

Theatre Links – Ireland and Australia: The Early Years

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Abstract: *The Irish have made a significant contribution to Theatre in Australia since the beginnings of European settlement in 1788. The first play known to have been staged in the new colony was Farquar’s *The Recruiting Officer*. The most prolific of the convict playwrights was the Dublin medical student Edward Geoghegan. The first free settler to write a play and have it performed was the Irishman, Evan Henry Thomas. Particularly following the gold rushes in Victoria and New South Wales, the Irish figured as playwrights, actors, actor-managers, theatre managers, and impresarios. Gustavus Vaughan Brooke toured, as did Lola Montez, as did Dionysius Lardner Boucicault. In the event Boucicault’s son, “Dot”, stayed to manage theatres in Melbourne and Sydney and to be the first to offer Oscar Wilde’s plays to Australian audiences. While not all the theatre links between Ireland and Australia throughout the nineteenth century were as symmetrical as a Wilde play, and while not all the characters won through to happy endings, there can be little doubt that the “plot” of Australia’s theatrical history would have been entirely different without the significant contribution made by the Irish.*

That the Irish have made a significant contribution to Theatre in Australia from the beginnings of its European settlement should come as no surprise. Statistics were in favour of it. Australia has more people of Irish descent per head of population than any country outside Ireland. Tradition too has favoured it. The first play believed to have been staged in the new colony was a “fit up” of George Farquar’s *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), performed on 4 June 1789 by a troupe of convicts before Captain Arthur Phillip and his fellow officers in a wooden hut near the newly constructed Government House as part of the 2nd anniversary of official colonial celebrations of the birthday of His Majesty, King George III.¹ At that time some 40% of the colony’s population were Irish, the mix of social classes ranging from Irish-speaking peasants transported for crimes against property² to the senior law officer, Judge-Advocate Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins, whose mother was from Park in King’s County.³

The manifest of the Second Fleet of 1790 tells a similar story; while the first shipment of convicts direct from Ireland – 133 males and 22 females and 4 children – occurred when the *Queen* arrived from Cork on 26 September 1791; the youngest convict on board being David Fay of Dublin aged 11 years, the oldest, Patrick Fitzgerald at sixty-four.⁴ As Patrick O’Farrell has pointed out: “How far the clank of convict origins echoed into the future of Irish Australia is suggested by the life-span of Michael Lamb, eighteen when arriving on the *Queen*, dying aged eighty-six, in 1860”.⁵ How long they continued to echo in the popular imagination, Australian as much as British and American, is suggested by the character of Magwitch, the transported convict who makes his fortune in New South Wales, in Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1860/61), and Peter Carey’s prize-winning reinterpretation, *Jack Maggs* (1997), as well as the international success of books like Robert Hughes’ *The Fatal Shore* (1987).⁶

But what remains to be appreciated, the more so since the recent publication of Robert Jordan’s magnificently researched *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia 1788-1840*, is the vital role played by the Theatre in the cultural life of the new country, and the extent to which the Irish contributed to that role. As Watkin Tench recorded in his diary of the 1789 convict performance of *The Recruiting Officer*:

The exhilarating effect of a splendid theatre is well known: and I am not ashamed to confess, that the proper distribution of three or four yards of stained paper, and a dozen farthing candles stuck around the mud walls of a convict built hut, failed not to diffuse general complacency on the countenances of sixty persons, of various descriptions, who were assembled to applaud the representation. Some of the actors acquitted themselves with great spirit, and received the praises of the audience: a prologue and an epilogue, written by one of the performers, were also spoken on the occasion; which, although not worth inserting here, contained some tolerable allusions to the situation of the parties and the novelty of a stage presentation in New South Wales.⁷

Continuous theatre, in the sense of dedicated premises licensed for the performance of plays, dates from within five to fifty years of the founding of each of the colonies – 1832 in Sydney, founded in 1788; 1834 in Hobart, founded in 1804; 1840 in Adelaide, founded in 1836; 1842 in Melbourne, founded in 1835; 1864 in Brisbane founded in 1824/1839; and 1879 in Perth, founded in 1829. Again, the Irish were a presence from the beginning. For example Sydney’s first theatre building, The Theatre Royal, opened on 5 October 1833 with the double bill: *The Miller and his Men* and *The Irishman in London*⁸, and closed the year with a performance of Sheridan’s *The Rivals* (14 November 1833). And one of the earliest free settlers to write for the Theatre was the Irishman, Evan Henry Thomas of Launceston. His *Bandit of the Rhine* (1836) is arguably the first play written and performed in Australia, though, unfortunately, it seems, no copy has survived.⁹

