

## GEORGE WALLACE REVUE COMPANY

One of the most popular variety companies of the 1920s. George Wallace premiered his revusical company at the Fullers Majestic Theatre, Newtown in August 1924, a few weeks after returning from his first tour of New Zealand. The troupe initially comprised several high profile vaudeville performers, notably Harry Burgess and Marshall Crosby, and later boasted such people as Sadie Gale, Ivy Moore, Lulla Fanning, and Bert and Evelyn Dudley, Keith Connolly and Elsie Hosking. Over the next five years, the troupe toured Australia and New Zealand constantly, presenting a combination of revusicals, revue/vaudeville and musical comedies. Wallace continued to tour with his own troupe up until the mid-1930s.

One of Australia's most popular variety and revusical comedians of the 1920s, George Wallace first came to prominence in 1919 through his association with Sydney-based variety entrepreneur Harry Clay. Initially working either solo or in an act with his wife, Wallace established a knockabout comedy partnership with Jack Paterson in 1920, called Dinks and Oncus. The two comedians went on to become arguably the most popular act on Clay's circuit for the four years they were together. In addition to their vaudeville act, Wallace and Paterson also appeared in revusicals on Clay's circuit. Following their split in late 1923, Wallace accepted an engagement from Fullers' Theatres Ltd to play an extended engagement in Dunedin, New Zealand. When he returned to Australia mid-way through 1924, he put together a revusical troupe that soon became one of the four leading Australian-based companies of the post-World War One era, the others being Nat Phillips' Stiffy and Mo Company, Bert Le Blanc's Travesty Stars, and the Jim Gerald Revue Company.

The George Wallace Revue Company played its first-ever season in Australia at the Fullers' Majestic Theatre, situated in the inner-city suburb of Newtown, beginning 9 August 1924. Following a four-month run at Adelaide's Majestic Theatre, the Fullers brought the troupe back to Sydney to play a season at the prestigious Fullers' Theatre, and from that point on, the company was positioned within the Fullers' organisation as one of its headline acts. Over the next five years, the troupe toured the Fullers' Australian and New Zealand circuit consistently, with the exposure helping to turn Wallace into one of the country's most popular comedians. In addition to writing the scripts (and often one or more songs) and playing the lead role in his shows, Wallace also directed each production. He would also sometimes help provide the scenic art and play an instrument on stage, notably piano or guitar.

Among the more popular revusicals staged by the George Wallace Revue Company were *Harmony Row* and *His Royal Highness* (both later adapted into films), *The Oojah Bird*, *Lads of the Village*, *Off Honolulu*, *Alpine Antics*, and *The Pickled Porter*. Initially these shows would occupy the second half of a Fullers bill, with the first half taken up with various vaudeville items. For its 1927 New Zealand tour the company presented both halves - either with a first part revue and second part revusical or with the entire evening taken up by a musical comedy. In such instances Wallace expanded shows like *His Royal Highness*,<sup>1</sup> *The Pickled Porter*, *The Oojah Bird*, *Some Night* and *The Sparklers* two and a half hour shows. Among the revues staged in New Zealand were *Scrambled Fun*, *All Sorts*, *Night Lights*, *Jumbies* and *Happy Moments*. Reports indicate the company's 1929 had maintained capacity crowds fifteen weeks after it commenced. The tour is also believed to have included the first production of a new musical comedy - £100,000.



<sup>1</sup> According to the Telegraph (Brisbane), *His Royal Highness* was the first of Wallace's "all-night" shows. It was given its premiere at the Fullers' Majestic Theatre, Newtown in early July 1926.

Upon returning to Australia in late 1929, Wallace ended his association with the Fullers and undertook a fifteen-week engagement at Melbourne's Tivoli Theatre. Reviews published over the course of the company's career with the Fullers suggest that there had never been any reduction in interest by the public, despite the rising popularity of film. This popularity continued unabated into the 1930s, by which time Wallace's troupe included such well-known variety performers as Jim Romaine (ex-Drew and Romaine), husband-and-wife comedy sketch artists Bert Dudley and Evelyn Dudley, and Keith Connolly and Elsie Hosking. Long-time stalwart, Marshall Crosby was also still with the company. There appears to have been no reduction in interest in the company, despite the rising popularity of film. Shortly after concluding the Melbourne season in 1930, Wallace took his company to Adelaide, followed by Sydney (returning to his old stamping ground the Bridge Theatre at Newtown), Perth, and the West Australian goldfields. After finishing up in Kalgoorlie in mid-December he and his company then travelled back to the east to open in Newcastle for Christmas. The post-Melbourne tour was produced under the direction of Harry R. Kitching (former *Australian Variety* critic and husband of singer Amy Rochelle).

