

Reviews

Book

Dale Jarvis. *The Golden Leg and Other Ghostly Campfire Tales*. Flanker Press, P.O. Box 2522, Sta. C, St. John's, NL A1C 6K1; 1-866-739-4420; info@flankerpress.com; www.flankerpress.com

As the old expression goes, if they like it once, they'll love it twice, and the third time is the charm. And speaking of the third time, here comes once again author, folklorist, storyteller and performer Dale Jarvis, who also happens to be the high priest of the supernatural and other-worldly folklore of Newfoundland and the dean of ghostly and bizarre happenings throughout and all across this Canadian province, ranging from the main streets of St. John's to the remotest of outports and coastal communities. This latest Jarvis effort is the result of his association with a children's oncology camp known as Camp Delight, which has been in operation since 1988. For several years now, Jarvis has been telling stories at this camp during the summer months, and the children attending the camp, cancer victims and their siblings, have been the very fortunate recipients of his masterful storytelling. And, oh yes, all the proceeds from sales of the book end up going to support Camp Delight in its various activities to make the lives of the children attending it even more comfortable and enjoyable considering their physical circumstances.

The twenty-six spooky and shivery tales in this wonderful collection take up where Jarvis left off in his last volume, *Wonderful Strange* [reviewed in 40.2, p. 31], a collection of tales about the various ghosts, faeries and fabulous beasts inhabiting Newfoundland from one end of the province to the other. As Jarvis stated in *Wonderful Strange*, for whatever reason, Newfoundland seems to have been blessed (or cursed, depending on one's outlook) with more ghosts, water monsters, phantom ships, faeries, giants, devils, old hags, death tokens, vanishing hitchhikers, will-o'-the-wisps and witches than any other locale anywhere in Canada. It should also be mentioned that, as an additional credential to his status as the dean of the Newfoundland ghost world, Jarvis also regularly takes groups of folks on walking tours of various sites and spots in St. John's said to be haunted or otherwise occupied by spectral and other-worldly manifestations of the unexplained and the bizarre. Thus armed in this narrative manner, Jarvis has taken his talents as a raconteur and yarn-spinner to the children of Camp Delight each summer and has shared his tales of terror and the supernatural with the

eager young listeners, who no doubt shivered more than slightly in the summer night air as Jarvis spun his stories of ghosts, witches and numerous other representatives of the natural world that has been part and parcel of Newfoundland folklore, tradition and culture since the very foundation of the province nearly half a millennium ago.

As to the tales in this collection, they are as diverse in their sources and origins as they are in actual content. Although a goodly number do in fact come from various locales throughout Newfoundland, from the downtown streets of St. John's to such places as Trinity Bay, Conception Bay, Placentia Bay, the Burin Peninsula and Proctor's Cove, there are stories that come from places as far afield as the United States, England, Scotland (including the Outer Hebrides), and Ireland, and even such far-flung locales as Malta and Singapore. The very title story, "The Golden Leg", is, as Jarvis states in his excellent section of notes giving the sources of these tales, a version of one of the most well-known and international of story plots, "The Golden Arm", a ghost story classic in its own right. This is one of the more terrifying tales in Jarvis's collection, with its ghostly image of a dead woman's vengeance from beyond the grave to punish the thief who stole her golden leg in the graveyard where she was buried. This tale, as well as others in the collection, seems to have the definite flavour of an urban legend, so popular among younger listeners, especially camp attendees, who soak up these kinds of narratives when stories are told around campfires late at night. That is why this volume will be more than thoroughly enjoyed by Scout leaders, camp counsellors, teachers, librarians and storytellers who deal with older children, and teenagers who just love this kind of tale.

