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 CONTENTS

- 1** Creating the Frontier: Border, Identity and History in Japan's Far North  
*Tessa Morris-Suzuki*
- 25** The Search for Korea's Past: Japanese Colonial Archaeology  
in the Korean Peninsula (1905–1945)  
*Hyung Il Pai*
- 49** Korean Echoes in the Nō Play *Furu*  
*Royall Tyler*
- 67** Emperors and Musume: China and Japan 'on the Boards'  
in Australia, 1850s–1920s  
*Darryl Collins*
- 93** Lu Xun, Leon Trotsky, and the Chinese Trotskyists  
*Gregor Benton*
- 105** Unwitting Partners: Relations between Taiwan and Britain, 1950–1958  
*Steve Tsang*

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Cover photograph Dolmen in Hwanghae-do Unyul-gun (Chōsen Sōtokufu, *Chōsen koseki zufu* [Album of ancient Korean sites and monuments], vol.2 [Keijō, 1915])

# EMPERORS AND MUSUME : CHINA AND JAPAN 'ON THE BOARDS' IN AUSTRALIA, 1850s–1920s

 Darryl Collins

## Prologue

Prior to their comprehensive exposure through film and the electronic media, it was the accessible visual world of the theatre that provided millions of Australians with a vision of Asian cultures which were themselves in the process of radical change. In many cases, particularly in relation to China and Japan, these Australian performances wilfully misrepresented reality. Undue emphasis on burlesque, satire, fantasy and stereotypes in works which depicted Asia and its peoples was the norm rather than the exception.

Nineteenth-century theatre was enjoyed by all strata of society, from the British royal family downwards, but most notably by the middle-class. Often little distinction was made, or subtlety perceived, by promoters, companies, or, by extension, the audience itself between the terms 'exhibition', 'cultural event', 'theatre', 'entertainment', 'circus', 'freak', and 'curiosity'.<sup>1</sup> Authenticity in the Victorian and Edwardian theatre was not important; exoticism was.<sup>2</sup> With Asia as the theme, many playwrights utilized stereotyped characters such as the dominant white uniformed male, his submissive Asian lover, the comic Chinaman, and a seemingly endless variety of coolies, fairies, *jinrickshamen*, spirits, 'samourais', sailors and demons, as stock performers.

This play on sexual, physical, moral and national strengths and perceived weaknesses, as then defined, is summed up by Broinowski:

Generally ... Australians inherited from Europe and accepted without question the image of Asia itself as feminine, alluring, seductive, exotic, inferior, immoral and dangerous.<sup>3</sup>

Tentatively, Britain and the United States should be added to the spheres of influence. Seen from a western viewpoint, the complementary dualities of

<sup>1</sup> Almost all were listed in advertisements as "Amusements." A good example of the transmutations which occurred was the exhibition "The Chinese Collection, Philadelphia 1838–1841; London 1842–1945," founded by the China-trader Nathan Dunn (1782–1844). This exhibition won popular acclaim in England, and Queen Victoria and Prince Edward were among its early visitors. It continued for two seasons and introduced such innovations as a pair of Chinese youths, A. Sheng and A. Yow, who made their living by appearing with the collection. On the death of Nathan Dunn in 1844 the collection was sent on a tour of the English provinces, after which it was returned to the United States and was for some time displayed in P. T. Barnum's museum in New York.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Aaron M. Cohen for this observation. He noted that Marie Tempest, who created 'O Mimosa San' in *The Geisha*, insisted on wearing an auburn wig (not black), overriding the opinion of the Japanologist Arthur Diösy who had been employed to advise on the authenticity of the production.

<sup>3</sup> Alison Broinowski, "The butterfly phenomenon," *Journal of the Asian Arts Society of Australia*, 1.3 (June 1992): 10–11.

<sup>4</sup> Respectively, first US Consul-General in Japan (Harris), trader (Glover), teacher and author (Hearn), author of *Madame Chrysanthème* (Loti).

<sup>5</sup> Among other Englishmen with Japanese partners were Ernest Satow (1843–1929), attaché and later Minister to Japan; Captain Francis Brinkley (1841–1912), naval instructor and later editor of the *Japan Mail*; and Josiah Conder (1852–1920), author and architect.

<sup>6</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 Nov. 1854, p. 4. ('Yedo' was a common rendering of Edo, the then capital of Japan, now present-day Tokyo.) The directions were given by order of Commodore M. C. Perry from Silas Bent, Flag Lieutenant, US Steam Frigate *Mississippi*, Hong Kong, 4 Sept. 1854.

<sup>7</sup> For further discussion of these and other direct contacts refer to Darryl Collins, "Asian art and Australia: 1830s–1930s" (MA diss., Australian National University, 1992). Chapters include: Australian taste and Asia (Chinoiserie, Japonisme and Aestheticism); Publications (relating to Asia); Intercolonial and international exhibitions; the Japanese Village in Australia; and a Survey of Asian collections in Australia.

West and East become clearer. The West (superior, male) wished to retain a degree of superiority over the culture and countries of the East (inferior, female). When western theatre dealt with Asia, in particular China and Japan, there was a long tradition of half-reality on which to base fictional scenarios. Townsend Harris (1804–1875), Thomas Blake Glover (1838–1912), Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), Pierre Loti (1850–1923)<sup>4</sup> and others in influential positions provided a string of male counterparts to 'Japanese dolls', or 'mousmé' (a rendering of *musume* 娘, the Japanese for 'girl').<sup>5</sup>

Colonial Australians did have access to more direct contact with Asia. In November 1854, a few months after Commodore Matthew Perry's squadron entered Edo Bay to sign the first treaty with Japan, a Sydney newspaper ran an article detailing "Sailing directions for Yedo."<sup>6</sup> Trade and representation in intercolonial and international exhibitions in Sydney and Melbourne from the 1850s to the 1900s ensured an almost uninterrupted flow of exotic household furnishings and decorative items into the country. A taste for the trappings related to Japonisme and Aestheticism as exemplified in both ethnographic and 'high art' collections was fuelled by books and art journalism that emanated primarily from Britain and the United States. Eurocentric correspondents supplied news on a regular basis for the illustrated journals from the outposts of the British Empire such as India, Burma, and smaller colonial footholds in South-east Asia. Some Anglo-Australians lived and worked in Asia. During the years covered by this paper, the countries of the 'East' were regularly visited by white artists, government officials, traders and travellers *en route* to or from Australia.<sup>7</sup>

As a substitute for the more adventurous means of tourism, contact with both real and imagined exotic racial types was often achieved through theatre shows. Many productions made deliberate use of costumes and spectacular transformation effects to describe what was otherwise a blurred, distant image of Asia. Others played on contemporary political events to add fear and drama to the unfamiliar, and by so doing extend the fantasy and lure of the 'East'. A bifocal image of Asian cultures typified the Australian public's understanding throughout the period. The 'Far East' or 'Orient' was seen alternatively as an embodiment of the unfamiliar, as a trade competitor, or even as a potential aggressor.

During the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–95, major Chinese defeats in battles in September 1894 turned Britain's allegiance toward the Japanese. Japan's quieter revolution in western-style industrialization could be seen as a natural by-product of war—the underpinning of its military success. Further re-evaluation of Japan's might came after her victory over Russia. In 1895, as a result of the war, China ceded the Liaotung Peninsula to Japan. Russia persuaded France and Germany to force Japan to relinquish this territory. Confronted by Russia's Far Eastern policy and the imperialist designs of France, Germany and England, Japan was forced, in a humiliating about-face, to return the peninsula to China. This incident, coupled with the failure of peace negotiations, ensured that the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 could

no longer be averted. The 1902 and 1905 Anglo-Japanese Alliance, brokered by Britain, assisted Japan to prepare herself to withstand Russian expansion. It was to the advantage of both Britain and the United States that Japan remain as an ally to balance the military might in the area and sustain trade. An additional deployment of Japanese troops came with the outbreak of the Boxer Uprising—the North China campaign of June 1900, after which Russia occupied the whole of Manchuria. Australia, as an ally of Japan, also contributed troops to this encounter.

This all took place while Australia was itself witnessing the overriding nationalist fervour of Federation (1901). As the isolationist *Bulletin* noted, “The rout of the Russians at Mukden is an event of history more important than any since the fall of Constantinople”,<sup>8</sup> and “Australia is a lonely outpost on the very borders of Asia.”<sup>9</sup>

In the interval between the years 1845 and 1929<sup>10</sup> there were in excess of eighty productions, ranging from extravaganza through circus and comic opera to drama, which directly, or in part, related to the ‘East’. Some performances were not entirely based on Asian sources, but included references to either the White Australia policy, the anti-Asian movements, or the international art movements of Aestheticism or Japonisme. Most depicted Asian characters in the performance, while others were presented by Asian performers on tour in the Australian colonies.

### *Early Chinese Performers in Australia*

A chronological examination of performances in Australia that were linked in content directly to Asia reveals an initial interest in China, followed by one in the country and people of Japan. This is not surprising, as it paralleled the historical sequence of world events which saw Chinoiserie supplanted by Japonisme. In Australia, it commenced with the early arrival of the Chinese in search of gold. There followed periods of growing resentment on the part of white Australians which led to open hostility and riots on the goldfields and anti-Chinese demonstrations in the capitals. It was, however, Chinese theatre which first played an important role as indigenous entertainment in the Chinese camps of colonial Australia.

Harold Love has documented the various troupes on the Victorian fields between 1858 and 1870 that successfully toured country centres in central Victoria.<sup>11</sup> Similar troupes operated throughout the goldfields in other states. Although the theatricals were sometimes shunned by the non-Chinese diggers and locals, who often complained of “horrid sounds” and “barbaric taste,” increasingly the Chinese found their dramatic offerings reviewed by journalists in newspapers of the day or witnessed by European members in the audience. A reviewer, in a piece entitled “Chinese Theatricals in Melbourne,” reported on the physical aspects of one such performance, and concluded:

<sup>8</sup> *Bulletin* (Sydney), 18 Feb. 1904.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 Mar. 1905.

<sup>10</sup> Days, months or years given are for the Australian première unless otherwise noted.

<sup>11</sup> Harold Love, “Chinese theatre on the Victorian goldfields 1858–1870,” *Australasian Drama Studies* 3.2 (though correctly no.6) (April 1985): 47–86.

<sup>12</sup> *Illustrated Australian News* (Melbourne), 16 July 1872, pp.144–5; republished *Illustrated Sydney News*, 23 Nov. 1872, p.4.

<sup>13</sup> Po An Toy company, Prince of Wales Theatre, Melbourne, 31 Oct.–10 Nov. 1860.

