

# Devoted fans fill Hancher for Keillor's PHC farewell

By Sue Davis Smith

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IOWA CITY — Garrison Keillor says farewell so well.

He enjoys his farewell performances of the Prairie Home Companion so much he is now in the midst of the Fourth Annual Farewell Performance tour.

He and his group of musicians have settled into Iowa City for three shows, two being performed today at 4:45 and 9 p.m.

Early in the show, Keillor, wearing a suit appropriate for a shy person, but adding red socks, tie and suspenders, explained why he keeps saying goodbye.

When you love doing something so much, you do it for fun, even if it's only once a year, you do it," he explained.

As to why the PHC show would come to Iowa, Keillor had several explanations.

In the show's program, Keillor writes, "it was listening to PHC regular Greg Brown's tune the Iowa Waltz. And here we are."

In Friday evening's show his reason may have been the opportunity to pen the tune, "Why Iowa?"

"Love lifted me to Iowa," he sang. Love and devotion brought a full house to Hancher Auditorium to partake of the Prairie Home Companion show. With Keillor were his PHC regulars: Scottish songstress Jean Redpath, Iowa native Greg Brown,

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fiddle player Peter Ostroushko, singer Kate MacKenzie, sound effect man Tom Keith and the Fourth Annual Farewell Band which includes Iowa City musician Dave Moore.

The stage was set as if the PHC show was being performed on the front porch of a simple farm house. From there the PHC regulars sang their ballads, hymns and lullabies and Keillor told the news about his fictional Minnesota town, Lake Wobegon.

"It's warm up here in Lake Wobegon," he said. The big news there was the opening of a video store.

"While the Lake Wobegon regulars turned up in Keillor's monologue, the show was Iowa, with references to a Trappist monastery near Dubuque and Iowa City, where sad and lonely teenagers go. There or Grinnell," the audience was told.

Friday night's show went well over its usual broadcast time of 90 minutes. With just a 15 minute intermission, the PHC show was three hours of fine music, humor and a touch of nostalgia. It was hard to say farewell to this fine group of performers.

Individual tickets remain for this evening's shows.