

ARTHUR TAUCHERT

Acrobatic comedian, dancer, singer, film actor. Best-known today as the star of the classic Australian silent movie, *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919), Arthur Tauchert's career as an entertainer began in the early 1900s as a vaudeville comedian. Over the next two decades he was associated with most of the leading managements firms of that era, including John Fuller, James Brennan, Ted Holland, Harry Clay, Bert Howard, J. C. Bain and Lennon, Hyman and Lennon. After the phenomenal success of *The Sentimental Bloke*, Tauchert appeared in eleven more films, including the sequel *Ginger Mick* (1920). He continued to perform on the vaudeville stage during the remainder of the 1920s and also appeared on radio. He died of cancer in 1933.

A popular vaudeville performer who became one of Australia's first film stars, Arthur Tauchert's career on the variety stage also saw him work with virtually every leading management operating in Australia at the time. Renowned mainly for his comic turns and fine tenor voice (he specialised in Irish songs and divers' ditties), he was also known to perform acrobatics, including neck and shoulder somersaults. An *Australian Variety* review of his stage turn in 1914 provides a brief insight into both his performance and reception: "Arthur Tauchert, the man in the black suit, brown suit, white suit, and not forgetting the purple vest, simply holds the theatre as he likes. By the way he is received, it looks as if he is going to be a landmark at Clay's for some considerable time" (20 May 1914, n. pag.). Despite his considerable reputation and eventual film-star status, very little of Arthur Tauchert's early life and career up until 1907 has been identified at this stage apart. Furthermore, his life and career after the mid-late 1920s also remains a mystery.



A still from *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919)

1877-1912

What can be ascertained from details located to date is that Arthur Michael Tauchert (pronounced Torsher) was born on 21 August 1877 at Waterloo (Syd),¹ the seventh child of German-born Frederick William Tauchert, a cabbie, and his Irish wife Norah (nee McNamara). He received his education at the Crown Street Public School and the Sacred Heart School, Darlinghurst, and initially found employment in several nondescript jobs before serving an

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ARTHUR TAUCHERT, Great End-man.
PRICES—2s and 1s. Plan at Dresden.

New Zealand Free Lance 24 Nov. (1906), 16.

apprenticeship to carriage builders Woods and Spinks. Arthur's flair for entertaining, likely influenced by his older sister Ida, led to him finding trialling at various amateur shows before finding engagements at various South Sydney "smoke nights" during the mid to late-1890s. In the meantime, Ida (then known professionally as Ida Rosslyn), had carved out a name for herself as minstrel singer, having appeared on the stage professionally as early as 1886 (aged 11 years).² While Ida's success was very likely the impetus for him following her on to the variety stage, it appears that her younger brother took some time to establish himself in the industry.

Tauchert's name has first been located in connection with the stage in 1906, this being a New Zealand engagement for John Fuller and Sons at the Theatre Royal, Wellington in October. His appearance as an endman indicates that he was already a seasoned performer, as the "bones" and "tambo" roles were almost always undertaken by the most experienced comedians in any minstrel show or troupe. And this would have certainly been the case with the Fullers' management. The New

Zealand tour also included Auckland (ca. Dec. 1906 and Jan. 1907). His next known engagement was the following year when he made his debut appearance for James Brennan at the National Amphitheatre, Sydney on 22 June (when his surname name was spelled Touchert).³ He was still with Brennan up until at least late July. In November that same

¹ NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration No: 6073.

² Frequently billed as "Australia's champion lady dancer and singer," Ida Tauchert (1875-1913), or Rosslyn as she was mostly billed, was a regular member of Dan Tracey's minstrel company during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Following her marriage to comedian Jack Kearns, she spent some five years with Harry Rickards touring the entrepreneur's Australasian circuit (see Jack Kearns entry for further details).

³ The "Touchert" spelling was quite common during the period 1906 to ca. 1910.

year he appeared under Ted Holland's management at Brisbane's Theatre Royal, with the *Brisbane Courier* writing of his appearance: "Mr Arthur Tauchert, another of the great army of eccentric comedians also made his initial bow to Brisbane with the results satisfactory to himself and the audience. His turns were breezy and laughable throughout" (2 Dec. 1907, 3). Over the next three years he alternated his James Brennan engagements with appearances for organisations like Lucas's New Tivoli Vaudeville Company (Tasmania) and Lennon, Hyman and Lennon (Empire Theatre, Adelaide). On a personal note Tauchert was married in 1909, his bride being Elizabeth (Lizzie) Le Bean, a signwriter's daughter. The ceremony took place on 14 September at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney.

