

# The Barn Dance Opera Journal

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**Fall Edition**

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## Donn Reynolds - World Champion Yodeler

by Lynn Russwurm

What do you say about a man who has done it all? Donn Reynolds certainly applies to that phrase. He's performed around the world, recorded for widely divergent record labels, appeared in movies, on radio and TV, broken records for the Guinness Book of Records, featured in Ripley's "Believe It Or Not", and won yodelling championships in both Canada and the U.S.A.

It was in 1921 that this unassuming young man first entered this world in Winnipeg, Man. It wasn't until 10 years later that he happened to hear the yodelling of British entertainer Harry Torrani and was smitten by that sound. Soon he was playing guitar and trying to imitate those yodelling sounds. In his teens he embarked on a temporary career in the armed forces, first the navy, then the RCAF. Came 1947, we find him in New Zealand and Australia pursuing an entertainment career, performing in a circus and in Australian films. In the two years he spent down under, he managed to record some well received records for the Regal Zonophone label. Many still think of Donn as being Australian. His records still appear on most requested lists of traditional Australian music.

In 1950 we find Donn back in Canada, after a year of moving around the continental United States on various radio stations, and a record release on Selection

Records. In Vancouver, he won the World's Open Yodelling Championship which was awarded by Wilf Carter. In 1956 he repeated his win with the U.S. National Yodelling Championship.

Somewhere in between these years he found time to appear in bit parts in Hollywood movies, DJ'd at various U.S. radio stations and even managed to squeeze in an appearance or two on the CKNX Barn Dance. He also guested on the WLS National Barn Dance, the WWVA Wheeling Jamboree, The Louisiana Hayride and the Big D Jamboree in Dallas, Texas. His records were released by Aragon, Lariat, Bullet and Blue Hen.

1956 saw new worlds to conquer and his sights were set on the European continent where he played the part of Davy Crockett

in an Irish theatrical musical. However, 1957 found him back in the U.S., recording under the direction of Wesley Rose of Acuff-Rose, these sides were released on M-G-M Records. Two years later Donn is back in the U.K. as part of a multi country European tour. As chance happened he shared billing with The Three Skylarks somewhere along the way and in the Skylarks was a young lady named Audrey Williams. They were married in 1960 and along with the name of Reynolds, she changed her name from Audrey to Cindy to avoid confusion with Nashville's Audrey Williams. A two week honeymoon in Spain ended up as a six month performing tour for the young couple.

A return to Canada in 1961 won Donn a spot on the televised "Cross Canada Barn Dance" and on "Red River Jamboree". His first album was released on the Citadel and Banff labels with masters that were recorded in England and never released. Finally settling in Toronto, Donn and Cindy developed a smooth lounge act which kept them occupied for a number of years. I remember them playing at the Coronet Motor Hotel in Kitchener where they were held over for many weeks. They were also featured on a Centennial year of special Barn Dances sponsored by CKNX. Donn released two popular albums on the Arc label in



**Donn Reynolds at CKGL  
Summerfest Jamboree Reunion  
in 1986.**

*Continued on Page 3*

## The Editor Speaks

by Grant Heywood



This past summer sure was different. Lots of rain, no rain, really hot, not so hot, and now it's getting darker earlier again. I love the fall but I really feel cheated since it wasn't much of a summer. Hmmm ... makes me wonder what winter will be like.

I had the pleasure of starting summer off with a trip to see and hear a good friend and his band perform in Burlington, Vermont on the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend. It sure is nice to have friends in the U.S.A. and they certainly know how to make you feel welcome. Great western swing music by Rick & the Ramblers, a huge fireworks display, BBQ snacks, liquid refreshments and a gathering of good friends makes for a perfect evening celebration. 50 years in the music biz, 'Way to go Rick!' You ain't done ramblin' yet my friend.

Fast forward now to September, and the International Plowing Match. Wow! It was a real pleasure to play at the IPM this year and Mitchell certainly did the IPM proud even if Saturday was a washout. Thanks to Stephanie Martin Smith and all of her colleagues for organizing some great talent at this year's event. Bravo! I performed with my musical partner Bob Richards at the Mutual tent

and performed later on at the RV tent with Randy Satchell, Larry Mercey, and Crystal Gage for an evening of fine country music. It was particularly exciting to be playing with George Lonsbury (guitarist), again, along with Al Alderson on bass, Doug Dietrich on steel guitar and Ryan St. Denis on fiddle. Thanks so much guys. It was a magical musical night enjoyed by all.

