

## **OPRY GOLD:**

- 1. CAST BIOS**
- 2. PROGRAM INFO**
- 3. CONCERT DESCRIPTION**

### **1) CAST BIOS:**

#### **Matt Ballagh – Lead Vocalist, Guitars, Banjo**

With a passion for live performance, Matt has toured extensively across North America and Ireland with his family band, **The Ballagh's**, and continues to share the stage with his sibling band, **The Crew**. For Drayton Entertainment: ***Fiddler On The Loose (2022, 2023) Good Ol' Country Gospel, Sorry I'm Canadian (2006, 2008, 2013)***. For Victoria Playhouse Petrolia: *The Ultimate Fiddler On The Loose, Sweet Soul Music, East Coast Kitchen Party Leftovers, When Irish Eyes Are Smiling, Pot O' Gold Fundraiser*. Film/TV credits include: *Family Feud Canada (CBC)*.

In addition to his work in music, Matt is a co-director for youth musicals with Studio 410 Productions, inspiring the next generation of performers and fostering their creativity. An accomplished professional, he has received accolades for his production, song-writing, and vocal skills, solidifying his reputation in the industry. Matt's original music is widely available on all major streaming platforms.

Matt is also a dynamic sound designer and proud graduate of the Music Industry Arts program at Fanshawe College. He combines his academic training with a wealth of practical experience. As the owner of On Track Studios, Matt has established a creative hub for artists, offering top-notch recording services and expertise, and most recently, Matt designed sound for Drayton Entertainment's productions of Jesus Christ Superstar and Shrek: The Musical.

Website: [www.mattballagh.com](http://www.mattballagh.com) Instagram: @mattballagh

#### **MARK DUNN – Lead Vocalist, Bass**

Mark Dunn was born into a musical family and started playing piano at age 3. He began playing saxophone professionally at age 14. He navigated his way through several instruments through the 1970's before settling on bass in 1980. After finishing college he continued his studies with various artists in Montreal, New York, and of course, Toronto. He has performed at numerous jazz festivals in Toronto, Niagara, Eastern Ontario, and toured England, and the US at other local folk and rock festivals. He continues to perform at local clubs and restaurants in the GTA and surrounding areas.

#### **BRANT GARRATT – Lead Vocalist, Guitar**

Based in Toronto Ontario, Brant Garratt is a multi-instrumentalist and singer with a passion for the acoustic guitar. About 4 years ago, while studying Jazz Performance at Humber College, Brant went through a musical paradigm shift when he discovered the

magic of Bluegrass and acoustic Folk music. Perhaps reminded of his early childhood exposure to traditional east-coast fiddle music, and the songs of Canadian folk legends like Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, and Stan Rogers, Brant has gone back to his acoustic roots. He performs solo acoustic arrangements of classic American and Canadian Folk and Country music in a style known as "Flatpicking". Brant has spent the last 8 Years as a career freelance musician and part-time music educator in the GTA and surrounding regions, working for a wide variety of artists across many musical forums. He is a member of a fabulous bluegrass band called Duke Street Turnaround.

### **Alexander George – Fiddle, Mandolin**

Alex George is a musician from Almonte Ontario, currently residing in Toronto. He performs in a wide variety of genres from jazz to country, classical to contemporary, and has entertained audiences of all ages in many different settings. Alex is the recipient of the Danny O'Connell Memorial Award, given for his role in advancing Ottawa Valley fiddle tradition, and has received similar recognition from the Niagara Old Tyme Fiddlers' Association. Alex has performed before federal Parliament, representing the next generation of fiddlers in support of the establishment of National Fiddling Day. He recently completed his Bachelor of Music Degree at Humber College, graduating with honours. Today, Alex performs with various artists in the GTA, works as a session musician, and arranges and records classical and contemporary violin parts for recording artists.

### **Bruce Ley – Arranger, Musical Director, Piano, Guitar, Vocals**

Born in Hamilton, Bruce is a man of many talents having enjoyed a long and steady career. A regular on television for many years, he played piano for both The Tommy Hunter Show, and The Ronnie Prophet Show. He has also worked with many Nashville artists including Don Everly, Chet Atkins and Brenda Lee, who was mentored by Patsy Cline. Bruce composed music for Sesame Street, the Polka Dot Door, has written scores for many television dramas and was nominated for a Gemini for best dramatic score. He scored "The Painted Door", a film that was nominated for an Academy Award. Over his eclectic career, he made his mark in the blues field as lead guitarist and singer in the award winning Trouble and Strife Blues Band and in the jazz world, his Bruce Ley Trio is much sought after. Bruce moved to Mulmur 15 years ago to open up his recording studio on his 80 acre farm. Leisa and Bruce met working for Theatre Orangeville, where Bruce played Home & Away, A Closer Walk With Patsy Cline and Ned Durango, and musical directed MESA, and Eighteen Wheels. Bruce has arranged nine of Leisa's concerts, including this one. Bruce's blues influenced recording "The Peacock, the Deer and the Moon" is available for your listening pleasure. For more information, go to [bruceley.ca](http://bruceley.ca)

### **Don Reid – Drums, Vocals**

Don has traveled much of North America starting in the early 80s as a professional touring musician. Don has worked with Orchestra London and was a regular in the pit at the Grand Theatre in London. Over the years he has worked in several musicals

including Oliver!, The Music Man, Rat Pack, 18 Wheels, Summer of Love and Blue Suede Shoes.

Don was also involved in writing and producing musical scores for video, radio and TV programs and various recording projects in the 80s and 90s. Don has been teaching private music lessons dating back as far as high school and currently serves as president of the Georgian Triangle Music Teachers' Association. He studied privately with Ass. Professor Bob Hughes (UWO) and also attended Music Industry Arts (Fanshawe college, London). Don has also studied privately with Steve Mancuso (Humber College).

