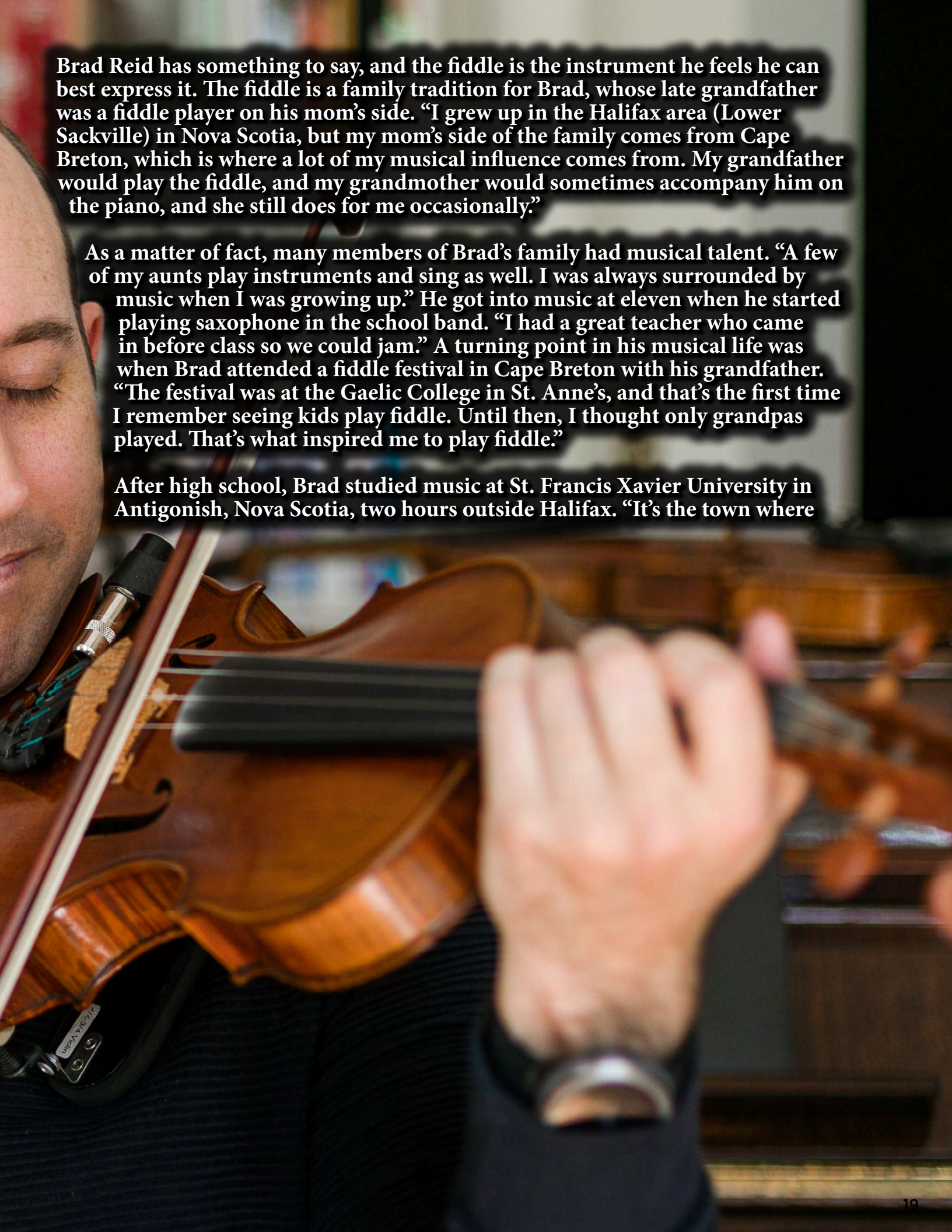




# BRAD REID

by Susan Marquez



**Brad Reid has something to say, and the fiddle is the instrument he feels he can best express it. The fiddle is a family tradition for Brad, whose late grandfather was a fiddle player on his mom's side. "I grew up in the Halifax area (Lower Sackville) in Nova Scotia, but my mom's side of the family comes from Cape Breton, which is where a lot of my musical influence comes from. My grandfather would play the fiddle, and my grandmother would sometimes accompany him on the piano, and she still does for me occasionally."**

