

2011 File Photo/Staff

Jac Alder co-founded Theatre Three with his wife-to-be Norma Young, who died in 1998, and a couple of friends in April 1961. The company moved to its current home in the Quadrangle in 1969.

JAC ALDER | 1934-2015

Co-founder of Theater Three, arts champion

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Jac Alder, a cornerstone in the history of Dallas theater and the co-founder, executive producer and director of Theatre Three, died Friday of respiratory failure at age 80.

The company's current show, *The Liar*, will continue as planned this weekend.

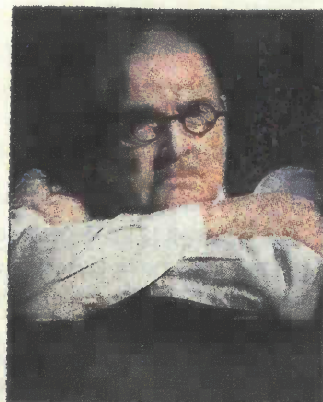
"We're going to perform for him," said Bruce R. Coleman, a resident artist who got his start at Theatre Three as an intern

almost 30 years ago.

"He would not want the theater to be dark. It's such a funny show, and he would not want the theater to be dark. He would want it filled with laughter."

Alder, an Oklahoma native who had trained as an architect, had battled chronic lymphocytic leukemia for years, but rarely took breaks from the theater, which remained until the end his favorite place to be.

His last production meeting was Sunday in his condominium. He made breakfast for Cole-



Darnell Renee

Jac Alder, who nurtured future Pulitzer Prize winners, was remembered as a fierce advocate of the arts.

man as they went over plans for the upcoming world premiere musical, *Kountry Girls*.

Alder was a fierce advocate

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Theater mainstay Alder guided Pulitzer winners

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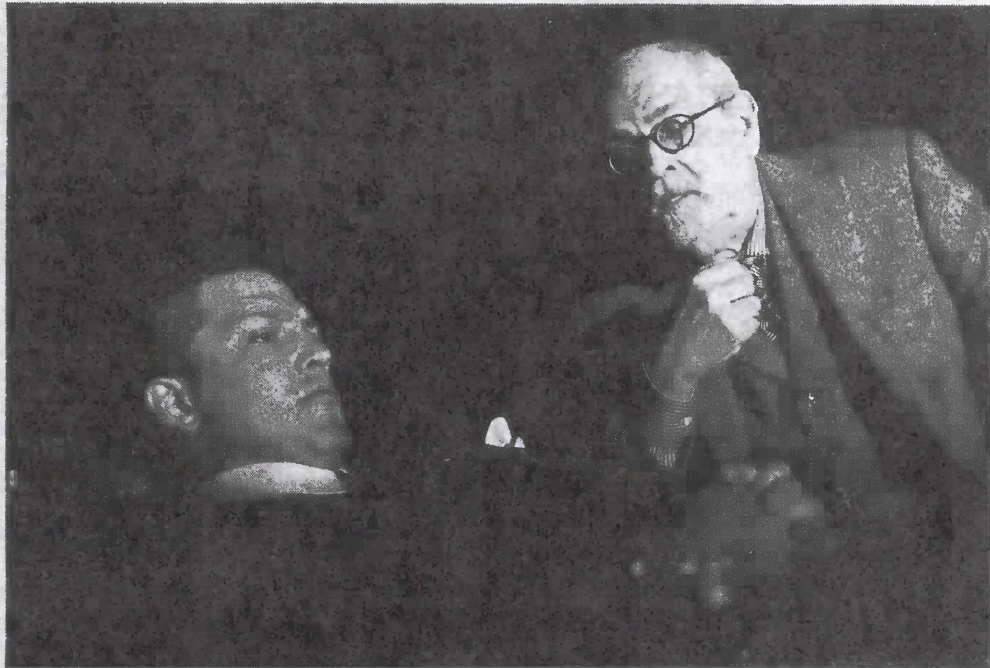
for the arts, says Marty Van Kleeck, co-founder of One Thirty Productions, who had recently served as Theatre Three's managing director.

"We're not just losing a leader of a theater, we're losing an institution. He was at every advocacy meeting. There isn't any part of the city he hasn't touched in some way."

He nurtured three future Pulitzer Prize winners at Theatre Three: Beth Henley, Tracy Letts and Doug Wright. He encouraged a shy young Dallas girl named Patsy McClenney to try performing. She later achieved film and television fame as Morgan Fairchild.

Undermain Theatre's artistic director Katherine Owen credits him for giving her company its first major donation that was "not from her parents," she said in a past interview. Last year, he dedicated Theatre Three resources to help Junior Players launch its first musical, *In the Heights*, which gave high school students a free opportunity to train and perform with professional support at Dallas City Performance Hall.

Alder co-founded Theatre



Jeffrey Schmidt

Alder (right) as Sigmund Freud, acts alongside Cameron Cobb as C.S. Lewis in *Freud's Last Session*. Alder acted, directed and produced plays at Theatre Three.

Three with his wife-to-be Norma Young, who died in 1998, and a couple of friends in a ballroom of the Sheraton Hotel in April 1961. The company moved to its current home in the Quadrangle in 1969.

Alder did everything from acting to directing, designing sets, hanging lights, planning seasons and finances. He en-

couraged versatility in others, too.

Michael A. Jenkins, president and managing director of Dallas Summer Musicals, remembers helping to build a set for the fledgling company in the hotel when he was in junior high school.

"Even if I was just nailing two pieces of wood together, he

made it seem like it was a very important thing to be doing."

Coleman says the succession plan for Theatre Three will be announced after the theater's board of directors meets. Plans for a celebration of Alder's life are pending.

Follow Nancy Churnin on Twitter at @nchurnin.