The array of ghosts and other spectral figures range across a broad spectrum, from floating heads to clutching hands, and from other-worldly tokens of approaching doom to, in one case, a black stag which is said to have caused the death of an entire family. In several other instances, ghosts return from the grave to protest their very burial places, while others return to guard buried treasure or other valuable items they do not wish disturbed from their resting places. There is even one tale in which a phantom pirate ship is seen sailing down a main street in St. John's, and, while the story's protagonist, a fellow known as Crusty Harry, may still not believe in ghosts, his hair was turned from black to white by the encounter with the ghostly pirates of the tale.

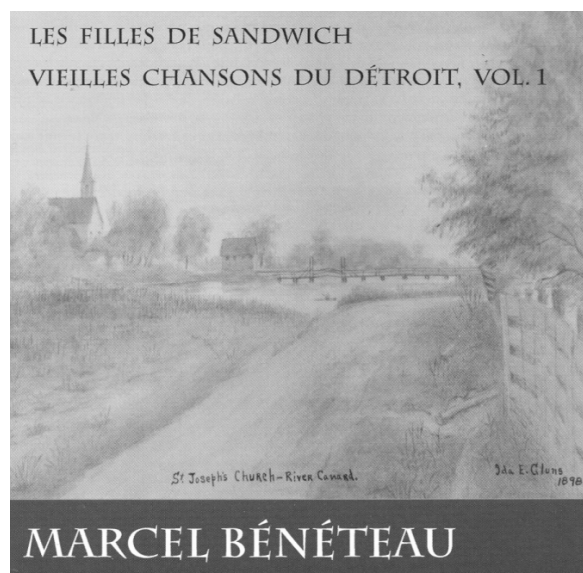
Like his two previous collections, *Haunted Shores* and *Wonderful Strange*, this latest Jarvis effort gets a resounding three cheers. The realm of Newfoundland's supernatural world truly comes

alive, and once again a top-rate storyteller struts his stuff. The only major complaint I have about this book is that it was not long enough.

Robert Rodriguez, New York, New York

CDs

Marcel Bénéteau. *Les Filles de Sandwich: Vieilles chansons du Détroit, Vol.1.* PC002. Disques Petite Côte Records, 247 Esdras Place, Windsor, Ont. N8S 2M4.



I would like to alert you to a CD reissue. In 1992, the folklorist Marcel Bénéteau issued a cassette of 14 folk songs collected from the French-speaking people of southwestern Ontario. In this he had the assistance of the Société Radio-Canada (French CBC). At the insistence of his fans, these recordings, as well as six others, are now available on CD. A dynamic interpretation and an original repertory: two essential ingredients to make a true jewel.

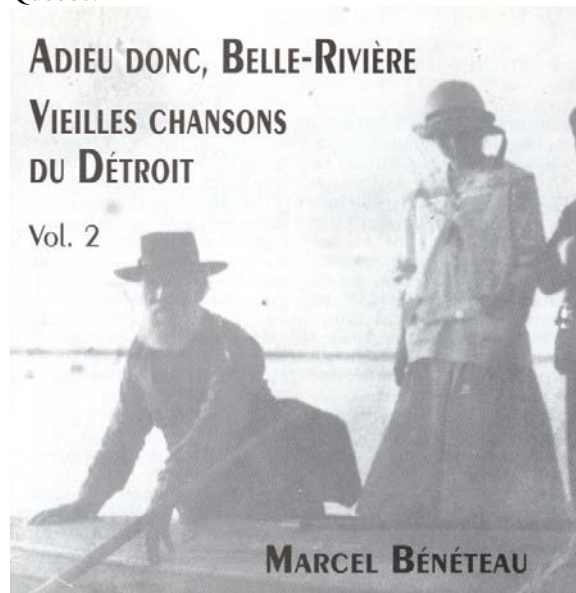
Donald Deschênes, Sudbury, Ontario

[Translated by Steven Méthot; reprinted from *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* 32.4 (1998) p.35]

Marcel Bénéteau. *Adieu donc, Belle-Rivière: Vieilles chansons du Détroit, Vol.2.* PC001. Disques Petite Côte Records, 247, Esdras Place, Windsor, Ontario N8S 2M4.

