

Down East At RTH

by Peter Crossley

A musical jubilee celebrates
Toronto's ties to the Maritimes

In the Canadian mosaic, some facets gleam with special brilliance. The Maritime provinces, with an eclectic mix of heritages and long history of personal and financial strife, have undeniably forged a distinctive personality. The music of the region, too, is unique in Canada. Drawing on history and heritage, the music blends traditional Celtic tunes and instruments with Acadian idioms.

A day-long celebration of the music of the Maritime provinces, The First Annual Down Home Jubilee, will take place Sunday, June 5, at Roy Thomson Hall. Beginning at noon with a box-lunch picnic on the lawns outside the hall and followed by a 2 p.m. concert geared for family participation, the day ends with a more formal evening concert preceded by a lobster dinner in the Dunington Grubb Court.

The celebration is an idea whose time had come. "It grew out of discussions with the Program Planning Committee," says Geoffrey Butler, general manager of Roy Thomson Hall. "The members felt we had been missing a significant percentage of Metro's population by ignoring the music of the Maritime region. With so many people originally from the Atlantic provinces living here and an even greater number with strong emotional and physical ties to it, the



John Allan Cameron's strong Atlantic roots and loyalties will no doubt surface when he performs at The First Annual Down Home Jubilee, a day-long celebration of Maritime music at Roy Thomson Hall on June 5. Cameron's "Down East music" can only be defined as Canadian.

committee felt it was time to correct the omission."

Roy Thomson Hall hired Bill Langstroth, a former CBC radio and television producer in the Maritimes, to produce the event. "He was a natural choice," Butler says, "having been closely involved with the talent from the region for so many years."

"And that's where I started," Langstroth says, "when the committee approached me to produce this event — with the talent. After a few preliminary sweeps of the talent rosters to assess who was available and who was suitable for a show such as this, I narrowed the list down to Edith Butler, John Allan Cameron, Bobby Brown And The Cape Breton Symphony Fiddlers and stepdancer Wayne Thompson. I have worked with these performers before and know their great ability to communicate with an audience. They really get an audience going. Too, all are excellent representatives of the various facets of the musical culture of the Maritimes."

Edith Butler, a French-singing, English-speaking Acadian singer-songwriter from Paquetville, N.B.,

dazzled Parisian audiences at her SRO concert in the prestigious Olympia Theatre in 1986. A puppeteer and sculptor, too, Butler plays 24 different musical instruments, holds degrees in music, ethnology, arts, literature and pedagogy and is an officer of the Order of Canada. She has recorded 16 albums since 1973, three of them attaining gold-status sales, has an award-winning career in radio and television and gives 150 concerts annually.

What does Butler do for fun? "Perform. What I bring audiences is not a history course but a show full of life and joy," she says. "It shows what I am and what Canadians are — a fun-loving bunch."

Her concerts are liberally salted with stories from "down home," both nostalgic and humorous, and are guaranteed to delight the most jaded musical audience. Contrast this with her slick, electronic musical back-up, sophisticated lighting, stylish costuming, elaborate staging and props and the mix produces a consummate entertainer.

Her music takes in the full range, from sentimental ballads and old