<sup>14</sup> Throughout this paper Chinese and Japanese theatrical and personal names have been transcribed as originally published. It is evident, however, that many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources vary considerably in their forms of anglicisation, with transcriptions that are now considered outdated and incorrect. Inscribed on the back of a photograph taken in Melbourne, presumably in Chang's hand are the characters Zhang [Chang] Wujiu.

Many of our European actors might take a lesson with profit from the Celestials, who evidently possess great talent, and are well versed in histrionic art. The properties are truly magnificent, the costumes being composed of the richest brocaded and flowered silks and satins ... A visit to the theatre in the Chinese quarter is exceedingly interesting as the performance altogether gives a higher idea of the manners and customs of the flowery land than a cursory glance at that of Bourke-street.<sup>12</sup>

In most cases, the acrobatic performances, dramas or musical events were held in tent-theatres erected in the Chinese quarter of the goldfields. By 1864 a Chinese theatre had opened at Ararat. Occasionally the troupes presented performances in established city theatres where the essentially white audience attended to experience the unfamiliar as amusement.<sup>13</sup> Racism, misinterpretation and a genuine lack of appreciation barred most white members of the audience from an understanding of the performances, for most were reluctant visitors drawn by sheer curiosity rather than a serious desire to appreciate a culture so different from their own.

The Chinese companies featured opera, mime, drama, and acrobatics with the costumed actors in traditional make-up. It was usual for the actors to be accompanied by a native orchestra of musicians. For the resident Chinese these troupes must have filled a role as important as the earliest revered visiting British and American stage personalities.

In 1870, the Chinese giant Chang (Chang Wu-Gow, 1846–93)<sup>14</sup> visited the goldfield city of Ballarat, Victoria. Chang's wife, Kim Soo, baby and entrepreneurial white manager were photographed for *carte-de-visite* portraits in both Ballarat and Melbourne. Touring as a freak of nature, Chang had made

**Figure 1**

*"Chinese theatricals in Melbourne"*  
(*Illustrated Australian News*, 16 July 1872, p.144; republished *Illustrated Sydney News*, 23 November 1872, p.8)



appearances at the Egyptian Hall, London, in 1865, the Exposition Universelle, Paris, in 1867, and was later to be seen in Europe during 1878. Chang, who appeared in full mandarin costume and “loved gold jewellery, ebony, pearls, red velvet, robes of silk brocade and panther skins ...” was often exhibited with dwarfs for a sense of greater visual disparity. The giant’s debut in Australia must have appealed to the rumbustious goldfields audience of itinerant Chinese, Europeans and Australians.

Questions still remain concerning the origins of these colonial theatre performers. Did they come direct from southern China, or primarily from California? As the companies disbanded with the demise of the concentration of Chinese on the fields and with greater curbs on Chinese immigration, their place was taken by Japanese troupes or performers in circuses.

### *Colonial Theatre and ‘the East’*

The partial vacuum formed by the absence of the Chinese was filled by a growth in the awareness of Japan as a source for the exotic in theatre. This was accelerated following the treaty of amity between the United States and Japan in 1854. The particular geographical location of Australia—its proximity to Asia, New Zealand, and the United States—did mean that from “the 1830s onward they [Australian actors] visited China, Japan, and India playing to the English communities in those centres. ‘Professor Bushell’ from Australia was in Japan on 7 November 1865, and gave a varied performance of electrical experiments, electro-biology etc.”;<sup>15</sup> and by 1872 the Great American Circus which was seen at the Exhibition Building, Sydney, was able to advertise that they were “now on their grand tour from the United States of America, having visited California, Japan, the principal ports in China, New Zealand, and Queensland, and [were] now en route to Melbourne.”

In Australia, Anglo-American theatre troupes experimented with productions which featured Asian characters in representations of the exotic. A number of these farces were directly related in content to the influx of gold-seeking Chinese and to some extent acted as foils to the native Chinese troupes on the fields.

On 20 February 1845, the Royal Victoria Theatre in Sydney premièred the ballet *The Barber of Peking* produced by Andrew Torning (1814–1900). The cast included ‘Zing Rang’, ‘Zam Roo’ and the ‘Rose of China’. In 1850, Melbourne saw the pantomime *The Goblin of the Gold Coast; or, Harlequina and the Melbournites in California*<sup>16</sup> with groups of ‘Celestials’, ‘Terrestrials’ and ‘Infernals’ as supporting cast. At Geelong in 1853, the almost unpronounceable exotic pantomime, *T: <Chit. T%Chet Cha-Ra-Cha, Emperor of China* was premièred at the Theatre Royal on 21 November. All these productions characterised initial white responses to the rapidly-growing Chinese population.

Not all the productions relied on the fantastic, although most relied on humour in the form of barb, satire and stereotyped behaviour. A London burlesque, *Masks and Faces; or, Before and Behind the Curtain*,<sup>17</sup> for example,

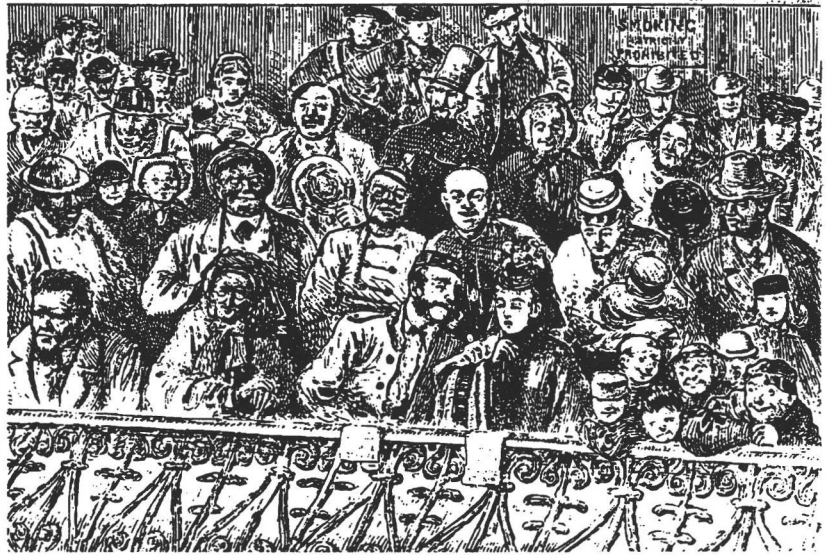
<sup>15</sup> Eric Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian theatre 1788–1914* (Sydney: Hale & Ironmonger, 1985), p.37.

<sup>16</sup> Queen’s Theatre, Melbourne, 13 May 1850.

<sup>17</sup> Royal Victoria Theatre, Sydney, 25 Sept. 1856; revived: Lyceum Theatre, Sydney 11 Oct. 1862.

**Figure 2**

"The 'Gods' at the Pantomime."  
 "At the middle of the picture a couple  
 of 'celestials' help to support the  
 Olympian character of the whole  
 group" (Australian Sketcher, 21  
 Feb. 1874, p.200)



<sup>18</sup> F. C. Brewer, *The drama and music of New South Wales*, published by authority of the New South Wales Commissioners for the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893 (Sydney: Charles Potter [Government Printer], 1892), p.25.

<sup>19</sup> Theatre Royal, Melbourne, 24 Feb. 1857.

<sup>20</sup> Theatre Royal, Melbourne, 24 July 1860.

lampooned the Chinese. It is of interest to note in an 1892 publication the description of a past theatrical event in terms of racial overtones. The author of *Masks and Faces* . . . , revived at Sydney's Lyceum Theatre from 11 October 1862, recalled some thirty years later:

Younge [Frederick Younge] was unquestionably among the cleverest of burlesque actors . . . of the Australian stage: in character sketches he was highly amusing, being a good mimic. His make-up and action as a Chinaman were remarkable; and when he presented 'John' on the stage none laughed at him more heartily than the 'Chinkies' who frequently formed a goodly portion of the audience.<sup>18</sup>

Other productions with an equal emphasis on the Chinese included the extravaganza *Pong Wong the Mandarin* in 1857,<sup>19</sup> and the comedy *A Spec in China* in 1860.<sup>20</sup> The musical *Bluebeard and the Heathen Chinees*; or, *Heathen Chinese*, or alternatively, *The Heathen Chinees; or, Harlequin Bluebeard* was performed at the Academy of Music, Melbourne, on 22 January 1877.

### *Early Japanese Performers in Australia*

With the 1860s came the first of the travelling acrobatic troupes which were to play an important part in the picturesque image Australians would cultivate of Japan and the Japanese. By 18 November 1867, *The Tycoon Troupe*, with a cast of four in a concert that featured Japanese acrobats, sword-swallowing, music and dance, had opened at the Royal Haymarket Theatre, Melbourne. The cast included "Otayseman, dancer, musician;

Querysan, dancer, musician; Tamaka Buchirosa, leader; and Tamaka Turischutchi, tumbling, top-spinning and balancing.”

In 1866 and 1867 troupes of Japanese performers had visited San Francisco and London. The leader of a similar troupe of Japanese, Tannaker [Tanaka?] Buchiro(san) visited Australia to perform in a precursor to a Japanese Village proper. The *Japanese Native Village; or Japan: Past & Present* was seen some seventeen years later in London (in 1885 and again in 1885–87). Critical response to the earlier Australian visit was good, with a Sydney reviewer using the phrase “native eccentricities” to describe the content of the performance.<sup>21</sup>

Between late 1867 and late 1868,<sup>22</sup> *Lenton and Smith's Great Dragon Japanese Troupe*, “12 performers direct from Jeddo at an expense of [US]\$15,000 with an assembled audience over the past few weeks [in Melbourne] of 10,000 persons” performed in capitals and country centres throughout Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia. The cast (in the order as given in the original program) consisted of:

Males:

Eso Kitchie, Director of the Dragon Theatre in Jeddo  
Gengero, juggler, top-spinner, &c. from Osaka &c.  
Bungero, pedal and light balancer &c.  
Metaro, acrobat and gymnast &c.  
Sagero, long ladder and heavy tub &c.  
Cho-Nos-Kee, flight of butterflies &c.  
Yaskee, wizard and fire eater  
Che-Oh-Kitchie, the boy wonder, gymnast and acrobat

Females:

Cuts-Who-Ge-Vo, slackrope, ascension &c.  
Omato, pointed bamboo walking, Japanese paper &c.  
Oh-Hat-Sue, perch performer &c.  
Onra-Or-Vo, in waiting on performance.

