



Garrison Keillor warmed up for his last Minnesota-based broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion" at the State Theatre on Saturday. Photos by LEILA NAVIDI • leila.navidi@startribune.com

## A historic night for 'Prairie'

Garrison Keillor celebrated Minnesota in the final "Prairie Home Companion" broadcast from his home state.

By NEAL JUSTIN • neal.justin@startribune.com

Guy Noir is borrowing a page from fellow gumshoe Philip Marlowe's "Long Goodbye."

Garrison Keillor's appearance at the State Theatre in Minneapolis Saturday was being billed as the last time he'll host "A Prairie Home Companion" from his home state of Minnesota.

Technically, that's true. The last Keillor-led broadcast, airing July 2 on public radio stations across the U.S., will occur in Los Angeles.

And Keillor's performance at the State Fair on Sept. 2 is expected to feature his regular band of comics and musicians, plus appearances from Noir and other familiar characters. But it's being billed as "The Minnesota Show."

No matter. Saturday's edition of "Prairie," which was tacked on the schedule to accommodate local fans who couldn't snag tickets to earlier tapings at St. Paul's more intimate Fitzgerald Theater, was labeled as the "Minnesota gratitude show," a stab at atonement for "all the complaining we've done over the years," Keillor said. With that theme as a guide, the host relied a bit more than usual on autobiographical stories and sentimental songs, including one called "Trees," which was really more of a love letter to his parents than an ode to red pines.



Keillor performed Saturday with Bob Douglas, a mandolin player who was a regular on the program more than 40 years ago.

### In Variety

Chris Thile preps to step into Garrison Keillor's shoes as "Prairie Home" host. **E1**

The sold-out show featured a blues number poking gentle fun at the Minnesota Twins' troubles and shoutouts to Anoka High School, the First Baptist Church and Como Park Zoo. One of the biggest audience reactions came when a Twin Cities quartet harmonized on snippets from jingles for Hamm's beer and the Green Giant.

Some out-of-staters crept into the proceedings, including Tim Russell's Donald Trump, shilling for "powermilk" biscuits and Sue Scott's Hillary Clinton defending the merits



Kathy Beatty of Inver Grove Heights sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" along with Keillor during warm-ups on Saturday.

of regular, reliable coffee.

The packed program also included an appearance from Sara Watkins, one of the few artists ever to fill in for Keillor as emcee. Chris Thile, who co-founded the band Nickel Creek with Watkins and her brother, Sean, becomes Keillor's official replacement in the fall.

Keillor isn't taking it easy before the July "finale" at the Hollywood Bowl. The itinerary includes stops in Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Chicago, St. Louis and Boston.

Luminaries in the audience included Bill Kling, the creator of Minnesota Public Radio who hired Keillor back in 1969, Sen. Amy Klobuchar and former Vice President Walter Mondale, whom Keillor called his personal hero.