



Dorothy Runk Mennen

(July 17, 1915 – February 20, 2011)

In memoriam

Dorothy Runk Mennen received her Bachelor of Science degree in Speech from Kent State University in 1938 and her Master's degree from Purdue University in 1964. She was a pioneer in the teaching of voice and speech and she served as vocal coach on over 70 Purdue Theatre productions, founded the Voice and Speech Training Association (VASTA) – the largest organization of its kind in the world – and served as its founding president. She was the first woman to serve as the president of the American Association of University Professors and she was given a national award for Leadership and Performance by the University and College Theatre Association. At Purdue, she helped form the Women's Caucus to study and implement gender equity and she was the first woman to chair the Purdue University Senate. In 2003 Dorothy was honored as a distinguished alumna of Purdue University and in 2010 she was an inaugural recipient of the Purdue Legacy Award for her contributions to Purdue Theatre. Dorothy served on the boards of numerous regional and national arts organizations and was a role model for countless students, faculty and alumni. She received a Sagamore of the Wabash Award from the Governor in 2003.

In a letter to the faculty, Dorothy Mennen wrote: "Perhaps because my family lived here...I knew this was where I would be. I always saw the faculty and staff as a gestalt. It was our personal responsibility to make each one not only look good, but be good as artists and teachers. It was important to make the Theatre live up to its potential with the university and the students. To me, this meant being a part of the university as a whole and to serve it."

Dorothy served Purdue University for more than sixty years. She believed that you could do anything you set your mind to and she instilled that belief in her students. They carried that belief into their life and established the Dorothy Runk Mennen Scholarship in her honor. Recognizing her impact beyond academics, this scholarship celebrates her unwavering enthusiasm and steadfast encouragement of students to pursue their dreams.

Dorothy Runk Mennen was the most beloved member of our faculty. We will miss her dearly.

On behalf of Purdue Theatre
Richard Stockton Rand, Chair

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