

# APPENDIX G

## SURVEY OF ARTISTS AND MANAGERS ASSOCIATED WITH HARRY CLAY

NB: All artists (except Walter Bentley) have had their entries updated and expanded for Clay Djubal's 2005 Ph D thesis "What Oh Tonight). See: <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:107238> (Appendix D)  
The same artists' entries in the Australian Variety Theatre Archive are being updated whenever new information is identified.  
See: <http://ozvta.com/> (or at Pandora <http://nla.gov.au/nla.arc-143747>)

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This appendix includes information concerning several artists and/or performers whose association with Harry Clay and his company can be considered significant. In this sense each had a business or professional relationship which was not just one of an employee, partner or performer (as several did at one stage or another find engagements with Clay in one or more of these areas during their earlier careers). Little if any research has been directed towards each of those included, and thus this appendix (as with the others) has been presented in order to provide a reference point for any further historical surveys into either the individuals themselves, or Australian vaudeville and theatre in general.

The list, and indeed each separate file, cannot be considered comprehensive but simply reflects the amount of source material located during the primary research undertaken for as part of the Clay project, and hence gaps in the information unfortunately exist.

### IKE BECK

Ragtime singer/hard shoe dancer (tap)/vaudeville manager/ entrepreneur. Referred to as "The Fashion Plate." Beck began his professional career in 1916, entering into management sometime in late 1916/early 1917 - first on his own and then with Bert Howard later in 1917. The Beck and Howard partnership did not last long, however. Following the split Beck began operating his own circuit in the Hunter Valley district, but by 1918 had divested himself of that enterprise. He is known to have shortly afterwards taken a company on tour through Queensland. During the period 1918-19 he was again performing for a number of managements, including Harry Clay, and by 1920 had returned to management in the Newcastle and Hunter regions, establishing his operations there with some success. Beck sold his circuit to Harry Clay in 1922, only to take it back a year or so later.

Ike Beck entered the world of professional vaudeville entertainment in 1916, presenting a ragtime singing and hard-shoe dancing (tap) act at the Princess Theatre in October. By mid-1917 he had installed himself as financial partner and manager in some of Bert Howard's ventures, including a Sydney suburban circuit - showing pictures and vaudeville. Beck was even then beginning to display considerable promise in entrepreneurial matters despite being so new to the business. Australian Variety published a brief account of his and Howard's career to that date, writing of the latter:

Ike Beck is a comparative newcomer to vaudeville... Amongst the sporting fraternity Beck has a big following, and is popular with all. His taste for good dress is well-known, and he has often been referred to as "The Fashion Plate." As a vaudeville manager, he already displays a wide knowledge of what is needed, and as he is not afraid to invest capital in his various ventures there is every reason to believe that he will be eminently successful (16 May 1917, n. pag).

Beck was also reportedly making an appearance in a film by Jack Garvin around this time, with Fred Bluett in a lead role. By around September 1917, however, it seems that the Howard and Beck relationship had become somewhat untenable, the pair severing their connection at that time- although apparently in a reasonably amicable manner. Despite being new to the game, Beck

was still able to engage some respectable names for his newly formed circuit, including Arthur Tauchert, Alf. Edwards, Louie Duggan, Ted Tutty, Joe Charles and Emily Dani, and Kitchie and Kliftie.

While continuing to run the Redfern Picture Palace in late 1917, Beck made a move to extend his circuit to the Newcastle area. His operations, known as Ike Beck's Vaudeville Enterprises, were being run out of 9 Commercial Chambers, 80 Bathurst St, Sydney. By the end of the year it is reported that he was doing "remarkably well around the Newcastle districts" (AV: 14 Dec. 1917, n. pag.). He continued presenting vaudeville on his Hunter circuit until April, at which time he sold his interests and left for Queensland with a troupe that included Tauchert, Little Sadie, and the Coleman Sisters. After the tour ended Beck returned once more to performing, finding engagements with several companies including Harry Clay, for whom he worked during the 1918-19 period.

Sometime around mid-1919 Beck again began operating a Newcastle and Hunter circuit, and by August had a No 2 company touring Northern NSW, including the towns of Werris Creek, Tamworth, Murrurundi, Narrabri, Gunnedah and Boggabri. His expansion also saw him running two companies in the Hunter by the end of the year, some of the artists on his books being Gale and Sadie, Porky Kearns, Shipp and Gaffney, Joe Archer and the Coleman Sisters. In March of 1922 Harry Clay took control of Beck's Hunter operations, including the towns of Cessnock, Wallsend, West Wallsend and Maitland. However, by April the following year Beck was once again running the circuit.

Ike Beck's career after 1923 is presently unclear, as are a number of other details regarding his life and his influence in the vaudeville industry. He can, however, be considered one of the more flamboyant of the smaller vaudeville managers, and one seemingly never satisfied with sitting still.

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- (Princess Theatre): - Ike Beck is now in his second week, and works with much more assurance; as a dancer he is in the A1 class; and gets a big applause for his clever work (AV: 25 Nov. 1916, n. pag.).

- Ike Beck is making his appearance in Jack Garvin's picture, in which Fred Bluett is featured. Our Chaser pal promises to be a big drawcard in the production (AV: 30 May 1917, n. pag.).

- **"A Week With Ike Beck Around the Suburbs"**  
by Presto

In doing a week for Ike Beck,  
I packed up my props and my clothes  
And, on Saturday, at Mascot,  
(To a big crowd) with the old red nose

Now it's not too warm out at Mascot  
But the actors they all didn't care,  
Just as long as they pleased the audience,  
And got their cut of the cash that was there.

Now Monday of course is an off night,  
Ike having no place for to show,  
But it's only a matter of some little time,  
When every night he'll be on the go.

On Tuesday, at the meeting place,  
The actors all did gather,  
And took the trip to Auburn fair  
On a wagon, in fine weather.

Cel Delwyn said: "Who'll drive the mokes?"<sup>1</sup>  
Levarto said: "Don't worry!"  
When Tauchert cried: "Why, I'm the man!"  
But Ike said: "You'll be sorry;"

We started off, and all went well  
So merry and so bright,  
Fat "Jamo" said: "I wouldn't care  
If my leg was only right!"

On Wednesday night the Wee McColls  
Were repeatedly called back,  
And everything was going fine  
Till something went off black.

At Lewisham on Thursday night –  
The same old mob and horses,  
And when "The Goat" commenced to sing,  
She nearly burst her.....

But leaving there we had some fun,  
With someone singing high,  
And all at once our old mokes fell,  
And Verlie heaved a sigh.

Granville was the final show,  
And sorry all were we,  
And Bob said: "What about the fares?"  
Ike said: "Leave that to me!"

If Ike continues on this game,  
A Fuller may he be,  
And may we live to see the day,  
When a city show has he.

(AV: 15 Aug. 1917, n. pag.)

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<sup>1</sup> Moke was the name given to a donkey or small horse

- Ike Beck is a very busy man nowanights, particularly as he is extending his circuit to the Newcastle suburbs. In the meantime, the Refern Picture Palace is the big draw for the pay-roll, and the other of Beck houses also report excellent business (AV: 16 Nov. 1917, n. pag.).
- Ike Beck is enjoying a spell in town prior to re-opening around the suburbs. In the meantime his combination at Newcastle, and the outlying districts is doing particularly fine, and Ike may now claim to have established a permanent circuit of houses there. Nobody is more deserving than this small-time manager, whose energy, perseverance and obliging manner is gradually bringing him to the fore (AV: 8 Mar. 1918, n. pag.).
- Artists who have just returned from the Ike Beck Circuit speak in glowing terms of the manner in which Ike treats them. "One of the most comfortable and pleasant two weeks engagement I have ever had," says Chady. A little bird off Jim White's hat tells us that Ike has started a No Three banking account. Well, Bo, you tried hard, and like Sir Robert Bruce, it looks as if you have won. Perseverance, ability and honesty of "purpose" must win in the long run. Good luck (AV: 28 Mar. 1919, 9).
- Ike Beck, the well-known fashion-plate dancer [has] after many strenuous months around the Newcastle district established a No 1 company that has provided very fine programmes to delighted patrons. Mr Beck is going further afield, and for this purpose has just organised a No 2 company of Australian artists who will go on a comprehensive tour commencing at... Werris Creek, with Tamworth, Murrurundi, Narrabri, Boggabri and Gunnedah on succeeding nights.... It is pleasing to note the success of one who has battled on in the face of big odds, and a legion of friends will admit that this success is well merited (AV: 3 Sept. 1920, n. pag.).