Part of their extensive advertising claimed that “en route [to Australia] they played before their Excellencies the Governors of Hong Kong and Straits Settlements; the Governor Generals of Manila and the Island of Java; and the Hon. Lieutenant Governors of Bengal and the Straits Settlements.”<sup>23</sup>

In early 1871, yet another troupe arrived in Melbourne. *Evans' Japanese Troupe: The Satsuma Troupe of Imperial Japan* opened at the Royal Princess's Theatre, Melbourne, then proceeded to tour with an itinerary similar to that of *The Great Dragon Japanese Troupe*.<sup>24</sup> As with most of the troupes, individual performers sometimes separated from the group to perform elsewhere under variant stage names. *Evans' Satsuma Troupe of Imperial Japanese* (a variation of their stage title) included ‘Kami Sami’ or ‘Kamisama’, the beautiful Japanese girl on the aerial slack-rope, and ‘Yama-moto’, the celebrated conjurer, fire-man and fakeer [sic], “principal paid performer of the Prince of Satsuma.” In addition, ‘All Right’ and ‘Tiskie Tiskie’, the wonderful butterfly fanner, were presented in this extraordinary entertainment.

<sup>21</sup> Critic, *Empire* (Sydney), 1 Jan. 1868, p.2, 4 Jan. 1868, p.2. Much the same terminology was used to describe the Japanese Village in Australia between 1886 and 1887.

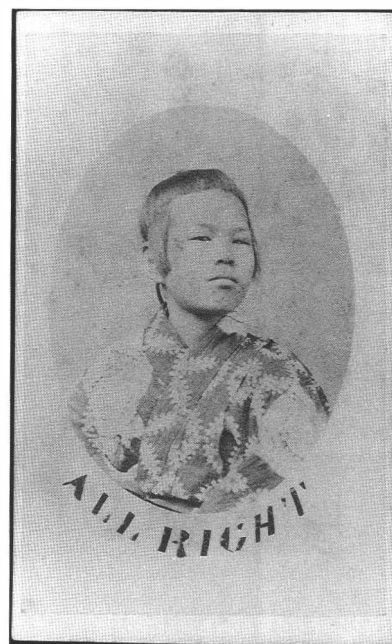
<sup>22</sup> Princess's Theatre, Melbourne, 26 Dec. 1867.

<sup>23</sup> *Argus* (Melbourne), 18 Dec. 1867, p.8; 27 Dec. 1867, p.6, 22 Jan. 1868, p.8.

<sup>24</sup> Princess's Theatre, Melbourne, 6 Feb. 1871.

**Figure 3**

*All Right* ('Little All Right', or Chikazo), c.1872. Carte-de-visite, albumen silver photograph by Henry Beaufoy Merlin (1830–73) (Collection: Australian National Gallery, Canberra)



<sup>25</sup> D. C. S. Sissons, *Episodes: a glimpse of Australia-Japan relations 1859-1979* (Canberra: Eric White Associates [under the auspices of the Embassy of Japan in Australia], and the H. S. Williams Collection, National Library of Australia, 1979).

The cast consisted of the following:

'All Right', boy ascensionist, contortionist, tumbler  
 Kamisama, rope-walker  
 Makai Takai Shingoro, master of ceremonies  
 Matz Noski, pedal-balancer  
 Nagai Natchisama, rope-walker  
 Sakujiro, apprentice all-rounder  
 Sengari Kato, top-spinner  
 Tiskie Tiskie, butterfly fanner  
 Yama Moto, conjuror and balancer

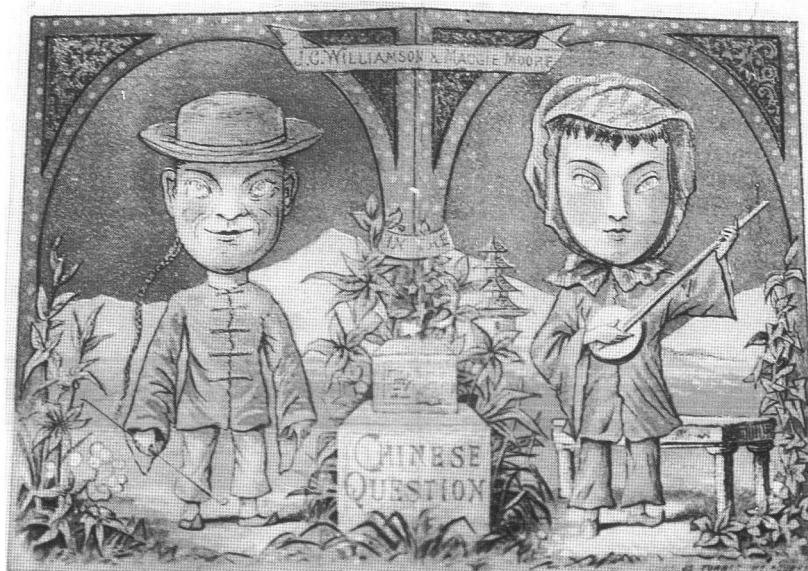
with a variant troupe:

'All Right', boy ascensionist, contortionist, tumbler  
 Daiksan, juggler  
 Denkitchi, acrobat  
 Hongiri, pedal-balancer  
 Matz Noski, pedal-balancer  
 Sakusan, top-spinner  
 Sakutaroo, conjuror  
 Yoshimatz, rope-walker.

Individual performers and troupes of similar calibre were typified by the *Sakuragawa Troupe*, which, under the leadership of Sakuragawa Rikinosuke, who had arrived in Sydney in 1871, performed between 1871 and 1917. Both Williams and Sissons have noted that, beside acrobatics, this person's claim to fame was to be "Possibly the first Japanese to settle in Australia ... In the Victorian Registrar-General's Office is the record of his marriage on 20 February 1875 at the age of 29 to Jane Kerr of Bourke Street, Melbourne."<sup>25</sup>

#### Figure 4

*"The Chinese Question"*—  
 cover of a miniature song-sheet  
 featuring portraits of J. C. Williamson  
 and Maggie Moore in Chinese  
 costume. Chromolithograph, printed  
 by Charles Turner, Melbourne. 10.6 cm  
 x 14.6 cm (Collection: National  
 Library of Australia, Canberra)



*J. C. Williamson and High-Victorian Theatre:  
an Aesthetic Dialogue*

With the arrival during 1874 in Melbourne of the great American actor, producer, director and theatrical entrepreneur, James Cassius Williamson (1845–1913) and his wife Maggie Moore (1851–1926),<sup>26</sup> the foundations were laid for 'the Firm'—a triumvirate of Arthur Garner (1851; to England 1896; died?), George Musgrove (1854–1916) and Williamson which was to influence popular theatre in Australia well into the twentieth century. Soon after their arrival in Australia, both Williamson and Moore appeared together in a topical farce *The Chinese Question* at the Theatre Royal, Melbourne.<sup>27</sup> Originally entitled *The Chinese Invasion*, this one-act piece was commissioned from Clay M. Greene by J. C. Williamson and his wife for their appearance at the California Theater and capitalised on "The Chinese Must Go" slogan that had gathered popular sentiment in San Francisco during the 1870s. Dicker described the plot:

[T]he play tells the story of a wealthy American gentleman who, exasperated with the dishonesty of his two American servants, replaces them with a Chinese couple. With unctuous politeness and inextinguishable smiles, the Chinese pair gleefully unload the household cupboards for the benefit of their friends and relations until their distraught employer is only too glad to reinstate his American servants.<sup>28</sup>

Shrewdly exploiting a similar popular prejudice on their arrival in Australia, the Williamsons had changed the title and utilised the farce in their opening bill. The performance incorporated a Chinese song composed for Maggie Moore by Charles Schultz. A miniature song-sheet printed in Melbourne featured idealised portraits of Williamson and Moore in Chinese costume. The song-and-dance routine simulated Chinese speech rhythms with the occasional inclusion of identifiable place names.

Orientalism did not only apply to what was seen on stage. In some cases the interiors of theatres themselves presented patrons with a glimpse of the 'mysterious East'. In Melbourne as early as 1876 a small elegant theatre, the Academy of Music, had incorporated rows of spectacularly large Japanese ceramic vases filled with artificial flowers as a decorative feature in the promenade or saloon. It is almost certain these vases were purchased from the Intercolonial Exhibition held in Melbourne at the Museum Hall and temporary buildings in association with the Public Library between 2 September and 16 November 1875. For the first time at an Australian exposition there was direct representation from Japan through official Japanese Commissioners who ensured the presence of a Japanese trade court. Some twenty years later, in December 1896, the Palace Theatre opened in Pitt Street, Sydney, to general public acclaim that it was as "gorgeous as an Indian temple." The interior was decorated by the famous scenic artist Phillip W. Goatcher (1852–1931), and incorporated, in 'Hindoo-Gothic' style, stage-boxes in the form of miniature Indian temples and a proscenium arch surmounted by a golden

<sup>26</sup> The couple arrived in Melbourne by the S.S. *Mikado* (!) on 2 July 1874.

<sup>27</sup> Theatre Royal, Melbourne, 23 Aug. 1879.

<sup>28</sup> Ian Dicker, *J. C. W.: a short biography of James Cassius Williamson* (Rose Bay, N.S.W.: Elizabeth Tudor Press, 1974), p.32.

<sup>29</sup> Opera House, Sydney, 10 Jan. 1880.

<sup>30</sup> Theatre Royal, Sydney, 26 Nov. 1881; also performed Theatre Royal, Melbourne, 1 July 1882; revived: Sydney, 1882, 1885, 1889, 1904, 1914; Melbourne, 1904, 1920.

<sup>31</sup> Theatre Royal, Sydney, 14 Nov. 1885; also performed Theatre Royal, Melbourne, 20 Feb. 1886; revived: Sydney, 1886, 1893, 1905, 1914, 1915, 1927; Melbourne, 1886, 1887, 1920, 1926.

<sup>32</sup> Barbara Morris, *Liberty design 1874–1914* (London: Octopus Publishing Group, 1989), p.118.

<sup>33</sup> *Illustrated Australian News* (Melbourne), 3 Mar. 1886, p.42.

<sup>34</sup> Opera House, Melbourne, 8 Apr. 1882; revived: Theatre Royal, Adelaide, 30 June 1887.

figure of Buddha. Goatcher, invited to Australia by J. C. Williamson in 1890, was arguably the greatest stage-designer ever to work in Australia. The primary interior colour-scheme of gold and peacock-blue was combined with concealed electric lighting behind stained glass screens and panels to produce a jewel-like aura in the auditorium.

In 1880, Sydney saw the production of the operetta *Ching Chow Hi; or, A Cracked Piece of China*, with words by W. Bough and G. Reed and music by Jacques Offenbach.<sup>29</sup> 'China', particularly of the blue-and-white variety, was a fast-rising symbol in the 1880s for the aspirations of the 'consummate Aesthete'. In the play *The Colonel*, the principal female lead breathed the immortal words, "There is so much to be learned from a teapot." Lyrics in *Patience* referred to "A Japanese young man, /A blue and white young man," while in *The Mikado*, the Chorus of Nobles opened with "If you want to know who we are, /We are gentlemen of Japan: /On many a vase and jar—/On many a screen and fan ...". At precisely this time, Japanese ceramics were being directly imported into Australia and were also a focus of trade at international exhibitions.

