

Role-call

La Belle Époque is created, directed and performed by:

David Adamson, Joceline Adamson, Ian Bennett, Maimu Berg, Yucel Biricik, David Bousquet, Angela Brewer, David Crowe, Jean Degert, Grégoire de Victor, Isabelle Dousset, Catherine Dreyfus, Imogen Hattenville, Louis Hattenville, Nell Hattenville, Christian Hientzelmann, Paula Hinchy, Banu Karamanoğlu, Selina Kenny, Julia Laffranque, Oscar Laffranque, Tobias Laffranque, Elena Malagioni, Roger Massie, Ann Meyer, Tina Mulcahy, Bridget O'Loughlin, Maria Oreshkina, Louise Palmer, Simon Palmer, Edmond Perrier, Edouard Perrier, Lucy Perrier, Maria Psarrou, Sabine Rinck, Milica Sajin, Doris Schaal, Mónica Soler-Pérez, Martin Switzer, Janis Symons, Martyn Symons, Andrew Tattersall, Richard Thayer, François Thouvenin, William Valk, Julie Vauboin, Armelle Weber, Julia Whitham, Andrew Wright, Jonah Wright, Liam Wright, Marie-Anne Wright, Martin Wright, Owen Wright.

Backstage

Michèle Adamson, Morgane Agez, Dianne Bartsch, Hazel Bastier, Lois Ceredig, Sara Rekar.

Wardrobe

Marie-Claude Leroux, with the help of Janis Symons and Julie Vauboin.

Technical team

Albin Bernard, Richard Cruse, Hal d'Arpini, Carlos Hernández, Jeannine O'Kane, Rob Simmons.

Front-of-house/bar

Claire Armstrong, Guido Brockmann, Pelin Iscan, Marloes Kerstens, Michèle Lotz, Lourd McCabe, Dave Parrott, Milica Sajin.

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A variety show from Tagora

Cube noir Koenigshoffen, Strasbourg

13-15 December 2013

18-20 December 2013



Programme

Our programme is in three parts, with a twenty-minute interval at each break. Your mistress of ceremonies, Bridget O'Loughlin, will be guiding you from one act to the next, but here is a brief glimpse of what's in store.

Part I

In which we meet our dance troupe, The Belle Hops; discover the best Chinese laundry in Hertfordshire; learn how a small incident can lead to a life of crime; admire the sights of suburban London; and thrill to the emotion and drama of our first playlet of the evening, *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Part II

We begin by singing the praises of one of our favourite tipples; continue with the derring-do of The Fortissimo Family; and, between two fine examples of *chanson française*, relive Aino and Herman's experiences of Strasbourg in La Belle Époque. Part II concludes with the story of *Pretty Penny* – a traditional Victorian melodrama with curiously modern echoes.

Part III

Look out for surprise special effects in our opening song, which is followed by a critique of the West Clare Railway system in rural Ireland. We then meet La Diva de l'Empire before being transported to Dickensian London for *A Christmas Carol* – or two. 🍷

The music hall tradition

Tagora asked J.R. Hayter, veteran music correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, to give us a few thoughts on music hall, and what it stands for. He writes:

In the late 1950s, when I was in my teens, my parents took me to see the Crazy Gang, at the Victoria Palace. Some of the humour and sentimental songs were familiar from the BBC Light Programme, but not the accompanying bawdiness, which would have been quite unacceptable on the wireless in those strait-laced days. The audience rocked with laughter. So did my mother. She was too young to remember the music hall, but had heard all about it from her grandmother, a sparky east-ender, who had sat through many performances at the old Hackney Empire.

The origins of music hall are lost in the mists of time. Suffice it to say that "the stage", in its broadest sense, has always offered the ordinary man and woman an opportunity to mock convention and laugh at their so-called betters. And there lay its essence: it was popular entertainment, not high art.

Some date the music hall era from roughly 1850 to 1960, although BBC television's *The Good Old Days* continued to draw an appreciative audience well beyond that. Its heyday was the late Victorian and early Edwardian period – say the 1880s to the outbreak of the First World War.

Du café-concert au music-hall

De Paris, notre correspondante spéciale, Louise St-Albèdes, voit les choses d'un autre angle.

Le début du vingtième siècle est marqué par l'apogée, et bien vite le déclin, des caf' conc' et par la montée en puissance des salles de music-hall.

Le café-concert, comme son nom l'indique, était un débit de boissons dans lequel des artistes venaient chanter des romances, des chansons comiques et des airs d'opéras. Certains de ces cafés concerts appelés aussi cabarets sont restés célèbres comme Le Chat noir, Le Carillon, ou Le Lapin à Gill (plus tard Le Lapin agile, nom dont les fidèles de Tagora se souviendront).

Le music-hall, ou théâtre de variétés, était une salle de spectacle où le programme était composé de numéros divers et variés : musique, chansons, sketches comiques ou dramatiques, revues à grand spectacle, acrobaties, attractions, etc. Les salles de music-hall les plus renommées étaient l'Olympia (créé en 1893), l'Empire, l'Apollo,

Music hall was very eclectic. Song and dance certainly, but also comedians, male and female impersonators, mime artists and impressionists, trampoline acts and comic pianists. The names are largely forgotten now; but in their day Marie Lloyd, Dan Leno, Little Tich, Vesta Tilley and a host of others were known and loved (or occasionally hated) by all.

Music hall was often subversive. In an era when certain topics were strictly taboo in most spheres of society, Marie Lloyd sang *She Sits among the Cabbages and Peas*. When called to account by the London County Council's Licensing Committee she demurely changed it to *I Sits amongst the Cabbages and Leeks*, which duly passed muster.

Space prevents me from elaborating further. But for those who wish to know more let me direct you to a surprising source. My old friend Sir John Major is quite unfairly known as the most boring British prime minister of the twentieth century. Not so many of you know, however, that his father, Tom Major-Ball, appeared with his wife, Kitty, on music hall stages across Britain and beyond. John's tribute to his dad – he's called it *My Old Man* – is a fascinating account of music hall from its inception to its demise. Warmly recommended. Enjoy the show. 🍷

l'Alhambra, le Music-hall des Champs-Élysées, Bobino...

Des deux côtés de la Manche

Le terme *music-hall* est anglais. Il y a de nombreux échanges entre 1880 et 1914 entre les deux pays comme l'utilisation en France des *girls* qui vient directement d'Angleterre ou le succès de la revue à la française qui s'impose en Angleterre à partir de 1910.

Des tournées vont vite passer d'un pays à l'autre, grâce à des producteurs de spectacles audacieux. Les artistes vont se produire une saison à Paris, une autre à Londres, une autre à Marseille. Harry Fragson chante en Angleterre un certain nombre de chansons sur Paris et à l'inverse à Paris des chansons sur l'Angleterre. Il joue sur sa double nationalité. Les chanteuses françaises s'exportent très bien en Angleterre. On y apprécie leur côté sexy et leurs chansons à sous-entendus. En France, on apprécie plus les comiques comme Little Tich ou Charles Coborn, ainsi que des danseuses excentriques. 🍷