

Memories of Robert Goulet

It was the Christmas holidays. The year was 1960. I was a student at the University of California, majoring in drama. I was on leave from my studies for a dose of New York and Broadway, sitting in the last row of the balcony of the Majestic Theatre. It was the Saturday matinee of Lerner & Lowe's *Camelot*, which had recently opened to mixed reviews. Headliners Richard Burton and Julie Andrews and word-of-mouth about a young actor named Robert Goulet, were keeping the box office happy with ticket sales.

As I sat in the dark, Robert Goulet began, "If Ever I Would Leave You". It remains in my memory as one of the most electrifying and moving moments I've ever experienced as a member of the audience. I had never witnessed such sheer emotional power combined with such elegance and grace. A glorious, ringing baritone, it was not only Robert Goulet's voice that captured the hearts and souls of the audience; it was also his interpretation of the role. His Lancelot was an everyman, proud, passionate, tender, incurably romantic, yet vulnerable to the frustrations of unfulfilled expectations. At the end of the song, tears streaming down our faces, the audience-as-one leapt to our feet with screams of "Bravo". In that moment, a new star exploded in the firmament.

Years later, I had the great privilege of meeting Bob in Hawaii, where we played on the same celebrity softball team, and enjoyed a few rounds of golf together, along with his dear pal, Leslie Nielsen. In fact, we played together for a couple of years, and the second time we were in Hawaii together, Bob was performing one evening and he invited me up on stage to play piano with the band. He knew I played keyboards. Well, I played horribly, jumped into the wrong key at the turnaround of a blues riff, and really never recovered. I was humiliated. Bob graciously came over to me and said, "Don't worry, kid. Just keep practicing. But don't give up your day job." We shared many laughs together. In addition to his enormous talent, Bob had a wonderfully wicked sense of humor and a loving spirit. He was my inspiration and my friend and I shall miss him. On behalf of the entire Keach family, we extend our sincere condolences to Vera and the entire Goulet family. Even though he is no longer with us, Bob will always be alive in our hearts.

With deepest sympathy,
Stacy Keach