

## « *Boha* : the bagpipes of the landes of Gascony »



### Summary présentation

#### Identification :

Practice of the landes of Gascony bagpipes

#### Peoples met :

Many practitioners and factors

#### Location (region, department, municipality):

Aquitaine / Midi-Pyrenees / Gironde / Gers;  
Landes / Lot-et-Garonne / and more widely in  
Europe

#### Indexation :

### (A) Identification and Location:

#### Name and role and/or function of person met:

Many practitioners and makers including members of the Association Bohaires de Gasconha: Association law 1901 whose purpose (excerpt) "to develop the practice and expression of the Bagpipes of the Landes de Gascogne, known as boha".

#### Municipality, valley, country, community of communes, locality...:

Bohaires of Gasconha

Head office: InÒc–Aquitaine - Castèth d'Este - BP 326 - 64141 Vilhèra / Billère cedex

#### Postal Adresse :

Ville :

Code postal :

Téléphone :

## (B) Description

### Description :

This wind musical instrument, a kind of double clarinet, belongs to the family of bagpipes which has more than twenty different types on the territory of France, instruments mainly equipped with a single melodic pipe with a double reed.

The boha belongs to a very particular category of simple reed bagpipes in which two tubes of the same size, placed on the same stem, allow the musician to develop polyphonic playing and rhythmic effects.

The boha is therefore a bagpipe whose monoxylo foot of rectangular section has two longitudinal bores. The melodic pipe has five playing holes at the front and one at the back, and the "semi-melodic" pipe has only one playing hole. The notion of "melodic" must be relativized here, the playing can also be rhythmic on both tubes.

According to Marie-Barbara Le Gonidec (Interdisciplinary Institute of Contemporary Anthropology of the C.N.R.S.): *"One of the particularities of the boha is to be, if we are willing to accept this expression, a real "living fossil". The two parallel channels correspond to the melodic pipe, pierced with five playing holes, and the semi-melodic pipe, pierced with a single hole. The latter punctuates the main melody and provides, most of the time, a rhythmic role in counterpoint. There is therefore no drone that emits a pedal note supporting the melody throughout the game, but the polyphonic effect characteristic of all bagpipes is well audible and even developed in a more complex way than for drone bagpipes.*"<sup>1</sup>

The Boha was used in the 19th century to make people dance, to animate local festivals such as street passes, maïades, weddings. It was practiced by a musician alone or with one or two friends playing the hurdy-gurdy, the fife, the violin and also the drum.

Nowadays, she continues to animate balls, weddings and she participates fully in Gascon musical expression including in current music. Its practice is also taken to the highest level thanks to quality teaching. Four bohaires are today winners, solo instrument category, of the competition of the international festival of master ringers of Saint-Chartier/Ars (36).



Bohaires de Gasconha – march 2013

## **Material components of the practice:**

### **Materials (origin, suppliers, operation, supply difficulties):**

- Wood for the pihet (double clarinet), the stump and the wind holder. The species generally used is boxwood. For the COMDT of Toulouse it comes from the south-west of France, with a natural drying of 20 years. Historically, we also find the mountain ash, the wild plum and various other fruit trees.
- Goatskin to make the pocket.
- Leather or synthetic material (rubber) for the non-return air valve flaps.
- Beeswax to tune the pihet.
- Cotton thread for ligatures.
- Cow horn for the mouthpiece of the wind holder.
- Tin for decoration.
- Silver or silver metal chain to connect the brunider (moving part) to the pihet.
- Neatsfoot oil to treat wood.
- Roseau du Var for the reed blades.
- Plexiglas for the base of the reeds.

### **Tools (origin, suppliers, exploitation, supply difficulties):**

These are all traditional woodworking tools.

- Wood files.
- Wood chisels.
- Scalpel for the so-called "notched" sculpture.
- Foil for the bore of the pihet.
- Excenter for drilling clearance holes.
- Wicks, strawberry drills.

### **Machinery (origin, suppliers, operation, supply difficulties):**

- Lathe
- Drill press.
- Band saw.
- Sander.
- Milling machine.

### **Exercise place :**

Private, semi-public and public spaces

### **Learning and Transmission:**

Formerly the transmission was accomplished by imitation within the community and today on the occasion of formal teachings, in workshops or courses in conservatory as well as by the practice in vivo in the dance festivals.

