

VAUDEVILLE THEATRE



DESIRÉE ELLINGER

SOMETIME

London run: Vaudeville, February 5th - 28th
(28 performances)

Music: Rudolf Friml

Book & Lyrics: Rida Johnson Young

Additional lyrics: Ed Wynn

Director: William J. Wilson

Producer: William J. Wilson

Cast: Désirée Ellinger (*Enid Vaughan*), Farren Soutar (*Hank Vaughan*), Bibi Delabere (*Mamie Dean*), Frank Tinney (*Frank*), Yvonne Mertens (*Mabel*), Carlito Ackroyd, Leslie Benson, Joan Carroll, Robert Chisolm, Hilda Cowley, Franklin Davies, Dolores Sisters, Josephine Earle, Jack Frost, Albert Goodwin, Joan Hay, Dodd A. Mehan, William Parry, Miriam Sabbage, Geoffrey Startin, Verita Vivien

Story: The story is told in “flashback” and shifts between the present and the past. Enid, the storyteller, is due to marry Henry Vaughan, but the voluptuous Mamie has other ideas. Mamie puts innocent Henry into an embarrassing situation that causes Enid to postpone the wedding until her fiancé has completed a five-year “good behaviour bond”. In the end Enid and Henry marry and Mamie is left to her own vices.

Notes: The original production opened on Broadway in 1918 with the role of Mamie played by Mae West. In the song “Any Kind of Man” Mae West introduced the “shimmy” to Broadway – a dance which involved a horizontal shaking of the upper body, especially the shoulders. It became immensely popular and was quickly associated with female sexual seductiveness. However, London audiences were not impressed. Their main interest seemed to be in the popular music-hall black-face comedian, Frank Tierney, making his debut in musical comedy. “Frank Tinney is a very funny fellow, but he has only one line of humour, and a whole evening of him is too much...he is the one bright spot and if you drop in for half an hour of the show, you will enjoy him. But do not stay more than half an hour” (*Daily Herald*). “The music is typical; conventional Viennese. It probably is better than it sounded last night, for the work of the orchestra was hardly up to the standard which one expects in a West End theatre” (*Daily News*). “...they did their best, but all were trying to make bricks without straw. If ‘Sometime’ succeeds it will be because of Tinney” (*Reynold’s News*). The show survived a mere 28 performances.

KATJA THE DANCER

London run: Gaiety, February 21st (Total 505 performances)



The First Act Finale: Lilian Davies (centre) and Gregory Stroud (right)



Ivy Tresmand & Gene Gerrard

KATJA THE DANCER

London run: Gaiety, February 21st - September 5th
 Transfer: Daly's, September 7th - May 5th 1926
 (Total 505 performances)

Music : Jean Gilbert

Additional music: Maurice Rubens & Ralph Benatsky

Additional lyrics: Clifford Grey

Original Book & Lyrics: Leopold Jacobsohn & Rudolph Oesterreicher

English adaptation: Frederick Lonsdale & Harry Graham

Director: Fred J. Blackman

Musical Director: Arthur Wood

Cast: Lilian Davies (*Katja*), Gregory Stroud (*Prince Karl*),
 Bobbie Comber (*Count Orpitch*), Dennis Hoey (*Ivo*),
 Rene Mallory (*Maud*), Gene Gerrard (*Leander*), Vincent Dawson,
 Roger Head, Norman Leyland, Jack Livesey, Leonard Russell,
 Ivy Tresmand. *Ensemble not credited.*

Story: Katja is really a Countess whose family has lost everything as a result of political intriguing. She has taken to dancing as a profession in order to earn a living and has been engaged to appear at Count Orpitch's where she is attracted to a man called Colonel Ineson. However, Ivo, Katja's dancing partner recognises Ineson – he is really Prince Karl of Koruja in disguise, and is the very man who brought down Katja's family. Ivo persuades Katja to accept an assignation with the Prince, drug his wine and deliver him to the hands of his enemies. But Katja learns the real story: Karl is a figurehead, wrongly used by political opportunists, and when Ivo decides to drug the prince himself, Katja dashes the wine from his lips and helps him escape. Finally all is put right, and Katja and Karl are united in matrimony. (A sub plot tells of the romance between Count Orpitch's daughter, Maud, and his secretary, Leander.)

Notes: This was adapted from the operetta "Katja, die Tänzerin", first produced at the Neues Operetten-Theater, Berlin, in February 1923. The English version had opened in Bradford in August 1924 for a summer run, and had then been re-staged as a Christmas attraction in Manchester. It transferred to the Gaiety to fill the gap left by the early end of "Poppy", and was intended as a stop-gap show.

It received excellent notices: "A great West End audience cheered themselves hoarse last night at the Gaiety Theatre as the curtain fell on the new musical comedy, 'Katja the Dancer'. For they had discovered a new comedian. His name is Gene Gerrard, and he bids fair to become a second Leslie Henson" (*Weekly Dispatch*). "...a cut above most other musical comedies...So lively are (Jean Gilbert's) tunes that it is strange how Harry Graham was content to fit them with such dull lyrics" (*Daily Herald*).

"It is the old Ruritanian piece, sumptuously dressed and decorated. glittering and shimmering through its three acts of important intrigue. But it has at least a new comedian in Mr Gene Gerrard...who thoroughly amused the first night audience" (*Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News*); "a brilliant success both so far as the piece was concerned and Miss Lilian Davies' personal part in it" (*Tatler*)

Despite its original "stop gap" intention, it turned out to be a great success, transferring to Daly's in September, and running for over 500 performances. It came to an abrupt end in May 1926 because of the General Strike,



Lilian Davies & Gregory Stroud

LOVE'S PRISONER

London run: Adelphi, February 6th - 28th
(26 performances)

Music, Book & Lyrics: Reginald Hargreaves

Director: Harry Welchman

Choreographer: Fred A. Leslie

Musical Director: John Heuvel

Producer: Harry Welchman

Cast: Ewart Scott (*Sir Barnaby Breeze*),

James Lindsay (*Sir Roger Trevannion*), Harry Welchman (*Gaston de Senlis*),

Helen Gilliland (*Barbara*), Betty Faire (*Licette*), E. Percy Parsons (*Lurgan*)

Russell Macauley (*Black George Tregonning*), Fred Wither (*Abel Polperro*)

Kathleen Beldon, John E. Coyle, Henry Crocker, Conway Dixon, W.F. Hall,

Albert Hayzen, Dorothy Lane, Grant Maclean, Dimitri Vetter, Fred Vigay,

Ensemble: Misses Maisie Barry, Doris Colston, Florence Davies, Mabel Devereux,

Cora Engleton, Gladys Goodwin, Lila Grettan, Mary Hedges, Irene Holmes,

Hilda Hoyes, Julie Mayo, Elizabeth Nelson, Eileen Reynolds, Christine Rona,

Tommi Stuart, Ann Tewksbury, Winifred Vigay, May Webster; *Messrs:* James Arnold, Frederick Chanin, Winter Coppin,

Gordon Crocker, Roy Devereux, Richard Fenwick, Arnold Halstead, Albon Hawke, Joseph Heaps, Edward Jones,

John Lloyd, Trevor Mansell, Webster Millar, Rex O'Brady, Arthur Rees, C.M. Rickards, Gilbert Robinson,

Nathan Shacknoff, Kenneth Solly, David Underwood.



Harry Welchman

Story: Sir Barnaby Breeze, who has dispossessed the wicked Sir Roger Trevanion and taken over his ancestral seat at Runion Manor, has been profiteering in the grain market during the Napoleonic Wars. He has offered to accommodate a French prisoner-of-war, Gaston de Senlis, a Napoleon Hussar, and, inevitably, Sir Barnaby's daughter, Barbara, falls in love with the handsome captive. Gaston's sister, Licette, has arrived in disguise, on a secret mission from Napoleon himself. Meantime Sir Roger is planning revenge and plots with the local smuggler, Lurgan, to kidnap Gaston and sell him as a slave on the American plantations. Gaston escapes back to France, and Sir Barnaby is arrested, so Gaston nobly risks his life in returning to England to rescue Barbara's father, fortuitously timed with the news of Waterloo and peace. Result: happy ending all round.

Notes: Originally announced to open on February 3rd, with part of the performance to be broadcast on the wireless, there was some confusion when the opening night was postponed for a few days and a substitute programme was aired. Clearly the show was in some kind of trouble. The Stage review elaborated on this, saying it had a "long drawn-out and badly constructed book, overloaded with sometimes tiresome and unnecessary detail" which led to its "unfortunately mixed reception".

Other reviews were equally dismissive: "Mr. Welchman has a fine fire and frenzy, and is a regular romantic

actor of the old school. It is very much to be regretted then that he chose such a dull piece as 'Love's Prisoner' for his opening at the Adelphi. Set in the Napoleonic period, its banal dialogue is only occasionally broken by music, and there is an entire lack of any real humour" (*Daily Herald*).

"It bears all the signs of hasty production. Curtailed, rewritten and with a little more attention paid to the music, it might furnish a very agreeable evening's entertainment. The theme is a good one, and the story itself is well constructed. But Mr. Hargreaves' adventures into the region of 'comic relief' are depressing beyond words" (*Sunday Mirror*).



BOODLE

London run: Empire, March 10th - May 30th
(94 performances)

Music: Philip Braham & Max Darewski

Lyrics: Douglas Furber

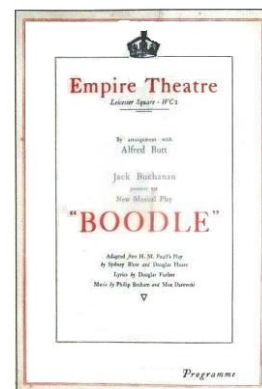
Book: Sydney Blow & Douglas Hoare

Director: Sydney Blow

Choreographer: Jack Buchanan

Musical Director: Max Darewski

Cast: Jack Buchanan (*"Boodle"*), Denis Cowles (*Bino Marchant*), Douglas Furber (*Dixon*), Sam Wilkinson (*Baker*), Miss June (*Daphne Drew*), Ethel Stewart (*Rosie*), Veronica Brady (*Matilda*), Russell Gorton (*Billy*), Elsie Randolph (*Clematis*), Frank Attree, Bessie Burns, Cicely Byng, Lola Campbell, Moya Chance, Peggy Evelyn, Bobby Gordon, Phyllis Lascelles, Pamela Lindley, Hastings Lynn, Violet Marley, Billie Rockford, Beryl Stackard, Barry Storri, Willy Zaalberg,
Ensemble Misses: Blair, Chant. Cole, D'Arcy, Giron, Heath, S. Lascelles, Gladys March, Ray, Roberts, Stewart,
Messrs: Gordon, Halpin. Herald, Irving, Leonhardt, Somerville, Tripp.



Story: Lord Algernon Kenilworth (*"Boodle"*) mistakenly believes he has killed his friend Bino Marchant by throwing him into the water from a window-sill during a fit of pique. Booodle hides in Dixon's Circus, where he takes the place of the clown, Baker. He is not the only person in disguise: Daphne Drew, for a bet, has taken the place of another circus performer, Rosie, the real equestrienne. Other characters include Matilda, the circus tattooed lady, wife of the disappearing Baker; Billy, the strongman; and Clematis, Daphne's plain sister.

Notes: This was adapted from H.M. Paull's 1902 farce *"The New Clown"*. It managed just two and a half months at the Empire despite its splendid circus effects. It was said to suffer from "rather dull dialogue" (*Stage*), although "apart from a rather arid ten minutes in the middle of the second act, the result is as jolly a musical piece as could be wished" (*Times*).

NO, NO, NANETTE

London run: Palace, March 11th - October 16th 1926



Florence Bayfield, Joan Barry & Vera Pearce, with Joseph Coyne & George Grossmith

NO, NO, NANETTE

London run: Palace, March 11th - October 16th 1926
(665 performances)

Music: Vincent Youmans
Lyrics: Irving Caesar & Otto Harbach
Book: Otto Harbach & Frank Mandel
Director: William Mollison
Choreographer: Patrick Leonard
Musical Director: Percival Mackey
Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller

Cast: Binnie Hale (*Nanette*), Joseph Coyne (*Jimmy Smith*), Marie Hemingway (*Sue Smith*), Irene Browne (*Lucille Early*), George Grossmith (*Billy Early*), Gracie Leigh (*Pauline*), Seymour Beard (*Tom Trainor*), Joan Barry, Florence Bayfield, Vera Pearce; *Ensemble: The Maids:* Zoe Andrews, Doris Beaton, Connie Harris, Rita McLean, Pat Neville, June Pelton, Mignon Ryan, Phyllis Stewart, Rubie Stewart, Irene Veronica;
The Marrieds: Margery Bouchier, Molly Bouchier, Mamie Bulman, Marjorie Cooper, Paula Fraser, Bobbie Hanson, Pamela Lindley, Mary Taylor, Ann Thurley, Rita Wilson; *The Bachelors:* Lester Barrett, Herbert Brett, Eric Bridson, Pat Bryant, Frank Fox, Michael Gaygan, Max Kirby, Charles Knight, Harry Marshall, Claude Watts.



*Joseph Coyne, Binnie Hales
& George Grossmith*

Story: Jimmy Smith, a married New York Bible manufacturer and the guardian of Nannette, has most innocently been giving financial support to help the careers of three different girls in three different cities. Jimmy, his wife and ward, together with family friends Lucille and Billy Early all gather for a holiday at Jimmy's Chickadee Cottage in Atlantic City. Totally unplanned, the cottage is also visited by the three young ladies. This causes all manner of complications and misunderstandings, not helped by the presence of the Smith's family maid, Pauline.

Notes: The original production was stuck on a USA provincial tour undergoing re-writes and re-casting, when this facsimile production opened at London's Palace Theatre, following a two-week try-out in Glasgow. It was an enormous success, and became a highly profitable box office attraction. The reviews were of one voice: "The music of 'No No Nanette' and the frenzied dancing on the stage are an epitome of modern Jazzomania. If this piece be ever discovered in the far future it will be made the text for learned discourses on the nervous breakdown of the American and European nations after the Great War. But, as usual, the learned professors will be wrong. For the total effect of this brilliant American musical comedy is one of intense and concentrated energy. You cannot sit still when George Grossmith, Joseph Coyne, Binnie Hale, and the rest of the cast are dancing until the gunpowder nearly runs out of their heels" (*Daily News*).

"This jazzical comedy is the finest exhibition of high-spirits London has had for years. There is hardly a dull moment in the show, and as an example of high-speed production on American lines, we do not remember

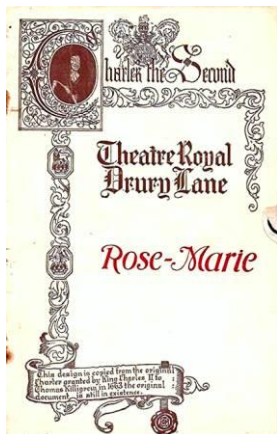


Irene Browne & the Bachelors

anything to equal it" (*Era*); "Perhaps the noisiest musical piece imported from the other side, (its success) will be due mainly to the zest, brio and go of the performance and to the liveliness and entrain of the music" (*Stage*); "The biggest musical comedy success that London has seen for many a long day" (*Tatler*)

The London run lasted 665 performances – twice the New York run. The USA show finally made it to Broadway six months after the London premiere.

Original London production: Palace, March 1925
Future revivals: Hippodrome, 1936;
 Drury Lane, May 1973



ROSE MARIE

London run: Drury Lane, March 20th - March 26th 1927
(851 performances)

Music: Rudolf Friml & Herbert Stothart

Lyrics & Book: Otto Harbach & Oscar Hammerstein II

Director: Felix Edwardes

Choreographer: J. Kathryn Scott

Musical Director: Herman Finck

Cast: Edith Day (*Rose Marie*), Derek Oldham (*Jim Kenyon*), Brian Gilmour (*Edward Hawkey*), Michael Cole (*Emile la Flamme*), Mira Nirska / Ruby Morris (*Wanda*), Percy Parsons (*Black Eagle*), John Dunsmure (*Sgt. Malone*), Billy Merson (*Hardboiled Herman*), Clarice Hardwick (*Lady Jane*), Marjorie Chard (*Ethel Brander*), George Spelvin

Ensemble Ladies: Pat Andrew, Betty Bailey, Madeleine Bailey, Maisie Barry, Joyce Beadon, Phyllis Beadon, Phyllis Bellonini, Benita Benham, Madeleine Bray, Eileen Carey, Joan Carr, Anne Crecy, Frances Day, Norah Edwards, Dorothy Eyre, Heather Featherstone, Kathleen Fitchie, Lena Fitchie, Nan Forster, Roma Forster, Helene Francois, Gaby Garay, Rosamund Gardner, Pauline Gilmer, Antoinette Gilsenan, Dorothy Hardy, Stephanie Insall, Phyllis James, Gladys Kelsey, Anne Layton, Joan Layton, Lindosè, Flora Macdonald, Doris Merritte, Patience Miller, Nance Miriam, Babette Moore, Maureen Moore, Mary Morris, Ruby Morris, Myrette Morven, Phyllis Neal, Mildred Nicoll, Inez O'Connor, Irene Page, Marjorie Poncia, Paula Reid, Norah Roberts, Vera Roebuck, Eileen Scott, Helen Stephens, Audrey Tiffen, Doris Traverne, Iris Turner, Veda Wardman, Margaret Watson, Norah Wilson. *Ensemble Gentlemen:* Richard Bodley, Sinclair Cole, Gordon Crocker, Harold Farrar, Hugh Foster, Louis Garnett, A.S. Gomez, Victor Hamel, Hal Hatswell, George Hayes, Felix Hill, Selwyn Morgan, Frank Nolan, Edgar Pierce, Arthur Rees, George Sylvester, Scott Thompson, Edward Ward, Wilfred Ward, Robert Wood.

Story: Rose-Marie La Flamme, a singer, and Jim Kenyon, a fur-trapper, are in love with each other, but Edward Hawley, a wealthy city man, plans to marry Rose-Marie, and is encouraged by Emile, Rose-Marie's brother. Edward is having an affair with Wanda, a half-Indian, and when Black Eagle catches the two of them together he attacks Edward, and is stabbed to death by Wanda, trying to save her lover. Edward pins the murder rap on Jim, who flees into hiding. Rose-Marie, believing Jim to be a murderer, is on the point of marrying Edward when Sergeant Malone of the Mounties, aided by Hardboiled Herman, finds out the truth. True to tradition, the Mounties get their man (or woman in this case!), the truth comes out, and Rose-Marie and Jim, together at last, go off into the sunset.

Notes: The show opened on Broadway on September 2nd 1924 and ran for 557 performances. The original cast included Mary Ellis and Dennis King. The fact that there was a murder in this musical caused quite a stir at the time – as it was felt a most unsuitable thing in a “musical comedy”. The London première was an immediate and outstanding success. There were suggestions that the plot was somewhat melodramatic and the show somewhat lacking in humour, but the music, the production, and, above all, the dancing, made this one of the most lavish, spectacular and impressive productions London had seen in living memory.

Above all, it was the “Totem Dance” which achieved the most memorable effect. “For the first time in the history of Drury Lane a play has marched to triumph not on the merits of its actors, its music or its book, but on the quite exceptional merits of fifty-seven pretty and amazingly agile chorus girls... The fifty-seven appeared in the stripes and war-paint of the Totem dance, and swayed and kicked in an immense, undulating line (and) a real roar of delight burst out” (*Weekly Dispatch*).



The Totem Dance

“At the end one still recalls the mass-dancing as the biggest triumph in this big show. Even if ‘Rose Marie’ were less attractive than it is, that wonderful dancing would be sufficient to make it an enormous success” (*Westminster Gazette*).

There was also much praise for the music. Just one month earlier the London critics has dismissed Rudolf Friml’s score for “Sometime” as “typical, conventional Viennese” and the show had been a three-week flop. Now “The music throughout the play is tuneful and vigorous. The ‘Rose Marie’ motif songs has been cleverly worked into the score, and the exquisite ‘Indian Love Call’ theme is used with appealing effect” (*Era*). “The composers have shown that they have close acquaintance with Puccini, and that the work of more modern composers is not unknown to them - that of Debussy, for instance, and the ‘Totem’ chorus is musically good” (*Daily News*)

“Rose Marie” at Drury Lane ran for 851 performances, nearly 300 more than the Broadway production, and became the longest-running musical of the 1920s. It also inaugurated a new policy at Drury Lane, making it an established home for major Broadway imports.

Three film versions have been made – all by MGM – in 1928 with Joan Crawford and James Murray, in 1936 with Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy, and in 1954 with Howard Keel and Ann Blyth, although the last two versions made considerable alterations to the original story.

Original London production: Drury Lane, March 1925,
 Future revivals : *Drury Lane*, Sept 1929; *Stoll Theatre*, July 1942,
Victoria Palace, Aug 1960; *Wimbledon (tour)* Nov 1974



Edith Day as Rose Marie



The wedding scene

THE BAMBOULA

London run: His Majesty's, March 26th – May 30th
(77 performances)

Music: Albert Sirmay & Harry Rosenthal

Lyrics: Douglas Furber & Irving Caesar

Book: H.M. Vernon & Guy Bolton

Director: William J. Wilson

Choreographer: J.W. Jackson

Musical Director: Percy Fletcher

Producer: L. Morgan

Cast: W.H. Berry (*Prince Robert*), Beppie de Vries (*Princess Muria*), Roy Byford (*Larranga*), Dorothy Shale (*Donna Juanita*), Harry Welchman (*Jimmy Roberts*), Billy Leonard (*Larry Wyndham*), Arthur Argent, Tom Barratt, Gordon Baskerville, Leslie Benson, George Bishop, Ivy Booker, James B. Carson, Vincent Clive, Mimi Crawford, Gerald Kent, Frank Lalor, Roy Leaker, Harry Pringle, K. Stewart. *Ensemble: Misses:* Grace Baker, Gloria Beaumont, Kathleen Beldon, Edna Bennett, Margery Binner, Audley Brooks, Nina Brunton, Millicent Cane, Jose Chambers, Stella Clemons, Eve Craske, Daphne Dixon, Kookoo Duncan, Vanity Fair, Gabe Gilroy, Billie Gomez, Gladys Goodwin, Winifred Green, May Harper, Marie Holt, Doreen Lynch, Elaine Nelson, Veronica Preston, Lulu Samuel, Viva Samuel, Edith Sinclair, Kathleen Stacey, Elsie Stoller, Dorothe Thomas, Nora Verdune; *Messrs:* Wallace Godsall, Donald Gulland, A. Gordon Lennox, Guy Lynton, Wyn Negus, Jack Owden, Fred Plant, E. Somerset, G.A. Yardbury.

Story: “Bamboula” is a title given to the acting Regent of the Ruritanian country of Corona. Prince Robert, the “Bamboula” for his young niece, Princess Muria, is ignoring his duties and the threat of revolution in his homeland. Accompanied by Larranga, his Minister of Finance, he is gallivanting through Europe, romantically driven in pursuit of the rich Donna Juanita. A hotel mix up confuses Prince Robert and Larranga for Jimmy Roberts and Larry Wyndham, a professional dancing act from England. The Prince and Minister are bullied because they dance badly, whilst the two dancers are treated like royalty. When Prince Robert hears of the problems at home, he dispatches Jimmy, telling him to act as “Deputy Bamboula” only to discover that Jimmy becomes so popular in Corona that he marries the Princess and is elected Consort. To add to the former Bamboula’s chagrin, Donna Juanita spurns him for Schmaltz, a German hotelier.

Notes: This rather old-fashioned piece suffered from comparison with the newly opened American shows, “No No Nanette” and “Rose Marie” and, indeed, there was some unfair booing from the gallery on the opening night. It was all perfectly acceptable, but also rather run-of-the-mill. “This ‘new and original’ musical comedy... is exactly similar in all its essentials to the umpteen thousand musical comedies that have preceded, and will probably follow it; but as the public never seems to grow tired of them this sameness is an asset rather than a liability” (*Sporting Times*). “The authors have followed the rules admirably. If the story is familiar, one must remember that familiarity in musical comedy does not breed contempt” (*Era*)

Despite being “pretty, colourful and tuneful, and reasonably funny” (*Sunday People*), it managed just two months in the West End. However, it went on to run for several years in various productions in the provinces, where the big “American” shows had not yet had the same impact.

Beppie de Vries



LITTLE MISS BLUEBEARD

London run: Wyndham's, April 15th - May 2nd
(21 performances)

Music: Various

Book: Avery Hopwood

Director: William E. Gilmore

Producer: Charles Frohman & E. Ray Goetz

Cast: Irene Bordoni (*Colette*), Arthur Margetson (*Larry Charters*), Tom Nesbitt (*Bob Talmadge*), Eric Blore (*Hon Bertie Bird*), George Elton (*Smithers, the butler*), Burton Brown, Dorothy Debenham, C.M. Lowne, Osa Marsh, Jeanette Sherwin,

Story: Colette, a French actress, goes to London for a holiday, but is stranded at a small French station where the drunken Mayor inadvertently marries her to Larry Charters, a philandering English composer of popular music. Actually, the man she has married is not the composer at all: it is his friend, Bob Talmadge, who is out to teach the composer a lesson and stop his philandering. When Larry is introduced to his "wife" and advised to get a divorce, he falls in love with her and decides to make it a honeymoon instead. Colette is willing, until she finds evidence of previous love affairs, then both her "husbands" are led a pretty dance before the tangle is finally straightened out.

Notes: This was based on the Hungarian original by Gábor Drégely and was not a musical comedy at all: it was a comedy with songs – and the songs were accompanied by a solo piano, and, in one case, played on a gramophone record. It was a star vehicle for Irene Bordoni and Arthur Margetson, and had enjoyed a five-month run on Broadway before transferring to London. It was withdrawn after two and a half weeks. "It was a great night for the dress-making firms duly advertised on the programme. Irene Bordoni's talent does not run to singing... but she wears her dresses well...It is amusing enough as a farce. It would be still more amusing if Irene Bordoni did not sing a number of very trashy songs" (*Daily News*)



FRASQUITA

London run: Prince's, April 23rd - May 23rd
(36 performances)

Music: Franz Lehar

Original book: Mme Fred de Gréescac

Adapted Book & Lyrics: A.M. Willner & Heinz Reichart

English version: Reginald Arkell

Director: Oscar Ashe

Choreographer: Jack Hulbert

Musical Director: Frederick Grey

Producer: Robert Evett

Cast: Thorpe Bates (*Armand Mirabeau*), Edmund Gwenn (*Hippolyt*), Ethel Baird (*Dolly Girot*), José Collins (*Frasquita*), Amy Augarde, George Hayes, Walter Lindsay, Phyllis Neal, Charles Quartermaine, Lindsell Stuart, Spencer Trevor, Emile de Vellen, Wallis Walters,

Sanders Warren, Derek Waterlow.

Story: Armand Mirabeau, a wealthy young Parisian, arrives at a Spanish seaport with his friend Hippolyt to meet his fiancée Dolly Girot. Armand, by chance, meets a local gipsy girl, Frasquita. She ensnares and then spurns him in revenge for his having accused her of stealing his cigarette case. Back in Paris, Dolly, deeply offended by Armand's fickle behaviour, marries Hippolyt and Frasquita, who has realised that she truly loves Armand, pursues, and is reunited with her only true love.

Notes: "Frasquita" was a great success at the Theater an der Wien in Vienna in 1922, when Richard Tauber's performance was regularly encored. It was based on Pierre Louys's novel "La Femme et le Pantin" (The Woman and the Puppet) which was later filmed by von Sternberg as "The Devil is a Woman". In 1933 it would be a great hit at the Opera-Comique in Paris, with the opera singer Conchita Supervia in the title role. In spite of all this, it only managed a four week run in London. It had opened in Edinburgh for Christmas 1924, and in the intervening tour had undergone a change of leading man and the original choreography by Espinosa had been replaced with the work of Jack Hulbert.

TELL ME MORE

London run: Winter Garden, May 26th - January 16th 1926
(263 performances)

Music: George Gershwin

Lyrics: Ira Gershwin, Buddy G. DeSylva & Desmond Carter

Book: Fred Thompson & William K. Wells

Director: Felix Edwardes

Choreographer: Sammy Lee

Musical Director: John Ansell.

Producer: George Grossmuth & J.A.E. Malone

Cast: Arthur Margetson (*Kenneth Dennison*), Elsa Macfarlane (*Peggy*), Claude Hulbert (*Billy*), Heather Thatcher (*Jane*), Leslie Henson (*Monty Sipkin*), Vera Lennox (*Bonnie*), Muriel Barnby, Guy Fane, Dorothy Field, Sylvia Hawkes, Ada Palmer, George de Warfaz,

Story: At a Manhattan fancy-dress ball, Kenneth Dennison is smitten by a young Pierette, and they meet briefly before she slips away. She has left behind a mask which says "property of Maison Elise", so the next day Kenneth and his friend Billy go to the Fifth Avenue hat-shop to look for this "Pierette". Billy suggests Kenneth would be better off meeting Margaret, Billy's estranged sister, rather than some stranger. After Billy leaves, Kenneth spots his Pierette. Love starts to blossom, and he learns her real name is Peggy. He is obliged to leave the next day for Viewport but promises they will meet again on his return. Meantime Peggy's friend, Jane, and Monty, the owner of the hat-shop are having a secret affair, secret because Jane's wealthy father would not approve of a poor tailor, and, making up the third romantic couple, Billy becomes enamoured of Bonnie, another shop-girl. And they all end up at the same time in Viewport, where many complications, misunderstandings and farcical goings on threaten all three relationships, before, finally, everything is sorted out and all relationships properly paired.



Mander & Mitchenson Collection: V&A

Vera Lennox & Claude Hulbert

Notes: The Stage review commented on the music : "Mr Gershwin has inclined clearly to the cacophony and noise of jazz", and on the dance : " the restless movements, so studiously precise and often in unison possess the good qualities and the complementary defects that mark the efforts of American producers" .

Generally the other critics were not as anti American-musicals as the "Stage", though the overall reaction was mixed. "There is even less plot than usual ... and what story there happens to be is told with so little wit or humour that it quite surprises to find two authors' names on the programme. 'Tell Me More' is really a dance and song show...George Gershwin has written some music of the light, jingly, sweetly reminiscent type now so popular" (*Reynold's News*)

"One Winter Garden musical comedy is rather like another, but 'Tell Me More' seemed brighter than its predecessors... a very jolly show" (*Daily Herald*); "At the end of two long acts... It is certainly a big thing - in splendour, humour, dancing and vocal effort, as well as in length" (*Westminster Gazette*)

However, the general public were happy enough and the show achieved a respectable 263 performances at the Winter Gardens.



CLEOPATRA

London run: Daly's, June 2nd - September 5th
(110 performances)

Music: Oscar Straus

Lyrics: Harry Graham

Additional numbers: Arthur Wood

Book: John Hastings Turner

Director: Oscar Ashe

Choreographer: Espinosa

Musical Director: Arthur Wood

Cast: Evelyn Laye (*Cleopatra*), Alec Fraser (*Victorian Silvius*),
Neta Underwood (*Charmian*), John E. Coyle (*Prince Beladonis*),
Shayle Gardner (*Mark Anthony*), Henry Hallatt (*Nephros*),

Jay Laurier (*Pamphylos*), Ninon Zaria (*Iras*), Marjorie Blareau, Alan Dale, Alma Lee, Peggie Lovat, Jeanne Planas, Draper Rendall, Neta Underwood. *Large chorus not credited.*

Story: A young Roman Officer, Victorian Silvius, makes short work of Cleopatra's Nubian guards, and gets into her sacred presence with a message for her. There he meets Cleopatra's slave, Charmian, whom he had loved in Rome, and who fears the worst should Cleopatra see her lover. Luckily Cleopatra is temporarily distracted by the clumsy attempts to woo her by a visiting Prince Beladonis. Silvius gets mixed up in a conspiracy to dethrone Cleopatra, at which point Mark Anthony and "half an army" are announced. Anthony suggests Silvius and Charmian should be condemned to death, but Cleopatra condemns them to matrimony, thus everyone ends happy, except perhaps Pamphylos, the Prime Minister, who has apparently been thrown to the crocodiles by mistake.

Notes: This was a wildly extravagant and lavish production, but was said to be very much lacking in humour. There was a mixed response. On the one hand: "it contains qualities which set it apart from most productions of its kind. It has a charming musical score by Oscar Straus, much fresher than several recent light operas by the composer. Some beautiful stage pictures rise out of the course of the action, and the two ballets are an enchantment to the eye... Lastly there is the exquisite beauty of Miss Evelyn Laye. She wears a wonderful auburn wig and Egyptian dresses of dazzling splendour. She is a very girlish Cleopatra but a surpassingly lovely one" (*Daily News*). Similarly "Oscar Ashe has produced with lavishness without garishness... the dances and the dainty music are among the best things in this new triumph" (*Westminster Gazette*)

On the other hand: "Judged even by musical comedy standards, the show is not yet a good one. The music by Oscar Straus is mild and agreeable; Evelyn Laye has one good song, and a pretty auburn wig; Ninon Zaria pirouettes with grace and velocity; and Jay Laurier cracks a few good jokes. But at present 'Cleopatra' is less remarkable for what it contains than for what it leaves out" (*Daily Herald*);

It managed a mere three month run and lost an absolute fortune.



Evelyn Laye as Cleopatra

CLO-CLO

London run: Shaftesbury, June 9th - August 1st
 Transfer : Adelphi, August 3rd - 29th
 (Total 95 performances)

Music: Franz Lehar

Original Book & Lyrics: Bela Jenbach

English Book & lyrics: Douglas Furber & Harry Graham

Additional songs: Max Darewski

Director: Dion Titheradge

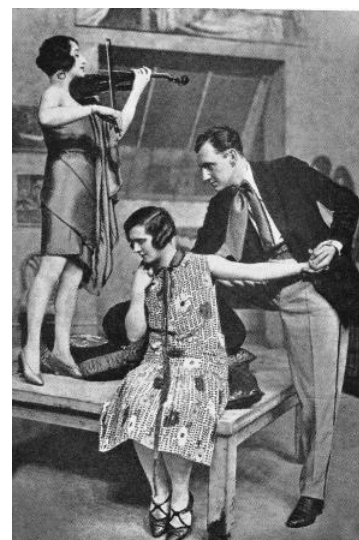
Choreographer: Max Rivers

Musical Director: Max Darewski

Cast: Cicely Debenham (*Clo-Clo*), Paul England (*Maxime*),
 A.W. Baskcomb (*Severin*), Harry Cole (*Petitpouf*),
 Reginald Dane (*Tricolet*), Frank Lawton (*Flipeur*),
 W. Mason (*Mazzagran*), Sydney Fairbrother (*Melousine*), Glory Edgar,
 Billy Leonard, Robert Nainby, Ellis Rolland, Cicely Stevens,
Principal Dancers: Marion & Martinez Randall

Story Clo-Clo, a Parisian revue star, has troops of admirers: her favourite, Maxime, has youth but no money, and Severin (the mayor of Perpignan) the opposite! Clo-Clo is arrested for playfully slapping the face of Petitpouf, a local gendarme, and has to raise a fine of 5,000 francs within a week. The best efforts of Maxime, and other friends, Tricolet, Flipeur and Mazzagran fail to raise any money, so in desperation she writes a begging letter to Severin, indiscreetly addressing him as "Dear Papa". Severin's wife, Melousine, intercepts the letter, which also calls him "Little Daddy", and believes that Clo-Clo is a secret love-child of her husband. So she decides to mother Clo-Clo. Severin is amazed at them appearing together, but stands by Clo-Clo through her problems with the police, - and even when she is happily united with Maxime.

