



OLDE TYME MUSIC HALL



14 - 28 November 2009
Centrestage Theatre, Orewa
www.centrestagetheatre.com

OLDE TYME MUSIC HALL - brief copy of show (129 words) :

Centrestage Theatre will transform into a 'cavern of conviviality' this November, as their group of players present Olde Time Music Hall in the true tradition of British Victorian theatre.

Escape into a world of nostalgia where you can join in with the songs of yesteryear, laugh along with the antics of the comics, admire the dancing belles, all under the stewardship of the ever present Chairman; who promises a captivating collection of consummate crime carefully contrived to captivate the connoisseur and confuse the castigator!

Young and old alike will delight in this great British cultural institution - a unique blend of audience participation, eccentric characters, comedy and sing-along (song sheets provided). Olde Tyme Music Hall promises plenty of merriment, mayhem and mirth for the enjoyment of the whole family.

OLDE TYME MUSIC HALL - overview (53 words) :

Olde Tyme Music Hall returns to Orewa in the true tradition of British Victorian theatre. Escape into a world of nostalgia where young and old alike will delight in the songs of yesteryear and antics of the comics. Plenty of merriment, mayhem and mirth is promised, for the enjoyment of the whole family.

OLDE TYME MUSIC HALL - marketing notes :

- Olde Tyme Music Hall
- Traditional British Victorian theatre
- Songs to remember
- Merriment, mayhem and mirth
- In true Victorian tradition
- Prepare to be serenaded with songs of yesteryear and be amused by the antics of the comics
- A spectacularly nostalgic show
- Music Hall will delight young and old alike
- Join in singing songs with catchy well known and much loved tunes, laugh at the MC's jokes and the cockney comics, be moved by sentimental favourites and admire the dancing belles.
- Victorian entertainment still proving popular in the 21st century
- Music Hall is a type of British theatrical entertainment which was popular between 1850 and 1960. Like pantomime, is one of those peculiarly British, enduring theatrical traditions.

OLDE TYME MUSIC HALL - show dates and times :

Saturday	14 November	8.00pm
Sunday	15 November	2.00pm
Wednesday	18 November	8.00pm
Thursday	19 November	8.00pm
Friday	20 November	8.00pm
Saturday	21 November	2.00pm Matinee
	21 November	8.00pm
Sunday	22 November	2.00pm Matinee
Wednesday	25 November	8.00pm
Thursday	26 November	8.00pm
Friday	27 November	8.00pm
Saturday	28 November	2.00pm Matinee
	28 November	8.00pm

OLDE TYME MUSIC HALL - booking details :

14 - 28 November 2009
Centrestage Theatre, Orewa
www.centrestagetheatre.com/musichall

\$15.00 - \$25.00 (+ booking fee)
Tickets on sale now from iTicket
Phone 09 426 7282 or www.iticket.co.nz
Special group booking offer available for 10 or more

PUBLICITY CONTACT

Nikki Kent
CENTRESTAGE THEATRE COMPANY INC.
Ph: 09 427 6506
Mob: 021 667 799
Email: markandnikki@orcon.net.nz

APPENDIX

OLDE TYME MUSIC HALL - the history :

If it had not been for Charles Morton we may never have enjoyed Canberra Repertory's Old Time Music Hall. It was he who, in London in 1852, opened the first building specifically devoted to popular musical entertainment. This was a hall next door to his Canterbury Arms Tavern in Lambeth. His venture was so successful that he opened more halls, first in London and then in the provinces. Others were quick to follow and, by the mid-1860s, there were over 300 registered 'Music Halls' in Britain. The numbers continued to increase over the next few decades.

Musical entertainment itself was not new. Prior to the advent of the Halls, wandering folk-singers, street singers and glee-singers abounded. In the early nineteenth century taverns, cider-cellars, coffee-houses, tea-gardens and song-and-supper rooms would hire musicians to entertain patrons who came to eat and drink. Customers in such places paid for their food and drink, the music being an accessory, usually free. At the Halls, in contrast, they paid at the door for the entertainment and could obtain food and drink once inside. The entertainment became the commercial concern.

The music in the taverns and cellars was generally casual. Music Halls were much more formally presented, with a Chairman acting as Master of Ceremonies controlling the proceedings. A new genre of entertainment had evolved.

Music Hall artistes performing 'turns' took the place of pub singers. The taverns had been a predominantly male domain. Now women singers and comedienne were often among the performers.

Competition was intense and performers had to come up with something special to become 'stars'. Those who reached the top were highly paid and often took their special acts to several different Halls on the same night. Sometimes, soon after a star left the stage, a horse and carriage could be heard starting off for another venue.

Among those who achieved fame by associating a specific act with their songs was George Leybourne, the original 'Lion Comique'. He sang Champagne Charlie dressed in immaculate evening dress, complete with cane, the epitome of the 'swell'. Eugene Stratton introduced a soft-shoe shuffle while singing and whistling Lily of Laguna. Harry Champion became renowned for singing at great speed. His songs were often about food, one speciality being Boiled Beef and Carrots. Vesta Tilley sang Burlington Bertie in male attire. Her costume was so stylish that it set the fashion for many of the young men-about-town.

