

Donor Showcase

George Valenta is Uncharacteristic

In 1951 George Valenta came to the University of Michigan as a Regents Alumni Scholarship recipient. Discovering his aptitude and passion for language, he received a Bachelors in German, with a double minor in Russian and French. Even as an undergraduate, George was grateful for the scholarship that gave him the financial support to study at the University of Michigan, and planned to reciprocate when he could.

He spent his first post-graduate year at the University of Potiers in France where he studied German via French. During frequent trips to Mexico and South America he has also acquired fluency in Spanish.

Upon earning a Master of Science in 1960, Valenta worked as a speech pathologist/audiologist in Grosse Pointe Farms for 30 years before he retired in order to pursue his interests in theater and the arts. Since that time he has been involved with a number of theater groups, namely the Michigan Classical Repertory Theater (MCRT), Ann Arbor Civic Theater, and the Comic Opera Guild. Valenta appeared in a rare North American fully staged production of *Minna von Barnhelm* with MCRT (see photo at right).

He created and hosted more than 200 Hatha Yoga programs that continue to air on CTN cable channel 17 each Tuesday and Wednesday. He also volunteers at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, local Senior Centers, and continues to teach Hatha Yoga at Washtenaw Community College each semester.

The German Department is particularly grateful for his philanthropy—having now created three endowments within the University of Michigan, George Valenta has begun his reciprocity, in honor of his father. His endowment has provided scholarships to a number of students for housing at the Max Kade House, and will continue in perpetuity.



George Valenta
(1909–1964)



George J. Valenta



George Valenta (left) as Count Bruchsall with Patrick Morgan as Major von Tellheim and Amy Caldwell as Minna in Robert Bethune's production of *Minna von Barnhelm*, Riverside Art Center, June 2004. Production translated for the stage and directed by Robert Bethune. Photo by Robert Bethune.

George Valenta has been involved with the theater since his retirement more than 20 years ago. He acts, directs, sings, and is currently on the Board of Directors, as well as Treasurer of the Comic Opera Guild, a semi-professional theater company that performs English translations of classic French, Italian, and German operetta, and early American musical theater.

The Comic Opera Guild hosts the Victor Herbert Festival every summer. This year five Victor Herbert operettas were offered. The COG is now the leading authority on Victor Herbert with all productions offered on CD and distributed worldwide.