

SAM GALE

(incl. **Gale and Sadie**)

Comedian, baritone. Sam Gale got his first big break working for Harry Cogill in the late 1890s and went on to appear with companies run by managers such as Kate Howarde, Ted Holland, Leonard Davis, Will Wallace, James Brennan and the Fullers. In 1905 he teamed up with his three year old daughter Sadie, performing a song and dance act that also often included sketch work. In addition to performing, Gale was heavily involved in industrial activity, being a co-founder of a variety artists association in Melbourne (ca. 1906) and helping to set up the Sydney-based Australian Variety Artists Association (1907). Both societies later merged to form the Australian Vaudeville Artists' Federation. Sam Gale's career was tragically cut short in December 1912 when he was killed by a tram while crossing a street in Sydney. He was survived by his wife, Myra, and daughter, who later went on to form a stage act together.

Born circa 1879, comedian/singer Sam Gale is believed to have begun his career as a professional variety entertainer in the mid-1890s. Although his name is currently first linked to Harry Cogill's Federal Minstrels during its 1898 Gaiety Theatre season in Melbourne, it is very likely that he had gained some experience elsewhere over the previous couple of years at least. In 1899 Gale joined John Coleman's Frolics Company, which included for a time, Frank M. Clark. The troupe is known to have undertaken a Western Australian tour towards the end of the year. He has been associated next with Kate Howards vaudeville troupe which played a season in Brisbane in 1900. Sometime around this period he also met and married Myra James, a fellow variety performer (the couple had a child, Sadie, in 1902).

According to reviews and advertising from around the late 1890s and early 1900s, Gale performed solo comedy sketches (often with a military theme) which were usually accompanied by songs. The *Western Australian* records, for example, Sam Gale, the Descriptive Baritone, has proved to be unequalled in his Military Songs. Tonight he will sing "Blow Winds gently" and "Sing one of the Irish Songs" (16 Dec. 1899, 1). Advertising in the *Brisbane Courier* the following year went so far as to record: "Mr Sam Gale, premier baritone of the Southern Hemisphere. His voice a Wonder" (19 May 1900, 14). The advertised bills from these engagements also indicate that Gale was being additionally employed as a stage manager, suggesting that he was even then being held in high regard by his employers and within the industry in general.

By 1905 Myra Gale had returned to performing, and in typical vaudeville tradition the couple began introducing audiences to their young daughter, then aged only three or four years of age. The earliest confirmed billing of Sam Gale and Little Sadie found to date (they were later known simply as Gale and Sadie), is for a season at the Theatre Royal, Charters Towers in July 1905 with Will Wallace's Waxworks and Vaudeville Company.¹ The act appears to have involved a selection of songs, sketches and dances (the cake walk, for example). Also in the troupe at that time was George Sorlie.

Having been active in helping and protecting the interests of his fellow performers for some time, Gale co-founded in either 1906 or in early 1907 a union-style organisation specifically devoted to protecting the rights of variety performers in Melbourne. While the name of the association has not yet been confirmed, Gale is recorded as having addressed a similar organisation – the Australian Variety Artists' Association – when it was opened in May 1907.

Between 1906 and 1912, Gale, his wife Myra and daughter Sadie toured Australia (and possibly New Zealand) continuously, for a number of companies and managements, including J. C. Williamsons, Ted Holland, James Brennan and in 1912 for the new firm of Fuller-Brennan in Sydney. One *Theatre* critic wrote of Gale and Sadie's act during a season at the National Amphitheatre in 1910 as being the "star turn." he went on so write: "The child is really wonderful and as pretty as a picture. As a little Japanese she is provokingly attractive" (Jan. 1910, 23). They are also known to have toured the East in 1910, their return on 17 July that same year having been recorded by the *Theatre* (Aug. 1910, 10).



Gale and Sadie
Theatre Feb. (1913), 19.

¹ Frank Van Staten, in *Tivoli* (2003) records that Sadie Gale made her stage debut with her father at the Cremorne Gardens in Perth when aged only two. This is yet to be confirmed. As Sadie was born in 1902, her family's stay in Perth in late 1904/early 1905 certainly makes this possible. If she did make her debut at that time, however, it's unclear if this was at the Cremorne Gardens (no details of such an appearance have been confirmed) or at the Palace Gardens, where the Gales were engaged under Leonard Davis' management.