Around 1909 Tauchert began teaming up occasionally with his brother-in-law's ex-partner, Albert McKisson (formerly McKisson and Kearns). One of their first engagements as a double act was with Lucas's New Tivoli Vaudeville Company at the Theatre Royal, Hobart. They are next known to have teamed up again while appearing in Adelaide mid-year, and may have also performed together in Brisbane under Ted Holland's management that year. In reviewing their performance "after a fairly long absence"⁴ the *Brisbane Courier* theatre critic writes: "It was soon evident that the pair had lost none of the popularity that was theirs on the occasion of their former visit." It is possible, then that the critic has inadvertently proposed that they were in partnership on their last visit when they may in fact have been simply appearing on the same programme but in unrelated acts. The review indicates that each comic would appear in a solo turn early in the evening (singing and stand-up), before joining forces in the second half to present comedy sketches (18 Apr. 1910, 6).

The McKisson/Tauchert partnership does not appear to have been a long one, however, as McKisson's name does not appear with Tauchert's during either his Harry Clay appearance at the Royal Standard (Syd) in mid-September 1910 or when he returned to the National Amphitheatre for James Brennan the following month. During the next two years Tauchert continued to work primarily for James Brennan, while also finding engagements with Harry Clay and Ted Holland. In terms of his status by this stage of his career Tauchert was working alongside many high-profile Australian-based performers, often as one of the company principals. Such performers included: Maud Fanning, Ted Tutty and Arthur Elliott (Clay's circuit); and Priscilla Verne and Tommy Armstrong, the Driscoll Brothers, Morris and "Redhead" Wilson and Florrie and Stella Ranger (Brennan's Theatres).

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Register (Adelaide) 16 June 1909, 10.

1913-1917

In 1913 Tauchert spent much of the year with J. C. Bain at the Princess Theatre, while also working briefly for other managements. He appeared, for example, in Newcastle around October/November for Dix-Baker. 1913 also brought with it the birth of his son, Jack. He was back at Harry Clay's Bridge Theatre (Newtown) the following year, briefly forming a partnership with Ern Delavale while his onstage partner Will Gilbert recovered from suffered a serious bout of acute sciatica and rheumatism. *Australian Variety* records in July 1914: "Arthur Tauchert has had a varied career with several partners, but this is the first time he has entered into a legitimate partnership" (8 July 1914, 13). Their act does not appear to have lasted long, however, as Tauchert was back doing solo work and touring his own Refined Vaudeville Company by October. His reputation by then was such that he was able to call on experienced local artists like Lyla Thompson, Pearl Smaile, Sutton and Jamieson and Maud Stewart to give the company a good deal of credibility. The troupe is known to have toured through the Hunter Valley around October 1914, including a season at Newcastle's King's Hall under the management of Dix-Baker. One critic wrote of his act around this period: "Arthur Tauchert... was the usual riot; as a knock-about endman he stands alone, some of his falls being almost real" (AV: 21 Oct 1914, n. pag.).

Back with Harry Clay in early 1915 Tauchert teamed up on several occasions over the next month or so with Ted Tutty (one of Clay's longest-serving and most popular comedians) and Bert Corrie. Both partnerships are believed to

⁴ See "Historical Notes and Corrections" section below for further details.

have been patter acts. *Australian Variety* wrote of one of the Tauchert/Tutty appearances at the Bridge Theatre: "Ted Tutty and Arthur "John McCormick" Tauchert again supplied the comedy and were the usual scream of the bill" (17 Feb. 1915, 3). A month later he undertook an engagement touring Queensland for Clay. *Variety* notes that he was "the riot of each town [with] his class of business having caught on" (28 Apr. 1915, 3), while the *Toowoomba Chronicle* records: "Arthur Tauchert is a tower of strength in the company. Clever and experienced, his 'Pilgrims of the Night,' in the first part (with encore) and contributory aid in the second session were heartily enjoyed (6 Apr. 1915, 6). The Ipswich-based newspaper, the *Queensland Times* reports a few days later: "Comedian Arthur Tauchert in his original song 'Jig-a-Jig' simply brought the house down. He certainly enhanced his already fine reputation" (12 Apr. 1915, 7).

