



## Keillor returns to stage with 'OLD FRIENDS'

Sarah Colburn Special to St. Cloud Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

A familiar radio voice is coming to St. Cloud for a public performance with friends from "A Prairie Home Companion."

Garrison Keillor is making the rounds with his newest show "Old Friends," following a string of sold-out performances in Minneapolis and New York. The show includes witty banter with singer Christine DiGiallonardo and music provided by pianist Richard Dworsky.

DiGiallonardo, an Italian-American Catholic from Brooklyn, New York, and Keillor, an Anglo-Evangelical from Minnesota, bring their opposing upbringings to light. On stage it plays out in the form of repartee, musical duets, lullabies, hymns and sweet songs about small towns.

"It's fun for us on a stage to talk about these enormous differences between growing up Evangelical and growing up Catholic and I think it's funny," Keillor said. "The combination of the bickering we do and the close harmony we do I think is part of the appeal."

Keillor, who was terminated from Minnesota Public Radio fol-

lowing allegations of inappropriate behavior with an individual who worked with him, is back telling stories of Lake Wobegon, reciting all 87 counties of Minnesota from memory and singing the Minnesota State song.

The performance will include a few words from "A Prairie Home Companion" sponsors including the Ketchup Advisory Board and the latest "News from Lake Wobegon." The onstage jabs and jokes will be accompanied by Dworsky, who is known by "A Prairie Home Companion" listeners for his ability to create piano scores in real time as Keillor crafts prose.

The show began in New York in early December when the two came together onstage and started a back-and-forth that had New Yorkers laughing, Keillor said. His long-term goal is to bring the show back to New York and develop it as an off-Broadway production.

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Garrison Keillor is touring with a new show that has familiar elements. CONTRIBUTED IMAGE

## Keillor

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### Dusty and Lefty

Additionally, Keillor is working on other projects. He's on his third revision of a musical he's drafting titled "Dusty and Lefty." Later this winter the script will be placed in the hands of actors who will do a read through and provide Keillor with a basis for yet more revisions.

The musical is the first time the acclaimed radio sketch writer has tried his hand at a full-length stage production. The script focuses on the trials and tribulations of the main character Lefty, and his taciturn sidekick Dusty.

The two cowboys head for a town in Wyoming, looking for Lefty's true love. He finds her and as he approaches her, he realizes she's holding an infant in her arms, an infant who he comes to learn is his very own child.

This woman is the love of Lefty's life, but to win her hand he must give up his

### If You Go

What: "Old Friends"

Who: Entertainer Garrison Keillor and singer Christine DiGiallonardo, along with pianist Richard Dworsky, take the stage for repartee, musical duets, lullabies, hymns and sweet songs about small towns.

When: 7:30 p.m. Feb. 21

Where: Pioneer Place on Fifth.

Tickets: \$45, available at [www.ppfive.com](http://www.ppfive.com).

cowboy ways and compete for her affections against a wealthy gold miner. The script is filled out with details of the town of Yellow Gulch, a forlorn mining town taken over by women, and the wit of Dusty.

"Sketches for radio are 10 minutes long so you didn't need to worry about structure...all you had to do was not get bogged down and keep it light," Keillor said.

Playwriting, he said, is different and must have a logical beginning, middle and end.

"I feel that live theater may be threatened somewhat by the pervasiveness of video and the ease of tuning in anything on your computer," he said. "I think that live events somehow fulfill a need we have to be there in person and to see and hear directly with our own eyes (and ears). As an old-fashioned person, I just feel that in the interaction between people in real time there is something that can't be reproduced electronically."

Keillor is working on the development of the script with experienced Broadway Music Director Rob Fisher and NYC Opera and Theater Director Mary Birnbaum, as well as the leadership of what he describes as a small, but ambitious, theater company out of Providence, Rhode Island.

### Working on a memoir

Keillor isn't stopping there. He's also working on a memoir titled "So Far So Good."

He's sent the manuscript off to a few editors. The work focuses on his life as a writer, a career he knew he wanted from the time he turned 13. He focuses on the education he got in the public school system and touts his teachers who truly made a difference in his life. Keillor attended the University of Minnesota and said though many of his colleagues there wanted to be writers, only two of them went on to do so.

"Talent is a very small part of it and persistence is much more important," he said. "What develops this habit of persistence is my question and I also answer it in the book."

Keillor said he hopes readers will find a sense of comedic relief in the book as well.

"I have just found it extremely awkward to write about myself," he said. "I think I've finally escaped the steel chains of chronology and I think I've written something fairly readable."

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