



YVES LAMBERT TRIO

In 1976 Yves Lambert, singer and multi-instrumentalist, founded La Bottine Souriante, with partners Mario Forest and André Marchand. Mr. Lambert, with his natural talent and charisma, through this legendary group and other efforts, has had a major impact on the development of Quebecois musical heritage as well as the revival of traditional music. Throughout his 26 years as a member of La Bottine Souriante, Yves Lambert was the anchor and leading personality during a meteoric rise that led to shows, tours and TV appearances around the world. The acclaim they achieved included 3 Juno Awards, 8 Félix Awards for Traditional Album of the Year, and 1 BBC Award for Traditional Album and Group of the Year, as well as Félix nominations in the following categories: Show of the Year, Group of the Year, and Most Successful Artist Outside Quebec.

In 1998 Yves's need to explore led him to produce a solo album, *Les Vacances de M. Lambert*, which won 2 OPUS Awards and was nominated in three categories at the ADISQ Gala.

After taking his famous boots around the world during more than a quarter century, Mr. Lambert decided to try on some new shoes. Guided by an overflow of creative energy, he embarked on a second beautiful big adventure. Surrounded by new musicians, he released an album entitled *Récidive* in 2004. This album was acclaimed once more by critics and was awarded the Félix for Best Traditional Album of the Year at the 2005 ADISQ Gala. His album *Le Monde à Lambert*, released in October 2007, added to this great artist's list of successes, and in 2008, it won a Canadian Folk Music award. *Bal à l'Huile* (2009), is a completely exceptional and original album. This project takes a new approach to a traditional repertoire, revisited by singers

from other milieus. In a context where traditional culture is marginalized and little known, this project's goal was to have it rediscovered by the public. In 2010, the Canadian Folk Music Awards honoured the artist with the Best Folk Singer award.

In 2012, once more Yves Lambert rolled up his sleeves to produce a new album as a trio with two musicians who have been his partners since 2004: Olivier Rondeau (guitar, bass guitar) and Tommy Gauthier (violin, mandolin, bouzouki, and feet).

Lambert, Rondeau, and Gauthier experimented with the trio concept during their 23-concert summer circuit tour in Eastern Quebec in 2010. Strongly encouraged by charmed audiences and by the pleasure of the musical challenge, in fall 2012, the trio delivered an album where the "sound" achieved extraordinary mastery and affirmed the trio's distinctive personality. The trio brilliantly demonstrates how traditional local music continually reinvents itself within a modern context. The three multi-instrumentalists multiply the decibels as though there were many more than three members. Studio wizardry? Absolutely not! With a simple modification to his guitar, Olivier Rondeau added depth by expanding the instrument's dynamic range. This process enables a new way of playing guitar and bass simultaneously. What we hear on the album can be 95% reproduced live on stage.

Friday, May 30, 2014

■ SUMMERFOCUS

Lambert musical ambassador

JAMES KEELAGHAN

I'd like to think that my wife came to Canada because of me, but really, she immigrated because of Yves Lambert.

I met my wife at the National Folk Festival in Canberra, Australia. While it was love at first sight for me, she needed some persuading. We courted by letter for about six months. I went to visit while I was on tour down under. Then, the summer after we met, she came to Canada for her vacation. My game plan was to woo her with the Rockies and the west coast. I also took her to her first Canadian folk festival in Mission, B.C.

One of the acts that weekend was La Bottine Souriante. She had never heard traditional Quebec music before. She dug it. Really dug it.

A large part of La Bottine's appeal came directly from the energy that spilled like a waterfall from their frontman Yves Lambert. He's a fantastic raconteur, a barrelhouse singer and one of the best accordion players on the planet. Yves is the consummate showman, the living embodiment of charisma. He presides over gigs like a jovial Buddha with a squeeze box.

I've seen Yves perform to audiences on three continents. In many of those places people were hearing Quebecois music for the first time. No matter where it was — Denmark, the U.S., England — the reaction was always the same. Even the most staid would be on their feet screaming for more. It doesn't matter that he is singing in different language, or that the intros are a *franglais* mash-up. His joy and love of his art shines through. It's infectious.

In 2003, after 27 years and 14 recordings with La Bottine Souriante, Lambert decided it was time to move on. He didn't rest on his laurels. He drew some of Quebec's best young players to him and created the Bébert Orchestra, he released another four CDs, contributed to compilations, toured constantly, wrote new tunes.

