



TED KIRK/LINCOLN JOURNAL-STAR

Humorist Garrison Keillor listens to other cast members while rehearsing a song about Lincoln before his Saturday performance at Lied Center for Performing Arts.

## Keillor broadcasts city's virtues

### Lied staging of 'American Radio Company' adds local touch

BY L. KENT WOLGAMOTT  
Lincoln Journal-Star

Garrison Keillor walked onto the Lied Center stage at 4:50 p.m. Saturday to warm up the sold-out crowd. Just over two hours later, another installment of his "American Radio Company" was in the books.

As always, the lanky, bespectacled Minnesotan was low-key, genial and humorous and was backed by a talented cast of regulars and a few local guests.

The show, broadcast live nationally on American Public Radio, went on smooth and easy with only a dropped paper or two and a tangled microphone chord making a stage hand scurry — the result of the experience of the cast and crew and of the preparation that took

most of the day.

At mid-afternoon, Keillor was rehearsing with the musicians who joined him on stage — the Hopeful Gospel Quartet, with whom he sings bass, country folk duo Robin and Linda Williams and local polka band the Mark Vyhidal Orchestra.

Once the music was finished, Keillor and the cast ran through the scripts that made up the bulk of the show. Each sketch got a single run-through as lines were added and deleted and delivery critiqued.

The skit that changed most dramatically from rehearsal to performance was a bit on "Cliff's Notes" that summed up "Moby Dick" in about a minute.

The rehearsal reading was dramatic, when Keillor wanted humor. "The joke here is that 'Cliff's Notes' reduces everything to tiny-

ness," Keillor told his fellow actors Ivy Austin and William Parry. "Let's not read this as if we were telling a story. Let's go faster."

During the performance, "Cliff's Notes" went by at twice the speed and had double the humor.

The final group to join the rehearsal was Bonae Cantores, a Lincoln children's choir that later received the evening's loudest applause.

Following a breathless version of "Alouette" rewritten so the chorus went "in Nebraska, beautiful Nebraska, in Nebraska, every child loves fish," Keillor joked with the youngsters — "Don't accelerate too fast or you're going to lose the older performer."

Between rehearsal and perform-

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ROBYN TYSER/LINCOLN JOURNAL-STAR

Tony and Chris Hinder were joined by about 100 friends and relatives Friday, the day Hinder's Grocery and Tavern closed in the unincorporated village of St. Mary.

Store/Many attend emotional closing

Continued from page 1D "I always said if we didn't have it, until midnight," she said. Two years ago the Hinderas began

Keillor/Nation hears Lied show live

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ance, Keillor met briefly with a delegation from the town of Prairie Home, drawn to the show because Keillor came to prominence with "A Prairie Home Companion," the 1974-87 public radio variety show on which "American Radio Company" is patterned.

They brought with them a freshly baked apple pie, per Keillor's request when he was contacted a few months ago.

Cutting and sampling the pie, Keillor remarked: "I would say except for my grandmother and one of my aunts, this is up in the pantheon of pies."

After making sure that all the Prairie Home visitors could see the sold-out show, Keillor slipped into a meeting with producer Christine Tschida, still working out the final details for the show just 30 minutes before it was to begin.

As would be expected, once the "ON AIR" sign went on, sharpness and verve not seen in the rehearsal emerged from all the performers.

Sound effects master Tom Keith cranked up his bag of tricks on the left side of the stage, stealing the show on a couple sketches while Keillor ran things with the relaxed grace of a veteran.

That was clearest when he sat at a stool in the center of the stage and delivered, script-free, a lengthy version of "News From Lake Wobegon," the popular holdover from "A Prairie Home Companion."

Keillor arrived in Lincoln Thursday night and had an assistant in town even earlier. He spent Friday night writing sketches and putting the show together.

His local research popped up in skits like the "Cliff's Notes" bit, in observations about the trees and awnings downtown and in songs, including the show-closer, titled simply "Lin-

coln."

After celebrating the city's virtues and observing its increasing population, Keillor had some words of advice for Lincolinites as the song came to a close.

"A word to the wise should be sufficient. Do as Seattle does," he said. Seattlites have been bad-mouthing Seattle for decades, talking about how it rains all the time and it's boring, and as a result Seattle remains the great city it always was. Talk down Lincoln now while you have the chance... before you attract a lot of newcomers who aren't going to be easy to get rid of."

Keillor was invited to Lincoln by Nebraska Public Radio. Last year, Keillor's producers sent a letter to all affiliate stations asking if they would like to host the May 1 program, which was to be a celebration of Fertility Day.

Nebraska was chosen from nine finalists, a selection that local officials say likely was aided by Keillor's successful 1991 performance in Red Cloud.

Proceeds from Saturday's performance were split between Keillor's organization and the local sponsors, the Lied Center and Nebraska Public Radio.

"Frankly, it's profitable for us. But needless to say, it's much more than the dollars," said Nebraska Public Radio general manager Steve Robinson. "It's the excitement of having it and being able to offer the tickets to our listeners."

ing Lessons

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