

ONSTAGE

# Not retiring, Keillor is staying at 'Home'

Radio star will host show from the Fox — and not for a farewell.

**By Rodney Ho**  
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At age 68, Garrison Keillor last year told a national magazine he was planning to leave the popular radio show "A Prairie Home Companion" in 2013.


But a few months later, he changed his mind. That means his visit to the Fox Theatre Saturday for a live version of his program — heard locally on 90.1/WABE-FM — won't be his farewell to Atlanta after all.

"Since I said that, I thought about it some more and realized I didn't want to do that after all," Keillor said in that dulcet Midwestern cadence well known to his millions of fans. "You don't want to walk down that slippery slope too soon. Because if you do, other things may happen."

Noting others who worked well into their 80s and even 90s, such as the late Andy Rooney and Mike Wallace, he said he doesn't think he'll be doing the show that long. "I understand the drive, but you get to a certain point, you start

**SHOW PREVIEW**

**"A Prairie Home Companion Live"**  
5:45 p.m. May 12. \$37-\$77 before fees. Fox Theatre, 660 Peachtree St. N.E., Atlanta. Tickets: 1-800-745-3000, www.foxtheatre.org or theater box office.



Garrison Keillor hosts "A Prairie Home Companion" from Atlanta on Saturday. His show first aired in 1974. ERIC HAGENSEN / SPECIAL

**Prairie** continued on D7

Printed on recycled paper. Color: Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Black. ID: A1C0. File name: D1, EUR01, A1C0P011, A1C0. Date/Time created: May 10 2012 14:30:43.344. User:

## Nearly 70, Keillor has new ideas

### Prairie

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to call into question your own reputation."

At this stage in his life, Keillor believes he can still do better work.

"That's really the motivation," he said in a recent phone interview from his St. Paul, Minn., home. "If I thought we had reached our high point in the 1990s, I'd quit in a moment. But I don't."

Not that mortality isn't hovering over him. "Time is running out," he mused.

"I'm going to be 70 in August. I'm very aware of time tapping me on the



One might believe Garrison Keillor is the only one who could host his "Prairie Home Companion" radio show, but he says he could teach someone. VALENGHENKO / SPECIAL

shoulder. I no longer read long novels. I don't watch television anymore.

I avoid painful social events. I've economized. And that's so I can write

the two or three or four more books I have in me. You want to get everything down that you have to give. Then you can take

it easy and go sit around and have coffee with your friends in the morning."

His latest book, "Guy Noir and the Straight Skinny," came out May 1 and is a parody of hard-boiled detective writing along the lines of Mickey Spillane and Elmore Leonard. The Guy Noir character is a regular on "Prairie Home Companion."

"I enjoy getting him into serious trouble, then getting him out. The story starts on the 12th floor of the Acme Building. He has a pistol aimed at his chest. The hammer is cocked. And it goes from there."

In addition to his books and radio program, Keillor also does 90-minute one-man shows — just him, a microphone and a wooden stool. He recently did one in Athens.

"It's sort of a character-building exercise," he said. "I tell stories and try

to twine them together, maybe recite a few poems if the audience is in the mood, maybe sing a song or two. It's improv. You take your chances. It's a way to stay in mental shape and stay in touch with your audience."

Could "A Prairie Home Companion," which came to life in 1974, live on without him?

"Oh, sure. Whether it will or not, I don't know. But it certainly could. I could teach someone how to do this."

Then, in classic Keillor self-deprecating style: "I could find someone twice as appealing and teach them what they need to know in a week and a half."

For now, he remains the "Prairie Home Companion" host and prima-

ry storyteller. While his disdain for the Chatty Cathys at Chastain Park Amphitheatre is legendary — Keillor left the stage angry after a 2005 performance and wrote on his website about "the drunks snarfling and bel-lowing down below" — he has nothing but praise for the Fox.

"I admire all that Ma-yan and Egyptian decor. And it's easier to be indoors. It's easier for the radio audience."

"We like the sound to be as clean as possible and not have the sirens and airplanes in the distance."

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Join Rodney Ho as he discusses radio and TV on his blog: [ajc.com/go/radiotv](http://ajc.com/go/radiotv).



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