

## Theater fest set for May

► SMITH from 1E

better after the play's only two trial runs this weekend at the Crest — Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2.

"By Saturday, we'll have a show, one way or another," Cussen said. "It's crucial — it's a true test of spirit."

Although the play focuses on a widow in Dublin with two grown-up kids who've left the nest, it's perfect for Florida, Cussin said. The son has left his wife and run off to England; the shrewish daughter lives in California. They return once a year and try to put Mom in a nursing home.

"It makes for great comedy because there's no way she's going into a home," Cussen said, "and she's smarter than either of the two."

Tickets for this weekend's performances are \$20 and available at the door or by calling the Crest box office at 243-7922, ext. 1.

Innisfree also has lined up considerable corporate assistance for the May 11-18 festival, which will feature four U.S. groups, four from Canada and three from Ireland, including the Irish champion Balally Players of Dublin. For more information, the Web site is [www.innisfreeirishtheatre.com](http://www.innisfreeirishtheatre.com), or call (561) 271-9606. Cussin can always use volunteers.

"Eleven sets in one week is a lot of work," he said.

### Keillor goes patriotic

Garrison Keillor wrapped his 70-minute chat Tuesday at the Society of the Four

Arts with an *America the Beautiful* sing-along. Ervin Duggan beamed. So did Ed Elson. But for different reasons.

Both sat to the left of the stage in the front row as Keillor, a Minnesota version of the melancholy Dane, regaled the audience with tales from Lake Wobegon and other thoughts that popped from his furrowed brow. Duggan, who runs the society, was delighted with his speaker and with the overwhelming success of this year's lecture series, which included Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister of Pakistan, art historian Kirk Varnedoe and irascible former U.S. Sen. Alan Simpson. Keillor, the 21st century's answer to Will Rogers, was a coup because he usually doesn't perform outside the auspices of his hit radio show *A Prairie Home Companion*. The Four Arts was ending its best year ever, and Duggan is already working to top it.

Elson may have arrived with some apprehension. During the Clinton administration, the sort-of-retired bookseller from Atlanta served as ambassador to Denmark, the only other nation that celebrates the American Fourth of July. Some years ago, Keillor gave a speech on that day.

"It was a very un-American speech," Elson recalled. "He had to leave the country."

But on Tuesday, Keillor was all American and at the close had everyone singing. Picture it: Palm Beach's old guard chiming in, robustly. Elson, a big smile on his face, needn't have worried.

© thom\_smith@pbpost.com