

## Friend pays touching tribute to 'Bath's favourite crooner' who recently died after battling illness.



James Lambeth, who has been described as 'immensely talented', died at his home

An "immensely talented" singer who was well known for his performances in Bath has died.

James Lambeth died "peacefully" at his home on May 19 from an illness he had suffered from for several months, close friend Ralph Oswick has said.

Mr Oswick, an active patron of Bath Comedy Festival, said the 53-year-old hailed from Oklahoma but became "Bath's favourite crooner".

Mr Lambeth was in many bands, had an "amazing" vocal range, and had annual "sell-out" shows at the Edinburgh Fringe, which gained rave reviews.

Mr Oswick said he will be remembered by scores of talented Bath musicians and has many memories of a "gentle and much-missed friend."

Here is Mr Oswick's tribute to his good friend.

'An immensely talented, gentle and much-missed friend'

"Many of you will have heard by now that Bath's favourite crooner, James Lambeth, passed away peacefully at home last week, after suffering several months of often painful illness," said Mr Oswick, who was artistic director at Bath's, The Natural Theatre Company, for 45 years.

"James originally hailed from Oklahoma but soon after moving to the UK became one of Widcombe's, nay Bath's, greatest cultural exports.

"James was talented in so many creative ways, be it singing, songwriting or performance.

"He was in seven bands encompassing seven genres for a start, let alone his forays into opera!

"Sometimes it seemed one only ever saw him when running, cycling or dashing past on his e-scooter on the way to yet another band rehearsal or gig.

"He had an amazing vocal range (3.5 octaves up to high B Flat), was no slouch on the trumpet, and whether singing the smooth classics or belting out a rock number while doing a handstand, he made every number his own.

"Friday nights at Widcombe Social Club will never be the same, and whilst you may have seen him perform in many a social situation from art galleries to nightclubs and pubs or even at your grandparents' anniversary, he was no mere 'wedding singer'.

"For example, his annual sell-out shows at Edinburgh Fringe gained rave reviews and enhanced his ever-growing national profile.

"Backed by top-notch musicians our boy with the golden voice proved equally happy giving us the songs of Johnny Mercer, Rogers and Hart or Gershwin.

"Or Kurt Weil for that matter. Or how about some ska punk? Or his all-time favourite, Morrissey?

"To quote just one of his four-star reviews: "The Oklahoma singer accentuates the blissful tonalities that bring together the music of Rodgers and Hart in such a way as I have never heard it before ... James Lambeth is undeniably one of the most talented jazz musicians to grace the Fringe.

"We will all miss James in a multitude of ways. He was part of the award-winning Natural Theatre performance team at the World Expo in Shanghai at the behest of the

British Council and even sang a duet with none other than Lady Margaret at one of Bath Comedy's cheeky cabarets.

"Their rendition of A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square is never to be forgotten, ending as it did with a completely unrehearsed smooch. Have you recovered from that image?

"I for one was pleased to have him in my 'holiday gang' and remember vividly his gig on the beach in Martinique which was very much like the aforementioned Friday night at Widcombe Social Club only with sea, sand and palm trees!

"Above all, James will be remembered by scores of talented Bath musicians with whom he collaborated over the years.

"I believe there is a post-lockdown tribute on the cards to which we look forward with eager anticipation.

"Calling The Edsel Furies, The Refusal, Kenisia, Ottrepop, The Lambeth Swing et al. What a night that will be!

"Meanwhile, I leave you with fond memories of an immensely talented, gentle and much-missed friend."