

## **Banjo Attitudes**

### **Le banjo à cinq cordes : Son histoire générale, sa documentation**

Gérard DE SMAELE

Préface d'Art Rosenbaum

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After the exhibition *Banjo !* presented by the Brussels' Musical Instruments Museum (MIM) in 2003/2004, the DVD *A Banjo Frolic* finished in 2003 but finally published by Frémeaux & Associés in 2010, the CD-Box *Banjo 1901-1956 The American Five strings-Banjo* by the same Frémeaux & associés in 2008, Gérard De Smaele strikes again but with a book. With this *Banjo Attitudes* - coming after a former essay published in 1983 - he gets deeply into a subject he knows perfectly, as you can hear on his own recordings *Back Door* (2001), *Cornfields* (2003), *Tears of America* (2005), etc. With a great attention to minute details (I enjoin to read all the foot-notes and supplements), the author relates the story of an instrument he likes with the modesty of a lover knowing that he has to share his love because « the banjo is ... a white page belonging to ... nobody. »

This white page of... a black-born instrument, Gérard De Smaele give us the means to write it with his unestimable personal documents collected during near fifty years : travels to Appalachia, exchanges, researches and musical meetings with the more sensitive and warm hearted banjo-pickers, strummers, frailers...: Pete Seeger, Mike Seeger, Will Keys, Roger Sprung, Bob Carlin, etc. Without forgetting a very inspired Belgian-adopted Oregon man : the unconventional and charismatic Derroll Adams.

Banjo-players or just inquirers interested by the banjo, you'll find in *Banjo Attitudes* a lot of rare informations about a neglected and sometimes despised instrument. With Gerard De Smaele, we are convinced that this poor American-African string machine made with a hollow gourd, a piece of wood, and the skin and guts of a chicken-killer cat, is the number one witness, since three centuries, of the popular north-american musical culture.

May God leave enough time to Gérard De Smaele to close his masterly work by a Musical entitled *BANJO !* beginning with a long, long crescendo on *Will the Circle Be unbroken* picked by the white painted fingers of fifty banjo-players illuminated with black-lights projectors.

**Nicolas Bardinet**