This Calendar collates information on theatrical performances which received their premieres in Australia between 1 January 1850 and 31 December 1869. It identifies the plays and authors where possible; includes information about the type of subject matter and theatrical genres used in colonial theatre after the goldrushes; gives any publication details about these plays; and includes full information of performance dates and venues, names of performers and names of production personnel (e.g. scenic artists, stage managers, theatre lessees, technical staff).

The data is arranged in FOUR files:

1. **INTRODUCTION AND FORMAT**
   
   (a) Parameters and methodology
   
   (b) The stage writers
   
   (c) Codes and keywords used in the four files
   
   (d) Acknowledgements

2. **ANNOTATED CALENDAR OF PLAYS PREMIERED IN AUSTRALIA 1850-1869: PLAYS** arranged alphabetically by author: see below the CODES and KEYWORDS used in the PLAYS file
3 ANNOTATED CALENDAR OF PLAYS PREMIERED IN AUSTRALIA 1850-1869: PUBLICATIONS arranged alphabetically by author: see below
CODES used in the PUBLICATIONS file

4. ANNOTATED CALENDAR OF PLAYS PREMIERED IN AUSTRALIA
1850-1869: PRODUCTIONS arranged chronologically: see below the
CODES used in the PRODUCTIONS file

(a) Parameters and methodology
The category ‘Australian premiere’ is based upon the criterion of initial performance in
the colonies of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Plays of demonstrably
‘Australian’ content by overseas writers, or by Australian-based playwrights which
premiered overseas (including New Zealand) are not considered ‘Australian’ by this
criterion. This information has been derived from daily searches of the metropolitan
press in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane (the Argus, Sydney Morning Herald and
Brisbane Courier) supplemented by reading of reviews in all available newspapers
published in these centres which are held in the principle public libraries of Brisbane,
Melbourne and Sydney. Where a play exists in manuscript or published form, it has
been read and summarised.

The inclusion of premieres in Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia is
not systematic, nor is that of premieres occurring outside the major metropolitan
centres of the three colonies of Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Hence
provincial theatre and touring patterns during this period, including the important
goldfields activity, remain to be built up by inclusive regional investigation. The
presence of regional and country premieres in this listing indicate either that they have
been supplied by Eric Irvin, or that they have been located in the playbills of the
Coppin-Holt Collection, La Trobe Library.

The information and the impetus for this Annotated Calendar derived initially from
the research of Eric Irvin, published in the ‘Appendix’ to his Australian Melodrama:
Eighty Years of Popular Theatre (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1981). Irvin’s criterion of
initial performance in the Australian colonies, was adopted for this project. However the present research extends Irvin’s criteria to include the genres of pantomime, minstrel shows, burlesque and similar musical theatre, and searches for evidence of fugitive productions in minor metropolitan halls. This has turned up considerably more evidence of colonial theatre ‘writing’ than was available previously, although most of these searches reveal few ascertainable authors’ names, resulting in a plethora of ‘Anons’ and ‘Anon adapts’. While some of this localising activity is tenuous evidence of ‘authorial’ intervention, it does provide chronological indication of localising impulses within post-goldrush theatre industry. Users will be aware that in this historical period the theatrical ‘author’, as currently understood, is a minor contributor to the totality of the theatrical event, with his or her functions largely supplemented and superseded by the play-making contributions of actor, scenic artist, manager and audience. Over the course of the two decades covered in this study, users may discern a more recognisably ‘modern’ authorial presence asserting itself within the industrial paradigm of a colonial theatre consolidating itself in the wake of rapid urbanisation and expansion.

Arguably, there was only a sketchily discernible distinctively ‘Australian’ theatre industry at the commencement of this period. What existed rather was an Australasian colonial industry, based on ceaseless touring of varied material by local and international visiting companies to small and quickly-exhausted population centres. Whereas a small family touring group, such as the Nelson Family, could make a few shows last a number of years before exhausting all potential audiences, more permanent residence in a specific centre meant that material had to be generated more quickly and flexibly, as seen in the case of Fawcett Rowe in Melbourne. By the end of the two decades a more established pattern emerges on the crest of the international wave of enthusiasm for the musical and fantastic forms of extravaganza and then burlesque, plus of course the on-going love of pantomime, melodrama, farce and minstrel shows. Australia’s first opera The Gentleman in Black belongs in this period.
The inclusion of amateur, as well as professional, performances signals some commitment to locally-evolved material amongst resident citizens, for whom touring was not an option but community involvement was paramount. Hence much of the activity annotated here may enable wider study of the incidence of performance of Australasian-generated stage material in parts of Australia not covered in the study, and also abroad: in New Zealand and the other widespread parts of the world routinely traversed by touring troupes.