## WALTER BENTLEY

Actor/Manager/Elocutionist/Teaching Academy Principal/Producer/Actors' Association of Australia Secretary and President /NSW Shakespearian Association Secretary and President/Public Speaker. The son of Rev. Dr James Begg, one of the leaders of the Free Church of Scotland, Walter Bentley was born William Begg in Scotland in 1849. After spending several years in the merchant navy and on a Queensland sheep station he settled in New Zealand, and became involved in theatre. Bentley returned to London around 1874 and not long after became associated with Henry Irving. Using the name Walter Bentley he toured several British provinces, establishing a reputation for dramatic acting, and in particular with his Shakespearian characterisations. After touring America for some three years as the lead actor in a company which presented, among other things, The Silver King, he returned to London (ca.1886) for an engagement at the Grand Theatre, after which he again toured the provinces prior to leaving for Australia. In 1891 Bentley presented a successful debut season of Hamlet at Melbourne's Theatre Royal, and by 1893 his Australasian tour had seen him twice visit New Zealand. In 1898 he returned to tour the Australian states and New Zealand, and at one stage ran a dramatic acting school in Brisbane, as well as organising various public entertainments and running for parliament. His career continued as both an actor and an orator throughout the early 1900s, with much of it believed to have been spent back in the United Kingdom. In 1909 he returned to Australia for the third time, with this tour including his excursion through Queensland under the auspices of Harry Clay. In late 1909 Bentley settled in Sydney, setting up his own College of Elocution and Dramatic Acting and presenting regular performances with his students. Bentley became a prominent member and official of both the Actors' Association of Australia and the Shakespearian Society of New South Wales. He also contributed a number of articles and viewpoints to the trade journals during his later career, in addition to appearing at and organising numerous benefits to Australian actors. In 1916 he once again failed to win a seat in Parliament, and during the war years, too, was noted for his considerable public contribution. Bentley died on the 19th of September 1927, having taken his own life after some period of ill health.

Walter Bentley can be considered as one of the leading exponents of Shakespearian character acting to have toured the Australasian regions during the two decades which span the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. A contemporary of George Rignold, Alfred Dampier and Julius Knight, he was seen by his contemporary critics as having been significantly influential in helping to raise the level of professional acting in Australia. In many respects it was not only through his efforts as an actor and director, but perhaps more so through his tireless work within the industry as a teacher, public speaker commentator, and prominent member of several theatrical associations. His willingness to contribute to the financial support of other fellow actors and the community at large also saw him given recognition during the years he spent in his adopted country.

Bentley was born William Begg at 51 Minto Street in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1849. His father Rev. Dr J. Begg, a rigid Presbyterian and one of the founders of the Scottish Free Church, was also renowned as a public speaker and intellectual. Bentley's aunt was philanthropist, Emily Faithful. He has also claimed to have been a descendant of Scottish poet, Burns. It appears that William, from an early age, desired an opportunity to enter the acting profession, at one stage attempting to use the influence of his famous aunt in order to get a position. John Plummer, a founding editor of the London Figaro records, however, that the situation was such that he found it impossible to get a start (TT: Dec. 1909, 10). Not long afterwards he was instead articled to Messrs. George Thompson and Co, for whom he spent some time voyaging to different parts of the world. After an argument on board the White Star liner "Colonial Empire," which was berthed in Port Jackson (Australia), young Begg jumped ship and later found employment on a sheep station out of Rockhampton through the efforts of Robert Towns and Sir Alexander Stuart. By 1870 he had moved to New Zealand where a brother, F. F. Begg, was already living - he being in the banking industry. Bentley found employment in New Zealand as a valuator and general agent for the Clay Council in Dunedin. On one occasion, however, he found himself stepping into the breach as it were, to help out his brother who had been engaged to play Mr Potter in an amateur production of Still Waters Run Deep. The brother's fiancée apparently had such an aversion to anything theatrical that she

threatened to break off their engagement unless he relinquished his involvement. William took on the role, believed to have been presented at Dunedin's Princess Theatre, and subsequently altered the course of his life.

Within a year he had taken the plunge and become a professional actor at the old Princess Theatre, Auckland. Writing to the Theatre in 1910, Jimmy South recalls seeing the comedy Love's Sacrifice presented by Bland Holt's father sometime around 1872, and in which Bentley played St. Leu - this being one of his very earliest professional performances. Smith also recounts that Bentley's father had come out from Scotland, and that it was understood that he "had parted up a sum of money so that the son might be given a show" (June 1910, 8). This seems to be contrary to the 1909 article by John Plummer, who knew both Bentley and his father, and in which he claims that William took to the stage "despite the vigorous remonstrations of his father" (TT: Dec. 1909, 10). By 1874, and having at one stage become the lessee of the Prince of Wales Theatre in Auckland for a season, the young actor returned to London. Now using the name Walter Bentley, he set about establishing his career in the United Kingdom, at first obtaining an engagement with Charles Wyndham and Marie Lytton at the Royal Court Theatre where he is known to have performed in Herman Merivale's farcical comedy, Peacock's Holiday. John Plummer recalls seeing this production and remembers the comment of John Huy, the theatre's cynical stage manager (as far as a new candidate's prospects were concerned, that is) saying, "there's something in him" (TT: Dec. 1909, 10).

In early 1876 Bentley secured a position as a juvenile lead in Henry Irving's Lyceum Company, and is known to have played supporting roles to Irving in Hamlet, Charles I, The Bells, Richard III, (Jan. 1877), Louis XI, Richeleiu (May 1876) and Tennyson's Queen Mary (Apr. 1876), as well as touring the provinces during the latter half of 1876. John Plummer records that the extremely fastidious Irving recognised in Bentley a player of exceptional ability and told him (Plummer) that "the British stage would be all the better for a few more men of his stamp" (TT: Dec. 1909, 10). Bentley's recital of Clarence's Dream in Richard III was said to have been one of the features of the great 1877 production (SMH: 20 Sept. 1927, 12).

When Irving and Mrs Bateman dissolved their partnership at the Lyceum in 1878, Bentley joined the latter's company (then based out of Sadler's Wells), and toured the provinces for her for some period of time. Over the next few years, too, he found engagements in London and the provinces, including a supporting role as Asa Trenchard, to E.A. Sothorn's famous Lord Dundreary in Our American Cousins at the Haymarket Theatre, London. Bentley later undertook his own tour of the UK, including in his repertoire a considerable number of Shakespearian characters and carrying with him special scenery and dresses. He did not, however, confine himself to only Shakespeare, but constantly added to his repertoire many of the standard dramas of the day. Another of his acclaimed roles around this period of his career was in 1882, when he partnered the Italian speaking Madame Ristori in Macbeth during her London season. He is believed to have played several other leading roles with Ristori during this time, too, including Leicester to her Queen Elizabeth.

Between 1883 and 1885 (approximately) Bentley toured the United States with productions such as The Silver King, Burr Oaks, and Love or Money, eventually establishing a reputation as one of the finest actors to have played Wilfred Denver in The Silver King. He had apparently taken on the role in Chicago following Osmund Tearle's season in San Francisco. Upon returning to the United Kingdom in 1886 Bentley once again ensconced himself in London with a season at the Grand Theatre, later touring British provinces until presented with an offer by George Coppin to tour Australasia in 1891, whereupon he arrived in Melbourne to present Hamlet at the Theatre Royal in a reportedly successful season. He then travelled to New Zealand before returning to Australia where he opened in Sydney, with Hamlet and The Silver King as the main productions. This season was then followed by a tour of Queensland and other states. He revisited New Zealand and then in 1893 returned to Australia where he played a number of centres, again including Queensland.

