

## MPR takes out 2nd mortgage to renovate World Theater

Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) has taken out a second mortgage on its headquarters building in downtown St. Paul to help pay for renovating the World Theater to provide a permanent home for "A Prairie Home Companion."

"Prairie Home," the live radio show starring Garrison Keillor, began using the downtown World Theater in 1978. MPR, which produces the show, acquired the building in 1980. But chunks of plaster began falling from the ceiling and the show lost its home in January 1984.

The World Theater Corp., a subsidiary of MPR, immediately launched a fund-raising campaign to "Save the World," as the show was moved a block away to the Orpheum Theater.

Keillor was unhappy with the design and maintenance of the Orpheum and there are no plans to renew the lease. "Prairie Home" ended its regular season of St. Paul performances with a show at the Orpheum Saturday night. After a June break, the show will return for one performance at the Orpheum on July 6, then will go on the road until the World renovation is completed.

With the second mortgage on the MPR building in hand, First Bank St. Paul is releasing enough money to guarantee the World will be rebuilt. The \$3.3 million renovation is expected to be complete in October or November.

MPR still faces an uphill battle in raising enough pledges from the public to repay the loan, but the second mortgage ended a month of speculation that the popular radio show might leave St. Paul permanently.

"Prairie Home" puts the fictional Lake Wobegon — and the real St. Paul — on the map for two hours every Saturday.

The show has been broadcast nationally on public radio stations since 1980. MPR conservatively estimates 2 million people listen each week on 260 radio stations.