Although this issue features a lot on the late, great singer/yodeler, Donn Reynolds, I would like to point out that I hope in a future issue to be doing an article on the young yodeling sensation, Naomi Bristow who hails from Beeton, Ontario. Naomi has been criss-crossing the continent all year performing in concert, and she has really blossomed into a fine singer/entertainer as well as being a great yodeler. I don't doubt she is aware of the late Donn Reynolds and I am sure with her own style of yodeling and singing, she will continue creating her own path to the top.

Also, I have been helping Kevin Westphal ('The Canuck') known for The Gas Song, The Timmy Tune, etc. We've been putting the finishing touches on his next single product (to be announced) and I have a good feeling it will be a nationwide song to be reckoned with. Kevin's success on YouTube with the song 'Lucknow Now' got well over 11,000 hits so far and he expects the next song will be one that everyone can relate to. More on that in the next issue.

## The Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum

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(or leave a message)

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Bill Simmermaker, Ron Shaw,

Ted Weishar, Doreen Armbruster,

and Lynn Russwurm.

Lots of events taking place this fall including two more Barn Dance Shows. Please check out the Barn Dance Schedule in this issue. Hope to see you at the next Barn Dance.

Comments? Please contact:

Grant Heywood

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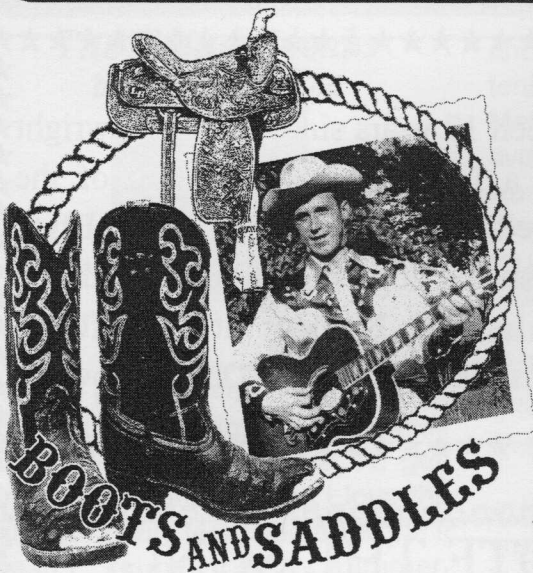
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## 2013 COMING EVENTS

Date	Event Name	Place
Sun., Oct. 20	Barn Dance Show - 2:00 p.m.	St. Anne's Centre, St. Thomas
Sun., Nov. 10	Barn Dance Show - 3:00 p.m.	Commercial Tavern, Maryhill
Sun., Aug. 3, 2014	Barn Dance Show	Wingham Homecoming (details soon)







by Lynn Russwurm

As most of you folks probably know, I've been making my living by buying and selling records since 1985. By doing this, I've managed to build up what is probably the best Canadian Country Collection in Canada. I have approximately 6,000 records including 78's. Now at the age of 83, I've come to the decision that I must divest myself of this collection and am now on the point of selling the whole collection to the National Library and Archives in Ottawa.

The point of this preamble is that I've started to listen to some of our obscure and not so obscure artists that I never took the time to listen to but just added the item to my collection. There are some real treasures on my shelf that I hadn't appreciated until now. I'm pretty gung-ho on the real old-time music like, Jimmie Rodgers, Bradley Kincaid, Red River Dave, Bob Atcher and many others of this type, especially those who yodeled. Now I've had some great yodelers here in Canada that I know nothing about, but I have their records.

A 78 I just picked up recently is by Jimmy Williams, it's on the Apex label, so it must be Canadian. The song is "The Happy Swiss Yodelers" / "Don't Cry For Your Lover". Now this guy is a fantastic yodeler, probably the best I've ever heard but who is he? I have absolutely no information on him. Another one is Mederic Gaudry. I have three albums by him on the Vocal Label, out of Edmonton. The first two are all Jimmie Rodgers songs, some with guitar only, others with dobro, piano, etc., but very tastefully done. Mederic is probably the best interpreter of Jimmie Rodgers songs that I have ever heard. The liner notes say he came into the

studio to cut several songs as a memento for his family. He was persuaded to do an album and now has three of them. By the third album which are standard old-time country songs I can see they've started to ruin him with heavy electric bass and too much piano. But if you can find his first two albums they are a real treasure. I'm still checking out some more of the unknowns before I say goodbye to my collection.

