

Oscar Asche 1871-1936

Oscar winner

'He was an extraordinary character, perhaps one of the most extraordinary men in the theatrical world. Money meant nothing to him. He made and got through enormous sums. I remember him once telling me that he spent £40,000 on greyhounds when he became a coursing enthusiast. Asche thought nothing of that. He always did things in a big way.'

That's entrepreneur Hugh D. McIntosh remembering riches-to-rags Oscar Asche who, despite his acclaimed Shakespearian productions and his legendary long-running musical, *Chu Chin Chow*, ended his life in penury.

The son of a Geelong publican, John Stanger Heiss Oscar Asche was born on 24 January 1871 and educated at Melbourne Grammar School. He was still in his teens when his Norwegian-born father sent him to study acting with Björn Bjørnson in Oslo, Sweden. When Ibsen advised him to work in his own language, Asche tackled London, continuing his studies and having his Australian accent 'corrected'. He made his stage debut on 25 March 1893 in *Man and Woman* at the Opera Comique, London, with Arthur Dacre and Amy Roselle – the popular husband-and-wife actors who sensationally suicided in Sydney two years later.

Between small parts with the F.R. Benson Company, Asche 'slept rough' and survived on a few tips calling cabs for theatre patrons. His engagements increased, and soon he was earning a good living and playing increasingly important parts. In 1899 he married Lily Brayton, another member of Benson's company; the two were associated in most of Asche's subsequent productions.

Asche was a good athlete and loved cricket: he even played in some minor matches with the Marlylebone Cricket Club. In 1901 he was a great success in Pinero's *Iris*, his first important modern comedy. The following year he joined Herbert Beerbohm Tree's Company and in 1903 played in *Much Ado About Nothing* opposite Ellen Terry. In 1907 he leased His Majesty's Theatre in London; it remained under his management for many years.

MMM

In 1909 the Asche–Brayton company came to Australia under the aegis of Clarke, Meynell and Gunn – a liaison between actors Clyde Meynell and John Gunn, entrepreneur Sir Rupert Clarke and the notorious John Wren, king of the illicit Collingwood 'tote'. They shuffled their shows between the Royal in Melbourne and the Criterion in Sydney, which Wren owned. It was at the Royal that Asche made his Australian debut in *The Taming of the Shrew*. 'What a homecoming it was,' he remembered. 'Nothing, nothing can ever deprive me of that. I had made good and had come home to show them. Whatever the future years hold, nothing can eliminate that. For over five minutes they greeted, shouted at me. Could anyone ever forget that? Hundreds waited in Little Bourke Street by the stage door, and we could scarcely move off in our car.' Later, he and Lily

During his lifetime his art gave immense pleasure to many thousands, and it seems a pity that, in spite of his enormous earnings, he finally died so near to poverty. But the stage, or at least actor-managing, was ever a precarious living.

Wed 11 Aug 1954 33 *The Dandenong Journal*, p11

90th Anniversary Of St. James' Church

"J.H.J." (Toora-din).

SIR, —I read with great interest your article about the early history of St. James' Church, Dandenong, but you omitted mentioning one of the finest clergyman in your list -the Rev. John Carrington, son in-law of Dr. Langley, then Bishop of Bendigo. He was here after Rev. Amos Brazier, who, in my day was one of the finest preachers in the Church of England in Victoria. He was able to preach his sermons *extempo* for 20 minutes to half-an-hour. The Rev. John Carrington used to hold his class at the Parsonage. I was a member and will never forget Mrs. Carrington's afternoon teas. My grandfather, the late Edward Kirkham, grandfather of Frank Kirkham, of Hallam, took the first pews when the church was completed in the Rev. Crawford's time.

I still recall an amusing incident in church. The late Mr. Chandler was verger for many years —and very strict —and one Sunday morning a little fox terrier sneaked into church. Mr. Chandler went after him but his task wasn't made any easier by the ladies, who tried to hide the pup under the long skirts that were the fashion in those days. At last he found him, gave him a crack with his walking stick, and the dog ran howling up the aisle in the middle of Rev. Brazier's sermon. I can still re-call the look on Mrs. Facey's face. Mrs. Facey, as Miss Shaw, conducted the private school at Masters, one of her pupils being that grand fellow, Arthur Clarke. One of Arthur's school-mates was Oscar Asche, the famous actor.

Then in the days of the Rev. Carter, Mrs. Carter always had a front pew and when he was overdoing the sermon, she would cough — and that was the cue for him to finish!

I have very many happy memories of the old church. In my time I had 14 first prizes from the Sunday School.

The Griffen family was one of the most versatile ever to attend the church. Harry, Paul, Charles, Bass and Gerald were all vocalists who used to assist in the choir on special occasions at all churches, including the nearby Catholic Church in Fr. Quilter's time.

In an Australian tour of 1909-10 a variety of parts played by Mr. Asche included Petruchio in "The Taming of the Shrew" and Shylock. Another visit to Australia was in 1911-12, when one of his parts was Haaj in "Kismet." In both seasons there was also fine work by Mrs. Asche. Returning to Australia in 1922, Mr. Asche produced and appeared in "Cairo," "Chu-Chin-Chow," "The Taming of the Shrew," "Othello," "Julius Caesar," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Spanish Main," "Iris," and "The Skin Game."

After his return to London Mr. Asche was associated with a number of productions which were not successful financially. His autobiography—"Oscar Asche: His Life"—was published in 1929.

In recent years Mr. Asche appeared in several British film productions, including "Two Hearts in Waltz Time," "Gay Love," and "Scrooge," in which he played the "Spirit of Christmas Present." "The Private Secretary," another British and Dominion film release, and his latest picture, will be screened in Melbourne shortly. He had been cast to appear in "In the Soup," with Ralph Lynn, but his illness prevented him from taking part in the film.

Fri 2 Dec 1938 **30** *Border Chronicle (Bordertown), p6*

THIS THAT and the OTHER – A Weekly Letter

CHU CHIN CHOW

I suppose that every Australian soldier (and likewise every Canadian, New Zealand, South African, or American soldier) who ever had a spare quid in his pocket in London during the war—and some that didn't even, possess the quid!—went to see Oscar Asche (not to mention his company!) in "Chu Chin Chow," a show which had one of the phenomenally long runs of theatrical history.

Asche died a little while ago, and although he made £200,000 out of Chu Chin Chow," he died leaving only £20/16/4. His Will, made in 1927, when published, disclosed that he had left everything he had to Miss Rose Marguerite Martin, of Kent. Thomas Stanger Heiss Oscar Asche—that was his full name—was actor-manager, producer, and author. He lived during the latter part of his life in Maida Vale, London, and died at Bisham, Berkshire, on March 23rd, 1936. Probate was granted to Miss Martin last month.

He wrote "Chu Chin Chow" and acted in it, and it was the most successful of all musical comedies. It ran at His Majesty's Theatre longer than the period of the War—for four years and eleven months.

Five years later, he went through the bankruptcy court, when a farm in Gloucestershire, on which he spent £100,000 of his "Chu Chin Chow" profits was taken over by the Official Receiver. He first became a prominent stage figure in "Kismet" in 1911. Twice in the earlier days of his long career he had been reduced to sleeping on the Embankment in London.

Oscar Asche was born in Victoria, and he returned to Australia with his company for, I think, two very successful tours before the war, and one afterwards. I saw him playing Shakespeare at the Theatre Royal in Adelaide before the War, when he played opposite his wife, Lily Brayton, in "The Taming of the Shrew." Then he made a huge success out of spectacular musical comedies such as "Kismet" and, later, "Chu Chin Chow," but a return to that type of thing in "Cairo," after the War, did not take on too well, and he gradually went under financially. Not so many years ago I saw him in an English film, when, although immensely fat and bloated, he took his part with consummate skill and artistry.

