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Do take Keillor seriously; he's an artist

His *Prairie Home Companion* third annual farewell tour airs on the Disney Channel at 8 p.m. today, but Garrison Keillor doesn't think of it as a "TV show."

"I don't see myself as being on TV," Keillor told the nation's TV critics in Los Angeles. "I look into the glass and talk to my aunts, and it becomes a television show."

Quipped Keillor, who, um, is not known for a matinee idol face: "I feel when someone is this good-looking, he's never going to be taken seriously as an artist until he does television."

And does it this well. If you saw the tour during its sold-out performance at Clowes Hall a few months ago, you can attest it's a wonderful evening of music, mirth and monologues in the tradition of the public radio show that started it all.

A camera crew accompanied Keillor and company on the 13-city tour, but today's show is drawn mostly from a performance in Dallas starring Emmy-lou Harris as well as the tour regulars — country/folk duo Robin and Linda Williams, bluegrass artist Kate MacKenzie, keyboardist/arranger Richard Dworsky and those masters of vocal effects, Dan Rowles and Tom Keith.

There are commercials for



Garrison Keillor

Powdermilk Biscuits, the further adventures of Buster the Show Dog and, of course, the latest news from the fictional little Minnesota town of Lake Wobegon in Keillor's monologue.

Keillor has decried his decision to put the last 17 weekly performances and grand finale of *Prairie Home Companion* on television in several interviews, including here in *The Indianapolis Star*. (Specifically, he told

us it "cheaped" the radio show.)

So why does he keep returning to the Disney Channel, with two *PHC* farewell tour shows and a just announced whimsical salute to classical music, *Lake Wobegon Loyalty Days*?

"Cable is the only place for a person like me to do his thing," Keillor said during the satellite interview from New York. "The heart of the show is 20 to 25 minutes of me talking, which any college freshman can tell you is a violation of *Elements of Television 1-A*.

"It goes against the wisdom of the medium. Cable is the only place where the people are paying the bill (for a program) and not the advertisers, so you can get away with doing something different."

The classical salute, *Lake Wobegon Loyalty Days*, doesn't have a scheduled airdate but sounds intriguing. Keillor claimed the meter of the Powdermilk Biscuits commercial fits a piece from the opera *Carmen*, which gave him the idea to tack new lyrics onto compositions by *Carmen* composer Georges Bizet and Antonin Dvorak.

He also adapted one of his essays, *The Young Lutheran's Guide to the Orchestra*, for the TV special. "It's a funny piece," Keillor said. "Members of the Minneapolis Orchestra were actually seen to smile while we were doing it."

These days, Keillor has started writing a novel about a character who gets into Chicago radio in the late '40s and early '50s,

just as the medium is dying and television is a-borning.

Other plans?

"I'm going to have lunch about one o'clock," deadpanned Keillor.

By STEVE HALL
STAR TELEVISION EDITOR

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By KAY GARDELLA
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

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