I'd like to comment on a few of what I consider the best of our Canadian country boys and girls. First, my all-time favourite Canadian Singer is Stu Davis. Stu starred in many CBC radio programs going way back in the forties. When television came along he starred in a number of those such as "Red River Jamboree", (the first season), as well as The Stu Davis Show and several others. The majority of his recordings were on the London Label. He also had a bit of success as a song-writer, including a #1 by Eddy Arnold "What A Fool I Was", other cuts included "Panamama" and "In Daddy's Footsteps" by Hank Snow.

Another favourite of mine was Buddy Reynolds. Buddy has two albums on Aragon to his credit, and as a writer he has "Over An Ocean of Golden Dreams" by Red Kirk which is a beautiful song. I met Buddy when he guested on Main Street Jamboree in Hamilton and his band did back-up for my wife and I. We were billed as Laura and Lynn, and Buddy's boys were excited, but were disappointed to find out we were man and wife, instead of two young ladies. After



Buddy Reynolds

that Buddy went back to Western Canada and gradually eased out of the business. More on the Reynolds name, Donn Reynolds is our featured artist so I won't go into Donn at this point.

We had some great artists come out of the Ottawa Valley, and heading that list has to be Bob King. With a number of great albums on the Banff Label, Bob has to be considered as the fore-runner from that area. An earlier album for RCA established him as one of our best. Even earlier and also from the Ottawa Valley was Henry LaRiviere aka Hank Rivers. With several RCA 78's to his credit he went on to record many more albums on Banff and other labels. He's the one who put words to Ward Allen's immortal "Maple Sugar" to transform it into "Maple Sugar Sweetheart".

Another Ottawa Valley boy was Orval Prophet. Discovered by Wilf Carter who terminated his contract with Decca records in the early 50's, Orval became an icon in this



Orval Prophet

country. A little known singer, who I've always thought of as one of the best was George Faith. George came to CKNX with Jean and Les Dowell, The Colorado Kids around 1957, but only stayed a little while, then after a stint in Montreal and CFCF's Jamboree went state-side and joined the "Sons of The Purple Sage", singing real cowboy songs, there is one album by them that features George on most of the songs.

Then we have our own Jack Kingston and Earl Heywood, both top-runners in Canada, but enough has been said about them. Now we come to the distaff side and of course the great Marg Osburn with the Don

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Lesser Show, is the front runner, who has not seen or heard Marg on Don's radio or TV shows? Myrna Lorrie came along at the age of fourteen with a duet recording with Buddy DeVal of "Are You Mine" and parleyed that into several TV and radio shows including a season on The Don Messer Show. Two great female yodelers are Shirley Field and Terry Parker. Now Terry Parker was a regular on the CKNX Barn Dance in the late 50's, I worked on the Barn Dance but didn't realize how good she was until I heard her albums on the Banff label. I saw Shirley Field a number of times when she played at the Twin Tables in Listowel with "The Shirley Field Show", also at the Hanover Inn. At that time he was appearing with her then husband Billy G. French. After their split-up, Shirley moved back to her home province of B.C., then to Alberta and back to B.C. She is known for her book on how to yodel which has received wide distribution. Shirley included two of my songs on one of her later CD's "Let The Wild Horse Run". Last I heard he was still doing Cowboy Gatherings and yodel festivals in Western Canada and the U.S.

These are some of our Canadian greats of the past and there is a new generation coming in on their coat tails.

### Barn Dance Trivia

The Ranch Boys were featured on CKNX TV's 'Circle 8 Ranch' for many years. Contrary to what many folks believed, twin fiddlers Ross Mann and Archie Mann were not even related ... but piano player Cora Robertson and bassist Don Robertson were husband and wife.