13 Jun Row in theatre after The Skin Game.
3 Jul Melbourne citizens' farewell to Asche.
? O.A. wrote The Good Old Days.
1929 Oscar Asche By Himself published in London.
1930 Two novels: The Joss Sticks of Chung ; The Saga of Hans Hansen.
1936 23 Mar Asche died at Marlow, England.
1953 30 April Lily Brayton died.

-LJB

Oscar Asche List

Created by Ray Carter, 12 September 2018

There are 2 general biographies followed by items in chronological order.

Mon 14 Jun 1954

The Sun (Sydney), p11
THEY SAID HE'D NEVER MAKE AN ACTOR

1979

Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol.7
Asche, Thomas Stange Heiss Oscar (1871–1936), by L. J. Blake

Also, (probably of very much interest)
"Oscar Asche at Laurel Lodge"
Ray needs to find a source for a copy of this item

Personal details:

Parents' names:	Thomas & Lily Asche	p1, <i>The Argus</i> , 9 Aug 1898 (1)
Date of birth:	24 Jan 1871	Vol.7 <i>Aus. Dic. Of Biography</i> (2)
Older brother:	name unknown	(1)
Married:	Lily Brayton, at Wigan, England	(1)
Leaves Australia:	1889	p11, <i>The Sun (Sydney)</i> , Mon 14 Jun 1954 (3)
Invited to tour Australia	1909	(3)

Timeline*

Aug 1826	Thomas Asche , born at Christiania, Norway
1851	Graduated in law at University of Christiania
27 Aug 1854	Arrived in Melbourne in the <i>Gibson Craig</i> Worked as a Ballarat goldfields trooper and miner, then storekeeper
1855	<u>Marries</u> Jane Wier at his Golden Point home 1 surviving son (name?)
1860	settled in Camperdown as an innkeeper, and was naturalized
(?)	Jane dies
13 Sep 1866	<u>marries</u> Harriet Emma Trear at Christ Church, Geelong daughter of Col. William Trear, who owned Mack's Hotel
1870	became a Geelong councillor
24 Jan 1871	Oscar Asche born at Geelong
1878 to 1882	Educated at Laurel Lodge, Dandenong
1883 (?)	At St James Grammar School
1884	Moved to Melbourne Church of England Grammar School
~1887	Left school at 16 (coincides with family move to Sydney?)
~1890	Goes to Norway to study at Christiania Soon after, moves to London to study speech and acting.
March 1893	first London part
Jun 1899	<u>Marries</u> Lily Brayton
1904	Asche and Lily form a company to play at the <i>Adelphi</i> Theatre
1907	lease <i>His Majesty's</i> Theatre
1909	Asche takes full company for 18-month tour of Australia
1911	2-year season of <i>Kismet</i>
1912	back in Australia with <i>Kismet</i> , running until Aug 1913
31 Aug 1916	<i>Chu Chin Chow</i> , written and produced by Oscar, opens, runs for 5 years, breaking all records. Asche receives £200,000 and £500 weekly (~£130,000)
1917	Produces <i>The Maid of the Mountains</i>
1932	Movie debut in <i>My Lucky Star</i> . Followed by 6 others
1936	Dies in England in 1936 of coronary thrombosis
24 Mar 1871	acquires Mack's Hotel
Nov 1876	moves to Union Club Hotel, Melbourne
1886	moves to Royal Hotel, Sydney
1893	heavy financial losses, sells Royal Hotel stops £10 weekly allowance to Oscar
1896	ran the Wynyard Hotel, Wynyard Square
2 Nov 1898	dies, leaves a son from 1st marriage, 2 sons and 3 daughters from 2nd marriage

*References from the Trove List Oscar Asche, except references from the booklet *History on the Hill*, published by the City of Greater Dandenong

THEY SAID HE'D NEVER MAKE AN ACTOR

A colossus of the stage

THE tall, elderly school-master glared down at the pleading chubby faced youth with the slightly slanting eyes and the wide mouth.

"Certainly not!" he growled. "There would be no use, you sir, in your joining the school's dramatic club — you would never make an actor."

With a deep "ahem" and a flick of his chalky gown he rustled off along the corridor with all the air of a man who had made a decision of world-shaking profundity.

The boy stared after him vacantly as long as he remained in sight.

The Melbourne Grammar School master's face must have been red every time he thought about that incident in later life.

For the youngster who had made the request was none other than Master Oscar Asche, destined in later life to become one of the greatest actors, producers and theatre managers in modern times.

Australian to the marrow, Asche stormed the theatrical heights of his day and captured the citadel of the most sophisticated and discriminating audiences in the world —London.

A gargantuan figure of a man, spluttering with a boisterous Rabelaisian love of life, he strode through the theatres of the world like some colour-frenzied magician from the Arabian Nights dazzling whole populaces with shows of sumptuous and amazing entertainment.

One of the truly great necromancers of the stage, Oscar Asche's very name is still the symbol of splendour in the world of the theatre.

Shakespeare reborn

Asche took Shakespeare's plays — creaking with out-of-date methods of production — and breathing his own blazing fire into them, revealed them as the explosive earthy manifestations they really were.

The father of the modern musical extravaganza, Asche out-Ziegfelded Ziegfeld, when, toward the end of World War 1, he wrote in two weeks, produced in four weeks and ran for five solid, years, the fabulous London stage spectacle — *Chu Chin Chow*.

Devoured by a mania for perfection he spent vast sums on his productions in securing the exact and most luxurious effects.

A huge 19-stone mountain of a man, he lived like an emperor in his private life, never stinting his passion for colourful living, winning and losing fortunes on his horses and dogs.

When he died practically insolvent in 1936 he had the satisfaction, perhaps, of knowing that he had lived fully and lived well.

Yet, strangely, today, there is no memorial of any kind to this colossus of the theatre in the land of his birth.

Oscar Asche stepped on to the stage of life nameless and unrehearsed, to play the part of a son to Mr. Thomas Asche, of Mark's Hotel, Geelong, Australia.

Asche senior himself, was a character in his own right. An obstreperous giant of a man, he was a graduate of Norway's Christiania University and had once been the terror of the Ballarat goldfields.

When he was eight Oscar was sent to a small co-educational boarding school, Laurel Lodge, in the Dandenong Ranges.

It was at Laurel Lodge that Oscar made his theatrical debut when dressed as a miniature but already chesty Henry VIII he took his place in a tableau surrounded by his ill-fated wives.

Later, when his father sold out at Geelong and transferred to the Royal Hotel, George St., Sydney, Oscar went to Melbourne Grammar where the budding theatrical genius tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to get into the school's dramatic club.

It was only during holidays at his parents' home, Ilderaway, in Elizabeth Bay Rd., Sydney, that he was able to indulge his growing passion for the theatre.

Before drawing-room audiences, made up of his father's guests, the 15-year-old theatrical tyro put on such juicy fare as the "jealousy" and the "smothering" scenes from *Othello*. On one occasion he gave an open-air performance in the garden of the "cave scene" from *Timor of Athens*.

He built all the settings himself, making a realistic cave from rocks and shrubs and painting an excellent background of snow-capped mountains and trees to give reality to the whole.

