

APPENDIX F

NOMENCLATURE AND PRODUCTION/NARRATIVE ISSUES

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1. Descriptions and Historical Overviews:

1.1 REVUSICALS: Combining elements of revue and the musical comedy, revusicals are one act musical comedies that similarly feature comedy and song and dance. While closely aligned with intimate revue in terms of production values, the revusical differs through its use of a storyline to hold the various sketches and improvised scenes together. The Australian revusical emerged primarily as a vehicle for two principal comedians, who were supported by a small but versatile ensemble of variety performers and six scantily-clad chorus girls.

- One act musical comedies were not new to the Australian stage by c1914. See, for example, *Romance from Rome* (1905). This production was staged as a second part entertainment by Ted Holland's Vaudeville Entertainers at the Theatre Royal (Bris) during the week of between 7-13 January. The production is described in the *Brisbane Courier* as a "musical comedy" (9 Jan. 1905, 2).
- The revusical emerged in Australia following the American Burlesque Company's 1913-14 tour, and almost two decades before it appeared elsewhere in the world. During its heyday in Australia (c 1915-1928), countless revusical companies plied their trade around the country presenting a mixture of original works and localised adaptations.
- Up until the early 1920s, Australian revusicals were billed under various titles including: "revue," "tabloid musical comedy," "burlesque revue," "musical dramatic sketch," "musical travesty," "miniature musical comedy" and "musical playlet," and "revusical." Because no over-arching term was applied, the genre was later confused with 'revue' by Australian theatre historians who incorrectly assumed that productions staged by troupes such as the George Wallace Revue Company involved a series of unrelated songs, sketches and dance staged under an 'umbrella' theme.
- The songs were taken from popular sources (local or overseas), with ragtime/jazz and sentimental numbers favoured. There was little attempt at integration, with most songs being interpolated into the story and changed as required. Nevertheless some songs are known to have been specifically written for particular scenes or characters – notably in the works by Nat Phillips and George Wallace. Of the many dozens of key Australian revusical practitioners, among the most successful were: Bert Le Blanc (ex-American Burlesque Co), Nat Phillips and Roy Rene (Stiffy and Mo), George Wallace, Jim Gerald, Paul Stanhope, Con Moreni, W. Gayle Wyer (USA), Arthur Morley, Art Slavin, Charles Delavale and Joe Rox.
- Described in the *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* as "a theatrical entertainment that combines elements of the revue and musical" (1244), the term revusical is to have been chiefly used in the American theatre context, having originated there as slang sometime around 1931 and as such perhaps came about through "playful or humorous intent." The dictionary also proposes that revusical did not come into more frequent usage in America (and Britain), until the late 1930s/early 1940s in Britain and America. The same entry points to an article in the *Australian New Idea* (23 Feb. 1967, 6) which refers John McKellar's invention, the revusical *Hail Gloria Fitzpatrick*. According to the writer it was "coined by the Phillip Theatre to describe a show that will cover every facet of theatre work."
- The earliest reference to **revusical** found to date is in an advertisement for Paul Stanhope's production, *I'm Sorry*, published in the *Age* 25 December 1915 (12).

1.2 REVUE: "A word which, if it means anything at all," writes one London critic, "means something with a dash of topicality" (PMG: 1 Sept. 1916, 6).

- In its broadest definition revue might be described as a form of popular culture entertainment in which unrelated sketches comprising elements of song, dance and dialogue are organized around a unifying idea or theme (usually intimated in the title). The genre traditionally features comedy and topical references, often with a sharp satiric edge.
- American and English revue derived out of the French form - a type of satirical theatre that became popular in the late nineteenth century. The advent of ragtime (and later jazz) was especially important to the genre's appeal from around 1910 onwards. Two of the most successful revue producers of the early twentieth century were England's Charles B. Cochrane and American Florenz Ziegfeld (Ziegfeld's Follies). The two differed in their approach, however, with Ziegfeld's formula focusing largely on spectacle and the glorification of the American female, while English (and Australian) revue tended to emphasise satirical humour.
- Revue was first staged in Australia in 1913 when J. C. Williamson toured an English production, *Come Over Here*, starring Daisy Jerome and Jack Cannot. Although the Tivoli presented follies-style revues from around 1915 onwards, these were mostly of foreign origin and represented only a minor part of the Australian theatre industry overall. More popular with Australian popular culture audience, however, was the locally-written and narrative-driven revusical genre. By the late 1920s traditional revue ousted the revusical from its once dominant position (due in part to its non-reliance on plot), becoming a popular live alternative to the movies following World War Two. As a popular culture form of entertainment, however, it eventually succumbed to the power of television in the 1970s and largely disappeared from the professional stage.

- Australian revue during the 1950s and early 1960s became synonymous with the Phillip Street Theatre (Sydney), although these productions were essentially a sub-genre known as intimate revue. Today the revue is commonly associated with university productions, whereby a pastiche of skits and popular songs (usually with new lyrics) are presented in order to comment humorously on aspects of student life or on contemporary issues. Another sub-genre of revue also emerged during the late twentieth century. Comprising few if any identifiable characters (although sometimes based on a rudimentary story line) these revues focus on either the songs of a particular composer or on songs made famous by a particular performer, or group of performers (a selection of female singers, for example).