He created a stripped down, trio version of Bébert for a 40-date tour. The power of that stripped down ensemble was undeniable. In the Yves Lambert Trio, he is joined by multi-instrumentalists Olivier Rondeau and Tommy Gauthier.

Gauthier plays violin, mandolin and bouzouki. His early training as a drummer informs his foot percussion. He's played



Yves Lambert performs as part of the Yves Lambert Trio. The Trio will perform at Summerfolk this year.

with Matapat and Antoine Dufour. Rondeau plays the acoustic and electric guitars, banjo, and vocals.

Gauthier and Rondeau are young, but they are not inexperienced. Their sound is simple and layered. While true to their roots they are definitely taking the music different places. The rhythms are more intricate. The mouth music is there, but it's sung with non-traditional harmonies.

Music has generational changes. Every 20 years, give or

take, a new crop of musicians bring their instrumental experience to bear on the tradition. They write snaky new tunes. They borrow fiddle styles from Scotland or Norway. They move the tradition forward tune by tune. The Yves Lambert Trio is bridging the gap between past and future in the Quebec tradition. For the second time in his life Lambert is in the vanguard of a Quebec musical evolution.

He is a genuine and humble man. He doesn't have to be.

He has a fist full of gold-selling albums, Juno Awards, Felix awards, Canadian Folk Music Awards. He is one of the most influential of the musicians that lead the Quebec roots revival in the late 70's. In song he is lyrical, poetic, not shy of the political or the romantic. Yves is a national treasure.

On the Monday morning after that festival in Mission, the phone in our hotel room rang at about 8:30 a.m. It was the front desk informing me that the van had been broken

into. I dressed and went downstairs to inspect the damage. I never leave guitars or bags in the truck so I was more worried about the inconvenience of a broken window, or however they got in. I looked in the van. The thieves had rifled through everything. All our things had been scattered around. I was relieved and a little wounded that the box with 150 copies of my latest cd was still there... but La Bottine's CD was gone.

The Yves Lambert Trio will be bringing the new tradition to us

at this year's Summerfolk Music and Crafts Festival. Information about him and all the other performers, artisans and vendors at this year's festival can be found at www.summerfolk.org

The Summerfolk Music and Crafts Festival happens Aug. 15, 16, 17 at Kelso Beach. Tickets available online or at 1-888-655-9090.

James Keelaghan is the artistic director of The Summerfolk Music and Crafts Festival.

■ EYE ON THE ARTS

Big rigs, country music and quilts on the bill

Owen Sound Little Theatre presents 18 Wheels by



Durham Saturday at 7:30 p.m. for an evening of traditional, good old country music at the

4 p.m. at the Mildmay-Carrick Recreation Complex, 24 Vincent Street, Mildmay. It includes quilt

establishing herself on performance stages across Canada. Renowned pianist and composer

Bob DeAngelis and Sax Appeal Jazz perform at Masford Hall.



The Yves Lam Musique ho

BY DANA WHITTLE

photo by Guillaume Morin

Lambert Trio: Airs piste



Accordionist-singer-harmonicist Yves Lambert was a founding member of one of Québec's earliest trad groups, La Bottine Souriante. From 1976-2003, he traveled the world with them, an ambassador for traditional Québécois music. Both with and without La Bottine, he has earned Félix and Juno awards and nominations.

Since striking out on his own, he has carved out an impressive niche for himself, collecting, arranging and performing a tenaciously-rooted repertoire that features a melding of pure Québécois style with edgy contemporary undertones, in part the result of his collaboration with his youthful sidemen and their strong trad and jazz backgrounds. I've known him for 25 years, but in recent years, I'd begun noticing another side to Monsieur Lambert – a poetic, curious and self-examining dimension to a man whom many of us see as somewhat larger-than-life due to his previous role as La Bottine frontman – but we had somehow missed the individual. As a trad musician myself, I was itching to learn more about what makes this iconic man, this “personage” tick, and to hear about his musical experiences “off-trail.”

