

'Prairie Home Companion' returns to renovated St. Paul World Theater

By Barabra Dewey

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ST. PAUL, Minn. — Garrison Keillor brought his tales of Lake Wobegon and "A Prairie Home Companion" radio show back home to the renovated World Theater Saturday after a two-year absence.

Keillor, author of "Lake Wobegon Days," and his radio show were forced to leave the World Theater in January 1984 when plaster began falling from the ceilings and officials declared the 75-year-old building unsafe.

Since then, the weekly two-hour variety show, which began using the World Theater in 1978, has been broadcasting from the Orpheum

Keillor ended speculation that he might leave Minnesota by buying a house in St. Paul.

Theater in St. Paul and from other cities in the American Public Radio Network. The show is produced by Minnesota Public Radio.

A \$3.5 million restoration began on the old vaudeville house in April and will continue between "Prairie Home" performances, said Alison Circle, public information coordinator for MPR. The theater's grand

opening is scheduled for April. Ms. Circle said Saturday.

Keillor has donated half the royalties from his best-selling "Lake Wobegon Days" to MPR, which is raising funds for the theater's restoration.

All radio shows through February are sold out; tickets for March haven't yet gone on sale.

"A Prairie Home Companion," launched 11 years ago, mixes music, monologues and various foolishness in a two-hour show which is broadcast live over more than 260 U.S. public radio stations and in Australia.

Keillor, 43, is a native of Anoka, just north of Minneapolis.