(b) The stage writers

The playwrights of colonial theatre were mostly situated either in journalism or in the centre or fringes of the theatre industry. The short-lived but promising Frank Soutten, W. M. Akhurst, Marcus Clarke, Garnet Walch, George Ross Morton, Walter Cooper, Mrs Mary Fortune (writing as ‘Waif Wander’), Robert Whitworth, Archibald Murray or George Scott Hough are examples of working journalists whose professional familiarity with political events and topical faits divers enabled them to readily undertake farce writing and burlesque or pantomime localising, and maybe to adventure into more ambitious dramas, including the sensation melodrama whose popularity becomes evident towards the end of this period. The press critics James Smith and J.E. Neild tried their hands at farce and drama. As the files show, the most prolific stage writer of the period (part from Anon) was William Mower Akhurst, who supplied a stream of comic extravaganzas and local-interest pantomimes to Melbourne theatres, many of which were re-staged or toured in other colonies, and even received the accolade of parody by farce and minstrel troupes.

Other colonial playwrights of this period were actors or managers who produced their own material as touring vehicles or to service an increasingly voracious industry. The international career of George Fawcett Rowe (known in Australia as George Fawcett) was launched by his stint at the Melbourne Princess’s during the 1860s. Other such occasional industry writers are Kate Warde, Mrs Alfred Phillips, George Coppin, the minstrel actor Frank Hussey, Joseph Simmons and J. M. Hall.
Other writers were of more literary bent, but managed to persuade managers to mount their plays: Francis Belfield, Richard Henghist Horne, Meyer Isaacs, William Jaffray, and the ‘lady moving in the fashionable circles of Melbourne’ whose oriental parable Secrets of the Harem was performed in 1858. Educational or amateur writing account for Miss Yonge’s school play The Apple of Discord (1865), or Mr Bond’s farce Hard Up for Brisbane’s Volunteer Dramatic Club (1868), in which he of course performed. Much of the personalities engaged in this occasional activity is buried in the categories ‘Anon’ or ‘Anon adapt’ in the PLAYS file. It is mainly evident in topical farces, minstrel shows with their changing gallery of real-life bushrangers, and the regular work of localising and adaptation of mostly English burlesques and pantomimes for specific colonial performance conditions and star actors.

(c) Format of the three files

(1) **PLAYS 1850-1869 arranged alphabetically by author**

The information in PLAYS is classified into 16 FIELDS, filled only where relevant information is available.

**FIELD 1: KEY (KY)**

An arbitrary seven- or nine-symbol code which uniquely identifies a play across all four of the major files. KEYS containing numerical symbols [HARLEQU1, HARLEQU2] have no chronological significance.

**FIELD 2: AUTHOR (AU)**

The commonly-known name of the author is given here [Marcus Clarke, Mrs Alfred Phillips]. If the work is an adaptation from a clearly-stated or inferred source, dramatic or non-dramatic, it is followed by ‘adapt’. Authors whose names are not known are signalled by ‘Anon’.
FIELD 3: NAME USED (NU)
This is employed with unidentified pseudonyms, or with variations of names, e.g. 'George Fawcett' is the name used for 'George Fawcett Rowe' when working in Australia.

FIELD 4: PERSONAL DETAILS (PD)
This distinguishes gender, where known: FX = female; MX = male. Full name and dates of birth and death are supplied where known. Married women are listed under their various known professional and personal names, if they are current at the date specified: [Fiddes, Josephine aka Murray, Mrs Dominick] (aka = 'also known as').

FIELD 5: TITLE (TI)
This supplies the fullest version of the play's title, with colon subtitle, as per press advertisements at the date of premiere [The belle of Brisbane; or, The lady of Queensland]. If it is published under a variant title, this is shown with 'aka' [Paris the prince and Helen the fair; or, The giant horse and the siege of Troy aka The siege of Troy]. If the title altered in subsequent performances, this is signalled by 'aka' [Rangatira Wahena: or The Maori queen aka The Maori Queen].

FIELD 6: DATE WRITTEN/PERFORMED/PUBLISHED (DT)
While the performance date ('perf') is that of the premiere, this publication also contains all Australian plays performed during the 1850-69 period, even if they premiered or were published earlier. The usual signals are (e.g.) 1864perf; 1864pub. Date written ('w') is rarely included unless known from clear external evidence, [Raymond, Lord of Milan: 1863perf, 1847w, 1851pub].

FIELD 7: LENGTH (LG)
This is given in acts and/ or scenes if the play has been read, or from newspaper advertisements.
FIELD 8: CAST (CA)
Where the play has been read in published or manuscript form, cast is classified as female characters (F), male characters (M), children (Child), and Extras for unnamed characters. Although some press advertisements in this period are quite detailed, they are not felt to be sufficiently accurate or stable for their information to be included in this category. Many, particularly in the 1850s, advertise no cast at all.

