

COVER STORY

# At 'Home' on the air

'A Prairie Home Companion' will broadcast live from the Civic Center on Saturday

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It's been a quiet week in Lake Wobegon — but not for its favorite son.

At 71, Garrison Keillor is the busiest he has ever been. The Minnesota writer and public radio poo-bah is launching a tour for his latest book, "The Keillor Reader," which hits stores today. He's writing a musical for a Twin Cities theater. He's planning his eighth cruise and a trip to Paris, plus a three-day festival in July to celebrate the 40th anniversary of "A Prairie Home Companion."

He's so busy, in fact, that he couldn't fit in an interview with us before his visit to the Des Moines Civic Center, where he'll broadcast his show on Saturday. But in the spirit of neighborhood relations, we've decided to offer a roundup of comments he's made over the years. There were certainly plenty to choose from; he's a man of many words.

**On the longevity of "Prairie Home Companion," which was first broadcast in 1974 in front of a dozen people at Macalester College in St. Paul:**

"We intended the show to last for a year or maybe two, but just as we were about to quit, the show started to draw an audience — 50, 100, 200 people coming to see it on Saturday night, and we kept going so we could figure out what we were doing right."

**On the secret to the show's success:**  
"The formula is simple: a variety of music that appeals, radio actors who can do noir or horror or soap, strong writing, a Midwestern ethos, and the thrill of live radio. And a support staff that do the work. It isn't what I planned to be doing for 40 years, but luckily for me, my



Garrison Keillor CLAUDIA DANIELSON/SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

**Listen in**

Des Moines Civic Center tickets for "A Prairie Home Companion" are sold out, but you can listen to the show live starting at 5 p.m. Saturday on Iowa Public Radio. The two-hour show will air again at noon Sunday.

**See him in Iowa City**

Garrison Keillor will read from his new collection of stories, essays and poems, "A Keillor Reader," at 7 p.m. Sunday at the First United Methodist Church in Iowa City. As long as they last, two tickets will be given away with each purchase of the new book at Prairie Lights Bookstore. Details can be found at [www.prairie-lights.com](http://www.prairie-lights.com).

plans went awry."

**On singing vs. storytelling:**

"Singing, because that's easy, and you do it with other people. The singing that I do is duets — singing duets with tall and attractive women — and there's nothing about that that a person couldn't enjoy.

"Writing — which is really what storytelling is — writing is hard work, and you do it all by yourself in a room, usually under high pressure, and it's late at night, and there's not much to eat."

**On the chances that he might run out of Lake Wobegon stories:**

"No. No, there's no reason that one would. As long as you're still getting up in the morning and pulling on your pants and going out for a walk, as long as you can still hear and see — no, you'd never run out of stories."

**On the book he published last fall, "O, What a Luxury: Verses Lyrical, Vulgar, Pathetic and Profound":**

"It's a book of poems that want to be understood. I used to write absolutely unreadable, unintelligible poems when I was in college. I thought it was the cool thing to do, to write dark poems about my loneliness, my suffering — whatever, tooth decay. And then I realized that my loneliness is not more interesting than anybody else's ...

"Whereas the ability to write something that's entertaining, that amuses people, that makes people happy — that's contributing to the good of the world. I wrote a double limerick in there. I'm unreasonably proud of it:

"A liberal lady of D.C. / by day was tasteful and p.c. / And then after ten / she went out with men / who were rednecks, vulgar and greasy."

"When it comes to the masculine specie,' / she said, 'Believe me, I'm easy, / but liberal guys / tend to theologize / and I'm not St. Clare of Assisi.'"

Sources: Time magazine, KARE TV in the Twin Cities, and [prairiehome.org](http://prairiehome.org).