



Nelda and Christine Balfa Cajun Musicians

One of Dewey Balfa's most famous quotes is, "Tradition is preserved one generation at a time." He did his part to make sure that his generation would not be the one to let tradition slip away. He also ensured that members of the next generation would have all the inspiration they would need in the face of an ever-expanding mass culture. While his message rang out across the world, it also rang out in his own home with his own family.

Balfa Toujours (meaning Balfa still and always) was formed soon after the death of Dewey Balfa. There was no thought of waiting, the group came together quickly, and it immediately felt right. There was great excitement in playing music that felt so good, but there was also sorrow because Dewey wasn't there to be a part of it. Everyone felt Dewey's absence, but it was soon realized that everyone was feeling his presence, too.

These feelings inspired Nelda Balfa to write the title song of the group's first recording on Swallow Records, "Pop, Tu Me Partes Toujours." The experience can be summed up in a few lines from that song: "O Pop, tu me parles toujours, avec une voix si jeune et si tendre" ("Oh Pop, you speak to me still, in a voice so young and tender.")

With the release of this recording, it became clear that the flame still burns in the Balfa family. Christine and Nelda Balfa, two of Dewey's four daughters, play with all the soul and drive associated with their family's music. Christine plays the guitar, as inspired by her Uncle Rodney, and Nelda plays the tee-fer ('tit fer - triangle), the percussion instrument that helps to give acoustic Cajun music its distinctive sound. They sing both the oldest songs in the Acadian repertoire as well as the originals. They have traveled all over the world playing their music at festivals, concerts, and dances.

Updated November 15, 2016 by Natchitoches- NSU Louisiana Folklife Center Staff