

# HASTINGS PIER CHARITY

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PIER

## Pier Entertainers – Percy Press, Arthur Lloyd and The Harry Hanson Court Players



Punch and Judy on the Pier in 1950 (HPC068.011)



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## **Pier Entertainers – Percy Press, Arthur Lloyd and The Harry Hanson Court Players**

### **Punch and Judy**

Percy Press Snr (1902-1980), was the resident Punch and Judy man on Hastings Pier for 24 years 1979.

He performed in the semi-circular area at the front of the Pier, and gave two shows every day. If it was wet, he would erect his booth in the White Rock Theatre Sussex Rooms.

Percy was a member of the Magic Circle, performing his regular magic shows as “Uncle Percy”, at the White Rock Theatre.

Video of Percy in Hastings:

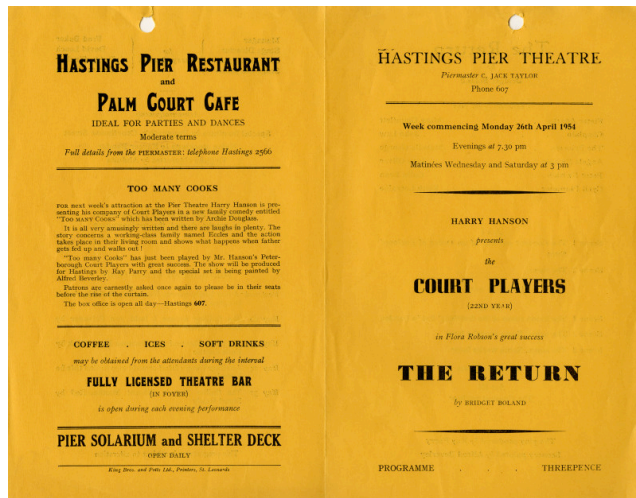
<https://vimeo.com/73999025>



<http://www.thepjf.com>

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## HARRY HANSON'S COURT PLAYERS



Programme for The Return, with Court Players, 26 April 1954 (HPC026.001b)

A repertoire of plays by Harry Hanson's Court Players, who were a regular feature on the Pier from 1932. "The cosy and charming theatre on the Hastings Pier is now the home of Repertory. A clever and versatile company, viz., the Court Players, is in permanent residence (except during the "high" season"), and throughout nine months of the year present the most successful plays."

Description c. 1935

There was a summer Theatre at the landward end of Hastings pier, which was still operational in the mid 1960s. This Theatre was a home base for Harry Hanson's Court Players, who often moved into the White Rock Pavilion during the winter months.

Harry Hanson brought the repertory rights of well know West End successes and presented them in his repertory companies all over the country. Apart from the smaller theatre such as the Theatre Royal Aldershot, Harry Hanson had companies in many No. 1 Theatres: Leed's Theatre Royal, The Princes Theatre Bradford, The Grand Theatre Swansea, and many others, including a short season at the London Coliseum at the start of World War Two.

It is easy to dismiss the Court Players as a by-word for 'Tat': true that it was not unusual to see a red chintz table cloth used as curtains one week and a table cloth the next, true that the flats were often nailed

### **HARRY HANSON'S COURT PLAYERS (continued)**

together rather than cleat and lines used, and that the Hanson carpenter having removed those nails at a week-end strike had to straighten them out for re-use rather than buy new nails. However, on the basis that you get what you pay for, by far and large Harry Hanson gave value for money, and audiences returned week after week to see his plays.

Harry Hanson was reputed to have a different coloured hairpiece for each season, and it is said that when presenting Dracula, he wore a white hairpiece and would tell his company, "My Dears, you have played yours parts so well that my hair has turned white with fright." Harry Hanson gave employment to many, and enjoyment to tens of thousands. Long live the name of Harry Hanson's Court Players.

Above Text kindly written for this site by Alan Chudley.

<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/Hastings.htm>

## Arthur Lloyd



<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/ArthurLloydBiography.htm>

Arthur Lloyd and his wife Katty King played the Pier Pavilion in 1888. A notice in the ERA of the 8th of December that year says: 'PIER PAVILION - Manager, Mr J. D. Hunter. - This is the second week of Mr Arthur Lloyd and Miss Katty King's visit. On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday they played The Rival Lovers, in which Mr J. D. Hunter appeared. The comedietta Her First Appearance, in which Mr Arthur Lloyd, Miss Katty King, and Mr J. E. Cowell took part, was also performed. For Thursday, Friday, and Saturday (to-night) we are promised the farcical comedy Major Baggs. Trillo, ventriloquist, is also here.' - The ERA, 8th December 1888.