Notes: This was the second Franz Lehar score in the West End within six weeks, although it achieved more than twice as many performances as "Fraquita", it was, nevertheless, a second disappointment. It was "up to the average, though not above it" (*Westminster Gazette*), and despite Franz Lehar's "well-laid out and musicianly choruses and ensembles heard to greater advantage than for some time" (*Stage*), it failed to reach a hundred performances.



*Cicely Stevens, Cicely Denham
& Paul England*

Mander & Mitchenson Collection: V&A

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA (1st Revival)

London run: Lyric Hammersmith, June 23rd – August 15th (6½ week limited run)

Return: Lyric Hammersmith, May 22nd 1926 - June 12th (3 week limited run)



Music: arranged by Frederic Austin

Book: John Gay

Director: Nigel Playfair

Choreographer: Marion Wilson

Musical Director: Nellie Chaplin

Cast: Scott Russell (*Peachum*),
 Arthur Wynn (*Lockit*),
 Frederick Ranalow (*Macheath*),
 Miles Malleson (*Filch*),
 Arnold Pilbeam (*The Beggar*),
 Sara Allgood (*Mrs Peachum*),
 Kathlyn Hilliard (*Polly Peachum*),
 Fedora Bernard (*Lucy Lockit*),
 Nonny Lock (*Jenny Diver*)

Notes: Among the Members of Macheath's Gang in this revival was the young Irish tenor, Cavan O'Connor. On the opening night the last act was "broadcast" from all stations of the British Broadcasting Company. The show returned for a three week limited run the following year with most of the same cast.

DEAR LITTLE BILLIE

London run: Shaftesbury, August 25th - November 7th
(86 performances)

Music: H.B. Hedley & Jack Strachey

Lyrics: Desmond Carter

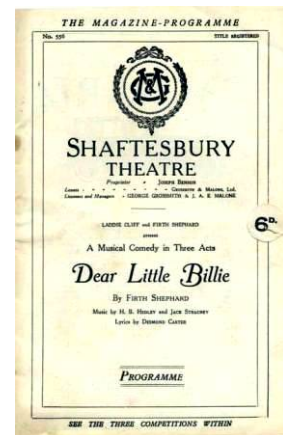
Book: Frith Shephard

Director-Choreographer: Laddie Cliff

Musical Director: Julian Jones

Producer: Laddie Cliff & Frith Shephard

Cast: Robert Michaelis (*Harry Somerset*), Charles Stone (*Earl of Dungiven*), Adah Dick (*Lady Honoria*), Irene Booth (*Lady Letitia*), Phyllis Monkman (*Billie Brent*), Laddie Cliff (*Sir Frederick Fotheringay*), Adrienne Brune (*Pamela Brooke*), Henry Fisher, Ernest Leeman, Douglas Pierce, Vera Robson. *Principal Dancers:* Claire Divina, Lawrence Charles



Story: Harry Somerset will forfeit his share in the family estate if he fails to marry a person of title. His crafty Uncle, the Earl of Dungiven, and two starchy aunts are anxious to prevent this loss, and wish to force him to avoid any further entanglements with the love of his life, the film actress Billie Brent. They send him off on a round-the-world tour. When he returns, Billie has an idea: if his old friend Sir Frederick Fotheringay will agree, Billie will marry Frederick, divorce him, and with her title thus acquired, she can marry Harry. The “honeymoon-à-trois” is interrupted when the widowed Pamela Brooke appears. She is an old friend of Frederick’s, and had met Harry in Colombo. Harry had fallen in love with her then, but because she was already married, remained true to his Billie back home. There is a renewal of love between Harry and his Colombian innamorata, and Billie finds she rather enjoys being Lady Fotheringay. The title-difficulty is overcome by the discovery that Mrs Brooke was the daughter of a peer.

Notes: This show had opened in Sheffield and had toured for some fifteen weeks prior to the West End. It was generally welcomed, though there was some criticism of the “Wicked Uncle, two Ugly Sisters, pantomime”

effect of some of the characters, and the plot-line was hardly credible. “On the whole, the evening was jolly enough even when pantomime seemed to threaten most... The music is quite tuneful” (*Times*); “The plot, such as it is; will serve, and, as it is aided by tuneful and catchy, if at times banal music... as well as by a body of popular and versatile artists, all the elements of success for musical comedy seem to be assured” (*Stage*).

Like the other musicals of the summer of 1925, “Dear Little Billie” was facing competition from the main rivals, “No No Nanette” and “Rose Marie”. “It has the same quick-fire song and dance attractions as the American shows, but except for an occasional concession to jazz, it is good, sound English workmanship” (*Daily News*).

However, the “good, sound English” approach lost out on this occasion, and the show managed a mere 86 performances.



Laddie Cliff & Adrienne Brune



MERCENARY MARY

London run: Hippodrome, October 7th - September 18th 1926
(446 performances)

Music: Con Conrad & William B. Friedlander

Book & Lyrics: William B. Friedlander & Isabel Leighton

Director: William Mollison

Choreographer: Larry Ceballos

Musical Director: Leonard Hornsey

Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller

Cast: Sonnie Hale (*Jerry Warner*), June Sommers (*Miss June*), Paddy Dupres (*Sir Henry Somers*), A.W. Baskcomb (*Chris Skinner*), Lew Hearn (*Grandpa Skinner*), Peggy O'Neill (*Mary*), Claude Bailey, Joan Carroll, Frank Masters. Eileen Redcott, Billy Rego, Tom A. Shale,

Story: Jerry Warner loves Joan, but her hard-hearted Uncle, Sir Henry Somers, is opposed because Jerry has no money. Suddenly Jerry comes in to £2,000 and is persuaded to invest it in a Texas oil company. His friend, Chris Skinner, put money into the same venture, hoping to gain independence from his grandfather, who has threatened to cut off his allowance if he marries Mary. But he and Mary are already secretly married. The various schemes involve Jerry and Mary pretending to have an affair but Joan is not let into the secret, and all kinds of problems ensue. Eventually things sort themselves out and Grandfather becomes fond of Mary and happily accepts the situation. And even the oil-well turns out to be a winner, pleasing Sir Henry.

Notes: This was a musical version of Herbert Hall Winslow and Emil Nyatray's farce "What's Your Wife Doing?" and had opened in New York in April 1925, running for 136 performances. The London production followed a month-long provincial run at the Glasgow Alhambra, and was produced by Herbert Clayton and Jack Waller, the same team responsible for "No No Nanette". It was clearly aimed as a follow-up, giving the Nanette audience a similar experience.— and, from the outset, was an outstanding success

"With the two musical comedies running together in London one may predict that the all-conquering jazz has captured the fort. Jazz pervades the whole production. The orchestral effects, those queer plaintive sounds and the muted brass, are familiar enough, but, as at the Palace, it all spreads to the stage and the actors themselves. The songs are worked to a state of frenzied excitement and one or two of the numbers run in and out of the musical score like Wagnerian motif. The secret of both productions is that a couple of neat, melodious tunes are played often and become insidiously familiar that everyone goes away humming them" (*Era*). It's "tip top entertainment... the Hippodrome hasn't given us a brighter show in years" (*Tatler*); "the greatest enthusiasm was aroused by the robust and extraordinary dancing of Frank Masters and Eileen Redcott and half a dozen hefty girls" (*Westminster Gazette*).



Peggy O'Neill as Mercenary Mary

SAUCY SUE (Tour)

London run: Shepherd's Bush Empire, October 12th & week

Music: Herman Darewski

Book & Lyrics: Cyril Hemington

Director: William E. Gilmore

Producer: Tom Walls

Cast: Jack Barty (*Bill Higgins*), George Manton (*Sir John Scarcliffe*), Walter Such (*MacDonald*), Josh Dixon (*Fleckerby*), Nora Roylance (*Pamela*), James Carson, Fred Edwards, Mabel Goldsworthy, James Gray, Barbara Lunnon, W. Grayson Mann, Fay Norris, Rex Romaine, Jack Stobart, J.A. Thomas, Marjory Verne.

Story: Bill Higgins, a Covent Garden porter, inherits a fortune and buys Scarcliffe Castle, former seat of the impecunious Sir John Scarcliffe from its new owner, the moneylender, MacDonald. As the new county squire Bill is regarded with snobbish disdain by some, and a gullible source of easy pickings by others of the local aristocracy. Meantime Bill has fallen in love with Patricia, Sir John's daughter, and the wily Fleckerby, who handles dud banknotes, offers to become Bill's secretary, smooth his way in society, and press his suit with Pamela. As part of his purchase, Bill has become the owner of the racehorse Shooting Star, which has been heavily backed by Sir John and his friends for the big race the next day to restore their lost fortunes. Bill knows his horses, and refuses to back his own horse, putting his money on a rival owner's Saucy Sue. He is accused of nobbling his own horse and of passing counterfeit banknotes but all ends happily when Bill's evidence enables the police to get the real culprit, and Patricia realises she truly loves the Cockney county squire.

Notes: The tour had opened at Portsmouth on September 7th. "This latest Tom Wall variety production is not a revue, although it has some of the qualities associated with that class of entertainment. It is, rather, a full-fledged musical comedy, with a book and lyrics that fit in with a capital, if rather thin, story; and, in addition to smart frocks and attractive scenery, there is some delightful music" (*Stage*). This London appearance, and throughout its tour, earned great praise for the "tour de force" performance of Jack Barty.

GOOD OLD DAYS

London run: Gaiety, October 27th - November 28th (37 performances)



GOOD OLD DAYS

London run: Gaiety, October 27th - November 28th
(37 performances)

Music: Percy Fletcher

Book & Lyrics: Oscar Ashe

Director: Oscar Ashe & Lily Brayton

Choreographer: Espinosa

Musical director: Percy Fletcher

Producer: Oscar Ashe & Lily Brayton

Cast: Oscar Ashe (*Earl of Jawleyford*), Pedro Branco (*Nightingale*), Margaret Cochran (*Lady Mickey*), Richard Hatteras (*Viscount Montague*), Eve Gray (*Prudence*), Norman Williams (*Samuel Crop*), Laura Smithson (*Countess of Jawleyford*), Paula Cinquevalli (*Miss Prout*), Carlito Ackroyd, Margery Aldington, Ivor Barnard, Warwick Bates, Leonard Calvert, John Clifford, Bert Downs, Roy Emerton, Constance Groome, Arnold Halstead. Gordon Harker, Haigh Jackson, Alfred Paumier, Pope Stamper, Leyland White, Hugh E. Wright.



Oscar Ashe

Story: The wicked Earl of Jawleyford has ruined the Count of Castille by playing with loaded dice. Castille's son is a strolling player and a sometime highwayman, known by the name of Nightingale. His beloved Lady Mickey puts on a highwayman's disguise and steals the loaded dice. She forces the Earl to play until all the Castile fortune is restored to its rightful owner. Sub-plots see the Viscount Montague marry Prudence, the daughter of landlord Samuel Crop, in an open-air wedding en route for Gretna Green; the involvement of the Countess of Jawleyford and her maid, Miss Prout; and a rascally trio of lawyer, doctor and chaplain.

Notes: This was a massively lavish production – an Olde English version of Chu Chin Chow in its extravagance: a pack of hounds and several horses appeared onstage for the hunting scene; a real donkey was brought on for a comic number; early publicity declared that the role of Nightingale would be played by a genuine nobleman, Sir Pedro Branco, who was related to the Portuguese royal family. Sadly, despite the massive investment, the show fell apart with its hugely complicated plotting and stilted dialogue and lyrics.

“It is not much of a story, and singularly wanting in humour. Also I cannot understand why rhymed couplets are used in the serious scenes, unless Oscar Ashe remembered that Christmas pantomime is coming” (*Daily News*). “Real water out of the pump, real horses out of the stable, real dogs out of the wings... but real wit in the dialogue and real originality in the plot would have been more acceptable... For two out of the three acts the script is in pantomime rhymed couplets!... Just as one speaks no ill of the dead, so one likes to deal gently with any big show in which much money and time and hope are invested. For these occasions there is always the cheering phrase: ‘It may pull itself together’” (*Daily Herald*). “On the whole... the eye had feasted, the ear had been kindled by tit-bits, but the mind had been left hankering in vain, like the late lamented Mr Tantalus” (*Sketch*)



Caricature from *The Tailor*



Senor Pedro Branco & Hugh E Wright as drawn by Einar Nerman

The audience began booing early on during the first night. Oscar Ashe in his autobiography claimed the show was deliberately sabotaged by a rival company of chorus members who were not selected for the show. It lost an absolute fortune and led to the personal bankruptcy of Ashe.

LIONEL AND CLARISSA

London run: Lyric Hammersmith, October 28th - March 27th 1926
(171 performances)

Music: Charles Dibdin (arr. Alfred Reynolds)

Book: Isaac Bickerstaffe

Director: Stephen Thomas

Choreographer: Penelope Spencer

Musical Director: Albert Reynolds

Producer: Nigel Playfair

Cast: Wilfred Temple (*Lionel*), Herbert Waring (*Sir John Flowerdale*), Olive Groves (*Clarissa*), Stella Seager (*Diana*), Nigel Playfair (*Col. Oldboy*), Ivan Samson (*Harman*), Lottie Venne (*Lady Oldboy*), Rupert Bruce (*Lord Jessamy*), Julian Browne, Joan Pitt Chatham, C. Hayden Coffin, Nadine March,



Lottie Venne as Lady Oldboy

Story: Dull and priggish Lionel, the adopted son of Sir John Flowerdale, and well-behaved Clarissa might be described as a quiet and sedate couple in love with each other. They are quite unlike the flighty Diana, daughter of bluff old Colonel Oldboy, and her lover Harman, the rakish man about town. Both couples wish to marry, but both are facing opposition from their families. The family members include doughty old Lady Oldboy and the coxcomb-fop of a son, Lord Jessamy, but it is through the wily Harman that Colonel Oldboy inadvertently assists with the post-chaise elopement which provides the happy ending.

Notes: Dibdin & Bickerstaffe were felt by some to be the equivalent of an 18th Century Gilbert & Sullivan, but their works had long fallen out of the repertoire. This “opera” from 1798 was chosen in the hope it would repeat some of the success of Nigel Playfair’s earlier hit with “The Beggar’s Opera”. It was well received as a charming curiosity. “The whole affair is whimsically out of date, almost oppressively formal, and unfortunately (though it never cloys) much richer in sentiment than in humour. They have a genius at the Lyric, Hammersmith for handling such productions. The grace and the oddities of an outworn mode are exquisitely balanced” (*Westminster Gazette*)

BETTY IN MAYFAIR

London run: Adelphi, November 11th



Evelyn Laye (c.) transforms from her Victorian dress to her “flapper” dress, revealing “the real me”

BETTY IN MAYFAIR

London run: Adelphi, November 11th - April 1st 1926
 Transfer: Shaftesbury, April 3rd - 24th, 1926
 (Total: 193 performances)

Music: H. Fraser-Simpson

Lyrics: Harry Graham

Book: J. Hastings Turner.

Director: Fred J. Blackman

Choreographer: A.H. Majilton

Musical Director: Charles Prentice

Producer: Daniel Mayer

Cast: Evelyn Laye (*Betty*), Mary Leigh (*Kitty*),
 Leslie Faber (*Rev. J. Head*), Lillian Mason (*Mrs Brooke Walter*),
 Arthur Margetson (*Barnaby Haddon*) Jack Hobbs (*Bryan Ropes*).
 Cecil Brooking, Winifred Evans, Cecil Fowler, Lena Halliday,
 Mabel Munro, Jean Stirling,
Ensemble Misses: Zane Baynes, Kathleen Bebington, Margery Binner.
 Marjorie Bliss, Kathleen Burgis, Glae Carrodus, Kathlyn Clifford,
 Teresa Clifford, Muriel Compton, Violette Dean, Ena Evans,
 Molly Gilroy, Margery Hoskins, Dolly King, Mary Mason,
 Beatrice Richmond, Beryly Stackard, Dinka Starace, Louise Stone,
 Ruth Winship; *Messrs* Joseph Boddy, Lawrence Edgley, Alfred Fairhurst, Herbert Garry, Harold Miller, Roy Mitchell,
 Eric Roland, Kenneth Seymour, Geoffrey Startin, Dudley Whitte.



Photo by Play Pictorial

Evelyn Laye & Mary Leigh

Story: Betty and Kitty, the twin daughters of a Gloucestershire vicar, are celebrating their 20th birthday in a demure and old-fashioned style, when Great-Aunt Brooke Walter arrives with a present of crepe-de-Chine for one of the girls and an offer to take the other to London for the season. Which one will go to London is an arbitrary decision, and to avoid any favouritism, the selection will be made by a complete stranger, Mr Barnaby Haddon— a man inspecting the architecture of the local church. The girls appear in their customary, old-fashioned Victorian dresses, and he is immensely taken with Betty and her old-fashioned style. Once in London, Betty throws all this to the wind, and becomes the most modern of “flappers”. Barnaby, who turns out to be extremely wealthy, is even more enchanted by the modern rather than the demure Betty, and the show ends with wedding bells in the air. (Meantime, Kitty does not miss out on the romance, and is happily united with her beloved Bryan Ropes).

Notes: J. Hastings Turner adapted his own play “The Lilies of the Field” (which had enjoyed a successful run of 270 performances at the Ambassadors in 1923) into a musical and “it makes in its musical guise a new type of entertainment. It is never boisterous, and it begins not with a chorus or any sort of singing, but with a long stretch of dialogue in which we are quickly introduced to the delightful vicar, to his wife, his strong-minded mother-in-law and his beautiful twins” (*Daily Mirror*),



Evelyn Laye

This unusual approach made it feel like a rather old-fashioned piece, but its charm and grace earned it a series of excellent reviews. “The author has deftly adapted his book, retaining most of the wit and charm, and yet making room for some graceful numbers by Mr. H. Fraser-Simson. If Mr. Fraser-Simson's music never rises to the heights of inspiration, neither does it fall below a very musicianly level. It is joyfully free from jazz only once, in the last act, "Dancing," is there a suggestion of it and even then it follows the tuneful model of Mr. George Gershwin. Indeed, so well has the author done his job that it is difficult to believe that the play was not originally written as a musical comedy” (*Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News*).

The costumed highlight of the show was the scene where Betty’s dropped her hooped crinoline dress to the floor to reveal the latest “flapper” dress - a moment that never failed to win extended applause from the audience. The “Betty in Mayfair” show had a successful run of just under six months.

NICOLETTE

London run: Duke of York's, November 18th - 28th
(12 performances)

Music & Lyrics: Patrick Barrow

Additional lyrics: Kingsley Lark

Book: Norman Frost & Kingsley Lark

Director: F. Reginald Bach

Choreographer: Alfred H. Majilton

Musical Director: John Heuvel

Producer: Thomas J. Courtley

Cast: Bertram Wallis (*Pan Fulano*), John Doran (*Sir Reginald*), Phyllis Le Grand (*Nicolette*), Mark Daly (*Wilfred Root*), Kingsley Lark (*Gerald*), Amy Augarde, Bert E. Evremonde, Jack Leopold, Walter Lindsay, George Lowe, Robert McQueen, Cecil Musk, Molly O'Shann, Gilbert Ritchie, Lindsell Stuart.



Mark Daly

Story: The staple industry of Volania (capital city: Toxia) is the manufacture of cigarettes, but the export of cigarettes is an offence punishable by death. This is decreed by the double-dealing head of state, Pan Fulano, who is making a private fortune in contraband sales. He over-stretches himself and causes a major shortage, but fortuitously he can lay the blame on three English people who have just arrived by aeroplane: Sir Reginald Browne, an English cigarette manufacturer, Nicolette, his daughter, and his secretary, Wilfred Root. The wicked Fulano has all three arrested and sentenced to death for the theft of the cigarettes. Villainously, he offers to spare them, if Nicolette will marry him. Luckily another Englishman arrives - Gerald, the rejected suitor of Nicolette, who is pursuing her on his motorbike. At the same time war breaks out with neighbouring Maldivia, and Fulano is forced to parole his prisoners and appoint Gerald Field Marshal in the Volanian army. Naturally, Gerald wins the war, exposes the evil Fulano and gets the girl.

Notes: This was yet another flop in the 1925 season, and came off after just 12 performances, following an almost universal critical drubbing. "... its pace is too leisurely, and even a battle is held up to allow the company to sing a chorus about it. The piece is held together by Mark Daly, a comedian new to London ... his quaint mannerisms and verbal fireworks provided oases of welcome relief, in what, I am afraid, seemed like a desert of sparse plot, mushy sentiment, and singing too often out of tune" (*Westminster Gazette*). "After hearing the astounding musical platitudes of 'Nicolette' anything more complicated than arpeggio would sound brilliantly original" (*Weekly Dispatch*)



Frederick Blamey as Schubert

LILAC TIME (1st Revival)

London run: Lyric Theatre, December 26th - March 13th 1926
(90 performances)

Music: Franz Schubert (adapted by Heinrich Berté & G.H. Clutsam.)

Book & Lyrics: A.M. Willner & Heinz Reichert

English Book & Lyrics: Adrian Ross

Cast: Frederick Blamey (*Schubert*), Edmund Gwenn (*Christian Veit*), Rose Hignell (*Lilli*), Sylvia Leslie, Eric Morgan (*Baron Schober*), Robert Nainby, Ronald Pomeroy, Henry Raymond, Jerold Robertshaw, Mina Green (*Mrs Veit*), Horace Mills, George Rydon, Maud Zimbla

Notes: This was one of several provincial theatre tours of "Lilac Time" - in this case touring the Number One circuits in Scotland - and it was chosen as a Christmas period filler for an unexpected gap in the programme of the Lyric. (Curiously, a second of the tours - this one starring Courtice Pounds - had played a week at the Borough Stratford just a few weeks earlier). The popularity of the show was such that it remained in Town from Boxing Day to the middle of March

Original London production: Lyric Theatre, December 1922; 1st Revival: Lyric, Dec 1925;

Future revivals: *Daly's Dec, 1927; Daly's, 1928; Lyric, May 1930; Globe, Dec 1932; Alhambra, Dec 1933*

THE BLUE KITTEN

London run: Gaiety, December 23rd - April 24th, 1926
(140 performances)

Music: Rudolph Friml

Book & Lyrics: Otto Harbach & William Carey Duncan

Additional lyrics: Greatrex Newman

Director: R.H. Burnside

Choreographer: Kuy Kendall

Musical Director: Howard Carr

Producer: J. L. Sacks

Cast: W.H. Berry (*Christopher Popp*), Margaret Halstan (*Lucille Popp*), Dorothy Brown (*Madeleine*), Roy Royston (*Armand*), Ethel Levey (*Totoche*), Estelle Brody (*Cri-Cri*), Bobby Howes (*Octave*), Dallas Welford (*Popinet*), Claude Bailey, Cicely Eldon, Tony de Lungo, C. Slater, Frances St Clair (*Fifi*), Denier Warren (*Louis*), Dallas Welford,



Story: The Blue Kitten is a Parisian cabaret-restaurant where the head porter is Englishman Christopher Popp. He has managed to keep this job a secret from his wife, Lucille, a very starchily aristocratic French lady. At his wife's chateau in Fontainebleau their daughter, Madeleine is in love with a young Marquis, Armand de Velin. Armand is a regular at the Blue Kitten, and unaware that Madeleine's father is the porter who knows about all his peccadilloes, especially with La Totoche, one of the girls from the Folies Bergère. The spurned Totoche and her friend Cri-Cri pursue Armand to Fontainebleau where she passes herself off to Lucille as a Duchess. Christopher's nephew Octave inadvertently causes the truth to come out. Lucille is horrified that her husband works as a porter; Popinet, Armand's tutor, is horrified at the idea of a Marquis marrying the daughter of a porter. It is left to Totoche to point out that all decent people would respect a marquis for marrying a porter's daughter. And so all ends happily.

Notes: Based on the French farce "Le Chasseur de chez Maxime" by Yves Mirande and Gustavo Quinson, and adapted by Dion Titheradge, this had originated on Broadway in January 1922, running for a disappointing 140 performances. During rehearsals for the London production, it seems the show may have run into financial problems: the producer, J.L. Sacks, sold the complete rights in the show to his leading lady, Ethel Levey. (Her husband, Claude Grahame-Wright, had just sold his Hendon aerodrome to the Government, so there was no money problems on their side!)



Mostly the reviews were distinctly cool: "The first act was a dismal affair. Things brightened up a trifle later on, and in in the second act there were several bright patches; but why doesn't someone take the books of these musical plays in hand?" (*Daily News*); "(Though) not the most original production of its class, it is quite good enough even so to find plenty of favour with a not too exacting public. The storymoves a trifle slowly, but it has the merit of coherence and intelligibility, and when the blue pencil has been applied here and there and the tempo has been speeded up all round, there should not be much doubt as to the success of the production" (*Westminster Gazette*)

However, the libraries had enough confidence in the drawing-power of the cast to take up £18,000 worth of advance tickets and the show did well during its initial Christmas and New Year season. Business then fell away and, curiously, the London run suffered the same fate as the Broadway version, both being withdrawn after exactly the same number of performances - just 140,

Roy Royston

TURNED UP

London run: New Oxford Theatre, January 28th – April 10th
(89 performances)

Music: Joseph Tunbridge, Isham Jones & Jack Melton,
Stanley Lupino, Sydney Clare & Cliff Friend

Lyrics: Stabley Lupino, Stanley J. Damerell, Robert Hargreaves,
Eric Valentine, Weston & Lee

Book: Arthur Rigby (from the play by Mark Melford)

Director: Julian Wylie

Choreographer: Edward Dolly

Musical Director: Joseph Tunbridge

Producer: C.B. Cochran

Cast: Leo Franklyn (*Carraway Bones*), Ruth Maitland (*Mrs Medway*), Henry Wenman (*Captain Medway*), Ouida McDermott (*Cleo*), Lupino Lane (*George Medway*), Anita Elsom (*Bina Medway*), Nancie Lovat (*Mary Baltic*), Charles Stone (*General Baltic*), Jack Melford (*Frank Steadley*), Carlito Ackroyd, The Dodge Sisters, Giannina Doris, Danny Graham, Walter Hook, Mickey McConnell, Arthur Rigby Jr, Vesta Sylva.

Story: The undertaker Carraway Bones has married the wealthy Widow Medway, only it turns out she's not a widow at all. Her husband's ship went down years ago and he has long been presumed dead. Now the supposedly drowned husband turns up with Cleo, the Sierra Leone native who nursed him back to health and whom he "married" in his confused state. To add to the problems, neither of the widow's children – George nor Bina - know about their mother's new marriage. George is engaged to marry Mary Baltic, daughter of a fiery old General who must meet the absent mother before he will give his consent. Bina is engaged to Frank Steadley who misconstrues Carraway's embracing his "stepdaughter" and throws him into the river. A minefield of misunderstandings with two supposed husbands, two supposed wives and two puzzled children are eventually sorted out in true musical comedy tradition.

Notes: Mark Melford's original farce, which made a star out of the actor Willie Eduoin, was well-established, much loved, and had received many revivals since its 1886 premiere. Some critics felt the addition of music and dance had added nothing worthwhile to the favourite old tale. There was also some reservation about the strong elements of "revue" which had been added to the production.

"The piece is described as a musical farcical comedy, and what is occasionally lost on the music at the start is undoubtedly made up on the farce at the end... it deserves praise for re-introducing us to an uproarious entertainment that has worn well" (*Times*)

"The process of adaptation to musical comedy requirements has been accomplished with skill... The music, alternately blatantly jazzish and genuinely tuneful, is composed mainly by Joseph Tunbridge...with composers of some additional numbers by no means to be relegated to a second place in any summing-up of the success to be found in the new Turned Up" (*Stage*)

It ran just 89 performances.



Photo by Swaine

The Dodge Sisters

KID BOOTS

London run: Winter Garden, February 2nd - June 26th
(172 performances)

Music: Harry Tierney

Lyrics: Joseph McCarthy

Book: William Anthony McGuire & Otto Harbach

Director: James Darling

Choreographer: Mary Farrell

Musical Director: John Ansell

Producer: George Grossmith & J.A.E. Malone

Cast: Leslie Henson (*Kid Boots*), Arthur Margetson (*Tom Sterling*), Edna Bellonini / June (*Polly Pendleton*), Ernest Graham (*Herbert Pendleton*), George Hamilton (*Harold Regan*), Peter Haddon (*Randolph Valentine*), Vera Lennox (*Jane*), Queenie Ashton (*Carmen Mendoza*), Claude Hulbert (*Menlo Manville*), Peggy Beaty, Noel Cortland, Master James Croome, Billy Daykin, Sybil Eastley, Leli Farmer, Walter R. Freear, Phyllis Garton, Beryl Murray, Bert Nash, Yvonne O'Beare, W.H. Rawlins, Rex Rodgers, Adele Royle, Guy Saunders, Dorothea Stone, Phyllis Swinburne, Billy Tasker, Diana Wilson. *Ensemble:* Misses Lulu Andre, Peggy Blake, Violet Blakeney, Audrey Carlyon, Daisy Dalziel, Dorothy Daw, Estelle Dudley, Betty Elliott, Elaine Ferrars, Violet Haggerty, Marjorie Hall, Phyllis Hayward, Shealagh Hunter, Felice Lascelles, Margaret Moore, Lilian Norris, Bunty O'Nolan, Mabel Rean, Ruby Simpson, Margot St Leger, Vera Wilson; *Messrs:* John Berryman, Eric A. Coxen, Arthur Ives, Stuart Kern, William Lennox, Jack Morgan, George A. Neil, Louis Roslyn, H.J. Werndley, Fred Whitlock.



Leslie Henson

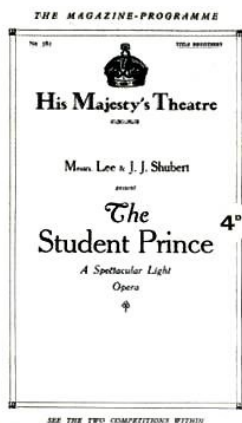
Story: Kid Boots is the nickname of the caddie master at Everglades Golf Club, Florida. His chief client is Tom Sterling, a semi-pro teacher at the club, who is really a millionaire disguised, so he can be close to Polly Pendleton, daughter of the Club Chairman. Mr Pendleton wants Polly to marry golf champ Harold Regan. In a crucial competition between Harold and visiting star Randolph Valentine, Tom has to step in as a substitute (due to some Cupid-intended nobbling on the part of Kid Boots and his girlfriend Jane). But there is other cheating going on, and (like the poisoned foil in "Hamlet") a weighted golf-ball passes from Harold's bag to Tom's – and Tom loses the match. Further complications come from Tom's old flame, Carmen Mendoza; from Menlo Manville, an interfering journalist; and from Kid Boots himself, whose attempts lead him to undertake a whole series of comical disguises.

Notes: The show had originated as a Florenz Ziegfeld production on Broadway starring Eddie Cantor and Mary Eaton, opening on New Year's Eve 1923 and running for 489 performances. As a hugely successful American hit it was given the full works for its London premiere, following its provincial one-week try-out at the King's Southsea. The popular musical comedy star Miss June was taken ill during rehearsals and needed hospital treatment. She was unable to join the show for most of its first month, and her role was successfully covered in the interim by Edna Bellonini.



Leslie Henson & Vera Lennox

Much of the advance expectation was dashed by a series of indifferent reviews: the plot "...contains continual references to 'bootlegging' and secret drinking and the rest of the jokes are about golf, and that must be a little trying for those who do not take any interest in the Royal and Ancient game" (*Daily Mirror*). However "As (Leslie Henson) is on the stage most of the time, there are not too many dull stretches... But to be frank, neither the music nor the book and lyrics are up to the standard of Winter Garden musical comedies" (*Daily News*). "One goes to the Winter Garden Theatre primarily to see Leslie Henson... 'Kid Boots' provides Mr Henson with enough opportunities to satisfy his most enthusiastic admirers... He is on the stage practically the whole of the time, and one cannot imagine what the comedy would have been like without his presence" (*Era*).



THE STUDENT PRINCE

London run: His Majesty's, February 3rd - May 1st
(96 performances)

Music: Sigmund Romberg

Book & Lyrics: Dorothy Donnelly

Director: J.C. Huffman

Choreographer: Edward Scanlan

Musical Director: Oscar Bradley

Producer: Lee & J.J. Shubert

Cast: Allan Prior (*Karl Franz*), Ilse Marvenga (*Kathie*),
Herbert Waterous (*Dr Engel*), Oscar Figman (*Lutz*),
Lucyenne Herval (*Princess Margaret*), John Coast (*Capt. Tarnitz*),
Raymond Marlow (*Detlef*), James Alderman, Violet Carlson, Chas Cautley,

Paul Clemen, Claude Eldred, Charles Gillespie, Huntley Gordon, Donald Graham, Charles Howard, Edward Laing, Jessie Lewis, Alex Mieux, Florence Morrison, Olaf Olsen, Paul Rhodes, Fred Rikitt, William Thomson, F.A. Wood. *Large chorus not credited.*

Story: Set in 1860, Crown Prince Karl Franz of Karlsberg has been promised in marriage since childhood to the Princess Johanna. His grandfather, King Ferdinand, sends him to Heidelberg University where he will live incognito like a regular student, under the watchful eyes of a kindly mentor, Doctor Engel, and his snooty valet Lutz. In Heidelberg, Karl falls in love with a waitress, Kathie, and they consider eloping, but Karl suddenly becomes King and must return and honour the arranged marriage with Princess Johanna (who is also in love with another man, Captain Tarnitz). He returns to Heidelberg two years later but discovers that youth cannot be recaptured and the past must be left in the past, although his true love will always be Kathie.

Notes: The original novel "Karl Heinrich" by Wilhelm Meyer-Forster was adapted into a play called "Alt Heidelberg", and Rudolf Bleichman's English translation was a big hit in New York around 1900. In 1924 Dorothy Donnelly and Sigmund Romberg turned it into the longest-running Broadway musical of the 1920s (608 performances). The production was re-created for London with a mostly American cast (except the leading man was Australian, and the two principal ladies French and Hungarian). It opened on February 3rd 1926, but closed after 96 performances.

