

York Shakespeare Project

Newsletter – January 2008

Kingsley Hoffman

Very sadly, this newsletter is dedicated to Kingsley Hoffman, who tragically died over New Year.

Kingsley appeared in two YSP productions, both of them in Rowntree Park: *Romeo and Juliet* in 2005, in which he played Friar Lawrence, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2006, in which he was Egeus, to both of which he brought interesting characteristics. He had a pleasant speaking voice (which called the Bingo at Mecca in Fishergate for many years), a great love for Shakespeare and also a great enthusiasm for performing, which stretched a lot further than his appearances with the YSP. Kingsley was also involved in, amongst other things, the Millennium Mystery Plays that were held at the Minster.

He was also a remarkable character off stage, a genuine eccentric capable of asking the most peculiar questions and taking conversations down extraordinary avenues. He could be the centre of attention in the pub after rehearsals, being both entertaining and controversial in equal measure. He was able to make jokes against others, and also take jokes against himself with his innate good nature. He could, like all of us, test the patience of his fellow cast members; for example, his ability to turn up at Rowntree Park when the rehearsal was at St Luke's Church Hall and vice versa was legendary. However, this was an infuriatingness that would be easy to smile at further down the line. He was never unpleasant, and never spiteful or unkind during the rehearsal period and performances, and offered encouragement to his fellow actors.



Kingsley as Egeus, Rowntree Park, 2006

Kingsley was blessed with a free spirit, that allowed him to enjoy the better things in life, such as a bit of a drink, a bit of a smoke, music, song, good company and a

seemingly limitless imagination. Whenever meeting him in the streets of York, he would unfailingly stop for a conversation, and always leave the impression that he was about to do something far more gratifying than you were, whether this was a walk in the park, sitting in a field in the sunshine or a morning trip to a pub. He would also usually ask you to comment on the latest development in his facial hair. (He would have been VERY hurt to have heard himself described as 'receding' in the Evening Press). He also had that remarkable ability to say something before considering its impact on others! This could be hilarious, or maddening, depending on where you were standing.

His love of music was also a huge part of his life. He busked a great deal in York, in Coppergate, on Coney Street and in the market, and it is for this for he is largely known as a character in the city, and the generous memorials of other buskers say a lot about him. He was an excellent guitarist, and with his pleasing voice it was a often the case that you'd hear him in town long before seeing him. He also played live, often to raise money for good causes, and on the night he died had played at two different venues, as well as entertaining a private party.

He will be sorely missed by very many close friends, to whom he showed great kindness and shared great friendship, and more distant acquaintances to whom he was a delightful and eccentric character. From his music and busking, to his involvement in amateur theatre, from his time controlling the bingo, to his just being an extraordinary person, he will be missed and mourned.