VA López DE NOÉL
An Acadian-Cajun Christmas Revels

DIRECTED BY
George Emlen
French-speaking Acadian people, harshly deported from the Canadian Maritimes in the 18th century, were scattered about the American continent. Many of them landed in the multicultural and polyglot Louisiana, where “Acadian” music evolved into “Cajun,” while those who eventually returned to Canada rekindled their distinctive Acadian style. Today those genres are vastly different, yet the historical bridges remain: the fiddle has traditionally been the driving force in both Acadian and Cajun dance music, and many songs embody archetypal themes of deep yearning. Most importantly, in spite of the challenges they have faced, both peoples know how to make their own fun, don’t take themselves too seriously—and love to dance. This collection of vocal and instrumental music from both communities reflects their shared commitment to laisser les bon temps rouler—let the good times roll!

—George Emlen, 2016

1. **Acadian Overture**
Cambridge Symphonic Brass Ensemble
Composed by George Emlen in 2016 on the Acadian hymn “Ave Maris Stella.”

2. **Les Anges dans nos campagnes**
The Revels Chorus • The Revels Children • Cambridge Symphonic Brass Ensemble
This beloved noël first appeared in French carol books in the 1840s. The English translation by James Chadwick became associated with this tune 20 years later. The first verse is arranged by the editors of the *Oxford Book of Carols*; the second is by Edward Shippen Barnes; the third and fourth are by George Emlen.

1. Les anges dans nos campagnes ont entonné l’hymne des cieux;
Et l’écho de nos montagnes redit ce chant mélodieux:
Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2. Angels we have heard on high sweetly singing o’er the plains,
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.

3. Shepherds, why this jubilee? why your joyful strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heavenly song?

4. Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
3. Quadrille de Sainte-Marie-sur-Mer: la première barre
Lisa Ornstein, fiddle • Keith Murphy, mandolin & foot percussion
This tune comes from the playing of Acadian fiddler Edgar Duguay, recorded some 60 years ago at a community dance in Shippagan, New Brunswick. It's the first part of a multi-figure group social dance called the quadrille.

4. Melchior et Balthazar
The Revels Children • Lisa Ornstein, fiddle
Traditional French carol collected by Geneviève Massignon in Acadie in the 1940s.
1. Melchior et Balthazar ont quitté l'Afrique, ont quitté l'Afrique, Melchior and Balthazar journeyed out of Africa with King Gaspard.
2. Ils sont tous les trois partis à la belle étoile, à la belle étoile, Forth they went together then, following a star a-shining in the East.
3. Les bergers les ont suivis, jouant de la flûte, jouant de la flûte, Shepherds in the fields came too, playing on their flutes and leading flocks of lambs.
4. Ils sont tous les trois venus, dedans une étable, dedans une étable, Kings and shepherds, they arrived, at the humble stable where the Christ child lay.

5. Acadian Mouth Music
Keith Murphy, solo & foot percussion
Skilled singers often fill in with vocal syllables on a familiar dance tune when a fiddle is not available. Such “mouth music” shows up in many cultures for the same purpose. This version is taken from the Acadian singer Benoît Benoît.

6. Nouvelle agréable
Josée Vachon, solo • The Revels Chorus • Lisa Ornstein, fiddle • Keith Murphy, piano
Megan Henderson, harmonium
Composed by Swiss composer Jean-Georges Nägeli, set to 19th-century words and arranged here by George Emlen.

Refrain:
Nouvelle agréable! un Sauveur enfant nous est né!
Joyful news! A savior child is born to us!
It was in a stable that he was given to us.

1. Dans cette nuit le Christ est né, c'est pour nous qu'il s'est incarné.
The Christ was born this night; it is for us that he was incarnate.
Venez, pasteurs, offrir vos coeurs, aimez cet enfant tout aimable!
Come, shepherds, offer your hearts, adore this completely lovable child!
2. Chrétiens, cet enfant plein d'appas, vous appele, hâtez vos pas.
Christians, this child, full of charm, calls you; hasten your steps!
Allez à lui, puisqu'aujourd'hui il tend une main secourable.
Go to him, because today he extends a saving hand.
3. People, gather round his cradle, see this new miracle: A tender child, weak and trembling, gains you the good will of the Most High.
4. Glory three times to Jesus! the world and Satan are vanquished; In turn, let us burn with love in gratitude to this wonderful victor.

