



TUFTS UNIVERSITY

Secretary of the Faculties

RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF
KALMAN AARON BURNIM
ADOPTED BY THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES OF
TUFTS UNIVERSITY
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Tuft's first cause for congratulation in Kalman Aaron Burnim is that he was himself a Tufts graduate, receiving his B.A. degree in 1950. He majored in drama, in a Drama Department which was itself still young, and came under the tutorship of Marston Balch, its first chairman. This established a relationship, and a friendship, which was to endure until Professor Balch's death earlier this year; Professor Burnim's most recent published work, in the departmental journal Prologue which Marston Balch founded, was a moving tribute to his former mentor and colleague.

An M.A. at Indiana University was followed by a brief flirtation with the business world. Happily for the theatre, and for scholarship, this failed to satisfy, and in 1955 Kalman Burnim entered the doctoral program of Yale University. Here the chief influence upon him was the distinguished theatre historian Alois Nagler. This established a tradition, and a connection: Kalman Burnim's own teaching of his discipline has preserved the meticulous scholarship in which he was himself trained, while Professor Nagler's presence as consultant and visitor helped notably to shape the growing department at Tufts. The Yale doctoral dissertation, "David Garrick, Director," established the pattern that Burnim's own scholarly life was to take. Published in 1961, it was recognized as a landmark study; since its appearance, it has been continually drawn upon by other historians in the field, and marked the distinguished beginning of a career which was to establish its author as one of the world's leading Garrick scholars.

After serving as Assistant Professor at Pittsburg and Valparaiso, Kalman Burnim returned to Tufts in 1960. Once re-established in his old department, and working once again under Marston Balch, he rose rapidly in university eminence. In 1965 he was full Professor; in 1966 he succeeded to the chairmanship of the Department, in which function he was to continue until 1975. During this period, he also served as Executive Director of Theatre, having ultimate responsibility for the Arena Theatre's productions and policies; and in 1971 he was elected to the Fletcher Chair of Drama and Oratory.

His professional life, in scholarship, in production and in service to the University, has been far too active to be catalogued in this brief space of time. Three aspects of his work, however, call for particular attention.

First, as part of a distinguished chairmanship, he was largely responsible for the original Tufts in London Program. As originally conceived, this was confined to work in drama and English; it was housed in a Kensington hotel; and it acquired a part-time faculty which included in its ranks, some of the most lustrous names in British scholarship and the theatre arts. His first director was the distinguished playwright James Forsythe; its second the stage, radio and television director Anthony Cornish. Perhaps its most prominent faculty member was Dr. E. Martin Browne, the greatest English authority on the medieval drama. But he was only one among many of almost equal eminence. Drama students treasured the London Program for its excitements, its sense of contact with one of the brightest manifestations of the living art, its backstage visits and its access to some of the best practitioners of the day. The London program continues and remains successful in a different and enlarged aspect, but there are many of us who still treasure memories of the program as it used to be, as Kalman Burnim helped to mold it, and of the sharp focus which his discerning mind brought to its activities.

Second, in play production. His concern here was largely with the classics of the art. His productions of Camille, Othello, King Lear and The Country Wife are still remembered by those who saw them, or took part in them; two of that list have been consciously imitated, on various occasions, in other parts of the country. Many will remember, also, The Diary of Anne Frank, which he directed for the first time in 1960 and again in 1978: not only for the expertise of the production, but for the sense of a burning personal commitment apparent in every line and moment of it. In 1981 he offered one

of the few American productions of that complex work, The Royal Hunt of the Sun, and in 1983 the American premiere of Restoration; some years later, when Time magazine falsely acclaimed the first American production of this work, he was able to write and point out proudly that Tufts did it first. Actors and actresses from this period of his directorship have distinguished themselves all across the continent. It was a remarkably fertile period in Tufts' connection with the professional theatre.

Third, in scholarship. Amid a wealth of books and articles, one work in particular stands out: the monumental Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800, written in collaboration with Philip H. Highfill and Edward A. Langhans. Ten volumes have so far been published; six remain, and together they offer an incredibly rich and vivid survey of one of the most exciting periods of English theatre history. Its oldest subject worked with Shakespeare; its youngest was killed by a train. Each entry represents a tour de force of scholarship, often drawing on hitherto unknown sources of evidence. Justly honored in reviews and commentaries, this work received, in 1979, the George Freedley Memorial Award of the Theatre Library Association as "an outstanding contribution to the literature of the theatre." It will be a major work on library shelves for many, many years to come, and will serve as an invaluable resource upon which later scholars may draw.

