

Garrison Keillor isn't bidding farewell for long

When Garrison Keillor brought the Second Annual Farewell Performance of "A Prairie Home Companion" to Middlebury in May, some people thought it might really be goodbye.

It looks like they were wrong. Keillor will return to Vermont Feb. 2 in an 8 p.m. concert at the Flynn Theater. Tickets, all of them reserved seating and \$25 each, go on sale today at the Flynn Theater box office.

Keillor will sing, recite poems and "tell everyone the latest from 'the little town that time forgot' — Lake Wobegon," said Harry Lipson, producer of the event with FolkTree ConcertMakers of Boston. WEZF-FM will promote the show locally.

Burlington will be Keillor's first stop on a short tour that will end Feb. 19 in Philadelphia. It will be Keillor's only appearance in northern New England on the tour, Lipson said. He declined to describe the concert further except to say some "special surprise guests" may share the stage with Keillor in Burlington.

It is not a third annual farewell tour, even though Keillor, the creator and former host of "A Prairie Home Companion," will talk about Lake Wobegon. The mythical Minnesotan town was made famous on weekly broadcasts from 1974 to 1987 from the World Theater in St. Paul, Minn. When Keillor left the show "to resume the life of a shy person," "A Prairie Home Companion" was America's most popular public radio program, with 4 million listeners. He left St. Paul, visited Denmark with his wife and settled in New York to write for The New Yorker magazine. He has also written two books: "Lake Wobegon," published in 1985, and last year's "Leaving Home."

Keillor performed at Middlebury College in 1983 as well as in May of this year. Both shows sold out in hours and last spring the college installed two extra phone lines to handle the flood of ticket inquiries.

The Flynn Theater staff is ready should a horde of Keillor fans descend. "You can't tell one way or the other what the public's going to do. But we will be prepared," said Ann Marie Barton at the box office, which is open from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. today. For information, call 863-5966.