## (C) History

### General history:

The practice of the boha is part of the general history of the appearance and development of bagpipes in Europe and the Mediterranean basin, going back at least to antiquity. Its revival in Gascony is also linked to the vast European revivalist movement of the 1970s.

### Particular history of the company, person or organization, form of expression or cultural space that is the subject of the file

The ethnomusicologist Lothaire Mabru writes on page 7 of « *La cornemuse des Landes de Gascogne*: » The oldest testimony that we know is a sculpted representation. Inside the church of Arx en Garbardan (40) are 2 sculptures (1522) at the fallout of two arches. One shows a musician playing a three-hole (?) flute and a drum, the other a bagpiper. The latter meets some of the identification criteria of the boha: an insufflation tube to inflate the pocket, a coin could be the "pihet". We can therefore hypothesize that it was used in Gabardan at least from the beginning of the 14th century.

Many testimonies tell us of a practice of the boha which was very much alive in the 19th century. Of all the parties, she participates fully in social life. This century will be that of descriptions of a living practice, however it is also the century where all the French countryside will be crossed by innovations and new dances will impose themselves. The practice of the boha will therefore decline at the end of the 19th century, mazurkas, waltzes and Scottisshs imposing on musicians a tempered scale whose range is greater than that of the boha. This difficulty is greatly aggravated by the arrival of instruments, such as the diatonic accordion, perfectly adapted to this repertoire, easy to buy and maintain, not to mention a popular enthusiasm which favors these changes.

In the 1920s, it continued to be sounded by certain musicians of oral tradition when the first folk groups were created, which were in fact entirely made up of routine musicians, including bohairs. This is the case of the last ringer of this generation Jeanty Benquet who died in 1957 who plays both in the folk group of Bazas and to animate conscript tours or country balls. From this period we have received a unique sound document recorded in 1939 while Jeanty Benquet was playing with the folk group "Lous Bazadès": La Gascogne, PTT 1939 - N° 443.

In the 1960s, the boha aroused renewed interest. Its disappearance was narrowly avoided by the dynamism of the revivalist movement of the 1970s and then by that of new actors. They have, through new research and reconstructions, brought the practice of the instrument and its derivatives to the present day. Indeed, following research carried out by Pierre Corbefin, an old Boha found at the Paul Dupuy Museum in Toulouse will serve as a model for Alain Cadeillan. He will make his own copies and use them in his musical group (Perlinpinpin Fôlc).



Boha called Claouriot

At the same time, studies had also been initiated by Charles Alexandre. The boha will then evolve with the workshop of the Occitan Conservatory of Toulouse to be able to play in a key common to

other instruments.

From these achievements, between 1980 and 2000 a dynamic was created around the instrument with in particular the action of the Bohaires de Gasconha association, the obtaining of a teaching diploma by distinguished players and the introduction of teaching in certain conservatories.

Today boha is:

more than 300 regular bell ringers including 200 members of the Bohaires de Gasconha association,  
several professional instrumental crafting workshops,  
about fifteen state-certified teachers active in conservatories and associations.



*Bohaire meetings in Barbaste (47) - "Playing together" workshop - 2009*

The term boha is the current common name of the ancient instrument and its recent variations. It was also named in the past according to the areas and the dialects of the Oc language: boha-au-sac, bohica, chabreta, chalamina, bonlora.

The linguistic survey carried out in 1954, in Gascony, under the direction of Professor Jean Séguy of the University of Toulouse, for the production of the Linguistic and Ethnographic Atlas of Gascony, lists the names given to this instrument according to their geographical location. . Thus, the map produced from this book shows that:

- the word bohaussac with its variant boha-au-sac was rather known in Haute-Lande (northern department of Landes and Landes Gironnines),
- the word boha in the central part of the Landes (Petites-Landes, Marsan, Marensin, Brassens),
- the name of bohica also appears but very localized to Armagnac.

According to the investigations carried out by the ethnomusicologist Lothaire Mabru and the testimony of the writer Gabriel Cabannes, the term bonlora is used in the Bazadais, part of the Gironnine Landes and the Petites Landes.

