

# The Barn Dance Opera Country Music Journal

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## CBC - TV NETWORK HIGHLIGHTS 60 Years of Canadian Barn Dance History ON COUNTRY CANADA SHOW

Ever since the early 1940's Johnny Brent was the key business manager, director and master of ceremonies of the CKNX Saturday night Barn Dance. His secret of success was finding top quality talent and adding more and more variety in each show.

Through time as it grew bigger it also gained greater recognition until Johnny decided to name the show "Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance". Eventually it became the longest lived Radio show of it's kind in the history of Canadian broadcasting, and it has never ceased to maintain it's popularity.

Saturday night June 29, 1996 "Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance" in all it's glory was aired over CKNX Radio for the first time in the past 33 years. It was kept alive with Barn Dance reunions without radio. More than one thousand Barn Dance Fans crowded into the Howick Community Centre, near Gorrie, Ontario, to welcome the Barn Dance Stars back on radio. As Johnny Brent opened the show, once again we heard him say.....

*FROM COAST TO COAST it's THE  
MUSIC PEOPLE LOVE MOST,  
AND TIME FOR ANOTHER  
SATURDAY NIGHT CKNX BARN*

*DANCE.* By this time the fiddlers and the pickers were playing their hearts out, the Barn Dance theme song,  
DOWN YONDER....

Amid the thundering applause - everyone was happy.

During all this commotion and

throughout the show Producer Nigel Simms and the crew from the CBC TV Network based in Winnipeg, Manitoba, were bobbing here and there filming segments of the Barn Dance for the CBC TV Network COUNTRY CANADA show. It was presented on the CBC Television Network, Sunday Dec. 8, 1996. If you missed it watch for rerun coming up on the CBC sometime during 1997 between 1p.m. and 2 p.m. (some Sunday afternoon).?

Millions of Canadians and Americans along the US-Canadian border, who viewed this show got a bird's eye view of a very important part of Canada's Musical History. Including interviews with Johnny Brent, Earl Heywood, Ernie King and Jack Gillespie, Manager of CKNX Radio.

The great crusade to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Barn Dance is now under way. Four Barn Dance presentations have been scheduled for 1997 and maybe more. Already confirmed LUCKNOW Community Centre - Saturday, June 7th. as a fund raiser for their REUNION in 1998 - for information on tickets phone (519) 528-3429.

Aslo a BARN DANCE Show and Dance is scheduled at the BRUSSELS HOMECOMING Saturday, August 2, for information and tickets Phone (519) 887-9634.

See BLYTH FESTIVAL story (on inside page) for information on a Special Barbecue, Variety Show and Dance - Sunday August 31. Several other Barn Dances are being negotiated at this time. Remember

1997 is the 60th Anniversary of the Barn Dance.



Johnny Brent, Business Manager and McEE

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## BARNDANCE LIVE! PLAYS TO SOLD OUT AUDIENCES AT THE BLYTH FESTIVAL



A scene from the 1996 Blyth Festival production *Barndance Live!* featuring actor/musicians - Eric Coates, Jack Nicholson, Carolyn Hay (seen here as Mary Elliott), and Andrew Dolha.  
(Photo by James Hockings) of Broadway Photography.)

The Blyth Festival, nationally-known for its Canadian plays which often depict local history, paid loving tribute to the CKNX Barn Dance in 1996.

The play, *Barndance Live!*, opened June 21st in Blyth Memorial Community Hall and ran in repertory until August 23rd. Due to popular demand, special promotion from sponsor CKNX 920, great reviews, and box office sell-outs, it was held over for extra performances until September 7th.

Directed by Paul Thompson, long time Artistic Director of Theatre Passe Muraille, the play was produced in the collective style with the actors themselves doing first hand research, then developing situations and dialogue through improvisation.

Paul grew up in the Listowel/Atwood area and remembers lively discussions amongst his family members about whether to listen to hockey or Barn Dance radio broadcasts on Saturday nights.

*"Barn Dance was quite a phenomenon. Doc Cruickshank (CKNX Radio founder) was way ahead of his time. It was also a terrific training ground for musicians,"* says Paul.

He called on people in the area with special memories of the Barn Dance to contact him through the Blyth Festival and he also held auditions for local talent to be incorporated into the play. The response was overwhelming on both counts and enough local talent was found to perform in each production - everyone from

dancers and singers to musicians and even mentalist! Also, after six of the *Barndance Live!* shows, public dances were held across the street at the Blyth Inn. The *Barndance Live!* company performed music in costumes from the show at these dances and were sometimes joined by the former stars of the original Barn Dance shows.

