it has four basic counts which correspond to the steps. Again the legs are slightly bent at the knees to give bounce to the steps. For teaching purposes, the rhythm is counted in the following way, 1 -2 -3 and 4. The corresponding footwork is as follows 1-2 (two small jumps in place) and then right-left-right, the rapid movement coming between steps 3 (right)and 4 (left). The legs are kept close together. As mentioned in Chapter 2 this dance was reputedly used to flatten out the earthen floors of farmhouses. The pounding movements of the steps seems to bear this out. The bal plinn differs from the other two dances in the suite. In the bal the circle breaks off into couples but the couples continue to move in circular formation. The first part is walked around anti-clockwise, couples linked by crossed hands. The man’s left shoulder is directed towards the inside of the circle. Remaining in couple formation, the second part is danced in place with the same basic steps as the other two dances. Essentially the couples remain in place but there is a slight forward movement with the left foot which keeps the momentum going. For an example of the Suite plinn see musical example 2 at pages 152-153.

Rond de Loudéac

The rond de Loudéac is a dance suite from Haute-Bretagne. It is the archetypal dance of the pays Gallo and the most popular haut-Breton dance to be found at contemporary festou noz. It is so named because it originates in the area which has the town of Loudéac as its centre. Slightly faster the plinn, it is also a dance à quatre temps (4 counts). It closely resembles the plinn but it has a number of distinctive features. In the rond de Loudéac, the legs are kept apart and slightly bent. The left foot is placed a little forward of the right. There is a shuffling movement between the first and second counts that is counted as follows, 1 and 2-3-4. The steps follow this
pattern, left and right left-right-left. On the last count the left foot is raised off the ground slightly in order to swing into the next count cycle. It has vigorous arm movements and the arms are always linked at the little finger. This is the case for practically all haut-Breton circle dances. There are four dances in the *rond de Loudéac*. The tempo is fast and the dancers make a rapid horizontal sawing movement with their arms in time to the music. To help the hesitant dancer along, people may sing the words, *scie, scie, scie, le bois* ('saw, saw, saw the wood') evoking a sawing action with both arms. The *rond de Loudéac* has the simplest - if very tiring - arm movements of all the dances with arm movements. 24

The first dance in the suite is the circle dance. Next comes the *bal* which resembles a slow march during which the circle fragments into couples. The couples glide around in an anti-clockwise circle. The men’s left shoulders are directed towards the inside of the circle. The right leg is dragged after the left in a leisurely wave-like ebb and flow fashion. Hands are cross-linked as for the *bal plinn*. The tune is quite slow and is played a couple of times only. Enough to permit recovery from the rapid movements of the first figure.

The *riquenée* follows. In this section the circle is reformed and the first part of the tune (AA) is danced in a circle as a *passe-pied* promenade, arms swinging lightly to and fro. In the second part (BB) the circle contracts, hands are re-joined at the fingers and at the appropriate time in the tune, everyone lifts their right leg up toward the centre of the circle, jerking the head and forearms back at the same time. The circle then unwinds to its original size, arms mimicking the movement. This is repeated several times. This figure is often left out in a crowded *fest noz* where many
circles are an impossibility. The suite is then finished by another rapid rond. The rond de Loudeac is both played and sung traditionally in the chant à répondre style. See musical example 3 at pages 154-156. In the case of all the round dances cited above, the basic round can last as long as 15 minutes if the mood is right.

Other popular dances

The Vannetais dance types, an dro and hanter dro are also accessible to newcomers to the tradition. The term an dro simply means rond or round. They have a leisurely tempo, hypnotic steps and swirling arm movements. Together with the plinn, gavotte and Loudeac genres cited above they are also common at all festoù noz. Because of their leisurely pace and melodic beauty an dro have tended to be the tunes that foreign musicians are most attracted to initially. In effect, all Breton circle dances are an dros. When people refer to 'the' an dro however they are speaking of a particular dance associated with the Vannes region in the south of Brittany. The an dro has both a bas and haut-Breton variant. It can be sung or played. In general haut-Breton musicians use the generic Breton language terms for these dances - although this is a comparatively recent development (Charles Quimbert, interview March 1993). The an dro is normally danced as a once of, but singers or players may perform a number of an dro in a suite. They may also include other Vannetais dances such as hanter dro or Laridé. The hanter dro is danced to four counts, half that of the an dro. Both genres are in 4/4 time. In both cases, the arms are linked at the little finger and move in circular motion. The last popular dance I wish to draw attention to here is the circle cirassian. This dance is in 6/8 time and it is jigged in a promenade formation. It is contained within the motion of the circle and it moves both clockwise and anti-clockwise. It takes a lot of space and an Irish or Scottish double jig is perfectly suited to it.
Figure 8: Basic motifs of three Breton round dances. The labanotation above shows the basic motifs of the dances described above in respect of one dancer. They do not pertain to the slow movement (bal) of the dance. The steps were documented by Dr Catherine Foley from the dancing of the author.
Musical example 1. *Suite gavotte montagne*

**Ton Simple**

\[ \text{\textit{Kaner}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{Diskaner}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{Tuilage}} \]

**Tamm kreiz/bal**

\[ \text{\textit{Kaner}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{Diskaner}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{Tuilage}} \]

**Speed up to dance tempo**

\[ \text{\textit{Kaner}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{Diskaner}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{Tuilage}} \]

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Ton Double

From the playing of Ifig Troadec November 1993.
From the playing of Stéphane Morvan (1).

Ton Double  Ifig Troade (2 and 3) May 1994.
Music Example 3

Suite des Ronds de Loundéac

A

Rond 1

\( \text{\( f \)} = 170 \)

Chant

Response

C

R

B

Ballu

Moderate March Time

Chant

Response

C

R

R

C

R
C

Rond 2

Chant

Reponse

C

R

D

Riqueniee

Chant

Reponse

C

R

C

R

Moderato

Confort Berhet si vous savez o

ya des Joli Fill es ya des Joli 1

Confort Berhet si vous savez o

Fill es

155
Example A is taken from the playing of Ifig Troadec, themes 2, 3 and 4 are taken from the singing of Michel Baud and the Chantous de Loudia at a fest noz in La Roche Derrien in August 1995.
Genres related to dance music

All forms of Breton traditional music are related to the dance tradition. Even the slowest vocal lament can resurface as Kan ha diskan. A look at these related idioms helps us better to conceive of the rich tapestry which surrounds the dance. All of the genres mentioned below are fertile areas of research in themselves. Breton folklorists have named three types of vocal repertories, in addition to the chanson à danser (‘songs to dance to’), which are integral to the tradition. These are epic narrative songs, lyrical ballads and religious canticles. Because the terms most frequently used in the literature concerning Breton traditional music to date (concentrating as it does on the music of Basse Bretagne) are in the Breton language, I have retained this convention for practical purposes.

The differentiation of Basse Breton song genres into gwerz and sone, epic songs and balladry respectively, was first advanced in 1868 by F. M Luzel (see Gwerziou Breiz Izel, Lorient 1886). These categorisations are useful in general because they describe the genres succinctly. In French (and Gallo) epic songs are known as complaintes. Some of the bas-Breton lyrical ballads or dances can have a similar format to the tradition of macaronic song in Ireland. That is, a verse or a line in Breton and a chorus or phrasal response in French or visa versa. Polig Montjarret quotes the words of the well-known gavotte de Huelgoat, noting that in 1942 this type of practice was common - ‘Je vous dis mademoiselle/da lakaad atansion’ (Montjarret 1984:25). Nowadays it is uncommon to mix the languages.

Also, in the past, any form of ceremonial parade - notably at a wedding (une noce) - was usually led by one or two musicians. In Basse-Bretagne this may have been the bombarde binioù combination, a clarinet (treu jenn gaol) or on rare occasions
a fiddler. The *bas*-Breton march repertory is also played *kan ha diskan*. In Haute Bretagne the *vielle* or hurdy-gurdy and fiddle were the most likely combination. In some cases and in the recent past however the accordion often replaced all of these. Duets, particularly *bombarde* and *biniou*, are still very much in demand for weddings.

*Chants marins* (sea shanties), *chanteurs engagés* (socio-political singers) and the *bagadoù* (bagpipe, drum and bombarde bands) represent three more specific areas of artistic endeavour which form part of a many-faceted Breton music scene.

*Gwerz/complainte* or the epic lament

The *gwerz* (epic narrative song in Breton) is traditionally sung unaccompanied by one singer. Occasionally, however, it too can be sung by two singers in *kan ha diskan* format. The text and tune of a *gwerz* may also be speeded up into dance tempo becoming a *gavotte* or a *plinn* (Annie Ebrel personal communication, November 1997). Although the phrasal overlapping - the characteristic *tuilage* of *kan ha diskan* - is not a feature of the *Gallo* or French song tradition, the *complainte* may also performed in answering couplets. In the *gwerz* while many of the melodies employed are of great beauty, it is the message of the song which is of primary importance. The subject matter of *gwerziou* (plural of *gwerz*) is rarely light-hearted. The *gwerz* always contains a profound lesson on the nature of human existence for the listener. Becker and Le Gurun refer to this ancient genre in the following way, "The *gwerz* is the tragic, epic, heroic or Homeric narrative of Breton literature" (1994:9). Donatien Laurent describes the *barzaz* or epic poems which are often sung as *gwerziou* as *la mémoire d’un peuple* (‘the memory of a people’). Laurent points out that the *gwerziou* have different characteristics to their nearest equivalent in French. He states that they are genuine historical documents as well as poetry,
To 'a poor soldier come back from the war'... compare..... 'Garan Le Bris from the village of Cavan'... in the case of the former the characters are the anonymous heroes of a universal story, in the other, they are called by their names and part of an action rich in concrete detail. (1967:19)

In his study of the Gwerz de Louis Le Ravellec (1967), he uses both historical records and different versions of the gwerz passed down through the oral tradition. In this way Laurent reconstructed the story of a suspected murder which took place in 1832, showing the many nuances in the interpretation of this remote event which are implicitly contained in different variants of the song. He set these against actual recorded evidence to reconstruct a unique socio-historical document.

To people who do not speak the Breton language, the gwerz is the least readily accessible genre in Breton music. Whilst the ability to understand Breton is not essential to the appreciation of a good singer or a strong melody, the socio-historical import of the song is lost on those who cannot understand the language. Gwerziou have no clearly discernible tempo and they possess a dirge like quality. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s groups of talented musicians and singers have invested much creative energy in the instrumental accompaniment of this song style. Groups like Gwerz and Barzaz have had considerable success in bringing it to a wider public. At present, a gwerz may be sung at the occasion of a veillé (house session) or in the context of a staged concert.

Gwerziou have survived through the oral tradition but they have also been collected and published as epic poetry (barzaz). During the 19th century a number of collectors including F.M Luzel (1868) and the aristocratic Celticist Théodore Hersart
de la Villemarqué, periodically included musical transcriptions. Donatien Laurent’s major work *Aux sources du Barzaz-Breiz* (1989) focused on a re-interpretation of three particular *gwerziou* collected by de la Villemarqué. Using the original field notes and at the same time obviously avoiding the censure of 19th century polite society and ‘linguistic purity’ which De La Villemarqué himself imposed upon them, Laurent cast a new light on the contents of the latter’s work - the original *Barzaz Breiz* (Breton epic poetry).

Even at the time the *Barzaz Breiz* was first published in 1839 it was widely held that the language portrayed therein was not the authentic voice of the native poets, the original bearers of the oral tradition. In 1845 de la Villemarqué attempted to make various Breton epic poems and stories acceptable - as he saw it - for publication. They were published without any of what he described as ‘*Jargon mixte*’ (mixed jargon). He even performed his revised editions himself at various fairs and village events. Nobody was interested. By re-inventing his own version of Celtic linguistic purity and by ridding the *barzaz/gwerz* of ‘Frenchism’s’ and other linguistic anomalies (elements which had been part of the spoken tongue for many hundreds of years), de la Villemarqué made the songs meaningless to the very people he had hoped would receive them with enthusiasm (see also Hardie 1948:14-15, Gourvil 1959, Giraudon,1985:43).

*Complaintes* or lamentations in French or *Gallo* are also sung unaccompanied and generally solo. They are performed in the same context as the *gwerz* but are inherently more accessible to greater numbers because of they are in French. *Haut-*Breton singers like Charles Quimbert and Mathieu Hamon are excellent interpreters of the *complainte*. Charles Quimbert, who has collected many songs in and around his native *pays* of Sel de Bretagne in Haute Bretagne, pointed out to me that collectors in
Basse Bretagne (whose priorities lay in collecting Breton language material) often overlooked the French language songs which were part of the active repertoire of some of their informants. In this way, it is possible that many old versions of songs in French, which were popular among the bilingual population of Basse Bretagne, were lost.

Popular folksong/ sône

Folk ballads (sonnioù in Breton) are still performed widely. They were originally the stock in trade of the 19th century song peddler. These often anecdotal offerings can be heard at the table during a festive meal in a private house or a small restaurant. They are basically lyrical ballads or playful chorus songs sung in unison or solo. They are usually lively in tempo. Love, drinking, humour and the like are the typical content of these songs. They can be poignant and wistful in the treatment of their subject matter but they are generally less sombre and brooding than the gwerz or complainte. One is more likely to hear a lyrical ballad in French with a well-known chorus than the more context sensitive gwerz or complainte. The most popular bas-Breton bard of the people in the mid-19th century was Prosper Proux, an irreverent anti-clerical bon-viveur. A Breton Robert Burns by all accounts, he wrote many popular poems in his native Cornouaillais dialect. These later became ballads. Many of them concerned the life of the philanderer, of which, apparently, he had much experience. According to Hardie, Proux's work was,

......the renaissance of the literature of the soil as opposed to that cultivated in the studies of Parisian Bretons...known only in the humble cottages and in the ciderodorous taverns; it was to repose in the pockets of rascals, not on the desks of scholars (1948:14-16)
His publications were the target of the clergy in the late 19th century and were practically hounded out of existence by them, but his song texts have survived chiefly through oral transmission and are still to be found today in kan ha diskan.

Some songs in French like *Dans la prison de Nantes*, (‘In the prison of Nantes’) recorded by a number of folk groups in the 1970s are very popular. The folk ballad-group world, as distinct from the traditional dance music milieu, is dominated by ensembles who sing Breton songs in French. Often as not their repertoire is comprised of a mixture of ballads and sea shanties (see below). Whilst not as large as its *anglophone* equivalent, the world of the ballad-group in Brittany has its mega-stars who - in some cases - have been around for over twenty years. They feature regularly at concerts and festivals all over Brittany and France. Foremost among these ensembles are groups like *Tri Yann* and *Sonnerien du*. *Tri Yann*’s lead singer is nicknamed ‘super-Bret’. He appears on stage dressed in an all-leather traditional costume. These groups and others like them recorded many of the popular French language Breton folk-dance songs, which are now the standard end of the evening rant at quay-side bistros and parties. The most famous drinking song in Breton is *son ar chistr* (‘the cider ballad’) but the most popular songs of this type are in French. 28

French language *chansons à danser* are, one could say, the most popular of the popular, within the generic category of Breton folksong. One singer leads the song and everyone joins in the responsorial chorus. In this way a song may start up at the table after a meal and finish with everyone chanting a response while dancing in a circle around the table or twisting-off in serpentine form to tour the immediate environs. Songs like *La jument de Michou* (‘Mick’s mare’) and *Ma jument Hypoline* (‘My mare Hypoline’) are favourites. They are *an dros* associated with Haute Bretagne- the *pays gallo Vannetais* to be exact. The linguistic mix of songs
depends on the location and context of the event, but practically all informal social gatherings throughout Brittany will include popular French language dance songs like the two mentioned above.

There are numerous collections of lyrical ballads in Breton, French (including complaintes) and Gallo, see for example Simone Morand (1976) François-Marie Luzel (1874). For social histories of popular balladry see Jean-Michel Guilcher (1989), D.Giraudon (1985), and P.Malrieu (1983). Singer Yann-Fañch Kemmener has recently published a collection of sonnioù and gwerzioù based on material from his field notes as a collector of songs in his native pays plinn between 1970 and 1980 (see ‘Carnets de Routes’ 1997). The Haut-Breton tradition of complainte and ballad is comprehensively covered by two volumes compiled-with accompanying notes on the changing social context of folk-song - by Louisette Radioyes (1995 and 1997).

Religious song and music

Spiritual canticles or kannen (Breton) date from the 17th century. The Canticou spirituel was published in 1642. Many are translations from French and Southern European sources. Becker and Le Gurun say that it is precisely these plain-chant modes which characterise much of the bas-Breton repertoire, both secular and sacred, today (1994:10). Equally however many popular tunes were utilised by the clergy to proselytise among the peasantry, so a musical exchange between church and people most assuredly took place (see Giraudon 1985:15). Old Breton language canticles can still be heard at the many religious processions (pardons) which take place throughout Basse Bretagne during the year. For examples of the text and tunes of these (See Le Coat 1889). In terms of Breton instrumental church music, bombarde and Organ recitals have been a feature of church performance for some
considerable time. Hervé Rivière suggests that religious music in the Breton language
is not as successful as dance music because it lacks 'personality'. Its musical features,
he points out, do 'not distinguish it' from French Catholic hymns (see Rivière
1991:79-91). Posters advertising these performances, while not as ubiquitous as those
for festoù noz, are nonetheless indicative of a certain popularity for such musical
offerings.

*Chants de marins*

As anyone who has visited maritime Brittany during the summer festival season
will know, the tradition of sea shanty singing or *chants de marins* ('sailors songs') is
very popular. There are many professional folk -groups, like the well -liked Lorient
based bon viveurs, Djiboudjep and the popular Cabestan, dedicated to their
performance. The *chants de marins* tradition is almost entirely in French. This mirrors
the fact that all of the major Breton sea ports have been French speaking for hundreds
of years. Essentially it dates back to the era of the big sailing ships and has many
parallels in terms of content and indeed repertoire with its sister traditions throughout
France, across the English channel and beyond. The most popular shanties that turn
up frequently at the end of many musical soirées in a port side café are without
question 'Jean François (pron. 'Franceweh') de Nantes' and 'John Kanak'. There is
a huge social world revolving around maritime pursuits in Brittany and all along the
French coast. The *chants de marins* are an integral part of these activities. The most
up to date publication concerning popular *chants de marins* is both a collection of
songs and a potted social history. It is published along with an extensive catalogue of
all things maritime by *Le Chasse -Marée* (1995) and is entitled simply *Le chant de
marin* ('the sailor's song').
Chanteurs engagés

There is a significant tradition of socio-politically conscious singers or *chanteurs engagés* in France in general. These artists are inspired by cultural, socio-political and linguistic issues. The *chanteur engagé* uses his or her creativity to write songs or poems which seek primarily to deliver a message. The *francophone* Diaspora has produced many shining examples of this type of performer. People like Georges Brassens and Jacques Brel will be familiar to many. In Brittany, the *chanteur engagé* is concerned for the most part with issues pertinent to the Breton context. Some like Bernez Tanguy and Kristen Nicolas sing only in Breton, to the accompaniment of a heavy rock sound. Others like the charismatic Gilles Servat sing in both French and Breton, mainly about issues concerning Brittany and the Celtic world—particularly Ireland. From the 1960s until the 1980s major figures in this genre were Glenmor and Youenn Gwernig (poet and singer). Alan Stivell could be considered as the first internationally known *chanteur engagé* to promote Celticism in a veiled political manner. Folk tradition and identity are by implication important concerns for the particularly Breton *chanteur engagé*.

Bagadoù

Similar to the bagpipe bands associated principally with Scotland, but familiar in most *anglophone* countries, the *bagadoù* are marching bands composed of highland pipes, drum corps, and *bombardes*. The addition of a group of *bombarde* players to this well established ensemble is the ingredient which gives them their very powerful and uniquely Breton sound. The *bagadoù* ensemble is a clear-cut acknowledged act of cultural borrowing from the Scottish pipe band tradition. It is authenticated by reference to a shared Celtic inheritance. They were first created by Polig Montjarret,
Dorig Le Voyer, Hervé Le Menn and a handful of enthusiasts under the auspices of the BAS (Bodadeg ar Sonerion) meaning ‘the assembly of pipers’ in 1942 (See Becker and Le Gurun 1994, Montjarret 1984). They played a key part in the re-vitalisation of the Breton musical inheritance in what was a difficult political climate for minority identities in France. Since then, many bagads under the direction of talented penn-soneurs (‘head sonneurs’) - after the model of the Scottish pipe-major - have been founded and are flourishing throughout Brittany.

Through his activities with the BAS, Polig Montjarret in particular had a pivotal role in the collection of tunes in Basse Bretagne. He was the main promoter of the highland bagpipe in Brittany. As the biniòù braz (‘big pipes’) became more ubiquitous during 1950s and ‘60s, specialist interest began to re-focus on the older sonneurs de tradition, the source of both repertoire and style. Some were unhappy with the way Scottish bagpipes were usurping the role of the sonneur de tradition. The position of the biniòù koz in particular, had become fragile. By its nature the bagad was destined to make sweeping changes to the character of the dance music. The bombardes had to be pitched in Bb in order to be in tune with the highland bagpipe and the rigor of Scottish chanter ornamentation inevitably played a role in shaping the bagad sound. Such large ensembles have to be well organised. Meticulous rehearsal under the artistic direction of the Penn-sonneur, rather than laissez-faire improvisation, is the strength of the successful bagad. In the 1970s, people assured me that the standard pitch of the bombarde and biniòù was Bb. As a reaction to the bagad and the martial overtones of the pipe-band, many talented players forsook the biniòù braz and returned to the practice of the vrai biniòù (‘real pipes’) - a reference to the biniòù koz. They studied the art of the older sonneurs and, as a result, their playing began to resemble more closely the practice of earlier times. By all accounts there were as many tunings as musicians among the older
Sonneurs of bombarde and binioù (see Montjarret 1984, Becker et Le Gurun 1994, La Musique Bretonne 1996). In recent years most players habitually carry instruments pitched in a variety of keys. Although an ardent promoter of the bagpipes and the bagadoù, Montjarret’s personal role in the promotion of the unique aesthetic, skill, repertoire and technique of the sonneurs de tradition on binioù koz and bombarde is well recognised (Musique Bretonne 1997: 418-419). Many Sonneurs who have not come to music through the BAS and who play regularly at festoù noz say that the bombarde player who is a specialist bagad player has a different musical aesthetic to that of the dance musician.

Like the pipe-bands in Scotland and virtually world wide, the social world of the bagadoù outside of performance at festivals, is very much orientated towards competition. There are competitions for bands, solo bagpipes and duets of binioù braz and bombarde. Many of today’s leading Breton bagpipers such as Patrick Molard and Erwan Ropars (the penn-sonneur of the bagad Kemper) are major figures in the world-wide bagpipe scene. Between them they have won many international piping awards. The bagadoù are in many ways a separate musical world. BAS is presently composed of at least 80 bands and - as suggested above - has evolved its own impressive ensemble aesthetic. The bagadoù form a major part of the traditional music panoply in Brittany. They are the distinctive sound of the big Breton summer festivals like Quimper and Lorient. A bagad will also turn out for parades and the better known bagads, like the bagad Kemper, give concerts and participate in big musical productions such as the L’héritage des Celts (1995). Many Bagadoù members have close ties with there counterparts in Scotland, Ireland and further afield.
Sources for Breton dance music

Two recent publications are essential reading for all students of the Breton musical tradition. For a comprehensive overview of all the more popularly perceived traditional instruments, their properties, the history of their use, the personalities that gave them life and detailed aesthetic and stylistic observations, see *Musique Bretonne*, (Chasse Marrée/Ar Men 1997). This work is an impressive tome of some 512 pages, well illustrated with superb photographs. It is the most recent comprehensive publication in the social history of Breton music. A bimonthly magazine of the same name, published by DASTUM is also a great source of information and commentary on the world of Breton music. Its contributors are for the most part experienced researchers and collectors. For a compact overview, see also *La Musique Bretonne* (Becker and Le Gurun 1994) especially the section on instruments on pages 35-71.

Various collections of traditional Breton dance music, many of which have already been cited above, have been published since the mid-19th century. By far the largest and most comprehensive is the Polig Montjarret collection of 2365 tunes, entitled *Musique populaire de Basse Bretagne*. Besides the tunes, the forward to this volume provides a valuable discourse about music in general and an insight into the concerns and attitudes (notions about the purity and authenticity of the material) of the people who worked on the collection and processing of the work in the 1950s when it was first published. A similar volume does not as yet exist for the instrumental music of Haute Bretagne.
Summary

What I have dealt with in chapters 3 and 4 are the fundamental aspects of the localized and pan-Breton world of traditional music in Brittany. The pan-Breton and the local bleed into each other constantly. This social world, based primarily on the fest noz, can and does function distinctly from the world of ‘Celtic’ music, but it is also a key factor in the maintenance of a ‘Celtic’ music scene per sé. This scenario does not mirror the process of post-modern enculturation that Mc Laughlin (1997:12-13) describes as ‘glocal’. However, the ‘glocal’ concept (a synthesis of global and local) can be applied to the relationship which exists between the local, the pan-Breton and the Celtic in musico-cultural life in Brittany. Syncretism in musical systems is not unique to Brittany, but the confluence of these particular ingredients are.

Essentially chapter 5 links what has gone before with the issues under discussion in chapters 6 and 7. In this next chapter I will look at the socio-economic significance of the fest noz, giving attention to such key issues as the nature of the event itself and amateurism and professionalism in traditional music. The popularity of the Breton fest noz combined with French social legislation has created the unique situation of a large body of professional traditional players. In turn the existence of these players affects both the social context of the music and production in the entertainment industry. It is in this professional arena where Breton music often mutates into Celtic music.
It has to be said however that the Irish 'session' is definitely not the free-for-all it can appear to be to the outsider. It has a complicated internal dynamic and specific 'rules' of comportment (see Wilkinson 1991: 34-39 and Carson 1986).

Solo playing, or a lead instrument with a Guitar or Bouzouki is becoming more popular. Although he usually plays in group and duo situations where he is accompanied by guitarist Yvon Riou, flute player J.M. Veillon is a pioneer in solo playing in Brittany. Fiddles, accordions and flutes do not make the same physical demands as double-reeded aerophones.

Les bons chanteurs ne sont plus appréciés pour l’histoire qu’ils racontent, mais pour leur puissance de voix capable de dynamiser le groupe et de ‘mener la danse’ dans un tempo à forte pulsations (Becker et Le Gurun 1994:11).

This LP features recordings of vocal kan ha diskan made between 1964 and 1980.

In 1994 a social commentary in bal gavotte (gavotte promenade) form, haranguing the French railway system (the Société Nationale de Chemin de fer Français - SNCF) was very popular. The SNCF proposed that the TGV (high speed train) would no longer stop at Plouaret - the heart of the Trégor. This bal took them to task. It is sung by Louis- Jacques Suignard, Claude Lintanf and Jean- Do Robin (see discography).

Sombre faces among the dancers in the round can be typical of the plinn and gavotte genres. This has led some to comment that the dances from Haute- Bretagne, that have become part of the Pan-Breton fest noz over the last ten years, have had the welcoming effect of making the events plus gai - more light-hearted.

The An dro or Hanter dro are Vannetais genres. The daës kef and rond pagan are from the Léon.

It is popularly held by many in Brittany today that the tuilage is exclusive to Kan ha diskan. However commentators such as Jean-François Dutertre, say that the tuilage sometimes featured in the chansons à répondre tradition throughout France and in the francophone communities of north America (see Dutertre, comments on the sleeve notes to the LP Chants à Répondre et à Danser, produced by Le Chant du Monde, 1974.

This tradition is also monophonic in character although a group of singers from the Léon called Kanerien Langazel have been experimenting with polyphonic textures in recent years.

The chèvrement is common to vocal performance in both parts of Brittany. It is central to successful performance on all the instruments mentioned in chapter 3. Interestingly the trademark of popular singing throughout France, both in rural and urban settings, particularly among people over 50 years of age, is a noticeable quiver in the voice. The Parisian singer Edith Piaf, whose remarkable idiosyncratic voice was a huge influence throughout the 1950s, is a highly impressive example of this typically French style of singing.

La veuze is a form of bagpipe associated with the rural area surrounding Nantes.

Le jeu d’alternance du couple biniou-bombarde et du biniou solo ne se résume pas à une reprise systématique de l'air; il s’agit d’un véritable dialogue. La bombarde et le biniou ne jouent pas la même chose, et pourtant ils se fondent dans une complémentarité exemplaire: L'un sonne de la bombarde (il roule les notes), l'autre sonne du biniou (il les tape) ... La raison d'être du biniou est de rythmer et d'exciter la bombarde, en veillant à l'équilibre de son bourdon et des floritures du lévriat (1994:49).
13 Le biniou et la bombarde ont le don de toucher au vif la sensibilité des Bretons de bonne souche. Ils suscitent parfois de véritables délire collectifs... Quand on nous parle maintenant des fureurs du jazz, nous avons connu mieux (1994:26).

14 Malrieu makes these observations on the sleeve notes to the double Album ‘Sonneurs de Clarinette en Bretagne’ (Dastum/Chasse Marée:1987).

15 Toutefois il n'y a pas pour les sonneurs de règles strictes et l'interprétation reste très personnelle. Bien souvent, la réponse du second sonneur apporte une variation qui peut être une ornementation, quelques notes supplémentaires, un silence, un phasé différent de celui de la mélodie... Ces transformations vont de la simple nuance, due au style propre à chaque sonneur, à la variant “établie” par l’usage. (1986: 11)

16 These bands, popular in the 1930s, used drum kits and played a mixture of traditional and contemporary styles.

17 There are some exceptions, notably the dañs ar podou fleur (flower pot dance), which features an anti-clockwise turn.

18 The bas-Breton repertory also became the main source for both the pipe and bombarde bands (bagadois) formed in the post war years and dance bands of the 1970s and early 1980s.

19 By the 1930s, the traditional repertory had assimilated many waltzes, mazurkas and polkas which suited the accordion in particular. Towards the end of the 19th century the polka was a risqué dance everywhere in Europe (and in America). This is reflected in the refrain of a famous French polka - “Mon papa, il veut pas, que je danse, que je danse, mon papa il veut pas, que je danse la polka” (Geneviève Wilkinson). Essentially this means ‘my father does not want me to dance the polka’.

20 I have learned from bitter experience that this serpentine variant can be hazardous if you come face to face with an enthusiastic robust dancer on a tight corner - particularly when vigorous arm movements are a feature of the dance.

21 "Une méme de Sévigné.... décrit les danse des bas-bretons ....et s'émerveille de voir danser par le Sénéchal de Rennes, les marquis de Coëtlogon de Locmaria, une sorte de danse que l'on ignore à Versailles : C'est quelque chose extraordinaire que cette quantité de pas différents, et cette cadence courte et juste..." (1994:10)

22 Les montagnes can be an inclusive description for the Monts d’Arrée and the Montagnes Noires (the black mountains). The pays fisel is in the Montagnes Noires. They are just south of the Monts d’Arrée, around the town of Gourin.

