

Richard and Deborah

BY MARK WEBER
Express/Adviser

There's not a musical style Richard and Deborah Popovich won't tackle.

The couple, set to perform at Innisfail's Century Theatre, May 10 & 11, make their living serving up their own brand of comedy and musical theatre.

To date, they've notched up more than 3,000 shows on the Stettler based Alberta Prairie Steam Train alone.

These appearances have also familiarized them with thousands.

Richard says 30,000 people take the train ride annually. About 90 per cent of those are from Alberta.

"Every time we do a function in Alberta, no matter where it is, there's at least 10 or 20 people in the audience who have seen us before," he said.

Their Innisfail performance is dubbed the 100 Years of Music and Hillbilly Show.

It draws on two of their best known acts.

From cornball comedy to tracking tunes that reflect the shifting styles of the 20th century, the show brims with flat-out fun and variety.

Not surprisingly, it was music that brought the couple, both from Central Alberta, together in the first place.

Deborah's father had a band called The Orange Blossom Special.

"They needed a bass player," chuckles Richard.

A unique collaboration was born.

"We have such common interests. We get along really well—we're together all the time."

Besides his wife, Richard counts the late Keith Mann, a former high school band director, as one of his most significant musical influences.

"He was always so enthusiastic," he says of Mann who founded the Red Deer Royals.

"He was always encouraging students to get involved."

After college, Richard toured with Peter Kingsmill and the Canadian Kings of Country Swing.

Deborah got an early start in the biz herself.

By the time she was 14, she was already singing in her dad's band.

She also enjoys working as a studio musician and as well, performing classical solo's from works such as Handel's Messiah.

When they aren't working, the couple enjoy their country estate and theatre site near Red Deer. "They say people need balance in their lives."

They're the proud parents of four daughters, all of whom have musical lives.

One of the highlights in this busy couple's life is performing together with their daughters, otherwise known as the Popovich Family Singers.

All in all, this couple has a very "entertaining" life!

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INNISFAIL LOVES THE POPOVICHS

The Innisfail Province - Submitted by LaRetta Gardner

One thing is for sure - Richard and Deborah Popovich can draw a crowd, and more than just one! Well, they did just that over the weekend, 2 days in a row to a sellout crowd with their show "100 Years of Music" and Hillbilly Show at the Historic Century Theatre. Of course, as the title of the show implies, we were treated to a variety of music spanning the past 100 years. We got so much more than that however. I know that many of you have seen this couple perform before, but this was my first time and I was delighted to discover this lively team. What a pair! Richard with his gorgeous handlebar moustache, (a hefty yank from an audience member tells us it's real), and Deborah in her delightful flapper outfit start us out with some tunes from the 20's, and then some quick costume changes take us into the 30's and 40's.

These nostalgic songs are the soundtrack to the lives of many people in our community, and you could sense the real feeling of appreciation for the Popovich's production. We heard songs like "Ain't She Sweet", "When You're Smiling", and "Margie".

The appreciation isn't only for the music and costumes however, there is some great interaction with the audience in a style that is very "Las Vegas". Some of us were very glad we had not chosen the front row seats, but the audience seemed quite willing and appeared to enjoy their "volunteer" participation.

The 40's brought us the big band era with such greats as the Glenn Miller Orchestra and the Andrew Sisters. Richard and Deborah move on to the 50's, 60's and 70's and right on up to now. The Elvis segment is particularly entertaining, as is the Sonny and Cher bit (guess which one of this pair dresses up as Cher, well let's just say it isn't Deborah!). The second half of the show is just as lively, but concentrates on country music ranging from the Hillbilly's to Willie Nelson.. Richard must have some authentic mountain man in his genes, because he makes one heck of a hillbilly! In this country session, we hear Hank Snow, Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline, Eddy Arnold, Johnny Cash, June Carter and more.

One of the most enjoyable parts of this production is the comedy impressions. Here we see a really good version of Victor Borge's bit, Willie Nelson and even Innisfail's own Jack Daines.

At any rate, one thing is transparently obvious, Innisfail loves the Popovichs!

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VARIETY SHOW

100 Years of Music

**Hilarious! Energetic!
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This is what you'll hear about Richard & Deborah's "Variety Show".

This "Las Vegas" style entertainment package is a fast paced show which spans "100 years of Music".



You'll be kept in "stitches" with Richard and Deborah's multiple costume changes and comedic impressions of Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash & June Carter, Sonny & Cher, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and more!



Whether you're 9 or 99, you won't want to miss this "hilarious" show!

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ROARING 20's SHOW



**Nostalgic
Period Show**



Here is a very entertaining and energetic period show patterned after the famous 1920's era, otherwise known as the "Roaring 20's".

Flat top "skimmer" hats fringes, feathers and beads were all the rage! This show includes "slapstick comedy" and famous songs from the 1920's, 30's & 40's.

ALL ABOARD!

Richard & Deborah are well known for their "Roaring 20's" shows on the remarkable "Award Winning Steam Train" at Stettler, AB.

Richard & Deborah have been delighting steam train audiences with their own special brand of humor & music ever since "Alberta Prairie Railway" was formed in 1990.



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I'VE BEEN EVERYWHERE**



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WESTERN SHOW

Cowboy Songs & Clean Humor!



This is a "sure-fire" show certain to please the Western audience!

You won't find Richard on stage without



his "wise-cracking" humour, so saddle up and prepare to sit back, relax, and be entertained by Richard & Deborah's wit and musical stylings of yesteryear.

For bookings & more information about any of Richard & Deborah's shows, and/or their "Patio Theatre", Call Toll-Free 1-888-856-9282 Visit Richard & Deborah's website at: www.RichardandDeborah.com