

New MSU theater professor, a Broadway vet, dies at 43

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(Photo: Courtesy photo/Michigan.com)

EAST LANSING – On Broadway, Greg Reuter played Billy Flynn in "Chicago," a French guard in the original cast of "Monty Python's Spamalot," a gnome and a skeleton and pied piper in the original cast of "Shrek: The Musical" and other roles besides.

To students and faculty in Michigan State University's theater community, Reuter was a prized new professor who has passed away far too early.

Reuter, a 20-year Broadway veteran and newly named musical theater and choreography professor at MSU, died last Thursday. He was 43. The cause has not been released by family, said MSU Department of Theatre Chair Kirk Domer.

"It is great to see such an outpouring of memories and support in the Broadway community," Domer said. "I hear he is being toasted on Broadway every night."

State Rep. Sam Singh became friends with Reuter in the second grade in Livonia.

"Greg was an incredibly talented performer so it didn't surprise any of us that he would find success on Broadway," he said.

Reuter was excited about joining the MSU theater department so he could share those experiences with his students, Singh said.

"He was such a caring person who wanted to share his talents and inspire his students to achieve their dreams."

Domer said Reuter brought experience and energy with him when he joined the department this fall, that he "brought Broadway to the classroom."

"He considered every class as a professional preparation for our theater students," he said. "When we hired him it was a win-win all the way around."

After 20 years, Reuter's list of professional contacts was extensive, he said, "and he wasn't shy about sharing it with the student body."

Domer said Reuter started a program for students to get in touch with Broadway professionals and answer questions about a career and life on Broadway.

"Greg Reuter was adding an entirely new dimension to the Michigan State University Department of Theatre with its new emphasis on musical theater and choreography," said Jeanie Croope, a board member of the Friends of MSU Theater.

"His students loved him and the recent showcase they presented showed that the talent is there and eager to soak up the knowledge of a talented Broadway professional who was committed to serving and preparing his students," she said.

Reuter, she said, will be sorely missed.

Reuter attended high school in Livonia and then graduated from Western Michigan University with a bachelor in fine arts.

Along with his work on Broadway, he performed on the Tony Awards broadcast three times, lent his voice to three Grammy Award-winning cast albums and numerous commercials.

MSU students started a fund-raiser Dec. 20 on Indiegogo online to donate to Reuter's family to help with funeral costs or other expenses. The goal was \$500. They raised \$665 in two days.

A funeral service for Reuter will take place at 6 p.m. on Sunday at Thayer-Rock Funeral Home, 33603 Grand River, Farmington. Visitation will be from 2-6 p.m.

Will Kangas is a writer for the Lansing State Journal

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