

Community Comment  
June 23, 2015

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

Did you happen to watch the Tony Awards earlier this month? *Fun Home* took home the coveted Tony Award for Best Musical. I had not read much about that show prior to the telecast—and I'm an old Broadway press agent and try to keep up on those things. One of the show's stars, and the evening's youngest nominee, Sydney Lucas, did not win the Best Featured Actress prize. But her performance that evening has haunted me each day since seeing her perform. And I am not alone in that experience.

Lucas sang one of the signature songs from the show, "Ring of Keys," in which young Alison recognizes a kindred spirit in —quoting the show—an “old-school butch” delivery woman.

Some of the lyrics: “You’re swagger, and your bearing, and the just right clothes you’re wearing; your short hair and your dungarees and your lace-up boots—and your keys, oh, your ring of keys.

"[It] is not a song of love," said composer Jeanine Tesori in her Tony acceptance speech. "It's a song of identification because for girls you have to see it to be it."

The award-winning composer explained her Ring of Keys moment: "I didn't realize that a career in music was available to women until 1981 when I saw the magnificent Linda Twine conduct *Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music*, and that was my 'Ring of Keys' moment.

Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron won Best Original Score for *Fun Home*, the first all-female songwriting team to win this award. Kron also won the Tony for Best Book of a Musical.

I have listened to this song almost every day since the Tonys. It's only been in the last week that I don't full-on cry while listening to it. (If you google the song, make sure you catch the Tony version and not the Drama Desk version—for some reason they don't really compare—the Tony version will knock your socks off.)

Most of us have had a “Ring of Keys” moment—maybe several of them. That moment when your realm of experience is expanded to include that one thing that truly makes your heart sing—and you had no idea what it was until you saw it. You knew it was there, but had no identifiers to explain it or put it into words.

My Ring of Keys moment was the first time I saw live theater and heard the overture begin. I knew I had to be a part of that. How? I wasn't sure. But it always stayed with me. I thought after high school my involvement would simply be as a regular audience member—and I was fine with that. Until I moved to Washington, D.C. and made that fateful call to the Kennedy Center press office and asked who I should address my resume to. They asked me “for the receptionist position?” and I said yes. And I never looked back.

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.