Its London failure was hard to explain. For some critics "The spectacular beauty of the production and the general excellence of the music and singing make it a notable achievement" (*Westminster Gazette*) and "Certainly the singing is the real thing, and it was a delight to listen to the young male chorus who delivered the students' songs as if their very lives depended upon it" (*Era*). However, for others it was "Utterly devoid of wit or humour... rather on the heavy side with sob-stuff introduced every now and then" (*Sporting Times*) and "a kind of solid, musicianly version of a Viennese operetta. That is to say the best tunes are of the Viennese type but the general treatment is conscientiously German" (*Daily Mirror*)

It was said to be "too German" and too close to the end of the Great War for London audiences to welcome such a "Teutonic" piece, but a subsequent UK tour, with Harry Welchman as Karl Franz, was extremely successful. A post-tour London revival in 1929 received a similarly negative response as did later productions in 1944, and again in 1968. Despite several major Broadway revivals, a major success with an MGM film, and regularly appearing in the repertoire of European operetta houses - and the show later becoming an annual summer feature at the Heidelberg Castle Festival - it has never enjoyed a big London success. .

Original London production: Her Majesty's February 1926
Future revivals: *Piccadilly*, Nov 1929; *Stoll*, May 1944;
Cambridge, June 1968



Ilse Marvenga & Allan Prior

WILDFLOWER

London run: Shaftesbury, February 17th - April 6th
 Transfer: Adelphi, April 8th - May 13th
 Transfer: His Majesty's May 15th - June 12th
 (Total 114 performances)

Music: Herbert Stothart & Vincent Youmans

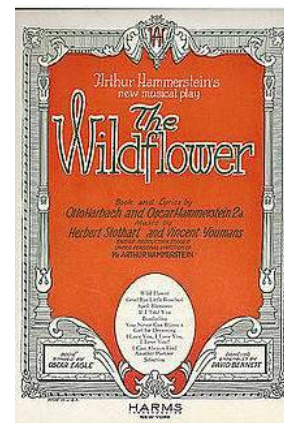
Book & Lyrics: Otto Harbach & Oscar Hammerstein II

Director: Fred J. Blackman

Choreographer: Max Rivers

Musical Director: Philip Braham

Cast: Kitty Reidy (*Nina Benedetto*), Howett Worster (*Guido*), Evelyn Drewe (*Bianca*), Peter Gawthorne (*Alberto*), Thomas Weguelin (*Gaston*), Julie Hartley-Milburn (*Lucrezia*), Mark Daley (*Gabriele*). Jane Ayr, Hazel Harris, Wesley Pierce, Leonard Shepherd,



Story: Nina Benedetto, known as Wildflower to her friends, lives in frugal simplicity, with the only inheritance from her late father being her violent temper. She is about to marry Guido when she learns her grandfather has left her a great fortune, subject to her living for six months with her relatives on the family estate at Lake Como, and not once losing her temper. If she fails, the inheritance will go to her vixenish Cousin Bianca. During her stay, in the hope of making her lose her temper, she is constantly goaded by Bianca and her wastrel fiancé, Alberto as well as the lawyer Gaston and his wife Lucrezia. When they fail, Alberto changes tack, starts heavily wooing Nina and inveigles her into agreeing to marry him. Just in time she finds out from the faithful Gabriele how she has been tricked, and how Guido has remained true to her.

Notes: As “The Wildflower” this was a big hit in New York, opening in February 1923 and running for over a year, and for 477 performances. The original cast included Edith Day and Charles Judels. An Australian production in 1925 had been similarly successful, and so Australians Kitty Reidy and Howett Worster had been imported for the London show. Its mixture of musical comedy and operetta didn’t catch on, not helped by being caught up in the General Strike of May 1926. Despite moving twice to different theatres, it came off after less than four months.



Isabel Jeans as Nell Gwynn

MR PEPYS

London run: Royalty, March 9th - April 24th
 (55 performances)

Music: Martin Shaw

Book: Clifford Bax

Director: Allan Wade

Choreographer: Leslie French & Mrs Martin Shaw

Musical Director: A. Davies Adams

Cast: Frederick Ranalow (*Samuel Pepys*), Margot Sieveking (*Mrs Pepys*), Isabel Jeans/ Jane Welsh (*Nell Gwynn*), Oriel Ross (*Mrs Knipp*), Lawrence Baskomb, Alfred Clark, Ita Cope, Loti Ford, Laurence Hepworth, Julian Herbage, Guy Le Feuvre, Percy Manchester, Florence McHugh, Mabel Moore, Henry Murray-Davey, Guy Pike, Oriel Ross,

Dorothy Saunders, Mildred Watson,

Story: Samuel Pepys regularly entertains Nell Gwynn, Mrs Knipp and other actresses at his house in Seething Lane. Mrs Pepys puts her foot down, and he promises that he will take her with him every future occasion he goes to the play. He cheats, of course, leading to some farcical situations, hiding under dressing-room tables, a slanging match between Nell and Mrs Knipp, and Mrs Pepys threatening to leave her husband and elope with the somewhat fey dancing master. Finally it all ends happily when all the persons meet up at Bartholomew Fair.

Notes: This was a further attempt to cash in on “The Beggar’s Opera”, by creating a “new” pastiche ballad opera. It had opened at the Everyman Club Theatre on February 11th and quickly transferred to the Royalty. Isabel Jeans left the production on April 3rd due to a prior commitment and was replaced by Jane Welsh. It was enthusiastically received: “Martin Shaw has contrived to capture not only the rhythms, but the spirit of the melodies of Carolan times.. it is a delightful entertainment” (*Sporting Times*). “... As for the book, ‘twill serve” (*Stage*)

LADY BE GOOD

London run: Empire Theatre, April 14th - January 22nd 1927
(326 performances)

Music: George Gershwin

Lyrics: Ira Gershwin

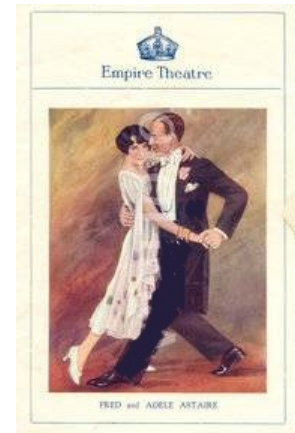
Book: Guy Bolton & Fred Thompson

Director: Felix Edwardes

Choreographer: Max Scheck

Musical Director: Jacques Heuvel

Cast: Fred Astaire (*Dick Trevor*), Adele Astaire (*Suzie Trevor*), William Kent (*J. Watterson Watkins*), Buddy Lee (*Jeff*), George Vollaire (*Jack Robinson*), Ewart Scott (*Bertie Bassett*), Glori Beaumont, Roy Emerton, Alec Johnstone, Sylvia Leslie, Irene Russell, Denier Warren,



Story: Dick and Suzie Trevor are a brother and sister dancing act who are rejected from the vaudeville circuit but manage to continue their career by entertaining at the homes of wealthy friends. Along the way Suzie pretends to be a Spanish heiress in order to claim a large inheritance, but she is found out. Somehow she and Dick come into some money anyway, and she manages to save Dick from a disastrous marriage to a gold-digger.

Notes: The show was originally specially created for Fred and Adele Astaire, who played it on Broadway from December 1924 for 330 performances. They brought the show into London's Empire Theatre in April 1926 where it was so eagerly awaited as a follow-up to "Stop Flirting" that an opening night queue formed outside the theatre as early as 6am. The reviews expressed considerable reservations about the show itself, and there was some ongoing resistance to the new American "jazz" music. However, with the Astaires in the show, nothing else seemed to matter.

"When the Astaires were on the stage 'Lady Be Good' was very good indeed.... When however, the Astaires were in their dressing rooms, 'Lady Be Good' degenerated into American junk" (*Sunday Mirror*); "This preposterous story, the second act of which was certainly not a little tedious....is fortunately relieved and redeemed a great deal by...the twin stars" (*Stage*). "The piece is just a fair example of an average musical comedy... But the Astaires make it into the most sparkling entertainment seen for months" (*Era*)

"The dancing is unlike any other dancing, and, moreover, Adele is a comedienne of seemingly inexhaustible exuberance...George Gershwin, who composed the music for the piece, seems to have tried his hardest to show how ugly and cacophonous jazz can be. If that were his aim, he has triumphed indeed!" (*Westminster Gazette*)

"Faced with some very tuneful numbers by George Gershwin, they do every possible sort of dance, including



Fred & Adele Astaire

one to the wailings of a coloured gentleman with a banjulele, who makes noises like cats in the night, and another to the now familiar Charleston rhythm" (*Daily Mirror*)

The show played to packed houses for the rest of the year, and was eventually taken off after 326 performances, because the Empire building was to be closed for redevelopment.

Original London production
Empire, April 1926.

Future revivals: Saville, July 1968;

Open Air, July 1992;

Regent's Park, July 2007

RIKI TIKI

London run: Gaiety Theatre, April 16th – May 1st
(18 performances)

Music: Eduard Künneke

Book & Lyrics: Leslie Stiles

Director: Alfred H. Majilton

Choreographer: Espinosa

Musical Director: K. Ernest Irving

Producer: Leslie Stiles

Cast: Roy Russell (*Prince Rollo*), Tubby Edlin (*Catarro*), Joe Farren Soutar (*Dodo*), Jack Leopold (*Harry Hotten*), Gladys Moncrieff (*Riki Tiki*), Ninon Zaria (*Amalyia*), Muriel Terry (*Annabelle Touquette*), Amy Augarde, Lawrence Barclay, Joseph Boddy. Albert Brouett, Leonard Calvert, Conway Dixon, Walter Mason, Bernard Ross, Thomas Weguelin,



Gladys Moncrieff

Story: Prince Rollo of Sylvania is being denied his throne by two opposing factions: a group of Republicans, and a gang of Romany brigands led by Catarro, a cockney taxi-driver. Supporting the Prince is Dodo, the loyal prime minister and master of disguises, and Harry Hotten, his English valet, with whom the Prince can change clothes to go wandering off into the woods to meet Riki Tiki, a gipsy flower-girl. (She turns out to be a Princess in disguise from the neighbouring state of Regania.!) A sub-plot sees Harry Hotten's romance with the maid, Amalyia, threatened by the "vampish" overtures of Anabelle Touquette, a man-hungry spinster.

Notes: The Stage referred to "an indifferent and stereotyped book with very poor comic relief" . Although the music, dancing, scenery and costumes were of the highest standard and the English debut of the young Australian soprano, Gladys Moncrieff, heralded a performer of outstanding talents, the show could not rise above its moribund, cliché – ridden plot. It managed two and half weeks.

THE GENERAL STRIKE 1926

The General Strike from Tuesday May 4th - Wednesday May 12th, 1926 led to widespread closures for London's theatres: there were no newspapers to advertise which of them remained open, and there were no trains, trams or buses to get the public to the shows or back home again.; On the first day of the strike His Majesty's, the Adelphi, Winter Garden, Apollo, Shaftesbury, Royalty and St Martin's were all closed. Daly's played the first night and then closed, and after struggling through to the end of the week, the Aldwych, Playhouse, Kingsway and Little Theatre closed. However, by the last night of the strike, Wednesday May 12th, as many as twenty-two West End theatres were back in business, as well as suburban theatres and all the London variety houses and cinemas.

YVONNE

London run: Daly's, May 22nd - December 18th
(280 performances)

Music: Jean Gilbert & Vernon Duke

Original book: Leo Kastner & Alfred Moller

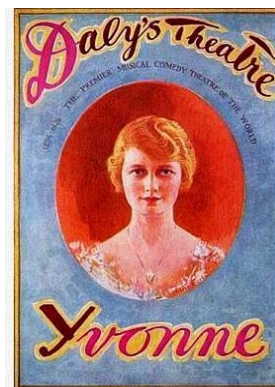
English Book & Lyrics: Percy Greenbank

Additional numbers: Arthur Wood

Director: Herbert Mason

Choreographer: Fred A. Leslie

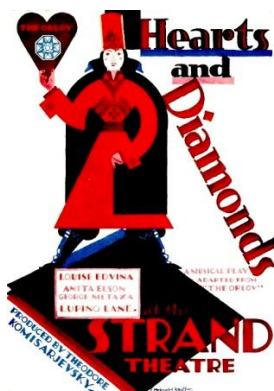
Musical Director: Arthur Wood



Cast: Ivy Tresmond (*Yvonne*), Arthur Pusey (*Maurice*), Mark Lester (*Prof Savigny*), Maria Minetti (*Astarte*), Horace Percival (*Victor Dulac*), Hal Sherman (*Waiter*), Allan Dale, Mabelle George, Henry Hallatt, Dennis Hooey, John Kelsett, Edmund La Touche, Wensley Russell, Nan Wild. *Chorus not credited.*

Story: Maurice de Fremond takes a job as a butler in order to be near Yvonne, the niece of Professor Savigny. He takes Yvonne to a music hall to see a “naughty” music hall star appear as Astarte, the Moon Goddess, and for various reasons Yvonne ends up taking the place of the performer. A sub-plot sees the professor and Victor Dulac, Yvonne’s undesirable fiancé, get terribly “blotto” and come home after the milk. At the end, Maurice, a kind of male version of Cinderella, gets his girl. Other characters include a waiter who masquerades as a gardener in addition to the standard “bevy of daintily-clad damsels” that mark a George Edwardes show at Daly’s.

Notes: The highlight of the show was the American comedian Hal Sherman’s eccentric dance as the waiter. “The dreariness of the third act rather taxed the patience of the audience on the first night” (*Westminster Gazette*), but this was quickly re-written and the show went on to run successfully for 280 performances.



HEARTS AND DIAMONDS

London run: Strand, June 1st – July 10th
(43 performances)

Music: Bruno Granischstädten

Original book & Lyrics: Granischstädten & Ernst Marischka

Book: P.G.Wodehouse & Lauri Wylie

English lyrics: Graham John

Additional numbers: Max Darewski

Director: Theodore Komisarjevsky

Choreographer: Edward Dolly

Musical Director: Max Darewski

Cast: George Metaxa (*Alex Dorotchinsky*), Lupino Lane (*Jefferson*), Charles Stone (*John Walsh*), Louise Edvina (*Nadya Nadyakovska*), Darly Aitken, Wilfrid Caithness, J.S. Carne, Kathleen Carroll, Lala Collins, Dorothy Daw, Anita Elson, Ena Evans, Colin Johnston, Wallace Lupino, C. O’Hara, Eric Roland, Harry Hilliard

Story: Alex Dorotchinsky, an exiled Russian noble, works as a mechanic in the garage owned in partnership by Jefferson and John Walsh. He is on hand to save the prima-donna Nadya Nadyakovska from the wheels of one of the firm’s motor lorries, and the two fall in love. They are soon separated, thanks to the machinations of John Walsh, who wants the lady for himself. This villain even arranges the theft of the Orlof diamond, which Alex had entrusted to his friend Jefferson to be sold. However, all are reconciled satisfactorily and a happy ending ensues after Walsh has been exposed and the diamond recovered.

Notes: Bruno Granischstädten’s “Der Orlow” had been an enormous hit in Vienna in April 1925, and had been performed some 428 times at the Theater an der Wien. It caused a sensation by introducing a live jazz band onstage in the middle of the operetta. The London production did not repeat this success. It was said to have lost all its humour in the adaptation, and the clash of musical styles did not please the critics. “. . . the cacophonies and exaggerated percussion effects of the worst American style are here alongside an ear-haunting balalaika song in the Russian manner, a typical Viennese waltz number, and a duet with a markedly Spanish rhythm” (*Stage*). It lasted just six weeks.



TIP TOES

London run: Winter Garden, August 31st - January 29th 1927
(182 performances)

Music: George Gershwin

Lyrics: Ira Gershwin

Book: Guy Bolton & Fred Thompson

Director: William Ritter

Choreographer: Sammy Lee

Musical Director: J.A. de Orellana

Cast: Dorothy Dickson (*Tip-toes Kaye*), Laddie Cliff (*Al Kaye*), Allen Kearns / Charles Lawrence (*Steve Burton*), John Kirby (*Hen Kaye*), Vera Bryer (*Sylvia Metcalf*), Evan Thomas (*Rollo Metcalf*), Eileen Stack (*Peggy*), Peggy Beaty (*Bunnie*), Sonia Bellamy, Nora Brown, Moya Connor, Jewell Dalmaine, Jack Dalmaine, Marie Fitzgerald, Leslie Francis, Lena Holmes,

Lovey Lee, Rita McLean, Leonard Neville, Betty Newnham; *Ensemble:* Misses Billy Bert, Honor Blair, Dorothy Bright, Betty Burke, Bobby Dillon, Tony Hart, Beth Howe, Betty King, Elsie Lawrence, Vera Llewellyn, Madge Martin, Irene Otto, Evie Parkinson, Veronica Preston, Daphne Reynolds, Kathleen Stack, Duff Tooley, Ruth Walker, Sonia Watson; *Messrs:* Stephen Adeson, Jack Barker, Claude Elliott, Gordon Howell, Claude Newman, Fred Le Roy, Sidney Lowen, Roy Mitchell, Neil O'Brien, Edward Orpwood, Charles Scofield, Frank Watkins.

Story: Tip-Toes Kaye, part of a vaudeville act with her uncles Al and Hen, is stranded in Palm Beach, quite penniless. The uncles hit on a way of making money, by passing Tiptoes off as a wealthy society lady and getting her to snare any old rich playboy who happens to be around. She hits on Steve Burton, and as their true love grows he admits to her that he, too, is penniless. That doesn't matter, she says, love is all that's important – at which point he admits he is actually a real millionaire, and he only pretended so as to test her.

Notes: This show was a follow-on to “Lady Be Good” – which had opened three months earlier at the Empire - with the same authors hoping to create another hit. The New York production of “Tip Toes” in December 1925 with Jeanette MacDonald and Allen Kearns, had only managed 194 performances, but there were great hopes for the London show, with the American Allen Kearns coming over to London to re-create his original part in the show.

This was the first Winter Garden piece without Leslie Henson, and very wisely no attempt has been made to imitate the inimitable “... its story is an excellent one; the whole of the large company is superb, and the music is full of Gershwin's amazing vitality. Some of the music, in fact, has quite a Stravinsky flavour... This is syncopation with distinction... some of the ensemble dancing is worthy to be compared with the Russian Ballet.” (*Westminster Gazette*).

“George Gershwin is a master of jazz; and his dancing rhythms are the best of their kind. It will be this music, and the marvellous team-work of the clever company which will ensure the success of ‘Tip Toes’” (*Sporting Times*). “One cannot imagine the parts being better played in almost every instance... the music is uniformly bright” (*Era*).

Allen Kearns was scheduled to leave the show on October 16th due to a prior contract in New York. In the event he left a week earlier than announced and was replaced by Charles Lawrence from October 11th. Despite the original excellent notices, the show did no better in London than it had in New York. Its five month run could claim a moderate success, but fell far short of its original expectations.



Photo by Play Pictorial

Laddie Cliff, Dorothy Dickson & John Kirby

JUST A KISS

London run: Shaftesbury, September 8th - November 13th
 Transfer: Gaiety, November 15th - 27th
 (93 performances)

Music: Maurice Yvain

Additional music: Vivian Ellis & others

English lyrics: Desmond Carter

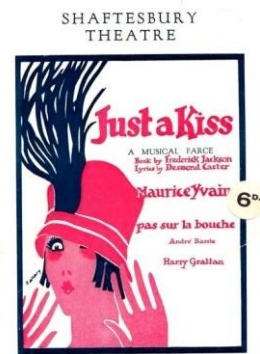
Book & adaptation: Frederick Jackson

Original Book & lyrics: Andre Barde

Director: Harry Grattan

Choreographer: J.W. Jackson

Musical Director: Julian Jones



Programme

Cast: Frederick Ranalow (*Armand*), Marjorie Gordon (*Valerie Trask*), Arthur Margetson (*Kenneth Courtney*), Marie George (*Miss Trask*), Barrie Oliver (*Charles Crawford*), Vera Lennox (*Rita Reynolds*). Hazel Hamilton, Harry St. A. Hilliard, Oriel Ross

Story: Comte Armand Delapierre, an experienced and extremely wealthy Lothario, has spent years seeking a wife – the only condition being that she must be a woman who has never been kissed on the lips. Finally he meets Valerie Trask, an innocent and virginal creature who meets all his requirements. (Little does he know she is really the ex- Mrs Kenneth Courtney, divorced in America after just a few days of marriage.) On the planned wedding day Kenneth Courtney himself turns up, ostensibly to visit his old friend, Armand, but really to win back the love of Valerie – and to claim that the American divorce is not legal in England, and they would be committing bigamy. Kenneth wins back Valerie, Armand discovers Valerie’s amorous aunt, Miss Trask, while subsidiary characters young American Charles Crawford and very modern miss, Rita Reynolds, make the third couple to be happily united in a big group wedding.

Notes: Adapted from “Pas sur la bouche” and “Ta bouche” by Maurice Yvain and Andre Barde, it was greeted with mixed notices: “it is bright and goes with a swing.. The best feature was the dancing, Vera Lennox and Barrie Oliver doing wonders together” (*Reynold’s News*) . “That it is derived from a French original is made obvious by the rather *risqué* third act” (*Stage*); “There is nothing very sparkling in the music... Playgoers who are not too exacting may extract some amusement from it” (*Illustrated London News*). The show moved from the Shaftesbury to the Gaiety to make way for the production of “My Son John”, then after a fortnight in its new venue, began a tour which opened at Golders Green Hippodrome. It had played a total of 93 performances in the West End.

MERRY MEXICO (Tour)

London run: Chiswick Empire, September 20th & week
 Kingston Empire, January 24th 1927 & week; Wood Green Empire, January 31st 1927 & week

Music: Noel Gay

Book: Harry M. Vernon

Director: Edward Marris

Choreographer: John Tiller

Musical Director: Harold Brewer

Cast: Fred Miller (*Billy*), Marie Ellis (*Mary*), Ouida MacDermott (*Mexican Maid*), Cecil Musk (*Nestor*), Penn Hamilton (*Governor Dindigul*), Alf Terris (*Mayor*), Molly Milne, Mansell Stringer, Dennis Waddington, Herbert Williams, John Tiller’s Zigfeld Folly Girls, Wallace Orton’s Male Voice Choir

Story: Billy Fagg, of Oswaldtwistle, Yorkshire (with an accent to match), and Mary, his Yorkshire sweetheart, find themselves among the sombreros, brigands, and fair ladies of Mexico, because Billy has put all his money into Mexican silver mines, and wants to see how they are doing. In spite of his appearance, the local population mistake him for the terrible bandit Madura, whom nobody has ever seen. He is lionised by the populace, but some of the real Madura’s fellow bandits expose him as an impostor. He also gets involved with a fiery-tempered Mexican Maid and her lover, Nestor, the innkeeper, and ultimately discovers that the real Madura is a member of the Governor Dindigul’s staff.

Notes: This tour opened at Sheffield on September 6th, and was billed as “a lustre of larceny, love and laughter”. “If it is neither revue nor musical comedy it is certainly a most attractive and picturesque entertainment that falls somewhere between the two. while a general air of irresponsibility greatly adds to its popular appeal” (*Stage*). It toured until May 1927, with two further suburban London dates in January 1927.

MERELY MOLLY

London run: Adelphi, September 22nd - December 5th
(85 performances)

Music: Herman Finck & Joseph Meyer

Lyrics: Harry Graham

Book: J. Hastings Turner

Director: Fred J. Blackman

Choreographer: Frank Masters

Musical Director: Charles Prentice

Producer: Daniel Mayer

Cast: Godfrey Tearle (*Duke of Wynnninghame*), Evelyn Laye (*Molly Shine*), Ben Field (*Samuel Shine*), Max Wall (*Sid Goyle*), Alfred Wellesley (*Dunn*), Helen Haye (*Lady Octavia*), Marie Ault (*Countess of Edgware*), Richard Dolman, Graham Edwins, Pollie Emery, Geo F. Ide, Greta Fayne George Queen, Herbert Ross, Morton Selten, Clive Watts.

Solo pianists Pete Yorke, Ken Warner *Ensemble: Misses* Margey Bliss, Glæe Carrodus, Ena Evans, Rachel Fry, Betty Hearne, Patsy Hearne, Alicia Hill, Betty Hoey, Margery Hoskins, Doris Leslie, Nancy Logan, Honoria Muggleton, Minnie Scott, Grace Snelson, Dinka Starace, Ethel Veenstra, Ida Wagstaff, Ruth Winship; *Messrs* Eric Alexander, Jack Clows, Leslie Dawson, Alfred Fairhurst, Kingsley Forster, Herbert Garry, Harry Marshall, Harold Miller, Fred Tonge.

Story: At London Zoo, the Duke of Wynnninghame, an expert on reptiles, meets Molly Shine, daughter of a Stepney undertaker. When she professes a polite interest in snakes he takes her address and starts sending her £5 each week to buy books on the subject. The new found riches in the Stepney household cause much gossip, so the apologetic Duke decides he must marry Molly, much to the disappointment of local-boy Sid Goyle, who has a crush on Molly. The Duke's valet, Dunn, arranges the engagement, but worried relatives, including his sister, Lady Octavia, and his godmother, the Countess of Edgware persuade him to delay the wedding until he has made a trip up the Amazon where a new species of toad has been discovered. Dunn persuades Molly to stow away on the boat to South America and thwart the relatives' scheming.

Notes: Based on J. Hastings Turner's book "Simple Souls", it was felt the story did not work in the musical comedy format, and the music was merely pleasant. "There seems to have been a good idea in 'Merely Molly' in an early stage of its existence, but it is afterwards spoiled by musical comedy treatment... The book might have served for a full length comedy, but it is obscured and overwhelmed by ordinary musical comedy treatment. The music is agreeable enough, but not very striking, and there is not a great deal of humour in the piece" (*Daily News*). "It lacks the blare and blaze of the American school and the book distinguishes it from many of the inane excuses for musical plays that have come and gone during the last few years. In fact, it is a comedy with music" (*Era*).



Max Wall

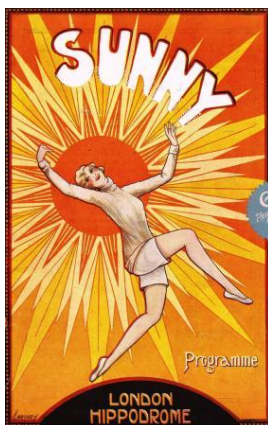


Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News

"The fact that 'Merely Molly' is neither American nor Viennese, but simply British, has been so loudly acclaimed that one might suppose the feat had seldom before been attempted by native librettists and composers... 'Merely Molly' seemed to me to labour under almost every common defect observable in this class of entertainment" (*Weekly Dispatch*)

There was some booing on the first night, and the show lasted just two months. The 18 year old Max Wall was singled out for his comedy dancing performance.

Godfrey Tearle & Evelyn Laye



SUNNY

London run: Hippodrome, October 7th - July 16th 1927
(363 performances)

Music: Jerome Kern

Book & Lyrics: Otto Harbach & Oscar Hammerstein II

Director: Charles Mast

Choreographer: Jack Buchanan

Musical Director: Philip Braham

Producer: Lee Ephraim & Jack Buchanan

Cast: Binnie Hale (*Sunny Peters*), Jack Buchanan (*Jim Deming*), Claude Hulbert (*Harold Wendell*), Elsie Randolph (*Weenie Winters*), Nicholas Adams (*Siegfried Peters*), Jack Hobbs (*Tom Warren*), Sam Macrae (*Sam*), Harry Clement, Robert Gordon, Maidie Hope, Nancie Lovat, Sam Macrae,

Gus Oxley, Dennis Wyndham. *Principal Dancer:* Ula Sharon

Sunny Girl Dancers: Betty Birch, Roma Darrell, Rene Force, Gladys Holt, Edith Lamb, Dorothy Marlow, Vera Owen, Esme Westhead. *Ensemble Ladies:* Zoe Andrews, Ella Atherton, Elsie Batson, Nancy Beard, Esme Brown, Mollie Crafter, Ivy Donnelly, Estelle Dudley, Peggy Eccles, Vivian Farnham, Dorothy Fenwick, Vera Fothergill, Marjorie Hall, Bobbie Hanson, Peggy Kendall, Olive Kilgour, Marie Masters, Eileen McCarthy, Audrey Milner, Jill Mureen, Monti Ryan, Rita Shield, Margot St Leger. Dorothea Stone, Biddy Wilkinson, Doris Yorke.

Gentlemen: William Abbott, Paul Barrie, Herbert Brett, Pat Bryant, Dudley Craig, Charles Digby, Noel Fisher, Cyril Gill, W.H. Kearton, Ian Lennox, Douglas Percival, Billy Reynolds, Joe Roncoroni, Louis Roslyn, Jack Stewart, Frank Townsend, Bernard Vogel, Fred Wallace, Eric Wardroper, Derek Waterlow, Claude Watts, Harry Wernley.

Story: This is the story of Sunny Peters, a feisty circus bareback rider who is being forced to marry Harold Harcourt Wendell, the English circus proprietor, even though her heart belongs to fellow-performer, Tom Warren. To escape Harold's clutches, she stows away on a ship bound for New York, but then discovers she will not be allowed to land, and will be sent back home immediately. In order to be accepted ashore she makes a deal with rich Jim Deming, where they will marry, she will enter the USA, and then they will straightway divorce. This happens as planned, but then Sunny realises she really does love Jim, and so the show ends with them planning to re-marry.

Notes: The original Broadway production opened in September 1925 with Marilyn Miller and Jack Donahue, and ran for 517 performances. It was a successor to Jerome Kern's "Sally", which had also been created with Marilyn Miller in mind. It was the first of the Kern-Hammerstein collaborations. The British production opened at the Palace Manchester on September 21st. Its reputation preceded it, and applications for first-night tickets were claimed to be enough to fill the Hippodrome three times over with £600 in advance ticket sales—a record for the Hippodrome. The show's success was guaranteed - and as a curious footnote, it has a unique claim: it was "sent-up" in the simultaneous revue "C.O.D." at the Duke of Yorks, when comedian Robert Hale dressed up as the character Sunny in a parody sketch - thus being the only time a father appeared as his daughter while both were playing in West End shows.

"Rarely has such fine lavish staging been seen in town" (*Stage*); "about the show there is a bustling vitality which swings it along" (*Daily Mirror*); "the talk of London" (*Daily News*).

Playing nine performances a week, the show ran until the middle of July the following year.



Nancie Lovat, Jack Buchanan, Binnie Hale, Jack Hobbs & Elsie Randolph

LOVE ADRIFT

London run: Gaiety Theatre, October 6th - 23rd
(21 performances)

Music: Eduard Poldini

Book & Lyrics: Ernest Vajda

English version: M.D. Calvocoressi

Director: Alois Mora

Choreographer: Margarita Mayo

Musical Director: Hubert J. Foss

Producer: Henri M. Taunay & William Foss

Cast: Frederick Collier (*Squire*), Eva von der Osten (*Squire's wife*), Jack Wright (*Kalman*), Kathleen Lafla (*Countess*), Andrew Shanks (*Zoltan*), Gwen Knight (*Stanzl*), Darius Keesing (*Andrisch*), Cavan O'Connor (*Forfeit Master*), M. Cassin, Constance Groom, Manuel Hemmingway, Kate Opperman, Eva Sternroyd, David Underwood, *plus an uncredited 75-strong chorus*.

Story: In a remote part of 1830s Hungary, Squire Peter and his wife are preparing the wedding feast for daughter, Suzy, and her husband to be. A fierce snowstorm prevents the guests and bridegroom from arriving and, instead, a crowd of stranded strangers beg for shelter. Among them is Kalman, a handsome young student, and, very soon, Suzy and the student fall in love, despite the efforts of a Countess and Zoltan, her Hussar officer, to keep them apart. The would-be bridegroom has himself been snowbound at another house, and fallen in love with someone new – so all ends happily. Other characters include Stanzl, a comical old-maidish Governess, Andrisch, a dodderly butler, and the Forfeit Master who organises games for the snow-bound party.

Notes: The work had originally been entitled “Wedding in Carnival Time”, and was more like an opera than the standard Gaiety-type musical comedy, and indeed Eva von der Osten had sung *Isolde* and *Kundry* at Covent Garden, and both Frederick Collier and Andrew Shanks were members of the British National Opera Company. The young tenor, Cavan O'Connor, would later go on to become well-loved on the variety circuit as “The Strolling Vagabond”. There was a very large chorus and it was a lavish production,

“The Stage” review was full of praise, congratulating the management on its “courage in breaking away from the Gaiety tradition...and staging a very different type of piece...with delightful music and some of the best chorus-singing one has heard in London for years”. However, that individual critic was more or less alone, since the rest of the Press was damning: “Poldini’s light opera proves a very serious affair, nor is it, unfortunately, immune from dullness... The lyrics are exceptionally banal, while the wording of the recitatives might well have been transferred en bloc from Burlesque” (*Westminster Gazette*); “...interminably long. For three hours the audience more or less patiently listened to the earnest recital of this story in song. But it all seemed a trifle futile” (*Daily Herald*); “I never remember such pretentious music for such absolutely banal lines. The singing is very good indeed and the opera is splendidly mounted. There are about a hundred people in it, and it must have cost a lot of money to put on, but I fear there will be very little return for it” (*Reynold's News*)

Not surprisingly, it failed, and came to an abrupt end. On the Saturday night at the end of the third week the company was told there was a problem with finances, and that week’s salary would be delayed until the following Monday. On the Monday it was announced the show would close immediately. Some of the principals offered to carry on “as a commonwealth”, but the management declined. Everyone was paid up to the previous Saturday, and the show was cancelled.

Eva van der Osten





PRINCESS CHARMING

London run: Palace, October 21st - August 3rd 1927
(362 performances)

Music: Albert Szirmai

Lyrics: Arthur Wimperis

Original book: Ferencz Martos

English Book: Arthur Wimperis & Lauri Wylie

Additional numbers: Russell Bennett & Jack Waller

Director: William Mollison

Choreographer: Espinosa

Musical Director: Percy Fletcher

Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller

Cast: Winnie Melville (*Princess Elaine*), Edmund Willard (*Lieut. Ivanoff*), W.H. Berry (*Albert Chuff*), George Grossmith (*King Christian*), John Clarke (*Captain Torelli*), Alice Delysia (*Wanda Navarro*), Bernard Clifton, Peter Gawthorne, Ernest Graham, Gerald Nodin, Edward O'Bryen, Charles Penrose, Eileen Redcott,

Story: Princess Elaine of Novia is a virtual prisoner in the Sylvania Embassy at Novia because of an ongoing revolution, and the revolutionists, commanded by Lieutenant Ivanoff, are particularly desirous of getting hold of her. However, the very English insurance agent, Albert Chuff, is charged with delivering her safely to King Christian of Novia to whom she is engaged. Chuff has the idea of marrying her temporarily to Captain Torelli of the Sylvania navy, by which act she becomes a Sylvania, and therefore cannot be touched by her fellow countrymen. She is safely carried to Sylvania, by which time she's decided she would rather stay married to Torelli in spite of the King's fury. However, Wanda Navarro is at hand, a dancer who also claims to be a Countess, and her "vamping" soon captures the King so all can end happily.

