

## Music Hall and the Age of Resistance

Music Hall and the Age of Resistance:  
A Study of the Censorship Practices Which Influenced the Form of the Victorian Music Hall  
Leading to the 1912 Royal Command Performance and Beyond

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## Lay Abstract

This thesis pairs an analysis of meeting minutes, newspaper articles, song-sheets, and theatrical programmes from London's Victorian music halls with contemporary music hall scholarship and studies of censorship to add to the discussion of the genre's "end" or "death." Using the work of Judith Butler, this thesis is divided into a study of how censorship transformed the music hall's landscape, content, and culminating performance from its onset. As a result, this thesis argues that the controlling factors which shaped the genre led to what other music hall scholars have considered its end. By identifying the styles and modes of censorship used in the evolution of the English music hall genre, and in in-period methods of resistance to social control, this project suggests the radical potential of the music hall form as a contemporary style of theatre.

## Abstract

Building on Penelope Summerfield's argument that the end of the Victorian music hall in the early twentieth century signaled not "death" but a class-conscious evolution of the genre prompted by a "process of deliberate selection later made to look natural and inevitable," this project examines the acts of censorship and resistance which characterised the final years of the Victorian music hall. Selecting the 1912 Royal Variety or Royal Command Performance as the "end" point of the genre, and limiting my focus to London music halls, this project examines competing aims of working, middle, and upper class participants: it suggests that the upper-class aspirations of the managers of London's music halls, paired with middle-class moral desire for social control over the working-classes, eventually enforced by the London County Council in the mid-late nineteenth century, saw the rise of "respectability" in the genre while severing its ties to London's working classes. Juxtaposing ephemeral evidence produced by or focused on London music halls in the late nineteenth century (leading up to and including the 1912 Royal Command Performance) with contemporary research on the classed nature of social control and censorship practices, this thesis intends to make the classed-struggle for power and ownership over the identity of London's music halls evident. In doing so, the thesis alludes to the potential success of a third wave of music hall or the neo-music hall, to replace out-dated reflections of the music hall revival sparked by "The Good Old Days" and nostalgia post World War II.

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## List of Abbreviations

RCP	Royal Command Performance
LCC	London County Council
MHPPA	Music Hall Proprietor's Protection Association
TMHLC	Theatres and Music Halls Licensing Committee
VAF	Variety Artistes Federation

## Declaration of Academic Achievement

All research and analysis in this thesis, except where otherwise cited and acknowledged, is the sole work of Kirsten Feldner.

## Introduction

### London Music Hall, the Working Class “Problem,” and Victorian Modes of Social Control

“The moralists and the artists are fighting for the control of our music halls, and we, the common crowd of Londoners, look on. It does not matter to us, we have lost it anyway... they have taken our music-halls from us.” (Charles E. Hands, "A Common Person's Complaint.")

The "death" of the English music hall genre is a topic well covered in Victorian studies and academics largely agree that the music hall, the progenitor of vaudeville, burlesque, and variety theatre, "ended" though there is contestation over its supposed "death."<sup>1</sup> David Cheshire suggests that the style never died but that "the methods of presentation, the styles of music and costume[s were] altered to suit prevailing taste, fashion and convention" (Cheshire 10). The argument that the music halls had “died,” much like the form itself by the turn of the twentieth century, is one that is consciously controlled and produced by the aspirations and practices of London’s upper-middle classes, be they patrons, music hall managers, moral campaigners, stage-stars, or city officials. The stance most beneficial to this project is Penelope Summerfield’s in "The Effingham Arms and the Empire: Deliberate Selection in the Evolution of Music Hall in London" which most closely resembles Hands' article in the *Daily Mail* from November 1913<sup>2</sup>. Both the "death" narrative(s) and in-period evolution of the form, from a lower working-class genre to one presented in "Palaces of Variety" for the royal family, demonstrates processes of

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<sup>1</sup> David Cheshire, an early music hall historian, and current music hall scholars such as Penelope Summerfield, Dave Russell, and Peter Bailey, all argue against the practice of signifying the genre’s “end,” or evolution, circa 1912 as a total “death” of the form.

<sup>2</sup> Hands indicates that the artists and moralist’s “fight” over the music hall, which occur on classed lines in various licensing acts, closures, strikes, and performances between 1880 and 1912, led to the “loss” of the *people’s* music hall (Hands). Summerfield, likewise, presents the “decline” of the music hall genre as an “evolution” to the variety theatre form prompted by "a process of deliberate selection [by upper-middle-class social ‘actors’] later made to look natural and inevitable" (Summerfield 209-210).

class-control if not overt erasure. Much like the work of Summerfield and Russell<sup>3</sup>, this thesis acknowledges that the genre did not suffer a painful death, reaching an "end" neither due to social controls with the intent to enhance the form's "respectability," nor to the rising popularity of cinema. The English music hall transformed into other forms such as variety theatre, pantomime, burlesque, and vaudeville as a result of increased practices and expectations of "respectability."