This is only one of the awards that have acknowledged the richness of his professional life. He has not been sparing in serving the professional lives of others, as his work for the National Endowment for the Humanities and his consultancies for other major universities will testify. Within the University, he has found time to work on committees across the spectrum of university governance; on educational policy, promotion and tenure, curriculum, and many others. We honor the busy life of a busy man, and ask his colleagues, on the eve of his retirement, to contribute their plaudits to those of his readers, his students, his actors and his audiences that have been heard so loudly over the years.

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P R O L O G U E

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BURNIM EMERITUS

Tufts' first cause for congratulation in Kalman Aaron Burnim is that he was one of our own, a product of the Drama Department in the formative years under Marston Balch. After Tufts came a brief flirtation with the business world, which, fortunately, failed to satisfy; then Yale, where he studied theatre history under Alois Nagler, thereby acquiring disciplines of European scholarship which, for the rest of his career, he sought to implant in his students. Eventually he returned to Tufts, working first under Marston Balch and ultimately succeeding him as chairman of the Department. A deep friendship of many years was ended only by Marston Balch's death a few months ago; one of Kalman Burnim's last official acts was to write the tribute to him that was published in this journal.

He made his indelible mark in three areas: in administration, in directing and in scholarship. As an administrator, he will be remembered—as I think he will wished to be remembered—above all for his role in creating the original Tufts in London program. As first conceived, over twenty years ago, this was a joint venture of the Departments of Drama and English, and he labored mightily to promote its value in bringing Tufts students into contact with the London theatre. Those early years have become legendary. The first director, the prominent playwright James Forsythe; the second, stage, radio and television director Antony Cornish; lectures by such luminaries as Peter O'Toole, E. Martin Browne, John Lahr; backstage visits to the Old Vic ("See! They complain about lack of space too!"). The London program now has a different shape, and a broader purpose; but there are many of us, faculty and former students alike, who look back fondly to the seedy splendors of the Reynolds Hotel, and what we mutually learned there.

As a director, his range was eclectic. He had a great fondness for the English classics. His production of *King Lear*, greatly admired here, has been imitated in at least two other places across the country. His love for Restoration comedy gave us a memorable production of *The Country Wife*. But he also had an eye for challenging modern plays: Capek's *The Insect Comedy*, Shaffer's *The Royal Hunt of the Sun*—a script abandoned by many professional companies as too difficult and too costly—and most recently, the American premiere of Bond's *Restoration*. He had a wonderful knack of getting his own way, which stood him in good stead as a director. I was on

the receiving end of this myself. A telephone call, typically, at one in the morning: "Will you take a part in my next production?" "Playing what part?" "God." It was hard to say no to a man like that; and hard not to like a director who, in the early rehearsals of *The Insect Play*, was heard complaining "My actors are dropping off like flies."

And then, of course, the scholarship. He was one of the world's leading experts on David Garrick, his theatre, his life and times, and his writings on Garrick were widely influential and often (the ultimate compliment) plagiarized. But his most memorable scholarly contribution has surely been the monumental work which has occupied the greater part of his career: the biographical dictionary of London stage personnel—actors, dancers, musicians, everybody from the Restoration to the end of the eighteenth century. He had two collaborators; after so many years of working together, their contributions were seamless and indistinguishable, but never undistinguished. The earliest chronological entry, he used to delight in saying, was an actor who had worked with Shakespeare; the latest, one who was run over by a train. And there were other incidental pleasures, such as the celebrated Restoration actress whose birthday varied by fifteen years, depending on which source you read—the official record, or the version she preferred to present to her public. Some things in the theatre never change. The Dictionary has become one of the major source books of world scholarship, and will keep its authors' names alive for generations to come.

And then he was a human being. Students sometimes found him forbidding, but those of us who knew him better recognized his often agonized concern that every student here should receive the maximum advantage from his or her education. He never took himself too seriously. Once, in those angry protest years of the late sixties, he and I were called upon to address a noisy student demonstration. He made what I still remember a brilliant speech, calling on all kinds of recondite facts and statistics to support his case. When we left the room, with the protestors appeased, I turned to him and said "That was very impressive." He turned to me, with a twinkle in his eye, and said "Yes, I wonder if it was true?"

Gone from our immediate company, Kalman Burnim, but still very much with us. Little Father, may you live long in this land to bless us.

—Peter D. Arnott