The whereabouts of Bentley over the next four or five years is unknown at this stage, however it is likely that he returned to the United Kingdom after a tour of South Africa. By 1898, however, he had returned to Australia, and for a while settled in the south-east area of Queensland. During this time he ran his Walter Bentley Dramatic Acting classes in Brisbane in addition to presenting theatrical seasons and a variety of events such as Mrs Joyce Manhatten's piano recital (Sept.) and Sunday lectures and pictorial presentations (such as Lourdes and its Miracles and The Land of the Maori). These last activities brought Bentley into conflict with several church groups, leading him to make a number of concerted public attacks on the Council of Churches who were demanding the abolishment of Sabbath entertainments. In October he also presented the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play and Hamlet, the latter containing members of his Dramatic Art Classes, one of whom was the young John Ralston, who played Osric (BC: 14 Oct. 1898, 2). Ralston would later become one of Australia's leading opera and musical comedy actor/singers. It has been recorded, too, that sometime around this period Bentley wrote a play, Captain Dreyfus, which George Rignold produced at the Criterion in Sydney. Of a non-theatrical nature during Bentley's stay in South-east Queensland was his unsuccessful attempt to run for parliament in the Stanthorpe seat of Carnarvon in the 1899 elections.

Bentley returned to the stage in 1899, and is known to have been touring through New Zealand in 1900, where he eventually joined forces with Douglas Ancelon to form the Ancelon-Bentley Dramatic Company. There is another gap in Bentley's life after this, although it seems likely that he and Ancelon continued their association for some period of time. He did return to the United Kingdom at some stage, however, as it is known that he appeared with the Osmund Tearle Company at Nottingham's Grand Theatre as Shylock in 1905. He also declined a starring engagement in South Africa for Leonard Rayne, due to prior commitments around this time (TT: Mar. 1915, 6), while it is further known that sometime during 1906 he appeared in A Victim of Villainy, a melodrama produced in London (TT: Jan. 1906, 9).

In 1909 Bentley quietly returned to Australia for a season in Adelaide, where he presented The Silver King. It has been reported that as he was about to leave Sydney he was approached by the young Stanley McKay, who induced him to present Hamlet at the Criterion upon his return some three weeks later. Although this was to be his first professional production, McKay put together a company in the short space of time he had, and rehearsed without the lead actor until three or four days prior to the opening. The enormously successful season (although only ten days long due to a previous booking at the theatre) was a particularly pleasing one for the tragedian, due mainly to the high praise he received. Upon the completion of the Criterion season, Bentley returned to Queensland under the production of Harry Clay, presenting a collection of works including Hamlet, David Garrick, and The Bells. A number of reports suggest that this tour was the first to include Shakespeare since he last came north some twelve years previously. [See *Chapter Five and Appendix C for further details*]

After the Clay tour Bentley settled himself and his family in Sydney and formed his own College of Elocution and Dramatic Art (initially located at 49 Phillip Street). Within a year or so he was presenting regular productions at St. James Hall in the city (as well as occasional visits to other centres such as Parramatta). These performances would include aside from Bentley and his students, the other principals of the college, these being Douglas Ancelon and a Miss Chapman. In 1913, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that Bentley's college was "the only establishment that has for four years given a performance every month" (16 Aug. 1913, 2). During the succeeding years Bentley continued to operate his college, as well as occasionally writing articles for several trade journals, primarily the Theatre and later Green Room. The topics of these ranged from his views on the deficiencies of Australian picture acting, and how to correct them (TT: Nov. 1915, 39); "The Scot on the Stage" (TT: Feb. 1916, 33) and "What Shall We Do with Our Girls" (GR: Feb. 1922, n. pag.); in addition to numerous reflections on his own and others' careers.

In 1910 he and George Titheridge set up the Actors' Association of Australia, with Bentley as Secretary and Titheridge as President. Interestingly, the Theatre reported (somewhat sarcastically) in 1914 that most of those present at the elections for office bearers of the Australian Actors' Association that year were non-Australians. Those present included Daisy Jerome, George Titheridge, elected president, and Walter Bentley elected Secretary (Mar. 1914, 26). Bentley continued in the position of Secretary until 1916, when he became President after the death of Titheridge. After being voted into office, however, he then relinquished the position in favour of Julius Knight when the position of Secretary (which he had held for a number of years) could not be satisfactorily filled. He was also a long time member and office bearer of the NSW Shakespearian Society, at one stage becoming that society's President. In addition to these positions, Bentley is known to have unsuccessfully contested the seat of Drummoyne for the NSW Legislative Assembly in a 1916 bi-election. It has been recorded, too, that around this time he suffered a breakdown of some kind, due in part to his heavy commitments to the war effort and his advancing years - he was by now in his late sixties.

In 1917, Bentley arranged for his college to combine with the Austral College of Music, at which point in time it became known as the Sydney Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. As a result he moved his studios to the Repertory Theatre, Grosvenor Street in the city. In 1918, he received much publicity when he was sued by a lady who claimed that he had not returned an autograph album which she had lent him. The woman lost the case but not the album, which strangely enough turned up when the veteran actor found it shortly after the case was heard (GR: June 1918, n. pag.).

During the last years of his life, Bentley continued to present his Walter Bentley Players at St. James's Hall, giving lectures for a wide variety of different associations, including the Shakespearian Society, and overseeing the operation of his college which by the end of the second decade was providing training for Elocution, Oratory, Dramatic Art, Picture Acting, Musical Monologues, Elocution of Song, Scenario Writing for Private Plays, Public Speaking and the curing of Stuttering and Stammering (GR: Apr. 1918, n. pag.).

On the 19th of September 1927, and after a long period of ill health, Bentley put a gun to his head and committed suicide. He was 79 years of age. His last words to his wife, as she left to run an errand, were "I feel brighter" (JI: 29 Sept. 1927, 4). Just It records that he was an "actor of the first rank, and in private a delightful companion." The same view seems to have been held throughout his life, despite some frequent indications as to his somewhat serious nature and lack of humour. As a popular and well-known figure in theatrical and social circles he was often lampooned by comics and other actors, including Harry Clay, whose impersonation of him could apparently bring the house down. Some examples of this treatment of him include a poem by Codger and published in Green Room in 1918, one line being: "While the great Walter Bentley could not see the joke when they made a stage-camel of him" (8).

As an actor Bentley was held in high esteem, although several critics saw his Scottish accent as the main handicap to him being regarded as one of the great Shakespearian actors of the period. Further to this John Plummer has suggested that as Bentley was never given the opportunity to create a character in a new play (due he said to the dearth of dramatic authors of the higher class) he had also suffered unfairly (TT: Dec. 1909, 10). In a sense, however, it was his decision to take quality theatre, and Shakespearian at that, to the distant areas of Australasia (many places having had little exposure to such entertainment) and not keeping himself wholly to the metropolitan theatres, that became one of his great achievements. In addition his role as a teacher and activist in the theatre industry, at a time when there were few locally born actors of equal experience, can be seen as part of his legacy to the country.

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- Mr Walter Bentley made his first appearance at the Garrick Theatre as Hamlet, on Saturday. The new impersonation is characterised by the clearness and simplicity of the conception in which the reflective nature of the Prince, who loses himself in

labyrinthian thoughts is kept in the background. Thus the play, which has been called a tragedy of thought, becomes a tragedy of action.... [he] is thoroughly at home in the character, and the audience are made to feel it (SMH: 6 June 1892, 7).