A series of Aesthetic comedies, comic operas and burlesques were performed in Australia between 1881 and 1885. Most were received with considerable enthusiasm by a public now well-acquainted with events in England and Europe. The series commenced in 1881 with *Patience*; or,

*Bunthorne's Bride*<sup>30</sup> and culminated in *The Mikado*; or, *The Town of Titipu*,<sup>31</sup> both by the masters of the comic opera, W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900). The libretti of these more famous works are now well known with the authors' obvious debts to Japan underscored.

In *Patience*, Reginald Bunthorne, a "fleshy poet," and Archibald Grosvenor, an "idyllic poet," are rivals for the love of Patience, a "dairy maid," while the "rapturous maidens," Angela, Saphir, Ella and Jane, rebuff the attentions of a chorus of officers from the Dragoon Guards. For these and other divine personages Liberty fabrics were extensively used in London productions. Dresses were designed by W. S. Gilbert himself for *Patience* (1881), *Iolanthe* (1882) and *The Mikado* (1885). For *The Mikado*, "Liberty sent representatives to Japan to study the native costumes at first hand, and bring back correct materials for both the costumes and stage sets."<sup>32</sup> By 1908, Liberty and Co. were represented in Sydney by the ladies who ran The Kosmic Company Ltd., with 'Liberty Rooms' situated on the Seventh Floor, Challis House, Martin Place.

## Figure 5

"Sketches at Patience, Theatre Royal"  
(Australasian Sketcher, 15 July 1882, frontispiece)



The Australian productions of *The Mikado* by Williamson also boasted “authentic” costumes and accessories specially purchased in Japan. A Melbourne reviewer concluded: “The dresses and stage accessories were handsome, and the work was presented in so artistic a manner as to form a decided era in operatic management in Australia.”<sup>33</sup>

Following its première in London during 1881, *The Colonel*,<sup>34</sup> an Aesthetic burlesque by Frank C. Burnand, then editor of the London *Punch*, opened in 1882 at the Opera House, Melbourne. The magazine had revelled in the pursuit of the Aesthete with cartoons by George du Maurier, Edward Linley Sambourne and others, which lampooned the art craze as “cultchah,” and such personages as the “Cimabue Browns” and the almost legendary “Mrs Ponsonby de Tomkyns.” Advertisements in newspapers of the day lauded the production as replete with “Crowded Houses, Brilliant Reception, Thunders of Applause, Intense Enthusiasm, Electric Success,” and, using the ‘correct’ jargon of the day, “‘Intensely’ Successful, ‘Intensely’ Aesthetic, ‘Intensely’ ‘Consummate’.” The burlesque, like *Patience*, parodied the artistic foibles of the aspiring Aesthete and included in the cast the archetypal artist “Basil Giorgione” and the character “Lambert Stryke,” played in London by Beerbohm Tree, that satirised Oscar Wilde.<sup>35</sup>

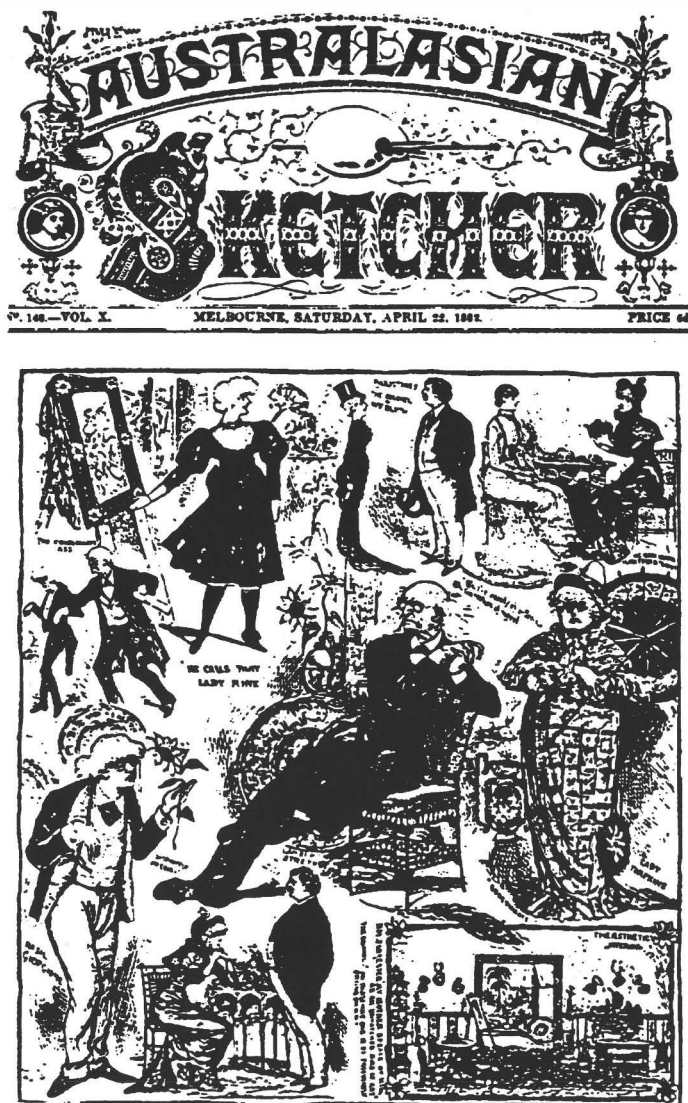
Part of this production’s success in Australia was due to its obvious emulation of the London theatre. The program referred the audience in the colonies to the reception the production had received in England:

At present (and for the past 12 months) performed to crowded and fashionable houses at the Prince of Wales Theatre, London, and by specially organised companies in the principal cities throughout Great Britain and America; also, recently by special command before HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN, The Prince and Princess of Wales and Royal Family.

In Adelaide, the costumes were recognised as “Quaint Aesthetic Dresses.”<sup>36</sup> As Morris has noted, Liberty textiles were used for *The Colonel*, a play which satirised the Aesthetes and itself parodied the Gilbert and Sullivan parody *par excellence*, *Patience*, which had earlier premièred in London on 23 April 1881.<sup>37</sup>

Figure 6

“Sketches from The Colonel, at the Opera House”  
(Australasian Sketcher, 22 April 1882, frontispiece)



<sup>35</sup> Other characters in the cast included Colonel W. W. Woodde, Mr & Mrs Forrester, Parkes, Romelli, Mrs Blyth, Lady Tompkins and Nelly Goodall.

<sup>36</sup> “Amusements,” *South Australian Advertiser* (Adelaide), 30 June 1887, p.1.

<sup>37</sup> Morris, *Liberty design*, p.118.

<sup>38</sup> Opera House, Melbourne, 18 Nov. 1882; also performed Theatre Royal, Adelaide, 14 Mar. 1883, and Opera House, Sydney.

<sup>39</sup> Critic, "Theatre Royal," *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 15 Mar. 1883, p.6.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Program notes for the performance at the Opera House, Sydney.

<sup>42</sup> "Amusements," *South Australian Register* (Adelaide), 14 Mar. 1883, p.1.

*The King's Dragoons*, another comic opera, was seen in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney during 1882 and 1883.<sup>38</sup> The cast included a specially trained troupe of dancers, "The Aesthetes," who performed an "Aesthetic Quadrille." An Adelaide paper described the dance and the costumes:

The female dancers were attired in Japanese costume and carried large sunflowers, while their partners wore black velvet, and held in their hands lilies and Japanese parasols. At the back of the stage stood the chorus, and simultaneously with the dancers opened and shut enormous fans and parasols<sup>39</sup>

and concluded:

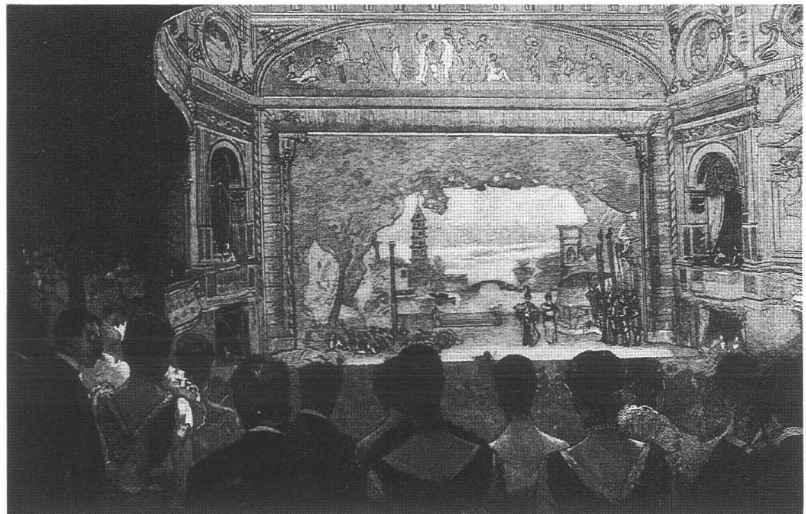
One minute they assume burlesque, tragic, or 'aesthetic' attitudes, the next they whirl about with acrobatic agility, winding up each figure with a 'flop,' which is supposed to be characteristic of the class travestied.<sup>40</sup>

The dance attracted much attention in the newspapers, though not all critics were enraptured by the performance; one called it a "most ludicrous dance, which is a skit on the aesthetic tendencies of the day, has always created a perfect furore wherever performed, and is one of the most ludicrous and extraordinary performances ever witnessed."<sup>41</sup> However, the "Aesthetes, who have been specially engaged ... [were] greeted with shouts of laughter and continued applause."<sup>42</sup>

Melbourne's Italianate Princess's Theatre opened in December 1886 with a revival of *The Mikado*, a comic opera which had previously been seen in Sydney (premiered Theatre Royal, 14 November 1885), and at the Theatre Royal, Melbourne (20 February 1886). The Sydney season commenced a mere eight months to the day after its London première at the Savoy on 14 March 1885.

### Figure 7

"Interior of Princess Theatre, Melbourne" (*The Mikado*)  
(Source: Andrew Garran, ed.,  
*Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*  
[Sydney: Picturesque Atlas Publishing  
Co., 1886–88], vol.3, p.792)



**Figure 8**

"A Box at the Pantomime"  
(Illustrated Sydney News, 3 Feb. 1887,  
p.13)

Performances, through the imaginative direction of costumiers and scenic artists, provided direct visual links between Japan, contemporary art movements (in particular, Aestheticism and Japonisme), fashion, and the decoration of domestic and public interiors. The Australian première of *The Mikado; or, The Town of Titipu* in 1885 coincided with a peak of popular interest in Japan, with its "Magnificent Scenery, illustrative of Japan, painted from Authentic Sources"<sup>43</sup> and "Gorgeous and Characteristic Costumes purchased in Japan and Imported for this Grand Production by Williamson, Garner, and Musgrove."<sup>44</sup> For Act I, the stage directions themselves specifically instructed that "Japanese nobles [be] discovered standing and sitting in attitudes suggested by native drawings" as the curtain opened. Furthermore, the original production took artistic direction from the Japanese Village in London (1885)<sup>45</sup> with assistance to Gilbert provided by A. B. Mitford, former Second Secretary to the British Legation in Japan (1866–70). A clue to this liaison is to be found in the text itself with a passing reference to "Japanese abroad" in London.

