

JOHN LITTLE

John Little's career as a professional scenic artist began in Melbourne sometime around 1870/71. Between 1872 and 1882 he was largely associated with John Hennings at Melbourne's Theatre Royal. He later painted drama and pantomime scenes for Williamson Garner and Musgrove, Alfred Dampier, George Rignold, Charles Arnold W.J. Holloway, Dan Barry and Kate Howarde, often in collaboration with other leading artists (notably Harry Grist). Variety theatre clients included F.M. Clarke, Harry Cogill, and the Gaiety Novelty Company. John Little and Sons (1895 onwards) continued to supply stage scenery up until at least the late 1910s.

John Little began advertising his services as a scenic artist in early 1871, having set up a studio in the Melbourne suburb of Carlton. The first professional production known to have included his work was Walter Cooper's *Foiled*. Produced at the Princess's Theatre by L. M. Bayless beginning 7 October, the "new and authentic scenery" was credited to Fry, Little and Assistants.

TO MANAGERS of PRIVATE THEATRES, Amateurs, &c.—SCENERY PAINTED by J. Little, 3 Lynch street, Carlton.

Argus 17 Apr. (1871), 8.

By late 1872 Little had begun his association with the Theatre Royal, then under the management of John Hennings, Henry R. Harwood, Richard Stewart and George Coppin. His earliest established works at the Royal were *Quite Alone* and *My Turn Next*. Staged as part of a double bill in early November 1872, both productions were credited to Hennings, Little and Harry Grist. The trio collaborated on numerous works up until 1877, including Garnet Walch's 1875 pantomime *A Frogee Would a Wooing Go*, and his 1876 burlesque *Pluto; Or, The Magic Lyre*. During this period Little also provided scenery for productions staged by other firms. Allison and Booty, for example, engaged him to paint the scenery for their 1873 Christmas pantomime, *Robinson Crusoe; Or, Harlequin Friday, the Fairy Liberty and the King of the Carribee Islands* (St James Hall, Bendigo; 26 Dec.). John Hennings provided a panorama depicting Crusoe's voyages for the same production.

From 1878 through to 1882 Little and Hennings worked mostly in collaboration, supported by a team of assistants. Among the productions staged during the last two years of Hennings, Harwood, Stewart and Coppin's lesseeship of the Royal (1878-79) were George Darrell's *Back from the Grave* (1878), *Struck Oil*, starring J. C. Williamson and Maggie Moore (1879), and Garnet Walch's 1879 Christmas pantomime *Babes in the Wood*. During the years 1880 to 1882, when the theatre was managed by Coppin, Hennings and Greville, the two scenic artists produced scenery for *Sin Fane; Or, Shamrock Green*, starring Gratton Riggs; Bland Holt's *New Babylon; Not Guilty*, starring B. N. Jones; Walch's *Sinbad the Sailor*, featuring the Stewart family (1880); *The Three Guardsmen* (1881); and *Russia As It Is* (1882), starring Alfred Dampier.

After leaving the Theatre Royal Little painted drama and pantomime scenes for various firms under his own name up until 1895, at which time he established John Little and Sons. Between 1883 and 1895 his "legitimate" theatre clients included Williamson Garner and Musgrove, Rignold and Allison, W. J. Holloway and C. F. Coutts. Some of the works undertaken in collaboration with other artists, notably Alexander Habbe, George Kelly, Harry Grist, J. R. Walsh, George Gordon, Alfred Clint, John Hennings and George Campbell. In 1891 he also began undertook possibly his first commission from the variety industry, this being minstrel semi-circle scenery for F. M. Clark. Later variety theatre clients included Harry Cogill, and Perman and Lang's Gaiety Novelty Company

After setting up John Little and Sons, the business expanded its operations beyond Melbourne and nearby Victorian centres such as Bendigo and Ballarat, securing contracts with professional and amateur theatre companies in Tasmania, New South Wales and South Australia. The company's work was also appearing further afield through Australian and New Zealand tours by Dan Barry, Alfred Dampier, M. L. Raphael, Charles Arnold, the Permans, the Coulter Dramatic Company, Kate Howarde, and Meynell and Gunn.