Here is a CD which stands out within the franco-ontarian oeuvre. There are very few folklore CDs in any case in French-speaking Ontario, and Marcel Bénéteau is the only person to create folklore CDs with an original repertory collected by the performer

himself. In doing this he is following the example of Raoul Roy, Yves Albert and the Breton-Cyr duo in Quebec.



In 1989 Marcel Bénéteau undertook the first attempt to collect traditional songs in the Detroit region. Marius Barbeau and E.-Z. Massicotte had already explored the east of the province, François Brassard and Father Germain Lemieux the north. South-western Ontario, which contains the French communities with the most ancient roots, had not yet aroused such substantial interest. In his *Vieilles chansons du Détroit, Vol. 2* Bénéteau chooses not a book but a CD and his own voice to communicate to us the finest examples of an oral tradition which is still rich, dynamic, and, above all, alive. Previously, in 1992, he brought out a first cassette which garnered much success: *Vieilles chansons du Détroit/Old French Songs of the Detroit River Region*, ECHS 1, 1992, Essex Historical Society, c/o 254 Pitt West, Windsor, Ontario, N9A 5L5.

On the current CD we rediscover a tremendously diverse repertoire; medieval *complaintes*, call and response songs of a striking originality, epic and religious subjects, songs of drunkenness and of drinking, and love songs addressing the classic traditional themes such as the soldier's departure or return, the rejected lover, romantic idylls, hauntings and mismatches. One could reproach Bénéteau for too eclectic a choice, but this is the price one pays for leaving the beaten track.

A substantial booklet in English and French accompanies the CD. In his introductory remarks the author establishes the French presence in the region. Each song-text includes a reference to Conrad Laforte's *Catalogue de la chanson folklorique française* (Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1977-

1987) and is followed by a placing in context: its position in the French traditional repertoire, the names of the informants who sang the songs to him. The English version of these comments includes a summary of the song. The whole adds up to a reliable and well-crafted tool for listeners and teachers as much as for researchers.

Marcel Bénêteau is accompanied by traditional musicians from the Detroit region playing accordion, banjo, concertina, spoons, guitar, celtic harp, mandolin and fiddle. As we might expect, the musical arrangements have a strong affinity with traditional Irish music, which unfortunately does not always harmonize with the spirit of French traditional songs. Because of this, the singer tends to interpret the songs in a staccato manner which lacks smoothness. He would have benefited from the services of a musician skilled in song arrangement who could have given advice, helped to bring the CD to life and provided the singer with a more varied set of arrangements. As an example, the song “La Soirée des Noces” (The Wedding Night) would have acquired an accompaniment better suited to the plaintive nature of the song. In addition, I have noted some problems with diction caused by the performer’s attempts to imitate archaic pronunciation. Thus, on several occasions the sound ‘é’ is opened out into ‘a’, as in ‘espervier’, pronounced ‘esparvier’, or ‘donnerais’ pronounced ‘donnera’, or even the ‘v’ converted to ‘w’, as in ‘voiles’, pronounced ‘welles’. These efforts are not always justified and interfere with the listener’s pleasure and comprehension.

My only other reservation concerns the album jacket, which derives its inspiration from an old black and white photo. Despite its value as a piece of heritage, this photo has no selling power whatsoever. It has little connection with the contents of the CD and thus reduces the latter’s general marketability.

Marcel Bénêteau has offered us here a second unique CD, excellently documented and certainly capable of teaching us a great deal about French oral tradition in south-western Ontario. A must for one’s CD collection.

Donald Deschênes, Sudbury, Ontario

[Translated by Rosaleen Gregory from
Canadian Folk Music Bulletin 30.2 (1996) p.40]

Marcel Bénêteau. *À la table de mes amis: Vieilles chansons du Détroit, Vol. III.* PC003. Disques Petite Côte Records, 247 Esdras Place, Windsor, Ontario. N8S 2M4; petitecote@hotmail.com.

