



KEILLOR TRIES 'TO TELL THE TRUTH THESE DAYS'

Novelist and host of "A Prairie Home Companion" brings one-man show to the Peace Center

By Paul Hyde

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It's always a quiet week in Lake Wobegon, Garrison Keillor's fictional hometown.

But as Keillor's legions of devoted listeners know, there's no end of things to talk about — and nary a dull moment.

Keillor, a local favorite, will no doubt have a lot to say as he brings his solo show, "An Evening With Garrison Keillor,"

YOU CAN GO

What: An Evening With Garrison Keillor

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 12

Where: Peace Center Concert Hall

Tickets: \$35 to \$55

Information: 864-467-3000 or www.peacecenter.org

back to the Peace Center on Thursday, March 12.

Keillor, a one-man entertainment juggernaut, has for

more than 40 years hosted "A Prairie Home Companion," heard by 4 million listeners on more than 600 public radio stations coast to coast.

His many books include "Lake Wobegon Days," "The Book of Guys," "Pilgrims: A Wobegon Romance" and "Guy Noir and the Straight Skinny." He's also the editor of several poetry anthologies and host of the daily radio program "A

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"The radio show is easy, since I've been doing it for almost 41 years," says Garrison Keillor. "After 30, I started to get the hang of it. The host of "A Prairie Home Companion" will be at the Peace Center on March 12.

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Writer's Almanac."

So what's on Keillor's fertile mind these days?

The Greenville News caught up with Keillor via email a few hours before he was scheduled to tape a recent weekly segment of "A Prairie Home Companion."

The Greenville News: Can you give us a preview of some of the stories you'll be relating in your upcoming visit to Greenville?

Garrison Keillor: I'm trying to tell the truth these days and so I talk about my life in Minnesota, growing up a quiet boy with low affect, bookish, slightly weird, and belonging to the Sanctified Brethren and trying to adhere to their ferocious theology. I loved the Brethren but I realize now that they made their mark on me and though I am now a High Church Episcopalian, with incense and dingy bells and a gay priest trotting around in medieval vestments, in my heart I am still sitting under ferocious preaching, though I must do it internally, the Piskies don't do it for me.

I love winter, the

moral season that brings us together, our bond, our common campfire. I tell stories about my little disasters in radio, starting with my debut. I disperse some rules for life, such as "Never talk about the relationship with the other person, and never use the word 'relationship.'"

I talk about my mother and father, both gone now, and how I realize now that "A Prairie Home Companion" tries to carry on their cheerful spirits and the culture they grew up in, the culture in which we all knew the words to certain songs. We sing some of those songs. I talk about aunts. About surgery. I tell some jokes about death. It's a diverse evening and it bounces around sort of crazily but it always ends well, with singing.

Greenville News: How do you successfully juggle so many activities: "A Prairie Home Companion," novel writing, editing books of poetry and writing your

own poetry, etc.?

Garrison Keillor: The radio show is easy, since I've been doing it for almost 41 years. After thirty, I started to get the hang of it. The new novel is a challenge, but it's on a back burner, waiting for a screenplay to get finished, which is very hard, to write only in dialogue. It looks good one day and the next day I look at it and the lines sound like they were translated from Albanian. The rewriting goes on and on. No more editing poetry books for me, and no poetry writing except for limericks which I do for my friends.

If I knew you better, I'd write "There was a reporter named Hyde, Whose talent could not be denied. He knows all the news, doesn't smoke but he chews, Is 18, and if not, then I lied."

Greenville News: What exciting things do you have coming up: a new novel, another book of poetry or a poetry collection?

Garrison Keillor: I have a cruise in the Caribbean coming up two days after Greenville, when my wife and daughter and I will sail around the coral-blue sea for a week and try to stay out of the sun and try to avoid irritating each other. Then in April, the show is in New York City for a couple weeks. And I'll go to comedy clubs to do research for the novel, which is about a stand-up comic.

Greenville News: What do you think of the state of American politics: hopeful, dismaying?

Garrison Keillor: Politics is as fascinating and comical as ever and it's a sport I follow closely. I lost interest in football long ago but politics is better than ever. A cast of great villains and not many heroes and a whole lot of folks just doing their best to get by.

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