

## Prairie Home Companion has birthday

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A tuxedo-clad bluegrass band, a dancing pickle and, of course, the latest news from Lake Wobegon took center stage as Prairie Home Companion celebrated a decade on the radio with a benefit performance.

"It's been 10 years since we sang this song and talked about Lake Wobegon," Prairie Home creator and storyteller Garrison Keillor warbled as the theme "Hello Love" opened the two-hour, 20-minute concert Friday night at the ornate Orpheum Theater.

The sold-out performance actually was a warm-up for Saturday's 10th anniversary show, which will be broadcast live by American Public Radio to 236 National Public Radio stations with an estimated audience of 2 million.

Proceeds from Friday night's show will go toward a \$1.5 million effort to renovate the 74-year-old World Theater, where Prairie Home shows were produced until falling plaster forced a move to the nearby 1,600-seat Orpheum.

Keillor reminisced about moving into the 900-seat World in 1978, after producing the weekly show at "educational auditoriums" around the Twin Cities.

"There were dressing rooms in this joint...and footlights," Keillor said. "A lot of what we did at that time didn't deserve illumination — but they (the surroundings) were theatrical."

Backed by the Night O'Rest Motel Orchestra and Chorus, Keillor referred to the musicians and singers as "the sort of people I wanted to hang out with in high

school, but they were in grade school at the time."

The performance included a Scott Joplin ragtime tune by long-time Prairie Home pianist Butch Thompson, a folksong medley by the bluegrass band Stoney Lonesome (attired in tuxedos and evening gowns instead of their usual jeans and plaid shirts) and a salute to "the tinfoil age of radio, after the golden age of radio had passed."

Among the parody radio shows were "Jack Armstrong, the Normal Boy," "The Saturday Night Kandiyohi County Bean Feed" (live from the Willmar, Minn., Municipal Auditorium), and the inspirational program, "Lutheran Whispers."