23 According to Pierre Crepillon these dances were not as demanding in their original form as what they have now become. He cites the choreographic practices of the cercles celtiques, which tend to exaggerate certain movements in a spectacular fashion, as being at the root of the mutations in these dances (personal communication, Limerick, April, 1999).

24 All of the dances which are traditionally associated with Haute Bretagne can have quite spellbinding circular arm movements. In my experience dancing between two people whose arm movements are hesitant or unsure can be most disconcerting and very sore on the little fingers.

25 La Gwerz est la complainte tragique, épique, héroïque ou homérique de la littérature bretonne (1994:9)
26 A 'un pauvre soldat revenant de la guerre'... répondent... 'Garan Le Bris, du bourg du Cavan... dans un cas, les acteurs sont les héros anonymes d'une situation universelle, dans l'autre, ils sont nommément désignés et engagés dans une action riche en détails concrets (1967:19).

27 Talented musicians have combined with singers of traditional gwerzioù in this endeavour. The following have been among the most significant contributors Gwerz with Eric Marchand, Barzaz with Yann Fañch Kemener and Dibenn with Annie Ebrel.

28 Songs like *buvons encore une dernière fois* (‘another last drink’) are contemporary folk-songs. I have heard this particular song everywhere - ranging from a party in a bas-Breton café to a wedding reception near Lyon - in this sense it (and others like it) are Pan-French.

29 As pointed out in chapter 2, after the 2nd World War and the Nazi occupation, centrist policies were pursued with renewed zeal under De Gaulle. Anything which could be seen to undermine the state (ie. minority cultural activism) was an easy scapegoat for the charge of collaboration. Many Breton separatist organisations were no more (nor less) guilty of collaboration than any other grouping in ‘I’ *hexagone*. They were however an easy target for such accusations because of both their anti-Republican histories and the activities of the more extreme elements within *Briez Atao* (see Favereau 1994:172-173).

30 Although, as stated in Chapter 3, this mirrors the concerns of contemporary group playing, it also marks a return to an older practice. Modern instrument makers however pay meticulous attention to the tonal values of standard western pitch to a much greater extent than the majority of their late 19th century forebears.
Chapter 5

THE FEST NOZ AND PROFESSIONALISM

In the previous chapters I have introduced the fest noz and spoke of its emblematic importance to Breton identity. Chapter 3 gave an overview of the social context of dance and music in Brittany while chapter 4 drew attention to performance practise, popular dance music genres and the general corpus of traditional music. This chapter concentrates on three important aspects of the socio-economic world of traditional music in Brittany. Correspondingly, it is divided into three sections. The first of these sections concerns the nature of the present day fest noz, showing how a fest noz is organised, describing the event itself and drawing attention to its economic significance. The second section is a description of professionalism in traditional Breton dance music. It deals with the legislation which facilitates professionalism and it looks at the discourse this professional status has provoked. The final section looks at the socio-musical implications of professional strategies and briefly examines the juxtaposition of innovation and tradition in the Breton context.

Festoù noz happen all year round in most localities. They are organised for a wide variety of reasons and directly or indirectly involve a numerous and diverse cross-section of the population. They are also of central importance to competitions and large festival events like the Festival interceltique de Lorient in August or the Printemps du Châteauneuf (‘the Spring at Chateauneuf’), the first major celebration of Breton music and dance in the annual cultural calendar. From idea to event, the
Jest noz is an important part of the Breton leisure economy; money is generated by them and around them. Over the course of the last two decades of the 20th century, the popularity of festou noz, together with French social legislation, has encouraged the growth of modern professionalism in the world of traditional music. This body of people often refer to festou noz as being alimentaires - meaning the 'bread and butter' work of their careers. An examination of the socio-economic impact of the event itself together with a descriptive analysis of professionalism in music, is central to any understanding of musical life in Brittany. It is precisely within the world of professional traditional music where Breton music becomes 'Celtic' music. That is, it moves from the fest-noz or dance environment to the concert stage, both within Brittany and abroad. As a result considerable numbers of professional musicians are willing to present themselves either exclusively or periodically as Celtic musicians.

'Professionalism' and it's relationship with 'amateurism' per se, has generated a number of tensions, tensions which have had an impact on the world of traditional music over the course of the last 15 years. That consideration aside however, an atmosphere of 'family' can be evident in this particularly Breton social world. This manifests itself in cameo moments of shared cultural solidarity where professional and personal jealousies, aesthetic debates and ideological positions may be periodically eclipsed. Typical of such moments are the main Pan-Breton and local traditional music events of each cultural new year and the celebrations of the anniversaries of well-known groups. As already indicated in chapter 4, friendship encoded in musical
performance, whether it be in the couple sonneurs or chanteurs situation or in the group, is a feature of Breton traditional music both amateur and professional. Many Breton groups who began their careers on the fest noz circuit such as BF15 and Bleizi Ruz (‘the red wolves’) have amazing longevity. In some cases they are proving capable of sustaining the entire professional careers of a number of musicians. Bleizi Ruz celebrated its 25th anniversary in the spring of 1998 by throwing a party. The party took the form of a fest noz at which they and their friends and colleagues from other groups performed.

Festoù noz in the Trégor

My experience of regular festou noz relates essentially to the rural bretonnant heartland of the Trégor where I lived for over two years. Here the fest noz is a regular community activity. The Trégor is famed for its coastline, the celebrated côtes de granit rose (‘pink granite coast’). As one approaches it from any direction this feature is displayed prominently on all tourist road signs. The Bishopric conceived of a as a pays (see chapter 2) is yet again made relevant in contemporary usage. In this instance it is used to de-limit a tourist destination.

The département of the ‘ Côtes d'Armor’ was called the ‘ Côtes du Nord’ up until 1990. This change of name has, according to many, served to make it sound more Breton - more maritime than cold - more celtique. The Conseil Général first put up bilingual road signs in the Trégor bretonnant during 1990. This had already
been accomplished for historical monuments after 1983 (D. Giraudon, personal communication, April 1998). The fact that this happened at all, has had a lot to do with the reasserting of local Breton identity in a resolute way over the last two decades. Festou noz were commonplace during my stay in the Trégor. As already pointed out in chapter 3, the Trégor has become an area noted for its vibrant community of cultural activists. Given these relatively recent public affirmations it remains a recognisable space with a past, a present and a future.

Lannion is the region’s capital. Tréguier was the seat of political and episcopal power until the collapse of the ancien régime. All types of western music are part of the scene. Pop music, Rock music and its multitude of sub genres, variété française (popular French songs), together with brass bands and western Art music. The area is well provided for in terms of performance venues; bars, night-clubs, theatres, halls and churches. Every commune in the region has its own fully equipped salle des fêtes (village/community hall). Festou noz are ubiquitous and a glance at the events listings in the local press, will confirm this. Comments made by of a band of rock musicians from northern France of the nature, “Who are this band fest noz? Their posters are everywhere... must be making a fortune”, are also telling (personal communication, November 1993).

The village communes of Cavan, Prat, Confort-Berhet and Pluzunet which are roughly between Lannion and Guingamp delimit the area where I was living (see Figure 2 page 12). Festou noz are held in or around this location throughout the year. Many people travel from other regions to attend them and many locals in turn travel to
events in neighbouring districts. These communes are not situated along the coast and as such are not major tourist destinations during the summer. Regular cultural activities are an important factor in attracting people to them.

Associations

The association is a way by which everybody, even the most recalcitrant, can be drawn into community life. All members of an association work in a voluntary capacity. They can however employ people to work on their behalf, as in the case of a large charity for example. The QUID (encyclopaedia) provides detailed information on the nature and obligations of associations. According to this important source there were 730,000 registered associations in France in 1994, 611,300 with paid employees, 118,700 without. Of these 21% are involved with sport, health and social action, 13.6% with leisure, commerce, employment and consumer affairs, 12.3% with education and vocational training and 8.2% social life, 7.9% are concerned with housing and the environment. A further 6.8% are dedicated to hunting and fishing while 2.8% are described as involved with culture and tourism. These figures are followed by a 0.02% whose activities can't apparently be classified (see QUID, 1995:1444).

Associations reflect all elements of society ranging from the purely social to business and politics. Most people in the area where I lived were involved with several associations. To form an association there must be at least two people,
afterwards there is no upward limit on numbers. They have to have legal status in the
locality especially if they are seeking public money for sponsorship of events. To do
this they must register at the centre of local government nearest to them (the préfecture or sous-préfecture). If they do not do this, they cannot sign cheques or
have a bank account. As the treasurer for the Confort-Brehet based association, Kanfarded ar vilin goz, Jean Pierre Le Toquer, once remarked, “Life in France is
based on associations. You have to create an association if you want to do anything
at all” (personal communication, August 1993). In addition to the associations
which hold réunions (meetings) at weekly or monthly intervals, single event or single
issue bodies such as comités d’action (‘forums for action’) come and go regularly.
Going to a réunion anywhere in France, outside of the workplace, serves a social as
well as a practical purpose. The local press usually mentions all of the réunions des
associations held in the area. A common feature of local news coverage is numerous
photos of businesslike-looking people sitting around tables with notepads in front of
them.

Among the most proactive of the local associations concerned with musical
activity between 1992 and 1994 in my area were Modall, Kanfarded ar Vilin Gozh,
Awel Dro and Youankiz Plunet. Between these associations and a few others
(either alone or acting in collaboration with other bodies such as DASTUM) a year-
long programme of dance classes, music classes, concerts and festou noz was assured.
They attracted a wide cross-section of people, ranging from the local youth in the case
of Youankiz Plunet (Pluzunet), to specialist musicians and artists, in the case of
Modall. The organisation of a fest noz, from idea to event, involves large numbers of people. It is a significant example of considerable local community enterprise.

What now follows is a description of festoù noz as social events. It is looked at under four headings. The first of these entitled simply ‘the event in general’ is an overview of what happens in and around practically all good festoù noz. The second, entitled plateau musical refers to the sonneurs, singers and groups who perform in these events. The third, entitled the fest noz du Loc is a description of one event in particular and the fourth heading entitled ‘impact on music professionalism’ explains the crucial socio-economic significance of the event for traditional music professionals.

As mentioned before in chapter 2, for many people the fest noz amounts to a social metaphor for Breton culture, a way of feeling, thinking and living. They speak of regular participation in the fest noz as essential to their general sense of well-being. One meets one’s friends, talks things over, drinks and dances. In this way the fest noz has a cathartic effect which brings with it a sense of renewal. It is reasonable to suggest that it is also a symbolic link with a pre-capitalist past.

The event in general

Festoù noz take place in the local salle des fêtes during the colder months but later on in the year they are moved out of doors. The Breton summer generally allows for many outdoor events. They are more widespread and frequent in summertime due both to the natural desire of locals to celebrate the passing of the seasons and to the
influx of tourists. More often than not, festou noz are preceded by an evening meal in which the performers, sonorisateur (sound man), the organisers and a host of helpers sit down together to eat. On big occasions the meal is offered to all patrons as an optional extra and the cost is built into the admission price. Practically all salles des fêtes have kitchens. Where facilities for cooking are not present, gas stoves, hot plates and barbecues are set up on the site. Bars are constructed and an electricity supply is obtained either from a nearby source or an on-site generator. I have also seen huge cast iron pots of steaming ragout (stew) being stirred over braziers of glowing wood, reminiscent of earlier times. In general no effort is spared in this regard. The organisation, preparation, and serving of a 3 or 4 course meal, with copious amounts of cider and wine, is done with what seems to be the minimum of fuss. No matter how limited the resources of the organisation, everyone gets fed. Considering that the meal is normally prepared for a large group of people (rarely less than about forty), it is an impressive undertaking.

Before a concert or fest noz in Brittany, a sit down meal for the main participants is a matter of course. Failure to provide decent food for invited performers is practically inexcusable and would be remarked upon. The meal is prepared and served by members of the organising association. Great attention is paid to detail. If the association is an enthusiastic group of people, the atmosphere around the table can be celebratory with songs, toasts and lively repartee throughout the proceedings. On special occasions, the main dish may be a roasted pig accompanied to the table by sonneurs of bombarde and biniou. Summer festou noz
can go on until dawn and throughout their duration, food and drink are always available. All the best festou noz involve eating, drinking, lively banter and dancing. As a well-known Breton musician once pointed out to me, it may also involve ‘flirtatious encounters’. In short, many of the more pleasant aspects of human existence are in abundant evidence.

The plateau musical

The general format of the plateau musical at most Pan-Breton festou noz is as follows. It usually consists of two groups, several couple sonneurs and two or three vocal duos or ensembles performing kan ha diskan or chants Gallo (dance songs from the ‘pays Gallo’). The fest noz group (usually purely instrumental) generally has a pan-Breton repertory. This is in contrast to the sonneurs and singers who will perform 2 or 3 localised dance genres.4

Throughout the night, groups alternate with the other performers in an attempt to guarantee dance music for everyone’s taste. Each act makes about 3 ‘passage sur scène’ (a set or an appearance on stage) during the course of the evening. A set can last from between 40 minutes to an hour. As a rule, one of the the headlining groups will play the last official set of the evening but, during the course of the after-event clean up operation, some sonneurs and dancers may continue the party until daylight. Some of the younger fest noz bands like the highly successful Are yaouank (‘the youth’), have the demeanour of pop stars. In 1994 and 1995 they were just that in
the world of the *fest noz*. Many Groups like this belong almost entirely to the *fest noz* circuit in Brittany, rarely moving outside of it. They use the latest sound gadgetry and attract the younger patrons. Every late teen and twenty-something generation in Brittany over the last 30 years has had its version of *Are Yaouank*. The quality (and in some cases sheer size) of the sound-systems employed at most *festou noz* today can be impressive.

Some of the more mature patrons complain that the groups are too loud and brash, often sacrificing nuance for decibels. Fearing the steady erosion of the 'traditional' *fest noz* context, these people favour more intimate events using a small sound-system (or none at all) and with an emphasis on traditional duos rather than groups. If such a development were to re-occur on a large scale, it would undermine the professional status of many who play exclusively in groups (see below). Most *anciens* (older people) rejoice in the numbers going to the *festou noz*, even if they may not approve of some of the musical treatment given to the old tunes by the groups. Naturally the younger patrons are the most likely to spend all their cash at the bar and stay up all night dancing to a sound which symbolically links the past with their generation. The effective combination of such instruments as *bombarde*, flute, violin and acoustic guitar for instance, would not have been possible before the advent of electronic amplification. Attracting the young with an expendable income is a major factor in the commercial success of *festou noz*. A popular group at a *fest noz* guarantees a big crowd and a large cash turnover.
The *fest noz du Loc*

One of my most enduring memories of a summer *fest noz* in the Trégor is the *fest noz du Loc*. Named after the *chapelle du Loc*, a small medieval church near the village of Pluzunet, this event has taken place regularly on the 14th of August each year from 1991 until 1998. Organised by the *Youankiz Plunet* (‘youth of Pluzunet’), it attracts people from all over the Trégor and beyond. Practically everyone who attends a *fest noz* dances at some time in the evening. As pointed out before, Breton dances are very community based and *festouè noz* are the most attractive and essential manifestation of popular cultural life in Brittany. The *fest noz du Loc* is one of the best of them.

Arriving at *le Loc* around 10 o’clock on the evening of the 14th of August 1994, night has fallen and all the adjacent fields are packed with parked cars. Stewards remain on the road until well into the night shepherding the arriving cars into these fields. They do this in an effort to keep the main tarmac road open in case of an emergency. Members of a first aid crew are on duty, hovering around the entrance to the chapel grounds. We pay our entrance fee of 30frs per person to a group of busy young people in a parked vanette. Easy-going stewards are also on duty around the *fête* area to prevent or at least curtail, the number of local youngsters trying to get in free. The sound of *bombarde* and *binioù* coupled with the coloured lights, which have been arraigned about the chapel, the dancing area and the podium (a customised truck trailer) create an atmosphere of expectation, excitement and bonhomie. The
main bar tent, situated just to the right of the chapel door, is already besieged by thirsty patrons talking animatedly and drinking coreff (Breton real ale), wine and cider from plastic cups. Coffee and soft drinks are available for those unwilling or too young to consume alcohol.

It is an event where one is sure to meet many friends at the same time. Consequently each arrival is greeted by a round of hand shakes and kisses on the cheek. This is customary throughout France. As a rule men shake hands with each other, although on occasion they may exchange kisses on the cheek. A single kiss on the cheek is the standard greeting between an adult and a child if there is a friendship or family connection. Between women and women and men and women, kisses on the cheek are habitually exchanged. In Brittany this involves four kisses. As a result greeting your friends at a large meal or a festoù noz where one knows a lot of people takes quite a while. I realised how much time I had spent doing this on my return to Ireland where this custom is not widespread. This same type of ritual greeting is practised every day on first meeting. I remember my young ten year old son shaking hands with each of his friends every morning when I left him at the local primary school in Prat.

Small circular buvettes (drinks tents) with their coloured canvas tops all placed at convenient locations - well clear of the podium, the dancing area and the main bar - dispense bottled beer, wine and cider from plastic barrels filled with water and ice cubes. The smoke-filled air is heavy with the smell of merguez (spicy sausages) and
crêpes (pancakes). From large tubs of pre-prepared buckwheat and egg batter, ladies working behind long tables make crêpes. To do this they spread the batter - using a special spatula - on large gas-heated circular hot plates (‘pillig’ in Breton). This is a process which involves great dexterity. There is a constant flow of people between all of these locations and the dancing area. Everywhere on the site is relatively well lit, although the overall effect is soft and unobtrusive. Children play on nearby open spaces, running up and down on the small hillocks in the chapel grounds and young lovers (locked in a motionless embrace) can be seen on the periphery. At around five or six in the morning, a few people may be a little tired and emotional, due to the combined effects of alcohol and dancing. However, I never witnessed any violence at this event during the three years that I attended it (1993-1995).

The most popular dances of the night are plinn, an dro/hanter dro, gavotte montagne and rond de Loudéac (see chapter 4). Throughout the night couple sonneurs of biniou, bombarde and treujenn gaol, together with singers of kan ha diskan and chant gallo - and the celebrated local duo of Jean-Michel Veillon and Yvon Riou, on wooden flutes and guitar respectively - alternate with groups on the podium. Should there be a request, the groups and the duo in question play dance tunes from all over Brittany and beyond. On the dancing area itself - a very buoyant square platform made from planks of timber - a large group of people rise and fall to the hypnotic repetitive movement of the plinn. See Plate 9 page 186.
Plate 8: Fest noz du Loc. These Photographs were taken at the chapelle du Loc on the 14th of August 1994. They include Kan ha diskan singers Louise Ebrel and Denez Prigent and the group Skolvan.
As the night wears on and the number of dancers increases, rounds within rounds form and the circle becomes a serpent which weaves its way well beyond the dancing space. People join the dance at any time, although most join at the start of a suite with a partner. Some people dance all night, stopping only for the occasional drink. For others the reverse is the case. For most, it is a balanced combination of both activities. The sound-desk and the sound-man face the podium on which the musicians and singers are performing. They are housed in scaffolding draped with blue canvas. For some young people this is a ‘cool’ place to hang-out. From here one can watch ‘the man’ at work, controlling the sound system with its bewildering array of dials and buttons.

Tonight the well-known groups Skolvan and Are Yaouank are playing. Are Yaouank have their own system and sound-man which they have hired out for the night to the organisers of the fest noz. This is a fairly standard practice. They are the last to play at the official end of the night at around 3am. Long after they leave the stage, a couple of sonneurs strike up a final appel à la danse in the midst of the die-hard throng at the main bar.

Performers are paid towards the end of the evening before they leave. At least half of the performers at contemporary festou noz are full-time professional musicians. Others, although they too get paid, are amateurs. The terms ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ in this sense do not reflect the relative abilities of the musicians or singers. They point rather to the fact that French social legislation (see below),
together with the popularity of the fest noz, allows for professionalism in the modern context. The professional’s fee includes the social insurance contributions which he/she is obliged to make. Payment involves a protracted bureaucratic procedure at the end of the night. Many fest noz organisers find this procedure stressful but the professional musician will insist upon it. For professional musicians it is of great importance that their performance is registered as every engagement they undertake contributes towards their eligibility for pay-related benefit.

Amateurs are paid in a way in which their fee can be read as expenses. Their payment is usually less than the fee allocated to professional musicians, because, in the case of the professional, the fee must take account of the various contributions and deductions the artist is obliged to pay. The issue of amateurism and professionalism in traditional music issue is one of considerable controversy but for the moment it has not sown the seeds of division among performers. One cannot imagine a similar entente cordiale in the cut and thrust of Paris for example.

The type of event that has been described above requires meticulous planning. Many of the locals in Pluzunet are affected by it. Volunteers are required to prepare and serve food, to organise a bar, to work as bar staff and to collect money at the entrance. Others are involved in organising the plateau musical: an activity that includes the sometimes stressful task of negotiating cachets (fees) with the musicians and practicalities like hiring equipment and sound-checks. Together with publicity in the local press, posters have to be made and paid for. Scaffolding, lighting, and the
podium, must be obtained and erected. In this matter, material and labour are often
donated freely by local trades people willing to help out. In some cases
accommodation may also be necessary. In my experience written contracts between
organisers and performers are a matter of course even when the parties know each
other well. All the above tasks are apportioned during the various réunions held in
the period leading up to the event. When one considers that over a thousand people
may attend a large fest noz, a significant amount of money is involved. If the night
has been a success, the event generates enough social and economic capital to launch
itself the following year. If not it may simply disappear. Many events like the fest
noz du Loc are not subsidised by public funds and therefore they must be
independently viable. Organisational structures - such as that in Pluzunet - are very
much dependent upon energetic local initiative. This is of crucial importance. Festou
noz currently support a lifestyle for a large number of professional traditional
musicians in Brittany.

Impact on music professionalism

Jean-Michel Veillon is often at pains to point out both the relative fragility of
the festou noz and the tenuous nature of the lifestyle dependent upon them. He says,

"It's all due to the existence of the fest noz, without the fest noz it would
be impossible. Even if there are lots of festou noz, I believe they are still a
fragile type of event and it's best to be vigilant. Because all it takes is a
government taking restrictive measures concerning such things as late
closure, drink sales outlets (buvettes) and the like and that could
completely destroy the fest noz in a year. Where would that leave the
groups who play practically full time at festou noz? For them it's all over."
They'll have to play another type of music.” (Interview, Prat, November 1994).^5

There is however a historical precedent for professionalism in traditional music in Brittany. Many 19th century sonneurs made a living from their music, playing at weddings, pardons and other local events. The method of payment at that time however conformed more to the idea of a ‘sphere of exchange’ (Douglas 1967:119-147), than a cash payment. The musician was usually paid in food, drink and lodging or with material goods considered appropriate to his itinerant life-style. In the 19th century money changed hands only for playing at a wedding or some exceptional circumstance.^6 The skill of the musician was highly prized, but effectively he could not really accumulate wealth or property. He was confined to an economically low status by the rural society in which he worked (see Merriam 1964:123-143 and Wilkinson 1991:37-41). By the advent of the 20th century, however, payment for the services of sonneurs became standard and effectively most traditional musicians also worked as small farmers. Full-time professional travelling musicians had became rare. Now, however, new social legislation is in place: legislation which is inextricably linked to the popularity of festoù noz over the last twenty years. Taken together with this legislation, the popularity and frequency of festoù noz have made the possibility of becoming professional a reality for traditional musicians. That means inclusion in mainstream society - so to speak - for the first time ever. This legislation is called the système d'intemittent du spectacle.
The intermittent du spectacle

Of itself the history and development of the système d’intermittent du spectacle, which roughly means ‘unemployment benefit scheme for irregulars of the entertainment industry’, is an interesting issue. However, I do not intend to examine this history nor how the system amasses and distributes funds as a part of the French social security network. This is a major undertaking and sits more comfortably in a specialist socio-economic study than here. In addition, although the experience of technicians, agents and actors who also benefit from this system is of great importance, this issue will not be dealt with in any depth here. Rather, I will refer in the main to the way this system affects the traditional music scene in Brittany. I will concentrate upon the perspective of the professional traditional musician in particular and the cultural activist in general. With regard to the issue of professionalism in traditional music, Brittany offers an example without parallel in other parts of France or elsewhere in Europe. According to well known sonneur Youenn le Bihan,

..there are over a thousand intermittents du spectacle in Brittany, therefore many live from Breton culture. Brittany has the highest numbers of professionals (le peuple breton 1992:1).

It is true that most of these musicians perform in groups but the fest noz star system is also linked to competition structures that were put in place in the past. This too has had its effect on professional careers. Competition success ensures that good young performers of kan ha diskan and promising sonneurs de tradition will quickly rise to the top of the pile should they so wish. A win at the yearly kan ar bobl
(‘songs of the people’) competition could in this respect launch a professional career. 7
The *bouc d’or* (‘golden goat’) is its Gallo/French equivalent. Engagements to sing at
*festoù noz* are usually the direct result of such successes. Winning competitions
therefore represents a ‘head start’ - ‘symbolic capital’ that can be turned to economic
advantage by a skilled professional (see Bourdieu 1977). Particularly for one who is
*brettonant*.

The first step in understanding how the *système d’intermittent du spectacle*
works is to define it. It is also important to state that not all professional musicians,
actors or technicians are involved in it. The word *intermittent* alone is used to
describe someone who has this status. For better or worse, it is now practically
synonymous with ‘professional musician’. The organisation that represents
‘*intermittents*’ - the *FNSAC-CGT* - estimate that the status is held by only half of all
professionals in France. 8 There are a variety of reasons for this, ranging from
stardom on the one hand to perhaps simply an ‘anarchic disposition’ on the other.
The star, for example, especially if he or she is earning over a certain sum per year, is
automatically excluded. 9 Those writers and composers who happen to be earning
considerable sums from royalties may also be much better-off opting to be self-
employed. On the other end of the scale, however, the conditions to be fulfilled in
order to benefit from the scheme prove so elusive as to be impossible for many. I
became eligible for benefit as an *intermittent du spectacle* some six months before I
left France in the late Autumn of 1994. I will now describe the generalities of this
benefit scheme which facilitates many music professionals in France and examinie how
Intermittent du spectacle is not a job description, it is a status which can be attained by professionals in the entertainment industry. What this means in practice is that France operates a system which guarantees a minimum monthly income for people engaged professionally in the world of entertainment. This world includes actors, agents and technicians as well as musicians. The working musician or actor, not the superstar, is the one who stands to gain most by becoming eligible for this status. This system recognises the irregular pattern of the musical profession and legislates accordingly. As a result, many professional musicians in France are either actively seeking to become intermittents or have already acquired the status.

Musicians are employed by a wide variety of different employers. This can range from the patron (owner) of a modest café cabaret, a recording studio or a local community association to a large theatre complex or the broadcasting media. The most common contract is called a contrat de durée déterminée de travail. That is, a short term contract where the beginning and end are clearly defined. The processing of the sporadic work patterns of the musician is the cornerstone of this system. It is both complicated and cumbersome, but most professional musicians feel that the security it offers is worth the trouble.
Conditions of belonging

The first step in becoming an intermittent is to register for work at the local office of the national employment agency, the ANPE (Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi). After stating that one is a professional musician looking for work, one enquires about the possibility of becoming an intermittent. The ANPE seldom if ever actually finds work for musicians. The déclaration mensuelle ('monthly statement') made to this agency outlines the artist's periods of work and inactivity. It is obligatory. This statement provides the ANPE with a ready made check list of engagements. This list is set against the list of performance fees that the musician eventually brings into the local office of the ASSEDIC (Association pour l'Emploi Dans l'Industrie et le Commerce) when registering a claim for benefit. The ASSEDIC is the benefit claims office. The individual cannot become an intermittent du spectacle unless he/she has been making this monthly statement to the ANPE - in the same way as everyone else who is looking for work. It is from the ASSEDIC that benefit eventually comes. The carnet d'intervent (‘intermittents log book’) is obtained from the ASSEDIC. It is a booklet of forms in triplicate. A separate form must, in theory, be filled in by each employer (and the employee) at the end of the contract and an up to date pay slip (fiche de paie) provided. One set of forms represents a concert or a consecutive series of concerts for the same employer. See example form at Figure 9 on page 195.
A l'attention du salarié

Ce carnet est destiné aux salariés intermittents du spectacle ou de la production cinématographique, l'audiovisuel, pour les activités exercées à compter du 1er janvier 1993. Ce carnet comporte des feuilles de couleur différente, prédéfinies, par séries de trois, sous forme de bannières imprimées :
- 1. des feuilles de couleur jaune servant d'attestation d'employeur et de demande d'allocations, que vous devez adresser à votre Assedic, dûment complétées et signées, dès remise par l'employeur.
- 2. des feuilles de couleur bleue que l'employeur doit envoyer, avec les contributions correspondantes, au centre de recouvrement, à l'adresse indiquée à cet effet, et dans les délais précisés sur le rabat du carnet.
- 3. des feuilles de couleur vieil or à conserver par l'employeur.

Sur le rabat intérieur du carnet figurent les taux des contributions et cotisations que l'employeur doit acquitter au titre de recouvrement.

Chaque feuille doit être remplie :
- même pour un extra d'une seule journée (pour les ouvriers et techniciens de la production cinématographique ou de l'audiovisuel),
- pour tout engagement, même si ce dernier ne compte qu'un seul "cache" (pour le personnel des entreprises spectacles).

Nous attirons votre attention sur le fait que, lors de l'examen de vos droits aux allocations ou de leur renouvellement, nous rassemblerons tous les feuillets que vous nous aurez fait parvenir. Nous ne pourrons toutefois prendre en compte que les activités que vous aurez, par ailleurs, signalées sur votre déclaration mensuelle de situation.

Les informations portées sur les feuilles doivent être conformes à celles figurant sur le certificat de travail et les billets de poche.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SALARIE</th>
<th>EMPLOYEUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Numéro de sécurité sociale</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nom et prénom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date et lieu de naissance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Adresse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nom de l'entreprise</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assedic</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**ATTENTION**

Ce carnet doit être adressé par le salarié à son Assedic et rempli par l'employeur. Chaque feuille de reconnaissance est possible, à un montant maximum de 20 000 F (hors taxes) du tiers cornet sur le robot du centre de recouvrement.