Although Sadie Gale and her father had been performing together since she was at least four, in 1911 the partnership was forced to temporarily stop performing in New South Wales when the government raised the minimum age for child performers from 7 to 10. With Sadie being only 9 years and five months at the time, this meant that the act was illegal in that state. With only seven months left before she turned 10, it is likely that Sam and Myra simply worked elsewhere in the meantime. certainly by December 1912 Gale and Sadie were again featuring at the National Amphitheatre in Sydney.

The father and daughter partnership was not to last much longer, however, as Sam Gale was knocked and killed by a tram while crossing Castlereagh Street in Sydney in late December 1912. He was only 33 years of age. The vaudeville community immediately rallied around his wife and daughter, with George Sorlie as the secretary of the Australian Vaudeville Artists' Federation, organising a benefit concert. More than 50 theatrical organisations and artists donated their time to help raise what turned out to be the considerable amount of £250. Headlining the entertainment were Grace Palotta, Jack Cannot and Vera Pearce from J. C. Williamson's.

On 7 June 1913 Myra and Sadie made a special appearance at the National Amphitheatre under the direction of Ben J. Fuller. Billed as Myra Gale and Little Sadie, they presented their new act – a new and original song scena. With the support of the Fullers they continued at the National for the remainder of the month, and re-appeared there at the end of November with the act by then fully worked out. By the following year the billing had resorted back to Gale and Sadie, the name by which father and daughter had been best known in Australia. Many years later, having married comedian Roy Rene, Sadie gave birth to a son, whom she and husband named Sam, in honour of her father.

SEE ALSO

- [Sadie Gale](#)

ENGAGEMENTS CHRONOLOGY

Entries from 1905 onwards are for Gale and Sadie (unless otherwise noted)

- 1898:** [HARRY COGILL](#) (Gaiety Th, Melb; ca.23 July- Aug/Sept.*)
1899: [JOHN COLEMAN'S FROLICS Co](#) (Th Royal, Perth; 2 Dec.-*).
1900: [KATE HOWARDE VAUDEVILLE Co](#) (Th Royal, Bris; ca. May*)
1904: [LEONARD DAVIS](#) (Palace Gardens, Perth; 31 Dec.)
1905: [LEONARD DAVIS](#) (Palace Gardens, Perth; 1 Jan. - ca. Mar* > also as stage manager) ► [WILL WALLACE](#) (Queensland regional tour; ca. June-July*) ► [F.M. CLARK](#) (Gaiety Th, Melb; ca. 29 July – ca. Sept.* - New Folly Co)
NB: Queensland tour included Th Royal, Charters Towers; 1 July -*)
1906: [J.C. WILLIAMSON'S](#) (Op House, Melb; 26-31 Dec.)
1907: [J.C. WILLIAMSON'S](#) (Op House, Melb; 1 Jan. -*) • (Syd; ca. Mar-Apr*)
1908: [TED HOLLAND](#) (Th Royal, Bris; ca. Apr.*)
1909: [JAMES BRENNAN](#) (Nat Amph, Syd; ca. Dec.*)
1910: [JAMES BRENNAN](#) (Nat Amph, Syd; ca. Jan.*) ► [TED HOLLAND](#) (Th Royal, Bris; ca. Aug-Nov.*)
NB: The *Theatre* records that Sam and Sadie Gale returned to Australia on 17 July via the China Mail (Aug. 1919, 10)
1912: [FULLER-BRENNAN](#) (Nat Amph, Syd; ca. 7 Dec.*)

FURTHER REFERENCE

"Personal." HM: 30 Dec. (1912), 5. [re: Sam Gale's death]

See also:

- A:** 29 July (1905), 16 • 16 Sept. (1905), 16.
BC: 19 May (1900), 14 • 25 June (1900), 6 • 2 July (1900), 6 • 28 July (1900), 14 • 25 Aug. (1900), 2 • 13 Aug. (1910), 2 • 29 Aug. (1910), 6 • 15 Oct. (1910), 2.
NM: 1, 8 July (1905), 1.
SMH: 4, 25 Dec. (1909), 1 • 4 Jan (1913), 2.
TT: June (1907), n. pag. • Jan. (1910), 23 • Dec. (1911), 20 • Feb. 1913, 19.
WA: 9, 11, 16 Dec. (1899), 1 • 13, 27 Jan., 10 Feb. (1910), 1 • 21 Jan. (1905), 1.

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