1.3 REVUDIVILLE: Is referred to in the *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* as "a form of variety entertainment" (1244), seems to have been first used to describe productions staged at the Windmill Theatre in London between 1932 and 1964. The earliest references to revudiville are in an advertisement published in the *Times* on 3 February 1932 (12), and a subsequent review (4 Feb. 1932, 15).

1.4 REVUOMIME: Coined as early as early as 1917, revuomime is a term that was sometimes applied to productions that comprised elements of musical revue and pantomime. The term is attributed to Brisbane entrepreneur T. H. Eslick (responsible for many of the White Cities established during WWI) who, according to an article in the *Brisbane Courier*, invented it because "the dictionary, after a long search, provided no proper word happily fitting his needs" (3 Sept. 1917, 4).

1.5 REVUETTE: Used to describe several Charles Delavale productions (ie. *Money to Burn* - A: 17 Dec. 1928, n. pag.), and some of Nat Phillips' productions from the late 1920s - including, for example: *Have a Bath, Sir* (BC: 28 Feb. 1927, 16)

1.6 SKETCH: Many of George Wallace's productions staged in Melbourne are described in the *Age* as "*sketches* which occupy the whole of the second half of the programme" rather than revues/revusicals/musical comedies. Wallace's advertisements on the other hand highlight his troupe as a "Revue Company."

Charles Norman describes the revusical (referred to as the "sketch") in *When Vaudeville was King*:

The sketch required precise technique and a very acute sense of audience reaction and it demanded expert acting. Sometime the big sketch had to follow a very popular knockabout comedy act which the audience was loath to let go... Sketches were often the try-out ground for writers who then went on to writing longer plays and film scripts. For instance a plot revue I played in on the Fuller circuit of Australia and New Zealand, by Gale Wyler, took up the second half of the bill... The plot was a case of mistaken identity."

According to the *Stage Year Book of 1927*, sketches had not the quality of those of former times. Maybe it was because speech was the new order and jazz was getting louder. The ear was being trained for things to come. Sitting in a variety theatre through the big sketch for nearly three quarters of an hour was losing its appeal, even though they contained... big star" (255).

1.7 MUSICAL COMEDY: A form of popular culture music theatre which originated in America and England during the early twentieth century, the musical is closely related in structure and style to European operetta. Both contain spoken dialogue and develop dramatic situations that feature song and dance sequences. The American, or Broadway musical, emerged out of New York in the immediate post-WWI era through writers and composers working in the area of revue. In 1927 the first modern, or mature musical, *Showboat* (not a musical comedy, however) laid the foundation for productions that not only contained more complex characterisations and dramatic organisation, but also utilised techniques of transition – the smooth integration of song out of scenes of dialogue. This aspect of the musical is the principal element that separates it from other types of music theatre – the play with music, for example. The American musical's golden years were roughly 1940 to 1965, with its most influential creative practitioners being Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II.

While forms of musical comedy (or musical plays) existed in Australian, as in the USA and England prior to *Showboat*, the country's first major musical production was *Collits' Inn* (1933). Attempts to replicate the American commodity musical model, with large-scale production values, have only rarely been successful. Prior to the successful revival of *The Boy from Oz* on Broadway in 2004, only *Hot Shoe Shuffle* (1994 revival) found success overseas (in London's West End). In every other instance local musicals (i.e. *The Sentimental Bloke*, 1961; or *Seven Little Australians*, 1988) have garnered only limited parochial support. Very few Australian musicals, too, have attempted to utilise techniques of integration, which has led to decades of negative criticism and the perennial search for the "great Australian musical."

This term was also sometimes used to refer to the revusical. See, for example: *Then They Woke Up* (1917), *Keep it Dark* (1917) and *The Mississippi Cabaret* (1920).

1.8 INTIMATE REVUE: Presented in small and sometimes even claustrophobic theatres by small ensembles, intimate revue relies more on witty dialogue and songs than on revue's typically elaborate staging. Costuming, dancing, spectacle and production values are therefore either missing or minimalist in their presentation. As with revue, however, the intimate form invariably features topical satire.

- Although intimate revue had been introduced to London audiences as early as 1897 by H. G. Pelissier, it was not until Charles B. Cochran began producing it during the First World War (Ambassadors and London Pavilion theatres) that the genre established a significant presence on the English stage. At the same time in New York, Jerome Kern, Guy Bolton, P. G. Wodehouse and others began staging an intimate form of musical comedy at the Princess Theatre. The appeal of intimate theatre, and particularly revue continued during and after the Second World War.
- Intimate revue in Australia dates back to 1947. During the 1950s and 1960s the genre was synonymous with Sydney's Phillip Street Theatre (staged under the direction of William Orr). Many prominent thespians and entertainers from the 1970s onwards began their early professional careers with the company. Such performers include : Judi Farr, June Salter, Charles Tingwell, Ray Barrett, Ruth Cracknell, Alan Hopgood, Alton Harvey, Gordon Chater, Robina Beard, Kevan Johnston, Peter Kenna, Jimmy Hannan, John Ewart, Patsy Ann Noble, Alan Hopgood, and Peter Batey. Others associated with the theatre include composers Dot Mendoza, Peter Sculthorpe, Gerry Donovan and Lance Mulcahey.

1.9 BURLESQUE: A humorous theatrical work involving parody and grotesque exaggeration of serious or well-known plays, operas, classical legends and children's stories. Nineteenth century burlesque featured songs and lively dancing, chorus girls (often semi-clad), comic buffoonery and cross-casting, all fashioned into an energetic spectacle.

