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Prairie Home Companion asks state grant for theater

By Lori Sturdevant
Staff Writer

The Minnesota Legislature has been asked to help get Garrison Keillor and the rest of the Prairie Home Companion radio show back home to St. Paul's World Theater.

A state Senate panel is expected to act Monday on a request by World Theater Corp. and Minnesota Public Radio for a \$1 million matching grant for the renovation of the World Theater, long the home of the nationally syndicated Saturday radio show.

The theater's disrepair forced Keillor and Co. to St. Paul's Orpheum

Theater last year. That lease is up Oct. 1, and cannot be renewed, said Ted Grindal, lobbyist for World Theater Corp. and MPR.

Unless the World Theater is renovated by then, Grindal said, Prairie Home will be without a Twin Cities home — and might be forced to listen to the siren calls that have regularly come to the program from Chicago, New York, Atlanta and elsewhere.

Grindal emphasized that the show's producers have no desire to leave Minnesota. But, because the show needs a hall that is always available on Saturday nights between 5 and 7

p.m., it cannot share a hall with most other performing arts. It needs its own facility and none appear available in the Twin Cities after Oct. 1, he said.

Efforts to raise money privately for the World Theater have not met expectations, partly because of competition for funds from other projects, he said.

The provision under consideration for inclusion in the Senate's state departments appropriations bill would allow matching grants from the state to begin only after \$250,000 in private funds have been pledged. The grants could be made in

\$100,000 increments, up to \$1 million. The grant money would be available until June 30, 1986.

Sen. Carl Kroening, DFL-Minneapolis, chairman of the Senate's state departments finance subdivision, was noncommittal yesterday about providing the matching money. "We'd like to help, but we don't know where all the dollars are yet," Kroening said. "It looks good, but everything looks good at this stage."

Gov. Rudy Perpich has communicated his support for the matching grant to key legislators, said Lani Kawamura, deputy state planning director.