By comparison, a substantial body of work has survived of one of the most prolific of the convict playwrights. This was the Dublin medical student Edward Geoghegan, who was sentenced in Dublin on 6 June 1839 to seven years transportation to the penal colony of New South Wales for “obtaining goods under false pretences”.¹⁰ Shortly after he arrived in Sydney Cove on 25 January 1840 on the *Middlesex*, he seems to have met the Irish actor Francis Nesbitt, “the leading tragedian at the Victoria Theatre and generally regarded as one of the better actors of Sydney”.¹¹ A poetical review of Sydney actors published in *The New South Wales Magazine* in 1843 proclaimed Nesbitt “the hero, the star of our stage”.¹² Whether or not Geoghegan’s meeting with his fellow countryman inspired him to begin writing for the theatre or whether he had long harboured a desire to be a playwright remains unknown, but what is certain is that, like one of the characters in his best known play, “the sun of Australia seem[ed] to possess wonderful powers in fertilising genius”.¹³ Within six years of his forced arrival, Geoghegan was seeking permission from the Colonial Secretary, E. Deas Thompson, to have his seventh play licensed for performance, convicts at that time being expressly prohibited from either performing in the Theatre or writing for it without due regard to the prevailing legislation.¹⁴ The letter, dated 16 September 1846 is valuable on two counts, for it not only gives a list of Geoghegan’s works but it also gives some indication of the repertoire of early Colonial Australian Theatre. The plays listed are: *The Hibernian Father* (1844), Original 5 Act Tragedy; *The Currency Lass* (1844), Original 2 Act Opera; *The Last Days of Pompeii* (after Bulwer Lytton, 1844), Adapted 3 Act Drama; *A Christmas Carol* (after Dickens, 1844), Adapted 5 Act Drama; *The Royal Masquer* (1845), Original 2 Act Drama; *Captain Kyd* (1845), Adapted 3 Act Drama; *Lafitte the Pirate* (1845), Adapted 3 Act Drama. Both the attributions and the generic classifications are Geoghegan’s. Since the letter of 16 September 1846 was seeking permission for the staging of *The Jew of Dresden*, and since subsequent scholarship has also added *Ravenswood*, an adaptation of Walter Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor*, to the list, Geoghegan appears to have written at least nine plays for the Sydney and Melbourne Theatres during his seven year sentence.

By this time, splendid theatre, in the sense of magnificent buildings, world-renowned actors, entrepreneurial management and productions ranging from Shakespeare to vaudeville and from Opera to animal acts was being financed from the gold rushes, firstly from Edward Hargraves’ discoveries in the Bathurst area of New South Wales in January 1851 and then from Thomas Hiscock’s discoveries at Warrandyte in Victoria five months later combined with the young Irish prospector, James Esmond’s discovery at Clunes also in Victoria at about the same time.¹⁵

The consequences for the Theatre were fourfold. Firstly, the population of the entire continent quintupled within twenty years (220,9681 in 1841 to 1,168,1491 in 1861). Secondly, the cessation of transportation to the eastern colonies in 1840 (when it ended to New South Wales), 1853 (when it ended to Tasmania)¹⁶ and 1868 (when it ended to Western Australia) meant that the rapid growth in population was largely due to the influx of free settlers in search of self-improvement and a better life. Thirdly, with

the opening up of Ballarat and Bendigo, reputedly the richest goldfields in the world, enormous wealth flooded into the cities, specifically into Melbourne and to a lesser extent into Sydney. Fourthly, this wealth proved irresistible to actors and actresses and to Theatrical entrepreneurs, particularly those with established networks in, or a willingness to travel to and from, England and America.

