

Acadian entertainer Geri LeBlanc releases *Going back home*

By Rosie Aucoin-Grace

“The title of CD album *Going back home* expresses my Acadian origins through my compositions such as *The Cabot Trail, Acadian Spirit, Separated by an Ocean*, and so forth”, says author, composer, and musician, Geraldine LeBlanc, nicknamed Geri. She added, “It also represents a profound personal journey that I can now sing about with songs like, *Freedom, Stand Up, My Awakening, and Take Control of Yourself*.”

Born in 1960, Geraldine is the daughter of the late Hubert (à Laurent) LeBlanc and Marie-Hélène Poirier. Raised in the quaint Acadian fishing village of Chéticamp, she was last child of a family of 19 siblings. She attended École NDA School and left Chéticamp in 1978 and graduated in Annapolis Royal. She then continued her studies at University of New Brunswick and graduated with a Bachelor of Education in Physical Education in 1985. A lover of sports, she participated in badminton, volleyball, and hockey camps in the Maritimes. She worked as a ski patroller on the slopes for five years before moving on to Montreal and worked as a director at the YMCA overseeing the children and youth programs.

In 1987, Geraldine left Canada and journeyed to France where she taught Physical Education and English for 10 years. She also worked as a personal care assistant with the elderly. In 2015, Geraldine pursued her studies for the next five years into a different field and became a psychotherapist. Now, this composer, and musician is happiest when she is writing and performing. It is not by coincidence that she ended in this French country, where many Acadians as a result of *Le Grand Dérangement* in 1755, were forced to leave their native homes in Nova Scotia and be deported to various places including France. Ironically, she describes the location as “If you take a boat from La Rochelle, well you could go straight and arrive on the Acadian coastline in Nova Scotia. My song, *Separated by an Ocean*, tells two stories, me of leaving in 1987 to come to France, separated from Chéticamp and of my ancestor, Daniel LeBlanc, who was separated from France by this vast body of water.”

This compassionate musician surrounded herself in an area which fed her very core, a journey of healing and soul-searching. Besides her life as a musician, she taught as a Physical Education teacher in Paris for 10 years. She has been living in La Rochelle, a place called Charente Maritime, which is situated on the southwestern coast of France since 2012.

Music has always been a very important part of Geri’s life. “My singing was inspired at an early age by my brothers, who played the guitar and sang. My mother in her rocking chair singing old French songs,” expressed LeBlanc. She continued, “I fell in love with the guitar, I was but 11 years old. Listening to my brother Jimmie, who is ten years older than me, it made me want to follow his footsteps. Jimmie was part of a local band called *The Phantoms* and he was quite popular among his peers.”

In 2014, she created Geri’n’co, a group which offered different types of music. In Trad’Acadie, for instance, she interpreted/sang Acadian, Cajun, and Irish songs accompanied by three other musicians. With *Bluesy Blues*, a four member group, she sang material ranging from BB King, Robert Johnson, and Muddy Waters. With another musician, in *le Folk*, one could hear some Bob Dylan, Neil Young, etc. In October 2015, journalist Francois Schotte invited her to participate at the *Beatles festival* in Mons, Belgium. Geraldine reunited the musicians from Trad’Acadie and *Bluesy Blues*, along with one more singer, in a tribute to Sir Paul McCartney.

Recently, Geri was inspired to write an unusual number

of songs, “Last summer, I got rid of some personal baggage, put all these issues to bed and boom, with such liberation, an immense inspiration came to me and I sat down and wrote six songs in one day. In the span of a week, I composed 42 songs with 26 completed lyrics and music.” She added, “These works translate many emotions for me.”

We talked about performing this new material and she responded, “I started with concerts in January, when my CD was complete. I play mostly in bars and restaurants so far. As well, I have had eight concerts. I am privileged to be able to share my music with others and don’t ask for more. My compilations varies from folk to the blues.”

Geri’s love for classical music goes way back and after a show when she’s driving home, trying to relax, she puts on her favourite classic CDs. Chuckling Geri says, “If I listen to other types of music, I sing along so I just get more hyped up. I listen to classical music...aw yes. No better music for reflection, enhancing one’s spiritual journey, and meditation. Such a stress reliever for me. It soothes the soul.” She added, “When I go to concerts, it’s usually a classical one.”