Much of the Halls popularity lay in the appeal of the songs. They had simple tunes which the audience could sing, both in the Halls and at home around the piano. Printing of sheet music was becoming cheaper making most of the songs easily accessible.

The themes touched the everyday lives of people in the audience. They referred to aspects of married life, home, holidays, animals, drinking, food or gardens. Some were a contemporary social comment on topics of the day such as the police force, freemasonry or spiritualism. Patriotic songs were favourites for this was the period of the British Empire's halcyon days. Sentimental songs touched the heartstrings while cockney comics could be relied on to elicit gales of laughter. The Halls were, above all, fun and comedians were quick to lampoon any misdemeanours of politicians and other prominent figures. It has been said that they acted as ombudsmen who could make a laughing stock of any public figure who put a foot wrong. Many of the songs were rich in puns and innuendo. The words may have seemed innocent and thus escaped the eagle eye of the Lord Chancellor but the performer's wink, knowing look or raised eyebrow gave the audience a clue to the double entendre.

The essential quality of Music Hall entertainment is the rapport engendered between artistes and audience. Those who had a special gift of giving themselves completely to an audience were the ones who became the stars. Dan Leno was one of the finest exponents although it was said that the effort destroyed him. Like many comedians the real man was melancholic; and he ended up losing his reason at the age of 42. Marie Lloyd was renowned for her ability. As Barney Colehan, in *The Good Old Days Songbook* put it: 'Her slightest naughty wink carried its meaning to the very back of the gallery and was received personally by every gullible male in the house'.

The music halls were the pop culture of the second half of the nineteenth century. The same artistes appeared in the provinces and in London so the songs spread even without radio, television or

recordings. Local and visiting VIPs were often in the audience; Johann Strauss, in London to conduct a symphony orchestra, attended a Music Hall and was so impressed that he wrote a waltz medley incorporating Home Sweet Home, The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze and Champagne Charlie.

Songs from the Halls enriched the English language. When Jules Leotard, a trapeze artiste immortalised by Leybourne in Man on the Flying Trapeze, performed in London in the 1860s he wore the costume that now bears his name. A patriotic song rendered by The Great Macdermott began with 'We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do' and 'jingoism' was added to our vocabulary.

The Halls themselves changed gradually over the years. They became more like conventional theatres with a stage, orchestra pit and rows of seats instead of tables and chairs. Drinking areas were separated from the auditorium. The programmes became a little less British with the importation of artistes from America, bringing 'coon' songs and 'Ragtime'.

The entertainment was not limited to songs. Expert jugglers, acrobats, magicians, ventriloquists or black-faced minstrels were engaged. Some halls included short dramatic segments. Sarah Bernhardt, Sir George Alexander and Sir Herbert Tree all appeared on the Music Hall stage. Music Hall was growing into 'Variety'.

After the 1914-18 war the popularity of the Halls began to decline. This has been attributed to competition from the gramophone, radio and films and, more recently, from television. Some Halls tried to meet the competition by joining it and included films in their programmes: in the end many were converted into cinemas. Changes in the liquor laws also deterred patrons. Rosemary Clarkson in Red Plush and Greasepaint has suggested that the decline could be found in the Music Hall itself because it lost its drive, became stereotyped and tried to be respectable, thereby losing its link with the world from which it had sprung.

A few surviving Halls struggled on bravely into the mid-1900s. One of the greatest performers in the latter stages was Gracie Fields who had the power of moving an audience to laughter or tears in true Music Hall tradition. George Formby entertained with songs and ukulele. However, even artistes such as these could not stop the demise of the Music Halls and they sought other places to perform.

In more recent times the spirit of the Music Halls has been attracting audiences keen to experience the genre of entertainment enjoyed by their forebears a century ago. Pubs in many parts of Britain put on Music Hall turns. Some theatres also recreate the Halls, foremost among them the Players' Theatre at Charing Cross in London which recaptures the atmosphere of its predecessor, Gatty's Under-the-Arches. Players', and the BBC television series The Good Old Days recorded live before enthusiastic audiences at the City Palace of Varieties in Leeds, have both inspired other revivals.

Audiences [now] enjoy Music Hall for the same reasons as those who attended in the heyday of the Halls. They can escape into a carefree world to join in singing songs with catchy tunes, laugh at the MC's jokes and the cockney comics, be moved by sentimental favourites and admire the dancing belles. Above all, they enjoy being entertained by artistes who have the knack of establishing rapport with an audience. That is what kept the British Music Halls alive for over sixty years.

Corille Fraser & Margaret Fead

History of Music Hall from 'With Abundant Pride' - Twenty-Five Years of Canberra Repertory's Old Time Music Hall