

Keillor/Homespun humor hits Salem

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Lake Wobegon. That world drew up to 4 million listeners to *A Prairie Home Companion*, broadcast from St. Paul, Minn., for 13 years.

Three years ago, Keillor quit the show and fled to his wife's native Denmark.

After three months, realizing he would spend the next two years of his life learning to speak Danish, he fled back to the United States and New York. Keillor also has returned to radio — his *American Radio Company of the Air*, which returns in the fall, started last November as a Minnesota Public Radio production.

Keillor loves New York and its crowds, although it's the reverse of Minnesota.

"I like to eavesdrop and walk along the street. New York and Venice are two of the cities where you can live without a car.

"Mine was stolen about two years ago. I was grateful."

Keillor also is happy with his new show, which is less Wobegon and more urban, more structured than improvised and more rock and jazz music than folk.

"It's very different. It was a bold step, a bold step that disappointed a lot of fans.

"Public radio is the only place

where this sort of thing could take place. In public radio, we see the medium itself as of interest."

The radio show is original satire and comedy, featuring big band music, but the Sweet Corn Show is more traditional Keillor.

"It's more like *A Prairie Home Companion*. I'm traveling with Chet Atkins and his band."

Atkins, a legendary guitarist with a 45-year career, frequently appeared on the original radio show.

The Sweet Corn Show, which is on an 18-city tour, features a homespun mixture of music and monologue, with guest folk artists.

Among those artists is another Keillor, Jason.

"My son is traveling with me, which is new. He's a new wave guitarist," Garrison Keillor said, calling himself an old wave humorist by contrast.

The fans have been behind him whatever he has done, even when he fled to Denmark for good and had to scurry back home, Keillor said.

"It is embarrassing to take a wrong turn and change your mind in public."

But he is determined to be human, even if it means forgetting his power cord.

"We're all in this over our heads, everybody; including me."