

INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS: P

GRACE PALOTTA

(1870-1959) Viennese-born actress and singer, writer.

Grace Palotta was a particular favourite in Australia, admired as much for her sense of fashion as she was as an actress. She was also in great demand as photographic model and appeared in countless magazines, newspapers and on postcards during her theatrical career.

Palotta made her first appearance on the stage in England in 1894, playing a small "French" role in George Edwardes' *The Gaiety Girl*, and despite having command of very little English quickly garnered attention. That same year she reprised her role in *The Gaiety Girl* at Daly's Theatre, New York. Her association with Australia came about in 1895 when she was spotted in London by **J.C. Williamson**. The Australian entrepreneur was at the time looking for new productions and artists to tour his Australian theatres. He was also on the lookout for a young actress with an accent, and according to Palotta she replied "yes" (one of the few words she knew) to his suggestion that she come to Australia with the Gaiety Theatre Company: "When I came to Australia in '95 I could still speak very little English," she recalls in a *Otago Witness* interview. "The Australians still remember me as the girl who sang 'When you can't afford a hansom take a bus'" ("Viennese." 69).

Grace Palotta and Florence Lloyd
A Gaiety Girl, (Daly's Theatre, New York, 1894)
Source: Footlight Notes



Between 1895 and 1918, Palotta visited Australia five times, while also continuing to tour internationally - including Great Britain, America and the East. Her Australasian engagements were under the auspices of several different firms, including **George Willoughy** and **Hugh J. Ward** (London Company, ca. 1906) and George Willoughy Ltd (1913-14). Although best known for her work in musical comedy, she was equally acclaimed as pantomime actress, notably in principal boy roles. While in Australia in the early 1900s Palotta also wrote and published a novella, *A Viennese Romance, Or, The Life and Adventures of an Actress* (1906) while also writing a number of articles, several of which were published in *Lone Hand* in 1907.



Sources L-R: Linda Applegate-Brown (*Find a Grave*); National Library of Australia (postcard); Powerhouse Museum (postcard)

Palotta's love of Australia was such that she decided to settle in Melbourne during the war years. In 1913 she starred alongside [Carrie Moore](#) in George Willoughby's production of *Aladdin*, with Moore as Aladdin. Palotta played Ko-ko, his Captain of the Guard. The production premiered at Sydney's [Adelphi Theatre](#) on Christmas Eve and subsequently toured Australia and New Zealand over the next eight months. She effectively retired from the stage the following year. After the end of the war Palotta returned to Europe. She died in Notting Hill, London on 21 February 1959.

Further Reference:

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"[Grace Palotta.](#)" *AustLit: The Australian Literature Resource*. [sighted 24/04/2014]

"[Miss Grace Palotta: A Talk on Sundry Things.](#)" *Dominion* (Wellington, NZ) 27 Feb. 1914, 2.

"[Viennese Beauty: Miss Grace Palotta, The.](#)" *Otago Witness* (Dunedin, NZ) 15 Sept. 1909, 68-69.

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