

## ALEC KELLAWAY

After arriving in Australia in 1923, Alec Kellaway (brother of entertainers Cecil and Jack) worked extensively for Fullers' Theatres as a specialist singer and comedian on its Australian and New Zealand circuits. He appeared with Nat Phillips's Whirligigs in 1926 and again briefly in 1929. During the 1930s he was engaged in numerous musical comedies and revues, including at least one Ernest C. Rolls production. Kellaway also garnered much praise for his comedic role in the 1938 Ken G. Hall film *The Broken Melody*. In the early 1940s he worked largely under Tivoli Theatres Australia general manager Wallace Parnell, helping to produce a number of revues and other entertainment spectacles. He took over the role of producer in 1944.

The cousin of British actors Arthur Chesney and Edmund Gwenn, Alec Kellaway was one of six siblings who carved out careers in the entertainment profession. While little is yet known of the Kellaway brothers' early years, it appears that Alex, along with Cecil, was born in South Africa, where it is believed the family resided for some years. Jack and Leon (a dancer who came to Australia with Anna Pavlova's ballet company) are thought to have been born in England. It is likely that their parents were involved in the theatre, as it has been said that the Kellaways were South Africa's equivalent of the Barrymores. Jack and Cecil followed Leon to Australia around 1920/1921, with Alec arriving in 1923. The most successful member of the family was Cecil, who spent more than two decades in the British and Australian film industries (seventeen years in Australia) as an actor, writer, and director before moving to Hollywood. In 1948, he garnered an Oscar nomination as Best Supporting Actor for *The Luck of the Irish*. One of the last films he appeared in was *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967) as Monsignor Mike Ryan.



Source: National Library of Australia

During the mid-to-late 1920s, Alec worked fairly extensively for Fullers' Theatres Ltd, appearing as a specialist singer on their Australian and New Zealand circuits. In 1924, for example, he co-starred alongside Edgely and Dawe in *The Midnight Frolics* (Palace Theatre, Melb; beginning 20 Dec.) and made regular appearances at the Bijou Theatre (Melb) between 1925 and 1926. In 1926 he joined his brother Jack in Nat Phillips's post Stiffy and Mo troupe, the Whirligigs, remaining until around the time that Phillips and Roy Rene brought their famous characters back in 1927. Kellaway briefly joined his brother and the Whirligigs in 1929 (following the final disbanding of the Stiffy and Mo troupe). His engagement was as temporary replacement for Dan M. Dunbar who had been struck down by a serious illness.

During the 1930s, Kellaway was engaged for such productions as *The Merry Malones* (Apollo Theatre, Melbourne; 23 June) and appeared alongside Roy Rene in Ernest C. Rolls' *Rhapsodies of 1935* at Melbourne's Apollo Theatre beginning early February (he was later Rene's producer at the Tivoli). He also appeared in at least six films – *Lovers and Luggers* (1937), *The Broken Melody* (1938), *Let George Do It* (1938) • *Dad and Dave Come to Town* (1938) • *Gone to the Dogs* (1939) • *Ants in His Pants* (1939, aka *Come Up Smiling*). His comedic role in Ken G. Hall's *The Broken Melody*, saw him garner much critical praise.

Between ca. 1940 and 1944 Kellaway worked largely under Tivoli Theatres Australia general manager Wallace Parnell, helping to produce a number of revues and other entertainment spectacles. When the company was bought out by a group headed by David N. Martin in 1944, Parnell resigned in protest at his demotion to resident producer. Kellaway subsequently took over the position, beginning with the new regime's premiere production, *It's Foolish - But it's Fun* (Melb; 9 Oct.).

Alec Kellaway's later career included roles in at least four more films - *Dad Rudd M.P.* (1940), *Smithy* (1946), *The Kangaroo Kid* (1950), and *Squeeze a Flower* (1970). He also worked as assistant director on *Sons of Matthew* (1949) and made a feature appearance on the first *Joe Martin's Late Show* when it went to air in 1959.

### SEE ALSO

- [Jack Kellaway](#)
- [Nat Phillips' Whirligigs Co](#)
- [Tivoli Theatres](#)
- [Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo Revue Co](#)

## TROUPES

Nat Phillips' Stiffy & Mo Revue Co • Nat Phillips' Whirligigs • Midnight Frolics Co • Moon & Morris Revue Co

## FURTHER REFERENCE

Djubal, Clay. "[Alec Kellaway](#)." AustLit (2007).



**Clockwise from left: Jack, his wife Sylvia, Cyril and Alec**  
Source: National Library of Australia

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