Oscar left school when he was a husky thick-set youth of 16 and, after a brief holiday with a school friend in Hong Kong and Shanghai, he returned to Sydney to find his parents had apprenticed him to an architect who, however, died shortly afterward, bequeathing to Oscar enough knowledge to help him in stage production later.

But city life palled on Asche and the thought of a professional career bored him. Aged 18 and with £80 in his pocket, which he had won at racing, he bought a horse and, equipped with an elaborate camping kit and a gun, he set out without saying goodbye to investigate the inland. The year was 1889.

He only got as far as Goulburn, then crossed back to the coast, where he settled in a small cave near Nowra.

He stayed there nearly three months, sowing vegetables and rearing fowls, swimming and riding most of the day and living on eggs, fish and oysters. He later looked back on this period as the most idyllic in his life.

At nights he would stand and recite long speeches from Shakespeare to the sea and imagine that the breaking waves upon the beach were the applause of countless thousands.

Wearying of the coast he rode north and took a job as a jackeroo on a Queensland cattle station.

One day, while practising whip-cracking with a wire-tipped whip, used for hunting dingoes, Asche badly flicked his wrist.

Poison set in and, with his arm horribly swollen, he was taken to the nearby doctor, a drunken wretch who insisted on cutting it off.

Asche fled and later an old aboriginal woman — Queen Biddy — who lived where he was working, cured the infection with poultices made out of boiled leaves and weeds.

Asche returned to Sydney soon afterward. But when he told his family he wanted to go on the stage his father threatened to thrash him.

Instead, he was forced to take a job as a clerk in a wine and spirit merchant's office. Nevertheless, Oscar was still eager for a stage career.

Scratching some money together, he put on an amateur performance of *Othello*, which received good Press notices.

But the success went to the young actor's head and the next week, after insulting his manager and quarrelling with his father, he left with a planter friend on a trip to Fiji.

His gesture, apparently, had some effect for, when he returned, his father agreed to let him become an actor. He stipulated, however, that he must study in Norway.

Before Oscar knew where he was he was on the high seas in a Norwegian ship bound for Bergen, Norway.

Asche stayed 12 months in Norway, boarding most of the time with the Russian Consul, who wanted to learn English.

He studied deportment and voice production under Norway's prince of producers, Bjorne Bjornson, the son of the great rival of the mighty Norwegian playwright — Ibsen.

Bjornson would train him morning after morning in the art of entering a room, closing the door and sitting down.

Asche also met the great Ibsen, who one day publicly abused him in the main street of Oslo for daring to greet him first.

"Do you not know, you uncivilised person from a barbarous country, that it is for the elder to salute the younger?" he raged.

A week later, however, the old maestro paid him the supreme honour of inviting him to sit at his table at the Grand Cafe.

Accent was drawback

Ibsen told him not to waste his time in Norway, but to go and become an artist in his own language.

Asche took his word and shortly afterwards left for London.

But one thing stood in his way — his Australian accent. Producers would not consider him.

On the advice of Irving he had it removed by under-going a special course in elocution. But jobs were still not forthcoming.

Restless, he went back to Norway, where he made some money with a series of recitals from Shakespeare.

Returning to London he got his first part — a bit-piece — but the play was a flop. For one whole summer he slept on the Embankment.

Then just before the cold weather set in he got a short-term job with the F. R. Benson Shakespeare Company, which opened at Stratford-on-Avon.

Asche stayed with the Benson company for eight years, learning his acting in 200 parts in 20 different plays.

But life in between tours was hard. Half-starved, he was often forced to call cabs for "toffs" outside exclusive hotels.

Sometimes he was so hungry that he was forced to line up for a free meal at soup kitchens.

But eventually things began to improve and Benson was able to put him on a full-time contract.

It was while playing with the Benson company that he met and married the exquisite English actress Lily Brayton, who in the years to come was to share with him so many of his triumphs.

By 1900 Oscar Asche and Lily Brayton were nearing the top in Shakespearian drama in Britain.

The brilliant pair then joined the famous Herbert Beerbohm Tree Company, where new lustre was added to their names.

Returning from a brief but successful appearance on the New York stage, Asche accepted a three-year contract to manage the Adelphi Theatre in the Strand, where he was to put on Shakespearian plays starring himself and his wife.

There, they went from triumph to triumph. Asche took the elocution out of Shakespeare and put back the robust Elizabethan vitality of the Bard.

He also revolutionised the settings.

All London flocked to see his interpretations of *Measure For Measure*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*.

Then, in 1909, 20 years after his departure, Asche was invited to tour Australia.

His London fame had gone before him and the tour was one long triumphal progress as he made his way from capital to capital.

Theatre audiences went mad after each performance of *The Shrew* and *Othello*.

So convincing was Asche's performance of the jealousy-crazed Moor that in Melbourne one night during the "smothering" scene a woman shrieked from the dress circle. "You big black beast".

Back in London after an 18-month absence Asche stumbled on a play — *Kismet*, by Edward Knoblock.

Asche bought and re-wrote it, turning it into an opulent Eastern drama spectacle.

It was a smash hit and ran for 12 months to packed houses until Asche had to leave on a second tour of Australia.

Asche received an even more tumultuous reception than on his previous visit.

Kismet was the prize piece, but his production of *Antony and Cleopatra* at the Melbourne Royal Theatre staggered audiences with its barbaric splendour.

Asche returned via South Africa, where he sought local colour for a play — *Child of the Storm* — by Rider Haggard, whom he had met in Brisbane.

But the play — retitled *Mameena* — proved a flop when it was put on in London in 1914 despite thousands of pounds spent on authentic Zulu props.

Asche then toured Britain with it. One wet weekend in Manchester, bored with nothing to do, he started lazily sketching out some ideas for a pantomime.

Within a fortnight he had written the script for one of the greatest and most dazzling shows of all time — *Chu Chin Chow*.

Famous London song-writer Freddie Norton wrote the music.

The curtain went up on August 3, 1916 and metaphorically did not come down until July 22, 1921 — nearly five years — longer than World War 1 — 2235 performances.

People crowded to see it 70, 80 and 100 times. By the time it was finished Asche had made more than £200,000. The show itself coined £3½ million.

While *Chu Chin Chow* was still running Asche took time off to produce another sensational success — *Maid of the Mountains* — later immortalised on the Australian stage by Gladys Moncrieff.

When *Chu Chin Chow* finally came off Asche followed it with an even more dazzling show — *Cairo*.

In 1922 Asche took both shows and several plays to Australia, playing in all, 80 weeks to packed houses in every city.

While in Australia he repeated the idyllic bushland camping trip of his youth down the south coast — only this time in a Rolls-Royce.

Unfortunately, management trouble developed and Asche made world headlines on his last night in Melbourne when, despite attempts to stop him, he knocked down two toughs and made a farewell speech in semi-darkness to a madly-cheering audience.

Though Asche had been making a large income for many years he also spent largely.

Lived like emperor

He lived like an emperor, threw banquets, parties, and thought nothing of having 50 guests for a weekend at his Gloucestershire farm, where he himself would personally prepare gargantuan feasts.

But the farm never paid and after his return from his last tour of Australia a number of his theatrical ventures failed. Eventually he became insolvent.

His last years were dimmed by failure, but he never whimpered and was gallant to the end, taking the bad with the good like a real trouper.

In the early 30's he appeared in several British films. The curtain was finally rung down on March 23, 1936.

The play was over.