Last December the Ontario folklorist Marcel Bénêteau launched the third instalment of his trilogy, *Vieilles chansons du Détroit*. The twenty-three songs

in the present album join the nineteen in the second volume (PC001) and the eighteen in the first CD (PC002) to create an anthology of more than sixty traditional songs from the Detroit region.



We are talking here about a vibrant testimonial to a French tradition confirming a French presence whose tercentenary we are celebrating this very year. Like the two preceding albums, *À la table de mes amis* (“At My Friends’ Table”) is made up of traditional songs collected by Marcel Bénêteau over a twenty-year period in the Detroit region, more specifically in small French communities such as Rivière-aux-Canards, Técumseh, Pointe-aux-Roches, Belle-Rivière, Saint-Joachim, Grande Pointe and Pain Court. Here is a repertoire that has been remarkably, almost hermetically, well preserved. This CD leaves the well-worn paths of traditional music presentation: it is a CD which bears witness rather than one dedicated to musical expression – a CD crammed with truly remarkable material. All the songs are presented in their original versions and more than half have never been on a CD before. Both texts and tunes take us back to the Middle Ages; however, the folklorist has given pride of place to pastoral poems.

Behind the performer is concealed a seasoned researcher. In the booklet each song text is accompanied by a brief bilingual exposition in which each song is located within the French tradition and in relation to the tradition-bearers from whom he learned it. Bénêteau is skilful at creating a scholarly work while remaining accessible to the layman.

His musical accompaniments are austere and inspired. His interpretations are judicious and sensitive,

free from contrived effects; the rhythm is solid and well-sustained.

Vieilles chansons du Détroit is a major work for those interested in the sung oral tradition of South-west Ontario. It is on a par with the works of Barbeau, D'Harcourt and other eminent collections featuring the oral tradition of French-speaking Canada. Hopefully this anthology will become known, recognized and widely disseminated throughout French-speaking Canada and Europe.

Donald Deschênes, *Beauport, Québec*

[Translated by Rosaleen Gregory from *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* 35.2 (2001) p.37]

Richard Harrow. *Songs from the Musical 'Potts'*. (2005) 1716 66th Ave. SE, Calgary, AB. T2C 1T3; rharrow@audiomastering.com; www.myspace.com/richardharrow

Back in 1973 Richard Harrow, who was apparently still a teenager then, wrote "Jerry Potts", a song that has since become a Canadian classic. Here, at last, we have his own performance of it on CD, along with thirteen other items from the musical—a kind of ballad opera, no less—that he subsequently co-wrote with Glen Mundy about the life of the Métis guide who played such an important role in the North West Mounted Police's early efforts to bring peace, law and order to the West. While I think it is fair to say that none of the other songs on the CD are quite as special as "Jerry Potts", there is not a bad track here. You will find considerable variety in the performance styles and backing instrumentation: some of this is rock music, but none the worse for that. Other items are excellent historical songs composed in a folk-music vein. Harrow himself is the vocalist and the main (perhaps the only) instrumentalist, and he is certainly a fine guitarist. If you are interested in well-crafted, melodic songs about Alberta history, this is a CD that you must get your hands on.

David Gregory, *Athabasca, Alberta*

High Noon. *The Way It All Began*. CR-6374. Canyon Records, 2004. 3131 West Clarendon Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85017. Tel: 1-800-268-1141. canyon@canyonrecords.com; www.canyonrecords.com

This is powerful and authentic music of the Plains Cree performed in traditional style, although most of the songs are compositions by three members of the group, Ted Noon, Faron Lujan, and Jacob Faithful. High Noon was initially formed over two decades ago on the Thunderchild Reserve, Saskatchewan. Since then it has expanded in size to include a few

singers and/or drummers from the Blackfoot, Tiwa, and other tribes, although a dozen members are Cree. High Noon has been very successful over the years, winning six World Championship titles for its singing and drumming. The intertribal nature of the current group explains why eight of the eleven tracks on this CD are designated "Intertribal"; two of the others are contest songs, and the other is a grass dance.

