

Music City stars to sing 'Prairie' folk

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Staff Writer

"Glory, glory hallelujah, teacher hit me with a ruler/I met her at the door with a loaded .44/Us kids are marching on." — from *The Prairie Home Companion Folk Song Book*.

Garrison Keillor is coming to town with a songbag full of a different kind of folk music.

Long-time *Prairie Home Companion* host Keillor believes that folk music is, pure and simple, music that folks learn from each other. That sort of folk music will be featured at Saturday's 3 and 7 p.m. *Prairie Home Folk Song Show* concerts at Vanderbilt's Langford Auditorium.

"These songs came from listeners to our old radio show, from people from all over the country," Keillor said during a telephone interview Tuesday. Guests Chet Atkins, Ray Stevens, the Judds, Johnny Gimble, Mike Seeger and Kate McKenzie will be joining Keillor in presenting off-the-wall, fondly remembered tunes like *More Eyes Have Seen the Glory of the Burning of the School*.

"These songs were sent in for a segment of the show called the Department of Folk Song. We asked people to send in songs that they had learned from somebody else — not from a book, not from a record, but from someone else, a relative or a friend, and songs that they knew by heart, not written." Listeners searched their memories and sent in thousands of songs — campfire songs, parodies, lullabies, drinking songs, school songs and childhood delights like *Greasy Griny Gopher Guts*.

The tunes, which have been gathered in the new *Prairie Home Companion Folk Song Book*, are a long way from Appalachian ballads or Dylanesque introspection, but that's exactly what Keillor had in mind.

"The term folk music has been used in quite a different way in commercial music to mean a particular sound," he said. "And it has been used to include songwriters. To me that seems a contradiction — people don't write folk songs."

"These old songs that are passed down from person to person, from parent to children, are real treasures. A thing that you know by heart and carry around in your head is something of value."

Atkins, a *Prairie Home Companion* regular and frequent Keillor collaborator, was responsible for lining up country sensations Naomi and Wynonna Judd, multi-talented funnyman Stevens, fiddle master Gimble and all-around folk musician Seeger.

"I don't know these people except as a fan," Keillor said. "Of course, Chet knows everybody."

Keillor has twice before brought *Prairie Home Companion* shows to Nashville. In 1985 when the series was still in regular production, and in June as part of a limited reunion tour. Keillor skirted the question of whether *Prairie Home Companion* may return on a more regular basis.

"I don't have so many long-term plans," he said. "I wanted to do this show, because I think it will be

a lot of fun.

"A person wants to take every opportunity to sing in public, whether you're invited to or not. I think it will be an awfully nice radio program and the audience will

be asked to sing along."

Atkins' band, ace bassist Roy Huskey Jr. and background vocalists led by Bergen White will also be contributing to the Langford shows. Both shows will last for 90

minutes, with the 7 p.m. show set for live broadcast over the American Public Radio stations including Nashville's WPLN-FM (90).

The shows are produced by Minnesota Public Radio and co-

sponsored by Sarratt Performing Arts and Vanderbilt Concerts. Tickets at \$10 and \$12 are available at the Sarratt Student Box Office and at all TicketMaster outlets. ■

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