This article includes an image of Oscar Asche

Asche, Thomas Stange Heiss Oscar (1871–1936) 2

by [L. J. Blake](#)

This article was published in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 7, (MUP), 1979

Thomas Stange Heiss Oscar Asche (1871-1936), actor-manager, was born on 24 January 1871 at Geelong, Victoria, son of Thomas Asche, land agent and hotelier, and his second wife Harriet Emma (Lily), née Trear. Oscar's father THOMAS was born in August 1826 at Christiania (Oslo), Norway, graduated in law from the University of Christiania in 1851, and arrived at Melbourne in the *Gibson Craig* on 27 August 1854. Golden-bearded and prodigiously strong, he worked as a goldfields trooper and miner, then as a Ballarat storekeeper; a reef, lead and gully were named after him. On 17 August 1855 at his home at Golden Point he married Jane Wier, by whom he had one surviving son. By August 1860 he had settled as innkeeper at Camperdown; in October he was naturalized. His wife died and on 13 September 1866 at Christ Church, Geelong, he married Harriet Emma, whose father Colonel William Trear owned Mack's Hotel. From 1866 as an all-powerful speculator Asche sometimes managed to arrange and almost to preside over the sale of crown lands, wanted by squatters, at auctions where his men dominated the bidding.

In Geelong he became a town councillor in 1870 and acquired Mack's Hotel on 24 March 1871. In November 1876 he moved to the Union Club Hotel, Melbourne, and some ten years later to the Royal Hotel in George Street, Sydney. After heavy financial losses in 1893 he had to sell the Royal but from 1896 ran the Imperial Hotel, Wynyard Square. He died there of chronic kidney disease on 2 November 1898 survived by his wife, one son of his first marriage and two sons and three daughters of the second.

Oscar was educated at Laurel Lodge, Dandenong, and from 1884 at Melbourne Church of England Grammar School, where his academic progress was aided by a flair for memorizing. He left school at 16 with a deep interest in theatre from his acquaintance with actors who frequented the Royal Hotel; but he was also keen to go on the land. He claimed to have visited China and Fiji, was briefly apprenticed to an architect, learned to box from [Larry Foley](#), and spent a few months 'humping his bluey' through southern New South Wales, accompanied by two dogs and a pocket edition of Shakespeare's plays. In 1890 he decided finally to make his career in the theatre; his father paid his fare to Norway to study under actor-manager Bjørn Bjørnson at Christiania, where he met Ibsen. On advice he went to London where he studied speech with Walter Lacy and Henry Neville and watched the acting of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving and others. In March 1893 he had his first London part in *Man and Woman* at the Opéra Comique Theatre, but that year his father had to stop his £10 weekly allowance. Living precariously at times, Oscar found work with (Sir) F. R. Benson's touring Shakespearian company. In June 1899 at Hindley, Lancashire, he married Lily Brayton who had joined the company in 1896.

In 1901 Lily was engaged by Herbert Beerbohm Tree in London. Asche also joined Tree but was released to play Freddy Maldonado in Pinero's *Iris*, his first prominent part in London. He also played opposite Ellen Terry in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and appeared in many Shakespearian plays. In 1904 Asche and Lily Brayton formed a company (with Oscar as actor-manager) to play at the Adelphi Theatre. *The Taming of the Shrew* became a very successful item in their repertoire. They then leased His Majesty's Theatre, opening in 1907 with *Attila*. This soon made way for Asche's entrancing production of *As You Like It*; he expounded his unorthodox interpretations of Shakespeare in an arrangement of this play published in 1907.

In 1909 Asche took the full company for a triumphal eighteen-months tour of Australia. He opened to packed houses at the Theatre Royal with *The Taming of the Shrew*, then

presented *Othello*, *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and in the new year, *Count Hannibal* and *The Virgin Goddess*. He played two seasons in Sydney and three in Melbourne.

Back in London in 1911, Asche began a two-year season of *Kismet*, a lavish Arabian nights fantasy with Oscar as the beggar Hajj and using original lighting techniques. He took *Kismet* to Australia and New Zealand from early 1912 until August next year. In Brisbane he met Rider Haggard and discussed with him the stage adaptation of his novel, *A Child of the Storm*. This was presented as *Mameena* in London in October 1914, but was not a financial success; Asche yearned for another *Kismet*. He found the answer in *Chu Chin Chow*, for which he wrote 'book' and lyrics in two weeks. Opening on 31 August 1916, the show broke all records with a five-year season; as author Asche received £200,000 and as actor-producer £500 weekly. In 1917 he produced *The Maid of the Mountains*; he also wrote another successful musical, *Cairo*, which opened in 1921.

In July 1922, under contract to [J. C. Williamson](#) Ltd, Asche left England for a third tour of Australasia. His wife refused to join him. He included *Chu Chin Chow* and *Cairo* as well as Shakespeare in his popular repertoire. Despite quarrelling with Williamson's over production and finance, he managed to recapture some of the pleasures of his earlier visits by staging lavish picnics, attending race meetings and making a camping tour of the coast between Sydney and Melbourne in his chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce. After further disagreement, his contract was abruptly terminated in June 1924; he left Melbourne soon after.

In England Asche encountered more trouble. Greyhound-racing, which he had taken up during his 1909 Australian tour, cost him £45,000; he owed over £40,000 in taxes and his £100,000 Sugley Farm in Gloucestershire had to be sold when he became bankrupt. His wife helped him by backing his new but unsuccessful musical, *The Good Old Days of England*. He wrote his memoirs, *Oscar Asche: His Life. By Himself* (London, 1929) and two novels (1930). In 1932 he directed his wife in her last stage appearance. Ill and impoverished, he re-joined her at Marlow, Buckinghamshire. He died at near-by Bisham of coronary thrombosis on 23 March 1936, and was buried in the riverside cemetery there. They had no children.

A powerfully built, virile figure 'glowing with health' in his early years, Asche became grossly fat in old age. He was a keen sportsman and had been a good cricketer, a wicket-keeper by preference. A man of great gusto, most impressive as an actor, an innovator and perfectionist as a producer, an extravagant generous incurable optimist, Asche was a splendid showman.

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- Asche family papers (privately held) other private information.

Mon 20 Jan 1873 **4** *The Argus, p3* (fragment)
(First mention of Laurel Lodge, Dandenong. During the 1860s, a Laurel Lodge at Upper Hawthorn was advertising many times)

EDUCATION

LAUREL-LODGE, Dandenong.-Principals, the Misses SHAW.
House replete with every comfort in this beautiful and healthy locality.
Daily coach. Highest order of testimonials.

Tue 23 Sep 1873 **5** *The Argus, p8* (fragment)

EDUCATION

LADIES' SCHOOL, Laurel Lodge, Dandenong, conducted by Miss SHAW.
House excellently situated and replete with every comfort.
Highest references. Terms moderate.

Items 6-10 advertisements for Laurel Lodge

Wed 9 Dec 1874 **11** *The Argus, p8* (fragment)

EDUCATION

MISS SHAW receives PUPILS at Laurel Lodge, Dandenong.
Highest references
Terms 15 guineas and 12 guineas respectively.

Fri 28 May 1875 **12** *The Argus, p3* (fragment)
DANDENONG – Miss Shaw RECEIVES STUDENTS, at Laurel-Lodge, Dandenong.
Highest references. Terms Moderate. Three coaches daily.

Tue 29 Jan 1879 **13** *The Argus, p3* (fragment)
Many schools advertised – no Laurel Lodge

Sat 27 Mar 1880 **14** *Weekly Times, p10* (fragment)

The Dandenong District, No.III

Cranbourne is situated about nine miles from Dandenong, on the road to the Bass River and Tobin Yallock, and is altogether a well-built, though scattered, little township. The road leading to it from Mr Poole's farm, described in a former article, is well-formed and thoroughly kept in order by the local shire council, and several farms occupy the frontage to it all the way to Cranbourne.

