IN MEMORIAM

WEBSTER L. SMALLEY

Dr. Webster L. Smalley (February 1921 - July 1996), nationally recognized playwright and teacher of playwriting, earned his B.A. degree from the University of Washington in 1946 and his M.A. degree from Columbia University in 1948, both in the field of English. He received his Ph.D. degree in theatre/dramatic literature from Stanford University in 1960. In New York City Smalley served as head of the script department for the American National Theatre and Academy (ANTA) and for the Experimental Theatre.

He taught at the University of Missouri and Stanford University before teaching at the University of Illinois, where he headed the Playwrights' Workshop. In the workshop he directed fifteen major productions and produced more than fifty new plays. After fourteen years at the University of Illinois, Dr. Smalley joined the faculty of the Department of Drama (now the Department of Theatre and Dance) at The University of Texas at Austin in 1969.

At The University of Texas Dr. Smalley taught both undergraduate and graduate courses in playwriting, introduction to the theatre, dramatic writing for television and contemporary British drama. During the summer of 1972, he served as a faculty member of a study tour of British theatre, sponsored by Southern Methodist University.
As a practicing playwright keenly interested in developing new scripts, Dr. Smalley founded the E. P. Conkle Workshop for Playwrights, which gave talented but little-known playwrights the chance to evaluate and revise their scripts within actual production circumstances. Dr. Smalley served seven years as the administrative director of the Conkle Workshop, named for his predecessor E. P. Conkle, the first teacher of playwriting in the Department of Drama. The original workshop was funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Dr. Smalley served on numerous departmental, college and University committees, such as the Executive Committee of the Department, College Promotion and Tenure Committee, and the Building Committee for the University Performing Arts Center, 1971-1974.

For three years (1972-1975) Dr. Smalley served as chairman of the Department of Drama, and in 1983-1984 he was appointed as the E. W. Doty Professor of Fine Arts. In 1980 he began the Shoestring Theatre program, which produced over 200 undergraduate and graduate plays in the Laboratory Theatre on a "shoestring budget."

In addition to his University work Smalley served on various state, regional and national theatre committees, such as: the Theatre Festival Subcommittee of the Arts for the Bicentennial Committee (1975); Playwriting Committee of the Southwest Theatre Association; and Standards Committee of the National Association of Schools of Theatre.
He served as a Vice President and President (1984-1987) of the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), the national accrediting association, which is comprised of administrators from more than eighty theatre departments, fine arts deans and other administrators.

Dr. Smalley was also active in the American Theatre Association, the Speech Communication Association, the University Resident Theatre Association and the National Theatre Conference. He was an elected member of The Players in New York City.

His produced plays included *Fragment* (off-Broadway, New York City, 1949); *Taste of Violence*, an epic play about the assassination in 1893 of Elijah Lovejoy, an Illinois minister-publisher; the award-winning *The Man With the Oboe* (1963), a fantasy with music which was named play of the year (1963) by the Southeastern Theatre Conference; and *The Boy Who Talked To Whales* (1978), which was produced successfully throughout the United States and in England. The British production of *The Boy Who Talked To Whales* was performed at the Unicorn Theatre, London's oldest and most respected professional theatre for children and youth.

*The Boy Who Talked To Whales* was published by Anchorage Press, New Orleans, and included in the anthology of plays for young audiences entitled *Theatre for Youth: Twelve Plays with Mature Themes* (University of Texas Press, 1986). *Chang Fu, the Witch of Moon Mountain*, another play for children, had a successful production in the Department of Theatre and Dance and elsewhere.
Dr. Smalley's published works also include an anthology entitled *Five Plays by Langston Hughes*. In 1963, when Smalley collected the plays and wrote the essay for *Five Plays by Langston Hughes*, none of Hughes' plays had been published although all had been staged. Later Smalley wrote the extensive biographical essay about Hughes for the *Dictionary of the Black Theatre, Broadway, Off-Broadway and Selected Harlem Theatres*, Allen Woll, editor. The African American poet, author and playwright Langston Hughes once referred to Smalley as "my genial editor."

Smalley was considered "a fine, caring gentleman" by both faculty and students. Through his guidance many of his students received honors and awards for their playwriting, such as Cheryl Hawkins, the winner of the $5,000 Joseph Kesselring Award of the National Arts Club, New York City, for her play *Shattered Home*, which concerns "...relationships in a black family whose members have trouble communicating with one another."

During the showcase production of the play in New York, Hawkins was quoted in the press as saying that she enrolled in the Department of Drama "...knowing nothing and he (Smalley) taught me about craftsmanship. I can't help being confident about my future now, but that is because of Dr. Smalley who helped me open up.... No matter when I called him, and I have called him at some crazy hours, Dr. Smalley has always been ready to help. He has been a very special person to me."

Upon his retirement in 1989, after teaching at The University of Texas at Austin for twenty years, Dr. Smalley was named Professor Emeritus, and an endowed student scholarship in playwriting was established in his name.
Professor Webster L. Smalley is survived by his wife, Pernella, and three children, Jane Smalley Tuttle of Durham, North Carolina; Cheryl Smalley of Seattle, Washington; and Tad Smalley of Austin, Texas.

Larry R. Faulkner, President
The University of Texas at Austin
This Memorial Resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Coleman A. Jennings (Chair), David Nancarrow, and Gordon Peacock.