For example, the so-called “father” of the Australian theatre, George Selth Coppin,¹⁷ was a young English actor playing comic roles in Dublin when, in 1843, he decided to try his luck in Australia. After highly successful seasons at the “Royal Victoria Theatre” in Sydney and in Hobart, followed by financial ruin in Adelaide, Coppin set up on his own in Geelong, near the Bendigo and Ballarat goldfields, where he met with considerable success.¹⁸ Within four years, that is by 1855, he had amassed sufficient wealth to ship from London the prefabricated cast and corrugated iron, timber and glass for an entire theatre and have it assembled in Melbourne in just thirty days. Named the “Olympic” and known affectionately as the “Iron Pot”, it was initially designed to showcase the Irish Shakespearian actor Gustavus Vaughan Brooke (1818-1866).¹⁹ Brooke, who had toured Ireland, England and America, not only performed the popular roles from *Hamlet*, *Richard III*, *Othello* and *Macbeth* with great verve and considerable financial success, but he also introduced Australian audiences to the wider Shakespearean repertoire, though he eventually found, particularly when he began to tour the country towns, that the popular taste was for melodrama and farce, such as *The Irish Lion* (1838) and *His Last Legs* (1839). Brooke gave his final Australian performance on the gold fields in Ned Kelly country at the “The Star Theatre” at Beechworth in 1860.²⁰

Sydney, Melbourne and the goldfields also figured largely in the 1855-56 Australian tour of another Irish performer, Lola Montez, in that she encouraged her audiences to express their appreciation by showering her with nuggets rather than applause – though her famous “spider dance” (much imitated three-quarters of a century later by James Joyce when inebriated) was doubtless more theatrical than splendid.²¹

But not all was burlesque, bravura and bluster on the goldfields. Anthony Trollope, who first visited Australia in 1871 and 1872, but whose commendations need to be qualified by the fact that his mildly satirical novels of the *petit bourgeois* of mid to late nineteenth century England had earned him the soubriquet as “the chronicler of small beer”, was nevertheless sufficiently impressed by his visit to the goldfield’s town of Gulgong, New South Wales, to record in his journal: “and there was a theatre, at which I saw *The Colleen Bawn* acted with a great deal of spirit, and a considerable amount of histrionic talent.”²² In fact, Boucicault’s most popular plays were enormously successful in Australia. Throughout the 1860s and 70s, when two and three night runs were customary, *The Flying Scud; or, A Four-Legged Fortune* ran for 27 performances (1867); *After Dark. A Tale of London Life* for 29 (1869), and *The Shaughraun* for 37 (1875). Thus, it is no exaggeration to claim that in the mid to late nineteenth century in Australia, the Irish were a force in the provincial as well as the metropolitan theatres – whether it was Boucicault, bawdy, burletta, burlesque, Ballad Opera, or the Bard.

Nor was George Selth Coppin a lone figure when it came to management. In Melbourne he had to contend with rival projects such as the “Theatre Royal”, which also opened in 1855 and which boasted an auditorium and stage to rival the largest London theatre. And he also had to compete with fellow impresarios such as William Saurin Lyster, Dublin born and of a well-to-do family – he took his middle name from a relative who had been Attorney General for Ireland – who made a reputation and a fortune for himself touring opera groups, drama companies and variety acts throughout the 1860s and into the 1870s. It was Lyster, as one theatre historian has remarked, who “brought to Australia the first full-time opera group with a consistently high standard of performance”.²³

The closing decades of the nineteenth century – despite the droughts, strikes, and the bank failures of the 1890s – was a golden age for the Australian Theatre. Within a quarter of a century Sydney acquired more than half a dozen major theatres – The Royal (1875), The Criterion (1886), Her Majesty’s (1887), The Garrick (1890), The Lyceum (1892), The Tivoli (1893; burnt down in 1899; rebuilt in 1900), and The Palace (1896). During the same period Melbourne saw the opening of The Royal (1872), The Prince of Wales Opera House (1872), the Bijou (1880), The Alexandra (1886) The Princess’s (1886) and the refurbishment of Her Majesty’s (1900).

More theatres, meant more business, meant more management. In the event, acts and assistants recruited by Coppin and Lyster provided the impresarios who went on to form the theatrical agencies that were to dominate Theatre in Australia well into the 1950s. Chief of these was an American actor James Cassius Williamson (1845-1913) and his actor wife Maggie Moore, both engaged by Coppin in 1874. Against all advice Williamson opened his Australian tour in Melbourne with a play entitled *Struck Oil* on the first of August of that year and was immediately rewarded with a run of 43 consecutive nights. The play was equally successful in Sydney, where it ran for 50 nights, and even more successful when Williamson and his wife continued to tour it in India, England, Scotland, Ireland and America. But Australia must have held a special appeal, for in 1879 the Williamsons returned to Melbourne with the rights to HMS *Pinafore*. By 1880 they had decided to go into Theatre management and by 1882 they had formed a partnership with Arthur Garner (1851-?) and William Saurin Lyster’s nephew, George Musgrove (1854-1916). Known around Melbourne as “The Triumvirate”, and subsequently as “The Firm”, this partnership provided the foundation for J.C. Williamson Enterprises, Australia’s main theatrical agency for the next half century.