Amongst others may be mentioned Messrs Leekey and Facey, and those in the neighbourhood of Cranbourne, but in a different direction, are Messrs. Gibb, Patterson, O'Connor, Donelly, Hall, Laver, Bell, Monahan, M'Donough, Close, Butter, Slett, and many others too numerous to particularise.

Tue 1 Feb 1881 15 *The Argus*, p2 (fragment)

EDUCATION

MISS SHAW'S Pupils RESUME WORK,
Wednesday, 2nd February. Laurel-lodge, Dandenong.

Sat 12 Jan 1884 16 *The Church of England Messenger*, p5

ST. JAMES'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

The annual distribution of prizes was held in the schoolroom on 14th December, the very rev. the Dean of Melbourne occupying the chair.

The Dean was sorry that sickness had prevented him from giving the usual weekly lessons in Scripture of late, but he hoped to be well enough to continue them after the holidays. He believed in giving premiums. They were an incentive to the scholars; they helped them on their way. To those who were not successful he gave some encouraging words, and then admonished the boys to be careful of their youth. They must be careful what they did now, for as their youth was so most likely would be their manhood.

The Rev. Mr. Kelly said that education without the love of God would be profitless.

The headmaster, Mr. James Murray, stated that the attendance for last year showed an average of 182, the highest since the school started. The whole of the ground had been asphalted, and, with the gymnasium, afforded the boys opportunity for enjoying themselves during playhours. The evening matriculation class, conducted by Mr. Lillie, had been a great success. Seven of the boys went up for the last matriculation examination, the result of which was not yet known, but two old scholars had been successful in gaining their B.A. degree at the University.

The following is the prize-list: —

Scripture ,	Algernon Lucas, Frederick Cummins, Oscar Asche, Edgar Allen, Chas. Clarke;
best boy ,	Wilfred White;
swimming ,	Henry Christie;
spelling ,	John Sheffield, Joel Solomon, Charles Graham;
dux ,	Arthur Enticott ;
French ,	Herbert Small, Fred. Dodge, Charles Falais;
music ,	Fred. Dodge, Walter Larkins;
conduct as boarders ,	Thomas Ritchie and Harry Balharry;
Greek ,	alter Gregson;
Latin ,	Arthur Shields, Arnold Mullen, Harry Buzolich, William Dow;
drawing ,	Harvey Draper, Frank Middleton, John Sheffield, Frank Vincent;
gymnastics ,	Ernest Hayward, Frank Freemantle, Archibald Turner, Sydney Burroughs;
arithmetic ,	Arthur Paterson, Walter Larkins, A. Sangster, John Haase, Charles Clark;
physics ,	Arthur Paterson, A. Shields, Walter Eustace;
history ,	E. Loyer, W. Gregson, Alfred Case;
reading ,	Ernest Williams, Arnold Mullen, Maurice Dudley, Albert Tombs;
writing ,	Nathan Musther, Ernest Hayward, George M'Kenzie, E. M'Carron, W. Case, and Charles Graham;
bookkeeping ,	Archibald Turner;
exercise book ,	Sydney Burroughs, Claud Johnston, Arthur Loyer, C. Roper;
mapping ,	Fred. Cummings, F. Middleton, Wm. Rollins, Claud Johnston;
mental arithmetic ,	William Dow, John Edney;
algebra ,	H. Wilson, Wm. Dow, John Sheffield;
general proficiency ,	A. Paterson, Wm. Dow, Wm. Sutton, Frank Vincent, S. Burroughs, John Scott, Charles Clark;
elocution ,	P. Richards, E. M'Carron;
highest marks ,	A. Paterson.

Wed 17 Aug 1887 17 *The Age, p1 (fragment)*

Deaths

Facey.— On the 11th August, at Spring Mount, Cranbourne.
Themagine, the beloved wife of James Facey, aged 63 years.

Sat 16 Feb 1889 18 *The Argus, p1 (fragment) also*

Sat 23 Feb 1889 19 *Weekly Times, p11*

Family Notices

FACEY —SHAW. —On the 27th December,
at St. George's Church, Malvern, by the Rev. Charles J. Godby,
James Facey, of Springmount, Cranbourne,
to Matilda L. Shaw, eldest daughter of the late John F. Shaw, of Melbourne.

Sat 25 May 1889 20 *The Prahran Telegraph, p3 (fragment)*

A LADY'S LETTER

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The engagement is announced of Miss Ethel Holroyd, second daughter of Mr. Justice Holroyd, of the Supreme Court of Victoria, to Mr. Oscar van Asche, of Antwerp, Belgium.

Fri 20 Dec 1889 21 *Table Talk, p9 (The order of headings is correct)*

Family Notices

Engagements

The marriage of Miss Ethel Holroyd, second daughter of Mr. Justice Holroyd, of the Supreme Court of Victoria, to Mr. Oscar Van Asche is arranged to take place at All Saints' Church of England, East St. Kilda, on Saturday, December 28. The bridesmaids will be Miss Marion Holroyd, Miss Wagner, Miss Boyd, Miss Youl, Miss F. Godfrey; and two small pages, sons of Mrs. G. Nankivell.

Fri 10 Jan 1890 22 *Table Talk, p13 (fragment)*

Fashion Notices.

Miss Sadlier, of the "Princess," an artistic dressmaking establishment in Fink's-buildings, at the corner of Elizabeth and Flinders-streets, has just completed a portion of the bridal trousseau of Madame Oscar von Asche (nee Holroyd) whose wedding took place last Saturday. Several, costumes, including the wedding-gown, were imported from London, the remainder of the trousseau being prepared by Miss Sadlier. Of her work a very smart ball dress arrests the attention at once by its striking originality. The materials used in the skirt foundation are chrome green tulle and white satin, and over this are arranged lengths of ribbon in chrome green and white alternately which are fastened to the waistband, kept well in place for several inches down the skirt, and falling in innumerable fluttering streamers to the ground. The bodice is of white satin veiled with green tulle with an arrangement of ribbons in the same colours at the shoulders. The bridesmaids' costumes, also made by Miss Sadlier, are described in that portion of *Table Talk* devoted to wedding reports.

Sat 12 Jul 1890 23 *The Sydney Mail and NSW Advertiser, p103*

Amateur Entertainment

On Saturday last an amateur theatrical entertainment was given in the School of Arts, to which admission was obtained by complimentary tickets, and these were so largely in request that a brilliant audience assembled. It had been whispered that some of those who took part in the performance of the Ideraway amateurs on June 6 would again act, and this was of itself sufficient to stimulate curiosity, which the result fully gratified. Lately all things Norwegian seem coming to the front. Grieg, the Norwegian musician, was the lion of the London season two years ago: His new sonata has delighted all hearers. "Thelma" has made every reader long to visit Norway.

