

LARRY OAKS

An Appreciation



The Pantomime this year is dedicated to the memory of Larry Oaks - director, choreographer, mentor and, above all, friend of Nairobi City Players. We were saddened to hear of his death in June this year. The world of theatre lost a talented and experienced "Jack-of-all-Trades".

Born in Jersey to a farming family, Larry set his sights on being a dancer. He achieved this, and from those early foot tapping years in theatre, television and cabaret, he went on to become choreographer for many stage and film productions. He then entered the field of direction and his great success associated him with many star names and smash hit musicals and took him to New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, Norway, Denmark, Holland and Israel as well as the United Kingdom.

But friends and colleagues throughout the world mourn the loss of a warm, generous-hearted man who loved life. He showed his own confidence in Kenyan talent when he returned time and time again. In all, he directed ten productions for Nairobi City Players. Tonight we remember him as we knew him.

His first production was "Fiddler on the Roof" in 1971 with Frank Price in the leading role, when his admiration for the hard-working and talented amateurs he worked with was born. He revived "Fiddler" bringing Barry Master to play Tevye in 1991 and between those years he directed "Kismet" (1971), "Hello Dolly" (1972), "Man of La Mancha" (1973), "Side by Side by Sondheim" (1980), "Annie" and "Jack and the Beanstalk" (1986), "Dick Whittington" (1992). "Cinderella" in 1993 was his last production in Kenya.

In a typically courageous and generous gesture, knowing that his life was to be shortened by cancer, he returned to Kenya in 1994 to throw a farewell party for his friends, as he did in many countries he had visited in his long career.

We miss his friendship. We will long remember his warmth, his wonderful smile and the high standards he sought and achieved in fine productions for NCP.