Le total des contributions et cotisations dues à l'Assedic est calculé sur les bases suivantes :
- 1.37 7017
- 2.37 7017
- 3.37 7017
- 4.37 7017
- 5.37 7017
- 6.37 7017

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**Tableau des données de travail**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Périodes d'emploi ou dates des jours travaillés</th>
<th>Nombre de jours</th>
<th>Salaire brut</th>
<th>Assedic</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Revenus</th>
<th>Cotisations</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
<th>Contributions et cotisations dues à l'Assedic</th>
<th>Remise au tribunal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>du 1 au 30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20 000 F</td>
<td>37 7017</td>
<td>20 000 F</td>
<td>20 000 F</td>
<td>20 000 F</td>
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<td>du 1 au 30</td>
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<td>20 000 F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Figure 9: The intermittents log book. This figure shows the list of instructions to be followed by the employee and provides an example of the form to be filled in by both employee and employer on cessation of short-term contract.
One form is for the employee’s records, one for the employers and one for the ASSEDIC. It serves as a record of all the short term contracts the musician undertakes, it also shows the tax, social security contributions and various other sums that have been paid by the employee and the employer. Every aspirant must carry their carnet d’intermittent to all their engagements.

There exists therefore a clearly defined protocol of registering for employment. The basic premise is that any artist habitually employed on a series of contrat de durée déterminée du travail is eligible to register as an intermittent. Anyone with un contrat de durée indéterminée de travail (‘a long term or open contract’), is not eligible to become an intermittent du spectacle, even though their work may be identical to that of the intermittent. A permanent salaried member of a state body like the national symphony orchestra would not qualify as a potential intermittent for instance.

As I have stated above, my main concern is with the conditions that are normally encountered by professional traditional musicians in their average employment situations. The criteria for participation in this system are relatively exclusive and strictly applied. They function for most traditional players in the following way. For a musician, one concert performance fee (un cachet) is the equivalent of twelve hours work. This time scale takes into account preparation and travel to and from the performance. According to the guide pratique des intermittents,
The employee can claim the first payment of benefit when he can prove he has worked 507 hours (or its equivalent in cachets) in the 12 month period prior to his last contract.\textsuperscript{10}(FNSAC-CGT 1993:10)

In terms of single cachets therefore, the minimum number necessary to enter into the system is 43 in any calendar year. In my experience finding this number of decently paid engagements is difficult. When the musician works for more than five or more continuous days with the same employer, his day’s work or cachet counts for 8hrs instead of 12. There is also a limit of 2 to the number of individual cachets a person is eligible to declare for one day. Many musicians of course exceed these guidelines for minimum benefit. In this case they ultimately receive their monthly allocation \( \text{à taux plein} \) (‘at the top rate’) for a longer period than those who satisfy the minimum conditions. Benefit is pay related. That is, the more one earns in a period of high activity, the more one receives during periods of inactivity. If the individual is working for an entire month, no payment is made in respect of that month. Only days of inactivity are covered.

As I have indicated, there are different rates and these rates relate to two factors. First, the number of hours worked in the calendar year preceding the claim of benefit and second the calculated average fee earned by the musician during that period. According to these criteria, the musician is placed on a sliding scale of payment each month. Basically this sliding scale of payment operates in a downward direction until \textit{La date anniversaire} (‘the anniversary date’), is reached (Guide
This date is exactly a year to the day when the musician logged his last *cachet*. At this point, the musician’s file will be re-examined to establish if he/she has fulfilled the conditions required to remain as an *intermittent du spectacle*. These conditions are strict, and if as little as one contract is missing, a new date must be chosen to enable the exact same conditions - 507 hours work minimum in a calendar year - to be met. Most musicians are agreed that the first year spent attempting to qualify for entry into the system, is without doubt the most difficult. The material benefits of belonging to it are such that the motivation to actively seek declared work is high.

When one becomes an *intermittent*, the monthly declaration form changes to a more detailed document, requiring specific information on all one’s engagements. Payment of monthly benefit commences when all the conditions have been fulfilled. This is one month after the musician has logged his year’s store of *cachets* at the local branch of the *ASSEDIC*. Providing that the musician continues to fulfil these conditions every consecutive calendar year thereafter, he has a secure minimum income every month. He also has all the advantages of any PAYE (pay-as-you-earn) worker in another employment sector. This includes health cover and a pension on reaching retirement age. The first *intermittents* in the Breton music scene began to qualify for retirement in 1998. Becoming an *intermittent* also opens up a range of possible services to the individual. These include instrument insurance and car insurance. The system gives a sense of something which is durable and not ephemeral. After five years one can take a year off work in order to pursue a career-
related educational or vocational course. Payment continues at a fixed rate. These courses are advertised regularly and are often reserved for *intermittents du spectacle* only. Account is taken of periods of inactivity due to illness but the same conditions as before must be fulfilled if one is to remain a beneficiary of the system. The system allows those who are working according to its conditions to live as fully integrated members of the socio-economic structure of French society. That is, as already stated, they receive pay related benefit when not working. Health cover, pension fund contribution and taxes are deducted from their earnings. In addition, they receive two weeks holiday pay and a return train ticket per year to any destination in France. This contribution, also taken at source is referred to as, *les congés spectacles* (‘artists holiday pay’). Like the benefit payment itself, the CS allowance is pay related so the more one earns the more holiday money one receives.

In my experience, because of the various deductions the first year is particularly difficult. The initial agreed salaire brut (‘gross fee’), reduces significantly after the various contributions have been made. For example, from a modest fee of 500frs one can expect to get around 270frs net. Rebates if appropriate are calculated at the end of the tax year. In keeping with the norm for the self-employed, most professionals assiduously hold on to petrol receipts, restaurant bills and a variety of other bills which can be associated with their professional duties. While it must be said that participation in the system seems logical, a concentrated effort is required if one is to qualify as a beneficiary. One is also required to put up with a formidable amount of paperwork.
In the explanation above, I have outlined the basic features of this benefit system. I have glossed over much bureaucratic detail and concentrated on the essentials required in order to understand it. On leaving Brittany after spending two years there, I had more papers and forms than I had managed to amass in 15 years of adult life in Ireland, North and South. As with all systems there are down sides as well as pluses. The bureaucracy may appear watertight but most admit that it is full of inconsistencies. One could speculate that this is why a constant battle of wits between the authorities and the artist seems to be a feature of the system. What follows now explains the discourse which takes place concerning some of the perceived advantages and disadvantages in the day-to-day operation of this system. That is, the way it works - or as the case may be, doesn’t work - for the individual musician. In addition it is useful to take a brief look at how the wider community perceive it, particularly event organisers and cultural activists. The conditions which provoke this discourse are a direct result of the existence of the *système d’intermittent du spectacle*. They have implications for all cultures.

The discourse

When Jacques Chirac and his centre-right coalition came to power in 1994, some artists expressed concern that the system may be undermined. This type of unease amongst the artistic community is constant but at the moment (1998) it remains in place. Interestingly, the status of *intermittent du spectacle* was first introduced during the early 1970s by another centre-right government headed by
Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. On closer analysis the type of strategy employed by Giscard was perfectly in tune with the socio-political climate of the post-1968 period. This was a period when capitalist development after the unrestrained American model simply had to be tempered by the social reforms necessary for political stability in France. According to Ardagh, Giscard saw that ‘if capitalism went ahead with little regard to any social philosophy, then the barricades and the red flags might come out again one day’ (1977:668).

The status of *intermittent du spectacle* evolved to its present form during the tenure of the socialist administration led by François Mitterand which stretched from the early 1980s into the mid-1990s. Ironically it was during the Mitterand years, when attempts to introduce more socialist policies became frustrated by a flood of capital from the country, that the status came nearest to being revoked (J.M. Veillon, personal communication, Nov 1993). This was seen by many *intermittents* as portentous of a climb down before reactionary elements. Some *intermittents* that I spoke to in the early 1990s, entertained a suspicion that a move to make the system more exclusive was inevitable. They further suggested that if the seeds of division were sown among their ranks everybody would suffer. This suspicion was reinforced by comments in the April 1993 edition of the *Guide pratique des intermittents*. In this issue the writer exhorted all professionals in the entertainment business to be ever vigilant and to show solidarity,
For want of action, the employers with the complicity of certain confederations, would not hesitate to undermine our inter-professional solidarity. In these circumstances, we have no other choice but to pull together in order to prevent any potential new set back, in the knowledge that this struggle cannot be separated from that of employment in general, the defence of artistic creation and production.\(^{13}\) (Fédération Nationale des Syndicats du Spectacle, de l’Audiovisuel et de l’Action Culturelle CGT 1993: 7)

It is also clear from the above that artists’ syndicats or unions are motivated and proactive. In this they mirror the militant tendency shown by the French work force in general concerning any perceived threat to their livelihoods. Many professional traditional musicians in Brittany display this type of solidarity. It is generally accepted, even among people who are not socio-political activists, that any move which may serve to undermine this legislation: legislation that has become an established right in the eyes of many in the artistic community, would be strongly resisted.\(^{14}\)

Conditions for becoming (or remaining) an intermittent may change in the future but it is clear that the status itself is an integral part of the French leisure industry. The many grands spectacles or ‘big shows’ which take place all over the country during the summer in particular, would be practically impossible to stage without the existence of large numbers of intermittents. The professional expertise is there, on standby as it were, to make them happen. These people are a unique and available artistic resource. The system is self-perpetuating - intermittents themselves often initiate productions or shows thereby creating work.\(^ {15}\) Once an intermittent
there is considerable incentive for people to be continually proactive in the search for work.

While there are many problems concerning the practical day-to-day workings of this system, professionals who have been *intermittents* for many years are convinced of its comparative efficiency and fairness. They are protective of their hard-earned status and object to anything which threatens to undermine it. This applies equally to playing *au noir* (undeclared) or any perceived government/employer-orchestrated strategy. Some unscrupulous people known as *faux amateurs* (‘false amateurs’) have been known to undercut professionals deliberately. Most people are anxious to find a way of allowing the tradition to embrace both ‘amateurism’ and ‘professionalism’ in the local context and there is - as pointed out above - a general understanding concerning this issue in the festou noz circuit. One wonders, however, what will transpire when circumstances change. Notably when the older performers are no longer active and the *intermittents* and ‘amateurs’ are all in the same age group.

Some cultural activists fear a situation where professionalism encroaches too much on the domain of traditional music and smaller local events become impossible to run. The overheads and the bureaucratic hassle of paying and declaring professionals can serve to demoralise local organisations. Jean-Michel Veillon expressed anxiety about this (see page 182). There is an ever increasing number of *intermittents* and the demands of the performing rights organisation, the *SACEM* (*Société des Auteurs Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique*), further complicates the
All this amounts to ever more stress on the musical ecosystem represented by the fest noz. This scenario is not without a touch of irony. A system which was created by a government exercising social conscience is, in some situations, at odds with the maintenance of a popularly-generated traditional genre in its local context.

Managing professionalism

The arbitrary conditions faced by professional musicians in other countries is regarded by some of their counterparts in France as, *la galère*, literally 'the galley'. Details are not taken into account by such a sweeping comparison, but clearly they see professional life in most other European countries as very uncertain. They find the everyday conditions of professional traditional musicians in Ireland for example decidedly unenviable. Some I spoke to feared any future pan-European legislation on professionalism in the genuine belief that this would automatically mean they would be worse off. In principle, however, the spokespersons of the musician's union are in favour of the introduction of similar legislation throughout the European community.

Because professional status is available to traditional musicians in Brittany, many young musicians from other parts of France, particularly those involved in 'Celtic music', see moving to Brittany as a logical professional strategy. I met three such people in Quimper in the summer of 1997. They told me they intended to remain in Brittany and try to become *intermittents*. They suggested that elsewhere in France such a strategy is practically impossible with traditional music. All three of these
musicians played Irish music. Their objective in coming to Brittany was to have the opportunity to play Irish music more regularly (see Chapters 6 and 7).

This move, although logical from their perspective, is seen by many musicians in Brittany as more competition for work in an already saturated market. It is also perceived by some as having the potential to undermine standards of musicianship, particularly in Breton music. Inevitably many of these players, having little or no experience of Breton music, find themselves in fest noz groups. Founder member of DASTUM, Pierre Crépillon, suggested that to define music professionalism as ‘43 cachets’ - the way some people describe their strategy these days - is a sad state of affairs (Pierre Crépillon, personal communication, July 1997). In his view, this attitude amounted to a narrow definition of professionalism as it had the potential to undermine both the sprit of music making and good musical standards. There is also a fear that the system will break down should too many try to become intermittents.

It is also true to say that too many intermittents on the scene makes music professionalism itself less mysterious. The exclusivity of music professionalism is a common tactic of survival in most cultures and societies. Tony Langlois, referring specifically to marginalised Gnawa musicians in the town of Oujda in the Magreb (Marocco), suggests that reticence is implicitly part of the survival strategy of the professional musician. There is always a reason for it.

I found it quite reasonable, in this case, that ..the Gnawa were unwilling to divulge all the secrets and tricks of the trade to me. As a very small ethnic
minority community in Oudja they were obliged to exploit a highly specific economic and cultural niche in local society. (Langlois 1998:140)

Many Breton traditional musicians who have been intermittents since 1984 say that they did not become aware of the existence of the system until that year. It had been on the statute books since 1974. They imply that Paris based musicians had been trying to keep it a secret. This observation shows that even when musical activity is incorporated into society as a legitimate activity, musicians still carry the image of themselves as operating somewhere on the margins. Their status, even though underwritten by state legislation, is still fragile. This is part of its mystery.

The information concerning the intermittent system is not on public display at the offices of the ANPE in the same way as other career information. It is of course made available on request. I came to understand the system through constant quizzing of my musician friends and direct experience. The whole process, aided by my own ingrained suspicion - as a musician - had the curious feel of a ritualised rite of passage. It is by no means easy to qualify for this benefit so in this sense alone it is a rite of passage. The individuals capacity to become an intermittent also serves as confirmation of their professional status. The system is tailor made for anyone wanting to work exclusively as a music professional. Combining it with other professional activities, matching up different social security systems, is practically impossible however. Musicians who have other jobs lose money every time they are declared as an intermittent. This happens automatically when one works for large public bodies like T.V and theatre companies for example. The musicians in question
pay the same rate of contributions as other full-time professionals, but they do not gain any benefit. This situation has encouraged many in this position, either to give up working with full-time professional musicians or to leave their other job and become full-time professionals themselves. My own case illustrates how teaching activities held up my access to benefit as an intermittent.

Case study

At this point a reference to my own experience is illuminating. My attempts to combine working as an intermittent du spectacle and a part-time teacher of music and English, help to illustrate the in-built inflexibility of the system. After I had fulfilled the conditions of becoming an intermittent, my access to financial benefit was denied because I was working several hours a week as an English teacher on an open contract. My job as a music teacher in Carhaix involved a similar contract. My teaching activities, even though they amounted to only eight hours, precipitated a wrangle over my actual status. It was not clear whether I was an intermittent or a vacataire (part-time teacher). I could not be both. I was paying my charges sociales (contributions) into two separate régimes (funds) which were mutually exclusive. I was advised by members of the Musicians Union that an intermittent could legally teach up to 12 hours per week and remain in the system. This provision was unknown to most of the people who worked in the ASSEDIC. Equally, and more importantly as far as they were concerned, my teaching activities were both open contracts. The confusion led to what I perceived as easily avoided financial stress. Eventually, by
meticulous re-definition of my contracts as a *vacataire*, I drafted a new short-term contract every week with the educational institutions that employed me. At first they were bemused by my request for this type of constantly renewable contract, but they agreed to accommodate me. In this way I finally accessed benefit as an *intermittent*. The money I had paid in tax, pension fund and social welfare contributions to the *régime des vacataires* was thus lost in a sea of bureaucracy somewhere. Everything is meticulously defined and enshrined in legislation as 'your rights', but I am convinced that had I not been determined in my personal struggle to circumvent the red-tape, I would not have obtained my due entitlement.19

During the course of my own difficulty in 1994, I talked to many musicians who had taken some part-time teaching for local government bodies after becoming *intermittents*. They told me that the loss of revenue on having to declare a days teaching made it both financially uninteresting and potentially troublesome. It alerted the authorities to the possibility that one may be transforming into a *vacataire* and therefore liable to lose one's status as an *intermittent*. Scenarios like the one described above have discouraged professional musicians from officially engaging in any part-time teaching on a regular basis. In short, the fact that the system does not easily accommodate the professional musician as professional teacher is perceived by many as one of its flaws.

Some self-employed people in other sectors view the status of *intermittent* as privileged. I have heard the phrase "*Monsieur l'intermittent, tranquille Emile"* used
to refer to its beneficiaries. This can be translated roughly as 'Mr intermittent, I'm all right Jack'. Many for whom irregular employment is also a reality would prefer a status similar to it. In this sense, its exclusivity can be viewed as a form of artistic privilege. Some also suggest that the operational bureaucracy arising from the system has succeeded in turning musicians into total businessmen and that many of them now consider the attaché case and the mobile phone more essential tools of the trade than musical instruments. These modern social accessories, of course, currently have prestige value beyond their utilitarian value. Implicit in this type of observation, however, is the suggestion that the system has demystified the bardic element of being a musician. Because of its status as an ethnic sound icon - the property of all - some believe that traditional music in particular should never have a commercial value. A spurious conclusion that too much wealth or organisation is in some way bad for creativity can be the outcome of such deliberations. This type of speculation serves to perpetuate the insidious mythology which would justify not giving the creative artist - if a traditional musician - his/her due. This is a public attitude which condemned many traditional musicians to alcoholism and penury in the past (see O’Neill, introduction 1913).

As pointed out above, the main advantage of being part of this system for musicians is the aspect of being a fully integrated member of the French work force. One has a recognised status and a guaranteed minimum wage. As an intermittent with a relatively healthy bank account and with access to a regular income, one can access all the normal financial services available to other working people. Not least
among these is the possibility of obtaining a building society loan. One is also covered for sickness benefit and can avail of specialist insurance for musicians.

Musicians say that over the last few decades the system has encouraged a general improvement in regular working conditions. I do not refer to large scale productions here but rather to the situation musicians are likely to find themselves in on a regular basis. That is the fest noz, the cabaret or the local concert. My experience of working in the café cabaret circuit as an Irish traditional performer is fairly typical of the conditions encountered by most. In France food and accommodation are a basic understanding in any contract between organiser and performers. Many suggest that the intermittent du spectacle system has encouraged both employers and musicians to be more professional in their dealings with each other, especially in contractual matters. If the meal, accommodation, general welcome and treatment has been good the esteem of the organisation will rise in the eyes of the performers. In my experience the last thing that any patron (café cabaret owner) would like to hear is that the musicians did not eat well in his/her establishment. The reverse holds true as well. A lot of work is expected from the performer and in these intensely social situations goodwill is won as much off-stage as on stage. Performance situations in Brittany are never understated affairs. One earns ones pay playing at least three 45 minute spots (with a sound system) to an audience who want to be entertained. The sound system (‘le sono’ for short) is ubiquitous at practically all performing situations in the café cabaret circuit. Besides being indispensable in a potentially noisy environment, the sono is perceived as a declaration of
professionalism. In some ways it could be argued that the bigger and more sophisticated the sound system (and the poster) the more important the group. I have witnessed scenarios in café-cabarets, involving rock groups, where once all the gear was erected, there was hardly any room for an audience.

Some professionals cite the existence of the *intermittent* system as having provided an impetus for creative activity in Breton traditional music throughout the 1980s and 1990s. They say that once an *intermittent*, one can find time for rehearsal and one can develop musical ideas and repertoire. All this can be done without the pressure of having to hustle continually for cash. Room to manoeuvre and consolidate ones position becomes more possible. Many have told me that the conditions created by their situation as *intermittents* has allowed them exercise greater control over their performance situations. The system gives them time to organise work in advance and to decide what engagements they would or would not do. In this way musical strategies can also be adapted to enable movement between different performance contexts. It is as *intermittents du spectacle* that many enterprising Breton dance musicians who have regular cachets from their performance at festoù noz re - emerge as ‘Celtic’ cabaret artists. They work from a strong supportive base. Clearly aside from the aesthetic desire to play another type of music or to perform in another context, the ability to be constantly adaptive in terms of professional strategy is essential.
Another perceived disadvantage of this system is the sheer weight of paperwork (often contemptuously referred to as *paperrasse*) required after each single transaction of money between the *patron* ('employer') and the *salaried* ('employee'). At the end of an event, the musicians and organisers have to sit down and sort out a complicated array of paperwork. In theory, there is an obligation on the part of employers to engage the system when they employ someone who is *intermittent du spectacle*. They do this by purchasing a *vignette* ('special tax label') at the local *URSSAF* (*Union de Recouvrement des Cotisations de Sécurité Sociale et d'Allocations Familiales*). This *vignette* proves that they, as an occasional employer, and the artist, have paid the relevant social welfare contributions. The onus is in theory, on the employers to fill in the relevant papers and to calculate the relevant financial allocations. Normally this system runs smoothly if one is engaged by a theatre or a large *cabaret*. However many employers are justifiably put-off by the intimidating paperwork, in particular the proprietors of a small *café cabaret* or a local *associations* who may have come together in a small village to organise a once-off event. As far as they are concerned, this bureaucratic scenario is increasingly replacing the hitherto simple ‘wad of notes in the back pocket’. In addition, the necessary visit to the local *URSSAF* to purchase the *vignette* is inconvenient.

*Allo Jazz*

It is often because of the paperwork and extra expense involved that *intermittents* have lost work to people who are working on the black. To avoid this
situation an intermediary organisation called \textit{Allo Jazz} exists. It offers its services to both musicians and employers for a fee. In this way, all the paperwork is taken over by \textit{Allo Jazz} and a lot of stress and confusion avoided. What happens is that the employer makes out a cheque to the \textit{Allo Jazz} organisation instead of paying the musician directly. In effect \textit{Allo Jazz} then becomes the employer. It is a middle-man organisation which could not exist without \textit{intermittents du spectacle}. In 1994 \textit{Allo Jazz} did not deal with \textit{cachets} of less than 500 francs \textit{brut} (gross).

What \textit{Allo Jazz} does (for a small fee on each transaction) is to route funds to the appropriate sectors of the social security system in respect of the employer and the employee. To avail of their services one must first register with them. The registration fee was 150frs in 1994. The musician then posts his/her \textit{cachet} (gross fee/pay) cheque to them together with the contract and after a few days receives all the necessary paperwork and a smaller pay cheque (net fee/pay) made out to him by \textit{Allo Jazz} (see Figure 10 page 214). This process, although costly, I found to be worthwhile as it maintained good relations with \textit{patrons} and thereby increased the chance of playing at the same venue again. Many feel that the service provided by \textit{Allo Jazz} should be part of the overall system and not a service offered by a state-sanctioned private concerns. Some musicians, armed with calculators, their \textit{carnet d'intermittent} and books of pay slips, do it all themselves - with the employer gazing on in wonderment. I have seen these type of situations become fraught with tension as musicians attempt to explain the intricacies of the system, at around 3 o'clock in the morning, to a tired and emotional organiser.
**Figure 10:** Allo Jazz return. This complete return comprises the equivalent of a page from the *carnet d’intermittent* and a pay slip. This pay slip illustrates the work that Allo Jazz does.
I have spoken to many musicians whom have tried and failed to become an *intermittent du spectacle*. The frustration of someone, who manages to accumulate say 450hrs work for several calendar years but who cannot make up the short fall, is obvious. This scenario amounts to a serious bone of contention causing resentment towards the system. Most musicians who fall into this category continue their activities but do not declare them except when unavoidable. Thus, in the eyes of the state and the professionals who are working within the system, they are both flouting the law and undermining the system which guarantees the latter their livelihoods. As I have said however, a certain ambivalence to this reality thankfully prevents constant acrimony at social events. I have talked about traditional music and 'mainstream' society in the Breton context at some length both above and in chapter 3, I would now like to briefly situate this discussion in a more global context before returning once again to Brittany and recent movements in Breton music.

**Specialisation, education and the market**

The whole area of 'music making' as opposed to the 'music business' is of considerable interest to the field of ethnomusicology because these categories - even if they are not articulated in this way - create tensions within the musical community which are inextricably linked with ever changing notions of prestige. In western societies a gulf has developed between the performer and access to an audience. This gap is increasingly mediated by production companies and their use of the mass-media. Perceptions of excellence and emphasis on specialisation leads to less performers and
more passive consumers. That is, more ‘stunning’ performances and less informed
listeners. This is Debord’s ‘society of the spectacle’ where, mirroring other 20th
century societal trends, the musical idiolect and small scale music-making become
increasingly irrelevant to mainstream society (see Debord 1988: pages 17 and 70).

Specialisation is increasingly reflected in the field of Education in general. As
Peter Cooke points out in his paper on Shetland fiddling, ‘institutionalised’ methods of
teaching (keyboard harmony and classical technique for prospective fiddlers), which
place less emphasis on the traditional oral method of learning, have had a negative
effect on popular music making. He says that,

..in 1979... some 20 children attending Cullivoe Primary School were
taken on by a visiting teacher. In February 1982 only one child was still
receiving lessons - and this in a community where an earlier survey showed
that approximately one-third of the men and youths of the village could
‘take a tune out of the fiddle’. (Cooke 1986:19)

This implies that the more rarefied, stratified and institutionalised the learning process
becomes the more likelihood that the social bed-rock on which the tradition rests will
disappear. This scenario presents quite a challenge for educational policy vis à vis
traditional music.

The issues discussed above point to a definitive shift from local to global in
production and consumption of music. It inevitably results in a downgrading of local
popularly-generated music in relation to mediated music. In this the music business is
merely reflecting the global economic trends that effect every other area of life on the
planet. The sometimes harsh reality of a paid ‘Trad’ session in many of Ireland’s pubs is illuminating. In a post-colonial Ireland, experiencing an at times rather vainglorious economic boom, ‘the music’ is perceived as globally acceptable but it is not necessarily widely understood nor appreciated at a local level.  

My own experience in the pub music arena relates particularly (though not exclusively) to the urban environment. In this context, musicians are often hired to encourage drink sales and to entertain foreign tourists. The novelty of the context is as important, if not more so, than the music itself. The attitude of the musicians themselves increasingly mirrors - of necessity - the change from the reflexivity of tradition ‘this is what we do’ to an ever present awareness of the ‘symbolic capital’ of self-conscious Art and its consequent economic value (see Bourdieu 1977). Their local relevance, that is, helping provide an ambience where some form of regular social catharsis which eclipses the role of performer and audience can take place, is difficult to maintain. The television is what counts for the majority of the people and social catharsis is more likely to be regularly evoked by a distant sporting event than a local song. The presence of television in prominent places in most pubs in contemporary Ireland has shifted the social locus from popularly generated entertainment and interaction - in which musicians and singers often played the key role - to the watching of distant happenings on a screen. Bars where music is welcomed genuinely and not solely for its potential in attracting drinkers do - thankfully - exist, but they are rare. They require a strategy vis-à-vis ambience which only a small minority of culturally motivated publicans recognise as necessary and
desirable. Anonymous musicians playing anonymous Irish music in self-conscious ‘Irish pubs’ both in Ireland and beyond her shores may be reaching the unhealthy level of saturation point.

To a greater extent than ever, the aesthetic of taste is heavily influenced by the depth of the purse and associated notions of prestige. All this affects the lives of the professional traditional musician profoundly because he/she must negotiate the sometimes precipitous path between the often opposing forces of, local identity, street credibility, heritage, systems and money. He/she must have unrelenting energy and a chameleon-like persona to survive and maintain a sense of aesthetic in creative endeavour that is not wholly driven by market forces. A look at developments within the music scene in Brittany over the last twenty years or so will serve as a preparation for a look at the world of celtitude in our time and the pivotal role of music in its construction and expression.

Recent movements in Breton music

Since the early days of the 1970s, Breton music has undergone considerable changes in terms of its performance and arrangement. These can be measured in the widespread use of new instruments, the fest noz group phenomenon and world music influences. The considerable number of musicians who are striving to be bimusical in Irish and Breton music is also significant. Whilst of itself the instance of bimusicality in Brittany is not unusual, the combination of Breton and Irish music is recent and
dates back only to the 1970s. Many musicians play a repertory which is described and marketed as ‘musique celtique’. In Brittany this perceived genre is now part of the everyday music scene (see chapters 6 and 7).

Practically every form of western music, Art, Rock, Jazz and Rhythm and blues among them have been fused with traditional music. This is not unusual and must be seen as a cumulative process. Breton musicians have always used every source, both foreign and domestic, as inspiration for composition and performance (see Montjarret 1984:5-6). The current popularity of ‘world music’ and along with it the commodification of traditional genres as ‘Celtic’ music per se has accelerated this process. Well-known traditional singer Eric Marchand has worked at combining Breton music with eastern European and Indian soundscapes. Many of the most recent fusion experiments lend themselves to both musique savante performance contexts and the festival stage. These projects and others like them, indicate a definitive shift away from the western Euro-Celt centred approaches of figures like Stivell in the 1970s. It may also be indicative of a move towards a new situating of musical bretonnitude.

The musical value of these fusions is not in question but it could be suggested that, in the present climate of post-modern abstractionism (typified by new age music), they are a renewed search for identities that transcend the previous search for familial, tribal or geographically based roots current in the 1970s. Viewed from this angle, the grand spectacle of ‘Celtic’ music may go some way towards fulfilling a
human need for spiritual symbolism and shared experience. Some of these musical developments provoke intense debate. Referring to traditional music the writer Ciarán Carson says ‘to go forward one must first be capable of going back’ (1986). In saying this he invokes a socio-historical model with regard to music making. Others may view this point of view as an unnecessary restraint, but in so doing they ignore the complex business of acquiring a sense of aesthetic.

Issues of innovation and acculturation.

Doing things with ‘the music’, using a perceived source and embellishing it with whatever takes your fancy: this activity is often referred to as developing the music or evolution. Evolution in particular can be read as a confusion of ideas emerging from the media and the music industries. ‘Lateral movement’ on the other hand does not have any prestigious connotations (see Wilkinson 1992:24). When researchers examine activity which involves something as imprecise as the human sense of aesthetic, it is essential that they do not adopt the perspective of antiquated evolutionism. Innovation in this sense is a more sophisticated concept than evolution but it too could become a hostage to fortune if overused. As Bohlman (1988) has pointed out, there has always been a constant dialogue between ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ in folk music. Process in folk music has never been a moribund affair reflecting the evolutionist and reductive attitude of das folk dichtet which is effectively a denial of individual creativity.
Making music cannot be seen to have evolved from a 'pure' source to something better nowadays. The individual sense of what is good, correct, desirable or undesirable aesthetically cannot be measured in the same way as we might measure the evolution of the internal combustion engine. Words like change and development are more apt when referring to the highly subjective area of the human aesthetic. They do not imply that change is automatically more enlightened or better but rather that it is inevitable. This does not prevent people from debating the issue and working with the situation within which they find themselves. Nor does it exclude the use of the word innovation in the sense of technological developments, arrangement, or the introduction of another instrument, technique, scale or motif to a tradition. It is the implication that there is a relatively static source with all its connotations of preservation and purity that can be used to inspire creativity which is questionable. It goes without saying too that the idea that traditional music is an inviolable source that has been with us from the dawn of time and embodies concepts such as race, is also questionable and dangerous. As John Blacking says,

Musical styles are based on what people have chosen to select from nature as a part of their cultural expression rather than on what nature has imposed on them.(1995:33)

However, in the context of a 'complex' capitalist society it can be argued that nature and culture are not clearly defined. In the absence of having to search for food and be totally integrated into an interdependent community, necessity takes on a different meaning. The aesthetic building blocks are all around us. Together with dreams and emotions, political attitudes, social class and philosophy, they influence
what we chose to be our musical expression as much as what is in the 'natural' environment. In this sense musicians are essentially trying to communicate to people 'like themselves' or (subliminally) to convert people to their philosophy.

