

## ELLA AIRLIE

Ella Airlie began her professional stage career in Melbourne as a pianist/singer and storyteller. She later worked for leading managements such as the Tait brothers (as an accompanist for their touring singers), the Fullers, J. C. Williamson's and William Anderson, and for a period of time toured America. Arguably her greatest success, however, was as author of *The Bunyip* (1916), one of Australia's most successful pantomimes.

Best remembered for originating the Fullers' most successful pantomime, *The Bunyip* (1916), Ella Airlie was born Ella Olgilvie and raised in Ballarat, Victoria. By 1907 her songs were being published (under her birth name) and she began her professional stage career around late 1909/early 1910 at various Melbourne-based variety shows. Airlie's act at this time saw her performing her own songs and presenting humorous dialogue. In 1910, she accepted an offer from the Taits to be an accompanist for visiting singers. She also continued to present her own routines and appeared in such shows as the Tait's Follies. After an engagement on the Fullers' Australian and New Zealand circuits, Airlie travelled to America, where she toured briefly before returning to Australia to once again take up a Fullers contract.

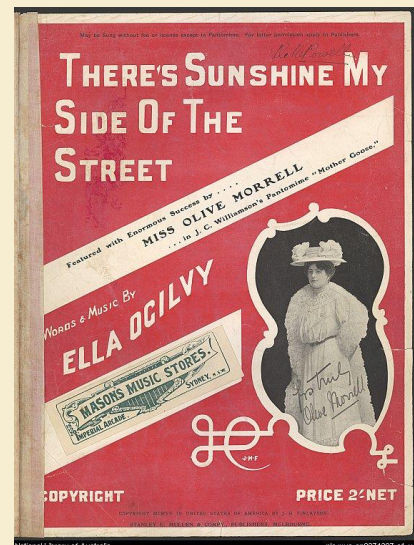
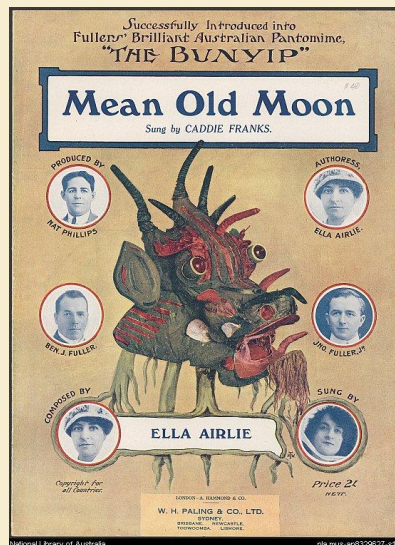
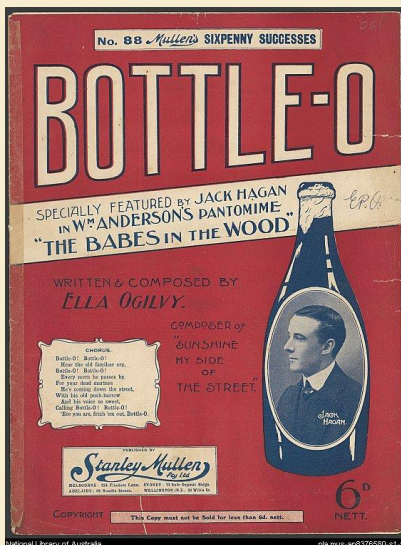
Although largely recognised as a songwriter - her compositions had been included in several pantomimes (notably J. C. Williamson's *Mother Goose* and William Anderson's *Babes in the Wood*, 1909) - Airlie's ambition was to become a playwright. In 1916, she submitted to Sir Benjamin Fuller a script that she had been working on since 1908. Titled 'The Bunyip,' it had been conceived first as a musical play and later as a revusical. Although Fuller initially rejected the work due to it having no romantic angle, he did see its potential as a pantomime, particularly as it contained strong Australian themes and content. He subsequently handed the project to Nat Phillips then one of his company's senior director/managers. Coming off a very successful

debut season at the Princess Theatre, with his newly formed "Stiffy and Mo" company, Phillips added some new material (including roles for himself and Roy 'Mo' Rene and put the show into production in late November. It premiered at the Grand Opera House (Syd) a few days before Christmas and went on to tour Australia and New Zealand frequently up until at least 1924. *Sinbad the Sailor*, another of Airlie's pantomimes, premiered under the Fullers' direction in 1918. Production details for a drama called 'The Wishing Cap' (ca. 1918) are yet to be located.

Airlie was later known as Ella Palzier Campbell.



*Theatre Oct. (1916), 19.*



Images courtesy of the National Library of Australia

## PERFORMANCE CHRONOLOGY (Australia)

An asterix (\*) beside a date indicates that it is either approximate or has yet to be established).

