



GARRISON KEILLOR gives the packed audience in Winona State's Somsen Hall auditorium quite a show. Photo by Joe Van Ryn.

Winona cheers Keillor

By THOMAS EK

"It's good to be here in Winona," Garrison Keillor half sang, half said to his followers in Somsen Hall at Winona State University on Wednesday night, Nov. 6.

"I can tell the women are strong, the men are all good looking and the children above average." The crowd cooed in appreciation. Keillor is big stuff in Minnesota.

That is changing. Others have taken notice. The Minnesota born Keillor is a national celebrity, with his photograph having graced the cover of Time Magazine recently.

His estimated two million fans worship the extraordinary singer, humorist and storyteller. Every Saturday at 5:30 p.m. central time, they tune in to listen to tales of Lake Wobegon and Bluegrass music, as well as other bits of

entertainment.

Lake Wobegon is the central theme of Keillor's radio show. It's a Keillor-invented place in "Mist County," a place "Time forgot and decades cannot improve."

For eleven years the people of Lake Wobegon have always provided some new and old things for Keillor to pass onto his listeners.

Keillor's dress was typically mid-western — faded blue jeans, an Oxford shirt and sneakers. He doesn't have that big time star look. That is, however, just what he is.

The 43-year-old humorist stands 6 feet 4 inches tall, calling himself "America's tallest radio humorist." He is fast becoming a favorite storyteller. Some are even comparing him to Mark Twain. His soft, tranquilizing voice never rushes through a sentence. Pauses are common as America waits patient-

ly for another down-home line of Keillor humor.

But you almost have to be a Keillor fan to appreciate his unique brand of philosophical humor. The humor of "A Prairie Home Companion" won't thrill most high school or college students. About 85 percent of the people in Wednesday night's crowd were over 30-years-old. Most of his fans are well educated and characteristically intellectual.

Keillor pokes fun at himself, often calling himself shy. His friends call him "Quite shy and introverted."

Garrison Keillor is a quiet giant who wants to make it big. He doesn't want to say "Thank you, I'm glad you enjoyed the show." He wants to say, "Rise my people."

Across America, people are rising and cheering for Garrison Keillor and Lake Wobegon...in Mist County, of course.