

# NEWS ANCHOR OR CHRIST?

Bob Bowersox debuts 'The Return' at The Red Barn Theatre

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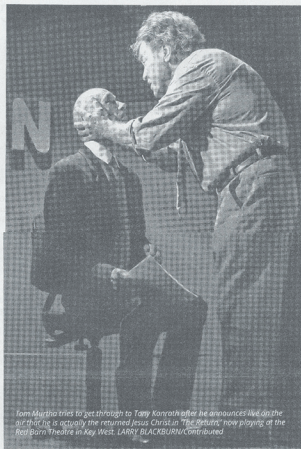
If Jesus Christ returned — as a trusted news anchor no less — how would the public react? "The Return" is playwright Bob Bowersox's quest to answer some lighthearted cultural and personal questions about today's reaction of organized religion and religious "salvation."

Bowersox has crafted a play that investigates religious phenomena in the best possible setting — the lifeblood of mainstream culture, the media. Lead anchorman, David Steele of the World Wide News, played by a convincing Toby Konrath, suddenly announces he is Jesus Christ on live television. The subsequent outcome ranges from casual disbelief to religious fanatics making him a demagogue. Bowersox adeptly strikes at the shallowness of mainstream media as the network bigwigs care less about the truth and more about the ratings. Melody Moore gives a sharp-tongued performance as the toothy network exec, Amanda Richards, come not to save the day but profit off it.

The counterpoints to David Steele's insanity is his wife, Patricia Steele, played by the delightful Vanessa McCaffrey, who simply wants to grow old with her husband, not Jesus Christ; and his boss at WNN, Karl M. Stahl, who dismisses the nonsense with scotch and aptly acts as the passive masses who make no stand against the insanity, only drink to it.

The crux of the play is in Steele's intent as he says, "Man's faith in himself, I just want to give it back to him," but his producer Charlie, played by Tom Murtha, who happens to be dying of cancer asks, "Ever think he just doesn't want it?" The quick-witted exchanges between all the characters is a facetious mirroring of the various notions of faith throughout our society.

"The Return" will run at the Red Barn Theatre in Key West Nov. 1-19.



Tom Murtha tries to get through to Toby Konrath after he announces live on the air that he is actually the returned Jesus Christ in "The Return," now playing at the Red Barn Theatre in Key West. LARRY BLACKBURN/CONTRIBUTED

**"I am nothing more than you, you think you need a savior — but you are the savior."**

— David Steele, news anchor and 'Jesus Christ'



Tom Murtha, Melody Moore, and Karl Stahl watch a news broadcast to see what Toby Konrath might say in "The Return," now playing at the Red Barn Theatre in Key West.

Bowersox, who grew up with a fundamentalist mother and by-the-Good-Book preacher grandfather, feels, "Too many people are worshipping the medium not the message." "The Return" delightfully pokes fun at people's gullibility and vulnerability when it comes to religion.

Bowersox wrote "The Return" for these particular actors who charmingly bring the play to life with ease and elocution. Tickets for "The Return" are available at [redbarntheatre.com/tickets](http://redbarntheatre.com/tickets) or call the box office 305-296-9911.