FIELD 9: MS LOCATION (MS)
If a manuscript exists in a public collection, its location is signalled:
VSL = State Library of Victoria/ La Trobe Library
NML = State Library of New South Wales/ Mitchell Library
ANL = National Library of Australia.

FIELD 10: ABSTRACT (AB)
The flag ‘adaptation’ signals a previous literary source for the play, and is a prompt to scan for detailed information in FIELD 13 (AD: ‘Adaptations’). Where a play has been read, the plot summary derives from the written source. The vast majority of plays of this period are known only from sketchy newspaper accounts, and plot information from these sources is cited with its origin(s). Where authorship is fleetingly advertised or identified in reviews, the exact source enabling identification is indicated.

Genre is always given as per the newspaper advertisements, and no attempt has been made to regularise or impose twentieth-century interpretations of such genre descriptors as comedietta, farce, burlesque, operetta, sketch etc. For scantily-advertised pieces, information is included sufficient to identify it as a distinct play, and uncertainties about the uniqueness of some e.g. minstrel farces are indicated and the searcher referred by KEY to other relevant records.

FIELD 11 HISTORICAL FIGURES (HF)
Where the play includes or adverts to actual historical personages, whether in text or (where ascertainable) through staging or spectacular imagery, they are indicated [Burke, Robert O’Hara; Gardiner, Frank]. Large historical events with multiple or
anonymous characters are signalled thus: [Indian Mutiny]. If the term ‘HISTORICAL’ appears in FIELD 14 (KY: Keywords), it signals that specific persons or events should be found in FIELD 11.

FIELD 12 SPECIAL TYPES (ST)
This distinguishes plays using MUSIC or DANCE, written in VERSE, or categories such as PANTOMIME. CENSORSHIP indicates some official attempt to interfere with the production.

FIELD 13 ADAPTATIONS (AD)
This identifies the specific literary source and author of the present adaptation or localisation, where known from press advertisements or reviews. The terms LIT-EUROPEAN, LIT-AMERICAN or LIT-AUSTRALIAN in FIELD 14 indicate that the immediate provenance of the literary redaction being used by the present performance is to be found in FIELD 13. Conjectural sources are so indicated. Plays with no ascertainable literary source which use public-domain fables are signalled in FIELD 14 merely by MYTH-EUROPEAN, MYTH-ORIENTAL, MYTH-CLASSICAL or FAIRYTALE.

FIELD 14 KEYWORDS (KW)
A restricted range of thematic KEYWORDS is used sparingly throughout the database to indicate topics of potential interest to searchers. Where a play does not clearly signal this content, no KEYWORDS will be included, though some indication of content may be derived from reading the ABSTRACT. Common melodrama themes such as ‘remorse’ or ‘love’ are not insistently signalled, and themes are flagged by KEYWORDS only when they are evidently thematically foregrounded in the text. The KEYWORD ‘THEATRE’ flags paratheatrical references, burlesques and actors’ impersonations of other actors. Note that the KEYWORDS are thematic: the term OPERA signals not the genre of the performance in question, but its selection of the operatic category for (usually burlesque) treatment.
The list of KEYWORDS 1850-1869 is as follows:

ABORIGINAL
ACTING
ADELAIDE
ALCOHOL
AMERICAN
ANGLO-AUSTRALIAN
ARCTIC
ARMY
ARTISTS
BALLARAT
BRISBANE
BUSH-CITY
BUSH
BUSHRANGING
CENSORSHIP
CHINESE
CLASS
CONMEN
CONVICTS
CRICKET
CRIME
EDUCATION
EGYPTIAN
ENGLAND
ESPIONAGE
EUREKA
EXPLORATION
FAIRYTALE
FALLEN-WOMEN
FAMILY
FARMING
FIREMEN
FOLKLORE
FRENCH
GEE Long
GERMAN
GHOSTS
GOLD
GUILT
GYPSY
HISTORICAL
INDIAN
INHERITANCE
INVASION
FIELD 15: COMPILER (CO)
The source of the informant or researcher is indicated by initials. The inclusion ‘EI’ indicates that the play is to be found in Eric Irvin’s original ‘Appendix’ (see above).

FIELD 16: EDITING (ED)
Internal editing codes indicating when the record was last worked on.

(2) Publications 1850-1869 arranged alphabetically by author

FIELD 1: KEY (KY)
As for PLAYS and PRODUCTIONS files.

FIELD 2: AUTHOR (AU)
As for PLAYS and PRODUCTIONS files.

FIELD 3: TITLE (TI)
As for PLAYS and PRODUCTIONS files.

FIELD 4: AUTHOR/EDITOR (AE)
Name of author of book or editor of anthology in which published play is found.

