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# Frank Lloyd Wright, Garrison Keillor Seek Unique Solutions

This past week I saw the work of two very different artists. Frank Lloyd Wright and Garrison Keillor may seem, at first glance, to have nothing in common, but I think they do. What I found myself thinking as I watched a PBS program on Wright's famous house at Fallingwater, and again as I watched, enthralled, as Keillor spun his tales at a concert at the Kennedy Center, was, "how did he come up with that idea?"

It is almost a cliché that artists view the world a bit differently from most people, but in Wright and Keillor I see a special talent to go beyond the obvious, to seek out a unique solution, to view the world not through rose-colored glasses, but through glasses of a special tint only they possess.

At the age of 70, Frank Lloyd Wright, the inspired creator of buildings of power and beauty and keen aesthetic sensibilities, was asked to design a summer home in Beaver Run. He listened as the clients told him of their fondness for the wooded land on which they wanted their home built and of the special love they had for a waterfall on their property.

Going against all conventional wisdom which would have located the house facing the waterfall, Wright build the house above the waterfall, integrating it into the terrain and natural setting. By using stones quarried locally and using only those stones, concrete, glass and steel he created a magnificent structure that seems at one with the landscape, has dramatic impact (steps from the living room go down directly to the stream above the waterfall) and is now acknowledged as a masterpiece of architecture.

It wasn't at the time, however. Skeptics insisted it would be struc-

turally unsound and wouldn't last. It has lasted more than 50 years and those skeptics' reports are charmingly buried in the concrete pilings supporting the house!

I'VE ALWAYS been fascinated by architecture and especially by Wright. He conceived a building, he gave it a soul and a persona as though it was a living thing. There is a Frank Lloyd Wright house in Springfield, Ill., where I lived for a year and it was a special kind of quiet joy to go on tours through the house and see an artist's hand at work in the overall concept of his house and in every small detail that made the concept work.

Then, in Kansas City, a folk



## Art Beat

By Davina Grace Hill  
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music organization I worked with held concerts at a Unitarian Church designed by Wright. Although he disowned the building because the owners insisted on painting it white, a color he detested, you could still tangibly feel Wright's creative work in the church. (I like Wright's "disowning" the building: how can one disown a 'thing'? But to Wright his buildings weren't things, they were and are living creations.)

In this church Wright had de-

signed all the entrance ways with extremely low ceilings (at 5 foot, 2 inches I could touch the ceilings!), the walls and ceilings were done in stucco, giving a cave-like feeling. Then, after entering these low and winding passageways, suddenly one came into the sanctuary, a huge cavernous space with extremely high ceilings, windows of irregular shapes allowing in streaming light.

His vision for this building had been the life of early Christians in the grottos and caves who, in his design, literally come into the light. It was a magnificent feeling to be in that building — even if it was disfigured by being painted white.

Frank Lloyd Wright was a brilliant artist for his ability to bring into physical form an idea, for his ability to make tangible a concept and for the talent to see something no one else could. Garrison Keillor's talent lies in his ability to take the obvious, simple facts of life, things we all take for granted and in them see a universal truth.

FANS OF "A Prairie Home Companion" know what I'm referring to. A seemingly simple monologue about Aunt Myrna's lemon meringue pie turns (eventually, after many twists and turns) into a philosophical point about life and whether it is better to savor and anticipate something or if is better to enjoy something immediately because life is short.

The craftsmanship in his monologues is so well-concealed that his point always seems to sneak up on you. The nice bow he puts on the

package, pulling together a great number of seemingly diverse thoughts, is amasing to watch.

It seems to me that Americans crave great storytellers and that there is always one in a generation that stands above the rest. From the stories of Washington Irving to the brilliance of Mark Twain, a rich legacy exists of American tall-tales and Keillor has picked up the mantle for our generation.

To those who have followed "A Prairie Home Companion" and know Keillor's work either through the radio or his books know that Lake Wobegon has become a real place. The Sons of Knute and Bertha's Kitty Boutique and the Hartack Cafe may be mythical but they have also become real in our consciousness. Keillor has taken some of the essential aspects of rural and small town life and from them created the people of Lake Wobegon.

But he has gone beyond that. Through small and special events like entering a county fair baking contest, a young boy riding a school bus, and how a town organizes a Memorial Day celebration, Keillor describes the basic ingredient of American life. From all these small details emerges an overall concept of wholesome American life, the kind of like we all wish existed everywhere.

Large and universal concepts created through intricate and beautiful small details, that is how the beauty and artistic impressions of Garrison Keillor and Frank Lloyd Wright have come about to bring joy to everyone.

Are you one of the 7 out of 8 who have

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