

Vishtèn

Canada's exhilarating French Acadian party music featuring three-part harmonies and stepdancing

"It's like Buckwheat Zydeco meets the Irish. The first time I saw them, I loved them!"

— Pittsburgh Irish Festival

There's an old saying that goes something like, "Go out and make your mark in the world exploring the new ways but don't turn your back on your roots." The members of Vishtèn have been doing just that for the past seven years, touring their brand of new-traditional Acadian music in over 1000 performances rendered in eight different countries. Made up of third generation Acadians living separate but parallel musical experiences, twin sisters Pastelle and Emmanuelle LeBlanc from Prince Edward Island, Canada have teamed up with Pascal Miousse from the nearby Magdalen Islands to create a sound that incorporates elements of the new ways while retaining and staying true to the essential Acadian spirit of their roots. The sound is essentially Celtic but with a difference. The songs are French, sung by each band member, alone or in three-part harmony. The foot percussion drives the rhythm in a fiddle tune at times yet refrains itself in the gentler musical moments. The band members are accomplished multi-instrumentalists and step-dancers incorporating the fiddle, guitar, accordion, penny-whistle, mandolin, piano, jaw-harp and bodhran into each performance. They are surely making their mark in the world today as their musical maturity comes through to captivate audiences wherever they play.

Vishtèn's story is a musical tale of two islands. In the North Atlantic Ocean, in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence off of Canada's east coast, lays tiny Prince Edward Island and nearby, the even smaller archipelago known as the Magdalen Islands (les Îles de



la Madeleine). Both islands have a shared history and a shared cultural tie that dates back several centuries.

This cultural tie tells a story of early French Acadian settlers seeking a better life in the new world, and many eventually became fishermen and carried with them their musical traditions as a means of celebrating their survival. There still exists today a small enclave in Prince Edward Island where the

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Workshops, Master Classes, and Residency Activities

Members of Vishtèn teach a variety of workshops including fundamentals of Acadian stepdancing (Prince Edward Island sit-down and stand-up styles), Acadian-style fiddling focusing on the unique bowing styles of the Magdalen Islands, guitar accompaniment for traditional music, and others.

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French culture is predominant while the Magdalen Islands still remains primarily French.

There has been a musical connection between these two places for centuries, traded back and forth through trips made on fishing boats in the old days and marriages among the French people which have taken place over the years. A musical marriage that embodies the spirit and the sound of this connection in the present is the contemporary Acadian traditional group Vishtèn.

The three members who make up Vishtèn — Pastelle and Emmanuelle LeBlanc, and Pascal Miousse — have become a distinctive and powerful international voice for traditional music from this part of the world.

Twin sisters Pastelle and Emmanuelle LeBlanc were raised on Prince Edward Island and grew up in a household where fiddle music was commonplace. They became accomplished step-dancers and learned the fundamentals of music on the piano. Pastelle's early piano training proved useful in making the transition to accordion and Emmanuelle soon discovered a flare for playing penny whistle and bodhran. Their voices matured and the sweetness and smoothness of sibling harmonies was soon added to the mix.

Growing up on the Magdalen Islands fiddler Pascal Miousse was also influenced and inspired by his guitarist father's connection to music. He inspired Pascal to take up the fiddle at the age of five, and it wasn't long before he was playing for his father's friends. Pascal broadened his musical scope to include the guitar, mandolin, and bass. With his style of play, he has become a musical anchor of Vishtèn's sound giving it a distinctive voice within the broader Celtic genre.

These three musicians, guided by their own inherent traditions, have collectively arrived at the same intersection at the same point in time, making a conscious choice to play and interpret in new ways the music they learned from their parents' generation. It certainly must stem from a deep respect for and love of the sounds and rhythms forged by the musicians who have come before, inspiring them to create anew and carry this music into the future. Vishtèn has evolved into a group that will leave its own legacy and inspire musicians for generations to come.