- Mr Bentley's representation is decidedly superior to nine tenths of the modern Hamlets, and it would be an infinitely more acceptable performance if certain peculiarities in the way of clothing English words with a Scotch pronunciation could be got rid of (A: 19 Sept. 1892, 6).
- During the past quarter century the Sydney public has seen a good many editions of Bailie Nicol Jarvie [Rob Roy] and Mr Bentley's interpretation of the character occupies a prominent position among them in regard to merit. It was a consistently good performance, and the audience was in a constant simmer of amusement whenever the Glasgow magistrate was on stage (AV: Sept. 1893, 6).
- Walter Bentley as Hamlet:- To be or not to be, that is the question (damn that limelight), whether it is nobler in the mind (keep quiet behind, you crimson fools) to suffer the slings and outrageous fortune (more limelight, you crimson idiot), etc (TT: Apr. 1907, n. pag.).
- In noting that these are "Shakespeare famine days," the Theatre records that "Walter Bentley as Richard III [is] the first since American Geo. C. Milne almost twenty years previously" (TT: Sept. 1909, 21).
- Shakespearian drama has had little attention in Brisbane since Mr Bentley appeared here some ten or twelve years ago. A production of a tragedy or a comedy at rare intervals has been all that we have had, not because a more generous measure of production would not have been gladly supported, but because actors and actresses capable of work in these high domains of literary and dramatic art have been few and far between. The warmth and spontaneity of the reception accorded to Mr Bentley... evidenced both the pleasure felt in meeting an old friend, and the appreciation of opportunity afforded of seeing once more an immortal play (BC: 6 Sept. 1909, 6).
- He is a man possessing ability amounting almost to genius, and to those who were familiar only with his acting in such parts as Hamlet or Wilfred Denver, his performances in David Garrick or Crammond Brig came as a surprise. He is one of the most capable and conscientious actors of the day, yet strangely enough, he had never had an opportunity of creating a character in a new play, a result, apparently, of a dearth of dramatic authors of the higher class (John Plummer, ctd. TT: Dec. 1909, 10).
- Walter Bentley's father, at one time a clergyman in New Zealand, did not at all relish the idea of his son taking to the stage. Returning home one night, disappointed in one of his early efforts to do something in this direction, Mr Bentley found his father and half-a-dozen clergymen sitting round the fire. The father growlingly observed that he saw Walter had come back from Hades, and asked him what he had seen there. Mr Bentley's reply was, "Just what I see here. You couldn't get near the fire for clergymen." It is Arthur A.D. Bayldon, the writer of the world-famed Marlow sonnet, that tells this yarn. But who is it that knows Walter - dour by nature, and without a gleam of humour, let alone wit - will believe that he was ever capable of such an utterance? (TT: Mar. 1911, 33).
- Walter Bentley is to be congratulated upon the manner he kept in the background of the Ellen Terry tribute. His name only appeared in the programme seven times and a flashlight of the performers showed him in the centre of the stage, arm in arm with Miss Terry (TT: Aug. 1914, 33).
- Walter Bentley's sad end came as a great shock to the public. He was one of the finest Silver Kings ever seen on the local boards.... Latterly his health broke down and he suffered a great deal of pain. He was an actor of the first rank, and in private a delightful companion (JI: 29 Sept. 1927, 4).
- Playgoers in many parts of the British Empire will learn with regret of the death of Walter Bentley, and more especially in Australia and New Zealand, parts of the world with which the Shakespearian actor's connection dates back half a century... Those who remember him in 1891 may pleasurably recollect him at the height of his career.... A widely read man, well-versed, particularly in Shakespearian lore, an able speaker and organiser, a successful lecturer and teacher, and a genial and charitable friend. Mr Bentley filled an important place in the community for many years (SMH: 20 Sept. 1927, 12).

## BERT HOWARD

Picture show, vaudeville and boxing manager. Born in 1879, The Rocks, Sydney. Nicknamed both "The Droll" and "The Lord Mayor of Poverty Point," Bert Howard worked for Harry Rickards, Harry Clay and J.C. Bain in his early theatrical career. Around 1910 he began running picture shows in the Sydney suburbs. He was also actively involved in the boxing industry as the manager of several established fighters. He briefly formed his own vaudeville and picture circuit around 1915 before joining forces with Frank Graham (ca.1914-16) and later with Ike Beck (1917). Howard returned to his own solo operations in 1918 while also running a booking agency. Howard is known to have had an entrepreneurial association with James H. White in the late 1920s, and to have continued to run vaudeville, pantomime and pictures in Sydney and NSW into the early 1930s.

One of Sydney's leading B circuit vaudeville managers and entrepreneurs - a group headed by Harry Clay and consisting of others such as Jacky Landow, Frank Reis and Harry Sadler, Bert Howard started his working life as a newsboy at Circular Quay. He later became interested in the fight game, first as a lightweight boxer and later as a manager. One of his earliest managerial successes was in helping Tommy Dillon win at a tournament at Waterloo. As a young man Howard was taken under the wing of Harry Rickards, initially selling song books at the Tivoli Theatre, and later acting as Rickards' office-boy and valet. After twelve years he stepped into the suburban vaudeville game, finding employment with Harry Clay's newly formed company for some five years, a period which also included spending at least one nine month period on tour throughout Queensland (and most likely some other states) with Clay. He later undertook similar employment with J.C. Bain for a further five years or so. Between around 1910 and 1916 Howard worked the suburbs of Sydney as a picture operator with Humbert Pugliese (of the Alhambra), in addition to his involvement in the boxing game. He has claimed that they were the first to introduce moving pictures to many of Sydney's suburbs. During that time Howard is also known to have been employed for some two years as a stage manager for the Fullers, and as a manager for both Dr Richard Rowe (magician and spiritualist) and Norwood (American Hypnotist). Taking the advice of Clay's manager Wally Edwards, Howard originated the Sunday night concerts at the old Gaiety Theatre, and continued his running of vaudeville and pictures around a small circuit in Sydney. In 1914 he and Frank Graham were jointly screening pictures shows and vaudeville around Sydney in a partnership which apparently lasted a year or so.

By 1917 Howard had joined forces with Ike Beck, running vaudeville and pictures in Redfern, Mascot, Leichhardt, Burwood and Rozelle. The partnership did not last long, however, due, one might suggest to the very nature and past experiences of each other. After parting ways with Beck, Howard opened up his own booking agency, and is renowned for having conducted his business from a doorway at Sydney's Poverty Point, often leaving messages in chalk on the footpath. In 1918 he expanded his operations, servicing suburbs such as Crows Nest, Leichhardt, Auburn, Granville and Hornsby, in addition to several country touring circuits. In 1919, after patching up their differences, Howard engaged Ike Beck for his circuit as a vaudeville performer during Beck's hiatus from his own managerial activities. Howard's circuit had also by this time expanded into the Blue Mountains area. In 1920 his Sydney circuit was Leichhardt, Arncliffe, Lidcombe, Parramatta, and Granville.

Howard continued as a vaudeville and picture show entrepreneur right up until at least the early 1930s, his circuit over the 1928 and 1929 period included, for instance Campsie, Manly, Burwood, Bankstown, Parramatta, Earlwood, Granville. Around this time, too, he toured a pantomime company through a number of regional centres including the Hunter circuit (ca. Jan. 1928). The productions included Beauty and the Beast, while the troupe consisted of Arthur Morley, Wal Rockley, Dan Thomas and Percy King among others. According to reports the tour was receiving much success until Howard was struck down with a seriously debilitating illness which required four operations and knocked both him and the tour out of action. While laid up his company was run by James H. White, Harry Clay's ex-Theatrical Agency manager, and a small-time entrepreneur in his own right. Upon recovering his health, Howard returned to his suburban circuit, continuing his career of thirty or so years in Sydney theatrical management.

