



PRAIRIE HOME PRODUCTIONS

Garrison Keillor returns to the Ryman Auditorium on Saturday.

## Keillor readies to host gospel night at Ryman

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Garrison Keillor is bringing a dose of Sunday morning to Saturday night.

That evening, he's hosting Gospel Night at the Tabernacle, a nod to the Ryman Auditorium's beginnings as the Union Gospel Tabernacle.

He'll be joined by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder, The Whites, Jearlyn Steele and Richard Dworsky, but those won't be the only performers, says Keillor.

"I want the audience to sing," he says. "It's so seldom the audience gets to sing a cappella at the Ryman so this will be their chance. It also gives them a chance to stand up and get off those punishing pews."

Keillor retired from the radio in 2016 after more than 40 years of hosting the weekly program "A Prairie Home Companion," but these days he's busier than ever. He's just finished rewriting the screenplay for a movie called "Lake Wobegon" after the fictional town from "APHC." He's also working on a mem-

oir and musical, and he pens a weekly column for The Washington Post.

It was another writing assignment — this one for The New Yorker — that inspired Keillor to create "A Prairie Home Companion." In 1974 he covered the Grand Ole Opry's last show at the Ryman before the show moved to the Opry House, and he watched artists such as Roy Acuff, Minnie Pearl and the Fruit Jar Drinkers captivate the country music fans who'd made the pilgrimage to Nashville.

"I went backstage and they were such amiable people. I think it was before modern marketing struck country music," Keillor laughed. "I don't recall that there was any security. People stood in the alley, waited for (singers) to walk by and said hello. It was very different from how it would be in modern times. It gave me the completely unrealistic impression that I could go up to Minnesota and start a show like that. It just seemed so wonderful. So that's what I did."