- Burlesque was initially popularised in Britain and the United States during the early 1800s as seasonal entertainment. Music was an important aspect and usually served as an additional means of parody. Songs would be re-fashioned with humorous new lyrics that poked fun at well-known identities, contemporary issues or the original source itself – an opera, serious drama or popular novel, for example. The dialogue mostly comprised rhyming couplets, and the jokes frequently relied on word-torturing puns. Australian minstrel shows often presented mini-burlesques as a standard finale - replacing or complimenting the traditional farce. Essentially a forerunner to the revusical (one act musical comedy), Australian minstrel burlesque featured music to a much greater degree than its American counterpart. The most popular source of burlesque for Australian authors and producers were therefore opera and operetta, particularly any work recently (or even concurrently) produced on the local stage.
- Although burlesques (and burlettas) appeared on the Australian stage as early as the 1840s, it was not until W. M. Akhust produced a string of successes in the late 1850s/early 1860s that the genre's popularity became established in the country. Leading Australian-based writers/adaptors of burlesque during its golden era (c1860-1890) included: W. Horace Bent, Charles and Harry Cogill, Garnet Walch, Percy St John, Lance Lenton, H. R. Duff and Harry Leston. The essence of Australian burlesque was laughter rather than satire. Eric Irvin notes in the *Dictionary of Australian Theatre* that "in a sense the musical burlesque of the 1860s and early 1870s could be called a pantomime for elders – a leg, costume, and scenic show designed to amuse and relax" (58). Australian burlesque, which drew more on the American tradition, became in turn an influence on the development of the locally-devised revusical (c 1915-1930). Two of the most popular sources for Australian burlesque were *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

As with pantomime, and indeed any popular culture entertainment form, a precise definition of burlesque is difficult to pin down. This is because a natural hybridisation process takes place over time as writers and producers borrow and reinterpret ideas from various others genres and sources. Thus most Australian burlesques of the 1880s and 1890s should be understood as being generically different from those of the 1850s and 1860s, and even the 1870s.

2. Nomenclature Survey (1915 - 1939):

1915

I'M SORRY (Paul Stanhope Revue Co): "A mirthful musical **revusical**... brightly written and elaborately produced. brimful of Latest Song successes, Hilarious Comedy Scenes, Artistic Ballets and Tuneful Choruses. A ripple of happiness from the opening chorus to the grand finale" (A: 25 Dec. 1915, 12 - advert.).

NB: The 1915 production included Stanhope's specialty act "Three Thousand Feet High"

1916

FULL STEAM AHEAD (Victor Prince Revusical Comedy Co): The *Theatre* magazine refers to the production as a "**revue**" (Mar. 1916, 44).

A SPORTING CHANCE (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo Co): Described as "another **tabloid** of inconsequences [sic], as regards the plot, but chock full of action and comedy just the same" (E: 26 Nov. 1924, 34).

GEE WHIZ (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo Co) "The dressing of the show each week is excellent, and taken on the whole Nat Phillips has presented the best "**musical revues**" seen on this circuit" (AV: 9 Aug. 1916, n. pag.).

1917

THEN THEY WOKE UP (Bert Le Blanc Co): Described as a **musical comedy** (AV: 6 June 1917, n. pag.).

KEEP IT DARK (Bert Le Blanc Co): Described as a **musical comedy** (TT: Jan. 1917, 52).

MISS CHILLY FROM CHILE (Harry Clay's company): "This is one of the highest class **playlets** in vaudeville [and] offered by artists of real merit" (AV: 4 July 1917, n. pag.).

AT THE RACES (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo Co): Described as both a "burlesque" (ARG: 17 Sept. 1917, 3) and "musical burletta" (ARG: 10 Dec. 1917, 8).

1918

IN OLD SEVILLE (Bert Le Blanc Co): "Bert Le Blanc and his musical merry-makers... essayed a **musical burlesque**..." (BC: 7 Jan. 1918, 9).

YACKA HULA HICKEY DULA (Arthur Morley Co): Described in the *Theatre* as an "original one act Hawaiian **extravaganza**" (Feb. 1918, n. pag.), and in *Australian Variety* as "an original **one act pantomime**" (15 Jan. 1918, n. pag.).

DO IT NOW (Bert Le Blanc Co): Described as a "**burlesque revue**" (BC: 11 Nov. 1918, 5).

1922

PEEP SHOW: The term "revusical" is used to describe this production, staged at the Theatre Royal, Sydney (c August/September).

1928

MONEY TO BURN: A Nat Phillips revusical at the Bijou Theatre, Melb, it is described in an *Age* review as a "**musical comedy revuette**" (17 Dec. 1928, 12).

1929

A TRIP TO THE MOUNTAINS: Les Shipp's *A Trip to the Mountains* is described as "a musical farce interspersed with numbers by the ballet and several specialties occupying the whole second half" (DM: 3 July 1929, 10).

1939

- The *Brisbane Courier* refers to a vaudeville show at Brisbane's Theatre Royal staged by Madge Cloherty's "Celebrities" troupe as "**revudiville**" (8 July 1939, 14).

