

# Keillor isn't ready for New York stories yet

Though he's quite at home in the Big Apple, Garrison Keillor hasn't come up with a cast of characters from that milieu.

The venerable host of "Prairie Home Companion" has gone urban in his new radio series, "American Radio Company of the Air," which is broadcast live on Saturdays from the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

"They're (New Yorkers) very different from the people at home, but I don't think I'm ready to tell stories about New York," Keillor said, referring to his native Minnesota, home of mythical Lake Wobegon and its eccentric inhabitants. "I seem to be in some period of confusion, and there's only so many stories one can tell about one's own confusion."

And for Lake Wobegon?

"I want to resume that," he said, "but sooner or later New York will creep up on me."

A seemingly relaxed Keillor talked about his new radio show — which went on the air in November — during a Feb. 1 telephone interview with Keith Ludden, arts producer for Lincoln radio station KUCV. Ludden gave The Star a pre-



Keillor show on Saturday.

Ludden's 15-minute interview with Keillor will air Saturday at 4:45 p.m. on KUCV, 90.9 FM, right before "American

Radio Company" airs from 5 to 7 p.m. The two-hour program features a wide array of American music, including jazz, blues and show music, in addition to monologues, skits and some of Keillor's famed stories.

"American Radio Company" is Keillor's first show since the immensely popular "Prairie Home Companion" went off the air in 1987 after 13 years.

During its heyday, "Prairie Home Companion" had a national audience of 4 million and was carried on about 300 American Public Radio affiliate stations.

Keillor ended "Prairie Home Companion" to live in his wife's native Denmark and to pursue writing. He since has moved to New York and now writes for The New Yorker and The Atlantic magazines.

His reason for doing "American Radio Company" dates back to his childhood.

"I wanted to do the kinds of music that I have an affection for and (that) are not easy to do in Minnesota. A lot of it is black music," he said, including doo wop, a capella gospel and jazz.

"I've liked them since I was a tiny child, when I listened to the radio," he

said.

Regular visitors on the new show include a capella groups, the Broadway Local Radio Theatre with Bob Elliott, Rob Fisher and his Coffee Club Orchestra, jazz pianist Butch Thompson and singers such as Marilyn Horne and Maureen McGovern.

Keillor will take his show on the road this spring, to such locales as Atlanta, Ga.; Memphis, Tenn.; and, he hopes, St. Paul, Minn.

This past fall, he did shows in London and Edinburgh, which were warmly received, he said. "I really liked it. I was amazed. . . . It was mostly material I could've done on American Radio Company — not really topical."

That kind of universal material, Keillor said, "doesn't depend on your knowing current events or having read People magazine lately. It just depends on being able to listen and imagine."

American music gives foreigners a truer picture of our lives, Keillor said. "Music is the most wonderful thing that America exports. TV and movies do nothing but teach foreigners that we are a greedy, violent and immoral people."