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Mr. W. J. HOLLOWAY
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Every scene new and painted by Mr. J. LITTLE.
"The representation was greeted at all points with unequivocal marks of favor, the audience reaching at times the highest pitch of enthusiasm."
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SPECIAL NOTICE—Doors open 7.15, commencing at quarter before eight sharp.
1899 **NEIL O'BRIEN, Agent.**

Bendigo Advertiser 5 Nov. (1883), 1.

While much still remains to be found in relation to John Little's life and career (both as a scenic artist and businessman), it has been established that his company was still producing scenery for the Australian theatre industry as late as 1918. That year saw Little and Co linked to a tour of *Charlie's Aunt* by Edmund Duggan and Leslie Woods.

SCENIC ART (PRODUCTIONS)

The following list comprises stage productions with scenic art by John Little and John Little and Sons that have been identified to date.

Abbreviations

Scenic Artists: AC = Alfred Clint • CF = Charles Fry • GG = George Gordon • HG = Harry Grist • AH = Alexander Habbe • JH = John Hennings

Firms: HHS&C = Hennings, Harwood, Stewart and Coppin • CH&G = Coppin, Hennings & Greville • WGM = Williamson, Garner & Musgrove

Year	Production(s) / [Entertainment]	Venue / Tour details	Management / Company
1871:	Foiled	(Princess's, Melb; 7 Oct.) with C.F and assistants.	[L.M. Bayless]
1872:	Quite Alone / My Turn Next	(Th Royal, Melb; 7 Nov.) with JH / HG	
1873:	Robinson Crusoe	(St James Hall, Bendigo; 26 Dec.)	[Allison & Booty]
1875:	The Octoroon	(Th Royal, Melb; 9 Aug.) with JH / HG	
	The Lancashire Lass	(Th Royal, Melb; 18 Sept.) with JH / HG	[HHS&C]
	A Froggee Would a Wooing Go	(Th Royal, Melb; 26 Dec.) with JH / HG	[HHS&C]
1876:	Saratoga	(Th Royal, Melb; 19 Feb.) with JH / HG	[HHS&C]
	Pluto; Or, The Magic Lyre	(Th Royal, Melb; 20 May) with JH / HG	[HHS&C]
1877:	As You Like It	(Th Royal, Melb; 28 July) with JH / HG	[HHS&C]
	King Richard III	(Th Royal, Melb; 22 Sept.) with JH / HG	[HHS&C]
1878:	Class	(Th Royal, Melb; 17 June) with JH	[HHS&C]
	Back From the Grave	(Th Royal, Melb; 29 June) with JH	[HHS&C]
	Our Boarding House in St Kilda	(Th Royal, Melb; 5 Sept.) with JH	[HHS&C]
1879:	Struck Oil	(Th Royal, Melb; 23 Aug.) with JH	[HHS&C]
	The Moonstone	(Th Royal, Melb; 13 Oct.) with JH	
	Babes in the Wood	(Th Royal, Melb; 26 Dec.) with JH / HG	
1880:	Gratton Riggs	(Th Royal, Melb; 27 Mar.) with JH	[CH&G]
	For Life	(Th Royal, Melb; 1 May) with JH	[CH&G]
	New Babylon	(Th Royal, Melb; 12 June) with JH / HG	[CH&G]
	Sentenced to Death	(Th Royal, Melb; 31 July) with JH	[CH&G]
	Not Guilty	(Th Royal, Melb; 14 Aug.) with JH	[CH&G]
	Sinbad the Sailor	(Th Royal, Melb; 27 Dec.) with JH	[CH&G]
1881:	The Three Guardsmen	(Th Royal, Melb; 26 Mar.) with JH	[CH&G]
	Shaun Slieven	(Th Royal, Melb; 9 Apr.) with JH	[CH&G]
1882:	Russia as it Is	(Th Royal, Melb; 6 May) with JH	[CH&G]
	Jack and the Beanstalk	(Th Royal, Melb; 26 Dec.) with JH	[WG&M]
1883:	The Naked Truth	(Opera House, Melb; 12 May) with A.H. and George Kelly	
	Lights of London	(Th Royal, Bris; 16 July)	[W. J. Holloway]
	Lights of London	(Royal Princess Th, Bendigo; 31 Oct.)	[W. J. Holloway]
	Babes in the Wood	(Royal Princess Th, Bendigo; 23 Dec.)	[C. F. Coutts]
1884:	Back From the Grave	(Her Majesty's Opera House, Syd; 1 Aug.) with JH	
1886:	Only Dust	(Bijou, Melb; 22 May)	
	Tempted	(Alexandra Theatre, Melb; 27 Nov.)	
	The Navvies or the Tram Line	(Victoria Hall, Melb; 27 Nov.) with HG. and J.R. Walsh	
1887:	Mates on the Goldfields	(Her Majesty's Th, Syd; 26 Nov.)	[Rignold & Allison]
	Siberia	(Her Majesty's Th, Syd; 10 Dec.) with GG	[Rignold & Allison]
	In the Ranks	(Her Majesty's Th, Syd; 16 Dec.) with Geo Campbell	[Rignold & Allison]
1889:	The Vendetta	(Her Majesty's, Syd; 23 Feb.) with AC.	
1891:	"Fin de Siecle" - Minstrel 1 st Part	(Gaiety Th, Melb; 26 Dec.)	[F. M. Clark]
1892:	Les Cloches De Corneville / Girofle Girofla / Grand Duchess / Manteaux Noir / Falka / La Perichole / Martha / Maritana / The Bohemian Girl	(Princess Comic Opera Co Queensland tour; ca. Aug.)	[Melton Morley]

