

1854

Among the music theatre works revived in 1854 were those first staged the previous year by Rainer's Original Ethiopian Serenaders, and the Nelson family.

During its second full year in Australia **Rainer's Original Ethiopian Serenaders** (aka Rainer's Serenaders) revived most of the burlesques they had introduced in 1852 and 1853, albeit with some occasional new titles. *Oh Hush, You Nigger* (1853) was invariably billed as simply *Oh Hush*, but was revived as *Negro Assurance; Or, High Life Below the Stairs*, and *High Life below the Stairs* on one occasion each. Italian Opera (1852) was known primarily as *The Lost Child of Domingo*, but on at least two occasions was staged as *Bo-Hea-Man's Gal* (reinforcing the burlesque's link to the Balfe/Bunn opera, *The Bohemian Girl* (1843).

A TURK IN DISTRESS: [musical entertainment] **Txt.** F.M. Soutten; **Mus.** [n/e]

Advertised as a "comic situation" and "musical vaudeville" (*Argus* 1 June 1854, 8), this short piece for one actor was written specially for Alfred Nelson by F.M. Soutten. The characterisations called for are Mr Augustus Spivvans (a fast character), and the voices of Mr Jollybanks (a steady character), Mrs Jollybanks (a middle-aged character), Miss Susan Sniggers (a queer character), Popkins (a monthly character), Mr Green (an agricultural character), Miss Fanny (an interesting character). The piece includes the song "I Dreamt that I Danced at Jullien's Mask'd Ball" [sic].

1854: Mechanics Institute, Melbourne; 1, 9 June, 17 July

- **M Dir.** Sydney Nelson.
- **Troupe:** Nelson Family.
- **Cast:** Alfred Nelson.

Argus (Melbourne) 1 June 1854, 8. [Advert.](#)

Kelly, Veronica, ed. *Annotated Calendar of Plays Premiered in Australia: 1850-1869*. (1995), v. pags.

THE RUSSIANS IN MELBOURNE: [musical entertainment] **Txt.** F.M. Soutten; **Mus.** Sydney Nelson

Advertised in the *Argus* as a "sketch," and "an entirely new and original, highly probable, versified catastrophe" (26 June 1854, 8), it capitalised on the current fears of Russian aggression. The story concerns Mr Rostrum, a retired auctioneer, his groom, James, and his daughter, Clarinda. Another character, Mary Ann, was advertised as being played by Miss Invisible Green. The Russian invaders of the title are "supposed to exist in the imaginations of several elderly ladies" (*Argus* 6 July 1854, 8).

The songs incorporated into the work are "No More Glasses" and "The Rumours Fast Increase" (Carry Nelson), "Come Down with Me" and "Pray Father" (Sara Nelson), the duets "Sir, What's the Reason," "Now Work, Good James" (Carry and Alfred Nelson) and "Tramp to Bendigo" (Sara and Carry Nelson), and the trios "Oh, Dear Me," "The Russians are Coming" and "Now, Our Doubts and Fears" (finale).

1854: Mechanics Institute, Melbourne; 29 June, 6, 10, 13, 20 July, 10 Aug.

- **M Dir/Arr.** Sydney Nelson.
- **Troupe:** Nelson Family.
- **Cast:** Alfred Nelson (Mr Rostrum), Sara Nelson (James Curricomb) Carry Nelson (Clarinda Rostrum).

1854: Queen's Theatre (Melbourne); 21 Oct.

- Cast and production as for previous Melbourne season.

Argus (Melbourne) 29 June 1854, 8. [Advert.](#) [see also advert. 6 July 1854, 8]

Kelly, Veronica, ed. *Annotated Calendar of Plays Premiered in Australia: 1850-1869*. (1995), v. pags.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN: [burletta] **Txt.** W. M. Akhurst; **Mus.** Sydney Nelson

Set in a chamber on the first floor of the Hippopotamus Hotel, it concerned the characters Julian Vincent (a "briefless Barrister" out of town for the sake of quiet and to escape the sheriff), Miss Blanche Evans (a strong-minded lady who is a "Pupil of the New Age" and a firm supporter of the Rights of Women); Cora Perks (a waitress at the hotel who is a lover of long chins); and a voice from offstage, "which is at first considered foreign to the subject, but eventually contributes to a happy denouement" (*Argus* 3 Aug. 1854, 8). The songs incorporated into the narrative are "What Life as a Poor Little Maid" (a recitative and air sung by Carry Nelson), "Woman's Rights" (Sara Nelson), "Stay and Let Me Hear My Fate" (Alfred and Sara Nelson), "There's the Clock and the Cream Jug" (Alfred and Carry Nelson), and the finale, "Away with Idle Fantasies."

1854: Mechanics Institute, Melbourne; 24, 31 July, 3 Aug.

- **M Dir/Arr.** Sydney Nelson.
- **Troupe:** Nelson Family.
- **Cast:** Alfred Nelson (Julian Vincent), Sara Nelson (Blanche Evans), Carry Nelson (Cora Perks/The Voice).

