

FILM EXHIBITION COMPANIES FEATURING VARIETY

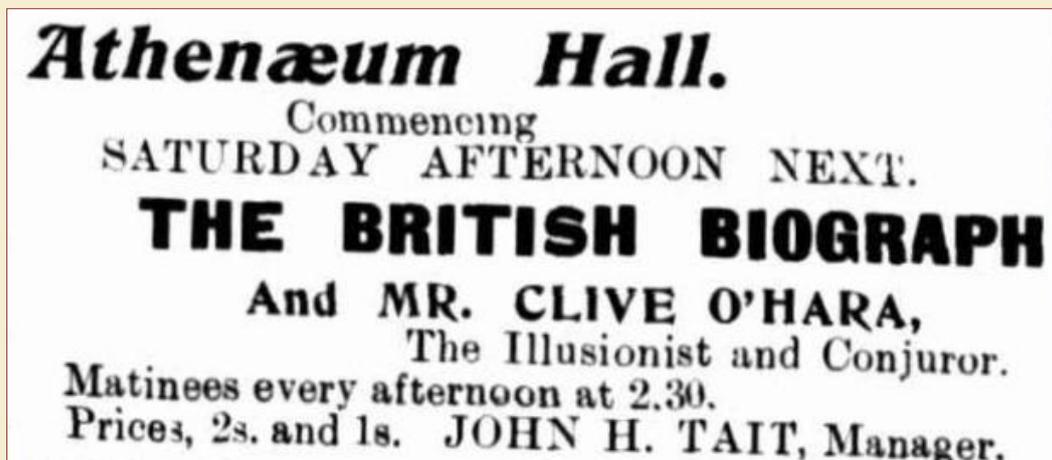
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BRITISH BIOGRAPH COMPANY [1]

[1903] In the 1903 New Year John H. Tait announced that he had made arrangements with the Edison Company to present a short season of moving pictures at Melbourne's Athenaeum Hall. Promising to provide "biograph views on a very fine scale,"¹ Tait also engaged magician Clive O'Hara as live entertainment and secured local pianist/music director [R.G. Oyston](#) to oversee the musical side of the shows. O'Hara had reportedly returned only recently from Great Britain with new illusions and routines.



Punch (Melbourne) 8 Jan. 1903, 12.

The Athenaeum season opened on 10 January and ran until the 31st. Towards the end of the run Tait added some extra performers to the program, including soprano Isabel Webster. The season was also interrupted for two nights (22-23 January) due to the hall having been previously booked by [Lawrence Campbell](#) for an evening with his concert company.

After the Melbourne season concluded Tait sent the show to select regional centres. Camperdown and Geelong have been identified to date.

Historical Notes and Corrections:

1. From March onwards several other companies toured Victoria (and elsewhere) using the name British Biograph in their billing. These included B.G. Collier's British Biograph Cinematograph, the Fitzgerald Brothers British Bioscope; and a company operated by Alex Gunn.
2. An explained gap of several weeks currently exists between the end of the Athenaeum season and the first known regional season - Geelong (19 Feb.).

See also: [R.G. Oyston](#) • [J. & N. Tait](#) (John Henry Tait)

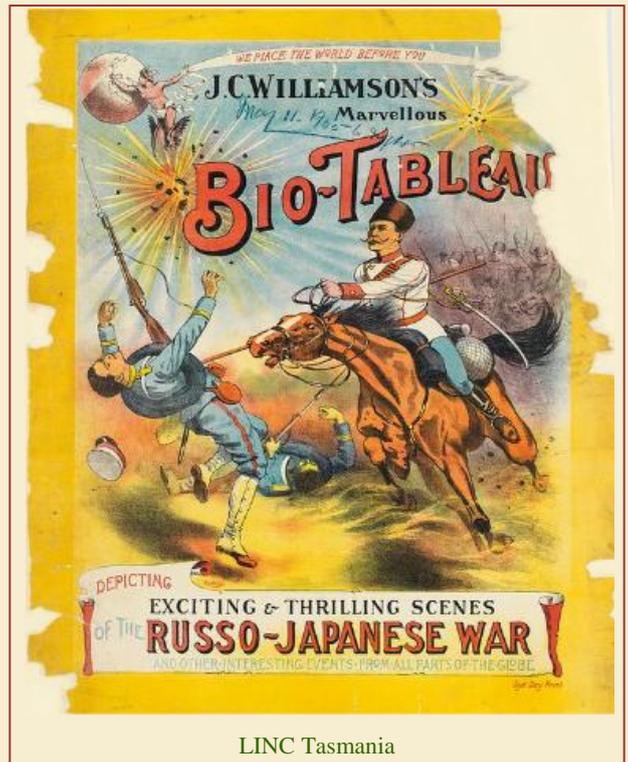
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¹ "Amusements." *Age* (Melbourne) 3 Jan. 1903, 10.

