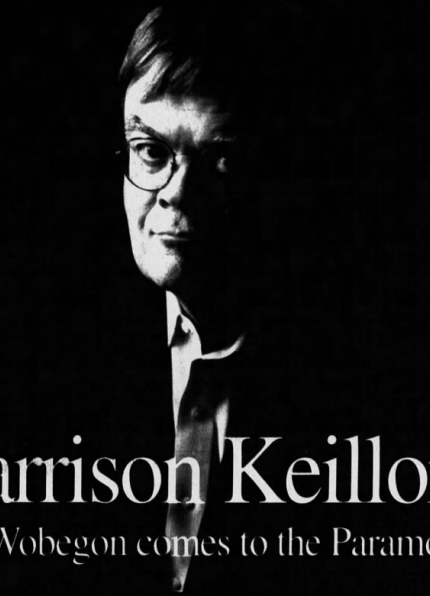


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# invite

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## Garrison Keillor

### Lake Wobegon comes to the Paramount

By CHUCK CLARNO ■ Herald Staff

**I** hear that old piano down the avenue ... I smell the maple syrup, I turn around and it's ... Garrison Keillor.

How many times have you heard that refrain at the beginning of "A Prairie Home Companion?"

Garrison Keillor's resonant voice singing the song that traditionally opens the weekly radio show. When the show is on the road, Keillor substitutes something familiar to the region — like maple syrup to Vermont — and announce the venue for that week's show.

Keillor will be appearing at 7:30 p.m. Monday at the Paramount Theatre. Tickets are on sale at the box office for \$40, \$60 and \$80. He is performing the day before at the Lebanon Opera House in Lebanon, N.H., in a benefit for The Frost Place, a nonprofit museum and poetry center based at poet Robert Frost's homestead in Franconia, N.H.

Keillor will be performing a one-man show at the Paramount. He will not be accompanied by his usual sidekicks the Royal Academy of Radio Actors. Guy's All Star Shoe Band will not back him up. That is not to say that Guy Noir won't make an appearance lurking in the shadows like any good gumbaoe. But Dnasy and Lefty will probably remain somewhere on the mythical range and continue living their "Lives of the Cowboys."

Keillor is so closely connected to "A Prairie Home Companion" that in so many ways he is a prairie home companion.

He created the show 34 years ago not long after graduating from the University of Minnesota. Keillor got the idea for the show while writing an article for the New Yorker on the Grand Old Opry.

"A Prairie Home Companion" debuted June 6, 1974, in a St. Paul, Minn., theater before an audience of a dozes heavy souls. But the show steadily grew in popularity and after a stint in New York City it returned to its Twin City home base and is now aired on some 450 National Public Radio stations.

Keillor brought "A Prairie Home Companion" to Vermont last summer, doing a show in front of an adoring crowd at the Champlain Valley Fairgrounds in Essex.

"A Prairie Home Companion's" popularity bubbled over from radio into a major motion-picture version in 2006 starring Keillor along with Meryl Streep, Lily Tomlin, Lindsay Lohan, Woody Harrison, John C. Riley and Tommy Lee Jones.

Many Vermonters are intimately familiar with the 64-year-old Keillor. He visits each morning at 8:35 on Vermont Public Radio as the voice of the "Writer's Almanac," reminding us all what literary person was born on that day, or what significant event happened on that particular date. He runs down the birthday list and then recites a poem, sometimes penned by a Vermont author like David Budbill, Ruth Stone or Grace Paley.

One popular Keillor spoof on "A Prairie Home Companion" each week centers on the Professional Organization for English Majors (POEM), "the secret society of men and women, who possess excellent spelling and punctuation skills." Yes Keillor is no joke as a writer; he's an accomplished author and poet.

He has published 17 books, for adults as well as children.

He also has had numerous short stories published and writes a daily column for Salon.com.

But what Keillor is best at is storytelling. He manages to capture the spirit and grit of the folks of the upper Midwest, particularly those in his home state of Minnesota, who are so quirky and so dear to him. Whether he is telling tales from his mythical village of Lake Wobegon or waxing eloquent in poem or prose, surely you'll be treated to some news from Lake Wobegon delivered purposefully in Keillor's drawl voice. "That's the news from Lake Wobegon where all the women are strong, all the men are good looking and all the children above average."

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