7. La Disputeuse/Quadrille d’André à Toto Savoie
Lisa Ornstein, fiddle • Keith Murphy, guitar & foot percussion
The first tune is a Magdalen Island version of a widespread fiddle tune that goes by many names. The second is from the repertory of Shippagan fiddler André Savoie.

8. Les Cloches du hameau
Josée Vachon, solo • The Revels Chorus • The Revels Children • Lisa Ornstein, fiddle
Keith Murphy, piano • Megan Henderson, harmonium
Parisian musician Albert Larrieu composed both lyrics and music for this well-loved tune. The arrangement is by Megan Henderson.

9. Le Voyageur
Keith Murphy, solo & guitar • Lisa Ornstein, octave fiddle • Josée Vachon, vocal harmony
Megan Henderson, harmonium • The Revels Chorus
Written by Angèle and Albert Arsenault, both of Prince Edward Island. Albert recalls that he and Angèle were chatting backstage while performing on the same concert program, far from their homes. As he started telling her all the things he missed, she started writing.
10. La Rose au bois
Josée Vachon, solo • The Revels Chorus

This 18th-century song appears in Québécois, Cajun and Acadian repertoires.

1. Mon père, aussi ma mère n’avaient que moi d’enfant.
N’avaient que moi d’enfant, la destinée,
N’avaient que moi d’enfant.

2. C’est pas l’affaire des filles d’aller voir les garçons.
D’aller voir les garçons, la destinée, la rose au bois,
D’aller voir les garçons.

3. Mais c’est l’affaire des filles de balier la maison.

4. Quand la maison est propre, tous les garçons y vont.

5. Ils entrent quatre par quatre en frappant du talon.

6. Quand tout l’monde est en place, on frise le rigodon.

7. Et c’est comme ça qu’ça s’passe, du moins dans nos cantons.
11. D'où viens-tu, bergère?

The Revels Children

A ubiquitous Nativity carol commonly sung at Christmas Eve midnight mass.

1. D'où viens-tu, bergère, d'où viens-tu?
I come from the stable, where, this very night,
I, a shepherd maiden, saw a wondrous sight.

2. Qu'as-tu vu, bergère, qu'as-tu vu?
What did you see, shepherdess?
There within a manger a little child I saw,
Lying, softly sleeping, on a bed of straw.

3. Rien de plus, bergère, rien de plus?
Nothing else, shepherdess?
There I saw the mother her sweet baby hold,
And the father, Joseph, trembling in the cold.

4. Rien de plus, bergère, rien de plus?
Nothing else, shepherdess?
I saw ass and oxen, kneeling meek and mild,
With their gentle breathing warm the holy child.

5. Rien de plus, bergère, rien de plus?
Nothing else, shepherdess?
There were three bright angels come down from the sky,
Singing forth sweet praises to our God on high.

12. La Petite Rosette

Lisa Ornstein, fiddle • Keith Murphy, piano

An instrumental adaption by Lisa Ornstein of an Acadian version of a traditional song sung in France and French-speaking Canada. It is a good-natured, tongue-in-cheek account of the wedding night experience of a young bride married off to a geriatric, rich groom who is gracious, but falls asleep immediately after the festivities.

13. Partons, la mer est belle

Josée Vachon, solo • The Revels Chorus • Lisa Ornstein, fiddle • Keith Murphy, guitar
Megan Henderson, piano

This is a much beloved song throughout the Acadian Maritimes, though it originated in the Vendée region of France. Arranged by George Emlen.

1. La pêche sera bonne, amis, partons sans bruit.
La pleine lune donne, presque toute la nuit.
Il faut qu'avant l'aurore, nous soyons de retour
Pour admirer encore, les merveilles du jour.

Refrain:
Partons, la mer est belle, embarquons-nous, pêcheurs.
Guidons notre nacelle, ramons avec ardeur.

1. The fishing will be good, my friends, let's leave without a sound.
The full moon will be with us, almost all night through.
We must be back before the dawn,
To once again admire the beauties of the day.

