

MINNEAPOLIS TRIBUNE

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Will Jones

after last night

Garrison Keillor was on the stage with his right hand in the air, clawing gently for applause for the musicians. The audience was enthusiastically dutiful, clapping right on cue. It was as if old-time, studio-audience radio never had been away. Almost.

The setting was the auditorium at Walker Art Center, and the event was the taping of the first programs for a new Keillor radio series that is to start next month on KSJN-FM and the Minnesota Educational Radio network.

Last year Keillor grew tired of getting up early in the morning to play records as "The Prairie Home Companion," so he quit. Lots of fans were disappointed. Now he has agreed to return to the air with a program that happens only once a week, late in the day, with live musicians. It will be aired at 4:30 p.m. Saturdays starting June 15.

The first three programs were recorded at a marathon session spread through a Sunday afternoon and evening. The event was deliberately under-advertised so as to fill the auditorium but not jam it, and so audience members could come and go as they pleased.

Starting in July, the programs will be broadcast live, probably from the Janet Wallace Auditorium at Macalester College.

Keillor's hand cues to orchestrate the applause were delivered as a kind of amused salute to the forms and clichés of the radio of yesteryear. Other forms were not so well observed, particularly the regimentation of time. There wasn't a stopwatch in sight, and Keillor was well into the second program before he observed, "We're doing radio, and I don't even have a watch."

Time was regulated only by the length of the recording tapes. Keillor would get a signal from someone in the control booth, indicating that the tape was about to run out. He would pick a likely pause and say, "We'll be back after this message."

Later he observed glumly: "I don't know why I said that. From watching so much television, I guess. Now I'll have to go and write the messages."

Originally, the plan was to record hour-long programs. Most of the tapes made at Walker ran closer to two hours. Keillor guesses that, with some of the longer pauses trimmed out, the show may run closer to an hour and a half.

"Fortunately, with public radio, we don't need to be so concerned with exact timing," he said.

Another radio tradition that was observed, but just for the fun of it, was the breathless on-location



Staff Photos by Mike Zerby

Garrison Keillor

announcer who would say things like, "And now, from beautiful Walker Art Center high above the bottleneck at the edge of downtown Minneapolis . . ."

Before recording the first program, "The Lake Wobegon Academy of Song Faculty Recital and Seminar," Keillor said:

"I need somebody out of the audience who wants to be a radio announcer. Someone about 12 or 13 would be nice."

Young Paul Burpee volunteered. Keillor handed him the script, told him where to insert his own name, and Burpee opened and closed the program, just like that.

"I've always maintained that radio announcing is an amateur profession," Keillor observed.

For the recital program, Judy Larson and Bill Hinkley performed a variety of blues and work songs, singer Vern Sutton satirized some stage and concert musical styles, and four hand-clapping young women singers, the West Bank Trackers, clapped their way through a pop repertoire with a four-piece instrumental group behind them.

Program 2 (for broadcast June 22), titled "Faded Photos, Parlor Songs and Old-Time Jazz," featured a group of singers from Plymouth Church, billed as the Herrick Family Quartet, plus Sutton, gathered around a piano manned by Philip Brunelle. Sutton did "Deep Purple," Fredrika Herrick did "Where Is My Boy Tonight?" and the group did "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say," and like that.

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Television timetables, movies, radio highlights

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Keillor did commercials for Jack's Auto Repair in all the programs, and in this segment he did a blurb for a book called "The Fallen Person — What Can You Do?" It contained helpful hints for dealing with those persons you find fallen in the street, including procedures for use when you have only a short time to spare, as well as techniques for use when more time is available.

Then the tape was stopped and the stage set up for a second segment of the program featuring The Wolverines Classic Jazz Orchestra, a youngish group who reproduce the sounds from jazz records of the 1920s and 1930s. Tunes like "Shakin' Like a Leaf on a Tree" and "The Misery Blues" and "The Whiteman Stomp" and "Off to Buffalo," as well as excerpts from a 1926 Aaron Copland piano concerto. The group's vocalist, Becky Riemer, sometimes sounds uncannily like the voice off an old 78 rpm record, and she produces the effect without any mechanical or electronic aids.

The Wolverines stayed on for Program 3 (air date June 29), "The Annual Jack's Anniversary Dance," and Keillor asked for another announcer from the audience. No kids volunteered this time, so instead he asked for someone from the over-50 group and got one Tom Olson who, on his first reading, introduced the music of "The Wolverines Jazz Class Orchestra." Something was wrong with the recording equipment at that moment, and the announcement had to be done over. Keillor expressed disappointment that the original flub wouldn't be on the air.

The final program also includes return visits by the



Vern Sutton contributed satiric vocals to the radio proceedings.



Paul Burpee and Garrison Keillor

West Bank Trackers and the Larson-Hinkley duo who were joined by an Irish dancer, Bridget Hardesty, for a jig, a reel and a hornpipe. Ms. Hardesty danced in her socks, so there was not even the sound of stomping feet for the microphones to pick up for the radio audience. Keillor pronounced her "one of the finest dancers ever to appear on radio."

Since the event was billed as a dance, the audience was invited to come onto the stage and dance, and some 30 or 40 did so, including a number of children in the audience. Along toward 9 in the evening, there were also some babies crying in the audience. That was never permitted on old-time studio audience radio, come to think of it.

Inflation pinches BBC

United Press International

London, England

The British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) said it expects to be running \$36,750,000 in the red by 1975.

"Inflation hits us just as hard as anybody else, if not harder," Charles Curran, the BBC's director-general, said. He said revenue was increasing from boosts in set license fees that provide the BBC's income and from the fact that more color sets, for which the fee is higher, are being sold.

"But it is as though we were continuously running up an escalator which is moving down," Curran said.