In Act II, Scene Ko-Ko's Garden, the following exchange takes place between the Mikado and Ko-Ko concerning the whereabouts of Nanki-Poo:

*Mik.* Nanki-Poo.

*Ko.* It's quite easy. That is it's rather difficult. In point of fact, he's gone abroad!

*Mik.* Gone abroad! His address.

*Ko.* Knightsbridge.

The venue of the original British Japanese Village was in fact Humphrey's Hall, Albert Gate, Knightsbridge.

Again 'the East' was viewed, through the medium of the comic opera, as a 'perfect fairy-tale land' peopled by quaint, humorous personages having

<sup>43</sup> The "sources" were most likely to have been photographs or illustrated publications. Japanese photographs were earlier displayed in 1877 at the Sydney Metropolitan and Intercolonial Exhibition; and in 1884 Mrs Campbell, an agent in Albert Park, Melbourne, was offering hand-coloured Japanese photographic prints for sale.

<sup>44</sup> Program notes for the opening at the Theatre Royal, Sydney, 14 Nov. 1885; and at the same venue, 13 Sept. 1886.

<sup>45</sup> Members of the Japanese Village were asked to attend rehearsals of *The Mikado*, at which the cast were afforded the opportunity to model poses and movements for the comic opera on those of persons from the Village.

**Figure 9**

Frontispiece celebrating the visit of the then premier of Queensland, Sir Thomas McIlwraith (1835–1900), to the "Land of the Japs," with overt references to *The Mikado* in "Wha a jolly New Year we are having!" (Boomerang [Brisbane], 29 Dec. 1888)



little connection with reality. The 'Willow Pattern' and all its legendary associations with ill-fated lovers was to become an archetypal symbol in the theatre. Costumes and sets echoed the fashionable and readily understood blue-and-white motifs. Purported to be based on Canton prototypes, and sometimes misused for Japanese as well as Chinese productions, the origins of the myth were, after all, English, not Chinese.<sup>46</sup> The Japanese Village Company, New Mikado Troupe, Imperial Dragon Troupe (acrobats), and *The Daimio's Daughter* (a drama) were all performers or acts connected with the Japanese Village seen between April 1886 (in Sydney) and July 1887 (in Adelaide). Brought to Australia by an English manager, Pemberton W. Willard, some fifty Japanese craftspersons, artists and performers toured state capitals and country centres in Victoria and New South Wales. In the more supportive roles were "also girls to wait on visitors to the tea houses, *yakusba* or theatrical people who will perform their native dramas, performers who walk on naked swords with bare feet, jugglers, top spinners and acrobats."

Similar Japanese acrobatic troupes were seen throughout Australia until the early 1900s. As one example, Godayu's Japanese Troupe, also known as Godayu's Talented Tokio Troupe, appeared at the Melbourne's Gaiety Theatre in December 1891, with a cast that included K. S. Godayu, Tommi Kitti, Little Matz, Little Take Godayu, Little Kame, Miss Pitti [Minnie] Godayu. *Bobemia* commented:

Tommi Kitti of the Gaiety Japanese troupe [is] as skittish as a kitten, and, like a cat on a ladder, worth travelling up Bourke-st to see. So are his compatriots.<sup>47</sup>

*Late-Victorian and Edwardian Theatre  
and the 'Far East'; or, The Pantomime  
Triumphant*

<sup>46</sup> It is claimed that the 'willow pattern' came into existence around 1780 through its use on Spode dinner services. An account of Chang's immortal love for Koong-se is given in an 1849 British magazine, *The Family Friend*. A comic operetta entitled *The Willow Pattern*, with libretto by Basil Hood and music by Cecil Cook, had a short run at London's Savoy Theatre in 1901.

Australia's reaction to events in China and Japan during the closing years of the nineteenth century saw a change in attitude to the Asian region as portrayed on the stage. Light-hearted humour and never-never lands were replaced by countries peopled by characters expressive of the darker side of human emotions with which audiences could readily identify. With Federation imminent there came a series of nationalist Australian dramas that isolated the Asian characters on account of their colour, to be alternately laughed at or hounded for their "degrading habits" and forcibly excluded from the ranks of

the “pure white strains.” The enactment of the White Australia policy, momentarily off centre-stage, was waiting in the wings. In 1886, the drama *Voices of the Night*,<sup>48</sup> written by Thomas Somers (a pen-name used by parliamentarian Thomas Walker [1858–1932]), “included three Chinese from Lower George Street and a cook who turned a cat into rabbit pie ...”<sup>49</sup> Two years later, the drama *Hue and Cry*,<sup>50</sup> written by George Darrell (1841–1921), featured Charles Brown as ‘Ah Wong’ in “a clever impersonation of a typical Chinese vegetable hawker,”<sup>51</sup> while in 1889, the drama written by Somers and co-author Alfred Dampier (1847–1908), *Marvellous Melbourne*,<sup>52</sup> later rewritten and retitled *Slaves of Sydney*,<sup>53</sup> depicted a scene which

moves to a Chinese gambling den ... and ... gives opportunity for covering all the attractions of Melbourne, including a Chinese opium den ...<sup>54</sup>

Despite the unflattering depiction, racist humour was not far beneath the surface, with one character, the Chinese market gardener Hang Hi, proclaiming “Look ‘ere it’s a burnin’ shame to let John Chinaman waller in luxury in Australia while the wukkin’ man ‘as dry bread.” Hang Hi is one of the chief sources of comedy with his speech impediment and disingenuous impudence.<sup>55</sup>

The latter years of the century also saw the golden age of the spectacular pantomime. *Aladdin*,<sup>56</sup> from the book by E. W. Royce, adapted in Australia by Toso Taylor with lyrics by Jay Hickory Wood and music by Edward Jones, to some extent typified stage productions throughout this period by amiably combining characters from the Middle East, China and Japan in confused settings. Characters from the Middle East (“Pekoe, “The Grand Vizier’s Son”) mingled with Chinese (“Chop Chop, Emperor of China”), Japanese (“Tokio Beauties”), and Chinese and Japanese fairies. Inexplicably, the “beauties” had recognisably Chinese names.<sup>57</sup> The sets, representing “The Beautiful Scenery of the Far East, [were] designed and painted by Phil [Phillip W.] Goatcher and W. R. [William Rowland] Coleman [1864–1932],” with “Magnificent Japanese and Chinese Costumes by Alias, of Paris and London.” Critics remarked on the attributes of the sets, drawing particular attention to their striking colour:

The scenery of this [Sydney] production does much credit to Mr. John Brunton ... the airy, light, picturesque marketplace of Pekin, and the gorgeous cave of glittering jewels ...; the garden of the emperor’s palace ... and the dainty willow pattern plate scene ... [Who] has not accomplished more thoughtful or vivid work than this? ... It is exceptionally good in idea, it shows imagination and the touch of a true artist, and it has admirable colour.<sup>58</sup>

An integral part of the performance was the “Pekin Swell’ dance in the first act, performed by a dozen girls attired as Chinese ‘mashers’.”<sup>59</sup> It was

**Figure 10**

Program cover, “*Aladdin*,” Theatre Royal, Sydney, 1902 (Collection: National Library of Australia, Canberra)



<sup>47</sup> *Bobemia* (Melbourne), 7 Jan. 1892, p.13.

<sup>48</sup> Royal Standard Theatre, Sydney, 24 July 1886.

<sup>49</sup> Margaret Williams, *Australia on the popular stage 1829–1929, an historical entertainment in six acts* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.150.

<sup>50</sup> Princess’s Theatre, Bendigo, 8 Apr. 1888; also performed: Opera House, Melbourne, 28 Nov. 1891.

<sup>51</sup> Williams, *Australia on the popular stage*, p.176 and “Amusements,” *Argus* (Melbourne), 28 Nov. 1891, p.16.

<sup>52</sup> Alexandra Theatre, Melbourne, 19 Jan. 1889.

<sup>53</sup> Theatre Royal, Sydney, 13 May 1893.

<sup>54</sup> Williams, *Australia on the popular stage*, pp.150–3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Theatre Royal, Sydney, 26 Dec. 1889; OVER

**Figure 11**

Group of fan-carrying, kimono-clad children featured in the *Fan Ballet* from *Djin Djin* (Collection: National Library of Australia, Canberra)



/parallel performance at the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, 26 Dec. 1889; revived: Sydney, 1895, and as *Aladdin, Junior*, Mar. 1902.

<sup>57</sup> Tom Mi, Ho Fi, Hi Ling, We Lung, Hi Chung, Lou Chong.

<sup>58</sup> Critic, "Amusements," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Dec. 1889, p.6.

<sup>59</sup> 'Mashers' (slang): persons with affected manners who frequented music-halls and fashionable promenades; hence, 'mashing-market', the place to be seen.

<sup>60</sup> Critic, "Amusements," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 Dec. 1889, p.6.

<sup>61</sup> Audrey North, *Australia's fan heritage* (Brisbane: Boolarong Publications, 1985), p.xiii.

<sup>62</sup> Charlotte M. Salwey (née Birch) (with introduction by William Anderson, FRCS), *Fans of Japan* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1894).

