

'Prairie' seems right at home as companion to Sioux City

By Tim Gallagher
Journal staff writer

If Garrison Keillor ever left his native Minnesota, he could set up Lake Wobegon's shop in Orange City, Sioux Center or Sioux City and not miss a beat.

Keillor brought "A Prairie Home Companion" to the Orpheum Theatre Saturday. While here, the popular show's creator demonstrated his signature wit, vocal versatility and timing on a host of topics ranging from the Iowa Caucuses to church councils to middle school chorus.

In doing so, Keillor showed a packed house of 2,500 fans – and a nationwide radio audience of 3.9 million – the affection he must have for Sioux City, Sioux County and Northwest Iowa.

In a day when many entertainers do the same show night after night with a "Thank you Sioux City" salutation, it was delightful to see a big-time star devote two solid hours to local history, regional culture and statewide current affairs.

Garrison Keillor does his homework.

"A Prairie Home Companion" began its live broadcast with the host addressing Monday's Iowa Caucuses. "It's the longest job interview in the world," said Keillor. "One in which each candidate is asked the same question 2,500 times."

This performance, in fact, started two hours after a Howard Dean rally blocks away. Honored guests in the Orpheum for "Prairie Home" were none other than Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack and Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson, who joined Keillor on stage to talk up the caucuses which continue to place the national spotlight on Iowa.

Keillor, backed by The Shoe Band, performed a limerick in his trademark monologue to send up eight Democrats gunning for top honors in Monday's caucus. The rhymes came pretty easily for each with Keillor not-



Garrison Keillor speaks prior to a live radio broadcast Saturday of the "A Prairie Home Companion" show at the Orpheum Theatre. (Staff photo by Jim Lee)

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ing his satisfaction with the Dennis Kucinich verse that incorporated Kucinich and spinach.

He fell short on purpose when singing about Joe Lieberman.

"There once was a man named Joe Lieberman," he sang. "Who sought the Democratic nomination ... And if you think this is supposed to be a limerick ... I'm doing the best I can under these circumstances."

Keillor said caucusing was a good thing, certainly for Iowa. It's part of the Democratic process, after all.

"Democracy is like sex. When it's good, it's great. When it's bad, it's still pretty good," he said, delighting the crowd.

When he wasn't talking politics – another fantastic bit featured his radio private eye Guy Noir traveling to Iowa to spy for President Bush – Keillor, The Shoe Band, and others like VocalEssence and pianist Thomas Alexander delivered impeccable music. Alexander's work on

Beethoven's "Für Elise" was remarkable.

And Keillor mentioned repeatedly that Alexander traveled the world playing music only to find his wife in Sioux City where they both now reside. They met at a Sioux City Art Center concert.

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FREMONT
DOWNTOWN TRAIN

Winter Schedule

Friday	7:30 pm
Saturday	6:30 pm
Sunday, February 15	1:30 pm

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

Saturday, January 24
..... "Death Stinks"

Friday, January 30
..... "A Part to Die For"

Saturday, January 31
..... "Marriage is Murder"

Saturday, February 7
..... No Murder, Mystery