

# 1908

1908 saw the arrival in Australia of composer/music director Victor Champion. Contracted by Clarke, Meynell and Gunn to over see the musical direction of his 1907 London pantomime *Cinderella* for a season in Melbourne, Champion remained with the company until it merged with J.C. Williamson's in 1911. He was subsequently associated with "the Firm" until his death. The pantomime's co-writer, Stanley Rogers was also linked to Australia, with several of his later works also being staged in the country. [NB: *Cinderella* is not included in the AVTA as there is no evidence that it was localised or updated for Australian audiences]

J.C. Williamson also staged J. Hickory Wood's hit London pantomime *Jack and Jill* (1907) in Melbourne at Christmas. Interestingly, the only pantomime produced in Sydney at Christmas was Edwin Geach's juvenile production of *Robinson Crusoe* (see 1907 entry for details).

A three act grand spectacular pantomime entitled *Fairy Dell; Or, The Enchanted Dell* was produced at the Royal Princess's Theatre, Bendigo (Victoria) beginning 4 December by 200 past and present students of St Killan's Girls' School. The origins of the libretto and music are currently unknown.

1908 revivals included *Blue Bell in Fairyland* (1907): Tom Pollard's Opera Company premiered *Blue Bell* in New Zealand in 1907. It was given a revival in Adelaide at Christmas 1908. • *Robinson Crusoe* (1907): First staged as an all-juvenile pantomime at William Anderson's Wonderland City (Sydney) over the 1907 Christmas season, *Robinson Crusoe* then transferred to the Oxford Theatre, Sydney in January 1908 with the same cast. Edwin Geach revived it at Sydney's Palace Theatre over the 1908/09 Christmas/New Year period with a combined juvenile and adult cast. Thereafter followed a New South Wales and Queensland tour.

## SINBAD THE SAILOR; OR, THE ISLAND OF DREAMS: [pantomime] Lib. H. Braine; Mus. F.W.

Tidd

Written by Bega local Harold Braine and composed by F.W. Tidd, late of Nowra ("Bega," 12), *Sinbad the Sailor* was produced especially to coincide with the town's Race Week. The pantomime was said to have cost between £25-30 to stage, with this amount all but covered after the first night's performance. All profits went to the Bega Public Band.

Some seventeen songs were written for the production. A number of specialty turns from the local actors were also incorporated into the narrative. A preview of the pantomime published in the *Bega Budget* records:

The first act will be a pretty Coastal Scene on the Island of Dreams and the descent of the Ark (length 6ft. width 4ft) with Sinbad the Sailor in its claws during a storm scene and chorus of spooks, is one of the main features of the act. Act II will be a pretty floral woodland scene. The dancing of the mermaids in their quaint costumes in *Sinbad the Sailor* should be one of the prettiest sights ever seen on a Bega stage ("Local," 2).

**1908:** School of Arts, Bega; 1-3 Jan.  
- **Dir.** H. Braine; **M Dir.** F.W. Tidd; **Chor.** Ruby Davies.  
- **Cast** incl. Will Cruikshank (dame).

"Bega." *Shoalhaven Telegraph* (NSW) 15 Jan. 1908, 12. Web.

"Local and General." *Bega Budget* (NSW) 18 Dec. 1907, 2. Web.

**RACE NIGHTS!**  
**RACE NIGHTS!**  
**JANUARY 1 and 2,**  
**And ON JANUARY 3RD.**  
— IN AID OF —  
**THE BEGA PUBLIC BAND,**  
**THE PANTOMIME**  
**Sinbad, the Sailor,**  
— OR —  
**The Island of Dreams.**  
Written in Bega! Composed in Bega!  
**17 ORIGINAL SONGS!**  
**WEIRD EFFECTS! LOCAL HITS!**  
Funny Situations! Gorgeous Dresses!  
Grotesque Dialogue!  
Entirely Original Scenery!  
**H. BRAINE, Stage Manager.**  
**F. W. TIDD, Musical Director.**

*Southern Star* (Bega, NSW) 28 Dec. 1907, 3.

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

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