<sup>63</sup> Princess's Theatre, Melbourne, 26 Dec. 1895; also performed at the Lyceum Theatre, Sydney, 28 Mar. 1896, and at the Opera House, Wellington, New Zealand, 27 Dec. 1897; revived: Sydney, 1901.

described as "a neat and attractive dance ... but the 'hit' in this direction is made by a fan ballet in the last act. This ballet is full of grace ..."<sup>60</sup>

Fans as stage accessories played an important part in the spectacle of theatrical performances. North has noted that:

By 1870 fans from Japan were being imported into Australia and most middle-class houses had them. Amateur Japanese theatricals used them and school children performed fan dances along with the maypole and flag drill.<sup>61</sup>

It should not be forgotten that these small objects were indispensable outside the theatre and were items of considerable international trade importance. With respect to Britain, by 1891 Charlotte Salwey was able to confirm:

Japanese goods have become almost an essential to us. They are to be seen in the most secluded habitation. You may go into the homes of peasants who have spent all their lives in some out-of-the-way extremity of an obscure village, and find a Japanese fan in the ubiquitous corner cupboard. Maybe the mother will tell you with pride her sailor son has sent it to her with other treasures from the port of Yokohama.<sup>62</sup>

Ill-ventilated Victorian and Edwardian interiors prior to air-conditioning demanded the fan as a utilitarian yet fashionable addition to the wardrobe. Illustrated magazines of the period feature fans as one of the accepted methods to cope with Australia's often torrid summers. The fan-shape itself was to be utilised by artists as a consciously chosen pictorial format for works of art which referred either in content or style to Japan or China. The year 1895 saw the première in Melbourne of the satirical pantomime, *Djin-Djin; or, The Japanese Boogie Man!*<sup>63</sup> "Djin Djin" in the title was probably adapted from the term 'djinn' (genie, or demon) used by Marcus Clarke in 'Sketches of Melbourne Low Life' in which the author described Chinatown in Little

Bourke Street, Melbourne: “One half of Little Bourke Street is not Melbourne but China. It is as though some ‘djinn’ or genie had taken up a handful of houses from the middle of one of the celestial cities, and flung them down, inhabitants and all, in the antipodes ....” The production, with lyrics by Bert Royle (1861–1929) and J. C. Williamson, music by Léon Caron and additional numbers by G. F. Pack, was subtitled *or, The Great Shogun, Who Lost his Son, and the Little Princess, Who Found Him: A Fairy Tale of Old Japan*. Williamson employed the talents of Royle, and together they fashioned the script, although many sources suggested the sole credit rested with Williamson. The program noted that “Mr. Williamson has completely departed from the recognised canons of pantomime, by the adaption of the idea of an Australian Nobleman, ‘Prince Eucalyptus,’ whose adventures in Japan constitute the story of the play.”<sup>64</sup> Programs and newspaper reports ascribed the libretto to two sources. For the first time in Australian theatre it was clear that the authors had relied on Japanese material— traditional fairy tales. There is no specific mention of book or books, but the plot is clearly intertwined with events from the then-current Sino-Japanese conflict:

[W]hy should not the piece deal with an up-to-date subject? Why, while the memory of the naval battle of Yalu was still fresh in the public mind, should he [Williamson] not stage a Japanese pantomime?<sup>65</sup>

Note: The sea-battle at the mouth of the Yalu River was waged in September 1894 between the Chinese navy and the Japanese fleet..

The actor-manager’s [Bert Royle’s and J. C. Williamson’s] idea was to leave the beaten track by drawing upon the fairy lore of Old Japan, and an extravaganza on somewhat novel lines has resulted.<sup>66</sup>

And again:

[T]he silken thread of the story is never lost to sight, and, by delving in the fruitful sources of Japanese fairy-lore, Messrs. Bert Royle and J. C. Williamson have achieved a vivacious and exhilarating ensemble in which there is a welcome show of novelty ... whilst the ingenious orchestral colouring savours of Japan and the gorgeous East.<sup>67</sup>

The cast list, beside the more traditional pantomime characters, featured some wonderfully inventive personalities with Australia represented by “Prince Eucalyptus,” and Japan by such notorieties as “Hojo-no-Kami,” “Chrysantheme, Fairy Queen of Japan” and the character with an historic namesake, “Oda Nobunaga.”

The scenes presented offer an important insight into the image of Japan as appreciated by the audience. The sets, “Presenting a beautiful Series of Characteristic Japanese Pictures and Remarkable Transformation Effects,” were

<sup>64</sup> *Djin-Djin souvenir programme* (Sydney: Marcus & Andrew, 1896), p.[1].

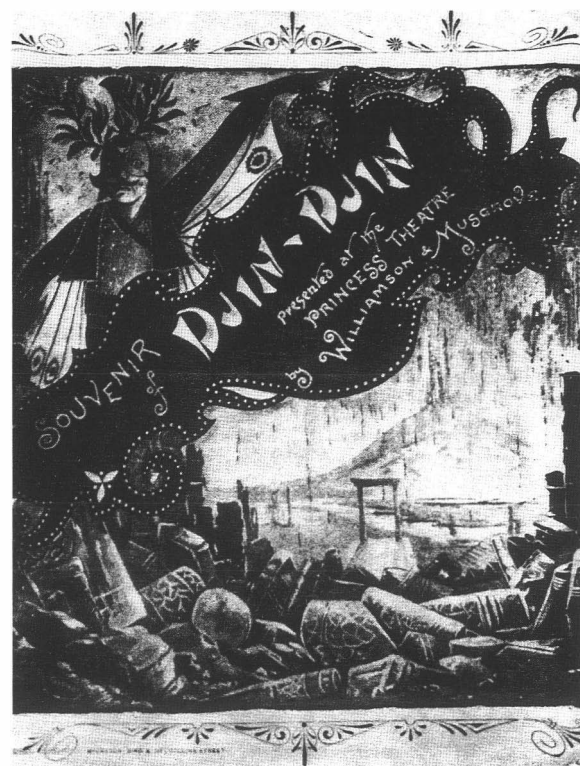
<sup>65</sup> *Souvenir of Djin-Djin* (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird & Co., 1895), p.3.

<sup>66</sup> “Amusements,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 Mar. 1896, p.10.

<sup>67</sup> “Amusements,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 Mar. 1896, p.3.

**Figure 12**

Program cover: “*Souvenir of Djin Djin*,” *Princess’s Theatre, Melbourne* (Collection: National Library of Australia, Canberra)



<sup>68</sup> Reports and drawings which detailed a devastating earthquake in Japan during 1891 had appeared in the *Illustrated Australian News* (Melbourne), 1 Jan. 1892, pp.17–18.

<sup>69</sup> “Amusements,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 Mar. 1896, p.3.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Okiamia’, an inept romanisation of the Japanese term *o-kama* おかま, or male prostitute (also known as *danshō* 男娼). Williamson and Musgrove had clearly not understood the true meaning of the term.

“Painted by a Combination of Great Artists—Geo. Gordon [George Gordon (1840–99)], Phil Goatcher and W. Spong [William Brookes Spong (1851–1929)]” and amongst others, included settings for the almost obligatory “Fan Ballet”; a “Street scene in Nagasaki”; the spectacular “Hall of a Thousand Storks”; “The Shogun’s Court”; and the incredible mechanically-contrived earthquake scene with the collapse of the temple which “terminate[d] with the Eruption of Fuji San.”<sup>68</sup>

As with *Aladdin*, the artists’ renditions of Japanese scenery drew high praise from critics:

[After] depicting the shrine of the Soothsayer, where priests and priestesses prostrate themselves before the colossal image whose glowing eyes shed sardonic approval of the god upon the ceremonial, the scene changes to a vividly picturesque street in Nagasaki, bright with colour, and crowded with gaily dressed idlers. Then follows ... the palace gardens of Hojo no Kami. The terraced-gardens form the foreground, with an extensive view of the course of a river ... spanned by the quaintest of ‘willow-plate’ bridges ...<sup>69</sup>

‘Prince Eucalyptus’ sang:

They call her the belle of Japan, of Japan;  
Her name it is Oyucha San, yucha San;  
Such tenderness lies in her soft almond eyes,  
I tell you she’s just Ichiban.

[Chorus]

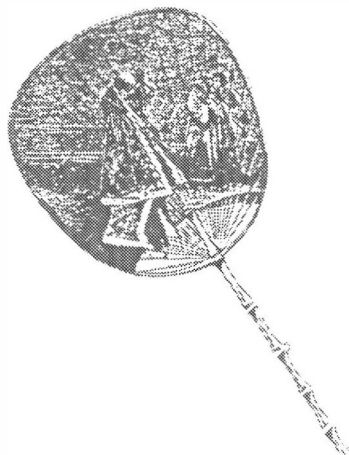
*I care not what others may say,  
I’m in love with Oyucha San.  
Ichiban—In Japan,  
I’m in love with Oyucha San.*

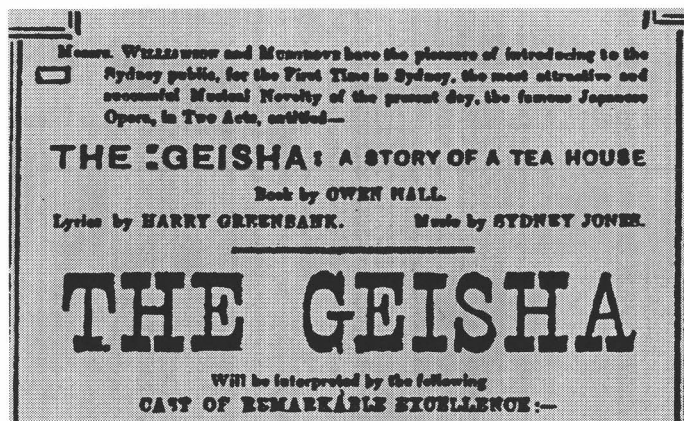
Perhaps she’s too thick at the waist, the waist;  
You see she has never been laced, been laced;  
But her figure divine would a vision outshine,  
And she dresses in exquisite taste.

She plays on the soft Samisen, Samisen;  
She sings me a song now and then, now and then;  
And smiling will say, as I bid her “Good-day,”  
“Sayonara” and please come again.

You may call this a Japanese craze, a craze;  
You may say a weak mind it displays, displays;  
But go to Japan and see Oyucha San,  
And you’ll have it the rest of your days.

There still persisted, with due deference to this as a pantomime, the notion of ‘the East’ as a source of amusement: “Mr. William Elton, ... with a concession to Japanese tastes in the use of hanging sleeves ... [and his] suggestion of readiness to be initiated into the Japanese art of flirting with a fan [a female mannerism] was inexpressively ludicrous.”<sup>70</sup> “‘Okiamia’ Coleman,”<sup>71</sup> dressed as a geisha, provided cross-dressing humour as a counter





to Elton's character, that of a foppish English groom—an interesting parallel to the traditional reversal of sex roles in western pantomime characters.

Other comic operas and farces which claimed eastern culture as their subject matter were seen in 1896 in both Adelaide and Sydney. *The Mandarin*<sup>72</sup> and *A Trip to Chinatown*<sup>73</sup> proved a source for popular song-sheets.

Two years later, in 1898, the musical comedy-cum-operetta *The Geisha; or, A Story of a Tea House*<sup>74</sup> opened in Melbourne. The production fared well in Australia. An assortment of correctly titled young ladies, with the suffix 'San' acted out a complex plot which carried the implicit message that Japanese women could be utilised as sexual playthings. This theme, common to many productions, was exemplified in the opera *Madame Butterfly*. When *Geisha* was staged in New York, photographs of Japanese scenery inspired the painting of the backcloths, while in England the important Japanophile Arthur Diósy (1856–1923) was consulted in much the same way Mitford and the Japanese Village in London provided assistance to Gilbert and Sullivan for *The Mikado*.