Although only a few details regarding Arthur Tauchert's whereabouts between 1916 and 1918 have been located to date, it is likely that Harry Clay's considerable circuit expansion throughout Sydney and along the south-west NSW railway line would have given him regular employment opportunities. It is believed, too, that he worked on occasion for Bert Howard in Sydney (ca. 1916) and at some stage returned to touring his own variety company around Sydney and the Hunter Valley. By May 1916 Tauchert had also started to become involved in the local film industry. His first prominent screen role was in *Charlie at the Show*, starring Ern Delavale as Charlie Chaplin and directed by Jack Galvin. Tauchert's performance led *Australian Variety* to call him "the new comedian of the movies." The magazine also describes the shooting of one particularly dangerous stunt which nearly resulted in the actor's death:

When Arthur Tauchert... was about to dive into the water (at the water jump) at the Agricultural Ground, when somebody told him that the water was over four-feet deep. Allowing for that depth, Arthur took a "header," and was lucky he didn't crack his neck as the juice was barely eighteen inches deep! In a subsequent scene, when Jack Galvin throws Tauchert and Walter Jamieson out of the Showground, the big fellow (who weighs about 300 lbs) walked on Arthur's hand, and broke the fore-finger. Notwithstanding the fact that he was a fit subject for a hospital, Tauchert was so enthusiastic over the movie business, and put up such a showing, that it is quite likely he will forsake vaudeville for the films (3 May 1916, n. pag.).



Australian Variety 27 May (1914), n. pag.

1918-1933

Tauchert's big opportunity came in 1918 when Raymond Longford cast him in the lead role of *The Sentimental Bloke*. Shot during the middle of the year, the film was released in early 1919 and received rave reviews for both its production and Tauchert's role as Bill "the bloke". One critic even suggested that his acting in the locally-made movie was a revelation, going on to say that a "fabulous amount has been offered by a leading theatrical firm for the rights of the said film" (AV: 3 Jan. 1919, 4). By the end of the year the comedian's star was well and truly on the rise with his performance in the film roundly praised. Taking advantage of his popularity Harry Clay offered him top billing on his

Sydney circuit which at that time included the Gaiety and Princess theatres. His Princess Theatre performance led the *Theatre* to record: "Arthur Tauchert with a taking makeup is good in his offering in the first part. As a supposed wild Indian he greatly helps along the concluding farce" (June 1919, 25). He also appeared on numerous other bills around the country, including Frank Reis's Sydney circuit and Rowley Martin's operations at the Coronation Theatre in Leichhardt.

The *Sentimental Bloke's* huge success provided Longford with the incentive to begin production on *Ginger Mick*, which was based on C. J. Dennis's companion poem "The Moods of Ginger Mick." Once again cast as Bill, the film became another pivotal career moment for Tauchert and further cemented his reputation around the country as "the sentimental bloke." *Ginger Mick* also saw his five-year old son, Jack, make his first film appearance. Tauchert appeared in at least eight more films over the course of the next decade, with the more notable being *Jackeroo* (1920), *The Dinkum Bloke* (1923), *The Digger Earl* (1924), and *Showgirls Luck* (1932, aka *Talkie Mad*).

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IT COST A FORTUNE — IT'S WORTH IT!

Theatre Royal Sydney (1933)
 Source: National Film and Sound Archive.

Despite his heavy film schedule Tauchert continued to perform regularly in vaudeville theatres. Following his engagement on Frank Reis's circuit in late 1919 he joined Reg "The Kangaroosta" Thornton's company. His first engagements with the K-Nuts are believed to have been in the New South Wales Blue Mountains in early 1920. The troupe then travelled to Melbourne sometime around May. A few months later he and his wife had another child, a daughter, with the event being announced in *Australian Variety* (29 July 1920, 1). By the end of the year he was on the bill at the Empire Theatre (Bris). His contract with Fullers is believed to have continued well into 1921.

Over the next three years Tauchert accepted engagements with various firms, notably Bert Howard. J.C. Bain also secured his services as a headline act in October 1924 shortly after opening at Wirth's Sydney Hippodrome. Tauchert was back with Bert Howard in early December that year but announced that it would be his farewell as he intended to shortly go into a sporting business (E: 3 Dec. 1924, 36; and 17 Dec. 1924, 35). However, this venture does not appear to have eventuated. Indeed, not only was he back on Howard's program by the end of the month (E: 31 Dec. 1924, 32), but he also continued to entertain the manager's suburban audiences up until early May the following year. He then left for Brisbane to take up a role in a film being shot there by Australian Film Productions Ltd (E: 13 May 1925, 37).