NB: John Little & Sons from 1895 onwards unless otherwise note

1895:	The Forty Thieves	(Town Hall, Perth; 26 Dec.) with Cameron Robbie	[Gaiety Panto Co /James Wilkinson]
	Is Life Worth Living	(Alexandra Theatre, Melb; 26 Dec.)	
	[Gaiety Pantomime Co]	(Town Hall, Perth; ca. Dec.) with W. H. Pulford	
1896:	[Gaiety Pantomime Co]	(Town Hall, Perth; ca. Jan.) with W. H. Pulford	
	[Fancy Yacht Fair]	(Elsternwick Presbyterian Church Drill Room; 25-38 Nov.)	
1897:	Rip Van Winkle	(Queen's Th, Melb; 26 June)	[Comic Opera Co]
	The Hermit's Bell	(Bijou Th, Melb; 8 July)	[Victorian Operatic Society]
	Ups and Downs of Life	(Alexandra Th, Melb; 25 Sept.)	[Alexandra Dramatic Co]
	A Cruel Wrong	(Alexandra Th, Melb; 9 Oct.)	[Alexandra Dramatic Co]
	Cinders	(Alexandra Th, Melb; 30 Oct.)	[Alexandra Dramatic Co]
	"The Rose Bower"	(Harry Cogill's Australian tour; ca. Nov. - Dec.)	[Harry Cogill]
1898:	The Roll of the Drum	(Alexandra Th, Melb; 23 Apr.)	[Dan Barry]
	A Miner's Secret	(Alexandra Th, Melb; 29 Oct.)	[Alexandra Dramatic Co / Erskine Scott]
1899:	Robinson Crusoe	(Th Royal, Adel; 11 Mar.)	[Wybert Reeve]
	The Irish Detective	(Alexandra Th, Melb; 29 Apr.)	[Duncan McCallum]
	[German Reed Entertainment season]	(Alexandra Th, Melb; 26 Aug. -)	[F.M. Alexander and Robert Young]
	Jack and the Beanstalk	(Raphael Pantomime Co Australian tour; Jan. - ca. Sept.)	[M. L. Raphael]
		- Incl. Brisbane; 4 Nov.	
	In Town / A Gaiety Girl	(Harry Cogill's Australian tour; ca. Oct. - Dec.)	[Harry Cogill]
		- Incl. Bendigo; 12 June / Mt Gambier; 7 Aug.	
1900:	HMS Pinafore	(A of M, Launceston; 22 May)	[Launceston Operatic Society]
	Briton and Boer	(Criterion Th, Syd; 9 June)	[Alfred Dampier]
	In Town / A Gaiety Girl	(Harry Cogill's Australian tour; ca. June - Sept.)	[Harry Cogill]
		- Incl. Tasmania; ca. Oct.	
	What Happened to Jones	(Palace Th, Syd; 25 Aug.)	[Charles Arnold]
	Jack and the Beanstalk / Maritana	(Raphael Pantomime Co Australian tour; Jan. - ca. Sept.)	[M. L. Raphael]
		- Incl. Tasmania; ca. Mar.- Apr. / Perth; 17 Aug. / Kalgoorlie; 7 Sept.	
1901:	Les Cloches de Corneville	(Princess's Th, Melb; 27 July)	[George Musgrove]
1902:	Gilded Sin	(His Majesty's Th, Bris; 15 Mar.)	[Dan Barry]
1903:	[Gaiety Novelty Entertainers]	(Gaiety Th, Melb; ca. Aug.-Dec.)	[Perman and Lang]
