

SADLER AND KEARNS

The brief managerial and lessee partnership between Harry Sadler and Jack Kearns was conducted entirely at the Fullers' Princess Theatre (Sydney) in 1916. It began with a series of Jack Kearns' revusicals and reached the pinnacle of success mid-year when the newly formed Nat Phillips' Tabloid Musical Comedy Company (featuring Stiffy and Mo) played its debut season at the theatre. After the Fullers took back control of the princess, Sadler stayed on a few months longer as manager, while Jack Kearns returned to performing.

Harry Sadler and Jack Kearns teamed up as managerial partners in early 1916. Kearns had previously been engaged on Harry Clay's suburban circuit for several months, while Sadler had only recently returned to Sydney following the closure of his Tasmanian and Victorian vaudeville operations. The first show staged by the pair was *The Brook* (5-11 Feb.), a second-part revusical presented by The Jack Kearns Revue Company. The troupe featured Peter Brooks, Billy Maloney, Violet Elliott (daughter of Maud Fanning) and her father Arthur Elliott, George Dean, Louie Duggan, Beattie Macdonald and Ruby Wallace. *The Brook* was followed by *On Your Nut*, *On the River*, *A Dress Rehearsal*, *Monte Carlo* and *Sunny Spain*.



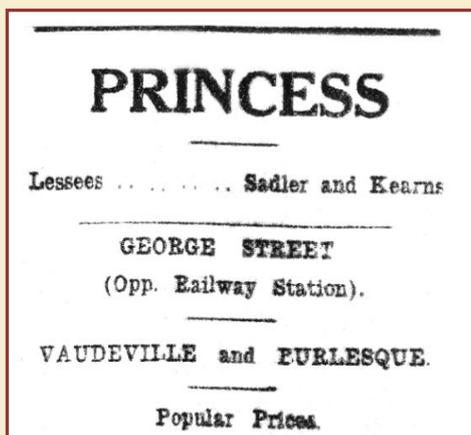
L: *Australian Variety* 3 Jan. (1919), 1.
R: *Australian Variety* 8 Nov. (1916), cover.

While the authorship of these revusicals has not yet been fully established, it seems likely that Kearns and Sadler put them together in collaboration with other members of the troupe. Despite drawing good audiences, the productions did not always garner positive reviews, although troupe members, notably Kearns, generally drew praise for their individual performances. A survey of reviews published in both the *Theatre* magazine and *Australian Variety* indicates that the main issue of contention was the inconsistent quality of the storylines, a matter to which the *Theatre* made reference in its April review of *On the River*:

What a strain it must be on the collective thinking power of the combination to get a change from week to week. Mr Kearns was never before faced with a problem of so gigantic an order... Really [this] one act frivolous frivolity [sic] consists of nothing more than one member of the company after the other coming on in a song, a dance, or some patter, varied now and again by the performer getting the support of a chorus or the appearance of Harry Sadler as the comedian with a toy bucket and shovel, and pretending to shovel sand into the bucket from the bare stage (Apr. 1916, 35).

Kearns wasn't always the recipient of favourable reviews, however, as can be seen by the criticism that followed his portrayal of the Irish JP in *Jurisprudence*, a sketch that owed much to the well-known comedy *Irish Justice*:

Judged on his performance on March 11, he should quietly get hold of Joe Charles and give him £5 to teach him how to get out of the role something of the uproarious humour there undoubtedly is in it... it would - or should - make Mr Kearns shed a lot of his weight in shame to see Mr Charles dispensing justice, and thus learn how infinitely better the part can be played than he does it (TT: Apr. 1916, 36).



Australian Variety 8 Nov. (1916), n. pag.

By May the pressure of constantly coming up with new revues became too much for Kearns and Sadler. Deciding to turn to management only, the pair announced in the week leading up to May 17 that they had arranged with the Fullers to take up the lease on the Princess Theatre and would shortly begin running the operations there independent of the theatre's owners. The Jack Kearns Revue Company subsequently disbanded, so as to allow the new managers time to concentrate on their entertainment strategy. For the first month or so, they presented in-house vaudeville bills, utilising the talents of Kearns's ex-troupe members and of artists on the Fullers' roster. However, by mid-year, and with the support of the Ben and John Fuller, they contracted the newly formed Nat Phillips' Tabloid Musical Comedy Company to open a new season of one-act musical comedy. The venture was to become the most successful put on at the theatre to that date, with the company being offered an extended six-week season in order to cope with the number of people flocking to see the shows.

The Fullers took back control of the theatre in December in order to stage *The Bunyip* pantomime, but having come to realise the potential for the new revusical entertainment – as presented by Phillips and Bert Le Blanc – they turned their attention towards developing more of the same. Indeed, within a year the company had upwards of a dozen local and imported revusical companies touring along its Australian and New Zealand circuit. As for Sadler and Kearns, the former stayed on a at the Princess Theatre as house manager for several months while Kearns returned to performing. His first engagement following the dissolving of the partnership is believed to have been with the American Burlesque Company in Melbourne (Palace Theatre), beginning 8 November.

NAT PHILLIPS
 Direction - BEN. J. FULLER
 SADLER and KEARNS
 Presents His
Tabloid Musical Comedy Revue Co.

Cadd Franks

Daisy Merritt

Nat Phillips, Roy Rene and the Panama Six.

A Good Company of Congenial Performers
 Playing to Record Business at the
 Princess Theatre, Sydney.

Roy Rene

Nat Phillips

Australian Variety 6 Sept. (1916), n. pag.

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- [Princess Theatre](#) (Syd)
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