



J.P. Tatum, a beloved member of our community, passed away on Sunday, October 12. He will be greatly missed by everyone in the Keystone community. The following is the eulogy given by his teacher, mentor and friend, Tony Ciaravino.

### The Noble Heart

*“Now cracks a noble heart.”*

Horatio’s words in Shakespeare’s Hamlet express the grief he feels at the moment of his prince’s death, and our collective grief over the loss of our prince.

Our theater department and school’s noble heart is cracked and even feels missing at this point.

JP Tatum was an actor. His gifts were numerous. Those of you that saw him on stage were treated to his charming, dimpled smile and gorgeous tenor voice.

Those of you who saw him dance were treated to his two left feet. He would laugh at his difficulty with dance but he would also take steps to get better. He even approached Jackie recently about teaching him ballet. Charm, good looks, dimples for days, acting chops and an angel’s voice weren’t enough? Not for Jean-Paul Tatum. He was willing to push himself and allowed us to push him.

JP felt things very deeply. His passion for words was obvious to those of us that read his writing. He was unafraid to express himself in song or poem. His willingness to write of personal struggles and to use his life experience to create characters was admirable and often times inspiring.

The little secret that very few teachers will tell you is that we look to our students for inspiration. Society tends to lean on us to be the ones doling out the inspiration, but we can’t inspire without the students to inspire us.

We will miss JP every day. We have created a photo memorial to him in our theater lobby to serve as our guide and comfort through this excruciating time.

JP understood that the impulse for creativity comes from the need human beings have to be heard, to be counted, to exist and leave a mark. He certainly left his on everyone of us.

We will leave our marks in the short term by opening The Wizard of Oz as planned because JP would have insisted. In the long term, we dedicate ourselves to honor his memory by being, as Shakespeare says, “the stuff dreams are made on” .

To my students past and present: The theater that JP and you all have fallen in love with is a force for creativity that focuses on a community coming together toward a common goal. It is a place for healing and catharsis, a place for communication. It is where JP felt safe to be himself. You are safe as well.

I hope whenever you enter our theater that you feel his presence, and find some comfort in that incredible creative energy that he so loved. Search your hearts for the strength to pick up the pieces and honor the art in him and yourselves.

JP, unlike the Tin Man, didn’t need to search for his heart; we all know this. He wore it on his sleeve, and he gave it to us in every smile and every song.

And now to finish the line I started at the beginning:

*“Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince:  
and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”*

