

HARRY CLAY'S VAUDEVILLE ENTERPRISES AND THEATRICAL BOOKING OFFICES

aka **Clay's Agency**

Harry Clay set up his Theatrical Enterprises and Booking Offices company sometime around August/September 1916 with the intention of expanding his interests in vaudeville acts by taking on the role of booking agent for both his own company and other organisations. To this end he engaged the services of **James H. White**, who had been managing the International Vaudeville Agency out of the offices of the *Australian Variety* magazine. White was also acting as a journalist for the magazine, under the bi-line of "Whitie," having previously worked in the same capacity for the *Hawklet*, a periodical published out of Melbourne. "Whitie's" role was to be the manager in charge of booking artists, in addition to fulfilling several other roles within Clay's company.

HARRY CLAY'S CIRCUIT
FEATURING
MUSICAL COMEDY and VAUDEVILLE.

Playing complete change of programme each week at Goulburn, Yass, Harden, Murrumburrah, Wagga, Young, Grenfell, Cowra, Bathurst, Lithgow, Katoomba, Parramatta, Ashfield, Mascot, North Shore, Mosman, and

BRIDGE THEATRE, NEWTOWN.

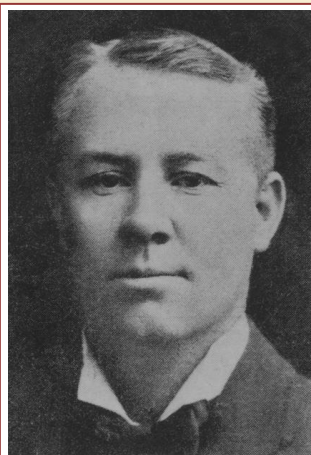
Wanted. First-class performers suitable for Musical Comedy, Revue and Vaudeville communicate at once stating lowest terms and full particulars to J. H. WHITE ("Whitie")

HARRY CLAY'S VAUDEVILLE ENTERPRISES
AND THEATRICAL BOOKING OFFICES,

4 Young's Chambers Pitt and Park Streets, Sydney.

Australian Variety and Show World (Sydney) 16 May 1917, n. pag.

More commonly referred to as Clay's Agency, the business set up its headquarters on the second floor of 4 Young's Chambers at the corner of Pitt and Park streets (by then the new Poverty Point). Shortly afterwards Clay began a concerted advertising campaign which saw him "practically [guarantee] Permanent Engagements to those worth their salt."¹ The agency not only offered opportunities for solo or ensemble acts but could also arrange entire touring companies.

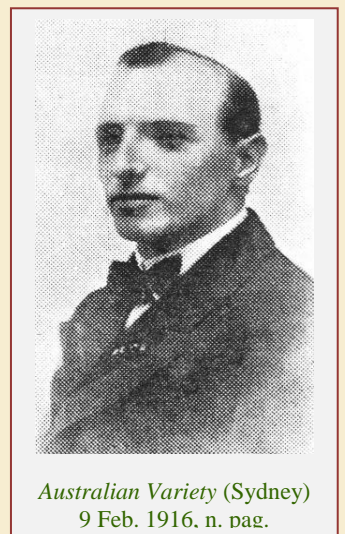


*Australian Variety (Sydney) 23
May 1917, n. pag.*

Among the first companies to utilise Clay's Agency were Tup Smith's weekly Newcastle circuit, Snowy Baker's Rushcutters Bay Stadium, **Jack Landow's** Sydney circuit, and even the **Tivoli Theatre**.² A little over a month it started operating, the agency also began to advertise its ability to supply entertainments for "Homes, Garden Fetes, and Smoke-nights," as well as for professional organisations. No commission charges were made, except for those engagements procured outside Clay's own vaudeville circuit. By 1917 White and Clay were also looking to fill positions for long engagements in the Far East, particularly circus-style acts. One company to utilise Clay's Agency was Harmston's Circus.

In 1921 the Agency was renamed the Australasian Theatrical Bureau. James H. White remained the manager, and began promoting the business as being able to supply all kinds of theatrical gear, including scenery, travelling trunks, and baskets etc., as well as its being a booking agent. While it is not certain as to whether Clay remained involved with the agency, there has been no evidence to date which show that he had divested himself of a financial interest in it.

Harry Clay's Sydney-based booking agent competition during the late-1910s included the Star Vaudeville Agency (run by **Joe Lashwood** and a Mr Rowley ca.1916), **Bert Howard** Enterprises, **Ike Beck** Enterprises and *Australian Variety* (ca.1915-16).



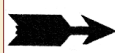
*Australian Variety (Sydney)
9 Feb. 1916, n. pag.*

SEE ALSO

- **Harry Clay**
- **Clay's Bridge Theatre Ltd**
- **James H. White**
- **"Harry Clay and Clay's Vaudeville Company"** (Appendix B)

¹ "Mr Vaudeville Man" n. pag.