Notes: Although by this time the Hungarian composer Albert Szirmai was living in New York, he regularly sent works in his native language back to Budapest, and his musical "Alexandra" was successfully performed in Budapest and Vienna in 1925. It was re-written and, with interpolated songs, was produced with great success in London under the title "Princess Charming".

"The Palace has found a spectacular successor for 'Nanette' in 'Princess Charming', a very lavish Ruritanian romance... she is a much more gorgeous creature, moving amid more ambitious music in a story that is not without its dramatic moments" (*Daily Herald*); It is "...an alliance of a first-rate romantic story on the Ruritanian model, with good music, dramatic situations and a quantity of excellent fun" (*Daily Mirror*); "excellently cast and mounted with a lavishness that is perhaps more dazzling than artistic... the authors prove conclusively that Ruritania is still worth visiting" (*Era*)

The show had a successful eight-and-a-half month run in London. With every expectation of repeating this success, the show opened on Broadway in 1930 with George Grossmith re-creating his original role. It flopped after just 56 performances. Possibly the Wall Street Crash had dampened all enthusiasm for Ruritanian operettas.

(A British film-version was made in 1934, again with George Grossmith – and with Evelyn Laye and Max Miller – but almost all the music was cut, leaving Evelyn Laye with just one song.)



Winnie Melville

QUEEN HIGH

London run: Queen's Theatre, November 2nd - April 23rd 1927
(198 performances)

Music: Lewis E. Gensler

Additional songs: Bernard Green

Lyrics: B.G. DeSylva

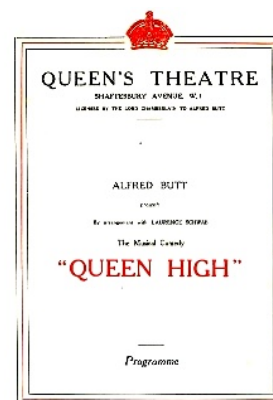
Book: Lawrence Schwab & B.G. DeSylva

Director: Edgar MacGregor

Choreographer: Sammy Lee

Musical Director: Percival Mackey

Producer: Sir Alfred Butt



Cast: A.W. Baskcomb (*George B. Nettleton*), Joseph Coyne (*T. Boggs Johns*), Anita Elson (*Polly*), Sonnie Hale (*Richard*), Haddon Mason (*Lawyer*), Stephanie Stephens (*Mrs Nettleton*), Joyce Barbour (*Florence Cole*), Hermione Baddeley., Kathryn J. Ellis, Doreen Farnham, Frank Masters, Nada Munday, Terri Storri.
Ensemble: Ladies Mary Beard, Mona Collister, Dorothy Dobson, Peggy Evelyn, Billie Harcourt, Marie Hudson, Lulu Lance, Patricia Neville, Susan Novack, Dora Pickard, Kitty Rees, Avis Robb, Regina West; *Gentlemen:* Simon Dale, Gordon Forrester, Jack Laurie, Stanley Overbury, Frank Rowland, Anthony St Air, Cecil Stafford, Herbert Strathmore.

Story: The story centres on the rivalry between George B. Nettleton and T. Boggs Johns, two quarrelling partners in a garter-selling business, each one convinced he is the one in charge. Nettleton appoints his niece, Polly, as secretary, and Johns makes his nephew, Richard, the advertising agent, and both of them suffer from conflicting orders and requirements. The firm's lawyer is called in, and comes up with a plan: the two men will play a game of poker and the winner will be the uncontested boss for a year, with the other agreeing to be the subordinate. Nettleton wins (in spite of John's Queen High) and proceeds to make Boggs act as his butler. Boggs gets his revenge in a series of tricks involving Nettleton's wife, so that eventually Nettleton is happy to cancel the deal, and restore both his domestic bliss and his business fortunes.

Notes: This was a musical adaptation of Edward Peple's farce "A Pair of Sixes". The New York production had opened on September 5th and would continue to run for 367 performances. The British production had opened with a try-out at Sunderland and then straight to London with a small cast change when Joyce Barbour took over the role originally played by Phyllis Povah.



Photo by Stage Photo Company

The reviews were not especially enthusiastic: "The piece is really a farce with musical numbers interpolated... There are several bright and tuneful numbers and they are repeated over and over again by first the principals and then in relays by the chorus" (*Era*). "Do farces make good books for musical comedies?...the dances, choruses and songs never seem part of the plot. The music and the farce are separate factors. Either would be more entertaining without the other" (*Daily News*). "The music was "often jazzish and noisy.. The chorus played and sang and moved with utmost zeal and enthusiasm after the fashion of many American importations seen recently... The two comedians worked together splendidly" (*Stage*).

It ran for just under six months - a respectable enough result, but considerably shorter than its Broadway equivalent.

Sonnie Hale, Joe Coyne & Anita Elson

MY SON JOHN

London run: Shaftesbury, November 17th - June 25th 1927
(255 performances)

Music: Oscar Straus

Lyrics: Desmond Carter & Harry Graham

Book: Graham John

Additional numbers: Billy Thompson Jr, Vivian Ellis

Director: Billy Merson

Choreographer: Edward Dolly

Musical Director: Leonard Hornsey

Producer: Billy Merson & David Miller

Cast: Charles Stone (*Sir Peregrine*), Vera Pearce (*Lady Clare*), Reginald Sharland (*Jack Revier*), Annie Croft (*Sandy Fayre*), Billy Merson (*Benjamin Littlewood*), Henry Latimer (*Prince Nicolai*), Betty Chester (*Suzanne*), Darley Aitken, Marjorie Aldington, K. Burgis, Mary Honri, Charles Sims, L. Underwood, G. Welford, Minnie Willett, Paula Wray. *Large chorus not credited.*



Story: Sir Peregrine flirts with all his female staff, so his wife, Clare, in revenge, invites Jack Revier to join her on a visit to the Lido. When Jack finds out she already has a husband, he engages Sandy Fayre to accompany him and pretend to be his fiancée. Sandy, a typist, was recently sacked by Sir Peregrine because she refused to explain the parentage of a child called John. Sir Peregrine hires Benjamin Littlewood, a private detective, to spy on his wife, and Benjamin disguises himself as an Albanian Prince, but the real Albanian Prince arrives (and turns out to be the father of the mysterious boy – whose mother was Sandy's sister). Alongside all this, Benjamin falls for Suzanne, Sir Peregrine's niece, Jack falls for Sandy, and the curtain falls on multiple weddings and reconciliations..

Notes: Originally staged in 1910 Vienna as "Mein junger Herr", some of its music was used in an English version called "Riquette" which played some provincial dates from December 1925. In turn, "Riquette" was further adapted with some additional music by Vivian Ellis and others and staged at the Shaftesbury under the title "My Son John".



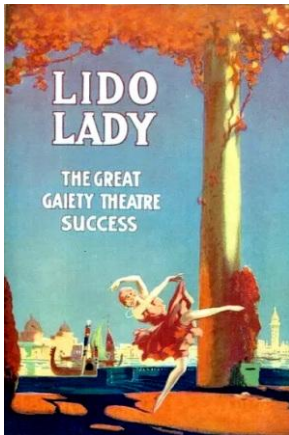
Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News

Annie Croft & Reginald Sharland

The production was the first venture into management by the established performer Billy Merson. Annie Croft and Reginald Sharland were husband and wife in private life, and were playing the roles of the young lovers. Although it was a bit of a hodge-podge from various sources, it was mostly well received: it "is the plottiest musical comedy I have seen for a long time. But its success will be due rather to the pretty tunes of Oscar Straus, the unusually well-turned lyrics and the agreeable fooling of Billy Merson" (*Sunday Mirror*); "There is a great deal of plot in 'My Son John' - for once, indeed, a trifle too much... but it is a venture that is well above the average of its kind" (*Sphere*). "The book is a trifle attenuated, but it contains more humour than is usual in a musical comedy. Oscar Straus has written some of the most graceful light music heard for a long time" (*Era*)

The cast contained a large chorus providing a series of dance numbers including a Russian dance, a Highland fling, and a hornpipe. A scene in a fashion store "affords scope for the presentation of a Parade of Mannequins; and at the end of the piece there is the finely staged Carnival, in the midst of which an unnamed lady, arrayed in gipsy attire, comes on to give a careful and not ineffective rendering of both cavatina and cabaletta of 'Ah fors è lui' from La Traviata" (*Stage*)

It ran for a respectable 255 performances.



LIDO LADY

London run: Gaiety Theatre, December 1st - July 23rd 1927
(259 performances)

Music: Richard Rodgers

Lyrics: Lorenz Hart

Book: Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby, Guy Bolton & Ronald Jeans

Director–Choreographer: Jack Hulbert

Musical Director: Sydney Baynes

Cast: Bobby Comber (*Rufus Blake*), Phyllis Dare (*Fay*), Jack Hulbert (*Harry Bassett*), Billy Arlington (*Bill Harker*), Cicely Courtneidge (*Peggy Bassett*), Harold French (*Spencer Weldon*), Henry de Bray (*Luis Valeze*), Phyl Arnold, Johnne Clare, Laurence Green, April Harmon, Rowland Hill, Muriel Montrose, *Dancers:* Dave Fitzgibbon,

Joe Gerald, Billy Shaw, Frank Tiernan, Harry White. *Ensemble Ladies:* Jeanette Andrews, Myra Barnard, Pamela Baxter, Marjorie Bell, Vera Budge, Erin Burke, Cynthia Carlton, Anne Citroen, Marjory Davidson, Lilian Du Roy, Jessie Fredericksen, Rosamaund Gardner, Marjorie Gascoigne, Lilian Logan, Ella Lowes, Thelma Morland, Molly Neame, Mary de Pury, Nancy Rigg, Vesta Smart, Rubie Stewart, Anne Thurlby; *Gentlemen:* Donald Aked, Charles Ellis, Paul French, Percy Gage, George Guinness, Arthur Ives. Dennis Ray.

Story: Wealthy sporting goods manufacturer, Rufus Blake, will only accept an heroic sportsman as a fitting husband for his daughter, Fay. Her sweetheart, Harry Bassett, out to impress, is helped by his friends Bill and Peggy, but gets knocked out in a boxing match which he thought he had “fixed” with promoter Spencer Weldon. With a second attempt, he beats South American tennis ace Luis Valeze (only to learn it wasn’t the real champion, but a crook in disguise – a villain who has stolen Rufus’s secret formula for making tennis balls.) Harry finally manages a heroic success when he recovers the stolen formula - though it is later revealed he simply managed to catch it when the escaping crook dropped it from the upper deck of the S.S. Futuria. However, that’s good enough for Fay and Rufus, and a happy ending ensues.

Notes: Jack Hulbert and Paul Murray devised the scenario for this musical with the intention of first performing it in New York. They approached Guy Bolton and the two Americans, Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby, to write the book, but a change of plans meant it would be staged first in England. They then approached Rodgers and Hart - at this point a writing team unknown in Britain - to write songs to fit the specific requirements of the story, and Ronald Jeans was brought on board to “anglicise” the work already carried out. The show included a Folies Bergère-type spectacle – the Festival of the Queen of Sheba – a lot of “American” dancing, and a scene with all the girls in pyjamas.

The reviews were generally positive: “The show is very long. and a beneficial cut could be made deleting the pageant of the Queen Sheba... This is the only cut one could bear to contemplate. All the rest is too merry for one be willing to sacrifice any of it” (*Daily Herald*); “a gorgeous spectacle which reaches its scintillating height in a Queen of Sheba party, where the guests wear wonderful costumes consisting largely of jewels, and eminently suited to a high temperature... the show is a bright and light-hearted affair, introducing some of our most popular revue personalities” (*Daily Mirror*); “Mr Richard Rodgers’ music is well up to the standard of modern musical comedy, decidedly tuneful and splendidly exploited and ‘plugged’” (*Era*). There was a dissenting voice: “the not specially interesting book has been revised from that of a presumably American triumvirate. Almost as banal and commonplace are the lyrics (very poor stuff some of them) by Lorenz Hart, and there is a good deal of familiarly sounding, if tuneful, engaging and not aggressively rag-timish music by Richard Rodgers and others” (*Stage*)

The show had a very successful eight month run in London, but was never staged on Broadway.



Jack Hulbert

HAPPY GO LUCKY

London run: Prince of Wales, December 21st – January 22nd
(37 performances)

Music: Tom Johnstone

Lyrics: Phil Cooke

Additional numbers: James Hanley, Philip Charig & Joseph Meyer

Book: Harry M. Vernon

Director: Ralph Lynn

Choreographer: Raymond Midgley

Musical Director: Al Starita

Producer: Harry & George Foster

Cast: Tom A. Shale (*John W. King*), Roy Royston (*Wally King*), Eve Benson (*Rita*), Rita Page (*Susan Remington*), Miss June (*June Willard*), Philip Carlton, Denis Cowles, Clifford Heatherley, Marin Iredale, Valerie Moore, Marion Saki, Billy Taylor. *Ensemble:* Joyce Compton, Ethel D'Arcy, Margit de Fest, Maisie Foot, Bernetice Hampshire, Margaret Harlan, Vera Hayes, Marie Holt, Mary Lynn, Norah Lorrimore, Sybil Lamley, Valerie Moore, Eileen Smith, Elma Slee, Eileen Sharland, Billie Tevlin, Violet Turner, Irene Walters.

Story: Hollywood movie mogul, John W. King, wishes to enlarge his grip on the film world, and wants full control of the main showbiz newspaper. He already owns half, but plans to let it collapse and then buy out his partner, Mr Willard, at rock-bottom price. The best way to ruin it is to get his playboy, talentless son, Wally, appointed as managing editor. John goes off on holiday waiting for the paper to crash, but Wally's idea of a beauty competition to be determined by the votes of the public proves to be a great hit, hugely increasing sales, bringing publicity to Rita, Old Man King's latest movie queen, and allowing Wally to fall in love with June Willard (who turns out to be the heir to half the newspaper!). John W. King returns, accepts the position philosophically, and congratulates his son on his achievement.



Miss June

Notes: Based on the original "When You Smile" by Tom Johnstone and Jack Alicoate, the pre-publicity for this show advertised the long-awaited return of Miss June after her illness and long absence from the stage. But on its first performance in Birmingham Miss June was announced as ill, and an understudy went on.

By the London opening Miss June was back in the role, receiving a polite but lukewarm reception from the critics: "Not all the smiles of June as the Girl, not all the galvanic fooling of Roy Royston as the Boy, not all the kaleidoscope dresses of the chorus, not all the swooning syncopation of the Kit-Kat Club Band could make this preposterous tale of Love in Los Angeles do more than just simper along" (*Daily Herald*) "a hotch-potch of ideas badly in need of a mastermind to knit them together" (*Weekly Dispatch*)

"It will not wholly please either the dramatic or musical highbrows, but one has a pretty shrewd suspicion that it will draw steady audiences to enjoy its general brightness and gaiety, and especially its admirable dances" (*Stage*)

In the event it failed to draw audiences, and managed a run of just one month.

THE APACHE

London run: Palladium, February 15th – May 28th
(166 performances)

Music: Ralph Benatsky

Book & Lyrics: Benatsky & L.M. Welleminsky

English adaptation: Dion Titheradge

Director: Julian Wylie

Choreographer: Edward Dolly

Musical Director: Horace Sheldon

Producer: A Wylie-Tate production.

Cast: Carl Brisson (*Romain Tierce*),
Shaun Glenville (*Theophile Redingote*),
Adrienne Brune (*Marian Redingote*), Dorothy Ward (*Lallage*),
Blake Adams, Reed Anderson, Tilly Brisson, Bibi Delabère,
Constance Evans, Bert Evremonde, Nada Ford, Francis Hope,
Benson Kleve, James McGrath, Ernest Ruston, Mark Turner,
Philip Valentine, The John Sherman Fisher Girls



Photo by Dorothy Wilding

Dorothy Ward & Carl Brisson

Story: The dead father of the hero, Romain Tierce, had been cheated in business by the villainous Theophile Redingote. To seek revenge, Romain passes himself off as the Duke de Brianza and, on a visit to Redingote's palatial mansion, makes love to Marian, Redingote's young wife, steals one of her jewelled combs, and finally carries her off to the Pyrenees where they live platonically. In the end Redingote gets her back, while the hero pairs off with his real love, Lallage, the very red-haired damsel of the tribe of Parisian Apaches of which he, himself, is the chief.

Notes: A highlight of this production was an Apache dance* performed by Carl Brisson and his real-life sister, Tilly. "The producers knew what they were about when they allowed Carl Brisson so many chances in the play. He is an immense favourite, he acts easily if without any inspiration, and dances with a blending of grace and energy. The piece itself seems to exist for the purpose of allowing Carl to make effective exits and entrances and otherwise attract everybody's attention" (*Sporting Times*)

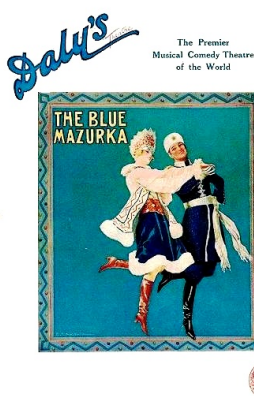
"The production is exceedingly efficient, even if the book is commonplace and the music reminiscent. The chorus is a good deal better than usual, and the Apache dance in which Carl Brisson and his sister, Tilly, take part brought down the house" (*Daily News*). "It isn't a bad story for a musical play, and if only the English librettist had been able to put a little wit, or even a little freshness of his own into the dialogue, it would have been better still" (*Stage*)



Photo by Dorothy Wilding

Carl & Tilly Brisson: *The Apache dance*

* The Apache dance had been created in France around 1908. The rough Parisian street gangs were labelled "les apaches" after the popular image of the Native American tribe (but pronounced "a-pash" rather than "a-patch-ee" in the American way). The dance usually portrayed a violent fight between a pimp and a prostitute, at the end of which the woman is either thrown to the ground, feigns unconsciousness and is carried off, or fights back and escapes. With its combination of stage combat, acrobatics and ballet it could be an exciting spectacle to watch (it was a different age!), and it gained much popularity and interest as a result of Ivor Novello performing an apache dance in the 1925 (silent) film, "The Rat"



THE BLUE MAZURKA

London run: Daly's, February 19th - June 18th
(140 performances)

Music: Franz Lehár

Original book & Lyrics: Leo Stein & Bela Jenbach

Additional songs: Jay Whidden & Idris Lewis

English Lyrics: Harry Graham

English Book: Monckton Hoffe

Director: Robert Courtneidge

Choreographer: Espinosa

Musical Director: Arthur Wood / Sheridan Gordon

Producer: James White

Cast: Wilfred Temple (*Count Julian Olinski*), Gladys Moncrieff (*Blanca*), Clifford Mollison (*Adolar*), Billie Hill (*Gretl*), George Graves (*Von Spatz*),

Bertram Wallis (*Baron von Reiger*), Arthur Claremont (*Adlin von Planting*),

Herbert Maule (*Leopold Klammerdatsch*), Jack Kelvin, E. Kelland-Espinosa, Nat Lewis, Lester Matthews,

Cecil Pearce, Eric Roland, *Speciality Dancers:* Ludmilla Scholler, Anatole Wiltzae, *Chorus not listed.*

Story: Count Julian Olinski and Blanca von Lossin, the daughter of an oil tycoon, fell in love whilst dancing the Blue Mazurka, the traditional last dance at a ball in their native Poland. Following their sudden wedding, his friend, Adolar, wonders how Gretl Unger, Julian's former mistress, will react when she arrives. He also warns of the anger of Governor-General Von Spatz, who will be opposed to the marriage. Julian manages to pacify Gretl and is giving her a final, friendly farewell embrace when Blanca walks in on them. She gets the wrong idea and flounces out. Other characters include three old bachelors, Baron von Reiger, Adlin von Planting, and Leopold Klammerdatsch, who, along with the baron's nephew, Adolar, are instrumental in bringing about the eventual reconciliation and the happy ending.

Notes: "Die blaue Mazur" had been premiered in Vienna in 1920. Gladys Moncrieff, the Australian soprano whose UK debut had been in the flop "Riki Tiki" was engaged at short notice to replace Elizabeth Pechy who had originated the role in the pre-West End Glasgow opening. It was said the Hungarian Miss Pechy's English was not good enough. She announced she intended to sue for breach of contract, but seems to have been pacified when she appeared in a special showcase performance of operatic arias at the Coliseum two weeks later. A similar cast change saw the original male lead, the Romanian George Metaxa, replaced by Wilfred Temple for the West End premiere. However, a separate touring production opened in Liverpool just four weeks after the London premiere, and Metaxa was back in his original role.

The critical reaction was respectful but unenthusiastic: "Lehar's score is ravishing, and was well sung and played... For the rest, a very ordinary and proper musical comedy came to a very ordinary and proper conclusion" (*Weekly Dispatch*). "The formula of romantic musical comedy has become old-fashioned ... we have the stereotyped pair of Balkan lovers who are separated in the first act and come together again, rather too easily, in the last; and their love-making, farewells, and reconciliation are contrasted with comic relief of one sort or another. That has been the formula of all the successful musical pieces at Daly's ... and 'The Blue Mazurka' has faithfully followed the formula" (*Stage*)

The show managed a four month run in London, though it proved to be much more popular in Europe, being staged in most European operetta houses in the 1920s. It has since disappeared from the repertoire, despite many considering it to be musically one of Lehar's masterpieces "It contains some gorgeous music in Lehar's most erotic style (with solo violin and celesta), and there are typically sumptuous waltzes and a rousing march, as well as an opening polonaise, a gavotte and the title mazurka" (*Gramophone*). However, it seems the formulaic book counteracts its musical excellence.



Gladys Moncrieff, George Graves & Wilfred Temple



THE DESERT SONG

London run: Drury Lane, April 7th - April 14th 1928
(432 performances)

Music: Sigmund Romberg

Lyrics: Otto Harbach & Oscar Hammerstein II

Book: Harbach, Hammerstein & Frank Mandel

Director: Laurence Schwab

Choreographer: Bobby Connolly

Musical Director: Herman Finck

Producer: Sir Alfred Butt

Cast: Edith Day (*Margot*), Harry Welchman (*Pierre Birabeau*),
Gene Gerrard (*Bennie Kidd*), Phoebe Brune (*Azuri*), Sidney Pointer (*Sid El Kar*),
Barry Mackay (*Capt Paul Fontaine*), Maria Minetti (*Clementina*),
Clarice Hardwicke (*Susan*), Alfred Atkins, Gordon Crocker,

Clifford Heatherley, Dennis Hoey, Leonard Mackay, Ruby Morriss, Edgar Pierce, Sybil Rhoda, Caton Woodville. *Plus a very large uncredited chorus*

Story: In North Africa the French occupying forces are striving to capture Red Shadow, the leader of the Riffs, an outlaw band of Moroccan tribesmen. The famous renegade is in love with Margot, but she is infatuated with Pierre Birabeau, the handsome son of the French Governor. Margot is captured by the mysterious Red Shadow and eventually falls in love with him, although she does not know his true identity – his face is always hidden from her. However, the Red Shadow is himself captured and imprisoned by the governor's soldiers, and only then does Margot discover the Red Shadow is really Pierre in disguise. All ends happily.

Notes: The musical was inspired by the 1925 uprising of the Moroccan Riffs against French Colonial rule, and by the current exploits of Lawrence of Arabia - a time when romantic tales of Arab North Africa were popular on stage and in the silent cinema. The original Broadway production opened in November 1926, and with Vivienne Segal and Richard Halliday starring, ran for 465 performances.

The London production, the successor to “Rose Marie”, was an equal success: it opened with a £47,000 library deal guaranteeing totally sold out houses for every single performance for the first three months. The reviews were mostly lavish in their praise: “In most respects it is even better than ‘Rose Marie’. It has a book that holds the play together more satisfactorily, the comedy is more amusing, and although there is nothing quite as fine as that beautiful, waving Totem Dance, there is compensation in a perfectly executed chorus of French soldiers which was encored again and again” (*Era*). It was a massive production - "singing by enormous companies of soldiers and Riffians and women, and very good dancing in similar proportions. The music... is tuneful and vigorous, with what dancers call ‘sure winners’...(but) the humour is so feeble, the lines provided are mostly execrable, dull or in questionable taste” (*Westminster Gazette*).

A few critics continued to bemoan the increasing Americanisation of the London stage, complaining of the vulgarity of American humour and the brashness of style. “I must have been in the wrong mood, for I thought it balderdash. The scenery and costumes were quite the worst I have ever seen at the Lane - garish and vulgarly conventional. Dear old Arthur Collins knew how to fill the stage...Sir Alfred Butt prefers to import a Foreign Legion to conduct our National Theatre for us” (*Weekly Dispatch*)

However, the public flocked, and it ran for a full year, before undertaking an extensive provincial tour. Over the next half century it would be revived five times in the West End, and would become one of the most frequently staged productions on the UK amateur musical society circuit.

Original London production: Drury Lane, April 1927
Future revivals: *Alhambra*, June 1931; *Coliseum*, Sept 1936;
Garrick, June 1939; *Prince of Wales*, Jan 1943; *Palace*, May 1967



Harry Welchman & Edith Day



THE VAGABOND KING

London run: Winter Garden, April 19th - January 21st 1928
 Transfer: Gaiety, January 23rd 1928 - June 9th 1928
 (Total 480 performances)

Music: Rudolf Friml

Lyrics: Brian Hooker

Book: Hooker, Russell Janney & W.H. Post

Director: Richard Boleslawsky

Choreographer: Royal Cutter & Helen Grenelle

Musical Director: Jacques Heuvel/ Anton Heindl

Cast: Derek Oldham (*Francois Villon*), Mark Lester (*Guy Taborie*), Winnie Melville (*Katherine de Vaucelles*), H.A. Saintsbury (*King Louis XI*), Norah Blaney (*Huguette du Hamel*), Betty Eley (*Lady Mary*). Frederic Collier, Henry De Coninck, Hubert Ennor, Stephen T. Ewart, Franklin Kelsey, Helen

Kinnaird, Donald Mather, Robert McQueen, Letty Robertson, Christine Rosslyn, Gus Sharland, Frank Wilson-Barrett.

Ensemble Ladies: Beryl Adair, Beth Alys, Muriel Angelus, Madeline Bailey, Gertrude Baxter, Kathleen Brett, Edna Brough, Ivy Bryant, Jeanette Carello, Marguerite Carlton, Nina Carleton, Anna Clive, Gwen Crawley, Gladys Fleming, Rachel Fry, Gloria Gay, Gladys Godwin, Dorothy Graham, Irene Holmes, Aline Howe, Lilian Julker, Julie Kanaley, Rhoda Langton, Minnie Lawrence, Dorita Lessels, Mary Martin, Gwen Noel, Doris Palm, Lollie Potter, Kathleen Proctor, Vere Raynor, Letty Robertson, Gladys Ross, Thelma Rutland, Eileen Sharland, Ruth Sherman, Geraldine Spear, Sylvia Spiers, Jean Stanley, Helen Stephens, Cynthia Ward, Maude Ward-Cowdery, Grace Webb, Valerie Willoughby, Helen Wilson-Barrett, Aimee Young; *Gentlemen:* Harold Alleyne, Fred Astell, Gordon Baskerville, Spencer Carpenter, Charles Chilly, Alex Collins, Hugh Collins, Walter Cutler, Ernest Dini, Jack Don, Edward Earle, Henry Edgell, Syd Elliott, David Evans, E. Fort, Don Hardy, Joe Heaps, William Kidd, Rex Leslie, Seymour Lucas, Trevor Mansell, Ian McCarthy, Reg Miller, F. Molyneux, Rudolph Mondo, Alexander Morphy, Kenneth Sterne, Edwin Stevens, Walter Such, John Thompson, Stanley Tustain, Leonard Walker, Richard A. Wheatley, Louis Wilson.

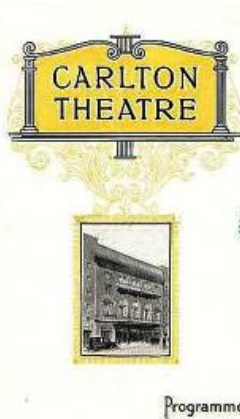
Story: Francois Villon – poet, braggart, thief and darling of the Paris rabble – has been sending anonymous love poems to the King’s intended bride, Katherine de Vaucelles. Intrigued by this unknown admirer, she arranges a secret rendezvous but is followed by the disguised King, who is furious to hear Villon mocking the failures of his reign and saying what he would do instead "if I were king." The king threatens Villon with death for his treachery, but says the death sentence will be delayed for 24 hours so that Villon can have all the powers of a King, command the army and free Paris according to his boast. If he fails, he will be hanged, if he succeeds he will be exiled. He emerges victorious, and the king decides to reward him with his life in exile but taking Katherine with him as his wife.

Notes: This was based on the 1901 play “If I Were King” by Justin Huntley McCarthy. It had already been turned into a musical – a very early Rodgers and Hart experiment staged in a college production with Dorothy Fields – and seeing this had inspired Russell Janney to commission his own version. It opened on Broadway on September 21st 1925 (511 performances) and then in London at the Winter Garden Theatre in April 1927.

“A finely musical and strongly dramatic production without a dull moment... for the greater part it grips and often thrills. The lesser part is its comedy, for when comedy holds the stage the beauty of the production halts, and the vagabonds and courtiers of old Paris are forgotten” (*Stage*) It had a very successful run of just over year,

Original London run:
 Winter Garden, April 1927 ;
Future revivals:
Coliseum, March 1937;
Winter Garden, April 1943





Programme

LADY LUCK

London run: Carlton Theatre, April 27th – February 4th 1928
(324 performances)

Music: H.B. Hedley & Jack Strachey

Additional songs: Rodgers & Hart

Lyrics: Desmond Carter

Book: Frith Shephard & Greatrex Newman

Director: Felix Edwardes

Choreographer: Max Rivers

Musical Director: H. Morley Acres

Producer: Laddie Cliff & Edgar O'Brien

Cast: Cyril Ritchard (*Lester*), Laddie Cliff (*Morton*), Leslie Henson (*Windy*), Bobby Blythe (*Van Hoover*), Phyllis Monkham (*Jane*),

John Kirby (*Ezra Pettyjohn*), Madge Elliott (*Patience*), Beryl Harrison (*Prudence*), Kathleen Amami, Peggy Beaty, Vera Bryer, James Croome, Leslie Francis, William Hall, Jose Melville, Cyril Rolls, The John Tiller Girls *Ensemble chorus not credited*

Story: Three stockbrokers, Lester, Morton and Windy are celebrating their good fortune with theatre manager Van Hoover and his “Baby Face” chorus ladies, but a telegram announces they have lost every penny because their copper mine, Lady Luck, has proved to be a dud. They cannot even afford to pay their hotel bill, when another message arrives to say that Windy has inherited six million dollars from his uncle in Salt Lake City on condition Windy will marry his Uncle’s six widows. Windy is in love with Jane, but with debts piling up, he has no option but to travel to Utah and undergo six miserable marriages conducted by the Mormon minister, Ezra Pettyjohn. A whole series of farcical events ensue, but eventually the marriages are annulled, Lester and Morton end up with Patience and Prudence, two of the widows, Windy ends up with Jane, and the Lady Luck mine turns out to be a winner after all.

Notes: This was based on the 1917 Broadway musical “His Little Widows” (music: William Schroeder; book and lyrics: Rida Johnson Young and W. C. Duncan). The original version had a four and a half month run at Wyndham’s in 1919 (*q.v.*) This completely new adaptation proved much more successful. It had commenced a five-week pre-London tour at Blackpool and underwent much re-writing before becoming the inaugural production at the brand-new Carlton Theatre in the Haymarket.

It was greeted with all-round enthusiasm, and a welcome for the splendid new theatre: its “situation in the heart of the West End is surely the proper place for that kind of musical comedy which is all vivacity and frivolity on the stage and all long cigars and glistening Marcella shirt-fronts in the stalls” (*Daily Mirror*); “Easily the funniest, and certainly one of the best staged musical pieces in town; and the stage lighting must be seen to be believed” (*Westminster Gazette*).

The show had a strong emphasis on dance: “It makes no pretence at being anything but a slick entertainment. The whole thing goes with bewildering rapidity, and everyone dances as if they had been galvanised into a frenzy” (*Daily News*) “The entertainment is called a ‘musical play’. The description ‘dancing comedy’ would have been nearer the mark... The dancing, in fact, is remarkable. Every member of the company can dance, and does so for quite half the evening” (*Times*)

It proved to be a very popular piece, and along with “The Desert Song” and “The Vagabond King” was one of the top three best-selling shows in the West End during the 1927-8 season. It ran for over nine months, with 324 performances.



Madge Elliott & Cyril Ritchard



THE BLUE TRAIN

London run: Prince of Wales, May 10th - August 6th
(116 performances)

Music: Robert Stolz

Original Book & Lyrics: Alfred Grünwald & Walter Stein

English version: Reginald Arkell & Don Titheridge

Additional songs: Ivy St Helier & Reginald Arkell

Director-Choreographer: Jack Hulbert

Musical Director: Arthur Wood

Producer: Philip Ridgeway

Cast: Arthur Margetson (*Tony Stowe*), Lily Elsie (*Eileen*), Bobby Howes (*Freddy Royce*), Cecily Debenham (*Josephine*), James Cameron, Eric Coxon, Vera Fleck, Henry Ford, Pat Malone, Jack Raine,

Principal Dancers: Sid Tracey, Bessie Hay

Ensemble: Ladies: Eve Becke, Sonia Bellamy, Aida Bird, Marjorie Bliss, Betty Burke, Esme Carlisle, Catherine Costello, Lucille Dale, Daisy Dalziel, Ena Evans, Winnie Ford, Eileen Francis, Betty French, Betty Havell, Margaret Hewlett, Kathleen Holt, Mary Lynn, Alison Maclaren, Violet Ormonde, Elinor Prowse, Lillian Russell, Emma Slec, Eileen Stack, Anne Wilson; *Gentlemen:* Norman V. Ablett, Jack Dalmayne, Alex Devore, Bernard Howard, Reginald Hyde, Fred Le Roy, Roy Mitchell, Richard Murdoch, Herbert Strathmore.

Story: Lord “Tony” Stowe is President of the Bachelors’ Club, having parted from his fiancée Eileen some years earlier because of his jealousy. Eileen wants to win him back, and persuades her friend Freddy to pose as a pretend suitor (even though Freddy is secretly engaged to Josephine Jones). The plan is to tell Tony that Freddy has been left a fortune by a rich aunt, but can only inherit if he marries a divorcee. He asks Tony to marry Eileen and then divorce her almost immediately so Freddy can get the money. They are secretly hoping that once Eileen and Tony are back on speaking terms, their old love will blossom again. Tony agrees but honourably tries to keep his part of the bargain in spite of all that Eileen can do. All works out in the end, of course!