FIELD 5: TITLE OF BOOK (TB)
The title of the publication, whether monograph, journal or anthology.

FIELD 6: PLACE OF PUBLICATION (PL)

FIELD 7: PUBLISHER (PB)

FIELD 8: YEAR OF PUBLICATION (YR)

FIELD 9: NUMBER OF PAGES/PAGE NUMBERS (PP)

FIELD 10: ANTHOLOGY (AN)

FIELD 11: PUBLICATION SIGHTED?
(US) US indicates that the publication recorded has not been sighted.

FIELD 12: EDITING (ED)
As for FIELD 16 in the PLAYS file.
FIELD 13: COMPILER (CO)
As for FIELD 15 in the PLAYS file.

(3) Productions 1850-1869 arranged chronologically

The information is so displayed in order to fulfil the functions of a calendar. Although the extent of any writer’s career cannot thus be discerned at a glance, the output of any particular writer may be traced through the Production files by AUTHOR or by KEY. The proliferation during this early period of the author flags of ‘Anon’ or ‘Anon adapt’ render the chronological approach more suitable, and the temporal development of a well-established colonial theatre industry can be better traced from the format adopted here.

There are 10 FIELDS in the Productions file:

FIELD 1: KEY (KY)
This unique code identifies performances, tours and revivals of a specific play. Searchers are advised to search through the entire period to ascertain the extent of a play’s longevity.

FIELD 2: AUTHOR (AU)
The name of author will be shown as it is in FIELD 2 of the Plays file.

FIELD 3: TITLE (TI)
The title is shown as advertised for the date of the performance(s) in question, with earlier or other titles indicated by ‘aka’. The unique KEY always identifies a specific play with variant titles.

FIELD 4: DATE (DT)
The dates are given as per the numeric formula which runs year, month, day, i.e. 15 November 1852 is given as 18521115. The information gives opening and closing dates, with number of performances during that period (given the industrial practice of stock
companies with plays in repertoire, the consecutive daily runs of en suite programming cannot be assumed).

FIELD 5: STATE/TOWN/.THEATRE
The name of the theatre is given as per the newspaper advertisement of the day, and no attempt is made to flag name changes undergone by any specific theatre building (e.g. Melbourne Haymarket = Duke of Edinburgh). Nor are the many rebuilt or renovated buildings which share an identical name distinguished here. The searcher is referred to:


Eric Irvin, Dictionary of the Australian Theatre 1788-1914 (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985)

Philip Parson and Victoria Chance, Companion to Theatre in Australia (Sydney: Currency/ CUP, 1995).

FIELD 6: COMPANY (CY)
The practice of naming companies domiciled in a specific theatre arrives late in this period; however touring and/or family troupes and minstrel companies are more easily identified by name.

FIELD 7: TYPE (TY)
The performance category of BENEFIT is distinguished, whether for a performer, author or theatre functionary or for charitable fund-raising, since it gives some indication of the prevalence of a practice of considerable contemporary industrial and social importance. The flag INCOMPLETE is used to indicate a partial performance, as when pantomime openings are run without their harlequinades, or vice versa. Searchers are urged to look beyond the initial performance records, especially of long-
running productions, since the tally of BENEFIT or INCOMPLETE performances will add a considerable number to the total.

FIELD 8: EDITING (ED)
As for FIELD 16 in the PLAYS file.

FIELD 9: COMPILER (CO)
As for FIELD 15 in the PLAYS file.

FIELD 10: PERSONS INVOLVED (PI)
This information is derived from the production function descriptions as advertised in the press, in cases – more common in the 1860s than the earlier period – where advertisements are fully informational. Sometimes names of performers are derived from reviews. Names of performers and management are as advertised, and little attempt has been made to regularise or conflate names. Hence frequent confusions such as Young/ Younge and Hyde/ Hydes are given as printed, and woman performers given as per the name they were currently using.

The categorisation of functions does not attempt to bend the descriptions to fit the assumptions of a modernist theatre practice alien to the period under investigation. Hence the searcher is advised to be particularly wary of the coding DR, since it cannot indicate the modern specification ‘director’ in a historical period where this particular function was not so distinguished. The information is intended to be as neutral as possible a record of how the functions of theatrical production and management were then understood, distinguished and evolved.

The PI categories are:

- AM acting manager
- AP appointments
- CO costumes
- CS comic scenes (produced/ devised)
- DA dance arranger/ choreographer
- DR directed by/ under direction of [theatre or performance]
- LS lessee
- LX lighting/ gas/ limelight
More common in the 1870s, but appearing infrequently towards the end of this period may be found:

- AG agent
- BX boxkeeper
- PP prompter
- TR treasurer

(d) Acknowledgements

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Any anomalies or misinterpretations of complex and sometimes sketchy data are my own.

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