

INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS:

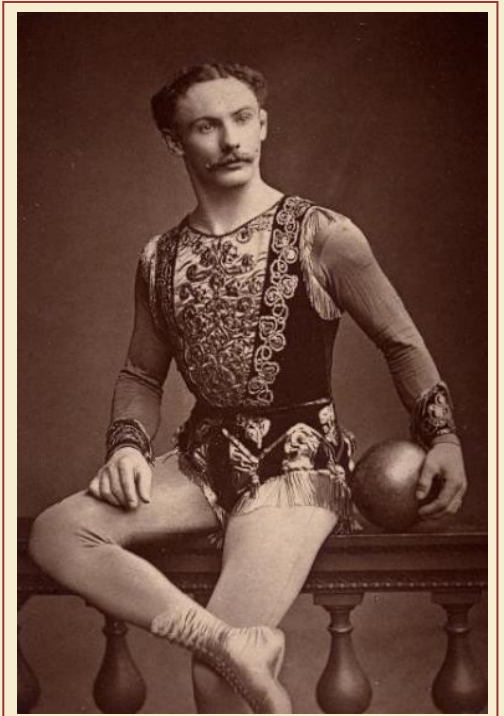
PAUL CINQUEVALLI

[1899, 1902-03, 1909, 1914] Often billed throughout his career as "L'incompabable," juggler, equilibrist and raconteur Paul Cinquevalli¹ was born in Lissa, in Posen Province, Prussia² on 30 June 1859 and educated in Berlin. His parents wanted him to become a priest, a career path he had no desire to follow. Instead he ran away from home at age 14, joining an Italian acrobatic troupe run by gymnast and aerialist Giuseppe Chiese-Cinquevalli (and from whom he adopted his professional name). Cinquevalli's career as a trapeze artist was cut short, however, when he sustained a broken leg, arm, crushed chest and permanently weakened wrist in a fall. Forced to reinvent himself, he went on to establish himself as the greatest classical juggler to have performed in vaudeville and music hall.

Most of Cinquevalli's juggling and balancing feats were of his own invention, and included the manipulation of billiard balls and cues, hats, umbrellas, steel balls, suitcases and chairs. One of his most famous routines, in which he juggled and rolled billiard balls over his green felt jacket, catching the balls in various pockets about his body, led to him being hailed the "Human Billiard-Table." Another of his signature performances involved the catching of a cannon ball. In this exceedingly dangerous feat he would catch the ball (reportedly weighting some 50 pounds) on his spine after it had been dropped from a height of between six to eight feet.³

Cinquevalli undertook his first Australian tour in 1899 for [Harry Rickards](#). Following his debut performance in Melbourne at the [Bijou Theatre](#) on 29

April he travelled to Sydney, playing the [Tivoli](#) from 24 June to 24 August. He returned to Melbourne for a brief season before making his farewell Australian performances back in Sydney at the Palace Theatre (30 Sept. - 27 Oct.).



Source: www.palace of variety.co.uk

PALACE GARDENS.
Sole Lessee Mr. Harry Rickards.
Sub-Lessee Mr. Leonard Davis.

TO-NIGHT. TO-NIGHT.

Mr. HARRY RICKARDS'
TIVOLI VAUDEVILLE COMPANY.

The Greatest Attraction ever introduced to
Western Australia, and the Reappearance
after an absence of Six Years of
THE KING of JUGGLERS
PAUL CINQUEVALLI.
PAUL CINQUEVALLI.
PAUL CINQUEVALLI.

CINQUEVALLI. The greatest exponent of
CINQUEVALLI. modern juggling the stage
CINQUEVALLI. has ever seen. His equal
CINQUEVALLI. can never be seen again if
CINQUEVALLI. you LIVE for 100 YEARS.
CINQUEVALLI. The most startling and
CINQUEVALLI. attractive act on the
CINQUEVALLI. vaudeville stage, and one
CINQUEVALLI. of the greatest successes
CINQUEVALLI. ever introduced to the
CINQUEVALLI. Commonwealth. Vide
CINQUEVALLI. European papers :- "A
CINQUEVALLI. performance standing out
CINQUEVALLI. by itself, simply marvel-
CINQUEVALLI. lous." "The most amaz-
CINQUEVALLI. ing juggler the world has
CINQUEVALLI. ever seen," etc., etc.
CINQUEVALLI. SEE and be CONVINCED

In late 1901 Cinquevalli undertook a world tour that concluded with a visit to the Australasian region. He sailed from the US on 10 April 1902 arriving in New Zealand early the following month where he opened his account in that country at Wellington on 7 May. Cinquevalli's Australian tour, once again under the management of Harry Rickards, began in Hobart on 11 July. Prior to returning to England in March 1903 he toured the Tivoli circuit through New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, playing both metropolitan and major regional centres. Among these were: Sydney (21 July - 19 Sept.), Newcastle (27 Sept.-), Melbourne (9 Oct.-), Geelong (15 Dec.), Ballarat (16-17 Dec.), Adelaide (20 Dec. - 10 Jan.), Port Elliott (8-10 Jan.), Broken Hill (13 Jan.), Perth (26 Jan.-), Northam (16 Feb.), Boulder (17-18 Feb.), Kalgoorlie (19 Feb.-) and Fremantle (27 Feb.).

