

1896

The Australian theatre industry of 1896 might best be known for as the year of *Trilby*. While Williamson and Musgrove had much success with their two Christmas extravaganzas - *Matsa, Queen of Fire* (Melbourne) and *Sinbad the Sailor* (Sydney), it was to be Du Maurier's *Trilby*, or to be more precise, the various "Colonial" version of his famous 1894 novel that caught the attention of local managers and audiences. The first apparent interest in *Trilby* came in December 1895, when two productions - *Pat; Or the Bells of Rathbeal* (Theatre Royal) and *Robinson Crusoe* (Her Majesty's) both featured *Trilby* ballet's. The following month the **Trilby Tourists** minstrel company was formed in Sydney for a season in Brisbane, followed by a tour of North Queensland. A reconstituted company was later formed to play at least one New South Wales regional centre (Bathurst) during its show week. While the 1896 Maggie Moore dramatised version of *Trilby* was undoubtedly the premiere Australian production, and indeed she is known to have continued playing her version through until at least 1898, this didn't stop others from mounting their own takes on the story. Among those identified to date were productions staged by the Charles Godfrey (revived in 1897 by Delohery, Bovis and Deane), and Melbourne journalist J. North. While touring with Tommy Hudson's Surprise Party, the Gourleys also presented a sketch entitled, "Trilby and Svengali."

TRILBY BURLESQUE: [burlesque] **Txt Adapt.** Edwin Fin; **Orig Mus.** George Pack; **Add Mus.** [n/e]

Advertised in 1898 as having its libretto written by Mr Edwin Fin, and the music "composed and arranged by Mr George F. Pack" (*Brisbane Courier* 3 Sept. 1898, 2), *Trilby Burlesque* was "especially [created] for the purpose of illustrating Maggie Moore's conception of Du Maurier's celebrated character, Trilby O'Ferrall," which she has rendered famous as Great Creation. It is believed, too, that both Maggie Moore (ex-Mrs J. C. Williamson) and H. R. Roberts, under whose sole direction the piece was produced (1897), also invested considerable input into the work's creation. The *Brisbane Courier* records in this respect that the burlesque was "chiefly a setting for a variety entertainment... [and] bears very little resemblance to either the book or the drama. The names of the principal characters are preserved, and there almost all the resemblance ends. In the burlesque, as in most productions of the kind, there is little rhyme or reason, but by way of compensation there is a large measure of bright and enjoyable entertainment. The degree of success attained in the production is due rather to the performers than to the author" ("Opera House," 5).



Maggie Moore as Trilby
Source: National Library of Australia

According to advertising the 1897 season of this "eminently successful and popular musical extravaganza" at the Theatre Royal (Sydney) was a revival (*Sydney Morning Herald* 28 Aug. 1897, 2). The *Sydney Morning Herald* review of that production records that "for over two hours the audience was kept in a condition of almost continuous merriment... [and] that since *Trilby* was last presented there has been no substantial change in the cast" ("Theatre Royal," 3).

Songs presented in 1897 included the "well-worn and pathetic ballad titled 'Ben Bolt'... given with the sympathetic feeling which is one of the potent charms of Miss Moore's vocalisation," along with "Nothing too good for the Irish" and "Arrah Go On." Other songs were: "Mesmeric (*Trilby* and Svengali); "The Hypnotiser" (Svengali); "Artists Models" (chorus); and "Willie Brewd a Peck O' Maut" and "The Macgregors Gathering" (The Laird). Reviews indicate, too, that additional highlights included H. R. Robert's "pantomimic manipulation of the piano," the "Altogether Ballet, and Shubert's "Adieu." The Perth 1898 season indicates that Walter Rivers sang "My Fiddle and Me" while Maggie Moore also contributed "My Father's Farmyard" along with "Nothing too Good for the Irish."

Among the characters portrayed in the work are Svengali, a mesmerist musician; the Laird of Cockpen; Zen Zou, of the Dragoons; Reverend and Mrs Bagot, Little Billie's uncle and mother; and the jealous and moody Gecko, sidekick to Svengali.

Although George Coppin as the manager of Melbourne's Theatre Royal has been aligned with the production as either producer or originator,¹ the fact that Maggie Moore was the lessee and company manager suggests that she would have been liable for the financial risks associated with the production, and hence the likely producer.

NB: The rights to stage a dramatised production of *Trilby* were secured by Herbert Beerholm Tree ca. 1894/5. According to a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tree's intention was to first try out the drama in the English provinces before staging it at the Haymarket Theatre in London in late autumn 1895 (7 Sept. 1895, 4).

1896: Theatre Royal, Melbourne; 27 June - 29 July

- **Dir.** John Wallace; **Lse/Mngr.** Maggie Moore; **Prod.** George Coppin; **M Arr.** George Pack; **S Art.** John Hennings; **Sat Mngr/Treasurer** H. Sproule.

¹ See for example "Dramatic Notes," *Mercury* (Hobart), 6 June 1896, Supp 2; and *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 Aug. 1896, 4.