It's a mild March afternoon, a Thursday, later to become weekly jam night at L'Albion in downtown Joliette. I drive my Subaru (jam-ready, acoustic bass in the back) down the very steep, winding, snowy road leading to Yves' Sainte-Mélanie studio, which is part of an old “domaine,” a group of ancient summer cottages on a tree-covered property high above the serpentine Assomption River. As I step out of the car, I notice enormous animal tracks in the snow. Really enormous, like bigger than a wolf. Hmm... When I reach the door and give a knock, I hear music and a muffled “Woof.” Yves opens up and assures me “He's friendly, don't worry.” Thank heavens, because he is VERY BIG. Diablo, a

130-pound Dogue de Bordeaux, proceeds to sniff, wag and kiss me, proving Yves right with ever-so-slightly alarming, overgrown-puppy gusto. We sit down with a local IPA microbrew from L'Alchimiste and begin to talk.

First of all, these guys are really, truly a team. The Yves Lambert Trio is Yves (vocals, accordion, harmonica), Olivier Rondeau (acoustic and electric guitar, vocals) and Tommy Gauthier (fiddle, bouzouki, mandolin, foot percussion, vocals). There is roughly a 20-year age difference

between the younger two men (both in their 30s) and Yves, which makes for a lovely dynamic, a kind of layed-back atmosphere that is sometimes lacking in bands with members who are at the same point in their lifecycle. They've been together in various line-ups for ten years, and Olivier tells me that working together is a pleasure. "The whole experience is instinctual, none of us are judgmental, and we constantly learn from each other," he notes, "and Yves has not lost his 'kamikaze' side, he's willing to take a risk." "It's definitely not like back in the days of La Bottine when there was a lot of arguing – there's no stress here," adds Yves. "And we're really productive and efficient," interjects Tommy. "We accomplish what we set out do do."

The three players have previously recorded other albums together (with additional musicians), their first album as the Yves Lambert Trio was just released late last year on the Prûche Libre label.

Yves, while physically imposing with a slightly theatrical presence, is in reality an unpretentious guy with a high level of self-awareness and open-mindedness. Yet he is deeply, persistently, connected to the idea of history, to the roots of the music he plays, continually returning to time-tested references to be sure he is understanding its essence. It is this "new"

Yves that I've really come to appreciate over the past few years. He has come alive with this trio and they have created a sound that lands somewhere between pure trad (repertoire, playing) and Québécois music viewed as "world" music – the "ethnic" music that is generally maligned by that nation's own government and cultural policies. I sometimes think that the danger it is in is, ironically, what keeps it alive; there is often a kind of urgency to those who devote their life to traditional music. Yves loves poetry and is a thinker, but what he cares about most is very simple: traditional music, music that has been passed down through the ages, that is just played and played and played. Period.

photos by Guillaume Morin





Tommy Gauthier



Yves Lambert



Olivier Rondeau

Olivier is a tall, slim, strawberry-blond-haired guy, very soft-spoken and smooth. He is the “calm” one, always responding thoughtfully. From rural Sainte-Mélanie, a bit north of Yves’ home, he is a unofficially the “arrangement king” with the trio. He holds a degree in Jazz Guitar from Concordia University and his playing is as smooth and as warm and spontaneous as his persona.

A native of Sainte-Ambroise, Tommy is an enthusiastic, intense fellow and a virtuosic multi-instrumentist. He has mastered styles from Québec trad to jazz, and has performed with many well-known Québec trad, jazz and country artists. He also possesses a tenacious personality – if he sets his mind to something it happens. He has a degree in Jazz from the University of Montréal and is a professor of violin there, as well.

ask Yves if his family was musical. “Not really, but my grandmother sang traditional songs and I remember at five- or six-years-old “gigueing” (stepdancing) to the Chicken Reel. Nobody could believe it, they were cracking up but I was tripping on the tune; it was a soirée at my grandmother Yvonne Poirier’s house. I loved it! I was also a big fan of Les Cailloux, a group with Robert Jourdain [a local musician and friend who died last year]. I’d come home from school, lie down on the couch and listen to that. After that I got into rock ... but later on, in the ’70s, the English band the Incredible String Band with Robin Williamson became a strong influence for me. The fiddling was incredible. It got me out of the rock and into the folk revival era. Another “étincelle” (spark) for me was John Renbourn and the Bothy Band.”

I’m curious about their first memory of music itself, the first time they noticed it or realized that it was important in their lives. “I remember exactly when!” says Yves immediately. “At 15 or 16, I paid \$3.50 for a harmonica at a tobacco shop in downtown Joliette. I put it in my mouth and knew right away I could do this ... It was like I had found

a missing body part! I knew I’d be able to play it and it inspired me. I was motivated to think I could earn my living playing music, to feed myself and travel, too. Then I bought a little banjo, but I couldn’t tune it [laughs] so I gave up on that. But it was really the harmonica that got me started. I came to realize that when you have music, even when you’re struggling to pay the bills, you’ve always got something.”