Christopher Small says this of the original context of Balinese Gamelan performance,

The players revel in the process of creation and care less about the finished product, which may well disappear unmourned when the musicians become tired of it. Their contact with the past is not through a number of fixed classics as in western music, but through the continuity provided by gradual change. They care nothing for the idea of progress. It is quite possible that a certain innovation may in fact be a revival of something that was done in an earlier time and lost, but this does not concern the Balinese; as with many other oriental peoples their concept of time is not linear but circular. Consequently, there can be no point in trying to hold on to a work from the past, since the past is not, as we believe, irretrievably lost; it will recur, and, when the time is right, so will the appropriate art forms. (Small 1977:45)

Times have changed in Bali and the Gamelan is increasingly a tourist attraction but the description above is indicative of an enjoyment of music which values process over product. It defines creativity in a human way which is not hung up on the twin prisons of novelty and originality. One may include recorded music in this analogy.

One could suggest that in principal people concerned with music (and indeed all aesthetic endeavours) should try to take care in identifying parameters for discussion that will ensure a discourse of equals. Out there in the 'real world' however this does not happen and sometimes vituperative dispute provides the necessary electricity to keep people going. As Loots suggests 'the power of art lies
precisely in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions’ (1996:194).

In Brittany, *Kan ha diskan* is now performed over ‘dance mixes’ by singers like Denez Prigent and the new ‘fest noz system’ ensemble. The result is either loved or loathed. A recent article in *Le monde* (2/2/1998) talks eloquently about ‘a new urban sound that marries the rhythms and sounds of Breton dance music to a range of world sounds’. This is fine, but the same article then goes on to illustrate the false dichotomy which many in the media relentlessly set up between ‘tradition and change’. In this dichotomy ‘change’ is valued over ‘tradition’. They are not explained as the complex interactive process which they represent. Summing up the author, Patrick Labesse, says that the *fest noz system* is,

…..Another way of shoving the tradition, which may well draw the rumblings of complaint from the defenders of the pure and hard, always ready to flush out a new ‘devils box’.23 (1998:23)

The writer inevitably contextualises the experience according to his or her own perspective, dismissing anyone who may simply not like this musical offering as ‘pure and hard’. The implication here is ‘stick in the mud’ or ‘musical fascist’. ‘Purists’ and ‘innovators’ are not two discreet groups, neither aesthetically nor socially. Innovation or novelty however always catches the eye of the media who usually go on to eulogise about the perceived ‘innovator’ at the expense of the perceived ‘purist’. In doing this they inevitably categorise and time-trap the ‘innovation’ as well. If what happens in music is unequivocally a metaphor for the socio-political world, which
many including Bourdieu (1984) and Attali (1985) suggest, then cautious language is required to try to avoid feelings of confusion, resentment and exclusion. Power relationships can be subtly transmuted by musical strategies.24 This is the area of cultural politics, one of whose defining features is, 'the means to define meanings and to shape social values' (Loots, 1996:184).25

While new departures take place all the time - often with considerable commercial and media backing - the perceived 'source' musicians are also constantly on the move creating and changing. Everything is contemporaneous if it shares the same time and space. Accepting this basic premise allows everyone to accept or reject new sounds and sub genres and to explain or promote opinions by example. When given a relatively even playing field - something which is impossible to legislate for - this may be attempted without too much unnecessary public rancour.

All of the above considered, the most important thing one can say concerning Breton traditional music today is that it continues to excite the passions of vast numbers of people. Through the actions and efforts of many from the cercles celtiques and Bodadeg ar sonerien in the 1950s and early 1960s (during a difficult political climate for bretonnitude) through to DASTUM and a myriad of local associations, collectors and performers it is now a popular cultural choice. This is a considerable change from the immediate post war era when it was too easily associated with backwardness at best and political obscurantism and reaction at worst (see chapter 2).
The Media and Traditional music

The Celtic folk rock idiom in particular, pioneered by Alan Stivell in the late 1960s and early 1970s excited popular media interest in all things Breton and Celtic. The prestige value of folk-music in general rose considerably. During my stay in Brittany, I listened to a lot of radio and was surprised at the amount of traditional (and related) music played practically every day. For the most part, the traditional musical fare offered by the stations I listened to - RBO (Radio France Bretagne Ouest) and a popular local station called RKB (Radio Kreiz Breiz) - was a mixture of bas-Breton and Irish. This mixture is often referred to simply as musique celtique. Traditional songs in French or Gallo from the haut-Breton repertory represent the least mediated aspect of the Breton musical tradition despite their relative accessibility.

Both RKB and RBO regularly collaborate in the promotion of musical events and competitions. In addition, the national press (Ouest France), local press (Le Trégor, Le Télégramme) and a whole series of revues both political (see chapter 1) and socio-cultural (like the monthly revue Ar Men) regularly carry features on personalities and events in traditional music. There is considerable co-operation in the promotion of Breton culture between the print media, cultural organisations and local government. This is easily gauged from the list of sponsors at the bottom of posters CDs and diverse publications. At its headquarters in Paris, Radio France has a department of traditional music. The France culture station broadcasts world music concerts both pre-recorded and live. Television is the exception. Aside from the odd
magazine slot in a local news programme about the Lorient festival or a brief feature on the two hour long Sunday morning Breton language emission, television has little to do with traditional music. This is true for France in general.

From local to global

I have suggested that the fest noz which began as a local cultural event in the Monts D’Arrée during the 1950s, (see chapter 2) has gradually became the type of Pan-Breton event now familiar everywhere in Brittany. In addition it has taken on the significant socio-economic importance outlined above. The status of intermittent du spectacle has allowed many traditional musicians to build professional careers. It is mainly within the context of the fest noz group that this new generation of musicians are to be found. Clearly there is some controversy surrounding the operation and effects of this system, especially in the local cultural habitat in Brittany, but it is now firmly established as a pathway in music professionalism. For many, it is also a way of entering the global world of Celtic music.

Music and the Celts

Not all of the musicians who play ‘Celtic’ music are traditional dance musicians. Dan Ar Bras the rock guitarist who represented France in the Eurovision song contest of 1996 is a case in point. However, it is traditional dance musicians who embody the link between the local and global in the Breton context.
musicians active in the world of Pan-bretonitude as expressed in the fest noz move outside of this arena, performing on the concert stage and doing foreign tours, the majority do so as 'Celtic' musicians. In pursuing this career path - or falling into this category - they do two things. Firstly they enter the global domain as part of the world music phenomenon and secondly they become part of a mainly professional performance scenario. In Brittany a socio-economic and cultural reality has grown around the système d'interrimment du spectacle, the pan-Breton fest noz and 'Celtic' music.

Many significant developments have taken place in the world of Breton music over the last few decades. This is essentially no different to what has gone before. When we refer to the contemporary situation, the concrete aspects of this process are the introduction of new instruments to the pool and the modern folk-group phenomena. Professionalism, 'Celtic music' and world music are part of the folk and traditional music scene in contemporary Brittany. 'Celtic Music' is of crucial symbolic importance to contemporary Celtic identity and is a location for many post-modern new age mystics. Like bretonnitude, celtitude has a scale of presence in different individuals that ranges from negligible to monumental.

North-western Europe is perceived as the original homeland of the Celts and North America has implicit Celtic connections. For many who live in these areas celtitude represents something positive. If there is something one does not like about being one of a horde of French, Germans, Spanish or Anglo-Saxons one can
be a Celt. There are historical reasons why many Europeans (and Americas) can make this choice if they feel the need to (see chapter 6). There is an industry around 'the Celts' which provides all the material and spiritual wherewithal for adherence. As Mac Donald has pointed out,

The Celtic area now extends far beyond philology, into politics, race, economics, culture, and morality. (Mac Donald 1989:116)

This chapter has described the fest noz as an event of immense social significance and established the link between it, professionalism in traditional music and French social legislation. It has also articulated the discourse between this professionalism and amateur music making, pointing out that a pathway in Celtic music is clearly linked to professionalism. As such it has provided the essential link between two of the most symbolic themes of this thesis: bretonnitude and celtitude.

The next chapter begins by considering the Celtic world from an historical perspective. Then, by providing an analysis of popular conceptions of Celtic identity, it offers a perspective on the socio-historical and contemporary building blocks of celtitude. Analysis of these two issues illustrate that culture and society are in a constant state of metamorphosis and re-invention. The Irish musical Diaspora in particular has related to the social world of traditional music in Brittany in a significant way over the last few decades of the 20th century. This relationship serves to illustrate the contrast between anglophone and francophone perspectives concerning celtitude. How Irish music fits into traditional 'Celtic' music in Brittany is dealt with in chapter 7.
BF15 are a well-known professional fest noz group who tour abroad. They are all individually well-known specialists on their instruments. Their name comes from a variety of potato common in Brittany.

These road signs (brown in colour) are the new pan-European tourist guide signs that are rapidly covering most of Western-Europe at the moment. They draw attention to ancient monuments, interpretative centres and geographical features. Le Trégor is also the name of the popular Lannion based weekly newspaper.

La vie en France est très associative, il faut créer une association si tu veux faire quoi que ce soit. (J.P. Le Toquer, August 1993)

Groups tend to play a Pan-Breton repertoire, even though some of their members may be well-known exponents of a local style. Interestingly many of those who are now key figures in fest noz groups, particularly those who play flutes, fiddles and in some cases harmonic instruments (such as the bouzouki), came to Breton music from an initial interest in Irish music.

C'est grâce aux fest noz... sans les fest noz ça sera impossible. Même s'il y a beaucoup de fest noz, je trouve que c'est toujours un truc fragile, et qu'il faut être vigilant. Parce qu'il suffit par exemple qu'il y a un gouvernement qui prenait des mesures particulières, pour les fermetures tardives, les buvettes et les trucs comme ça, et ça pourrait laminer complètement les fest noz, en un an. Et là les groupes qui en vivent... les groupes qui ne font quasiment que des festoù noz? Pour eux c'est fini. Il faudrait qu'il fasse autre musique. (J.M. Veillon, interview, November 1994)

Musique Bretonne 1997 cites the appearance of Breton sonneurs at the World Fair in Paris at the turn of the 19th century. An appearance for which the sonneurs received a fee.

This culturally important competition was initiated by Polig Montjarret on his return from a Fleadh Cheoil in Ireland in the late 1960s. Young singers of kan ha diskan or gwerz (or their equivalent in Gallo and French) are now rare compared to the situation in the past. In the 19th and early 20th centuries' singing was the most common way of leading the dance (see Chapter 3). Singing was an integral part of rural family and community life until after the 2nd World War. According to Louisette Radioyes - speaking about rural Haute Bretagne - mediated entertainment (discos and night clubs) came to represent the social world of the younger adults (see Radioyes 1995).


This was not always the case. There was a scandal during the early years of the operation of the scheme when it was discovered that, in the absence of guidelines (such as a limit on amounts paid out), some people who could be best described as national figures were abusing it.

Le salariés ressortissant... peut prétendre à l'ouverture de droits dès qu'il justifie de 507 heures de travail (ou de son équivalent en cachets) dans les 12 mois précédant sa dernière fin de contrat (F N SAC-CGT 1993:10)

This is done in the form of completed declarations from his carnet d'intermittent together with pay slips.

Health cover is made available before the actual payment of benefit. In this way, all medical expenses are defrayed at 75%, in-line with every other area of work. All manner of specialist treatment, including homeopathy, are covered by the French public health system, so this is very significant.
A défaut d’agir à nouveau, le patronat, avec la complicité de certaines confédérations, n’hésiterait pas à nous éjecter de la solidarité interprofessionnelle. Dans ces conditions nous n’avons d’autres choix que nous rassembler pour empêcher tout nouveau recul, sachant que ce combat est indissociable de celui plus large de l’emploi, de la défense de la création et de la production artistiques. (guide pratique des intermittents 1993:7) The ‘Guide pratique des intermittents du spectacle’ is the essential key to the system. It is updated regularly and is used as the ultimate reference by the socially conscious musician.

The latter part of 1995 saw major confrontations between the French authorities (led by the president M. Chirac and his Prime-Minister M. Alain Juppé) and some of the biggest trade Unions in France. There were three weeks of industrial action - notably in the commercial transport sector - which brought the country to a standstill. The push to bring France economically on side for future European monetary union and the possible consequence of the harmonisation of European socio-economic legislation has implications for the professional musician not only in France but in the E.C. in general. Cohabitation with Lionel Jospin’s Socialists has since occurred. Given this difficult passage for the Chirac government infuriating another sector of the French work force would not seem to make sense.

When I moved to Brittany in 1992 it was essentially to work on a project initiated by the group Bleizi Ruz and their association - association pellgomz : that is the creation of a musical drama evoking the story of the pilgrim route to Santiago di Compostela in Galicia. This ambitious project involved musicians from different European countries. I began my professional career in Brittany as an intermittent du spectacle from the outset without fully comprehending the system.

I have heard certain groups referred to as faux amateurs (‘false amateurs’). That is, those who go after work deliberately undercutting the prices of established professional groups. In one notorious case the group in question stated that they were not intermittents in their publicity. They advertised their services for half the price of one well-known professional group, saying they played exactly the same music and were much cheaper. Their gambit was highly personalised in that their musical line up and sound were similar. They made no attempt to conceal the fact that they were operating au noir. Intermittents argue that this type of behaviour puts the system in severe jeopardy.

Société des Auteurs Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique (SACEM). There has been a similar controversy in rural Ireland over the last few years over the question of small rural pubs who run traditional music sessions, paying a licensing fee to IMRO (Irish Performing Rights Organisation).

In the particular case of the ‘Celtic’ countries and their geographic location on the edge of Europe, some in Brittany have suggested the principal of an arc atlantique (see Favereau 1994: 14), serving to unite music professionals in these areas, both culturally and economically.

My experience was not unique. There was an instance of a musician who had been excluded from the system because he worked as a teacher for a local municipality - that is, two hours per week on a long-term contract. He had fulfilled its conditions on many occasions over a period of two calendar years. His employers said they could not change his contract even though his main activity was playing music professionally. This person’s situation was taken up as a test case by the Musicians Union early in 1995.

When the sum is labelled brut or T.T.C (Toutes Taxes Comprises) this means one is being quoted the sum before all the deductions have been taken off, both in respect of the employer and the employee.
21 The new cut-and-thrust Ireland is epitomised for me by the image of the well-heeled 'Celtic tiger cub' conspicuously cutting important deals on his/her 'mobile' outside a trendy Dublin street Café with 'river-dance' playing in the background.

22 There are also examples of the use of North-African inspired percussion, stemming from a perceived ancient connection between the Celts and the Berbers. A Parisian based project featured Celtic and Berber musicians. They produced a CD entitled Mugar in 1998.

23 Une autre manière de bousculer la tradition, au risque de rendre gogos les défenseurs d'une ligne pure et dure, toujours prêts à débusquer une nouvelle 'boîte de diable' (1998:23).

24 Bourdieu has suggested that the perimeters of taste are dependent on one's social and class background, "...a practical anticipation of objective limits acquired by experience of objective limits, a 'sense of one's place' which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded." (1984:471) Attali describes this internalised reasoning as 'autosurveillance', in the context of music this can be interpreted as an automatic internalised taste censure.

25 All the various forms of western popular music and western Art music are a part of the Breton musical taxonomy. They inevitably influence traditional idioms both aesthetically and sociologically from time to time.
Chapter 6

CELTITUDE

Celtitude is the French word for ways of expressing or experiencing ‘Celticness’. In this chapter I use celtitude to encapsulate the parallel ideas of Celticism and Celtic identity in both the anglophone (English-speaking) and francophone (French-speaking) worlds. For me the concept of celtitude implies a deliberate psycho-social construct, a set of assumed - though constantly debated - attitudes and attributes. I suggest that simply because celtitude is imprecise, it accurately describes the nature of the issue under discussion here. The other reason for adopting the term celtitude is because it is in Brittany and the western francophone world that a contemporary Pan-Celtic ‘imagescape’ (Slobin 1992) has been most actively promoted in recent times. This is evidenced by the number of events celebrating the Celtic world which are now a normal part of cultural life there. Pan-celtitude in the western anglophone world is different and has not been as pro-actively inclusive as the ‘Celtic diaspora’ which is promoted in Brittany and France. This difference in diasporic perspective is crucial to the understanding of how the Irish cultural Diaspora has interfaced with Breton celtitude (Chapter 7). Chapter 7 concerns the engagement of the world of Breton music with the Irish Diaspora; an engagement which is represented by traditional Irish music in the context of Brittany itself. It shows how the Irish and the Bretons - by extension the western anglophone and francophone worlds - have interacted with each other in the context of a perceived shared Celtic inheritance.
The main issues which are explored below concern the building blocks of celtitude. In the first instance, the series of relationships which contribute to popular perceptions of what constitutes celtitude today are set out, showing also how the word Celtic has been interpreted and used by people. For many people, ‘the Celt’, the concept ‘Celtic’ or the ‘Celtic countries’ are an indisputable reality (see Figure 11 page 234). I suggest that for the majority, such an awareness lies at various points on a continuum. At each end of this continuum there are two extreme positions. On the one hand, there is monumental indifference to things Celtic and on the other an attitude where everything is imbued with Celticity - landscape, history, psychology and so on. From the latter perspective Celtic behaviour patterns are referred to conversationally. Both these attitudes may be held by a minority of people but that, in itself is of little consequence. They simply serve in this instance to give an idea of the length and breadth of the issue under consideration. The reality is that celtitude can encompass a whole range of cultural expressions ranging from obscure Druidic rituals to business strategies. As such, notions of cultural continuity and transmission of a world-view, therefore, exist side by side with more easily established truths such as Indo-European linguistic inheritance and demographic movements, as outlined by Abalain, (1989) and Ó Murchú (1985). During the last three decades of the 20th century, there has been a new fusion of the building blocks of Music, Mythology, History and politics in Brittany to give a contemporary meaning to celtitude. It is a process similar to what happened concerning Gaelic identity in Scotland and Ireland during the 19th and early 20th centuries, a process which resulted in the ideological construction of modern Ireland and the virtual pan-gaelicising of Scotland (see Kiberd 1996: 3-4 and Chapman 1978).
Figure 11: The Celtic countries. The cover page of Carn magazine serves to illustrate the perceived territory of the ‘Celtic countries’.
A conception of how this came about is crucially important to the understanding of the social world of music in Brittany today. What is different about today’s popular manifestation of celtitude however, is the central symbolic role that music plays in its construction. This chapter does not provide a potted history of ‘the Celts’ nor does it attempt to suggest, prove or disprove some ancient cultural strands linking the popularly perceived Celtic countries. Perceptions of the Celts in antiquity will be dealt with of necessity but whether people called the Celts did or did not exist during this period is not an issue. What is undertaken below is an up-to-date (at the time of writing) perspective on celtitude and the quite recent invention of the category Celtic music.

What do we know about the first peoples who were called Celts? Deep ancient roots are certainly an important ingredient of what celtitude means in our time, so a look at the ancient world is an essential exercise at this point. Interpretation of historical data and an examination of some contemporary popular understandings of the term ‘Celtic’ are a necessary backdrop to the reality of playing ‘Celtic’ and Irish music in Brittany today.

The Celts - a history

As Jonathan Friedman has pointed out,

History is an imprinting of the present onto the past, as much as the reverse process... In this sense, all history including modern historiography is mythology (1992:837).
Unlike the interpretation put on it by people who can best be described as *celtomane* (‘maniacally Celtic’), the word Celtic does not have to suggest the existence of a recognisable ethnicity. Arguably the Celts were never a distinct ethnic group, although some scholars do suggest that Druidic priests may have been united by a religious language akin to the usage of Latin in the Christian churches. To approach the Celts (or any other group), as I do here, as a cultural phenomenon, implicitly undermines the often twisted and manipulated notions of nation, heritage, race and cast that continue to haunt humanity.

**Greeks and Romans**

According to Julius Caesar, in his epic *De Bello Gallico*, the people of Gaul called themselves *Celts*. In retrospect, we can question the validity of his assertion. It is quite possible that just a few tribes were asked or that the persons asked were members of an elitist group - like the Druids for example - within their respective tribes. Even if we accept that they had a shared material culture and tribal custom, it is reasonable to suggest that we cannot be sure if all the people of western Europe at this time called themselves Celts. The Romans, and indeed the Greeks before them, had a world view which in modern anthropological terms was ethnocentricity personified. The Greeks viewed everyone to the north-west of them as Celtic and to the east of them as Persians. It may well have had no other significance than *western barbarian* and *eastern barbarian*, but it was clearly a description of peoples living in chaotic disorder (see Chapman 1992 and Ritchie and Ritchie 1985). The notion of the Celts as an ‘other’ therefore is very old. The intellectual élites of 19th century European imperial civilisation - scholars like Matthew Arnold and many more - used
pseudo-romantic imagery to glorify yet disempower the perceived Celts of the time (see Kiberd 1996: 30-32). While such attitudes persist today, the promotion of the 'new Celt' can be a lucrative business gambit, particularly in the areas of tourism and music (see below).

We can say that the chroniclers of the ancient civilisations provided the model for the concept of imperialistic ethnocentrism.

Classical authors... tended to perpetuate the idea of 'national types' evoking... more what Greek and Roman audiences expected to hear rather than observed fact (Ritchie and Ritchie, 1985:8).

In this treatment of the 'other' we can see portentous shades of Asterix the Gaul and the red-haired fighting Irish of a much later age. It is reasonable to suggest that the people whom the ancient Romans and Greeks encountered were not exclusively 'Celtic' no more than Germans or Scandinavians are perceived as Celts nowadays.

Malcolm Chapman who has written extensively on the issue of Celtic lineage in his book 'The Celts-the construction of a myth' (1992) points out that we should not take it for granted that the ancient Celts called themselves Celts. He says that,

One unambiguous message from the archaeology of the period is that goods from the Mediterranean civilisations - metalwork, wine, jewellery - were held in very high esteem in barbarian Europe. And just as the imported goods were held in high esteem, so might the imported vocabulary. The history of the colonisation of the world by Europe in the modern period is rich in examples of peoples who have taken, as their own, a name originally given them by powerful and privileged visitors. It is likely enough that the same thing happened somewhere in Gaul in the few hundred years before Caesar wrote. (Chapman 1992:49)
The large scale acceptance and assimilation of imported vocabulary, goods and values is certainly part of the cultural and economic hegemony of today's most influential civilisation - the United States. Chapman goes on to propose that the term *Keltos ethnos*, as used by the Greek historian Herodotus, is not best translated as 'Celtic people' but more likely as 'a swarm of foreigners'. The Greeks made no distinction between Celt and German. It is from ancient Greek and Roman texts, however, that the word Celtic has evolved to provide the necessary generic term for the peoples of Europe's western fringe (and their north-American relatives) today. There is some information that can be cited that is relatively indisputable and at least furnishes a precedent for the espousal of a popularly perceived Celtic identity dating back to before Christ. It will now be considered.

Factual information

Archaeological and linguistic evidence gleaned from diverse corners of Europe indicates that a collection of peoples now usually referred to as the Celts had a dominant presence in an area ranging from Ireland and Galicia in northern Spain, all the way to central Turkey. Jewellery, weaponry and other artefacts from all over Europe, characterised by impressive spiralling motifs, became associated with a centre of production based around the southern German city of Halstatt. This established Halstatt as the epicentre of the antique Celtic world or what became more widely known as *La Tène* culture. It can reasonably be assumed that the term 'Celtic peoples' does not accurately describe all the people who produced and used these objects. However these artefacts are proof that a stable wide-spread material culture,
spanning several centuries from before the first millennium until well after the birth of Christ, existed. Some degree of cultural uniformity can be inferred from this.

The Gundestrup cauldron in Denmark reputedly depicts the Celtic myth of origin. Scenarios depicted on this cauldron have been interpreted as scenes reminiscent of the Táin Bó Cúailgne (‘The cattle-raid of Cooley’) and other Hiberno-Celtic epics. The ‘Táin’ is the most important of the tales of the Ulster cycle (see Olmsted 1979 and Figure 12 page 240). The survival of this epic tale in Ireland suggests that universal ‘Celtic’ epics lived on in the oral tradition until early Christian monks wrote them down in the 8th century. The scribes who produced these works continued to use the characteristic spiralling motifs of La Tène art. The famous Book of Kells in Ireland, one of the country’s most significant literary artefacts, is a prime example of this. The tales of the Ulster cycle have continued in both the oral and literary traditions of Ireland until the present day. Aside from this archaeological data, linguistic research provides convincing proof of the existence of a people sharing the same or related languages (see Glanville 1992, Chadwick 1970 and Raftery, 1967 and 91). Whether they universally conceived of themselves as Celts or not is open to different interpretations.
Figure 12. The Gundestrup Cauldron. This cauldron was found in a peat bog in Denmark in 1891. It reputedly illustrates a Celtic epic tale, reminiscent of the Táin Bó Cúalnge. The famous Ulster tale of the 'Cattle raid of Cooley'. 
Celtic Languages

Language scholars say that the modern Celtic languages have evolved from an older root language. They are classified as Indo-European languages and are divided into two groups, the Goedelic (Scots and Irish Gaelic) and the Brythonic (Welsh and Breton). The now defunct languages of Manx and Cornish also belonged to these groupings, Manx to the Goedelic and Cornish to the Brythonic. Breton and Welsh are referred to as ‘P’ Celtic and Irish and Scots Gaelic as ‘Q’ or ‘qu’ Celtic because of a basic difference in a key sound (Ó Murchú, 1985). This divergence is well illustrated by the word for ‘head’, Penn in Breton and Ceann in Irish. Based on this type of linguistic evidence, it is suggested that ‘Celts’ occupied large tracts of land stretching from Ireland to Asia Minor.

The countries widely held to be Celtic today are Ireland, Scotland, Brittany and Wales, not because everybody living in them speaks a Celtic language but because it is in these countries that the majority of native speakers live. However a general rise in the popular awareness of celtitude, promoted in no small way by the Lorient festival (in the Breton context - see below) and the world-wide Celtic music industry, constantly swells this geographical base into a metaphorical space.

In the countries where a Celtic language has survived as a first language - against all the odds it must be said - the areas are very specific and involve a comparatively small group of people. For the most part they are located in the Western highlands and Islands of Scotland, the West of Ireland, Wales and the interior part of Basse Bretagne (kreiz Breiz). My own impression, having spent time
in all of these areas, is that Welsh is the most widely used of the Celtic tongues. It is the lingua franca of large areas of North and West Wales. Although spoken by a bilingual minority, all these languages are modern living languages that have robust and historic literary traditions. After centuries of disregard for their continuance they now represent considerable potential in cultural and economic capital for those who speak them fluently. As Declan Kiberd points out, referring to the Irish experience,

The fact that many of the most successful business “achievers” in society have been enthusiastic Gaeilgeoir (Irish speakers) has strengthened arguments for a connection between cultural self-confidence and economic success... The major moral - it is not too strong a word - is this: that, if the native culture of a people is devalued and destroyed for the sake of material progress, what follows may not be material progress of the kind hoped for, but cultural confusion and a diminished sense of enterprise. (1996: 652)

Although no conclusive figures are available and definitions as to linguistic competence vary, scholars estimate that today around two million people speak a Celtic language, the vast majority of these are bilingual (see Abalain 1998: 11).4

Today many inhabitants of the Celtic fringe countries and far beyond them - be they mono-lingual French or English speakers - can claim to be Celts. Native speakers of Celtic languages are generally no more active in their assertion of their celtitude than their English or French speaking fellow countrymen and women. By and large they share the same divergence of interest and awareness in this matter as the latter. They tend to be divided between those who are aware of a Celtic language community and those who are not. The most pro-active people involved in pan-Celtic political agitation - like the ‘Celtic league’ - do tend to be political and linguistic activists however.5 During my stay in Brittany the Celtic league’s quarterly magazine,
Cam, was easily obtained in Celtic bookshops or at festivals and festoù noz. Many language activists in Brittany consider language as being the only reasonable parameter by which to measure one’s celtitude. The logic is if you want to be a Celt, speak a Celtic language. The image of the binioù player walking on a shaky platform shown at Figure 13 page 244 could easily be directed at non-Breton speaking musicians who are happy that their musical celtitude is sufficient. If one refers solely to fluent speakers of a Celtic language as Celts however, then the majority of people who live in the land mass of the ‘Celtic countries’ are patently not Celts (see Figure 11, page 234). The perceived Celts of today are clearly not confined to speakers of the Celtic languages nor to the ‘Celtic’ countries.

Conquest or migration

We cannot say whether the pre-Christian movement of ‘Celtic’ peoples was co-ordinated and general. It is very unlikely that it was an organised expansionist invasion in the military sense. It is more likely to have been a random movement of nomadic pastoral communities riven with internecine struggles, little different in nature from the quarrels they may have had with other tribal peoples they encountered along the way. Although they cite the sacking of Rome by Brennus in 387BC as a possible exception, Ritchie and Ritchie describe the movement of the Celts in this way,

The underlying continuity in building traditions and material culture shows that there was no sudden or radical change in everyday life. Areas became Celtic by a form of cultural osmosis. (1985:8)
DANS CE MONDE DE
doute et d'interrogation

LE BRETON

Figure 13. Only one celtitude. This image - adapted from a photograph - is a poster produced by the Comité Culturel Breton. It shows a binioù player in a precarious position. The text states that “In this world of doubt and of questioning, there is only one celtitude - Breton.”
Given the obvious mixing of cultures and languages that constituted these nomadic groups, we cannot say that they were monolingual. Monolingualism and the idea of one nation, one language, one culture, are modern concepts. The Austro-Hungarian empire is a relatively recent European example of a unified entity which was dependent for its cohesion on the shared aspirations of its ruling elite and not on any notions of cultural or linguistic homogeneity. Celts today do not form a unified cultural grouping any more than their perceived ancient forebears. To view celtitude as a chronological and historically documentable continuum is implicitly to ignore all of modern European history. It bears no relation to the mainstream socio-cultural and political processes within Europe since early Christian times until the present day. We can say with certainty that in historical terms a popular awareness of Celtic fraternity is quite recent. There was a long period of time when the Celts were all but forgotten. After the literary figures of antiquity, the next group of scholars and writers to invoke the Celtic 'other' - albeit from a very different perspective - are to be found in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries. This period is now often referred to as the Romantic period. Post-modern popular celtitude may well have no need for historical precedents, but there can be no doubt that the influence of the Romantic period Celticists remains potent.