Part II.
**To conclude with (1st time) an entirely original op-
 ulla, by the author of "Quite Colonial," "Romance
 and Reality," etc., entitled**
"THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN!"
The music composed and arranged by Mr. S. Nelson.

Argus (Melbourne) 24 July 1854, 8

Argus (Melbourne) 24 July 1854, 8. Advert. [see also advert. 3 Aug. 1854, 8]

Kelly, Veronica, ed. *Annotated Calendar of Plays Premiered in Australia: 1850-1869*. (1995), v. pags.

A MIDNIGHT MYSTERY: [musical entertainment] **Txt.** F.M. Soutten; **Mus.** Sydney Nelson

Described as "musical vaudeville," and a ghost story with music, this was written expressly for the Nelsons by F. M. Soutten. Set during the reign of William III, the story concerns the characters Captain Arthur Tyrone, an officer in the Jacobite service, the Honourable Miss Villiers, a lady of fortune, and Margery, her unsophisticated maid.

The songs incorporated into the narrative are the duets "What a Fearful Night" and "The Legend" (Sara and Carry Nelson), "How Joyous and Sportive" (Carry Nelson), "Let Youths Never Listen" (Sara Nelson), and the trios "It's Useless Resisting" and "How our Little Plot is Ended" (finale).

1854: Mechanics Institute, Melbourne; 7, 10 Aug.

- **M Dir/Arr.** Sydney Nelson.

- **Troupe:** Nelson Family.

- **Cast:** Alfred Nelson (Captain Tyrone), Sara Nelson (Miss Villiers), Carry Nelson (Margery).

Argus (Melbourne) 7 Aug. 1854, 8. Advert.

Kelly, Veronica, ed. *Annotated Calendar of Plays Premiered in Australia: 1850-1869*. (1995), v. pags.

HARLEQUIN KING BLEAR AND HIS THREE DAUGHTERS; OR, THE FAIRY OF THE ENCHANTED PALACE ON THE SILVER LAKE: [pantomime]

Lib. Henry Thornton Craven; **Mus.** [n/e]

Paisy and Fryer, 1854.

An advertisement placed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* for the 1854 premiere describes *Harlequin King Blear* as a "grand scenical, historical, fictional, parodical, balygalical, musical match-if-you-can-ical, comical Christmas Pantomime" (26 Dec. 1854, 1), while an *Age* reviewer describes the 1855 Melbourne revival as: "A rich burlesque on Shakespeare's *King Lear*, whereby the king seeks to relieve himself of the cares of state in favour of what he seems to think the more agreeable delights of drinking potations deep" (27 Dec. 1855, 5). Although the two productions involved mostly different companies (with the exception of Frank Belfield as Bloatero), there is evidence in the form of similar synopses and characters (published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Argus*) which indicates that they are related (at least in the dramatic action). New comic business and songs are believed to have been added to the latter production.

**VICTORIA THEATRE.—On TUESDAY
 EVENING, December 26th, 1854, the evening's entertain-
 ment will commence with a grand scenical, historical, fictional,
 parodiocal, balygalical, musical, match-if-you-can-ical, comical
 Christmas Pantomime! entitled HARLEQUIN KING BLEAR,
 AND HIS THREE DAUGHTERS!!**
**N.B.—To forestall criticism, the conviction is publicly avowed,
 that on this Pantomime the immortal Shakspeare founded the
 sublime tragedy of King Lear!**

Sydney Morning Herald 26 Dec. (1854), 1.

According to the *Age's* plot synopsis, King Blear decides to abdicate and announces that he will divide his kingdom and possessions between his three daughters (Scragina, Fatima and Lightstep) if they will each promise to provide him with comfort in his declining years. Meanwhile Blear is also persuaded by his right-hand man Demon Goggle to promise his youngest and finest daughter (Lightstep) in wedlock to a Falstaffian lothario, Bloatero, much to the dismay of the damsel and her true knight, Edward. The lovers are, however, given support by Queen Graceful who promises not only her protection but also her best assistance to thwart the schemes of Goggle. The Sydney production included Sydney's George Street Market, the exterior of Woolloomooloo Gaol, Castlereagh Street, the Newtown races, Homebush Nursery Grounds, and the Prince of Wales Restaurant in Pitt Street. The Melbourne production had these scenes changed to local settings (*ibid*, 5).

The songs incorporated into the Sydney production included: "Gin a Fairy Meet a Fairy, Comin' Through the Sky" (Fairy chorus), and "Bonny Done" (Queen Graceful and ladies). The musical aspects of the revival were described in the *Age* as "creditable." They included "new and beautiful songs," two of these being "Hot Coddlin's," and "Tippetwitchet." The production also involved several dance sequences (ibid, 5).

1854: Royal Victoria Theatre, Sydney; 26 Dec. 1854 - 5 Jan. 1855

- **Mngr/Lsc.** Andrew Torning.

