



## JOHN MILLARD AND HAPPY DAY PERFORMER PROFILES

**John Millard** is a Toronto based composer, singer and songwriter. Mainly he works composing for theatre. His work has graced stages from the Shaw Festival to Armstrong, B.C.'s Caravan Theatre. In the late 80's John founded a group of musical adventurers called The Polka Dogs. For three or four years they impressed, startled and amazed audiences in Canada and Europe with a body of great songs and original arrangements. In 1993 the members of the band went their own ways and John returned to writing for theatre. A half dozen years later, John once again got the itch to put together another band. **John Millard and Happy Day** is the result and once again John's writing continues to impress. "Tunes so sharp they could have been played by a pool shark" is how a Toronto Globe and Mail reviewer greeted the band's first public appearance in May of 2000.

Born in Hamilton, John spent 10 years, from age five to fifteen, living in and around Waterloo, Ontario. John's family was musical. His mother was a singer in Scotland and his grandmother used to play organ for both the local Presbyterian and Anglican churches, often working for the former at nine in the morning and the latter at eleven. She also played in Gordie Tapp's band, often arriving for a church job after having performed in a showband the night before. This mixture of the sacred and secular finds a home in John's music.

Mennonite music teachers, the sounds and personalities of the farmers' market, Oktoberfest polka bands, Austrian men's choirs and yodeling competitions all resonated in the young mind of John Millard and all have found expression in his adult work. As the musicians around him became infatuated with "world music" as diverse as Macedonian wedding bands and Tuvan throat singing, John returned again and again to the sounds and landscape of his corner of Ontario. "Write what you know" is an axiom of the arts and John has taken that to heart.

The instrumentation of Happy Day is somewhere between a bluegrass band and a cabaret ensemble - three vocalists, vibraphone, string bass, accordion and percussion accompany John's voice and banjo. Each member of the band is a virtuoso with a plethora of other projects. The attraction of Happy Day for its members is the opportunity to work with a great arranger and composer who also is an eccentric, yet compelling, storyteller.

The songs are tales peopled by an odd assortment of characters - a man with no name, William Lyon Mackenzie, a devil and an angel out on the town together, a tragic woman named Glory





and a truck driver racing to his sweetie through the southern Ontario back country. Yet the words and the music come together to make breathtaking sense, to look at the world in a way that is uniquely John Millard, but also compelling and affecting. And somewhere in all that is the sounds and look of small town Ontario and places like it across the country and the dramas of everyday life that are as profound and powerful as the Odyssey.

Happy Day came together in the Spring of 2000. It performed at a number of Toronto clubs, including a longish run at Clinton's. In the fall of that year the group recorded its first CD and was invited to the Frostbite Festival in Whitehorse, which marked its festival debut. The band showcased at the North American Folk Alliance meeting in Vancouver, which led to a number of festivals in the summer of 2001. Between July 1st, when the band performed as part of the Canada Day concert at Toronto's Harbourfront Centre, and mid August, when they performed on the Main Stage at Owen Sound's Summerfolk Festival, Happy Day performed at the Quebec City Summer Festival, The Harrison (B.C.) Festival of the Arts, in concert at the Caravan Theatre in Armstrong, B.C., The Islands Folk Festival (Duncan, B.C.), and the Hillside Festival (Guelph). They also performed with guitarist, Tim Posgate, as the Folk Choir with his Horn Band at the Guelph Jazz Festival and recording this work, In 2002 Happy Day performed mainly in Toronto and environs, including a concert at Harbourfront in their Sunday afternoon series, which was recorded and broadcast on CBC radio's Bandwidth program. They gave a week of performances as part of Theatre Columbus' Mayhem program at the Factory Lab Theatre and performed to a warm audience as part of the Live From St. Jacobs series. One exception was a trip west to the Regina Folk Festival where the band was a surprise hit of the festival. One reviewer wrote: "Even among folk/roots legends like Odetta and Alejandro Escovedo, Happy Day stands out as my favourite part of the festival"

*Emmet Matheson, Regina Post Herald.*

The group released their second cd in April 2003 at Artword Theatre in Toronto. A small tour of B.C. included the Caravan Farm Theatre, The Mission Folk Festival and The Cellar in Vancouver. The group recently performed before a captivated audience of physicists in Deep River Ontario and is looking forward to upcoming concerts in Montreal at The Salle Rosa and in Aylmer Ontario.