The cast-list indicated a growing consistency in the naming of Japanese characters—"Captain Katana" (literally, Captain Sword), "Marquis Imari" (a term associated with Japanese ceramic ware), and numerous geisha—but still retained "Wun-Hi" as the comic Chinaman and proprietor of the 'tea house'.<sup>75</sup> Two acts, one set in "The Tea House of Ten Thousand Joys" and the other, the "Chrysanthemum Fete in the Palace Gardens," were complemented by a "Gorgeous Japanese wardrobe specially made in London for this Production." The action of the play, set in "Time—The Present," "[took] place in Japan, outside the treaty limits." Whilst in Sydney, "The Vestibule Decorations [were] in the form of a Japanese Pavilion, by Messrs. T. O. Sada & Co, Pitt-st." This Japanese company also made capital out of advertising "The Japanese Art

Figure 13

Notice introducing the cast of *The Geisha* (left), and program cover for the performance at Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney, 1899 (below) (Collection: National Library of Australia, Canberra)



<sup>72</sup> Theatre Royal, Adelaide, 19 Apr. 1896.

<sup>73</sup> Lyceum Theatre, Sydney, 1896; revived Mar. 1902.

<sup>74</sup> Princess's Theatre, Melbourne, 17 Dec. 1898; also performed at Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney, 9 Feb. 1899.

<sup>75</sup> The term 'tea house' was an understood euphemism for 'brothel'. The chorus took on added meaning when Miss Marie Lloyd sang the refrain in London:

Ev'ry little Jappy chappie's gone upon the  
Geisha,  
Trickiest little Geisha ever seen in Asia!  
I've made things hum a bit, you know,  
since I became a Geisha,  
Japanesey, free and easy Tea house girl!

<sup>76</sup> Williamson & Musgrove (with commentary by John Sanders), *A souvenir of The Geisha* (Melbourne: Troedel & Co., 1898).

<sup>77</sup> Criterion Theatre, Sydney, 9 Nov. 1901.

<sup>78</sup> Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne, 21 Dec. 1901.

<sup>79</sup> Princess's Theatre, Melbourne, 30 June 1902.

Exhibition" with an offer of "Eastern Novelties" that would arrive by mail boat. As an example of astute business promotion, jewellers in the city also marketed 'Geisha' accessories especially imported from London which arrived on the all too aptly-named ship, the R.M.S. *Oriental*. In Britain, the same production had spawned the sale of Geisha hats and ties, Geisha whatnots in the shops, and, like other similar productions, contributed a host of souvenir 'Japanesey' illustrated song-sheets, postcards and photographs.

Under the heading "The New Eastern Problem!," which the audience, after reading the review, may have decided was not so "new" after all, the Melbourne program stated:

In a word, for the European visitor who goes to Japan anxious to study it on the spot, the true Eastern Problem is—the Womankind. ... If they ever pray for anything, it is the arrival of a British Man-of-War. ... There are pleasant reminiscences too, of the Pacific Station, recollections of the pretty Kava-makers of Samoa, and of the darker beauties of Tahiti, and the islands by the line which the sub-lieutenant has explored, quite as thoroughly as Becke or Loti. ... But how does it strike the Jewel of Asia [Mimosa San] herself? In the circumscribed vocabulary of her experiences, Lieutenant Fairfax is simply a Man, and therefore a Lover.

In an equally patronising tone the reviewer continued:

Japan must pay a price for joining the comity of nations. ... With the acquisition of fresh territory she must also acquire a fresh code of morals. And so, after long years, the Chief Geisha, and Nami, and all the other "lovely harmless things" must taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They may be better when they have discovered that they are really very naughty little girls, that Wun Hi is a disreputable old man, and that English sailors should never be allowed to come to close quarters.<sup>76</sup>

One can only hope the "moral" lesson was heeded! In Australia during the early years of this century, there followed in rapid succession a number of productions similar in style and content to *The Geisha* and *The Mikado*. These included the comic opera, *Wang*<sup>77</sup> and the musical comedy, *San Toy*; or, *The Emperor's Own*<sup>78</sup> in 1901, and in 1902, the musical comedy *A Chinese Honeymoon*.<sup>79</sup> These culminated in 1903 with the now-revered tragedy

**Figure 14**

*Scenes from A Chinese Honeymoon* (Australasian, 12 July 1902, p.96)



of more musical substance, *Madame Butterfly*,<sup>80</sup> by David Belaszczo and John Luther Long based on a magazine short story by Long of 1898. It was not until 1910 in Sydney that Australians witnessed the opera *Madama Butterfly*<sup>81</sup> with words by Luigi Illica (1857–1919) and Guiseppe Giacosa (1847–1906), after Belasco and Long, and music by Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924). To this day, Cio Cio San personifies for many the discarded female butterfly. There were revivals of this classic in both Melbourne and Sydney during 1913.

Chinese and, particularly, Japanese-inspired productions continued to be popular in Britain around the turn of the century, bolstered by the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 and 1905. The Japan-British Exhibition held at Shepherd's Bush, London, during 1910 provided further incentives, while the musical comedies *San Toy; or, The Emperor's Own* and *The Moonlight Blossom* (both 1899), *A Chinese Honeymoon* (1901), *The White Chrysanthemum* (1905), *The Little Japanese Girl* (1907), *Vision of Japan*, and *The Mousmé* (both 1911), and the play, *The Darling of the Gods* (1903), all popularised images of the 'Far East' through the accessible 'geisha' or lover.

### *Federation, 'the Orient', and Australian Nationalist Theatre*

In the early 1900s, inspired by a fear of Japan's sustained aggression in China, a series of Australian dramas highlighted the possibility of similar events occurring in the country's far north. The north, facing Asia was, and to this day is, considered "vulnerable."<sup>82</sup> Used as a means to gauge public reaction to the then contemporary politics of Asia and Australia, the theatre offered a surprisingly accurate reflection of the popular fears, models and idealised images of countries which alternated between ally and perceived antagonist.

The year 1905 saw the drama *Besieged at Port Arthur*,<sup>83</sup> written by Bland Holt (1853–1942), which "played on fears of Australian vulnerability in introducing a war between Japan and Russia ...".<sup>84</sup> It is recorded that Holt used projected documentary film footage of the Russo-Japanese war during some scenes in place of the more usual back-cloth.

A drama written by Randolph Bedford (1868–1941) that in both title and content best summed up these fears was *White Australia; or, The Empty North*.<sup>85</sup> Since the early years of this century the editorial masthead of *The Bulletin* had been "The National Australian Newspaper. 'Australia for the White man'," and warned repeatedly of the "Mongol hordes" to the north. In a film version of this play entitled *Australia Calls* and directed by Raymond Longford in 1912, *Bulletin* writers drafted the script from *White Australia*, with obliging Sydney Chinese representing the 'yellow peril' and the bombing scenes shot using model aircraft over a simulated city of Sydney.<sup>86</sup> As a national propagandist, Bedford originally gave the work the title *For*

<sup>80</sup> Her Majesty's Theatre, Sydney, 27 July 1903.

<sup>81</sup> Theatre Royal, Sydney, 26 Mar. 1910.

<sup>82</sup> Refer to Douglas Lockwood, *The front door: Darwin 1869–1969* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1974).

<sup>83</sup> Theatre Royal, Melbourne, 12 Aug. 1905.

<sup>84</sup> Williams, *Australia on the popular stage*, p.214.

<sup>85</sup> King's Theatre, Melbourne, 26 June 1909.

<sup>86</sup> Katherine Brisbane, ed., *Entertaining Australia: an illustrated history* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1991), p.157.

**Figure 15**

Editorial masthead of the *The Bulletin*, 1908



<sup>87</sup> Williams, *Australia on the popular stage*, pp.237–42.

<sup>88</sup> Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian theatre*, p.44.

<sup>89</sup> Williams, *Australia on the popular stage*, p.242.

*Australia*—or, *The White Man's Land*. Considered by the author to be his most important play, it “explored the parallel possibility of Australia’s being invaded through the Northern Territory, the empty north of the title ... with Japan and China vying for the possession of Australia ....” The invasion of Australia by an Asian force takes place in the play initially through Darwin, with a “spirited fight at Chinatown, Port Darwin [in the Joss House], ... and the Japanese fleet in the beautiful harbour is sunk with celerity, the curtain falling with the triumphant march of the Australian troops.”<sup>87</sup> The plot also called for “an airship travelling through cloudland at an indefinite height above the earth and subsequently hovering over Sydney” to drop bombs on the enemy fleet at anchor in Sydney Harbour.<sup>88</sup> This was eerily prophetic of the historical reversal of fortunes in Darwin on 19 February 1942 and the midget Japanese submarine attack in Sydney Harbour on the night of 31 May that same year.

*Reaping the Whirlwind*, dedicated to “Australia: Nearest and Dearest: The Jewel of the South” and subtitled *an Australian Patriotic Drama for Australian people*, written by Francis Hopkins (1849–1916) but never performed, was, according to Williams, “a surprisingly modern and realistic three-act drama on the same subject [as *White Australia*, which,] though published in the same year, was not able to find a manager to take it up.”<sup>89</sup> Characters listed in the cast leave no doubt as to the ethnic origin of the protagonists—‘Baron Kokura’, ‘Sameda’, ‘Colonel Koyada’, ‘General Mosaku’ and ‘Wong’. In a slim volume published by the author in 1909 the climax of the play is dramatically summed up by two leading characters:

*Wyndham*: The British Government, this morning, issued a proclamation suspending the operation of the Aliens Exclusion Act throughout Australia!

*Hammerton*: The Asiatics will enter this country without firing a shot! Oh! My God!

[*Final Curtain (slow)*]

In 1911, *My Mate*, a drama written by Edmund Duggan (1866–1938) and billed as “a bush love story,” opened in Melbourne.<sup>90</sup> Williams drew the important distinction between the revised nationalist attitude towards the Aborigines and that reserved for the Chinese, noting that:

a play with so attractive a portrait of an Aboriginal in Bunney, should also include several xenophobic references to the white Australia policy and the unpatriotic practice of “upholding the Chinese,” ... . “If I had my way, I’d give the coloured races 24 hours to leave Australian shores”—a reference to the Asians rather than the Aborigines, with whom he [Dolf] and Jess cheerfully share their picnic a moment later.<sup>91</sup>

The following year, the drama *The Girl of the Never Never*,<sup>92</sup> written by Jo Smith (no dates) and again set in the north of Australia, reaffirmed the White Australia policy and cast the Japanese as the villains of the piece. The setting was the Gulf of Carpentaria, “where the vulnerability to invasion was felt to be most acute,” with characters who pronounced with clarity, “We’re going to keep this country and we’re going to keep it white.” The plot revolved around the “fear of invasion [which] is confirmed when the villain conscripts a Japanese, Kami, into his service, and their escape across the Strangways River in full flood is the chief sensation.” Symbolically, as Williams has noted, the “set description is for ‘a turbulent stream of yellow water rushing towards the footlights’—a powerful but perhaps unintentional visual image of the play’s theme.”<sup>93</sup>

Not all productions of this period played on such melodramatic, racist emotions. To offset these there remained a substantial number of fantasies which incorporated a more decorative vision of Asia. With menace less immediate, remoteness and glamour reasserted themselves. Even dramas were set “in the present” with the characters engaged in normal, less threatening pursuits.

