

Appleton audience finds Keillor above average



Post-Crescent photo by Kirk Wagner

GARRISON KEILLOR (right) sings a song about Appleton during his performance Saturday of "A Prairie Home Companion" at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center.

'Prairie Home Companion' pays tribute to Valley

By Cheryl Anderson
Post-Crescent staff writer

APPLETON — Wearing his trademark red tennis shoes, Garrison Keillor warmed up the audience Saturday night at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center before going live at 5 p.m. with his signature radio broadcast.

"We've not done a show devoted to a particular city in a long time," Keillor told the sold-out crowd. "I can't remember if we've ever done this before."

A Minnesota native, Keillor is host and writer of "A Prairie Home Companion," which has been in production since 1974 and broadcasts to more than 4 million listeners on 580 radio stations, and "The Writer's Almanac" heard on public radio stations across the country and locally on WPNE-FM 89.3.



A SELL-OUT CROWD fills the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center for Saturday's live broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion."

Now in its 35th year of production, "A Prairie Home Companion" on Saturday featured comedy sketches including detective Guy Noir, music by six homegrown musical acts and Keillor's signature monologue, "The News from Lake Wobegon."

Weeks before the show

came to the area, PHC staff gathered information about the Fox Cities. Keillor then pored through the notes to be able to share with the listening audience facts about Appleton and its surrounding communities.

Keillor paid tribute to area businesses and churches, Lawrence Uni-

Miss the show?

"A Prairie Home Companion" will be rebroadcast from 10 a.m. to noon today on WHID-FM 88.1.

Additionally, audio and video highlights are regularly posted on the show's Web site, www.prairiehome.org.

versity, the Packers, cheese and bratwurst and the Wisconsin ritual of masculinity "which for some is a hobby and for others a career. I'm talking about beer."

Local talent sharing the stage with Keillor were pianist, singer and songwriter Helen Exner; teen pop/rock band Dance Billy Dance; Cory Chisel; Greg Waters; American Fiction; and classical violinist Jonathan Eddy, and each got a chance to chat with Keillor beforehand

See **KEILLOR**, A-5

"We've not done a show devoted to a particular city in a long time. I can't remember if we've ever done this before."

GARRISON KEILLOR, host and writer of "A Prairie Home Companion"

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KEILLOR: Fans welcome chance to see show

From A-3

about the joys of living in Appleton.

Ruth McEnroe, who traveled from Rhinelander to take in the show with her sisters from Fond du Lac, had never seen Keillor perform live but had listened to his show for years on the radio.

"You know what's so neat, all these years I'm listening to him on the radio and you don't put a face (to it). Just to see it was so cool," McEnroe said.

"I've heard 'Prairie Home Companion' on the radio, and used to listen years ago" said Dale Eggert of Manawa, who attended the show with Nancy Novotny of Appleton. "I thought it would be fun to see. It was very entertaining and exciting to see a live show like that."

"We saw the movie, we listen to the shows and now we decided we better get over here," said Simone Dorcas, who with her husband, Mike, has listened to PHC for 30 years.

"It was amazing the young people and the talent they have," said Joanne Schemm of Appleton, who attended with husband Norb.

The last time Keillor took the PAC stage was spring 2007 with the Fox Valley Symphony, where he made a surprise announcement after the sold-out appearance that he was donating his \$35,100 performance fee to the orchestra.

A second nontaped show Saturday followed at 8:30 p.m.

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