Arthur Lloyd and his son and daughter are known to have played here in 1897. A notice in the ERA of the 29th of May reads: 'HASTINGS PIER PAVILION - Entertainment Manager, Mr J. D. Hunter: - A welcome visit is paid here this week by Mr Arthur Lloyd and party which include Mr Harry King-Lloyd and Miss Annie King-Lloyd, who, in conjunction with Mr Hunter's company, produced on Monday Mr Lloyd's musical comedy Our Party ; or, the Nobleman in Disguise, a piece which forms a pleasant medium for introducing any required amount of comic sketches, character songs, or graceful dancing. Mr J. D. Hunter played Marmaduke Mugg, a parvenu, with unctuous humour and amusing

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effect; Miss Annie King-Lloyd played with sparkling vivacity as his daughter Gertrude; Miss Eva Bayley displayed bright humour and lively talent as Aunt Meg, Gertrude's aunt; Mr Arthur Lloyd was droll as Jimmy Ferguson, an adventurer, and gave a selection from his repertoire, followed by Mr Harry King-Lloyd in character songs, which won much applause; Mr Harry J. Crane gave assistance to the plot as Montague. The guests masquerading as dukes and duchesses, but in reality, members of Montague's variety show, were played by Messrs John A. Thomson, C. W. Spencer, Carter Bligh, Misses Blanche Bayley and Cherry Wardroper. Mr Chas Hawker as Mugg's servant complete the cast.' - *The ERA*, 29th May 1897.

Whilst at the Pier Pavilion in June of the same year, 1897, the manager of the Theatre took the company on a picnic which was reported in the *ERA* on the 5th of June saying: 'MR J. D. HUNTER, the popular manager and comedian, of the Pier Pavilion, Hastings, last Thursday drove his company in a brake and four horses to Bodiam Castle, a fine old ruin twelve miles from Hastings, surrounded by a moat. There, in the castle, they had a jolly picnic, the caterers being Mr and Mrs Smith, of the Pier Refreshments Buffets. The guests included Mr and Mrs J. D. Hunter, Mr Arthur Lloyd, Miss Annie King-Lloyd, Mr Harry King-Lloyd, the Misses Eva and Blanche Bayley, Miss Cherry Wardroper, the Misses Katty, Lilly, and Dulcie King-Lloyd, Messrs C. W. Spencer, Charles Hawker, Carter Bligh, Harry Krane, Mason Warboys, John Thomson, &c.'" - *The ERA*, 5th June **1897**.

Arthur Lloyd also performed at the Pier Pavilion Theatre in 1898, and he is known to have performed in Hastings in 1879, 1886, 1888, 1890, and 1898, sometimes when touring with his popular review 'Two Hours of Genuine Fun'.

<http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/AlanChudleyBiography.htm>



"AN AMATEUR DETECTIVE."

On Monday, May 23, 1893, was produced, for the first time on any stage, at the Pier Pavilion, Hastings, a new farcical and musical play, in two acts, by Arthur Lloyd, entitled:—

*An Amateur Detective.*

Mrs. Ridgid ..... Miss Eva Bailey  
Miss Cirilia Snip ..... Miss Loie Esmond  
Flossie Fenton ..... Miss Annie King Lloyd  
Lena Laing ..... Miss Lillian King Lloyd  
Ena Deena ..... Miss Lily Day  
Dina Dusk ..... Miss Alice Day  
Minnie May ..... Miss Dulcie  
Pattie Price ..... Miss G. Ayton  
Peter Pecker ..... Mr. Arthur Lloyd  
Roginald Belmont St. Clair ..... Mr. Harry King Lloyd  
Toby ..... Mr. Edward Neville  
Mr. Ridgid ..... Mr. Herbert Maule  
Policeman ..... Mr. Chas. Hawker

This farce is of the kind with a little plot and a large amount of funny business. It is written to cause laughter at any cost, and some of the methods are not too refined. The farce was received with a large amount of approval by a big audience.

The plot is, in brief:—Mr. and Mrs. Ridgid keep a ladies' school. One of the young ladies, Miss Flossie Fenton, is carrying on a flirtation with St. Clair, an actor whose presence about the grounds gives rise to much discussion between her schoolmaster and mistress. Mr. Peter Pecker is a neighbour whose delight is to mind somebody else's business. He calls on Ridgid to try to find out who St. Clair is. When told that Ridgid does not know, he asks permission, which is granted, to play the detective—dress up as a new French master who is expected, and see if he can find out the mystery. Mr. Ridgid is called away, and Mrs. Ridgid has gone out on business, when the girls, with the help of Toby, the page, let in St. Clair. While he is showing them a pantomime song and dance, for which he assumes a dame's dress, Pecker is announced as the French master. The girls introduce St. Clair as a Miss Snip, a new teacher who is expected. Further complications arise and Pecker's clothes are torn off one at a time, including his shirt, when he is found to be clothed as a Scotchman. In act two he assumes several more disguises, finally impersonating Miss Snip, to try and unmask St. Clair, who has not yet been able to get away. In the end the real Miss Snip arrives and is taken for a man by Mr. Ridgid, who tears her dress off. Then St. Clair owns who he is, and matters are brought to a conclusion. Mr. Arthur Lloyd sustains the rôle of Pecker in a clever manner, his changes of character being for the most part excellent. Mr. Harry King Lloyd as the actor is good, whilst Mr. Edward Neville helps to keep the fun going as Toby. Mr. Herbert Maule gives a clever sketch of Ridgid, his wife being carefully played by Miss Eva Bayley. Miss Loie Esmond in the small part of Miss Snip is excellent, and the remaining characters are well carried out. Several songs and dances are introduced, including "The Klondyke King," by Mr. Lloyd; "My Intended," capably rendered by Harry King Lloyd; and a clever medley and a song, "There Was I," by Mr. Neville. A pretty dance is cleverly given by Misses A. and L. King Lloyd. The two acts take place in the schoolroom and drawing room at Mr. Ridgid's.

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