In 1929 Howard claimed to have been the first manager to introduce revusicals to the suburbs, suggesting that if anyone wanted to argue "let's see if they can remember a company earlier than Arthur Morley's, On the Sands with Amy Rochelle, Jim Caldwell, the Phillip Sisters, the Dudleys, Morley and Bates, Will Rollow and Ted Stanley" (Howard 104).<sup>2</sup> He has also claimed to have given Nellie Kolle her first success, prior to the English male impersonator's metropolitan successes, although some doubt exists concerning this claim as Kolle's first six years in Australasia were almost certainly under contract to the Fullers.

As a fight manager, Howard gained some recognition for his involvement in the careers of Bob Whitelaw, Arthur Cripps, and Tommy Hanley, while also touring such fighters as Billy McColl, George Johns and heavyweight title contender Bill Squires. His involvement with vaudeville saw him employ a great number of Australian artists over the years, although in no way comparable to that of his fellow B circuit manager, Harry Clay. However, many of the leading artists Howard engaged were also leading performers for Clay's, Rickards and the Fullers managements, these artists including George Sorlie, Arthur Tauchert, Arthur Morley, Maurice Chenoweth, Lily Vockler Ted Tutty and Denis Carney to name just a few. He is also known to have engaged the likes of Clyde Cook, Nat Phillips and Broncho Wallace at various times during his career.

Referred to as the Lord Mayor of Poverty Point (Harry Clay having been the King), Howard was highly regarded for his generous charity work. As he himself noted: "While it makes an old showman like me mighty happy to hear the money clinking in the box-office, maybe I get more happiness out of hearing the chuckles when we give the Lidcombe Hospital a show, or the yells of the youngsters when we play the Boys' Farm at Mittagong..." (Howard 104).

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- Bert Howard, "The Droll," wishes it to be distinctly understood that he is still in the business, despite the many knockers who would keep him out if they could. At present Bert is running his own show, and also works in conjunction with Frank Graham (AV: 29 Oct. 1913, 6).
  - Long Bert Howard is also helping local acts get three regular meals and the usual bed nowanights. The King Droll is a battler who strikes adversity now and again, but he is some fighter, believe me (AV: Jan. 1914, n. pag.).

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, this company sounds suspiciously like Harry Clay's No 1 Revue Company. At this point there is no explanation for such a similarity. Clay began presenting revues in 1916, at a time when each of those artists was known to have been in his regular employment.

- "The King of Drolls" appeared to be very disconsolate one day last week. On Wong Toy Sun asking the reason, the big fellow said:- "Here I am with a fine office, everything I want, and to think that I cannot 'bridge' it to Dr Richard Rowe right away. When he comes back the newness will be worn off" (AV: 16 May 1917, n. pag.)
- Success kills some people, but not so with Bert Howard, who despite the fact that he is now doing better than at any other period during the past ten years, has plenty of time for his less fortunate professional brethren. At the same time there are a few who still "knock" and the big fellow now and again has a little of this commodity directed against him. It would be better if some of these loafers took a leaf out of The Droll's book, and got a hustle on! Whilst they are asleep he is working for himself and the new firm. When not with them he is doing business for somebody else. Beck and Howard are now doing fine business, and the latter says that with Ike behind him he is not afraid of anybody in the show business (AV: 13 June 1917, n. pag.).
- It is not generally known that Bert Howard was at one time a picture showman, and many Sydney suburbs now possessing an elaborate theatre saw its first films screened by the Howardscope. The Droll specialised in Sunday evening screenings and he numbered among his audiences of the time many who are now prominent exhibitors. In addition to the pictorial offering, artists helped the show along, and the favourites included Clyde Cook, Nat Phillips, George Sorlie, Tom Armstrong, Bronco Wallace and George Clements, who was the real big noise with a lineup of illustrated songs. With such films as The Life and Death of Ned Kelly and The Life of Buffalo Bill, the show was always good for an extension of the season to three or four nights in all centres (E: 9 Jan. 1929, 49).
- I used to be a magnate in the days when the only two syllable word anyone in the picture business knew was "Fillum." We had the "Howardscope," Harry Harrison, Joe Dunn, Daddy Franklin, and me, with Humbert Pugliese as operator. It was one of the first movie outfits to go on tour, with the Clement Bros, Charles Rodgers, Olive (Baby) Carr, Doris Tindall, Jack West, Baby Josie Johnson and Scott and Wallace as added attractions. Just as well we had those added attractions, because half the time we had no picture show. Plop -flop- plop! And the machine was a bust (E: 11 Dec. 1929, 104).

## STANLEY MCKAY

Actor/theatrical entrepreneur/pantomime and Shakespearian director/ travelling tent showman. Born in Tumut NSW, McKay became the founding director of the Sydney Muffs Amateur Dramatic in 1903. Apart from several years during the second world war, he toured pantomime and Shakespearian drama throughout many regional and city centres in Australia and New Zealand almost continuously from ca.1908 and up until at least the early 1930s, and quite often using tents. He occasionally toured or undertook engagements with his own company under the auspices of the Fullers and Harry Clay, as well as in association with Walter George, Birch-Carroll (Qld) and George Stephenson. McKay's first professional venture was the Walter Bentley Criterion Theatre season in 1909, and by 1911 had at least two companies on the road touring serious drama and pantomime. Several well-known artists spent considerable time with McKay over the years including Jim Gerald, Essie Jennings, Bruce Drysdale and Phyllis Faye. McKay is known to have toured virtually all the Australian States during his long career.

Considered one of the most enterprising actor/managers during the first three decades of the twentieth century by his Australian contemporaries, H. Stanley McKay was one of the first showmen in the 20th century to tour pantomime around Australia and New Zealand using tents as his theatre space. While the greater part of his life was spent in theatrical pursuits he initially started out working for the Bank of New South Wales, where he spent some nine years. Three years into this career he began devoting his spare time to the theatre, founding the Sydney Muffs in 1903. Their premiere production, Henry Hamilton's Harvest, was presented in July of that year. The Sydney Muffs were to become a highly popular and critically acclaimed amateur theatrical company, not only for their generally excellent productions, but also for their considerable charity work. The success of this company was seen by a number of critics as a result of McKay's enthusiastic and professional attitude. Their repertoire is known to have included drama, farce, comedy-drama, and vaudeville. While still an amateur he also instigated the first Australian Shakespearian Festival at the Palace Theatre. One of McKay's last productions as an amateur was during Easter week 1909 when he presented Uncle Tom's Cabin at Clay's Standard Theatre, the company including the young Fred Stephenson as Uncle Tom.

In August of 1909, having left the bank, he presented his first professional production<sup>3</sup> the Walter Bentley Hamlet season at the Criterion Theatre (Sydney). Highly acclaimed by the critics and with record attendances, the production belied the two and a half weeks rehearsal time it was able to be allocated (along with the fact that Bentley was only available for the final three or four days of the rehearsal period). Sometime after this McKay formed his own Shakespearian and Comedy Company In late 1910, he began presenting pantomime shows around NSW and in Sydney, resulting in the 1911 Bo-Peep tour of Queensland under the auspices of Harry Clay, and which was advertised as the largest ever toured in the Commonwealth. By all accounts much of the public's initial

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<sup>3</sup> McKay uses the term regular to differentiate professional from amateur. In a 1916 review of his career prior to enlisting in the Army, McKay has said of the term: "I use it [regular] instead of professional. This latter is the general term used to distinguish the man or woman who takes up theatrical work as a hobby, generally called amateur from the individual who makes it his, or her, means of livelihood. But I have seen so many of the so-called amateurs who have been so much superior to the so-called professionals that I prefer the word regular" (TT: Sept. 1916, 41).

interest lay in the size of the mammoth mining tent the company used, it seating some 2,000 people and taking several days to erect, while the critical responses to the shows themselves were overwhelmingly enthusiastic. [See Appendix C for further details] McKay claims in 1916 that he "chose pantomime for preference, as no touring company other than the late John Sheridan's (who played only a few towns), had exploited 'panto' through Inland [sic] Australia" (TT: Sept. 1916, 42). While the Bo-Peep tour utilised rail and steamer for its transportation, McKay's other tours around this period involved a variety of methods, including stage coach, bullock wagons, cars, trucks and even a sulky. From 1912 and up until around 1916 he operated two touring companies at one time - one offering pantomime and the other serious drama, more often than not presenting in Shakespeare. The companies toured all the Australian states, with the dramatic company also being known to have operated under a tent for its productions.

