

'Proud Canadian Soldier' strikes chord

By Capt JOHN WEINGARDT
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The Proud Canadian Soldier is a relatively new song that serves as a tribute to the Canadian military, past and present.

It is truly an all services effort: it was written by Jay Willis, who served in the Canadian Navy, it is sung by Jill Younghusband, formerly of the Air Force, and it has been beautifully arranged and recorded by Captain Brian Greenwood and the Royal Canadian Artillery Band.

The song was written by Willis in Ottawa in 1999. He had just watched the November 11th ceremonies. He was serving at the time, and also moved as he thought of his father, who had served in the RCN during the Second World War.



'Proud Canadian Soldier' was written by Jay Willis (R) and is sung by Jill Younghusband (L).

"It struck me that we had never sung about all the battles, all the campaigns, and what we did," recalls Willis.

Already an accomplished singer/songwriter, he was able to pour out the lyrics.

By 2004, Willis was in Edmonton dating Jill Younghusband, a professional singer who shared his passion for veterans. Younghusband sang the song at the 2004 Remembrance Day ceremonies at Edmonton's Butterdome, in front of thousands.

"Watching Jill perform is the fulfillment of a dream, because she sings with a conviction - I couldn't bring that much conviction to my music," says Willis.

The song has elicited strong emotional reactions whenever it is performed.

After the 2004 performance, Younghusband remembers and elderly lady reaching out to her from the crowd, very moved. The lady had herself been a singer in the 1940s.

After hearing the song performed, Capt Greenwood asked if he could do an arrangement with the RCA Band.

All parties were in enthusiastic agreement. The song was recorded June 6 at the recording studio at the Edmonton Garrison. An orchestra now backs what started out as a simple folk song for the guitar; the melody is haunting.

The new arrangement was performed at the Land Force Western Area Change of Command in June and at the Edmonton Tattoo in July. It will likely be performed at other public venues in the coming months.

Larry Anderson, a mutual friend, was moved when he heard the song. He has constructed a web site that makes the song available for free.

All people are encouraged to download it and distribute it freely; it is a not-for-profit endeavour.

The song is available at www.proudcanadiansoldier.com.



— Photos by Capt JOHN WEINGARDT

The Royal Canadian Artillery Band recorded a new arrangement of the song at the Edmonton Garrison recording studio June 6.