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CAV Association No. A0052375A

Nomination of Frank Van Straten AM for RHSV Associate Fellowship

On behalf of Theatre Heritage Australia Inc., I am nominating Frank Van Straten AM for this award. Frank has been a member of the RHSV since 1973.

Frank is a founding member of Victoria Theatres Trust (now Theatre Heritage Australia), and since 1995 has been instrumental in the growth and success of the organisation. From 1999-2012, he co-produced THA's quarterly magazine *On Stage*. As well as commissioning articles, he contributed hundreds of his own. The magazine received a Victorian Community History Award in 2004.

Although he retired from the committee in 2017, Frank continues to support THA as a mentor, researcher, and writer, freely sharing his knowledge, expertise and vast archive of theatre programs and photos with the committee and others.

Frank's love of the theatre goes back to his youth when he collected early recordings and established his own record label. As his collection grew, so too did his knowledge of Australian theatre history and his network of industry contacts.


During the 1970s Frank was appointed archivist of the newly founded Performing Arts Museum at the Victorian Arts Centre (now Arts Centre Melbourne), becoming its director from 1984 to 1993. Frank played a pivotal role in the development of the Australian Performing Arts Collection which today ranks as one of the leading performing arts repositories in the southern hemisphere. In 2020, APAC established the Frank Van Straten Fellowship in his honour. The Fellowship is supported by the Van Straten Turley Foundation. This same Foundation has given donations to the RHSV and Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens, notably a new public gate, which was unveiled in 2023.

From 1986 to 2001, Frank researched and presented the ABC's weekly Nostalgia Show, broadcast on Melbourne's 774. The show highlighted different aspects of Melbourne's theatre history through interviews with stars of yesteryear and the playing of illustrative recordings sourced from his own collection and that of the ABC.

As well as contributing historical articles to theatre programs and journals, Frank has written histories of the Tivoli circuit (2003) (Victorian Community History Award, 2004), Regent (1996) and Her Majesty's Theatres (2018) in Melbourne, and Her Majesty's in Adelaide (2013), plus biographies of near-forgotten Melbourne-based theatre personalities Gertrude Johnson (1994), Hugh D McIntosh (2004), Florence Young (2009) and Ernest C Rolls (2020). Frank has also served on various boards and on judging panels for the Green Room and Helpmann Awards.

In 1999, he received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his contributions to the performing arts; and in 2017 was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

For his contribution to the success of Theatre Heritage Australia and as a champion of theatre history in Melbourne and Australia, Frank is a worthy recipient of the inaugural RHSV Associate Fellowship.



Elisabeth Kumm

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