

Friends, colleagues, students pay tribute to Burdick through Sondheim, scholarship

by News Bureau - Thursday, March 06, 2014

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/32298/friends-colleagues-students-pay-tribute-to-burdick-through-sondheim-scholarship/>

Don Burdick's friends and colleagues will pay him special tribute starting next week and lasting for decades through the songs of Sondheim and a new scholarship for performing arts students at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.

Burdick was a passionate theatre professor and director for 36 years at UW Oshkosh. He died in August last year. A 1992 Distinguished Teaching Award winner at UW Oshkosh and a lifelong theatre stock actor, director and supporter, Burdick is remembered, as his obituary eloquently states, as "a mentor to many students at the University in which he helped countless students develop their skills as actors by helping each individual create their own identities along with instilling the wonders of the well-spoken word."

On March 13 through March 15, UW Oshkosh's Theatre department will stage *Side by Side by Sondheim* in honor and remembrance of Burdick. Theatre composer Stephen Sondheim was one of Burdick's favorites, and faculty and students opted to swap out UW Oshkosh's annual production of one-act plays for a the March run as an ode to a beloved teacher, performer and community member.

"When I first came here, one of the things that stood out for me was that Don was very kind and very gracious and really knowledgeable on the subject matter," said Theatre Department Chair and Professor Merlaine Angwall. "We'd often talk about musicians and, in particular, Sondheim."

The Theater Department bills *Side by Side by Sondheim* as "a dazzling collection of songs by Broadway's musical master, Stephen Sondheim" featuring works from *Follies*, *A Little Night Music*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* as well as classics Sondheim wrote with musical theatre giants Leonard Bernstein and Richard Rodgers.

Additionally, UW Oshkosh's Theatre Department, College of Letters and Science and Foundation are collaborating with Burdick's friends, family, colleagues and former students to create "The Don Burdick Scholarship."

The scholarship will be "awarded to deserving students whose personal and professional qualities mirror the commitment to the performing arts that Don embodied." Supporters plan to raise at least \$10,000 to fully endow the scholarship and support students for years to come.

The loss of Burdick led to an outpouring of memories and applause for a gifted teacher and acolyte of the theatre.

"Don gave notes after every performance, including closing night," Tony Teofilo '99, a communications

and theatre arts graduate now in Los Angeles, California, wrote in an online guest book connected to Burdick's August 2013 obituary. "His attitude was that there was something to be learned after every show, no matter if there was a crowd coming again or not. Don was a great and compassionate teacher. These years later, I remember him best for his sense of humor, and no-nonsense teaching style."

"I fondly remember the many challenging and exciting assignments Mr. Burdick gave me and my classmates while I was a student at UW-O," wrote Carol (Dorn) King '77 of Neenah, who graduated UW Oshkosh a speech and English major. "His Voice and Diction class is one I've never forgotten, and I have used his advice throughout my career as a Speech teacher. His gentle manner and endearing smile will always remain in my memory. I know he'll keep all those angels up there entertained with his fascinating stories about the characters he played."

Characters he played... and played with.

In a 2009 write-up done by UW Oshkosh's Learning in Retirement (LIR) group – a nonprofit that, since the late 1990s, has provided lifelong learning opportunities for older adults – Burdick's acting chops got some worthy spotlight.

Burdick was at UW Oshkosh for the opening of its Frederic March Theatre in 1971. Fitting, as "Don Burdick not only met Fredric March but performed with him in a production titled "The Visit,"" the LIR profile states. "He sat at Marsh's table during opening night."

Burdick was a champion for the LIR group, remembered for volunteering countless hours to help organize trips, dining experiences and other arts and cultural immersions in the Oshkosh area and beyond.

"That's the thing that sets him apart," Angwall said. "He was loved by students and everyone for a reason. He was passionate about what he did and that showed."

Tickets for *Side by Side by Sondheim* remain on sale at the Theatre Box Office or online at www.uwosh.edu/theatre. Ticket prices are \$5 for general admission, \$4 for senior citizens or alumni and \$4 for UWO students with ID.

The box office is open the week of each production, Monday through Friday from Noon to 4 p.m. and in evenings of each performance from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Learn more, give:

- [Give to the Don Burdick Scholarship](#)
- [Learn more about the scholarship, leave a memory](#)
- [UW Oshkosh Theatre](#)