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Garrison Keillor returned to public radio Saturday with "Garrison Keillor's American Radio Company of the Air," a show he insists will not be a continuation or spinoff of "A Prairie Home Companion," which attracted 4 million listeners each week.

## Keillor's new radio show won't mimic previous one

Associated Press

NEW YORK — It's been more than two years since Garrison Keillor left gentle Lake Wobegon, but public radio's favorite storyteller says he's not worried about stepping up to the microphone again, even if the stage is in rough-and-tumble Brooklyn.

"Garrison Keillor's American Radio Company of the Air," which premiered on public radio stations Saturday, once again features Keillor's soft voice — "I'm going to sing just ever so slightly less than people would like me to."

But he insists the new, live show will not be a continuation or spinoff of "A Prairie Home Companion," which attracted 4 million listeners each week on American Public Radio.

"What I'm doing is taking 13 years of experience doing one kind of live radio variety show in one place and I'm using that to create a different one, a different one in a different place," he said in a recent interview, sitting behind a desk stacked with books at his Manhattan office.

Keillor's plans for this season's 20 shows include "classic American music of all kinds" — from Aaron Copland to Duke Ellington, country music to Broadway. Singer Eileen Farrell, pianist James Tocco and opera star Marilyn Horne are scheduled to guest star.

And the humorist says his monologues will return, but with less of a focus on the Midwest.

"I've a lot of things I want to talk about, some of which have to do about New York, or take place here," he said. "But I don't have any need to do a routine on New York ... tell New York jokes."

Will he be telling tales again about the Norwegian bachelor

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**Garrison Keillor**

farmers and other residents of the mythical Minnesota town of Lake Wobegon?

"I don't believe I will," he says with a smile. "Unless of course I heard something, I would pass it on."

Keillor, 47, left his home base of St. Paul, Minn., with his wife for Denmark in 1987 and settled in Manhattan later that same year.

Since then, he has done occasional specials for cable television, appeared on tour with orchestras and continued to spin yarns about the town he made famous on the earlier show and in such best-sellers as "Lake Wobegon Days" and "Leaving Home."

Keillor's return to radio was sparked, he says, by an elderly Georgia man beset during a trip last year to Gettysburg, Pa.

"He said, 'When are you coming back?' And that was the first time anybody had asked me that question, 'When are you coming back?' not, 'Are you ...' or, 'Why don't you ...'"

"He just said, 'When are you coming back?' I said, 'Pretty soon.'"

He also received encouragement from his wife, Ulla Skarved, a career counselor. "She's a professional in this field of advising middle-aged men on their career plans," he said.

After discussions with Minnesota Public Radio, which also produced "A Prairie Home Companion," Keillor announced plans for his return in May.

He put together his company this summer after scores of auditions where he made a point of not looking at the performers.

"I wanted to find radio actors who can also sing," he said. "And I really was bowled over by the people who I got."

The Brooklyn Academy of Music will house the show, except for two weeks next year when it travels to St. Paul.

The urban neighborhood where the Academy is located is a far cry from mild-mannered St. Paul, and Keillor expects the house to be filled with "a lot of people from Connecticut and New Jersey who will be uneasy ... thinking about the fact when the show's over, it'll be dark."

But, he says, "We'll reassure them. They'll be brave when they leave."

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