Romantic Celticism

An important influence on popular ideas of Celtic consciousness today can be traced to the writers of the Romantic period; the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries. People like Walter Scott and Matthew Arnold in Britain and Ernest Renan in Brittany.\textsuperscript{6} The noble, mythical, passionate, poetic illogical Celt was in fact being
custom built to fulfil the growing yearning for all things mystic among an emerging urban intellectual bourgeoisie. Kibkrd (1996:52-53) suggests that - in the case of Arnold and Scott at any rate - this was done in order to reclaim the femininity and creativity imperialism had deprived them of. For Scott and Arnold, the Celt - in his Scottish Gaelic manifestation - was restructured by them and for them. A much glorified figure perhaps, but remaining forever doomed to political failure. It is not without a certain sense of bitter irony when we reflect that this popular romanticising of Scottish Gaeldom took place in the wake of its actual socio-political destruction. Scott's description of a painting which portrays a highland chieftain in battle dress, cited in the final chapter of his novel *Waverley* (written in the early 1800s) is the subject of this commentary.

Thus, while the tumult and the shouting can still be heard in the background, as it were .....Scott reduces the convulsion of the '45 to the stasis of art ... to matter for passive and romantic contemplation. (Watson 1994:53).

The writings of Scott and others like him, together with those of a later and very different band of 'real' de-colonisers (writers like Shaw, Yeats and Wilde in the mid-19th century) have had their effect upon the descendants of both the colonised and the colonisers. Many English and indeed French profess to feeling 'not as rooted' in their identity as the Irish, Scots, or Bretons. I have heard it expressed by some that to be English or British essentially *means* nothing. This position has to do with received cultural and political truths and constructed binary oppositions. It is the inevitable result of the respective roles - colonised and coloniser - which have been inherited from the colonial past. Colonial inheritance, at best bland and laden with guilt, and at worst an oppressive legacy, is less attractive than the more colourful idea
of the ethnic group. The following quotation from Malcolm Chapman concerns linguistics but nonetheless implicitly supports the above contention,

I have several times heard it expressed that the initial consonant mutation of the Celtic languages is evidence of the fleeting, wayward, insubstantial imagination of the Celtic people, opposed to the dull obviousness of immutable English... (1992:250)

In my experience similar allusions have been made between French and English. Romantic is juxtaposed with practical or material, feminine attributes are put in opposition to masculine attributes and so on. Celtic behaviour in this sense is seen as illogical, hedonistic and poetic. Much of the writings of Celticism literary figures have been devoted to the unchanging purity of the Celt. To change or to be practical is, as Watson points out, 'a non-Celtic quality'.

Even if we disregard its conceptual meaning, we can say that the word Celtic, in its present resurrection, has been in circulation since the Romantic period. I will now take a look at the popular anglophone understandings of it which have evolved during the first part of the 20th century. For many people these understandings do not require a relationship with ancient history.

**Popular celtitude**

One can begin by saying that in today’s Celtic fringe countries most people have a sense of identity which most substantively relates to the political reality of the nation states in which they live (see chapter 2). What I propose to do in this section and in the following one entitled ‘musique celtique’, is to take a look at present day
understandings of Celtic identity from both the Irish and Breton standpoints. This will serve to illustrate how continental or francophone Celts and insular or anglophone Celts, informed by developments in modern history and different social circumstances, do not share exactly the same conception of celtitude.

As Chapman points out,

> Popular thought is determinant, and is not amenable, as intellectuals too commonly suppose, to being argued away on the grounds of supposed intellectual or scientific inadequacy. (Chapman 1993:6)

For most people, celtitude is not something that is regularly felt, it is essentially a sub-liminal notion. However, if ways of being or feeling Celtic are in the process of re-defining themselves, no matter how de-politicised they may appear to be, the indicators of this process are interesting. The so-called ‘First World’ is currently dominated by the ideology of acquisitive capitalism, a culture of corporate driven consumerism that all too often works to the detriment of the well-being of most of the population of the rest of the world (see Pilger 1997). Against a background of such circumstances, a notion like celtitude which encompasses a sense of mystery and yet is rooted in the ‘ancient’ western past is worthy of some consideration. It may be to areas like celtitude which allow apparently benevolent ideas of cross-cultural community to develop, that many westerners (even ‘first worlders’ in general) may begin to look. They will do this in order to better understand human cultural, psychological and - by implication - spiritual needs. On the other hand we can view the business end of celtitude and Celtic music, as a pseudo-spiritual distraction for
people in the west; yet another mere anaesthetising frisson of interminable profit-driven global capitalism.

Swedish business management expert, Professor Kjell Nordstrom, gives the thumbs-up to the economic strategy of many of the commercially successful innovators of the 1970s. People whose strategies and ideas were viewed with scepticism at that time. Citing Richard Branson (Virgin) and Anita Roddick (The Body Shop) as examples, he says,

Average is not profitable in our time...If you and your company would like to earn money, and a lot of money, see to it that that you get weird because that is profitable...entrepreneurs could not create their businesses without being strange and letting yourself being strange.
(The Irish Times, March 1998: 18)

The successful re-invented Druids and Celtic mystics of the music business should feel encouraged by this eminent vindication of their strategy. Expressions or celebrations of celtitude play a major part in ‘leisure’ activities. As already suggested, this is particularly true of Brittany.

Considerable numbers of people in Europe, America and elsewhere, whether perceived Celts or not, rarely question the nature of the concept. Many use the word in a matter-of-fact way. As Chapman has pointed out,

today...probably for the first time ever, quite large numbers of people...are prepared, on occasions, to think of themselves as Celts.
(1993:25)
This consideration alone makes the perceived Celtic world important as an influential quasi-spiritual, poetic entity at the very least. We must also bear in mind that in the occidental popular mind, music is mainly seen as a leisure activity - people are often quick to point out that their hobby is music. The sport and leisure industries (in the 'First World' at any rate) are the fastest growing economic sectors of our time. A look at the Celts in sport and leisure may give a strong indication as to where they now reside. Popular conceptions of the word Celtic throughout the 20th century in Ireland and Scotland for example, have been associated with a soccer team. Since its foundation this team has been identified with Irish nationalism.

Up the Celts

Use of the word Celtic in insular anglophone Keltia (Britain and Ireland) by people who could not be termed Celticists by any manner of means, reveals that "up Celtic" or "up the Celts", written on a wall in Glasgow or Belfast, is not a eulogy to the ancient Britons. It does not indicate a hankering after some long forgotten pre-Christian heroic era. What it shows is the scribe’s support for Glasgow Celtic. Glasgow Celtic are a well-known and successful Scottish premier league soccer team with a support base extending far beyond Scotland. The club was founded by a Marist brother called Walfrid Kerins in 1888 with the object of raising money to feed the poor of Glasgow’s East End through playing football matches. Choosing to name the club Celtic, obviously reflects pride in the historic lineage of the people who constituted its social base, Irish emigrants. This was also the period when the Gaelic league (founded in 1893) began to form the strategies with which it intended to reinvigorate Irish national pride. What the Gaelic league did essentially was to make
the study of the Irish language an urbane pursuit and to evoke continually the perceived heroic era of the ancient Gaelic order. From its inception, Glasgow Celtic has remained synonymous with Irish Nationalism, latterly Republicanism and to a lesser extent (in Glasgow at any rate) Catholicism.

In retrospect, ten year old boys innocently chanting 'Celtic, Celtic' (pronounced 'Seltic') - the first time I ever heard the word - in the playground of a Belfast primary school in the early 1960s was a guileless assertion of inherited identity. It was at once a profession of Irish ethnicity, the Catholic faith, the cause of Irish Nationalism and boyish support for the football team. All this professed in much the same way as support for Glasgow Rangers football club stood for Protestantism (specifically Ulster loyalism) and fidelity to the British crown. While steps have been taken by both Celtic and Rangers to try to de-polarise their followings in Scotland itself (the players now come from many different backgrounds and countries), the sectarian aspect among their support still remains. In Northern Ireland, they still dramatically symbolise the divide between Orange (Unionist) and Green (Republican), particularly among working class people.

In the specific context of Northern Irish politics throughout the 20th century, the words 'Celtic' and 'British' are a binary opposition - a fact which bears no resemblance whatever to the usage of the same words in the context of the history of the Celtic tribes of antiquity. In this re-definition, a legacy of the political processes of modern British and Irish history, 'Celtic' equals Catholic Nationalist and 'British' equals Protestant Unionist. This particular context is but one example of the liberal
application of the word Celtic. It can be said that throughout the 20th century in Ireland and Scotland it has helped to keep it alive in everyday speech.

A totally different application of the word in another place means something else. A quotation from the New Secret Celtic Web Page (1995) on the Internet, praises an American basketball team - the Boston Celtics - with the words “The Celtics will rise again in the 21st century! You can’t keep a good Leprechaun down forever”. In this application the elfin creature from Irish folklore is linked to the word Celtic. This is an amusing image, which displays what could be termed ‘Glockamora’ Celticism. The mythic powers of the Celts were publicly invoked in 1995 by Irish boxer Steve Collins, prior to the defence of his title against Chris Eubank. Collin’s publicity presented him in the media as a ‘Celtic warrior’ and the boxer cultivated this image as his pugilistic persona. There are obvious connotations of devilment, mystery and strength contained in the depiction’s of celtitude cited above.

In westernised societies the ‘Celtic world’ is habitually presented in soft-focus. It has a high ‘windswept and interesting’ (yet accessible) factor. In this, music plays the primary role. Artists like Alan Stivell in the 1970s were among the first promoters of Celtic music as a genre (see below). They now have many imitators. Hearts of Space a Californian radio station has a play-list of titles that are, “Inspired by the swirling mists and verdant hills of the Celtic landscape” (Internet 1995). Celtic imagery of this nature is a common pastoral view of a perceived Celtic world from outside of its recognised geographical boundaries. Several adult fairy-tale soaps that I have watched on RTE television recently (1997-98), principally the series ‘Roar’ and to a lesser extent ‘Zena, Warrior Princess’, clearly show a certain public fascination
with *celtitude*.

They are all produced in America. The characters do not make lyrical or epic speeches in opaque language, they speak in contemporary dialects. 'Roar' has lead characters called Conor and Fergus, two well-known Irish names. Fergus has a Belfast accent of sorts. This is interesting. Campaigning Northern Irish politicians have been regular visitors to America throughout the 1980s and '90s, they have frequently been interviewed on news programs and popular talk shows. The sprinkling of northern Irish accents - never used by Hollywood in the past - may be a recognition that this accent is now familiar to Americans as the voice of the warrior Celt.

An Irish interest cable T.V. channel called the Tara channel was also launched recently. It is aimed at the public in urban England. Tony Currie, a spokesperson for the channel, said that the English public would be in favour of it. He added that this is because it would provide them with 'an alternative Celtic point of view' (R.T.E., evening news Nov. 5, 1995). He did mention Scotland and Wales, but essentially he was referring to Ireland. This could be viewed as an interesting and commercially viable way to take away the negative connotations that references to Ireland and the Irish are seen to represent for some English people. In my view when set against contemporary peace negotiations in Northern Ireland it has some resonance.

Given its wide application, ranging from academia (Celtic studies) to male strippers (the Celtic Knights) - the word 'Celtic' covers a lot of ground. In Ireland it is generally used to identify the product as Irish. For example, a look into the relevant section of many book-shops in Ireland will reveal either very little or nothing in the way of literature from or about the other 'Celtic' countries. This is in contrast to
Brittany where many book-shops have well stocked sections of historical and contemporaneous material concerning what are described as *Les pays celtiques*. The Irish tourist industry, it seems, also adopts a hegemonic attitude to other Celts. The following statement, is redolent with all the clichés characteristic of Romantic celtitude.

...the Irish people in general and tourism operators in particular have come to realise that in the Irish culture and all its manifestations there survives something unique in the western world, namely the last vestiges of the Celtic culture that was one of the parents of modern European culture. More than other Celtic regions, such as Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, the isle of Man and Scotland, Ireland has preserved for the modern tourist a culture that was almost lost and yet one that has helped mould the world and the values we know today. (G. O'Donnchadha and B. O'Connor 1996:197)

The writers in this case have claimed that Ireland is basically the centre of a perceived Celtic culture, indeed that Ireland alone is the real inheritor of what they describe as a ‘Dionysian non-rational’ Celtic holy grail. Whilst one appreciates the deliberate promotion of an economic strategy behind this type of rhetoric, it can be misleading. While this document mainly concerns economic facts and figures in relation to Ireland’s cultural heritage, the word Celtic is liberally sprinkled throughout it. In Ireland, as a rule, the concepts of ‘ancient Gaelic’ and ‘Celtic’ are completely interchangeable. In musical terms, the reference is essentially to Irish music, its generic relatives and associates, all of which are indigenous to the *anglophone* world and popularly perceived through the medium of the Irish and Scottish Diasporas. Breton music does not really figure in this equation.

The term ‘Celtic music’ is increasingly employed ad nauseum to cover a multitude of commercial strategies. In the Irish times of Feb 21st 1997, Kevin
Courtney wrote a review of an album called “And the Craic was good - Traditional Celtic moods and Irish airs” (Polygram 1997). He describes it as “one of the latest in a slew of cattle-market compilation examples of Celtic kitsch to hit the market”. Calling it - “a masterpiece of hackneyed and confusing imagery” he says that it “takes a bunch of old soft-rock tunes, middle-of-the-bothar (‘road’) ballads, diddley eyes and drippy folk songs, and repackages them under a dubious catch-all brand name”. He adds that this is “proof positive that this “Celtic” lark has gone too far” (Courtney, Feb 21st, 1997: Irish Times).

Music and celtitude

The musician, collector and enthusiastic pan-Celticist Polig Montjarret does not equivocate on the Celtic roots of Breton music. In 1984 he wrote,

Concerning the question “is Breton music Celtic?” I have no hesitation in answering that it is not, and that does not harm in any way its values, its qualities and merits. (1984: xv)

At the time of writing, Montjarret cites Irish and Scots Gaelic music as his understanding of the category Celtic music. As indicated above, in this he shares the attitude of most people in the contemporary anglophone world remotely concerned with such issues. He suggests that Breton music and dance are more allied to Gregorian chant and the mid-European troubadour tradition. It is quite different in character to both the Scottish and Irish dance music traditions and their north American cousins, all of which are generically related and considerably more modern.
The latest Breton Pan-Celtic grand spectacle ('big show') is called, *L'heritage des celtes*. It is led by rock musician Dan Ar Bras. I attended one of its first performances at Quimper in July 1995. During the evening, a well-known Scots Gaelic singer introduced what she described - in English - as ‘An anthem for Celts everywhere’. The announcement was greeted with arms outstretched in euphoria by many in the audience. Much of the latter were tourists from elsewhere in France there in search of *celtitude*. She went on to sing the haunting *Càn an nan Gàidheal* - the language or chant of the Gael.\(^1^8\)

Anthony Seeger, referring to the Kiriri, says that “The mobilization of a given identity is often related to a wider political framework” (1994:10). At the moment with regard to Celtic identity this statement is primarily related to a wider economic framework, but it is nonetheless applicable. Whatever the genesis of contemporary understandings of the category Celtic music, be it *anglophone* or *francophone*, the ‘Celtic’ label with its ‘deep’ historicomythical undertones ultimately describes an economic category. It cannot accurately be spoken of as a musical genre, but the fact that people refer to it in such terms cannot be ignored. Its lack of generic pedigree has no effect whatever on its intrinsic artistic merit. Judgements concerning ‘good’ Celtic music and ‘bad’ Celtic music depend upon a myriad of factors, not least the individuals socio-cultural background and their aesthetic preferences (see chapter 5). Celtic music in the modern world can be anything from ‘the Celtic sound’ of middle-of-the-road piano maestro Phil Coulter (Limerick post 1998:34:) to the Breton-Maghrebin rock sound of Taifa (circa 1993). It can also include the Denez Prigent led *Fest noz* sound system (1997) and the Peter Gabriel initiated Afro-Celt sound-system (1997). These last three examples diverge...
considerably from the “swirling mists and verdant hills of the Celtic landscape” referred to above. Although the definition is wide-ranging, a recognisable formula has developed. It has an appeal as an international pop-ethnic genre. Dreamy melismatic echo-laden voices, the Uillean pipes and low-whistle, together with an obscure occidental language. All this presented with a synthesiser pad in the background, offer an escape within the familiar. These are hallmarks of the superbly-marketed strengths of Celtic ‘new-age’ music. It is unquestionably dominated by the aura of Hiberno-Caledonian traditional music. Listen for example to the catchy, beautifully-arranged theme tunes from the films ‘Braveheart’ and ‘The Titanic’. All are a long way from the traditional music played in local communities in Brittany (or Ireland).

By dint of the continued existence of a spoken tongue, the bulk of today’s fully-fledged perceived Celts live on the western fringes of Europe. Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Brittany in the main. Galicia and Asturias, regions of Spain, have also declared their cultural hand as Celts. The ‘Celtic Diaspora’ is virtually world-wide. The hitherto Irish and Scottish musical Diasporas of North America are currently engaged in the strategic promotion of their traditional music as Celtic. With every succeeding decade there are more Celtic ‘idioscapes’ (Slobin 1992). In the world of professional Celtic music, both artists and promoters are re-inventing both a commercial category and, arguably, a soul community. In so doing they are reaching a much wider audience by way of the ‘World Music’ category.

As pointed out in chapter 5, it is via the route of professional music on the world stage where Breton music becomes part of the Celtic family. This avenue is a sound economic strategy from the point of view of Breton-based record companies.
and promotion agencies. The main players in the field of inter-Celtic grands spectacles in Brittany are the festival interceltique de Lorient and the fête de Cornouaille at Quimper. In recent times, the interests involved in the organisation of the fête de Cornouaille have been responsible for the ‘héritage des celtes’ show. A song from this show (sung in Breton) represented France in the Eurovision song contest of 1996. Coincidentally, 1996 was also the year of the imaginaire irlandais festival which took place throughout France.

Celtic music is the most important aspect of what modern-day celtitude means to those not actively involved in the day-to-day usage of one of the Celtic languages. For the most part these people are native speakers of English or French. O Súilleabháin says,

In many ways, music is a language of emotions and as such can be used to express intuitive truth or to create an aura of illusion and myth. (1986:13)

This absolves music from any concerns about geographical and ethnic boundaries. It is the idiomatic reality of perceived Celtic music today. Although it pertains directly to the field of linguistics, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis can be interpreted as an explanation of this position. It states that making a change in the surface structure, for example the usage of another language (substitute another musical language), can lead to an expansion of understanding in the domain of the deep structure. This would tend to bear out the view, if we carry on the analogy, that any connection with another aesthetic medium - in this case another musical language - is a valuable experience. In reality this is what most musicians do, either consciously or unconsciously.
Malcolm Chapman has described the learning of a lesser known language as involving a strategy of ‘mono-maniacal saturation’ in the chosen tongue. He adds that this is an undertaking that few people are willing to make (1994:84). He states that language activists are involved in setting themselves up as the ‘élite of Celtic consciousness’, making a self-conscious proclamation of identity. Compared to such a commitment, music is arguably more accessible than language. This goes a long way towards explaining the huge numbers involved in playing, listening to and appreciating the various forms of Celtic music, as opposed to those actively learning and promoting the relevant languages. A good linguist, however, is not always a good musician. To speak of Celtic music today is to accept that one has selected a group of musics which one has chosen to call Celtic, using some or all of the criteria discussed above.

We can say that the present notion of Celtic culture is something which authenticates itself with reference to archaeology, linguistic inheritance, a perceived antique past, mysticism and the literary legacy of 18th and 19th century Celticists. Also important, in some cases, is a sense of shared political wrong to put right (see below) and other random associations, some of which have been touched upon above. The Celts of today are not a bounded ethnic group with shared physical features, material culture and a distinct political system. Indeed the characteristics by which they define themselves have often been attributed to them by their most ‘significant other’ - the English or the French. Whatever its source, however, the idea that there is such a thing as a Celtic community can of itself be enough to create this community. In the real world shared characteristics do not have to be numerous or deeply rooted,
they can be as simple as making friends, having a few social drinks, discussing ancient history or - of central importance to this thesis - playing a tune.

_Celtitude_ today then is a form of perceived cultural unity and it is mostly expressed through music. This ‘New’ _celtitude_ has its roots in the late 1960s (particularly in Brittany). It is essentially a populist phenomenon capable of turning mysticism into an economic strategy. The next section homes in on Breton musical _celtitude_. It points out the difference between it and _anglophone celtitude_ as represented by Irish music and suggests further reasons for this difference. I suggest that over a twenty year period, roughly from the 1970s until the 1990s, Celtic music in Brittany has come to represent the juxtaposition of two quite different Diasporic constructions (see chapter 7).

**Musique Celtique**

This section takes a composite look at the background to musical _celtitude_ in Brittany and at the initial importance of Irish music in its promotion. Popular music publications like the ‘Rough Guide to World Music’ do not mention - even in passing - that Celtic music may not be a unified field. As the first few lines of Raymond Traver’s section on Breton music says,

Breton music, which draws richly in its themes, style and instrumentation on the common Celtic heritage of the Atlantic seaboard, has been for centuries a unifying and inspiring part of the culture of the province. Despite the intermittent efforts of a reactionary clergy to stifle its popularity, it survived the union with France and the general suppression of indigenous art and language. (Travers 1994:28)
Certainly as a comment on contemporary reality, the first point is valid. Overall however, it is vague and leaves three important issues unresolved. These are the origins - Celtic or otherwise - of Breton music, the description of Brittany as a province and the role of the clergy vis à vis the music. These issues are infinitely more complex and important than the above implies. Nonetheless the description given is very typical of the popular perception of ‘Celtic’ music today. Celtitude is a notion that possesses ever changing and constantly re-authenticated meanings. Celtic interconnectedness is there to be claimed by large numbers of Europeans and Americans. Many in France have told me that they love ‘Celtic’ music. People travel to Brittany from many parts of the country to experience the ambiance celtique (Celtic atmosphere). They go on to cite places like the standing stones at Carnac and the festival interceltique as part of this ambience. These stones may have been there long before the Celts but Celtic imagery is often conceived with reference to monuments dating from the stone age. In particular symbols of ageless continuity like standing stones. For the tourist from other parts of France, it can matter little whether the music they hear is Irish, Breton, a Scots pipe band or a Welsh choir, its all musique celtique. Brittany is perceived as a Celtic place, a fun place, with lots of summer entertainment and in addition a place which offers all the home comforts of a French life-style. It is exotic without being uncomfortably foreign.

The festival interceltique de Lorient

The organisers of le festival celtique de Savoie describe their attraction for celtitude in the following way,
To choose the Celtic world is like digging up one of the roots of the tree of life and exposing its hot entrails of miseries and joys in order to find therein the simple comfort and fortification of having a good time (Planète Celte 1996:15).21

*Celtitude* here approximates to what the Irish call having ‘the crack’. The *festival interceltique de Lorient* is the flagship of francophone celtitude. It is also the biggest Celtic festival in the world. It has been held in mid-August every year since 1970.

The *interceltique* and others like it (notably the *fête de Cornouaille* in Quimper) are extravagant public displays of Brittany’s contemporary concern with a pan-Celtic identity. The directors of the Lorient festival continually work on a world-wide promotion in which music plays the most prominent part. Recent publicity for the festival states,

> The international ensemble of the *FESTIVAL INTERCELTIQUE* was created in order to present a panorama of Celtic music to the world, they are all top class musicians. .... The ensemble of the *festival interceltique* have a vast repertoire of ancient and contemporary music drawn from all the Celtic lands.22 (*L’interceltique* 1996)

The musicians in this case are all Bretons playing ‘Celtic’ music. Aside from the economic benefits of the festival, its promoters are engaged in what could conceivably be referred to as ‘visibility shifting through self-conscious creation and promotion’ (Slobin 1992:10). That is, the creation of a francophone centre for a perceived Celtic Diaspora. Jean Pierre Pichard, Director of the *festival interceltique de Lorient* and President of the town’s tourist office, is the first to admit that without support from Paris, in terms of public money and publicity, the festival could never attain the status of a true national (in the French sense) and international festival.

In attaching much importance to recognition in Paris, the economic reality of
francophone celtitude is thus recognised by Breton entrepreneurs. In addition Pichard alludes directly to the Alan Stivell phenomenon when he says,

We know well that even to be recognised in Brittany, one must first be noticed in Paris, as we have seen with Stivell among others. 23 (Le peuple Breton 1994:26)

A 'big-time' professional career for Breton artists (particularly singers) is only possible with recognition in Paris. This is evidence of the current investment of the music business, based in the capital, in celtitude. 24 Bretonitude is carefully packaged as celtitude in the context of the Lorient festival.

The festival interceltique has put the coastal city of Lorient, devastated by bombing during the Second World War, on the world festival map. Lorient is a success story borne out of both an appreciation for Breton cultural strengths and clever entrepreneurial vision. It is without doubt la musique celtique that attracts people there year after year in their tens of thousands. Many artists, both well-known professionals and hosts of amateurs, from the folk and rock music scenes in Ireland, Scotland, Brittany and Wales, together with Galicia, the USA and Canada, have played at Lorient at one time or another. For the week-long duration of the festival, the town is transformed into a Celtic capital. In fact, part of the town centre is transformed into a Celtic theme park. In this area, suitably dressed ancient Celts serve crêpes, cider and assorted fast foods. Book and record stalls conveniently placed reflect the literary and artistic output of the Celtic world. Throughout the week-long event, the université d'été (‘summer university’), which is allied to the festival, runs seminars and lectures concerning socio-political and cultural aspects of life in the
Celtic countries. Keynote grands spectacles symbolically comprised of artists from all the Celtic countries, have been both initiated and financed by the festival throughout its existence. Concerts and parades portray a unified Celtic world. Treasa Ní Earcáin describes below how this world is presented in Lorient. On this occasion (1995) it included pipe-bands from both Unionist and Nationalist backgrounds in Ireland.

The morning parade was followed that evening by another which was just for the pipe bands and was titled the Triomphe des Pays Celtes. This outward show of Celticism though, had its ultimate expression in the three Nuits Magiques. (Ní Earcáin 1995:21)

She cites the following speech (in French) made by the master of ceremonies for the night in front of a capacity crowd. The translation is hers,

Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to tonight's Nuit Magique. The Celtic people have suffered long and hard. They have resisted military occupation and the ravages of emigration and have come through it all with their culture intact. Tonight the best of that culture will be performed by...(list of performers). (Ní Earcáin 1995:21)

Just like kan ha diskan, the show was continuous, with each act bleeding into the other, an imaginary blending of all into a colourful metaphor for Celtic continuity. Together with the fest noz, these type of events provide the central focus of the festival. Lorient has become an example to emulate for many other organisations all over Brittany and France. 25

It is the 'unofficial' side of the Lorient festival that catches the imagination of many however. In this context the words festival interceltique take on a new meaning in the popular imagination and are often substituted by the words festival interceltcuite, which means literally, 'the inter- Celtic completely plastered festival'. 26
People from all over Europe meet in bars throughout the town, carousing in a Celtic Mardi Gras mode until the small hours. Irish music is the main common musical expression in these informal gatherings. The festival is very important to the local economy, and although some complaints may be voiced concerning the late night antics and drinking habits of some of the more ebullient Celts, they are usually followed by a comment supporting the idea of the festival. Lorient is at once a celebration of myth, history and a planned economic strategy. It is of considerable importance to Brittany's symbolic celtitude, the local economy and tourism in France.

Breton celtitude

The type of inclusive pan-celtitude displayed at Lorient has surfaced periodically in the Irish/Gaelic music Diaspora but, in general, the concept is still, as pointed out already, largely synonymous with Gaeldom. In Brittany many musicians have been travelling a pan-Celtic musical pathway since the early 1970s at least. It is not unusual for some folk musicians in Brittany to describe themselves quite unselfconsciously as Celtic musicians and their repertory usually reflects this. In Ireland, such a development has yet to happen on any grand scale. This scenario reflects a different socio-musical perspective in the two places. Many Irish musicians that I know play a few Breton tunes as part of their repertory without any strategic adoption of the term Celtic music.

Celtic-inspired tourist trinkets and jewellery, plastic Triskel and hermine car stickers, la Tène style spiral necklaces and earrings - in short 'low level Celtic cultural paraphernalia' - have been present in abundance throughout Brittany for thirty years.
They coexist with wholly Breton paraphernalia like pancakes (crêpes) and cider. Much in same way as the charismatic and entrepreneurial Sobieski Stuarts (the Allen brothers) invented Clan tartans in early 19th century Scotland (Trevor-Roper 1983:37), a reinvention of small symbols unifying the concepts of Breton national/cultural identity and ancient Celtic heritage have been evoked. Alan Stivell and Lorient have been trend setters in this regard. Breton-Celtic imagery is used in everything from the literature of environmentalist groupings to product lines.

As indicated above, it is now a natural artistic strategy for many Breton musicians to play both Irish and Breton music. These artists represent a new breed of locally-based Celtic music performers who are now open to world music influences. However, professional Irish bands of the 1970s and 1980s have been a seminal influence on them. Whether or not these musicians have been successful in the assimilation of the aesthetic values of both Irish music and Breton music is an issue for some. This type of discourse is confined to people who are concerned with such finely-tuned questions, others are content to function unselfconsciously as Celtic musicians.

Alan Stivell

In professional musical terms celtitude can arguably be traced to Alan Stivell. Alan Stivell has been described as ‘the godfather of the modern Breton music scene’ (Rough Guide 1991:28). He is one of Brittany’s most influential musical figures and an international Celtic star. He could be said to have invented himself from his Parisian base as the quintessential modern Celtic musical mystic in the late 1960s. At
that time, he was a regular performer at 'the hootenannies at the *centre Américain* on the Boulevard Raspail'. He was born in Paris to Breton parents as Alain Cochevelou; many prominent Breton cultural activists share his Parisian background. A multi-instrumentalist he went on to play in *bagadoù* and at *festoù noz* covering the whole spectrum of 'Celtic' music and adopting the Celtic Harp as his main instrument. His early career has been the subject of much biographical writing. For detailed accounts see Brekilien (1973) and *Racines interdites* ('forbidden roots') in *Musiciens et musiques* (1979). *Stivell* - which is his adopted name - means 'source' in the Breton language. He has had a prolific professional career. A comprehensive overview of his recordings can be obtained from *ceolas* on the Internet.28

With what could only be described as affectionate cynicism, he is often alluded to in the Breton musical milieu by his popular underground pseudonym *'Raymond la Source'*. In the city of Glasgow in Scotland any male person can be referred to as 'Jimmy'; if we apply this precedent, the expression *'Raymond la Source'* translates something like 'Jimmy the wellspring'. It is a humorous marriage of the familiar and the epic. Many professional Celts in Brittany and elsewhere have since followed Stivell's lead. Yann Brekilien's book (1973) which documents Stivell's early career, is an unabashed act of hero-worship. Here Stivell is credited with being the possible progenitor of what Malcolm Chapman (referring to Celtic music in the British context) has called,

the largest regiment in the phantom army of 'folk' who are the notional makers of 'folk music' (1994:42).
Brekilien states (with considerable justification) that Stivell invented Celtic folk music (Le 'fait Stivell' ou le folk-celtique is the book's title) and became a sort of messianic figure for young Bretons,

...he has been approved of by the mass of the youth, he has brought something to them. Something that they were waiting for. 29 (1973:61)

On the sleeve notes to the English language edition of his best known recording, live at the Olympia theatre in Paris (Fontana 1972), he sets out his stall quite clearly, invoking a unified 'Celtic' tradition in the space of a couple of succinct phrases. The stuff of which history, legend and as has been shown - commercial success - is made.