Again, there was a significant Irish presence. In 1886 George Tallis, a 17 year old cadet reporter with the *Kilkenny Moderator*, who was in Melbourne to visit a sick brother, knocked on Williamson’s door and asked him for a job. Impressed by the young Irishman’s confidence and energy, Williamson tried him in a number of menial jobs – messenger, clerk, usher, and general assistant – before appointing him as his private secretary. Tallis’s rise through the Company was as assured as it was steady. From 1902

he was regularly being sent around the world to liaise with the Company's offices in New York and London and to study theatre management and theatre buildings and to recruit acts and actors. Not surprisingly, when Williamson died of kidney failure in Paris in 1913, it was Tallis who became Chairman of Directors, a position he held for the next eighteen years.

By then the Australian stage had seen an impressive cast of actors – the Shakespearians Charles & Ellen Kean who toured throughout 1863-64; Barry Sullivan, a great favourite with Irish audiences, who came to Melbourne in 1862 and met with such success that he took out a four-year lease on the Theatre Royal; Walter Montgomery, whose interpretation of *Hamlet* during his 1867-9 tour provoked heated debate and who was the first to introduce Australian audiences to *Antony and Cleopatra* (1867-69); Adelaide Ristori renowned as the greatest tragedienne of the day, whose eighty-five recitals in 1875 entirely in Italian of the lives of Mary Stuart, Marie Antoinette, Medea, Phedre, Judith and Lucrezia Borgia in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and the gold-fields netted her £13,336; George Rignold who first brought his internationally famous *Henry V* to Sydney in 1876; and the English Shakespearean actor William Creswick who, though coming towards the end of an illustrious career, nevertheless played to packed houses in Sydney in 1877.

Undoubtedly one of the most infamous was Dionysius Lardner Boucicault, the Irish playwright, actor and theatre manager who reaped enormous wealth from the American theatre – *The Shaughraun* (1876) alone is said to have made him well over half a million dollars – though little of it remained in 1885 when he suddenly left his wife Agnes Robertson in New York and bigamously eloped to Australia with Louise Thorndyke, an actress not much older than the eldest of his five children.²⁴ Then in 1889 there was the English actor Janet Achurch, who produced and acted in *A Doll's House* at the Princess's Theatre in Melbourne, the first of Ibsen's plays to be staged in Australia. Finally, in 1891 Sarah Bernhardt opened her Australian season in Melbourne with *La Dame aux Camélias* and followed it with performances of *La Tosca*, *Théodora*, *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, *Frou Frou*, *Fédora*, *Pauline Blanchard* (world premiere), *Jeanne d'Arc*, and *Cléopâtre*.

Also important in their own way, in terms of Irish-Australian theatre links, are the tours that did not take place. Within the nineteenth century, Oscar Wilde's is the most notable. Australia was a temptation to which he never yielded. Plans for a visit were first drawn up by D'Oyly Carte, who had brought him to America in January 1882 as the inspiration for Bunthorne to lecture throughout the country on the aesthetic movement. By then *Patience* had not only enjoyed considerable success in America but had also been staged in Australia, the first performance having taken place at the Theatre Royal in Sydney on 26 November 1881.²⁵ Australia continued to beckon throughout the year Wilde spent touring America and Canada. In April 1882, barely three months into his travels, he wrote from St Joseph Missouri to his friend Norman Forbes-Robertson: "I still journey and lecture: it is a desperately exciting life. They want me now to go to

Australia but I think I will refuse. I am not sure yet".²⁶ From Boston in early October he informed Colonel Moore, D'Oyly Carte's agent who was managing his tour, that it might be possible for him to go in November, though if Mary Anderson took his play *The Duchess of Padua*, which he hoped to have staged in America, he would have to delay. "I wish you would tell Hayman", J.C. Williamson's New York agent, he advised Colonel Morse, "that I accept his offer for next October, 1883. That would be equally good and more convenient".²⁷ Plans for the visit however remained uncertain. Writing from New York a short time later he enquired of Henry Edwards, another of D'Oyly Carte's agents: "I am anxious to ask you about Australia, and my trip there, and under whose management I should go".²⁸ The "trip", it seems, was to affect a transformation of continental proportions. *The New York Tribune* of 31 October 1882 reported Wilde replying to an enquiry from Lilly Langtry: "Well, do you know, when I look at the map and see what an awfully ugly-looking country Australia is, I feel as if I want to go there to see if it cannot be changed into a more beautiful form."²⁹ In the event Wilde returned to London and then went on to Paris – while Australia remained as it was.

