

## VALANTYNE NAPIER

The daughter of Hector and Dorothy Napier, Valantyne Napier also carved out a successful international career on the stage, both as a contortionist and a dancer. Between 1948 and 1969 she worked in vaudeville, revue and pantomime, often presenting a variation on her father's Spider act. She also teamed up with her first husband Ted Weeks in an act billed as Vyne and Valantyne. In her later years Napier published several books about the variety industry.

The second, but only surviving daughter, of world famous English contortionist Hector Napier and his Australian wife, dancer Dorothy Yvonne Cartledge, Valantyne Napier was born in Chelsea (Victoria) in 1923 during her parents' 1922/23 return tour of Australia. She made her first professional appearance in 1930, and as with her two older brothers became part of their parents' act until they retired in the mid-1930s. Valantyne's signature turn act during her youth, which she first performed in 1935, was a solo version of her father's Human Spider act.

Although able to dislocate bone joints like her father and blessed with her mother's grace and poise as a dancer, Napier was a serious student at high school and seriously considered pursuing a career as a scientist. Following the outbreak of World War II Napier decided to use her theatrical experience entertaining troops, with this decision eventually leading her away from science and back into the entertainment industry. Her superiors assigned her to a touring all-female concert party called The Gaiety Girls, with their

object being to tour armed forces camps and help build morale. Napier's contribution to the tour saw her

perform a male impersonation along with her Human Spider contortionist act. She also choreographed and danced in several numbers.

After the end of the war Napier studied ballet with Edouard Borovanski and later with Espinosa before touring Australia and Japan in 1947. She moved to the United Kingdom in 1948 remaining there for more than a decade. Soon after arriving in the country she and her first husband, Ted Weeks, formed the double act, Vyne and Valantyne. The partnership featured Napier's abilities as a dancer and contortionist and Week's skills as a head balancer and comedian. After their relationship ended in 1951 Napier worked primarily in vaudeville, revue and pantomime - both in Australia and internationally - until her retirement in 1969. During that time she appeared as a solo artist, often presenting her signature spider act. It was especially popular in pantomimes, and became one of the hit turns of Little Miss Muffett.

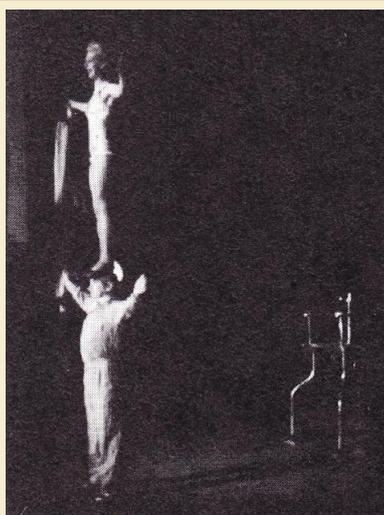
Napier and her second husband Jeffrey Jones, returned to Australia in 1966. She gave her final performance (as the Human Spider) in 1969 at the Heidelberg Town Hall. After retiring from the stage Napier went on to write several books about the variety industry - *Act as Known: Australian Specialty Acts* (1986) and *Glossary of Terms Used in Variety* (1996).

### SEE ALSO

- [Hector Napier](#)



Source: American Vaudeville Museum.



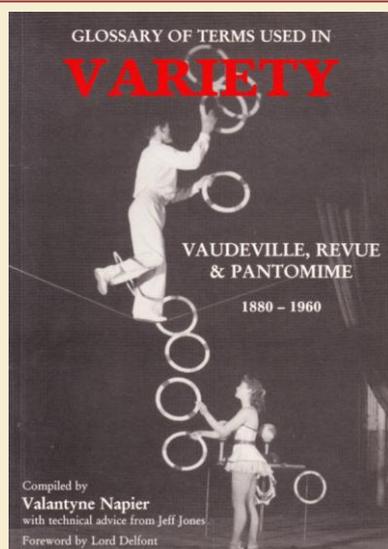
**Vyne and Valantyne**

Source: Valantyne Napier. *Glossary of Terms Used in Variety*. (1996)



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Source: Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library

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