Notes: This was based on the book by Alfred Grünwald and Walter Stein and had been on a short try-out tour since opening at Southsea in March. It marked Lily Elsie’s return to the stage after an absence of ten years, and she was clearly the star attraction. “Those of us who remember her so well in ‘The Merry Widow’ and ‘The Dollar Princess’ had forgotten that she had such superb qualities...Her movements are as musical as her voice. She glides to unheard music: and only a composer of genius could write music worthy of her grace and charm... ‘The Blue Train’ would be a great success if she were the only feature of it. But this new musical comedy is one of the best that has been seen on the London stage for many years. I do not except ‘No No Nanette’ nor ‘Rose Marie’ although it differs from these popular successes in every way” (*Daily News*). A somewhat less enthusiastic opinion thought the show which was “produced with his (Jack Hulbert’s) accustomed spectacular and choreographic gusto, is of the modern hectic, dashing, bustling type of musical entertainment where dignity, be it never so queenly, and quiet charm are more or less wasted. In spite of the enthusiasm of last night’s audience, one could not help feeling that Miss Elsie was in the show rather than of it. Of its kind ‘The Blue Train’ is good! (*Westminster Gazette*)

With its chaste honeymoon scene in the Swiss alps, a real toboggan slide, and a comedy ski-session as well as a series of novelty dances, and a happy ending set on the French Riviera, this was well received. And yet it failed to run for more than three months despite good reviews and its star attraction.



Photo by Lenare—for The Sketch

Lily Elsie & Bobby Howes



CASTLES IN THE AIR

London run: Shaftesbury Theatre, June 29th - July 23rd
(28 performances)

Music: Percy Wenrich

Book & Lyrics: Raymond W. Peck

Director: Frank Collins

Choreographer: John Boyle

Musical Director: K. Ernest Irving

Producer: C.B. Cochran

Cast: Henry Latimer (*Philip Rodman*), Helen Gilliland (*Evelyn Devine*), Allen Kearns (*Monty Blair*), John Steel (*John Brown*), Ralph Coram (*George Sedgwick*), George de Warfaz (*Count Draga*), Genevieve McCormick (*Annie Moore*), Frank Atherley, Ivor Barnard,

Maud Cressall, W.A. Haines, Gordon Hill, Vera Pearce, The Boyle Double Dancing Sestet
plus uncredited chorus

Story: Philip Rodman's ward, Evelyn Devine, is very wealthy, and has converted an old barn in the grounds of their mansion into a nightclub to entertain her friends. Two impoverished students Monty Blair and John Brown are stranded when their car breaks down, and ask the passing George Sedgwick for directions to the nearest inn. Monty, in an effort to impress, whispers to George that John is actually Prince Carol of Latavia. As a joke, George directs them to Evelyn's Club, and gets there ahead of them, announcing that the Prince is coming. Evelyn has titled friends, especially Count Draga, who are really only interested in her money, so she swaps places with Annie Moore, a cigarette seller at the Club. When John insists he is plain Mr Brown and not a royal Prince, Evelyn falls instantly in love. For complicated reasons the action moves to Latavia where John is recognised as the real Prince Carol, assumed to have been assassinated some years earlier, and told he can inherit the Latavian throne but will not be allowed to marry a commoner. But he is determined to marry Evelyn. Eventually, of course, it is all sorted out happily.

Notes: This was a C.B. Cochran show, but turned out to be an expensive flop, managing just 28 performances. The general reaction was that the music was unimpressive and occasionally too "jazzy", the plot was a poor rehash of "She Stoops to Conquer" and the whole approach too "American". "The music, tuneful and well-sounded at times and not obtrusively jazzish, does not rise above the ordinary level of the stuff turned out ad lib by the facile artificers of trans-Atlantic musical pieces. However, neither librettist nor composer has achieved anything of distinction" (*Stage*).

It mixes "a romantic story of the old type with a great deal of the new... in addition to music and choral work of the usual light opera type, there are syncopated numbers and a lot of highly disciplined revue dancing by a chorus more remarkable for agility than for physical beauty! (*Daily Mirror*); "a bright and effervescent show, with an artless plot, a really beautiful leading lady and one of the most agile and energetic choruses in London! (*Daily News*)

NB: This is NOT the same show staged under the same title in 1911 by Paul Lincke (q.v.)

Helen Gilliland (1897-1942) originally made her name as a principal soprano with the D'Oyly Carte Repertory Company. From the mid 1920s she moved into musical comedy, becoming a much-loved favourite with audiences. In November 1942 she was en route to an ENSA engagement for the troops in World War 2 when her ship was torpedoed by the Japanese Navy and sunk in Far Eastern waters with no survivors.



Helen Gilliland

Photo by Rita Martin

PEGGY- ANN

London run: Daly's Theatre, July 29th - November 19th
(130 performances)

Music: Richard Rodgers

Lyrics: Lorenz Hart

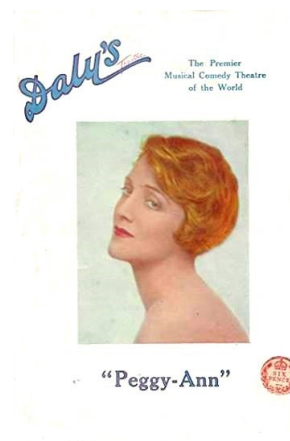
Book: Herbert Fields

Director: Lew Fields

Choreographer: Seymour Felix

Musical Director:

Producer: Lee Ephrain & Jack Buchanan



Cast: Dorothy Dickson (*Peggy Ann Barnes*), Oliver McLennon (*Guy Pendleton*), Maisie Gay (*Mrs Frost*), Elsie Randolph (*Alice Frost*), Sylvia Leslie (*Dolores*) Basil Howes (*Freddie Shawn*), Lalla Collins (*Patricia Seymour*). Marjorie Brooks, Noel Colne, Hindle Edgar, Frank Hector, Elvira Henderson, Robert Gordon, Nat Lewis, Stanley Rendall. *Ensemble: Ladies:* Effie Atherton, Billie Dell, Vivien Farnham, Zena Fayre, Muriel Harrold, Dorothy MacBean, Beth Meredith, Elsie Moore, Audrey Pointing, Elly Ronica, Wendy Sheldon, Irene Veronica; *Gentlemen:* John Barker, Bruce Carfax, Hindle Edgar, Jack Lancaster, Neil O'Brien, Billy Shaw

Story: This was a “dream” story, telling of the subconscious adventures of Peggy-Ann: as she dreams away in her boarding house in Glen Falls, she is taken to New York’s Fifth Avenue on a yachting trip (where she gets married in her underwear) and to the racetrack in Havana. At the end she awakes happily in the arms of her Glen Falls boyfriend. (For the English production the places were changed to Hampshire, Piccadilly Circus and Regent Street, but, improbably, the boarding-house owner in Hampshire also owned property in Havana, enabling the Cuban side of the story to remain.)

Notes: The story was based on an earlier Broadway musical, “Tillie’s Nightmare” by Edgar Smith and A. Baldwin Stone – a show which managed just 77 performances in 1910. The Rodgers & Hart version was very different to the usual musical style of the time: there was no opening chorus, and no songs for the first quarter of an hour of the show. The first and last scenes were played in almost total darkness, and the scenery and costumes were changed in full view of the audience. Its Broadway premiere was on December 27, 1926 and it ran for 333 performances. It came at the end of an amazing year for Rodgers & Hart: five of their shows had Broadway openings in 1926 - the fifth, “Betsy” opened just one night after “Peggy Ann”.

The London adaptation was considered to be somewhat thrown together, with bits of the “Dick Whittington” story mixed in. The Stage review felt a song in the nightclub was highly improper, and there were “suggestions of the unpleasant in several of the lyrics by Lorenz Hart”. “From the musical point of view (it) falls far below the standard set by the best plays produced at this theatre” (*Illustrated London News*)

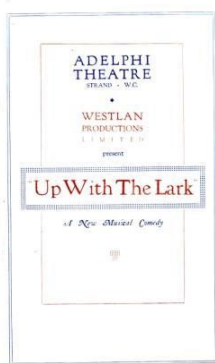
The unconventional stylistic approach was viewed unfavourably by some, but others were enthusiastic: “a complete break with the Daly tradition, and the change in my opinion is for the better... I found it all much



Cartoon by Tom Titt - The Sphere

more entertaining than the usual run of musical comedy” (*Era*). The Broadway production placed greater emphasis on the surrealistic, Freudian dream element, something that was toned down for London, resulting in a “botched version” (*Kurt Gänzl- British Musical Theatre*). This may have contributed to the discrepancy between the respective success if the shows - 333 in New York, 130 in London,

L to R: Robert Gordon, Oliver McLennan, Dorothy Dickson, Sylvia Leslie, Maisie Gay, Elsie Randolph, Basil Howes, Lalla Collins, & Nat Lewis



UP WITH THE LARK

London run: Adelphi, August 25th – November 12th

(92 performances)

Music: Philip Braham & others

Lyrics: Douglas Furber

Book: Douglas Furber & Hartley Carrick

Director: George Grossmith

Choreographer: Max Rivers & Ethel Heliwell

Musical Director: Philip Braham

Cast: Henry Wenman (*M. Galicot*), Leslie Sarony (*Hyacinth*), Austin Melford (*Jack Murray*), Allen Kearns (*Freddy van Bozer*), Harry Pringle (*Comte St. Valerie*), Billie Hill (*Regine Galicot*),

Anita Elson (*Toto*), W.A. Haines (*Tricot*), Adrian Ash, Charles King, Robert Michaelis, Diana Wilson, *Ensemble Ladies*: Constance Aldis, Mary Beard, Noelle Cardew, Beryl Chamberlain, Silvia Collison, Mona Collister, Barbara Coote, Peggy Diamond, Maisie Draper, Beth Ellis, Doreen Farnham, Dorothy Faulkner, Gwen Garton, Billie Harcourt, May Harper, Ethel Heliwell, Elsie Heliwell, Mabel Heliwell, Vera Laine, Kathleen Lowe, Nora Marchant, Joan Morgan, Nada Munday, Molly Nicholls, Muriel Pitman, Eva Shotter, Sara Smith, Dinka Starace, Marjorie Tiller, Christine Warren-Bell, Muriel Whitlock; *Gentlemen*: Eric Alexander, George Bennett, Gilbert Coventry, Billy Forbes, Alfred Goodwin, Donald P. McGann, W. L. McLaren, Harry Marshall, Jimmy Seacombe.

Story: Monsieur Galicot has a craze for spiritualism and believes his butler, Hyacinth, to be a medium. His son-in-law, Jack Murray, is more interested in pretty girls, and with his friend, Freddy van Bozer, pretends they are going on an adventure with Comte de St. Valerie in “The Lark”, his flying machine. They are really going to visit the fascinating young coquette, Toto. Madame Galicot is worried about the danger of the flight, but Mme van Bozer is more suspicious and hires Tricot, a detective, to keep her eye on Freddy. A series of farcical misunderstandings, disguises, and escapades ensue before everything is finally brought to rights.

Notes: This was a new musical version of the farce “Le Zèbre” by Armont and Nancey, which was better known on the British stage as “The Glad Eye”. As well as its success as a play, the piece had previously been adapted into a musical called “Kiki”, by Martin Henry and Herman Finck, and had toured the provinces in 1922 but failed to come into London. This new adaptation was originally designed as a showcase for the film-star Betty Balfour, known as the “British Mary Pickford”. Despite packed houses and a wild reception for her opening night at the Cardiff Playhouse, it was soon clear she was not up to the job, and by the time the show opened in the West End a month later, she had been replaced with Anita Elson. The show itself had undergone some major re-writing and significant other alterations.

It was reviewed as “a formless and rather naïve entertainment, but a very cheerful one...There is music to help things along - dum-ti-dum-ti-dum-ti-dum-dum comes from the orchestra while arms and legs shoot in all directions - and if it is not to your liking it is fairly easy to shut your ears, even although this is the theatre” (*Times*) “While it cannot be said that songs and dances make the (original play) any funnier, the present adapters have done their work with efficiency... Mr Philip Braham’s music is tuneful and there are several pretty songs” (*Era*)

“There was so much fun in ‘Up With the Lark’ last night at the Adelphi that I came away quite tired from laughing. Allen Kearns was really the success of the evening” (*Westminster Gazette*). It survived just under three months at the Adelphi.



Betty Balfour



Allen Kearns & Anita Elson

THE BELOVED VAGABOND

London run: Duke of York's, September 1st - October 22nd
 Transfer: New Theatre, Oct 24th – Dec 3rd
 (Total 107 performances)

Music: Dudley Glass

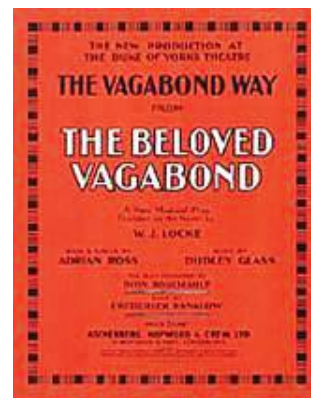
Book & Lyrics: Adrian Ross

Director: Dion Boucicault

Choreographer: Carlotta Mossetti

Musical Director: Philip Lewis.

Producer Charlton Mann



Cast: Frederick Ranalow (*Paragot*), Lilian Davies (*Joanna*), Norman Macowan (*Comte de Vernet*), Mabel Russell (*Blanquette*), Frank Harvey (*Denis Walters*), Vera Robson (*Marie*), W.E. Stephens (*Bringuet*) Hector Abbas, Carlito Ackroyd, Frank J. Arlton, Wilfrid Babbage, Walter Bird, Leslie French, Marjorie Heal, Frederick de Lara, Mary Mayfren, Honor Multon, Violet Sterne, Chris Walker, Theresa Walters.
Ensemble Ladies: Amy Chapple, Gladys Courtland, Dorothy Fair, Muriel Heathy, Veronica Mansfield, Rita Odoli, Freda Pettitt, Melodie Strange; **Gentlemen:** Reginald Crawford, Louis Garnett, Philip Merritt, John Mottershead, Kenneth Solly, Ted Warburton.

Story: Paragot, the leader of a merry Bohemian coterie, has been separated from his beloved “English Princess”, Joanna, and she has meantime married the odious Comte de Vernet . Paragot returns to his life as a roving Bohemian vagabond, but later gets a second chance when Joanna becomes a widow. The possibility of re-capturing his love for Joanna draws him back into the world of polite society, but he soon realises this is not the life for him. To make matters worse, he finds his previous enthusiasm for the old Bohemian way of life has waned. He finally settles down, without Joann, on a little farm in Normandy with his new love, Blanquette. The fickle Joanna ends up with the well-to-do Major Denis Walters. Other characters in the story include old Dubois, the owner of the farm, and his daughter Marie, who marries young Bringuet in the opening scene.

Notes: Based on the novel by W.J. Locke, this was adapted by Adrian Ross with music by the Australian composer, Dudley Glass. A straight play version had been performed at His Majesty's in 1908 with Herbert Beerbohm Tree in the lead. There was much interest in this musical version since Mabel Russell who had left



Frederick Ranalow and Lilian Davies

the stage in 1923 when she was elected as the Member of Parliament for Berwick-upon-Tweed, made a brief return to play the role of Blanquette, fitting it is during a nine-week Parliamentary recess. (In early November she would return to Parliament and be succeeded by Nellie Briercliffe (who happened to be her real-life sister-in-law)

There was a plea to “See this all-British musical play because it should prove a romantic entertainment for all those whose tastes are not definitely perverted by the Broadway complex” (*Weekly Dispatch*), but sadly, the show received very poor notices.

“The piece as a whole has an old-fashioned ring, and humour is almost non-existent in it” (*Daily Mirror*); “I came away disappointed after a tedious evening... it is a grey affair that lacks colour and humour and fantasy, a dull meandering story” (*Era*) . It did offer “well-shaped and rounded melodies which possess tunefulness as well as due regard for musical form,.. (but these) may be set off against an at times dull book” (*Stage*)

Despite a planned transfer to the New Theatre, it had a short run.

Cartoon by Tom Titt—The Sphere



THE GIRL FRIEND

London run: Palace Theatre, September 8th - September 8th 1928
(421 performances)

Music & Lyrics: Con Conrad, Gus Kahn, Vivian Ellis,
Richard Rodgers & Lorenz Hart

Book: R.P. Weston & Bert Lee

Director: William Mollison

Choreographer: Max Scheck

Musical Director: Sims Waller

Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller

Cast: Louise Brown (*Kitty*), Roy Royston (*Robert Mason*),
Clifford Mollison (*Richard Dennison*), Emma Haig (*Jennie*), George Gee (*Jerry*),
Sara Allgood (*Mrs Burke*), Sebastian Smith (*Mr Burke*), Hall Willis (*Lift Boy*).
Molly Bouchier, Bernard Clifton, Pollie Emery, Evelyn Hope, Flora Le Breton,
Sheila Maloney, Susan Novack, Mel Sydney, Ernest Trimmingham,
The Ramblers Quartet *Speciality Dancers:* Hal Willis & Hazel Macfarlane
Chorus not credited

George Gee & Emma Haig **Story:** Kitty Brown meets Robert Mason, a young lawyer, on a Canadian Pacific railway journey, but they are separated when he gallantly goes to look for her lost purse and ends up being left behind when the train departs. The penniless Kitty's only way of securing hotel accommodation is to pose as the wife of Richard Dennison, a man due to arrive at the hotel the next day, where he will meet his in-laws, the Burkes, and be given \$200,000 if he can prove he and his wife have been happily married for a year. Of course Mr Dennison turns up a day early – drunk – as do the Burkes, who were on the same train as Kitty. Many complications ensue. A sub-plot involves the relationship between Jennie and Jerry, the telephone girl and night-desk clerk, as well as Mr and Mrs Burke, especially demanding hotel guests.

Notes: This was adapted from P. Bartholomae and Otto Harbach's "Kitty's Kisses" which had opened on Broadway in May 1926 and run for 170 performances. However, its title was changed to "The Girl Friend" for the London production, causing some confusion, since "The Girl Friend" had been the name of a different 1926 Rodgers and Hart Broadway show. To add to the confusion, the song "Blue Room" was used in both shows.

Following a two-week try-out in Liverpool, "The Girl Friend" opened in London to excellent reviews: "It is bright, humorous and tuneful, but its chief claim to public favour is that it brings three first-rate new players to London {Americans Emma Haig and Louise Brown, and the English George Gee}... 'The Girl Friend would not be the success it is sure to be if it were not for the excellent trio of newcomers' (*Westminster Gazette*). "Not one of the cast is a 'star' of the flashing electric-signs calibre, but it is the best musical comedy in town... a first-rate musical with plenty of good tunes" (*Weekly Dispatch*); A "quite amusing farce with commonplace music... the songs are plugged for all they are worth - and a trifle more - and at the end of the evening the audience leaves the theatre humming the tunes" (*Era*); "This not unskilful adaptation is garnished with tuneful and, happily, scarcely jazzish music, and is staged and dressed very prettily indeed... No change of bill should be wanted at the Palace for a long time" (*Stage*)

It was a great success in London and ran for a whole year - 421 performances.



George Gee & Emma Haig

Photo by The Graphic

OH, KAY!

London run: His Majesty's, September 21st - March 24th 1928
(214 performances)

Music: George Gershwin

Lyrics: Ira Gershwin

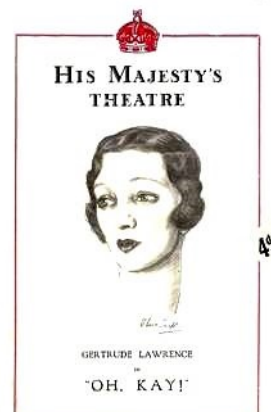
Book: Guy Bolton & P.G. Wodehouse

Director: William Ritter

Choreographer: Elsie Neal

Musical Director: Arthur Wood

Cast: Gertrude Lawrence (*Kay Denham*), Harold French (*Jimmy Winter*), John Kirby (*Shorty McGee*), Claude Hulbert (*Duke of Datchet*), Beth & Betty Dodge (*Phil & Dolly Ruxton*), Eric Coxon (*Larry Potter*), April Harmon (*Constance Appleton*), Percy Parsons (*Revenue Officer*), Rita McLean (*Molly Morse*), Charles Cautley, Jack Dalmayne, Phyllis Dawn, Cecile Maule-Cole; *Ensemble Ladies:* Vera Budge, Erin Burke, Pat Charles, Vivian Cooke, Jewel Dalmaine, Kathleen Daw, Dorothy Dobson, Ruby Duff, Betty Ferris, Olive Firth, Rosamund Gardner, Connie Harris, Molly Hartley, Philipa Heron, Lena Holmes, Kathleen Joyce, Vera Langley, Elsie Lingley, Enid Lowe, Enid Mara, Vi Marston, Madge Martin, Rena May, Betty Newnham, Mabs Newnham, Lucienne Orry, Jean Parker, Rona Raymond, Marie Rose, Eileen Stack, Sadie Sydney, Beryl Tracy, Sepha Trebble, Beatie Wiseman; *Gentlemen:* J. Cameron, Douglas Challoner, Edward Estick, Frank Fox, E. Gifford, W.H. Kearton, Thomas Lowe, Fred Le Roy, L. Naismith, A. Richardson, Terry Rendle, Jack Stewart, E. Williams.



Story: Kay Denham is the sister of a titled English bootlegger in Prohibition era America. Her brother, the Duke, has stashed his illegal hooch in the cellars of the Long Island beach-side mansion of playboy Jimmy Winter - but has a problem when Jimmy suddenly turns up. Kay manages to get a job as the maid in Jimmy's house so she can keep an eye on the cellar. Jimmy is about to get married for the second time, but discovers he has fallen in love with his new "maid". Though Kay and Jimmy make their feelings clear in the duet "Maybe", and Kay says how she needs someone to watch over her, the couple have to undergo a series of problems, matrimonial, legal and farcical until they can settle down to the proper kind of happy ending obligatory for musicals of this era.

Notes: Gertrude Lawrence became the first English actress to originate a role on Broadway before playing it in London. The Broadway production opened in November 1926 and ran for 256 performances, with Gertrude Lawrence playing opposite Oscar Shaw and Victor Moore. It was the first of two Gershwin musicals specially written for her (the second, "Treasure Girl", was a flop.)



Gertrude Lawrence & Harold French

The general reaction was "A musical comedy of no great distinction, made remarkable by its production and by the acting of Gertrude Lawrence" (*Daily News*) but it was an overwhelming success for its leading lady, elevating her reputation to the heights. "It would be foolish to deny the overwhelming contribution to the success of the show that Gertrude Lawrence makes. It is not her vitality, nor grace, nor easy mastery of every trick of the musical comedy heroine, that makes her so fascinating, but her finesse in fooling. She is an artist of burlesque and knows precisely how far to go" (*Westminster Gazette*). "Miss Lawrence is the complete musical comedy actress. She has youth, charm, a touch of sunshine in her smile, and limpid tones of voice which enable her to give her work on occasion, a pretty accent of pathos... she has intelligence and humour, so that her work never lacks variety" (*Daily Mirror*)

Original London production: His Majesty's, 1927;
Future revival: Westminster, March 1974

THE GIRL FROM COOK'S

London run: Gaiety Theatre, November 1st - December 1st
(38 performances)

Music: Raymond Hubbell and Jean Gilbert

English Book & Lyrics: R.H. Burnside & Greatrex Newman

Director: R.H. Burnside

Choreographer: Larry Ceballos

Musical Director: Leonard Hornsey

Cast: Eva Sternroyd (*Stella Smith*), Alec Fraser (*Baron Henri*), Billy Leonard (*Baron Anatole*), Margaret Campbell (*Marie*), W.H. Berry (*Alfonzo Higgins*), Edmund Gwenn (*President*), Ernest Thesiger (*Rafael*), John Coast, Walter Herald, Hal Higgins, Robert Nainby, Douglas Pierce, Charles Stone, Nan Wild;

Speciality dancers: Lee & Moore, Holland & Barry.

Ensemble: D. Aitkin, Joy Ashley, Lilyan Ashley, Kitty Attfield, Nancv Beard, Gloria Beaumont, Doreen Beaumont, Wyn Clare, Marion Clifford. Peggy Eccles, Renee Gadd, Pearl Greene,

Gwendolyn Henry, Peggy Holland, Kathlyn Holt, Doris Hutchison, Dorothy Jeffrey. E. Lewis, Dorothy Lingley, Gwen Lyons, Marie Masters, Joan Pelton, Baby Phillips, Veronica Proton, Patricia Ray, Esme Shaw, Ruby Stewart, Renee Stocker, Billie Tevlin, Cicely Verae, Jenny Warden, Paula Wray.



Photo by Sasha

Holland & Barry - Speciality Dancers

Story: Stella Smith, the girl from the Paris branch of Cook's travel agency, pretends to be an experienced world traveller to impress her boyfriend, Baron Henri and his friend, Baron Anatole. Stella and Henri, together with Anatole and his girl friend, Marie, are in Monte Carlo. (Marie is the daughter of a supposed Englishman, Alfonso Alonzo Higgins.) When Stella is sacked for fraternising with the clients, she doesn't worry, because she has just won 100,000 francs in a novel-writing competition. (Actually, she hasn't won it at all, it's been secretly sent by Henri.) Complications involve the impoverished South American President of Peroona and his secretary, Rafael.

Notes: With a chorus of thirty young ladies, Spanish dance numbers, acrobatic turns, and a fashion parade of "women throughout the ages", as well as a parade of women in national costumes in a scene in Cook's travel agency, this was a lavish spectacle supporting a very thin plot. For most critics, the show was saved by the ever-popular W.H. Berry. "No musical comedy is dull for me if W.H. Berry is in the cast. His buoyancy held up 'The Girl from Cook's'.. Without his support it would have sunk from sheer mediocrity" (*Daily News*). "It is just as well that W. H. Berry is a comedian of great natural resource, for the authors simply give him little opportunity to display his natural gifts and graces, and leave it at that" (*Sporting Times*). "Its stay at the famous home of musical comedy will depend, not upon the rather dull book and the reminiscent music, but upon the personality of the artists. Fortunately, the cast is particularly strong on the male side. Neither Mr. W. H. Berry, Mr. Billy Leonard. Mr. Edmund Gwenn nor Mr. Ernest Thesiger, are too well supplied with material, but they all have resources of their own draw on" (*Era*). Its stay was very short indeed, managing just 38 performances.



Photo by : Stage Photo Co

HIT THE DECK

London run: Hippodrome, November 3rd - June 2nd 1928
(277 performances)

Music: Vincent Youmans

Lyrics: Clifford Grey & Leo Robins

Book: Herbert Fields (adapted for London by Bert Lee & R.P. Weston)

Director: William Mollison

Choreographer: Max Scheck

Musical Director: Joseph Tunbridge

Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller



Cast: Ivy Tresmand (*Loulou Martin*), Alice Morley (*Magnolia*), Gerald Nodin (*Lt. Alan Clark*), Mamie Watson (*Charlotte Payne*), Stanley Holloway (*Bill Smith*), Ellen Pollock (*Rita*), Tom Cheong, Alfred Cooper, Paddy Duprez, Dick Francis, Ma Fu, Ernest Graham, Charles Groves, Sydney Howard, Nancy Pawley, Rosa Pinkerton, Lancelot Quinn, Billy Rego, Tom Shale, Reginald Sheridan, The Barry Twins, The Prince Sisters, *Speciality Dancers:* Rene Dawes, George Pierce
Plus a very large chorus not credited

Story: Loulou Martin, assisted by the tough-talking Magnolia, runs a dockside coffee shop, where the customers include Lieutenant Alan Clark, who brings aristocratic Charlotte Payne on a little “slumming” trip. Another visitor is Bill Smith, a sailor with whom Loulou falls instantly in love. Bill’s dream is to quit the navy and run his own freighter with a wife at his side. By selling a valuable trinket to Charlotte, Loulou raises enough money to make that dream come true, and goes off in search of her sailor love. Bill is in China and has fixed himself up with a brassy girlfriend, Rita, and when Loulou and her friends arrive in China, Bill is horrified at the idea of accepting such an offer from a woman and ends up drunk and in jail. Sadly, Loulou returns to America and re-opens her coffee shop, where finally Bill returns to say he has got a promise of his own ship, it’s only as coal barge, but it’s his – and eventually a way is found for him to keep his pride, the ship and the girl.

Notes: Based on the play “Shore Leave” by Hubert Osborne, the musical opened on Broadway in April 1927 and ran for 352 performances. Some small alterations were made for the London production: the leading man, “Bilge Smith” became “Bill”, and the Newport Rhode Island setting was changed to Plymouth.

In the London production there was some controversy over the song “Hallelujah”: “it was not until Alice Morley, a newcomer from America, sang ‘Hallelujah’ that the large audience was thoroughly enthused” (*Westminster Gazette*); though several complained about “A jazzing of the sacred Hebrew word



Photo by The Graphic

Ellen Pollock, Tom Cheong and Stanley Holloway

meaning ‘Praise ye Jehovah’, calculated to wound not only the religious but also those who have respect for religion” (*Stage*). Generally, though, “It is a big, bright, breezy show, more humorous, tuneful and dramatic than anything we have had in the musical comedy line for a long time” (*Daily Mirror*). “Not only does the show contain the lavish spectacle, the expert dancing and the elaborate staging which one associates with this class of production, but it has also really well-written dialogue and some capital acting” (*Daily Herald*).

The show ran for six months, followed by highly successful UK tours.

SYLVIA

London run: Vaudeville, December 14th – January 21st 1928
(51 performances)

Music: Carroll Gibbons

Book & Lyrics: James Dyrenforth

Director: Reginald Denham

Choreographer: Fred A. Leslie

Musical Director: Philip Lewis

Cast: Iris Hoey (*Sylvia*), Ben Webster (*Canon Considine*),
Dame May Whitty (*Mrs Considine*), Ernest Thesiger (*Sir Henry*),
James Raglan (*Geoffrey Considine*), Meg le Monnier (*Sheila*),
Margaret Yarde (*Miss Mimms*), Ivor Banard (*Mr Hobbs*).
Hazel Hamilton, Cyril Smith, Margaret Yarde,

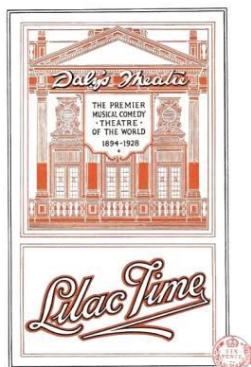
Story: Sylvia Westlake is an actress visiting the country vicarage of Canon Considine and his wife. Her “madcap” actressy ways are appealing to the succession of men she meets, but, in her contrary manner, it seems she cannot decide which of them she truly favours – the Canon’s brother, Sir Henry, the former Governor of Andabar, or the young son, Geoffrey, a would-be playwright. This causes problems for Sheila, engaged to the young Geoffrey Considine, and for Miss Mimms, the leader of the local Girl Guide troop. Mr Hobbs, Sylvia’s theatrical manager, adds to the muddle by suggesting Geoffrey abandons his poetical drama “Joan of Arc”, and works instead on Mr Hobbs’s idea of a play about a lovesick baboon and a shipwrecked Duke.

Notes: St John Ervine’s comedy “Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary” which ran at the Savoy in 1925 with Eva Moore, was adapted into a musical by a young American lyricist, James Dyrenforth. An especial attraction for this show was the engagement of Dame May Whitty and her husband, Ben Webster, who had never before appeared together in any production, and were both making their first appearance in a musical play. The original play tended towards a heavy-handed satire on the theatre world, and this was toned down in the musical version. However, lacking the satire, and, indeed, real singing voices, this limped towards an early closure.



Dame May Whitty

Photo by Bassano & Vandyk Studios



LILAC TIME (2nd Revival)

London run: Daly’s, December 23rd- (6 week limited run)

Music: Franz Schubert (adapted by Heinrich Berté & G.H. Clutsam.)

Book & Lyrics: A.M. Willner & Heinz Reichert

English Book & Lyrics: Adrian Ross

Director: Arthur Hammond

Choreographer: Carlotta Mossetti

Musical Director: Charles Prentice

Cast: Frederick Blamey (*Schubert*), Evelyn Laye (*Lili*),
Percy Heming (*Von Schober*), W.H. Berry (*Christian Veit*), Evelyn Dene (*Willi*),
Rose Hignell (*Tilli*), Kitty Attfield, Fred Carlton, Greta Griffith, Hetty Holbein,
John Kelly, Robert Nainby, Stanley Newman, Ernest Norris, Louise Prussing,
Henry Raymons, Rosa Stoakes, Florence Vie, Cyril Whittle, Philip D. Williams,
Derek Wright.

Notes: The show returned once again for a Christmas season, this time with a limited run of six weeks. The role of Schubert was taken by Frederick Blamey—by sad coincidence Courtice Pounds, who originated the role in 1922 and had been associated with it ever since, had died at the age of 65, just two days before the opening of this revival.

Original London production: Lyric Theatre, December 1922; 1st Revival: Lyric, Dec 1925; 2nd revival: Daly’s, Dec 1927
Future revivals: *Daly’s Theatre*, 1928; *Lyric Theatre*, May 1930; *Globe*, Dec 1932; *Alhambra*, Dec 1933
Coliseum, July 1936; *Stoll*, Oct 1942; *His Majesty’s*, Feb 1949 (trans. *Palace*)

THE YELLOW MASK

London run: Carlton Theatre, February 8th - March 24th
 Transfer: His Majesty's, March 26th - June 23rd
 Transfer: Palladium, June 25th - August 11th
 (Total run 218 performances)

Music: Vernon Duke. *Additional songs:* Harry Acres

Lyrics: Desmond Carter. *Additional lyrics:* Eric Little

Book: Edgar Wallace

Director: Julian Wylie

Choreographer: Max Rivers

Musical Director: Julian Jones

Cast: Malcolm Keen (*Li-San*), Wilfred Temple (*John Carn*),
 Phyllis Dare (*Mary*), Frank Cochrane (*Ah-Song*), Bobby Howes (*Sam Slider*),
 Winnie Collins (*Molly Vane*), Mona Jenkins (*Empress of China*),
 Frank Adair, Joch Findlay, David Hutcheson, Howard Huxtable,
 Reginald Tate, George Welford, Sybil Wise,



Photo by : Stage Photo Co

Phyllis Dare

Story: The wicked Chinaman, Li-San succeeds in stealing a Chinese diamond from the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London and is pursued by Captain John Carn and his assistant, the beloved Mary. Their perils include problems on board ship, in the dungeons of Li-San's palace, and inside the Forbidden City, as well as encounters with Ah-Song, a comical Chinese spy, Sam Slider, an equally comical British detective, his assistant, Molly Vane, and the Dowager Empress of China.

Notes: After ten weeks on the road with a number of cast changes and considerable re-writing, the show opened at the Carlton Theatre to very good notices, which generally felt it was a spectacular and very funny entertainment, with the songs and music serving as a kind of add-on. Almost immediately the management was given notice and informed the Carlton had decided to change policy and operate exclusively as a cinema. His Majesty's Theatre was available for the next three months (until the pre-scheduled ballet season) so a transfer was hastily arranged. The show finally moved to the Palladium for its last six weeks or so.



