



BON DÉBARRAS



Photo : Vitor Munoz

BIOGRAPHY

Bon Débarras unites the worlds of music, dance and poetry through a collaboration between Montreal artists Dominic Desrochers, Jean-François Dumas and Véronique Plasse. With their latest album, ***En panne de silence***, nominated for an ADISQ award, **Bon Débarras** moves boldly into an entirely original repertoire steeped in poetry and rhythmic urban sounds, with unambiguous Quebec flavors. On guitar, banjo, violin and harmonica, the group carries an identity, a style and an energy-filled zest for life quite unique and beautifully served by the versatility of the musicians as well as their daring jiggling and vivid body percussion. Bon Débarras' energy taps into the rhythms of today and ventures boldly on the multi-faceted road to tomorrow's dreams, in an

atmosphere that transcends boundaries and ages.

Bon Débarras drew the attention of European presenters in 2014 after receiving the *Lynda Lemay Award* at the Festival de la chanson de Granby. Since its birth, the band has played throughout Canada, the United States, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom as well as making regular appearances in France. Their latest show, ***En panne de silence***, was nominated for an Opus Award in the category Concert of the Year – Quebec's Traditional Music in 2019.

En panne de silence - The show

En panne de silence by **Bon Débarras** takes us on a journey where anything is possible. While a solitary kitchen party is on, an opinionated dance caller, a mad dancer, a theatre ghost and a lover inspired by the seasons show up.

You need a live performance of the trio to fully experience the many traditions of francophone America which coexist in their swing and in a repertoire now mostly made of original compositions sometimes overflowing with rhythmic poetry. The stage is set for jigs, dances and some blazing body percussions, because their distinctive physical atmosphere embedded in their music is definitely **Bon Débarras'** trademark.

And you need the heartfelt warmth of **Dominic Desrochers**, **Jean-François Dumas** and third and not least **Véronique Plasse** when they slow down their mad tempo for a tender love song, a quiet folk tune or a foray into Innu traditions, touching upon some of Québec's deepest roots. The depth of the musical atmospheres on the album is carried by the musicians' versatility and proficiency on a panoply of instruments – guitar, banjo, fiddle, viola, harmonica, Jew's harp, ukulele, rhythmically supported by the cajon and podorythms.



Bon Débarras' music is not only an antioxidant for the soul, it will tickle your inner silence with a compelling energy calling for foot stomping and dancing!

About **En panne de silence**

*We were used to the band drawing on the memory of French-speaking America, all the way to Louisiana, as well as incorporating elements of American roots music. Although these influences can still be felt here, **Bon Débarras'** gift with this fresh 3rd album is a bunch of original songs – almost all of them. The trio resolutely highlights songs and lyrics – poetic, traditional in its inspiration, or a place where slam meets other forms of definitely urban rhythmic poetry. That's one of the band's trademarks associated to their very physical musical atmosphere. So, don't worry, there is plenty of jigging, dancing, hand drumming and vivid body percussion.*

Yves Bernard, Le Devoir

*In their first recordings, you could perceive them deeply rooted in Québec and French North America's memories all the way through Louisiana, with a dash of Americana. In their latest creation, **Bon Débarras** bets mostly on original compositions, in addition to a new cover of the Rill pour rire popularized by Diane Dufresne. Here, it is sung by Marie-Pierre Lecault, the gifted new band member, violinist and violist, who has answered the call of "folk trad" in recent years. Her instruments play the part that used to be for the Double Bass, which gives a new swing to*

*their music sometimes overflowing with rhythmic poetry. Ready for this kitchen party, the trio dares slow down for a tender love song or a more intimate folk song, to end up exploring Nitassinan, Innu territory. Somewhere between folk sound and songs, traditional roots and contemporary beat, **Bon Débarras** has succeeded one more time in seducing us.*

Nicolas Mouchel, Le Pays d'Auge

*Moving from inspired and dazzling original pieces whose energy is contagious to more mellow and poetic, even melancholic ones, **Bon Débarras** found the right pace for *En panne de silence*. A sense of lightness and free spirit exudes from this album, with its lively songs and beats made for foot stomping – an authentic call to dance!*

Pauline Banchereau, FrancoFans

*Still faithful to the rhythms of French-speaking North America and well rooted in the Québec folk trad repertoire, **Bon Débarras** trio has succeeded over the years in imposing their close to unique style and identity, with their energy beautifully served by the jig and the percussive dancing.*

Bernard Letissier, La Manche libre

Join Bon Débarras for a night of foot-stomping fun

The Center presents French Canadian trio at the Argyros

Chris Melville Jan 9, 2019

“When I think of the music of Québec, it puts a smile on my face because it’s just plain fun.”