During the 1914-15 period McKay dropped the dramatic company tours in favour of two pantomime companies, no doubt forced into this by the greater financial returns offered through presenting popular theatre. The companies toured for a while on the Fullers circuit, the itineraries including Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, and Fremantle, along with NSW and Queensland regions. Ross B. Simpson, the manager in charge of the No 2 company, and who also handled the book work for McKay, estimated that the No 1 company alone travelled some 27,000 miles during the 12 month period to July 31, 1915. In December 1915 McKay expanded his operations when he undertook his first overseas venture, a tour through the New Zealand dominions. Between 1914 and 1916 his pantomime company included Jim Gerald and Essie Jennings. In mid 1916, however, McKay, as with fellow thespian Gerald, volunteered for war service, thus putting his theatrical operations on hold.

While details of McKay's career between the end of the war and 1924 are at this stage unclear, it is believed that he continued touring his Pantomime and Dramatic companies as previously. Between 1924 and 1929 his tours are known to have included at least all three eastern states as well as New Zealand, with the organisation, by now known as Stanley McKay's Enterprises, and scoring successful seasons in 1928-29 with Frank Neil's grand operas Up in Mabel's Room and Getting Gertie's Garter. During his long career, McKay utilised the services of a number of well-known actors and vaudevillians, including John Cosgrove, Jim Gerald and Essie Jennings, Joe Rox, Nellie Ferguson, Elsie Prince, Bruce Drysdale and Phyllis Faye, Will Raynor, the Coleman Sisters, and Billy and Ivy Cass. McKay's entrepreneurial efforts were frequently acknowledged by many within the industry, including the leading trade journals. He was often praised for his strong contributions as an actor during his early years, and for the skill with which he established the often critically acclaimed Sydney Muffs productions. His apparent disposition, professionalism and enthusiasm also reportedly earned him the respect and admiration of his fellow thespians, helping to create an theatrical enterprise which lasted some twenty years or more.

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- The Sydney Muffs have not evinced their usual activity of late, their efforts being restricted to suburban performances. Rumour however speaks of their reappearance at the Criterion Theatre on Dec. 21st, but the name of the piece selected has not been made known. Stanley McKay is still the moving spirit in all the club's undertakings, which have lately assumed a Shakespearian bent with much success (TT: Nov. 1905, 7).
  - Since the initial production by "The Sydney Muffs" at the Criterion Theatre in July, 1903, that clever band of amateurs has been particularly active in the cause of charity - city and suburban charities having benefited to the extent of nearly £400 by the club's exertions... Much of the success of "The Muffs" is due to the energy displayed by their general manager, Mr Stanley McKay (TT: June 1906, 13).
  - The Sydney Muffs revived The Merchant of Venice on a very complete scale at the Royal Standard Theatre, on evenings of 11th, 12th and 13th November. .. Mr Stanley McKay's Shylock is well and favourably known to play-goers. He realised more than ever the implacability, fierce hatred, and subtle cunning of the old Jew, and his acting in the Trial scene was very fine (TT: Dec. 1908, 19).
  - By courtesy of Mr Bland Holt, who generously lent the Theatre Royal .... The Sydney Muffs, who are ever ready to lend a hand for charity's sake, staged Niobe and A Martyr to Principle in aid of St. Martha's Industrial Home, Leichhardt. The theatre was crowded. Niobe, which followed the original playlet A Martyr to Principle, was thoroughly appreciated by the audience, but the interest really centred in the curtain-raiser, which was written by Sumner-Locke and Stanley McKay, the well-known Director of "The Sydney Muffs" (TT: Sept 1909, 19).
  - Mr McKay's manifold other theatrical ventures include the organisation of the Shakespearian and Comedy Co. with which he just recently returned to Sydney after making the third of a most successful series of tours of the Northern Rivers..... So costly and exhilarating an entertainment is that now promised by Mr McKay [the Bo-Peep tour] that he should meet with crowded houses, particularly in the country, where pantomime on the scale on which he is presenting it is really being seen for the very first time (TT: Nov. 1910, 10).
  - Stanley McKay's Pantomime, Mother Goose, is showing at the Lyric Theatre, on the Esplanade, St Kilda [Melb], and a tidy little combination it is, too, and also vaudeville Australian artists are here getting a decent chance to show what they can really do, and are miles ahead of some of the imported article, which is constantly being pushed into Australia for a Christmas pantomime, heralded by a lot of newspaper junket and interviews, and if the truth is really known they come out of a small time pantomime in

the "smalls" of England. Essie Jennings, as principal boy is great, her beautiful figure making the society crowd look some, and her singing and acting being a real knock-out to this scribe...Jimmy Gerald (alias Fitzgerald) is a fair dame, and scores solid throughout, although some of his songs want nailing down his box. On the whole, McKay deserves every success for getting such good vaudeville talent together (AV: 18 Nov. 1914, n. pag.).

- Mr McKay is a man of untiring energy. To his many friends it was ever a matter of wonder how he contrived to keep going at the pace he worked. Yet never in the course of his association with the stage has he been incapacitated for a day (TT: Sept. 1916, 41).
- Stan McKay's Pantomime Coy has been meeting with big success on their present tour of the NSW towns... the entire company return to Sydney for a week's spell, then out again on tour (E: 20 May 1925, n. pag.).
- For the first six months of the year, during the New Zealand tour, the repertoire was devoted solely to pantomime, and since July - on the company's return to Australia - Mr McKay arranged with Mr Walter George to present his Operatic Revues, which were so very successful for some years at Fullers city theatres.... During the tour of the Dominion.... Mr McKay had the honour of being the first manager to place the House Full sign at the matinee [in New Plymouth] - this happy necessity being repeated at the night performance.... When en route from Tauranga - where the New Zealand tour ended ... the company had the unpleasant experience of being shipwrecked on Slipper Reef (E: 15 Dec. 1926, 126).

## HARRY SADLER

Comic/singer/manager/vaudeville entrepreneur. Born ca.1899, brother of Bill Sadler, and married to Nellie Searle, a well-known soubrette. In 1912 the Northern Miner said of the diminutive comic/manager, he's "a most melancholy looking comedian" (7 May 1912, 4). Sadler worked for Fullers, Harry Rickards and Harry Clay during his career, but it is chiefly in his own right as a vaudeville entrepreneur that he became known around Australia. His early life and career are unknown as yet with the earliest record found to date being in 1902, when he secured an engagement with John Fuller Jnr as a corner-man for a New Zealand tour. This in turn led to his association in 1907 with Harry Rickards at the Tivoli (Syd). He is also believed to have first worked for Harry Clay around this period, later managing theatres in Tasmania, Perth, and Victoria, with his most renowned operations being the Princess and Gaiety Theatres in Sydney. Sadler became the most talked about man in vaudeville in 1918 when he was the centre of a lawsuit by one of his female artists, the resulting scandal and his topsy-turvy financial and management career being considered as some of the reasons behind his suicide in 1919.

Harry Sadler is another of the more interesting Australian vaudeville personalities. Energetic and feisty, he was a hustler and a spieler in every sense. The pocket-sized comic and endman perhaps came closer than any other circuit vaudeville manager to matching the heights of Harry Clay's record of achievement as a vaudeville man - making his name at both the Princess and Gaiety theatres, in addition to his various circuits throughout Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia. But unlike Clay, who'd learnt to curb his temperament and channel it constructively, Sadler found himself riding the waves of success and despair throughout his career - a career cut short by his suicide in the wake of financial problems and a highly publicised law-suit and scandal. Sadler's worst enemy, it would seem, was himself.