	After Dark	(Dan Barry Dramatic Co Australian tour; ca. Dec.)	[Dan Barry]
		- Incl. Bendigo; 28 Dec.	
1904:	[Gaiety Novelty Entertainers]	(Gaiety Th, Melb; 1 Jan. - 15 July)	[Perman and Lang]
	After Dark	(Dan Barry Dramatic Co Australian tour; Jan. - ca. Apr.)	[Dan Barry]
		- Incl. Brisbane; Mar.	
	Little Red Riding Hood	(Perman/Lang's Australian tour; ca. Feb. - Oct.) with HG	[Perman and Lang]
		- Incl. Adelaide 13 Feb. / Brisbane 26 Mar. / Sydney 23 Apr.	
	[Austral Competitions]	(Bendigo; 26 May)	[Austral Association]
	Pygmalion and Galatea /Caste	(Coulter Dramatic Co Victorian tour; ca. June - July)	[J. Coulter]
		- Incl. Warragul 9 June / Maffra 17 June	
	In Gay Paree	(Perman/Lang's Australian tour; ca. Feb. - Oct.)	[Perman and Lang]
		- Incl. Melbourne 25 June / Bendigo 5 Sept.	
	The World's Mercy / In Mighty London / A Wife's Peril / The Russian Spy	(Coulter Dramatic Co Australian tour; ca. Sept-Dec.)	[J. Coulter]
1905:	The World's Mercy / In Mighty London / A Wife's Peril / The Russian Spy	(Coulter Dramatic Co Australian tour; ca. Jan.)	[J. Coulter]
	H.M.S. Pinafore	(A of M, Launceston; 29 Nov.)	[Launceston Operatic Society]
1906:	[Austral Competitions]	(Bendigo; 14 May)	[Austral Association]
	The Two Orphans	(Bijou Th, Melb; 2 June)	[Irving Dramatic Co]
	The Fatal Wedding	(Meynell & Gunn Dramatic Co Australia tour)	[Meynell and Gunn]
		- Incl. Sydney 21 Apr. / Hobart 27 July / Perth 26 Dec.	
	The Gaiety Girl	(Mechanic's Th, Albury, NSW; 9 Aug.)	[Albury Operatic Society]
	The Three Hats	(City Hall, Prahan; 27 Sept.)	[Garrick Comedy Co]
1907:	The Double Event	(Th Royal, Hobart; 26 Jan.)	[Kate Howarde]
1909:	The Giesha	(A of M, Launceston; 8 Dec.)	[Launceston Operatic Society]
1910:	The Partners	(Albert Hall, Launceston; 6 June)	[The Idlers Co]
1911:	Miss Hook of Holland	(A of M, Launceston; 20 Nov.)	[Launceston Operatic Society]
1912:	San Toy	(A of M, Launceston; 2 Dec.)	[Launceston Operatic Society]
1918:	Charlie's Aunt	(Camperdown, Vic; 28 Mar.)	[Edmund Duggan/Leslie Woods Co]

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Geo. A. Jones	Julia Dasma.

Argus 26 Dec. (1891), 12

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Argus 19 Mar. (1904), 20.