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## Local theater actor and director Roger Alan Long, 68

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By [Wayne Harada](#)  
Advertiser Entertainment Writer

Roger Alan Long, an eminent director/actor who also had a passion for Indonesian wayang kulit (Javanese shadow puppetry), died Monday at the St. Francis Hospice in 'Ewa Beach. He was 68.

"Roger was highly intelligent, sensitive and creative — and enormously caring," said Glenn Cannon, an actor, director and University of Hawai'i professor, who was to direct Long in Manoa Valley Theatre's revival of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" in January, before Long's illness forced him to withdraw.

"He faced death with a grace and courage that awed and inspired me," said Karen "Bree" Bumatai, a longtime theater friend who had been rehearsing with Long for the MVT show.

"Roger was the reason I got back on stage this year. I jumped at the chance to spend more time with him and have the opportunity to work with someone of his caliber, for whom I felt such overwhelming respect. I was so sad when he was robbed of that opportunity (to play George) ... but I'm so glad he is out of pain."

Local audiences will recall his Kennedy Theatre productions of rarely performed Indonesian and Balinese dramas, including "Balinese Kecak" and "Kapai-Kapai," which challenged student actors and audiences alike with their risky reach into intercultural themes and traditions, and their integration of rituals and dances fusing music and masks. He also directed more conventional classics, such as "The Fantasticks."

Long earned Po'okela Awards for his direction of influential American dramas, including "Wit" and "Angels in America, Part I" at MVT, where he also mounted such shows as "Shirley Valentine" and "Deathtrap."

Late last year, when his diagnosis indicated that time was running out, Long e-mailed friends and colleagues about his decision to forgo additional treatments in order to maintain his quality of life.

"I have elected to enjoy my life, my family, my friends, my time," he wrote. "When I made that decision ... I immediately felt a calmness, a centeredness, a certainty that I had been missing for months and months. There are difficult days ahead, of course. But I will now concentrate on my appreciation of having quality time, and of sharing it with so many wonderful friends."

Long was a professor emeritus of Asian theater. He was a professor and associate dean of the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Hawai'i before retiring in 2005. He served as chairman of its Department of Theatre and Dance, professor of Southeast Asian Theatre and director of the Southeast Asian Studies Program.

He lived, studied, researched and worked in Indonesia, where he was widely known because of his teaching and stage credentials in Malaysia and Java.

He explored the cultural phenomenon of Javanese shadow puppetry, one of the many aspects of theater he devoted his life to, and was a regular member of the UH gamelan orchestra over the years. He became interested in Asian theater while earning a master's degree at Michigan State University.

Long earned a doctorate in Asian theater from UH in 1979.



Roger Alan Long

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An Illinois native, he was born Dec. 13, 1938, in Centralia and raised in Decatur. At Decatur High School, he lettered in tennis and played in the orchestra.

Long also had a bachelor's degree in theater from Southern Illinois University.

A passionate believer in education, Long donated his body to the John A. Burns School of Medicine for medical research.

"Once, we talked about what we would do once we had passed, to show the living we were near," said Karen Bumatai, the widow of comedian-actor Ray Bumatai.

"I would make things bloom," Long replied.

Survivors include a sister, Janice Long, and a brother, Ross Thompson, both of Decatur, and many nieces and nephews.

Memorial services are pending.

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