Yet the country continued to engage his imagination. His first theatrical success, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, which opened at the St James's Theatre in 1892 has The Duchess of Berwick remarking what "a curious shape it is! Just like a large packing case. However, it is a very young country, isn't it".³⁰ Her next remark, that it must be a "pretty country with all those dear little kangaroos flying about", which she immediately retracts once she discovers her daughter wants to marry Hopper and live in Australia,³¹ probably had its origins in a visit to Australia that was actually made. While Sarah Bernhardt was playing *La Dame aux Camélias* at the Princess Theatre in Melbourne in May 1891, the *Australian Theatre Story* reported that "Madame's baby kangaroo was proving to be a "little bundle of trouble" having been found hopping along a Melbourne Street with a card tied around its neck – I belong to Sarah Bernhardt".³² It is highly likely that Wilde heard about the "little bundle of trouble" when Bernhardt returned to Paris for the winter of 1891, because he was there too, working on *Lady Windermere's Fan* and on *Salomé*, a title role he hoped would prove seductive to Bernhardt.

That the Duchess of Berwick identifies Australia with the kangaroo in a play performed in 1892 is itself noteworthy. In 80s and 90s London the wombat was the exotic pet of the day – Dante Gabriel Rossetti's was probably the most famous, not only accorded a portrait but also regularly invited to trundle around the well-shod feet of guests. Yet, when the colonies formed themselves into a Federation as The Commonwealth of Australia in 1901 and were granted a coat of arms in 1908, it was the kangaroo, the emu and wattle that were chosen and not the wombat. Unwittingly or not, the Duchess of Berwick with her off-hand remark about "dear little kangaroos flying about" in fact proved herself more knowledgeable of Australian culture and less the slave of London fashion than even she would have cared to admit.

And there were other 'nineties connections. Sometime in 1894 the English actor Mrs Bernard Beere wrote to Wilde apparently seeking permission to include one of his

plays in a projected tour of Australia beginning at the Bijou Theatre in Melbourne, at that time managed by Dot Boucicault, the nickname of Dionysius George Boucicault (1859-1929), son of the famous actor and playwright. By then Wilde, Mrs Bernard Beere and Dot Boucicault had known one another for some thirteen years, “My dear Bernie”, as Wilde called her having agreed to play the title role in his first play, *Vera: or the Nihilists*, which was to be staged at the Adelphi in London towards the end of 1881 but which was summarily cancelled because it was considered offensively topical following the recent assassinations of Czar Alexander II and President Garfield. Responding to Mrs Beere’s 1894 enquiry for performance rights Wilde replied: “Of course: *we* must fly to Australia:” – his insouciance most likely a tilt at Boucicault senior’s elopement a decade earlier:

I could not let you go alone. I have written to Cartwright – a bald genius who is dear Dot’s agent – to ask him if it can be arranged. They have also *Mrs Tanqueray*, in which I long to see you.

I have also asked Cartwright if Dot is coming over – or I suppose I should say coming *up* from Australia. I believe that absurdly shaped country lies right underneath the floor of one’s coal-cellar.³³

And though Mrs Bernard Beere did not travel to Australia for at least another year, Wilde’s plays certainly did. Dot Boucicault, who ran the Bijou Theatre in Melbourne from 1886-1896 and also the Criterion in Sydney, staged performances of *Lady Windermere’s Fan*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*³⁴ as well as Pinero’s *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*. Over time *The Importance of Being Earnest* was to prove enormously popular – it is said to be one of the most frequently performed plays in Australia – despite its playful denigration of the antipodes. You will recall that when Cecily informs Algernon that Uncle Jack has gone to buy him an “outfit” because he wants him to emigrate, Algernon replies that if he has to choose “between this world, the next world, and Australia”, he will choose “this world” because “The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world are not particularly encouraging.”³⁵

People did however return from “Down-Under”. The English actor Irene Vanburgh (1872-1949), who toured Melbourne and Sydney in the early 1890s, went back to London to join Beerbohm Tree at the Haymarket and then George Alexander’s company at the St James’s Theatre where she played the role of the Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax in the premiere of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in February 1895. Finally, as if to give her own life the symmetry of the plot of the well-made play, she married Dot Boucicault in 1901.

