

An evening with Garrison Keillor

Garrison Keillor travels to Columbia for a one-man show Monday night, a rare performance in the Capital City.

In advance of his appearance at the Koger Center for the Arts, Keillor, host and creator of the radio show "A Prairie Home Companion," shared a little about the creative process, technology and a memory from an earlier visit to Columbia in an email interview.

We'd like to know about your creative process, because the stories from Lake Wobegon can be very complex and emotional. What's your strategy for imagining the characters and their stories? Do you have an activity or place that allows them to develop? Perhaps they're based on events you read about or people you meet.

Garrison Keillor: I leave it to the audience to imagine the characters - I just try to get the events straight. I create a scaffold and the audience imagines a building - that's how it works. The stories are based on real life in some way. Everything starts with a germ of reality and one simply follows it into the dark and sees where it leads. I think a lot about my mother and

father, both gone now, and many of the stories try to capture their cheerful spirits and the culture they grew up in, the culture in which we all knew the words to certain songs. I think about aunts. About death. When you live in one place for so many years - I am 72 - your memories are attached to the landscape, particular streets, the river, woods, a town, and you only need to drive around slowly and you will recall enough stories to occupy you for hours.

Share your thoughts about technology, please, particularly as it applies to your craft and your daily life.

It is a godsend, of course. The typewriter was brutal to a writer and severely punished the urge to rewrite. The computer is utterly irresistible. Of course one must resist its ease somewhat, its facility, which can lure you into writing gibberish, and it's always good to do some writing with a pen on paper, especially if you need to capture a

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IF YOU GO

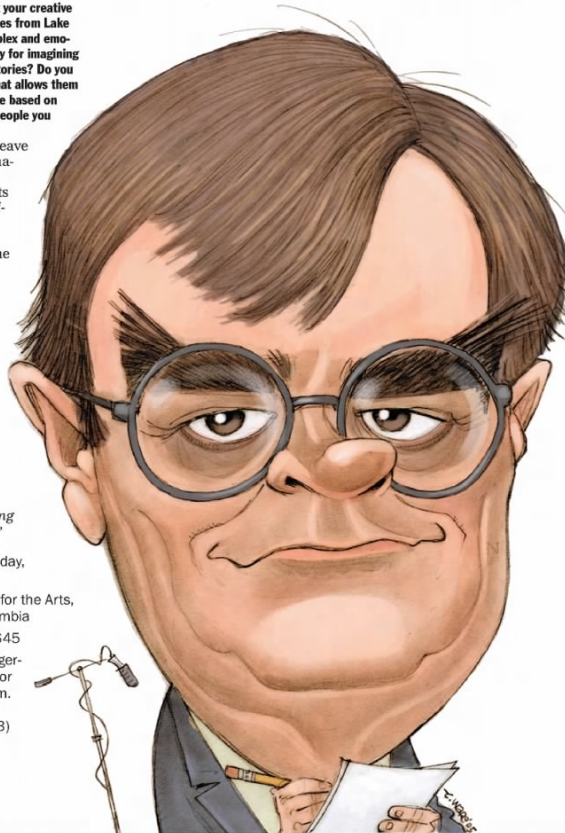
"A Very Special Evening with Garrison Keillor"

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Monday, March 9

WHERE: Koger Center for the Arts, 1051 Greene St., Columbia

COST: \$65, \$55 and \$45

TICKETS: Online at koger-centerforthearts.com or at the box office, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, at (803) 251-2222





ANN HEISENFELT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Garrison Keillor records installments of 'The Writer's Almanac' in St. Paul, Minn., in 2014.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

- Garrison Keillor was born in 1942 in Anoka, Minn., and began his radio career as a freshman at the University of Minnesota, from which he graduated in 1966.
- He went to work for Minnesota Public Radio in 1969 and, on July 6, 1974, hosted the first broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion" in St. Paul.
- Keillor has been honored with Grammy, ACE and George Foster Peabody awards, the National Humanities Medal and election to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.
- His many books include "Lake Wobegon Days," "The Book of Guys," "Pilgrims: A Wobegon Romance" and "Guy Noir and the Straight Skinny."
- He is host of the daily program "The Writer's Almanac" and the editor of several anthologies of poetry, most recently, "Good Poems: American Places."
- In 2006, Keillor played himself in the movie adaptation of his show, a film directed by Robert Altman.
- He has two grandsons and in 2007 opened an independent bookstore, Common Good Books, in St. Paul, where he and his wife and daughter make their home.

SOURCE: prairiehome.org

KEILLOR

FROM PAGE C1

voice. Daily life? The smartphone is a dear friend. Once I left mine in a hotel room and flew away to another city and it was a grievous loss. I am fond of the seat warmer, GPS, Facebook, non-fat cream, Google, and of course Wikipedia. I don't mess with the smartphone camera or games or movies – I like the giant silver screen – and mp3s sound tinny to me, Twitter is stupid and the idea of "followers," but texting is lovely.

Are you surprised at the longevity of your format, an old-time radio show? What is it that listeners find so appealing? Do you try to make the

show as much fun to watch as to hear? How?

We don't think about how the show looks – I suppose it looks like a radio show – and what listeners find appealing, I suppose, is the breadth of the music and the humanity of the writing. The format isn't so important. What's important is that people feel we are talking to them.

We love "The Writer's Almanac" (a daily podcast on authors). Give us a few favorite writers, please, and say why.

The old Beat poet Jack Gilbert, W.S. Merwin out on Oahu, Grace Paley of Greenwich Village, Eliza Griswold, Tom Hennen are a few I like a lot, and all because they strive so mightily to bring clarity into the world. Not literariness but emotional and spiritual clarity.

What do you do in your down time?

I sleep. It's a beautiful thing. I am a very practiced sleeper, very quiet (I'm told), I have peaceful dreams and awaken before dawn with a keen urge to sit at a desk and do my work.

Tell us about Columbia as a place to visit.

I went there one spring years ago – I gave a speech at (USC), where William Price Fox was teaching at the time – and remember mockingbirds singing in the trees downtown. I sat under a tree full of mockingbirds and drank my coffee. It was a living poem.

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