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## USEFUL WEBSITES AND ORGANISATIONS WHEN LOCATING AN ARTISTE

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The first step when searching for any information is to try **Google!** Although, be aware that sometimes the information is not always accurate. However, it is a good place to start and can often reveal some surprises.

There are a whole host of sites that will help with your research and many allow you to search on-line for free.

### **NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES**

These offer a great source of information and often go as far back as the late 1800's. Here are a few sites that you might want to visit:

#### **The British Newspaper Archive**

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

The British Newspaper Archive (BNA) contains around three million pages of newspaper content including all of the main theatrical newspapers including The Era (1838-1959), The Stage (1880 - 2007), The Music Hall and Theatre Review (1889 - 1912), The Referee (1877–1914) and The London Entr'acte (1870–71 The London Entr'acte. Illustrated theatrical and musical critic and advertiser ; 1871–72 London and Provincial Entr'acte; 1872–1907 The Entr'acte).

It is free to search the BNA but to view original newspaper pages, you'll need to subscribe. If you have an Ancestry or Find My Past subscription, the BNA may be included as part of the package.

#### **Radio Times**

<http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/about>

This site contains the BBC listings information which the BBC printed in Radio Times between 1923 and 2009. You can search the site for BBC programmes, people, dates and Radio Times editions. This will enable you to research a particular person or BBC programme they might have been associated with or appeared in.



## LIBRARIES

These are another useful source of information and here are a few sites that you might want to visit:

### **Bodleian Library**

[www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/using/introduction/using](http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/using/introduction/using)

The Bodleian in Oxford has a great selection of music hall songs in their Music Collection. Payment for music has recently changed and you have to register with them.

The music librarian is Sally Chestnutt whose e-mail is [sally.chestnutt@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:sally.chestnutt@bodleian.ox.ac.uk)

The John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera is also housed at The Bodleian Library [johnjohnson.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing/index.jsp](http://johnjohnson.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing/index.jsp)

### **British Library**

[www.explore.bl.uk](http://www.explore.bl.uk)

You can explore the British Library's main catalogue online. If you want to visit in person you have to pre-register to become a 'Reader.' Details are available on their website.

### **New York Public Library**

[www.nypl.org/locations/lpa](http://www.nypl.org/locations/lpa)

The NYPL contains the Billy Rose Theatre Division (named after the American impresario, theatrical showman and lyricist). Until the 1950s their records are based on an enormous card index system and consist of 'clippings.' Clippings are articles clipped from newspapers, magazines, playbills, and other types of publications and ephemera. Virtually all clippings contain text and many also include photographs or images. Their files contain over 400,000 folders of clippings; each folder can contain anywhere from one to 100 clippings. All the divisions have clippings, many of which are NOT in the online catalog. In general, the folders are inventoried, not the individual clippings within the folder.

It is very interesting to follow up on UK performers that toured on the Vaudeville Circuit in the USA. There are some digitised records available online. Email the theatre division for further information - [theatre@nypl.org](mailto:theatre@nypl.org)

### **National Library of Australia - TROVE**

<https://trove.nla.gov.au>

Trove helps you find and use resources relating to Australia. Trove brings together content from libraries, museums, archives, repositories and other research and collecting organisations big and small. It includes digitised newspapers. Music Hall performers often travelled to Australia to perform. You will likely find details of their performances in the digitised newspapers.



**Other sites which may provide a useful source of information include:**

**Bristol University Theatre Collection**

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/>

This theatre collection is one of the world's leading collections relating to the history of British theatre. The collection of Raymond Mander & Joe Mitchenson is held there and has a much greater concentration on the illegitimate stage.

See their website for catalogue details or email your query to [theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:theatre-collection@bristol.ac.uk) or call 0117 331 5045.

**The Cyril Critchlow Collection**

<https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Libraries-arts-and-heritage/Blackpool-heritage/Collection-and-archive/Cyril-Critchlow-Collection.aspx>

The Cyril Critchlow Collection is an extensive collection of ephemera and printed material relating to the entertainment industry in Blackpool. The collection is held in the Local and Family History Centre at the Blackpool Central Library.

