

Savoir-Faire. Produced by Toast Studio with the participation of Canal Savoir and the Fonds de la radiodiffusion et des nouveaux médias de Bell. 2013. Three linked, interactive websites with embedded documentary films (in French). <http://caleur.ca> (“Jean-François Berthiaume, *caleur*”); <http://tonnelier.ca> (“Pascal Plamondon, *tonnelier*”); <http://feronnier.ca> (“Guy Bel, *ferronnier d’art et forgeron*”).

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Savoir-Faire, recipient of the 2013 Prix Mnémo, is an online multimedia project currently consisting of three linked, interactive websites (more are planned). Each site features a present-day Quebec practitioner of an unusual craft: Pascal Plamondon builds handmade oak barrels for wine production; Guy Bel is an artisanal blacksmith; Jean-François Berthiaume is a dance caller. These are not scholarly documentaries but rather intimate visits to the workplaces of these “artisans passionnés ... qui pratiquent et préservent des métiers rares ou en voie de disparition” (Savoir-Faire online mission statement).

These sites take full advantage of the interactive potential of Internet 2.0. The centrepiece of each web portal is a short documentary film featuring the artisan, and supplemental material includes written historical overviews (“Qu’est-ce qu’un *caleur*?”); photographic slideshows; 360-degree views of a winged horse forged in metal and of the barrel-making workshop, the latter with selected close-ups and explanations; links to the artisans’ professional

websites; and the now-ubiquitous “share” button for Facebook, Twitter, and nearly 100 additional social media platforms. The site about dance caller Jean-François Berthiaume also features four archival audio recordings of Quebec dance calls dating from 1929 to 1938.

The mission statement of Savoir-Faire emphasizes not only documentation, but also maintenance and transmission—“Ce projet se veut la mémoire de leurs gestes et une célébration de la transmission de ces savoirs, pour garder vivant le patrimoine d’ici”—and both the content and the design are structured to this end. The artisans are young men (except Guy Bel, age seventy-six at the time of filming, but that documentary focuses equally on his young apprentice Samuel Rodrigue), passionate about their craft and eloquent on the place of traditional arts in modern society. There is no hint of nostalgia, nor do the sites visually resemble online scholarly archives such as *l’Inventaire des ressources ethnologiques du patrimoine immatériel* (<http://irepi.ulaval.ca>). Rather, the layouts are sleek and artsy, with black and white photographs against a black background and linked content signalled by large coloured squares, circles or diamonds, and minimalist ideograms. The overall impression is of an underground, indie world of traditional crafts that the viewer might well decide to join.

At the heart of each website is a short documentary film (between six and fifteen minutes) about the featured artisan. Each follows a clear narrative arc: Plamondon builds a barrel, Bel and his apprentice forge a decorative railing, Berthiaume researches and then calls a dance. In a nod to the *cinéma direct* of the late 1950s and 1960s, the films celebrate labour and suggest a

certain purity of purpose through physical work. There is no external voice-over and the only talking heads are the artisans themselves. Yet each speaks only minimally about his background or the history of his craft; rather, the films are anchored in each man's ongoing labour, such that the artisans at times seem to be little more than vehicles for the products of their work. Hammers ring, cranks turn, Jean-François Berthiaume transcribes dance calls and pushes eight beer-bottle caps around a desktop in imitation of a square set. ("À mon avis, si t'es pas capable de faire danser tes bouchons, seras pas plus capable de faire danser les personnes en avant toi, c'est sûr et certain.") There is a long moment of pure cinematic beauty as Plamondon stares at the tempering fire inside a new barrel, sweat dripping from his nose. Even the nicks in the blacksmith's anvil are photographed with a solemn gravity and import.

Scholars may find this framing of Berthiaume, Plamondon and Bel as go-it-alone tradition-bearers problematic. While we see Jean-François Berthiaume calling a dance at Festival Mémoire et Racines, for instance, the film does little to locate his work within a larger community of traditional music and dance. Rather, he comes across as a solo operator, searching out LPs at a used record store, conducting and transcribing ethnographic interviews, and compiling an extensive personal archive of traditional dances in Quebec. A viewer hoping for a balanced overview of traditional dance in Quebec may want to look elsewhere (to the writings of Simonne Voyer, for instance, or the many articles published in the *Bulletin Mnémo* [www.mnemo.qc.ca/spip/bulletin-mnemo]). Yet it is this same

quasi-heroic narrative approach that gives the films their strength. In their careful, detailed portrayals of day-to-day labour, the films bring us into intimate contact with these artisans and for a brief span of time, we feel what it might be like to actually be a barrel maker, blacksmith or dance caller. Indeed, the film on Jean-François Berthiaume takes this temporary identification one step further, allowing us to listen through Berthiaume's ears to an historical recording of caller Ovila Légaré. In this sequence, Berthiaume becomes an interpreter for the viewer, pointing out the poetry, humour and precise rhythms of Légaré's calls.

In sum, *Savoir-Faire* offers an accessible entry point for three traditional crafts, and scholars of folklore and ethnology should find these sites useful teaching tools. The website on dance caller Jean-François Berthiaume will likely be of the most interest to readers of *MUSICultures*; however, the films on barrel maker Pascal Plamondon and blacksmith Guy Bel engage with issues of revival and transmission that will resonate with many music and dance scholars. *Savoir-Faire* may also be a useful model for scholars seeking innovative approaches to sharing their research with a general audience.

According to Toast Studio (www.gotoast.ca/), these websites are only the beginning of a larger project; I look forward to future installments and would particularly like to see female artisans featured in the series. One senses that the producers' ultimate goal is to inspire viewers to take up a traditional craft, and, if these sites gain some level of online popularity, they may very well inspire the next generation of blacksmiths, barrel makers and dance callers. 🍷