Geri’s CD is more than just a compilation of songs for her, it is a representation of a life changing time, a going back home and feeling complete, happy, and an acceptance. LeBlanc spoke of her visit to Chéticamp last summer, “It was such an amazing experience, a re-connecting with family, friends, and new acquaintances.” She continued, “One of my songs reflects some of these special times – *Phantom’s Reunion*. It was the 50th reunion of this band and people of all walks of life, from near and far, gathered for this incredible weekend. Memories to cherish forever and as for me, to share that joy with others through song.”

This new release, Geri LeBlanc – *Going back home* (folk) has an interesting cover. A photo of a lighthouse painted with the tri-colours of the Acadian flag with the yellow star. The flag of France but with the star, many meanings for this Acadian performer. These CDs are available locally at *Les Trois Pignons* (Boutique) and *Charlie’s Country Music Store*.

Most recently, Geri has composed a song 150 years on Canada’s Day. She speaks of how we came to be, that we have so much to be grateful for and how truly blessed we are to be Canadians! I leave you with the lyrics...we hope some day Geri will be performing for us in our neck of the woods.

150 years on Canada’s Day
 150 years on Canada’s Day
 Let’s celebrate today
 With our friends and our family
 Barbecuing all the way
 The French in the 1700
 Were welcome by the Indians
 And, then along England
 Followed by the Scottish and the Irish lads
 (Chorus)
 It’s a blessing they came
 It’s a blessing the Indians were there before
 It’s a blessing all cultures came along
 It’s a blessing everyone is there today
 Since then, people came from everywhere
 Creating what Canada is today
 So let’s be proud and fly our flags
 Cause its 150 years today
 Living all together
 And, celebrating all the way
 Let’s seek peace and happiness
 Reuniting our energies
 It’s a blessing
 It’s a blessing everyone is there today.



HAPPY CANADA DAY FROM THE INVERNESS ORAN. THE ORAN OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON FRIDAY, JUNE 30TH, IN LIEU OF CANADA DAY.

ADULT DANCE

with: 
**Andrea Beaton,
 Mac Morin,
 Shelley Campbell
 & Allan Dewar**
**Brookvillage
 Parish Hall**

MONDAY, JULY 3rd
 9:30 - 1, Adm. \$8.00
 Must be 19+

GLENCOE SQUARE DANCE



Thursday, July 6th
KITCHEN FEST
**Mike Hall, Douglas
 Cameron,
 Lawrence Cameron,
 Pius MacIsaac**

9 - 12, Adm. \$8.00
 children under 12 free
 Fun for all ages!

PUB NIGHT

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at the **INVERNESS FIREHALL**
Saturday, July 1st

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 Come out to the Pub Night with
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**Captain Angus L. Macdonald
 Branch 132**
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 Cape Breton

- KITCHEN FEST -

PERFORMANCES:

Saturday, July 1st (7-10 pm)
 Dara Macdonald, Kevin Dugas, Adam Young, John R. Fontaine
Sunday, July 2nd (7-10 pm)
 Howie MacDonald, Brenda Stubbert, Junior Fraser, Darrell Keigan
Thursday, July 6th (7-10 pm)
 All Fired Up, Cyril MacPhee
Friday, July 7th (7-10 pm)
 Evans & Doherty

\$10.00 AT THE DOOR

West Mabou Hall Square Dance Saturday, July 1st

Time: 9-12, Admission: \$8/Children under 12 admitted free
 Enjoy hotdogs, pop, water,
 tea and coffee at our canteen.
KITCHEN FEST:
**Rodney MacDonald, Richard Wood,
 Allan Dewar and Sandy MacDonald**

SW MARGAREE SUMMER ADULT SQUARE DANCE



FRIDAY NIGHT
 10:00 pm - 1:00 am \$8.00/person
June 30th - MIKE HALL
St. Joseph’s Parish Hall, S.W. Margaree

KITCHEN FEST is happening at the Whycocomagh Waterfront Centre

The Centre will host
 3 pubs, 19+,
 \$10 admission at the
 door. 8-11 nightly



Sunday, July 2nd: Richard Wood,
 Buddy MacDonald, Decota McNamara
 and Joel Chiasson
Wednesday, July 5th: Evans and
 Doherty
Friday, July 7th: McGinty



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 Thursday (Fiddle) - July 6th : Colin Grant
 Friday: June 30th: Andrew & Dwayne
 Saturday: July 8th - Gillian Head
 Sunday: July 2nd, Glen & Nicole

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