



CLARA THOMAS ARCHIVES

**Inventory of the
Abbott-Ferguson Productions Ltd. fonds**

Inventory #F0554

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F0554 - Abbott-Ferguson Productions Ltd. fonds

Fonds/Collection Number: F0554**Title:** Abbott-Ferguson Productions Ltd. fonds**Dates:** ca. 1970-2012, predominant 1973-2012

Extent: ca. 48 m of textual records
 ca. 21700 photographs
 ca. 6745 negatives
 ca. 435 contact sheets
 ca. 952 slides
 69 VHS videocassettes
 467 Digibeta videocassettes
 64 Betacam videocassettes
 6 DVDs
 71 HDCAM videocassettes
 112 compact discs
 899 audio reels
 6 audio cassettes
 12 video reels
 14 U-matic videocassettes
 1 external hard drive : 109GB
 ca. 122 objects
 9 audio compact discs
 17 rolls of negatives
 1 optical disc
 3 PFD optical discs

**Biographical Sketch/
 Administrative History:** Abbott-Ferguson Productions Ltd. was established in the late 1970s by Roger Abbott and Don Ferguson, two of the principals of the Royal Canadian Air Farce comedy troupe. Together they acquired a 55% stake in Air Farce Productions Inc. which had been incorporated in 1978 to formally establish the ownership and management of the creative work of the group. During the 1990s Abbott-Ferguson Productions subsequently bought out the shares from other troupe members and co-owners Dave Broadfoot, Luba Goy, and John Morgan, becoming the sole owner of Royal Canadian Air Farce and its creative properties. After the death of Roger Abbott in 2011, Don Ferguson became the sole owner of Abbott-Ferguson Productions, and by extension, of Air Farce. Abbott-Ferguson Productions Ltd. remains active as of 2020. Until 2008, the primary focus of Abbott-Ferguson Productions was on the development, production, and delivery of Royal Canadian Air Farce radio and television programmes, as well as national concert tours; live stage productions; books; and home audio and video releases. The roots of Royal Canadian Air Farce exist in the improvisational theatre revue The Jest Society. Established in Montreal in 1970, The Jest Society took its name from then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's goal of making Canada a "just society." The original cast included co-founders John Morgan and Martin Bronstein, as well as Patrick Conlon, Gay Claitman, and Roger Abbott. Don Ferguson joined the group when it moved to Toronto in the fall of 1970. Patrick Conlon and Gay Claitman chose not to move and remained in Montreal. Luba Goy joined in January 1971. Favourable reviews caught the attention of CBC Radio, which engaged the group to perform on its weekly variety show The Entertainers. The group renamed itself Royal Canadian Air Farce in 1973 with the performing ensemble comprised of Roger Abbott, Luba Goy, John Morgan, Dave Broadfoot, and Martin Bronstein; Don Ferguson was one of the show writers. In 1974, Bronstein stepped away from performing to concentrate on writing and other interests, and Ferguson became a writer-performer. In 1977, Gord Holtan and Rick Olsen joined the group as apprentice writers. The Royal Canadian Air Farce radio shows were broadcast on CBC Radio from 1973-1997. This longevity marks their success in attracting and keeping a strong national audience with their satirical sketches skewering the cultural and political events of the day. Taped in front of a live audience, the shows were first recorded at the Curtain Club in Richmond Hill, Ontario, and then subsequently at the CBC's Cabbagetown Studios on Parliament Street in downtown Toronto. From 1984-1992, the troupe began touring across the country to record their weekly broadcasts, tailoring

