

## Keillor brings his 'Home' to Ryman

By ALAN BOSTICK / Staff Writer

Garrison Keillor and his ultra-popular live radio show "A Prairie Home Companion" are coming to Nashville June 4 as part of the grand opening festivities at the Ryman Auditorium.

Keillor, the Dr. Feelgood of public radio, a wry chronicler of the rich heritage of small-town America, will lead a live broadcast of his show to help celebrate completion of an \$8.5 million restoration of the 102-year-old landmark.

"Garrison Keillor made early pilgrimages to the Ryman, and live radio has been an integral part of the Ryman's history," said Steve Buchanan, the Ryman's general manager.

"We anticipate more than one grand opening event, but this one is the result of a unique relationship."

The broadcast, underwritten by the Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Inc., will be carried on 278 stations on the American Public Radio Network with a projected audience of almost two million listeners.

Keillor's connection with the Ryman — which opened as a church in 1802 and served as home to the Grand Ole Opry from 1943 until 1974, when the Opry moved to the Grand Ole Opry House — is somewhat unique.

He of the famously rich baritone voice listened to the Opry long before he created "Prairie Home Companion." In fact, Keillor wrote a lengthy piece in the *New Yorker* magazine about the Opry's last performance in the Ryman in 1974.

In it, he described the experience of a tourist overwhelmed by the chance to walk on the Ryman stage.

"What inspires such awe in us — her and me, too — I don't claim to know, but radio is mysterious in its ways," he wrote.

The Ryman is on the National Register of Historic Places and is currently under renovation by its owner, Gaylord Entertainment Company. Since the Opry relocated to Opryland USA, the Ryman has been operating as a museum.

The June 4 show at the Ryman is incidentally a benefit for WPLN-FM, Nashville's public radio station. ■

### Getting there

Tickets to attend "A Prairie Home Companion" at Ryman Auditorium go on sale tomorrow and are priced at \$25. Call Ticketmaster at 737-4849. Air time is 5-7 p.m. June 4.

WPLN-FM is selling 100 \$125 tickets that include a post-show reception and another block of \$50 tickets for special seating. Call 862-5819.