

Mark Beeson - Playwright, raconteur, poet and monkey man

He had an uncanny knack of understanding the moor.
The 'In bye' and the workings of the Piskie mind
Which bridged the generations and centuries
Of granite that contained the farms and stories
That had survived down the centuries
And were ripe for plucking, a drama or two
That filled the hearts of village halls,
A rich understanding of what made people tick
In past, present and future..
A dance of words that bridged the gap between
Poetry and prose a script that was hammered out
On the moor's anvil, in the west wind
And in the river's sparkle that led each play
Into the depths of some real and imaginary world
That shimmered on the horizon between the tors.
His act hard to follow. And in so doing, fuelled
The imagination of a generation or two of youngsters
Brought up on his inner passion for storytelling and magic,
Each stage a new beginning that opened
People's eyes to the possibilities of performance
And the power of words woven between the rocks
And the glint of silver or was it gold ? within his grasp
Each play mining deep within the structure of the moor
And carried home on his shoulder
Like a deer or a lost sheep that has just been set free.

James Crowden 23rd May 2022

For over thirty years MED Theatre has produced an array of bonkers plays,
Mark's words captivated and seduced an audience into the romance of ancient leys
Talking birds, rocks and legends of long passed days.
Where you or I may see a tor as stone, a crow as a bird, a salmon as a fish,
Mark saw words which spoke of a connection to the earth, each play a fulfilment of his wish
to bring people closer together, and closer to the soil which nurtures them
Not only birds were anthropomorphised, by surprised actors who were obliged to be
adorned in feathers and speak avian poetry in the round, but so was the living rock, turning
every day locals into personified segments of ground, a strong metaphor for the symbiotic
unity which is achieved,
By transforming the people into animals and inanimate object and creating a melding of the
natural and human communities.

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From a few actors in a dilapidated barn MED grew to be a charity which not only puts on
great shows and spins wonderful yarns, but also inspires confidence and helps creativity
grow in the young people of east Dartmoor. The connection of people in intergenerational
links was hugely important to Mark, who put humanity, in balance with nature, at the heart
of the national park.

Thankfully Mark's vision will survive in the fantastic team, actors and technicians, who make
the creativity happen and enable the Moors to come alive.

Mark will be remembered for his lifelong commitment to this area and its people through
whacky, entertaining works of sometimes baffling literature, reflecting the beauty of this
moor that straddles the Dart, I myself have greatly benefited from Mark's hard work, vision
and passion for his art. So, thank you Mark for your impact on our world and of course to
the wonderful team, and in fact all the people involved, past present and future who make
the remarkable local venture, which is MED,

It was an honour to have been directed by you Mark, well led.

Saul Jenner

This is a poem I wrote while processing my grief, which embodies the loss of Mark through the beauty and ever changing nature of Dartmoor.

Evie Faulkner

Dartmoor Mists Close In

In memory of Mark Beeson; a friend, a director, a guide.

The Dartmoor mists close in,
shrouding everything in wispy white and grey,
obscuring landmarks and turning the familiar into a stranger.
The constant changing in an ever constant moorland is often forgotten.
You think of the once bright yellows and greens,
swallowed by roaring fires to create pathways and allow for new growth,
now lying dark, twisted and burnt across the landscape,
yet soon to spring new life, and change afresh.
Oak, Rowan, and Hawthorn reach for the skies,
green limbs stretching and yawning to the heavens,
their buds and leaves opening to the sun, drinking in the rays,
though as the days become colder,
they are destined to fall one by one to become part of the earth that feeds the land.
Old leaves and mosses feed the peat bogs,
giving themselves for the future of the moorland,
their end meaning the beginning of new energies that will continue on in the wilderness,
purifying the waters needed to bring in new life.
Rivers and streams flow, ever changing, always evolving,
creating a network of sparkling lights that dance across the stretching hills.
Plants and animals drink from these alike,
ferns, and foxes,
heather, and hears,
taking in the life force that the ever changing waters bring.
The cycle of life continues on in these lands,
although at times the strong immovable tors and appearing barren views can strike the eye first,
a closer look will show the ever changing flow of energies as they continuously evolve.
The Dartmoor mists shift on, wisps of the familiar return.
At first it seems exactly the same as before the whites obscured your view,
but then you notice,
was that tree there before, bursting with new life,
standing strong to watch the rolling hills and the ever changing life stretching across the horizon?