

fRoots

#282

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BOULERICE-DEMERS – *Un peu d’ci, un peu d’ça* (Roues et Archets)

In traditional music, ‘less’ often means ‘more’ - the old songs and tunes are best served by arrangements that allow them to breathe freely and bring out their essential character and qualities. That’s certainly the outlook of fiddler Olivier Demers and multi-instrumentalist Nicolas Boulerice. The two Quebecois musicians, who are also members of Juno-winning band Le Vent du Nord, never clutter the sound on *Un peu d’ci, un peu d’ça*, preferring to keep things spare and tasteful.

For instance “En Arrière De Chez Ma Tante”, a very Breton-sounding variant of the marching song ‘Aupres de ma Blonde’, opens with a handful of notes from Boulerice on the hurdy gurdy, establishing the mood and the mode of the piece, then Demers taps the brisk rhythm with his feet, a guitar adds subtle accents and colour, and Boulerice starts singing - his strong yet unforced voice soon joined by drone-like fiddle. The music steadily builds up its emotional charge as the pair, with support from Genticorum’s Yann Falquet, explore the song from the inside, without any intrusive displays of technique.

Each of the 11 tracks features a different stellar guest from Quebec’s folk scene, including several alumni of La Bottine Souriante – flute and whistle-player Daniel Roy, guitarist André Marchand, pianist Denis Frechette, and fiddler Michel Bordeleau. On the beautiful “M’En Revenant De Noces” Yann-Fanch Kemener, one of the leading traditional artists from Brittany, sings in French for the first time on record. His piercing, quavering, nasal voice sounds as if it’s been marinated in Atlantic brine for a century. Boulerice and Demers keep good company, and show a fine sense of respect and understanding for the material they choose.

Tony Montague