

MEDIA RELEASE

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JOHN BELL ELECTED A DISTINGUISHED FELLOW

Australia's legendary Shakespearian actor-director, Dr John Bell AO OBE, has been elected a Distinguished Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales. The RSNSW is one of Australia's oldest learned societies and gained royal assent from Queen Victoria in 1866.

Dr Bell joins an exclusive group of 20 RSNSW Distinguished Fellows. They include former NSW Governor Dame Marie Bashir; author Thomas Keneally; former Commonwealth senators Barry Jones and Peter Baume, and internationally recognised scientists, including Professors Brian Schmidt, Michelle Simmons, Peter Doherty and Elizabeth Blackburn.

The RSNSW's President, Dr Susan Pond, welcomed Dr Bell to the society's highest echelon of elected members. She said 'John is one of Australia's most brilliant theatre personalities – an award-winning actor, acclaimed director, risk-taking impresario, passionate educator, inspiring leader and superbly engaging speaker.

'His contributions to the appreciation of the works of William Shakespeare have been pervasive and invigorating, while his many interpretations of the Bard's leading characters have become performance benchmarks in Australian theatre.'

Before he founded the Bell Shakespeare theatre company in a circus tent in 1990, Dr Bell worked for the Old Tote and Royal Shakespeare Company in London, each of the Australian state theatre companies and was a co-founder of the Nimrod Theatre Company in Sydney. He retired from the Bell Shakespeare Company in 2015, after overseeing the company's transfer to new premises on Pier 2/3 in the Walsh Bay Creative Arts Precinct.

The Royal Society of NSW has been fostering informed debate in NSW for more than 150 years. Its mission is to draw people together from diverse disciplines including science, art, literature and philosophy, to share their knowledge and experiences.

'Our focus is on the highly complex challenges that the world faces in the 21st century, particularly those that impact NSW and Australia', said Dr Pond.

Dr Bell will receive his DistFRSN award from the Governor of NSW, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, in an evening ceremony at Government House, Sydney, on 31 October 2024.