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Straight from Lake Woebegone, It's A Prairie Home Companion

MIDDLEBURY — After months of reviewing tapes, recordings and other submissions from dozens of folk and traditional artists, the producers of A Prairie Home Companion have selected five Vermont performing groups to headline three shows this weekend in Mead Memorial Chapel at Middlebury College.

The Vermont musicians will perform on stage with Garrison Keillor and the rest of the Prairie Home Companion crew Friday, Saturday and Sunday. All shows are sold out.

Guest artists for the Saturday evening national broadcast, which will be heard locally on Vermont Public Radio, WVPR 88.5 FM, will be the Word of

Mouth Chorus from Plainfield and La Famille Beaudoin of Burlington.

The Plainfield group appears throughout New England often in collaboration with the Bread and Puppet Theater. The musicians perform a wide variety of traditional as well as renaissance and medieval music, and are known for their early American hymn songs from the Sacred Harp tradition.

The Famille Beaudoin, with its presentation of traditional French Canadian songs and music, are known nationally as a result of performances at the Smithsonian National Folklife Festival, and an appearance on the Andy Williams Christmas Special

filmed at the Shelburne Museum, just north of Middlebury, last year.

Another nationally known family will be on hand for Friday evening's show when Margaret MacArthur and family appear as special guests. The MacArthurs are from Marlboro.

Harp and dulcimer player Margaret MacArthur will be joined by sons Dan and Gary performing on fiddle, mandolin and guitar, and by daughter Megan on bass in performances of traditional American songs. Many of the songs are drawn from the Helen Hartness Flanders Ballad Collection housed at Middlebury College.

Appearing Friday evening will be Middlebury

College's Dissipated Eight. This select close-harmony singing group has appeared in schools and before civic groups from Maine to Florida. The group recently released its first recording in many years.

Concluding the three-day stand of A Prairie Home Companion Sunday afternoon will be Apple'ack.

From the hills of southern Vermont, this popular group has helped to maintain the tradition of New England country dancing through its performances of old-time New England and ethnic dance tunes. The four members of the group have given more than 400 performances throughout the northeast and have served as Vermont artists-in-residence at Vermont Public Radio.