“From a trad point of view, I was first inspired by musicians like accordionist Philippe Bruneau. I always come back to him as a reference. I also have great respect for Denis Pépin [another Québec accordionist]. In the ’70s I loved *Le Rêve du Diable*; the first time I saw them on Mont-Royal in Montréal for the national holiday it was incredible; their first album will always be a classic for me. It’s authentic, the beginning of the folk-revival here in Québec, it was a renaissance for our own traditional music and very avant-garde at that moment in time, really “pure” in a way.”

“I can’t honestly say that I’m in a period right now of listening to a lot of new stuff. I’m going back to the roots, my archives.” I ask him if he is in “rediscovery” mode. “Yes, but I have to say I’ve always been in that mode ... it’s my way of thinking. While I love working on arrangements with the group, I have to admit that when listening to music, it’s not the arrangement that interests me the most. I’m more moved by the authenticity of a fiddler, an accordion by itself, without arrangements. This week I asked Sergiu [Popa] why he wanted to play with me. He responded that he went to school to learn a lot of what he does but his father was self-taught, and after awhile, with all he [Sergiu] had learned about theory and the mechanics of music, he had grown to realize that the essence of music lies in simplicity. And he could appreciate the Québécois repertoire in all its comparative simplicity.”

“Today, I get excited about artists like the duo The Black Keys. I recently watched one of their David Letterman performances on YouTube – amazing! I love what’s happening



L-R: Tommy Gauthier, Yves Lambert, Olivier Rondeau
Photo credit © Dana Whittle

with groups like Mumford & Sons, it's remarkable, it's folk no matter what they call it, so I'm happy that music is going in that direction, it's positive. It's great that it can exist alongside the typical pop that's out there. I recently saw an amazing show in Montréal, [accordionist] Richard Galliano and his sextet, classical music, formal and virtuosic but fantastic. Virtuosity in general impresses me. It used to intimidate me but now that I have a bit more experience I know that it's important not to be eaten up by comparing ourselves to our influences."

From an area that was mostly hilly farms, Olivier's home didn't have cable, "so my friends used to come over with video cassettes of rock shows and I was like 'Wow!' I didn't know it even existed ... rock stars, MTV, Guns 'n Roses ... it was then I decided I wanted to play guitar. We also saw bands in high-school. I was impressed, it was when I was about 12 and they played tunes I knew. It was a revelation to think that I could recreate the music of artists I admired; so I started taking guitar lessons. I was into Jimmy Hendrix, Led Zeppelin; they were big influences. When I started getting into trad, locally, it was La Bottine, of course. I listened

to it all; I liked the complexity and it got me interested in Québécois roots music. More recently, I listen a lot to the Punch Brothers, and mind-blowing UK folk group Lau."

Tommy tells me that, for him, it started late. "To be honest, up until I was about 14 I didn't even like music! I played sports, video games with friends, but when someone would ask me if I wanted to hang out and listen to music, some rock, Metallica ... I'd say 'No, no, not music!'. I wanted to be outside playing sports. By chance I started playing my Mom's drums; she had been drumming while she was pregnant with my sister. It was fun. My brother liked my drumming, too. My Dad was a fiddler but he didn't want me to play his instrument. One day, while he was at work, I took it out anyway and taught myself to play a waltz he often played. I figured out how to play it just like he did. When he came home, I played it for him and he was stunned. I'd gone from zero to playing one of his tunes, so he was impressed and spent the rest of the afternoon showing me how to do it properly."

But the main reason I started playing music is actually awful, a case of ego. I was about 15 and one day I was drumming, accompanying my Dad on fiddle. We were playing for

one of his friends, a guy I didn't like who'd stopped by. My dad's friend said to me 'It's really easy to play drums, not like playing the fiddle, a real instrument.' At first I didn't take it as a personal challenge, but subconsciously, probably because of my competitive sports instinct, I guess I did. I got out my Dad's fiddle and over the next week I learned four or five tunes. That's how it all began. I played both drums and fiddle for awhile and eventually realized that there was more of a future for me on fiddle."

