

Keillor's show draws from afar

By JIM POLLOCK

Register Staff Writer

People called from Alaska.

When they heard Garrison Keillor was going to give his fourth annual "farewell" performance of "A Prairie Home Companion" in Iowa City, some people actually called from Alaska to buy tickets, according to the box office folks. Other fans called from West Virginia, Florida, Texas, Arizona and California, among other states.

So it's really not surprising that Keillor keeps doing these shows. It's surprising that he doesn't do more of them. It's also surprising, or at least it was unpredictable, that his only PHC show for 1990 landed in Johnson County.

The radio humorist and author plans three shows at Hancher Auditorium on the University of Iowa campus: 8 p.m. Friday, June 15; 4:45 p.m. Saturday, June 16, and 9 p.m. June 16.

The Saturday matinee will be provided via satellite to affiliates of American Public Radio, the network set up by Minnesota Public Radio to handle the Keillor phenomenon.

This mini-bonanza for Iowa City restaurateurs and innkeepers required no lobbying on Hancher's part. Keillor and MPR asked to be invited.

"He was looking for a Midwestern location," said Rosalie Miller, coordinating producer for MPR in St. Paul. "Iowa seemed like a good place, because he has a lot of fans there. Then as a practical matter, a lot of performing halls aren't big enough. That narrowed it down some more.



Garrison Keillor

"We looked at Des Moines, but we were nearby in Ames last year, and besides, we wanted a smaller city. His current show, The American Radio Company of the Air, is done in New York City and we wanted to differentiate between that show and PHC."

Darn. How many times must Des Moines be punished for its striking similarity to New York?

They also checked out Cedar Rapids. "I personally loved the Paramount Theater," Miller said, but college town atmosphere apparently won out and Iowa City got the nod.

Appearing with Keillor will be Jean Redpath, Peter Ostroushko, Greg Brown, Kate MacKenzie, Richard Dworsky, Dan Rowles, Tom Keith and Dave Moore.

Late in the week, tickets remained for all three shows. They cost \$15, \$19 and \$22 for the shows Friday evening and Saturday evening, and \$17, \$21 and \$24 for Saturday's radio broadcast. Call (800) HANCHER, or 335-1160 in Iowa City.