The talented cast of the *Barndance Live!*, many of whom doubled as musicians, included Raoul Bhaneja who portrayed Ernie King amongst others; Eric Coates who played Ross Mann, Larry Mercey and Johnny Brent; Andrew Dolha who portrayed Don Robertson and Earl Heywood; Carolyn Hay who played Cora Robertson, Mary Elliot and a variety of others; Gary Muir who played Doc Cruickshank and Clarke Johnston; Jack Nichol森 who played Al Cherny and others; John Wright who played the narrator; and Anne Lederman who was the fiddler and musical director.

What occurred on stage was a tribute to a western Ontario institution of the 1940's to 1960's **The CKNX Travelling Barn Dance** was broadcast live from centres all over the western part of the province, from Lake Erie to Georgian Bay. It created its own galaxy of stars like those mentioned above. Much of the *Barndance Live!* audience at Blyth was made up of local people who well remember the success of "Canada's No.1 Travelling Barn Dance." It is difficult to find a person raised within the sound of CKNX radio

who cannot name you at least one of their favourite performers and sing a few bars from a favourite tune.

To translate the Barn Dance stories to the stage was a daunting task which would not have been possible without the assistance and encouragement of the people who lived the stories. The whole creative team is grateful to the "real" Barn Dance folks for their generosity and trust in bringing a piece of local history to life on the stage.

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### **Barndance Play Returns to Blyth Stage in 1997**

And now... *Barndance Live!*, the hit of the Blyth Festival's 1996 season, is being brought back for two weeks in the Festival's 1997 season.

For those who missed it the first time around, or for those who want to see it again, the play will run from **Tuesday 26th (Preview) until Saturday, September 6th. Opening Night is Wednesday, August 27th.** Many of the same talented cast will return to perform again in the '97 production.

In addition, on **Sunday, August 31st**, the Blyth Festival and the Blyth Lions Club will hold a fundraising barbecue paired with a concert and dance starring some of the original members of the CKNX Barn Dance and cast members of the *Barndance Live!*

Many details have yet to be confirmed but mark the above dates on your calendars right now so you don't miss any of the fun. For more information, call the Blyth Festival Box Office at... (519) 523-9300.

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# In Memory of Archie Mann

## 1902 - 1996



Archie Mann

Archie Mann, well known Ole Time Fiddler of Radio and Television since the early 40's peacefully passed away at the age of 95, in the Listowel Memorial Hospital, Sunday, November 17th, 1996.

Born, February, 11th 1902, son of the late Mr. and Mrs. William Mann, of Grey Township, Archie married Pearl Bowes, and farmed near Moncrief, Ont. until retiring in Listowel, Ont. in 1978.

Archie was a self taught musician, a member of the Brussels Pipe Band, and an honoured ole time fiddler, inducted into the Fiddle Country Heritage Club in 1990. He was a companion fiddler of the late Ross Mann ... a lifetime member of the popular Ranch Boys Orchestra, and a Pioneer fiddler of ... "Canada's Largest Travelling Barn Dance", heard over CKNX Radio for three decades including two decades on the Circle Eight Ranch TV. (Archie and Ross Mann were no relation to each other.)

On Wed., November 20th, 1996, many of Archie's beloved friends gathered at Calvary United Church, in Listowel, to remember and celebrate the good life they shared with Archie Mann. During the service near by Archies casket lay the fiddle that accompanied him all through his life. His niece Helen Barker then read a poem as a special tribute to Uncle Archie, and Reverend George Russell read a heart-warming letter "Goodbye Grandpa" from his granddaughter, Tracey Mann, as she was unable to attend the funeral. Archie Mann's last request was honourably fulfilled by Pipers Bill Robb of Listowel, and Elwood (Pat) Wilson, of Atwood, as they played their bagpipes leading the mourners out of the church.

Mr. Mann is survived by his daughter, Mrs. Marion Roberts, son - Robert Mann and his wife Pat of Clinton, daughter-in-law Mrs. Mary Beth, of Waterloo, and 5 grandchildren. He was predeceased by

his wife Pearl Bowes, son William Mann, Son-in-law Harold Roberts, brothers George and William Mann, sisters Jessie Mann and Mrs. Roy (Flora) McCreight. Final resting place the Elma Centre Cemetery, near Atwood.

