
Pro Rege

Volume 7 | Number 4

Article 10

June 1979

Key to Theatre

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Recommended Citation

Koldenhoven, James (1979) "Key to Theatre," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 7: No. 4, 33 - 34.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol7/iss4/10

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separated by an impenetrable gulf.

Swierenga acknowledged that social science history embodies certain dangers, such as a tendency towards an ideological behavioralism and a propensity to ignore the human aspects of history. Nevertheless, he argued, these are more than offset by positive values, such as encouraging historians to make their assumptions clear and introducing theories and hypotheses that are very useful in enabling the historian better to focus his research. Traditional and behavioral historians have found it quite possible to coexist within the historical profession, he noted. "Behavioral history does not and cannot provide an objective seamless web containing all aspects of human life," Swierenga concluded, "but it can be most effectively used to describe, explain and understand some aspects of history."

Wm. Nawyn



Key to Theatre

Those who availed themselves of the opportunity to visit with Tom Key, or hear his performance of C.S. Lewis, were not disappointed. Tom Key is a dynamic Christian theatre artist. He is an actor. He has a future, too, if the Christian community will give him support.

This 27-year old Georgian was raised a Southern Baptist, though he says he was not a Christian until a few years ago. In the meantime, Tom Key

had been pursuing an acting career. Not that he was born into a family of actors. Quite the opposite. He says, "My father had one position and one position only, about theatre, and that position was that theatre is inherently evil." That was his first obstacle. Unfortunately, it would seem that the inspiration for him to become an actor came from a totally secularized commercial theatre experience. Tom reported that while he was in high school, the school bussed its students to New York. There the kids were turned loose to see some Broadway plays. "I was mesmerized," he said, "and I knew from that time on, I had to be an actor."

His interest soon got him enough training and experience to get some small roles in local theatre productions. His big opportunity came, as he saw it then, to direct and perform theatre in a cabaret, a kind of dinner theatre situation. The shows were all geared to selling food and drinks. The bar was the most profitable part of the enterprise, and the producer would actually mingle with the audience after a scene or song was performed to count the number of drinks sold. Key said, "In a sense we were all bartenders in disguise. Not that I'm a teetotaler, but I didn't get a Masters degree in theatre and become a Christian just to push drinks."

Then Tom Key got another break, this time more to his liking. A matron of the local community asked if he would do something at a poetry club meeting to restore some interest in literature. Key accepted the invitation, and was soon looking for material. Instead of poetry, he came across C.S. Lewis, the famous English scholar and writer of *The Screwtape Letters*. Tom Key's interest in C.S. Lewis grew. He read everything he could get his hands on. And in the process, Key developed both a short presentation for the poetry club and, later, material for a one-man show,

which he plans to take to New York.

Here are some of Tom Key's observations for Christians, both actors and audience:

1. He says that what we need is a total commitment from the actor-artists who are Christians. He says this does not mean that the Christian has to do what he calls "witness art." "Witness art is neither witness nor art." He calls witness art "a hybrid — it tries to entertain as well as teach a lesson." It does neither successfully.

2. "The more control I have in the business, the better off I am," Key says. He means that actors too often place themselves at the mercy of the producer who "wants to turn a fast buck," and who will require actors to do things that are not within their principles. Without the support of the Christian community, however, it is virtually impossible to control the art of theatre. Without the Christian community in support, the Christian actor is, in Key's words, "forced to compromise himself."

3. Key feels that it is important to test his C.S. Lewis show in a New York theatre. "For good or bad, New York is still the place where the art of theatre is finally tested. That's where the critics

are, and that's where the serious theatre artists come to find jobs and to display their talent." He adds: "I feel that it will do more good to have a Christian play on Broadway than to have 1000 Christian plays which, for reasons of quality, mismanagement, or lack of vision, never make it into the mainstream of dramatic literature."

Tom Key, gifted artist and challenging Christian, is out there now somewhere, carrying out the will of God for his life and for the life of the kingdom. His high standards were an inspiration to many who heard him talk.

James Koldenhoven

Note: Some of the quotations are from *Christian Theatre Artists Guild Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 7, Sept., 1978.



Report on Jim Polet's Visit

On the afternoon of Friday, March 1, the Special Events Committee and the Business Administration and Economics Departments, in conjunction with the Future Business Executives Club, sponsored a lecture by