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*Dramatic Publishing*

# CROSSROADS

A Musical Comedy

Book, music and lyrics  
by  
ROBERT INMAN

Musical arrangements  
by  
William Harbinson



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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This play is dedicated to the memory of  
Nell Bancroft Cooper,  
who gave me the gift of music.

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### IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the Musical *must* give credit to the Author/Composer/Lyricist of the Musical in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Musical and in all instances in which the title of the Musical appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Musical and/or a production. The name of the Author/Composer/Lyricist *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than 50% the size of the title type. Biographical information on the Author/Composer/Lyricist, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

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“Originally produced at the Blowing Rock Stage Company,  
Kenneth Kay, Producing Artistic Director.”

In addition, the following must be inserted in all programs in 8-point type:

“Special thanks to Kathleen Mock Craver for sharing her memories of life at Reeds Cross Roads, North Carolina, in the early part of the Twentieth Century.”

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

In October 1904, a train carrying Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show collided with another near Salisbury, North Carolina. There were no serious injuries, but many of the show's horses (including Buffalo Bill's favorite) were killed and props and equipment were destroyed.

From this point, fantasy takes over. I have moved the event to 1914 (the Wild West Show was still in operation then) and imagined the impact of such a calamity on the life of one family in a quiet rural crossroads community.

Why 1914? It was an era of profound change in America. The automobile was already dissolving distances, there was a growing culture clash between rural and urban values, and World War I was beginning. We were, in short, at a crossroads—on the verge of losing our innocence.

The Wild West Show was a vestige of the nation's past—a paean to our romantic notions of the settlement of the last frontier and the popular image of the show's founder, Colonel William F. Cody. It was an extravaganza of heroic proportions: imagine a combination of "Gunsmoke" and the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus, complete with re-enactments of buffalo hunts, stagecoach robberies and skirmishes with Indian war parties. When the show finally folded in 1917, it had performed before audiences worldwide and had captured the popular imagination.

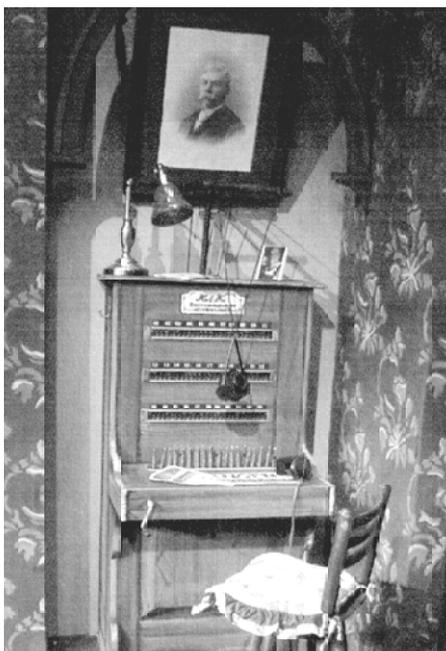
All stories are about people, and all people have dreams, which in this case are re-awakened by a twist of fate. One hopes that *Crossroads* audiences will be reminded of their own dreams. Does anybody's dream come true? Yes, if you give it heart and hand.

*Crossroads* owes a great debt to several people. There is first of all my grandmother, Nell Cooper, to whom I dedicate the play. She taught me, at a tender age, to play the piano (after a fashion)—and more importantly, gave me an appreciation for the power of music to challenge and inspire. Director/producer Kenneth Kay, actor/teacher Ed Pilkington, and arranger William Harbinson nurtured me through the writing and composing experience. And my family put up with me during the process.

A few notes which may assist in production and performance:

1. The action takes place entirely in the parlor of the Potter home, which serves as family residence, boardinghouse, doctor's office and telephone exchange.

2. It is not necessary for cast members to be able to play the piano. The piano used onstage in Act Two by Miss Eva, Nell and the Cowboy is a prop. Actual playing is done by the ensemble pianist.



