



Photograph credit: Paul Cary, 2004

Playwright Willy Russell's personal archive available at Liverpool John Moores University

24th April 2013: Playwright Willy Russell's personal archive collection is now available for access at Liverpool John Moores University's Special Collections and Archives department. Willy Russell will give a talk at the University in October 2013 which will be accompanied by an exhibition of material from the archive.

Willy Russell is a playwright and musician whose work has enjoyed worldwide success and acclaim. He is best known for plays *Educating Rita* (1980), *Shirley Valentine* (1986), *Our Day Out* (1977), and the musical *Blood Brothers* (1983). Willy Russell's works have been translated into numerous languages and won multiple awards for both theatre and film.

Further works by Willy Russell include the screenplays for the award winning film adaptations of *Educating Rita* and *Shirley Valentine*, the musical *John, Paul, George, Ringo...and Bert*, plays *Stags & Hens*, *Breezeblock Park*, *When the Reds..* and *One For the Road*, and television dramas *One Summer*, *Terraces*, and *The Daughters of Albion*. Willy Russell's first novel, *The Wrong Boy*, was published in 2000. Willy Russell has provided the musical scores for the feature films, *Shirley Valentine*, *Dancin' Thru The Dark* and *Mr Love* as well as for the TV series *Connie* and the television play *Terraces*. His first album, *Hooovering the Moon* was released in 2003.

The archive collection is a comprehensive representation of Willy Russell's work to date. It includes manuscripts, which illustrate the process of creation, with drafts, alternate dialogue, adaptation for film and pieces which have been updated for modern audiences. The collection also contains notebooks and diaries providing evidence of the rehearsal and preparatory process, programmes and posters highlighting the manner in which works were promoted, newspaper cuttings providing insight into actors, theatres and critical reception, and correspondence, which includes discussions with producers, directors, agents, actors, publicists and collaborators.

The collection was amassed by Willy Russell over the course of his career, and the material is an excellent resource for research into modern theatre, graphic design, creative writing, literature and linguistics. The collection has been catalogued and is available for access at:

<http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/lea/77343.htm>

Willy Russell, April 2013

It has always been my intention that if ever my papers and manuscripts were to be deposited, then it would be with a Liverpool institute. I'm delighted to have come to this arrangement with Liverpool John Moores University and want to record my grateful thanks to Valerie Stevenson, Emily Parsons, and Dr. Ros Merkin for their invaluable help and assistance in bringing this about. I'd also like to record a special thanks to Jessica Smith, the Archivist who has done so much of the 'heavy lifting' in the preparation and cataloguing of the material and overseeing its transfer to the University. I now have a much tidier office; and a quiet sense of something fitting in knowing that my manuscripts are housed in a building no more than a few yards from where most of them were written and first performed.

Roger Webster, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professional and Social Studies commented:

"I am very pleased that the University has been able to acquire this archive through Willy Russell's generosity: Willy has been a good friend to the University over many years and we are delighted that he has chosen us as the guardian of an extremely important collection of material. It will undoubtedly attract and produce world-class scholarship and we hope to develop a number of research projects around it. This collection also consolidates our relationship with drama writing and production in Liverpool, especially with the Everyman Theatre."

Dr Ros Merkin, Reader in Drama, Liverpool Screen School said:

"Willy Russell's archive is of international importance for theatre students, researchers and historians and his generosity in donating it to Liverpool John Moores University means it will now be an invaluable resource accessible to students and researchers. The fact that Blood Brothers is still the best selling contemporary playtext, more than thirty years after its first appearance on stage at Liverpool Playhouse, attests to the enduring popularity and legacy of Willy Russell's work."

Valerie Stevenson, Head of Academic Services, Library Services added:

"We are delighted, and very proud, to be the custodians of Willy Russell's archive. The collection sits very well alongside the archives of the Everyman Theatre, the Unity Theatre and the Merseyside Youth Theatre (Fuse) Archive, providing a wealth of material for researchers and for anyone interested in Liverpool theatre. We plan to make the archive very accessible by working with the other cultural and educational organisations in Liverpool and holding exhibitions and events here at LJMU."

For more information, please contact:

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