

Obituary, Vern Williamsen

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Vern Williamsen proved to me that, in fact, old dogs can learn new tricks. As a graduate student at the University of Arizona in the early 1990s, full of the excitement that a new discipline and new technology provide, I had the privilege of learning this valuable life lesson from Vern. The personal computer was still a bit of a mystery to most, but not to Vern. He had already begun editing and translating Golden Age plays in the leading word processing software of the time, WordPerfect. The number of hours he spent battling formatting codes and diligently filling the screen with the beautiful lines of poetry of those plays demonstrate both his love for the literature and his vision of the power of the medium for sharing that love. When we stumbled, like most of those whose concept of mail involved a person physically dropping it at your door, into the world of networked computers and email, our reach suddenly included, well, frankly, everyone. Vern seized on the idea of an email listserv and, with the help of the university, those interested in the *comedia* had reason to setup their email accounts. It was quite intoxicating to know that one's words could reach scholars whose names were like royalty to a graduate student, within minutes...and a response could be expected to follow shortly. When one of the first catalogs of listerv addresses published our names along with the *comedia* listerv, I felt like I had just published an article. Finally, it was only natural that Vern move into the next act of the Internet, the World Wide Web. His plays, digitized and ready to be shown on an open stage, continue to act in the AHCT archives and give life to plays written so many centuries ago. Now that my students, texting away on their phones, probably see me as an old dog, it gives me comfort to know that there still might be some tricks to learn, just like Vern. Thank you, Vern, for all that you did for me, for teaching me about the *comedia* and life and for all that you did, and continue to do, for Golden Age theater.