Older written sources supplement this information. Thus the Dictionary of the Grande Lande by Félix Arnaudin, a great folklorist from the Landes at the end of the 19th century, confirms, for the Grandes and Petites Landes, the data of the Linguistic Atlas. Chalamina is also cited for a few villages. The bagpipe player is called bohaire there.

For the northeastern part of Aquitaine, Dordogne and Lot et Garonne, the Linguistic Atlas cites two very similar pronunciations, tiabreta or tsabreta. The consistency between the name of the bagpipes in this region, tiabreta, and the name given to the musician on a postcard, thiabretaire, indicates that the word tiabreta, quoted by the Linguistic Atlas, probably refers to the boha in the region of Casteljaloux while beyond the Garonne, tiabreta designates a very different bagpipe.

In addition to these elements, we note that the known or probable origin of all the old instruments found (18 to date), represented (drawings, photos, old postcards) or quoted (books, collections), is located in an area including Uzeste(33), Sabers(40), Le Sen(40), Bazas(33), Casteljaloux(47), that is to say at the very heart of the area defined by linguists.

### Some testimonials:

In the work entitled "*De l'agriculture et du déricement des Landes*" published by Th. Lafargue in Bordeaux in 1839, the Vicomte de Méthivier describes the Landes people as follows: "*On holidays, their character is brightened up. The dances, to the sound of the musette, the galoubet or the chalumeau, come to give to the figure, then playful, of the landais of both sexes, a vivacity, an extraordinary animation*". It is, of course, a text written for scholars where the author uses the vocabulary of his readers. Thus musette replaces the "local" name of the bagpipe (boha, bohaussac), galoubet (Provençal flute) that given to the three-hole flute and chalumeau probably designates a rustic clarinet, of the caramèra type, which was used to make people dance, after the testimonies collected by the folklorist Félix Arnaudin.

From the end of the 19th century, Ferdinand Bernède, a professional photographer, had the idea of capturing the landscapes and moments of life in the Landes. From 1899, he published his photographs as postcards. In the middle of scenes of life and Landes customs such as weddings, wood pigeon hunting, pig killing, it shows boha players in a game situation.

In the Casteljaloux region, another photographer, Eugène Dupin, also a publisher, published postcards at the end of the 19th century, three of which depict bohaires.

The occasions for playing this instrument are clarified in various writings from the end of the 19th century or later. Thus its harmonic and rhythmic playing makes it an instrument very well suited to the repertoire of Landes dances, a certain Cadét de Luglon declared to Félix Arnaudin: "*the boha is very good for dancing as long as you know how to play it*".<sup>1</sup>

In his book *La bagpipe des Landes de Gascogne*, L. Mabru also cites its use during street crossings organized for festivals (Felibrean or folkloric events, town, village, district festivals) or rituals, such as the walk of the fatty oxen, carnivals, rounds of conscripts. In this festive and noisy setting, the bagpipe parades in the company of drums, hurdy-gurdies, flutes, fifes.

Thus, in *Le Républicain landais* of September 9, 1891, a certain "*Pif-paf*" writes, about the course landaise organized on the Sunday of the Saint-Jean-d'Août holidays in Mont-de-Marsan:

*"We hear the music in the distance as it goes around the neighborhood before arriving at the bullring. The doors open. The alguazil, dressed in a rich costume of purple satin, which was formerly that of a Huguenot, precedes the musicians and the players of hurdy-gurdy and musette, the latter numbering about fifteen, wearing helmets with red locks and wine lees (...). The festival: (...) the illumination of the arenas and the avenues leading to it leave nothing to be desired. The music, the musettes and the hurdy-gurdies alternated the harmony of the brass with the joyful cacophony of the wind of the mouths and the keys of the hurdy-gurdies"*.

In the same newspaper, dated Sunday, September 12, 1886, a certain Xavier, mentions, in an article on the festivals of Nonères-la-Belle, "the traditional zim-zim of the Marseillaise, the harmonious and melancholy notes of the bagpipes".