The 1920s saw Tauchert appear in nine films, beginning with *Ginger Mick* (1920) and ending with *For the Term of His Natural Life* in 1929. For one of these films, *Joe* (1924) he reportedly composed some of the music that accompanied its screenings. He appeared in two more films in the early 1930s, but by then his employment opportunities in variety had become more difficult to obtain as the once dominant city-based vaudeville firms began to close down under the weight of competition from film exhibitors. The suburban and regional circuits continued to offer work, but he nevertheless fell on hard times. During the late 1920s and early 1930s he found additional opportunities in radio, presenting for example recitations from *The Sentimental Bloke* and also singing comic songs, but this was not regular enough to sustain his career. Having tasted success as one of Australia's top entertainers and one of its first film stars, he, like many of his peers, subsequently found the post-variety boom years difficult to survive. While some, like Jack Cannot, took their own lives, Tauchert reportedly found solace in alcohol and according to Isadore Brodsky eventually became destitute. Brodsky offers an insight into his final days when recalling the last of Sydney's poverty points (at Marshall's corner in Park Street). He writes: "The Sentimental Bloke,' Arthur Tauchert, faltered at this spot right under the lamp-post. An old man saw him in his cups on an ill-starred day when he was brimming with pugilism. His challenge went out to Griffo, of all people. Griffo stood to one side and chopped him on the jaw. Then he went back to leaning on the lamp post" (106-7).

Also suffering from cancer, Tauchert was admitted to the Sacred Heart Hospice, Darlinghurst in 1933. He died there on 27 November 1933, less than a year after appearing in his final film. Survived by his wife, two sons and daughter, he was buried with Anglican rites in the Catholic section of Waverley cemetery.

Although very little historical attention has been directed at Arthur Tauchert, despite the significant part he played in Australia's early film industry, it is clear that his contemporaries considered him to be among the country's top entertainers. One prominent American singer, Lou London, even said of him: "I consider Arthur Tauchert one of the most original individuals I have met; he is also one of the best-dispositioned men I have ever had the pleasure of working alongside." London backed his opinion shortly before returning home by giving Tauchert the exclusive Australasian rights to all the songs he had worked in Australia, as well as several he had not performed" ("*Sentimental Bloke Gets Songs*" 20).



Source: Bob Boston. *Find a Grave* website

SEE ALSO

- [Ida Tauchert](#)
- [Jack "Porky" Kearns](#)

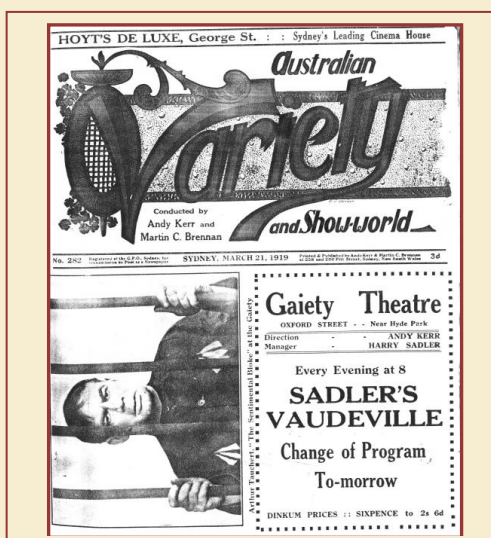
ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

- Mr Arthur Tauchert sang one or two songs which more than bordered on the vulgar, and which were certainly in questionable taste, and his contributions did nothing to assist the high standards which the Fuller Company endeavours to maintain ("Opera House." PNZ: 21 May (1912), 8)
- Arthur Tauchert sang a parody on "Row Row Row," and was the usual riot; as a knock-about endman he stands alone, some of his falls being almost real (AV: 21 Oct 1914, n. pag.)
- Arthur Tauchert, from paper reports, seems to be the riot of each town [touring Queensland for Harry Clay] (AV: 28 Apr. 1915, 3).
- It is said that Arthur Tauchert's acting in the locally-made movie is a revelation, and that a fabulous amount has been offered by a leading theatrical firm for the rights of the said film (AV: 3 Jan. 1919, 4).

