

Standing room only Radio station swamped with orders for tickets to Keillor's last radio show

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HOLLYWOOD — The Powdermill Biscuit company, Bertha's Kitty Boutique and Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery will soon go belly up and already tickets to the wake look as if they are going to be scalped at premium prices.

When the entire town of Lake Wobegone, Minn., vanishes from the airwaves June 13, a \$12 ticket to witness the farewell to long, tall Garrison Keillor and his "A Prairie Home Companion" could cost as much as a ticket to the Super Bowl.

"Calls are running at about 3,000 a day and the World Theater only holds 1,000 people," said William Kling, president of Minnesota Public Radio, which produces Keillor's program. "By the end of this week, we expect to have received 22,000 calls about tickets and there are only 17 shows left."

The best-selling author of "Lake Wobegone Days" said he would return to being "a shy person" after 13 years as radio's pre-eminent storyteller. He made the

on-air announcement Saturday, surprising the network that carries "A Prairie Home Companion" and the 275 radio stations that broadcast the show each week — as well as 4 million Keillor fans.

As with most of the Keillor shows, the final program will air from the World Theater in St. Paul, Minn., June 13.

Keillor said he planned to write and has no immediate plans to return to broadcasting.

"I want to resume the life of a shy person and live with my affectionate family a more peaceful life, a life in which there are Saturdays," Keillor told his audience. "I want to be a writer again."

Last year, Keillor married a high school sweetheart after rekindling their romance at their 25-year high school reunion. She had been an exchange student from Denmark. He plans to leave the United States as well as Lake Wobegone and live, at least for a time, in his bride's native country.

Keillor could not be reached for comment, but his longtime

producer Kling said Tuesday "I can't tell you much more than what he said. He's worked here for almost 19 years, 13 of which were with 'Prairie Home.' I can tell you that on three previous occasions he has stopped broadcasting to write."

Each leave of absence was about a year and each time, Keillor returned to Lake Wobegone. Though this departure could be final, Kling said the door would remain open for the 44-year-old humorist's return.

Meanwhile, Kling has hired another 44-year-old to replace Keillor: National Public Radio's Noah Adams, co-host of the network's afternoon news magazine, "All Things Considered," told his audience Monday he would soon be leaving for Minnesota to develop a new Saturday-night program that would include many of the successful elements of "A Prairie Home Companion" as well as some surprises.

Though Adams' two-hour variety show will not be unveiled until late April when public radio offi-

cialists gather in Columbia, Mo., for their annual conference, Kling said it would not be a copy of "A Prairie Home Companion." The new program will premiere on Minnesota Public Radio in June and will be offered nationally by September.

"We hired Noah because, in my view, he is one of the most effective people I've met in understanding how to use the medium of radio," Kling said. "He's a Kentuckian and has a broad music background in bluegrass, country and jazz. He's very conversant with authors and knows literature and knows people who can get involved. He's not a humorist in the way that Garrison is but he has an incredible warmth."

National Public Radio spokeswoman Paula Darie said Tuesday there have been no permanent replacements selected for either Adams or Susan Stamberg, who teamed to make "All Things Considered" the National Public Radio mainstay for more than a decade. Guest hosts will anchor until permanent hosts can be



Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" will go on television on The Disney Channel soon, but the show will last only a short time.

found, she said.

Stamberg left the show last fall to host a Sunday-morning program over National Public Radio called "Weekend Edition."

Like Stamberg, Adams said he was exhausted from hosting the daily news magazine for several years and welcomed the opportunity to move on to a less grueling once-a-week program. He will not be leaving "All Things Considered" until the end of March.

Though the live Keillor program will disappear, diehard fans still will have access to Lake

Wobegone in reruns.

Earlier this month, Minnesota Public Radio and Disney Channel officials announced the two-hour weekly radio program of music and storytelling would become a 90-minute television series on the Disney Channel beginning March 7.

Kling said that the last 14 shows would be taped and broadcast on the cable channel later on the same Saturday night the radio show is broadcast. He said the programs may be rebroadcast later in the year.