- **Cast** incl. Maggie Moore (Trilby O'Ferrall), H. R. Roberts (Svengali), Walter Rivers (Gecko), E. B. Russell (Taffy, alias Talbot Wynne), Robert Kennedy (The Laird of Cockpen), Laura Roberts (Little Billee), Max Maxwell (Zen Zou), Mr Taylor (Manager Kaw), J. P. West (Rev. Bagot), Miss Conroy (Mrs Bagot), Miss M. A. Melville (Madame Vinard)
- Other characters incl. Models, Artists, Students, Grisettes, Chorus, Ballet.

1896: Theatre Royal, Sydney; 5-27 Aug.
- Cast and Production mostly as for previous Melbourne season.

1896: Victorian regional tour; ca. Aug-Sept.
- Cast and Production mostly as for previous Melbourne season.
- Itinerary incl. Bendigo (Royal Princess Theatre; 4-5 Sept.) • Ballarat • Geelong

1896: Theatre Royal, Adelaide; 12-25 Sept.
- Cast and Production mostly as for previous Melbourne season.

1896: Cosmopolitan Hall, Broken Hill (NSW); 5 Oct. -
- Cast and Production mostly as for previous Melbourne season.

NB: Although Moore indicated her intention to tour Tasmania and New Zealand prior to departing for America, no details of her company playing dates in either destination have yet been located. Moore left for the USA in early December 1896.

1897: Theatre Royal, Sydney; 28 Aug. -
- **Dir.** H. R. Roberts; **Lse.** Maggie Moore; **M Dir/Cond.** George Gardiner; **S Art.** George Campbell; **Chor.** Edie Hooper, with Miss Beany Galletely; **B Mngr.** Percy Ward.
- **Cast** incl. Maggie Moore (Trilby O'Ferrall), H. R. Roberts (Svengali), Walter Rivers (Gecko), Little Gladys Bashford (Jeannot O'Ferrall), E. B. Russell (Taffy, alias Talbot Wynne), Roy Cushing (The Laird of Cockpen), Max Maxwell (Zen Zou), Percy Walshe (Manager Kaw), J. P. West (Rev. Bagot), Maggie Forde (Mrs Bagot), Miss M. A. Melville (Madame Vinard), Ettie Croucher, Florrie West, Sybil Grey, Lily Bentley, Stella Langley, Eva Howard, Lihe Bashford, Fanny Keary, Ella Wilde, Mary Walford, May Connelly, Bertha Davis, Belle Harvey, Lucy George, Annie Sefton.
- This production also presented for the first time in Australia "the latest orchestral vocal novelty 'Parson Johnson's Chicken Brigade'" (*Sydney Morning Herald* 28 Aug. 1897, 2).

T H E A T R E R O Y A L
 Lessee and Manager Maggie Moore.
 Assistant Manager and Treasurer .. Mr. H. Sproule.

MAGGIE MOORE,
 After an Absence from Melbourne of 18 Months,
 Has Much Pleasure in Announcing that
 She has Leased This Popular Theatre
 For a Short Season of
FOUR WEEKS,
 Previous to Starting Again Upon
ANOTHER EXTENSIVE TOUR
 Through the Other Colonies, America, and England.

THIS (SATURDAY) EVENING, JUNE 27,
 A NEW MUSICAL EXTRAVAGANZA,
 Specially Written and Composed for the Purpose of
 Illustrating
MAGGIE MOORE'S CONCEPTION
 Of Lu Maurier's Celebrated Character,
TRILBY O'FERRALL.
 The Libretto by Mr. E. Finn. The Music arranged
 and composed by Mr. G. Pack. New Scenery by Mr.
 J. Hennings. The whole produced under the stage
 management of Mr. JOHN WALLACE.

TRILBY BURLESQUE.
TRILBY O'FERRALL MAGGIE MOORE.
 "Have You Seen My Pretty Feet."
 "No wonder I can't lose the brogue of Ould Ireland.
 My father's name was Patrick Michael O'Ferrall,
 Fellow of Trinity College. He was a gentleman,
 and could sing 'Ben Bolt' like a bird." See Novel,
 page 20.
 Jeannot O'Ferrall (her little brother) .. Alma Skinner
 Svengali (mesmerist musician) .. Mr. H. R. Roberts
 Gecko (his familiar) Mr. Rivers
 Taffy Mr. C. Russell
 The Laird } the three } Mr. Robt. Kennedy
 Little Billee } musketeers } Miss Laura Roberts
 Zen Zou .. Mr. Maxwell. Manager Kaw .. Mr. Taylor
 Rev. Mr. Bagot (Little Billee's uncle) .. Mr. J. P. West
 Mrs. Bagot (Little Billee's mother) .. Miss Conroy
 Madame Vinard (conscience) .. Miss Melville
 Models, Artists, Students, Grisettes, Chorus,
 Ballet, &c.

Argus 27 June (1896, 12).