3. Production Descriptions:

1915

THIS IS THE LIFE (Paul Stanhope's Merry Musical Burlesque Co): Paul Stanhope's company "opened at the National (Syd) on February 13. They fill in the second part of bill. It is a refreshing departure from the ordinary-presented vaudeville acts... The initial offering was *This is the Life*. In this there are seven part-players, and in addition there are a dozen other performers who appear in singing, dancing, and other novelties. The entertainment, in short, is what it is described to be - a musical burlesque" (X-Ray. "Paul Stanhope Musical Burlesque Co." TT: Mar. 1915, 35).

CATCH ON (Kate Howard and Elton Black Co): "The performers come on - and disappear - in such a way as to suggest the development of a story. But it is ... only the slenderest attempt that is made in the way of connecting things up" (X-Ray "Month in Vaudeville, The." TT: Sept. 1915, 45).

ON THE SANDS (Royal Musical Comedy Co): Synopsis of Events - Flo and her Friends Arrive; On the Sands; Private, Strictly Private; Clarence the Sport; Somebody's Taken My Togs, I Wonder Who Were There Before?; Police; The Rich Uncle from Fiji; Everybody Happy (AV: 27 Oct. 1915, n. pag. / AV: 3 Nov. 1915, n. pag. / AV: 27 Sept. 1916, n. pag.).

NOT A WORD TO THE WIFE (Royal Musical Comedy Co): "Nellie Calthorpe, wanting to go to a masked ball, tries to find an excuse to give to her husband. Nellie's friends are decidedly frivolous and sophisticated young ladies who suggest all manner of excuses so that she might attend the ball" (AV: 17 Nov. 1915, n. pag.).

1916

ON YOUR NUT (Jack Kearns Co) [Set in a Sydney boarding house, the cast of characters includes a young army recruit, the boarding house keeper (Mrs O'Flanagan), and various lodgers and local residents] "The curtain rises on a festive boarding house scene, the guest being a young fellow in khaki [who] is going to the front... Then the front-cloth descends. After it comes down Mr Kearns appears in the guise of 'an Irish M.P.' from Goondiwindi (Qld), looking for 'an ould friend of mine phwat keeps a Sydney boarding-house - Mrs O'Flanagan.' In this search he meets many other members of the company, representing different types of Sydney residents, and in that way the audience are provided with a lot of humorously skittish stuff. In turn songs are given by Peter Brooks, Harry Sadler, Cliff O'Keefe, Billy Maloney, Beattie McDonald, Vera Kearns, Violet Elliot and Mrs Kearns himself... Finally the front-cloth is raised once more disclosing the boarding house - this time with the lodgers at the table more or less busy on a meal, and the landlady flying about here and there. The Mr Kearns enters. The keeper of the place, Mrs Flanagan, is the "'ould friend' he is looking for! Then the fun - in which all the boarders participate - follows fast and furious" (TT: Mar. 1916, n. pag.).

ALL ABOARD (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo Co): Set aboard the S.S. Maysail, the story concerns newly weds Tom and Eva, her brother John and his wife, Eva, a stewardess, Sarah, and a friend, Fred (TT: Oct. 1916, 49).

A SPORTING CHANCE (Stiffy and Mo Co): Set on a farm owned by an old farmer with half a dozen pretty daughters on his hands, one of the on-going jokes concerns "The Truth Tree" - a tree that grows all sorts of fruit. Anyone telling a lie beneath it gets a piece of fruit dropped on his or her head. The bigger the lie the bigger the fruit! The 1924 production was described in *Everyone's* as "another tabloid of inconsequences [sic], as regards the plot, but chock full of action and comedy just the same" (26 Nov. 1924, 34).

JOYLAND and **THE MATINEE GIRL** (Les Bates Follies of Pleasure Co): "Like the revue, the musical burlesque comprises a medley of music, dancing and humour, the whole strung together on the slenderest of plots... In [both productions, Con Moreni's] work was the outstanding feature... As Mike Sweeney in the first piece, a hearty gullible Irishman, and in the second, a gay old sport, the comedian utilised his dry style of humour with considerable success in the proceedings.... The music of the two trifles consists of a number of brisk solos and choruses mainly in rag-time, alternating with the approved style sentimental ballad. The predominance of solo items is given to the lady members of the company" ("Follies of Pleasure Co," WA: 25 Dec. 1916, 6).

1917

THEN THEY WOKE UP (Bert Le Blanc Co): Described as a "musical comedy" (AV: 6 June 1917, n. pag.) the songs, dances and "business" are loosely tied to a story that concerns two Jewish sailors (Le Blanc and Mack) who are wrecked on the languorous island of Bong. They fall asleep and dream of becoming king and grand secretary respectively, and have, as one review notes, "a right royal time" (BC: 3 Dec. 1917, 9).

KEEP IT DARK (Bert Le Blanc Co): see the two eccentric jokers, Ike Cohan (Bert Le Blanc) and Morris Levi (Jake Mack) ensconced in a Paris Hotel where they create all sorts of mayhem and hilarity." The revusical is described as a **musical comedy** (TT: Jan. 1917, 52).

WHAT'S THE USE (Bert Le Blanc Co): sees Ike Cohan (Bert Le Blanc) and Morris Levi (Jake Mack) run a far-from-successful pawnshop that nevertheless can't help being a place of riotous fun, singing, dancing, and joking (BC: 10 Dec. 1917, 5).