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. The *Brisbane Courier's* review from April 1910 indicating that that McKisson and Tauchert were making their re-appearance in the city "after a fairly long absence" is yet to be confirmed (18 Apr. 1910, 6). No details regarding a Brisbane engagement prior to that time have yet been located. The first time their names have been linked together is 30 January 1909.
2. In its 3 December 1924 issue *Everyone's* records that Tauchert made his farewell appearance for Bert Howard at Granville the previous week. The writer further notes: "For many years this performer has played under the management of Howard, and the pair have been bosom pals for many years than we can remember." By the end of the month, however, he was back on the circuit (31 Dec. 1924, 32).
3. Tauchert's first child, a son, was born on 2 July 1910 at his wife's parent's home (SMH: 4 July 1910, 8).
4. The *Sydney Morning Herald* notes in Tauchert's obituary that he and his brother-in-law, Jack Kearns, worked together for some time (23 Nov. 1933, 13). Details of this partnership have not yet been located. As noted above, Tauchert did work, however, with Jack Kearns' former partner, Albert McKisson.

FILM CREDITS



- 1916:** Charlie at the Sydney Show
- 1919:** The Sentimental Bloke
- 1920:** Ginger Mick • The Jackaroo of Coolabong
- 1921:** The Dinkum Bloke
- 1923:** The Digger Earl
- 1924:** Joe
- 1926:** The Moth of Moombi
- 1927:** For the Term of His Natural Life
- 1928:** The Adorable Outcast • Odds On
- 1930:** Fellers
- 1931:** Showgirls

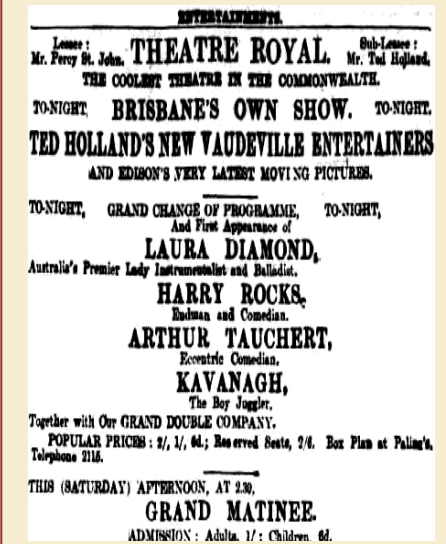
Australian Variety 21 Mar. (1920).

ENGAGEMENTS CHRONOLOGY

- 1906:** JOHN FULLER (Th Royal, Wellington; NZ; 27 Oct. – ca. Dec.) • (Op House, Auckland, NZ; ca. Dec. *)
- 1907:** JOHN FULLER (Op House, Auckland, NZ; 1 Jan. - *) ► JAMES BRENNAN (Nat Amph, Syd; 22 June - ca. Sept/Oct.* > First appearance) ► TED HOLLAND (Th Royal, Bris; 1 Nov. - ca. Dec.*)
- 1908:** JAMES BRENNAN (Nat Amph, Syd; ca. 17 July - *) ► HARRY CLAY (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. Mar. -*) ► JAMES BRENNAN (GaietyTh, Melb; ca. Aug/Sept.)

