

Goodbye dear friend...

Dr. Steve Zegree left us this Saturday 7th March, victim of a rapidly-spreading cancer. Music has lost one of its most faithful servants and hundreds of students, alumni, members of *World Youth Choir* and artists mourn his passing.



Steve was an accomplished musician. After an academic training in choral conducting and piano, he soon made it his mission to give modern-day music, and vocal jazz in particular, the place it deserves in the music curriculum. For thirty-four years, as a professor at the *Western Michigan University* in Kalamazoo, he trained generations of singers and pianists, many of whom are now the pride of the international jazz and pop scene. At the head of *Gold Company*, the vocal group of the school, he performed on stages around the world and received more than twenty awards for his recordings.

An advocate of vocal jazz, he continued to defend this living music until recently and had agreed to leave Kalamazoo to equip the prestigious and venerable *Jacobs School of Music* of Indiana University in Bloomington with a vocal jazz department.



Steve was involved in many projects. He founded the *Steve Zegree Vocal Camp for High School and College Students and Teachers*, led three sessions of the *World Youth Choir* and performed with *Gold Company* in many conventions for the *American Choral Directors Association*, the *Jazz Educator Association* and the *Global Symposium of the International Federation for Choral Music*.

He leaves his many arrangements and recordings with the *Heritage Music Press* and *Hal Leonard*, among other publishers.



Beyond these facts, it is to the man and the teacher that we should pay homage. Steve would do anything for his students. His teaching was not only musical. He took the time to talk about the everyday lives of each student, advocating discipline and rigour, self-respect and respect for others, to make his students artists respected for their art, their personality and their role in society. Steve required 110 percent commitment but he was always positive, encouraging and

inspiring in revealing their talent and creating confidence in everyone.



A quick search on internet is all that is required to discover the thousands of anecdotes that describe, better than this article, what Steve was like and what he represented. My story about him is probably trivial. We met by chance. I was looking for a group to take on a cancelled tour of thirty school concerts in Europe at the last minute. While nothing could foreshadow the beginning of a deep and loyal friendship, his first question was “Why are you doing concerts in schools?” I’ll leave you to imagine the sequel to our discussions.

Steve profoundly influenced the way I see my job, the direction it should take ... and he introduced me to vocal jazz backstage! I shall be eternally grateful to him.