

## VERNA BAIN

The youngest daughter of J.C. Bain, Verna Bain's stage career began as early as 1914. For the next five years she toured extensively throughout Australia and New Zealand, while also undertaking tours of South Africa and the East. From 1920 onwards Verna worked without her father, appearing on both the Tivoli and Fullers circuits as a vaudeville performer and pantomime/musical comedy artist.



Although known widely as the daughter of J.C. Bain, Verna Bain's early development is said to have been as much the result of the training she received through her mother, a talented musician. Born sometime around 1905 she was described in 1914 by *Australian Variety* as one of Australia's finest exponents of the Genee school of terpsichore. By 1917 her remarkable performances were then being likened to the great Pavlova.<sup>1</sup> The same magazine had even described her in an earlier issue as "Australia's greatest dancer."<sup>2</sup> Bain's reputation was such that she featured on the front page of *Variety* on at least two occasions between 1915 and 1917.<sup>3</sup> G.W. Hean's, makers of Hean's Essence, even contracted her to be the face of their "Heenzo" cough syrup advertising in 1918.<sup>4</sup> That same year the Christchurch *Star* newspaper wrote of her turn, "well worth the price of admission alone."<sup>5</sup>

Between 1914 and 1918, Verna and her father appeared with a variety of Australian-based companies, including *Dix-Baker* (Newcastle), *Brennan-Fuller*, *Harry Sadler*, *Harry Clay*, and with *Birch and Carroll's* Queensland circuit. In early 1917 they were engaged for a tour of South Africa. So impressive was her performance in Johannesburg that Verna attracted the attention of Solly Joel, a leading world financier. He subsequently made arrangements for her to appear under the management of Alfred Butt at the Palace Theatre, London. Although passages were booked for the trip to London from Capetown, orders from the British government came via the Admiralty on the eve of the trip that no women or children were allowed to voyage to the United Kingdom. This was on account of the number of boats being torpedoed off the South African west coast by German submarines.<sup>6</sup> After returning to Australia the Bains took up a three month engagement in the East. The tour was abandoned after six weeks, however, when Verna contracted a mild case of malaria in Surabaya. They returned to Australia and after spending some time in recuperation Verna traveled to New Zealand with her father to work the *Fullers'* Dominion circuit. Father and daughter later toured New Zealand briefly with *Tom Pollard* and returned to Australia playing the Birch and Carroll circuit once again. This was followed by another Fullers engagement at the *Empire Theatre*, Brisbane.

Verna Bain's association with the Fullers saw her appear in the company's 1919 Christmas pantomime, *Cinderella* (*Grand Opera House*, Sydney) as Snow Queen, leading a *Theatre Magazine* critic to write: "Miss Bain who - light of foot and expressive in gesture and face - must certainly be credited with the dancing honours of the show."<sup>7</sup> She was engaged by *Hugh D. McIntosh* for the *Tivoli* circuit in 1921, appearing both in vaudeville and in musical comedies, notably the Melbourne season of *Bran Pie* (ca. July). In December that same year Bain was once again procured by the Fullers for their annual Christmas pantomime, with this being *Dick Whittington* (*Grand Opera House*, Sydney). She continued working the company's circuit throughout much of 1922. After a season at the Melbourne *Tivoli* (ca. Oct/Nov.), Bain returned to the Fullers at Christmas, appearing in the firm's Melbourne season of *Dick Whittington*. 1922 also saw her contracted to promote another product - Merclized Wax.<sup>8</sup>

Although few details of Bain's career after 1922 have been identified to date, it is known that she spent around a year in New Zealand beginning late January 1924. Initially performing on the Fullers' Dominion circuit she later turned to

<sup>1</sup> *Australian Variety* (Sydney) 20 Oct. 1917, 3.  
<sup>2</sup> *Australian Variety* (Sydney) June 1917, n. pag.  
<sup>3</sup> See the 17 November 1915 and 20 October 1917 issues.  
<sup>4</sup> *Green Room* (Sydney) Jan. 1918, 2.  
<sup>5</sup> Qtd. in *Green Room* (Sydney) Feb. 1918, 8.  
<sup>6</sup> "Dancing Star" 22.  
<sup>7</sup> *Theatre Magazine* (Sydney) Jan. 1920, 23.  
<sup>8</sup> *Green Room* (Sydney) July 1922, 37.

cabaret. In its 6 May issue of 1925, *Everyone's* reported that she was by then contemplating a return to vaudeville in Australia (37). Her name has next been identified with the Brandon-Cremer Players during its production of *Caste* at Hobart's Theatre Royal beginning 9 September 1927. Bain was specially engaged to perform a dance act for the night the production was attended by the Governor. The following month she was back in Sydney, presenting a "between films" act at the Lyric Wintergarden for [Union Theatres Ltd](#) (ca. 12 Oct.).