sketches to the local audience. Attempts at television during this time were unsuccessful as the medium was unable to accommodate the troupe's need for its topical content to be broadcast as soon as possible after recording. A one hour television special was broadcast on CBC in 1980, leading to a ten week series that was aborted by a CBC strike, and two subsequent specials on the network. In 1984, a live Toronto stage show was recorded and subsequently broadcast on Global television. A critical development occurred in 1991-92 when CBC consolidated its Toronto operations in downtown Toronto. The new Canadian Broadcasting Centre housed an extensive collection of costumes, a large wardrobe department, hair and make-up departments, and contained full carpentry and paint shops. The quick turnaround from script to broadcast enabled by this development led to 1992: Year of the Farce, which was televised as a satirical New Year's Eve special to such great ratings success that the troupe was able to begin its long run as CBC Television's highest rated weekly television series. The series ran from October 1993 until the end of December 2008. The radio and television programs ran concurrently until May 1997 when the radio show was discontinued in order to focus completely on television. Making the transition to the television series as performers were Roger Abbott, Don Ferguson, Luba Goy, and John Morgan. Dave Broadfoot retired from the cast in 1989 to pursue a solo career but, as a respected colleague and mentor, he made regular special guest appearances on the television series for many years including the final regular broadcast in 2008; Broadfoot passed away in 2016. Morgan retired from Air Farce in 2001, and the regular troupe was joined by many guest stars, some of whom subsequently became regulars. New cast members included Jessica Holmes, Alan Park, Craig Lauzon, and Penelope Corrin. The fifteenth season of the series was aired live under a new name, Air Farce Live, in 2007-2008. The final half-season ran from October until December 2008, and returned to the previous production schedule, which saw the show recorded in front of a live audience on Thursday evenings for broadcast on Friday. From 2009 until 2019 Air Farce reunited to perform its very highly rated New Year's Eve special broadcasts with a mix of performers. John Morgan passed away in 2004, and Roger Abbott remained with the troupe until his death in 2011. Long-time show writers Gord Holtam and Rick Olsen retired at the end of the 2008 season. Over the years Air Farce and its cast were recognized with many awards including the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement (Broadcasting) in 1998; a star on Canada's Walk of Fame in 2000; a Juno Award for Comedy Album of the Year in 1979; and the Earle Grey Award for lifetime achievement in Canadian television in 2000 as well as twice winning the viewer-voted People's Choice Award for favourite television program. The cast were the first Canadians inducted into the International Humour Hall of Fame in 1992, and were inducted into the Canadian Comedy Hall of Fame in 2001. In addition, cast members have been the recipients of multiple ACTRA awards. Other television projects produced by Abbott-Ferguson Productions include: three solo television specials performed by Air Farce mentor Dave Broadfoot; SketchCom, a series developed to showcase promising new comedians and comedy troupes; and XPM, a two-episode sitcom about a former Prime Minister starring Don Ferguson, Dave Broadfoot, Kathy Greenwood, and Jessica Holmes. In addition, Abbott-Ferguson Productions has been involved in developing and producing various comedy-related projects such as CBC Radio's comedy archive show, Comedy Classics, and other programs.

Scope and Content: The fonds is comprehensive and extensive in scope, and documents both the creative and business aspects of Abbott-Ferguson Productions. Records include scripts and production files for both the radio and television shows; show logs; sound and video recordings; photographs; press and publicity; business correspondence; audience correspondence; contracts and other legal documentation; memorabilia; and research files including for ratings and audience research. The fonds has been arranged into the following series:

S00613	The Jest Society
S00614	Air Farce - radio - scripts and production files
S00615	Air Farce - television - scripts and production files
S00616	Air Farce - A/V recordings

F0554 - Abbott-Ferguson Productions Ltd. fonds

S00617	Air Farce - sound recordings
S00618	Air Farce - hair and makeup photos
S00619	Air Farce - wardrobe photos
S00620	Air Farce - set design
S00621	Air Farce - gigs
S00622	Air Farce - publicity and press, including photos
S00623	Air Farce - business and legal files
S00624	Air Farce - audience mail
S00625	Air Farce - memorabilia and merchandise
S00626	Air Farce - miscellaneous files
S00627	Dave Broadfoot productions
S00628	Non-Air Farce - XPM
S00629	SketchCom productions
S00630	Air Farce - ratings and audience research
S00687	Johnny Chase files
S00688	Non-Air Farce - miscellaneous files

Restrictions on Access and Use: Some restrictions on access apply. See series descriptions for details. Some restrictions on reproduction and/or publication apply. In general, creative rights rest with Abbott-Ferguson Productions or the writers while broadcast rights rest with CBC.

Finding Aid: Series-level descriptions with corresponding file lists are complete at this time. Individual accession file lists are available separately; see accruals note.

URL of Finding Aid: <http://archivesfa.library.yorku.ca/fonds/ON00370-f0000554.htm>

Accruals: The fonds comprises the following accessions: 2009-015, 2009-020, 2011-029, 2011-035, 2011-036, 2011-043, 2012-005, 2012-012, 2012-021, 2012-025, 2012-026, 2012-036, 2012-051. Further accruals are expected.

Related Records: Related records may be found in the Dave Broadfoot fonds, F530.

Immediate source of acquisition: Donated by Roger Abbott or his estate, and Don Ferguson in 2009, 2011, and 2012.

Subject Access Points: Royal Canadian Air Farce (Comedy group)
Abbott, Roger (1946-2011)
Ferguson, Don (1946-
Morgan, John (1930-2004)
Broadfoot, Dave (1925-2016)
Goy, Luba
Holtam, Gord
Olsen, Rick

Provenance Access Points: Abbott-Ferguson Productions
Air Farce Productions