



CHUCK KENNEDY/KRT - TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES



THE MAN

behind the microphone

BY JASON DAVIS

RADIO LISTENERS
RECOGNIZE HIS
VOICE INSTANTLY,
BUT THERE'S
MORE TO
GARRISON
KEILLOR THAN
MEETS THE EAR.
IN AN EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW,
KEILLOR TELLS *TB*
WHAT'S ON
HIS MIND.

Radio host Garrison Keillor comes to the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center on May 18, where he promises to talk a while, sing a while and wear his trademark red socks.

"It's been a quiet week in Lake Wobegon, my home town," comes the man's soft voice through the radio on a Saturday evening, beginning another installment of a weekly American broadcasting tradition. It's a great storytelling device, this cardigan-comfortable introduction to an intimate exchange between speaker and listener — a rare theater-of-the-mind moment for anyone who grew up with radio as an intensely personal experience rather than the homogenized audio wallpaper it has become today. But the man isn't telling the whole truth. It's not very quiet at all for Garrison Keillor these days.

For more than 30 years, audiences have tuned into Keillor's variety show, *A Prairie Home Companion*, for music and poetry and comedy and tales about gentler days in the host's fictional Minnesota birthplace, where "the women are strong, the men are good looking and the children are above average," as the saying goes. More than 4 million listeners on more than 550 radio stations worldwide (including WUSF-89.7 FM locally) know him as the folksy figure whose wry view of small-town America comes to life in "The News from Lake Wobegon," a 20-minute signature monologue that *Time* magazine once described as an "out-of-body experience."

Yet there's more going on than a steady Midwestern diet of Powdermilk Biscuits, droll public service announcements for the American Duct Tape

