



The "Prairie Home Companion" ensemble performs during a broadcast in 2008 from Hot Springs, Ark. The 38-year-old show will come to Shreveport's Municipal Auditorium this Saturday. SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Garrison Keillor, 'Prairie Home Companion' come to Shreveport

By Melody Brumble
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Singer Jeralyn Steele performs during the 2008 "Prairie Home Companion" show in Hot Springs, Ark. SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Brian Salvatore was toiling in a chemistry lab when he first heard humorist Garrison Keillor's voice in 1994.

His lab partner tuned in to "A Prairie Home Companion," then in its 20th year. Salvatore was hooked. He hopes to meet Keillor and the cast when the show broadcasts live from Municipal Auditorium in Shreveport on Saturday.

"I've got tickets in the second row. I got them the minute they went on sale," Salvatore said. "Every show they do on the road, they tailor it to that community so you learn about the community."

Research, discussion with locals and a look-see at a community when time allows shape Keillor's local flavor on the road. He brings local musicians to the show when possible. The Shreveport broadcast will feature Lafayette Cajun band BeauSoleil.

"We like to talk about the good points of a community," Keillor said during a phone interview.

He was curious about poisonous snakes, hurricanes, local musicians and preachers in Shreveport. Alarmed that snakes sometimes show up in houses, he joked, "So you're saying I should stay above the fourth floor?"

Keillor and his band of airwave pranksters have broadcast from most of the 50 states and several countries, including England, Germany and Iceland. Despite competition from the explosion of on-demand entertainment, the show remains popular nearly 40 years after it debuted. More than 4 million people tune in each week.

"I'm too old to know about 24/7 entertainment. If I tuned in to entertainment 24/7 it would kill me. This is one of the advantages of not being up on things. You don't know you're outmoded," Keillor said. "You're not aware of your own antiquity. I've been doing this show since 1974, and the world has changed since 1974, but I'm not aware of it. If I were aware of it, I would realize the day for this show has passed. Ignorance can be an asset."



Brian Salvatore (left), his wife, Elahe Madavian, their daughter, Sarah Salvatore, and Madavian's mother, Maliheh Pakzad, are all "Prairie Home Companion" fans. SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

His Lake Wobegon monologue remains one of his favorite parts of the show. Since the beginning it's been Keillor, microphone in hand, delivering an extemporaneous update on the fictional Minnesota town. He calls the stories "circular" — the adults never age — but notes that their children have grown up and moved.

"People are unreasonably astonished that a man can talk for 20, 30 minutes without a script," Keillor said.

As for real-time aging, he still clings to the image of himself in his mid-30s although the calendar says he'll turn 70 in August.

"People do not age in their own minds. They kind of stay in their mid-30s on into their 70s, and then they get really



"A Prairie Home Companion's" Garrison Keillor says he likes to bring the local flavor of a community into each show. SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

IF YOU GO

What: "A Prairie Home Companion,"

When: 4:45 p.m. Saturday, Municipal Auditorium, 705 Elvis Presley Ave., Shreveport.

Cost: \$25 to \$65 general admission; students \$15. Student tickets are limited.

Info: (800) 745-3000 or www.ticketmaster.com. The Municipal Auditorium box office will be open the day of the show.

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Garrison Keillor (right) and The Guy's All-Star Shoe Band perform during a "Prairie Home Companion" broadcast. SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

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old, really fast. I've become a slower man in his mid-30s, but not dramatically so," Keillor said. "I still feel things are possible or within reach. I haven't played baseball in 30, almost 40 years, but I still feel that I could. I still think I could swing a bat."

Keillor hasn't discussed retirement, but rumors that he might head to pasture prompted Red River Radio to pitch a broadcast from Shreveport.

"Various groups have tried to get Garrison Keillor to agree to come to Shreveport over the years. They've gotten close once or twice, but it seems like this time was the charm," said Kermit Poling, Red River Radio general manager.

"A Prairie Home Companion" is the largest event the northwest Louisiana public radio affiliate has sponsored.

"Since there are ru-



Libby Murphy, of Stonewall, shows off several magnets she got during a "Prairie Home Companion" show in 2010 in St. Paul, Minn. JIM HUDELSON/THE TIMES

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Read more about "A Prairie Home Companion" @ [shreveporttimes.com](https://www.shreveporttimes.com)

mors of Keillor's retirement sometime in the next couple of years, this could very well be a once-in-a-lifetime event," Poling said.

Libby Murphy, of Stonewall, snapped up tickets for herself and her 8-year-old grandson. Murphy said she wants to expose

her grandson to the pleasure of live performance as an alternative to recorded music and video.

She's been a Keillor fan virtually since the show started. She saw a live broadcast once before while on business in St. Paul, Minn., in 2010.

"It was magnificent," Murphy said. "There is not anyone else in the world that has that comforting, mellifluous voice."

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