- 1897:** Theatre Royal, Melbourne; 4-10 Dec.
- Cast and production mostly as for previous Sydney production. Major changes were J. E. Sheppard replacing Roy Cushing as The Laird; Blanche Lewis as Madame Vineyard, replacing Miss M. A. Melville. Laura Roberts, cast as Little Billee (alias William Bagot) for the Melbourne production had not been engaged for the Sydney season.
- 1898:** Town Hall, Perth; 4-8 June [return season; 18-19 July]
- Cast and production mostly as for previous Melbourne season. New cast members incl. Nellie Osgood Moore.
- 1898:** Western Australian regional tour; 9 June -
- Itinerary incl. Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, Kanowna and Fremantle.
- 1898:** Opera House, Brisbane; 3-4 Sept.
- **Dir.** H. R. Roberts; **Lse.** Maggie Moore and H. R. Roberts; **M Dir/Cond.** Henry Hawkins; **S Art.** George Campbell; **Chor.** Edie Hooper; **B Mngr.** Percy Ward; **S Mngr.** Herbert Ashton.
- **Cast** incl. Maggie Moore (Trilby O'Ferrall), H. R. Roberts (Svengali), Walter Rivers (Gecko), Little Gladys Bashford (Jeannot O'Ferrall), Alec Cochrane (Taffy), Fred Esmelton (The Laird of Cockpen), W. J. Townsend (Zen Zou), J. J. Ennie (Manager Kaw), Herbert Ashton (Rev. Bagot), Marion Willis (Mrs Bagot), Lily Branscombe (Madame Vinard), Irene Connelly, Lucy Bentley, Mary Wall, Alice Massey, Annie East, Hilda Black, Adelaide Massey, Jessie Stevens, Florence Grey.
- **Musicians** incl. Hosea Easton (banjo).

NB: C. Russell (advertised as Taffy for the 1896 Melbourne season is named as E. B. Russell (also as Taffy) for the Sydney season.

*W. B. Baker
S. E. Comp.*

TRILBY'S Song

BEN BOLT

As Sung by ...
 Miss REGINA NAGEL
 In the Original Play
 and
 Miss MAGGIE MOORE
 In the Popular Trilby Burlesque.

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ALLAN & CO. Limited,
 Collins Street, Melbourne.

Source: National Library of Australia

"Amusements." *Age* 6 Dec. (1897), 6. [see also advert. - 4 Dec. 1897, 12]

"Amusements: Theatre Royal." *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 14 Sept. (1896), 6.

"Amusements: The Maggie Moore Season." *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill, NSW) 3 Oct. (1896), 2.

- "Amusements: *The Royal - The Trilby Burlesque*." *South Australian Register* 14 Sept. (1896), 7.
 "Amusements: *Trilby Burlesque*." *Sydney Morning Herald* 6 Aug. (1896), 6.
 "Dramatic Notes." *Mercury* (Hobart): 6 June (1896), Supp. 2.
 "Maggie Moore Company: *Trilby Burlesque*." *West Australian* 8 June (1898), 6.
 "Maggie Moore Season, The." *West Australian* 6 June (1898), 2.
 "Miss Maggie Moore." *Australian Town and Country Journal* 29 Aug. (1896), 34.
 "Opera House: Miss Maggie Moore Season, The." *Brisbane Courier* 5 Sept. (1898), 5. [see also advert. - 3 Sept. 1898, 2]
 "Royal Princess Theatre: *Trilby Burlesque*." *Bendigo Advertiser* (Vic) 5 Sept. (1896), 5.
 "Theatre Royal - *Trilby, The*." *Sydney Morning Herald* 30 Aug. (1897), 3. [see also advert. - 28 Aug. 1897, 2]
 "Theatre Royal: *Trilby*" *Argus* 29 June (1896), 6.

TRILBY BURLESQUE: [burlesque] **Txt Adapt.** J. North; **Mus.** [n/e]

The *Williamstown Chronicle* records that this "real Colonial Trilby," had been attracting "overflowing houses in the suburbs, and that the author Mr J. North, "a rising journalist who [had been] fast making a name for himself" (11 July 1896, 3).

- 1896:** Melbourne suburban tour; ca. June-July
 - Mr Duckworth (Lionel Long), Lillie Davis (Polly), J. North (Lambkin Louder), J. Cotter (Septimus Skinflint), F. Wright (Teddy Waitwell), Mr Arnott (Nabben), Lottie Davis (Maude Devonport).
 - Musical performances by Miss Gaynor "and several other talented artists."
 - Itinerary incl. Williamstown (Mechanics Institute; 14 July).

"*Trilby Burlesque*." *Williamstown Chronicle* 11 July (1896), 3.

TRILL-B!; OR, SVENGALEE THE GREAT HYPNOTISER: [burlesque] **Txt/Mus.** [n/e]

Advertised for its Brisbane premier as "an original, Musical, Operatic, Fantastic, Burlesque of Du Maurier's great work... [with] new songs, dances, sketches, comedies etc." The story is set in "the studi-o for the nudey-oh in the very late-in quarter-oh!" Some of the characters are described thus: Trilby - "plenty of sole has our heroine sweet, but alas she carries it all in her feet;" Sven-Garlic - "a strong character;" Jacko "up to monkey tricks;" and Madame Vineyard "good wine needs no push" (*Brisbane Courier* 13 Mar. 1897, 2).

