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Locksmith Rod Oden launched his Southwest Entertainment Theatre Group (SET) to entertain and generate discussions about today's important issues. *Photos courtesy of Tom Mendoza*

Metro Locksmith Opens "Hot Topics" Theater in Santa Clarita

- Online at [setheatre.com](#): [Southwest Entertainment Theatre Group](#)

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

(March 25, 2010) Wayside Locksmith Rod Oden is diligent about testing the locks he installs to keep Metro's doors secure and its people and property safe.

In fact, days before the Gold Line East Side Extension opened in November, Oden and the rest of the Metro Key Shop were busy "switching out" scores of locks to make them accessible to Metro employees.

"Switching out" locks, he explained, is standard procedure when a project is completed by a contractor and officially turned over to Metro.

Earlier this month, Oden secured his locksmith tools gear and launched the Southwest Entertainment Theatre (SET) Group, a "black box" theatre venue he created to showcase "relevant, powerful and entertaining productions that start and continue discussions about social and political themes."



Oden and Managing Director Jon Ross put their construction skills to work on the 800 square-foot facility before this month's opening.

A former theatre technical director, Oden, who completed courses in theatre arts from Ferris State University in Michigan, said he wanted to construct a venue to provide relevant stage works for younger audiences who have grown tired of a never-ending stream of plays like *Annie*.

"People ask me, 'Why aren't you doing Neil Simon? Why aren't you doing comedy?' And the reality is that those are shared entertainment plays. You'll laugh while you're there, and then you're done," he said. "The plays I do, you'll walk away learning something about yourself, and about what you've watched, and that stays with you for a while."

Shockingly good reviews

Currently, two single-act plays produced by the SET Group have been met with "shockingly good" reviews from area critics, said Oden.

The first – *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains it All* – is an absurdly humorous play about a dogmatic nun who gives the audience her own somewhat skewed perspectives on life and all things spiritual and is taken-aback when some of her former students show up to confront her.



Oden says audiences are sometimes brought to tears when they watch

Japhy Frolick (Thomas) and Janice Crow-Christensen in the twisted comedy
Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You.

The second – the *Actor's Nightmare* – zeroes-in on the challenges faced by a man who unwittingly wanders onto a theatre stage only to be immediately shanghaied by the cast and crew to act out scenes he knows nothing about.

"He doesn't know what play it is, and doesn't know any of his lines," said Oden.

"We're doing well playing to full houses and everyone is interested," Oden said noting that performances end March 27 and that a new season with a new playbill will open in June.

With no expectations of becoming a wealthy superstar, Oden said the payoff is "providing a venue for original or unique works that focus on important issues" at extremely reasonable rates. He also makes the space available to rent for student groups or others who want to rehearse in a "real setting."

"When I was young, I always asked myself I wish there was a place that I can go and practice all these things but I couldn't," he said noting that they would have full access to the theatre's lighting and support equipment.

"My 3 year goal," said Oden, who lives with his wife Mimi and their two daughters in Santa Clarita, "is to have a strong thriving theater that benefits not only the players but also benefits the community and the audience at large."

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