



John Palmer Gregg/The News Leader

Garrison Keillor and The Hopeful Gospel Quartet perform Sunday at the Frontier Culture Museum.

## A Prairie Home Staunton

*Gospel flourish helps conclude music festival*

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STAUNTON — The final day of the 4th Annual Fortune Williams Music Festival ended in a hand-clapping, foot-tapping, side-splitting good time, with a rare performance by The Hopeful Gospel Quartet.

Garrison Keillor, best known for his radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion," re-joined old friends Robin and Linda Williams for the show, with Carol Elizabeth Jones rounding out the quartet. Keillor's rumbly bass joined the other, higher-pitched voices, accompanied by Robin Williams on guitar.

The audience sat in an entranced silence for the ballads, but there was plenty of clapping hands and stomping feet for the more upbeat tunes — and more than one standing ovation.

It's the kind of music

nobody sings in church anymore, as Keillor said to the crowd. Several heads nodded in agreement.

Born in the stairwells of Radio City Music Hall, the quartet started as a way to stave off boredom during breaks. Now, the group performs about four or five times a year, most often on Keillor's radio show.

Keillor said he came to Staunton at his friends' request.

In between songs, he entertained the crowd with stories of life growing up in rural Minnesota. About half of Keillor's stage stories were true, he said later. The rest were embellishments, what Keillor called bits of embroidery around the edges.

The show brought out hundreds to watch, including three generations of one Fishersville family. Grand-



Keillor



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The crowd claps for Garrison Keillor and The Hopeful Gospel Quartet between songs during the Fortune Williams Music Festival on Sunday.

mother Lois Orr was the true "Prairie Home Companion" fan, but her daughter and grandchildren came as well. The three ran into Keillor backstage as he and the quartet practiced before the show. Orr's granddaughter Genevieve Bowles even picked up a few tips on story-telling for her forensics

team competitions.

"He said people like stories they can believe," the Wilson Memorial High sophomore said. "People want to think your story is a gift from you to them."

"I really enjoyed it; I was really impressed," her mother, Penny Bowles said of the performance.