



# Saying goodbye to a Kanata Theatre founding member

JIM HOLMES

Laurence Thornton, one of Kanata Theatre's earliest and most active members

died Friday, Dec. 3, at the age of 85.

When the group was founded in 1968, Laurence was the only member who

had ever directed a play. In the next 20 years he directed 15 plays for Kanata Theatre beginning with the group's first production,

The Lady Killers and ending with Lunch Hour in 1988. His interests as a director ranged from dark classics like Hedda Gabler to broad comedy like Arsenic and Old Lace.

He was happiest on the stage. In 25 productions he enjoyed playing characters who shared his zeal for life and his bouncy energy. Although he was not physically tall, generations of Kanata Theatre audiences will remember his portrayals of expansive, larger than life roles such as General Fitzbutter in Halfway Up the Tree, General St. Pe in Waltz of the Toreadors, Governor Dansforth in The Crucible, the Russian ballet teacher Mr. Kolenkov in You Can't Take it With You, Sir Percy Shorter in Alan Bennett's Habeas Corpus, and the swashbuckling hard drinking Sir Toby Belch in Twelfth Night.

He was for many years treasurer of Kanata Theatre. He held this

office at a time when the community theatre company was building up the reserve fund that made possible the construction of Kanata's only dedicated performing arts facility, the Ron Maslin Playhouse. For years he worked tirelessly with Ron Maslin on the Kanata Theatre Clown Face Project that provided, one face at a time, much of the funding for the Playhouse.

Although in his later years Alzheimer's disease kept him from entering more fully into the life of the Ron Maslin Playhouse, he was able to perform one of his famous monologues on its stage at the opening gala.

Laurence was an enthusiastic leader in the scouting movement. When he became less active with Kanata Theatre he devoted hours to reading aloud to the blind the *Kanata Courier-Standard*.

He leaves his wife Heather whom he met in England while he was on active duty during the Second World War, four children, Sandra, Kim, Jennifer, and Neil, as well as grandchildren and great grandchildren. He is also survived by his sister Madeline, herself a distinguished stage and film actor. A memorial service was held in the lobby of the Ron Maslin Playhouse Sunday, Dec. 5.



Laurence Thornton as the character of Dandy Dick.



## THE BEST GIFT

A CHILDREN'S CHOIR PRESENTATION  
December 12, 10:00 AM

CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE  
December 24, 7:00 PM