3. The switchboard is a period contraption of cords, receptacles and lights. Whenever the switchboard rings, a light comes on above the receptacle of the calling party. When the operator plugs in a cord to answer the call, the ringing stops, but the light stays on until the call is completed and the operator unplugs. In the sequence involving Nell's disastrous attempt to operate the switchboard, the ringing sound is constant despite her attempts to stop it, many lights come on and begin flashing, and the more cords Nell plugs in, the more the switchboard goes haywire. Finally, every

light is flashing, the ringing continues unabated, and smoke begins to pour from the top of the switchboard.

4. The musical number "Falling in Love in a Song" begins in an up-tempo, lilting, whimsical vein and, by turns, becomes serious. Of course, Fargo and Lavinia sing, it's impossible to fall in love in a song. But right before our eyes, they do.

5. I prefer, but do not require, that the role of Lomax be played by an African-American actor.

*Crossroads* premiered at Blowing Rock Stage Company, a professional theatre in Blowing Rock, N.C., on June 12, 2003, directed by Kenneth Kay, arrangements and musical direction by William Harbinson, scenic design by Lyle Baskin, sound design by Gary Lee Smith, costume design by Sue Williams, lighting design by Dan Mathews, stage management by Lisa Lamont, technical direction by Tim Billman, choreography by Anita Miller. The original cast was:

MISS EVA . . . . . Viki Boyle  
GRANDPA . . . . . Ed Pilkington  
LAVINIA . . . . . Kim Cozort Kay  
THE COWBOY . . . . . Douglas Kampsen  
NELL . . . . . Channing Franks  
LOMAX . . . . . Reggie Whitehead

# CROSSROADS

A Musical in Two Acts

## CHARACTERS

MISS EVA . . . . . widow of a country doctor,  
practicing medicine without a license  
NELL. . . . . her imaginative and restless teenage daughter  
GRANDPA . . . . Miss Eva's father, a crusty retired hellfire  
and brimstone minister  
LOMAX . . . . . family handyman with a shady past  
LAVINIA . . . . . schoolteacher and part-time switchboard  
operator  
THE COWBOY . . a mysterious refugee from a train wreck

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

### ACT ONE

1. Six o'Clock in the Morning . . . . Nell, Lavinia, Grandpa
2. A Little Shakin' Up . . . . . Nell
3. Our Boys Will Shine Tonight . . . . . Miss Eva, Lomax
4. Old Grey Bonnett Old Mill Stream . . Miss Eva, Lomax
5. Lemon Meringue . . . . . Miss Eva, Lomax, Nell
6. Crazy for Percy . . . . . Lavinia
7. The Heavenly Telephone Line . . . . . Lomax, Nell,  
Miss Eva, Lavinia
8. Calamity and Commotion . . . . Nell, Lavinia, Miss Eva,  
Grandpa, Lomax
9. I Coulda Been a Cowboy. . . . . Grandpa, Nell, Lomax,  
Cowboy

### ACT TWO

1. Celebration!. . . . . Miss Eva, Lavinia, Nell, Lomax
2. Marry an Older Man . . . . . Lavinia, Nell
3. The Girl I Might Have Been . . . . . Miss Eva
4. Being Buffalo Bill . . . . . Cowboy
5. Jass . . . . . Lomax, Cowboy, Nell, Lavinia
6. Does Anybody's Dream Come True?. . . . . All
7. Falling in Love in a Song. . . . . Lavinia, Cowboy
8. Jass (Reprise) . . . . . Cowboy, Lomax, Nell, Lavinia
9. Celebration! (Reprise). . . . . All

# ACT ONE

*(As the curtain rises, NELL—wearing an apron—is sweeping the porch. The sound of a distant train whistle provokes a wistful look.)*

NELL *(singing “Six O’Clock in the Morning”)*.

**SIX O’CLOCK IN THE MORNING,  
I’VE BEEN UP SINCE THE CRACK OF DAWN;  
ROLLED OUT LOTS OF BISCUIT DOUGH  
AND PUT THE KETTLE ON;  
MOPPED AND SWEEPED AND DUSTED  
’TIL IT SPARKLES LIKE A PIN,  
SO FOLKS CAN TRAIPISE IN ALL DAY LONG  
AND MESS IT UP AGAIN.**

*(LAVINIA is seated at the switchboard, atop which is a framed photograph of a bald, fat, homely man. She takes off her headset, stretches and yawns.)*

LAVINIA *(singing)*.

