**Entry type:** Person
**Entry ID:** IMP0028

# Fitton, Doris Alice

(1897 - 1985)

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| **Born** | 18971103, Santa Ana Manila Philippines |
| **Died** | 19850402, St Leonards, SydneySt Leonards, Sydney New South Wales Australia |
| **Occupation** | Actor, Theatrical director |

## Summary

Doris Fitton was an actor who, with a number of others, established the Independent Theatre in Sydney in 1930 and kept it going until its closure in 1977. The theatre provided a training ground for young Australian actors and playwrights. She was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire on 31 December 1981 for Services to the theatre (as Mrs Mason).

## Details

Doris Fitton was the daughter of Walter Fitton, an English accountant, broker and cigar manufacturer, and his wife, Janet Cameron, an Australian. She came to Australia in 1902 with her mother and older sister, Janet. She was educated at Loreto Convent, Ballarat and took acting classes with Gregan McMahon. Fitton had her first acting role in Melbourne with J C Williamson in 1915.

Doris Fitton married solicitor Norbert Mason in Sydney in 1922 and had two sons.

Frustrated at the lack of opportunity for acting, she and nineteen other actors established the Independent Theatre in Sydney 1930. It remained in existence for forty-seven years, closing in May 1977. The theatre provided young Australian actors and playwrights with opportunities to develop and display their talents. They staged more than four hundred productions, the most controversial being Sumner Locke Elliott's *Rusty Bugles*.

Although her students and peers loved and respected her, she was known for her dictatorial personality. Her autobiography entitled *Not without heat and dust*, was published in 1981.

Shee gained public recognition for her commitment to theatre in Australia with her appointment to the OBE in 1955, the CBE in 1975 and the DBE in 1982.

Doris Fitton died in Sydney on 2 April 1985.

## Published resources

**Book**
My brief strut upon the stage, Kingsmill, John, 2001

Not without dust and heat : my life in theatre, Fitton, Doris, c1981

The golden age of Australian radio drama 1923-1960 : a history through biography, Lane, Richard, 1994

**Sound recording**
[Conversation with Doris Fitton], Fitton, Doris, 1960

**Book Section**
Doris Fitton, Oppenheimer, Melanie, 1988

Fitton, Dame Doris Alice, 1996

**Edited Book**
200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988,
https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20071105022623/http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/78644/20071105-1315/www.200australianwo

**Site Exhibition**
Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

**Resource**
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

**Resource Section**
Fitton, Dame Doris Alice Lucy Walkden (1897 - 1985), McPherson, Ailsa, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A170390b.htm

## Archival resources

**National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection**
Papers relating to the Canberra Repertory Society 1945-1975 [manuscript]

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**Created** 24 April 2002
**Last modified** 14 May 2019