1928 saw Bain take up a contract on the Tivoli circuit, then being run by [J.C. Williamson's](#).<sup>9</sup> Her appearances in Melbourne were as part of an ensemble support to Jimmy Kemper, who presented "three short stories of song and dance." One of the other artists engaged for the turn was [Cliff O'Keefe](#). Bain remained at the Melbourne Tivoli between 26 June and September.

1.30 TO-DAY. &  
**FULLERS' THEATRE.**  
 DICK MILTON'S  
 "NOVELETTES."  
 Bright, Snappy, New Original Review Company,  
 presenting  
**STAN FOLEY, AMY ROCHELLE.**  
 Some other Novelettes:—  
 Dick Milton, Keith Connelly, Lily Coburn, Harry Huley, Lulla Fanning, Cyril James, Rene Dixon,  
 Frank Haining, Verna Bain, Iris Acworth, Pat. Sherry, and the Novelette Ballet—The Six Beautiful Pleasants  
 Tiny Douglas and his 'Varsity Boys' Band.  
**FULLERS' PEOPLE'S PRICES:**  
 Matinees, 2/6, 2/, 1/6, 1/. Week Nights, 2/, 2/, 1/. Saturday Nights and Holidays, 4/, 2/.  
**THE BEST AND MOST FOR THE MONEY.**

*Sydney Morning Herald 25 Feb. 1929, 2.*

At the end of January 1929 Bain was back with the Fullers, appearing as one of the first part support acts during [Roy Rene's](#) season at Fullers' Theatre with his [\[Mo's\] Merrymakers](#). Billed as "the Surprise Party of Vaudeville," Bain found herself competing for the audience's favour as a dancer with female impersonator [Tiki Carpenter](#) ("the Dance Exquisite"). A few weeks later she joined Dick Milton's Novelettes. Headed by [Stan Foley](#) and [Amy Rochelle](#), the company presented "bright, snappy [and] new original reviews [sic] with support from such well-known performers as Lulla Fanning, Rene Dixon, [Frank Haining](#) and [Keith Connelly](#). The troupe later undertook an extensive tour, with seasons established to date including Adelaide and Broken Hill.

**CRYSTAL THEATRE** Commencing Monday, April 15th.  
 THE CRYSTAL THEATRES PROPRIETARY LTD., by Special Arrangement with SIR BENJAMIN and MR. JOHN FULLER, will Present—  
**THE NOVELETTES**  
 A Galaxy of 18 STAR ARTISTS, including AMY ROCHELLE, STAN FOLEY, Verna Bain, Iris Ackworth, Lulla Fanning, Keith Connolly, Cyril James, Pat. Sherry, Frank Wilson, Walter George, Lance Vance, Clyde and Yvette, and others; also a Ballet of 6 Beautiful Girls.  
 Beautiful Scenery, Gorgeous Costumes, Brilliant Lighting Effects, Splendid Music—in fact, the Whole Production as it was recently staged at Fuller's Theatre, Sydney.  
**POPULAR PRICES.**—Reserved and Front Stalls, 4/; Back Stalls, 3/; Gallery, 2/; Pit, 1/. Children Half-Price except the 1/ section.  
**MATINEE EVERY SATURDAY AFTERNOON, at 2.30.—Prices, 3/, 2/, and 1/. Children Half-Price.**  
**PLAN OPEN AT RINK OFFICE.**

*Barrier Miner (NSW) 13 Apr. 1929, 2.*

Verna Bain's last known engagement was a season with the [Bert Le Blanc](#) and [George H. Ward](#)-led Tivoli Follies in Adelaide in 1934 (7 July - ca Aug/Sept).

<sup>9</sup> See [Tivoli Celebrity Vaudeville](#).

**TIVOLI THEATRE**

DIRECTION . . . . . BERT LENNON  
**WHERE THE SHOW IS ALWAYS GOOD.**  
**ANOTHER SMASH "HIT"**  
**Shaking Adelaide with Laughter**  
**TIVOLI FOLLIES**  
 INCLUDING THOSE POPULAR COMEDIANS,  
**Geo. Ward, Bert Le Blanc,**  
**Nat Hanley, Will Gilbert,**  
 JOHN CARFAX      MAGGIE BUCKLEY  
 VERA BAIN        MAURICE JAFFEY  
 JOHN BANYER     BUSTER NOBLE  
 CORA WHITWELL   FRANK KENNEDY  
 ROSS JAMES       LYNNIE GILBERT  
 MARGOT RAMAGE   TIVOLI EIGHT  
**PLANS AT MAJESTIC; after 6.30, Tivoli Theatre.**  
**Prices, 2/, 1/6, 1/ and 6d.**

Advertiser (Adelaide) 6 Aug. 1934, 2.

