



Critic's choice / Popular music

Back in the mid-'70s before "A Prairie Home Companion" was even a household name in Minnesota, Garrison Keillor, Gregory Bitz and their musical friends used to give these lovably oddball performances at Walker Art Center. Bill Hinkley and Judy Larson (above), the venerable acoustic duo that used to be part of the original "Prairie Home" house band and some of those wacky Walker performances, will gather Keillor, Bitz and such musical friends as Dave Ray and Marya Hart for a program of musical merriment at 8 p.m. today at the World Theater in St. Paul. The versatile Hinkley and Larson can play at least one song in every kind of ethnic style you can imagine from Japanese to Swedish. They're liable to pull just about anything out of their vast songbook tonight, and who knows what to expect from the retiring Keillor in what will probably be one of his last public appearances for a long time. Tickets are priced from \$8.50 to \$13.50. 298-1300.

— Jon Bream