While much of his early life and career is still to be uncovered, it is known that he secured an engagement to tour New Zealand for the Fullers after John Fuller Jnr saw him performing with Jim Bell's company at King's Theatre, Newcastle in 1902. Sadler himself recalls the tour as getting off to a fiery start when he knocked out Ted Sylvani, the Fullers' Stage Manager at the Dunedin theatre, after the latter apparently insulted him. After the same thing happened again at Christchurch, with a different stage manager, an angry Walter Fuller wrote to his brothers, who apparently decided to teach their young end-man a lesson, hiring one Tommy McGregor to play a role in the farce usually played by Ben Fuller. Sadler recalls:

When he entered I asked (being a waiter), "What's for you?" He said, "I want some steak, and I want it blood-raw" - then he banged me on the temple, and knocked me down. I was a bit silly for a second; but got up; and after asking the same question he hit me again, this time, a beaut in the pit of the stomach, and down I went. I was almost out. The audience were thoroughly enjoying it. So was Ben Fuller... who was laughing fit to kill himself. Then I tumbled to the joke. I got up, took off my apron and cap... determined if to see if I couldn't give him some. We then got to it. In three minutes we were both "blood-raw." Anyhow I fixed my man. I knocked him. The moment I did so down came the curtain. As my opponent lay there... the other members of the company crowded round, exclaiming, "Do you know who you have knocked? Why that's Tommy McGregor - the champion of New Zealand." Ben came on the stage, and how did he laugh (TT: June 1915, 49).

Sadler goes on to recall that he ended up teaching Ben Fuller the finer points of boxing, and as a pupil he records, "Ben [on a number of occasions] did me proud." After finishing up with the Fullers some five or so months later, it is believed that he spent a brief time on Harry Clay's Sydney circuit (during the non-Queensland tour part of the year, and possibly around the same period as George Sorlie). Sadler was later offered an engagement with Harry Rickards, having been given a letter of introduction from Ben Fuller. He was on the Rickards circuit for seven years - a good deal of that time in association with Major Bosco. Finishing up with

Rickards, he is believed to have spent some more time on Clay's circuit before accepting another engagement with the Fullers after they took over the Brennan circuit. It has been reported that he stayed there for some six months before being transferred to Melbourne as a manager for the firm.

Between the end of his Fullers' engagement and the opening of his Tasmanian and Victorian operations around 1913/14, Sadler re-established his connection with Harry Clay, performing both on his Sydney circuit and on the first half of Clay's 1912 Queensland tour. The Theatre in its December 1912 issue records that:

Mr Harry Sadler has often worked with Mr Harry Clay. One of the songs he used to sing was, "Studying the Doctor's Orders." In this get-up he had a swag on his back. Mr Clay says that sometimes when Mr Sadler was singing this he used to shout to him from behind the scenes: - "If I had my way, I'd strap that swag to your back, and make you carry it to Melbourne" (TT: Dec. 1912, 33).

By early 1914 the Sadler and Beveridge partnership had begun an enterprise at Hobart's Theatre Royal, backed by Ben Fuller. In July they announced their plan to open in Launceston, which Australian Variety suggested was risky as "the city on the banks of the Tamar is the nemesis of vaudeville! J.C. Bain and Mareno Lucas had a bad experience there" (1 July 1914, 12). In August the pair were to open at Her Majesty's Theatre Ballarat (Vic), too, but had to postpone due to the advent of the war. By October the pair had begun introducing quick change dramas at the Hobart venue, and later in December they finally got the Ballarat operation under way, with Sadler claiming he intended to settle in the city. The following year he had his various Tasmanian and Victorian enterprises in full swing, including the lease of the Barclay Theatre in Footscray from March. In September, Sadler announced that he had "made arrangements with Mr S. Spurling, General Manager of the New National Theatre, Launceston, to take all acts and turns after they have played Hobart, and I have also made exceptional arrangements with Mr Ben J. Fuller for a continuous supply of acts for both centres" (AV: 22 Sept. 1915, n. pag.). By late September, however, despite "some success" he had apparently divested himself of his interests in the south and returned to performing once again.

Harry Sadler's return engagement as a performer was at the Princess Theatre, then owned by the Fullers, and by May 1916 he and Jack "Porky" Kearns had taken over the running of the popular venue for them, a venture which the Theatre reports as having been quite a success by the end of the year (Dec. 1916, 52]. While his attention was primarily directed towards the Princess operations, Sadler nonetheless continued to put on seasons in some of his old stamping grounds, including Hobart around January/February. It seems that Sadler and Kearns eventually finished their run at the Princess some twelve months later (around May 1917), with Sadler continuing his association with Tasmania, playing at the Temperance Hall, Hobart and in other centres. Australian Variety notes in regard to his Launceston season, "Harry Sadler opens ... this week, and this will be about the strength of its run. One good night a week is about all that burg can stand. Sadler is on the bill, and with him are the Farrants, Shipp and Gaffney, Ward Lear, Maudie Stewart and others" (23 May 1917, 7). By the end of the month, he had indeed closed down his Launceston operations. He also closed down his Hobart venture, a decision which apparently created something of a furor amongst his artists.

In late November 1917, Sadler had once again taken over the Princess, with critics noting that it was Sadler's experience and innate understanding of what the audiences wanted that accounted for his success there. Australian Variety, however, reported that "during the past several years, Sadler has had a somewhat pyrotechnic career. This time he is in the game for keeps and the first whisperer who comes along with a good thing [horse racing tip] is to be thrown to a dressing-room of live serious" (AV: 23 Nov. 1917, n. pag.). 1918 began auspiciously enough Sadler, being able to attract some quality performers like George Sorlie, Arthur Morley, Phyllis Faye, Arthur Elliott and Harry Little. He also sent another troupe to Tasmania during January. During February he announced to the public through Australian Variety that he intended to expand his circuit, opening at the Melrose Theatre (Perth), a venue which "has been closed to vaudeville for some time" noted the magazine, and which further suggested that "it now remains to be seen whether Sadler and his hustling methods can keep it open permanently" (22 Feb. 1918, 3). During the same month Sadler claimed it cost him over £200 weekly to run the Princess. One of Sadler's major successes during the period was the Baby Dolls, a group of singers, dancers and physical culturists led by Phyllis Faye. However, his relationship with Faye was shortly to bring him into the West Australian court over an incident which occurred during the Perth season.

Sadler took with him to Perth several top-line artists including his old mate Porky Kearns, Arthur Morley (producer), Harry Little and Faye and the Baby Dolls. Initial reports suggest that the venture, which began around April was a successful one, and by June he was opening in a number of other centres including Fremantle and Kalgoorlie (July). During this time his personal situation was far from satisfactory, with Australian Variety recording that "a big law case comes off late this month, and the evidence will make even the ears of corn men open up wide. Artists throughout Australia will feel interested in the revelations, according to some of the know-alls" (19 July 1918, n. pag.) In early August the same magazine also reported that the case is "chockfull of undesirable evidence and spicy allegations" (2 Aug. 1918, 3).

By August 1918 "the most discussed man in Australian vaudeville" was back in Sydney having lost the case brought against him by Faye. The libel case centred around Sadler's allegation that Faye (whose husband Bruce Drysdale was on active duty in the war) and Arthur Morley were having an affair. Morley's wife Elsie Bates was in Perth with her husband at the time, but Sadler had indicated to several people that the pair were "carrying on," after Morley was seen by Jack Kearns coming out of Ms Faye's adjoining room. During cross examination Faye said that she had met Sadler shortly after she made her debut at Wallsend (NSW) in 1908 [aged 14], and that he had frequently since then made improper overtures to her. She added that she had defeated him in one instance by struggling with him. Sadler denied the allegations and produced witnesses to verify the fact that Morley was seen in

Faye's bed. In addition he claimed that well-known Perth bookmaker, Percy Dennis, with whom he had had a falling out, and who subsequently engaged Morley and Faye for his own shows after the allegation, was party to inflaming the situation in revenge. Included in the scandal, too, was Jack Kearns, who the prosecution claimed was a "drunken scoundrel" (TT: Sept. 1918, 30). The case was eventually found in favour of Faye, who was awarded £25, although the expenses incurred by Sadler for legal costs are believed to have been quite high.