**SEE ALSO**

- J.C. Bain

**TIVOLI THEATRE**

DIRECTION . . . . . BERT LENNON  
**Where the Show is Always Good**  
**AGAIN TODAY AT**  
**2.30**  
**Another Big, Bright Revue**



**BERT LeBLANC — GEO. WARD**  
 Together With the Talented  
**TIVOLI FOLLIES**

JOHN CARFAX      WILL GILBERT  
 MAGGIE BUCKLEY   CORA WHITWELL  
 VERA BAIN        FRANK KENNEDY  
 MAURICE JAFFEY   LYNNIE GILBERT  
 JOHN BANYER     BUSTER NOBLE  
 BUSTER NOBLE     TIVOLI EIGHT  
 AND  
**NAT HANLEY**  
**PLANS AT MAJESTIC; after 6.30, Tivoli Theatre.**  
**PRICES—2/, 1/6, AND 10d.**

Advertiser (Adelaide) 14 July 1934, 2.

**FURTHER REFERENCE**

"Dancing Star, A." *Fuller News* (Sydney) Dec/Jan. 1921/22, 22.

THE GREEN ROOM. APRIL 1, 1918.

**LITTLE VERA BAIN** is unquestionably the cleverest child dancer ever seen in Australia. After a successful season on the Tivoli and other circuits, she proceeded to South Africa and the Far East, where her performances created quite a sensation, and she was engaged to appear at the Palace in London, one of the world's best theatres, but, unfortunately, the orders of the Admiralty prohibiting women and children from travelling to England because of the submarine menace, necessitated postponement of the engagement, till after the war. Returning to Australia, she was at once engaged by Messrs. J. and N. Tait, and her dancing was a star feature of "The White Cavalcade."

Writing from the Palace Theatre, Sydney, on October 22nd, Mr. J. C. Bain said—  
 "DURING OUR RECENT TOURS BY LITTLE DAUGHTER VERA AND MYSELF FOUND HEENZO ONE OF OUR BEST FRIENDS, AS IT NEVER FAILED TO BRING QUICK RELIEF WHENEVER EITHER OF US CAUGHT COLD."  
 "I MUST ALSO COMPLIMENT YOU UPON THE EXCELLENCE OF HEAN'S TONIC NERVE NUTS. THEY ARE UNDOUBTEDLY THE FINEST TONIC I KNOW OF."

HEENZO, sufficient to make a pint of cough mixture, as much as you can get of ordinary remedies for 12s., costs only 2s. Moral! Use HEENZO and save 10s. Money cannot buy a better cough and cold medicine.  
 HEAN'S TONIC NERVE NUTS, sufficient for 12 days' treatment, cost only 3s. per box, or six boxes for 17s. 3d.  
 HEENZO COUGH DIAMONDS (price 1s. per tin) are made for those who prefer a lozenge to a liquid remedy for throat and chest troubles.



LITTLE VERA BAIN, and her father, Mr. J. C. BAIN, are enthusiastic in their praise of

**HEENZO** (Registered Name for HEAN'S ESSENCE)

The Great Money-saving Remedy for COUGHS, COLDS, CROUP, CATARRH, and other Chest and Throat Troubles, and also of

**HEAN'S TONIC NERVE NUTS** The Reliable Nerve Remedy. Headaches, Backache, Insomnia, Neuralgia, Brain Fog, Breakdown, Anaemia, Lassitude, And other Neurotic and Allied Affections.

ALL OF MY PREPARATIONS ARE OBTAINABLE FROM LEADING CHEMISTS AND STORES, OR BY POST FROM ME DIRECT.  
 G. W. HEAN, Manufacturing Chemist, 128 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

Green Room (Sydney) Apr. 1918, n. pag.



Verna Bain in a dance scene from *Dick Whittington* (1921)

Fuller News Dec/Jan. 1921/1922, 12.

Green Room (Sydney) Feb. 1922, 19.



Theatre Magazine (Sydney) Nov. 1914, 37.

## BOUDOIR NOTES

... AND ...

# BEAUTY SECRETS

### Popular Australian Star Favours Simple Methods

I have been asked to give a few hints that I know, either through personal use or by observation, to be valuable to the toilet, and which are within the reach of the average woman. The preparations which I mention may be readily procured from the chemist in original packages. Fortunately, I do not suffer from the troubles enumerated below, but some people who are not so fortunate have told me their experiences, and with your permission I will set forth some remedies which they have found to be efficacious.

