

GO!

BEHIND THE SCENES ENTERTAINMENT

'The beauty of days gone by'



Garrison Keillor, who retired last summer from hosting "A Prairie Home Companion" after 42 years, is bringing his new solo show to the Aronoff Center on Friday. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Garrison Keillor brings whimsical nostalgia to Aronoff.

By Aaron Epple
Contributing Writer

While there's nothing strange about the popular humorist and storyteller Garrison Keillor going on tour — and stopping at the Aronoff in Cincinnati this weekend — he won't be doing it with the cast and guests of his legendary live radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion," behind him.

Last summer, just before turning 74 years old, Keillor stepped down as host of the program after 42 years. Hosting duties there were handed over to Chris Thile, a multi-instrumentalist singer/songwriter for the band Nickel Creek.

Keillor said, "There's a huge sense of loss when you walk away from your show and you feel bereaved. It's like losing your mother, only not just losing her but feeling like you killed her yourself."

"The best way to cope with loss is to throw yourself into a great deal of work, and that's what I've done," Keillor said. "If you pack your schedule like a suitcase, you don't have time to feel bad."

Keillor's solo performance will still feature tales from Lake Wobegon, his fictional Minnesota hometown. He implied that the show will still contain a similar sense of whimsical nostalgia for which "Prairie Home Companion" was famous.

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Garrison Keillor
Humorist, discussing his youngest child, Maia

beauty of being 74, and about the beauty of days gone by," he said "And recall my days as a teenage misfit and how several teachers changed my life without really meaning to. I also want to pay homage to the first girl I loved enough to write a poem about. It's a sweet story."

Keillor's youngest child, Maia, was born in 1997, and he said he'd also spend a portion of his show talking about being a "late-life father."

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HOW TO GO

What: An Evening With Garrison Keillor
Where: Aronoff Center for the Arts, 650 Walnut St., Cincinnati
When: 8 p.m. Friday, May 19
Cost: \$30-\$70
More info: 513-621-2787 or www.cincinnatiarts.org

utterly out of date," he said. "We love each other dearly, and that is enough. And she knows that I have the ability to embarrass her in public simply by throwing my head back and making the mating call of a mature African elephant, which I do very, very well. I am also good at fake dementia."

Keillor has always had a complicated relationship with his fellow Minnesotans, to the point where real-life Lake Wobegoners sometimes weren't sure whether Keillor was laughing with them or at them.

While Keillor said he has made good on his promise to keep busy, writing a screenplay, a book of linericks, a memoir, a newspaper column and a musical about three old men who are trying to make a comeback, one thing he said he hasn't done is listen to "A Prairie Home Companion."

"When I started the show in 1974, nobody paid much attention to me, and I had the luxury of great freedom," Keillor said. "So I don't listen to his show at all. I don't want to have any advice to offer. I don't think it'd be helpful."