Refrain:
Let's be on our way, the sea is smooth, all on board, fishermen.
Adjust the boom and let's row with all our might.
Reel du diable/Cotillon madelinot
/La Gigue à Claude Austin
Lisa Ornstein, fiddle • Keith Murphy, piano & foot percussion

The first two of these three Acadian dance tunes are from Acadian fiddler Avila LeBlanc, a beloved and well-known member of his Magdalen Islands community. The third tune is from Acadian fiddler Claude Austin of Neguac, a tiny village in northern New Brunswick.

14. La Poulette grisée
The Revels Children • Lisa Ornstein, fiddle

A very old French counting song with many variants. This unusual version is from Rachel LeBlanc of Edmondston, New Brunswick.

1. La petite poulette grisée a pondu dans les cerises,
Elle a pondu un petit coco pour le petit enfant
1. The little gray hen has laid an egg in the cherries,
She has laid a little egg for a little child who is going to sleep;
Since that child is sleeping, will this child sleep soon? Go to sleep.

2. La petite poulette blanche a pondu dans la grange...
3. La petite poulette noire a pondu dans l'armoire...
4. La petite poulette verte a pondu dans les couvertes...

15. Reel du diable/Cotillon madelinot
/La Gigue à Claude Austin

La Gigue à Claude Austin
Lisa Ornstein, fiddle • Keith Murphy, piano & foot percussion

The first two of these three Acadian dance tunes are from Acadian fiddler Avila LeBlanc, a beloved and well-known member of his Magdalen Islands community. The third tune is from Acadian fiddler Claude Austin of Neguac, a tiny village in northern New Brunswick.

1. Let’s hoist our sails up the masts, the sky is clear and beautiful, I see the shining star which guides the sailors.
2. Thus spoke my father as he left the port. He little knew that death awaited him. On that stormy day, he was taken unawares. Thrown overboard into raging waters, he met his cruel fate.
3. All that is left to me is my mother, who is penniless. She lives in dire poverty, I am her sole support. Row! oh row quickly! I see her standing there. I’ll run as fast as ever I can and throw myself into her arms.

1. La petite poulette grisée a pondu dans les cerises,
Elle a pondu un petit coco pour le petit enfant
1. The little gray hen has laid an egg in the cherries,
She has laid a little egg for a little child who...
16. Le Départ du Canada

Keith Murphy, solo & Jew’s harp • Lisa Ornstein, fiddle

Versions of this song are sung in both Acadian and Québec. The Québécois versions typically describe the mind-numbing, weary work of life in the mills. This particular version from Acadian singer and fiddler Joseph Athanase Larade describes the plight of an immigrant who becomes a farm hand—a sad, timeless and universal theme of forced departure.

1. Quand chu parti du Canada, pour m’en aller dans les États
J’avais qu’une simple valise, tout mon butin était dedans,
J’avais qu’une simple valise, mais de l’argent y’en avait pas dedans.

2. Dans mon chemin, j’ai rencontré un homme que j’avais oublié.
Il m’a dit: Quelle surprise! où t’en vas-tu dans les États?
Tu vas rencontrer la misère. Dans les États, non, n’y vas-y donc pas.

3. Je suis resté le coeur saisi, je suis resté le coeur meurtri.
Et c’est là que j’ai dit à ma femme ainsi que mes petits enfants:
Nous allons poursuivre notre route, Dieu nous préservera d’accidents.

4. Il y a sept ans et quelques mois que je suis ici dans les États.

J’ai bien su bien travailler pour nourrir mes petits enfants
Jusqu’au soir au clair de la lune, le matin au soleil levant.

5. Pour être un bon habitant, il faut être bon travaillant.
Il ne faut pas que l’endormitoire vienne te prendre sur le champ,
Car quelqu’un qui ferait de même, il serait mort dans très peu de temps.

6. Quand j’suis revenu au Canada, on ne voit plus de traces de nos pas.
On n’entend plus les cloches sonner le matin pour nous réveiller,
On n’entend plus les cloches sonner de tous les bords, de tous les côtés.

17. Grain de mil

Josée Vachon, solo • The Revels Chorus

One of many songs sung by exiles to pass the time as they traveled on foot back to their native Acadie, according to singer Edith Butler, who brought the song into wide circulation.

1. Par derrière chez mon père il y’a un pommier doux, il y’a un pommier doux.

I have always worked hard to feed my little children,
Till the evening by the light of the moon, from the morning at sunrise.