Other parts of the collection are held at the University of Sheffield National Fairground and Circus Archive.

**Edith Terry & Edith Craig Database**

[www.ellenterryarchive.essex.ac.uk](http://www.ellenterryarchive.essex.ac.uk)

This is helpful to trace theatrical ancestors on the 'legitimate' stage - some music hall performers worked in both 'legitimate' theatre and music hall

**The Davenport Collection - a growing resource on magic and entertainment history**

[www.davenportcollection.co.uk](http://www.davenportcollection.co.uk)

The Davenports have been accumulating magic and related ephemera ever since Lewis Davenport founded his magic business in 1898. This website is the latest venture in making material from the collection more accessible. Phase 1 is now up and running, and includes 300 posters which are searchable for acts, dates, theatres and towns. Many posters include Lewis Davenport, who was performing from the early 1900s to the 1930s. During this time he shared bills with the greats and less well known performers, all of whom can be searched.

## **Desert Island Discs - BBC Archives**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2td756sn6v24QtTMwb325kS/about-desert-island-discs>

Since 1942, there have been 2,800 editions of Desert Island Discs. Although castaways only started choosing books and luxuries regularly in the late 1950's the scale of the data associated with the programme is huge.

Over 1500 Desert Island Discs programmes – dating back from the present day – are available permanently on this website, and are available on BBC Sounds. In a few, some of the speech inserts have been shortened, and in a very few cases, removed for rights reasons. The music in the podcasts is shorter than in the original broadcast for rights reasons and in a few cases removed, again for rights reasons. Inevitably tastes and times change and some of what is said needs to be considered in context. Where there is strong language or disturbing imagery or particularly sensitive subjects referred to there are warnings on the relevant page or in the case of downloads, at the beginning of the audio.

## **Genealogy websites**

The two leading websites today are Ancestry.Com and FindMyPast.co.uk

Although they offer free searches, generally if you want to look at documents you have to subscribe in some way. Both of these services have links with the British Newspaper Archive and in the case of world-wide subscriptions, newspapers from other parts of the world.

Birth, marriage and death registers may be searched for free at [www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk).

The entries date from 1837 and certificates may be ordered online (for a fee) from the General Register Office via their website [www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk).

A difficulty which very often arises when searching is that the registers only contain an artiste's legal names, not their professional ones. A further complication is that married women were (and usually still are) registered at death under their husbands' surnames.

## **The Society for Theatre Research**

[www.str.org.uk](http://www.str.org.uk)

The STR hold indices of music hall/theatre owners, managers or licensees compiled by the late Graeme Cruickshank. See their website for details.

## **Sheffield University National Fairground and Circus Archive**

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfa>

Established in 1994 the National Fairground and Circus Archive is a collection covering all aspects of the culture of travelling show people. The collection can be viewed online or email your query to [nfa@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:nfa@sheffield.ac.uk)

### **The Theatre Trust - archives list**

[www.theatrust.org.uk/resources/theatres/list](http://www.theatrust.org.uk/resources/theatres/list)

An archive of information on almost 4,000 British theatre buildings past and present across the UK. Many images of theatres from their archive are available online. See their website for details.

### **University of Kent - Special Collections and Archive**

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/library/specialcollections/>

The collection includes popular and comic performance from the Victorian era to the present, including published and archival material from pantomime, melodrama, variety, stand-up comedy. The collection of Max Tyler, a former historian of the British Music Hall Society is held here. You may search the catalogue online but must make an appointment to view items in their reading room. Contact details on their website.

### **Victoria and Albert Museum**

[www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/archives-theatre-performance/](http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/archives-theatre-performance/)

Collections from V&A's Theatre and Performance Archives are located at Blythe House, 23 Blythe Road, London W14 0QX. The content is strongest on theatre, opera and ballet, though there is a substantial amount of Music Hall and Variety material including posters and songsheets. Their catalogue can be searched online.

The archives can be accessed with a V&A Library Card and by appointment only. You can apply for a free Library Card by creating a user account either in advance of your visit or in person on your arrival.

Check their online catalogue to see whether there is any material likely to be significant for your purposes and book an appointment.

