

Prairie Home Companion Still Hits Home

Departing from convention, Garrison Keillor delivered his signature monologue in three installments Tuesday night before a capacity crowd at the Civic Center Music Hall, as "A Prairie Home Companion" stopped over on its 13-city Third Annual Farewell Tour.

The monologue, an ongoing parable of life and values drawn from the fictional Lake Wobegon of central Minnesota, was a fixture of the live radio show, formerly broadcast on public radio stations.

Keillor's magic has always been his quiet ability to weave the threads of

small-town life into the fabric of urban America. The program, a patchwork of folk and gospel music, cut across the seams of culture, attracting listeners from all age groups and from every region.

A Prairie Home Companion was created by Keillor in 1974 and inspired by his research into the history of the Grand Ole Opry. PHC's best shows are still being rebroadcast on KCSC-FM in Edmond.

Joining him on the current tour are Robin and Linda Williams, aka Mavis and Marvin Smiley of



Garrison Keillor

Middlebrook, Va. The couple got a standing ovation last November at the Grand Ole Opry; Tuesday, they brought down the house when Do

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Tell Records sponsored the duo's classic Broadway Bluegrass record "commercial."

Naturally, the show tune with the biggest response was the title song from "Oklahoma!" rendered hillbilly style. Later, Keillor led the audience in a spontaneous singing of the state song during the show's single encore.

Keillor, in his first visit to this state, said Oklahoma City's sprawl is so extensive that he noticed

the first city limit sign just outside the tour's previous stop, Kansas City. With so much space, he quipped, Oklahoma City is the unlikely birthplace of the parking meter.

The news from Lake Wobegon is anchored by a man who has no illusions about small-town life.

"I could write an attack on Lake Wobegon in 30 minutes," he says. It would take him far longer to write a homage "to my hometown" and the attack would be more fun to write, Keillor adds.

"But the homage, I think,

would be more truthful."

The truth never hurts when Keillor delivers it. The show still works two years after it went off the air because it reminds listeners of people they know or of a great event in their past or "the loveliness of the present."

"Midwestern values ain't simple," says Keillor. "They are mysterious and you could spend a lifetime struggling with them."

Or, you could spend two hours every Saturday night listening as Garrison Keillor makes the struggle so much easier to bear.

— Mary McReynolds