Interestingly, a number of newspapers and magazines around the country reported in the first half of 1930 that Wallace intended travelling to Great Britain in the near future. An item published in *Table Talk's* 23 January issue indicates that the comedian, who had yet to travel outside Australasia, planned to take Keith Connolly and Marshall Crosby with him.<sup>2</sup> In April that same year *Everyone's* reported that Wallace was to receive £150 a week in England when he went there. There was talk, too, of a month's holiday first. Although references to the British tour were made as late as early May,<sup>3</sup> a search of Australian newspapers held in *Trove* for the period 1930 to 1933 indicates that Wallace never made the trip, being otherwise engaged touring Australia.<sup>4</sup> Although Wallace's career in the 1930s is chiefly remembered for his film career, he nevertheless continued taking a company on the road whenever his commitments allowed [see for example 1934 below].

As with Stiffy and Mo, Bert Le Blanc, and Jim Gerald, much of George Wallace's popularity can also be put down to the remarkable talents of his fellow performers and, notably, long-serving troupe member Marshall Crosby, who often played the comedian's on-stage foil. The initial company, as formed in 1924, also included Harry Burgess (ex-American Burlesque Co), Tom Lincoln, George Lloyd, Nellie Dean, Jacky White, Rene Albert, Marie Nyman, Pat Reid, and a chorus known as The Six Twinklers. Over the years, he also engaged such local stars as Sadie Gale (the pair were romantically linked for a brief period), Ivy Moore, Lulla Fanning, Ada Scaddan, Fred 'Check' Hayes, Frank Haining, and Bert and Evelyn Dudley. Many of these performers remained with Wallace for years at a time, providing him with an ensemble that could readily adapt whenever the lead comedian began improvising. It also allowed his revivals to develop more rounded characters, an issue of some significance in a genre even more hampered by storytelling time than the musical. That his company remained so stable over the years, despite the rigours of touring Australia and New Zealand - it played the Dominion circuit at least three times during the 1920s (1924, 1927-28, and 1928-29) - suggests that it was more than ably run by its charismatic leader.



*Argus* 22 Sept. (1928), 28

### **SEE ALSO**

- [George Wallace](#)
- [Fullers Theatres](#)
- [Sadie Gale](#)
- [Marshall Crosby](#)
- [Betty Craydon](#)
- [Flaming Youths](#)
- [Keith Connolly](#)
- [Harry R. Kitching](#)
- [Elsie Hosking](#)

<sup>2</sup> "[George Wallace for England](#)." *Table Talk* 23 Jan. (1930), 19.

<sup>3</sup> "[Majestic Theatre](#)." *Advertiser* 9 May (1930), 2. Advertisement.

<sup>4</sup> This preliminary research into George Wallace's touring schedule was conducted by Sharon Connolly for her biographical article on [Keith Connolly](#). By 1932 Wallace's film commitments meant that overseas travel was put on hold, and indeed he is not believed to have travelled to Britain until the 1950s.

## PERSONNEL

All dates shown below are established years only. In some instances, people may have been associated with the company prior to or after the dates shown, but these years have not yet been identified.