Tommy's influences began with fiddler Mark O'Connor whose country-bluegrass, modern style and precision playing he admired. "It's rare to hear such perfect improvisation. I used to doubt that it was improvised but it is." Today, he's a fan of the Punch Brothers, especially virtuostic mandolin player Chris Thile. "Completely insane!", he says. As for people from his region: "I love the album *Cap au Sorciers* from Jean-François Bélanger [a Joliette composer-musician]; I didn't realize trad could be so hot! And all the fiddlers in the trad jams playing Irish and Québec tunes, like Rémy Laporte, or the super players from Ontario like Pierre Schryer; that whole gang inspired me."

We open a bag of lime-and-pepper potato chips and I ask (with my mouth full, and Diablo sitting hopefully nearby) "So what's a day in the life of Yves Lambert like? Are you a morning person or what?" Yves tells me "As a musician, an accordionist, a big part of my day is practicing. I'm currently working on a project with Sergiu Popa [Moldavian piano-accordion player], so I'm focused on learning and practicing tunes for the project as well as maintaining and developing my regular repertoire. I usually play accordion from 3 to 5 hours per day – a bit in the morning, a bit in the afternoon, and sometimes late into the night. I might go to bed at 11:00 pm but if I can't sleep I'll get up and go to the studio and play until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. I generally start to function around 10:00 am. Since I've been doing this a long time, I try to work on my archives, the history of what I play.

"I also work on perfecting technique on the other instruments I play. I had my didgeridoo period, and I'm now learning bass harmonica. I continue to enjoy practicing – I'm not really a composer, more of an "interprète" so I am constantly learning tunes and songs. I also spend time working on the setlists and presentations for our shows; we're not super busy right now so it's a good time to work on the mechanics. I listened to a recording of a solo show I did in December and it's not the same

as when I'm playing with the guys – I thought my presentations were really bad! So I've decided it's time to fix that. Of course I'm an old "folkie" with that natural reflex to say nothing – or anything, sometimes really boring stuff – between tunes [laughs]."

"Lately I'm questioning modern technology and how it has us living in the moment, looking at the future, but not deeply reflecting on the past." As he is talking, two iPhones ring simultaneously and three out of four of us jump up to see whose it is. Yves raises an eyebrow. "Cell phones ringing everywhere ... modernity is so tied up with inventions, like Gutenberg's moveable type, for example. We keep moving ahead but seem to forget that these things are just tools. We love them for their usefulness, their beauty, or the success they symbolize. Even though I use modern tools, I feel that I'm still a dinosaur. What pulls me in as a trad musician is going back to the origins, tripping on what people were already doing in past centuries, the introspectiveness of the 19th century, the extravagance of the 17th century. I'm so inspired by history. I can't help it. I've been reading this great book about Québec in the 1600s that recounts the first text written by a European describ-

ing a Native ceremony and its music; understand that at that time we're still a long way from the ethnomusicology of Marius Barbeau [famous collector of Québec songs in the early 1900s]. That was the first time that somebody wrote about music in Québec.

The beer is gone. The chips are digesting. The dog is snoring at my feet. We're almost out of time (and possibly space), so I decide to wind things up using a minimalist approach. I ask for a one-word description of the next album they'll make as a trio. Tommy: swiny. Olivier: groovin'. Yves: happy.

And what best sums up what each of them is about musically at this moment in time? Tommy quickly responds with "efficacité" (efficient). Olivier takes only a moment to say "discipline" (conveniently the same in English) but worries that I'll think that strange (I don't). Yves thinks hard for a moment, then, with a flourish, offers up "errance," which probably best translates in this context to "off the beaten path". I have a flash when I hear him say this French word – with all of his talk about how important history is to him, I suddenly imagine a new word, the offspring of coupling "errance" with "hier", which is French for "yesterday." I say it out loud: "hierrance" – vagabonding in the musical past, but most definitely not sticking to the trail.

DISCOGRAPHY & CONTACTS

Trio (Lambert, Rondeau, Gauthier), 2012, La Prûche Libre

Bal à l'huile (Yves Lambert), 2009, La Prûche Libre

Le monde à Lambert (Yves Lambert & le Bébert Orchestra), 2007, La Prûche Libre

Vacances De M Lambert, 2006, Les Productions Mille-Pattes

Récidive (Monsieur Lambert & Compagnie), 2004, La Prûche Libre

- Yves also appeared on the first seven albums with La Bottine Souriante (from 1976 through 1992).
- The Montréal album launch for the Sergiu Popa project will be in Spring 2014.

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<<http://www.yveslambert.com>>

<<http://www.lapruchelibre.com>>

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