

NAN'S LETTER (continued)

The SBW Foundation Archives and Library is also the custodian of upwards of forty stage set models practically representing the life work of the distinguished Australian theatre designer and costumier, Allan Lees, whose career began in New Zealand, and later flourished in Australia as well as internationally. This remarkable collection, comprising not only set models, but also meticulously drawn scale plans of design renderings, is quite possibly unique amongst the performing arts collecting institutions in Australasia, as it represents the creative inspiration of one of Australia's most prolific set designers of opera, ballet and stage productions in both Australia and New Zealand during his fifty year career. Allan Lees is presently undertaking the laborious and painstaking restoration and conservation of his stage set models, with a view to their ultimate display in the future for the benefit of students of theatre design and for the wider theatre-loving public.

One of the most iconic collections in the custody of the SBW Foundation Archives is that of the Marionette Theatre of Australia, which includes in excess of 200 puppets which were used in such memorable and much-loved productions as *The Magic Pudding* (1970 and 1980), *The Water Babies* (1972), *The Explorers* (1966) and *Sydney Coves* (1988). A small collection of puppets which formerly belonged to Nancy Robertson Johnston's *Nutshell Puppet Theatre* in Perth also forms part of the Marionette Theatre of Australia collection. The Marionette Theatre archives and puppets were acquired by the SBW Foundation from the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, which owned the collection, in 1992, and were subsequently accommodated partly in the care of Ms Maddy Slabacu, director of the Horizon Theatre Company and puppeteer and partly with the Griffin Theatre Company. Apart from the puppets, the collection also includes production audio-tapes, cinematographic film, press clippings, photographic images and theatre programmes. A long-term project has commenced in consultation, where possible, with the original Marionette Theatre puppeteers, puppet makers and costumiers to undertake the identification, technical description, cataloguing, conservation and repair of the puppets with the ultimate aim of creating professional quality photographic images of the puppets to be made and uploaded on the SBW Foundation website. The first stage of this process has commenced and is proceeding in accordance with professional advice and guidance of internationally recognised puppet theatre experts including Australian puppeteer Norman Hetherington ("Mr Squiggle") and Canadian puppeteer Ronnie Burkett.

The Board of Directors of the SBW Foundation has decided to continue their financial support in aid of the "SBW Artist-in-Residence" program at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, and have undertaken to provide a sum of \$100,000 a year for the next five years. This is a very worthy investment in the education and vocational training of talented young theatre practitioners.

The SBW Foundation is especially grateful for the financial support of its Friends whose continuing generosity enables the Foundation to pursue its aim of providing assistance to the Australian theatre and performing arts.

Dr Peter Orlovich
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