Kristine Bretall, Director of Performing Arts at the Center

French Canadian fur trappers, known colloquially as *coureurs des bois*, or “runners of the woods,” were among the first wanderers of European descent to explore the American West.

They crossed into Idaho in the early 19th century, leaving linguistic marks upon much the state’s landscape and people. Boise, Coeur d’Alene, Paris (obviously) and even the eponym Nez Perce all bear evidence of French Canadian influence.

Though toponymical remnants are clear to behold, the cultural predilections of these francophone trailblazers did not take root as firmly in Idaho. Partly, that’s due to the fact that the cultural identity of what was then “le Canada” was still evolving. Since becoming the Canadian province Québec, a more distinct cultural, and especially musical, tradition emerged.

Defined by its roots in northern France and featuring a noticeably Celtic lilt introduced by Scottish and Irish immigrants in the later 19th century, Québécois folk music often features fiddles, guitars and a healthy dose of raucous foot-stomping.

Now, to bridge that gap of more than 2,500 miles, the Sun Valley Center for the Arts is reintroducing some French Canadian heritage to the mountains of Idaho.

Residents of and visitors to the Wood River Valley can prepare their boots for stomping and their hands for clapping in warm welcome to the Québécois musical trio Bon Débarras (which, ironically, translates into English as “good riddance”).

The band consists of three Montréal-based artists, Dominic Desrochers, Jean-François Dumas and Marie-Pierre Lecault.

With four instruments among the three of them (guitar, banjo, harmonica and violin) the members of Bon Débarras create a sonic fusion of traditional French Canadian folk styles and contemporary rhythms from around the world to produce a unique musical blend.

Though rooted in this historical style, Bon Débarras’ repertoire consists entirely of original compositions.

“We build upon the traditional heritage and we do our own stuff,” Dumas explained. “It’s all original lyrics and original music inspired by the language.”

Courtesy of the Sun Valley Center for the Arts, the Argyros Performing Arts Center in Ketchum will play host to a one-night-only concert from the trio on Friday, Jan. 18, at 7:30 p.m.

“When I think of the music of Québec, it puts a smile on my face because it’s just plain fun,” said Kristine Bretall, The Center’s director of performing arts. “[Bon Débarras] fuse Québécois folk music, step-dancing and more into a high-energy, rhythmically driven show.”

In contribution to The Center’s ongoing educational outreach efforts, Bon Débarras, like the other musical groups participating in The Center’s 2018-19 Performing Arts Series, will perform their music and lecture before every elementary school in the Wood River Valley.

Their educational programs, taking place from Jan. 16-18, will delve into the rich tapestry of the French Canadian folk music tradition, its mixed heritage from different immigrant nationalities, its technical musicality and more.

“It’s important for the translation of the culture,” Dumas said. “Here in Québec, traditional music is a bit on the fringe. The children are not aware of their own culture. It’s important for us to actualize and show where Québec’s traditional music and culture come from.”

Since “food” is the theme of The Center’s winter exhibition, “At the Table: Kitchen as Home,” Bon Débarras’ Sun Valley sojourn will include an appropriately culinary soirée at The Center’s Hailey House location.

At 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 17, the band will perform a short set at the Winter Warmup Veillée. Appropriately brumal libations, namely mulled wine and cider, will be served to complement an array of Québec-inspired desserts.

Regular admission to the event is \$10 per person, though The Center is offering an extra incentive to those who wish to help foster a sense of community at the evening gathering. Anyone who comes bearing a homemade dessert to share will have the cost of admission waived. In a sense, The Center hopes to make this event a community potluck.

“This evening promises to be a fun way to get a taste of the project in a setting that speaks to

https://www.mtexpress.com/arts_and_events/events/join-bon-d-barras-for-a-night-of-foot-stomping/article_5773da18-138f-11e9-a13d-7baa5524823a.html

home,” said Kristin Poole, The Center’s artistic director. “Besides, who doesn’t like good food, good music and good people?”