Incidental numbers inserted into the 1896 version of the burlesque included "The Three Musketeers (trio), "Laughing," "All I Could Spare," "Svengalai and Trilby" (duet), "Ben Bolt (Up-to-date)" and "Annie Laurie" (sung by Ada Baker), "The Great Svengali," "Studio Revels," and "La Belle Mobile."

The same production also included the "Trilby Toe Dance" performed by Beanie Gallately.

- 1896:** Royal Princess's Theatre, Bendigo (Vic); 22-25 Aug.
 - **Troupe:** Charles Godfrey Vaudeville Co
 - **Cast** incl. Charles Godfrey (Sven-Garlic), Will Bovis (Trilby O'Farrell), Charles Bovis (The Laird o' Cock Fights), J. C. Bain (Little Silly Billy), Ada Baker (Madame Vinard), Frank Emery (Taffy), H. Bennett (Rev. Mr Bagot), Marie Lingard (Mrs Bagot), P. C. Josphehs (Gecko), Jean Lingard (Lady Figure), Beanie Galletley, Little Trixie.
1896: Theatre Royal, Hobart; 10 Dec.
 - **Cast** incl. Charles Godfrey (Sven-Garlic), Will Bovis (Trilby O'Farrell), Charles Bovis (The Laird o' Cock Fights), J. C. Bain (Little Bill), Ada Rehan (Madame Vinard), Frank Emery (Jacko), H. Jannaway (Taffy), H. Bennett (Rev. Mr Bagot), Miss Hazlewood (Mrs Bagot), P. C. Josphehs (Gecko), Annie Taylor (Lady Figure), Laura Fischer (The Statue).

Bendigo Advertiser 24 Aug. (1896), 1.

- 1897:** Gaiety Theatre, Brisbane; 13-19 Mar.
 - **Prod/Lse.** Thomas Delohery, Charles Bovis and Sydney Deane; **T Mngr.** Henry Colley.
 - **Troupe:** Elite Burlesque, Comedy and Specialty Company.
 - **Cast** incl. Will Bovis (Trill-B), Sydney Deane (Sven-Garlic), Ted Holland (Jacko), James Craydon (Taffee), Charles Bovis (The Laird), James Bain (Little Bill), John D. Foley (Rev. Mr Bag-it), Edie Reeves (Mrs Bag-it), Miss B. Mayfield (Madame Vineyard), Miss B. Galletley (The Statue), Miss M. Lingrad (Lay Figure).

Brisbane Courier 13 Mar. (1897), 2. **Advert.**

"Princess Theatre: Mr Charles Godfrey Company." *Bendigo Advertiser* 24 Aug. (1896), 3.

"Princess Theatre: Mr Charles Godfrey Company." *Bendigo Advertiser* 25 Aug. (1896), 2.

SINBAD THE SAILOR; OR, TINBAD THE TAILOR AND THE WICKED OGRES, THE GOOD FAIRY AND THE LITTLE OLD MAN OF THE SEA, TO SAY NOTHING OF THE BOLD BAD WRECKEROO: [pantomime] **Lib.** Bert Royle and J. C. Williamson; **Orig Mus.** George F.

Pack; **Add Mus.** [n/e]

Williamson and Musgrove, 1896 [printed by John Andrew]

J. C. Williamson once again premiered this pantomime on Christmas Eve rather than the traditional Boxing Day, a move which the *Sydney Morning Herald* critic noted "savoured somewhat of a final dress rehearsal." The review further suggests that the libretto was in need of a great deal work, particularly with regard to cutting the length down from its four hour running time. "Though there is plenty of talent in the cast," writes the reviewer, "the 'book' as presented last night hardly disclosed it, and the actors waded through the voluminous verbiage without striking as many sparks of fun from it as they may possibly do when the pruning-knife has enabled them to find their way to the jokes a little quicker" ("Amusements," 6).

The narrative was played out in three acts, comprising the following scenes: Act 1 Sc 1. Davey Jones' Locker. Cavern under the Sea; Sc 2. Port of Balasora. A village Carnival. Hornpipe in Fetters. Sinbad's Departure; Sc 3. Saloon of the Bobstay; Sc 4. Wreck of the Vessel. Storm at Sea. Breakers Ahead. Neptune to the Rescue. Act 2 Sc 1. The Royal Bath at Nowayer Patiklar. The Natch Dance and the Ballet of the Harem; Sc 2. The Mountain Pass. Topical duets; Sc 3. The Diamond Valley. Ballet of the Night Elves and the Grand Amazonian March. Starting Trap Scenes. Flight of the Fairy Rock and Escape of Sinbad. Act 3 Sc 1. The King's Palace. Grand Variety and Specialty Scene; Sc 2. The Palace Gardens. Recovery of the Koh-i-Noor; Transformation Scene; Harlequinade.

The Grand Specialty scene comprised vaudeville-style acts by Frank Lawton, Will Crackles, Ada Baker, Eva Clements, Mons. Provo, the Bavard family (trapeze artists and acrobats) and the Lucifers (acrobats and strength act).

