IN MEMORIAM

DAVID MARK COHEN

David Mark Cohen, Professor of Theatre and Dance at the University of Texas at Austin, died December 23, 1997. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on October 2, 1952, to Jacob and Betty Beden Cohen. He is survived by his parents, two brothers (Stuart and Richard), and his partner Steven Tomlinson.

Cohen received a B.A. degree in Theatre with honors from the University of Massachusetts (Amherst) in 1974 and a master's of fine arts in Theatre Arts (Playwriting) from Brandeis University in 1976. He was a Visiting Assistant Professor and Playwright-in-Residence at the University of Montana in 1976-77; Assistant Professor and Playwright-in-Residence at the University of South Carolina in 1977-78; Visiting Assistant Professor and Playwright-in-Residence at George Mason University in 1978-79; Assistant Professor, then Associate Professor and Co-Dean of Arts, at Hampshire College, 1979-85; and Associate Professor and Director of Theatre at the College of Charleston, 1987-90. He came to the University of Texas in 1990 as Associate Professor and head of the Playwriting Program in the Department of Theatre and Dance; he was promoted to Professor in 1997. Cohen was also on the faculty of the Texas Center for Writers, served on its Executive Committee from the Center's formation in 1990 until his death, was Chair of the Center's Graduate Studies Committee from 1992 until his death, and was its Graduate Adviser from 1992 to 1994.

In addition to being an excellent teacher and mentor, Cohen was a playwright of note. His plays Tanglewood and Indeed! were produced in New York by the Cubiculo Company, and his Piaf--A Remembrance was presented on Broadway. Subsequently, others of his plays--among them Joshua's Miracle, Where Credit is Due, Slice and Dice, Baby Grand, and Nantasket--were
staged by theatres scattered throughout the United States. He also wrote scripts for television and for film.

Cohen took great pleasure and pride in assisting others with their scripts. From 1986 to 1993, he was a key member of the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival's Playwriting Awards Committee, which seeks to identify and reward talented young writers; he served as chair of this committee from 1991 to 1993, and throughout the final decade of his life he traveled throughout the country to witness productions of new plays and to offer workshops in dramatic writing at the several regional conferences offered each year by the KC/ACTF. In addition, he was frequently called upon to judge new play competitions. Among these were the Southeastern Theatre Conference New Play Project, the Sarett National Playwriting Competition administered by the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, and the Idaho Centennial Playwriting Contest. He also presented papers and participated in workshops for aspiring playwrights at the annual meetings of professional organizations, perhaps most notably the Association for Theatre in Higher Education, and he frequently served as a guest critic for playwriting festivals and at various universities. In Austin, in addition to his work at the University of Texas, he served as resident playwright and director of new play development at the Capitol City Playhouse from 1991 to 1995, and in 1997 was one of the founders of Austin Script Works, an organization whose mission is to assist writers of new plays. Cohen's success as a teacher of playwrights and promoter of new plays is indicated by the large number of scripts by his students that have been accepted for development or performance by theatres and workshops throughout the United States.

Cohen also wrote extensively about plays and playwriting. He was theatre reviewer for the Post Courier in Charleston, South Carolina, from 1987 to 1991, and theatre critic for The Texas Triangle (Austin) from 1992 to 1997. His reviews covered not only local events but also
productions in New York, London, Houston, Dallas, Toronto, Boston, and Washington. At the time of his death, he was Associate Secretary of the American Theatre Critics Association.

Cohen demonstrated many skills beyond writing. He frequently directed plays. In Austin, he directed productions at the Hyde Park Theatre, Capitol City Playhouse, and the University of Texas. He also directed at the University of Idaho, the Shenandoah Playwrights Retreat, the College of Charleston, the Piccolo Spoleto Festival, Hampshire College and elsewhere. He demonstrated considerable administrative skill as Co-Dean of the Arts and Co-Director of Theatre at Hampshire College, Director of Theatre at Charleston College, and Associate Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Texas from 1995 to 1997.

His service to the Department of Theatre and Dance, the College of Fine Arts, and to the University was noteworthy and extensive. In Theatre and Dance, in addition to serving as Associate Chair and as head of the Playwriting Program, Cohen was a member of the Department's Executive Committee, Director of the Laboratory Theatre Season, a member of the Scholarship and Recruitment Committee, a member of the Area Heads Council, and of several other committees. He also arranged visits to the Department of several prominent playwrights, theatre practitioners, and scholars. For the College, he was a member of several committees relating to the Performing Arts Center as well as of the College's Summer Fellowship Selection Committee. For the University, in addition to his extensive involvement with the Texas Center for Writers, he served for three years as judge for the Dobie-Paisano Creative Writing Fellowship Competition, was a member of the Planning Committee for the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center's Flair 96 Symposium, and was a participant in the Honors Colloquium and a supervisor of several Plan II Honors theses.

On the national level, in addition to his extensive work with the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival, his frequent participation as leader or panelist for playwriting workshops
throughout the United States, and his work with the American Theatre Critics Association, he was a member of the National Training Committee of the International Theatre Institute, and was for a time coordinator of the Piccolo Spoleto Theatre Fringe in Charleston, South Carolina.

Cohen was the recipient of many honors. He was awarded fellowships at several writers colonies, among them the Ragdale Writers Colony (twice), the Mt. Sequoyah New Play Retreat, the Wurlitzer Foundation, the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts (twice), and the Millay Colony for the Arts. For his work with the Kennedy Center/American College Theatre Festival, he was awarded the ACTF Gold Medallion and the Texas ACTF Award for Excellence in Promotion of Playwriting. The Austin City Council gave Cohen a special citation "For Distinguished Service with the Texas Young Playwrights Festival." The Texas Center for Writers awarded him several fellowships, among them the Helen Strauss Regents Professorship in Creative Writing (twice), the Bennett Cerf Professorship in Creative Writing, and the Susan Taylor McDaniel Regents Professorship in Creative Writing. The College of Fine Arts also gave Cohen several fellowships to honor or support his work. These included the Foxworth Centennial Fellowship (three times), the Walter and Gina Ducloux Summer Fellowship (twice), and the Ruth Head Centennial Professorship. In 1994-95, Cohen was awarded a Faculty Research Assignment by the University Research Institute. He also was the recipient of a National Endowment of the Humanities Summer Seminar Fellowship.

To Cohen's professional accomplishments, one must add his personal attributes. He was characterized above all by his integrity. He was always straightforward in his dealings with others, never deceptive; he was an ethical and moral person of the highest order. He could always be depended on. He said what he believed and stood by what he said. He was steadfast in his determination to help students and devoted much of his life to that goal. He was always accessible. He was trusted by students and faculty, and he repaid that trust. His death is a tremendous loss to
students, faculty, and friends, as well as to the Department of Theatre and Dance, to the University of Texas, and to his profession.

Students, faculty, and friends have expressed their appreciation for Cohen in contributing to an endowed fund established at the University of Texas to assist young playwrights toward achieving their goals.

Larry R. Faulkner, President
The University of Texas at Austin

John Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Oscar G. Brockett (Chair), Suzan Zeder, and Fritz Schwentker