



Seaborn Broughton & Walford Foundation Newsletter

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For bookings please call Carol Martin -on 9697 7654 Monday to Friday - 10am - 4pm

Volume Number Issue Number

17

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Date

23rd July 2009

Nan's Letter Space

Dear Friend

2nd September marks the 70th Anniversary of the Independent Theatre's Gala opening at the old vaudeville hall in 269 Miller Street, North Sydney. You are invited to attend a special afternoon tea at the Theatre to celebrate this occasion with a number of stars of the Independent's past. Booking details can be found elsewhere in in this Newsletter.

When Doris Fitton founded the Independent Theatre in 1930, her brave theatrical venture coincided with the Great Depression, diminution of live theatre, shortage of theatrical venues and competition from 'talking pictures'. Nevertheless, Miss Fitton displayed tenacity and imagination by setting up Club Rooms in King Street where drama classes were held, new plays were read and performed and where performers and theatre lovers could meet for discussions of mutual interest. Her productions were staged at St. James Hall, the Savoy Theatre and the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. By 1939, Doris Fitton, her loyal supporters and troupe of actors (professional, semi-professional and amateur) had secured a regular audience of 700 subscribers, mostly from the Eastern suburbs, and the Independent was known as a vibrant theatre group with a wide repertoire of classical, modern and local plays previously ignored by commercial theatre managements.

The Independent's relocation across the new Sydney Harbour Bridge to North Sydney in September 1939 contained an element of risk. But to Doris Fitton, the cavernous hall in Miller Street, leased for £5 a week, promised a secure opportunity. A large neon sign was affixed to the building's façade bearing its new name: 'The Independent'.

Miss Fitton's first production in the Independent's new home, Terence Rattigan's *French Without Tears*, coincided with the commencement of the World War 11. (Cast members Howard Craven, Ronald Folkard and David Nettheim served in the War.)

Most of the plays in these early years were directed by Doris Fitton who also played a number of major roles. Her Drama School flourished and she gave significant opportunities to local actors, playwrights, stage technicians and scenic designers.

Although a shortage of resources impacted on the Independent Theatre's work, and production standards were sometimes uneven, there were many remarkable and memorable productions, some of which toured country NSW sponsored by the Arts Council and commercial managements. One of the most notable was the Australian play *Rusty Bugles* (1948) by Sumner Locke Elliott. Records show that Doris Fitton gradually handed the reigns to other directors but there was never any doubt that, as Locke Elliott quipped: 'In the beginning was Doris. And Doris was the Independent Theatre and the Independent Theatre was Doris'. Her important contribution to Sydney theatre, 1930 to 1977, was recognised when she became Dame Doris in 1982.

The impressive Edwardian building which still bears the name 'Independent' may have been lost had not Dr Rodney Seaborn purchased it and commenced its restoration with the help of the Friends of the Independent Theatre, the Foundation and the local community. The 1990's were busy, exciting times. Volunteers worked alongside tradespeople. Actors and audiences returned to breathe new life into the old Theatre.

During the restoration, Dr Seaborn created a space upstairs, Gosh Hall, to honour the Glugs' theatrical lunch club founded in 1986 by a group of Sydney theatre critics. We have just learned that a good Friend of the Foundation, and Glugs' 'Mayor', Bob Davis has passed away. We send our deepest sympathies to his wife, Miriam, and their son Neil. Micki and Bob were generous supporters of the Independent restoration project.

Best wishes

Carolyn Lowry

The Opera Foundation Society (NSW)
invite you to
A SWELL PARTY with Cole Porter
A GALA DINNER
with the
De Lovely Music of the Ben Jones Jazz Quartet
Special Guest Artist
Mathew Loeser
Pianist- Vocalist- Entertainer
Performing Cole Porter Classics

Join us for this elegant evening at the
Royal Automobile Club 89 Macquarie St Sydney
Friday - 28th August 2009 - 7pm for 7.30pm
De Lovely music Delectable Dinner and Wines
Delightful Company
Entrée - \$165.00

Dress - Black Tie -Ladies Dress for Era
Bookings - Carol Martin - 9697 7654

(The Opera Foundation kindly donate a percentage of all monies to the SBW Foundation for bookings made by SBW Friends through the SBW Foundation office)



The Independent Theatre's 70th Birthday

**Independent Theatre 269 Miller St
North Sydney**

Wednesday 2nd September at 2pm

Join stars of the Independent Theatre's heyday for a celebration of the spoken word, fascinating anecdotes and a delicious afternoon tea.

Among the guests who have already accepted our invitation to share their memories and read pieces important to them and associated with the Independent's rich history are:

**John Derum, David Goddard, Betty Lucas
Jacqueline Kott, John Kingsmill,
Dinah Shearing and Rodney Milgate,
John Whitham and Barbara Wyndon**

Friends have already started booking for this delightful afternoon commemorating the 70th anniversary of Doris Fitton opening her Independent Theatre in North Sydney.

