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*the*Stage

ENTERTAINMENT LANCASTER

## Garrison Keillor keeps the 'Radio Romance' alive

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Even after one of the tires on the tour bus blew and everyone had to wait four hours in the middle of the night — in the middle of nowhere — for help, Garrison Keillor sounds like he's having a good time on his "Radio Romance" tour, which is coming to the American Music Theatre

on Monday.

"I'm sitting in the back of the bus right now, going through Utah with the distant mountains and the high plains," Keillor said during a phone interview last week, the day after the tire incident.

"Radio Romance" is taking Keillor and his Prairie Home Companion compadres all across the country.

So why is the 70-year-old Keillor, who will mark 40 years of "Prairie Home Com-

panion" on the radio next year, spending his summer touring?

"It's my idea of fun," he says in that wonderfully soothing voice. "Some people go canoeing in the Northwoods and other people would prefer to do this. I'm having a great time. I get to sing duets with wonderful singers [Sara Watkins is joining Keillor at AMT] and the band [Rich Dworsky and the Guys' All Star Shoe Band] is all here and Fred Newman [the sound ef-

fects guy], and I will do silly things people our age probably shouldn't be doing, like talking about mutant pterodactyls, submarines and various kinds of dogs."

And of course, there's Guy Noir Private Eye, Dusty and Lefty and the news from

**Garrison Keillor**  
Mon. 8 p.m. \$45-\$95  
American Music Theatre  
2425 Lincoln Highway East  
397-7700. www.amtshows.com

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## Keillor

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Lake Wobegon.

Parts of the show change from night to night, with Keillor fine-tuning and bringing new music in to each show.

And unlike the radio show, there are fewer time restraints.

"We're running anywhere from two to two and a half hours," he says. "At intermission, I go out in the audience and we sing songs together. It's been a study in anthropology to find out what people know."

Keillor, 70, has been a radio host of one sort or another since 1969, when he began working for Minnesota Public Radio.

"Prairie Home Companion" made its debut in 1974, and except for a few breaks when Keillor thought he might retire, it's been running on public radio (distributed by American Public Media) ever since.

"I'm just about getting the hang of it," he says.

Keillor notes that the show is often more of a challenge these days than it used to be.

"Your standards go up the longer you do something," he says. "Things you would have received joyfully ten years ago don't move you anymore."



Eric Hagness

Garrison Keillor will take the stage Monday at the American Music Theatre.

"After 40 years, you become a perfectionist. You have no alternative. And it's not easy being a perfectionist and doing a live show."

Those live shows are put together "helter-skelter," according to Keillor. They are performed twice, once on Friday and then for broadcast on Saturday. (None of the Radio Romance shows will be broadcast.)

"It's always very last minute. I go off into a dressing room with Sam Hudson, who produces the show. We've worked out several alternative orders and we decide at the last minute what to include. Sometimes, something isn't quite ready to do or the show is running long.

"We really run by the seat of our pants. It's an amazing impromptu piece of work, and we do make changes on the fly, especially when we are running late," he says. "We have to have ballast to throw overboard."

Keillor is carrying on a tradition of narrative pastoral comedy, centered on the small town. His humor is gentle but on target, keying into human foibles in all their variations.

"I think I have a duty to the town of Lake Wobegon," he says of the fictional town he talks about at every show. "I do take that seriously."

And he takes the idea of radio seriously as well.

"I have certain people in mind when I do the show," he says. "I think of people living in isolated places, prisoners, truck drivers, people without much money who need the radio much more than most people do. Someone in Manhattan doesn't have the same need as somebody living in Horsefly, Mont."

Now that he's 70, Keillor has begun to think about the time when he won't be doing "Prairie Home Companion."

"I am looking for people to keep the show going when I step back, which of course I will do," he says. "When I can no longer sing harmony with a good woman singer, when I can't remember the news from Lake Wobegon, I will stop."

In the meantime, there is plenty of harmonizing and plenty of news from Lake Wobegon on his Radio Romance tour.

"We are having a fine time," he says. "It's a wonderful way to see the country."

### localAuditions

**CHRISTMAS SHOW:** Youth auditions for the American Music Theatre's "2013 Christmas Show: The First Noel," will be held from 5 to 9 p.m. Monday, Aug. 12, at the theater, 2425 Lincoln Highway East.

Male and female seasoned performers, ages 7-15, especially those with dance experience, are encouraged to audition. Those auditioning should be prepared to sing their favorite Christmas song a cappella as well as learn a dance combination, and wear appropriate clothing and dance shoes or sneakers.

The show will be on stage Nov. 5 through Dec. 30, 2013. Youth cast will be divided into teams, alternating performance days throughout the show's run.

For more information or to schedule an audition time, call the AMT box office at (800) 648-4102.

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL:** The Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre is seeking male and female youths ages 8 to 12 years old for its upcoming production of "A Christmas Carol." These roles require singing, dancing and acting.

The theater is also seeking male and female actors ages 18 and up for the production's ensemble.

Auditions will be held Sunday, Aug. 4, starting at 10 a.m. Those auditioning must prepare a cut of a vocal selection and bring sheet music. An accompanist will be provided. Callbacks will be held Sunday, Aug. 11, starting at 3:30 p.m.

Rehearsals begin Oct. 31 and the show runs from Nov. 14 to Dec. 23, Tuesdays through Sundays.

To audition, email [Lsobore@dutchapple.com](mailto:Lsobore@dutchapple.com) or call 898-1900, ext. 20, to request a time slot, leaving your name, age, height and a contact number.

