

Garrison Keillor, city's best booster?

By John Kiesewetter

jkiesewetter@enquirer.com

Could Cincinnati have a bigger booster than Garrison Keillor?

During his "A Prairie Home Companion" broadcast Saturday from Music Hall, he told his national radio audience that "Cincinnati... is a wonderful city. Come see it sometime."

To him, the main attraction is our architecture, not our athletes.

He admires the Romanesque city hall with the big red clock tower. "It's a fabulous building that can't be built today," he said.

The narrow Over-the-Rhine brick buildings "look like Italy, but it's in the Midwest," he said. The city "feels like Europe, because that's where they (the founders) came from."

Keillor broadcast his second Thanksgiving weekend show in three years from here because he loves historic Music Hall, "this great brick palace on Elm Street."

Although the musical guest star was the Boys Of The Lough, an Irish-Scottish group, Keillor balanced out the show with a local band, Jake Speed and the Freddie's, playing the "Queen City Rag" and "Ohio River Waltz."

Keillor spent more time talking about sausages, goetta and Procter & Gamble than about the Reds, Bengals and University of Cincinnati Bearcats.

"A million pounds of goetta

Read more online

To read more about Garrison Keillor's visit to Music Hall on Saturday night, visit John Kiesewetter's blog at Cincinnati.Com.

are produced each year, and 99 percent is consumed here. Somehow, it didn't catch on in other parts of the country," he mused.

He praised P&G, which "makes stuff you need every day. You've got to feed your dog. You've got to change your baby's diapers. You've got to wipe its butt. You've got to wipe your own butt," he said.

He also commended P&G for being "slow to change" and not experimenting with products people rely on - like toilet paper.

Keillor's affection for the city couldn't be contained in a two-hour show. After signing off, he recalled being given a Cincinnati tour by guitarist Chet Atkins, who started his career at WLW-AM. Then he sang Atkins' "The Next Time I'm in Town" as an off-air encore.

After the show, chatting with fans in front of the stage, Keillor promised there will be a next time for "APHC" at Music Hall. He even has a musical guest in mind.

"We could have the Cincinnati symphony on the show," he says. "These are tough times for regional orchestras. They're under tremendous pressure, and even more so with the economy in such trouble."