CHOPS OF THE CHANNEL (Harry Clay's company): "The big success for some weeks... a laugh from start to finish," the two stars, according to Harry Kitching (*Australian Variety*) were Will Gilbert, who kept the "record" audience clambering for encores," and Kitty Stanley whose "handling of the plot and the discovery could not have been placed in better hands" (30 Nov. 1917, n. pag.). "Kitch's" review of the Coliseum season in December notes, too, that the "musical numbers fitted in with the farce, and by the applause which greeted the show, the audience were well satisfied with the production" (14 Dec. 1917, n. pag.).

1918

THE PLUMBERS: (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo) Concerns the antics of two plumbers, Stiffy and Mo, called in to make repairs at a wedding breakfast. It is here they meet Mr Pinetree and his mean old wife, Mr Senate and Mrs Senate (with a way of her own) and the newly wed Scudders. The chorus girls took on roles such as bridesmaids and friends (Nat Phillips' Collection manuscript, UQFL9).

IN A HAREM: (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo) Sees Stiffy and Mo in an old-time impression of a Turkish domestic doveote, portraying porters at a Railway, who along with several other characters later find themselves in a Sultan's Harem. M. A. Keup, writing in his "Vaudeville" column in *Just It*, notes that Phillips based this work on "the same theme that inspired Mozart to compose *The Seraglio*," presenting an "old-time impression of a Turkish domestic doveote" (6 Oct. 1927, 28). The production differs somewhat from the usual Nat Phillips one act musical comedy revue in that it is divided into two distinct scenes, and contains a slightly larger cast. Furthermore, several members of the troupe who appear in the first scene ("The Railway") do not appear in the second ("The Sultan's Harem"). The other characters include Will Aitkins (a crook) and Mr Burwood (a smartie), a group of passengers, a sultan (alias Will Atkins) and a chorus of Ladies of the Harem" (Keup, M.A. "Month in Vaudeville." 6 Oct. 1927, 28).

DO IT NOW: (Bert Le Blanc) Described in the *Brisbane Courier* as a "burlesque revue, *Do it Now* was "the first episode in a story which [was] revealed more full in the sequel *Get The Habit*." The revusical's setting is in the stockbroking office of Will Cheaten, with Ike and Morris as unsuspecting speculators who soon learn that stockbroking is the art of buying stock that doesn't exist with money you don't possess and selling it for more than it cost" (11 Nov. 1918, 5).

1919

BULLFIGHTERS: (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo) Also known as *Toreadors*, *In Mexico*, *Mexicans* and *In Spain*, the various versions of this one act musical comedy revue see Stiffy and Mo as bullfighters. Although new songs and fresh comic business were no doubt inserted into the various productions over the years, it is believed that the basic format of the first narrative was kept. The 1922 production, for example (presented as *In Mexico*), is known to have contained the following characters: Bill Brady (a crook), Floritta (an heiress), Anita (in love with Brady), Antonio (in love with Floritta), Petre (a bad hombre), Florrie (who also loves Brady), and various senioritas. The 1924 version has at least four similarly-named four characters - Pedro, Natalie, Flora and Floritta. The *Theatre* describes the 1924 production, titled *Mexicans* thus: "Stiffy and Mo, two strangers in Mexico, are alternatively vamped by Natalie, Flora and Floritta, and only just manage to evade the knife of Pedro the toreador. The plot is neither here nor there, however, when Stiffy and Mo start gagging. A most artistic scene representing a courtyard in Mexico, forms the background for the revue and six dainty senioritas dance on and off when the fun slows down... but the show is Stiffy and Mo" (Dec. 1924, 44).

KUTE KIDS: Billed as a "Komical Kolation," Arts Slavin's *Kute Kids* concerns Mr Mug (an elderly widower) who has his mind (and eye) set on marrying again. The "infant terribles" of the women he is pursuing cause him problems with their antics.

THE BELLE OF LA PEROUSE: Reviewed in the *Theatre* as containing a "*Charley's Aunt*-like plot [and] embellished with... incidental numbers" (July 1919, 23), the story line of *The Belle of La Perouse* has Jack Kearns' character masquerading as an aunt for chaperone purposes.

AFTER THE SHOW: Art Slavin's revusical *After the Show* is described by Harry Kitching in *Australian Variety* as a musical play, and as having a good plot - "with many funny situations" (6 Sept. 1919, n. pag).

1920

THE MISSISSIPPI CABARET: Said to have been produced for the first time in Sydney, and described as a 'musical comedy,' the origin and authorship of *The Mississippi Cabaret* are unknown. Despite the American-ness of its subject matter it is possible that the work could still be an Australian-written work (most likely by Reg Greenwood, then manager of Harry Clay's No 4 company, along with others in the troupe). Greenwood was an English comic and tenor who was resident in Australia for a number of years, and indeed is known to have secured regular employment with Harry Clay between 1918 and at least 1921.

HENPECKED: A Harry Clay production (Princess Theatre, Syd; 18-24 Sept.), *Henpecked* is described as both a musical farce and a musical comedy.

1921

IN OLD SEVILLE: This Bert Le Blanc revusical is described in advertising as a musical comedy.

TWO DAYS OUT: George Wallace's revusical *Two Days Out* is described in advertising and reviews as a "musical tabloid."

