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SOUNDS FROM THE  
**SONGBOOK**

Country Music Star Suzy Bogguss Brings  
A Folk Music Lesson To WJ Ranch Sept. 8

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FORDYCE, Neb. — When country star Suzy Bogguss performed with “Prairie Home Companion” host Garrison Keillor in 2008, she discovered one disturbing thing about most of the audiences.

“At intermission, Garrison would get everyone to stand up and start singing. You couldn’t imagine it. People were really enjoying themselves,” she told the *Press & Dakotan* in a phone interview. “I loved having them sing along, but everyone (age) 30 or younger didn’t know any of the words to folk songs.”

Bogguss was particularly troubled to see younger audience members didn’t know American classics such as “Shenandoah” or “Red River Valley.” She felt a pressing need to preserve the music — which she considered the scrapbook of America’s experiences — for future generations.

“I needed at least to pass it on to my own family,” she said.

She launched an effort to produce the songs with an updated yet reverent style that would appeal to today’s audiences. The compact disc and companion “American Folk Songbook” were released nationally in 2011.

And now, the folk music — along with her country hits — form the foundation for her current tour. The 120-day road trip includes a Sept. 8 performance at the WJ Ranch, seven miles south of Yankton just off U.S. Highway 81.

The show starts at 8 p.m., and doors open at 7 p.m. Bogguss will perform two 45-minute sets with a short intermission. She is joined on the current 80-show tour by Pat Bergeson on guitar and harmonica and Charlie Chadwick on upright bass.

The audience is in for a real treat, predicted Jan Schiferl, who operates the WJ Ranch with her husband, Greg. The Schiferls have become known for booking concerts in their horse arena, converted into a concert venue.

“This is our ninth concert event, and we have been blessed. Everybody that we have worked with has been over-the-top cool. Suzy is going to be right up there,” Schiferl said. “It’s been real fun working with her. I think the crowd will like her for sure, and it will be great. I am really looking forward to it.”

Schiferl has remained a Bogguss fan for years, keeping the performer on a list of desired acts at the ranch.

“I perform with the group Sweetwater, and we have done some of Suzy’s songs. I enjoy her a lot and really wish I could sing like her,” Schiferl said. “When I heard that she was doing the folk album, I knew that it would be a perfect fit for us. Now, it’s like, ‘Wow! This (local concert) has come to fruition.’”

**HELLO, DOLLY!**

Bogguss graduated in 1980 from Illinois State University with a degree in metalsmithing and still enjoys creating jewelry for Christmas presents and other uses. She started her musical career while still in col-

lege, playing coffeehouses and becoming a regular on the club circuit before touring the United States.

Bogguss received a major break in 1986 as the first featured female performer at Dollywood, a theme park owned by country music legend Dolly Parton. Bogguss produced a cassette that she sold at her Dollywood shows. At the time, Bogguss met future husband Doug Crider, who wrote one of the songs on the cassette. The demo caught the attention of record label executive Jim Foglesong, who offered her a recording contract.

“Dolly was great. She really didn’t force anything on you. Here I was at the theme park, and she let me choose every song that we put on my show,” Bogguss said. “She very much encouraged us to use our own material. I showcased all different types of songs.”

Bogguss credits Parton not only with offering her a major break but also serving as a friend and mentor. Parton even provided Dollywood’s benches and flowers for Bogguss’ wedding.

Bogguss’ career took off, scoring platinum album sales along with Grammy and Country Music Association (CMA) awards. Now, she has added the release of her “American Folk Songbook.” The 96-page songbook includes the words and a history of each folk classic.

Bogguss credits Keillor, himself a symbol of Americana, with inspiring her folk music effort.

“I toured with Garrison, and we did 21 shows in 25 days. It was pretty crazy, and he tailored every show to each vicinity. Every day, there was rehearsal because there were different words for the songs,” she said. “Garrison doesn’t sleep much. He’s a really hard-working guy that I love to be with. On tour, he might sleep four hours. He is constantly working.”

The sing-alongs with the audiences at intermission provided an special connection with fans, Bogguss said.

“Audiences in the (United Kingdom), especially Ireland and Scotland, belted it out. They were having a great time and loved to sing along,” she said. “In the (United) States, people were a little more reserved. They thought it was impolite (to sing out), but I loved



Country music star Suzy Bogguss will delve into the America’s musical folklore when she performs at WJ Ranch south of Yankton on Sept. 8. (Courtesy Photo)

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