

## Folk humorist Garrison Keillor lives on 'Prairie'

STAFF REPORT

He's one of the most familiar voices on National Public Radio, and if you don't immediately recognize the name Garrison Keillor, perhaps you've heard his famous slogan: "Lake Wobegon, where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking and all the children are above-average."

The folksy humorist is best known for his monologues and skits about the quirky characters who populate the fictional Minnesota town of Lake Wobegon. The weekly broadcast of his variety show "A Prairie Home Companion," is heard by about 3.9 million listeners on more than 500 public radio stations.

On Dec. 2, he will bring his Midwestern charm to the F.M. Kirby Center.

Mr. Keillor, 61, began his radio career in college, which was perhaps a fitting choice for the Minnesota native. His family belonged to the Plymouth Brethren, a conservative religious group, and he didn't watch any television until high school — although he was allowed to listen to radio.

In his twenties and early thirties, he was writing freelance articles for the New Yorker. One of those pieces, a story about the Grand Ole Opry, inspired him to create a live radio variety show with musical guests and features like fake commercials for imaginary products.

That's how the first "Prairie Home Companion" was born, in July 1974, with a broadcast at a college theater in St. Paul, Minn. A dozen people were in the audience.

After that humble beginning the show took off, with hundreds of broadcasts produced over the 13 years. Like many writers who work best under deadlines, Mr. Keillor typically creates his monologue in the 24 hours before show time.

Except for a two-year hiatus in the late 1980s — when Mr. Keillor remarried and moved to Europe — "A Prairie Home Companion" has been a standard on the public radio airwaves.

On the show's Web site (www.prairiehome.org) Mr. Keillor says, "When the show started, it was something funny to do with my friends, and then it became an achievement that I hoped would be successful, and now it's a good way of life."

Mr. Keillor is also the author of 11 books and is a frequent contributor to Time magazine.



### If you go

**WHAT:** An Evening with Garrison Keillor  
**WHEN:** Dec. 2, at 7:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** F.M. Kirby Center

**DETAILS:** Tickets are \$40 and \$55. Call the Kirby Center (826-1100) or Ticketmaster (693-4100) or ticketmaster.com.