WILLIAMSON'S BIO-TABLEAU

[1904-1905] J.C. Williamson purchased a Phono-Bio-Tableau from England in mid-1904. Said to be latest development of the biograph machines," it arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia, aboard the R.M.S. Omrah in early August, along with chief operator C. Mason. The show was immediately sent out to the Eastern goldfields region by Williamson's business manager W.J. Lincoln and given trial seasons in Coolgardie (8 Aug.), Kalgoorlie (13 Aug.) and other nearby centres. The main attraction for the tour was a series of moving and vivid pictures taken of the Russo-Japanese War. Other early films included the Italian Exhibition, a bullfight at Seville, the execution of Chinese spy at Mukden, International wrestling and boxing matches, the Gordon Bennett Motor Derby. The shows also featured illustrated songs.

The songs that initially accompanied the moving pictures were produced via sound recordings. Live performers were later used at various times. In addition to Lincoln the venture included an assistant operator, an electrician, and a sound effects person. According to various reviews the sound effects included cannons, horses running, crowds, motor car engines and marching troops. The early tour also featured a pianist (Heinewood). Williamson later engaged an ensemble to accompany the films. Although often referred to as an "orchestra," the musicians usually numbered three for tours - typically a pianist, violinist and cornettist. Advertising also indicates that Williamson employed a combination of tour manager and business manager (otherwise known as treasurer).



TOWN HALL, COOLGARDIE.

Under the direction of Mr. J. C. Williamson.

Business Manager...Mr. W. J. Lincoln
A 20th CENTURY SENSATION.
MONDAY, AUGUST 8,
And Four Following Nights.

First Production in Australasia of the
WILLIAMSON BIO-TABLEAU
(Just arrived per R.M.S. Omrah).
This remarkable Biograph Machine
excels any invention of a similar nature
ever before presented to an Australian public.

Mr. J. C. Williamson, in introducing
this most wonderful series of WAR
PICTURES, depicting moving and
graphic scenes of the GREAT
RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR, likewise
a beautiful selection of Animated Pictures
representing events of world-
wide interest and renown, is fully assured
of the public support of the entire
population of Western Australia.

A refined and beautiful entertainment
for both old and young.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 13,
And 7 Following Nights,
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE,
Kalgoorlie.

Prices—3s., 2s., 1s. Special school
matinees.

Watch press for fuller particulars.

After playing the goldfields the company played seasons in Fremantle and Perth before travelling east to Adelaide. Seasons in Brisbane and Sydney followed before the end of the year. In December a second Bio-Tableau company went on the road, opening in Broken Hill on the 6th. It then undertook an extensive tour of regional South Australia playing most of the towns on the northern railway line as far as Port Augusta and the south-east line as far as Mount Gambier. This tour continued through until the end of January 1905 when the company continued into Victoria. Its last recorded engagement was in Mount Alexander on 20 February. It is likely that the operator A.T. Richards purchased the equipment from Williamson in order to mount his one tour of the country under the name Richards' Entertainers.²

Following the end of its Sydney season at Queen's Hall in late-January 1905, the first company went to New Zealand, making its debut in Auckland on the 30th. The tour, managed Clamor Sudholz, reportedly included 36 towns on both islands and became a financial success for Williamson. On its return to Australia the No 1 company played seasons in Hobart and Launceston, followed by a few town in Victoria prior to extensive regional tours through a brief tour of regional Victoria and extended tours through New South Wales and Queensland. After a return seasons in Sydney and Melbourne Williamson sold the equipment to his business manager, Sudholz who subsequently began touring a show known as Sudholz's Biograph and World's Entertainers.

Kalgoorlie Miner (WA) 8 Aug. 1904, 7.

² English film and vaudeville entrepreneur A.T. Richards had come to Australia in 1901. The 1905 tour, billed as his fifth annual venture, began in Victoria shortly after the Bio-Tableau season in Mount Alexander (20 Feb.). The earliest show identified to date was at Benalla on 3 March.

The Bio-Tableau tour of Australasia was primarily a moving pictures venture. Additional entertainment was provided by sound recordings by artists such as Madam Melba. Signor A. Zelman was engaged towards the end of the first Melbourne season (1904) to present a march, "Banzai," comprising a selection of Japanese national songs. The Brisbane season, and subsequent Sydney and New Zealand shows, featured singer Ernest Fitts in illustrated songs. A highlight of the Sydney season was the introduction at Christmas of the 18 scene pantomime fantasy *Submarina; Or, The Old Man of the Sea*. Comprising 30 tableau pictures, the production was accompanied by live sound and scenic effects. It was followed by *Fun at a Doctors*, a shadow harlequinade performed live by a company of "shadowlites." *Submarina* was included in the New Zealand tour without the harlequinade.