**(D) Heritage interest and development****Valuation methods**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brochure           | <input type="checkbox"/> Web sites                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guide              | <input type="checkbox"/> Shop                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open doors         | <input type="checkbox"/> Show-room/gallery             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exposition         | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair/exhibitions              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Festival           | <input type="checkbox"/> Living Heritage Company Label |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road of MA         | <input type="checkbox"/> Pole of MA                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Artist residencies | <input type="checkbox"/> Network of professionals      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other:             |  |

**Valorisation actions :**

## 1) Local level:

- Various events including concerts, street passes, dance festivals.
- The teaching of instrumental practice.

## 2) National level:

- Festivals and meetings of traditional music.
- Publications of the Bohaires de Gasconha association.
- National colloquium on boha in Arthous (2006).

## 3) International level:

- Participation in a symposium in Great Britain in 2012:  
<http://new.bagpipesociety.org.uk/international-bagpipe-day/>
- Musical performances by members of the Bohaires de Gasconha in Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Spain, Italy, Australia, Belgium, Switzerland...

**Modes of public recognition (local, national, international levels):**

- Bohaires de Gasconha by its federation of the various actors and dissemination of information (Website, half-yearly and internal newspaper "BOHA!", publication of a boha method and a repertoire of old tunes "1001 Rondeaux de Gasconha").
- The COMDT through institutionalized teaching and instrument making.
- The Landes Conservatory through teaching.
- The Conservatory and music schools of Tarbes, Pau and Albi  
ACPPG of Auch for education.
- Several bohaire medalists in the competition of the international festival of master ringers of Saint-Chartier/Ars (36).
- Teaching by state-certified teachers (CA, DE, DEM).

**Documentation / bibliographic elements / inventories already made:**

- ARNAUDIN Félix. « *Œuvres complètes. Dictionnaires de la Grande-Lande, tomes VI & VII* », Bordeaux/Mont-de-Marsan : Confluences/Parc naturel régional des Landes de Gascogne, 2001-2002.
- ARNAUDIN Félix. « *Chants populaires de la Grande-Lande* », Édition établie et présentée par Jacques Boisgontier et Lothaire Mabru. Oeuvres complètes, tomes III & IV, Bordeaux/Mont-de-Marsan : Confluences/Parc naturel régional des Landes de Gascogne, 1995 -1997.
- BAUDOIN Jacques. « *Et s'il existait un son perdu? Ou les suites inattendues du Colloque de l'Abbaye d'Arthous* », *BOHA ! 14*. Sl. Revue des *Bohaires de Gasconha*, été 2007. p : 2 et 3.
- BAUDOIN Jacques. « *Les instruments de musique dans les Landes* », Pastel, n° 57, Toulouse, COc, mai 2008. p : 5 à 20.
- BEC Pierre. « *La cornemuse : sens et histoire de ses désignations* ». Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie régionale, n°4, Toulouse, Isatis, COc, 1996.
- BENQUET Jeanty. « *Landes de Gascogne, la Cornemuse* », Collection Ocora/Radio France.1996. Enregistrement retrouvé par L. Mabru.
- BERDOT Michel. « *Rondèus e congos de las Lanas* », Livret bilingue et CD ACPL, CMDTA, Menestrèrs Gascons. Pau : 1995.
- Bohaires de Gasconha. « *Méthode de cornemuse des landes de Gascogne : La boha. Découvrir, apprendre, entretenir* », Sl : Bohaires de Gasconha, 2011.
- BOHAIRES DE GASCONHA. « *1001 rondeaux de Gascogne* », Sl : Bohaires de Gasconha, 2011.
- KANAFANI-ZAHAR, Aïda, coord. « *La production de la tradition aujourd'hui à partir des processus de relance et de revitalisation* », Paris : Mission du patrimoine ethnologique : Programme Tradition, 2e phase; Aix-en-Provence : Centre d'ethnologie méditerranéenne, 1997.
- BONNEMASON Bénédicte. « *La tradition réinventée de la cornemuse des Landes : fabrication et pratique actuelle* ». Pastel : musiques et danses traditionnelles en Midi-Pyrénées. N° 25, 1995, p. 30 à 35.
- CHARLES-DOMINIQUE Luc. « *Musique populaire en pays d'oc* », Portet-sur-Garonne : Ed. Loubatières, 1987.
- CHARLES-DOMINIQUE Luc. « *Bernard Desblancs, facteur de cornemuses gasconnes* », Pastel, Musiques et danses traditionnelles en Midi-Pyrénées, n° 25, 1995, pages 6 à 9.
- « *La cornemuse landaise : La Boha* » Actes du colloque des 20 & 21 mai 2006, Abbaye d'Arthous, Hastings (40). Mont-de-Marsan : Centre départemental du patrimoine, Conseil Général des Landes, 2006.
- COZIAN Yan. "L'incroyable histoire de la cornemuse landaise. BOHA! Au couers des Landes". En companhia, 2013.
- COZIAN Yan. Méthode d'apprentissage et partitions pour boha. Cornemuse landaise". Souston : En companhia, 2014.
- COZIAN Yan. "Carnet de bal en Gascogne. Musiques traditionnelles de Gascogne jouées à la boha". Souston : En companhia, 2014.
- DARDEY Gilbert et COZIAN Yan. « *Autour d'une cornemuse landaise* », Bulletin de la société de Borda, n° 481, 1er trimestre 2006 ; (ouvrage entier).
- DESBLANCS Bernard. « *Étude et construction des anches : Les anches simples* », Toulouse : Conservatoire Occitan 1980.
- ÉCOMUSÉ DE LA GRANDE LANDE. Parc régional des Landes de Gascogne. « *La cornemuse landaise : hier et aujourd'hui* », Catalogue d'exposition. Sabres : Parc Nat. Rég. Des Landes de Gascogne, 1980.
- ESPINASSE Jean-Michel et CASTANET Marc. « *Les instruments de musique occitans : la Gascogne* ». Scérem : CRRP Midi-Pyrénées : CDDP Gers. CDROM. 31032W14.
- LE GODINEC Marie-Barbara. « *La collection de cornemuses du musée des civilisations de*



