

George Alexander McCalmon

February 5, 1909 — April 6, 1965

When George McCalmon died in the spring of 1965 at the age of fifty-six, he had not yet completed thirteen academic years at Cornell University. These years were full, however, and scores of students who remember him from classroom and theatre looked upon him not only as their teacher and director but also as their counselor and friend.

Professor McCalmon was born in Pittsburgh, where he later studied at Carnegie Institute of Technology and received a Bachelor's degree in dramatic arts in 1934. He studied also at Teachers College, Columbia, and ultimately at Western Reserve University, where he earned M.F.A. and Ph.D. degrees. After teaching at Geneva College, Carnegie Institute, Western Reserve, and Florida State University, he came to Cornell in 1952 as Director of the Cornell University Theatre and Associate Professor of Speech and Drama. He was named Professor of Speech and Drama in 1959, and had begun a term as chairman in 1964.

While he taught—and enjoyed—a wide range of theatre courses, including playwriting, he was especially challenged by directing; his productions were consistently touched by his own flavor as well as his own distinction. At the time of his death, he was in the last weeks of production on *The Great Magician*, a modern adaptation of commedia dell'arte, written by his friend, Lawrence Carra.

In the summer of 1962 he was director of *How to Grow a Musical*, a Cornell University Theatre production which toured Latin America under State Department sponsorship. In 1959 he directed *The Golden Crucible*, which celebrated Pittsburgh's bicentennial; in 1956, *Horn in the West*, at Boone, North Carolina; in 1955, *The Lost Colony*, at Manteo, North Carolina. He was coauthor of *Creating Historical Drama*, posthumously published in 1965.

Professor McCalmon was active in the American Educational Theatre Association, the National Theatre Conference, the American National Theatre and Academy, the New York State Community Theatre Association, and the Institute of Outdoor Drama. In Ithaca, he was a member of the Statler Club and the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors. He was the author of several plays, as well as articles on varied phases of dramatic production.

He was an active member of St. John's Episcopal Church of Ithaca. In addition to his wife, Irene McCalmon, he is survived by a son, Byron (Cornell '62); a daughter, Heather; a sister; and a nephew.

An intensely vital yet altogether gentle man, George McCalmon was a master teacher and director, and a warm friend and loyal colleague. Those who had an opportunity to work with him are unlikely to forget either his high standards of performance or his rare sense of humor. He himself would like to be remembered, we think, as a thorough workman and a good artist.

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