

Keillor gets back on the air

By Barbara Vancheri
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Garrison Keillor, the folksy humorist who transported Americans to Lake Wobegon, returns to radio tomorrow with a new variety show. This time, however, instead of broadcasting from the nation's heartland, he will be stationed in the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

The program, "Garrison Keillor's American Radio Company of the Air," will be heard Saturdays at 6 p.m. on WQED-FM. It will be the first radio variety show to be broadcast from New York in more than 35 years.

The two-hour show promises a blend of music, monologues, special guests and a cast of regulars. Guests on tomorrow's show will be vocalist Eileen Farrell and pianist Butch Thompson, a favorite on Keillor's former show, "A Prairie Home Companion."

"Our show will be funny and happy and full of classic American music of all kinds," Keillor says. "The music our guests will perform will be the music the world knows as

American — jazz, show music, blues, country, Waller, Joplin, Copland, Ellington, Rodgers (Richard and Jimmie) — the list goes on for pages."

Pianist James Tocco will be a guest Dec. 2, the Manhattan Rhythm Kings Dec. 9, and opera singer Marilyn Horne Dec. 16.

Keillor's new venture had been scheduled to debut in late September before being bumped to this month, a fact that rankled some station managers around the country. They also were upset with the show's high price and its irregular scheduling, which alternates new shows with rebroadcasts of "A Prairie Home Companion."

For WQED, the new program will cost \$16,400 a year, compared with the \$3,600 it pays for "Prairie" rebroadcasts.

If you're interested only in the new shows, knowing when to tune in could be tricky. For instance, the new show will be heard Saturdays through Dec. 16. Then, the reruns kick in until "American Radio" returns from Feb. 3-24. Rebroadcasts are scheduled for March 3 and

10.

New broadcasts will follow through June 9, with the exception of April 14 when "Prairie" is plugged into the schedule.

Keillor made a name for himself with "Prairie" and four best-selling books.

His new program is being produced by Minnesota Public Radio and distributed by American Public Radio. If you're interested in seeing the show live in New York, tickets for December performances are on sale at the Brooklyn Academy of Music box office or through TicketMaster at (212) 307-7171.

Mail orders can be sent to: Ticket Services Department, Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217-1486.

New York tickets are priced at \$25 and \$28. A service fee of \$3.25 per ticket is assessed on telephone orders. The Feb. 24 and March 24 performances will be in St. Paul at the World Theater, home of "Prairie."

If you're listening

"Garrison Keillor's American Radio Company of the Air" begins tomorrow at 6 p.m. on WQED-FM.