



On the back of the worldwide success of *The King's Speech*, a collection of speech therapist Lionel Logue souvenirs has been put on display at the Festival Centre, writes **SAMELA HARRIS**

The talk of the town

PERHAPS Lionel Logue's good works as a speech therapist did not end with his renowned work in tutoring King George VI.

His leap to new fame as the subject of the film *The King's Speech* has resulted in souvenirs of his life being placed in the public gaze; among them, the classic elocution text books that underscored his teaching.

Today they sit on display in the front foyer of the Festival Centre, part of a special Lionel Logue exhibition mounted by the Performing Arts Collection.

And, suddenly, the vanishing art of elocution is a talking point.

To the Performing Arts Collection's exhibitions co-ordinator, Jo Peoples, this is a cause for hope.

"Perhaps it will promote renewed interest in elocution, a revival of it," she says.

"Heaven knows it is needed in this era when kids talk in telephone text.

"Elocution is a useful art to have. It gives one the ability to talk in front of people. It is generally useful in most aspects of life."

Before he met Lionel Logue, King George VI, the then Duke of York, was denied this crucial art of articulating at all, so critically had he been afflicted with stuttering. It was Adelaide-born Logue's extraordinary path to the pages of

history that he was able to help the troubled father of the Queen with his techniques of speech therapy.

Logue was not only to become

renowned but also he was to earn the lifelong friendship of the King – and, of course, his achievements were recorded proudly in the Australian media of the times.

In Adelaide, Logue had attended Prince Alfred's College from 1889 to 1896 while his father was accountant for Logue's Brewery, established by his grandfather Edward Logue in 1850.

It was to merge with the South Australian Brewing Company.

His father, George, went on to become a publican, running the Burnside Hotel and later the Elephant and Castle. Lionel gained his elocution training at Elder Conservatorium from Edward Reeves and by 1902 had set up as a teacher.

After a stint in Western Australia, he took his wife Myrtle and their young family to England where, in Harley St in 1926, he established the speech-defect practice that was to attract royal attention. Thus was he charged with the task of helping the shy future king to achieve a smooth speaking pattern.

In 1944 George VI was to reward Logue for this by making him a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order. After the King's death, the Queen Mother sent Logue a special box from the King's desk as an affectionate keepsake. The letter that accompanied this gift is one of the items on show at the Festival Centre.

Among the many exhibitions Jo Peoples has mounted from the vast resources of the SA Performing Arts Collection, the "remark-

able" Lionel Logue perhaps taps sharpest on her societal nerve.

Jo Peoples has, in fact, been the Lionel Logue of our times.

She is a qualified elocution teacher trained at Trinity College, London. She has taught students of most of the city's major private schools.

"But elocution has gone out of favour these days," she says.

"Its teaching now comes under umbrella of 'speech and drama.'

In its traditional form, elocution has been taught by specially-qualified theatre people.

Over the years, notable teachers have been behind the scenes in television and radio newsrooms, ensuring news readers are skilled in enunciation, breathing, phrasing and pronunciation.

"Elocution nowadays is often taught to school students out of hours," says Ms Peoples.

"I have given before-school private classes to some Saints boys and to other students after hours."

Ms Peoples says the concern to have young people trained in good elocution often comes from parents who fear that their young may be disadvantaged in their careers if they cannot articulate clearly and with interesting intonation. "These are arts needed not only to command a board room, but simply to stand up in front of people and give presentations.

"We should never underestimate the power of the spoken word," she said.



ELOCUTION CRAZE: Performing Arts Collection's exhibitions co-ordinator Jo Peoples with some of the Lionel Logue memorabilia, including a letter from the Queen Mother, at the Festival Centre