

# Keillor Brings Show to City

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At 3:25 p.m. Saturday, 35 minutes before his nationally syndicated show went on the air, radio humorist Garrison Keillor, in red T-shirt and black tuxedo pants, was still tinkering with the script.

Standing in the dim light back stage, Keillor asked someone what New Mexicans eat. Finding what he wanted, Keillor inked in some words for a poem about New Mexico food that included references to "tortilla, sopaipilla and honey by my side."

At 4 p.m., Keillor exchanged the T-shirt for a white dress shirt, red tie and black tux jacket. And the sold-out audience in the 2,600-seat Kiva Auditorium

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applauded the short poem, just as it did the many humorous and historical allusions to the Land of Enchantment that peppered the popular two-hour, nationally syndicated show.

In fact, you could call the first half of Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion" radio show "A New Mexico Home Companion."

In one skit, Keillor portrayed author D.H. Lawrence ("The 'D.H.' stands for designated hitter, but you can call me Dez") who was chatting with actors playing the characters of Georgia O'Keeffe and an unnamed bartender.

The imagined O'Keeffe confessed that she painted Western art with rearing, snorting horses because people want action.

But Lawrence advised her to concentrate on cactus and cows' skulls, secondary images in art. "That's the money motif," Lawrence said.

Keillor confessed to the audience that he doesn't like O'Keeffe's art. Earlier backstage, he had said he found it "boring as Henry James and North Dakota, but in a different way."

On the air, Keillor said people who think of Albuquerque as the heart of New Mexico think of Santa Fe as an "adobe theme park." Applause.

Taos, he learned, was "the Greenwich Village of the Southwest."

But he also threw a few jabs at Albuquerque.

One skit recreated the circumstances of how the city acquired its name. A couple meets up with an elderly man whose last wish is to have a town named for him. His name is Mr. Buquerque. His given name is Bob but his nickname is Al. The nickname prevails.

## The show was to be the first live broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion" from New Mexico.

In another skit, a woman named Eileen moves from Minnesota to Albuquerque to find inner peace and joy only to be eaten by a cougar. That segues into the crash of a hot-air balloon that wipes out 150 Minnesotans.

Don't forget that the soft-spoken Keillor is playfully poking fun at his home state; he's a native of Anoka, Minn., and Minnesota Public Radio produces the show in St. Paul.

In a skit in which Keillor portrays Guy Noir, Private Eye, a character winds up in Albuquerque where . . . "there's no hockey, a lot of hicks from Milwaukee and your sneakers stick to the sidewalk."

The script researchers prepared Keillor well on historical New Mexico.

He referred to the enormous size of the Bell cattle ranch, of the Goodnight-Loving Trail (he sang a song about it), he spoke of the three dominant cultures as being Indian, Hispanic and gringo, and of Willa Cather, who wrote her book, "Death Comes to the Archbishop" while living in Santa Fe.

Keillor also sang "Spanish Johnny," a song for

which, he said, Cather wrote the lyrics.

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But 25 minutes into it, producer Chris Tschida reported, the power went out on the program's satellite dish, perched on the sidewalk outside the Albuquerque Convention Center.

That meant that none of the 300 affiliates got the feed.

KANW-FM (89.1), the Albuquerque public radio station that carries Keillor's weekly program, usually rebroadcasts the show at 7 p.m. on Sundays, the day after the live broadcast.

The station didn't know Saturday what its plans

were for broadcasting the full two-hour show.

Twenty percent of the ticket sale receipts of Saturday's Kiva broadcast went to KANW's underwriting of the syndicated shows that it buys such as "A Prairie Home Companion," a station official said.

Keillor started the program in 1974, was on hiatus from it for several years, then restarted two years ago.

Of the 30 live broadcasts Keillor's program does each season, half are done in St. Paul, one fourth in New York and one fourth around the country.

P.S. It was another quiet week in Lake Wobegon. . . .

JIM THOMPSON/JOURNAL



Popular humorist Garrison Keillor, right, and Sue Scott of Albuquerque, rehearse his live radio show "A Prairie Home Companion" on Saturday at the Kiva Auditorium.