Having returned to Sydney, Sadler began to arrange to takeover the lease of the old Emu Theatre in Oxford Street, near Hyde Park, a venture backed by bookmaker Andy Kerr, who was to take on the role of Direction. Sadler and Kerr began operating vaudeville out of the theatre, renamed the Gaiety, on the 9th of December 1918, with the opening company including Ike Beck, James Craydon (also stage manager), Louie Duggan, Carlton and Sutton, Thompson and Montez, Daisy Harcourt and Sadler himself. The Gaiety quickly took a hold on the city and Eastern Suburbs audiences, "doing remarkably good business" according to the Theatre (Jan. 1919, 25). However, it seems that despite the success of the venture, the psychological depression that would eventually cause Sadler to take his life later in 1919 began to take a firm grip on the comic/manager during the early part of the year. While little is known of Sadler's personal life during this period it would seem that his ability to manage the business side of the Gaiety was being left more and more to Kerr, along with Harry Clay who is believed to have been supplying many of the acts in an unofficial capacity (through his agency) in contrast to the way Sadler previously engaged his artists.

On July 23rd 1919, about a month after his brother Victor died in Queensland of pneumonia, Harry Sadler committed suicide by jumping to his death from a railway bridge at Leichhardt. Sydney's Evening News records that:

Harry Sadler, formerly manager of the Gaiety Theatre in Oxford Street, and well-known in theatrical circles, met his death in a sensational manner at Leichhardt this morning. Soon after 10 o'clock a man and a woman, who were standing on the bridge which crosses the Glebe Island- Homebush railway in Norton Street, saw a man jump on to the parapet of the bridge. He looked towards them for a moment and said, "Goodbye! You'll find my body below." Then he dived head first to the railway below (qtd. TT: Aug. 1919, n. pag.).

Sadler left a touching note to Martin Brennan, editor of Australian Variety, in which, even during his final hours he still gave thought to his long-time mate Jack Kearns. The note read:

Dear Martin,

I have decided to end it all today. I die knowing I did absolutely all I could for the profession. Through your paper give my kindest thoughts to Ben and John Fuller they are kings! Ta ta old pal; good luck!

Harry Sadler

P.S. - Ain't a man stiff. Cheer-oh Porky!

Australian Variety wrote of Sadler shortly after his death:

The unfortunate victim of his own hand was one of the best-known men in Australian vaudeville. His was a meteoric career, both as regards performer and manager. He had played the Fuller time on many occasions, and with very great success. As a manager, also, he was identified with several shows, all of which, strange to say, came to a somewhat premature end - sometimes from mismanagement, more often from sheer bad luck. Poor Sadler was a happy-go-lucky fellow, generous to a fault, and if ever he had an enemy it was probably himself.

Years later, Roy Rene wrote of Sadler in his memoirs, "those two men, Porky Kearns and Harry Sadler, were great performers in their day, and they knew show business backwards and they knew what the audience wanted" (61-22). Harry Sadler was forty years of age when he died, and is buried at Rookwood Cemetery. Surviving brothers Sid and Will were the chief mourners.

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- Harry Sadler's turn at the Tivoli is a roar from the start... He out-Tiches Little Tich, which is tall talk (TT: June 1907, n. pag).
  - Thus the ever energetic Harry Sadler, writing from the Theatre Royal, Hobart: Australian Variety is in great demand here, and you will find a good scope for it in Tasmania now that vaudeville has come, I hope to stay.... I have made arrangements with Mr S. Spurling general manager of the New national Theatre, Launceston, to take all acts and turns after they have played Hobart, and I have also made exceptional arrangements with Mr Ben J. Fuller for a continuous supply of acts for both centres... I will do all I can to push Variety along, and have already arranged for its sale in my theatres" (AV: 22 Sept. 1915, n. pag.).
  - Harry Sadler, in his elegant dress suit, makes an imposing figure in front of the Princess Theatre every evening. And how the comedian-manager works to get 'em in, and how he succeeds, is told in the fine box-office returns (AV: 31 May 1916, n. pag.).
  - When Sadler and Beveridge were running vaudeville in Hobart, Ted Stanley (doyen of theatrical mangers in the tight little island), [would] put up some great jokes on them. Harry always dressed like a parson, and Ted's favourite joke was to get someone to hand Harry a bible wrapped in neat parcel. Harry used to go stone mad when he opened it (AV: 22 Aug. 1917, 15).

- Harry Sadler to be a "Live One" - When the Princess Theatre re-opens to-morrow, it will have Harry Sadler at the helm, and this ubiquitous comedian-manager is going to give this well-known house the surprise of its life. He will run broad burlesque for the edification of patrons, and those latter are going to see a legs show hitherto unequalled. A very fine company of comedians has been secured, and the talent of the rest of the show is in keeping with the venture. Mr Sadler wishes it to be distinctly understood that he is taking the venture up entirely on his own responsibility, the only interest the Fuller firm has is the lease of the premises (AV: 23 Nov. 1917, n. pag.).
- "Wanted - Fifty, fine divine cute beauty girls for Harry Sadler's great new show, The Yankee Doodle Girls" - so ran the advertisement in a recent daily paper..... And there was some rush. Honoured more in the breach than the observance, girls, women and "ladies" of all shapes and sizes, answered the call. During the past three days [of auditions] the manager and his staff have had the time of their lives; but the ultimate results have been very satisfactory, and to-morrow evening will see some of the best forms ever seen on the Australian stage. The Yankee Doodle Girls will be a burlesque show of the real rip-tearing type. It will keep within the bounds of discretion by a reasonable margin, and may also be depended upon to produce an entertainment of breezy merriment (AV: 23 Nov. 1917, n. pag.).
- "How to be Quick at Figures" by Harry Sadler will be on the market shortly. Advance sales are enormous (AV: 23 Nov. 1917, n. pag.).
- Harry Sadler is a full blown "Stenographer," and can go some on the machine. His office is a buzz of business, and to see Harry at work, things must be looking up. Some class now, he can be seen only by appointment (AV: 30 Nov. 1917, n. pag.).
- Harry Sadler offered Ben J. Fuller six months rent of the Princess Theatre in advance last Monday. But the governing-director refused to take the money. Instead, he told Sadler that he really thought that the latter was on the way to make a big reputation for himself, and, the money would be available for improvements, and other matters. This is no "bull" - for Sadler has the backing to a very large amount (AV: 7 Dec. 1917, n. pag.).
- Back to the pay-box. So great was the rush at the Princess Theatre last Saturday evening that Harry Sadler had to go into the main pay-box and tear off the roll tickets for the seller. So busy was he - when a client came to pay him thirty shillings, that he did not have time to put his hand out for it (AV: 8 Feb. 1918, n. pag.).
- Harry Sadler back. - The most discussed man in Australian vaudeville at the present time arrived back from Perth last Friday..... Despite the fact that the case went against him, Harry still has the old smile up, and fully anticipates everything going right again, ere he returns westward (AV: 23 Aug. 1918, 3).
- Judge not, that ye not be judged. [Part of Sadler's death notice, published in Australian Variety (AV: 25 July 1919, 3).
- When climbing the ladder of success may you never meet a friend. [Harry Sadler] (TT: Nov. 1922, 6)



Ike Beck  
(AV: 27 Aug. 1920, 11)



Walter Bentley as Hamlet  
(TT: Aug. 1909, 13)



Harry Sadler  
(AV: 25 July 1919, 3.)



Bert Howard – the Lord Mayor of  
Poverty Point  
(E: 12 Dec. 1928, 136.)



Stanley McKay as Shylock  
(TT: June 1906, 14)