The Center’s Hailey House, the historic birthplace of modernist poet and literary critic Ezra Pound, is at 314 Second Ave. S. Pound spent several years living in Paris, so the French connection strengthens further. He was later arrested for treason after voicing support for Mussolini’s fascist regime and spreading anti-American and anti-Semitic propaganda.

Tickets for both the Winter Warmup Veillée and the concert are now on sale from The Center at a range of prices. For premium seating, tickets retail at \$55 for members, \$65 for nonmembers and \$27.50 for students. Regular seating runs \$30 for members, \$40 for nonmembers and only \$15 for students.

Bon Débarras is currently working on their fourth studio album, which they anticipate completing next year.

For more information on Bon Débarras, visit the band’s website at bondebarras.ca. To purchase tickets or for more information on the concert, visit sunvalleycenter.org or theargyros.org.

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3 Quebecois 3

It's foot-tapping in all directions for music of the Canadian province. Tony Montague profiles three of the current hot outfits.



More than forty years since the first renewal of popular interest in traditional music, fronted by bands such as La Bottine Souriante and Le Réve du Diable, the roots scene in Quebec has acquired the maturity to experiment and push constantly at boundaries of genre and style.

The artists of Montreal-based trio Bon Débarras have carved out a unique place for themselves with witty and verbally nimble songs, sharp musicianship, smart arrangements, and more than a touch of the variety show.

"I was born into a family of musicians, singers, storytellers, and step dancers and I fell into traditional music when I was a small kid," says Dominique Desrochers, who writes and sings, plays various instruments, and is an agile step dancer, or *gigueur*. "Like every teen I got into other stuff later – rock, heavy metal, and so on – but I also really connected with traditional gigue. I was in folklore ensembles and it's there I had my first classes in gigue from masters. At the same time I did international dances, and the ones that grabbed me the most involved using the body as a percussion instrument – such as South African gumboot dancing. At the same time I developed a career as a musician."

The different strands of Dominique's art as a performer came together after co-founding Bon Debarras [Good Riddance] with Jean-François Dumas ten years ago. A fellow multi-instrumentalist and songwriter, Jean-François picked up his skills in the course of travelling the world with his guitar for many years, entertaining people – and above all learning. "I was interested in every culture and tradition I encountered. Quebecois music came later. I started to play mandolin, then picked up banjo. I'd also heard Alain Lamontagne play harmonica when I was thirteen and it marked me for life. I longed to play like him and to tap my feet like a madman. Like Dominique I'm also influenced by American folk, Cajun, and country."

Bon Debarras's self-titled debut in 2009 was nominated for an ADISQ – the big music award in Quebec. They followed up in 2013 with *Errance*, moving more towards their own compositions. Fiddle and viola player Marie-Pierre Lecault joined three years ago to replace bassist Cédric Dind-Lavoie, adding a woman's voice to the singing and injecting new drive into the trio's sound. "I was born into a family of musicians, and I've been playing violin since I was two and majored in classical violin up to university. But at the same time I played traditional music."

La Grondeuse A Fille/Reel Bipolaire, the folk-instrumental set that opens Bon Débarras's third album *En Panne De Silence*, showcases Marie-Pierre's supple and spirited fiddling. She also sings lead on the hilarious *Rill Pour Rire* – an urban lowlife ditty that was a big hit forty years ago. You don't need to speak French to enjoy the rhymes and rhythms of this brilliant put-down of an aspiring bed companion. "The guys wanted to cover it for a long time but it needed a female interpreter," she says. "It's hard to see a man doing it! As



Bon Débarras

Photo: Vitor Munhoz

soon as I joined they asked if I was interested. We play it in a stripped-down acoustic way with repeating patterns. It's the only song on which I sing the lead."

Dominique contributes four compositions, and commands a range of different idioms from rural folk to slam poetry. "I dived into traditional music and research into songwriting. I put together a step-dancing spectacle for a dance company, and wrote a show around the poetry of Gaston Miron [1928-96], which made me want to work with that kind of popular language and approach. I like urban music a lot, and slam attracted me in particular. There's a strong community in Montreal."