From around October 1907 word began to surface in the Australian press that Harry Rickards had arranged for Cinquevalli to undertake another tour of Australia in 1909. This long lead-up time was not unusual for the star juggler, however. Indeed, it was reported in the lead-up to the Australian tour that his engagements worldwide had at that time been scheduled as far ahead as 1916. Cinquevalli made his return Australian debut at Rickards' Palace Theatre on 9 January, and after the season concluded travelled directly to Sydney, opening at the Tivoli on 13 February. Such was his popularity that Rickards induced him to remain in Sydney a fortnight longer than originally contracted.

West Australian (Perth) 9 Jan. 1909, 1.

¹ Cinquevalli's birth name is disputed. Various sources indicate the following possibilities: Emile Otto Lehmann-Braun, Paul Lehmann-Braun and Paul Kestner.

² Now Leszno, in Poland's Wielkopolski province.

³ 22.7 kilograms; 1.83 to 2.4 metres.

Prior to his departure for a brief tour of New Zealand (beginning April), Cinquevalli married Englishwoman Dora Knowles (his first wife having died a little over a year previous). Following his return to Australia in early June he undertook a brief farewell season in Sydney before making his way to Melbourne where he opened at the [Opera House](#) on 19 June. After a season in Adelaide he left the country and returned to England.

Cinquevalli undertook his final tour of Australia in 1914. Once again contracted for the Tivoli circuit, this time his arrangements were overseen by [Hugh D. McIntosh](#), the co-owner and general manager of [Harry Rickards Tivoli Theatres Ltd](#). Interestingly the 44 year-old juggler announced in the lead-up to his arrival that not only did he intend retiring from the stage at the conclusion of the engagement but that he had chosen Australia as the place to settle.⁴ He opened his final Australian tour at the Melbourne [Tivoli](#) on 8 August, and according to newspaper reports continued to cement his reputation as one of the greatest, if not the greatest juggler to ever perform in the country. The *Argus* theatre critic wrote, for example:

Despite the lure of exciting war news the Tivoli Theatre was crowded on Saturday night. One of the new turns was the re-appearance Paul Cinquevalli. It is some years since this master juggler was in Australia but he does not appear to have altered his appearance. His tricks, however, are not quite the same. There are more of them and they have been improved, if improvement was ever possible. He does the most extraordinary balancing feats, apparently with the greatest of ease and he juggles with all the things which it would appear were impossible to handle. He turns himself into a billiard table, attaching pockets to his shoulders, hips, and arms, and he catches billiard balls in the pockets after the most amazing evolutions... Cinquevalli was always good. He is now better than ever.⁵

Cinquevalli made his Sydney return on 22 August, continuing through until the end of September, after which time he travelled to Adelaide, opening at the Tivoli on 3 October. His final season was conducted at the Melbourne Tivoli between 17 October and 16 November. At the conclusion of his final performance he reportedly bid farewell to the audience and kissed the cannon ball that had travelled with him for many years.

Historical Note: Numerous secondary sources, including the Albert and Victoria Museum,⁶ the *HAT Archive*,⁷ *Stage Whispers* and Anthony Slide (*Encyclopedia of Vaudeville*, 1994) claim that Cinquevalli was branded a German following the outbreak of WWI and that that this "forced" him into retirement in 1915. However, not one of these websites or publications provides any primary source evidence to support this assertion. Indeed, the claim appears to be a matter of mass replication from an unidentified secondary source (or sources) that erroneously assumed his retirement was a result of the war. Research into Cinquevalli's presence in Australian newspapers published between 1914 and 1918 shows no evidence of the juggler having been ostracised in this country. Given his international star status it is surprising that there is also no mention of it having occurred elsewhere (in Britain, for example). And indeed following his death in 1918 Cinquevalli was accorded much positive coverage and reflection. Furthermore, the claims that Cinquevalli was forced to retire in 1915 fail to take into consideration the fact that he had announced his impending retirement prior to arriving in Australia in August 1914, and therefore before the outbreak of war.

Further Reference:

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- "Thrilling Adventures in Russia." *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* (NSW) 18 June 1909, 45.

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⁴ "Master Magician: Arrival of Cinquevalli." *Daily News* (Perth) 28 July 1914, 7.

⁵ "Tivoli Theatre." *Argus* (Melbourne) 10 Aug. 1914, 4.

⁶ "Paul Cinquevalli." *Victoria and Albert Museum* (n. yr.) [sighted 27/07/2014]

⁷ Richards, Leann. "Cinquevalli." *HAT Archive* (n. yr.). [sighted 27/07/2014]. See also Richards' *Stage Whispers* article "What Broke the Heart of the World's Greatest Juggler" (n. yr.).