

# VIDEO: Nova Scotia musician with Cape Breton roots playing away for Cirque du Soleil

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This is artwork from the latest Brad Reid album,

**SYDNEY** — When one lifelong dream was accomplished, multi-instrumentalist Brad Reid moved seamlessly onto the next.

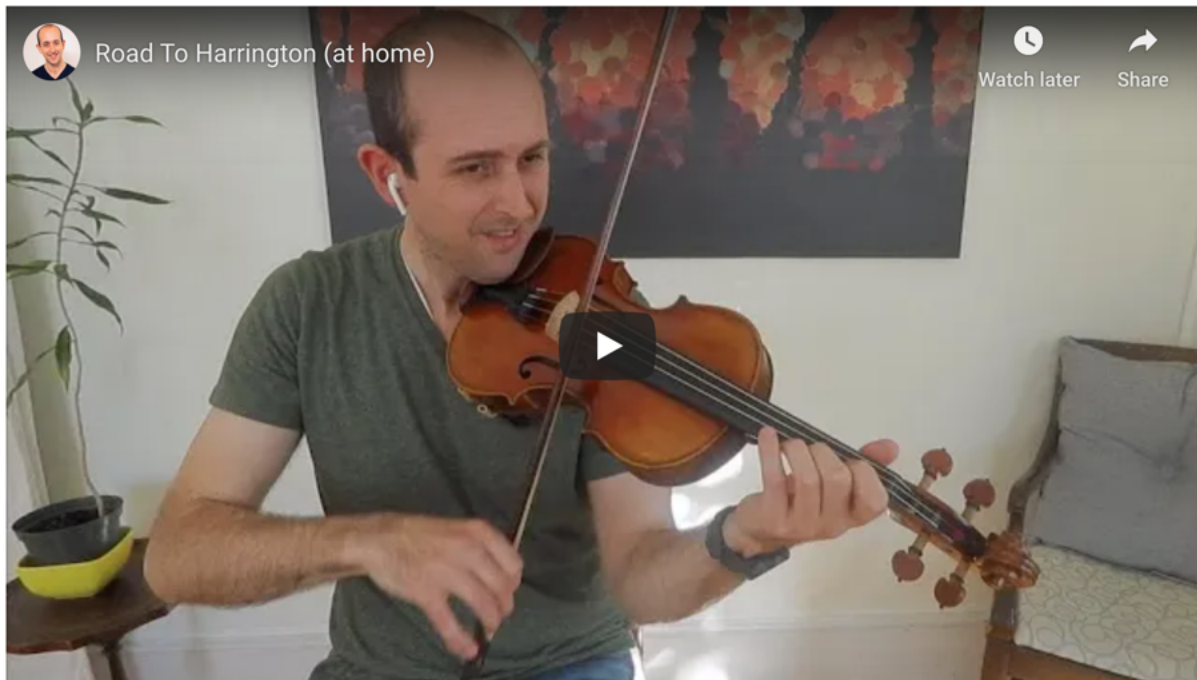
Last year, Reid, 40, who has a music degree from St. Francis Xavier University in jazz saxophone, applied to Cirque du Soleil to become one of

their musicians. He succeeded in joining their “Crystal” show in March 2019. It’s Cirque’s first show that required all participants to perform while ice-skating which brought a whole new level of challenges.

“The music itself is not easy,” he said. “As for ice-skating and trying to catch my breath — we were in Mexico City where the elevation is 9,000 feet. It’s hard to breath at that elevation when you’re just walking, let alone skating and playing the clarinet. It was challenging.

“Can’t say I ever expected to be combining my hockey skills with my clarinet skills.”

But while it had been a lifelong dream for Reid to play for Cirque, at the end of his first contract, which also took him to the U.S., Russia and Latvia, he decided against returning.



“It was intense,” he said. “I’m very glad I got to do it because it was something that I always wanted to do but at the same time, when this initial

contract came up to be renewed I decided that I didn't want to keep going with it because I thought maybe it wasn't ultimately what I wanted to do and then I left.

"And it just happened that within a few weeks, the tour ended up being shut down because of COVID."

Leaving Cirque brought him back to another dream that hails back to his musical roots in Cape Breton.

Although born in Halifax and now residing in Dartmouth, Reid's parents were from Cape Breton and his grandfather was noted Cheticamp fiddler Henry LeForte.

Even though saxophone was his first instrument, he also plays the fiddle, inspired by his grandfather.





Brad Reid holds his fiddle, one of many instruments he plays on his most recent album, "NEW Scotland," which will be launched in this month. - Elizabeth Patterson

"He was one of my main influences for the fiddle," he said. "He was my mentor."

With that for inspiration, Reid will be launching his latest album, "NEW Scotland," during a mini-tour through Nova Scotia and P.E.I. this month. He will be launching the album Nov. 19 at Sydney's Old Triangle and in Charlottetown on Nov. 28, also at the Old Triangle. A Nov. 12 performance at Halifax's Carleton has already sold-out so there will be another show there Jan. 9.

The album features traditional tunes and some Reid originals, influenced by

Latin, classical, jazz and even urban and hip-hop music. On some tunes he plays all the instruments while others feature well-known players like Jamie Gatti, Tom Roach and Dave MacIsaac.



Reid also plays clarinet, flute, oboe, piano, accordion, electric and acoustic guitar, electric bass, cello, double bass, percussion and other instruments. For a player to be also skilled on string and percussion instruments in addition to wind instruments is rare but Reid downplays it.

"It takes time," he said. "You just got to work and keep at it. I practice regularly — I've gone a few times where I practice something very intensely, like hours and hours for days and weeks and then if you're talking about different instruments, a lot of them are similar. Once you start to become comfortable on something, as long as you have some time to put in on another instrument, it's kind of like what they say about languages. If you know how to speak French, then learning Spanish isn't that much of a stretch."





It's not every job that allows you to combine your music and skating skills as multi-instrumentalist Brad Reid found out when he joined the Cirque du Soleil show, "Crystal." Reid is shown here playing saxophone while skating. - CIRQUE DU SOLEIL CRYSTAL

*Elizabeth Patterson is the culture reporter at the Cape Breton Post.*