- 1910:** Collingwood Town Hall (Melb; 29 Jan. - \* > first appearance).
- 1910-11:** Airlie was engaged by the Taits in Melbourne for much of 1910 and 1911.
- 1915:** HOLLAND & ST JOHN (Empire Th; Bris; 28 Aug. - \*) ► Queensland regional tour (ca. Sept/Oct. > see Olympia Th, Charters Towers; ca. 2 Oct.).
- 1916:** FULLERS (Melrose Th, Perth; ca. Feb.\*) • Grand Op House; Syd; 22-31 Dec. > *The Bunyip*).
- 1917:** FULLERS Grand Op House (Syd; 1 Jan. - 2 Mar. > *The Bunyip*).
- 1919:** FULLERS (Majestic Th, Adel; 4 Oct - \*) • (Bijou Th (Melb; 1 Nov. -\*) • Empire Th, Bris; 29 Nov. -\*).

## ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS (Published)

All songs credited to Ella Airlie unless otherwise noted.

♪ = published score available online via the National Library of Australia (NLA). All other links to NLA Trove record.

- ♪ 1907: "[There's Sunshine on My Side of the Street](#)" (Ogilvie)
- ♪ 1909: "[Bottle-O](#)" (Ogilvie)
- 1911: "[I've Got a Heart to Give Away.](#)"
- 1915: "Go Away Mr Crocodile" [ctd. TT: Mar. 1915, 35]
- 1915: "If Everyone Thought as Mother" [ctd. TT: Mar. 1915, 35]
- 1915: "We're Not Downhearted Yet" (ca. 1915) [cited TT: Mar. 1915, 35]
- ♪ 1916: "[Mean Old Moon](#)"
- ca.1916: "[Back to Kosciusko](#)"

### A Pantomime Composer Sings the Praises of DR. SHELDON'S MAGNETIC LINIMENT.



MISS ELLA AIRLIE  
from a photo.

MISS ELLA AIRLIE, a favorite stage actress, is the first woman to record her own compositions. Not only is she the authoress of "The Bump," she is also its musical conductor and has composed several of its musical numbers. Miss Airlie writes to us:—

"I guess everyone has Neuralgia at some time or other. I had an attack the other night of Neuralgia and Toothache at the same time, and it nearly drove me mad. A friend of mine recommended Dr. Sheldon's Magnetic Liniment, and I was delighted with the results I obtained from the use of it; the pain ceased almost immediately. I rubbed it on my forehead, cheek and neck, and a little toward the gums of the tooth that was bothering me, and in less than half an hour's time I was quite relieved, and enjoyed a good night's sleep. I had not forgotten my pain, and again used the Magnetic Liniment with equally good results. It certainly drives pain to a most marvelous fashion.

"Did you know that Magnetic Liniment would cure scalded toes at once? A girl friend of mine recently went scurrying, and was bitten by sandflies on the hand three times. She was so troubled with the itching that she told me, and I at once got my bottle of Magnetic Liniment and rubbed some on the bites. In an hour's time the itching and soreness had disappeared. She has bought a bottle of your Magnetic Liniment too, now, and is quite as enthusiastic as I am about it. Magnetic Liniment deserves notice.

"Yours truly,  
(Sept.) "ELLA AIRLIE."

### BANISHES ALL PAIN.

**Those who have Used  
Magnetic Liniment  
Know its Value.**

"We tried to crush one of the worst neuralgic pains possible here.—In my possession I could not get a better relief for me than that secured by Dr. Sheldon's Magnetic Liniment. I have used it on my forehead and behind my head, and I shall use it always."

"I have written you once.—I had a severe case of Neuralgia and Toothache, and I always have a bottle of your Magnetic Liniment in my traveling bag."

"Mr. John Livingston, before me, in my office, a Magnetic Liniment is a very good one with Dr. Sheldon's Magnetic Liniment, making him to go through his work with ease and comfort."

Pain in any form, be it Neuralgia, Toothache, or Insect Bites of any kind, which cause so much misery in life—all these pains and more are easily overcome by Dr. Sheldon's Magnetic Liniment. Not an internal remedy, but working through the pores of the skin. Dr. Sheldon's Magnetic Liniment penetrates—goes into the seat of pain, and banishes it in the result. Apply the Liniment with the palm of the hand until the friction creates a warm glow, and the pain leaves you as if charmed away. Life should not be spoiled by pain and suffering when Dr. Sheldon's Magnetic Liniment is ready to relieve all aches and pains. The ever-ready family remedy, 1/4 and 2/4.



## FURTHER REFERENCE

Djubal, Clay. "[Airlie, Ella](#)." *AustLit* (2006).

West, John. *Theatre in Australia*. (1978) 129. [photograph]

Williams, Margaret. *Australia on the Popular Stage*. (1983), 84. [photograph]



From the "Back to Kosciusko" cover  
Source: National Library of Australia

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Expanded and updated from the 2006 AustLit entry.

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