



# Seaborn Broughton & Walford Foundation Newsletter

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## Nan's Letter Space

Dear Friend

In response to an invitation from Mr Leslie Walford AM, President of the SBW Foundation, to write "Nan's Letter", I welcome this opportunity as Chief Archivist of the SBW Foundation to report on the recent progress of the SBW Foundation Archives, Library and Performing Arts Collection.

The SBW Foundation Archives commenced soon after the establishment of the SBW Foundation in 1986, but Dr Rodney Seaborn AO OBE Founding President of the SBW Foundation, always considered that the SBW Foundation Archives, Library and Performing Arts Collection was formally inaugurated on Tuesday 18 June, 1991 when radio and television presenter and theatre historian John West AM (1924-2008), known to many devoted ABC listeners as "The Showman", donated his personal archives, comprising theatre programmes, newspaper cuttings, reviews, books, historical articles, phonograph recordings and theatrical memorabilia to the SBW Foundation at a large press gathering held at the SBW Foundation Function Room in Wattle House, Oxford St, Darlinghurst. The occasion was formally celebrated that evening when some 140 Friends of the Foundation attended the "John West Dinner" at the new Nikko Hotel, Macleay St, Potts Point, held in his honour to acknowledge and accept the generous donation of his lifelong collection of papers to the Foundation. This magnificent collection of historical notes and papers on the history of Australian theatre was accumulated by John West during decades of research in the Mitchell Library and other Australian libraries in the course of researching and writing his book *Theatre in Australia*, which was published in 1978. The generosity and munificence of John West did not come to an end with his passing on 9 July, 2008, as he bequeathed a substantial sum to the SBW Foundation for its general purposes as one of the residuary beneficiaries under his will.

In the twenty years since John West donated his papers, the SBW Foundation Archives has expanded enormously through the acquisition of many other collections which are of great importance to Australian theatrical research and scholarship. Amongst these are included the substantial collections of press clippings and theatre programmes and an accompanying card index which were acquired by the SBW Foundation from the University of NSW Library in January 2006, but which originally formed part of the Dennis Wolanski Library of the performing Arts when located at the Sydney Opera House between 1973 and 1996. Numerous smaller collections of manuscripts were previously acquired from the Dennis Wolanski Library in the 1990's, and these are listed in a catalogue or select list of material transferred to other organizations and collecting institutions available on the Wolanski Foundation website at <http://www.twf.org.au/library/catalogue.html>

Shortly before he died on the 17 May, 2008 Dr Seaborn commenced negotiations with the executives of the Griffin Theatre Company, which is committed to the production of Australian plays, for the transfer of the company archives to the SBW Foundation archive repository. This transfer of the records of the Griffin Theatre Company is one which would have brought much pleasure to Dr Seaborn and may be regarded as the fulfillment of a long-held desire to make proper provision for the protection and preservation of the archives of the Griffin Theatre Company and the Stables Theatre, which properly regards itself as "one of the great engine rooms of Australian theatre" and "the only Sydney theatre company entirely dedicated to the professional development and production of new Australian writing for the stage." The acquisition of the archives of the Griffin Theatre Company, which was established in 1978 by graduates of the National Institute of Dramatic Art, is a milestone in the development of the SBW Foundation Archives and Library.

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