- 1. Principal troupe members:** Incl. Harry Burgess (1924-25), Bunny Cannan (1928), Keith Connelly (1929-30), Letty Craydon (1927), Marshal Crosby (1924-30), Les Daley (1927), Kathleen Daley (1927), Nellie Dean (1924-25), John V. Dobbie (1929-30), Bert Dudley (1929-30), Tup Dudley (1929-30), Leonard Durell (1927), Mercia Elliott (1925), Lulla Fanning (1925-26), Tom Foggitt (1928), Sadie Gale (1925), Jack Grant (1929-30), Frank Haining (1925-28), Frederick 'Check' Hayes (1925), Elsie Hosking (1929-30), Maida Jones (1928), Tom Lincoln (1924-28), George Lloyd (1924-25), Marilyn McGill (1927), Georgie McGrath (1928), Al Mack (1927), Gwen Matthews (1929-30), Ivy Moore (1925), Olga Muir (1924), Marie Nyman (1924-28), Hylton Osborne (1927), Pat Reid (1924), Leonard Rich (1929-30), Jim Romaine (1929-30), Lena Ryan (1925), Ada Scaddan (1925-28), Bebe Scott (1929-30), Jack Scott (1928), Irene Shamrock (1929-30), Alec Thompson (1928), Bert Tucker (1928), Jacky White (1924-25).
- 2. Chorus/ballet members between 1924 and 1934** incl. Isobel Broadfoot (1925), Thelma Buxton (1928), Rene Langton (1928), Phyllis Lough (1925), Ivy Moyle (1928), Betty Norber (1928), Olive Partridge (1928), Sybil Rudd (1928), Hilary Salmon (1925), Eileen Smith (1925), Alma Stewart (1925), Doris Whimp (1925).
- 3. Occasional or special guest performers** incl. Baby Myrtle Gourlay (1930), Queenie and David Kaili (1927), The Two Dalys (1928).
- 4. Musicians and musical ensembles** incl. The Five Flaming Youths (1928-1930).
- 5. Additional notes and/or historical clarification:**
  - **Mercia Elliot and Lulla Fanning** were daughters of high-profile minstrel performers Arthur Elliott (comedian) and Maud Fanning (coon singer). [see *Maud Fanning* entry for further details]
  - **Maurice Diamond:** employed as Wallace's choreographer ca. 1929-1930.
  - **Queenie and David Kaili:** Hawaiian entertainers. Played guitar/ukulele and sang.
  - **Georgie McGrath** is sometimes referred to as George.
  - **Bebe Scott:** George Wallace's half-sister, she married English radio actor George Randall. For five years during the 1930s, she and Randall presented the children's radio program *The Cap and Bebe Show* on the ABC Brisbane radio station 4QG.



**MATINEE,**  
"NIGHT LIGHTS" in  
Daylight at 2.30  
To-day.

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COMING SATURDAY NEXT,  
"THE VETERANS OF VARIETY,"  
Book Early.

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**FULLERS  
EMPIRE  
THEATRE**

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"NIGHT LIGHTS,"  
The Brand New  
**GEO. WALLACE**  
Show.

ENID PARKER,  
GRACE AND KEATS,  
CARTHY BROS.,  
LESLIE ELLIOTT.

3/2, 2/1, and 1/1. Reserves 3/2  
Palings till midday, then-theatre.

Follow the crowd to Fuller's.

*Brisbane Courier* 13 Feb. (1926), 2.

*Everyone's* 12 Dec. (1928), 128.

## REVUSICALS

All works written by George Wallace (in association with various members of the company). All dates are first known year of production only.

- 1924:** **A Dancing Delirium** [revusical] • **Some Night** [revusical/musical comedy] • **Alpine Antics** [revusical/musical comedy] • **The Pickled Porter** [revusical/musical comedy] • **Off Honolulu** (aka **S. S. Sunshine**) [revusical] • **Harmony Row** [revusical] • **The Oojah Bird** (aka **Harem Scarem**) [revusical/musical comedy] • **At the Crossroads** [revusical] • **Lads of the Village** (aka **The Village Lads / Boys of the Village / Mr Mulligan, Millionaire**) [revusical] • **Midnight Revels** [revusical]
- 1925:** **Dangerous Dan** [revusical] • **Athletic Frolics** [revusical] • **Money and Matrimony** [revusical] • **The Sparklers** [revusical/musical comedy] • **Rising Tides** [revusical] •



- 1926: **Night Lights** [revue] • **Happy Moments** [revue] • **Scrambled Fun** [revue] • **His Royal Highness** [musical comedy]  
 1927: **Married Bliss-ters** [revusical] • **All Sorts** [revue] • **Jumbies** [revue]  
 1928: **Bald Heads** [revusical]  
 1929: **Me and My Girl** [revusical]  
 1930: **Mr Mulligan Comes to the Show** [revusical] • **Oh What a Night** [revusical]

### ENGAGEMENTS CHRONOLOGY

An asterisk (\*) beside a date indicates that it is either approximate or has not yet been established)