While not all the theatre links between Ireland and Australia throughout the nineteenth century were as symmetrical, and while not all the characters won through to happy endings, there can be little doubt that the “plot” of Australia’s theatrical history would have been entirely different without the significant contribution made by the Irish.

Notes

- 1 Robert Jordan, *The Convict Theatres of Early Australia 1788-1840*. Sydney: Currency House, 2002, 29: "Since the prologue specially written for that production spoke of the "novelty" of the occasion, there can be little doubt that it actually was Australia's first full-scale theatrical event". For a romanticised fictional account see Thomas Keneally's *The Playmaker*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987. See also Timberlake Wertenbaker, *Our Country's Good: Based on The Playmaker, a novel by Thomas Keneally*. London: Methuen in Association with The Royal Court Theatre, 1988.
- 2 Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*. 1986. Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1993. 24: "Approximately four-fifths can be described as ordinary criminals, mostly thieves". For incidence of theft for transportation to Tasmania see John Williams, *Ordered to the Island: Irish Convicts and Van Diemen's Land*. Sydney: Crossing Press, 1994. 38-59; 64-83. Compare Portia Robinson, "Thank God it can be no worse". Ed. Trevor McClaughlin. *Irish Women in Colonial Australia*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1998. 17: "women were convicted almost exclusively for some form of larceny".
- 3 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, I, 236. See John Currey, *David Collins: A Colonial Life*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000. 10.
- 4 Con Costello, *Botany Bay: The Story of the Convicts transported from Ireland to Australia, 1791-1853*. Cork: Mercier Press, 1987. 17 gives the manifest as 133 men, 22 women and 4 children. Note however *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales with Remarks on the Depositions, Customs, Manners, &. of that Country. To Which are added, Some Particulars of New Zealand; Compiled, by Permission, from the mss. of Lieutenant-Governor King. By David Collins, Esquire, Late Judge-Advocate and Secretary of the Colony*. London: Printed for T. Cadell Jun, and W. Davies, in the Strand, 1798. 179-80: 'The officers party on board the *Queen* with 126 male and 23 female and 3 children.
- 5 O'Farrell, *Irish in Australia*. 22.
- 6 See Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: A History of The Transportation of Convicts to Australia, 1787-1868*. London: Collins, 1987. 181-95 for a stereotypical albeit flamboyant "portrait" of the Irish convict.
- 7 Watkin Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years being a reprint of A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay and A Complete Account of the Settlement at Port Jackson*, with an introduction and annotations by L.F. Fitzhardinge. Sydney: library of Australian History, 1979. 152.
- 8 Ian Bevan, *The Story of the Theatre Royal*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1993. 26-7. Eric Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre 1788-1914*. Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1985. 274: *The Irishman in London* (1792).
- 9 John Alexander Ferguson, *Bibliography of Australia*. Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1986, entry 2053.
- 10 Janette Pelosi, "Colonial Drama Revealed, or Plays submitted for Approval" in *MARGIN: Life & Letters in early Australia*, July-August 2003: 1. 13.Jan.2005 at http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0PEH/is_60/ai_108114095
- 11 Quoted in Roger Covell, ed., Edward Geoghegan, *The Currency Lass or My Native Girl: A Musical Play in Two Acts*. Sydney: Currency Press; London: Eyre Methuen, 1976. xviii.
- 12 Quoted in Harold Love, ed. *The Australian Stage: A Documentary History*. Kensington: New South Wales University Press in Association with Australian Theatre Studies Centre, School of Drama, UNSW, 1984. 35-6.
- 13 Covell, ed., Geoghegan, *The Currency Lass or My Native Girl*, 31.
- 14 *Ibid.* xix.