**SIX O’CLOCK IN THE MORNING  
AND I’M JUST NOW GOING TO BED.  
I’VE BEEN UP ALL NIGHT WITH THE  
SWITCHBOARD;  
I’VE GOT WIRES COMING OUT OF MY HEAD.  
I’M DUE FOR A FEW WINKS OF SHUTEYE,  
A FEW HOURS RESPITE, AND THEN**

**I'LL GET UP AND PUT ON MY HEADSET  
AND DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN.**

*(GRANDPA appears in the window L, leaning on a walking cane and gripping a Bible.)*

GRANDPA *(singing)*

**SIX O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING,  
I'VE BEEN UP SINCE THE BREAK OF DAY  
TO TAKE SOME TIME WITH THE GOOD BOOK,  
MEDITATE AND PRAY.  
I'LL SPEND ALL DAY AT THE CROSSROADS  
SAVING THE WORLD FROM SIN,  
THEN RISE UP ANEW IN THE MORNING  
AND DO IT ALL AGAIN.**

NELL, LAVINIA, GRANDPA.  
**AND DO IT ALL AGAIN.**

*(GRANDPA shuffles slowly across the parlor toward the doorway R. LAVINIA rises wearily from the switchboard as NELL enters the parlor with her broom and gives a few half-hearted swipes at the floor.)*

LAVINIA. Good Lordy, what a night. Every time I tried to get to bed, the switchboard would ring again. Folks calling about a pig loose on Claremont Road, and wanting to know about the Hunts' new baby.

NELL. Ah, the exciting and glamorous life at the Crossroads. A runaway pig and a baby. Why, Miss Lavinia, when folks stay up all night in New York City, it's because they're going to dances at the Ritz and listening to jass music.

LAVINIA. Nell, I'm too tired to listen... (*Starts toward the stairs.*)

NELL. Here at the Crossroads, if you dance or listen to jass you're going to hell.

GRANDPA. Amen! (*GRANDPA exits through the doorway R, LAVINIA up the stairs.*)

NELL (*calling loudly after both of them*). Here at the Crossroads, the flies are dyin' from boredom! (*Singing "A Little Shakin' Up."*)

**IS IT 1914 OR 1814, I CAN'T TELL THE  
DIFFERENCE;  
THINGS ARE PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AS  
THEY HAVE ALWAYS BEEN.  
BABIES BIRTHING, OLD FOLKS DYING, GOIN'  
TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY;  
DOIN' WHAT WE DID BEFORE, THEN DOIN' IT  
ALL AGAIN.**

**WHAT THIS PLACE COULD USE IS A LITTLE  
SHAKIN' UP;  
TURN THE TABLES UPSIDE DOWN, DRINK  
FROM A DIFFERENT CUP.  
TRY A SLICE OF MODERN LIFE, TRY  
SOMEBODY ELSE'S WIFE;  
WHAT THIS PLACE COULD USE IS A LITTLE  
SHAKIN' UP.**

(*Another chorus as NELL dances, using the broom as a partner.*)

**WE COULD STAND SOME RUCKUS, CALAMITY  
AND COMMOTION;  
GIRLS IN ROUGE AND LIPSTICK, PLAYING  
CARDS AND GIN.**

**IT WON'T TAKE MUCH TO SATISFY MY  
CRAVING FOR EXCITEMENT:  
A SMIDGIN OF CORRUPTION, A LITTLE VICE  
AND SIN.**

**OH, WHAT THIS PLACE COULD USE IS A  
LITTLE SHAKIN' UP;  
TURN THE TABLES UPSIDE DOWN, DRINK  
FROM A DIFFERENT CUP.  
ROCK THE BOAT AND MAKE A FUSS,  
FIRE A SHOT FROM YOUR BLUNDERBUSS;  
WHAT THIS PLACE COULD USE IS A LITTLE  
SHAKIN' UP.**

