

It is a privilege to speak of Stephen's life and I would like to thank his family for asking me to do so.

I want to speak not of the very recent past, but of the 30 years of friendship between us.

Benjamin Jonson said that "True happiness consists not in the multitude of friends but in the worth and choice."

And the worth of Stephen's friendship meant a great deal to me.

We met at Theatr Clwyd in Wales where he stage managed an arduous tour with great humour and expertise. These were qualities that would serve him well in his career. It was in Wales at University that he met Val his first wife.

Stephen went on to work for the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre and the English National Opera. He directed a touring version of *Les Liaisons Dangereuse* for the RSC. Great achievements in such a crowded and competitive profession.

Stephen understood actors. He knew how to communicate with them with tact and assurance, it was his job and he did it well. For me this was illustrated perfectly on that tour, so many years ago in Wales. We performed in village halls and community centres. Each day for seven weeks we were in a new venue, packing and unpacking a vast amount of equipment. At one point during each performance I had to make a quick exit from the stage and then find my way round to the front of whichever building we were in to make my next entrance from behind the audience. All went well until on one particular night performing in a village hall somewhere in the depths of the countryside I made my exit, climbed through a window and raced round to the front of the building. There inexplicably I found myself drawn into a fascinating conversation with a local shepherd, complete with dog. I'm not sure how long that conversation lasted but I'd long missed my cue. Eventually the door of the hall opened and Stephen appeared peering out into the dark "Ah David" he said, "are you thinking of joining us?"

I don't know where Stephen found this ability to communicate so easily, but I saw it many times, particularly in later life with children. No doubt his own

happy childhood had something to do with it. I do know that his son Tom brought him great joy.

I know he taught, perhaps all too briefly, at a Primary school – and his second wife Sherry, who he married in 2000 told me of hearing a child run to her waiting parents and gleefully impart the news that “We had Mr Dobbin today!”

Later he worked in audio description, which gives blind and partially sighted people an opportunity to enjoy film and television. A really worthwhile occupation - I’ve heard some of his work, and his performance was as good if not better than many actors that I’ve worked with.

It is an understatement to say that Stephen was well read. His love of literature was always obvious. Indeed he was the only person I have ever met who could read, and hold a conversation at the same time.

Stephen had many very special qualities. He was kind, generous, thoughtful and had the rare ability to enjoy the success of others. His love and knowledge of music, literature and theatre made for wonderful conversations.

He was greatly loved, and loved others in return.

At this time our hearts are full of great sadness, but my fondest memories will be of Stephen’s intelligence, humour and wit. His ability above all to communicate; he shared with me the gift of laughter that his passing does nothing to diminish.

Finally some words of William Wordsworth;

There is a comfort in the strength of love:  
‘twill make a thing endurable, which else would upset the brain, or break the heart.