- 1909: JAMES BRENNAN (Nat Amph, Syd; 23- ca. 27 Jan.*) ► M. LUCAS McKisson & Touchert [sic] > (Th Royal, Hobart; 30 Jan. - ca. Mar.* > Lucas' New Vaudeville Co) ► JAMES BRENNAN (Nat Amph, Syd; ca. 1 Apr. -*) ► LENNON, HYMAN, LENNON (Empire Th, Adel; ca. 29 Apr. - * > incl. McKisson & Touchert from 16 June) ► HARRY CLAY (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. 13 Nov. -*)
- 1912: FULLERS (Op House, Lyttelton, NZ; ca. 22 Apr. - *)
- 1913: J. C. BAIN (Princess Th, Syd; 13 Mar. - May*) • (Princess Th, Syd; 2 Aug. -*) ► DIX-BAKER (Vic Hall, Newc; ca. Nov.) ► HARRY CLAY (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. Dec.)
- 1914: HARRY CLAY (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. Jan.) ► JACKY LANDOW (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. July > Delavale & Touchert) ► DIX-BAKER (Vic Hall, Newc; ca. Oct. > Arthur Touchert's Refined Vaudeville Co)
- 1916: HOWARD AND TAUCHERT (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. Mar – July*) ► JACKY LANDOW (Sydney Suburban circuit; ca. Aug-Sept.)
- 1919: KERR & SADLER (Gaiety Th, Sydney; ca. Jan/Feb.*) ► FRANK REIS (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. Aug. Dec.)
- 1920: FRANK REIS (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. Jan.) ► n/e (Strand Cinema, Bris; 31 Jan. -* > "presents gems from the poems by C. J. Dennis") ► REG THORNTON (Blue Mountains/Western NSW circuit; ca. Feb.* > K-Nuts Co) • (Melb; no details > K-Nuts Co)
- 1921: FULLERS' THEATRES (Empire Th, Bris; 1 Jan. -*) • (Fullers' Th, Syd; ca. Aug.)
- 1924: J. C. BAIN (Hippodrome, Syd; ca. 11 Oct. -*) ► BERT HOWARD (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. Nov/Dec.)
- 1925: BERT HOWARD (Sydney suburban circuit; ca. Apr/May)

Brisbane Courier 30 Nov. (1907), 2.



ENTERTAINMENTS

Lessee: **THEATRE ROYAL** Sub-Lessee: Mr. Ted Hoiland.
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TONIGHT, **BRISBANE'S OWN SHOW.** TONIGHT, **TED HOLLAND'S NEW VAUDEVILLE ENTERTAINERS** AND EDISON'S VERY LATEST MOVING PICTURES.

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KAVANAGH, The Boy Juggler.

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THIS (SATURDAY) AFTERNOON, AT 2.30.
GRAND MATINEE.
ADMISSION: Adults 1/; Children 6d.

FURTHER REFERENCE

- Brodsky, Isadore. *Streets of Sydney* (1962), 106-7.
- Djubal, Clay. "Tauchert, Arthur." *AustLit* (2006).
- "Mr Arthur Tauchert." CM: 28 Nov. (1933), 15.
- "Obituary." ARG: 28 Nov. (1933), 6.
- "Obituary: Mr Arthur Tauchert." SMH: 28 Nov. (1933), 13. [Also published in the Townsville Daily Bulletin 4 Dec. 1933, 4]
- "Ritchie, John, "Tauchert, Arthur Michael (1878-1933)." ADB 12 (1990) - online (sighted 8/11/2011)
- "*Sentimental Bloke*." AV: 13 Nov. (1919), n. pag.
- "*Sentimental Bloke Gets Songs*." E: 12 Oct. (1921), 20.

See also:

- HM: 8 Jan. (1907), 7.
- TG: Feb-Apr. (1961), 60-1. [Photo spread]
- SMH: 22 June (1907), 2 [First appearance at Brennan's National Amphitheatre]



STRAND PICTURES.

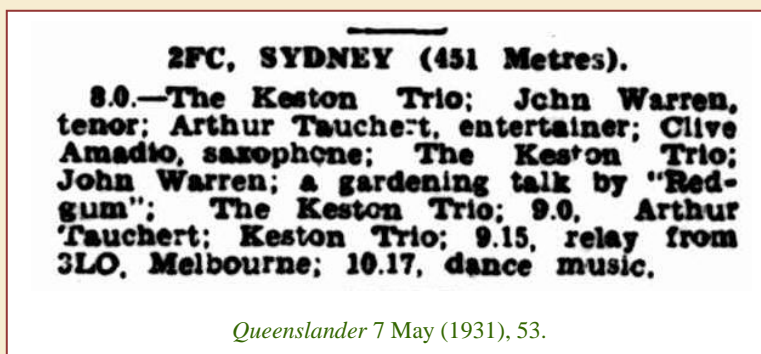
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Cessnock (NSW)
Examiner 2 Oct. (1923), 4.



2FC, SYDNEY (451 Metres).

8.0.—The Keston Trio; John Warren, tenor; Arthur Tauchert, entertainer; Clive Amadio, saxophone; The Keston Trio; John Warren; a gardening talk by "Redgum"; The Keston Trio; 9.0, Arthur Tauchert; Keston Trio; 9.15, relay from 3LO, Melbourne; 10.17, dance music.

Queenslander 7 May (1931), 53.

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