Ibsen, the Norwegian author, is to be introduced to Sydney this evening, and unless we are much mistaken Mr. Oscar Asche, who, though born in Australia, is the son of a Norwegian father, will make a name and fame as one of Nature's actors. On Saturday he appeared as "Hamlet" in the third scene of the third act of Shakspeare's great tragedy; as the Thane of Cawdor in the first scene of the second act of "Macbeth," and as "Othello" in Scene 1, Act 3. Letter-perfect in all, moving with ease and grace, animated by a vigorous conception with singularly fresh touches in each character, this young stripling in years made a most powerful impression; he is apparently "to the manner born" in matters dramatic, and there is a ring in the voice, a dignity in the pose, and a manly, passionate earnestness which many a trained actor might envy. The performance of Mr. Oscar Asche points to a most distinguished career should the strong natural bent be allowed its course; at least all who are interested in the dramatic art will anxiously look for more opportunities of witnessing his powers. By Miss Fitzsimons, as the Queen in Hamlet and as Lady Macbeth, Mr. Oscar Asche was ably supported; in Othello his sisters, as Desdemona and Emilia, were thoroughly successful, and Mr. H. Goyder was a painstaking, intriguing Iago. Mr. C. Gorman played a flute solo, which was vociferously encored. Mr. Arthur Marks showed good work on the violin, and a most enjoyable evening (though too long an entertainment) was closed by "A Happy Pair," in which Mr. Osborne was sufficiently aggravating, indifferent, and finally penitent as Mr. Honeyton. Miss Fitzsimons was better in the serious parts named than as Mrs. Honeyton. The various scenes were well represented.

Sat 13 Sep 1890 24 *The Sydney Mail, p1* (fragment)

Events of the Week

This evening (Saturday) the Standard Theatre will be occupied by a company of amateurs who will play Shakspeare's great tragedy, "Othello," for the benefit of the Children's Hospital at the Glebe. It is an ambitious undertaking, but for the chief character the excellent acting of Mr. Oscar Asche gives very good promise, and the cast has been carefully selected.

Sat 20 Sep 1890 25 *The Sydney Mail, p1* (fragment)

SOCIAL.

Events of the Week

The performances for the benefit of the Sick Children's Hospital at the Glebe, were fixed for unfortunate dates, the first being the occasion of the Australian Club Ball, and the second on the evening of the Derby Day, when the majority of those interested in local matters were otherwise engaged. This is to be regretted as withholding an addition to the funds of a deserving institution, and also as showing a lack of support and encouragement to well-directed effort.

"Othello" is an ambitious attempt; but in some instances the result justified this, and in the case of the arduous character of Othello the performance of Mr. Oscar Asche merits very high commendation. For an actor yet in his teens to undertake such a task as learning the lines is something; but to know them and speak them with intelligent appreciation of their meaning, and to fulfil in a large degree the dramatic and tragic demands of the character, bespeaks qualifications of no mean order; and the interpretation was most creditable.

The characters were all appropriately and many of them richly dressed, and in many performances by professionals a lower standard of dramatic merit has been accepted.

Iago was overacted in parts, and too great prominence was given to lines which in these days are too broadly expressed to be acceptable. There is a fashion in language, and the English of the seventeenth century differs from that of the nineteenth. Brabantio drawled, and in emphasising the final letter frequently inserted a vowel, with an odd effect.

The Desdemona was scarcely equal to her self-imposed task. In the scene where Othello's love contends against the insinuation of Iago, and the Moor threatens his ancient with punishment in case of failure to prove what he hints at, the passion of the Moor was finely shown, and the last scene, though somewhat prolonged, was well worked up.

Unless we much mistake, Mr. Oscar Asche's undoubted talent will yet find its home in the career of an actor, and should he seriously embrace the profession we think there is a brilliant path before him.

Sat 31 Jan 1891 **26** *The Sydney Mail*, p239 (fragment)

Events of the Week

Mr. Oscar Asche, the talented amateur whose dramatic representations of Hamlet and Othello will not readily be forgotten by any who witnessed them, has at last secured the consent of his parents to make the stage his profession, and proceeds at once to Norway, the native land of his father, to study in the dramatic school of the capital, intending, when his course of two years is complete, to make his debut on the London stage.

Mr. Oscar Asche is well endowed by nature, having a grand physique, beautiful resonant voice, and, unless we greatly mistake, so much of the divine fire that in following his cherished inclination with all zeal and earnestness we predict for him a great future in the higher walks of the distinguished profession he has selected, and shall anticipate his appearance as a legitimate actor with unfeigned pleasure.

Fri 23 Feb 1894 **27** *Table Talk*, p7 (fragment)

On and Off the Stage

Mr. Oscar Asche, a young Sydney amateur who some years ago essayed the part of Othello, after studying both in Norway and London, joined Mr. Benson's Shakspearean Company, and at the Cork Opera House he has just appeared with credit as Cassius in a fine spectacular production of *Julius Caesar*.

Mr. Oscar Asche is the eldest son of Mr Asche, formerly proprietor of the Royal Hotel, Sydney, and cousin of Dr. Fieldstadt, of Randwick. The young actor is only 21 years of age, and from all accounts has a brilliant future before him.

Tue 9 Aug 1898 **28** *The Argus*, p1 (fragment)

MARRIAGES.

ASCHE—BRAYTON.—On the 22nd June, at Wigan, England, by the Rev. C. F. Holt, Thomas Stange Heiss Oscar, second son of Thomas and Lily Asche, Sydney, to Lily, daughter of the late Dr. Brayton, of White-house, Wigan.

Thu 1 Apr 1909 **29** *Table Talk*, p24 (fragment)

On and Off the Stage

In "Count Hannibal," which is to be staged by Oscar Asche and Lily Brayton, under the management of Meynell and Gunn, Lily Brayton will wear some magnificent dresses, including one the material of which cost £20 per yard. It is of diaphanous cloth of gold, wrought by hand with months of patient and tedious labour.

Sat 3 Apr 1909 **30** *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), p9 (fragment)

Music and Drama

Mr. Oscar Asche, who will arrive in Australia in May next with his wife and a complete company, under the management of Messrs. Meynell and Gunn, is said to be one of the finest all-round sportsmen in England. He is a man of commanding appearance and powerful physique, with a strong personality. He is about 6 feet 2 inches in height, and broad in proportion. His appearance as Othello is said to be most awe-inspiring.

The first instalment of the Oscar Asche-Lily Brayton company's scenery is due to arrive shortly. With properties and other accessories it totals about 400 cubic tons.

Sat 17 Apr 1909 **31** *The Daily News* (Perth), p6

In 'Count Hannibal,' which is to be staged by Oscar Asche and Lily Brayton, under the management of Meynell and Gunn, Lily Brayton will wear some magnificent dresses, including one the material of which cost £20 per yard. It is of diaphanous cloth of gold, wrought by hand with months of patient and tedious labor.

Sun 2 May 1909 **32** *Sunday Times* (Sydney), p6

MR. OSCAR ASCHE.

who, with his wife, Miss Lily Brayton, and their complete English company, will shortly arrive in Australia, stages all his own productions. He is said to be one of the most expert and masterful of all producers, Beerbohm Tree not being excepted. Mr. Asche's commanding personality is claimed to accomplish more than the most earnest requests of the ordinary stage manager, or the most violent demands. As one of his staff said recently, "When Mr. Asche points out something to be done, you don't let anything else cross your mind until it is done. And it's got to be well done."

Sat 5 Jun 1909 **33** *The Queenslander* (Brisbane), p3 (fragment)

THE STAGE

The importation of Oscar Asche, Miss Lily Brayton and their complete English company of twenty-six people is one of the biggest dramatic enterprises ever undertaken by a management in Australia, and Rupert Clarke, Meynell and Gunn are to be congratulated on their pluck.

Sat 26 Jun 1909 34 *The Age* (Melbourne), p18

THEATRE ROYAL.

OSCAR ASCHE— LILY BRAYTON SEASON.
OSCAR ASCHE— LILY BRAYTON SEASON.