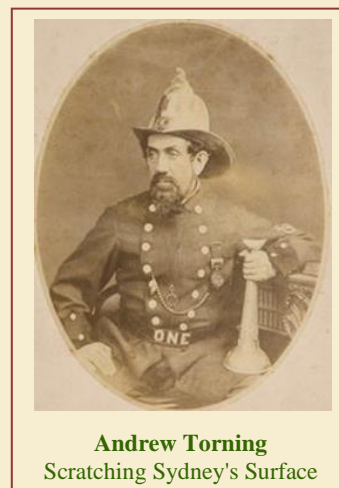
- **Cast:** Frank Howson (King Blear), Julia Matthews (Queen Graceful), Mrs Matthews (Spangleskirt), Mrs Moore (Silk-ho-ia), Miss Hart (Tynyshoe), Miss Seymour (Sweetankle), Miss Sinclair (Scragina), Miss Wheeler (Fatima), Mrs R. McGowan (Lightstep/Columbine), Mr Howard (Demon Goggle), Mr Long (Slithoof), Mr Dobsen (Blackhard), Mr Jones (Spiketail), Mr Lloyd (Baldun), Mr Cramp (an imp), Frank Belfield (Bloatero), Lachlan McGowan (Edward), Mr Turner (Spittytonty), Mr Cordner (Selvote), Mr Styles (Guzzle/Lushus), C. King (Duke of Allbony), Mr Ryall (Earl of Spindleshanks), Mr Mayson (Swigwack), Mr Hall (Harlequin), Andrew Torning (Clown), H. Twight (Pantaloan), Master J. Glover (Sprite).

1855: Queen's Theatre, Melbourne; 26 Dec. 1855 - 10 Jan. 1856

- **Dir.** Mr Chambers and Mr Walsh; **Mngr.** H.N. Warner.

- **Cast:** H.N. Warner (King Blear), Minnie Clifford (Queen Graceful), Mr Chambers (Edward), Miss Fortesque (Scragina), Miss Roberts (Fatima), Miss Chambers (Lightstep/Columbine), Charles Walsh (Clown), J.M. Wolf (Pantaloan), Mr Robbins, Frank Belfield (Bloatero), Mr Drummond (Earl of Spindleshanks), Mr Ryan (Duke of Allborey), Mr Chambers Jnr (Harlequin).

- The 1-3 January shows included three dances "Old Man," "Kangaroo" and one unnamed dance, which were performed by Aborigines.



Andrew Torning
Scratching Sydney's Surface



"Scene from the Pantomime of King Blear at the Victoria Theatre."
Illustrated Sydney News 6 Jan. 1855.

Kelly, Veronica, ed. *Annotated Calendar of Plays Premiered in Australia: 1850-1869*. (1995), v. pags.

"Queen's Theatre." *Age* (Melbourne) 27 Dec. 1855, 5. Incl. plot synopsis.¹

"Queen's Theatre." *Argus* (Melbourne) 28 Dec. 1855, 5.

"Victoria Theatre – On Tuesday Evening." *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 Dec. 1854, 1. Advert. Incl. plot synopsis.

¹ Pages 4 and 5 in Trove's digitised reproduction of the 27 December 1855 edition of the *Age* have been published in reverse order. To identify the correct page refer to the newspaper not the Trove publication details header.

RIDDLE ME RIDDLE ME REE; OR, HARLEQUIN AND CONUNDRUM CASTLE: [pantomime] **Lib.** Nelson Lee; **Mus.** [n/e]

The pantomime opens with the Hall of Riddles, where Puzzle, a demonical kind of personage instigated by Mirth, manufactures three goblin riddles for the special bewilderment of humans in general and to the Princess Riddle-Me-Riddle Me-Ree in particular. This is followed by the scene where King Conundrum offers the hand of his daughter to the successful unraveller of the riddles. Three wealthy gentlemen attempt the task and fail, thus being forced to hand over large sums of money as a consequence. A young sentimental youth, in love with the Princess, as she is with him, also fails, and having no money escapes before being punished. With the aid of the good fairy the youth finally works out the puzzles and the lovers are united.

1854: Queen's Theatre, Melbourne; 26 Dec. 1854 - 12 Jan. 1855 [17 pfms]

- **Dir/Prod/M Arr.** George Coppin; **Lse.** Messrs Young and Hyde; **M Dir.** B. Thom; **S Art.** William Pitt.

- **Cast** incl. Mr Rogers (Puzzle), Mr Burford, J. Chambers (Harlequin), T. Barry, W. Nunn, Miss F. Young (Mirth), Mrs Avins (Princess Riddle-Me-Riddle-Me-Ree), Harriet Gordon [Hyde], Mrs Young.

"Christmas Festivities and Amusements." *Argus* (Melbourne) 26 Dec. 1854, 5.

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"Queen's Theatre." *Argus* (Melbourne) 27 Dec. 1854, 4.

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