

# SHELTA : CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS

The Irish traditional band Shelta is based in the Lyon area of France. Their guitarist Fabien Guiloineau was interviewed for Irish Music Magazine by Philippe Cousin.



“I'm originally from Auvergne but I live in Lyon,” Fabien begins, “and I play guitar and bouzouki. I started playing at the age of 16 and quickly turned to traditional Irish music. Apart from Shelta I played in various Irish bands: Foxy Devil, Hop Corner...

“Tania Buisse who plays the bodhrán comes from Burgundy. She discovered the bodhrán and Irish music at a Danú concert in 1997. Since then she has continued to develop her style by travelling to Ireland and in particular to Ennis.

“On the tenor banjo, uilleann pipes and whistles, there is Julien Cartonnet who is originally from Morvan and lives in Beaujolais, north of Lyon. He discovered the uilleann pipes at the age of 15 when he was already playing the bagpipes of central France. And in 2007, after taking up the banjo, he began to learn Irish music in the Lyon sessions.

“John Delorme is a talented fiddle player, guitarist and singer. He too lives near Lyon. Surprisingly, he started his musical career by studying flamenco. Eventually he met the Lyon fiddler John Doherty,

and Lúnasa. But as they travelled around Ireland, especially in Ennis, Limerick and Cork; they met many musicians and discovered other styles, other ways of making traditional music, which inevitably influenced them.

Has there been an evolution in their music in the twenty years? “Yes, of course,” admits Fabien, “even if it's difficult to have an outside view on what we do. At the beginning we tried to make arrangements. Nowadays we do less, but we prefer the swing of this music. Irish melodies are so rich that sometimes there is no need for arrangements because they are self-sufficient.”

In their twenty-year career, Shelta has released several albums. This year they decided to release an anniversary album called *Twenty*, with guests, including the original musicians of the band. François Baubet who lives in Connemara on the flute. Romain Chéré on mandolin and flute, Tiennet Simonnin on button chromatic accordion and uilleann pipes. And finally the Limerick flautist Ronan Ryan.

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who taught him the fiddle, and specialised in Irish music.

“Finally, on the diatonic accordion, there is Guy Vesvre who lives near Saint-Étienne, south-west of Lyon. He has been playing the accordion for more than forty years, first with traditional music from the centre of France, then quite quickly with Irish music in the band Korrigan with whom he toured for more than 20 years.”

As Fabien explains, “Shelta is the name of the Travellers' language in Ireland, a community where music had a very important place and from which came such famous musicians as Johnny Doran and Paddy Keenan. In France, we say that we play Irish music as it is played in pubs. Many French people have been on holiday in Ireland and it speaks to them.

“The Irish repertoire is so vast that the choice is infinite and it is a pleasant challenge to find good combinations of sets. For the songs, it's John who chooses what he wants to sing. His inspiration ranges from Irish and Scottish repertoire to American music.”

Fabien Guiloineau and his friends admit to having discovered Irish music via records by The Bothy Band, Dé Dannan, Altan, Dervish

“The recording took place in three sessions in a small theatre in Burgundy,” Fabien continues. “The first was in June 2021, when we recorded the songs. Then in September for the instrumentals, and in November with the guest musicians. During this session, we recorded a set of reels, all nine of us at the same time.”

The choice of the tracks was also the subject of real research. “As is often the case, we have made a mix of more or less well-known traditional tunes and recent compositions. The idea, always the same, is to find a balance between tradition and modernity. Most of the suites we recorded were already played in concert or in session. Except for the ones with the guests, where we decided on the arrangements together.”

Listen to *Twenty* and like me you'll come to the conclusion that the five members of Shelta play very good music, they respect the tradition whilst adding their own personal touch.

**Find out more and investigate Shelta's new recording and their impressive back catalogue of albums at [www.shelta.org](http://www.shelta.org)**