Voyageur & French Canadian
Folk Songs

Arranged and annotated by Lois Samis Lund©

For the 2008 David Thompson Brigade
the 2010 & 2013 Paul Kane Dinners
and the 2013 Rideau Canal Canoe Brigade
Sometimes referred to as the "unofficial anthem" of French Canada, *A la claire fontaine* is a beautiful ballad of a lost love. Once again it has a lot of words in either language but is worth the effort for its nostalgic melody. The song came from France but its Canadian melody is quite different. One of its early appearances in Canada was at Port Royal in 1608 where it was sung by the men in Champlain's "Order of Good Cheer."

If you have the skills, feel free to be creative with the harmony; the guitar chords which I provide are the "generic" version.

**A la claire fontaine**

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Ah! si mon moine voulait danser is based on a pun on the word "moine" which in France means "monk" but in Quebec can also mean "spinning top". A young lady offers a monk many incentives to get him to dance with her - a hood, a sash, a rosary, a home-spun gown, and a psalter, and then concludes, "If he had not taken a vow of poverty, many other things I would give to him." (Penguin Book of Canadian Folk Songs - Edith Fowke). In Quebec this song has been a popular song for children to sing while playing with a spinning top. I have provided the English words to aid in understanding the text, but like most of these voyageur songs, it really needs to be sung in French! A very pleasant version of the melody can be found at http://members.shaw.ca/tunebook/monmoine.htm.

Ah! si mon moine voulait danser

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French and English words found at http://ingeb.org/songs/ahsimonm.html

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Alouette

G

D7

G

Fine

G

D7

G

D.C. al Fine

G

D7

D7

D7
Auprès de ma blonde (Next to my Girlfriend) was a popular song in France originating in the 17th century, among French sailors and soldiers imprisoned in the Netherlands during the Franco-Dutch War, during the reign of Louis XIV. It became highly popular on both sides of the Atlantic as a military march, a drinking song and nursery rhyme. The tune may be found at: http://www.acadian.org/blonde.html

The lyrics are best left in the original French but an English translation of the refrain is: Near to my sweetheart, How pleasant that makes it, Near to my sweetheart, How pleasant that makes it to sleep.

The French lyrics:

Au jardin de mon père les lauriers sont fleuris
Au jardin de mon père les lauriers sont fleuris
Tous les oiseaux du monde vont y faire leurs nids.

Refrain

Auprès de ma blonde, qu’il fait bon, fait bon, fait bon,
Auprès de ma blonde, qu’il fait bon dormir.

La caille, la turturelle, et la jolie perdris
La caille, la turturelle, et la jolie perdris
Et la jolie colombe qui chante jour et nuit.

Refrain

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C'est l’aviron is the song that was used as the theme music in the old National Film Board production "The Voyageurs." Like En roulant, C'est l'aviron is from medieval France, but was adapted by the voyageurs to fit the task of paddling for endless hours. These two songs have similar characteristics in the way that one verse layers upon the next. C'est l'aviron has a very catchy tune, but for those not fluent in French the words can be overwhelming - I would suggest, if this is the situation, to use nonsense words (or English) for the verse and sing the refrain in either English or French. The words of this song (once again with an endless number of verses) and a version of the melody may be found at http://ingeb.org/songs/aviron.html.

**C'est l'aviron**

Traditional voyageur song

2. |: I met three girls and all of them were pretty; :|
By chance I chose the one who was the beauty.
Refrain:

3. |: By chance I chose the one who was the beauty; :|
Lifted her up so she could ride beside me.
Refrain:

4. |: Lifted her up so she could ride beside me; :|
With ne'er a word we rode along together.
Refrain:

…. And there are lots more verses following!

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En Passant Par La Lorraine

Traditional Voyager song

\[ F \quad A_m \quad B_b \quad C \]
\[ F \quad A_m \quad B_b \quad C \]
\[ F \quad A_m \quad G_m \quad C_7 \]
\[ F \quad A_m \quad B_b \quad C \quad F \]
En roulant ma boule is a very well known voyageur song which originated in fifteenth century France. Scholars researching this song have found over 100 versions. This is not surprising, because En roulant is typical of folk songs (particularly work songs) from all over the world and in many different time periods. The singers made up verses of the songs as they went along in a call/response manner - one person (the leader) would sing a phrase and the rest of the group would echo it back. The leadership could be passed through the members of the group throughout the song. Very often the verse of the song would be a rhyming couplet - and often each succeeding verse would have as its first line the same words that were used as the second line of the preceding verse. Yes, the songs did go on forever - but why not, if you are doing an endlessly repetitive task!

I chose this song as a starter because it is very simple, you only have to know a very few words, yet it opens a whole creative opportunity. If you have convinced yourself that you can't sing, you can still make up verses and call them out at the appropriate time in the song.

It has been requested that I provide "the" English and French lyrics. With over 100 versions who is to say which ones are correct, but I have included links to one version in each language:
(French - http://pagesperso-orange.fr/alain.perron/Chansonvoyageur.htm
and English - http://www.mythstories.com/grizzlyL.html). Each one goes on for a thousand verses and the English one lets you listen to the melody. However I think you will have a lot more fun (and possibility of success!) if you follow the example that I have given you with the written music.

A suggested use of the song on the 2008 DTB is to adjust its tempo to the paddling speed, and make up verses to poke fun at the canoe paddling next to you and its members. I am sure that some of our made up verses will become favourites to be repeated at the campfires where there will be instruments to carry the tune.

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This is a wonderful little tune to play around with on percussion instruments, (spoons, wood blocks, or play the tune on pitched percussion) With a few French words and lots of creativity it works just fine for the non-French speaker. There is a very spirited performance by a girls' concert choir at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOkgIERRQOw&NR=1

J'entends le moulin (tique tique taque)
Mon père a fait un mignon.
Sont trois charpentiers qui la font.
Le plus jeune c'est mon mignon.
Qu'apporte-tu dans ton jupon?
Asseyons-nous et le mangeons.
En s'asseyant il fit un bond,
Qui fit trembler mer et poisson
Et les cailloux qui sont au fond.

I hear the millwheel (tique tique taque)
My father is having a house built.
It's being built with three gables.
There are three carpenters building it.
The youngest is my darling.
What do you have in your apron?
Let's sit down and eat it.
While sitting down they all leapt up,
Causing the sea and fish to tremble,
and the stones on the bottom of the sea.

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Un Canadien Errant

Traditional voyaguer song

F F/E Dm Bb Gm C

C Bb A\textsubscript{m} Bb C Dm

Bb Bb C Gm C F
Vive la Canadienne!

Vive la Canadienne
Vole, mon coeur, vole!
Vive la Canadienne
Et ses jolis yeux doux
Et ses jolis yeux doux, doux, doux
Et ses jolis yeux doux.

Nous la menons aux noces
Vole mon coeur, vole!
Nous la menons aux noces
Dans tous ses beaux atours
Dans tous ses beaux atours, 'tours, 'tours
Dans tous ses beaux atours.

On danse avec nos blondes
Vole mon coeur, vole!
On danse avec nos blondes
Nous changeons tour à tour
Nous changeons tour à tour, tour, tour
Nous changeons tour à tour.

Ainsi le temps se passe
Vole mon coeur, vole!
Ainsi le temps se passe
Il est vraiment bien doux
Il est vraiment bien doux, doux, doux
Il est vraiment bien doux.

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