



LEILA NAVIDI • leila.navidi@startribune.com
Garrison Keillor read the "News from Lake Wobegon" during a live "Prairie Home" broadcast in Nashville, Tenn., in 2016.

MPR, Keillor both take a hit

• **KEILLOR** from BI
not so rosy. "I've been going through my memoir and removing Minnesota Public Radio from it," he wrote in a post he later deleted. "I never went to work there in 1969, never did a morning show, and Prairie Home Companion simply existed without any organization. Removing MPR makes room for other happier things and if I never worked for them, they can't fire me."

A book updated to include details of his downfall could end up being a bestseller. But sales of anything else with Keillor's name on the spine may suffer.

"I can't help but think it's going to affect his future as an author," said Claire Kirch, a senior correspondent for Publishers Weekly. "There are just too many questions about what exactly happened."

Bill O'Reilly, fired from Fox News after numerous sexual allegations, has kept his name on the bestsellers list. But "Killing England," his first book since his ouster, moved 64,723 copies in its first week, far below the 100,000-plus heights achieved by his previous five "Killing" titles.

But loyal fans are probably more concerned about Keillor's emotional state.

"I am so sorry. I am a wreck," he said Thursday in response to a Facebook

posting from a woman disappointed that a performance had been canceled. "I could not imagine walking onto a stage with people watching. It's heart-breaking and I worry about my family and it's painful to walk through an airport and people look and whisper and don't speak to me. I need to put my life back together."

If Keillor comes across as a victim, it's largely because the public has heard only his side of the story. "I put my hand on a woman's bare back," he said in an e-mail to the Star Tribune Wednesday. "I meant to pat her back after she told me about her unhappiness and her shirt was open and my hand went up it about six inches. She recoiled. I sent her an e-mail of apology later and she replied that she had forgiven me and not to think about it. We were friends. We continued to be friendly right up until her lawyer called."

MPR has declined to offer an alternative version of events or to make its top executives available for interviews, leaving some to believe the punishment outweighed the crime.

On social media and elsewhere, longtime MPR supporters are expressing confusion or anger. As of late Thursday afternoon, the network had received 153 cancellation requests from its 133,000 members, according to MPR News.

Jackie Quiram, a listener from Chicago City, called the decision a disservice to Minnesota. "I think they're hurting all of us by throwing him under the bus," she said. "This could be a knee-jerk reaction, but if I won the lottery tomorrow, they wouldn't be on my list."

A few voices support for the decision. "I'll be contributing to MPR for the first time in many years because of this decision," wrote one commenter on MPR News' Facebook page.

MPR's director of communications, Angie Andresen, said Friday that her organization would like to share more information, but to do so would be a breach of confidentiality that might deter potential victims or witnesses of abuse from coming forward. "We understand that some listeners are upset," she said. "We've also heard from listeners and members who appreciate the decision and understand the importance of confidentiality."

As part of the divorce from its marquee figure, MPR has canceled Keillor's daily feature "The Writer's Almanac" and will no longer offer rebroadcasts of "Prairie Home." That program, for the moment at least, is being called "The Show With Chris Thile" — putting even more weight on Keillor's hand-picked replacement.

Georgia Public Radio vice

president Tanya Ott hopes her audience will understand the changes. "I'm personally excited about the opportunity this provides Chris to really brand and reshape the show in a way that will allow it to grow audience and reflect a diversity of perspective that is so valuable in these times."

George John, a marketing professor at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management, predicts that MPR will be just fine. "It's a short, sharp negative thing and people come out of it," he said. "It's not a heavy stone around your neck that you drag around for years." John said he's even optimistic that NBC's "Today" show will recover from its ouster of co-host Matt Lauer last week over what appear to be more serious allegations.

"These transitions are not as hard as we think, even when it's people at the top, provided whatever bad action has been rectified," he said. Keillor "is an individual. Individuals do all kinds of stuff. You don't normally hold the organization responsible for an act of an individual. He's not even the CEO. He's a talent. They can seal it off and they can recover from it."

612-673-7431 • @nealjdaher
Staff writer Jackie Crosby contributed to this report.

Thile addresses scandal around his 'Prairie' predecessor

By NATALIE DAHER and NEAL JUSTIN
Star Tribune

NEW YORK — Tradition fell by the wayside on the Saturday edition of what was formerly known as "A Prairie Home Companion." The live broadcast from Town Hall in New York City started with host Chris Thile abandoning the traditional theme song, "Tishomping Blues" ("There that old piano...") with lyrics by Garrison Keillor. Instead, Thile expressed his heartbreak over news that Keillor, the legendary broadcaster

who hand-picked him to take his place last year, had been dropped from Minnesota Public Radio earlier this week after allegations of inappropriate behavior.

He told the audience that the show would continue to be a "respite from weekly troubles," and then launched into the bluegrass number "Radio Boogie," and into the show.

Sexual harassment is an exploding conversation in



Thile

America, and the rows and lobbies of any American theater are no different.

"I was a little apprehensive about how it was going to be handled," said Hope Gariand, 55, a teaching artist who lives in New York City. "I was hoping there was going to be some acknowledgment... I think it was really important for [Thile] to say something."

"I'm glad he mentioned it," said Veronica Tjoe, 28, of New York. "I'm glad he called it 'progress.'"

The monologue was short and sweet, which some audience members appreciated.

"It was kind of understated," said Hank Feder, 68, a retired teacher in New York. "He didn't make a big deal about the whole thing. He said enough."

"Sometimes, the show can't go on!" eternal optimist Thile joked at one point in the show.

But sometimes it can. Despite the week's bad news, at Town Hall on Saturday, it appeared that Thile and many in the audience had already moved on.

Natalie Daher • @NatalieDaher7
Neal Justin • 612-673-7431