

Folk roots go deep for Quebec's Le Vent du Nord

By Brock Weir

Nicolas Boulerice considers himself part of a new wave.

"We're not young anymore, but we're still a little bit young," says the Quebec singer, but nevertheless they are part of a new wave of younger generations picking up the ancient musical traditions of the various cultures converging on La Belle Province.

As a founding member of Le Vent Du Nord, which combines the distinctive sounds and flavours of Quebec culture, and instruments as commonplace as the fiddle to the more distinctive hurdy-gurdy, they aim to not only share the music of Quebec with others, but also the Joie de Vivre that is part of their tradition.

"My mother was a singer and she always sang traditional songs," says Mr. Boulerice. "My father decided to analyse those old songs and record singers in my area. I fell in love with the music for many reasons and when I was in college studying jazz, I realised I was trying to be a good musician with traditional music from the U.S. It is beautiful music, and I still love jazz, but it was weird because I didn't know the music from my own country. I knew it, but not well enough.

"It was really a shock to me to dig a little bit more into what Quebec music is and the music of my grandmother. I started to mix the traditional stuff with the jazz, the pop, and rock. It is the same for all the guys in our band. They are born into really musical families, playing music, making violins, who all had the traditional music inside them but didn't know."

For them, the music was not necessarily second nature, but they aimed to reverse that. They found local folk music was not dead, it was actually quite healthy in folk markets, but they wanted to bring the sounds to a wider audience.

They will do just that this Thursday night at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

Five albums later, including their latest, *Fooling Time*, Mr. Boulerice says traditional Quebec folk music is now experiencing "quite a moment."

"People are just amazed that music can still be alive and we have something different from pop music," he says. "What is amazing with folk music is the world is the garden. We can go all over the world and there is no frontier. What people like with folk is the differences. They don't want to have the same kind of cording, approach and energy. Pop can be very interesting, of course, but the folk music and world beat music is something very deep. People talk about all the roots, and go across the generations, it is something very deep and strong."

Le Vent Du Nord hits the Aurora Cultural Centre this Thursday, May 1, at 8 p.m. For more information, including tickets, visit www.auroraculturalcentre.ca.