1922

THE BANK: (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo) Stiffy and Mo are janitors in *The Bank*. The other characters are Mr Morgan (a banker), Mazie (his daughter), Freddie (her fiancée), Jacques (the manager), Quilpy (a clerk), Miss Fussy (the head typist), Dora (a secretary), and Mrs Mush (the charwoman).

IN SOCIETY: (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo) Stiffy and Mo's *In Society* is set in the studio of socialite artist, Maurice. The other characters in this "musical comedy revue" are Floritte (his model), Peters (his friend), Polly (his maid), Tonnette (a model), Mr Guiter (a roue), several attractive models and two "butter-ins," Stiffy and Mo. For the 1924 production, *Australian Variety* records, "a most sumptuous interior set, with a superb moonlight view of the city in the background. Here the amusing attempts of Stiffy and Mo to get Mo into society were the chief ingredients of a revue that contains a lot of matter founded on everyday experience. A really amusing episode is where Stiffy, [with] the help of an imaginary lady, attempts to drill Mo into the manner of conducting himself in high-class social circles... Wisely surrounding themselves with excellent 'straight people,' the revue goes through the haven of success without the humoursities of the pair becoming too boresome" (AV: 20 Sept. 1924, n. pag.).

A MILLIONAIRE FOR A NIGHT: (Jim Gerald Co) Described in a *Theatre* review as a "mini musical comedy," with "some sort of story [running] through it to give interest to the characters," Jim Gerald's *A Millionaire for a Night* concerns two people who change lives temporarily so that each can enlarge his life experience (or else break the monotony of life for a while) by being someone (and something) different (TT: Sept. 1927, 19).

1914-1918; OR, FOR THE DURATION: (Jim Gerald Co)"Enlisting in 1914 [Mr Gerald's] period as a recruit at Liverpool Camp was one of "persecution" at the hands of Sergeant Major Bluff (Mr Howard Hall) from whose gruff person he got nothing but hostility and abuse. Muggins' discomfiture was further provoked by the austere Captain Aynsley (Mr Ernest Crawford). On board the transport and finally in the trenches Private Muggins' was always to the fore" (13 Nov. 1922, 13).

WHIPS AND QUIPS: (Jim Gerald Co) Jim Gerald's *Whips and Quips*, a racing revue with a law court burlesque, has a cast of characters which include a trainer, a crook, a stableman, a yokel, an owner, a jockey and a spieler.

THE TENNIS CLUB: (Jim Gerald Co) Jim Gerald's one act musical comedy, *The Tennis Club*, revolves around Lord Colic and his valet, Hector Lip (Gerald).

1923

ROCKETS: The Grand Opera House was filled to its utmost seating on Saturday night to witness the "revusical pantomime" presented by Mr Hugh J. Ward's London Company, under the title of *Rockets*. *Rockets* is neither a pantomime nor a revue, but it seems to include the best of both, for there is not a dull moment in the full three hour's performance. There are fourteen scenes in all, each of which is distinct in itself, and all are staged in a spectacular manner (SMH: 24 Oct. 1923, 6).

1924

REMNANTS: (Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo) "Like its predecessors," writes an *Everyone's* reviewer, Nat Phillips *Remnants* "has little or no plot, but just enough to hold it together and permit of the comedians and their support giving a first-class impression of how easy it is to get laughs" (3 Dec. 1924, 34).

1925

JUST A GIRL / THE DEATH OF THE APHRODITE: The *Theatre* notes, in its review of two Phil Smith revusicals, *Just a Girl* and *The Death of the Aphrodite*, that the patter work of Phil Smith and William Greene was "very finished, [but] perhaps at times a trifle too subtle for audiences used to knock-about farce." The magazine's critic also notes that Phil Smith's revues, notably *Just a Girl*, are "built on lines that recall some of the musical comedies of the past... the plot is in many cases quite coherent, and in some cases dramatic. The result is the performers have something tangible to work upon, and the revues are more than glorified vaudeville" (February 1925, 12).

THE PICKLED PORTER: (George Wallace Co) Typical of Wallace's revusical farces, *The Pickled Porter* utilised his outrageous capability to perform a drunk act, complete with side-splitting falls. *Everyone's* writes of the 1925 production: "as is usual with these tabloids, there is just the semblance of story, but it serves to introduce the little comedian in another mirth-provoking part - that of the porter.

SO THIS IS MANLY: Believed to have been the first of Reg "Kangaroosta" Thornton's one act musical revues for Harry Clay, and perhaps the first that he wrote. Previews and reviews indicate that Thornton's revusicals, and this one in particular, contained a stronger plot within their story lines than most contemporary productions. *Everyone's*, for example, wrote in May that "all [his productions] are written with a view to continuity of plot and the inclusion of song numbers of an appropriate nature" (6 May 1925, 37).

ACTORS TROUBLES: Another of Reg Thornton's revusicals produced by Harry Clay's company, *Actors Troubles* is described in the *Theatre* as containing "a novel plot"... which proposes that "actors have more than their share of troubles" (July 1925, 4).

CATCHEM AND ROBBEM: A Con Moreni revusical produced as part of "The Veterans of Variety," a special event put on by Sir Benjamin Fuller, concerns a pair of actors, "Ginger Catchem" (Con Moreni) and "Robbem" (Dan Weldon), who are down on their luck. They put up at a hotel "and proceed to resuscitate their financial standing by working their heads upon all likely marks with whom they come into contact" (GR: July 1925, 14).