The following songs and dances incorporated into the story during the opening week: "Didn't I Run, Run, Run" (sung by Will Crackles), "Rosie O'Grady" (Ada Baker), "Il Bacio" and "Canary Polka" (Frank Lawton), "Darling Mabel" (Eva Clements), "We'll Just Have Another and Then" (Crackles and Stanfield), "Mary Used to Go to Sunday School" (Stella Esdaile), "Remedies" (Stanfield), "Love's Duet" (Phillips and Esdaile), and the "Magnificent Trio Dance" (performed by Misses E. and A. Hooper and Frank Lawton). According to the Herald, new songs and specialty acts were constantly being introduced (9 Jan. 1897, 12).

The *Herald* suggested that George Leopold, as the King of Nowayer, was suspiciously like the Premier ("Amusements," 6).

1896: Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney; 24 Dec. - 29 Jan. 1897

- **Dir.** John Wallace; **Prod.** J. C. Williamson and George Musgrove; **Mngr.** C. B. Westmacott; **M Arr/Dir.** George F. Pack; **S Art.** W. B. Spong (G. and J. Gordon and P. Howden - Transformation Scene); **Chor.** Mde Pasta Moore and John Wallace; **Cost.** Miss Nathan and Miss Donnelly; **Harlequinade Dir.** Joe Tolano.
- **Cast** incl. Stella Esdaile (Sinbad), Ada Baker (Zorilda), Will Crackles (Tinbad), Eva Clements (Hinbad), D'Arcy Stanfield (Mrs Tinbad), Frank Lawton (Wreckeroo), Joe Tolano (Captain of the Bobstay), Little Florrie Ranger (Old Man of the Sea), J. Kingston (Neptune), P. Stewart (Cockle), A. King (Davey Jones), Miss M. Thornton (Venus), George Leopold (King of Nowayer), Mina Phillips (Princess Pearl), Hettie Holroyd (Fairy), the Banvards (Ogres), George Ridgway (Ogre), Joe Walhalla, Mons. Provo, the Lucifers (acrobats); Harlequinade incl - Joe Tolano (Pantaloon), George Ridgway (Clown).
- Other characters incl. Ladies of the Harem, Messengers, Pixies, Wreckers, Sailors, Villagers, Tailors, Lumpers, Demons, Fairies, Guards, Eunuchs,

"**Amusements: Christmas Pantomime, The.**" *Sydney Morning Herald* 25 Dec. (1896), 6.

"**Her Majesty's Theatre.**" *Sydney Morning Herald* 9 Jan. (1897), 10.

"**Sinbad the Sailor.**" *Sydney Morning Herald* 19 Dec. (1896), 12.

Sydney Morning Herald 24 Dec. (1896), 2. **Advert.**

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

Sole Lessees, Messrs. Williamson and Musgrove.
Under the Management of Mr. C. B. Westmacott.
Treasurer, Mr. J. B. Moutrie.

**THE CURTAIN WILL BE RAISED
PUNCTUALLY AT 7.45 TO-NIGHT.**

GRAND CHRISTMAS ANNUAL,
commencing
**TO-NIGHT, TO-NIGHT,
CHRISTMAS EVE,**

and continuing Every Evening till further notice.
(MATTINE ANNOUNCEMENT SEE BELOW.)
Mr. Westmacott will TO-NIGHT have the pleasure of
submitting for PUBLIC APPROVAL an Up-to-date,
Original Version, by Messrs.
BERT ROYLE and J. C. WILLIAMSON,
of the Gorgeous, Comic, and Spectacular Pantomime,

SINBAD THE SAILOR,

or **TINBAD THE TAILOR,**
and the Wicked Ogres, the Good Fairy, and the Little Old
Man of the Sea. To say nothing of the Bold Bad
Wreckeroo.

Sydney Morning Herald 24 Dec. (1896), 2.

MATSA - QUEEN OF FIRE; OR, THE APPLES OF THE ISLE, THE DATES OF OSIRIS AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE OF THE MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON, ONN

AND OPH: [pantomime] **Lib.** J. C. Williamson and Bert Royle; **Orig Mus.** Leon Caron and George Pack; **Add Mus.** [n/e]

Williamson and Musgrove, 1896 [printed by McCarron, Bird]

Intended by J. C. Williamson to surpass the enormously successful *Djin Djin* (1895), *Matsa's* Melbourne premiere was seen, at least by the *Age* critic to have achieved its aim in most areas, notably in the spectacle, ballets and artwork presented ("Princess's Theatre, 6). In the *Sydney Morning Herald's* "Musical and Dramatic Notes" column the following year Williamson himself describes the production as the 'most elaborate spectacular... his firm [had] ever attempted' (27 Feb. 1897, 4). The column's critic had previously expressed a similar opinion, suggesting that *Matsa* had "entirely eclipsed" its predecessor (2 Jan. 1897, 4). Set mostly in Egypt (with scenes of the Pyramids, Cairo and Ancient Memphis), but with a brief return to Melbourne in the final scene, the pantomime concerns the rescue of a beautiful young princess by her beloved prince. The princess has been captured by

