



## Charles "Chuck" Monroe Olsen

September 17, 1927 - February 5, 2020

Charles "Chuck" Olsen, beloved theatre director, actor, teacher, mentor, and father, passed away peacefully on February 5, 2020. Chuck was a devoted man, to his family and to the theatre. Friends are invited to a Memorial "Celebration of Life" on Sunday, March 15, 2020 at 2:00pm at Theatre Tallahassee, 1861 Thomasville Rd., where guests are invited to share a story or remembrance of Chuck. He was the first-born son of big band leader, George Olsen, and singer, Ethel Shutta, along with his younger brother, George Edward Olsen, who preceded him in death in June 2018. He married Rosalyn Newport in 1964, and they had two children, David and Kristin, and a granddaughter, Jaime Olsen. Chuck also leaves behind his nephew, George "Eric" Olsen, and his grand-nephew, George "Evan" Olsen.

Their parents' show-biz celebrity life gave Chuck and his brother George a reluctance to be in front of the camera. But Chuck was also instilled with a lifelong love of theatre, and an astute touch in theatre direction. Both Chuck and George went to the Georgia Military Academy, and served in the Army in World War II. Chuck graduated with a B.A. in English from the University of Michigan, where he and George played football for the Michigan Wolverines. Chuck later received an M.F.A. from New York University in Theatre, and taught at SUNY-Purchase for many years, as well as at Brooklyn College, Penn State, Stanford University, Sarah Lawrence, and the Eugene O'Neill Center.

Chuck was a professional director and acting teacher in New York City and around the world, and directed the New York premiere of Tennessee Williams' *This Property Is Condemned*, and directed and produced the first production of *Career* with Larry Hagman. He was also one of the founding members of the Society for Stage Directors and Choreographers (SSCD) and served on their Executive Board from 1958-78.

## TEACHING AND DIRECTING IN TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

Chuck was brought to Tallahassee by Richard Fallon, and Chuck headed the M.F.A. Directing Program at the FSU School of Theatre for seventeen years, mentoring and encouraging directors, actors, friends and colleagues with his kind advice and inspiration. Some of the many productions he directed at FSU included the world-premieres of Sidney Kingsley's *Falling Man* (with Tony Musante), as well as Judge Charles Miner's drama, *Too Much Chain to Swim With* (with Ruby Dee). Chuck also directed Richard Fallon in *Death of a Salesman*, along with Chuck's beloved wife, Rosalyn N. Olsen. Other FSU directing credits included *Gemini*, *The Three Sisters*, *What the Butler Saw*, and Chuck's own adaptations of *Lysistrata*, *Great Expectations*, and *The Bacchae* (which included one of his favorite directorial moments of casting two talented actors to switch the lead roles for alternate performances). Chuck also created and managed the FSU Summer Repertory Theatre for students for several summers, even acting in small roles in several of the shows. Chuck was also very prolific in working and encouraging in many community theatrical productions in and around Tallahassee, including directing and co-directing many productions such as: *Member of the Wedding*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Lion in Winter*, *45 Seconds from Broadway*, *The Water Engine*, *A Delicate Balance*, *The Golden Fleece*, *The Boys Next Door*, *Small Craft Warnings*, *The Gingerbread Lady*, and

Quartermaine's Terms. Chuck also directed new plays by local playwrights, including the musical *Politico!* by Judge Charles Miner and Irving Fleet, and Janet Burroway's *Sweepstakes*, as well as adapting her book, *Opening Nights*, into a radio play.

## ACTORS REPERTORY THEATRE OF TALLAHASSEE & IRISH REPERTORY THEATER

Chuck's devotion to the theatre and kind encouragement of the actor's and director's process was an inspiration to many students and colleagues that had the privilege to work with him. After learning of the European repertory theatre structure during the FSU School of Theatre's exchange program with the Moscow Art Theatre, Chuck and his wife, Rosalyn Newport Olsen, founded the Actors Repertory Theatre of Tallahassee (ARTT) in January 1991. ARTT's purpose was to free themselves from the usual four to six-week rehearsal schedule often governed by outside factors, and to explore instead the European system to prepare a production over a period of several months on a more relaxed rehearsal schedule and to work on it until it is "ready." ARTT's group of dedicated actors in the local community rehearsed a chosen play over a prolonged period, in the evenings and weekends in the Olsen's living room. This allowed for the development of a play to evolve over time in a more deep and meaningful fashion.