**As a matter of fact, many members of Brad's family had musical talent. "A few of my aunts play instruments and sing as well. I was always surrounded by music when I was growing up." He got into music at eleven when he started playing saxophone in the school band. "I had a great teacher who came in before class so we could jam." A turning point in his musical life was when Brad attended a fiddle festival in Cape Breton with his grandfather. "The festival was at the Gaelic College in St. Anne's, and that's the first time I remember seeing kids play fiddle. Until then, I thought only grandpas played. That's what inspired me to play fiddle."**

**After high school, Brad studied music at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, two hours outside Halifax. "It's the town where**



my grandparents lived, and a lot of my family went to school there. It has always been known for having an excellent jazz program, which is what I did on saxophone. I also got into playing multiple woodwinds and just being a multi-instrumentalist in general. After university, I went to work on cruise ships playing saxophone, flute, and clarinet. I later added more instruments, and to this day, I work in the pit bands for musical theatre shows.”

Now known as a world-class fiddle player, Brad says he can't put his finger on “why fiddle” exactly. “I guess I feel like it's the instrument that I feel I have something to say on. When at St. Francis Xavier, I lived with my grandparents. In my fourth year there, my grandfather passed away, and shortly after that, I started to feel like I really wanted to carry on the fiddle tradition in our family. My cousin Heather also plays some fiddle, so I'm not alone.”

While he still enjoys playing other instruments, creatively and technically, Brad focuses on the fiddle. “I feel like everyone's sound on the fiddle is so different, just like the person playing it. Maybe more so than other instruments. So, as I get closer and closer to getting the sound I want on the fiddle, I am showing the world more and more of myself.”

Brad says there is a great community around fiddle music, which is a bonus. “You can find sessions all around the world (in particular Irish music, which I have picked up some of) and play common repertoire with strangers who might not even speak the language. Thanks to music, you're no longer strangers.”

Brad has recorded three albums to date. “The Conundrum (2008) was kind of ‘getting my feet wet’ kind of experience. I knew I wanted to start recording, but I was still figuring out my own style and sound.” Next came NEW Scotland because Brad was on tour with Cirque du Soleil in 2019. “It was an ice show, and I played clarinet while skating. I also played saxophone and guitar. I realized that I still had that calling to play and be creative on the fiddle, so I left the Cirque tour and came home to write and record NEW Scotland, inspired by the last few years of my life.”

His new album, The Bridge, picks up where NEW Scotland left off. “The album features all original music, but with the idea of connecting the old-style tradition with modern-day pop styles. I wanted to try and connect with more people in general, not just react to the die-hard fiddle fans. I like meeting and connecting with people, so incorporating more styles into the album was a way to do that.”

The Bridge is a collaborative effort for Brad, who had various musicians with different styles of music joining him for some of the songs on the album. “Part of why I enjoy collaboration is that you get to hang out with the people you're working with. It's social. It's a way of sharing what each other has and coming up with some music that wouldn't have happened otherwise. Most of the time, I will have the full idea of what I'm going for, and then will let the other person make it their own by adding their input.”

The album is a blend of traditional music with modern pop. “I hope it makes this music more approachable, not so it will sell more (though that would be nice, of course) but just to actually connect with more people. I also enjoy pop music myself and grew up on it, so I have enjoyed feeling unrestrained and making music in any way I feel. I think musicians strive to be more and more themselves when playing, and that’s what sets them apart.”

Brad’s music has been recognized with nominations for some impressive awards. In 2021 He was the Nova Scotia Music Award nominee for Folk Recording of the Year and for Roots/Traditional Recording of the Year in 2021 and 2022. While award nominations play a role in the industry, and Brad admits they can be helpful, he says that’s not why he makes music. “But getting the nominations, or maybe someday an award, helps me to keep making the music and to keep expanding.”

Even when he is at home, Brad is surrounded by music. “My partner Catherine is a classical cellist. We sometimes play together, but for the most part, each do our own thing musically.” While he loves both dogs and kids, he has neither. “But I do like to cook, I love coffee, and these days I’m going through a smoothie recipe book I found and loving my daily smoothie! I’ve always loved traveling, so I hope to keep that up as well. I also love walking with my headphones and listening to podcasts or music - pop, fiddle, classical, jazz, whatever.”

The future holds endless possibilities for Brad. “I would like to work with a producer to create a bigger sound on an album, whether it’s electronic or acoustic in nature. I’m also still writing new tunes, so maybe a really traditional-style album of fiddle, piano, and guitar. I’m also putting together a tune book and developing some merch items to be available on my website. And I am working on a podcast that would be featuring trad musicians.”