*(NELL does another 4-bar dance.)*

**ROCK THE BOAT AND MAKE A FUSS,  
FIRE A SHOT FROM YOUR BLUNDERBUSS;**

*(NELL fires an imaginary shot, using her broom as a gun, to the accompaniment of a drum crash.)*

**WHAT THIS PLACE COULD USE IS A LITTLE  
SHAKIN' UP.**

*(GRANDPA appears in the doorway R, a napkin tucked in his collar, licking on a wooden spoon. He stops and bursts into prayer.)*

GRANDPA. Dear Lord, we thank you for this new day, even though we know it is another day in a world full of trial and tribulation, pain and pestilence, sin and corruption. Help us, Lord, to bear our afflictions with a minimum of moaning and groaning and to get through the day without yielding to temptation or coming down with diarrhea or heat rash. Amen.

NELL (*with a sigh, indicating GRANDPA*). Instead, that's what we get.

(*GRANDPA exits. From offstage, the sound of MISS EVA and LOMAX...*)

MISS EVA, LOMAX (*singing "Our Boys Will Shine Tonight." Sung a cappella*).

**OUR BOYS WILL SHINE TONIGHT,  
OUR BOYS WILL SHINE;  
THEY'LL SHINE IN BEAUTY BRIGHT  
ALL DOWN THE LINE.**

(*MISS EVA and LOMAX appear on the porch arm in arm as the song continues. MISS EVA has a stethoscope around her neck. Her hair is disheveled, her dress rumpled, her hat drooping, but she maintains an air of spirited good humor. She carries a battered black physician's bag and LOMAX a burlap sack. Music begins, drum only.*)

**THEY'RE ALL DRESSED UP TONIGHT,  
DON'T THEY LOOK FINE.  
WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN  
AND THE MOON COMES UP,  
OUR BOYS WILL SHINE.**

(*LOMAX does a fancy soft-shoe while MISS EVA looks on admiringly.*)

MISS EVA.

**YAH-TAH-TA-TAH-TA-TAH,  
YAH-TAH-TA-TAH**

**YAH-TAH-TAH-TAH-TA-TAH,  
YAH-TAH-TAH-TAH.  
YAH-TAH-TA-TAH-TA-TAH,  
YAH-TAH-TAH-TAH,  
YAH-TA-TAH-TAH-TAH,  
YAH-TA-TAH-TAH-TAH,  
YAH-TAH-TA-TAH.**

*(MISS EVA opens the front door and leads a two-person parade into the parlor. GRANDPA enters—this time without the spoon, but with the napkin still tucked in his collar. He looks on sourly.)*

MISS EVA, LOMAX.

**THEY'RE ALL DRESSED UP TONIGHT,  
DON'T THEY LOOK FINE;  
WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN  
AND THE MOON COMES UP,  
OUR BOYS WILL SHINE.**

NELL. For folks who've stayed out all night, y'all sure are mighty chipper.

*(GRANDPA makes slow progress toward his rocking chair.)*

GRANDPA. For folks coming in at six o'clock in the morning, you sure are making a lot of racket.

MISS EVA. Daddy, Lomax and I have been singing to stay awake on the ride home.

LOMAX. All the old songs me and Doctor Charlie used to sing when we were riding around together in the middle of the night tending to folks.

MISS EVA (*singing*).

**PUT ON YOUR OLD GREY BONNET**

MISS EVA, LOMAX.

**WITH THE BLUE RIBBON ON IT,  
AND HITCH OLD DOBBIN TO THE SHAY...**

LOMAX. ...and... (*Singing.*)

**DOWN BY THE...**

LOMAX, MISS EVA.

**...OLD MILL STREAM  
WHERE I FIRST MET YOU...**

NELL. That was Papa's favorite. I can just hear him now.

LOMAX. Lordy, I hope not. The doctor's voice was so off-key, he could make the radiator boil over.

GRANDPA. Don't you know any hymns?

LOMAX. Of course we do, Reverend, but lots of those hymns'll put you to sleep. One night we tried "Lead Kindly Light" and almost ended up in the ditch.

