

Garrison Keillor to bring 'News From Lake Wobegon' to SD

By Pat Stein
Staff Writer

Despite 20 years of writing and performing "A Prairie Home Companion," Garrison Keillor still has no concerns about running out of material for the popular radio variety show that airs Saturdays on 325 public broadcasting stations across the nation.

The creator of the folksy "News From Lake Wobegon" monologues will perform at 2:45 p.m. Saturday, when KPBS radio will present "A Prairie Home Companion" live from the San Diego Civic Theatre. But as of Wednesday, Keillor had "no idea" what he would talk about.

"When we arrive in San Diego on Friday, I'll walk around and look at things and talk to people," Keillor said in an interview from St. Paul, Minn., which is the 1974 birthplace of "A Prairie Home Companion." It still serves as home base for the quirky two-hour show that claims an estimated 2 million listeners.

Keillor says he "never thinks about the show far in advance." When he's ready to receive an inspiration for the next installment of "News From Lake Wobegone," he gets in his car and drives to some small town near where he lives in Wisconsin, just across the border from Minnesota.

"I go into a local coffee shop, and of course no one will tell you their life story because they can tell you're not from there, but I listen to people talking," Keillor said.

A few snippets of overheard conversation are all he needs as the basis for a monologue.

Event Information

- **What:** Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion"
- **When:** Live performance is at 2:45 p.m. Saturday; KPBS radio 89.5 FM broadcasts will be at 3 and 5 p.m. Saturday and noon Sunday
- **Where:** San Diego Civic Theatre, 202 C St., San Diego
- **Tickets:** 236-6510 or 278-8497



Garrison Keillor will perform in San Diego.

"All I need is a subject and a verb," he said. "I can imagine the rest."

Keillor, who is also a best-selling author, is known for humor that treads a fine line between sentimentality and satire. His stories about the mythical central Minnesota town of Lake Wobegon are heartfelt (with a tinge of irony) and filled with characters such as Clarence and Arlene Bunsen, Father Wilmer of Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility and The Whippets, a baseball team comprised of middle-aged men who always lose.

Keillor has been to San Diego before, and he calls it "paradise as anyone from Minnesota would see it."

"San Diego is a city of perpetual youth and continuous spring," Keillor observed.

"When I run into transplanted Minnesotans in San Diego, I can understand why they've moved there."

go plant tomatoes or play tennis."

However, he does admit that he now enjoys the radio broadcasts more than he did 20 years ago when he started the show "so I would have something to do on Saturday night, since I wasn't that much fun to be with and never got invited to parties."

In the early years, he admitted to being "frozen with fear." Now, he says, he particularly enjoys the touring shows, such as the one that will be presented Saturday at 202 C St. in downtown San Diego. The line-up includes such special musical guests as blues stylist Maria Muldaur (best known for her 1974 hit "Midnight at the Oasis") and the U.S. Navy Band San Diego. "A Prairie Home Companion" regulars like sound-effects wizard Tom Keith and keyboardist Rich Dworsky as well as the Guy's All-Star Shoe Band will be on hand.

Keillor will present many of his favorite characters and his signature "News From Lake Wobegone." In the monologue, Keillor confided that he might take a few potshots at San Diego, but because "Minnesotans are polite," the barbs will be so subtle and so courteous that "only people from Lake Wobegon will know they're potshots."

KPBS radio 89.5 FM will broadcast the concert show live from 3 to 5 p.m. Saturday. It will be re-aired at its regularly scheduled time from 5 to 7 p.m. and again from noon to 2 p.m. Sunday.

Tickets are available through Ticketmaster (278-8497) or the Civic Theatre box office (236-6510) and they range in price from \$22.50 to \$55.

Though he wonders "why we don't all want to live in San Diego," Keillor says he is quite happy in his Wisconsin home, where he has "woods, a garden and a studio."

Because he considers himself primarily a writer, he says he doesn't dwell on the radio show.

"The show just rolls along from week to week," Keillor said. "When we finish one we