² See, for example, "Clay's Budget," *Australian Variety* (Sydney) 6 Sept. and 20 Sept. 1916. See also "Harry Clay and Clay's Vaudeville Company," Appendix B (above) for further information concerning Clay's Agency and affiliated organisations.



Mr. Vaudeville Man, do You want Work ?

I wish to intimate to Artists all over Australasia that I am personally controlling four Vaudeville Circuits, thus practically guaranteeing Permanent Engagements to those worth their salt. All acts given an opportunity to make good. My motto—"Fair and Square Deal." No more old stuff. Bring along something new and I will talk business. My thirty years' experience proves that my word is my bond. Call on my representative, J. H. WHITE ("Whitie") and get into line at once. Managers interviewed daily between 12 and 1.

HARRY CLAY, Young's Chambers, 2nd Floor, Cr. Pitt & Park Sts., SYDNEY

Australian Variety and Show World (Sydney) 16 Aug. 1916, n. pag.

ACTING FOR

All theatres/organisations were located in Sydney unless otherwise stated.

Abraham's, Hyman: Oxford Theatre, Paddington (1917).

Alhambra Theatre: (no dates).

Baker's Stadium: Rushcutters Bay (1916-18).

Beck, Ike: Newcastle/Hunter circuit (1918, 1920).

Bishop and Dampier's Comedy Costume Company: South African tour, 1917 [Humphrey Bishop and Claude Dampier].

Bray's Boomerang Theatre: Coogee, (1918).

Centenary Carnival: Goulburn (1920).

Clare's Picture Theatre: Drummoyne (1917).

Craydon, James: Mascot (1916).

Dennis, Percy: Western Australia (1919).

Harmston's Circus: (1917) sole Australian representative.

Harry Rickards' Tivoli Theatres Ltd: Sydney (1916).

Henry, Dr Lewis: National Theatre, Hobart (1918).

Hippodrome: Sydney (1917-18).

Hollyford's Dramatic Company: (1918).

Howard, Bert: Coronation Picture Palace, Leichhardt (1917).

James, Les: South Coast Circuit (1918) includes: Wollongong.

King's Theatre: Newcastle (1917).

Knight, Ernest: Britannia Theatre, Manly (1916) books his entire show through Clay's from Oct. 1916.

Landow, Jack: (1916) circuit includes Mascot.

Leathard, A.H: Burwood (1916).

Lytton, Phillip - Vaudeville Co: (1918) - under canvas in 1918, circuit includes North Coast of New South Wales.

Ogden's Crown Star Theatre: Surry Hills (1918-1919).

Reis, Frank: (1919).

Robey, Will: Clare's Picture Palace, Drummoyne (1917-1918).

Sadler, Harry: National Theatre, Hobart (1917-1918), Gaiety Theatre (1918-1919).

Shaftesbury Theatre: Perth WA (1920) [A.E. Hosking, Managing Dir.].

Sydney, Frank: circuit includes Temperance Hall, Hobart (1920).

Smith, "Tup": Newcastle District Circuit (1916).

Thornton, "Ned": Roseberry Theatre, Mascot (1917).

Webb, ?: Newcastle (1919).

FURTHER REFERENCE

"Mr Vaudeville Man, Do You Want Work." *Australian Variety* (Sydney) 16 Jan. 1916, n. pag. [Advert.]

Important to the Artist.

I wish to intimate to Artists all over Australasia that I am personally controlling four Vaudeville Circuits, thus practically guaranteeing permanent engagements to those worth their salt. All acts given an opportunity to make good. My motto: "Fair and Square Deal." My thirty years' reputation proves that my word is my bond. Call on my representative, J. H. White ("Whitie") and get into line at once.

No commission is charged artistes appearing under Mr. Clay's management. Special arrangements will be made with artistes booked elsewhere. To Vaudeville and Picture-show Managers: If in need of good talent, see us. At Homes, Garden Fetes, and Smoke Nights specially catered for.

**Harry Clay's Theatrical Enterprises,
Theatrical Booking Offices,**

4 Young's Chambers (Second Floor), Pitt & Park Street, Sydney.

Australian Variety (Sydney) 7 Feb. 1917, n. pag.

Last updated: 10/05/2022

First published in: Clay Djubal, "Harry Clay and Clay's Vaudeville Company." MA Thesis, U of Qld (1998), Chapter 4 and Appendix B.

NB: The URL for this PDF will change each time it is updated. If you wish to cite or link to this record please use the following:

Clay Djubal. "Harry Clay's Theatrical Enterprises and Booking Offices." *Australian Variety Theatre Archive*. Industry Misc 1: Agencies.

<http://ozvta.com/industry-misc-1/>