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Tyler Gibbons and Robin MacArthur of Marlboro, a husband-and-wife duo who perform as Red Heart the Ticker, will be appearing this evening on the radio show "A Prairie Home Companion" with Garrison Keillor.

Local duo making waves tonight

MacArthur, Gibbons to appear on 'Prairie Home Companion'

By JON POTTER
Reformer Staff

BRATTLEBORO — Robin MacArthur is getting a second chance to make a first impression on Garrison Keillor and his "Prairie Home Companion" audience.

MacArthur, of Marlboro, has hazy memories of being backstage during a broadcast of "A Prairie Home Companion" when she was about 5 sometime in the 1980s, watching her grandmother, famed singer-songwriter and folklorist Margaret MacArthur, perform.

Today, Robin and her husband, Tyler Gibbons, will be joining Keillor on center stage, as one of six duos in the show's "Great American Duet Sing-Off."

MacArthur and Gibbons, who have been performing as the duo Red Heart the Ticker for about five years, will sing Buck Owens' "Above and Beyond" and possibly

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— Robin MacArthur

one other song. And if she gets the chance, Robin will tell Keillor about her first visit to the show.

"I would like to tell him that I saw him when I was 5, and now that dream has come full circle," she said. "I've listened to

'Prairie Home Companion' my whole life — we both have — and because of that, we're not too nervous. ... Maybe we should be."

Listeners will get the chance to vote on the winners of "The Great American Duet Sing-Off" by logging on to www.prairiehome.org after all the duets have sung. The show will be aired on both Vermont and New Hampshire public radio stations tonight from 6 to 8 p.m., and Sunday, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"I think we'd rather not think of it as a 'winning situation.' We're just thinking of it as a chance to play," said MacArthur.

In truth, MacArthur and Gibbons really never had their sights set on performing in the contest — they're plenty busy forging a life in a small house in the woods in Marl-

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boro, with their new baby daughter, Avah.

They learned the song "Above and Beyond" to sing not long ago at a friend's wedding, and friends thought it so sounded so good, they urged the couple to send in a tape.

Robin was out walking Avah when Gibbons got the phone call that they were in the show.

"He came running down the road to tell me," Robin remembered.

The two headed to New York Friday morning, with Avah and Robin's dad, Dan, along for the ride. There were eight hours of rehearsal Friday and eight more today, before the broadcast this evening.

MacArthur and Gibbons are the second act with local ties to perform on a "Prairie Home Companion" contest in the last 24 months. In April 2007, Brattleboro native Stefan Amidon performed with the Sweetback Sis-

ters in the "People in their Twenties" contest.

A couple before they began playing music together, Red Heart the Ticker was born in the winter of 2005, when they were living in a cabin without running water in the Marlboro woods.

In 2006, Red Heart the Ticker released "For the Wicked," which earned critical acclaim and some radio airplay. In late 2008, the duo began recording its second CD, "Oh My! Mountains Below." The songs on it are influenced by Margaret MacArthur's death and by the subsequent birth of Robin and Tyler's daughter.

"Oh My! Mountains Below" is due to be released in May, and the duo has a CD release party slated for the May 26 at The Loft in Brattleboro.

For information in the meantime, visit www.rhtt.net or www.myspace.com/redhearttheticker.

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