"So I wrote some 'portraits', like *All You Can Beat* – the psychological sketch of a *tapageur* [roisterer] or step-dancer, all of it flavoured with traditional music and fragments of text. Bon Débarras is very percussive – as much in our words as our music. For the first album we took traditional texts from the archives and gave them new arrangements. Little by little we added our own material. Jean-François and I have our own distinctive styles, ways of talking, and delivery of a song, which gives colour to our show. We like playing with that."

Jean-François's contribution *Le Théâtre De La Ville* is a beautifully crafted short-story-in-song – a tale of childhood trauma. "It's something that happened to me, but I didn't want to put it in the first person. Everything in the song is true. I went back to the theatre and met the technicians who had worked there. They knew what I experienced, and told me that a child died there, and the theatre had a ghost – which I hadn't known at the time."

How do such relatively long, word-rich songs go over with English-speaking audiences? "We play a lot for Anglophones in the US and Canada, and came to the UK in 2014 for three weeks," says Jean-François. "People may not understand all the words but they appreciate the rhythmic aspects and recognise the Anglo-Celtic side of our music. It's in the jigs and reels of course, but there are other close links and resonances – those between Dominique's danc-

ing and English clogging for instance."

With solo dance and body percussion, frequent instrumental changes, and of course the audience animation that's such a strong feature of Quebecois bands, Bon Débarras's live performance carries echoes of the old-time variety show. "The first thing that our US agent said to me when we met was, 'there's something about the circus in what you do'," recalls Jean-François.

Le Vent Du Nord, Les Chauffeurs A Pieds, and Bon Débarras embrace a growing awareness and respect for North America's First Nations and their culture. Le Vent Du Nord were inspired to write *La Marche Des Iroquois* for their current album *Têtu*; Les Chauffeurs' 400-km canoe trip downriver for the book and album *De Ses Couteaux Microscopiques* is interspersed with reference and allusion to 'les autochtones' and their knowledge of the natural world; and Bon Débarras end *En Panne De Silence* with *Makushami/Nitassinan*, a traditional dance of the Innu or Montagnais from north-east Quebec.

"Makushami is a gathering, a feast and celebration to the rhythm of the Innu's traditional drum the *teueikan*, and Nitassinan means 'our land' in Innu-aimun," explains Jean-François. "We've added a reel and some *turlutte* [mouth music] to it. I've got a job outside of Bon Débarras, working for Wapikomi Mobile, an organisation that brings cinema to autochtone communities. It's a great project and has taken me all over Quebec – which is home to eleven First Nations. Dominique has also been to these communities, and it made us want to write a song as a homage. Quebecois folk and roots music is often identified with particular places and regions, and there's a nationalistic side to that. We want to see things from a wider perspective, and draw attention to the people who were here so long before us and that we love so much."

leventdunord.com/en

leschauffeurs.com

bondebarras.ca/en



LE DEVOIR

LIBRE DE PENSER

« De la cuisine à la lune avec Bon Débarras »

Yves Bernard, Le Devoir, 24 février 2017

<http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/musique/492563/de-la-cuisine-a-la-lune-avec-bon-debarras>

Jeudi soir, le groupe montréalais proposait le spectacle du lancement de « En panne de silence », du nom de son nouvel album, devant un public très enthousiaste au Lion d'Or. D'entrée de jeu, une nouveauté s'impose : l'arrivée de la violoniste altiste Marie-Pierre Lecault, ce qui modifie beaucoup la personnalité du groupe. Elle remplace le contrebassiste Cédric Dind-Lavoie, joue, chante, tape du pied et invite le Quatuor Trad avec lequel elle s'est fait connaître. Avec elle, Bon Débarras se rapproche davantage du son québécois.

Le groupe a toujours puisé principalement dans l'Amérique francophone, jusqu'à la Louisiane, en intégrant des éléments de roots américain, mais avec ce troisième album, et bien que ces influences soient toujours présentes, Bon Débarras offre dorénavant un répertoire presque complètement original en mettant l'accent sur la chanson : la chanson poétique, celle d'inspiration traditionnelle, ou cette autre qui intègre le slam et d'autres formes de poésie rythmée, urbaine.