LADY MARY

London run: Daly's, February 23rd - July 28th
 (181 performances)

Music: Albert Szirmai

Lyrics: Harry Graham

Additional numbers: Phil Charig, Richard Meyer, Jerome Kern

Book: Frederick Lonsdale & J. Hastings Turner

Director: John Harwood

Choreographer: Jack Hulbert

Musical Director: Charles Prentice

Producer: Lee Ephraim & Jack Buchanan

Cast: Paul Cavanagh (*Richard Howe*), Helen Gilliland (*Lady Mary*),
 Richard Dolman (*George Rollat*), George Grossmith (*Hatpin Pinge*),
 Dorothy Field (*Lady Elizabeth*), Herbert Mundin (*Waghorn*), Vera Bryer (*Maid*)

Lester Matthews, Jack Raine, Thomas Weguelin, Harold Fraser.

Story: Richard Howe is a sheep-farmer in Australia and is in love with Lady Mary. She is engaged to George Rollat, a self-serving rotter who believes Mary is in line to inherit further title and wealth. Richard himself is genuinely heir to title and fortune, but he is determined not to reveal these prospects in his pursuit of his loved one. He follows Mary to England, and with the help of the kindly millionaire, Hatpin Pinge, succeeds in exposing Rollat for the cad that he is, winning Mary's love, and also winning the hand of Mary's sister, Elizabeth, for the dotting Pinge. (A subplot has Pinge's manservant Waghorn in pursuit of Lady Mary's maid and fighting off competition from a bullying butler.)

Notes: Although the story and the performances were all praised, generally the critics felt the music was disappointing. The strength of Grossmith's name alone was enough to give the show a good advance booking, but sales tailed away and the show came off after five months.

LUMBER LOVE

London run: Lyceum, March 15th - June 2nd
 Transfer: Prince's Theatre, June 4th – June 9th
 (Total 108 performances)

Music & Lyrics: Berté & Archie Emmett Adams

Book: Leslie Stiles

Director: Milton Rosmer

Choreographer: Fred A. Leslie & Ethel Heliwell

Musical Director: Howard Carr

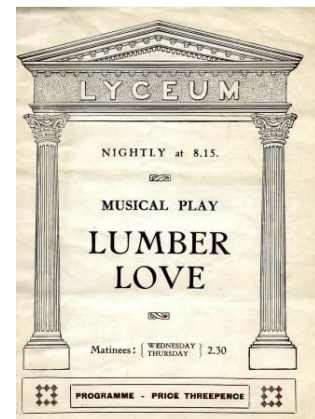
Producer: John Southern

Cast: Frederick Leister (*John MacDonald*), J.C. Aubrey (*William Slack*),
 Joan Lockton (*Jean MacDonald*), Basil Howes (*Tony Slack*),

Jamieson Dodds (*Paul Levaux*), Dorie Sawyer (*Lisa*), Fred Kitchen (*Wangle*)

Mai Bacon, Conway Dixon, Denis Emons, Arthur Fibb, Diane Gardner, Kathleen Holt, Flora MacDonald,
 Lillian Mason, Dudley Somerville, Arthur Summers.

Ensemble: Constance Aldis, Peggy Diamond, Dorothy Faulkener, Edith Floyde, May Harper, Elsie Heliwell,
 Ethel Heliwell, Mabel Heliwell, Joan Morgan, Mildred Rackham, Dorothea Rogers, Mary Squires, Eva Trigg,
 Muriel Whitlock. The Plaza Tiller Dancing Girls.



Story: Set in a lumberjack camp in the Canadian forests, this is the somewhat complicated story of two rival lumber magnates, John MacDonald and William Slack, both out to ruin the other. Meantime MacDonald's daughter, Jean, and Slack's son, Tony announce their engagement. To help her father avoid bankruptcy Jean uses a blank cheque to buy land from Paul Levaux, but Paul's wild-gypsy fiancée, Lisa, steals the cheque. Jean disguises herself as Lisa, and, hidden by a veil, marries Levaux, (while Tony has helped by locking the real Lisa in a store-cupboard). Somehow it all sorts itself out in the end, even though there are further activities from a troupe of Tiller Dancing girls and from Wangle, a Cockney ex-gardener who, disguised as "One-Eyed Pete, the Terror of Red Gulch", is working as a postman in the Canadian mountains.

Notes: The music and lyrics were by an Australian brother and sister team, who had been trying to get it staged in London for several years (at one point as far back as 1921 it had been announced, but the money fell through.) Finally, heavily promoted as a "A New All British" production", it began its pre-London tour in Birmingham on January 23rd. By the time it reached London it was being referred to as a poor man's "Rose Marie" with an overloaded and complicated plot. There was praise for the scenery and the extraneous dancing and comedy scenes, but they had no connection whatsoever with the main story.

It received somewhat mixed reviews, but the "all British" claim tempered the reaction: "(it) is just the piece for the Lyceum. Everything is on the big scale, from the size of the mountains to the numbers of the lumbermen and girls. There is plenty of comedy, and it is the sort of comedy that gets over the footlights" (*Era*) On the other hand, a less patriotic view stated "It must be admitted that it is a dull, old-fashioned affair, with very ordinary music, practically no dancing, and a plot which concerned the most preposterous financial undertakings!" (*Daily Herald*); "...it never seems to get up any momentum... it just stodged along, exhibiting plenty of bulldog grit in the way it stuck to its task until almost midnight. This was partly due to Joan Lockton who was called upon to sing a commonplace song called 'My Man' so often that I thought she was never going to desert her post" (*Graphic*)



Dorie Sawyer, Fred Kitchen & Basil Howes

With the Lyceum no longer available, the management made the foolhardy decision to transfer the show to the Prince's Theatre, where it lasted just one week before being withdrawn and taken on a short provincial tour.

THE COCOANUTS

London run: Garrick Theatre, March 20th - April 7th
(23 performances)

Music & Lyrics: Irving Berlin

Book: George S. Kaufman & Morrie Ryskind

Director-Choreographer: Jack Hulbert

Musical Director: Stanley Holt

Cast: Fred Duprez (*Julius Slimmer*), Madleine Seymour (*Mrs Potter*), Pat Kendall (*Penelope*), Noel Layland (*Bob Adams*), Terry Kendall (*Jamison*), Enid Stamp Taylor (*Polly*), J.H. Wakefield (*Harvey*), Edgar Pierce (*Detective Hennessey*), Alison Maclaren (*Jenny*) Leonard Henry (*Chico*), Max Nesbitt (*Harpo*), & Harry Nesbitt



Max & Harry Nesbitt

Story: Julius Slimmer owns a failing hotel on Cocoanut Beach, Florida. One of his guests is the wealthy widow, Mrs Potter, accompanied by her daughter Penelope. Penelope is in love with Bob Adams, a man considered entirely ineligible by her overbearing mother. The hotel staff also includes Jamison and Polly, a pair of young lovers, whilst other guests include a pair of crooks, who are out to rob Mrs Potter's jewels – but they are not the only ones with this in mind. When the necklace finally vanishes, the theft is pinned on the boyfriend. His innocence is eventually proven when the real crooks are exposed, and the lovers receive maternal blessing.

Notes: This was adapted from the second of three Broadway musicals starring the Marx Brothers (the others were "I'll Say She Is" and "Animal Crackers"). It opened in New York in December 1925 and ran for 276 performances. The London production underwent major re-writing, and considerable adaptation for a British audience. Replacing the Marx Brothers with the very British Max and Harry Nesbitt meant the "speciality" comedy scenes were quite different. It was regarded as a bit of a mess, more a very short play with a number of speciality comedy acts, dances and revue sketches, than a musical comedy. It was withdrawn very quickly. (The following year the Carlton Theatre - by then in use as a full-time cinema - had a very successful season with the film version of "The Cocoanuts" starring the Marx Brothers)

LOVE IN A VILLAGE

London run: Lyric Hammersmith, April 19th – August 4th (124 performances)

Music: Thomas Arne & others

New music: Alfred Reynolds

Original book: Isaac Bickerstaffe

Director: Nigel Playfair

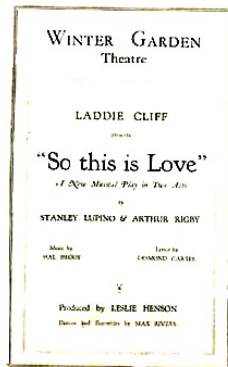
Choreographer: Marian Wilson

Musical Director: Alfred Reynolds

Cast: Rose Hignell (*Rosetta*), Stanley Lathburv (*Justice Woodcock*), Leonard Gowings (*Thomas Meadows*), Nigel Playfair (*Sir William Meadows*), Frederick Randalow (*Hawthorn*), Franklin Gilmore (*Eustace*), Leslie Holland (*Hodge*), Sybil Crawley (*Lucinda*), Una O'Connor (*Mrs Woodcock*), Viola Leyer (*Margery*), David Dilworth, Dewey Gibson, Harry Hilliard, Mary Midgeley, Vera Robson, Scott Russell,

Story: To escape from an arranged marriage to a man she has never met, Rosetta runs away from home and acquires a position as chambermaid in the home of Justice Woodcock. It so happens that Thomas, the gardener to Justice Woodcock is in a similar position: he is really the son of Sir William Meadows, and has run away to avoid a similar fate. Both families are pursuing them, intent on making them marry their chosen spouses. Meantime Rosetta and Thomas fall in love. Just when all seems hopeless, Sir William arrives and reveals that the young lovers have in fact been betrothed to each other the whole time

Notes Isaac Bickerstaffe's "Love in a Village", which was first produced at Covent Garden in 1762, was a comic opera compiled from various other pieces, including Johnson's "Village Opera" and containing 42 separate songs.. The music was arranged by Dr. Arne, and ten of the songs in this present version were composed by Arne. The others, except for six newly written by Alfred Reynolds, were either traditional or by lesser-known contemporary composers. This was clearly aimed at repeating the phenomenal success of "The Beggar's Opera". It did not.



SO THIS IS LOVE

London run: Winter Garden Theatre, April 25th – January 26th 1929
(321 performances)

Music: Hal Brody

Lyrics: Desmond Carter

Book: Stanley Lupino & Arthur Rigby

Director: Leslie Henson

Choreographer: Max Rivers

Musical Director: Harry Acres

Producer: Laddie Cliff

Cast: Cyril Ritchard (*Peter Malden*), Madge Elliot (*Pamela Stuart*),
Sylvia Leslie (*Kitty*), Laddie Cliff (*Hap J. Hazzard*),

Stanley Lupino (*Potiphar Griggs*), Connie Emerald (*Minnie*), James Croome,

Gilly Flower, William Hall, Ewart Locke, Freddie Lord, Reita Nugent, Dudley Rolph, Walter E. Wallis,
The John Tiller Girls. *Speciality Piano:* Jack Clarke, H.B. Hedley, George Myddleton

Story: The Hon. Peter Malden is in love with his proud but impoverished secretary, Pamela Stuart. In order to win her, he pretends he has lost all his money and they are on equal footing. However, Pamela's jealous rival, Kitty, reveals the subterfuge, and succeeds in breaking up the relationship. In the meantime Peter really does lose all his money. Kitty herself is desperately loved by the American Hap J. Hazzard, whose attempts to woo her are frequently stalled by Potiphar Griggs ("Potty") and his new wife, Minnie. Naturally Peter manages to recover both his fortune and the girl by the end of the show.

Notes: "Hal Brody" was a pseudonym for a mixture of four British writers, mostly H.B. Hedley and Jack Strachey, on the assumption that only "American music" was likely to draw in the public. It was a perfect mix of story, humour, song, dance and style capturing the frivolous mood of the moment. Clearly recognised as "froth", it was nonetheless welcomed.

"It is that comparative rarity, a British musical comedy... But it very much of a muchness with the 'peppy' type of American show that has swept the board for so long. Dancing and bustling humour are its strong suits... Why anybody is allowed to sing is a mystery, for nobody can, but what does it matter when there is so much brisk, simultaneous movement on the part of the dancers - especially those ubiquitous persons the Tiller Girls - and so much cause for boisterous mirth? Judged on its laughs the show is a prodigious comic success" (*Daily Mirror*).

"Hal Brody's music is catchy and popular, and, in short, 'So This is Love'; is rattling good entertainment" (*Daily News*). "There is so much hard talent, so much sheer fun in this vivacious entertainment that it would be absurd to examine its texture too closely" (*Observer*)

It enjoyed a good run, and became a kind of model for several similar song-dance-jokes-and story shows over the next few years. While the show was still running in the West End no fewer than three separate touring productions were mounted, and gained considerable success - so much so that a production of "So This is Love" was playing somewhere in the provinces every week through 1929 and 1930, and a few months into 1931,



Cyril Ritchard & Madge Elliot

BLUE EYES

London run: Piccadilly Theatre, April 27th - July 28th
 Transfer: Daly's, July 30th – December 22nd
 (Total 276 performances)

Music: Jerome Kern

Lyrics: Guy Bolton

Book: Guy Bolton & Graham John

Director: John Harwood

Choreographer: Fred A. Leslie

Musical Director: Charles Prentice

Producer: Lee Ephraim

Cast: Evelyn Laye (*Nancy*), Bertram Wallis (*Cumberland*),
 W.H. Berry (*Pilbeam*), Geoffrey Gwyther (*Sir George Fairmont*),
 Edward O'Bryen (*Prince Charles Edward*), Arthur Lucas (*David Garrick*), Phillip D. Williams (*Dr Johnson*),
 Carlito Ackroyd, Ethel Baird, William Black, Amy Brandon-Thomas, Sylvia Cecil, Trevor Glyn,
 Edmund La Touche, Barrle Livesey, Henry Millidge, Stanley Newman, Gerald Simons, George Vollaire,
 Cyril Whittle.



Story: The action swings between the 18th Century Scottish Highlands and the wings of the Covent Garden Theatre. The actress George Ann Bellamy, known as Nancy “Blue Eyes”, is helping her brother in his effort to decoy the victorious English. He has disguised himself as Bonnie Prince Charlie, so she disguises herself as her own brother to enable him to make his getaway. But the disguise fails, and she is arrested and put on trial by the Duke of Cumberland, the notorious “Butcher of Culloden”. In a Tosca-like scene, Cumberland lusts after Nancy and allows her to go free with some unspoken “conditions”. When he confronts her in the Green Room at Covent Garden his evil intent is thwarted by the arrival of his royal mistress, who has been tipped off by Nancy’s comical friend, Pilbeam. Pilbeam, who is mostly cast in such roles as the back end of a horse, has at last been given the chance of a starring role, but he turns it down in order to go and save Nancy’s honour, thus enabling her finally to go off and marry her real love, Sir George Fairmont.

Notes: This was a desperately old-fashioned musical, with opportunities for Highland flings, Scottish reels and swirling tartan to be mixed with backstage shenanigans, comic disguises and a flea-circus version of Romeo and Juliet. It was chosen as the show to open the brand new Piccadilly Theatre.

“I found much of the music delightful: the book distinguished, but rather dull: the acting and singing excellent: the general interest rather drawn out. But when I saw the chorus men in kilts and beards yelling ‘Och aye!’ and so on, I was filled with an intense love of my own race - which is not Scottish, by the way” (*Weekly Dispatch*); “There is plenty of colour, but the piece is still at least half an hour too long... the humour is mainly noticeable by its absence and Mr W.H. Berry has seldom had a poorer part... Miss Evelyn Laye is altogether charming” (*Era*); “It must be said that the comic relief designed to lighten this romantic semi-historical theme is but poor stuff” (*Stage*)



Evelyn Laye



Evelyn Laye & Geoffrey Gwyther

Despite the general critical reaction being very negative, its spectacle appealed to the public and the immensely popular Evelyn Laye, dressed as a highwayman and fighting a duel, was more than enough to give the show a very respectable run, including a transfer to Daly's.

SHOW BOAT

London run: Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, May 3rd - March 2nd, 1929
(350 performances)

Music: Jerome Kern

Book & Lyrics: Oscar Hammerstein II

Director: Felix Edwardes

Choreographer: Max Scheck

Musical Director: Herman Finck

Cast: Edith Day (*Magnolia*), Howett Worster (*Gaylord Ravenal*), Cedric Hardwicke (*Cap'n Andy*), Marie Burke (*Julie La Verne*), Viola Compton (*Parthy*), Paul Robeson (*Joe*), Alberta Hunter (*Queenie*), Dorothy Lena (*Ellie May*), Leslie Sarony (*Frank Schultz*), Colin Clive (*Steve Baker*), Ann Barbour, Nancy Brown, Michael Cole, Maude Cressall, Gordon Crocker, Cecil Dereham, Roy Emerton, Lenore Gadsden, Fred Hearne, Felix Hill, Peggy Lovat, Jack Martin, Helen Moore, Percy Parsons, Norris Smith, Will Stuart, Henry Thomas, Kathleen Thomas, William Wallace, Walter Webster, Alec J. Willard, Margaret Yarde.

Ensemble: Chorus: Ladies Sybil Allnatt, Patricia Andrew, Babette Archer, Cynthia Arthur, Betty Atherton, Margaret Boyle, Nancy Brown, Zita da Costa, Nancy Edgley, Leila Farrer, Kathleen Fitchie, Lena Fitchie, Nan Forster, Mel Hunter, Mavis Kalman, Elsie Lawrence, Cynthia Lawson, Linda Lindore, Irene Lister, Peggie Lovat, Yetta Lucknet, Nance Miriam, Mary Morris, Phyllis Neal, Esme Oxley, Eileen Pendistny, Heather Price, Phyllis Rayner, Noranna Rose, Joanna Sands, Eileen Scott, Ruby Simpson, Rosalind Snow, Crystine Symons, Comyna Thomas, Eunice Vickeridge.

Chorus Gentlemen: Jack Allan, Kenneth Brooker, Haydn Campbell, Richard Crawford, Alfred Fairmont, Walter Farrance, Henry Fergusson, William Herbert, Felix Hill, Donald Kingston, Alfred Lawton, Ernest Ludlow, Philip Merritt, Selwyn Morgan, Frank Ogg, Kilmore Scott, William Wallace, A.J. Willard.

Mississippi Chorus & Dancers: Ladies: Louise Alexander, Kathleen Blay, Alma Chester, May Downs, Violet Downs, Vera Gomez, Marge Lawrence, Lavinia Lewis, Ella Minto, Connie Smith, Dorothy St Elmo, Rita Stevens, Kathleen Thomas, Margaret L. Wyng, Irene Zulia. **Gentlemen:** Kuammane Alexander, William Banks, J.N. Caldwell, Andasm Dowlan, H.N. Downes, Frank Emon, Arthur Gibson, Amos Howard, Bob Hudson, Nicholas Kofie, Alexander Lorres, Oscar Paul, Norris Smith, James Solomon, George Williams.

Dancers: Rosa Austin, Rachel Beech, Glennis Cheesman, Doris Colbert, Evelyn Dickerson, Leonore C. Gadsden, Rosalind Jackson, Nina Hudson, Lois Parker, Ethel Taylor, Gladys Thomas,

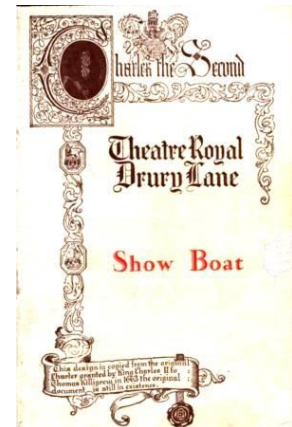


Photo by : Stage Photo Co

Story: This is the story of Magnolia Hawkes and Gaylord Ravenal from their first meeting on the Natchez levee in the mid 1880s, to their reunion aboard the “Cotton Blossom” in 1927. In between they fall in love, act in showboat productions, marry, move to Chicago at the time of the 1893 World Fair, lose their money because of Ravenal’s gambling addiction, and separate. Magnolia then becomes a musical-comedy star on Broadway. Secondary plots involve the relationship between mixed-race Julie and showboat leading man Steve, and the harsh life of Negro dockworkers represented by Joe.

Notes: Based on Edna Ferber’s novel, this is one of the most significant musicals of them all. It is notable for its integrated plot and for being the first musical to deal with love between different races. It dealt with “real” issues - alcoholism, poverty, gambling - and integrated them into the kind of show which up to then had been a frothy, glamorous frivolous escapist form of entertainment. The original Broadway production ran for 572 performances in New York’s Ziegfeld Theater in 1927, followed by the London premiere with 350 performances at Drury Lane in 1928. The first London production featured Edith Day, Cedric Hardwicke and Paul Robeson.



Paul Robeson

It was greatly admired for its spectacle, though its epic story-telling - so different from the conventional musical shows of the time - was dismissed as secondary to the scenic effect. The show boat itself was “a stupendous piece of stage carpentry...but it is only part of the scenic wonders. There is a plot, but it is not important. There is, in fact, a great deal that is not important; but the unforgettable parts of the show are those in which the negroes figure... stupendous, colourful... a wonderful evening” (*Daily Mirror*). “Drury Lane has never staged a more brilliant production ... Of the piece itself, bewildering in its changes of time from the late eighties to last year, it is almost impossible to write with coherence...The plot rolls along like the Mississippi itself, bearing Edith Day and a brilliant cast on its surface” (*Daily News*). “We were promised a super-production, but the fulfilment of this promise far exceeds one’s expectations” (*Daily Herald*). “Its success at Drury Lane will be due less to a rather leisurely and episodic and at times uninteresting dramatisation than to the gorgeously spectacular staging and to the combined efforts of a very numerous company, including... Mr. Paul Robeson” (*Stage*).

It took a little while for “Show Boat” to be recognised as a landmark in the history of musical theatre. It was a work that moved away from the frivolity of musical comedy and from the artificiality of operetta; its characters were given greater depth, the music was more integrated into the dialogue, and it dealt with previously unaccustomed subjects like broken relationships, mixed-race marriages and the inequality of treatment between black and white America. Only a few of the initial reviews hinted at this: “There will be those who complain that the story is thin and ill-connected, but as a stirring moving review of American life, it

is first rate entertainment ... It is regrettable that Mr Paul Robeson is given so little to do, although it must be recorded that his song ‘Old Man River’ is the choicest memory of the evening” (*Era*)



Photo by : Stage Photo Co (for !The Graphic)

Original London production:
Drury Lane 1928;
Future revivals:
Stoll, April 1943;
Adelphi, June 1971;
Palladium, July 1990
(return March 1991);
Prince Edward, April 1998;
Royal Albert Hall, June 2006;
New London, April 2016

THAT'S A GOOD GIRL

London run: London Hippodrome June 5th – March 16th 1929
(363 performances)

Music: Phil Charig, Joseph Meyer and Charles Prentice

Lyrics: Douglas Furber, Ira Gershwin, Desmond Carter

Book: Douglas Furber

Director: Jack Buchanan

Choreographer: Jack Buchanan & Anton Dolin

Musical Director: Leonard Hornsey

Producer: Jack Buchanan

Cast: Jack Buchanan (*Bill Barrow*), Elsie Randolph (*Joy Dean*), William Kendall (*Timothy*), Maidie Andrews (*Moya*), Kate Cutler (*Aunt Helen*), Raymond Newell (*Francis Moray*), Vera Pearce (*Sunya Berata*), Tom Barratt, Ivan Berlyn, Fred Grey, Walter Herald, Leonard Russell,
Ensemble: Ladies: Lulu Andre, Lilian Ashley, Aisleen Ball, Claire Batchelor, Daphne Brayne, Marjory Brown, Molly Ellis, Ena Everton, Gladys Falck, Dorothy Fair, Vivian Farnham, Rene Forse, Jackie Gardner, Ivy Halstead, Mignon Harmon, Connie Harris, Molly Hartley, Pearl Janis, Kathleen Joyce, Marjorie Lee, Else Lewis, Mollie Luck, Gwennyth Lyons, Edna Macauley, Dorothy MacBean, Dorothy Marlow, Violet Marston, Betty Newnham, Vera Owen, Rona Raymond, Margot Scott, Zoe Stevens, Joan Sutherland, Billie Telvin, Iris Turner, Esme Westhead;
Gentlemen Kenneth Birrell, A. Brentford, Philip Clarke, Anthony Cooper, Louis Costello, Peter Crawford, Algernon Kingsland, Roy Mitchell, Dick Murdoch, Terry Rendle, Jack Stewart.



*Elsie Randolph &
Jack Buchanan*

Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News: Sallon

Story: Bill Barrow, habitué of the high-life, is always hiding from creditors. Now he is being pursued by a lady detective, Joy Dean, and her friend Timothy, but this time not for his debts, but because a rich uncle has left a fortune jointly to Bill and a cousin, Moya Malone. The inheritance is administered by Aunt Helen, who is adamant that Bill must visit her in the company of a sensible friend of birth and breeding, capable of keeping away fortune-hunters and gold-diggers. He takes along Francis Moray, the chief baritone at the opera and the hen-pecked fiancé of Sunya Berata, the opera's hugely temperamental diva. Their visit to the aunt in the South of France, the pursuit by a jealous diva, and the developing romance between Moya and Francis lead to some hilarious situations which manage to involve a troupe of eight Tiller Girls and opera choruses from "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "I Pagliacci".

Notes: During its four-month pre-West End tour there were a number of cast changes and new song and dance additions. The show opened at the London Hippodrome with the male chorus entering with their backs to the audience, wearing top hats and tails. When line turned around it was revealed that the star of the show, Jack Buchanan, was in the centre of the line. Such was his popularity that the audience erupted with a roar of approval, so prolonged that the conductor was forced to stop the opening number; Jack Buchanan sent the chorus offstage, took a solo call, and then started the number all over again.

"There's a quite uninteresting plot about an uncle's fortune, with a very feeble love interest, set off against a number of amusing comic scenes and a great many ingeniously devised dancing items. (*However*) These last named seemed to be the main thing with the audience...when the work of deftly dancing Mr Buchanan and his chief supporters was received with acclamation" (*Stage*)

The show went on to run for nine months, consistently playing to excellent houses, and giving the Hippodrome one of its most profitable returns.

It was filmed in 1933 with Jack Buchanan, Elsie Randolph, Vera Pearce and William Kendall, produced by Herbert Wilcox.



Jack Buchanan & admirers



MARJOLAINE

London run: Gaiety Theatre, June 12th – August 11th
(71 performances)

Music: Dr Hugo Felix

Lyrics: Brian Hooker

Book: Catherine Chisholm Cushing

Director: Oscar Eagle

Choreographer: Roy Cutter & Lucille Constant

Musical Director: Jacques Heuvel

Producer: Olga Treskoff & Russell Janney

Cast: Lionel Victor (*Sir Peter Antrobus*), Winifred Hall (*Mrs Poskett*),
Oscar Ashe (*Brooke-Hostyn*), Ethel Hook (*Mme. Lucie*),
Lilian Davies (*Marjolaine*), Colin Campbell (*Rev Sternroyd*),

Babs Farren (*Barbara*), Robert Geddes (*Jack Sayle*), Barrington Hooper (*Baron Otford*),
Eric Fawcett (*Basil Pringle*), David Evans, Joyce Fletcher, Robert Geddes, Ethel Hook, Bernard Howard,
Cecile Maule-Cole, Alex Meux, James Page, Edgar Pierce, George Seeley, *Dancers:* Misses Connor,
Hamilton, Kelsey, Lincoln, Ordova, Verne

Story: Pomander Walk, Chiswick, 1805: Retired Admiral Sir Peter Antrobus lives in No. 1, next door to Mrs Poskett, who has matrimonial designs on him. Mystery business man Mr Brooke-Hostyn lives in No 3 with his ever growing family, next door to Mme Lucie and her daughter Marjolaine. The resident of No. 5 is the Rev Sternroyd and his daughter, Barbara. A party of visiting sailors is headed by Lieutenant the Hon. Jack Sayle, and it is clear that Jack has more than a passing interest in Marjolaine. However, Mme. Lucie discovers that Jack is the son of her former lover, the Baron Otford, and forbids any further meetings. However, by the end of the musical : Marjolaine and Jack are united; Barbara and the violinist Basil Pringle, as well as the widow and the admiral are similarly engaged, and the mystery of Mr Brooke-Hostyn is solved..

Notes: Originally adapted from the comedy “Pomander Walk” by Louis N. Parker, which had been staged as a play in New York in 1910, and then adapted into a musical for a Broadway production in 1922. Although the Broadway production managed to run for just 136 performances, it was felt the show would have a greater appeal for a British audience.

This was not so. Its London opening was greeted with some very unhelpful notices. "‘Marjolaine’ is one of those innocuous entertainments best described as neither fish, flesh, fowl nor good red herring. It is an enterprising effort to make a musical play of an old-fashioned comedy of the period of 1805 and frankly it does not succeed" (*Daily News*).

“All the ‘pretty-prettness’ of the original work has been retained, though rather less of its original humour” (*Stage*). “It is rather boring... it is an attempt to achieve something a little more delicate than the usual musical play. I should therefore like to praise it. But I can only praise it with a yawn” (*Sunday Mirror*).

The show was not a success and came off after just 71 performances. The production itself was lavishly, if somewhat eccentrically, costumed and much interest was expressed in the party scene when Mme. Lucie arrived in an elegant Directoire gown accompanied by her maid, Nanette, who was wearing a peasant-style national costume with a “Butterfly” head-dress. These costumes, especially the butterfly hat were the subject of parody in several of the London revues playing at the time.



Ethel Hook (*Mme Lucie*) & Cecile Maule-Cole
(*Nanette*) with the “Butterfly” head-dress



GOOD NEWS

London run: Carlton, August 15th - December 8th
(132 performances)

Music: Ray Henderson

Lyrics: B.G. DeSylva & Lew Brown

Book: DeSylva & Laurence Schwab

Director: William Mollison

Choreographer: Claude Watts

Musical Director: Van Phillips

Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller

Cast: Neil Collins (*Tom Marlowe*), Edward Gargan (*Beef Saunders*),

Bobby Jarvis (*Bobby Randall*), Goodee Montgomery (*Babe O'Day*),

Arthur West (*Pooch Kearney*), H. R. Hignett (*Professor Kenyon*),

Evelyn Hoey (*Connie Lane*), Amy Revere (*Patricia Bingham*),

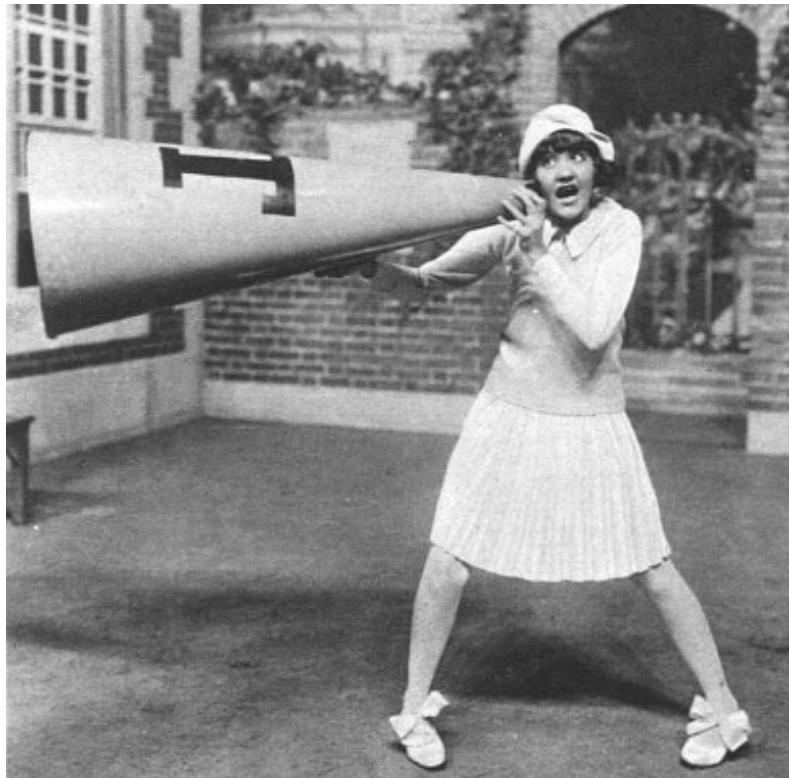
Zelma O'Neal (*Flo*), Julie Johnston (*Millie*), Michael Tripp (*Sylvester*), George Murphy (*Windy*),
Edward Brandt, Pat Childress, Joyce Compton, Roy Lloyd, A O'Farrell, Van Phillips,

Story: Will Tom Marlowe, the star football player at Tait College, be allowed to play in the big game against Colton, despite his failing to pass the astronomy exam? If he is not allowed on the field, then the team should be led by bully-boy Beef Saunders – but Beef has been knocked out – leaving the very nervous Bobby Jarvis to take over. Bobby's girlfriend, Babe O'Day and Pooch Kearney, the superstitious trainer are all on tenterhooks. Professor Kenyon saves the day by cheating a little and adding a single extra mark to the exam paper, allowing Tom to lead his team to victory, and win the heart of fellow-student, Connie Lane. Everyone is happy, except the scheming college belle, Patricia Bingham, who rather fancied winning Tom for herself.

Notes: This was a long running hit on Broadway, where it opened in September 1927 and ran for 551 performances. It was mostly welcomed in London: "When the band came into the orchestra at the Carlton Theatre last night clad in red jumpers and flannel trousers and the conductor began directing them with muscular enthusiasm... it was obvious we were in for a real peppy evening. 'Good News' is 99 per cent. American" (*Daily News*).

The show is "as ingenuous as the plot and most of the dialogue, and is just a wild display of youth, which is acted - and mostly danced - by a company of very bright young things" (*Era*); it was "a rattling good song and dance show (with) jazz music that is not always on the soft and mellow side, and dances that often sacrifice all considerations of graceful movement for comical, rapid effects... who could fail to be roused by such a riot of youth and high spirits such as this?" (*Stage*)

It was possibly a bit too "American" for London, where it managed a mere 132 performances. It was also very much a piece of its time: a Broadway revival in 1974 starring Alice Faye and Gene Nelson was taken off after just two weeks.



Zelma O'Neill

SONG OF THE SEA

London run: His Majesty's, September 6th - January 19th 1929
(156 performances)

Music: Eduard Künnecke

Lyrics: Arthur Wimperis

Book: Arthur Wimperis & Lauri Wylie

Director- Choreographer: Jack Hulbert

Musical Director: Percy Fletcher

Producer: Daniel Meyer



Cast: Dennis Hoey (*Sir William*), Lillian Davies (*Nancy*), Stanley Holloway (*Richard Manners*), A.W. Baskcomb (*Peter Pettigrew*), Mary Leigh (*Kitty*), Claude Hulbert (*Bob Blake*), Edna Covey, Winifred Hare, Ronald Massey, Leonard Mackay, Jerry Verno, Polly Ward. (*Plus a large ensemble of sailors, etc not credited in the programme*)

Story: The very detailed plot opens in late 18th Century Portsmouth then moves to the British Embassy in Naples where the Ambassador Sir William Candy has amorous intentions towards the virtuous singing maid, Nancy. She, in turn, is in love with naval officer, Richard Manners. A sub-plot sees the painter, Peter Pettigrew, lose his favourite model, Kitty, to Bob Blake, the ambassador's courier.

