

Cold here? Well, back at Lake Wobegon ...

Public radio's Garrison Keillor delivers
Midwestern warmth to Greenville audience

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Garrison Keillor, the poet laureate of Lake Wobegon, had the Peace Center audience spellbound Monday night with his funny, poignant and, at times, bruising tale of Christmas in his hometown.

The lanky storyteller, clad in a dark suit offset by bright red socks, shoes and matching necktie, sauntered on stage and opened his one-man show by saying he was sorry about Greenville's ice storm.

Then, he took the audience right into snowy Lake Wobegon, into the midst of the hometown folks gathering at the Lutheran Church to celebrate the birth of the Christ child.

Keillor's powers to spin a tale that lasts for two hours and leaves you for wanting more defy categorization. Suffice to say, he

makes you want to inhabit his nostalgia-drenched small town where fierce dowager queens rule the kitchen, men sit and talk about Model T Fords and a fight

over zoning that beats any political skirmish dished out in Washington.

Keillor — the host and originator of public radio's highly popular "A Prairie Home Companion" — he writes close to 50 monologues a year; one for each show — spoke without a script of any kind.

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In a clever twist, he drew the audience to his bosom by transforming them into members of the Lake Wobegon Lutheran church choir. At that point, they became one big family — the type that loves nothing better

than to listen to their favorite relative tell stories about characters they can love, laugh at, weep over and identify with from the heart.

As choir members, the audience was also invited to sing "Gloria," "Oh Holy Night" and "Silent Night" — as Keillor conducted and admonished the

basses and the baritones to step it up and sing louder.

They also laughed hard and thunderously applauded the man from Lake Wobegon where "the women are strong, the men are good-looking and all the children are above average."

Or, as was Keillor's show, way above average.

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