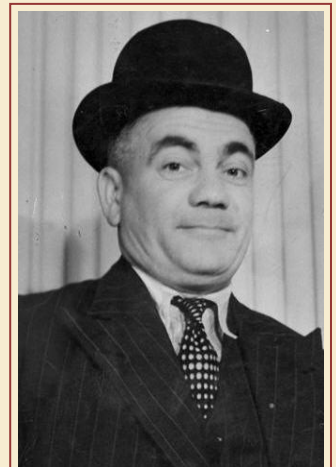


SYD BECK

(1898-1948). Syd Beck's theatrical career began after he was discovered by Hugh Huxham. Between the mid-20s and the mid-1940s he cemented his position as one of Australia's most popular comedians, working in revue, pantomime and follies. He also worked Nat "Stiffy" Phillips's stage partner and appeared frequently on radio.

Born in the Sydney beach-side suburb of Manly in 1898, Syd Beck was a promising swimmer in his youth. He joined [Huxham's Serenaders](#) (ca. 1923/24) after being discovered while doing a comedy routine at a swim-meet in his home suburb. Beck's next known engagement was in Brisbane with Colin Crane's Topics of 1925, followed in 1926 by the Vogues Costume Comedy Company, and later with the Lee White and Clay Smith Co. He then played a season in Perth with Lee White before returning to Brisbane to appear at the [Tivoli](#). During the remainder of the decade Beck found work with the [Tivoli Celebrity Vaudeville](#) circuit and [Fullers' Theatres](#), notably with Robert Robert's Bon Bons Revue Company and [Connors and Paul's League of Notions](#). He also made frequent appearances at cinemas, and maintained a constant presence around the country through numerous radio broadcasts.



Source: National Library of Australia.

In January 1931 Beck joined [Nat Phillips' Whirligigs](#). Initially featuring [Stiffy \(Phillips\)](#), [Joe \(Joe Lawman\)](#) and Syd, the troupe became known as the Phillips and Beck Revue Company in mid-1931. During the 1930s and 1940s Beck cemented his position as one of the region's most popular comedians, working consistently in revues, follies, pantomimes and radio. Among the firm's he worked for were the [Tivoli circuit](#), [Ernest C. Rolls](#), [Graham Mitchell's Jesters](#) (and later the [Serenaders](#)), [Stanley McKay's Gaieties](#), [Madge Cloherty's Celebrities](#) (Brisbane) and [Deane's Dandies](#) among other companies. He also secured engagements with [Charles "Ike" Delavale](#) and [George Sorlie](#) (ca. 1942).

Beck died of natural causes (believed to have been alcohol-related) on rail tracks near the South Brisbane railway station on 11 March 1948.

MATINEE, TO-DAY, 2.30
Children 6d to all parts.
THEATRE ROYAL
TO-NIGHT AT EIGHT.
Madge Cloherty presents the
CELEBRITIES
with Brisbane's Favourite Comedian,
SYD. BECK
Instantaneous Success of
ELTON BLACK
Famous Scottish Humourist, at
and all your favourite Artists at
MADGE CLOHERTY PRICES:
Week days 1/ and 1/6. Satys. and Holdys.
1/ and 2/. Reserves 6d extra.
Box plan at Paling's until 12 noon, then
at Theatre. 50002.
GIFT NIGHT NEXT MONDAY
First prize lacquered kitchen table.
Numerous consolation prizes, including
Colanders, saucepans, and other kitchen
utensils.
Production by George Greig.

Courier Mail (Brisbane) 11 Feb. 1939, 14.

SEE ALSO

- [Nat Phillips' Whirligigs](#)
- [Stiffy, Joe & Syd](#)



Courier Mail (Brisbane)
12 Mar. 1948, 3

TO-NIGHT AT EIGHT TO-NIGHT AT EIGHT
COMPLETE CHANGE OF PROGRAMME
BY MADGE A. CLOHERTY'S
CELEBRITIES
with Brisbane's Most Popular Comedian—
SYD BECK
THE FOUR K's, SCOTTY and DOLLY.
First Appearance of the Act Extraordinary—
CUSKO'S ANIMAL CIRCUS
A Treat For Children. An education for Adults.
WAYERLEY WALLACE, BERNARD McCAFFREY
THE ORLANDOS
Stella Lamond, Fonda Perry, Mickey Carolan.
MAKE THE THEATRE ROYAL A WEEKLY HABIT,
BOOK NOW FOR THE MIDNIGHT SHOW.
EXHIBITION TUESDAY. RESERVES, 2/6. BOX PLAN AT
THEATRE. REGULAR NIGHT PLAN AT PALING'S.
PRODUCTION BY LEN RICH

Courier Mail (Brisbane) 12 Aug. 1938, 10.

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. Beck married dancer/choreographer Mary Massey (ca. 1925).

FURTHER REFERENCE

"Syd Beck Found Dead." *Courier Mail* (Brisbane) 12 Mar. 1948, 3.

SYD. BECK.

SWAM TO THEATRICAL PROMINENCE.

Australia has produced many comedians of merit, the bright lights of Broadway and Piccadilly bearing testimony to their popularity overseas as well as at home, but none has shown greater promise than Syd. Beck, the young humorist who has been engaged by J.L.O. Melbourne for a comedy season.

Still in his early twenties, Beck is already counted as the foremost and funniest of the Australian comedians performing to-day, for he is that rare occurrence, a born humorist. He has not been abroad to see the methods of other comedians, nor has he inherited any theatrical instinct from any ancestors. Syd. Beck's father thought that teaching his son to swim might cure him of a slight tendency to attend any theatres where any comedians were performing, and although the sport kept Syd out of the theatres it directly resulted in his presence on the stage to-day.

Syd. Beck proved to be such a good swimmer that his name was considered for inclusion in the Australian team for the back stroke championships, was also a brilliant sprinter and fancy diver and good keeper of his place in any distance relay races. His versatility was his downfall, for he was so good in each department that he did not know what to specialise in. Some of his record times still stand. At all swimming carnivals Beck was in great demand as a clown, an occupation which a natural bent for comedy manifested at an early age. No championships were complete without Beck's funny dives, burlesque strokes and general comedy efforts.

At Manly where most of his swimming feats were performed, he attracted the notice of the promoter of a beach perriot show. Beck was engaged as comedian, and within two weeks was the featured attraction. Then followed engagements for important touring companies, and Beck played a six months' season in Brisbane, his presence being the main public attraction.

Sydney heard many rumors about the rising young comedian so envied by the already funny men, and when Miss Lee White and Clay Smith presented their revue he was engaged as principal comedian. In vaudeville he has been equally successful, his wonderful sense of mimicry and burlesque making him an instant favorite. Soon he is to have an opportunity in first-class musical comedy, and good judges predict sensational success for him.

He is no stranger to broadcasting, having appeared for lengthy seasons with 2F.C. and 4Q.G. before his engagement with J.L.O. Melbourne.

Cairns Post (Qld) 19 Apr. 1927, 2.