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Obituary

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# Dick Williams

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Christine Williams

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[A larger](#) | [smaller](#)

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My husband, Dick Williams, who has died aged 91, produced his first play when he was 13, and taught his last piano lesson the week before he died. While studying the piano at the Royal Academy of Music, he won a scholarship to Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he became the youngest actor ever to become an LGSM, and was awarded the Bassett Roe Memorial Prize. A love of music and theatre enriched his life. While in prison as a wartime conscientious objector, he worked on the land and this gave him the third great love of his life - gardening.

Born in Walthamstow, east London, he and his sister founded the Modern College of Music and Drama there in the 1930s. Postwar, he reopened it, with his first wife Freda, who died in 1975. In 1951 they bought a cottage on the Essex borders, where their children could experience country life. There, he and Freda created a beautiful garden, which still delights hundreds of visitors each year. Adjoining the cottage, an old marl pit in the forest became the open-air Willow Cottage theatre, where for 46 years the plays of Shakespeare, Molière, Oscar Wilde and many others have amused and enchanted audiences.

A man of enormous drive and energy, Dick inspired all who worked with him. Last year a civic award recognised his contribution to Waltham Forest's cultural life. Typically, his speech was about the future of the arts - he looked forward, never back. We who are left, together with the four children of his first marriage, grand and great-grandchildren, will do our best to keep alive the vision of this extraordinary man.

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