

Published in the *CALL BOY* September 1972

THE WORLD OF MUSIC HALL IN 1907

Naturally the chief event of 1907 in the world of music hall was the Music Hall strike which started on January 21st and ended on February 13th. This subject was so ably dealt with by Peter Honri in our last issue that I will not enlarge further on it except to mention one or two details that were not included in Mr Honri's article.

The wages of back-stage workers before the strike were 4/- per week for a stage-door-keeper (36 hour week), the call-boy collected 3/- at the end of each week, the scene shifter s picked up from 5/- to 8/- per week while the dresser had to be satisfied with 2/- or 2/6 per week. Of course the stage door-keeper, the call-boy, and the dresser picked up tips from the artistes.

An important complaint was the practice by managements of deducting the artistes' commission from their salaries and then taking a portion of this for their own pockets before remitting the remainder to the agent. To my personal knowledge this practice was continued, in spite of agreements made to conclude the strike, by some quite first class managements well into the '30's.

The strike only took place in the London area and it is reckoned that 213 musicians, 90 stage staff, and more than 300 artistes including virtually every top of the bill participated.

Throughout the strike the artistes complained bitterly of unfair and scandalous treatment meted out to them by the National Press. I have before me the official printed list issued by the VAF of artistes who black - legged during the strike. Few of the names mentioned would be known to many people today though included on the list are Dr Walford Bodie, Datas, Nelson Jackson, John Lawson, Lottie Lennox, Lockhart's Elephants, Jock Whiteford, and a lady named Mrs. Brown Potter who apparently was

exceedingly busy. I am told she was a product of the legitimate theatre, somewhat eccentric, and she did monologues, sketches, 'and those sort of things'. The profession had nicknamed her 'Mrs Brown Potty'.

At the Colonial Theatre, New York Lillie Langtry refused to follow R. G. Knowles on the programme. The management refused to alter Mr Knowles position to oblige her but gave her the choice of going on earlier in the programme. Unfortunately the Press report does not state what the lady decided to do.

Prince and Princess de Broglie (no less) opened at the Tivoli week of Jan 14 but in spite of considerable research I have not been able to find out what kind of act they did.

Nellie Wallace sailed for her first American tour on February 6 to open at the Colonial, New York.

A trade advertisement offers Scotch Whisky at 42/- per dozen bottles, carriage paid.



LA MILO as Lady Godiva

Photographs and detailed reports of the marriage on March 28 of Marie Lloyd's daughter, Marie Courtney (Marie Lloyd Junr.) to Aylin, famous jockey.

On April 25 the London Coliseum came up for sale at the Auction Mart, Tokenhouse Yard. The auctioneer invited bids of £100,000 and finally for a bid of £80,000 but silence reigned and the Coliseum remained unsold.

Terrific rumpus over the increase of 'Living Statuary' acts, led by a great outcry from the clergy and the Press. Banned completely in several towns, in others the acts had to do an audition for the local big-wigs on Monday afternoon before they were granted permission to appear. Mrs. Ormiston Chant, the lady who was instrumental in closing the Empire Promenade, is reported as being 'Terribly shocked to see La Milo as God made her'. 'The Performer' wonders if this were a criticism of God or of La Milo.

On July 1 with Vesta Tilley heading the Sunderland Empire was opened.

It is reported that Dot Stephens who lost her feet in a railway accident has replaced them by artificial ones at a cost of £200. Some of the money was raised by a monster Benefit Performance given by a number of her fellow artistes.

Marie Lloyd opened on October 7 on another visit to America for eight weeks on the Williams halls and 2 weeks on Hammersteins.

The Selbinis offer for sale 'A gentleman's private bus to hold six. Suitable for working turns.'

The New Era Dress shirt is offered at 2/6 plus 4d postage by Husbands, the famous shirt makers of Newington Butts.

Many artistes' advertisements carry the line 'Fully booked for the next four



FRED BARNES

Photo kindly supplied by
Molly Wise

years.

Daisy Dormer advertises that she is booked solid for the next five years and booked by the Stoll management for the next ten years.

First advertisements appear of Fred Barnes 'The Prince of Light Comedians'.

At the present time Manchester has ten regular music halls but the Tivoli is the only one with a drinking licence.

Mistinguett opened at the Palace, Shaftesbury Avenue for 4 weeks on August 26th.

Belle Elmore, the unfortunate wife of Crippen, is thanked for a donation of 3/- by the Music Hall Ladies Guild.

Week of October 21, **Sam Mayo** advertises that he is working that week as follows:

Prince's Poplar	7.10
London, Shoreditch	7.40
South London Palace	8.10
The Oxford	9.00
The Metropolitan	9.20
South London Palace	9.50
London Shoreditch	10.20
Prince's Poplar	10.50

(How did he manage it? Must have done a very short act to do some of these jumps in a horse cab.)

Twice nightly was becoming the vogue though many halls were still once nightly.

Little Tich headlines at the opening of Barrasford's new hall, The Alhambra, Brussels on 1 November.

Marie Dressler big success at the Palace 5 November week.

Griff, writing from Philadelphia, writes to warn artistes that things are very



DAISY DORMER

expensive in the USA. He complains that he had to pay the equivalent of 7½p for a shave.

Gaby Deslys working 4 weeks at the Alhambra.

Back on Stoll's hands the London Colliseum re-opens on 16 December with **Albert Chevalier** topping, **Gracia's Elephants** featured and a supporting bill of standard but not outstanding acts.

DON ROSS