- 15 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Year Book Australia: Articles Released Prior to 2002 at <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs%40.nsf/0/cc0c058e907e3c35ca2569de00271b1e?OpenDocument> It was Hiscock however who received the Government reward for the Victorian discovery. Note that “Discoveries” of gold were reported by convicts and in 1841 by the Revered W.B. Clarke though the news was suppressed for fear that gold-fever would create turmoil.
- 16 Williams, *Ordered to the Island*. 2-3, 5, 14 and 114: “No convicts tried in Ireland came directly to the colony before 1840. All those who did arrive came as transferees from Sydney”.
- 17 See Eric Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre 1788-1914*. Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1985. 75-6. See also Alec Bagot, *Coppin the Great*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965.
- 18 Michael and Joan Tallis, *The Silent Showman*. South Australia: Wakefield Press, 1999. 18-9.
- 19 See Richard Madelaine and John Golder, “*O Brave New World*”: *Two Centuries of Shakespeare on the Australian Stage*. Sydney: Currency Press, 2001. 56-71 *passim* and particularly 61-2 for evaluation of Brooke’s acting (*contra* Irvin). See Eric Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre 1788-1914*. Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1985, 55-7 for an assessment of Brooke’s acting on the London and Belfast stages. William J. Lawrence, *The Life of Gustavus Vaughan Brooke*, Tragedian. Belfast: W & G Baird, 1892. See also William Kelly, *Life in Victoria: or Victoria in 1853 and Victoria in 1858*. London, Chapman & Hall, 1860, II, 124-5.
- 20 Not all Irish actors were as successful. Shiel Barry (1842-1897) is a case in point. After having himself starred as ‘the Irish comedian who would put all other Irish comedians into obscurity’ in Melbourne in 1865, Barry was left with no alternative but to go to London, where by dint of hard work he eventually became a respected actor. Irvin, *Dictionary*, 42-3.
- 21 See Helen Holdredge, *The Woman in Black – The Life of the Fabulous Lola Montez*. New York: Putnam, 1955, and Horace Wyndham, *The Magnificent Montez*. New York: Hillmann-Curl, 1935. See also Kelly, *Life in Victoria*, II, 281-2.
- 22 P. D. Edwards and R.B. Joyce, eds., Anthony Trollope, *Australia*. 1873; St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1967. 295. The Australian writer, Henry Lawson, was born on 17 June 1867, on the nearby Grenfell goldfields.
- 23 Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre*, p. 167. See also Harold Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera: W.S. Lyster and his Companies 1881-1860*. Sydney: Currency Press, 1981.
- 24 Richard Fawkes, *Dion Boucicault: A Biography* (London: Quartet Books, 1979. 226-7. For Boucicault’s views of his Australian tour see Love, *The Australian Stage*, 102-6. The Templeman Library at the University of Kent at Canterbury holds the Transcript of an agreement between Dion Boucicault and J. C. Williamson of the Theatre Royal, Melbourne relating to Boucicault’s proposed tour of Australia in 1873 at pressmark: UKC/BOUC/BIO: 0648716 in The Richard Fawkes Dion Boucicault Collection.
- 25 With a Melbourne revival at the Princess Theatre in July 1883. See John Willis, *Oscar Wilde and the Antipodes*. Melbourne: Privately Printed, 2002. 7.
- 26 Oscar Wilde to Norman Forbes-Robertson, 19 April 1882 in Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis, eds., *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*. London: Fourth Estate, 2000. 164.
- 27 Oscar Wilde to Colonel W.F. Morse, [Late September 1882], *Letters* 183.
- 28 Oscar Wilde to Henry Edwards [early November 1882], *Letters* 189.
- 29 Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987. 196.
- 30 Oscar Wilde, *Collins Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: Centenary Edition*. London: Harper Collins, 1999. 433.
- 31 Wilde, *Complete Works* 440-1.
- 32 From George Lauri, *Australian Theatre Story*. Sydney: Peerless Press, 1960, quoted in Willis, *Oscar Wilde and the Antipodes* 22.

- 33 Oscar Wilde to Mrs Bernard Beere *Letters*, [? April 1894], *Letters* 590.
- 34 *Lady Windermere's Fan* as announced in *The Age* (Melbourne) 8 September 1894: 10. Season ran until Friday 21 September 1894. *An Ideal Husband*, 8 June 1895 as announced in *The Age* (Melbourne), 8 June 1895: 10. Season ran until 21 June 1895. I have not been able to verify Willis, "Checklist of Theatre Programs Listed", *Oscar Wilde and the Antipodes* 53-7: *An Ideal Husband*, May 1895, Princess Theatre, Melbourne; *Lady Windermere's Fan*, April 1895, Princess Theatre, Melbourne; Sept 1895. *The Importance of Being Earnest*, September 1895, Criterion, Sydney.
- 35 Oscar Wilde, *Complete Works* 379.