No 1 Company

- 1904:** Regional Western Australia (8 Aug) • Fremantle (10 Sept.) • Perth (14 Sept.) • Adelaide (1 Oct.) • Brisbane (26 Nov.) • Sydney (10 Dec.).
- 1905:** Sydney (1 Jan.) • New Zealand (30 Jan-6 May) • Hobart (11 May) • Launceston (19 May) • regional Victoria (25 May) • regional New South Wales (26 May) • regional Queensland (6 July) • regional Victoria (14 Sept.) • regional New South Wales (22 Sept) • Sydney (30 Sept.) • Melbourne (14 Oct. - 13 Nov.) •

No 2 Company

- 1904:** Broken Hill (6 Dec.) • regional South Australia (13 Dec.).
- 1905:** Regional South Australia (1 Jan.)³ • regional Victoria (31 Jan.)
- **Tour/Business Managers:** W.J. Lincoln [1/2], M. Marcus [2], Charles Sudholz [1], John Farrell [2], T.E. Foster [1].
 - **Advance Reprs** incl. G. Matheson.
 - **Treasurers** incl. Clamor Sudholz [1], M. Livingston, John Farrell [1], W. Bryer [2].

FIRST GRAND BIO-TABLEAU MATINEE.
 WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON NEXT, AT 2.30.
 Children Half-price to All Parts.

H.M. THEATRE—THE COOLEST THEATRE IN QUEENSLAND.
 Lessee: H. Ashton. Under the Direction of J. C. Williamson.
 Business Manager: Mr. W. J. Lincoln. Representative: Mr. G. Matheson.

THIS (SATURDAY) EVENING, 26th NOVEMBER.
 And Thereafter Every Evening at 8.
 WEDNESDAY AND SATURDAY MATINEES AT 2.30.
 WITH THE JAPS IN MANCHURIA.
 As Magnificently and Realistically Illustrated by

Mr. J. C. WILLIAMSON'S MARVELLOUS BIO-TABLEAU.

We Announce our Grand and Varied Programme (Unrivalled throughout Australia).
 The Italian Exhibition at Earl's Court. London Hawkers in Cheapside. The King and Gordon Highlanders at Edinburgh. A Day in the Country. Driven from Home. A Dash for Liberty. Sensational Dartmoor Convict's Escape. Sinking of a Japanese Torpedo Boat. The Great Gordon-Bennett Motor Derby.
 THE BATTLE OF LIAO-YANG. CAPTURE OF RUSSIAN GUNS.
 Japanese Guards Leaving Tokio for the Front. An Incident of the Manchurian Frontier—Russian Troops on the Alert.
 PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE BOMBARDMENT OF PORT ARTHUR.
 The Only Genuine Pictures in connection with the Siege yet shown in Australia.
 THE GREAT NIKKO PROCESSION. THE GREAT TORONTO FIRE.
 Russian Troops Crossing the Yalu River. The Japanese Warship Hatsuse in Action. The Pigeon Derby at Hammersgate. His Master's Voice. Such is Life. Whisky versus Ballets. Boulter's Look on Ascot Sunday.
 THE WONDERFUL 1904 MELBOURNE CUP PICTURES,
 And Other Subjects too numerous to mention.
 Forming a Pleasant Variation to the Animated Pictures. The Popular Baritone,
 MR. ERNEST FITTS,
 Will Sing "Harvest Days" and "The Lost Master."
 BOX PLAN AT PALING'S. PRICES: Dress Circle and Reserved Stalls, 3s.;
 Stalls, 2s.; Family Circle, ONE SHILLING. NO EARLY DOORS.

Brisbane Courier 26 Nov. 1904, 1.

NB: All dates are first known only. See various newspapers in Trove for further details

Further Research:

- "Bio-Tableau, The." *Register* (Adelaide) 3 Oct. 1904, 5.
 "Bio-Tableau, The." *Evening News* (Sydney) 12 Dec. 1904, 8.
 Editorial. *Border Watch* (Mount Gambier, SA) 25 Jan. 1905, 2.
 "Mr J.C. Williamson's Bio-Tableau." *Goulburn Herald* (NSW) 7 June 1905, 2.
 "Palace: Bio-Tableau." *Sunday Times* (Sydney) 1 Oct. 1905, 2.
 "Stageland." *Wanganui Chronicle* (NZ) 6 Feb. 1905, 7.
 "Tivoli Theatre." *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 3 Oct. 1904, 6.
 "Williamson Bio-Tableau, The." *Table Talk* (Melbourne) 13 Oct. 1904, 17.
 "Williamson's Bio-Tableau." *Kalgoorlie Miner* (WA) 11 Aug. 1904, 4.

See also: [J.C. Williamson's Ltd](#) • [J.C. Williamson](#) • [W.J. Lincoln](#) • [Clamor Sudholz](#) • [Sudholz' Bio-Tableau & World's Entertainers](#) • [A.T. Richards](#) • [Richards' Entertainers](#)

³ The Bio-Tableau was exhibited in Adelaide for one night only during a fireworks event.