### BARN DANCE JOURNAL ADVERTISING PRICES

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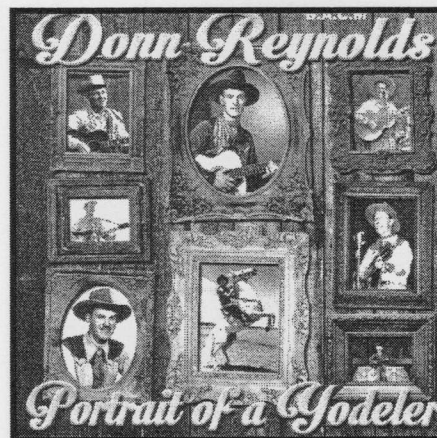
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## FEATURE C. D. REVIEW

# "Donn Reynolds"

## Portrait of a Yodeler

It was Lynn Russwurm who actually had a part in putting this compilation of Donn Reynolds classic tunes together on CD. I really enjoyed reviewing this CD as it takes me back to the era of when my dad was a cowboy singer. In fact the earlier Donn Reynolds tunes from the late 40's and early 50's had a haunting effect on me. When I heard the Donn Reynolds song Blue Mountain Waltz, I had to listen to it again as it sounded much



like my dad singing or at least a tune he would have done.

Donn Reynolds was undoubtedly a champion yodeler. He was officially named World Champion Yodeler in 1950 and also won a spot in the Guinness Book Of World Records in 1976 for yodeling non-stop for 7 hours and 29 minutes. He toured across North America, Australia and Europe doing concerts, radio and TV shows and his career spanned 7 decades from the '30s to the '90s.

There are 27 tracks on this CD and many are rare to say the least. Donn's voice was as smooth as silk and not all of these tracks are yodeling music. Some are cowboy tunes and many are traditional country and western tunes that befit the time period. Most of the recordings here span 15 years from 1947 to 1960 when Donn was in his 'peak period'. Donn's original song Texas Yodel was one of his biggest charting songs in 1949 and really showcases his band and Donn's talent as a true yodeler. Donn could croon with the best of them and it shows on songs like Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain or Rose Of Old Pawnee. Other songs include the beautiful Mexican flavoured ballad, Hasta Luego, and Stockman's Lullaby, as well as the Bob Nolan classic, Tumbling Tumbleweeds.

There is no question about Donn Reynolds talent as a gifted singer/yodeler. Although well known amongst his peers he was never able to break into the mainstream country market with a major label. When in Canada Donn appeared on Cross Canada Barn Dance, Don Messer Show, and Country Hoedown to name a few. He constantly toured to promote his traditional style of country with yodeling as a feature attraction. After countless years on the circuit, Donn passed away in 1997.

It is a real treasure to have a CD such as this in your collection as many of these Donn Reynolds recordings were almost lost forever. It is worth checking this CD out. It will take you back to a time of real, genuine singers singing real traditional country music and then some. Recommended listening for those who remember and for those who want a history lesson of where true country singing started.

# Country Music Memories



*Patricia and Grant Heywood playing Earl and Martha, at Earl and Martha's 45th Anniversary in 1998.*



*John Tremblay and Wayne Riehl at a Jamboree Reunion, Kitchener in 1986.*



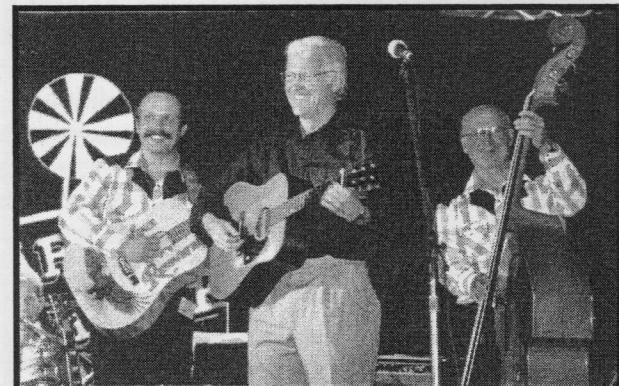
*Jo Brennan*



*Howard Heathcote, Lynn Russwurm, Stu Clayton, Chickie Williams and Kidd Baker, Jamboree Reunion, Kitchener, 1987.*



*Lynn Russwurm, Bob Tremblay, Jinny Phair and Ken Cook, May 25, 2013*



*Bruce Robertson, lead; Gerry Boppre, drums; Lance Russwurm, guitar and Lynn Russwurm, bass. Taken at St. Clements Barn Dance, July 25, 1998.*



*Mel Lavigne, Lorne Prince and Lynn Russwurm at the Jamboree Reunion, Kitchener, 1991.*



*Walter Ostanek at a Jamboree Reunion in Kitchener in 1990.*



## COUNTRY CALENDAR



by Doreen Brown

(Toronto and surrounding area)

\* **Upcoming Shows for Dottie Kirkpatrick** - 705-326-8706. Monthly dance and open mic sessions, starts at 1 pm. Barrie, Ontario at the Army and Navy and Air Force Club.