Notes: This was based on the play by Richard Barts and Leopold Jacobson which, originally, told the story of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton - the characters were changed for the musical version. It was admired for its music and its spectacle, but the general critical reaction felt the show was plot-heavy and filled with extraneous dances, including hornpipes and a comedy version of Anna Pavlova's Dying Swan.

"A great deal of artistry has gone to the making of 'Song of the Sea'... Eduard Künnecke's music is extremely good, far above the average for this type of production... There were two charming ballets, and the chorus worked hard and well. When all this has been said it must yet be admitted that the piece has its tedious moments. The book is very feeble; the plot barely exists; and the greatest joke of the evening consists in pushing a fat lady into a sedan chair" (*Daily Herald*). "It is a bright, colourful and magnificently staged show with music above the average. It should be a big success" (*Daily Mirror*). "Eduard Künnecke has written some very tuneful melodies. The star number is 'Song of the Sea', a stirring tune sung with great effect by Stanley Holloway and a massed choir of sailors on boards HMS Conquest" (*Daily Mirror*)

It was not a success, though it did manage 156 performances at His Majesty's.



The finale

BILLY BLUE (Tour)

London run: Finsbury Park Empire, September 17th & week;
New Cross Empire, September 24th & week

Music: Joseph A. Tunbridge & Fred Elkin

Book & Lyrics: Harold Dayne

Additional numbers: Tom D. Newell; R.P. Weston & Bert Lee

Director: Francis Laidler

Choreographer: J.W. Jackson

Producer: Francis Laidler

Cast: Tom D. Newell (*Billy Blue*), Harold Dayne (*Mattel Cambetta*), Noreen Davis (*Mario*), Ernest Selig (Bobo), Harry Hart (*Beppo*), Marda Devannah, Myrtle Douglas, C. Cranleigh-Andrews, Mary Fox, Nancy Heather, Neatha Mack, Arthur Rees, The Jackson Corsican Maids & Military Boys

Story: Billy Blue is in Corsica, an island which abounds with vendettas and duels, and plots to out-smart Mattel Cambetta, the miserly old innkeeper. In the course of his escapades Billy will emerge triumphant, winning the hand of a charming bride, Mario, and a healthy cheque for the capture of the brigands Bobo and Beppo, and the Brigand Chief.

Notes: This tour had opened in Newcastle in August and ran until December 1st, finishing in Birkenhead. These two September weeks were its only London dates. This was something of a showcase for Tom D. Newell, an established pantomime Dame on Francis Laidler's provincial circuit, and aimed at demonstrating his versatility. "In this bright and laughter making show, he makes the most of the many opportunities for fun provided by the author, his dancing and singing are on the same high level as his comedy" (*Stage*). It was a mixture of revue and musical comedy, with great novelty value in its "Skeleton Walk" which introduces the audience to the somewhat fearsome spectacle of skeletons doing the latest modern dances - the hit of the evening and a triumph of lighting effects." (*ibid*)



Max Miller

TIPPERARY TIM (Tour)

London run: New Cross Empire, September 17th & week;
Finsbury Park Empire, Sept 24th; Kilburn Empire, Oct 1st;
Clapham Oct 8th; Islington Empire Oct 13th;
Croydon, Dec 10th; Hammersmith, Dec 17th;
Camberwell Palace Dec 24th ;

Music: Joseph A. Tunbridge

Book & Lyrics: Arthur Field & George Arthurs

Additional numbers: Max Miller

Director: Francis Laidler

Choreographer: J.W. Jackson

Producer: Francis Laidler

Cast: Sydney Benson (*Mr Oofenstein*), Kitty Kirwan (*Bridget McGuire*), Lister Reekie (*Sir Joseph Rivers*), Marcelle de Florelle (*Princess Sadie*), Max Miller (*Tim*), Charles Gillespie (*Lt. Jack Dereham*), Kitty Lorraine (*Mabel Grey*), Sidney Rudstone (*Percy*),

Story: Shady Mr Oofenstein has obtained a plan showing the hiding place of the stolen Crown Jewels of Alluria. The heiress Bridget Maguire is looking for a good investment, and Sir Joseph Rivers wants to recover the losses on some worthless shares. Oofenstein says he can persuade the gullible Bridget to buy the shares in return for Sir Joseph arranging for Oofenstein to meet the wealthy Princess Sadie. Tipperary Tim, a "broth of a boy" has got wind of the plot to recover the jewels, and with the help of his friend Lieutenant Jack Dareham, he's out to get both the jewels and the hand of his sweetheart, Mabel.

Notes: This tour opened at the Bradford Alhambra in August. It was a showcase for the young Max Miller, a rising talent on the revue circuit. "Mr. Miller possesses a fine presence and an ingratiating manner. Something should be said about his wardrobe, too, and particularly of his novel ideas in plus-fours. He sang, danced, joked, and smiled his way into favour .. He is the whole show" (*Stage*) This was a highly successful tour and helped secure star status for Max Miller, who would go on to be recognised as the greatest stand-up comic of his generation.

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TOPSY AND EVA

London run: Gaiety Theatre, October 4th - December 15th
(10 weeks)

Music & Lyrics: The Duncan Sisters

Book: Catherine Chisholm Cushing

Director: Jack Buchanan

Musical Director: Arthur E. Godfrey

Producer: Jack Buchanan

Cast: Rosetta Duncan (*Topsy*), Vivian Duncan (*Eva*), John Kelly (*Uncle Tom*), Kate Opperman (*Old Chloe*), Myrtle Fergusson (*Ophelia*), Bert Bray (*Simon Legree*), Georgia Sewell (*Poor Eliza*), Sylvia Cecil, Winifred Davis, Harold Duncan, Constance Edwards, George Elliston, Margaret Fordue, Mildred Letts, George Skillan, George Vollaire, Leonard Walker, Doris Yorke.

Plantation Quartet: Alan Mackay, Tony Smythe, Jack Stanton, Leonard Walker

Old-Fashioned Girls: Betty Bennett, Pamela Deedes, Vera Fabri, Shirley Hopkins, Gladys Manning, Alida Middlecote, Queenie Steadman. *Speciality Dancers:* Mildred Burns & Wensley Johnston; The John Tiller Troupe

Story: The basic story of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" had been "jollied up", and was presented more as a burlesque than a musical tale, incorporating Apache-like acrobatic dancers and the Savoy Orpheans jazz band.

Notes: The original production of this musical version of Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" opened in Los Angeles in 1923, and was revived in Chicago in December 1925, coming into Broadway the following March where it closed after 165 performances.

The British premiere was at Lewisham Hippodrome in August 1928, and it came into the West End in October. Although the critics were not sure what to make of the show, audiences flocked, and soon after opening, an extra weekly matinee was scheduled to cope with the demand for tickets. But Rosetta Duncan suffered a breakdown from overwork, and the show was cancelled for two performances and it looked as if it would have to close.

On November 17th, with one day's notice. Gracie Fields took over as Topsy and was hugely acclaimed. At the end of this show a group of well-wishers and fans carried her along the Strand and back to the Savoy Hotel. (This happened on this occasion and NOT on her opening of "Mr Tower of London", as is sometimes erroneously stated.)

Gracie was able to stay with the show for just one week due to the opening of "The Show's the Thing", but her week with the show was well publicised and saved the Duncan Sisters' investment. She left the show on November 26th, and was replaced by Mimi Crawford. After only two days in the role, Vivian Duncan decided that Mimi Crawford wasn't right in the role, and so they switched parts, with Vivian taking a lot of performance tips from Gracie's portrayal of the character. Rosetta Duncan returned to the show on December 1st.

The show itself was withdrawn on December 15th after a ten week run.



Rosetta & Vivian Duncan



Gracie Fields as Topsy



FUNNY FACE

London run: Prince's Theatre, November 8th

Transfer: Winter Garden, January 28th 1929 - June 29th 1929
(263 performances)

Music: George Gershwin

Lyrics: Ira Gershwin

Book: Paul Gerard Smith & Fred Thompson

Director: Felix Edwardes

Choreographer: Bobby Connolly

Musical Director: Julian Jones

Cast: Fred Astaire (*Jimmie Reeve*), Adele Astaire (*Frankie Wynne*),

Bernard Clifton (*Peter Thurston*), Leslie Henson (*Dugsie Gibbs*),

Sydney Howard (*Herbert*), Rita Page (*Dore Wynne*), Renee Gadd (*June Wynne*)

Alfred Atkins, Esme Brown, Harry Cartwright, Jack Dalmyne, Stephen Francis, John McNally,

Story: Frankie Wynne feels so restricted by her guardian, Jimmie Reeve, that she persuades her boyfriend, Peter, to help her recover her diary from Jimmie's safe. With the help of Dugsie Gibbs and Herbert, a "professional" burglar disguised as a butler, Peter gets hold of the package from the safe – but it is the wrong package – it's a diamond bracelet and not the diary!

Notes: The production opened on Broadway in November 1927 and ran for 250 performances, after which the two main stars, Fred and Adele Astaire came to London for the British premiere. The magic of the Astaires guaranteed this was a hit, and provided a great night in the theatre, but for some critics the formula was beginning to get threadbare.

"Its great success is certainly not due to the idiotically meaningless and colloquial title... nor can any portion of the success be ascribed to the plot (if such a dignified appellation be deserved) for even if there is plenty of jingling rhyme by Ira Gershwin to the alternately tuneful and noisily jazzish music of George Gershwin, there is little, if any, reason about the story... As with their former successes here, the Astaires bring to the aid of their authors their splendid gifts in dancing... and then there is Leslie Henson readily causing laughter... Thus it was an evening of unalloyed triumph for the executants in this dancing-cum-comedy production which should have a long run" (*Stage*).

"In the middle of this brilliant show of dancing and fun I had a fit of detachment. To think that an audience was willing to pay 24 shillings for reserved seats to see such a clotted mass of nonsense. But then I remembered that everything is relative. Even I would certainly rather have paid for a seat at the Princes Theatre than have wasted the same money in a conventional dinner at a crowded restaurant... on the whole, in the words of one of the songs, this new show's Wonderful" (*Daily News*) " 'Funny Face' is a triumph for Leslie Henson. Without him it would be an also-ran show, for we know all what the Astaires can do, and they do it all again. The play itself is just Broadway with the lid on" (*Daily Mirror*).

However, the paying public— even at the top price of 24 shillings (£1.20 in today's currency) - packed both the Prince's and the Winter Garden, following a transfer) for the next seven months.

(The 1957 film version with Fred Astaire and Audrey Hepburn used a completely new story and additional songs).



Fred and Adele Astaire



VIRGINIA

London run: Palace Theatre, October 24th – May 11th, 1929
(227 performances)

Music: Jack Waller & Joseph A. Tunbridge

Lyrics: R.P. Weston & Bert Lee

Book: Herbert Clayton & Douglas Furber

Director: William Mollison

Choreographer: Ralph Reader

Musical Director: Joseph A. Tunbridge

Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller

Cast: Emma Haig (*Virginia*), John Kirby (*Silas J. Hock*), Harold French (*Lord Hampton*), Marjorie Gordon (*Lady Hampton*), George Gee (*Nicholas Ninnijohn*), Ernest Trimmingham (*Sambo*), Cora La Redd (*Lizzie*), Jimmie Fergusson (*Caesar*), Walter Richardson (*Uncle New*), Anthony Brian, Edna Brough, A. Bromley Davenport, Gladys Falck, John Gordon, Ernest Graham, Robert Nainby, Roma Presano, Lancelot Quinn, Madeleine Rossiter, Maude West-Courtenay, *Principal Dancer:* Phil Arnold
A very large chorus, not credited.

Story: The unfortunate Virginia Hock is forced by her father, the social-climbing Silas J. Hock, to accompany him to her name-state of Virginia where he wants her to marry the impecunious Earl of Hampton. Unknown to Silas, not only is Lord Hampton already married to an ex-actress, but Virginia herself has been secretly married to Nicholas Ninnijohn, Silas's private secretary. Other characters involved include negro servants Sambo and Lizzie, Uncle New, and the accident-prone chauffeur, Caesar. The usual farcical shenanigans ensue, with the actions moving from grand hotels to cotton plantations, and eventually, of course, all is happily resolved.

Notes: The pre-West End tour played two weeks each at Cardiff and Southsea, and then moved straight into the Palace. During its month on the road there had been considerable re-writing and cast-changes, but it opened to good notices in spite of a number of suggestions that it was an obvious attempt to cash in on the success of "Showboat". "Virginia" offered a similar mix of cotton field scenery, humming negroes, and the hit song "Roll Away Clouds" was sung by Walter Richardson ("another negro baritone to reach these shores" – *Stage*).



Harold French & Emma Haigh

"The story does not count for much. It is of the kind in which no normal human being can take any intelligent interest, and therefore comes well up to sample. The humour, too, is of a familiar pattern... But the music is very melodious, and the chorus work and dancing rescues the whole show and makes it an excellent entertainment" (*Daily Mirror*).

"The chorus - changing with amazing rapidity from bathing dresses and pyjamas to many beautiful 'confections' and other sorts of attire, all worn with becoming grace - provide conjoint work of infinite value to this finely staged and sumptuously dressed musical comedy" (*Stage*)



Three ladies of the chorus

LUCKY GIRL

London run: Shaftesbury Theatre, November 14th - December 22nd
 Transfer: London Pavilion December 24th – March 23rd 1929
 (Total 150 performances)

Music: Phil Charig & Charles Prentice

Lyrics: R.P. Weston & Bert Lee

Book: Douglas Furber

Director: Austin Melford

Choreographer: Tom Nip & Fred A. Leslie

Musical Director: Kennedy Russell

Producer: B.A. Meyer & E.J. Carroll

Cast: Clifford Mollison (*King Stephen of Karaslavia*), Gene Gerrard (*Hudson*), Spencer Trevor (*Duke*), Marjorie Chard (*Duchess*), Greta Fayne (*Lady Moira*), Anita Elson (*Barbara*), G. Clarke, Hilda Esty-March, H. Franklyn, B. Heap, J. Gilding-Clarke, Kenneth Henry, G. Lyons-Hastings, Gus Oxley, Tom Reynolds, *Principal Dancers:* Errol Addison, & Mitrenga, Charles Brookes



Anita Elson

Story: The impecunious King Stephen of Karasalavia and Hudson, his irresponsible young Chancellor, mistake the luxurious country mansion of the Duke and Duchess of Pevensy for a shady night club. The two young men are taken for burglars and are chased around the mansion, meantime falling in love with the Duke's daughter, Moira, and his niece, Barbara.

Notes: Based on Reginald Berkeley's play "Mr Abdullah", the show began its pre-West End tour in September at the Newcastle Empire, and had played Golders Green and Lewisham immediately prior to opening at the Shaftesbury. It was regarded as competent and somewhat ordinary - "This musical farce never strays into any dangerous originality" (*Times*) - and lasted a few months before returning to the provincial touring circuit, where it did rather well.

THE ROSE AND THE RING

London run: Apollo, November 21st – December 22nd
 Transfer: Playhouse, December 24th – February 2nd 1929
 (Total 52 performances)

Music & Book: Christabel Marillier

Lyrics: John Arthington, Hilaire Belloc, Clifford Bax, Renee Hayes

Director: Stephen Thomas

Choreographer: Leslie French

Musical Director: Dr Malcolm Sargent / H. Foster Clark

Producer: H. Chiswell Billing

Cast: Dorothy Gill (*Fairy Blackstick*), John Mott (*Jenkins Gruffanuff*), Lawrence Baskcomb (*King Vaoloroso*), Vivienne Chatterton (*The Queen*), Nellie Briercliffe (*Angelica*), Frederick Ranalow (*Giglio*), Elsie French (*Countess Gruffanuff*), Stanley Vilven (*Prince Bulbo*), Megan Foster (*Princess Rosalba*), Hector Abbas, Reginald Allen, Dewey Gibson, Henry Latimer, John Mott, Cicely Nicks, *Ensemble Misses* Mary Honer, Helen Rashleigh, Carol Rose, Mary Miller, Betty Wedgwood, Gwen Willby, Gertrude Wolfie, Joyce Wootton; *Messrs.* Walter Cato, Geoffrey Dunn, Dalvary, Gerald Kent, Patrick G. Ward,



Megan Foster

Photo by : Stage Photo Co

Notes: It was described as a light operetta based on Thackeray's satirical tale for children. "Miss Marillier, evidently a musician to her finger-tips, has followed in the main approved models, generally on classical lines, and also in some delightful items of ballad-opera type" (*Stage*). "Her music is sufficiently tuneful and reminiscent to make us want to hear more of it" (*Sunday Mirror*). "The humour is as delicious as when it was first written, but the satire is a shade 'démodé' and a trifle on the heavy side" (*Sphere*)

This was a different version from the one by Robert Cox produced at Wyndham's in 1923 and the one by Michael Jeffrey produced at the Hen & Chicken in 2001 (q.q.v)

ADAM'S OPERA

London run: Old Vic, December 3rd - January 6th 1929 (20 performances in repertoire)

Music: Richard Addinsell

Book & Lyrics: Clemence Dane

Director: Andrew Leigh

Choreographer: Ninette de Valois

Musical Director: Lawrence Collingwood

Producer: Lilian Baylis

Cast: Wilfred Babbage (*Tom Tiddler*), Eric Spear (*Tom Fiddler*), Adele Dixon (*Seeping Beauty*), John Laurie (*Adam*), Marie Lohr (*Mother Earth*), Horace Sequeira (*Solomon Grundy*), Esme Church (*Mrs Grundy*), Godfrey Kenton (*Foreman*), Andrew Leigh (*Jester*), Eric Adeney, H. Reyner Barton, Iris Bager, H. Stanley Beers, Monica Brett, Grace Brochett, Rosamond Burne, Lillian Clifford, Edith Coates, Rita Daniel, Nora Desmond, Beryl Ede, Phillip Fothergill, Vera Goring-Thomas, Percy Harris, Audrie Haynes, Mary Hull, Peggy Hunter, Mary Lamb, Frank Lepla, Powell Lloyd, Mabel Mitchell, Cecilia Nono, Eric Phillips, Ivy Richards, Mabel Roberts, Charles Smyrk, Peter Taylor-Smith, Torin Thatcher, Rafe Thomson, Arabella Turtle, Percy Walsh, Michael Watts, Leslie Young, Master Sidney Knight, Master David Fergusson,

Story: Tom Tiddler, the scheming business man and axe-grinder wishes to keep out the foreigner and find useful work for the unemployed. With his twin brother, Tom Fiddler, painter and musician, he schemes to make money out of tour-guiding through a briar-concealed castle in which a Beauty spends most of her time sleeping. Beauty's husband is Adam, the son of a Prince and Mother Earth, but he is away dreaming of removing the barriers of tolls and customs and of giving the whole world peace and happiness. During his absence Beauty wakes up periodically to meet would-be lovers, including King Nebuchadnezzar, but she rejects them all, and they come to a grisly end on the gallows outside the castle. Adam's return leads to some heavy satire on contemporary politics, censorship and social attitudes.

Notes: It was described as "A thoughtful and incisively satirical modernised variant upon the fairy story of the Sleeping Beauty... with much generally melodious music mainly on familiar nursery rhyme themes" (*Stage*) but "Clemence Dane has tried her hand at féerie in 'Adam's Opera' but féerie with satiric intent, which seems rather a contradiction in terms. The spirited attempt does not quite come off. but the piece may pique or divert the sophisticated, who do not usually gather at the Old Vic" (*ibid*).

LILAC TIME (3rd Revival)

London run: Daly's , December 24th (Six week limited season)

Music: Franz Schubert (additions by G.H. Clutsam.)

Book & Lyrics: A.M. Willner & Heinz Reichert

English Book & Lyrics: Adrian Ross

Director: Charles Cannon

Choreographer: Carlotta Mossetti

Musical Director: Charles Prentice

Cast: Frederick Blamey (*Schubert*), Evelyn Laye (*Lili*), Percy Heming (*Von Schober*), W.H. Berry (*Christian Veit*), Carlito Ackroyd, Kitty Attfield, Fred Carlton, Evelyn Dene, Mina Greene, Muriel Heath, John Kelly, Enid Lowe, Henry Millidge, Maria Minetti, Stanley Newman, Gilbert Robinson, Dennis Thoroughgood, Lionel Victor, Cyril Whittloe, Philip D. Williams,



W.H. Berry

Notes: Based on the 1916 Viennese operetta "Das Dreimäderlhaus". The English version premiered at the Lyric Theatre in December 1922. It was enormously popular, and this was its fourth production in the West End. This version used the original German name "Lili" instead of "Mitzi"

Original London production: Lyric Theatre, December 1922

1st Revival: Lyric, Dec 1925; 2nd Revival: Daly's Dec, 1927; 3rd Revival: Daly's Dec 1928

Future revivals: Lyric, May 1930; Globe, Dec 1932; Alhambra, Dec 1933; Coliseum, July 1936; Stoll, Oct 1942; His Majesty's Feb 1949 (trans Palace)

CHU CHIN CHOW (1st Revival)

London run: Regent Theatre, December 26th - Feb 2nd, 1929
(6 weeks Limited run)

Music: Frederic Norton

Book & Lyrics: Oscar Ashe

Director: Oscar Ashe

Musical Director: Not listed

Producer: Martin Sabine

Cast: Oscar Ashe (*Abu Hasan*),
Doris Champion (*Zahrat Al-Kalub*),
Helen Debroy Somers (*Marjanah*), Wensley Russell (*Ali Baba*),
Stuart Kern (*Nur Al-Huda*), William Dewhurst (*Kasim Baba*),
Marion Edwardes (*Alcolom*), Dorothy Dewhurst (*Mahbubah*)
Herbert Carter, Horace Custins, Dacia, James Johnson,
Ellis J. Preston, Savana, Lawrence Shiel, Betty Williamson.
Ensemble not listed

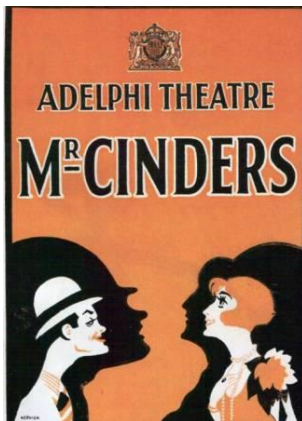
Notes: The original production at His Majesty's Theatre in August 1916 ran for an astonishing 2,238 performances, becoming the longest running musical in the West End, a record it held for almost 40 years, until it was finally overtaken by "Salad Days". This first revival was a somewhat cut-down version, with a reduced number of scenes to enable it to be performed twice-nightly on its provincial tour. It was brought back into London for the Christmas period, with Oscar Ashe returning to play his original role. "For the occasion a new set of dresses has been provided. . . Though some of them may be remarkable for their brevity, all are notable for their effective colouring" (*Stage*)



"costumes. . . Remarkable for their brevity. . .!"

Original London production: His Majesty's, August 1916; 1st revival: Regent Theatre, Dec 1928

Future revivals: *Palace*, July 1940 (returned July 1941); *Empire Pool, Wembley (on ice!)*, July 1953
Finborough, July 2008



MR CINDERS

London run: Adelphi Theatre, February 11th—July 13th
 Transfer: London Hippodrome July 15th – March 29th 1930
 (Total 529 performances)

Music: Vivian Ellis & Richard Meyers
Lyrics: Leo Robin, Clifford Grey & Greatrex Norman
Book: Clifford Grey & Greatrex Newman
Director: George D. Parkes
Choreographer: Edward Dolly
Musical Director: Patrick Barrow
Producer: Julian Wylie

Cast: Bobby Howes (*Jim Lancaster*), Binnie Hale (*Jill Kemp*), Basil Howes (*Guy Lancaster*), David Hutcheson (*Lumley Lancaster*), Charles Cautley (*Henry Kemp*), Ruth Maitland (*Lady Lancaster*), Jack Heller (*Sir George Lancaster*), Thorpe Devereaux, Paddy Duprez, Lorna Hubbard, Phil Lester, Rene Mallory, Jack Melford, Reita Nugent, Edith Saville, Sebastian Smith. *Ensemble Ladies:* Jean Adrienne, Sheila Armstrong, Doris Collins, Eda Earle, Rita Elsie, Ella Fairbanks, Dorothy Greene, Kathlyn Holt, Alison Maclaren, Gracie May, Vera Wilson, *Gentlemen:* George Hornby, Norman Lonsdale, Ronald Massey, Freddie Nye, Billy Reynolds, Harry Webster.

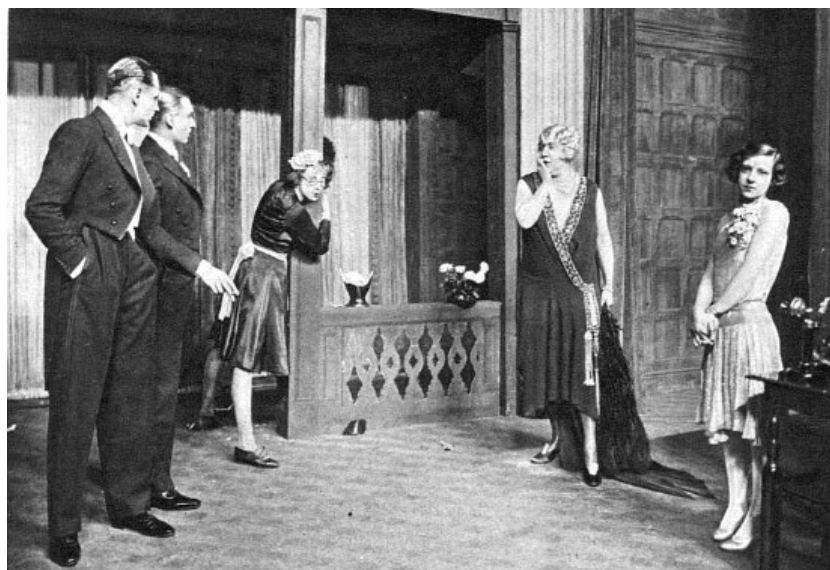
Story: Jim Lancaster is an adopted son forced to work as a menial for his snobbish stepmother, Lady Agatha, and her two foppish sons, Lumley and Guy. Jill, an American heiress, is giving a costume ball in the mansion of her father Henry Kemp and Lady Agatha sees this as an opportunity to catch a wealthy bride for one of her sons, but refuses to allow Jim to attend. Meanwhile Jill has disguised herself as a servant girl, "Sarah" and persuaded Minerva, her poor relation, to pretend to be Jill, while Jim manages to get to the ball in a disguise of his own. The plot then involves a stolen necklace, mistaken identity, and the discovery of a hat belonging to the mystery person who captured the thief. A search for the owner of the hat shows that it fits only Jim. He wins the £1,000 reward and learns that the maid "Sarah" is actually Jill, and she and Jim agree to get married. Lumley and Guy, meanwhile, announce their own engagements so all ends happily.

Notes: The show had opened at Blackpool in September 1928 and toured right through to its London opening at the Adelphi on February 11th. The London critics mostly did not enthuse over the show itself, though the lead performers came in for much praise: "A considerable part of the evening had gone before the piece shook off its languor and went merrily and even splendidly forward" (*Times*). "After a rather dull opening it was pleasant to see Binnie Hale once more. She has such vitality and so many talents... From his entry on roller skates, Bobby Howes has in his own way many of the qualities of Binnie Hale... and as they are on most of the time, the dull moments were comparatively few" (*Daily News*). "The lyrics may have been great stuff, but they were mostly inaudible. Mr. Howes and Miss Hale, however, were so good as to be almost compensation enough for everything else" (*Daily Herald*)

The initial problems must have been solved very quickly, and the show proved enormously successful with the public, and when "The Five o' Clock Girl" failed at the Hippodrome, "Mr Cinders" transferred and went on to achieve over 500 performances. It was filmed in 1934 with Kenneth and George Western (The Western Brothers) and Esme Church, Renee Houston and Ellen Pollock.

Original London production:
 Adelphi in February 1929

Future revivals:
King's Head/Fortune Dec 1982;
King's Head, Jan 1993



L to R: Jack Melford, Basil Howes, Binnie Hale, Ruth Maitland & Reita Nugent



OH, LETTY! (Tour)

London run: Lewisham Hippodrome, February 18th & week

Music: Billy Mayerl

Additional numbers: H.B. Hedley, Desmond Carter, Louis Alter

Lyrics: Frank Eyton

Book: Stanley Lupino

Director: Stanley Lupino & Austin Melford

Choreographer: Frederick Lord

Musical Director: Reginald Burton

Producer: Laddie Cliff

Cast: Mark Daly (*Tommy Robbins*), Jack Leopold (*Harry Miller*), Phyllis Monkman (*Letty Robbins*), Jennie Gregson (*Grace Miller*), Richard Murdoch (*Philip Brown*), Cecile Maule-Cole (*Mary Heath*), Florence Vie (*Mrs Owbridge*), Walter Amner (*James*), *Chorus not credited*

Story: Tommy Robbins and Harry Miller decide to swap wives for a week: one desires a better cook, and the other is longing for a more frivolous partner. (This was a different age from today - such an exchange could be portrayed as totally harmless and perfectly innocent!). It is obvious from the first that the plan will meet with total failure, and the husbands are glad indeed to return to their respective spouses at the end of the agreed time.

Notes: Based on the play by Oliver Morosco and Elmer Harris., this was first adapted into a musical by Austin Melford and it opened under the title "So Long, Letty" in October 1928 at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham. It toured for a month and then, on December 3rd in Sheffield, re-opened in a completely revised version written by Stanley Lupino. This new version, re-named "Oh, Letty!" was successful and booked for a six week Christmas run in Manchester followed by a few more weeks touring, ending at Lewisham

THE WHITE CAMELLIA

London run: Daly's, February 26th - April 20th
(62 performances)

Music: Pat Thayer and Arthur Wood

Lyrics: Arthur Wood, Clifford Seyler

Book: Laura Leycester

Director: Oscar Ashe

Musical Director: Arthur Wood

Producer: Harry Welchman

Cast: Harry Welchman (*Lt. Paul Carret*), Dorothy Brunton (*Fleurette*), Barry Mackay (*Sergeant*), M. Klit-Gaarde (*Major Otto Hummel*), Charles Barrett (*Count Legratz*), Barbara Everest (*Anna*), Conway Dixon (*Colonel Vandersyll*), Sylvia Forde/ Julie Suedo (*Sonda*), Maisie Bell, Lisa Coleman, Clifford Deri, Ernest Dini, George F. Ide, T. Minogue, Fred Rickett, Eric Roland, Everell Spain, Kenneth Sterne, Huntley Wright.



Dorothy Brunton

Story: Passadenia, a Ruritanian-type country is facing a revolution. Members of White Camellia movement wish to replace the present King Alexis with Prince Adolph, the elder son, banished for his excessive life-style. The Royalists, headed by Lieutenant Paul Carret, are fighting for the younger son, Prince Alexis. To complicate loyalties, Paul Carret falls in love with Fleurette, a supporter of the Revolutionaries. Major Otto Hummel is the villainous Royalist turncoat who betrays and arrests Paul. Fleurette comes to the rescue and decides to join the Royalists and, of course, marry the dashing Lieutenant. Other characters include Count Legratz, Anna, the old nurse, the elderly Colonel Vandersyll and Sonda, the fiery, cast off mistress.

Notes: The show had been touring for almost six months and had been considerably re-written and adapted on its journey into the West End. On the opening night in the West End the actress playing Sonda was taken ill, and the understudy, Sylvia Forde took over the role. The show itself was not a success, running for just 62 performances



MERRY MERRY

London run: Carlton Theatre, February 28th
 Transfer: Lyceum, April 22nd – June 22nd
 (Total 131 performances)

Music: Jack Waller, Harris Weston & Joseph A. Tunbridge

Lyrics: R.P. Weston & Bert Lee

Book: Adapted from Harlan Thompson and Harry Archer

Director: William Mollison

Choreographer: Ralph Reader

Musical Director: Percival Mackey

Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller

Cast: A.W. Baskcomb (*Henry Penwell*), Peggy O'Neill (*Sadie la Salle*), W.H. Berry (*Jimmie Diggs*), Cecily Cunningham (*Conchita Murphy*), Gladys Cruickshank (*Eve Walters*), Richard Dolman (*Adam Winslow*), George Vollaire (*Stephen Brewster*), Kitty Attfield, Veronica Brady, Hugh Fraser, Mollie Luck, Babette O'Deal, Leedham Stanley, Irene Veronica, Morgan & Levine, *Plus a 30-strong ensemble, not credited.*

Story: A middle-aged noodle named Henry Penwell is sued for £5,000, accused of breaking the rib of Sadie la Salle, a musical comedy star. The injury is said to have occurred when he squeezed her too tight whilst driving her home after the show one night. This is a put-up job, organised by Jimmie Diggs, a Press agent, who needs his share of the money to marry his girlfriend, Conchita Murphy. Sadie persuades her friend, Eve Walters to impersonate her injured self, and this raises much jealousy from Adam Winslow (Eve's lover) and Stephen Brewster (Sadie's possessive boyfriend).

Notes: This was adapted from an original story by Harlan Thompson and Harry Archer. With a dancing chorus of 20 women and 10 men, and some interpolated speciality acts, it was more a musical variety show than a musical comedy. It received poor notices - "Its humour is by no means so effective as it should be with such experienced comedians at disposal, nor are some of the scenes as snappy or cohesive as one could wish" (*Stage*)

" If it turns out a success it will be owing to the dancing. for there is no music worthy of the name, and little comedy... The dancing is first rate, and it is a long time since I have seen such a well-drilled chorus, it is, in fact, trained to the last toe" (*Daily News*); The story has its dull moments and some of the jokes have been chestnuts for years, but 'Merry Merry' serves as vehicle for a typical Clayton and Waller production. Perhaps the stars of the evening were the ladies of the chorus and the inventive Mr. Ralph Reader, who arranged the dances and ensembles. Rarely has such a pretty collection of girls been seen on the stage, and the frocks they wear are ravishingly beautiful" (*Era*) .

Despite a transfer to the newly decorated Lyceum, it lasted just four months.