OPENING of the BOOKING.

APPLICATIONS, by LETTER ONLY, will now be received by RUPERT CLARKE,
MEYNELL and GUNN for Seats for the FIRST NIGHT PERFORMANCE ONLY,

On SATURDAY, 17th JULY,

of the OSCAR ASCHE—LILY BRAYTON CO., in their world famous and magnificent
production of

"THE TAMING OF THE SHREW"

"THE TAMING OF THE SHREW"

(Including the Induction).

PRICES for DRESS CIRCLE and RESERVED STALLS. FIRST NIGHT ONLY, 7/6.
Applications will be dealt with in the order received.

Sat 26 Jun 1909 35 *Leader* (Melbourne), p33 (fragment)

AMUSEMENTS

THE DRAMA, &C

Matters in connection with the Oscar Asche-Lily Brayton season are beginning to materialise. The *Ormuz* brought to Melbourne another consignment of scenery, &c., for the various productions, and there also arrived the well-known English mechanist and stage superintendent, Mr Coverdale, who has been associated with Mr Asche for some considerable time. Mr Coverdale is regarded in England as one of the leading men of his line, and was largely responsible for the magnificent effects introduced into Mr Asche's productions. He has already commenced preparations at The Theatre Royal for the opening season.

The opening of the Oscar Asche-Lily Brayton season at the Theatre Royal has been definitely fixed for 17th July. It was in *The Taming of the Shrew* that Oscar Asche and Miss Lily Brayton achieved one of their earliest and greatest triumphs; and it is fitting, therefore, that this should be the opening production. Every detail of the London representation at His Majesty's Theatre will be reproduced here; and Melbourne playgoers in this, as in the other productions of the repertoire, will have the opportunity of witnessing the plays exactly as staged in England, and with the entire original company.

The repertoire of the forthcoming season is to be as comprehensive as possible. First, there will be *The Taming of the Shrew*, to be followed by *As You Like It*, *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and other Shakspearean plays, together with his latest dramatic achievement, the picturesque sword play, *Count Hannibal*, in which

the stage will be crowded with armed men engaging in the deadly work of the massacre of the Hugonots. Also, there is every probability of Piniero's *Iris* being included.

Notwithstanding the outlay involved in these productions, it has been decided that the prices of admission during the forthcoming season will be kept within the reach of all classes, and that little, if any, increase will be made in the cheapest parts of the theatre. This announcement will be welcomed by playgoers generally. Mr Oscar Asche, Miss Lily Brayton, and their company will arrive in Melbourne by the *Orentes* on 7th July. They have secured suites of rooms at Menzies', where they will reside during their stay in Melbourne.

Sat 26 Jun 1909 36 *Chronicle* (Adelaide), p39 (fragment)

LONDON PERSONAL NOTES.

(From Our Special Correspondent.)

London, May 4, 1909

Prior to their departure for Australia Miss Lily Brayton and Mr. Oscar Asche are to be the guests of honour at the Savage Club's annual ladies' dinner on Saturday week next at the Hotel Cecil. Mr B A Meyer, who has acted as general manager for Mr Asche during his recent tours, accompanies the party to Australia.

Mon 28 Jun 1909 37

Wed 30 Jun 1909 38 *Chronicle* (Adelaide), p4 (fragment) (NOT IN LIST)

MAINLY ABOUT PEOPLE

By the *Orontes*, due at Fremantle to-morrow, Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Asche are travelling to Australia to begin their theatrical season under the management of Messrs. Meynell, Gunn, and Clarke. For Mr. Asche, although of Norwegian descent, the occasion is really a home-coming. He was born in Geelong, Victoria, and is an old boy of the Church of England Gram-mar School there. Eighteen years ago he went to Europe, and under the tutorship of Jogens Hansen and Bjornsterne, the son of the world famous author, he studied for the stage at Bergen and Christiania, Norway. Here he attracted the attention of the great Hephrik Ibsen, and it was mainly due to his advice that Oscar Asche went to England. He was only 21 years of age when he made his first appearance in London, under the management of the ill-fated Arthur Dacre, whose tragic death took place in Sydney some years ago. The play was *Man and Woman*, in which he made such a brilliant success that the famous Shakespearean manager, actor, and producer, Mr. F R Benson, engaged him for his company, with which he remained for over eight years. During that period he played over 200 parts in twenty Shakespearean plays. In the sixth year of his association with Mr. Benson, Miss Lily Brayton joined the company, and shortly afterwards the esteem and admiration each felt for the other ripened into love, and they were married. Mr. Asche made his first triumph in America, in '*Iris*,' his representation of Maldonado causing a furore. Of his performance the '*Times*' has said: - 'It is not every actor who can play a wild beast and yet seem human; but Oscar Asche contrives to do it.' It is not unlikely that this great play will be seen in Australia during the forthcoming season.

Prior to their departure from London Mr. and Mrs. Asche were the guests at the eighth annual ladies' dinner held at the Hotel Cecil, on May 22. The attendance, which exceeded 300, included the Lord Chief Justice (Lord Alverstone), and Admiral Sir Edmund Fremantle. Mr. Asche, replying on behalf of Miss Brayton to the toast of "Our Guests," declared, amid laughter, that he had never had brought home to him the righteousness and justice of the suffrage question until that night. "All the years I have been in London," he said, "I have wallowed in brutality towards women on the stage. But the whirligig of time

brings its revenges; and now I am asked to respond on behalf of the guests of the Savage Club, most of whom are ladies. And as my wife refuses to speak, remembering perhaps the 700 performances in which I have ill-used her in *The Taming of the Shrew* — (laughter) — I have to respond for her." He had not looked down the list of names, because there might be among them some of the estimable ladies who had suffered for their cause (laughter), but he could assure them that their sufferings for their cause did not exceed his sufferings that evening. (Laughter). Mr Asche's season opens in Melbourne on July 7.

Sun 16 Jun 1910 39 Sunday Times (Sydney), p18 NOT IN LIST
OSCAR ASCHE.

In April next there is to be a Shakespeare Festival Week in London. On Saturday last Mr. Oscar Asche received a cable from Sir Herbert Tree, asking whether he (Mr Asche), Miss Brayton, and their company, would be able to appear during the whole of the festival week at His Majesty's Theatre, London, in their Shakespearean repertoire. Mr Asche was unable to accept, as his Australian engagement with Clarke and Meynell will not be completed until some time after April. In all probability the Asche Brayton Company will be in the middle of their return Season in Sydney while the Shakespeare Festival is being held in the Old Country.

In a letter to the Melbourne 'Argus,' Mr Asche, while refuting the arguments of certain correspondents about his representation of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, offers to donate £100 to the charities in Melbourne if authorities could be produced to demonstrate that his dressing of Shylock, as regards the wearing of the yellow turban, is incorrect.

Tue 2 Jan 1923 40 P3, The Mercury (Hobart) (fragment)
MUSIC AND DRAMA.

Thirty years have passed since Oscar Asche left Australia to study dramatic art in Norway, under Bjornsterne. And now, on his third visit to the land of his birth, he finds that an actor, unlike a prophet, can be honoured in his own country. Things were not always prosperous with Oscar Asche, however. When he started his rounds of the London theatres to look for work he found that an intimate knowledge of theoretical dramatic art and an enthusiasm for Ibsen were not sufficient to induce managers to rush him with contracts. There were times when he knew what it was to be hungry, and some nights, for want of a bed, the Thames embankment provided him with a resting place. Ultimately, however, he secured an engagement - his first - at the Opera Comique, with Arthur Dacre and Amy Roelle, who afterwards met a tragic end in Sydney. But his first real touch of success came when he joined the F. R. Benson Shakespearean Company.

