



## Unity Theatre Ensemble Mourns The Passing Of Ralph E. Greene, Theatre Pioneer And Director

**U**nity Theatre Ensemble mourns the loss of its founder and producing/artistic director, Ralph E. Greene who peacefully passed away at his home on May 15, 2020 from complications associated with a late diagnosis of stomach cancer. He was

78 years old.

Greene was well-known to the East St. Louis community during the mid 1970's thru the mid 1990's as the coordinator and director of the SIU Edwardsville's Performing Arts Training Center later renamed the Katherine Dunham Center for the Performing Arts; and as the artistic director of Kutana Players later renamed Unity Theatre Ensemble.

For twenty plus years, Mr. Greene, tirelessly devoted his arts administrative skills and creative talents to nurture the cultural and performing arts development of bi-state youth and adults enrolled at the SIUE, East St. Louis Center.

While in East St. Louis, he and his company of actors and dancers (many went on to have professional careers) created unforgettable productions and transformed many local spaces around town into theaters. The history of those places include the Northwest Neighborhood Opportunity Cen-

ter later known as the GEMM Center; a converted catholic church referred to as ESLIDEC; and the East St. Louis Center of SIUE which was housed at the old Broadway Hotel on the now renamed Obama Avenue.

Directing successful and thought-provoking shows; creating a theater in the many different spaces was sometimes an extreme challenge. But, Mr. Greene made it work and audiences left satisfied and inspired. He often said that "nothing worthwhile is achieved without a challenge". And, he met those challenges with a quiet, calm and harmonious demeanor.

After, Greene left the university in 1996, he and his wife, managing director and actress, Bonnie Harmon, moved the theater company to St. Louis where they continued producing shows until the end of October 2012. At that time, challenges with his health required Greene to take a hiatus from his nonstop creative history of 41 years. In December 2017, he returned to limited activity with the theater company until his final production which was an encore run of Everything Must Change in May 2018.

Ralph Greene was also a spiritual man, a very serious and studious seeker of truth and reality and the true purpose

for life and living it. For 40 plus years he was the Chairman of New Age Truth of Missouri, Incorporated, a not-for-profit focused on community service and self-help education programs. Mr. Greene was preceded in death by his father, Major Greene; mother, Irazona Knight-Greene; brother, Isaac Greene; sister, Angie Nora Greene-Barlow; and step-daughter, Marie Girardeau-Bianchetta.

A memorial fund will be established in his name to honor and continue his legacy with the mission to support developing young playwrights and performing artists.

Greene's constructive influence, noble character and nurturing manner runs deep with those he touched. Therefore, a legacy memorial event will be planned sometime in the future once it is socially safe to do so. Meanwhile, members of the St. Louis theater community with whom he worked will be hosting an online Zoom Tribute in his honor. Also, members of New Age Truth of Missouri, are presenting a Facebook Live Tribute which is now scheduled of June 14th. Expressions of condolence can be sent to Unity Theatre Ensemble at P.O. Box 1035, Florissant, Missouri 63031 or to 1832 Partridge Berry Drive, Florissant, Missouri, 63031. Announcement of the online memorial events will be posted on Facebook and on the websites: [www.utensemble.org](http://www.utensemble.org) and [www.newaget-ruth.org](http://www.newaget-ruth.org).



Rehearsal for 1975 Youth Summer Workshop performance of the musical, The Me Nobody Knows.



Scene from Kutana Players 1978 Performance of Sty of the Blind Pig



Tambourines To Glory Finale, 1991