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Keillor's World is falling apart

The World Theater in downtown St. Paul has been closed temporarily, and the "Prairie Home Companion" radio show has been moved, temporarily, to the St. Paul Orpheum. Today's 5 p.m. show, hosted by Garrison Keillor, will be held at the Orpheum.

Minnesota Public Radio (MPR), which owns the World Theater, closed it after an inspection showed that the ceiling was unsafe. MPR officials were told it was dangerous to allow people to sit in the auditorium.

The culprit is falling ceiling plaster, according to Cathy DeMoll, MPR's director of public relations. Unusually large chunks of plaster began

falling during last Saturday's "Prairie Home Companion" show, DeMoll said, and officials decided to have an architect inspect it.

Plaster had been falling from the ceiling backstage for some time, she said.

MPR bought the theater in 1978, knowing it needed work, DeMoll said, but the radio station needed a permanent place from which to broadcast its popular Saturday night show. The public radio station had formed a committee to study renovation of the theater, and early estimates had indicated that total renovation would run as high as \$1.5 million. Part of the proceeds from tickets go to the renovation fund.

With no hope of making the ceiling safe in time for tonight's performance, the MPR staff scrambled Friday to find a new place. With the help of the mayor's office, the Orpheum, a former movie theater now closed, was secured. Microwave relay units, phone lines and public address systems were installed and a bathroom was repaired.

The Orpheum, 21 W. 7th St., has 1,700 seats, and the World only 900, so extra seats will be available for tonight's show, DeMoll said. The show is often sold out up to six weeks in advance.

Moving to the Orpheum is only a temporary solution, DeMoll cautioned.