Photo by : Stage Photo Co

A.W. Baskcomb, Cecily Cunningham & W.H. Berry

LOVE LIES



London run: Gaiety Theatre, March 20th - January 18th 1930
(347 performances)

Music: Hal Brody

Lyrics: Desmond Carter

Additional songs: Da Sylva, Henderson & Brown, Billy Mayerl, Frank Eyton & Leslie Sarony

Book: Stanley Lupino & Arthur Rigby

Director: Arthur Rigby & Stanley Lupino

Choreographer: Frederick Lord

Musical Director: Harry Acres

Producer: Laddie Cliff

Cast: Laddie Cliff (*Rolly Ryder*), Connie Emerald (*Joyce Ryder*), Harry Wotton (*Uncle Nicholas*), Stanley Lupino (*Jerry Walker*), Stuart Mellor (*Uncle Cyrus*), Cyril Ritchard (*Jack Stanton*), Madge Elliot (*Valerie St Claire*), Wyn Weaver (*Lord Luston*), Arty Ash, Bubbles Brown, Noel Courtland, Master James Croome, Kathleen Dennys, Pat Fraser, Alex Hall, Dorothy Langley, Walter E. Wallis, *Plus a large chorus not credited*

Story: Rolly Ryder, who runs an art school in Torquay, has just married Joyce even though his Uncle Nicholas in Australia has written his firm opposition. Rolly's friend Jerry Walker similarly has a distant uncle, Uncle Cyrus, in South America – but in this case the uncle is urging his nephew to find a girl, get married and settle down. A third friend, Jack Stanton, has fallen in love with Valerie St Clair, but since she is so far above him, he has pretended to be a Lord Luston – picking the name out of thin air. Naturally both Uncles and the real Lord Luston turn up unannounced, and many complications ensue, involving knockabout farce and even cross-dressing.

Notes: This was the re-opening show at the newly redecorated and slightly enlarged Gaiety Theatre. Seven composers, two librettists and a lyric writer were credited in the programme, but “Hal Brody” was a made-up name covering several other unnamed song-writers. The music was described as “often taking and tuneful and often noisy and jazzish.. Which is just as well seeing that only two of the principals seem to be trained and capable vocalists” (*Stage*)

The leading players, Laddie Cliff and Stanley Lupino, “are evidently determined to do all they can to restore the house to its former position among theatres presenting musical entertainments. They certainly have made an excellent start with ‘Love Lies’ which is largely a dancing show, and also, to use a now accepted phrase, one constructed for ‘laughing purposes’. Nimble and often acrobatic dancing and honest fooling, clever as well as diverting, are among the constituent elements of a capital show” (*ibid*).

“The story is quite nonsensical, but why trouble to have a story at all? The sentimental moments are excruciating, and poor Mr. Cyril Ritchard has lines that would have baffled Henry Irving. The fun is in capable hands. Mr. Laddie Cliff and Mr. Stanley Lupino work really well together... ~ Altogether u very bright show” (*Daily Herald*). “Better rough and tumble fooling is not to be seen in London... Everyone seemed very pleased, and it is a good show for those who are not too particular” (*Daily Mirror*)

The show was an instant success at the box office and had a profitable run of some ten months and 347 performances.



Laddie Cliff & Stanley Lupino



THE FIVE O'CLOCK GIRL

London run: London Hippodrome, March 21st - June 22nd
(122 performances)

Music & Lyrics: Bert Kalmar & Harry Ruby

Book: Guy Bolton & Fred Thompson

Director: John Harwood

Choreographer: Fred A. Leslie & Charles Brooks

Musical Director: Charles Prentice

Cast: Jean Colin (*Patricia Brown*), Hermione Baddeley (*Susie Snow*), Mary Sheridan (*Madame Rosalie*), Ernest Truex (*Gerald Brooks*), George Grossmith (*Huggins*), Ursula Jeans (*Cora*), Cecil Mannering (*Ramon Martinez*), Richard Murdoch (*Ronnie Webb*), Peggy Beaty, Alec Chantrens, Eddie Childs, Chester Field, Gus McNaughton, Madeleine Parker, Tom Scott. *Speciality Dancers:* Adams Sisters

Story: Patricia Browne, along with Susie Snow, is employed at the Snowflake Cleaners' Shop. Mme. Rosalie, the owner of a nearby dressmaker's fashion shop, informs Pat that she is the winner of a beauty prize, and will become chief model at Rosalie's other place of business at Pourville-sur-mer. Secretly Pat has been having a "telephone affair" – every evening at 5pm she and the wealthy Gerald Brooks engage in a sweet-nothings phone conversation – though neither has actually met the other. It turns out that Gerald's valet, Huggins, has been having a face-to-face romance with Susie Snow, but Gerald has been pretending he is a millionaire. The meetings, confusions, misunderstandings and the inevitable 1920s plot device of a stolen emerald necklace also involve Gerald's former fiancée, Cora, and her new lover, the fiery Sicilian, Ramon Martinez. Eventually, of course, the whole muddle is suitably and happily sorted out.

Notes: The notices were mostly polite, but unenthusiastic: "As a whole the piece is patchy, perhaps, but there are enough good patches to get it over" (*Daily Mirror*). The Hippodrome has become thoroughly used to success of late years, and although its latest musical play, 'The Five O' Clock Girl' does not increase its reputation, it does little harm to it. Ernest Truex makes his first English appearance in this kind of play, and as the hero is a definite acting and a moderate singing success. A new leading lady in Jean Colin is welcome considering the scarcity of good specimens of that breed" (*Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News*). "A chirpy little story lifts this show above the general run of musical farces. Ernest Truex actually shakes a nifty leg, and George Grossmith gives his well-known impersonation of himself (helped by Hermione Baddeley)" (*The Sphere*).

It was the only Hippodrome show to feature the highly popular George Grossmith, and it was felt that his part as the valet did not provide him with enough opportunities to achieve his usual, expected impact. The show failed to catch on with the public, and came off after just thirteen weeks. However, in an interview George Grossmith said: "In the halcyon days of the Gaiety if a play was a success it ran for three years; if it was not so successful, we had to be content with a miserable one year. In these days, when musical entertainment is provided not only by theatres, music-halls, and cinemas, but also by hotels, restaurants, cafes, riverside resorts, to say nothing of the gramophone and the wireless, five or six months may be looked upon as a healthy run." (*Stage*)



Photo by : Stage Photo Co

Ursula Jeans and Cecil Mannering

THE NEW MOON

London run: Theatre Royal, Drury Lane , April 4th - August 17th
(148 performances)

Music: Sigmund Romberg

Lyrics: Oscar Hammerstein II

Book: Hammerstein, Frank Mandel & Lawrence Schwab.

Director: Felix Edwardes

Choreographer: Bobby Connolly

Musical Director: Herman Finck



Cast: Evelyn Laye (*Marianne Beauvoir*), Howett Worster (*Robert Mission*), Gene Gerrard (*Alexander*), Ben Williams (*Philippe*), Dolores Farris (*Julie*)
Vincent Clive, Gordon Crocker, Walter Donohue, Roy Emerton, Hubert Ennor, Dolores Farris, Kathleen Gerrard, Margey Hicklin, Ernest Ludlow, Barrie Livesey, Jack Livesey, John MacMahon, Selwyn Morgan, Vera Pearce, Edmund Willard
Ensemble: *Misses:* Hero Allen, Sybil Allnatt, Cynthia Arthurs, Margaret Boyle, Corine Brandt, Nancy Brown, Dorothy Cooper, Rita Cooper, Dorothy Crofts, Muriel Cronshaw, Zita Da Costa, Eileen Dubarry, Constance Edwardes, Molly Egbert, Nancy Eshelby, Kathleen Fitchie, Lena Fitchie, Winnie Ford, Nan Forster, Joyce Gabelle, Grace Garrod, Kathleen Gerrard, Carnegie Hazel, Joyce Holloway, Maureen Julian, Mavice Kalmar, Elsie Lawrence, Alma Lee, Linda Lindose, Peggy Lovat, Nance Miriam, Mary Morris, Myrette Morven, Phyllis Neal, Esme Oxley, Eileen PEMBERTHY, Constance Perrin, Sylva Phipps, Audrey Robbins, Marjorie Ross, Rosalind Snow, Christine Symons, Winifred Talbot, Billie Webb; *Messers:* Bernard S. Adams, Reginald Adams, Jack Allen, Arthur Bell, C. Britton-Eldred, Kennedy Brooker, Eric Broster, Haydn Campbell, William Colvin, Richard Crawford, Herbert Court, Gordon Crocker, Walter Cutler, Vincent Davis, John Delaney, Edward Del Foss, Tom Drew, Alfred Fairhurst, Walter Farrance, Egbert Faul, Harry Fergusson, Reginald Gibson, Alvon Hawke, Ivan Hawkes, William Herbert, Clifford Kennedy, Donald Kingstone, Harry Lacey, Leonard Lowe, Ernest Ludlow, Guy Lynton, T. G. MacBenn, Trevor Mansell, Phillip Merritt, David Morgan, Selwyn Morgan, Basil Neale, Roy Neilson, G Pennington, H.E. Richards, J.W. Robinson, Victor Robson, John O. Scott, Ronald Stear, Eric Sutherland, Scott Thompson. William Wallace, Alfred Ward, A. C. Whitehead, A. J. Willard.

Story: Set in New Orleans in 1792, this is the story of Robert Mission, a French nobleman who, threatened with arrest in his native France, has fled to America and is working in disguise as a bondsman. He is captured and shipped back to France on the “New Moon”, whose passenger list includes his beloved, Marianne Beauvoir. Robert’s loyal followers take over the ship and rescue their hero, who takes Marianne with him and establishes a colony of freemen on the Isle of Pines. A year later the Revolution in France has overthrown the monarchy, and Robert is exonerated and appointed Governor of the Island.

Notes: The original Broadway production opened in September 1928 after a troubled gestation period involving an abandoned tour, a new book, new songs, and several cast changes. It finally won through and ran for 509 performances. It was not so lucky in London, despite excellent reviews: “It is safe to say no musical play has been better sung, more effectively acted, or mounted on a more sumptuous way” (*Daily Mirror*); “It has all the magnificence and splendour of a Cochran revue combined with music of rare charm and unusual quality. There is not one note of syncopation in the score... nothing American about this all-American musical comedy. Pep is sacrificed to beauty; the dreamy waltz takes the place of the Black Bottom and ... no one utters those blessed words ‘baby’ or ‘sweetie’” (*Weekly Dispatch*); it is “sumptuous musical comedy with beautiful clothes and elaborate sets, while the scene of the fight with a pirate ship takes one back to the days of Drury Lane’s spectacular melodramas” (*Daily Herald*)



Evelyn Laye as Marianne

Although it was the fourth successive Hammerstein musical to play Drury Lane, it turned out to be the least successful, and managed just a four month run. Announcing the end of the run, Sir Alfred Butt issued the following statement to the Press: “The New Moon is playing to £4,000 a week, but those receipts do not justify its continuance in the bill. The chief outgoings are as follows: Artists’ salaries £1,587; authors’ and composers’ fees £543; orchestra £279; stage staff £231; lighting and warming £183; advertising £330; house staff £199; upkeep of wardrobe £131. The important item of rent and other charges is not included. There is also the production outlay to be taken into account. The policy of the big musical play – especially from America with authors and composers taking more than one-eighth of the total receipts – is a very hazardous one”.

Photo by Janet Jevons



Marjery Wyn

THE LADY OF THE ROSE (1st Revival)

London run: Daly's, April 26th - May 18th
(27 Performances)

Music: Jean Gilbert

Original Book & Lyrics: Rudolph Schanzer & Ernest Welitsch

English Book: Frederick Lonsdale

English Lyrics: Harry Graham

Director: Herbert Bryan

Choreographer: Espinosa

Musical Director: Arthur Wood

Producer: Harry Welchman

Cast: Adrian Burgon (*Count Adrian Beltrami*), Huntley Wright (*Suitangi*),
Harry Welchman (*Colonel Belovar*), Marjery Wyn (*Countess Mariana*),
Leo Sheffield (*Baron Sprotti-Sprotti*), Greta Fayne (*Sophie Lavalle*),

Allan Dale, Vincent Lawson, Ethel Oliver, Eric Roland, Leonard Treer,

Notes: The failure of "The White Camellia" caused Harry Welchman to withdraw the show after just eight weeks, and, in order to find a show to fill his contracted weeks at Daly's, he decided to revive "The Lady of the Rose", his great success from 1922 at the same theatre. This revival opened just six days after "The White Camellia" had closed. Sadly, there was little public appetite for the revival, and it closed after three weeks and two days. At this point Harry Welchman decided to abandon his attempts at producing. He immediately took over the role of Robert in "The New Moon" at Drury Lane, replacing Howett Worster who was leaving for a previous contract in America.

Original London production: Daly's, February 1922

1st revival: Daly's, April 1929

MARIETTE

London run: His Majesty's, June 3rd - 29th
(4 week limited season)

Music: Oscar Straus

Book & Lyrics: Sacha Guitry

Director: Sacha Guitry

Musical Director: Raol Labis

Producer: C.B. Cochran

Cast: Sacha Guitry (*Prince Louis-Napoleon III*),
Yvonne Printemps (*Mariette Fleury*), M. Aquistapace (*Roi Jerome*)
Mlle. Alfreda, Fernand Bonavia, Charles Chanot, Clara Dorel,
Jacques Gautier, Georges Lemaire, Marie Rocca, Emile Roques,
Renée Senac, Charlotte Treslin,

Story: The first Act shows Prince Louis Napoleon in a stage box at the Théâtre d'Amiens in 1848 admiring the actress Mariette Fleury in a third-rate romantic opera. In the second Act they meet and start a liaison which ends rather sadly in a villa in St Cloud. The third Act is in "modern" times and shows Mariette as a tottering old centenarian who tells a journalist a wonderful but totally untrue story about her affair with the Emperor and of the stormy scene between the Emperor and Jerome Bonaparte on the night of the coup d'état in that very room.



Photo by Sasha

Sacha Guitry & Yvonne Printemps

Notes: This was a French-language production with the title "Mariette, ou comment on écrit l'histoire" and featured the enormously popular husband-and-wife French stars Sacha Guitry and Yvonne Printemps. Guitry originally prepared the work as a play for Sarah Bernhardt, but it ended as a play with music. Guitry enjoyed appearing in contrasting double-roles and played Napoleon and the journalist. It had a great success in Paris in 1928, and it was this production that played His Majesty's for a month-long season.



HOLD EVERYTHING

London run: Palace Theatre, June 12th - November 9th
(173 performances)

Music: Ray Henderson

Lyrics: B.G. DeSylva & Lew Brown

Book: John McGowan & DeSylva

Adapted by R.P. Weston & Bert Lee

Director: William Mollison

Choreographer: Ralph Reader

Musical Director: J.A. Tunbridge

Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller

Cast: Owen Nares (*Jim Brooks*), Mamie Watson (*Sue O'Keefe*),
George Gee (*Spike Skinner*), John Kirby (*Chubby Bartlett*),

Pamela Carme (*Norine Lloyd*), Sunny Jarmann (*Toots*), Joseph Cunningham, Nina Devitt, James French, George Gilbert, Ernest Graham, Desmond Jeans, Max Kirby, Barry Mackay, Charles Mortimer, Percy Parsons, Lancelot Quinn.

Ensemble Ladies: Peggy Bedell, Marjorie Bouchier, Molly Bouchier, Constance Carr, Eileen Clifton, Kathleen Cops, Cecile Colledge, Irene Coly, Dorothy Dampier, Norah Dawes, Margaret Gordon, Doreen Hayes, Connie Harris, Norah Henderson, Lilie Lance, Elsie Lewis, Lucille Langley, Margaret Nelson, Susan Novack, Dorothy Passmore, Rosemary Rock, Maisie Rose, Mary Taylor, Sonia Watson; *Gentlemen* Adrian Beaumont, Billy Forder, Edward King, Ian Lennox, Henry Lemoine, James Leversedge Jeffrey Piddock, J. Redvers-Sheppard, Tony Smythe, Richard Thorpe, Eric Warren, Harry Wendley.

Story: Sonny Jim Brooks is a welterweight boxing challenger in love with his girl, Sue, who is “the cream in his coffee”. He becomes temporarily distracted by the wealthy Norine Lloyd, who persuades him he should develop technical skills rather than rely on brute force. But when Jim learns that the champion has insulted Sue, his killer instincts are aroused and he successfully wins the championship and defends the honour of his beloved.

Notes: The Broadway premiere of this show in October 1928 was the second in what turned out to be a series of four musical comedies by DeSylva, Brown and Henderson, all based on modern sports and fads (The others were “Good News”, “Follow Through” and “Flying High”). The New York production ran for 413 performances, but only managed 173 in London following mostly indifferent reviews : “It is a mediocre show which has been most skilfully produced” (*Daily News*); “the lyrics, so called, are even weaker and more feebly phrased than one finds in the generality of such pieces, and there is nothing very catchy about the at times rather noisy music” (*Stage*).

The main point of interest was the appearance of Owen Nares, a well-established and experienced leading man in West End plays and many silent films. He was a box-office draw, but had very limited experience in musicals, and was physically somewhat unsuitable for the role of a welterweight boxer. “As the prevailing ‘big noises’ in English musical comedy, Messrs Clayton and Waller cannot be congratulated on this piece of casting. By engaging Mr Nares for his name rather than his abilities (which are considerable)...they have placed him in a rather ridiculous position. The conduct of a big theatre like the Palace should not be treated in the same spirit as a booth at the Actors’ Garden Party” (*Graphic*)

Just one month into the London run Owen Nares asked to be released from his contract, saying that he felt more suited to the dramatic stage than to musical comedy, and, from the matinee on June 29th he was replaced by Arthur Margetson. On the same day Dorothy Dickson replaced Mamie Watson. The production survived a further four months.



L to R: George Gee, John Kirby, Sunny Jarmann
Mamie Watson & Owen Nares

BITTER SWEET

London run: His Majesty's, July 18th - February 28th 1920

Transfer: Palace Theatre, March 2nd 1931 – March 21st

(Total 697 performances)

Returned to Lyceum, April 13th – May 9th, 1931 (32 perfs)

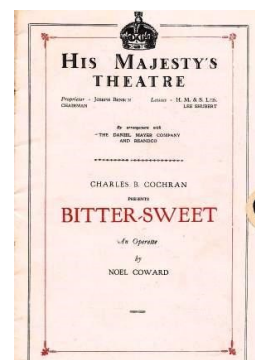
Music, Book & Lyrics: Noel Coward

Director: Noel Coward

Choreographer: Tilly Losch

Musical Director: Reginald Burston

Producer: C.B. Cochran



Cast: Peggy Wood (*Sarah Millick*), George Metaxa (*Carl Linden*),

Ivy St Helier (*Manon*), Billy Milton (*Vincent Howard*), Robert Newton (*Hugh Devon*), Norah Howard (*Gussi*),

Alan Napier (*Marquis of Shayne*), Robert Algar (*Capt. Schenzi*), Arthur Alexander, Penryn Bannersman,

Isla Bevan, Dorothy Boyd, Anthony Brian, Eileen Carey, Richard Cornish, Hugh Cuenod, Winifred Davis,

Maie Drage, Claude Farrow, José Fearon, John Gatrell, Sydney Grammer, William Harn,

Clifford Heatherley, Rose Hignell, Betty Huntley-Wright, Elaine Inescourt, Eric Lauriston, Maureen Moore,

Gerald Nodin, Leonard Pearce, Mary Pounds, Victor Robson, Marjorie Rogers, Roy Russell, Millie Sim,

Eva Sternroyd, Robert Sturtivant, R. J. Thurgood, Austin Trevor, Keira Tuson, Kenneth Ware,

Ensemble Ladies: Mildred Allen-Letts, Vera Bertie, Nancy Bevill, Yvonne Bose, Joan Brooke, Bettie Bucknell,

Nina Carleton, Norah Chapman, Mabel Couper, Olive Darby, Eleanor Darville, Lucy Feorde, Gladys Goodwin,

Kitty Gordon, Peggy Grimmett, Marjorie Heal, Dodo Jay, Margaret Lancaster, Freda Marcus, Delta Miller,

Felicity Monkman, Mai Orton, Joan Panter, Audrey Pointing, Leonta Proctor, Sheila Rawle, Fedora Rozelli, Enid Settle,

Verna Shaxon, Barbara Silverius, Doris Treverne, Marcelle Turner, Mary Tudor, Ena Wood Sims, Victoria Yates,

Gentlemen: John Allen, Charles Apsey, Leonard Bryant, Charles S. Cartwright, J. Delmayne, Frank Freeman,

Hugh French, M. Hackforth, Tommy Hayes, Tom Johnson, Frank Linden, G. Martin, Fergus O'Connor, Alfred O'Farrell,

Tom Paxford, Leonard Pennell, William Reid, Jack Ricketts, Ray Rivington, Jack Rose, Lionel Stamford, Bill Skyrme,

Allan Thorpe, Kingston Trollope, Cyril Whittle, Arthur Wilson, Frank Worth, Harry Young.

Story: Told in flashback, the sentimental tale is concerned with headstrong Sarah Millick, who in 1875 leaves her intended bridegroom in London and elopes to Vienna with music teacher, Carl Linden. Five years later her happiness is shattered when Carl is killed in a duel, but she goes on to become a prima-donna and marry the faithful Marquis of Shayne.

Notes: The cast of the original London production included the American actress, Peggy Wood, and the Romanian, Georges Metaxa in addition to Billy Milton and Robert Newton. Following its hugely successful run of nearly 700 performances the show moved to Streatham Hill for one week, then Golders Green for a

further two weeks, before coming back into the West End for a short run at the Lyceum. It was an outstanding and immediate hit: a “dramatically interesting, musically charming and spectacularly brilliant work” (*Stage*); “Triumphant... Mr Coward does know his job... startling in its effectiveness” (*Era*)



During its long run there were a number of cast replacements – notably Evelyn Laye, who had been the original first choice for the leading role, but had turned it down because she had quarrelled with the producer. However, when she saw the success of the show she naturally changed her mind, and agreed to play the role for the Broadway production, and later took over from Peggy Wood in London

The show was produced on Broadway at the Ziegfeld Theatre in November 1929 and revived again in New York in 1934.

Original London production: His Majesty's, July 1929

Future revivals: Wimbledon/Croydon (tour) Feb/June 1970; Sadler's Wells, Feb 1988

Peggy Wood & George Metaxa



Edith Day & Roy Russell

ROSE MARIE (1st Revival)

London run: Drury Lane, September 12th
(Limited 12 week season)

Music: Rudolf Friml & Herbert Stothart

Lyrics & Book: Otto Harbach & Oscar Hammerstein II

Director: Felix Edwardes

Choreographer: J. Kathryn Scott

Musical Director: Wolseley Charles

Producer: Tom Arnold & Bernard Delfont

Cast: Edith Day (*Rose Marie*),
Roy Russell (*Jim Kenyon*),
Clarice Hardwicke (*Lady Jane*),
Gene Gerrard (*Hardboiled Herman*),
Jack Livesey (*Edward Hawley*), Hazel Gaudreau (*Wanda*),
Charles Meakins (*Sgt Malone*), Barrie Livesey (*la Flamme*),
Marjorie Chard, Percy Parsons, *Ensemble not listed*

Notes: The first run of the show played the Theatre Royal Drury Lane from March 10th 1925 to March 26th 1927, a total of 864 performances. It had been touring the provinces since then, but was brought back into the West End for a limited run of twelve weeks, to fill the gap left by the early closure of "The New Moon". Sir Alfred Butt had managed to persuade the original star, Edith Day, to return for this revival.

Original London production: Drury Lane, March 1925;
1st revival: Drury Lane, Sept 1929; *Future revivals:*
Stoll July 1942; Victoria Palace, Aug 1960;
Wimbledon (tour) Nov 1974



Charles Meakins Edith Day & Barrie Livesey



FOLLOW THROUGH

London run: Dominion Theatre, October 3rd - February 8th 1930
(148 performances)

Music: Ray Henderson

Lyrics: B.G. DeSylva & Lew Brown

Book: Laurence Schwab & DeSylva

Director: Leslie Henson

Choreographer: Arthur Apell

Musical Director: Percival Mackey

Producer: Alfred Butt

Cast: Leslie Henson (*Jack Martin*), Mark Lester (*J. Bickersley Blewitt*),
Ada May (*Angie Howard*), Ivy Tresman (*Lora Moore*),
Elsie Randolph (*Ruth Vanning*), Bernard Clifton (*Jerry Downs*),

Rita Page (*Babs Bascomb*), Harry Pélissier (*Thomas Dinty Moore*), John Avril, John Barker,
Auriel Beresford, William Black, Viola Compton, Eric Bridson, Rachel Fry, Iris Kirk White, Harry Loss,
Madge Martin, Charles Stone,

Ensemble Ladies : A. Anstruther, B. Archer, Mary Barlow, Mary Beard, Roma Beaumont, Margaret Beesley,
A. Beresford, Fanny Charles, Joyce Compton, Marjorie Daw, Billie Dell, Barbara Dene, Rae Farnham, Ada Fay,
R. Fry, V. Fothergill, Gwen Garton, Babs Hope, Dorothy Jackson, Gladys Lincoln, Vi Marsten, Madge Martin,
Dorothy Matthews, Renee May, M. Maxwell, Eileen Robinson, Trixie Scales, Margo Scott, Wendy Sheldon,
Bee Thayer, Irene Veronica, J. Vilesid, Jenny Warden, Dorothy Willard, Sheila Wilson; *Gentlemen*: John Barker,
Eric Bridson, Harold Eden, J. Farrell, Barney Gordon, Norman Graham, Ivan Hawkins, Hal Higgins, Tony Holley,
Reg Hurst, Jack Kingsland, Harry Loss, Barry Macdonald, Basil Neale, Neil O'Brien, Fred Plant,
James Seacombe, Chas Stevens, Andre Verdi, Fred Wallace.

The Idare et Cie Mannequins: Auriol, Averil, Babette, Barbara, Felicity, Jacquelin, Janita, Rachel, Sylvia, Valerie.

Story: Before the show opens, a family heirloom ring has been acquired by a lady at a fancy dress ball and Jack Martin really must get it back – but who was this disguised lady? He and his friend J. Bickersley-Blewitt recognise it on the finger of Angie Howard and are themselves involved in all manner of disguises in their attempts at recovery. Meantime there is rivalry for the feminine golf championship between Lora Moore, daughter of a golf professional, and visiting player, Ruth Vanning. Professional golf ace Jerry Downs is enlisted to help Lora to success, and romance ensues, followed by further romantic relationships between Bickersley Blewitt and Ruth Vanning – and the youngsters Babs Bascomb and Thomas Dinty Moore.

Notes: After their musicals about football (“Good News”) and boxing (“Hold Everything”) this one was about golf - and was their second London musical in a three month period. The original New York production opened in January 1929 and ran for 403 performances. It was notable for giving Jack Haley his first major comic role as “Jack Martin”.

The London production had a cast of some sixty players and was chosen as the first show to open the new Dominion Theatre in Tottenham Court Road. It received a slew of bad notices: The basic golf story “becomes wearisome, and it is overburdened with the uninteresting love stories of what are really minor characters. .. The music is passable... and there is the fascinating Ada May. It is worth seeing for her sake alone... seldom has so gifted an artist appeared suddenly on the London stage” (*Daily News*); “many dully-written scenes... it is difficult to stifle a yawn” (*Era*).

It survived a three month run, possibly because of interest in seeing the inside of the palatial new theatre



Charles Stone, Harry Pelissier, Rita Page & Viola Compton

A YANKEE AT THE COURT OF KING ARTHUR

London run: Daly's, October 10th - November 16th
(43 performances)

Music: Richard Rodgers

Lyrics: Lorenz Hart

Additional numbers: Vivian Ellis & Desmond Carter

Book: Herbert Fields

Director: David Miller

Choreographer: Fred Leslie & Charles Brooks

Musical Director: Arthur Wood

Cast: Harry Fox (*Martin*), Norah Robinson (*Fay Morgan*),
Constance Carpenter (*Alice Carter*), J.G. Taylor (*Merlin*),
Billy Holland (*Gerald Lake*), Gladys Cruickshank (*Evelyn*),
Sam Livesey (*Arthur Pendragos*), J.C. Aubrey, William D. Fazan,
Fred Hearne, Cliff Jones, Clifford Kibbler, Victoria Sievers,
Paul Stanton, Dolly Summers., *Ensemble not listed*



Norah Robinson & Harry Fox

Photo by : Stage Photo Co

Story: On the eve of his marriage to Fay Morgan, Martin is accidentally knocked unconscious by his bride-to-be. He dreams he is back in the days of King Arthur, where he wins the confidence of the King by industrialising the country, and also wins the heart of the maiden Alice. When he regains consciousness, Martin realises he is about to marry the wrong girl, and turns instead to the modern-day equivalent of Alice.

Notes: Based on the book by Mark Twain, the show was first produced on Broadway in November 1927 under the title "A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur". The original choreographer was Busby Berkeley. It was a great success in New York, so it came as a great surprise when the London production - given a more "English" title - "A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur" - was a flop, running for just 43 performances. The London critics ranged from unenthusiastic to scathingly dismissive: "a rather childish charade brightened by some of the conventional features of modern musical comedy, including attractive musical numbers by Hart and Rodgers" (*Daily Mirror*); "most puerile rubbish" (*Sunday People*). There was, however, much praise for the American, Harry Fox, in the role of Martin, said to be the only good reason for going to see the show. (The New York revival in 1943 added six new songs, including the showstopper "To Keep My Love Alive" and was updated so that all the characters appeared in military uniforms. The revival was Lorenz Hart's last work for the theatre - he died five days after the opening night.)

Original London production: Daly's October 1929; *Future revival: Regent's Park, July 1993*

THE STUDENT PRINCE (1st Revival)

London run: Piccadilly Theatre, November 7th to December 28th (59 performances)

Music: Sigmund Romberg

Lyrics & Book: Dorothy Donnelly

Director: Edward Scanlon

Music Director: K. Ernest Irving

Cast: Donald Mather (*Karl Franz*), Stella Browne (*Kathie*), Harry Brindle (*Dr Engel*), George Hassell (*Lutz*),
Marie Burke (*Princess Margaret*), John Coast (*Capt. Tarnitz*), David Henley (*Detlef*),
Emil de Velten (*Asterberg*), Frank J. Arlton, Sydney Arnold, Reginald Austin, Adrian Burgon,
Florence Desmond, Sidney Elliott, Wilfred Essex, George Hassell, Clifford Kennedy, Elizabeth Malcolm,
Ian McCarthy, John McDonald, W. Norman, Alice O'Day, C. Schaefer, Fred Terriss, Fred Tonge,
F. Warren, *Ensemble not listed*

Notes: This first revival was an attempt by the Piccadilly Theatre to return to live shows - since the closure of "Blue Eyes" it had been used as a cinema. However, despite excellent notices, after a run of just over seven weeks the production was withdrawn, and the Piccadilly announced a five-week run of films pending its next attempt at live theatre.

Original London run: His Majesty's February 1926; 1st Revival: Piccadilly, Nov 1929

Future revivals: Alhambra, June 1931; Coliseum, Sept 1936; Garrick, June 1939;

Prince of Wales, Jan 1943; Palace, May 1967

DEAR LOVE

London run: Palace Theatre, November 14th – March 8th 1930
(132 performances)

Music: Haydn Wood, Joseph A. Tunbridge & Jack Waller

Lyrics & Book: Dion Titheradge, Lauri Wylie & Herbert Clayton

Director: William Mollison

Choreographer: Ralph Reader

Musical Director: Simms Waller

Producer: Herbert Clayton & Jack Waller

Cast: Annie Croft (*Suzanne*), Sydney Howard (*Maurice*), Tom Burke (*Pierre*), Ena Grossmith (*Marie*), Claude Hulbert (*Peter Twigley*), Luise Blackburn, Lisa Coleman, Kate Cutler, The DeStiffano Brothers, Dino Galvani, Ernest Graham, Philip Merritt, Jack Morris, Robert Nainby, Vera Pearce, Elgar Villiers, Eric Wardroper. **Ensemble:** Luise Blackburn, Molly Bouchier, Tom Devine, Keith Gerard, Yetta Luberti, Molly Luck, Terry Rendle, Tony Sympson.

Story: Upon her marriage Suzanne will inherit a huge fortune if she follows the strange conditions in her deceased uncle's will: a time limit by which she must marry, and her husband must hold a title. With time running out, Maurice, her father, is desperate, and hits on Pierre, a Bohemian artist-Count who agrees to marry Suzanne "in name only" in return for £1,000. (She will inherit a million!) He is not allowed to see the bride before the ceremony itself, and must agree to depart immediately. At one point he mistakes Suzanne's sister, Marie, for his bride to be, and, at the wedding itself, where his bride is veiled, he is ashamed of his decision, and throws the money on the floor. Suzanne herself, is so impressed and smitten, that she pursues him, pretending to be her own sister, and finally persuading him to elope before revealing the truth that they are already legally married.

Notes: With lavish modern dances, a ballet scene, an accordion speciality act, a comic drunk scene and a leading Covent Garden tenor as Pierre, this was all-round entertainment, heavily promoted as a "British" show. It was welcomed by some: "...it takes us back to the best traditions of the English musical comedy stage. It is not made up of legs and jazz, the principals can really sing, and are given stuff that demands singing voices. Even the plot belongs to the good old days, and the humour is not of an imported type. It is a real breakaway from the Americanisation of musical comedy. And it looks like being a big success" (*Reynolds' News*)

Others were not so sure: "A hall-marked all-British production, it has even the national virtues and the national failings. In the latter category it is perhaps little leisurely, the humour is of the kipper school, and the music is tuneful rather than original. On the assets side there is some real singing... One does not expect much intelligence of a musical comedy heroine, but the entirely idiotic behaviour of this one exceeded the normal" (*Daily Herald*).

"Even if all the sextet (of authors and composers) are British-born, that need not justify the ridiculous all-British stunt set rolling about a play with scenes and characters generally French, and with lively and spirited music more akin to that of Offenbach or Lecocq than to that of Arthur Sullivan" (*Stage*). It failed to run longer than three and a half months.



Annie Croft & Tom Burke

THE ROSE AND THE RING (1st Revival)

London run: Lyric Hammersmith, December 26th - January 25th 1930
(Total 36 performances)

Music & Book: Christabel Marillier

Lyrics: John Arthington, Hilaire Belloc, Clifford Bax, Renee Hayes

Director: Stephen Thomas

Choreographer: Leslie French

Musical Director: Alfred Reynolds

Cast: Dorothy Gill (*Fairy Blackstick*), Julien Henry (*Jenkins Gruffanuff*), Lawrence Baskcomb (*King Vaoloroso*), Vivienne Chatterton (*The Queen*), Adrienne Brune (*Angelica*), Frederick Ranalow (*Giglio*), Violet Gould (*Countess Gruffanuff*), Stanley Vilven (*Prince Bulbo*), Sylvia Nelis (*Princess Rosalba*), Frank Drew, Edgar Elmes, Dewey Gibson, Henry Latimer, Cicely Nicks, H.P. Owen.

Ensemble Misses Anna Brunton, Joan Butterfield, Joan Garner, Carole Rose, Betty Scorer, Rita Tate, Betty Wedgewood; *Messrs* Geoffrey Davis, Emlyn Bebb, Arnold Matters, Edward Forsyth,

Notes: This was a revival of the production first staged a year earlier, with several of the original cast returning to their roles. "Perhaps more a grown-ups show, but I am sure the young ones will enjoy it" (*Reynolds News*)

Original London production: Apollo, November 1928 (trans Playhouse)

1st revival: Lyric Hammersmith, Dec 1929