So his originality springs from traditional Celtic music, which he considers to be at the origin of white-American folk music and of many groups' inspiration (some of the Beatles' songs are true Celtic themes). Neither recognised nor exploited yet, Celtic music is now given a chance according to Alan Stivell.

Historian Jacques Vassal describes Stivell's concert at the Olympia Paris in 1972 as 'the revenge of young Brittany in the heart of Sodom' (1973:114). 30 Vassal also strongly criticised Stivell's detractors who accused him of being involved in Breton activism and Celticism only for the money. Musicians who could not be described as fans of Stivell's music today are nonetheless quick to acknowledge the energising effect that this concert had on the many who heard extracts from it at home on their radios in Brittany. It was a very public valorisation of bretonnitude and Breton music. An important cathartic moment for the new Breton consciousness (see Figure 14 page 269). On this live recording, Stivell makes the potent symbolic gesture of singing 'une chanson sur la révolution irlandaise'- a song about the Irish revolution.
Figure 14: A L’ Olympia: The cover and sleeve notes from the album of Alan Stivell’s live concert at the Olympia theatre in Paris in 1972.
A plaintiff prelude in Breton entitled *Telenn gwad war ar garreg* ('Bloostained harp on the rock') follows. It is sung to the air of the famous Irish song from the penal times, *An raibh tú ag an charraig*. Stivell follows this with a version of the Foggy Dew.31 With this song and a rousing electrified version of the set dance, ‘The King of the Fairies’, he unleashed Irish music on the francophone world as part of a general Celtic inheritance.

He most certainly did make Irish music more accessible to a larger public and at the same time he opened a window into Irish history and politics for a new generation of young people throughout Brittany and France. Similarly he introduced the music of Scotland, Wales and other Celtic zones. The fact that he sang in the English language and at no time in French on this particular album is also significant. French was a threat to Celtic Brittany but English was a valid ‘Celtic’ tongue.32 On this level his musical strategy mirrors a definition of French culture as the ‘other’ by which Breton Celts identified themselves. Presumably he also had his eye on the anglophone popular music market, although at this time English still had a certain exoticism in France. English was and has so far remained - the language of global ‘first world’ success in popular music. Stivell has been known to sing in French however and, as pointed out above, the francophone market is of considerable importance to his livelihood.

Viewed against the socio-political turmoil and the profound hopes of the 1960s, both in America and Europe, one can appreciate more realistically where Stivell drew his inspiration. Aside from the freshness and attractiveness of his music at
that time, he was articulating the spirit of a generation in a particularly Breton way. One could also suggest a particularly French way. Stivell’s appeal was strong throughout the length and breadth of France. The old France, epitomised by Charles De Gaulle, was singularly unattractive to the youth. The Paris riots of 1968 were to signify yet another cathartic moment in the history of France and indeed Europe in general. New identities were actively being sought by a new generation and students made common cause with workers. For some it was socio-political revolution, for others the hippie nirvana of ‘tune in and drop out’. For the majority it was probably a combination of both. Stivell’s emblematic musical search for ‘roots’ which would symbolically offer something fresh and new, yet of ancient lineage, was in tune with the idealism of the time and fitted the mood in Brittany.

Although reputedly unhappy with the hippie image he felt record companies wished to foist upon him in his early career, Stivell did offer a composite image of flower power, lyrical mystery, socio-political concern and rootedness— a new cool Bretagne. At this time in history, this powerful urbane and youthful image was at once a break with the tarnished pre-war image of political bretonnitude (see chapter 2) and an accessible statement of Brittany’s global celtitude. This view of Brittany stood in sharp contrast to previously received ideas of provincial backwardness (see Vassal 1973:40). Stivell represented an image which married youthful exuberance, idealism (and Rock-star gloss) with older traditions and ways of viewing the world. Effectively he was a necessary bridge or mediator between the local and the global (see Racines interdites 1979). Although his influence has proved negligible in Ireland at any rate, he remains an important figure both in Brittany and in Celtic music.
Brittany and Irish music

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the world of Breton traditional music and song described in chapters 3 and 4 was continuing along its already well-established route, fulfilling its own social and aesthetic agendas. This remains the situation today. Many Bretons, including Stivell, had been involved in playing some Scottish and Irish music within the context of the bagadoù since the 1960s at least. While Irish folk groups like the Dubliners had had some exposure, it was for the most part Stivell who popularised a cultural sense of celtitude and provided an accessible introduction to Irish culture (and to a lesser extent politics) to many throughout Brittany and France.

The issue to be examined in the next chapter is the profile of Irish traditional music in contemporary Brittany. This is set against the backdrop of a general sense of Ireland and its Diaspora from both an Irish and a Breton perspective. No large scale Irish community exists in Brittany but Irish traditional music interfaces with the indigenous musico-social genre in a relationship that does not have any contemporary parallel in western Europe. Ireland (and Irish music) occupies a distinct spot in the imagination of many Europeans and I suggest that up until relatively recently Ireland has been perceived by many in Brittany and France as the engine room of a perceived 'Celtic Diaspora'. The next chapter explains how this perception evolved in the first place and how Ireland and Irish music are now in the process of being relocated in Breton celtitude.
1 The ‘Celtic fringe’ (as it is often described) is popularly held to be comprised of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Brittany in the main. It may also include the Isle of Man, Galicia, and Cornwall. Recent visits to the Lorient festival interceltique (1994/1996) indicate that this fringe is beginning to grow, taking in increasing numbers of would be Celts from other European regions and further afield.

2 This is a translation of the word celtomane that is used in Brittany and France to describe people who are locked into the idea of the Celts as an ethnic group or a race.

3 The Gundestrup cauldron, reputedly made in 100 years BC (in Gaul), was discovered in a peat bog in Denmark in 1891. It is now housed in the National Museum at Copenhagen.

4 All people born and educated in the Irish Republic - and considerable numbers in northern Ireland - learn Irish at school. For a variety of reasons, however, only language enthusiasts choose to use it. By all accounts, I have heard the reason for the unpopularity of Irish among many school kids is both the lack lustre way it has been presented to pupils and the quite sad perception that it is materially unimportant. When asked should it be scrapped from the curriculum, however, some of the same people who have just displayed no enthusiasm for the language whatever may still answer ‘no, it is part of our heritage’.

5 A look at the multi-lingual pages of Carn will confirm this. The paper supports political independence for all Celtic countries. For more information on the Celtic League and the magazine Carn, contact the general secretary and P.R.O., Bernard Moffat, 11 Hilltop View, Farmhill Braddan Mannin (Isle of Man). This information is taken from the summer 1993 edition of the publication.

6 James Macpherson’s famous collection of Ossianic ballads (later attributed to himself) was very influential within Walter Scott’s circle - and throughout many similar circles all over Western Europe - even though it had its detractors among the Gaelic scholars of the time (see Chapman 1978). This collection is still the subject of debate among Gaelic scholars today.

7 These people it must be said belong to the more liberal section of English society. England’s infamous Soccer thugs, the supporters of Glasgow Rangers and some right-wing elements in the Conservative party are triumphalist in their ‘English-ness’ or ‘Britishness’. Today being ‘British’ remains important to Ulster Unionists as they continue to represent the value system of the colonial past. “What we have we hold” is the most celebrated catch phrase of populist Unionism in the 20th century.


9 In his book ‘Hidden Agendas’, internationally renowned journalist John Pilger clearly describes the dreadful harm that de-regulation and the so-called ‘free market’ has done and is doing to the people of the ‘developing world’ (see Pilger 1997: 60-70).

10 Formed around the charismatic figure of Douglas Hyde in 1893, the Gaelic League was typical of the de-colonising movements of that period. In a sense, the ancient heroic past with which some ‘leaguers’ sought to galvanise Irish pride was a mirror image of the stratified imperialist society which they so disliked. The original ‘Gaelic Leaguers’ were men of their time, a time when evolutionism was at the zenith of its persuasive powers. Their reaction to British colonial racism was decidedly knee-jerk; the result was a parallel of the old imperialist model they knew, an Irish race history based on the debonair gaelic aristocracy typified by the dashing figure of the noble chieftain. This romanticising of Gaeldom, which had been underway in Scotland since the time of Walter Scott, was in
essence the building of an ideology which paid scant attention to the vernacular traditions of the people. "These intellectual movements somehow ignored the eight million peasants and their real vivid and concrete way of life." (Mac Lochlann 1977:23). For detailed analyses see Mac Lochlann (1977:17-35) see also Kiberd (1996:151).

11 There are many Internet web pages devoted to Glasgow Celtic. For example one site at http://members.tripod.com/~Glasgow_Celtic/index.html lists all the club's achievements since its inception. It also includes a guide to the profile of arch-rivals Rangers and their supporters which is interesting. It indicates the depth of mistrust that still exists between the two clubs and the politico-cultural baggage they carry. The commentary ranges from political attacks to normal sports rivalry. It reads, "Choose Rangers, choose bigotry, choose knuckledragging, choose fascism, choose arse-licking royalty. .....Choose to boast about winning 10-in-a-row and then fail to do it, choose that dick - Advocaat, choose Walter Smith. Choose Rangers,"(Internet, May 1998)

12 Glockamora is an imaginary idyllic Irish village evoked in the song ‘How are things in Glockamora’. It comes from a Holywood musical of the 1950s which starred Fred Astair and Tommy Steele.

13 Zena, Warrior Princess is a hotchpotch of Viking and Celtic fantasy with Bulgarian music thrown in for good measure.

14 It may help - in a day-to-day manner - to break down the wall of suspicion and misunderstanding which has existed between the two populations for centuries. The promotion of an understanding of life in contemporary Ireland, besides making the accents and landscape more familiar, may also point out that major elements of mainstream popular culture in Ireland and England are no different.

15 In some ways this type of commentary is completely in keeping with a perceived 'headship of the Celts' legacy. A new dynamic, youthful - some say ageist - Ireland, has had no difficulty in accepting the appellation of 'the Celtic Tiger' - after the Asian example - as a metaphor for its new found economic performance. The 'Celtic Tiger' may in time turn out to be a transitory and therefore ultimately toothless illusion because of its dependence on technological software production for foreign (mostly American) companies (see Mac Laughlin and Crowley 1997). Restraint and consideration of all the variables in thought, word and deed is now called for. Declan Kiberd in 'Inventing Ireland' cites Edmund Burke's comments concerning the colonial usurpers of another age. Burke could almost be talking about some of today's brash mobile-phone-wielding yuppies (male and female)....when he says that they had the boldness of obscure young men who “drink the intoxicating draughts of authority and dominion before their heads are able to bear it” (1996:18). However, Kiberd goes on to make the point that cultural vitality has a lot to do with economic success and self-confidence (p365).

16 The key figure in the town twinning schemes between Ireland and Brittany which have flourished over the last ten years (Guy Arhant, personal communication, September 1997).

17 For a view on these matters and an overview of his perspective on the scales used in Scottish, Irish and Breton music see Montjarret (1984: xiv).

18 This song was written by the late Murdo McFarlane of Lewis and sung on this occasion by Karen Matheson. The introduction of the song illustrates that many anglophone Celts do not conceive of Celtic music in the same way as francophone Celts.
This is by no means a put-down of linguistic activism. It is rather an observation that such groupings are an easy target for criticism, whether justifiable or not.

I should add at this point that parts of the Iberian peninsula, such as Galicia and Asturias, are now included in Euro-Keltia, principally through connections re-configured from ancient history and expressed through folk music. In these areas and many parts of urban Spain and Portugal, 'Celtic music' - or traditional music reinvented as Celtic - is a popular new trend. It began significantly after the collapse of General Franco's repressive regime. I remember this period well. Many of my Breton musician friends travelled there throughout the 1980s to play at large festivals. They returned with descriptions of a social catharsis taking place among many young Spaniards, reminiscent of the era of 'flower power' and the hippie movement of two decades earlier in most other western countries. Both Lisbon and Oporto have been hosting large Celtic music festivals over the last few years, under the auspices of an entrepreneurial association called Mundo Da Cancao (1993). Irish, Scottish and Breton groups are regular guests and, in some cases, have provided models for newly re-constituted folk groups in these regions. While on a visit to Spain in 1993 at a festival in Segovia, I saw an Asturian group using a wooden concert flute, Bodhran and highland pipes. These instruments in this form are all recent additions to the musical landscape there. The 'Celtic' music group, particularly after the Scottish model, is the popular symbol of a perceived celtitude to many Iberians.

Choisir le monde celté, c'est comme déterrer une grosse racine de l'arbre de la vie et en exhiber les entrailles chaudes de misères et de joies pour y trouver le simple réconfort de la fête (Planète Celte, 1996:15).

L'ensemble international du FESTIVAL INTERCELTIQUE a été mis sur pied afin de représenter un panorama de la musique celtique dans le monde, avec des musiciens de haut niveau. L'ensemble du festival interceltique possède un répertoire très vaste qui inclut les musiques des différents pays celtiques, des plus anciennes aux plus contemporaines. (L'interceltique 1996)

On sait bien que même pour être reconnu en Bretagne, il faut d'abord l'être à Paris, comme on l'a vu avec Stivell entre autre". (Le peuple Breton, 1994:26: )

Euro Celts are less of a threat to the European political establishment - who may certainly wish to retain certain national strategies (ie. defence) in a Europe of the regions - than a disgruntled Breton nationalist minority in France (to cite but one example). This may be one reason (aside from genuine attempts at inclusiveness) why all things pertaining to the cultural diversity of France have been significant of late. The last two songs to represent France in the Eurovision song contest have been inspired by North African rai and 'Celtic' music respectively. Dan ar Bras sings the 1996 entry in the Breton language notwithstanding the fact that France is the only country in the EC which has not signed the Charter in relation to the protection of minority languages. Jaques Chirac has recently proclaimed his willingness to sign, but stressed that this will take time as it involves changing the French constitution. The constitution states that French is the only language of the Republic.

I have been involved personally as a musician in two inter-Celtic shows. I have also participated in the Université d'été (1996). For a full description of the event cited above see Ni Earcáin 1995: 21-27. During the summer time, Brittany abounds with music festivals. Practically all of the major towns do something where musique celtique features strongly. 'Big is beautiful' tends to be the guiding principle - a key strategy for drawing large numbers of tourists, indeed prolonging the season. Large amounts of money are invested on lavish stage sets with many visiting artists, both from home and abroad.
26 I first heard this expression for interceltic drunkenness used by a presenter on Cheri FM the local pop Radio station in the Trégor. Prendre une cuite, literally 'to take a cooking' is a standard way for people throughout France to describe getting drunk.

27 All types of Irish rock stars among them Van Morrison and Sinead O'Connor have claimed Gaelo-Celtic type 'deep' influences on their music over the course of the last decade. In some cases, this influence is implied in their publicity. Recent tours in Ireland entitled 'Celtic flame'1996 and 1997 have featured only Irish artists playing essentially Irish music.

28 Http://celtic.stanford.edu/artists/Stivell.html

29 Il a été plébiscité par la masse des jeunes qu'il leur apportait quelque chose. Et quelque chose qui répondait à une attente. (Brekilien 1973:61)

30 ....revanche de la jeune Bretagne au coeur de Sodome. (1973:114)

31 I remember listening to this recording with great pleasure in Belfast in 1975. It also valorised the Irishness which had no public value in Northern Ireland at that time. The Foggy Dew is perhaps the best known Irish rebel song concerning the 1916 rising. An instrumental version of the song first appears in Bunting's collection of 1840, the author of the 20th century verses is unknown. There is a group of French musicians currently performing Irish folk music and song (1995) who go by the name of The Froggy Stew.

32 Singing in English and Breton to the exclusion of French is still popular with some Breton artists. Even though French is their first language they make the point of refusing to sing in it. This is indicative of the fact that English is viewed by some as of no threat to celtitude, whereas the use of French - even though it would be understood by a wider public - is a perceived dilution of it.
Chapter 7

IRISH MUSIC AND BRETON CELTITUDE

As we have seen in chapter 6, contemporary *celtitude* is made up of notions of a common linguistic inheritance, elements of ancient history, modern history and folklore. To this cocktail we can add post-imperial invention and post-modern abstraction. The Irish are viewed as Celts but the Irish diaspora is a relatively recent historical construct based on large scale demographic movements over the last 250 years or more. As such it makes scant reference to *celtitude*. The island of Ireland is now at the centre of the ‘Irish Diaspora’ for the first time. Furthermore a new Irish cultural Diaspora, represented by her artists and writers, extends to countries that have little or no recognisable Irish immigrant communities. Irish traditional music is the main popular presence of that diasporic influence on the European continent. In Brittany Irish music has been adopted by many musicians as part of a general apprenticeship in Celtic music. In the Breton context, this has meant a shift in the diasporic location of Irish music causing it to become a part of Breton *celtitude*. This chapter suggests how this has happened. Before returning to look at Irish music in the particular context of Brittany, however, the first section works towards a basic understanding of what the contemporary Irish cultural diaspora means and shows how it affects Irish perspectives on *celtitude*. 

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The Irish Diaspora

When people refer to an ‘Irish Diaspora’ they are usually speaking about the large communities of Irish descent that are concentrated in and around the major urban centres of the English-speaking world, in particular, the eastern seaboard of North America and the large cities of Britain. The first movements of Irish people to North America en masse happened during the 18th century. These were mostly Ulster-Scots ‘in search of fame, fortune and sweet liberty’ - as the song The Emigrant’s farewell says (Sam Henry collection 1990:200). Various areas of the Ozark and Appalachian mountains retain elements of the folklore, music and song carried by these people. It was during the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, however, that the big cities of Britain and America became the main destinations for large numbers of Irish emigrants. In general, these people were in flight from the devastating effects of the great famine of the late 1840s. Their descendants are estimated to run into millions and this community has maintained close sentimental ties with Ireland. In addition, they have been kept in constant touch with the old country by a constant stream of new Irish emigrants. This emigrant trail - to North America in particular - only began to show signs of slowing down in the late 1990s. Well-established Irish social clubs and societies have continually nurtured Irish cultural expression and maintained an interest in Irish politics. Irish music has always been and continues to be, a central feature of their social activity. Irish traditional and folk-music groups therefore have always had access to an audience within this large diasporic community.
The Catholic Irish did suffer discrimination in the early years of immigration but, through time, they have integrated fully with the wider occidental community due to their increasing affluence. This is particularly true of North America. Essentially these ‘Irish’ are now part of the establishment in their original host countries. Many people of non-Irish descent are involved in their cultural activities.

Britain has been more problematic with regard to Irish integration. The lot of the unskilled Irish emigrants to Britain (until recently the traditional profile of the emigrant) has not always been a happy one. In the recent past, emigration from Ireland to Britain, aggravated further by the current troubles in Northern Ireland, is a known cause of tension between ‘the Irish’ per se and sections of the British public. According to an article concerning Britain’s Irish population, which appeared in the Sunday Tribune of January 26th 1997, leaving home in Ireland to settle in Britain is said to shorten the life expectancy of many Irish emigrants. The article states that the Irish suicide rate there is twice that of what the article describes as the “indigenous white population”. The same article offers no details concerning social class, religion, politics or provenance, nor does it give actual figures. However it does point out that these statistics refer mainly to the uneducated emigrant of the 1950s. The typical profile of this vulnerable group is the ageing single male, working as a labourer in the construction industry. Many Irish pressure groups in Britain have strongly pressed the British government for the Irish to be considered as a separate ethnic group in that country, a group which has suffered from discrimination in the past.
Irish housing associations in Britain say that the specific housing needs of the Irish in Britain, which are a result of discrimination, must be recognised. They are calling on the housing corporation to address their needs, particularly where the Irish comprise 3% or more of the local population. (Sunday Tribune January 26th, 1997)

This contention has been accepted by the British Commission for Racial Equality (CRI). The next British census figures will be interesting in that they will for the first time show how many people in Britain claim to be of Irish origin.

Before the 1980s the primary concerns of the ‘Irish Diaspora’ were centred around agitation for political independence in Ireland. There was a popular sense of a people with shared values having a wrong to redress. That wrong was the British colonial presence in Ireland. Contemporary socio-economic developments however have played a decisive role in the conscious emergence of an Irish Diaspora per se. Throughout the 1990s, prominent Irish political figures, including President Mary Robinson, have centred the Irish Diaspora around the geographic and political entity which is the Republic of Ireland. Prior to the existence of an independent Irish state this strategic locus was symbolically impossible. A sense of Diaspora can be turned up or down, on or off, depending upon socio-political circumstance. There are no large Irish communities in Europe of the scale that exists in North America, Britain or Australia for example but, for the first time, there is a popular Irish diasporic influence in the cultural sphere. Through the influence of her writers and artists - individuals like James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, to mention but two 20th century figures - Ireland has always had an impact on European cultural life. This impact though has
largely been confined to literary circles and although immensely important, it is not an issue in this dissertation.

The Irish cultural diaspora in Europe

When I refer to the Irish cultural diaspora in Europe in this instance, I am speaking of a large scale contemporary awareness of popular Irish culture throughout Europe. Against the important backdrop of membership of the EEC and all of its attendant economic and political significance, the Irish cultural sphere of influence has extended to most parts of Western Europe: parts which were largely untouched by it hitherto. The medium of traditional and folk music has been the most popular aspect of this growing awareness of a sense of Ireland and its people. This foreign interest in Irish music has in turn dramatically affected the popular perception of traditional music in Ireland itself. The public performance of Irish music is now commonplace all over Ireland. It's aesthetic values may remain misunderstood by many but, as pointed out in the previous chapter, it now has a universally recognised commodity value.

Traditional and folk music in Ireland has a well-established association with the gregarious social life connected with pubs. Its potential as a promotional tool has long been recognised by the tourism and drinks industries. Events featuring traditional music are routinely sponsored by the Guinness company. This has happened to such an extent that a visitor to Ireland (or to an Irish pub anywhere) may be excused for
enquiring where he or she might listen to some ‘Guinness’ traditional music. The seemingly permanent association of traditional music with drink and pubs, although convivial and economically beneficial to many musicians, has had the unfortunate side effect of devaluing the music as a genre. My experience confirms that it is often little more than background noise for the T.V. watching public.

Irish music is used to promote Ireland and Irish produce, both in Ireland and all over Europe. It is seen as an important aural icon which immediately identifies the provenance of the produce as Irish. The attendant implication is that it is clean and Celtic, cultured and wholesome with a hint of humour and mystery. The instrument which typifies this at present is the Uillean pipes. The ‘pipes’ have upstaged the harp as the archetypal Irish instrument. Retrospective justice one could say. The Uillean pipes are popularly perceived as unambiguously Irish - pipers were reputedly hung during the Penal times - while the Harp has been equally appropriated by both colonisers and colonised.

Irish Traditional and Folk Music in Europe

Irish traditional and folk musicians have been performing on the European continent since the late 1960s. At that time Germany was the major market place and groups like the Dubliners, the Furey brothers and Clannad were very popular. During the course of what could be called the German folk reconstruction period in the mid-1970s, Irish and Scottish music became well established on the University and Folk
club circuit there. They were referred to in English as ‘happy folk’. This was in order to differentiate them from the more weighty Politiche Lieder (socio-political songs) which were the preserve of many popular German folksingers during this time. According to music promoter Carsten Linde (personal communication, October 1991), Irish music has remained popular in Germany despite a drop in interest in folk music in general during the mid-1980s. Many Germans are regular visitors to Ireland and have come to know and like the county. Irish music does not fall into the esoteric or world music category there. It has a solid core following among German audiences. In this respect, it may be viewed as having a status akin to that of a well-established genre like traditional Jazz. Germany is still the main European destination for Irish bands but audiences in every western European country (and many in Eastern Europe) are becoming increasingly familiar with Irish folk music of some description. This is largely due to the increasing numbers of Irish pubs in all major European cities. I have some experience of these pubs. The next two sub-sections reflect that experience.

Music selling Ireland, Ireland selling music

In addition to the many concert, festival and folk club venues, the ‘Irish pub’ now provides the opportunity, if so desired, to experience Irish music on a regular basis. These pubs started to proliferate during the late 1980s and are now ubiquitous practically everywhere in the world. They vary greatly in size and their quality as performance venues depends to a great extent on the owner or manager.
From Oslo to Shanghai (and in some cases Ireland itself), the 'Irish theme pub' represents a visible *Irishness* on a virtually world-wide scale. There are several companies (based in Dublin) which travel all over the world fitting-up Irish pubs, among these are the 'Irish pub company' and the 'Irish pub design and installation company'. In the more exotic locations like Hong Kong and Lhasa the 'Irish pub' caters mainly for the ex-patriot British and Irish (and other western European) communities. Many of these pubs either run by the licensee or part of the outlet chain of a major brewery provide their clientele with a diet of ballads and/or Irish traditional instrumental music at least once a week. In March 1997, RTE's Gerry Ryan show interviewed a man looking for a 'traditional piano accordion player and a fiddler' to do a 'six week stint' in an Irish pub in Thailand. This type of offer is not unusual nowadays.

**Euro-Paddies**

As stated above, Irish music now has a strong association with pub culture everywhere in the world. In most parts of Europe - aside from being meeting points for locals with some nostalgia for Ireland and many Irish and British ex-patriots - these pubs also provide a source of income for players of Irish music. A number of traditional and folk musicians from Ireland (and Britain) now live and work in Europe but many of the resident players (in the case of Western Europe at least) are natives of that country. Such is the extent of their involvement with Irish people and Irish culture that they often speak recognisable regional forms of Hiberno-English. An
Irish person or native English speaker who can sing or play (a singer in particular) is prized by European Irish bands for his or her authenticity. They usually play in the most convivial pubs - of which there is usually one in most cities - where the manager has managed to marry commerce with respect for the music and the musicians. Many Irish bands working on the European continent - doing concerts, festivals and pub gigs - are comprised entirely of European nationals. Besides these local musicians, who tend to be genuine followers of the best that the Irish tradition has to offer, boisterous Irish-based ballad groups are sponsored by drinks companies with the object of promoting their product. In the larger purely commercial custom built pubs, when the musical ‘Paddy’ is not a wild, constantly beer-swilling larger-than-life character, bewilderment or disappointment can be detected amongst some of the clientele. These type of pubs do not attract the real fans of the music - no more than similar establishments in Ireland - but they represent a popular conception of Irishness abroad. Saint Patrick’s day is now celebrated throughout Western Europe. Florian Fürst is a respected German promoter who has organised tours in Germany for well-known traditional musicians throughout the 1980s and 1990s. He was responsible for bringing the legendary Irish tin whistle player Micho Russell on tour in Germany. He told me (Personal communication, October 5th, 1998) that he believes that the pub scene has had the effect of making Irish music banal to the German public. It is increasingly perceived as music to drink to. He deliberately avoids the pub circuit when organising concert tours in order to (as he sees it) try to reverse this trend.
People in their twenties and thirties make up the majority of the patrons in the most of the city centre ‘Irish’ pubs in large European cities. The throng may include young Irish people who have never had much exposure to traditional music in their own home towns. Most are happy to join in the stamping, screaming and general boisterous bonhomie that can on occasion build up to a crescendo before closing time.

A cathartic evening in some ‘Irish pubs’- or Irish events - in parts of Northern Europe can be quite a frenzied affair. I have been present at occasions in Brittany where the only recognisable unison phrase of the night has been ‘dirty old town’ in the unmistakable style of the Pogues. This song has become popularly associated with Ireland. In fact, it is a poignantly ballad about the legacy of environmental misery created by industrialisation in 19th Century Britain.

For considerable numbers of people on the European continent, Ireland equals a good laid back holiday and the Irish are people who know how to enjoy themselves. They may be currently perceived by other Europeans as more easy-going than themselves, nonetheless clearly they are perceived as Europeans. An evening of Irish music therefore has an element of culturally accessible Mardi Gras. It is different but it does not feel too foreign. Virtually everywhere that I have travelled in Western Europe in recent times I have encountered nothing but goodwill towards the Irish and Ireland.

Irish music on the European continent is diasporic music in a non-immigrant environment. This is what makes it different contextually to Irish music played in
many parts of North America or Britain. Bearing this in mind, I will now go on to examine the recent history and contemporary profile of Irish music in Brittany and its consequent relationship to Breton celtitude. To contextualise Brittany’s special relationship with Ireland, however, a look at Franco-Irlandais (and Bretonno-Irlandais) relations in the light of modern European history is necessary.

Ireland and France

Since the late 16th century at least, Irish political and military leaders have looked to the Catholic monarchies of France and Spain in particular for practical help in their struggle with the English crown. In a tradition going back several centuries before this period, members of the leading Gaelic families attended European centres of learning. By the end of the reign of Elizabeth I, the Gaelic order in Ireland had effectively been destroyed. Subsequently the Cromwellian campaign and the Williamite wars in the early 1690s forced the remaining vestiges of Irish Catholic nobility and the rump of the Irish Jacobite army to seek asylum abroad. France gave refuge to a large number of these exiled Irish military men (‘the Wild Geese’) and provided them with the opportunity to continue their careers. During the reign of Louis XIV, ‘the Sun King’, many thousands of them - including Patrick Sarsfield, the principal Jacobite signatory to the ill-fated treaty of Limerick - died in the service of France. In France, the exiled Irish were formed into the Irish brigade. This brigade was to last for a hundred years before becoming subsumed into what eventually was to become the foreign legion. Many of the descendants of these people attained high
office in France - notably Patrice Mc Mahon, *duc de Magenta*, who was President of the Republic between 1873-1877. For further information see O'Callaghan 1890, Hennessy 1973 and Bartlett 1996.