Tickets \$25.00 - SBW Friends \$20.00

For your comfort and convenience this event will be held in the Independent Theatre's foyer (no steps)
Please book early to avoid disappointment. Places are limited.

Parking available at Ryde Street Car Park
Bookings - Carol Martin - 9697 7654



INTENT TO MURDER

by Leslie Sands
Genesian Theatre 420 Kent St Sydney

In *Intent to Murder* a famous writer of mystery novels who lives alone in a remote cottage is discovered doing away with her no-good husband.
Now she has her nemesis. A twisted plot unfolds and takes many turns on its exciting journey towards a surprising end. We know you love the Genesian murder mysteries, and this one is not to be missed. So do join us on this date.

Sunday - 6th September 2009 - 4.30pm

Tickets - \$23.50

Bookings - Carol Martin - 9697 7654



Actors' Forum play reading SOULMATES

by David Williamson
Independent Theatre 269 Miller St North Sydney

Australia's most popular playwright is definitely at home in this comedic tilt at the idea that writing popular, money-making page-turners, requires less skill than serious 'elitist' literature.

When Melbourne *Age* book reviewer Danny O'Loughlin writes two scathing pieces on expatriate novelist Katie best, she devises a plan of revenge worthy of a plot in one of her own novels. She sets up a situation that threatens a survival of Danny's marriage to a woman who is an ardent fan of Katie's. But revenge can backfire and truth can prove to stranger than fiction.

Sunday - September 13th 2009 - 2pm

Tickets - \$20.00 Concession \$15.00

Ticket sales at door one hour prior to performance time.

WICKED

Capitol Theatre

13 Campbell Street Haymarket

Starring- Amanda Harrison, Lucy Durack, Bert Newton, Rob Mills and Maggie Kirkpatrick.

Wicked is coming to Sydney! The international blockbuster will open at the Capitol Theatre for a limited season from September 2009.

Wicked is the untold story of the Witches of OZ. One, born with an emerald green skin, is smart, fiery and misunderstood. The other is beautiful, ambitious and very popular. *Wicked* tells the story of how these two unlikely friends grow to become the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good Witch.

When *Wicked* opened on Broadway, it worked magic on critics and audiences alike.

Winner of 20 major awards including the Grammy and three Tony Awards, today it remains one of the most successful theatrical events in the world.

Limited seats available

Thursday - September 17th 2009 -8pm - Stalls

Sunday October 18th 2009 - 2pm

Front Dress Circle

Tickets - Eve - \$111.00 Matinee- \$118.00

Bookings - Carol Martin- 9697 7654



Actor's Forum play reading

LOVE CHILD

by Joanna Murray-Smith

Independent Theatre 269 Miller St North Sydney

Playwright, novelist and screenwriter, Joanna Murray-Smith is one of this country's acclaimed contemporary voices. Her play, *Honour* had a public reading in New York by Meryl Streep and Sam Waterson.

In *Love Child* her vivid and distinctive style of dialogue brings into play every nuance of an extraordinary meeting between a woman who gave away her unwanted baby and one who comes looking for a mother. Both are unmasked in a dramatic confrontation of fact and desire, throwing into question conventional ideas of love ties.

Sunday - October 18th 2009 - 2pm

Tickets - \$20.00- Concessions - \$15.00

Tickets on sale at door at 1pm



Opera Australia

THE MIKADO

by Gilbert and Sullivan

Opera Theatre Sydney Opera House

The Mikado (1885), which made fun of English bureaucracy, thinly disguised by a Japanese setting. The story focuses on a "cheap tailor," Ko-Ko, who is promoted to the position of Lord High Executioner of the town of Titipu. Koko loves his ward, Yum-Yum, but she loves a musician, who is really the son of the emperor of Japan (the Mikado), and who is in disguise to escape the attentions of the elderly and amorous Katisha. The Mikado has decreed that executions must resume without delay in Titipu.

Join us for this wonderful production that was one of Gilbert and Sullivan's most successful operas.

Wednesday - 28th October - 2009 - 7.30pm

Tickets - Stalls - \$ 94.00

Bookings - Carol Martin - 9697 7654



Some 'Friends' in the past have questioned the discrepancy of the price shown on the tickets for some functions to the price we actually charge. The reason for this is that our Foundation must make a profit on functions to build up our assets to continue benefiting the Performing Arts, but the price we charge 'Friends' is always cheaper than the normal price to the General Public. As well as paying for tickets months ahead the Foundation has to pay handling fees and in many cases 4% credit card fees.

We aim to make 10% for the Foundation on each function but we seldom do, and at the same time SBW 'Friends' get the best tickets at a reduced price.

