

Les Charbonniers De L'Enfer

Quebecois vocal ensemble

Lanaudière, Quebec, Canada

The ensemble, Les Charbonniers De L'Enfer, or "The Coal Men From Hell," was conceived in the early 1990s, when Quebecois musician Michel Faubert and several singers he was working with were struck by the blend of their voices on several songs. The repertoire was traditional, a cappella pieces that mined the riches of the French Canadian vocal tradition, accompanied only by the persistent and complex rhythm of the musicians' feet, known in Quebec as *podorhythmie*. However, the harmonies they created were new, and striking. As in the English and Irish traditions, French Canadian songs are usually sung in unison, or with simple two part harmony. Les Charbonniers have enriched their tradition in a new way, with these five powerful and rich voices blending effortlessly. Their vocal prowess, along with their thrilling stage presence and years of stage experience, combine to create what is now one of the most unique and powerful French-Canadian performing groups.

The group consists of a veritable who's-who of Quebecois traditional music over the past 30 years. Since all of the members of Les Charbonniers de L'Enfer have established musical careers, live performances of the ensemble are a relatively infrequent and eagerly awaited occurrence. After their initial formation, it took Les Charbonniers three years to record their first album, *Chansons A Capella*, which garnered critical acclaim and led to a European tour. Over the next few years the group performed only occasionally, usually in Quebec.

Group founder Michel Faubert is best known as a traditional storyteller, but is also a mesmerizing singer, as well as an accomplished fiddler. A noted collector of songs and stories, he has had a long career as a solo artist and director. Jean-Claude Mirandette learned the core of his repertoire from his father and uncles growing up in rural Quebec. A multi-instrumentalist, he has performed in Les Freres Labri and Onjab, as well as a number of regional groups. Normand Miron, also grew up in a musical family, is a bottomless well of songs that have been passed down in his community. He is a superb accordionist and singer, and has performed with Manigance, Les Freres Labri and Dent-de Lion, among others. Two of the members of Les Charbonniers de L'Enfer are veterans of the legendary La Bottine Souriante. Andre Marchand, was a founder of La Bottine and its lead singer and guitarist. He also has performed with most of Quebec's leading traditional musicians. Michel Bordeleau was a longtime member of La Bottine, where in addition to singing, he played fiddle, mandolin and percussion. The group recently released *A la Grâce de Dieu*, an electrifying recording that fully recognizes the combined artistry of the musicians involved.