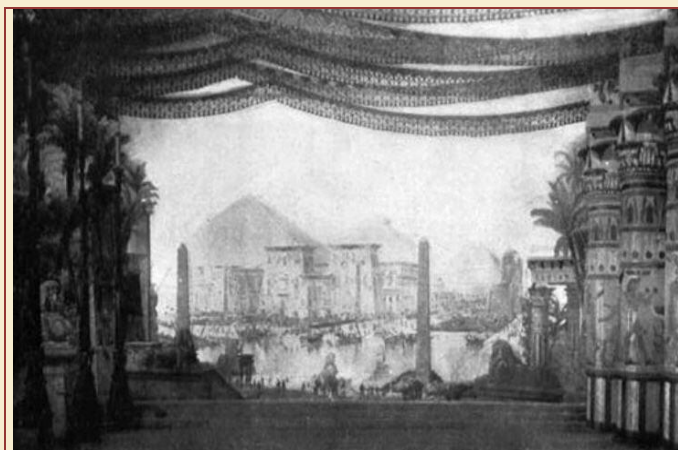
the evil Queen of Fire, who threatens to sacrifice her. Characters incorporated into the narrative include Pygmies (and their King), a mummy, warriors, priests, and ugly Irish spinster and an American heiress.



Source: State Library of Victoria.

The story, essentially an original fairytale created by Royle, concerns the Queen of Fire, who every hundred years demands the life of a maiden. The Fates point to Zelica as the victim, and Pentaur, a revived mummy, is dispatched to modern Cairo to seize her. Pentaur's attempt is foiled by Colonel Boomley, an American speculator, and Prince Simbal, Captain of the Khedive's Guard, but he manages to trick them into eating the magic apples of Isis the Great, which somehow send them back to Memphis of 3,000 years - a time when Ramesses II ruled Egypt. Zelica is eventually saved, but not before several grand adventures occur, including the group's capture by pygmies.

The musical aspects known to have been incorporated into the story include Leon Caron's "It May Be Love" (sung by Nellie Young), along with "Some Things are Better Left Unsaid" (George Lauri), and dances such as the "Floral Ballet" and "Fire Ballet." The production included the usual Williamson spectacles - grand marches, sumptuous ballets, and elaborate and striking costumes. Some notable features of the production were "The Mist of Past Ages," "Ancient Memphis Restored," "The Tomb of the Kings," "The Triumphant Return of Rameses III," "The Great Martial Procession" (250 people), "The Land of the Pygmies," "Matsa's Cyclopien Guards," "March of the Elephants, Lions and Tigers and Other Animals," "The Home of the Queen of Fire," "Sensational Fire Ballet," "On a P&O Steamer in the Suez," "The Court of the Queen of Air," and the "Astounding Ariel Ballet." The visual highlight of the production according to one review were George Gordon's scenes "The Rising of the Nile" and the "Startling Inundation Scene," which show the destruction of Matsa's temple by an inundation of the Nile. "The priestesses," records one account, "are seen dancing in the fire, until overwhelmed by the water. The massive temple sinks bit by bit, the Nile rises higher and higher, and at last the stage 'looks like a vast extent of water shimmering under a full moon'" ("Musical and Dramatic Notes," 2 Jan. 1897, 4).



L: Ancient Egypt. R: Great Bazaar of Cairo

Source: *Matsa, Queen of Fire* Melbourne program
State Library of Victoria

The music by Leon Caron, with additional assistance from George Pack, was viewed by the *Age* critic as along the "lines of distinct originality, and as pleasing as any old favourites could be... [although] the paucity of topical songs and local allusions [was] noticeable" ("Princess Theatre," 28 Dec. 1896, 6). The musical highlights included "Love's Serenade," previously sung in the production of *The Milk White Flag*, "The Honeymoon March, and several numbers sung by Carrie Moore, including "Only Me," described as "a beautiful pathetic song" and "the germ of the pantomime." The refrain from this is published in the *Age* (9 Jan. 1897, 12):

Only me, only me
Sobbed in a weary tone;
Wrung from an innocent baby's heart,
That felt so much alone.

One got the kisses and kindly words
That was her pet, 'Marie';
One told her troubles to bees and birds
That one was "Only Me."

Another hit from the production, the children's song "Won't You Come to My Tea Party," said to be "prettier and easier than the great favourite "I Don't Want To Play in Your Yard," (which had already sold some 100,000 copies in America and England), also had its refrain published in the *Age* (ibid, 12):

Won't you come to my tea party?
All my playmates will be there;
Come and bring your baby sweethearts,
Mamma says that she don't care.

We will have, oh such a good time,
Lots of sweets and oh so much fun;
Mamma told me to invite you.
To my tea party, won't you come?

The *Sydney Morning Herald* critic records, in relation to the libretto, that although "the comic element in *Matsa* is not strong... there are some clever lyrics in the libretto... Much [of the production's success, however] is due to the grace and gaiety of the music" ("Her Majesty's - *Matsa*," 7).



