

Keillor's warmth fills Taft stage

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Theater review

BY CLIFF RADEL
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The miracle of radio and the power of the imagination filled the Taft Theater Monday night. Garrison Keillor brought his *A Prairie Home Companion: The Third Annual Farewell Tour* to town and, in a grand three-hour performance, told a crowd of 2,510 about the joys of coming home.

The topic was a timely one. Just last Thursday, Keillor announced he would return to radio after a two-year hiatus.

Keillor delivered his Monday night message in the deep, softly rumbling tones he used when he was host of *A Prairie Home Companion*, the old-fashioned variety program which proved that with a little imagination, radio can still work miracles.

Musical ingredients

Since his message took some telling and singing, Keillor had help from *Prairie Home* regulars, singers Robin and Linda Williams and Kate MacKenzie, sound-effects men Tom Keith and Dan Rowles, pianist Richard Dworsky plus drummer Randy Hauser, bassist Molly Mason and, the one, the



Garrison Keillor
... tells Lake Wobegon news

only, Buster, the Show Dog. Woof!

Behind this troupe stood a two-story replica of Keillor's ancestral home in Lake Wobegon, Minn. It was a solid turn-of-the-century house with an ample front porch for the Hopeful Gospel Quartet to sing songs of feeling the spirit in more ways than one.

As the quartet of Keillor, the Williams and MacKenzie sang, a warm, buttery yellow light glowed in the front room window. On the

second floor, the misty blue light from a lamp — belonging to a writer like Keillor who's always listening to the songs and the stories below and getting them down on paper — spilled softly over the shingles and down on the singers.

Later in the evening, that light would shine on assorted commercials from fictitious advertisers, the Williams' spellbinding rendition of "Don't Let Me Come Home A Stranger" and an episode in the continuing adventures of Buster, the Show Dog and how he turns into a canine Donald Trump but saves the day by . . . *to be continued.*

News from Lake Wobegon

That same light shined on Keillor as he delivered the news from Lake Wobegon. It has been a quiet spring up there. People lived and died, and Rev. Inkvist's wife left him. But like a certain radio show host who's on the comeback trail, "she knew she was going to come back, otherwise she never would have gone."

And that's the news from Lake Wobegon and the Taft Theater where it was a night to walk home in a soft rain and hold your memories tight in your hand and close to your heart.