Il s'agit là de l'une des marques de commerce du groupe, en plus du caractère physique, aussi intégré dans la musique. On gigue, on danse, on se frappe le corps et on rend très vivantes les percussions corporelles. Le mouvement va même au-delà du trad et on a l'impression à un moment d'être presque rendu dans un tablao espagnol lorsque Dominic Desrochers se met à marteler le plancher. Il a l'habitude d'explorer plusieurs formes de danses contemporaines qui nous projettent ailleurs.

Il joue aussi de la guitare et du ukulélé en chantant. Durant le spectacle, on n'est jamais bien loin de la chanson, même si des passages instrumentaux « groove » et « rillent » fort. On pénètre aussi dans d'autres atmosphères : en valse délicatement habillée par le quatuor à cordes ou en folk avec un violon rythmique qui confère un effet hypnotique. Ailleurs, on turlutte et on harmonise les turluttes. On les rend même mélodiques. On sait aussi se faire très drôle en faisant « riller » le chant, surtout dans l'interprétation par Marie-Pierre du Rill pour rire que Diane Dufresne avait rendu célèbre. Ici, on a même trouvé le moyen de siffloter et de finir la pièce avec du chant jazz, toujours avec le sourire en coin.



Photo: Mario Faubert

Bon Débarras offre dorénavant un répertoire presque complètement original en mettant l'accent sur la chanson.

Les choses sont devenues plus émouvantes lorsque les spectateurs ont commencé à simuler des battements de coeur en se frappant légèrement sur le corps pour annoncer Makusham en hommage à la culture innue. Tout y était : le sentiment, la langue et la présence de Joséphine Bacon qui s'est permis de danser sur la scène avec sa canne, tout cela précédé d'un extrait d'un poème de Natasha Kanapé Fontaine. Ici, les racines ancestrales et moins anciennes du Québec se rejoignent le plus naturellement du monde. La lenteur de l'espace se transmettait dans l'offrande.

Ce qui précède a également été rendu possible par l'excellent multi-instrumentiste Jean-François Dumas. En plus d'être de tous les rythmes avec sa podorythmie et son cajon, il incarne le troubadour du voyage en s'accompagnant à la guitare, au banjo, à la mandoline et à l'harmonica. Au banjo, il est l'un des héritiers de Jean-Paul Loyer par sa façon aventureuse d'utiliser l'instrument. Il « groove » en toute complicité avec Marie-Pierre pendant que Dominic se laisse souvent aller à la parole originale. Quelques lignes de Déclunaison paraissent d'ailleurs résumer la démarche poétique et musicale du groupe : « Je me fais un party de cuisine. Dans ma tête en sourdine. C'est la lune qui me répond ». Un exemple de l'originalité de Bon Débarras.

LE DEVOIR

LIBRE DE PENSER

« En panne de silence, Bon Débarras »

Yves Bernard, Le Devoir, 17 février 2017

<http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/musique/491877/en-panne-de-silence-bon-debarras>



Sur les premiers disques, on a perçu les racines du Québec et de l'Amérique française jusqu'à la Louisiane, mais avec un peu de roots américaine. Ici, Bon Débarras mise sur des originales, en plus d'une version de Rill pour rire rendue célèbre par Diane Dufresne et interprétée ici par Marie-Pierre Lecault, la nouvelle venue, violoniste-altiste de formation, qui est tombée dans la marmite trad dans les dernières années. Ses instruments remplacent la contrebasse, et cela

transparaît beaucoup dans le swing de cette musique parfois gorgée de poésie rythmique dans le party de cuisine. On peut aussi ralentir vers une tendre chanson d'amour ou un folk plus intime. Dans quelques pièces, le quatuor trad confère des couleurs plus classiques et vers la fin, le groupe s'aventure vers le Nitassinan, le territoire innu. Entre folk, chanson et trad, Bon Débarras réussit un autre bon coup. Spectacle-lancement au Lion d'Or le jeudi 23 février.