May Pollard as Matsa

Source: *Matsa, Queen of Fire* Melbourne program. State Library of Victoria

NB: Following the end of the Melbourne revival in May 1897, J. C. Williamson engaged a number of cast members to form the *Matsa* Vaudeville Company. Among those in the company were John Coleman, Alice Leamar, Frank Lawton, the Delavines, the Winterton Sisters, Little Gulliver, Ernest Fitts and Mr Leoni Clarke (the "Cat King"). The company is believed to have toured New Zealand between ca. June and August. Williamson's representative, Harold Ashton, had sail for Auckland in late May to arrange the tour. For further details see the [Matsa Vaudeville Co](#) entry.

1896: Princess's Theatre, Melbourne; 24 Dec. 1896 - 12 Feb. 1897

- **Dir/S Mngr.** Walter Raynham; **Prod.** J. C. Williamson and George Musgrove; **Cond/M Arr.** Leon Caron; **S Art.** George and J. Gordon, John Brunton; **Cost.** W. R. Barnes and Emily Nathan; **Chor.** Mde Phillipini.
- **Cast** incl. George Lauri (Col. Kidstone Boomley), May Pollard (*Matsa*), Howard Vernon (Pentaur), Florence Young (Prince Simbal), Carrie Moore (Nokatch, a Cairo donkey boy), Ernest Fitts (Phtha, *Matsa's* High Priest), Marietta Nash (Mrs McLonely, an Irish spinster), Gus Gregory (Cashup, Boomley's valet), P. Bathurst (Rameses III), F. England (Seti), Juliet Wray (Kitty Truelove), Mary Weir (Ariel), Annie Cubitt (Aetheria, Queen of the Air), Maie Saqui (Ahmed), Little Gulliver (Onn, King of the Pygmies), Little Ivy Scott (Oph, Queen of the Pygmies), Alma Vaughan, Lucy Cobb, Flora Graupner (Zelica), Mr Leoni Clarke's Trained Cats, Rats, Mice, Monkey's, Canaries and Cockatoos.

1897: Princess Theatre, Bendigo (Vic); 15-17 Feb.

- Cast and production mostly as for previous Melbourne season.

1897: Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney; 27 Feb. - 10 Apr.

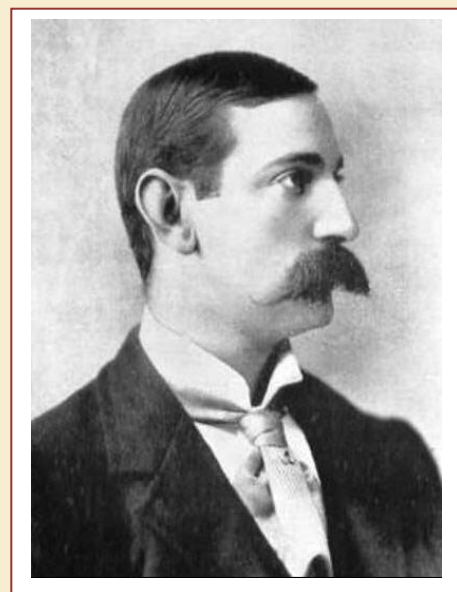
- **Dir/S Mngr.** Walter Raynham; **Prod.** J. C. Williamson and George Musgrove; **Cond/M Arr.** Leon Caron; **S Art.** George and J. Gordon, John Brunton; **Cost.** W. R. Barnes and Emily Nathan; **Chor.** Mde Phillipini.
- **Cast** incl. George Lauri (Col. Kidstone Boomley), May Pollard (*Matsa*), Howard Vernon (Pentaur), Florence Young (Prince Simbal), Carrie Moore (Nokatch, a Cairo donkey boy), Nellie Young (Zelica), D'Arcy Stanfield Mrs McLonely, elderly Irish spinster), Ernest Fitts (Phtha, *Matsa's* High Priest), Gus Gregory (Cashup, Boomley's valet), P. Bathurst (Rameses III), F. England (Seti), Juliet Wray (Kitty Truelove), Mary Weir (Ariel), Annie Cubitt (Aetheria, Queen of the Air), Maie Saqui (Ahmed), Minnie Hooper (Hassen), Miss M. Myers (Yorak), Lila Clifton (Caseira), Kitty Kehir (Muza), Miss Smith (Hafed), Linda Bergin (Soda), Madge Torrence (Husho), Miss F. McRae (Hene, Zelica's friend), Little Gulliver (Onn, King of the Pygmies), Little Ivy Scott (Oph, Queen of the Pygmies), P. Lear (Shu), H. Smith (Knua), W. Beaumont (Amasis).
- According to an item in the *Sydney Morning Herald's* "Musical and Dramatic Notes" column (27 Feb. 1897, 4), Williamson and Musgrove transported the entire chorus, principal musicians, chief mechanist, wardrobe mistress and numerous other leading production staff from the Melbourne season.
- A second edition was presented from 27 March onwards.

1897: Theatre Royal, Adelaide; 19 Apr. - 8 May

- Cast and production mostly as for previous Sydney season.
- The second edition was staged from 1 May onwards.

1897: Princess's Theatre, Melbourne ; 15-20 May [return season]

- Cast and production mostly as for previous Sydney and Melbourne seasons. Major changes in the cast were: Millie Young (as Prince Simbal), Mina Phillips (Zelica), John Coleman (Mrs McLonely), Lila Clifton (Hene).