This is a live recording, made at the 27th Annual Napi Pow-Wow, held in January 2004 near Brocket, Alberta. To a non-Native ear there is a certain similarity between many of the performances. Several of the songs have much the same tempo and an insistent but hardly polyrhythmic beat. The patterned interplay of solo and group vocalizing also becomes fairly predictable after a while. Nonetheless, the music is exciting and the sound quality is good, making this a recording that I was glad to add to my collection.

David Gregory, *Athabasca, Alberta*

A Peak in Darien

Some of these will be reviewed in upcoming issues; some are outside our purview, but are included as a courtesy to the people who sent them to us, and to inform our readers.

Books

Roxanne Young. *String City, vol. 1: 16 Original Bluegrass & Irish Fiddle Tunes for Intermediate to Advanced Players*. Calgary Contemporary School of Music, P.O. Box 32012, 2619 14th St. SW, Calgary, Alta. T2T 5X6; www.ccsmusic.com

Recordings

Asani. *Rattle & Drum*. AR 12. Ann Arbor Records Ltd., 49 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg, Man. R2L 1K9; www.arborrecords.com; Asani, c/o 1671 Tomlinson Common, Edmonton, Alta. T6R 3E2; spocklin@telus.net; www.asani.org

Blackfoot Confederacy. *Hear the Beat: Pow Wow Songs Recorded Live at Ft. McDowell*. CR-6428. Canyon Records, 3131 West Clarendon Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85017, USA; canyon@canyonrecords.com; www.canyonrecords.com

Michael Jerome Browne. *Double*. BCD188. Borealis Records, 225 Sterling Rd., Unit 19, Toronto, Ont. M6R 2B2; www.borealisrecords.com; info@borealisrecords.com

Clinton Denny with Gerald Primeaux, Sr. *Prayers for My Father*. CR-6427. Canyon Records (address above)

Daniel Gervais. *Endless Possibilities*. 11528 – 44A Ave., Edmonton, Alta. T6J 1A3; danielg.gervais@excite.com (addresses different from packaging)

John Wort Hannam. *Two Bit Suit*. BHM-CD-957. Black Hen Music, Box 74661, Kitsilano, Vancouver, B.C. V6H 4P4; info@blackhenmusic.com; www.blackhenmusic.com; John Wort Hannam, Box 1904, Ft. Macleod, Alta. T0L 0Z0; www.johnworthannam.com

Cara Luft. *The Light Fantastic*. BHM CD 954. Blue Case Tunes, Box 68045, R.P.O. Osborne Village, Winnipeg, Man. R3L 2V9; www.caraluft.com; www.myspace.com/caraluftmusic; www.blackhenmusic.com; cara@caraluft.com; hugh@sotw.ca

Katie Moore. *Only Thing Worse*. BCD184. Borealis Records (address above)

Erin Ross. *No Rhyme EP*. erin@erinross.ca; www.erinross.ca (no address on packaging)

Bob Snider. *A Maze in Greys*. BCD186. Borealis Records (address above)

Ben Sures. *Goodbye Pretty Girl*. 86 Wardell St., Toronto, Ont. M4M 2L6; info@bensures.com; www.bensures.com

Clark Tenakhongva. *Po'li: Traditional Songs of the Hopi*. CR-6412. Canyon Records (address above)

Valdy & Gary Fjellgaard. *Contenders Two: Still in the Running*. SPCD1321. Stony Plain Recording Co., Box 861, Edmonton, Alta. T5J 2L8; info@stonyplainrecords.com; www.stonyplainrecords.com

Katherine Wheatley. *Habits and Heros*. HMCCD001. HOOT Music Company, 2238 Dundas St. W, Box 59009, Toronto, Ont. M6R 3B5; hoot@kwheatley.com; www.kwheatley.com

Ken Whiteley. *One World Dance*. BCD187. Borealis Records (address above)

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