*'Europe et de la Méditerranée* ». Sl, *La Revue des Musées de France / Revue du Louvre*", 3 juin 2009.

- MABRU Lothaire. « *La cornemuse des Landes de Gascogne* », Belin-Beliet : Centre Lapios/Cahiers du Bazadais, éd. Les Amis du Bazadais, 1986.
- MABRU Lothaire. « *Musiques, musiques Pratiques musicales en milieu rural (XIXème-XXème siècle) L'exemple des Landes de Gascogne* », Belin Beliet : Centre Lapios. Sd. MATTE Jean-Luc, « Petite encyclopédie des cornemuses : « *La Boha* », Trad Mag, n° 101, sl, mai/juin 2005, pages 14 à 17.
- *Pastel*. « *La cornemuse gasconne* ». Numéro spécial, n°25, Toulouse, Juillet-Août-Sept 1995.
- SEGUY Jean. « *Atlas linguistique et ethnographique de la Gascogne* », Vol 1. Paris : CNRS, 1954.

### Some sites dedicated to the boha

- BOHAIRES DE GASCONHA : <http://www.bohaires.fr/>
- COMDT : <http://www.comdt.org/>
- CSC : <http://www.yancozian.fr>
- PATRICK BURBAUD : <http://museedelaboha.fr/>
- JEAN PASCAL LERICHE : <http://arcolan.e-monsite.com/pages/arcolan.html>
- MATTA ROBERT : <http://cornemusesoccitanes.com/>

### As well as :

- ICONOGRAPHIE DE LA CORNEMUSE Inventory of representations held in France, Catherine et Jean-Luc MATTE : <http://jeanluc.matte.free.fr/>
- INSTITUT OCCITAN : [www.in-oc.org](http://www.in-oc.org)
- MUCEM : <http://www.mucem.org/>
- SONDAQUI Oral and festive heritage in Aquitaine : [www.sondaqui.com](http://www.sondaqui.com)

## (E) Safeguards

Existence of a DE and a CA for traditional music; traditional music classes in conservatories with departmental or regional influence.

Instrumental practice induces the making of musical instruments,

## (F) Technical data

**Dates and place(s) of the survey:** 2012, Landes de Gascogne and neighboring areas.

**Date of inventory card:** March 2013

**Name of investigator(s):** Patrick Burbaud, Jean Pascal Leriche.

**Name of the editor of the sheet:** Association Bohaires de Gasconha in collaboration with the ITEM Laboratory, EA 3002 of the University of Pau and Pays de l'Adour / InOc-Aquitaine as part of the Research Program "Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Aquitaine"