5. To be a good farmhand, you have to be a hard worker.
You can’t let sleepiness overcome you. For if you do, death comes swiftly.

6. When I came back to Canada, there was no longer any trace of our steps.
No more did one hear the bells ring in the morning to awaken us.
No more did one hear the bells ring, from all sides, from every corner.

1. Out behind my father’s house there is a sweet apple tree;
18. Les Veuves de la coulée

Michelle Kaminsky, fiddle • Alan Bradbury, accordion • Maggie Moniz, guitar & vocals

A Cajun two-step learned from Dewey Balfa, one of the Balfa Brothers who helped popularize Cajun music around the world and was instrumental in fostering a cultural revival in Louisiana.

1. Toutes les veuves de la coulée sont parti au village
Pour acheter du cotton jaune à la boutique;
Pour acheter du cotton jaune pour faire des petites menines
Pour les petites filles de la coulée fini.

2. Toutes les veuves de la coulée sont parti au village
S’en aller sur la coulée, s’en aller sur la coulée
Pour amener les petites filles au bal chez Joe.

Les trois filles d’un prince sont endormis dessous. Ah!

Refrain:

J’ai du zi, j’ai du zinnezi, j’ai de zinnezinne, j’ai de zinnnezo, j’ai de beaux, j’ai de beaux oiseaux.

2. Les trois filles d’un prince sont endormis dessous;
La plus jeune se réveille, dit, ma soeur, il est jour.

3. La plus jeune soeur s’éveille, dit, ma soeur, il est jour.
Non, ce n’est qu’une étoile qui éclaire nos amours.

4. Non, ce n’est qu’une étoile qui éclaire nos amours.
Nos amants sont en guerre, ils combattent pour nous.

5. Nos amants sont en guerre, ils combattent pour nous.
S’ils gagnent la bataille ils auront nos amours.

Qu’ils gagnent ou qu’ils perdent, ils resterons toujours.

A prince’s three daughters are sleeping underneath it.

Refrain:
I have millet seed, I have straw seed, I have orange trees, I have [tri], I have matches, I have pineapples, flints, blooming laurels. I have [nonsense syllables]. I have some fine birds.

2. A prince’s three daughters are sleeping underneath it;
The youngest sister wakes up and says, my sister, it is daytime.

3. The youngest sister wakes up and says, my sister, it is daytime;
No, it’s just a star lighting up our loves.

4. No, it’s just a star lighting up our loves;
Our lovers are in the war, they are fighting for us.

5. Our lovers are in the war, they are fighting for us;
If they win the battle they will have our loves.

6. If they win the battle they will have our loves;
Whether they win or lose, they will always remain [our loves].

19. La Valse Cadienne de Noël

Josée Vachon, solo • The Revels Chorus • Michelle Kaminsky, fiddle
Alan Bradbury, accordion • Maggie Moniz, guitar

The words and music of this waltz were written by Jeanette V. Aguillard, of the singing group Les Amies Louisianaises, and is arranged for chorus by George Emlen. Published by Musique Acadienne Publishing Company & Pocahontas Music.
21. **Daddy Carrière’s Waltz**
Michelle Kaminsky, fiddle • Alan Bradbury, accordion • Maggie Moniz, guitar & triangle

This waltz was learned from Bébé and Eraste Carrière, brothers who played for house parties in the 1930s and 1940s. They provided a link to dances of European origin such as mazurkas and contredanses. Presumably the tune is either from or for their father and is a variant of “Valse de Prairie Ronde.”

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22. **J’ai vu le loup, le renard et la belette**
George Emlen, solo • The Revels Children • Michelle Kaminsky, fiddle • Alan Bradbury, accordion • Maggie Moniz, guitar • Josée Vachon, triangle

This song of French medieval origin is taken from the playing and singing of Dewey Balfa. Hear a very different version on our 1991 recording *Sing We Now of Christmas*.

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20. **The Rayne Bounce/Acadian Two-Step**
Michelle Kaminsky, fiddle • Alan Bradbury, accordion & triangle • Maggie Moniz, guitar

A medley of Cajun two-steps, the first learned from the playing of Jesse Lége and the second from Dewey Balfa. Lége, from Gueydan, Louisiana, is a legendary accordion player and a treasure trove of Cajun music and songs. Rayne is a small town in the part of southern Louisiana known as Acadiana.
23. **La Dernière Valse**
Michelle Kaminsky, fiddle • Alan Bradbury, accordion • Maggie Moniz, guitar & vocals

A song of heartbreak by Phillip Alleman and learned by the band Magnolia at a jam session at a 1992 Rhode Island Cajun festival.