**HOME-MADE HAIR TONIC.**  
My acquaintances say that a good stimulant to the natural growth of the hair is sorghum. A very simple, effective and safe stimulating lotion made up by mixing one package of sorghum with a pint of bay rum. This may be applied to the hair roots occasionally with the finger-tips with good results.

**COMPLEXION RENEWALS.**  
Complexion experts advise me that a normal, healthy complexion is constantly renewing itself by dropping off the scales of worn-out tissue, thus revealing the fresh young skin underneath. They say that when this process is checked by sun, exposure or some of many causes, the complexion becomes dull and ugly. The rational treatment recommended is to help the skin perform the natural functions of "shedding" worn-out tissue. For this purpose there is nothing so good as pure mercerized wax, used for a few minutes, just as you would use a face cream. It is claimed that it possesses a special affinity for the effete, soft skin which it quickly removes by absorbing it. The fact, I am assured, will soon look much younger and prettier under this treatment.

**THE CURLING IRON.**  
Don't use a hot iron to curl your hair. Some of my friends make the cunningest sort of curls, wherever they want them simply by clamping the hair with liquid silver, before retiring at night. When the hair is dry in the morning it will be softly curly, just where you want it to be. This method is perfectly harmless, even shampooing with the hair, and the curls last a long time. The liquid is quite pleasant, and neither sticky nor greasy.

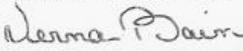
**HOW TO SHAMPOO.**  
Most women do not know how to use shampoos properly when shampooing with it. Unless the hair is naturally oily, a really shampoo may sometimes leave it slightly too dry. If, however, you will apply olive oil freely to your hair and scalp just before shampooing with it, the result is most delightful. The hair will be left clean, soft, bright and wavy, the olive oil having properly balanced the action of the wonderful hair cleanser.

**IS POWDER NECESSARY?**  
A great many women object to using powder, for various reasons. The following formula is a good one: Dissolve a package of cinnamon in four tablespoonfuls of water, or witch-hazel, and use it as a face lotion, smoothing the skin with the fingers until it is dry. This method is perfectly harmless. I am told that a really beautiful, natural, velvety bloom results and remains for many hours quite unaffected by the most moist, trying conditions out of doors or in the ballroom or theatre, and that it gives a much more natural appearance to some skins than does ordinary powder.

**GREY HAIR.**  
I have observed many attempts of many people to succeed grey hair. Some of these experiments were amusing, some disastrous, and some were successful. Personally, I believe I shall let my hair turn when the appointed time comes, but if I were going to try to evade it, I would give a trial to a real old "grandmother" formula that would probably do the work. This formula, I am informed, has been used with degrees of success for many generations, and consists of two ounces of concentrate of ammonia mixed with three ounces of bay rum. It is applied to the grey hair a few times with a small sponge, and appears to darken the hair to a natural shade, not like a dye, but gradually and naturally.

**MISCELLANEOUS HINTS.**  
The eyebrows and lashes may be made to grow stronger and darker by applying mercurial, a specially delicate pencil, with the finger-tips at night. Rouge is often obvious, and many women therefore prefer to use pure, inert collodion, which gives a most natural tint. The lips may be prevented from drying and chapping by touching them with a stick of proclatum, which also gives them a good colour. Freckles are most effectively concealed with ammoniated mercury cream, of which jetraline is the best.

  
**MISS VERNA BAIN**  
 Folk-Monte Lutz Photo.



Fuller News 1 July 1922, n. pag.

  
**MISS VERNA BAIN,**  
 Premiere Dancer with the Hugh J. Ward and Fuller's Theatrical Co.  
 A Daily Advertiser of Melbourne and for the Star.

### Toilet Essentials for Discriminating Women

<p><b>PURE MERCERIZED WAX.</b> An improvement on Face Creams and invaluable for protecting the skin from chapping. Does not grow hair.</p> <p><b>STALLAN GRANULES.</b> Delightful Hair Shampoo, brings out the richness and lustre of the hair, being really good for the scalp.</p>	<p><b>COLLIANDUM.</b> Rose-treated Clark Colour, not obvious like rouge, delicate and harmless. Does not streak.</p> <p><b>PROCLATUM.</b> Soothing and effective Lip Colour, making the lips as supple and rosy as possible.</p>
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Obtainable at all Retail Chemists, and unvarnished Australia.

**DEARBORN (Australia) LTD.**    279 CLARENCE STREET, SYDNEY

Green Room (Sydney) July 1922, n. pag.

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Expanded and updated from Clay Djubal, "What Oh Tonight." Ph D Diss. U of Qld (2005), Appendix D.

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