- 1924: **FULLERS' THEATRES** (Majestic Theatre, Sydney; 9 Aug. - 22 Oct.) • (Majestic Theatre, Adelaide; ca. 25 Oct - 31 Dec.).
- 1925: **FULLERS' THEATRES** (Majestic Theatre Adelaide; 1 Jan. - 24 Feb.) • (Fullers' Theatre, Sydney; 28 Feb. - 29 May) • (Bijou Theatre, Melbourne; 5 June - 4 Sept.) • (Empire Theatre, Brisbane; 19 Sept. - 31 Dec.)
- 1926: **FULLERS' THEATRES** (Empire Theatre, Brisbane; 1 Jan. - 1 Apr.) • (Victoria Theatre, Newcastle; 3 Apr. - 14 May) • (Majestic Theatre, Newtown, Sydney; 15 May - 9 June) • (Majestic Theatre, Adelaide; 17 July - 10 Dec.) • (Bijou Theatre, Melbourne; 13-31 Dec.)
- 1927: **FULLERS' THEATRES** (Bijou Theatre, Melbourne; 1 Jan. - 4 Mar.) • (New Zealand; 18 Mar. - 31 Dec. )  
 NB: New Zealand itinerary incl. Wellington (His Majesty's Theatre; 18 Mar. - \*) • Dunedin (Princess Theatre; 20 June - 2 Sept.)
- 1928: **FULLERS' THEATRES** (1<sup>st</sup> New Zealand tour; 1 Jan. - ca. Mar. \*) • (Victoria Theatre, Newcastle; 28 Apr. - 4 May) • (Fullers' Theatre, Sydney; 5 May - 6 July) • (Empire Theatre, Brisbane; 11 July - 78 Sept.) • (Bijou Theatre, Melbourne; 10 Sept. - 8 Dec.) • (2<sup>nd</sup> New Zealand tour; ca. Dec. \*)  
 NB: The second 1928 New Zealand tour included seasons in Auckland (St James Theatre; 17-31 Dec.)
- 1929: **FULLERS' THEATRES** (New Zealand; 1 Jan. - ca. Oct. \*) ► **TIVOLI CELEBRITY VAUDEVILLE** (Tivoli Theatre, Melbourne; 26-31 Dec.).  
 NB 1: The 1929 New Zealand itinerary incl. Auckland (St James Theatre; 1 Jan. - 16 May) • Christchurch (Opera House; 20 May - 17 Aug.) • Wellington (His Majesty's Theatre; 20 Aug. - 17 Oct).  
 NB 2: The company returned to Australia following the Wellington season . A proposed season at Melbourne's Bijou Theatre beginning 26 October never eventuated. Wallace is recorded as appearing at the Fullers' Sydney Theatre in early December as a solo comedian.  
 NB 3: Tivoli Celebrity Vaudeville was operated by J. C. Williamsons.
- 1930: **TIVOLI CELEBRITY VAUDEVILLE** (Tivoli Theatre, Melbourne; 1 Jan. - 4 Apr.) ► **HARRY R. KITCHING** (Majestic Theatre, Adelaide; 18 Apr. - 16 May) • (Bridge Theatre, Newtown, Sydney; ca. May-July \*) • (Theatre Royal, Perth; 26 July - 6 Dec.) • (Kalgoorlie Town Hall; 10-12 Dec.) • (Boulder Town Hall; 13 Dec.) • (Victoria Theatre, Newcastle; 26-31 Dec.)  
 NB 1: Although Fullers Theatres was the lessee of the Adelaide, Perth and Newcastle theatres, advertising during these season records that the shows were under the direction of Harry R. Kitching.  
 NB 2: The Bridge Theatre season was presumably under management and/or direction of Kitching. He is known to have taken the lease in December 1929. How long he remained lessee is yet to be determined.
- 1931: **HARRY R. KITCHING** (Victoria Theatre, Newcastle; 1-27 Jan.)
- 1934: n/e (Civic Theatre, Syd; Dec. \*).

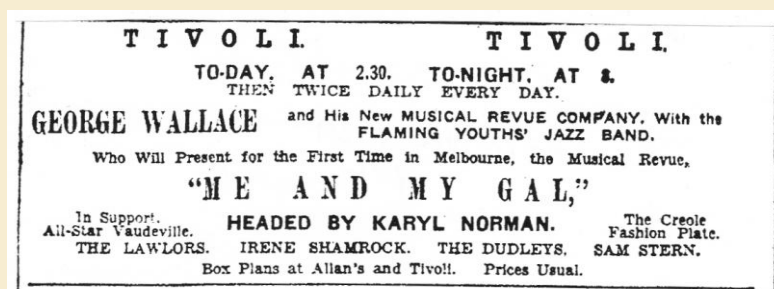
### FURTHER REFERENCE

See George Wallace entry for articles relating specifically to him.

See individual works entries for reviews of the George Wallace Revue Company productions.

Djubal, Clay. "[George Wallace Revue Company](#)." *AustLit* (2007).

"[His Majesty's Theatre](#)." *Evening Post* (Wellington, NZ) 19 Mar. (1927), 12.



Age 26 Dec. (1929), 12.

Last updated: 14/10/2015

Expanded and updated from the 2007 AustLit entry.

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