The goal was to empower the actor, through a long period of gestation, to learn more about the world of the play, to live through the life of the play over a period of months, and to refine the texture of the characters and their interactions. In short, it is to reach that level of artistic performance usually achieved only by months of playing in front of an audience. ARTT's first

production was The Show-Off, followed by Hidden Laughter, The Golden Fleece, Red Roses For Me, and Vanya In The Coffeehouse.

Many members of this group later formed into the Irish Repertory Theater (IRT), and Chuck directed several plays for IRT, including The Weir, Da, The Seafarer, and his final play, The Cripple of Inishmaan.

## ACTING

Chuck also used his later years to get a chance to play all those “delicious” roles that an aging character actor gets to play, and performed at FSU as Falstaff in Merry Wives of Windsor, Old Mahon in Playboy of the Western World, the Devil in Don Juan in Hell, the Starcatcher in Carousel, and Mr. Lundie in Brigadoon. In local community productions, Chuck performed as Shylock in The Merchant Of Venice, Big Daddy in Cat On A Hot Tin Roof, King Henry in The Lion In Winter, King Lear in selected scenes of King Lear, Weston in Curse Of The Starving Class, Sheridan Whiteside in The Man Who Came To Dinner, Harry in The Sum of Us, Krapp in Krapp’s Last Tape, and as Noah in Two By Two, in which he was dancing and singing on stage in his 70s.

Chuck was an inspiration to many, and loved by those who had the pleasure of knowing and working with him. A bright light of the theatre dimmed when he left us, and he will be sorely missed.

The memorial service for Chuck has been postponed and will be rescheduled for a later date. Please continue to check this site for information on the service time. Guests will be invited to share a story or remembrance of Chuck at the Celebration, or may send a written recollection (to

kolsen13@hotmail.com) to be gathered into a “Book of Memories.”

In lieu of flowers, the family asks their friends to consider making donations in Chuck Olsen’s honor to the theatre that he loved and dedicated his life.

- The Irish Repertory Theater of Tallahassee

<https://tallahasseeirishrep.com/sponsorship/>

(via PayPal)

You mail checks made payable to:

Irish Repertory Theater, P.O. Box 3332, Tallahassee, Florida 32315-3332

- The Southern Shakespeare Festival

<https://southernshakes.org>

You may mail checks payable to:

Southern Shakespeare Company, 119 S. Monroe Street, Suite 300, Tallahassee, Florida 32301. Southern Shakespeare Co., Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit company. All donations are tax deductible under section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code. Tax ID number available upon request.

- The John A. Degen Resource Room and Theatre Library at the Florida State University School of Theatre

You may mail checks payable to:

“FSU Foundation” with “Degen Theatre Fund” in the memo line  
325 W. College Avenue, Tallahassee, Florida 32301.

The

# Tribute Wall

JG

“ Jeannie Graf lit a candle in memory of Charles "Chuck" Monroe Olsen



Jeannie Graf - June 17, 2022 at 01:32 PM

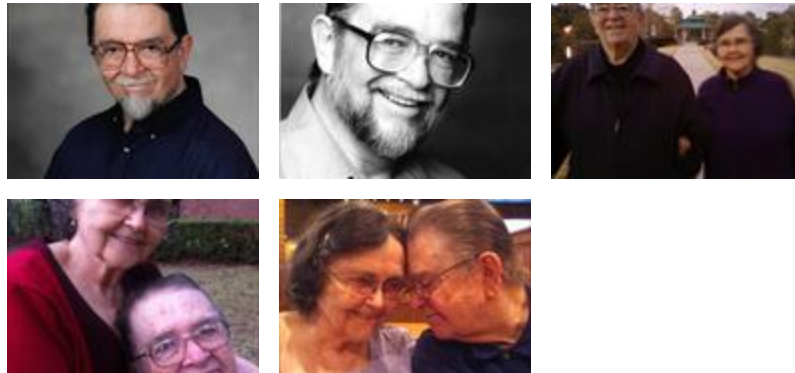
JG

“ I had not realized that Chuck had passed away. He was a wonderful man with a lovely wife and family. He directed me in several plays. His talent was just amazing. I am sorry to hear of his passing, but thank him for all that he gave this world. Jeannie Graf

Jeannie Graf - June 17, 2022 at 01:31 PM

*B*  
BEVIS

“ 17 files added to the album Memories Album



Bevis Funeral Home - March 05, 2020 at 05:14 PM