FrancoFans

LE BIMESTRIEL INDÉ DE LA SCÈNE FRANCOPHONE

No.64 (avril-mai 2017)

BON DÉBARRAS

En panne de silence

(Production de l'Onde)



Porteur d'un son traditionnel, ce trio n'a pas eu de panne d'inspiration pour son troisième album empreint de son origine, que vous allez très vite deviner grâce au bel accent... québécois ! Loin des clichés, la musique folk de Bon Débarras s'ouvre à d'autres horizons spacio-temporels, nous transportant tantôt en Irlande, tantôt dans la cale d'un bateau de Vikings (*La grondeuse à la fille*). Il faut dire que les matelots sont bien équipés pour le voyage et la fête : banjo, violon, harmonica, percussions corporelles, exaltés par des passagers invités tel que l'accordéon. L'alternance entre les morceaux à l'énergie contagieuse et d'autres plus doux, remplis de poésie, de mélancolie (*Le théâtre de la ville*) rythme judicieusement *En panne de silence*. Un sentiment de légèreté et de liberté se dégage de cet album aux ritournelles faisant taper du pied, un véritable appel à la danse !

www.bondebarras.ca

Pauline Bancheureau



« Quebec's high energy folk trio Bon Débarras in concert Aug. 20 & 21 »

Daily Bulldog, Maine (États-Unis), 16 août 2014

<http://www.dailybulldog.com/db/arts/quebecs-high-energy-folk-trio-bon-debarras-in-concert-aug-20-21/>

SOUTH CARTHAGE - New England Celtic Arts with the support of the American Folk Festival and Folk Quebec will present Bon Débarras. Performances are at Skye Theatre Performing Arts Center in South Carthage on Wednesday, Aug.20; and at Phillips Area Community Center in Phillips on Thursday, Aug. 21. Curtain is at 7 p.m. at both locations and a jam session at Skye will start at 6:15 p.m.

Bon Débarras is the result of the unexpected meeting of three dynamic creators involved in music, dance and poetry. The trio opens a door to their recollections of America and their music is at the intersection of various traditions. Their energy taps into the rhythms of today and ventures boldly on the multi-faceted road to tomorrow's dreams.

Folklore (from folk, meaning "people," and lore, meaning "knowledge") refers to all collective productions by the people that are orally transmitted from generation to generation (tales, stories, songs) or through example (music, dance, rites, beliefs, savoir-faire).

Folklore defines who we are and traces our origins. Bon Débarras' inspiration comes from their home base, Montreal, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in North America. While remaining true to their roots, the three musicians, who are equally passionate about music, dance and poetry, are drawing on living traditions and various influences to explore new avenues.

Bon Débarras' folk music is deeply rooted in the memory of French-speaking America. On their guitars, banjo, mandolin, accordion, washboard and harmonicas, and integrating foot percussion, jig and body percussion, the trio creates musical atmospheres that transcend boundaries and ages.

The American Folk Festival is Maine premier Folk event held Aug. 22 thru 24 on the Bangor Waterfront. This years schedule is available at <http://www.americanfolkfestival.com>



Bon débarras

Bon Débarras are featured throughout the festival with performances and workshops.

More information is available at:
<http://www.necelticarts.com>



“St. Albert Children’s Festival fun for all ages”

Colin Maclean, Edmonton Sun, Alberta, 28 mai 2014

<http://www.edmontonsun.com/2014/05/28/st-albert-childrens-festival-fun-for-all-ages>

When the final yellow bus filled with happy kids drove away and the final volunteer wearily went home June 1st of last year, 57,137 patrons had turned up to sample the many pleasures of the St. Albert International Children’s Festival. And over 23,000 of those paid to see a show.

Much like the Fringe, the quality of entertainment at the St. Albert Festival has drifted upward over the years. This year with a banquet of entertainments to choose from, let me lead you through the feast with a few morsels you might consider.

On the streets (and free) consider Phileas Flash and Dan The One Man Band. Both of these fast-talking entertainers feature snappy patter, and an act that holds the attention of children — of all ages. Flash is a motor-mouthed

Brit with an amazing facility with balloons. His act includes a hypnotizing device you stare at — and when he moves it away — his head blows up like, well, a balloon. Dan The One Man Band walks around the Festival dressed in a suit of instruments — drums, triangles, cymbals and the like while playing a guitar, a kazoo and a mouth organ and working the audience like a vaudeville clown.

On the (also free) outdoor stage, my favourite act is Kimberly and Daniel Craig who are a complete circus all by themselves — juggling, fire juggling, hand-to-hand acrobatics and a stunning turn by Daniel on a spinning hoop. He gives the impression he will go out of control at any second but he rules the stage. You’ve probably seen these kinds of acts before but never better or performed by just two people.