*(MISS EVA hangs her hat and coat on a rack and takes the black bag to the medicine cabinet.)*

MISS EVA (*to LOMAX*). I don't know how I'd make it without you doing the driving and leading the singing.

NELL. You've got a fine voice and happy feet, Lomax. You ought to be on stage. "Lomax and the Rhythm Kings." Talk about a glamorous life...

LOMAX. Hah! There ain't nothing glamorous about being on stage.

NELL. How do you know? Have you ever been on stage?

LOMAX. Well...

MISS EVA. Nell, don't pry into other folks' business.

LOMAX. Thank you, Miss Eva. Besides, if I was on stage, I wouldn't be here. What would you folks do without me?

*(GRANDPA has finally reached the chair and is circling it warily, making unsuccessful attempts to sit down.)*

GRANDPA. Believe me, we'd do just fine.

LOMAX *(watching GRANDPA)*. Speaking of happy feet...

*(He puts down the sack and takes GRANDPA's arm.)*

GRANDPA. I can do it by myself.

LOMAX. Why, of course you can. You're a regular streak of greased lightning. *(He helps GRANDPA ease down into the chair.)* Now, anything else I can do for you?

GRANDPA. Check on me in an hour and see if I've passed away.

NELL. Grandpa, if you were as old as you act, you'd be a candidate for mummification.

GRANDPA. I *am* old. I spend half my time trying to remember folks' names and the other half going to the bathroom.

LOMAX *(picking up the sack)*. What do you want me to do with these potatoes, Miss Eva?

MISS EVA. Just set 'em out there on the porch for now.

*(LOMAX takes the broom from NELL and exits to the porch. He sets the sack on the bench beneath the window L, then finishes NELL's sweeping. MISS EVA takes*

*the napkin from GRANDPA's collar and dabs at his mouth.)*

MISS EVA. Daddy, I wish you'd stop being so grouchy with Lomax. One of these days he's going to get fed up with it and leave.

GRANDPA. Yeah. One day he'll disappear into thin air. Just like he appeared out of thin air, hat in hand, looking for work. Two years, and we still don't know a dad-blamed thing about him. He could be an escaped murderer. Or worse...an actor!

*(LOMAX listens from the porch.)*

MISS EVA. Well, whoever he used to be, right now, he's the most indispensable person around here. The place would fall apart without him. Especially since we lost Charlie.

NELL. Papa was pretty good at sizing up people, and he always said Lomax was a fine fellow. In fact, he said Lomax was one of the best friends he ever had.

*(LOMAX grins and takes a bow.)*

MISS EVA. And he's the soul of goodness, putting up with your grumbling.

GRANDPA. Humph!

*(GRANDPA opens his Bible and begins to read to himself. LOMAX enters from the porch, picks up a dustcloth, and goes to work on the furniture.)*

MISS EVA. Nell, is breakfast ready?

NELL. Almost, Mama. I'm just letting the grits simmer.  
(*MISS EVA yawns broadly.*) And after you eat, you should take a nap.

MISS EVA. No time for a nap, I'm afraid. I need to start my morning rounds.

NELL. Oh, by the way, Cousin Chauncey came over last night, not long after you and Lomax left. He wants you to drop by this morning.

MISS EVA (*indicating the switchboard*). Why on earth didn't he just call?

NELL. He says talking on the telephone will scramble your brains.

GRANDPA. Amen to that!

NELL. He says having a telephone in the house was Minerva's idea. Anyway, Minerva's having more female trouble. Nothing life-threatening, but he wants you to look in on her.

MISS EVA. Minerva's female trouble *is* Chauncey. Half the time, she can't find him, and the other half, she wishes she hadn't. Is Lavinia up yet?

NELL. She's just now gone to bed. The switchboard kept her up all night. Lots of the calls were about the Hunts' baby.

MISS EVA. Another little girl.

NELL. Good golly. How many is that?

MISS EVA. Nine.

LOMAX. They've run out of girls' names, so they asked Miss Eva to come up with one.

MISS EVA. I wrote "Patience" on the birth certificate...

LOMAX. ...because she took all night getting here.