Ascendancy Ireland had given shelter to significant numbers of French Huguenots after the anti-Protestant pogroms of the 17th century. These people were instrumental in the setting up of the linen manufacturing industry in Ulster. Revolutionary France sent military expeditions to Ireland as recently as the 1790s. In 1796 general Lazare Hoche and the visionary Irish patriot Theobald Wolfe Tone sailed from Brest on an ill-fated mission to Ireland. Roger Faligot (1994:16) makes the point that many of the descendants of the Wild Geese, by now part of French society, took part in - or were supportive of - this mission. A year later General Humbert and another French expeditionary force - too little too late - arrived to aid the 'Irish revolution'. This force succeeded in establishing a Republican directorate in Mayo for a few weeks and carried out a brief campaign before capitulating in glory to superior forces. The captured French military were well treated in Dublin before their eventual repatriation. Their Irish allies - viewed as traitors by the authorities - were not afforded the same courtesy. In the less well-known context of 19th century Canada, Irish emigrant and French settler populations intertwined to such an extent that many French Canadians proudly claim, with considerable justification, to have an Irish ancestor (Johanne Trew, personnal communication 1997). See also Grace:1993 and O'Gallagher and Dompierre 1995. In terms of the actual numbers of people involved
and their social class this is perhaps the most significant interfacing of the two peoples in modern times.  

Late 19th century Breton Celticists had made pilgrimages to the other Celtic lands but prior to the 1970s there was no wide-spread knowledge in Ireland that Brittany was in any way distinct from France. The French per se had and still have a cozy niche in Irish history. It was only during the 1970s when visiting Bretons loudly proclaimed their celtitude and, as such, their close affinity with Ireland, that some Irish people began to take the idea of Pan-Celticism on board. In this new spirit of inter-Celticity, ancient linguistic precedents were cited and most of modern history after the early Christian period was ignored. On one occasion, at an event in West Cork to commemorate the French expeditionary force of 1796, I noticed that some Breton friends of mine expressed a sense of incomprehension when they saw a French flag on display. Irish people, in general, perceive the display of the French flag as a compliment to their Breton/French guests. This small incident, however, does provide an instance of the different diasporic perspectives concerning their relationship held by Irish people and many Bretons. Brittany now has a special place in Irish popular consciousness but at the outset at least this was in the context of good will towards the French in general. The French are in turn generally well disposed towards the Irish. The following comment on the relationship between Ireland and France illustrates this,

Irish people visiting France often remark on the welcome they receive.....Very often too it is a combination of this State’s English-speaking status and the fact that it is not British or American that seems to
explain the identification. Then there is the special welcome extended to Irish people in Brittany as, loosely, fellow Celts, which bring them back on holiday again and again. ¹⁷ (Paul Gillespie, Irish Times supplement, May 1998)

As a rule however, Bretons have a greater awareness of Irish music and cultural-political realities in Ireland - particularly Northern Ireland - than other French people. Breton cultural and political activists are responsible for this level of awareness. A similar degree of popular knowledge concerning politics and culture in Brittany does not exist in Ireland. I will return to the crucial importance of Breton cultural and political activism to a sense of Ireland in Brittany on page 292 below.

Ireland’s Celtic Status

The Irish people are perceived in much of metropolitan France as unmaterialistic. The countryside is rugged and beautiful avec le Guinness qui coule à flot (‘with Guinness flowing like water’). A recent publication by Autrement edited by Michel Sailhan (Paris, 1993) is an intelligent overview of Ireland for the French tourist. Ironically in its title Irlande ‘Les latins du nord’ (1993) - (‘Ireland, the Latins of the North’) - the very aspects of the Irish character which would be dubbed celtique by the dedicated Breton celtophile are viewed as Latin. The back cover of the book reveals that ‘in the cold mists of the north, Ireland unveils her Latinness’.¹⁸ There are many different perceptions of Ireland; some are informed, others are entirely subjective. These perceptions serve to paint a picture of Ireland at once complimentary and epic. A land of wit and humour, bardic minstrelsy, heroic idealism, breathtaking
scenery and political independence. The land of the ‘free Celt’ and the carefree holiday. Historian A. Rivoallan draws attention to what is felt to be Ireland’s special position among the Celts when he says, Ireland....can assert an individuality in every area, something which other groupings would be unable to do.\(^{19}\) (1958:8)

It is also true to say that in many cases the wished-for perception of Ireland is the one that is experienced. For many, Ireland’s down-to-earth nature is its strength. It is unhurried but the roads and sign-posting are inconsistent and the public transport system can be unreliable. Navigating the roads of Ireland is part of the Celtic adventure. Many people in Brittany are fond of finding Ireland even more rustic, more spontaneous than Brittany. When however a Breton sums up his/her complimentary discourse on Ireland and the Irish with the comment, \textit{“On est tous Celtes, on est pareils”} (‘We’re all Celts, we’re the same’), they are complimenting Brittany and the Breton people at the same time. Rivoallen says that the Bretons are, ‘the most Celtic mixture that it is possible to conceive of’ (1958:5).\(^{20}\) He goes on to explain that the French are Celts by virtue of the fact that they were the ‘original’ Gauls. Modern Bretons, the descendants of these Gauls and the migrating Britons, are by implication then, doubly Celtic. They represent a powerful symbolic fusion between the continental and insular Celt. This Celtic fusion happened between the 4\(^{th}\) and 6\(^{th}\) centuries (see also, Ó Murchú 1985:10).\(^{21}\) It is the contribution of 20\(^{th}\) century political radicalism, however, that has been the most important ingredient in the raising of awareness of Irish affairs in Brittany. Before honing in on the musical environment, it is useful to take a look at this issue.
Romantic Celticism certainly enhanced the political profile of Ireland as a model for political activists seeking independence from France (see Faligot 1994: 25). As already mentioned in chapter 2, early 20th century separatists were profoundly inspired by the Irish revolutionary Padraig Pearse’s maxim ‘England’s difficulty is Ireland’s opportunity’ (see Favereau 172-173). The 1916 rising was a particularly potent symbol for Breton nationalism at this time. Even then, however, some in Brittany - like Emile Masson the socialist mayor of Pontivy - greeted the 1916 rising with caution, suggesting that it was not a revolution in the real sense if it only changed one group of proprietors for another. In this sentiment he echoed exactly the words of James Connolly and the great ideological debates of the first half of the 20th century. In very general terms though, Breiz Atao’s choice of the Irish revolutionary model was based on ideas of Celtic (and Catholic) commonality and of shared oppression. For all shades of political opinion, the Irish struggle has remained influential in Brittany ever since (see Faligot 1994: 51-55). I suggest that the photograph shown in plate 9 (page 293), encapsulates the heroic image of Ireland in 1916 idealised by Breton separatists in the interim period between the two world wars. Some in the Breiz Atao movement mooted the possibility of running guns from Ireland during the Second World War. In the immediate post war years, many sought refuge in Ireland because they were suspected of collaboration22
Plate 9: Warrior wedding: Taken from the book 'My fight for Irish Freedom' by Dan Breen. The caption underneath the photograph reads, "Wedding photograph of Dan Breen and Brighid Malone, Seán Hogan (best man) Ainé Malone (bridesmaid)."
These people, whether guilty of collaboration or wholly innocent of such a charge, represent the first major politically inspired contact in modern history between Brittany and Ireland.

In the early 1950s, Per Denez entrusted the Irish folklore commission with field tapes (together with scripts) of Bas-Breton songs and stories on wax cylinders. Much of this collection was given to the French phonothèque nationale in the late 1970s. Taped copies of them were in turn sent back to Ireland. Thirty-five of the original wax cylinders remain in the archives of the Irish folklore commission at the folklore department at UCD in Dublin to this day (Personnal communication, Rfonach Úgáin, Folklore Dept. UCD, May 1998).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s oppressive regimes and xenophobic attitudes were being challenged everywhere. The situation in northern Ireland revived interest in Irish affairs. Even though by this time the political profile of the new Breton movement was considerably different to what had gone before, these troubles offered another potent image of bloody dispute between Irish Celts and the hegemonic oppressor. Poets and writers such as Paol Keineg in his 1974 collection *L’aube dissout les monstres* (‘The dawn dissolves the monsters’) were both passionate and forthright in explaining the often brutal reality of the situation on the ground to the public in Brittany and throughout France.
There can be no doubt that many Bretons have taken a great interest in Irish politics since the 1970s because of the political impasse in the north of Ireland. During my stay in Brittany, 1992-1994, Breton language broadcaster with RBO, Sten Charbonneau, held monthly interviews in Breton with Eamon Ó Ciosáin of Maynooth College. The main thrust of these interviews was to provide continuous updates on the current political situation in Northern Ireland. Most people in Brittany have an empathy with the Nationalist population of Northern Ireland, but, as one would expect, levels of interest in the political nuances of the situation vary greatly. While many show a comprehensive understanding, others - thankfully a small minority - appear to believe that Britain invaded Northern Ireland in 1968. As in many other parts of Western Europe, well-informed radicals have formed associations which support the Republican movement in Ireland.

In order to explain and monitor political events in Ireland from a Republican perspective, literature is made available. A pamphlet, often on sale at culturo-political events in Brittany, is *Solidarité Irlande*. It is published and distributed by the association *Solidarité Irlande* in Brest (see Figure 15, page 297). The pamphlet contains editorials and socio-political satire taken from Irish sources like *An Phoblacht*. This material is augmented by a selection of articles and commentaries from the European press concerning Ireland. Since the early 1970s Bretons have taken thousands of children from Nationalist areas of Northern Ireland into their homes during the summer. For a thorough look at the complex issue of Irish-Breton political relationships since the end of the 19th century until the 1990s, see Faligot 1994.
As I have pointed out above, some radicals in Brittany have drawn parallels between the relationship of the French state to Brittany and that of Britain with Ireland. Shared celtitude has had a lot to do with the formation of this attitude. Over the last number of years however (1994-1998), the tendency among most political activists in Brittany has been to look increasingly at other European areas, both within and outside of France (notably the Basque region) for suitable parallels with their own situation. There is some evidence to suggest that throughout Western Europe at least, honest recognition of cultural diversity and the positive promotion of it, may slowly be taking precedence over the need for nationality or ethnicity to be rigidly defined by territory (see chapter 2).

Un peu d’Irlandais

This section is concerned with a popular sense of Ireland in Brittany. How Bretons view Ireland in general and Irish music in particular. “Oui, Je fais un peu d’irlandais de temps en temps”, is a phrase I have often heard. It is what many Breton traditional musicians may answer to the question, “Do you play any Irish music?” It translates as, ‘Yes I do a little Irish from time to time’. Conversely I have also heard, “Je ne fais plus d’Irlandais maintenant”, (‘I don’t do Irish anymore’). Such comments were commonplace throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As they only make sense in musical terms, they suggest a great familiarity with Irish culture.
Figure 15. Solidarité Irlande.

OÙ EN EST LE PROCESSUS DE PAIX ?

Le gouvernement britannique et le Mouvement Républicain ont échangé des messages pendant plusieurs années. Mais il y avait peu de chance qu'aucun progrès ne soit atteint dans la résolution du conflit par ce seul moyen d'échange !

L'évolution décisive est venue de John Hume (leader du SDLP) et de Gerry Adams (président du Sinn Féin) quand ils ont annoncé en septembre 1993 qu'ils s'étaient mis d'accord sur les propositions de "L'Irish Peace Initiative". Il faut à ce propos noter les médiocres réponses des représentants britanniques après cette annonce. Ils n'avaient pas été mis au courant. Enfin, le 15 décembre les gouvernements britannique et irlandais ont publié leur "Déclaration de Downing Street".

La machine de propagande des deux gouvernements se mit à appuyer sur une idée forte :
- Le mouvement Républicain était dans une situation compli-
Most Breton folk and traditional musicians see Ireland as a place of outstanding musical achievement, a place to which they have often looked for inspiration. As I have said before, numerous visits by Irish musicians have taken place with great regularity over the past twenty years. Some personalities from the professional Irish traditional music scene are practically household names to many folk music fans in Brittany. Add to this the increasing social and cultural ties between the two places, as expressed by the numerous town twinnings (see pages 305 and 306 below) and the conclusion that a strong sense of Ireland exists in Brittany is inescapable. Ireland (and *la musique irlandaise*) is well established in the popular mind as the most significant of all the other lands of the perceived ‘Celtic Diaspora’.

During the course of the 1980s in particular, I participated in many events both large and small that featured Irish traditional music. My experience was shared by many other Irish musicians during this time. There are now significant numbers of people living in Brittany who can play Irish music. During the busy tourist season, which lasts from mid-June until early September, *musique irlandaise* is often advertised. It must be said though, that outside the large festival context, when ‘a name’ from the Irish music scene may be imported to enhance the prestige of the event, there is less work in the 1990s for visiting Irish musicians than was the case throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. There are two important reasons for this. In the first instance much of the expertise now exists in Brittany without having to import it and secondly, the stiff competition for work which the *intermittent du spectacle*
system (see chapter 5) has encouraged, tends to favour giving local work to local people.

Tourists from elsewhere in France and other countries come to Brittany not only for the coastline but for the opportunity to enjoy listening to ‘Celtic music’. As I have pointed out already (chapter 6) in this they make no distinction between Irish and Breton music. A friend told me recently (August 1996) that a presenter, speaking from the stage at a festival in the town of Lannion, chided the crowd for not dancing to what he went on to describe as ‘some of the best Breton folk music he had ever heard’. The musicians were in fact playing Irish music. This comment reputedly amused many of the local people who knew Breton dancing and music very well but it went unnoticed by just as many. In Brittany at present, Irish traditional music coexists to a significant degree with the widely performed indigenous folk music of the country. It shares, as implied by the anecdote above, the same ideational and commercial categorisation in the eyes of many visitors to Brittany. Indeed Bretons who are not involved in traditional music see it all as folk celtique. 27

Bretons and Irish music

Since the 1970s then, many Bretons have been actively popularising a contemporary Celtic identity through one of the most accessible ways of doing it, playing music (see Chapman 1994:34-35). For these people music from other parts of the Celtic world became an authenticated musical pathway (after Finnegan 1989) for
those wishing to participate in a folk music which they found attractive in any case.\textsuperscript{28} From a uniquely Breton perspective, it offered membership of a diasporic musical community which countered the effects of what Brekilien has termed \textit{`Le latinisme desséchant'} (1973:24) or `arid latinity'. As mentioned before, in a later publication by Michel Sailhan (1993) \textit{latinité} is the very quality admired in the Irish. These two instances offer an interesting clash of perspectives.

Having heard Irish performers and groups in Brittany during the 1970s, young Breton musicians subsequently came to Ireland to experience the ready accessibility and apparent informality of the traditional music session (see Carson 1986 and Wilkinson 1991). The social context of the music was as attractive to them as the music itself. Within the relatively short space of ten to twenty years, some Breton (and many French) musicians have become specialists in Irish traditional music. A common strategy in Brittany is to seek after fluency in both the Irish and Breton genres. This is no easy task because the two traditions are different. It is to the credit of some of the talented musicians in Brittany that they have to a large degree succeeded in this particular bimusical pathway. Whilst these players could conceivably be called \textit{`Brettono-irlandais'} musicians, they are distinct from those who play Irish or Breton music exclusively. The instruments they use are chiefly associated with the Irish tradition and in some cases their playing of Irish music (and Breton music) could be said to be a syncretic development, a merging of the two aesthetics. This issue provokes some controversy in musical circles in Brittany - as some would suggest that the result is a watering down and confusion of the two
aesthetics, rather than a merging. Others proffer an opinion infinitely more simple. They say that there are two types of people who make use of musical instruments; these are, ‘musicians’ and those who ‘own instruments’. They do not see bimusicality and such phrases as ‘confusion of the two aesthetics’ as significant in real terms. What is at issue for them, is the musicality of the individual. This basic ‘fact’ they argue, has got nothing to do with grandiose inter-cultural debates.

Many traditional musicians in Brittany, representing an age range of between fifteen (and younger) to around forty or fifty, have at some time played Irish music. This is not an unusual phenomenon,

...Traditional music is behaviour. Any kind of music, no matter what its origins or content, can become part of a tradition and be transmitted traditionally. (Porter 1978:2).

I taught Irish traditional music (and some Breton music) for a year (1993-94) in the town of Carhaix. In this medium sized bas-Breton town close to the heartland of the ‘traditional’ fest noz (see chapter 2), there were enough people of all ages for me to have a full days work every week. My job as professeur de la flûte irlandaise existed before I took it up and the post is still there today. This is an indication of the presence of Irish music as a normal experience for those involved in folk-music in Brittany. In folk-music, the ‘session’ or boeuf irlandaise is a social context exported from Ireland and emulated in Brittany. The word boeuf has been around in France since the 1930s. Becker and Le Gurun explain that,
Revivalist musicians borrowed the term ‘boeuf’ from jazz. It describes or characterises late night musical sessions. \( \text{(Musique bretonne 1997:445)} \)

Throughout 1992-1994, there was one regular session in the Trégor every month. It took place at Le Mincoat in Trézeny on the last Friday of each month. Irish instrumental music was the main performance ingredient of the evening. This level of activity in Irish music is commonplace even in rural parts of Brittany. There are a number of Irish traditional musicians from Ireland living and working in Brittany. Some are intermittent du spectacle and some are not.

For the general public in Brittany, Ireland is no longer the unfamiliar place it was 30 years ago. At that time, any English-speaking person would have been presumed to be Anglais.\(^3\) A sense of Ireland and Irish music is to a significant degree part of popular culture in Brittany. This is largely due to the activities and actions of the Pan-Celtic culturo-political activists of the 1970s and 1980s. Also in a purely practical sense it has got quite a lot to do with the establishment of a car-ferry link between Roscoff and Cork during the late 1970s and seasonal air traffic between Cork and Rennes or Quimper. With such easy access travel between the two places is now relatively frequent. Throughout the 1960s, musicians like Stivell and Montjarret were among the best known of the cultural activists involved with Ireland and Irish music. In turn, throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s artists like the Molard brothers Patrick and Jacky, Alan Kloat’r, Christian Lemaitre, Jean-Michel Veillon and many others were also playing Irish music. In the 1980s, as these individuals became major figures in the world of professional Breton music, (playing as sonneurs de
couple and in a wide variety of groups) their influence spread. They combined their talents in one of the most popular fest noz groups of the 1980s, Pennou Skoulm. In Pennou Skoulm, Patrick Molard played the Uillean pipes- Ireland’s quintessential musical icon - regularly at festoù noz. These musicians, and others like them, have been considerably influential in the popularising of instruments like the concert flute, pipes and fiddle (hitherto chiefly associated with Irish music) in the playing of Breton music.

Alan Stivell’s father, Jord Cochevelou, made him his first Harp emulating the so-called ‘Brian Boru Harp’ displayed at Trinity college Dublin (Brekilien, 1973). It is much smaller than the Classical harp. Stivell is often credited with the re-introduction of this long abandoned smaller instrument during the 1970s. Although attractive and easily carried, this ‘Brian Boru Harp’ still has few adepts. The Harp favoured these days in Ireland and Brittany is described by scholars in Ireland, as the neo-Irish harp; a diatonic harp with a curved fore-pillar. It is a smaller version of the Classical harp; a chromatic with a straight fore-pillar.

For Popular balladeer Gilles Servat, who recorded his latest album sur les quais de Dublin (‘on the quays of Dublin’ 1996) in Dublin, Ireland and the political troubles there have become an important part of his inspiration. In a recent interview with Servat, Daniel Morvan writes,

Servat marries past utopias to the indescribable aroma of Celtic nostalgia. And more importantly, he reveals himself to be more Irish than ever.
...“Sur les quais de Dublin” is simply the story of a man who has patiently constructed his own homeland, a singer who has folded the geography of his flights of fancy and conquered the secret lightness of the poets of space, of the utopians, in league with the isles.  

(Ar Men July 1996:68)

This inter-Celtic vision of the world, although intensely personal, mirrors that of many people whom I have met over the years in Brittany. What one could describe as Servat’s ‘geo-poetic keltia’ is popularly reflected on the shelves of most record and book shops in Brittany. As Kubik states,

..culture is precisely what one is not born with, but what one learns during one’s lifetime in the environment in which one grows up and lives (Kubik, 1994:20).

Against the backdrop of popular celtitude, the experience of traditional music for many Bretons could conceivably be referred to as ‘Celtico-Breton’. Most musicians habitually pursue excellence in the terms of their immediate socio-musical experience and, from this base - as folk musicians are no different to others - individual musical strategies lead people in all directions. As Martin Stokes has pointed out,

A moment’s reflection on our own musical practises brings home to us the sheer profusion of identities and selves that we possess.( 1994:4).

This premise is at the heart of inter-cultural musical exchanges on a personal level between individual musicians who relate well. It is only when groups of people nominally representing two or more musical traditions get together to produce something that problems of perception as to whose music is the ‘richest’ or the ‘most prestigious’ can arise. I will return to the general issue of the ‘psychology of culture
contact below (after Kubik, 1994:17), when I come to deal with the attitudes of cultural activists.

*Jumelages* and commerce

Since the heady days of inter-celtic euphoria which characterised the 1970s and early 1980s in Brittany, many relationships have developed on a variety of levels between Brittany and Ireland. We will now take a brief look at some public aspects of this popular sense of Ireland and how they are expressed in social and economic life in Brittany.

Nowaday’s town-twinning is a popular idea throughout Europe and beyond. There is no doubt, however, that in the Irish context, Breton towns are the most popular twinning partners. Moving around Basse Bretagne and the southern Irish counties in particular one cannot fail to notice the number of towns, villages, cities and rural town lands (as in the case of Coolea and Lanrivain) which are twinned. The numerous town twinnings (*jumelages* in French) between Ireland and Brittany were at the out-set the result of the enthusiasm of people like Polig Montjarret. The first twinnings were initiated exclusively from the Breton side. As yet, it is too early to tell if they will continue far into the next millennium because their continuance depends on small groups of dynamic and motivated individuals on both sides. Under the auspices of town twinning schemes, people travel to meet each other in their respective hometowns. This happens at least once a year in the case of proactive
associations. Visitors are lodged with partner families. In this way long standing friendships have become established. Business partnerships may on occasion be initiated (exchange of trainee personnel for example) but the vast bulk of the activities organised by twining committees is social. I have attended many such celebrations in Brittany. The summer visit of people from the Irish partner town is usually the pretext for such get-together. However fund-raising events organised to facilitate exchange visits also take place during the rest of the year. They are usually fun-filled occasions involving some low-key pomp and ceremony. In the summer of 1995, I attended an event at Tréglamus in the Trégor at which visitors from the partner town Kilgarvan in Co. Cork took part in a sheep shearing competition with the locals. At other such event’s I have seen tug o’ war competitions and many traditional rural games of both Irish and Breton provenance. All of these occasions have an ongoing musical backdrop of both Breton and Irish music. For a comprehensive up-to-date list of the number of Breton and Irish town twinning schemes see Figure 16 pages 307-308.

The most obvious piece of information that can be deduced from the list below is that most of the Breton towns are in the départements of Basse Bretagne and most of the Irish locations are in Munster, the southernmost Irish Province. A little knowledge of the geography of both places establishes that certain criteria are followed. The places twinned are of similar size, location and character. For example a seaside town like Penmarc’h is twinned with Baltimore and so on. A city is obviously twinned with another city.
Town twinnings between Brittany and Ireland

a) The symbol = means "twinned with"

b) The first two digits of the bracketed postcodes show the *departemental* location of each town,

- 56 Morbihan,
- 29 Finistère,
- 22 Côtes d’Armor
- 35 Ille et Vilaine

ALLAIRE (56350) = NAAS
ARZON (56640) = LAHINCH
AURAY (56400) = CASTELBAR
BOURBRIAC (22390) = MIDDLETON
BREST (29200) = DUN LAOGHAIRE
BUBRY (56310) = MACROOM
BULAT - PESTITIEN (22160) = BALLYFERRITER
CARHAIX-PLOUGUER (29270) = CARRICKMACROSS
ESQUIBIEN (29113) = BARNA
ETEL (56410) = KILLORGLIN
GLOMEL (22110) = CAMP
GUESNACH (29118) = EYRECOURT
GOURIN (56110) = RUSH
GUER (56380) = BANDON
Cavan (22140) = BELTURBET
CHANTEPIE (35135) = DONAGHMEDE
CHATRES-DE-BRETAGNE (35131) = NEWCASTLEWEST
CHATEAUGIRON (35410) = MANORHAMILTON
CHATEAULIN (29150) = CLONAKILTY
CLOHARS-CARNOET (29360) = DUNMORE EAST
CORPS-NUDS (35150) = KILDARE
CREHEN (22130) = KILMORE QUAY
LANDEAN (35133) = BALROTHERY
LANRIVAIN (22480) = BALLYMAKEERA (Coolea)
Larmor-Baden (56790) = NEWPORT
Larmor-Plage (56260) = YOUGHAL
Le Faouet (56320) = HEADFORD
Guichen (35890) = SKERRIES
Guidel (56520) = CARRYGALINE
Guilers (29820) = BALLYHAUNIS
Guingamp (22200) = SHANNON
Guiscriff (56560) = GLENAMADDY
Hengoat (22450) = RINGASKIDDY
Kergrist-Moelou (22110) = CILL NA MARTRA
Locmiquelic (56570) = CASTLETOWNBERE
Loccoal-Mendon (56550) = KINVARA
Lorient (56100) = GALWAY
Mael-Pestivien (22160) = FEOHANNAGH
MALANSAC (56220) = SWINFORD
MAURON (56430) = NEWMARKET
Town twinnings between Brittany and Ireland (continued).

MELLAC (29130) = Piltown / Ownings
MELRAND (56310) = Ballyneen - Enniskean
PENMARCH (29760) = Skibbereen & Baltimore
PERROS-GUIREC (22700) = ? à vérifier
PLOUGAGAT (22170) = Oughterard
PLOUARET (22420) = Charleville
PLOUEZEC (22470) = Ballinamore
PLOUGASTEL - DAULAS (29470) = Westport
PLOUGONVEN (29216) = Inishcarriga
PLOUGRÉSCANT (22820) = An Spideal
PLOUGHINNEC (56680) = Mountrath
PEUMEURIT-QUINTIN (22480) = Coolena
PLOMEUR-BODOU (22560) = Crosshaven
PLOMEUR (56500) = Fermoyle
PLOERMEL (56800) = Cobh
PLOUENEVEZ-LOCHRIST (29430) = Mooncoin
PLOUZANE (29230) = Kilrush
PLOUZEVET (29143) = Mountrath
PLUVIGNER (56330) = Caherciveen
POMMERIT-LE-VICOMTE (22200) = Miltown/Castlemaine
ST. SERVAIN (22160) = Ventry
ST. THURIEN (29380) = Cillmacown
THORIGNE-SUR-LE-FOUILLARD (35235) = Lusk
TREGLAMUS (22540) = Kilgarvan
TREGUIER (22220) = Mallow
TREGUNC (29110) = Carrick on Suir
TREMARGAT (22110) = Ballyvourney
QUEVÉN (56330) = Dunmore
QUIMPER (29310) = Dunnamanway
QUINTIN (22800) = Cool-Aodha
QUISTINIC (56310) = Loughshinney
RENNES (35000) = Cork
ROSPEZ (22300) = Carraroe
ROSTRENEN (22110) = Kanturk
REZE (Loire-Atlantique) = Dundalk
SARZEAU (56370) = Clifden
SENE (56800) = Donegal-Ballyshannon
SPEZET (29135) = Roundwood
ST. ARMEL (56450) = Culladuff/Cleggan
ST. NICODEM (22160) = Dunquin

Figure 16: Town twinnings. This list was provided by Teckla Coatval in May 1998. It is adapted from the files available at AFCCRE (Association Française Conseil Communes Région Europe).
A twinning can spring simply from the meeting of two individuals. The twinning of the town-lands of Lanrivain (Breton-speaking) and Ballymakeera (Irish-speaking) is an example of this. The level of inter-personal relationships which have developed between the communities in Ireland and Brittany as a direct result of town twinnings is considerable. It represents a level of knowledge each vis-à-vis the other that was not present before the 1970s. If this is the sum total of popular contemporary celtitude then it is already a positive inter-cultural force. The semaine de la danse irlandaise et bretonne, which took place every year until 1996 at Confort-Berhet, was an initiative based on friendship between individuals in Brittany and Ireland. As a convivial, entertaining and informative event that included sessions festoù noz, concerts and workshops it provided a vivid illustration of celebratory celtitude. (See poster on Plate 10 page 310.)

People say that the Bretons and the Irish are alike. Attitudes to having a good time are often mentioned. Among the older generation, in particular, the Catholic religion is considered as a significant bond. For some Breton separatists, a shared political inheritance of oppression from a larger neighbour figures in their comparison of the Irish with themselves. Others refer to the existence of languages which share the same Celtic root. In conversation, many will say that the traditional music of the two places is similar. All these things point to a popular Breton conception of celtitude in which Ireland figures significantly. Some Breton 'Irlandophiles' have identified a market for Irish produce and turned their interest in Ireland into a thriving business concern. Les comptoirs irlandais are a chain of shops.
Plate 10: Fest noz/ Ceilidh. This poster adapted from a photo by ‘Marius’ and printed at Henry’s printers Pedernec, advertises the key-note event of the 1995 dance workshop at Confort-Berhet and Prat.
which specialise in Irish produce - everything from ginger biscuits and bacon to smoked salmon and whiskey. They are found all over Brittany and in various locations throughout France. Ideas of a pan-Celtic ‘arc atlantique’ are attractive to many in a very practical sense as they tie in neatly with some current European initiatives.33

Irish traditional dance music however remains the most significant aspect of a cultural sense of Ireland in Brittany. All of the social and commercial concerns mentioned above use Irish music, both recorded and live, to advertise their activities. During my two year stay in Brittany, I played at many functions aimed at either promoting Irish produce in Brittany or simply cashing in on the well-known attachment of Irish music and social drinking. At one event at which I played in the summer of 1994, the organisers - a local comité d’animation near to Pont L’Abbé in Finistère - concluded that Irish music was great for encouraging people to drink and eat. While handing over our cachet the following morning, in an ambience of bonhomie, one of the organisers told me ‘we had a group of Portuguese dancers here last year ...no good...we didn’t sell anything like the number of meals and drinks that we sold last night...Irish music is fantastic’ (Personal communication, August 1994). I sang ‘dirty old town’ three times that night (see Figure 17 page 313 ). In folk-music performance contexts throughout Brittany, that do not involve the uniquely Breton fest noz, Irish music features strongly. As I have indicated above, this has been the case since the 1970s at all levels, festivals, concerts and café-cabarets. Breton music is most often performed on the occasion of the fest noz in conjunction
with dancing and does not lend itself so readily to small *cabaret*-type venues. Outside of the summer festival environment, Irish music is most often performed on the small stage in *café cabarets* or in Irish pubs. In this case all the musicians are usually resident in Brittany. This is the present situation and it is not without some tensions.

**Cultural activism and Irish music**

Irish music then has been a regular feature of cultural life in Brittany since the 1970s. At this time, Breton cultural and musical activists, like Stivell, gave their imprimatur to Irish music, as *musique celtique*. Aided by the focal point of the Lorient festival, widespread social contact between Bretons and Irish people affected popular perceptions of a common *celtitude*. Irish musicians were also travelling to all parts of Western Europe at this time. It is important to re-state that the situation concerning Irish music played in the Breton context, however, has one crucially important nuance which makes it different from Irish music played in other parts of Western Europe. It is only in contemporary Brittany that Irish traditional and folk music coexists in the same local Celtic ‘folk space’ as Breton music itself.