Email [tmenquiries@vam.ac.uk](mailto:tmenquiries@vam.ac.uk) or call 020 7942 2697.

Visit their Music Hall & Variety Theatre web pages for general information <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/m/music-hall>



### **BOOKS**

There are many books that cover music hall and variety and far too many to mention them all. However, here are just a few that you might want to try and locate in your local library or on-line.

British Library shelf-marks in brackets, shown for some publications, but try your local reference library.

**BAKER, RICHARD ANTHONY** *British Music Hall: An Illustrated History* 2005 (Sutton Publishing)

**BAKER, RICHARD ANTHONY** *Old-Time Variety: An Illustrated History* 2011 (Pen & Sword Books)

**BARKER, TONY** *Music hall magazines and Cylidisc CD's*

**BROWN, JAMES D. & STRATTON, STEPHEN S.** *British Musical Biographies* (10804 k 23)

**BRYAN, GEORGE D.** *Stage Deaths 1850-1990* 2 vols (on open shelves 791.0922)

**BRYAN, GEORGE D.** *Stage Lives* 1985

**BOASE, FREDERICK** *Modern English Biography* (on open shelves 920.041)

**BUSBY, ROY** *British Music Hall: An Illustrated Who's Who from 1850 to the Present Day* (792.7/028/0922)

**ERA ALMANAC and ANNUAL, THE** From 1868 includes an annual necrology (on open shelves 791.0922)

**GAMMOND, PETER** *The Oxford Companion to Popular Music* 1991 (YM 1991 b186 – on open shelves 781.63)

**GRAY, ANDREW** *Illustrated Who's Who in Variety* (British Year Books) (YC 1996 b 4504)

**GREEN, BENNY** *The Last Empires: A Music Hall Companion* 1986 (Pavilion Books Ltd)

**ROY HUDD** *Roy Hudd's Cavalcade of Variety Acts* 1997 (Robson Books Ltd)

**HERBERT, S. & MCKERNAN, L.** *Who's Who of Victorian Cinema* 1996 (YC 1996 b 4504)

**KILGARRIFF, MICHAEL** *Grace, Beauty & Banjos – Peculiar Lives and Strange Times of Music Hall and Variety Artistes* 1999 (Oberon)

**MAJOR, JOHN** *My Old Man - A Personal History of Music Hall* 2012 (Harper Press)

**PERRY, JEB H.** *Variety Obits* 1980 (X809/47928)

**PRATT, ALFRED T. CAMDEN** *People of the Period* 1897 (010608 m 25)

**VARIETY OBITUARIES** Eds. Chuck Bartelt & Barbara Bergeron many vols. (ZC 9D 365)

**WEARING, J. P.** *American and British Theatrical Biography* (792/.092/2)



Other Useful Links include:

[www.monologues.co.uk/musichall](http://www.monologues.co.uk/musichall)

[www.monologuearchive.com](http://www.monologuearchive.com)

[www.arthurlloyd.co.uk](http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk)

[www.comedy.co.uk](http://www.comedy.co.uk)

[www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com)

[www.circusmania.blogspot.com](http://www.circusmania.blogspot.com)

[www.collinsvariety.co.uk](http://www.collinsvariety.co.uk)

[www.whirligig-tv.co.uk](http://www.whirligig-tv.co.uk)

[footlightnotes.tumblr.com](http://footlightnotes.tumblr.com)

[www.its-behind-you.com](http://www.its-behind-you.com)

[www.ventriloquistcentral.com](http://www.ventriloquistcentral.com) (US only)

[www.musichallcds.co.uk](http://www.musichallcds.co.uk)

[www.fredgodfreysongs.ca](http://www.fredgodfreysongs.ca)

[www.voices-of-variety.com](http://www.voices-of-variety.com)

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*The Society is fortunate to have two historians (Peter Charlton for music hall and Brian O’Gorman for variety) as well as our archivist, David Reed.*

*If you would like the British Music Hall Society Historians/Archivist to research an artiste on your behalf please e-mail [contact@britishmusichallsociety.com](mailto:contact@britishmusichallsociety.com)*

*The cost of research is free to members and for non- members there is a minimum donation of £10 (payable in advance).*