

Dear All,

Most of you will have heard by now about the very sad passing of Steve Knight, our dear friend and colleague.

Steve died suddenly and unexpectedly on 17<sup>th</sup> August. Everyone will have seen Steve's incredibly beautiful work on stage – he brought something very special to all Firebird performances. We have received many tributes to Steve and his work; we will post all of them on Firebird's website and include a small selection at the end of this letter.

There are many things we would like to do to remember Steve, to help us move on and take our memories of him into the future: we are still discussing our ideas and talking about how we will make them happen.

For now, however, we would like to introduce the Steve Knight Memorial Workshop Fund. This will be used to fund a day's workshop every year for all members of Firebird Theatre. We think Steve would have very much approved of this idea.

The plan is to run the Steve Knight Memorial Workshop Fund for 5 years and then review what should happen next.

To enable us to do this we would need to raise £350 every year for 5 years to pay for the workshop. This amount would cover the cost of paying someone workshop fees and expenses. Any monies saved would automatically be carried over to the next year; any monies raised would be dedicated to this scheme only.

We have already been given a generous donation of £100 towards the first workshop and would like to open this up to others who feel they would like to donate to this fund.

Members of Firebird have said that they want to give to the fund in lieu of flowers for Steve. We know that many of you already donate through the Friends and Supporters Scheme so please do not feel obliged to give more – we are hoping that small donations will quickly add up to the amount we are looking for to get us started. We will ask our trustees to look at other ways of raising the target amount for next year and subsequent years.

Although this has yet to be confirmed, we are very much hoping that Olivier award winner, Kathryn Hunter, who worked with us on *Faustus* and has run other workshops for us, will lead the first Steve Knight Memorial Workshop for us next year. We will let you know as soon as this has been confirmed.

Please contact us if you would like more information. If you want to make a donation, please make cheques payable to Firebird Theatre; cash donations also welcomed.

Tributes to Steve:

- So very sad to hear about Stephen's death. His dance in *Caliban* remains one of the most moving pieces of theatre I've ever seen and I've spoken to so many people about it. Please pass on my condolences to his family. *Jan Burke, supporter and audience member*
- He was bright and intelligent and amazingly sensitive to people, to language, to stories and the human condition. He had a brilliant wicked sense of humour! He was brave and fearless and had an expressiveness of soul that emanated from his eyes and his fingers and his body. *Kathryn Hunter, Patron of Firebird and Olivier Award winner*
- So sad to hear about Steve, he was a kind and lovely man with a wonderful soul he was a huge part of Firebird and all that it stands for, His performances have always been beautiful and he will be sorely missed. My condolences go out to his family and friends at this difficult time but his memory will live on with us and in all that Firebird does. *J Costello-Roberts, BOV Senior Technician (Studios)*
- I got to know Steve through my connection with Firebird Theatre. Steve was an incredibly thoughtful performer and was magnetic to watch on stage. I shall also remember Steve as a man with a delightful and mischievous sense of humour as well as someone who showed great support, patience and tenderness towards others. *John Nicholson, actor, writer, Peepolykus*
- He was a rare talent indeed and such a sweet, sweet man. *Tristan Sturrock, Theatre Damfino, Kneehigh*

## Obituaries desk

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### Stephen Knight

The actor Stephen Knight, who has died suddenly aged 47, worked with Firebird Theatre, an associate company of Bristol Old Vic (BOV). He had Down's syndrome and learning difficulties, and used the most public of arenas - the stage - to change people's perceptions of disability.

When Steve was born in a Bristol hospital, his mother, Jean, was given the choice to take him home or have him placed in an institution. She took him home. He went to Grimsby Park special school in Bristol, and later left home to live more independently in care homes, firstly in Manor House and latterly at Kendall House.

Throughout his adult life, Steve attended day centres, college courses and other schemes set up for people with learning difficulties. He auditioned for Firebird Theatre, a company of disabled actors, because he wanted to develop his theatrical skills.

From the moment Steve joined Firebird in 1998 he inspired his colleagues and audiences. His performances included the title role of Faustus (2004) and Caliban in *The Tempest* (2010). His final appearance

**Stephen Knight, an actor with the Firebird theatre company, helped change perceptions of disability**



at BOV came earlier this year in Alan Garner's *The Breadhorse*.

Steve knew how to use his craft and to relate to an audience; he leaves a legacy of what can be achieved if you show as many people as possible what you can do. Tom Morris, BOV's artistic director, said: "Steve's dance solo in *The Nine Lessons of Caliban* (2012) was of breathtaking beauty and precision. It was a transcendent moment because Steve was in such command of it." As Steve said: "Being an actor has made me strong."

He is survived by Jean, his brothers, David and Andrew, and his sisters, Sally and Jane.

**Jane Sallis**