Having drawn attention to political radicalism in Brittany and its position regarding Irish politics above, I will now turn specifically to an examination of the attitudes of today’s cultural activists.
Figure 17: Dirty Old Town. This figure shows one of the requests for this song handed up to me on the stage. It also indicates how the money is raised to pay for or help to pay for the music at many local events in Brittany. The phrase ‘articles majorés de 5f pendant la soirée spectacle’ means the price of all drinks and meals will be augmented by 5 francs during the show'.
Although there is a significant influence from political radicalism, people of all socio-economic classes and all political hues are to be found among this grouping. By looking at the area of cultural activism as expressed through music, one can begin to gauge current trends in how celtitude relates to the Irish Diaspora.

The interceltic microcosm

Musician and teacher Gwenola Ropars (Personal communication, Carhaix March 1994) suggested to me that the reason why Ireland became so important as a potent symbol for Bretons during the 1970s was its political independence as a Celtic nation state. French centralism was viewed as the political force which had culturally impoverished Brittany. The Irish example in political, linguistic and music matters, became a model for many young idealistic Bretons to follow.

Visiting Ireland on holiday during this time however, these idealists often discovered that Irish people, although welcoming and hospitable, often viewed them as just another group of friendly continental people. Their status as fellow Celts, although roundly feted, was not really that important from an Irish perspective. To some of these people the lack of in-depth knowledge of things inter-Celtic, which their peers in Ireland possessed, came as a surprise. As pointed out above, the popular Irish diasporic perspective on the Celtic world per se was different to that held in Brittany during the heyday of Breton celtitude in the 1970s and early 1980s. Outside of key
Because of the genuine welcome afforded to them and the life-style and culture they encountered there however, Brittany became a favoured destination for Irish groups and professional bands during the 1970s. There was a period around the early 1980s when, according to some, the number of groups playing Irish music reached saturation level. It over-stretched the market that was capable of sustaining it. Outside of the ambience of charged inter-Celticity at Lorient, most of these musicians were engaging enthusiastically with a favoured part of continental Europe and the ready sociability of the Bretons and not celtitude in particular. Viewed from the perspective of Breton cultural activism however, Ireland lost some of its mystique when Irish musicians in general did not appear to show a reciprocal interest in Breton music. Such received ideas of what could be termed ‘Irish folk imperialism’, however, are symptomatic of considerably different diasporic perspectives rather than any lack of interest in Breton music.

Among many of the people in Brittany presently engaged in the professional performance of traditional music, Irish music is less often cited as a source of inspiration than before. Musicians who brought Irish music to public attention in the 1970s and who participated in the emergence of Breton music as a group phenomenon on the fest noz circuit, have effectively re-situated Irish music as but one of the many influences on Breton music. In both a social and musical sense, this is a natural and
necessary progression. It can be read as a move towards a different distinctly Breton francophone-centred form of musical celtitude at both local and global level.

In a small book concerning Breton music, *La musique bretonne* (1994), the recent and very present influence of the Irish musical diaspora receives scant reference. In contrast, a generous sprinkling of other world musics are cited as recent influences. The same company (*coop breiz*) published another small book by Eric Falc’her (1995) dedicated exclusively to Irish music. They were secure in the knowledge that such a publication would have popular appeal in Brittany. In the 1990s, Irish music is familiar to a wide cross-section of the public in Brittany. My own professional experience has shown me the extent of this interest. I was able to make a living playing and teaching Irish music there for over two years.

From being focused on *les pays celtiques* in the last decade, there is a palpable sea change among cultural activists in Brittany, especially in Basse Bretagne. On the macro level, there is an opening up to other regions and culture zones outside of the Celtic countries. In the world of education and minority languages, Ireland is less relevant than the Basque region. The Basque example has directly inspired the *Diwan* schools system. Significantly, part of the Basque country is in France. Throughout the 1990s Basque delegations have been a familiar sight at major Breton cultural events.

Even during the 1970s and 1980s, the time when Ireland was the symbolic heartland of Celtdom for many Bretons, a basic difference between the two peoples
concerning diasporic perspective was present. Through the popularity of Irish music, the Irish watched as their diasporic influence spread throughout Europe. From a Breton perspective, however, a new inter-Celtic vision was unfolding. Culturally pro-active Bretons viewed the Irish as partners in this vision. Popular inter-Celticism was a vital and important cultural force in Brittany at that time, but it did not have the same broadly-based significance in Ireland. This difference in diasporic perspective is at the root of some inter-Celtic confusion.

As in many other parts of Europe, Irish music will always have a discerning public in Brittany. However, its exotic ‘head-ship of the Celts’ heyday there has now passed. While it may be the case that many people are more knowledgeable about Irish music and culture than they used to be, Breton celtitude requires a new equilibrium where the focus is on Brittany and not Ireland.

Irish music as cultural bogeyman

In the 1970s, then, many actively involved in Breton culture were keen to embrace Irish music as a counter balance to French cultural influence. Now, in the 1990s, this Irish influence has become a bogeyman for some. Many Breton musicians may have chosen to play Irish music and Ireland now has a place in the popular imagination, but some people who are engaged in cultural and linguistic activism in the 1990s express unease about the idea of Bretons playing Irish music. Irish music, because of its ‘easy’ attraction, is perceived by them as something of a seductress which draws many talented young Bretons away from the practice and perfection of their ‘own Music’. They suggest that Irish music is best played by Irish people
only. I have heard Breton traditional musicians come under fire periodically from Breton cultural activists for not learning Breton and for playing too much Irish music - after all a ‘foreign genre’. In the light of the positive status Irish music represented for bretonnitude in the 1970s, to equate an inability to speak Breton with playing Irish music is an interesting paradox. The same criticism is not levelled at Jazz, Rock or Classical musicians who happen to be Breton. One can speculate that this is because these genres are not perceived of as impinging upon Breton identity. This attitude irritates many non-bretonnant musicians who, whilst sympathetic to the aims of the language movement, are annoyed by such assertions. Such opinions nonetheless represent a change in the attitude towards Irish music in Brittany from that current in the 1970s. A time when it was considered a bulwark in support of Breton music and identity in its role as Celtic music’s champion.

This perspective on Irish music may be the preserve of a comparatively small number of people, consciously active in the politico-cultural sphere. However, it is a strong undercurrent which I have often felt. Many also point out that Breton music is of an older pedigree than today’s Irish music and they authenticate this claim by citing the continued existence of scales with unusual intervals not present in Irish music. One could argue that too much insistence on the influence of people who are activists diverts attention away from the more popularly perceived reality. But it is after all socio-cultural and political activists who form popular attitudes. These attitudes in turn have consequences for the ‘real’ world of economics and social
organisation. Cultural activists are a small yet enthusiastic and pro-active group of people. Their influence is crucially important.

The popularity (and variety of) events which come under the label of ‘Celtic’ music in Brittany today, is in some way due to the activities of those who were at the forefront of re-investing tradition with new vigour and meaning in the 1970s. It was conspicuous activists who pursued their dreams, in creative endeavour, in education, in economics, or simply in the (less sublimely motivated) path of personal ambition. Cultural activity, brotherhood and economic strategies coexist, sometimes in ideological conflict and sometimes in harmony. In this sense celtitude is both a commercial and a sentimental reality.

Diasporic re-location

Seeger says,

By examining music and ethnicity in their wider socio-political context as well as over time, we can present the complexity and vitality of both music and human aspirations (1994:13)

A local Celtic music scene has developed in Brittany since the early 1990s. In this café cabaret circuit, Celtic music is presented as a genre related to, though apart from, Irish music. ‘Celtic’ music evokes an ambience of mystery and reflection – it is usually in concert format and an entrance fee is paid. A boeuf irlandais (Irish music session), on the other hand is a free-for-all session with a (hoped for) jolly ‘flowing bowl’ type ambience. Increasingly no entrance fee is paid. The musicians may get free drink or a fee from majoration (see Figure 17, page 311). This may be viewed as either a symbolic banalisation of Irish music or as a recognition that Irish music is
singly intimate and friendly. That is a music to be participated in rather than marveled at. Although the prestige of Irish music for concert performance has decreased significantly over the course of the 1990s, attachment to ideas of a 'Celtic' community are more popular than ever. Breton music is played at festoù noz and concerts. 'Celtic' music has appeared to challenge a position hitherto held by Irish music in the café cabaret circuit.

Local Celtic music in Brittany is a concert-orientated repertory of essentially Breton music with a few Irish tunes (for the most part) thrown in. This scenario is relatively absent from local music scenes in other areas of Europe. I suggest that this is because, in other local European contexts, Irish music does not vie for symbolic space with the indigenous folk genre in the way that it does in Brittany. In Brittany, Irish music and Breton music are both perceived as Celtic - they are also considerably different in character. During a year-long festival advertised as a celebration of Irish culture in 1996, the imaginaire irlandais, much of the Irish traditional music content was presented within the context of Celtic music. The event finished officially and symbolically at the Lorient festival in August.

In the global arena of cultural activism and professional musical promotion in Brittany, Irish music is attached to the musique celtique banner. In this context, its diasporic location changes. Cultural and economic movers in Brittany, such as those behind the Lorient festival, are symbolically claiming the Celtic crown for entry into the new millennium. In this way, Breton merges with Celtic to find its niche in
the World Music industry. This process also ensures a large *francophone* presence in a hitherto *anglophone* 'Celtic music' world. From this perspective, Irish music is but an integral part. It is not the cuckoo in the nest that gets the biggest share of prestige. As pointed out above, this macro schema is reflected in the everyday conceptual space occupied by traditional music in Brittany today.

**Conclusion**

The resonances from *les Monts d'Arrée* (place), the *fest noz* (event) and the *gavotte* (genre) have served as a popular symbolic galvanising force for local identity in Brittany in the form of *pan-bretonnitude*. In the same way Lorient (place), the *grand spectacle* (event) and *musique celtique* (genre) represent a global identity which in turn resonates throughout the westernised *francophone* world and beyond. The 'glocal' space in Brittany is the new place where the two exist side by side. Where these influences coalesce with the Irish diasporic influence (as represented by Irish music in Brittany) a realignment takes place. In this realignment, the diasporic influence of Irish music - long in the ascendant during the 1970s - is enveloped by and included as part of *celtitude*. In this way Irish music in Brittany loses its diasporic location. In the rising global tide of 'Celtic' music, Irish music, the Esperanto of the European folk-revival, is abstracted and post-modernised or Celticised.

The Romantic Celticists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries paved the way for the Celtic revival of the 1970s; their residual influence is still perceptible. The
popular *celtitude* of the 1970s stems from a search for a socio-political and cultural alternative, an ‘otherness’ to bland (oppressive) imperial Britishness or Frenchness. *La musique celtique* is now definitely *à la mode* in France, Britain and North America. Now in the late 1990s all the signs are that another ‘Celtic development’ will include large tracts of Europe in a reconstructed ‘Euro-Celt culture zone’. This is based on ancient history but it will have a concrete ‘its all in the packaging’ economic strategy for the new millennium. This is certainly the impression that I took from reading about a current European cultural awareness project, the *Europa Celtica Raphael* project in 1996-97. In a scenario where there are Celts everywhere, the Celts move from the periphery to the centre stage. On the one hand, this is likely to precipitate a firming up of boundaries and a search for new local meanings or alliances that seek to devalue or dismantle this type of catch-all global ‘Celtica’. From another angle of course, *celtitude* embraces life-style choices. Choice of the ‘Celtic world’ can mean, as it does for people like the folk-singer Donovan, a ‘connection with the dream-self’ and a view of the bard as healer (RTE 1 interview, 1998: December 5th). A philosophy based on the interpretation and positive practical application of legend and myth. It is essentially a fluid post-modern concept open to different readings. It is real simply because people say it is. The notion of *celtitude* has over the last twenty years created a community of real people who communicate with each other regularly and who know each other well.
This began with the Scots-Irish in the early 18th century and continued throughout the desperate era of the famine floods of the 19th century, through to the steady stream of economic migrants which has characterised much of the 20th century.

For many reasons, but essentially because of colour and their use of the English language, the Irish emigrants of the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries found it slightly easier to integrate into the host English-speaking societies within which they found themselves.

This has been exacerbated, both by the 1970s IRA campaign in Britain itself and major politically motivated miscarriages of justice, perpetrated against innocent Irish people like the 'the Birmingham six'. During the mid-1990s, globally popular productions like Riverdance - have of course given Ireland a new trendy sheen in Britain. That is, a 'positive aggressive' image redolent of economic success. At this very moment however (May 1999) Combat 18, a British fascist group, have threatened to attack the Irish population in Britain.

The Greater London council (GLC), under the direction of Ken Livingstone, assisted in the publishing of a book entitled "Nothing But The Same Old Story" The roots of anti-Irish racism (Information On Ireland, London 1984). This small publication goes a long way towards the explanation of anti-Irish prejudice in Britain.

The success of the Irish soccer team has been cited as of great significant in terms of Ireland's international profile. One could add to that the international success of some Irish pop/rock groups.

Although many in Western Europe now eulogise over the 'music and the crack' in the pubs of Ireland, it is only during the years of the so-called ballad boom in the 1960s that music in pubs began to be a feature of normal social life in Ireland. In the not-so-distant past (up until the 1980s), outside the domain of the concert, ceili dance or private house party, Irish music had to be sought out, generally in off-the-beaten-track rural places or relatively obscure city pubs. Things change quickly. For more information on the distinction between 'folk' and 'traditional' in the Irish context see Wilkinson (1991:4-6).

Guinness is currently the main sponsor of events involving the performance of Irish music abroad. As part of an extensive promotion during the late 1980s and early 1990s the well-known drinks company employed many 'hit squads' of musicians to play sessions at selected pub outlets all over Europe flying them to and from Ireland at regular intervals. The dark brew is now a familiar sight at pubs throughout Europe, but connoisseurs insist that it does not taste as good outside of Ireland. I have heard this analogy extended in reference to the performance of Irish music abroad.

The harp and shamrock was the emblem of Irish freedom throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, appearing on both the flag of the United Irishmen in the 1790s and latterly that of the Fenian brotherhood in the late 1880s. The crown on top of the harp officially symbolised British rule in Ireland. This icon can still be seen on most of the older public buildings both north and south of the Irish border.

The notion of a Scottish murder ballad being in some way happy may be curious. However, clearly the language barrier played a major part in this, as did the presentation of the music by the touring groups themselves as something de-politicised and light-hearted.
In some of these custom built establishments the musician’s social function is little better than that of a human juke-box. For this reason many musicians regard them as the coal-face of performance situations. There are, however, a few notable exceptions where care is taken to balance making money with the creation of favourable performance conditions. These establishments tend to be the ones part-owned or licensed by musicians or music lovers.

Anyone interested in finding out more about what these companies do, the scale of their operations or the profile of their customers may like to contact them directly. The Irish Pub Design and Installation Company, 31 Howth road Dublin or the Irish Pub Company, Warrington house, Mount street crescent Dublin 2.

RTE - Radio Telifis Eireann is the Irish national broadcasting company.

The Pogues are a folk/rock type fusion group of London/Irish extraction. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s they were hugely popular with young Breton (and continental) audiences who were not ‘into’ folk-music but liked irreverent ‘Celtic’ rock music with a social conscience. Their charismatic lead singer (ex-lead singer of late) Shane Mc Gowan, was noted for his on stage drinking and chain smoking during a performance. The popularity of the song ‘dirty old town’ in France and Brittany in particular is entirely due to the Pogues.

The majority of the Wild Geese came from the south western counties of Ireland. They were brought to France throughout the 18th century by ships engaged in smuggling brandy and wine. On these journeys they were listed in the ships paperwork as ois sauvages or ‘wild geese,’ hence their historic appellation.

For detailed accounts of this crucial period in Irish history see Pakenham 1969 and Stewart 1995.

During the year of 1847 when the Irish famine was at its height, about 95% of the unfortunate Irish children who had lost their parents before arrival at the quarantine station of Grosse ile on the St Laurence, were adopted by Québécois families. This accounted for around 500 children in that year alone. The adoptions were organised by the bishop of Québec with the stipulation that the children keep their family names (see O’ Gallagher and Dompierre 1995).

For a basic overview of contemporary popular perceptions of the relationship between France and Ireland see the Irish Times supplement ‘Connecting the Nations’ - France and Ireland 1798 and 1998 (May 20th 1998).

dans les froides vapeurs du nord, l'Irlande livre sa latinité. (1993:1)

L'Irlande ... peut dans tous les domaines prétendre à une existence individuelle dont les autres groupes celtiques seraient bien incapables. (Rivoallen 1958:8).

Le mélange le plus celtique qu'il soit possible de concevoir (Rivoallan 1958:5)

The Irish saints Brigid and Ronan also travelled to Brittany in the early Christian period. Their names are remembered in the ecclesiastical centre of Locronan and the village of Berhet.

‘Suspected’ is the operative word here. During the Nazi occupation anyone engaged in Breton cultural activities was often presumed to be a less than loyal French citizen.
23 I remember vividly the effect that his poem ‘Arrest Under Special Powers’ (as performed by the Breton group Galorn) had in some ‘mixed’ venues in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s. Although the poem itself was in French, the title, when announced, had the effect of polarising the audience. Some cheered, some maintained a stony silence, others walked out.

24 It would appear that the Breton speaking audience for Charbonneau’s program had an ongoing interest in Ireland. I regularly heard the Wolf Tones, a folk group associated with Irish Republicanism singing ‘oh ah up the ‘ra (IRA)’ on radio emissions in Brittany - both RBO and RKB - never in Ireland.

25 ‘An phoblacht’ meaning ‘the people’ is the weekly newspaper of the Republican movement in Ireland.

26 During the course of a conversation with some friends in Belfast in the 1980s, a general agreement was reached. In short, everyone expressed a desire to see an end to the shooting and bombing. This agreement was informed by general despair and not by any partisan political feelings among the company. I can remember being somewhat taken aback when I heard a Breton acquaintance who was present say, “too many bombs in Belfast and not enough in Brest”. Whilst no doubt innocently looking for inter-Celtic kudos, the blunt nature of the statement dumbfounded the company. Although a well-meant expression of presumed solidarity, it was entirely wide of the mark.

27 On one occasion, I had dealings with a Tregorois sports association many of whose members rejected Breton music as jolklorique (quaint) and repetitive. At the same time they praised Irish music. I in turn expressed praise for Breton music and the Jest noz. Over a short period of time this praise had an effect. The same people began to contemplate a fest noz as a desirable and necessary part of their social events calendar in the future.

28 In her publication ‘the hidden musicians’ (1989), Ruth Finnegan identifies ‘pathways’ as a better way than ‘worlds of music’ to describe the musical strategies of urban based musicians. The term is more fluid and all-embracing as it takes in process as well as product. Viewed from this perspective, Celtic music may well become a genre after the commercial hype has died down.

29 Les musiciens revivalistes ont emprunté au Jazz le terme “boeuj”, caractérisant des rencontres musicale tardives... (Musique bretonne 1997:445)

30 With elderly people this still happens occasionally. Once in conversation with a man in a café outside Lannion, I was complimented on the beauty of English gardens. The comment that Vous les Anglishes parlez Français comme vous avez des billes dans la bouche (“you English speak French as if you’ve got marbles in your mouths”) was also passed. The same person praised the beauty of Irish music. I dropped the ‘I’ word at every available opportunity and whistled jigs at lulls in the conversation but to no avail. I finally gave up my assertions of Irishness and accepted the compliment on behalf of the gardens of England.

31 Servat marie les utopies passées à l’indéfinissable arôme de la nostalgie celte. Et surtout, il se revele plus irlandais que jamais ....... “Sur les quais de Dublin” est simplement une histoire d’homme qui s’est patiemment construit un territoire, un chanteur qui a plié la géographie à ses rêves aériens, a conquis la secrète légèreté des poètes de l’espace, des utopistes, avec les connivence desîles. (Ar Men, July 1996:68)
This association is a body which is concerned with the development of cultural relations between European countries. It is based at 30 rue Alsace Lorraine 45000 Orleans, France.

The expression *arc atlantique* is a term used by European economists and sociologists. It refers to Brittany and the western fringes of Ireland, the UK, Spain, and Portugal, areas which have all suffered from rural depopulation and economic crises throughout the 1980s. Studies have been financed with the intention of creating a new socio-economic locus in these areas, encouraging partnership between local representatives, universities and businesses (Bernadette Andreosso, Personal communication, May 1998).

In Breton music one generally requires a *compère*, it is therefore not as apparently accessible as Irish sessions. The ‘session’ appears to welcome the automatic involvement of anyone with an instrument. Enthusiastic foreigners trying their hand at Irish music without having first made an effort to understand the apparently informal social ground rules for participation, are not always welcomed with open arms at Irish music sessions. As many discovered there is a protocol for participation in Irish sessions and if it is breached in an apparently insensitive manner the perpetrator can be cleverly ostracised. (see Carson, 1986:55-58)

The Irish attitude to ‘having the crack’ is similar to the Breton attitude to having a good time. This readiness to enter in festive mood on both their parts, was easily interpreted as ‘Celtic behaviour’. Significantly many of the French musicians (Irish players) who come to Ireland are quite happy to describe themselves as Bretons as the Irish public are now (in the 1990s) more aware of Brittany as distinct from France than hitherto.

For instance, when I talked to her in the late summer of 1994, Noluen Corbel, who then worked as a presenter on Breton language television, lamented the fact that many young talented Breton musicians were devoting too much time to the perfection of their skills in Irish music and neglecting their own ‘native music’ (interview, June 1994). This type of perspective is current among some cultural activists.

A type of *bombarde* (see chapter 2) from the *pays Vannetais*, has a special scale and repertoire attached to it. Creative musicians like Jean-Michel Veillon has had a flute made in this style to play the Vannetais repertoire.

I note that agencies in other parts of France wish to enter the Celtic domain. A project for a multi-media package concerning the art, culture and traditions of the Celtic peoples in Europe, has been initiated by *Technologies des systèmes d’information* at Bordeaux (1997). A similar process may be happening in the world of folk music in Britain where Scottish Welsh, Northumbrian and Irish music have formed a festival ‘Celtic’ category for quite some time.
SUMMATION

The concerns expressed in this dissertation have a subtle interrelationship that are imprinted upon them by my own background (see introduction) and my experience as a performing musician and teacher in Brittany. In it I have described the complex role of traditional music in contemporary socio-cultural and economic life in Brittany.

In chapters one and two I dealt with aspects of cultural-political identity in Brittany. People mirror what I have called ‘compound ethnicity’. Much depends on the situation in which they find themselves as to how they might express an allegiance. In different circumstances they may be Trégorois, Breton, French or celtique (Celtic) or in some cases all at once. Compound ethnicity exhibits aspects which eclipse both the local and global. Chapter one describes Brittany and specifically considers the unselfconscious aspects of bretonnitude. Chapter two then deals with the political reality of Brittany and examines the pro-active aspects of bretonnitude such as political and cultural activism. Breton traditional dance is the prime vehicle by which local identity ‘pays’ is expressed. It also provides an accessible forum for a Pan-Breton cultural identity. Both are encapsulated in the important and immensely popular festoù noz (night dances). The dance tradition and the fest noz are cited as the ideological powerhouse of pan-Breton identity.

Chapters three and four continued on the theme of the fest noz and provided a window into the world of one of western Europe’s most vibrant traditional musics. Chapter three looked at the way traditional music is passed on considering such
issues as institutionalised learning, orality, literacy and musical instruments. It also looked at the social context of dancing. Chapter four provided a description of the structure and form of some of the most popular and symbolic Pan-Breton round dances performed at most festoù noz. It dealt with the most emblematic Breton vocal and instrumental dance genres and their musical dynamic. As all traditional genres in Brittany are bound to the dance tradition through repertoire, an overview of these important and related idioms was included in order to situate the dance music.

Chapter five considered the complimentary role of both the fest noz and French social legislation showing how they have encouraged traditional music professionalism and the construction of popular musical celtitude. This chapter linked the local and global aspects of the social world of traditional music in Brittany. Festoù noz are the keystone of contemporary emblematic cultural identity and their importance to musical and socio-economic life cannot be overstressed. The status of intermittent du spectacle put in place by state legislation and the discourse provoked by the socio-economic impact of professionalism, were outlined here. It is within the world of professional traditional music that Breton music becomes Celtic music, moving from the fest-noz or dance environment to the concert stage, both within Brittany and abroad. The result is a large body of professional musicians who present themselves periodically as ‘Celtic’ musicians.

Chapters six and seven dealt with the background to, and the nature of, the cultural interfacing between Brittany and Ireland within the context of celtitude. Celtitude is examined in chapter six and is shown to be underpinned by music. Chapter six used the concept of celtitude to examine various popular understandings
of the term Celtic. It documented the process by which combinations of mythic, historic, aesthetic and economic factors invest the constantly changing physical environment with reinvigorated cultural meaning. In Brittany the promotion of ‘Celtic’ music is the principal way in which this Pan-Celtic agenda is expressed. Popular perceptions of celtitude from both the anglophone and francophone perspectives were examined here and were shown to differ substantially.

The musical globalisation of bretonnitude has valorised a social process and perceived reality that has eclipsed local and global, in a ‘glocal’ reality (see Mac Laughlin 1997). While Breton celtitude must be understood as a Breton or francophone phenomenon, it has been shown above that a sense of Ireland and Irish music has had a significant practical and symbolic role in its construction. Chapter 7 showed that the interfacing of Diasporic perspectives between Irish music and Celtic music in the Breton context, has had implications for music making at a local level. It described the process by which Irish music has been incorporated in a unique way as part of the local traditional music scene in Brittany and how it has been re-located in francophone celtitude.

As with the nature of all investigation, the writing of this thesis has thrown up as many issues as it has dealt with - I have already cited some of these in the text. All of them are potential areas for further research. Celtic identity continues into the next millennium and remains of considerable interest to virtually all areas of human activity from cultural identity to making money or finding ‘inner peace’. Music is a constantly renewable resource in all these endeavours. Also on a socio-musical level, within the context of Brittany itself, all genres of Breton
music are worthy of individual scrutiny. In terms of musicological analysis, the possible influence of Irish (and Scottish) music on Breton style and repertory has still to be looked at. I suggest that a meaningful way of doing this is to examine the musical pathways of players who have a lifelong history as practitioners of both musics and who have also been active as teachers. There are now a number of people in Brittany who fit this description. Many Breton musicians acknowledge that basic Irish ornamentation techniques - adapted from pipes, flute and fiddle - may have had a certain general influence. A retrospective analysis of Irish music’s role as the international language of folk-music throughout the western world during the last thirty years of the 20th century, is also an issue which has considerable potential for future research.
Air à Chanter: Songs for the dance.

Airs à Sonner: Instrumental tunes.

Anglophone: English speaking.

Appel à la danse: Call to the dance.

Association: Social organisation.

Bagad -Bagadoù (plural): Breton band composed of, Bagpipes, Bombardes and Drum corps.

Basse Bretagne /Breizh Izel: Lower Brittany. Western Brittany, where Breton and French are now spoken as native languages. Adjective: bas-Breton.

Biniou: Breton traditional small bagpipes.

Biniou Braz: Highland (Scottish) Bagpipe

Bombarde: Double-reeded traditional Breton shawm.

Boeuf: Informal music session.

Breiz: Brittany in Breton.

Breiz Atao: Brittany For Ever - an early 20th century Breton autonomist movement.

Bretonnant : Breton native speaker or Breton language activist.

Bretonnitude: Breton identity. Ways of being or feeling Breton. Alternatively - Bretonnité.

Cachet: Fee.
Café cabaret: A small pub like venue for music concerts and sessions also called a café théâtre.

Cercles celtiques: Folklore associations -literally Celtic circles—for the promotion of Breton dance, music and costumes.

Celtitude: Ways of being or feeling Celtic.

Chants à répondre: Responsorial songs in French and Gallo.

Chèvrement: Literally ‘goat-like sound’. The traditional vibrato in Breton music.

Coiffe: Lace hair adornment.

Complainte: Epic narrative song in French or Gallo.

Conseil régional: Regional council.

Conservatoire municipal: Local music school.

Cornouaille: Bas-Breton bishopric.

Couple Sonneurs: Or Sonneurs de couple: The name given to a traditional instrumental duo.

Danse en rond: Circle or round dance - dañs tro in Breton.

DASTUM: Meaning—‘To gather’. The organisation concerned with the collection and dissemination of Breton music.

Département: French governmental area.

Diwan: Literal meaning ‘seed’—Breton language schools.

EMSAV: Movement.
Fest-deiz: Day party.

Fest-noz: Night party, a night of traditional music and dance, plural: Festou-noz.

Francophone: French Speaking.

Gavotte: Dance genre.

Gwerz: Epic narrative song in the Breton language.


Jacobin: French revolutionary centralists.

Kan ha Diskan: Chant and descant form originating in the Monts d'Arrée.

Léon: Bas-Breton bishopric.

Les Monts d'Arrée The centre of Basse Bretagne where the fest noz was re-invented in its modern form. The heartland of Kan ha Diskan and the original home of the various forms of Gavotte and Plinn. This area is also referred to as Kreizh Breizh meaning the centre of Brittany in Breton.

Le Peuple Breton: Pobl Vreizh (Breton) periodical of the UDB.

Patron: Owner or employer.

Pays Gallo: Area west of the Sébillot line where Gallo is spoken.

Plateau musical: Performers at a fest noz.

Plinn: Dance genre.
Rond de Loudéac:

Dance genre.

Sonneur:

Traditional instrumentalist.

Système d’intermittent du spectacle:

Unemployment benefit for irregulars of the entertainment industry. *Intermittent* - used as both noun and adjective.

Trégor:

*Bas*-Breton bishopric.

Tuillage:

The overlapping phrase at the end of the refrain where the changeover from kaner to diskaner is made.

Vannes (Vannetais):

*Bas*-Breton bishopric.

Veilléée:

A small social gathering - including song music and dance.

Abbreviations

**ANPE:** Agence Nationale Pour l’Emploi.

**ASSEDIC:** Association pour l’Emploi Dans l’Industrie et le Commerce.

**BAS:** Bodadeg Ar Sonerien-“The assembly of sonneurs.”

**FNSAC-CGT :** Fédération Nationale des Syndicats du Spectacle, de l’Audiovisuel et de l’Action Culturelle CGT.

**RBO:** Radio Bretagne Ouest.

**RKB:** Radio Kreizh Breizh.

**SACEM :** Société des Auteurs Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique.

**UDB:** Union Démocratique Bretonne.
Discography

A small selection of commercially available recordings representative of the music discussed in this thesis.

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Part (ii) Newspapers and Periodicals
Part (iii) Internet and Other sources.

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*Planète Celte* 1996 (Bi-monthly magazine of the Lorient festival)

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(iii) Internet and Other sources

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