On the mainstages, I was particularly impressed with the French Canadian trio Bon Debarras (“Good Riddance”). The act is based on traditional French Canadian folk music but the manic trio certainly blow the doors off anything fusty or old-fashioned. First of all, they are superlative musicians playing in many styles and on many instruments. That includes the human body. At one point they had an entire sell-out audience of young people syncopating various rhythms by slapping sundry parts of their bodies. (“The most accessible instrument in the world. And the cheapest.”)

My favourite was a simple, yet continent spanning rhythm, first played on an Inuit drum that morphed into a French Canadian two-step and finally into a barn burning Cajun melody. You leave Bon Debarras with a goofy smile on your face and a spring in your step.

From India, by way of L.A., a dance company called Blue 13 comes with Ghungroos and Whistles, a very practiced and precise high energy company of seven that celebrates the exuberance of Bollywood dancing. The costumes are gorgeous, the music infectious and the dances are diverse — much like India itself.

The Edmonton Sun is proud to present Train Theatre — an Israeli puppet theatre in the riveting A Touch of Light. It’s the story of Louis Braille, who lost his sight when he was three and at the age of 15 invented a method of reading and writing for the blind. It doesn’t sound like much of a gripper but in the hands of master storyteller Patricia O’Donovan, there wasn’t a sound in the hall until the audience broke into enthusiastic applause at the end. The very basic puppets are all made of paper but with music, lighting and use of shadow this story of a little boy who changed the lives of blind people everywhere becomes very real and touching.

And finally, a spectacular production on the mainstage of the Arden Theatre. There may be just three actors on stage but the Austin, Texas company The Robot Planet presents a cast of dozens in The Intergalactic Nemesis, a lurid, melodramatic 1933 comic book about an intrepid (female) reporter and her faithful sidekick who undertake a dangerous intergalactic journey to save the earth. (Of course!) There’s music, sound effects and over 700 huge comic style drawings. The production was a bit leaden but the audience loved it.

The shows are available right through the week but Friday night and all day Saturday the buses full of kids stop and families are more apt to find tickets available. But beware — many shows are sold out already. The St. .Albert International Children’s Festival runs through May 31.

“Joyful, energetic music with Bon Débarras”

Anna Borowiecki, St. Albert Gazette, Alberta, 7 mai 2014

<http://www.stalbertgazette.com/article/20140507/SAG0302/305079978/joyful-energetic-music-with-bon-d%C3%A9barras>

Every year the Northern Alberta International Children’s Festival books a lively foot-stomping group. And this year the bouncy, up-tempo Bon Débarras fills the slot.

The Montreal-based trio’s name roughly translates into “Good Riddance.” But in an odd paradox, the group’s energetic traditional step dancing generally evokes a “wow.”

Bon Débarras spokesperson Jean-Francoise Dumas patiently explains that the choice of their quirky moniker was based on two things.

“Bon Débarras has two meanings. One is ‘good riddance’ and good riddance is about getting rid of sorrow, anger and all negative energy. We let it go when we play music. We let it out. Also in French, débarras is a place to keep old stuff you don’t want to get rid of. We are like a storage closet where we can go and find traditional influences and inspiration.”

Dumas is the trio’s drummer, even though snare, kick and cymbals are not part of his toolkit. He specializes in podorythmie – a popular French form playing percussion using only feet and the floor.

His longtime band mate Dominic Desrochers, a well-known Quebecois singer and step-dancer, also plays banjo, guitar and washboard. Rounding out the ensemble is virtuoso Cedric Dind-Lavoie on upright bass and accordion.

Together they are a high-powered trio melding American and Quebec influences to form a distinct sound of their own.

Bon Débarras was born after three dynamic creators pooled their energy. While remaining true to their roots, they also tapped into the rhythms of today creating a one-of-a-kind fusion that has echoes of Scottish, country, bluegrass and rockabilly.

In 2013, the ensemble dropped its second album, *Errance*, meaning “wanderer.”

“It was inspired by the francophone memory of America. We are like the Acadian, the Cajun. We all have a French connection. We wander all over the map.”

Unlike other Quebec-based bands such as *Le Vent du Nord* that use the traditional fiddle, strings and accordion, Bon Débarras prefers banjo, piano and accordion.

“And we include dance. Dominic comes from a tap dancing background. He went looking for more vocabulary in his research and discovered a gum boot dance, Hungarian dance and body percussion.”

