

# PRESS RELEASE

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World Premiere Performance

## Michael Johnathon's SONGS OF RURAL AMERICA Comes to the historic Ariel Opera House

*"Yes, I am a dreamer. For a dreamer is one who can find his way by moonlight,  
and see the dawn before the rest of the world." - Oscar Wilde*

Among the throngs of musicians in the folk world, few have elevated "dreaming" to such a high artform as Michael Johnathon. He will be performing a special event concert called the Songs of Rural America with the The Ohio Valley Symphony on Saturday October 6, 2018.

From composing the *Woody Guthrie Opera* to writing the *Walden play*, creating the national SongFarmers movement to producing the wildly successful broadcast of the *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour*, solo concert tours of coffeehouses to recording his song *The Dream* about the earth at piece with a 61-piece orchestra and choirs in English, French, Spanish and Russian, his accomplishments can easily overshadow a very important point:

Michael Johnathon is an excellent musician.

**"Once upon a time, rural America was built on the music and conversation of families who relaxed at the end of the day playing music on their front porches,"** says Johnathon from his log cabin home in Kentucky. **"The front porch was the grand pulpit of every community, the gathering place for family, friends and neighbors. It was the greatest stage in the world, filled with musicians every evening singing together as the sun went down."**

He is quick to point out that America, as a community, has lost its sense of its own front porch.

**"As soon as they invented TV and air conditioning, everybody fled inside,"** he says. **"They don't even build front porches on new homes any more. For the past 50 years, the great feng shui welcome of a new home was the garage door. The thing you leave by is what welcomes your friends."**

Among his many ongoing accomplishments is the sustained creation of an international, live audience syndicated broadcast called the *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour*. The show airs on 515 radio stations from Australia to Boston to Dublin, Ireland. It also airs on American Forces Radio Network twice each weekend in 173 nations, every military base and US Naval ship in the world. The shows airs coast-to-coast in millions of TV homes as a public TV series. Now Friday and Wednesday's on RFD-TV. What is especially striking about the production is that it is completely volunteer run and available free of charge to schools and home school families with lesson plans.

It is the success of WoodSongs that makes the broadcast recording of *Songs of Rural America* so important. It will be not only recorded for broadcast on nearly 600 public radio stations, it will also air on American Forces Radio Network in 173 nations plus be filmed for a public television TV special.

The concept behind this concert tour is to bring a sense of America's front porch spirit onto classical orchestra stages nationwide. The concert at the historic Ariel-Ann Carson Dater Performing Arts Centre in Gallipolis, Ohio is the world premiere of the tour.

**"I thought to myself, 'How hard can it be for a folksinger to perform with classical musicians?'"** he explains. **"Well, it's pretty hard."** Johnathon arranged the orchestration with Joshua Carter of Nashville TN, who works with Ben Folds and others to his credits. The concert will be conducted by Tim Berens.

The audience can expect a very surprising, rich and powerful selection of songs that will represent the passion and importance of the "front porch" spirit, once taken for granted across rural America.

**"I'll be there with my long neck banjo, my Martin guitar and about 40 new friends who are amazing classical musicians, engineers and six TV cameras,"** says Johnathon. **"I can't tell you how exciting this will be."**

Tickets for the 7:30PM Saturday October 6 *Songs of Rural America* concert and broadcast taping are on sale now at the historic Ariel Opera House box office, 426 Second Avenue in Gallipolis OH. Call 740-446-ARTS or online at [ArielOperaHouse.org](http://ArielOperaHouse.org). Tickets are \$28 reserved.

*"Take the inventiveness of Bob Dylan,  
the melodic voice of John Denver,  
add the showmanship of Garrison Keillor  
and that's Michael Johnathon."*

**Bob Spear, Publisher**

**ARIEL OPERA HOUSE**  
*Home of The Ohio Valley Symphony*  
Established 1895

*folksinger*  
**Michael Johnathon**

**Songs of Rural America**  
*World Premiere*

*conductor* **Tim Berens**

**Saturday Oct. 6**  
**7:30 p.m.**

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**The Ohio Valley Symphony**

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