1. Eh, malheureuse, criminelle,
Tu m’as dit tu pouvais mais p’us m’aimer
Oh, je veux pas que tu vas;
Gard donc là aujourd’hui tu me tournes la dos.

2. Eh, malheureuse, tu m’as dit
Tu avais trouver un autre qui tu aimer plus que moi;
Oh, je m’ennuie de toi,
Tous demande c’est de rester la derniere valse.

1. Oh, you miserable one, you criminal,
You told me you could but you no longer love me;
Oh, I don’t want you to go,
Today you turned your back on me.

2. Oh, you miserable one, you told me
You’ve found another you love more than me;
Oh, I’m so lonesome for you,
All I ask of you is to stay for the last waltz.

24. **Ave Maris Stella**

Natalie Frank, solo • The Revels Children • The Revels Chorus • Megan Henderson, harmonium • Cambridge Symphonic Brass Ensemble

This plainsong Marian Vespers hymn dating from about the 8th century was adopted in 1884 as the "official" Acadian national anthem in an attempt to build pride, unity and a common identity among Acadians in the Maritimes diaspora. The French verses, written by Jacinthe Laforest in 1994, are the ones most commonly sung, except that the first verse is usually still sung in Latin. The arrangement is by Megan Henderson.

1. Ave, maris stella, Dei mater alma,
Atque semper virgo felix coeli porta.

2. Acadie, ma patrie, à ton nom je me lie.
Ma vie, ma foi sont à toi, tu me protègera.

3. Acadie, ma patrie, ma terre et mon défi,
De près, de loin tu me tiens, mon cœur est acadien.

4. Solve vincula reis, profer lumen caesis,
Mala nostra pelle, bona cuncta posce.

5. Ave, maris stella...
Many hands and ears went into the production of this recording. Particular thanks go to Lisa Ornstein and Josée Vachon for their scholarly and enthusiastic research into the many possibilities for this recording and for providing excellent translations and notes for the ultimate choices. Keith Murphy brought his impressive singing and playing ability to bear, along with his considerable experience as a music director and producer. The three members of Magnolia also yielded a trove of Cajun material to choose from and much Cajun lore to back it up. Albert Arsenault, whom we know from our 2000 Spring Revels collaboration with his Acadian group Barachois, was generous and encouraging. Our good friend Susie Rioff opened her home for out-of-town guest artists, for which we are eternally grateful. Paul Buckley took some beautiful photographs of our recording sessions. We are indebted to Jared Kass and Sophie Michaud for the use of their harmoniums. Lastly, production manager Lynda Johnson made sure everything hummed along smoothly throughout the whole process. Her daughter Sarah Morrisette took invaluable notes during the sessions to guide us in post-production.

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**The Revels Children** Natalie-Susan Frank, Ian Horsburgh, Liam King, Skyler Marks, Madeleine McLaughlin, Celia Molla, Eva Molla, Nora O’Brien, Ewan Swanson, Connor Thomas Upton, Jane Orianna Yannis

**Cambridge Symphonic Brass Ensemble** Gregory Hopkins & Thomas Duprey, *trumpets* • Richard L. Hudson, *horn* • Philip Swanson, *trombone* • Kenneth Amis, *tuba* • Abe Finch, *timpani*

**Production Credits** George Emlen, *music director & producer* • Lynda Johnson, *production manager* • Bill Winn & Antonio Oliart, *recording engineers* • Sarah Morissette, *production assistant* • Recorded at Fraser Performance Studio, WGBH, Boston, MA • *Post-production*: Sound Mirror, Jamaica Plain, MA • Mark Donahue, *editing, mixing and mastering* • Cahoots, *packaging design* • Pat Juneau, *folk art* • Alëna Kuzub, *artwork photography* • *Musical arrangements*: George Emlen & Megan Henderson except where noted • *Liner notes*: Lisa Ornstein, Josée Vachon, Michelle Kaminsky, Alan Bradbury, Maggie Moniz & George Emlen