Unlike Bon Débarras’ first self-titled album that hinged mostly on traditional works, *Errance* is mainly original tunes each with their own vibe.

Reel facile has a strong start right out the gate and is loaded with tight harmonies, a funky harmonica and serious banjo action.

Chanson du forcat translated into the “song of the convict” creates a tempo with a chain-gang feel whereas *Vagancia* is more delicate with the use of a mouth harp and good support from the double bass.



GOOD RIDDANCE – Bon Débarras, the Montreal-based trio whose name roughly translates into “Good Riddance,” is coming to this year’s children’s festival. Supplied photo

Humour is a big part of *Chien fidèle*, a song about the singer’s dying dog, which you might think would bring on a rush of tears. But after the dog dies, the percussion gears up and the singer dances a jig on the car that killed his dog and stomps the hell out of it.

Yes, Bon Débarras is promising a lot of fun.

“Come, you’ll feel better. Music is joyful and there’s a lot of energy in it. It makes me feel alive when I play and it makes you feel alive. Hopefully you will dance too.”

“Bon Débarras offers up a foot-stomping party”

Alexander Varty, The Georgia Straight, 22 février 2012

<http://www.straight.com/music/bon-debarras-offers-foot-stomping-party>

Bon Débarras's name translates as “Good Riddance”, but that's the last thing anyone's likely to say when the Montreal-based trio leaves a stage. “Wow!” is the more usual response, thanks to the group's energetic fusion of traditional step-dancing, Québécois folk music, and influences from around the globe.

Most of all, audiences are going to be knocked out by the fancy footwork of Jean-François Dumas. In addition to playing harmonica, banjo, and guitar, he's effectively Bon Débarras's drummer, even though snare, kick, and cymbals are noticeably absent from his musical toolkit. That's because he specializes in podorythmie—playing percussion using only his feet and the floor.

“It's very typical of Quebec, this kind of art, but when we go out of Quebec, in France or the United States, people are very fascinated by it,” says Dumas's bandmate Dominic Desrochers, an acclaimed singer and step-dancer who also plays banjo, guitar, and washboard. On the line from a Winnipeg tour stop, he explains that in Québécois folk music, foot percussion predates the 19th-century introduction of the piano and the 20th-century adoption of the guitar.

“It's the original accompaniment to fiddle or accordion music,” he notes. “You're dancing, sitting on a chair, and playing percussion—and with Jean-François, he's playing banjo and harmonica at the same time, as well as singing. It's really impressive.”

Add Luzio Altobelli's accordion virtuosity and you've got what Desrochers calls “acoustic rock groove music”, but even that's a misleadingly reductive explanation of what Bon Débarras has to offer. As documented on its eponymous debut, the band combines elegant original songs with the considerably more rustic sounds that Desrochers was exposed to during his family's multigenerational jam sessions. As well, it draws on the melting-pot reality of contemporary Montreal.

“Traditional French-Canadian music was inspired by immigration—the old immigration, with Irish music, Scottish music, English music, and music from France, too,” the multi-instrumentalist stresses. “And today the immigration's still going on, with African and Latin American



The members of Bon Débarras model the type of ensembles that pass as formal evening wear among fans of traditional French-Canadian folk music.

people, people from around the world. So we're inspired by all these cultures, and want to integrate them into our culture.”

To bolster his argument, Desrochers points out that Dumas will make a bonus appearance at this weekend's Festival du Bois, tapping his feet along to Argentine-born guitarist Juan Sebastian Larobina's innovative take on the tango. Don't think that Québécois folk music has entirely abandoned its national-treasure status in favour of international exploration, though. Giving the Straight an impromptu French lesson, Desrochers explains the secondary meanings of his band's punning name.

“Débarras also means a storage room: it's a place where we store old memories and old things in case we need them one day,” he says. “But sometimes those things can grow in value. That's why we search for old songs that can also be a reality today. That's why we go into the archives or draw on family repertoire.

“And, too, débarras can mean a release or deliverance from something,” he continues. “In that way, we see music as kind of an antioxidant of the soul. It makes us feel good when we play so, yeah, it's good riddance—good riddance to sad feelings.”

Bon Débarras plays the Festival du Bois in Maillardville's Mackin Park on Saturday and Sunday (March 3 and 4).