

Keillor plans Billings broadcast

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The people of Montana and Wyoming will have a chance to meet the folks from Lake Wobegon when humorist and raconteur Garrison Keillor brings his popular radio show to Billings for a live broadcast.

The Alberta Bair Theater will host "A Prairie Home Companion" on June 8, but tickets won't go on sale until April 25, at which time they'll be sold for \$35, \$27 and \$20.

Engineering the visit was a collaborative effort between staffs of the ABT and Yellowstone Public Radio, where station manager Marvin Granger has special ties with the radio personality.

"We've been looking at the possibility for months," Granger said Monday, "but it's a huge undertaking and we needed to make sure it would work."

Granger gave Keillor his first radio job at University of Minnesota Public Radio Station KUOM back in the mid-1960s.

"He was a graduate student in English looking for part-time work



GARRISON KEILLOR
"Prairie Home" host

and I hired him as a newscaster," Granger said. Keillor, Granger recalled with a laugh, "got me in trouble several times — doing impromptu comedy bits at the end of the newscasts. And once, when 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' was released out, he played the entire album — in the days

when 'cultural radio stations' didn't do such things."

Granger is looking forward to working with his old friend and former colleague again and is already in correspondence with show producer Christine Tschida.

Production of the two-hour live show involves considerable advance work from Tschida and her staff. And Keillor himself likes to be involved in choosing talent for the local segments.

Interviewed recently in Tucson, where "Prairie Home" was broadcasting from University of Arizona's Centennial Hall, Keillor said his staff would welcome tapes or cassettes to the show's associate producer Stevie Beck, c/o "A Prairie Home Companion," 45 E. Seventh St., St. Paul, Minn. 55101.

The show, as fans know, is a potpourri of comedy sketches, music and Keillor's signature monologue, "The News From Lake Wobegon" ("where all the women are strong, the men are good-looking and the children are above average.") It will begin at 3:45 p.m., and the radio portion will end at 5:59 p.m.

The show always features several local segments with talent re-

flective of the region. Granger said the selection process was already well under way and that further suggestions should be sent directly to "Prairie Home."

Keillor, backstage after the Tucson show, said he was eager to visit Montana again. He has been here twice to do successful benefits for U.S. Rep. Pat Williams, D-Mont. Granger said Williams will, in turn, probably host a reception for Keillor after the June 8 show. It would double as a Yellowstone Public Radio fund-raiser.

"A Prairie Home Companion" is broadcast to 340 public radio stations and has a loyal listenership of over 2 million.

Keillor is rarely seen — obviously — since the medium makes use of his mellow voice and wry wit. At 53, the native Minnesotan is tall and angular and has features etched with his own unique character. He usually wears funky glasses and his hair is often askew.

According to Granger, Keillor coined the phrase, "I have a good face for radio."

The show is looking for sponsors to help foot the \$15,000 bill. Sponsorship involves national exposure.