OBITUARIES

Richard Oberlin, director and actor at Play House

Richard Oberlin, a veteran actor, stage director, and former owner-director of the Cleveland Play House, died yesterday at St. Vincent Charity Hospital and Death House.

He had been reported to have been in the hospital since Nov. 10 for open-heart surgery, which was performed on Dec. 27. He developed complications and was admitted to the hospital permanently on Jan. 2, where he underwent surgery.

Mr. Oberlin resigned as director of the Cleveland Play House June 30, 1980, after 27 years in that post, and of those years was spent at a salary of $1,000 a month. He had been working as a consulting director and had continued as a leukemia actor at the university.

Since joining the Play House in 1959, he had acted in, directed or produced almost 500 plays, he had announced shortly before his death.

Mr. Oberlin had one of the leading roles in the current Play House production of "Shakespeare," which opened Dec. 1 at the Uptown Theatre.

After resigning his post, he joined the Play House staff as a visiting professor in the graduate theater program at the University of Michigan, where he taught for five years.

Mr. Oberlin was a graduate of the University of Michigan and an authority on Shakespeare. He was born in New York City in 1904 and died at home.

He had been active in the Broadway Organization and appeared in all of the major productions of Shakespeare in New York for his 50th birthday party.

Mr. Oberlin had been in the company of the American Indian Theater Company from 1937 to 1942 and was a leading director of the Cleveland Play House from 1941 to 1961. He had also been in the directing company of the Play House from 1941 to 1961 and was a leading director of the Cleveland Play House from 1941 to 1961.

On the night of the 1980 meeting of the Cleveland Play House Board of Directors, Mr. Oberlin was appointed to a special committee to investigate the conduct of the Play House.

He had been honored by the American Theatre Wing, the New York Shakespeare Festival and the Cleveland Play House.

Mr. Oberlin had recently been appointed to the Board of Governors of the Ohio Arts Council and had been a member of the National Theater Conference and the Executive Officers of the Conference.

It has been an honor for Oberlin at Case Western Reserve University and a strong voice for Cleveland in acting.

In 1952 he was one of the professional residents of the University of Colorado, invited by the Federal Republic of Germany for a special theater tour of West Germany. He followed this with a tour to Poland and East Germany in 1980.

In 1970 Mr. Oberlin received the Excellence in Education Award from the Ohio Theatre Alliance. He was also designated the "Mr. Play House" by the Women's City Club of Cleveland in 1970 and was an international about the educational outreach program of the Play House.

He had been honored by his alma mater, Washington High School in Milwaukee, where he graduated in 1914. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame of the United States at the 1980 Olympics, at the age of 85. He had leading roles in several films.

Mr. Oberlin also acted, including the lead in "Shakespeare," at the College of Wooster where he received a bachelor's degree in 1912. He was inducted into the Ohio High School Hall of Fame at the 1980 Olympics. For more than 50 years, he had been a director of the Play House in Chicago.

After leaving Wooster, he worked as a radio broadcaster, wrote a column for the Cleveland Press, and appeared in productions of the Players Guild at Canton.

In 1978, Mr. Oberlin told reporters, "I can play on TV, but I can't play in a television show. I don't have the time to play in a television show. I can't play on TV. It's a luxury for me to play in a television show."

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