\* **Lester White and Ol' Country** - phone 705-438-5862. Upcoming appearances - Oct. 26, Nov. 23 and Dec. 21 at The New Dutch Oven, 115 Taunton Rd., Orono, every month; Nov. 17 at Moose Lodge Br. 2132, 731 Wilson Rd. S., Oshawa, every second month; Oct. 18 Bluegrass Night, 7:30 to 1, Wroxeter Community Hall, upper hall, with Al Widmeyer and Community Bluegrass Band, contact 705-335-3245.

\* **October 18** - featuring Johnny Burke, Harold MacIntyre, Steve Pitocco. North Bay Shriner's Club, 2 pm. 705-455-9177.

\* **Sunday, October 20** - Barn Dance show, 2 pm, St. Anne's Centre, St. Thomas.

\* **Upcoming appearances by Larry Mercey** - Christmas Concerts - Nov. 17, Central Westside United Church, 310 Tenth Street, Owen Sound, special guests Naomi Bristow, John & Geneva Heaman, tickets 519-376-8319; Nov. 24, Cargill Community Centre, special guest Marie Bottrell and Randy, 2 pm, tickets 519-648-8644; Dec. 1, Commercial Tavern, Maryhill, special guests Naomi Bristow, and Randy and Carol Satchell, also a meal, 7:30 pm, Call Cindy 519-366-2317 for tickets.

\* **For upcoming appearances of Stay Tuned**, hard drivin' bluegrass, contact Richard Wigfield, at 519-967-1743 or richardwigfield@sypmatico.ca

\* **Ron & Linda's Old Time Country Music** different bands weekly. Oddfellows Hall in Brooklin, 42 Bagot St., every Friday night from 6:30 to 10:30, light lunch at 8:30. Appearing - Oct. 4, Gary Hooper; Oct. 11, Clarence Deveaux and Friends,

also Nov. 8 and Dec. 13; Oct. 18, Classic Country; Oct. 25, Crossroads.

\* **Proud to mention** Michael T. Wall's five year old grand daughter, Cynthia Grace, will soon be recording a new song with him entitled Grandpa's Little Girl. (that's sure keeping our country music alive).

\* **Waylon Jennings Tribute Show** - featuring Bob Gill can be contacted www.waylon-country-tribute.com or bob@waylon-country-tribute.com or phone Canada 647-209-4863 or USA 702-275-7651.

\* **Ralph and Sandy Price** - at Warminster Legion, start at 1 pm, Oct. 20, Nov. 3 and Dec. 1.

\* **Following dance and open mic:** Barrie Legion, 410 St. Vincent St., Barrie, 705-728-4002, dance 7:30 - 11:30; Mactier Legion, open mic 1 to 5, 4th Sun. each month Apr. to Nov., Dec. will be 2nd Sun.; Orillia Arm, Navy, Air Force Club, dance 8 to 12, 74 Victoria St., Orillia, 705-325-2007; Warminster Legion, open mic jam 1 to 5, 3rd Sun. each month, Apr. to Dec., 9767 Trans Canada Hwy., Warminster, Hwy. 12, 705-325-6920.

\* **Appearances by Cyril Wan and The Working Class Heroes Band** - email to silas97@bell.net

\* **Frank's Pasta / Grill** 426 King St. E., Cobourg, 905-372-2727. Open mic every Wed. 8 to 11. Hosted by Nelson Denes..

\* **Country Versatiles Schedule:** Gerald Davidson, Oct. - Dec. 519-539-2653 or music550fair@hotmail.com or www.countryversatiles.com

\* **For upcoming shows**, including "Country Christmas Tour 2013", contact Scott Woods, www.scottwoods.ca or email info@scottwoods.ca or 1-855-726-8896.

