

# Humorist + orchestra = not bad

By JEFF RODRIGUEZ  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR-TELEGRAM

In the opening segment of his performance, Garrison Keillor sang a song called *Not So Bad*. It was a clever ditty reflecting the Lake Wobegone philosophy that things should never be too good, or too bad. It also summed up Keillor's show performance Friday night at the convention center in Fort Worth: Not so bad, but not that great, either.

Certainly the premise of the show was promising. Keillor paired with the Fort Worth Symphony, relying on the symphony to provide the elegant music, and Keillor the amusing lyrics.

The symphony consistently made good on its end of the bargain, and on several of the selections, Keillor returned the favor. Besides *Not So Bad*, Keillor was on target with his *Hymn to Sweetcorn*, along with his *Young Lutheran's Guide to the Orchestra*, a clever explanation of the instruments that had even the musicians chuckling.

The Minnesotan also showed great intuition by



Special to the Star-Telegram/SAM MORALES

Garrison Keillor was on target with his *Hymn to Sweetcorn* and *Young Lutheran's Guide to the Orchestra*.

leading a sing-along of *Home on the Range*. With an audience comprised mostly of elderly Texans, this number may have been the high point of the show.

But elsewhere the show was uneven. The opening narrative, recited to Bizet's *Habanera*, was often unintelligible. Also, Keillor's trademark "News from Lake Wobegone," monologue, while often quite funny, rambled on too long, losing some audience members. And his closing selection, *My Love Is Like a Red, Red Rose*, was charming but weak. It did not draw an encore applause from the audience, which is even more remarkable considering the brevity of the show.

Of course, it helps to remember that Keillor is a humorist, not a comedian; he aims more for chuckles than laughs, and sings more for appreciation than inspiration.

All in all, not that bad.

The concert is repeated tonight at 8 and tomorrow at 2 p.m. at Fort Worth/Tarrant County Convention Center JFK Theatre. Tickets are \$17-\$34. Call 335-9000.