Ernest Fitts (Phtha)

Source: *Matsa, Queen of Fire* Melbourne program

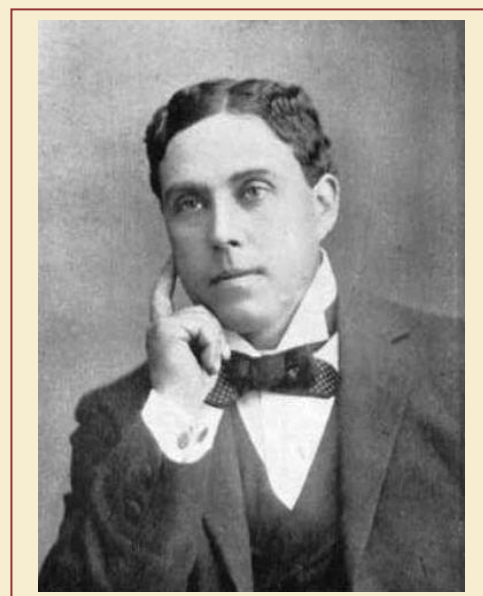


L-R: **Flora Graupner (Zelica); Little Gulliver (Onn, King of the Pygmies); Carrie Moore (Nokatch) and Ivy Scott (Oph, Queen of the Pygmies); and Marietta Nash (Mrs McLonely)**

Source: *Matsa, Queen of Fire* Melbourne program. State Library of Victoria

- ▶ Royle, Bert and J. C. Williamson. *Matsa, Queen of Fire*. Available online courtesy of the State Library of Victoria. (sighted 9/10/2012)

"Amusements: *Matsa* in Adelaide." *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 19 Apr. (1897), 6.
 "Amusements: Marvellous *Matsa*." *South Australian Register* 19 Apr. (1897), 7.
 "Amusements: Second Edition of *Matsa*." *Sydney Morning Herald* 29 Mar. (1897), 3.
 "Amusements: Theatre Royal - *Matsa*." *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 20 Apr. (1897), 5.
 "Amusements: Theatre Royal - *Matsa*." *Chronicle* (Adelaide) 24 Apr. (1897), 32.
 Dicker, Ian. "An Historical-Critical Study of the Career of James Cassius Williamson and his Contribution to Theatre in Australia." Ph D Diss. U of Colorado, 1972
 --- *JCW: A Short Biography of James Cassius Williamson* (1974), 130-33.
 "Her Majesty's - *Matsa*." *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 Mar. (1897), 7.
 "Her Majesty's Theatre." *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 Feb. (1897), 12. [see also adverts. - 27 Feb.; 2, 5, 6, 13, 20 Mar. 1897, 2]
 "Princess's Theatre - *Matsa*." *Age* 17 May (1897), 6.
 [see also advert. - 15 May 1897, 12]
 "Princess's Theatre - The Pantomime *Matsa*." *Age* 28 Dec. (1896), 6.
 [see also adverts. - 2 Jan. 1897, 2; and 9, Jan. 1897, 12]
 "*Matsa*." *South Australian Register* 20 Apr. (1897), 6.
 "*Matsa* at the Princess's Theatre." *Fitzroy City Press* (Melbourne) 7 Jan. (1897), 3.
 "*Matsa* in Bendigo." *Bendigo Advertiser* 4 Feb. (1897), 3.
 "Melbourne Gossip [From a Lady Correspondant]" *Capricornian* (Rockhampton) 6 Mar. (1897), 6.
 "Musical and Dramatic Notes." *Sydney Morning Herald* 2 Jan. (1897), 4.
 "Musical and Dramatic News" *Sydney Morning Herald* 27 Feb. 1897, 4.
 "Princess Theatre Pantomime - *Matsa Queen of Fire*." *Argus* 28 Dec. (1896), 7.
 "Princess Theatre: New Edition of *Matsa*." *Argus* 11 Jan. (1897), 6.
 "Royal Princess Theatre: The *Matsa* Specialty Company." *Bendigo Advertiser* 19 Feb. (1897), 2.
 "Theatre Royal." *South Australian Register* 22 Apr. (1897), 3.



George Lauri (Col. Kidstone Boomley)

Source: *Matsa, Queen of Fire* Melbourne program. State Library of Victoria

NB: The article published in the *Fitzroy City Press* (7 Feb. 1897) was also published in several other Melbourne and regional Victorian newspapers. These include the *Morwell Advertiser*, and *Healsville Guardian* (8 Jan.), *Oakleigh Leader*, *Caulfield and Elsternwick Leader*, and *Coburg Leader*. (9 Jan.). It was also in the published *Evelyn Observer*, and *South and East Bourke Record* (15 Jan.) and again in *Caulfield and Elsternwick Leader* (16 Jan.).



The Rising of the Nile

Source: *Matsa, Queen of Fire* Melbourne program
 State Library of Victoria

Last updated: 18/06/2016

Expanded and updated from Clay Djubal, "What Oh Tonight" (Appendix C), Ph D Diss (2005) U of Qld.

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