THE LADY BUCCANEERS: A revusical presented by the Bandbox Revue Company under the direction of its leader/writer/director, F. Gayle Wyer, is set on a corsair's ship run by women pirates. The storyline allowed the "original lines" to unfold within the "picturesque scene" of the ship's "bridge and flying deck built up... [with] the starboard and port lights turning, and the main deck alive with pretty lady pirates" (TT: Oct. 1925, 13-14).

AFTER THE STORM: The *Theatre* notes that "novelty was imparted to [*After the Storm*]... by the locale being placed in Sydney." With a greater emphasis on localised dialogue and topicalities, "this smart concoction of song, dance and interlude... possessed like all Gayle's works, a clear-cut story, which was punctuated at times by introduced songs and the ever welcome dancing of the clever Australian girls." The story is set in a Darlinghurst flat owned by Timothy O'Sullivan, who, during the absence of his wife, gets an old bachelor friend Bill Utterman (Gayle Wyer) to keep him company. The two have a night out, and arrive home to find that Mrs O'Sullivan has unexpectedly returned from the country. To make matters worse, La Belle Farnois, a chorus girl, turns up to get her handbag that the now much-tangled O'Sullivan took by mistake. Much humour is supplied, too, by the character Jones, a "danky" servant, who has to repeatedly unpack and pack his mistresses bags as she and her husband continually shift between arguing and making up (Nov. 1925, 41).

1926

FIREMEN AND FLAPPERS: "As usual, the second part is devoted to revue as purveyed by The Skeeta Cass Co., whose offering this week is the rattling, romantic and mirth-provoking revue of *Firemen and Flappers*, which in other States has brought them well-deserved fame. The jokes and comical situations of the plot never fail to please, and the sentimental side of the revue is well-looked after. *Firemen and Flappers* has an alluring title and the author and composer, aided by the company made the piece very fascinating to patrons..." ("Vaudeville." JI: 11 Nov. 1926, 29).

WILLIE'S FRIVOLS: "[The Desmond troupe's *Willie's Frivols*] revue, as usual, built on the broad lines of vaudeville, with a plot liable to be dislocated at any moment by lively song and dance incidents" ("Vaudeville." JI: 18 Nov. 1926, 28).

1927

MARY'S LAMB: "The Zig Zag Revue Co. are excellent in *Mary's Lamb*, the plot of which shows a gay Lothario of a husband being kept under the eye of a suspicious wife until the wife is bowled out in a little indiscretion of her own." ("Vaudeville." JI: 3 Feb. 1927, 28).

HAVE A BATH, SIR!: "There was a healthy mixture of nonsense in *Have a Bath, Sir* which was billed as 'a musical comedy revue,' in which Dr Dapper (Dan Weldon), the matron (Dorothy Manning), Dr Mo (Roy Rene), Stiffy (Nat Phillips), the lunatic who wheels his barrow upside down for fear someone might put bricks in it (Jack Kellaway), Miss Monotony (Polly Power), Mr Nearly Better (Hal Cooper), and the neurotic patients (the Charleston Boys) appeared at their best" (BC: 28 Feb. 1927, 16).

THE MERRY MASQUERADER: "Masquerading as a millionaire whose eccentricities are overlooked in view of his supposed wealth, [Jim Gerald's character] becomes entangled in a love affair which provides a series of incidents affording [the comedian] every scope for his inimitable acting" (BC: 20 June 1927, 20).

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- "The revues purveyed by the [Nat] **Hanley** troupe are all well constructed with a view to utilising to the fullest advantage the talents of [the troupe]. Not for a moment is the ceaseless flow of joke, song and dance allowed to flag... One good feature about revue is that one is not tied down to tradition, or bound to follow 'the book,' as in the case of comic opera or the various branches of the drama. A revue is a handy, if spineless, form of show. One can take out a song here and there, or insert another one there, for the charm of revue is that it is not tied down to plot or incidents" ("Vaudeville." JI: 20 Jan. 1927, 28).
- "**Nat Hanley** and Al Mack supply the major portion of the humour in the well-presented revues, which seem as countless as the sands of Coogee, Bondi or La Perouse. Even the naming of each fresh revue must cause some thought, and the working out of a different plot, with incidental "business," songs, dances, and comical situations, calls for, and gets, producing talent of the Augustus Harris quality" ("Vaudeville." JI: 24 Feb. 1927, 28).
- "There are many quick changes in the two acts of the present [**Stiffy and Mo**] show... the revue at present has just enough patter to preserve a semblance of continuity throughout, and the comedians are always about during the whole performance" ("Vaudeville." JI: 21 Apr. 1927, 28).
- "As usual with this class of entertainment, the stage is flooded from time to time with pretty girls whose dancing and evolutions bring joy to the most hardened of playgoers... To the making of revues, like the making of books, there seems to be no limit, and the variety of incidents and songs worked into these patchwork pieces is a source of wonder to the auditor" ("Vaudeville." JI: 5 May 1927, 29).
- "The medium of revue for the display of **Stiffy and Mo** is wise, as this class of entertainment is all sorts of shows and nothing long. The writing of the 'book' and compiling of the music numbers is the work of Mr Phillips (Stiffy), who must work all round the clock.. The amount of work involved in weekly changes of revue, must make hard labour in the 'cooler' a mere trifle. Not only do the company supply two shows a day, but they have to rehearse the revue for the following week." (Keup, M. A. "Vaudeville." JI: 12 May 1927, 28).
- "[Revue] allows ample scope for the introduction of pretty scenery, pretty girls, and effective comic incidents. The revue medium is never at a standstill, it can be chopped and changed about to suit all tastes. A song and dance can be dragged into the average revue on the same principle that the old theatrical manager, Crummies, introduced a pump into every play he staged at Plymouth. The incident is well treated by Charles Dickens... in his fascinating story of *Nicholas Nickleby*. Revue knows no limits, the scene can be Lapland or Canberra according to the taste of the author (Keup, M. A. "Vaudeville." JI: 12 May 1927, 29).
- One cannot be tied to facts in revue. Like pantomime and other mediums, the fancy of the author is allowed to roam (Keup, M. A. "Vaudeville." JI: 2 June 1927, 29).
- "The invention of the revue came as a boon and blessing to theatrical managers, and is the best medium for the display of vocal talent, good dancing]and comedians that have funny jokes to make one forget the income tax, the bailiff and the landlord" (Keup, M. A. "Vaudeville." JI: 9 June 1927, 28).
- "The revue in which the two principles [**Stiffy and Mo**] appear as returned soldiers, orderlies to their former war-time captains, and are drafted into peaceful social surroundings, allows great scope for laughable consequences. The audiences were greatly amused when 'Mo' came forth as a despatch rider" (Keup, M. A. "Vaudeville." JI: 16 June 1927, 28).

