

Garrison Keillor spins yarns at Frazee

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On Thursday, a warm breezy night, under a bright moon, Garrison Keillor & The Hopeful Gospel Quartet, captivated the audience at Frazee Pavilion in Kettering with a heartfelt show of song and story.

Regular listeners of Mr. Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*, found on public radio, know his brand of charming small-town entertainment well.

For more than 25 years, Mr. Keillor has been singing old-time gospel and folk music and sharing the tales of

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Lake Wobegone, Minn., "the town that time forgot."

Thursday night was much like Mr. Keillor's radio program, with 2½ hours of music and plenty of quirky tales of sweet corn, drunken preachers and adolescent shenanigans.

For most of the performance, Kate MacKenzie and Robin and Linda Williams joined Keillor as the Hopeful Gospel Quartet. The group, which often appears on *A Prairie Home Companion*, sang primarily vintage,

down-home gospel tunes. Their sweet harmonies were tight, and the music simple, with sparse train beats and swinging rhythm.

For instance, "I Am A Pilgrim" had a strong jazzy hop, the lively "Life is a Ballgame" chugged along at a toe-tapping pace and "Under the Boardwalk" was a soulful a cappella doo-wop.

However, Mr. Keillor's own stories, especially his signature monologue "The News From Lake Wobegone," held the attention of the mostly middle-aged crowd of 3,975.

For more than half an hour, Mr.

Keillor, the author of 10 books, wove a hilarious and bizarre yarn of family scandal in Lake Wobegone, complete with sex, talking dogs, tornadoes and memories of when he began to write at age 13.

Interestingly, while the quartet sang mostly pious gospel music, Mr. Keillor's own tale was full of off-color humor that had the crowd howling with laughter.

While the songs of the Hopeful Gospel Quartet were enjoyable, Mr. Keillor's own charm, weird humor and animated storytelling made the night truly festive.