Written by **Kelly Holt** on February 7, 2011

The King's Speech: A Story of Personal Bravery and Victory

Bertie, played by Colin Firth, has a disastrous first public speech and Firth easily sets the tenor of the story by drawing the audience into the painful and mortifying affliction kept hidden behind palace walls. Bertie's wife, played by Helena Bonham Carter, seeks a speech therapist for him and finds Lionel Logue, played by Geoffrey Rush. Logue, not intimidated by his royal client, pulls both Bertie and the audience into a picture of the wretched childhood Albert endured in the royal life. Bertie's difficult and fearful relationship with his father, as well as the insular nature of palace life, is set against the backdrop of a world on the precipice of change. As Britain is on the verge of war with Germany, war also rages in the royal household.

David has taken to cavorting with Wallis Simpson, an American commoner, and a divorcée no less, and has stubbornly and irresponsibly refused to end his relationship with her. When King George V, their father, dies, he is unprepared and unwilling to be King if it means he cannot marry Mrs. Simpson. Seated on the throne for less than a year, he finally abdicates, and the monarchy transfers to the next in line, the horrified Bertie.

Before Bertie's coronation as King George VI, he discovers that Logue hasn't the schooling for the avocation he's chosen, and in a moment of fear and despair, criticizes Logue for his lack of credentials, in spite of Logue's success in treating Bertie's stuttering. The unlikely friendship is cemented through the juxtaposition of roles — one party lacks the credentials to match his experience, and the other has not the experience required by his credentials.

The performances of the cast are excellent, the production values of the film outstanding, the *mise en scène* spectacular. Some cinematic devices, such as distorted camera images, give the viewer an idea of the claustrophobic prison in which Bertie suffered, and some palace rooms and hallways are portrayed as small and constrictive, underscoring the confinement of palace life. And scattered through the film are almost humorous scenes, in which Firth is seated in chairs that are much too small, symbolizing the discomfort he felt both with his handicap and with palace life.

The royal machine is aptly portrayed, but given little focus, and the impotence of the monarchy is given short shrift. But an offhand comment made by the Archbishop is portentous when he declares his fear that the radio, the new form of media, is really a Pandora's box.

The film ends with the new king delivering his first wartime speech, a three-minute communiqué that ushers the king, and the palace, into a new world, as the throne will never again experience the world

that Bertie's father understood.

The story succeeds in never losing its humanity, as Carter portrays a wife genuinely concerned with her husband's welfare, and Logue and Bertie develop a fast friendship, possibly one of the few real relationships Bertie has ever had.

The King's Speech carries a R-rating. Even though it is free of gratuitous sex and violence, it includes the use of several profanities. They are used in context, as a technique to sharpen Bertie's speech skills, but parents should be aware that they are present. The film has captivated the hearts of stutterers around the world, to understand the value of positive support such as Logue provided his client. Other than the obscenities, the story of King George VI is an endearing one, and one of courage and bravery not often displayed by the palace.