Sat 22 Mar 1924 **30**

The Register (Adelaide), p2

THEATRE ROYAL

COMMENCING

NEXT SATURDAY NIGHT

THE GREATEST AUSTRALIAN-BORN ACTOR THE WORLD HAS YET KNOWN

OSCAR ASCHE

FOR A SEASON OF 12 NIGHTS ONLY

**Repertoire of Four Plays Presented on a Scale of Lavish
Magnificence only possible to Oscar Asche**

"OTHELLO"

SAT, MARCH 29th, MON. MARCH 31st, TUES. APRIL 1st, WED. APRIL 2nd And Matinee

"IRIS" THURS., FRI., & SAT., Apr 3rd, 4th & 5th

"TAMING OF THE SHREW" MON., TUES., & WED., Apr. 7th, 8th, and 9th And Matinee.

"THE SPANISH MAIN" THURS. and FRIDAY, Apr 10th and 11th

Preferential Boxplans for Season are now open at the theatre.

Ordinary Plans will Open at Allan's Next Tuesday at 9 a.m.

PRICES 8/- D.C. and Res. Stalls 5/- Back Stalls 1/6 Gallery Early Doors 1/- extra to Gallery only
Preferential Seats, 2/6 extra (plus S.A. double tax)

Direction
Adelaide Representative

J. C. WILLIAMSON, LTD.
HERBERT MYERS

A GREAT ACTOR-MANAGER

THE death of Mr. Oscar Asche in London will awaken many theatrical memories in the land of his birth, Australia.

Few of those who saw his productions of Shakespeare in Sydney and Melbourne will forget the color and decorative settings with which he surrounded them.

It was, indeed, in this department of "decor" and production that Oscar Asche was supreme. He had a true artist's eye for effect, and his ideas ranged from the most gorgeous and elaborate stage sets to the greatest simplicity. On the one hand he gave us "Kismet," a riot of Oriental color and movement and melodrama — and, on the other, an unforgettable setting of Julius Caesar, in which scenery was reduced to a minimum. That minimum, however, was rich in suggestion and mystery, an impressive background for the great tragedy of Rome's first Emperor.

In his productions he spared no effort and no expense, and it was due to his determination to spend money that he met his reverses on his return to London. His Eastern plays, "Kismet," "Cairo," and "Chu Chin Chow," depended more on the grandeur of their spectacles than upon any very deep histrionic or literary qualities.

Yet he was, in spite of criticism, a fine actor, as he showed in Australia in many parts. He had a powerful personality, and ideas of his own. He refused to stick to the traditional readings of Shakespeare, and so brought something new and forceful into such parts as Christopher Sly, Petruchio, and the melancholy Jacques. He had a fine turn of robust comedy, too, as those who saw him play Bottom and Falstaff will remember.

Among the finest things he did was the part of Antony — a role in which his bluff, forthright personality was well suited, and one of the great moments of his second season in 1923 was the scene in which, against an atmospheric background of light, he was seen addressing the Roman mob in the famous speech.

His place in the theatrical history of Britain will not be, however, with the Garricks and the Macreadys and the Irvings. There was a certain lack of finesse and of the finer shades. Like Bottom, he could "play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split." To such parts he wisely confined his talents. It is in production, however, that he will be remembered most; his artist's eye to the right placing of color and massing of tone, that sense which brought the most glowing pageants, full of contrasted color, upon the stage to make one fine picture of it — it was upon these that his fame will be forever established.

DEATH OF OSCAR ASCHE

Actor and Manager

Notable Stage Career

LONDON, March 23.

The death has occurred of Mr. Oscar Asche, the noted actor, who was a native of Geelong, Victoria, aged 64 years. Mr. Asche died at his riverside cottage at Marlow, from pneumonia. He had been ill for a fortnight.

Mr. Asche was a skilful actor, and one of the most capable of producers. He was responsible for some of the finest of the romantic and spectacular productions of his time. In addition to Shakespearian comedy and tragedy, he staged a number of plays by modern writers. Even when a play in itself was not very remarkable, he could give it merit by the manner of presentation. "Chu-Chin-Chow," his own "mosaic in music and mime" on the Arabian Nights story of Ali Baba, was an instance of his mastery of stage effect. This spectacular play, in which he appeared as the Chinese bandit-leader of the title, ran at His Majesty's Theatre, London, for 2,238 performances, beginning on August 31, 1916. There was similar richness and ingenuity of production in his presentation of Edward Knoblock's drama, "Kismet" (1911), in which he played the beggar Haaj, and in "Cairo" (1921), his own sequel to "Chu-Chin-Chow." Originally "Cairo" was called "Mecca," but the title was changed because of objections by the censorship. A modern play which exemplified Mr. Asche's great ability both as actor and producer, was Galsworthy's "The Skin Game," as he staged it in Australia. As the vulgarian Hornblower he gave a masterly representation of character comedy, gradually merging into tragedy. New richness of staging was imparted to light musical pieces by his productions of "The Maid of the Mountains," which had 1,352 performances at Daly's Theatre, London, beginning in February, 1917; and of "A Southern Maid," "Frasquita," and other plays.



THE LATE OSCAR ASCHE

John Stanger Heiss Oscar Asche was the actor's full name. He was born at Geelong on January 26, 1872, and was educated at the Melbourne Grammar School. Following youthful amateur appearances in Australia, Mr. Asche, who was of Norwegian descent, went to Christiania, where he studied for the stage. His first professional appearance was at the Opera Comique Theatre, London, on March 25, 1893, as Roberts in "Man and Woman," in the company of Amy Roselle and Arthur Dacre. For eight years he was in the F. R. Benson company on tour and in London, playing a wide variety of parts in Shakespeare and other classic English plays. Miss Lily Brayton, whom he married, was a member of the Benson company. Both in London and in New York Mr. Asche had great success as Maldonado in Plnerio's "Iris;" then he appeared in many of the spectacular productions of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty's Theatre, London, and on tour. Other London appearances were with Ellen Terry; and after a term of joint management with Otho Stuart at the Adelphi Theatre, Mr. Asche entered into management at His Majesty's and at other London theatres.

William Seamer in the Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985

Name: William Seamer
Birth Year: abt 1828
Age: 52
Death Place: Victoria
Father's name: William
Mother's name: Sarah Gray
Registration Year: 1880
Registration Place: Victoria
Registration Number: 4177

Source Information

Ancestry.com. *Australia, Death Index, 1787-1985* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

Original data: Compiled from publicly available sources.

Description

Vital records—records of births, marriage, and death—are the basic building blocks of family history research, and this database features some of the most comprehensive indexes available of historical Australian death records. These indexes were created by Australian registrar's offices after civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths became law in the mid 19th century. [Learn more...](#)

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William Seamer
in the Victoria, Australia, Death Index, 1836-1988

Name: William Seamer

Death Registration Year: 1869

Death Registration Place: Victoria, Australia

Father: [Thomas Gray](#)

Reference Number: 8892

Source Citation

The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages; Melbourne, Victoria, Australia; *Victoria, Australia, Death Records*

Source Information

Ancestry.com. *Victoria, Australia, Death Index, 1836-1988* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2018.

Original data: Victoria, Australia, Death Index, 1836-1988. The Victorian Registry of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Description

This collection contains a death index for the Australian state of Victoria. [Learn more...](#)

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