



File photo

Garrison Keillor of radio's "A Prairie Home Companion" will pack the houses this weekend for a live broadcast of the show and a book-signing.

Keillor is bringing his wit to Madison

He'll do a radio show from the Civic Center and a book-reading at the Orpheum.

By Tom Alesia
Wisconsin State Journal

Folksy storyteller and writer Garrison Keillor — the radio star who . . . talks . . . so . . . slowly . . . but . . . richly — will provoke the kind of frenzy at two Downtown Madison theaters Saturday and Sunday usually reserved for snarling rock acts.

Laid-back to the point you expect him to tip over, Keillor, 59, brings his public radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion," to the Madison Civic Center for a live two-hour national broadcast at 5 p.m. Saturday. More

than 2,300 tickets, including 80 for seating on the stage, were snapped up quicker than it takes someone in Keillor's fictional Lake Wobegon to reach church.

In a separate event, Keillor makes a book-reading appearance at 3 p.m. Sunday in the Orpheum Theatre. It is expected to draw a full house to the grandiose movie house's 1,700-seat auditorium; as of Thursday, only 200 tickets at \$5 each remained.

"He's huge," said Mark Benno, general manager of Canterbury Booksellers Inn, which sponsors Sunday's Keillor event. "He taps into Midwestern humor and values. He's striking a very wry

Please see **KEILLOR**, Page B2

Keillor

Continued from Page B1

chord, and people respond to that."

"Prairie Home's" broadcast, airing live on WHA-AM (970) and WERN-FM (88.7), will feature two Madison musical acts: folk humorists Lou and Peter Berryman and traditional bluegrass band Nob Hill Boys.

A five-member band whose members' day jobs range from cook to computer technician, the Nob Hill Boys will get their first national exposure on the show.

"We've played regionally all over the Midwest," said singer and mandolin player John Fabke. "But this is our big break."

A former housemate of Fabke's helped the Nob Hill Boys attract the attention of a "Prairie Home" producer, who asked for the band's CDs and promotional material when booking acts for the program's Madison stop.

The Berrymans will make their third "Prairie Home" appearance — but their first in 20 years. The show in its current form began in 1974.

"They asked us to prepare five songs, but they won't know what songs we'll do or how many until an hour before show time," Lou Berryman said. "The last time we were on (Keillor) changed the schedule in the middle of the show. You've got to be on your toes."

(Immediately after "Prairie Home," the Berrymans will head to Zion Community Center, 2165 Linden Ave., to perform an 8 p.m. concert celebrating the duo's 25th year performing in Madison.)

In 1980, the Berrymans made their debut appearance on "Prairie Home" during the

Keillor mania

◆ **What:** "Prairie Home Companion" radio show.

◆ **When:** 5-7 p.m. Saturday.

◆ **Where:** Madison Civic Center, 211 State St.

◆ **Tickets:** Sold out.

◆ **What:** Garrison Keillor book-reading appearance.

◆ **When:** 3 p.m. Sunday.

◆ **Where:** The Orpheum Theatre's main auditorium, 216 State St.

◆ **Tickets:** \$5 each. For updated ticket availability, call Canterbury Booksellers Inn at 258-9911.

show's stop in the former auditorium at Madison Area Technical College.

Greg Schnirring, director of Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR), said "Prairie Home" is in the top tier of public radio programs nationwide. It airs on 511 public radio stations and is heard by almost 3 million listeners.

It isn't surprising, then, that Keillor's book-reading appearance Sunday afternoon will be one of the most popular events of its kind in Madison ever. Canterbury's Benno said Keillor, who will read from his novel "Lake Wobegon, Summer 1956," does not have a specific schedule for Sunday's event.

"It's a little loose. He'll do a reading, take some questions then have an autograph session afterwards," Benno said. "From what his publicist tells me, he'll sign whatever people bring and chat with them as well."

That could develop into a wait of a few hours.

"The publicist prepared us for the line to move slowly," Benno said. "Be patient — and for a good reason. He really wants to talk to people who show an interest in him."