- "It is a tradition that a Fuller revue must have a chorus-ballet of six shapely girls, and well sustained is this tradition in the present [**Stiffy and Mo**] revues" (Keup, M. A. "Vaudeville." JI: 23 June 1927, 29).
- [There was] the inevitable revue, without which very few vaudeville houses like to dispense with.... Herein a thread of a plot was proved strong enough to hang upon it a series of songs, dances and interludes (Keup, M. A. "Vaudeville." JI: 30 June 1927, 28. *Review of an unnamed Mugsy Desmond revusical staged at the Gaiety Theatre, Sydney*)
- M. A. Keup, reviewer for *Just It* from April 1927 onwards, provides some insights into the **Nat Phillips**-produced revues of 1927. The (unnamed) production for the week beginning 30 July, for example, contained at least five sketches - "Three Doors In A Passage," "The Sailors," "Have A Drink," "Becky" and "The Nervous Patient" (Keup M. A. "Vaudeville." JI: 4 Aug. 1927, 28).

1928

DON'T TELL THE WIFE: "Mr Gerald kept the audience in continual laughter ... in this comedy in which he ludicrously impersonated a Spanish senorita, a coy maid-servant, a picturesque Chinese and a drunken husband," writes the *Sydney Morning Herald* theatre critic. "There is a plot in this play about a will and the schemes of those who try to break it; but the interest in this is quite secondary to that of the clever fooling of the comedians and the bright songs and dances of the principals and the Twinklers. The piece was written and produced by Mr Gerald" (SMH: 30 Jan. 1928, 6).

THE MERRY MASQUERADER: "In successive sketches [Gerald] characterized a forgetful cinema cameraman and a desperate deadbeat who wanted to live in gaol. As the leading figure of the *Merry Masquerader* he was once more in a penniless condition but decided to pose as an American millionaire with a view to becoming engaged to the daughter of a wealthy English baronet" (SMH: 12 Mar. 1928, 5).

CHUCKLES: Charles Delavale is "Ike" is a janitor "no bank manager could reject" in *Chuckles*, a "musical revuette," which concerns itself with the matrimonial differences between a jealous husband and his wife. Other characters include a woman, Susie, and a bank manager ("Bijou Theatre." A: 16 July 1928, 11).

COLLEGE DAYS: Described as "a collegiate revuette" the comedy of *College Days* was sustained through the animosities between Charles Delavale's character and that portrayed by Charles Megan, both members of an all male group of university students called the "Crazy Quintette" ("Bijou Theatre." A: 23 July 1928, 12).

A HARUM MIX-UP: "Ike Delavale, as Ike Cohen, gets into more difficulties than any person in Melbourne, and the comedy created by his efforts to extricate himself would compel laughter from a Silent Cop. *A Harem Mix-Up* is a comedy revue that cannot fail to please" (A: 25 Aug. 1928, 32. Advert.)

THE SPARKLERS: "A merry melange of fun and melody," *The Sparklers* story-line concerned diamond thieves, French police, customs officials, sailors and passengers. Wallace's role is recorded in the *Age* as being "the Nuisance" (15 Oct. 1928, 9).

DANGEROUS DAN: Described by Wallace as a "cowboy musical drama," *Dangerous Dan* was advertised in 1928 as "the most screamingly funny of revues... His Six-Shooter Gun Spoke! and Seven Indians 'Bit the Dust'... Yes George is Dangerous" (A: 1 Dec. 1928, 32). The production is later described in the *Age* as having "bristled with laughable situations" (A: 3 Dec. 1928, 15).

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- Many of **George Wallace's** revusicals staged in Melbourne are described in the *Age* as "*sketches* which occupy the whole of the second half of the programme" and not revues/revusicals/musical comedies. Wallace's advertisements on the other hand highlight his troupe as a "Revue Company." [For details see Bijou (Melb) season ca. Sept. - Nov.]