Speech given by Isla Baring on behalf of herself and her sisters, Ann and Sally, on the occasion of the launch of their mother’s memoirs.

At the launch of her second book in 2001, our mother in her speech announced that it was the happiest day of her life. We know she would be equally delighted tonight! We three sisters are so thrilled to think that her memoirs, and her need to record some of the stories we’d heard – again and again – over the years, are here now for you to enjoy in print.

Many sincere thanks to Elisabeth Kumm – without her this would not have been possible, and we remain eternally grateful to her for bringing it to life. We also gratefully thank the amazing team from Theatre Heritage Australia who have worked so tirelessly to realise Mummy’s dream.

Our mother’s infectious enthusiasm and her joy of anything theatrical radiated to all those who knew her. We are so proud of her many achievements, and everyone here tonight will have fond memories of our remarkable mother.

The three of us had such great fun finding memorable photographs to be included in the book. We especially loved finding the cover image for the book in a collection of photographs in New York, and to top it all off, we managed to get her good friend Maestro Richard Bonynge to write the Foreword.

This book has brought to life the amazing memories of our mother and the theatrical lives we all led. Mummy and Daddy brought some of the world’s most famous international companies and stars of the time to Australia under the banner of J.C. Williamson’s. Many of them came to our home at 32 Hopetoun Road, Toorak, and this is all so lovingly remembered in the book. Daddy died in 1965, being the youngest and last of the five brothers. It was the end of an era.
These pages are filled with Mummy’s devotion to my father, our family and to the theatre. On page after page, those of you who knew Mummy will instantly recognise her humour, personality and special way of telling a story.

Her love of Scotland never left her – in the book there are so many pictures of the beloved family she left behind – but she embraced her new life in her adopted home, Australia. As you read this book you will love and understand our dear mother, and get a real sense of her huge devotion and commitment to the arts.

The Tait Memorial Trust, which was founded 26 years ago in London, was our mother’s inspiration. She was our first patron. She would be so proud to know how many young Australian performing artists we have helped in the UK and Australia. We now help New Zealanders too.

We would like to thank our wonderful performers tonight, soprano Naomi Summers, our pianist Andrea Katz, and our dear mezzo-soprano Liane Keegan who has been such a big a part of these continuing stories as well.

We are also so grateful to our sister Sally, and her husband Lew, who have generously provided their wonderful home for our launch this evening, and to their family Jess, Josh and Dave. Thank you so much from Ann and me.