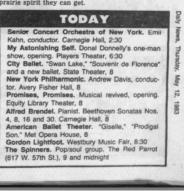
harboring a suspicion that Cynthia (Liz with a usually acceptable singing voice set allowing for "dissolves" from the prove it with this avoidable one 'Prairie' town folk coming to the big city Good Grocery.... If you can't get it at Ralph's, you can probably get along without it," or "The Chatter-box Cafe, the place that's just like home.... Take what you want and eat what you take," or "The Sidetrack Tap.... Don't sleep at our bar, we don't drink in your bed." Others like the monologues, wherein Keillor's seemingly rambling remarks on the terrors of learn-ing to swim or the trials of having a 13-year-old son ("He wants his own apartment") actually make many points, some witty, all true. IN THE END, he uses the rural image to disprove <text><text><text><text><text><text><text> By DAVID HINCKLEY points, some witty, all true. IN THE END, he uses the rural image to disprove its own negatives. This is no rube on the radio, despite his rumpled-bear looks. This is one sharp fellow, autor of 25 articles for The New Yorker, one of the best word craftsmen working today. That he also does a radio show is a happy thing for radio, and for his listeners. Including the ones who, in five of the most densely populated towns on earth, can use all the prairie spirit they can get.



And, no, that's not just in Sioux City, either. "Prairie" listeners are all over, it seems, in places that even surprise Kellor. Like New York City. "It always amazes me," he says, "to think of people in 12th-floor apartments on the upper West Side of Manhattan listening to this show. But I guess they do. They write us letters."

This weekend, they won't have to. "A Prairie Home Companion" is coming to them, with four concerts Friday through Monday at Town Hall, 123 W. 43d St. Keillor takes the show away from its St.



broadcast of "A Praine Home Companion" Paul base a few weeks each year, and this is its first trip to New York. The 5:45 p.m. show Saturday will be broadcast live, with Keillor and the Butch Thompson Trio, his house band, plus Stoney Lonesome, a bluegrass band, and fiddler/mandolinist Peter Ostroushko, a long-time "Prairie Home" player. There may be other guests, too, but Bruce Springsteen probably won't be among them. "This is a fragile little boat," says Keillor. "We take care not to swamp it." **THE FRIDAY.** Sunday and Monday shows, all at 8

Keillor. "We take care not to swamp it." **THE FRIDAY**, Sunday and Monday shows, all at 8 p.m. and all starting with the same musical lineup, will be taped for future broadcast. What's certain is that Keillor will not change the show for New York. Its charm comes from his consistently hitting the same right note—somewhere between indisputable and droll—for his whole cast of characters, including himself. Some listeners prefer the ads: "Ralph's Pretty

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