In 1907 a comedy, *The Blue Moon*, written by Harold Ellis and Percy Greenbank with music by Howard Talbot and Paul A. Rubens, presented a cast which geographically spanned west to south-east Asia and featured Burmese, Thai and Indian costumes. The comedy was performed in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney.<sup>94</sup> In Adelaide, the reviewer described the performance, which had

scenes set in the silken East, bringing with it a breath of flowers and spices and the beauty of Oriental magnificence ..., and there is a plentiful supply of the lovely Burmah girls, who are described as sitting by the ‘old Moulmein pagoda’.<sup>95</sup>

Adelaide also saw the première of the operetta *The Grey Kimona*, with a cast which included the “Damio of Kissi-Kissi” and “His Daughter, Kissi-me.”<sup>96</sup> The spelling of ‘kimona’ for *kimono* appears to be of Australo-American derivation. In 1888 ‘kimonas’, items of clothing, were offered for sale at Finney, Isles and Co., Brisbane. In the United States, the sheet-music “Kimona Girl: Japanese March and Two Step” was published in 1904. *The Grey*

<sup>90</sup> King’s Theatre, Melbourne, 4 Feb. 1911.

<sup>91</sup> Williams, *Australia on the popular stage*, p.237.

<sup>92</sup> King’s Theatre, Melbourne, 4 Feb. 1912.

<sup>93</sup> Williams, *Australia on the popular stage*, pp.243–4.

<sup>94</sup> Princess’s Theatre, Melbourne, 22 June 1907; also performed at the Theatre Royal, Adelaide, 2 Sept. 1907, and Her Majesty’s Theatre, Sydney, 25 Nov. 1907.

<sup>95</sup> “Amusements,” *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 2 Sept. 1907, p.9.

<sup>96</sup> Theatre Royal, Adelaide, 28 Sept. 1907.

**Figure 15**

Advertisement for *M. Butterfly* (Canberra Times, 10 June 1993)

**The Foreign Affair  
Canberra has been  
waiting for, starts  
this week!**

**M. BUTTERFLY**

Harry M. Miller, Melbourne Theatre Company and Prime Television present  
David Henry Hwang's Tony Award-winning play

**M. BUTTERFLY**

Starring Robert Grubb and introducing D. Yap

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Saturday 12 June, 2pm	112 seats
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*Kimona*, an "original Japanese operetta" with music by F. Wynne-Jones and lyrics by the artist D. H. Souter (1862–1935), had been published by William Brooks & Co. Ltd, Sydney in 1902 and was later performed by Pollard's Opera Company in Adelaide. The stage setting was "both artistic and appropriate," with the costuming "in true Japanese style." The "backcloth represented a stretch of water, with a pagoda in the distance, while the foreground was rich with cherry blossoms." As to the musical contribution, "the most popular [lyrics were] by Rosie Fitzgerald and her six miniature maids in willow-pattern attire."<sup>97</sup>

17 May 1913 saw O'Hana San & Company,<sup>98</sup> direct from London, present "an elaborate scene—'A Vision of Japan'" at the Tivoli Theatre, Sydney. On 2 May 1914, the musical comedy *The Mayor of Tokio* was presented at the Adelphi Theatre, Sydney. *The Willow Tree*,<sup>99</sup> "a fantasy of Japan in three acts," featured a setting in "A Garden House in the Grounds of Mr Geoffrey Fuller, Merchant, in one of the smaller Cities of Japan," and the "Legend of the Princess of the Willow Tree [was] told by Old Tomotada, who carved her Image." The year 1921 saw the Tivoli Theatre, Melbourne, stage the extravagant "musical tale of the East," *Chu-Chin-Chow*,<sup>100</sup> written by the Australian actor-director-manager, Oscar Asche (1871–1936) with music by Frederick Norton, that presented the main character 'Chu Chin Chow of China'. This work, which had earlier had its première in Britain, brought world fame to Asche and a certain credibility to his belief that his central character was an exception to the demeaning stereotype of Chinese as portrayed on the stage.<sup>101</sup> The following year, Sydney theatre-goers saw *East of Suez* at the Criterion Theatre and the fantasy *Cairo* at Her Majesty's Theatre. On 13 April 1929, the ballet *Oriental Impressions* was presented at the Theatre Royal, Sydney, incorporating "three miniature tableaux, based on the traditional dances of Japan and India ... ."

<sup>97</sup> "Amusements," *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 30 Sept. 1907, p.9.

<sup>98</sup> Cohen has noted that this performance received considerable attention in London during its première in 1911. O'Hana San and her company were accused of not being Japanese, but rather a "bad American imitation." The libel suit had to be retracted when it was noted that "O Hana San was English and had devised the act in Tōkyō where she procured the dresses and effects."

<sup>99</sup> Criterion Theatre, Sydney, 9 Feb. 1918; also performed at the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, 27 Apr. 1918.

<sup>100</sup> Also performed at the Grand Opera House, Sydney, 26 Mar. 1921; revived: Theatre Royal, Sydney, 26 May 1923.

<sup>101</sup> It should be noted, however, that by the late 1920s he seemed to hold diametrically opposed views. Following a visit to Australia, his autobiography recorded, "Already in the North of Australia the Chinese and the Japanese are percolating into the country .... And brown and yellow are continually landing on the coast. Thursday Island is practically Japanese." [Oscar Asche], *Oscar Asche: his life—by himself* (London: Hurst & Blackett, [1929]).

Despite this concentration of diversionary pieces, some theatre continued to reflect the crueller world of innuendo and racist stereotype. *The Golden Shanty*,<sup>102</sup> a drama based on the short story by Edward George Dyson (1865–1931), related how a group of Chinese fossickers, who had discovered that the bricks of the Shamrock, a goldfields hotel, had been made with clay rich in gold, steal the building brick by brick. In this piece the Chinese were still portrayed as “wily Celestials.” In direct contrast, another drama presented scenes in which the “entire action ... takes place in China, in and near the City of Hong Kong.” *Mr Wu*,<sup>103</sup> the program mentioned, dealt “with life in Hong Kong and Kowloon (China), and is most gorgeously mounted.”

### *Asia and Australian Theatre: Epilogue*

A procession of negative experiences in the Antipodes with the Chinese (1850s to 1900s), the Japanese (1890s, then 1930s, and again in 1940s), Korea (1950s), Malaysia (1950s), Vietnam (1960s–70s), Cambodia (1970s–80s) and, most recently, China (1989) has taken its toll on public attitudes to the peoples and cultures of these countries. Many of the confrontations occurred as a result of open hostility outside Australia. From the nineteenth century on, Asian peoples tended to be viewed by the greater part of the Australian population as aggressors, labelled with unbecoming names,<sup>104</sup> and now most recently spoken of as poverty-stricken refugees. Not surprisingly, the images were hardly those which promoted positive cultural understanding or ready acceptance. During the last century, Japan, in particular, has been favoured by Australia over all other Asian countries, due initially to the perceived non-threatening number of immigrants as compared to the Chinese, and, it could be argued, her aesthetic contributions to international art movements. This affair with the ‘Far East’ cooled under the threat of attack associated with the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–95, and came to an abrupt end on the declaration of war with Japan in 1941. The post-war Australia-Japan relationship has shown a dramatic improvement, with the recovery of trade in a relatively short time, and now encompasses ‘sister-state’ and ‘sister-city’ relationships and numerous cultural exchanges.

As Alison Broinowski perceptively observed:

So has anything changed? Are we still fascinated by Asia as Illicit Space? Are we just moving Illicit Space, as the value of the Australian dollar declines, to countries where it still gives men power? Now that Japan has priced itself out of the market, Japanese sex tourists join Western men in the Nameless Nightclub in the Philippines, Thailand and perhaps, next, in the South Pacific. Now the opprobrium of miscegenation has given way to the danger of AIDS. Is the image of the West as male and the East as female still with us?<sup>105</sup>

In June 1993, Canberra witnessed David Henry Hwang’s play *M. Butterfly* that first opened on Broadway in 1988. This drama explored sexual exploit-

<sup>102</sup> Palace Theatre, Sydney, 30 Aug. 1913.

<sup>103</sup> Adelphi Theatre, Sydney, 11 July 1914; also performed at the Palace Theatre, Sydney, 3 Sept. 1914, and Princess’s Theatre, Melbourne, 3 Oct. 1914.

<sup>104</sup> The formation of Australian slang, with its many expressions of cultural rejection (rarely approval), underscores racist attitudes to Asian peoples. The most frequently heard date from the nineteenth century, and many are still used today: [for Chinese] ‘Celestials’, the ‘Celestial Empire’, ‘Chinaman’, ‘Chinaman’s luck’, ‘Chinatown’, ‘Chink’, ‘Chinkie’, ‘Chow’, ‘John Chinaman’, ‘Mongols’, ‘Paddy Chinaman’, ‘Slants’, ‘Slopes’ or ‘Tartar hordes’; and [for Japanese] ‘Jap’ or ‘Nip’. More recent is the racial cry, ‘Asians Out!’. See Lachlan Strachan, “The luck of a Chinaman: images of the Chinese in popular Australian sayings,” *East Asian History* 3 (June 1992).

<sup>105</sup> Broinowski, “Butterfly phenomenon.”

<sup>106</sup> The play was based on a true story—that of the French diplomat Bernard Boursicot.

*Darryl Collins*

Adviser  
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Phnom Penh  
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ation and betrayed love, revealing that the oriental butterfly (this time male) is alive and transformed yet again through theatre.<sup>106</sup> It flutters still. The history of stage depiction of the 'mysterious East' must extend valuable clues and lessons to those Australians who are currently preoccupied in seeking the 'real' Asia. Instead of a 'clever country' well-versed in the cultures of our Asian neighbours, Australia has tended to maintain a structure of ignorance which is only now beginning to disappear. The Sydney-based photographer William Yang's illustrated monologue *Sadness*, presented in Canberra later the same year, wove together the rediscovery of his Australian-Chinese heritage with themes of contemporary concern in Australia: sexuality, friendship, AIDS and death. Unquestionably, this moving monologue resulted in the audience having to face important current racial issues, and in so doing, perhaps partially begin to atone for the theatrical escapism of the past.

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