**Rob Clutton** plays the double bass. Current projects include JMHD, Tim Posgate's Jazzstory, The Steve Koven Trio, N.O.J.O., Kavli, The David Mott Quintet, This Moment, and the Rob Clutton Band. Rob has been recorded on numerous cd's and has performed at festivals across





Canada as well as in the U.S., Italy , the U.K. and the Caribbean. Upcoming projects include the release of a second CD of original compositions entitled Holstein Dream Pageant.



**Randi Helmers**, singer, actor and visual artist, has participated in the Toronto arts community for over twenty years, As well as singing with JMHD, she sings in the “folk choir” on Tim Posgate’s upcoming CD, “In The Future of Your Dream”. Together with singer Karin Randoja and bassist Rob Clutton, the trio “Kavli” has released “Huldra Sessions”, an eclectic collection of world and popular music. Randi recently read from her work in progress at Theatre Columbus’ “Mayhem and the Naked Writer” festival in May. She has just spent a successful season at The Stratford Festival and she looks forward to a european tour of Sonja Mills’ “The Danish Play”. Randi’s visual art has been on view in galleries, theatres and outdoor exhibits in Toronto, most recently at Artscape’s “Art for Art’s Sake” show at the historic Gooderham and Worts Distillery district.



**Christine Brubaker** has been working as a professional actor and musician for 10 years. Originally from Guelph, Ontario, she now lives in Toronto and is a graduate of the National Theatre School. She works regularly in film and tv and was an ensemble member in A&E series Nero Wolfe. This season she will be acting in shows at the Tarragon Theatre, Lorraine Kisma Theatre for Young People and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. She also musically directs and writes and currently is working on two new projects, “I have heard.....”, the story of Joan of Arc, and “The B Girls” an exploration of the women in Bertolt Brecht’s life. As well as singing, Christine plays accordion and piano and teaches music in her home.



Percussionist **Mark Duggan** has been active in the Canadian music scene for many years as both performer and composer. Working with such artists as pianist Lee Pui Ming, the Evergreen Club Gamelan, the percussion ensemble NEXUS, or his own group Vuja dé, Mark’s versatile blend of contemporary world percussion has impressed audiences from the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland and Festival de Musique Actuelle in Victoriaville, to the Lincoln Center in New York. Mark has performed in a wide spectrum of musical contexts appearing





with the Philip Glass Ensemble, the Esprit Orchestra and the Ensemble Intercontemporain de Paris directed by Pierre Boulez. His affinity for the music of Latin America has led him to integrate these influences into his own writing especially with the group Vuja dé. Other projects include several tours of Japan with marimbist Mika Yoshida, performances with Brazilian singer Celso Machado, the Heartbeat world music orchestra, and the cajun dance group “Swamperella”. Mark is a founding member of the Evergreen Club Gamelan (since 1983) which has over the years performed throughout Canada and internationally in Europe, Asia and the US.

**Karin Randoja** is a singer, actress, director and teacher based in Toronto. She sings, tours and has released CDs with John Millard and Happy Day, and Kavli, a unique musical trio. She teaches singing and acting at Humber College and The National Theatre School. She has studied voice in France and England with the Roy Hart Theatre and Pantheatre. She has toured nationally and internationally at both folk festivals and theatre festivals. Karin is a graduate of The National Theatre School of Canada and was a co-founder of Primus Theatre.

**Dragoslav Tanascovic** graduated from Belgrade University in 1993. He has lived in Toronto since 1994. He has played music in many projects that range from punk to classical. He has toured Canada, the U.S. and Europe playing guitars and keyboards with Melanie Doane and Alannah Myles. He was musical director for the London (UK) production of Hedwig and the Angry Inch at the Edinburgh Festival 2001. He has composed and performed music (even acted!) for many theatre productions in Toronto. These include Oliver Twist (YPT Composer/performer 1997), The Barber of Seville (performer, Theatre Columbus 1996) and Twelfth Night (Soulpepper 2000 musician/actor). Happily unmarried, Dragoslav shares his life in art with his daughter Talia.