The Barn Dance Historical Foundation  
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Phone (519) 357-3021

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Earl Heywood

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Howdy Folks:-

Looking back on the year of 1996, one thing for sure - we blazed the trail of one success after another, and here now is some good news from the lawyer.

Government registration authorities have insisted if we made a slight change in the name of our organization they would Incorporate the foundation with a name that could open more doors in the future. Our Board of Directors unanimously agreed and now we are legally incorporated with a new name. Now to be known as **The Barn Dance Historical Society Incorporated** - Of course we remain to be called a Canadian Foundation for the purpose of preserving the history of Canadian Music and Entertainment.

After the loss of *Archie Mann*, one of the longest Ole time Fiddlers of the original CKNX Barn Dance, on Radio and TV - we also lost our famous Canadian legend, the father of Canadian Country Music, *Wilf Carter*. Wilf died peacefully in his sleep at his daughters home in Scotsdale, Arizona on December 4, 1996 at the age of 91. Another great Canadian singer, songwriter and recording artist *Bobbie Rowan* known as Rowan De Courcey fought a fierce battle with cancer - he passed away at the Mississauga Ontario Hospital on Dec. 24, 1996, age 64. He and his singing partner Mary Morewood were a popular singing team known on recordings as "Rowen & Mary".

*On behalf of the 400 members of our Society may we extend our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of these great Canadian performers, who will be sadly missed but forever remembered.*

Wilf Carter once told me the greatest honour ever bestowed on him was the time he was Parade Marshall at the Calgary Stampede. Wilf gave me an autographed picture of he and the horse he rode in the parade, it read - "*Best of luck to you Earl and remember the show goes on.*" - Throughout 1997, 60th anniversary of

the Barn Dance, let's all follow suit as we salute and honour the longest lived radio show in the history of Canadian Broadcasting, the original Barn Dance founded by the late W.T. "Doc" Cruickshank, - in his honour -

The show must go on.

*Earl Heywood,*

Founder and  
Honourary President, Director and Advisor.

### MEMBERSHIP

*We Invite You*

To Become a member of the  
Barn Dance Historical Foundation  
by sending your Name and Address  
with the \$20. fee to:-

Box 68, Wingham, Ontario N0G 2W0

## NOTICE

THE ANNUAL MEETING  
of

**The Barn Dance Historical  
Society Inc.**

will be held at

**The Wingham Armouries**  
(rear of town hall)

**SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 1997**  
at 1:30 p.m.

*Agenda - As per Constitution  
By-Laws*

1. Reports of Directors
2. Committee Chair Persons
3. Election of Officers

*You are cordially invited to attend.*

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## EVENTS Notes 'N News

The Great Gerrard and his 18 year old "Great Scott", popular Kitchener Magicians attended the annual Magic Convention awhile back in Colon, Michigan, the magic capitol of the world. It was young Scott who won the first prize with his baffling magic production Spellbound. The father and son team have had the pleasure of presenting their show to the Wingham Kinsmen and other organizations. Anyone interested in magic, should call Gerard for details about the Hat and Wand Club in Kitchener, devoted to those of the profession - Phone (519) 893-3052

Remember the cornball humour show "Hee Haw" that was seen in 140 markets then folded in 1993 with more than 600 shows stored in a vault at TNN Network in Nashville Tennessee. For the love of Mike, and what do you know the "Hee Haw" show is back on TNN Network along with Canadian funmakers Charlie Farquarson, Gordie Tapp and cousin Clem.

Quality records have been releasing the great country sounds of the Desert Dolphins. Singer songwriter and leader of the group Grant Heywood got the ball rolling when he wrote and recorded Dynamite that went to the top ten on the Canadian playlist. To date 2 videos "Here's What they say" and "Lisa Marie" have been released. A recent CD record album "Hang of A Heartache" skyrocketed to 38 in the top 40 bracket in record sales. Latest single release "That's the way it goes" sounds like another winner for G.Heywood and the Desert Dolphins. Business Manager Bill Jeffross is preparing a tour for the group.

Jack Boswell of Heritage Music, Scarborough, Ont. reports that Smiley Bates passed away on January 8th. after a 3 year battle with cancer. Smiley was a fantastic flat top guitar picker and won ten Gold Records and a host of other citations.

Happy Birthday - goes to Cora Robertson from more than 400 members of the Barn Dance Historical Society on the occasion of a big party in her honour at the home of her daughter with family and friends.