\* **Appearances by Doreen Brown:** Oct. 17, Bluesky Bluegrass Club, Barrie; Oct. 13, Shelburne Jamboree 1 pm; Oct. 15 and Nov. 19, Rosemont Jamboree, 7 pm; Nov. 11 ANAF, Barrie, 1 pm, with Don Celsie and band; Dec. 1, Warminster Jamboree, 1 pm.

\* **Barn Dance Shows**, Oct. 20, 2 pm, St. Anne's Centre, St. Thomas; Nov. 10, 3 pm, Commercial Tavern, Maryhill.

\* **For upcoming shows**, contact Rescue Junction, gospel bluegrass with Kaitlyn Gerber, e-mail rescuejunc-

tion@hotmail.com or www.rescuejunctionband.com or phone 519-595-4089.

\* **Club Dates** for Pineridge Bluegrass - Oct. 6, Nov. 3, and Dec. 1 at Woodview Community Centre, 151 Cadillac Ave. N., Oshawa. www.pineridgebluegrass.ca

\* **Contact Dieter Boehme** - country entertainment, shows, festivals, jamborees, Odessa. Phone 613-386-5501 or e-mail dieterboehme@hotmail.com

\* **For Country Music Entertainment**, contact Scotty Gartshore, 705-286-3865 or mgartshore@sympatico.ca

\* **Nov. 21** - Moe Bandy and Friends will be performing in Brantford, Ont.

\* **Kendal's Country Open Mic** - Oct. 19, every 3 months, with the Good Ole Boys and Side Kicks, show by Sheila Hannah at Kendal Community Centre.

*Since this is the last Barn Dance Issue for 2013, and a little early, but extending best wishes to all for Christmas and New Year's holiday season with good health, happiness and thanks to all for your endless support of our Country Music.*

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## BARN DANCE CORNER

by Peter Saros

It is difficult to explain how a weekly live-radio variety show rooted in the middle of America, made up of musical segments, comedy, radio drama, and hopelessly sentimental storytelling has any currency today.

But *A Prairie Home Companion* is still money in the bank. First played to a tiny crowd of friends in a college auditorium in St. Paul, Minnesota, the almost 40 year-old show continues to be heard by four million listeners each week. The show dangerously dances out of time and stumbles with cultural relevance in an age when just listening to broadcast radio is an anachronistic and revolutionary act.

Garrison Keillor, the show's host and writer, first conceived of *A Prairie Home Companion* while in Nashville on assignment for *The New Yorker* magazine in 1974 researching the Grand Ole Opry which was leaving its home in the Ryman Auditorium to move to the Opryland Hotel in suburban Nashville.

The colour observed while writing that

piece of a dying and changing music industry no doubt inspired the show's strong emphasis on American folk music. It provides a contemporary stage for genres often considered museum music today. Classic country, bluegrass, blues and gospel musicians figure heavily into the weekly musical mix.

Nostalgia for a simpler and slower time certainly drives the radio shows ongoing popularity and success beyond the music. The familiar predictability of the show makes it comfortable. The fictional products advertised on the show are performed in the style of live old-time radio commercials. The recurring comedy skits of "Guy Noir, Private Eye" and "The Lives of the Cowboys" remain highlights of the show into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The weekly storytelling monologue famously titled "The News From Lake Wobegon" has opened the same way for over thirty years: "Well, it's been a quiet week in Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, my hometown, out on the edge of the prairie." The report from Keillor's fictitious hometown closes with the same lines as well: "where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above

average."

The folksy/hokey lightheartedness and silliness of the production, however, trumps any earnest striving for significance. It never gets above its raising. It strives to keep its entertainment close to the ground. Keillor was listening with his heart when in Nashville as a young man trying to figure out why the Grand Ole Opry mattered.

The similarities in production sensibilities between *A Prairie Home Companion* and The Barn Dance productions are obvious and many. There has to be something to the fact that before 1987 APHC's theme song was Hank Snow's "Hello Love."

How wonderful would it be if the Barn Dance Historical Society and Entertainment Museum could convince the show's distributor American Public Media to coordinate broadcasts from the Wingham Heritage Theatre while both productions are still alive and kicking?

I am convinced once Mr. Keillor heard about the history of the CKNX Saturday Night Barn Dance he would understand what all the fuss is about.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON ...

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