As always Don thanks Marilyn, J.T. and Callum for their never-ending support!

### **Leisa Way – Singer, Concert Creator, & Producer**

Leisa was born in Kitchener and raised in Sudbury, where she got her start at 12 years old singing for Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth. At age 20, she starred as “Anne” in *Anne of Green Gables* for six seasons at the Charlottetown Festival, including tours of Canada, the USA & Japan, CBC Radio, filming for television, & 3 performances for the Royal Family. Since then, her career has taken her to over 50 countries, and Leisa has performed at major theatres across the US and Canada (including Drayton) in roles such as Billie Dawn in *Born Yesterday*; Guenevere in *Camelot*; Peter in *Peter Pan*, Magnolia in *Showboat*; Maria in *The Sound of Music*; and Justine in *The Love List*. An avid fisherwoman, Leisa travels with her fishing rod, and is also a certified 350 hr-Yoga teacher. 18 years ago, Leisa began creating concerts, beginning with *Sweet Dreams (Patsy Cline)*, a hugely successful concert which has been called the finest Patsy Cline concert in North America, performing at over 140 theatres across the country. Next came the hugely successful *Rhinestone Cowgirl (Dolly Parton)*, *Early Morning Rain: The Legend of Gordon Lightfoot*; *Country Jukebox* (duets); *You Give Me Fever (Peggy Lee)*, *Rock The Night Away*; *Wichita Lineman (Glen Campbell)*, *Across The Pond*, three holiday shows, and *Oh, Canada, We Sing For Thee!* which toured across this great country on a 44-city tour of over 80 performances during our Canada 150 year. In 2026, Leisa debuts her 14<sup>th</sup> concert at a theatre near you. Recently, Leisa was named, “Toronto Musician of the Year”, and in January of 2023, Leisa and her band made the cover of International Musician Magazine, as musicians who inspire other artists. Leisa feels blessed to continue to do what she loves, and is very proud to work with these fine musicians. Their cd's are available here, or at [www.waytogoproductions.ca](http://www.waytogoproductions.ca)

\*\* \*\* \*

## **2) Program info:**

**Opry Gold**

**Starring Leisa Way & The Wayward Wind Band**

**(Brant Garratt, Matt Ballagh, Mark Dunn,**

**Bruce Ley, Don Reid & Alex George)**

Leisa Way - Vocals

Mark Dunn – Bass & Lead Vocals

Matt Ballagh – Guitars, Banjo, & Lead Vocals

Brant Garratt – Guitar & Lead Vocals

Alex George – Fiddle, Mandolin

Bruce Ley – Piano, Guitar, Lead Vocals, and Musical Arrangements

Don Reid – Drums, & Vocals

Concert Created by Leisa Way

Music Arranged by: Bruce Ley

Sound Designer: (fill in tech name)

Lighting Designer: (fill in venue tech name)

Followspot Operator: (fill in venue tech name, if applicable)

Costume Design: Way-To-Go Productions

Wig styling: Sharon Ryman (Canadian Opera Company)

Concert logo: Sharyn Ayliffe Creative

Concert is licensed by SOCAN.

Musicians appear courtesy of AFM.

There will be one 20 minute intermission.

**\*\* \*\***

### **3) CONCERT DESCRIPTION Opry Gold:**

**Can't go to the Opry? (venue) Theatre is bringing the Grand Ole Opry to you! Leisa Way & The Wayward Wind Band will raise the roof!**

**Entertaining folks since 1925, The Opry has been called,  
“The Show That Made Country Music Famous”.**

To share the Opry’s history is to share the story of Country Music. Leisa Way and her phenomenally talented Wayward Wind Band have brought Canada many great shows, and this latest concert raises the roof with the hottest country songs from the

last few decades. Sing-a-long to Shania Twain, Keith Urban, Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline, Chris Stapleton, Lady Antebellum, Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton, Charlie Daniels, Zac Brown Band, Willie Nelson, Tammy Wynette, George Jones, Garth Brooks, Hank Williams, Billy Ray Cyrus, Merle Haggard, Glen Campbell, Brad Paisley, Taylor Swift, Gretchen Wilson, Tammy Wynette, Roger Miller, and more!

**Opry Gold is a toe-tappin', roof-raisin' salute  
to the greatest music in the history of Country Music!**

*A one of a kind entertainment experience for audiences  
for the whole family!*

*OR*

Opry Gold is a vibrant celebration featuring a rich mixture of classic Grand Ole Opry masters and the next generation of breakthrough country artists! This show highlights all the amazing artists that have played the Opry stage over the years and tells the stories about their connections. Opry Gold clearly is a labour of love for show creator Leisa Way and her multi-talented band, Brant Garratt, Jack Gaughan OR Matt Ballagh, Al Braatz OR Mark Dunn, Alex George, Don Reid and musical arranger Bruce Ley. The fiddle, banjo, drums, keyboard, guitars, bass, harmonica and even the washboard; these artists can play them all! And when they vocalize, the audience is treated to first class harmonies and solos. Opry Gold takes the audience on a journey back through time to the days, in 1925, when Nashville's radio station WSM became the first all-country music station featuring early stars like Uncle Jimmy Thompson and Grandpa Jones and then featuring the sounds of Patsy, Dolly, Conway & Loretta and Tammy & George right through to today's stars like Shania Twain, Keith Urban, Taylor Swift, Darius Rucker, Kenny Chesney, and Zac Brown Band. Leisa Way's Opry Gold brings audiences some of the very best of classic and new wave country music and heapin' helpin' of good-natured fun!