Censorship and overt practices of control over the music hall's working-class form, content, and cultural impact begin as early as 1843 and were "already well advanced" by the Royal Command Performance of 1912 (Russell 66). Arguably, the signs of the music hall's waning popularity in the early twentieth century and disassociation from the public are inherent in its "birth" and "life." Music hall's birth—developing out of fairground and early tavern entertainments—and the reorganization, rebuilding, and changes which altered its form and content throughout the nineteenth century were just as influenced by calculated courses of social control—prompted by judgement and cemented through legislation—as the 1912 Royal Command Performance. My work in this thesis draws from Summerfield's understanding of English music hall as a culture of consolation,<sup>4</sup> which suggests that the working-class music hall was 'lost' to the people through censorship practices, and that occasional winks and nods to pre-censorship or transgressional acts and beliefs were the exception rather than the norm<sup>5</sup>. The

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<sup>3</sup> See Summerfield's "The Effingham Arms and the Empire: Deliberate Selection in the Evolution of Music Hall in London" in *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure* and Russell's "Varieties of Life: The Making of the Edwardian Music Hall" in *The Edwardian Theatre: Essays on Performance and the Stage*

<sup>4</sup> Summerfield builds on Stedman Jones' "Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870–1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class" in the *Journal of Social History*, which is extensively analyzed in Bailey's "Music hall and the knowingness of popular culture" in *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*. See either for further information on the London music halls and culture(s) of consolation.

<sup>5</sup> Summerfield argues that the consolation in question *is* the English music hall, and that consolation in the music hall genre was produced through managerial practice and licensing of halls throughout the nineteenth century.

entertainment which Hands mourned did not represent the lives, thoughts, or desires of the masses— primarily the working classes— because private and public officials intervened in the genre’s development and execution. As a result of these practices and consolation in the running and enjoyment of the halls,<sup>6</sup> this working-class entertainment by and for the working-classes ceased to be: music hall’s death came as a result of its managers, stars, and content being unable to adequately represent its original patrons.

### **DRURY LANE’S *MUSIC HALL***

This thesis is not concerned with arguing when the Victorian music hall “ended,” *if* it ever truly did, but is interested in the potential, and radical, future of the form. The foundation of my interest in music hall studies as well as in the on-going debate on the genre’s “death” is thanks, in part, to the modern Drury Lane Theatrical Productions’ *Music Hall*. The company, located in Burlington, Ontario, has produced their rendition of music hall annually since 1980, touting it as “the most entertaining, comedic, and touching” production in house and the Burlington community (“40<sup>th</sup> Olde Tyme Music Hall”). Drury Lane’s *Music Hall* is inspired by “The Good Old Days,” a music-hall revival produced by the BBC between 1953 and 1983 which “recreated an authentic atmosphere of the Victorian-Edwardian music hall with songs and sketches of the era performed by present-day performers in the style of the original artistes” (“The Good Old Days”). Like “The Good Old Days,” *Music Hall* began as *Olde Tyme Music Hall* and exclusively consisted of songs and sketches from the Victorian and Edwardian period. Over its forty-year run, the show, like the genre itself in the Victorian period, has “evolved,” dropping “Olde Tyme” from its title and slowly integrating more culturally accessible content.

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<sup>6</sup> As this thesis suggests, while many “accepted” the changes in the halls there is resistance to the spirit of consolation and censorship in the halls within the period, as demonstrated in Hands’ article.

While the show has been profitable for the company, recent financial reports reveal that the show, and the company, is losing patrons ("AGM 2018 Financial Report"). The company's leading source of income is the sale of alcohol and tickets, particularly "Series Tickets" which allow them to ensure full(er) audiences throughout the season, and this financial backing is bolstered by the company's artists and in-house "staff," consisted entirely by volunteers.<sup>7</sup> The central loss of money, especially in *Music Hall* which was previously the company's most lucrative production, is correlated to its loss of patrons. Drury Lane's long-time demographic is dwindling and the company's tickets— which have only recently been reduced from \$28 to \$25 for "students" or persons 18 and under— are exorbitant for community theatre ("Tickets"). Further, their choice of content has made recouping this loss, by selling tickets to or convincing younger demographics to volunteer their limited free-time, improbable if not impossible.

Of the company's productions, *Music Hall*, in particular, has failed to represent the desires, thoughts, and lives of the coveted youth markets. This failure is not for lack of trying: members of Drury Lane's community organization have rallied to bring ticket prices for youths down, to target series content at them, and have recently begun to reach out to post-secondary institutions to get artistically-inclined millennials involved in their productions. However, *Music Hall* as the company's "traditional" show carries with it staunch and unwavering support by traditionalists unwilling to see *their* show altered to suit a new generation. The traditionalists can be perceived by this new generation as embodying the racist, sexist, xenophobic, homophobic, and ablest practices and "norms" of music hall whilst also undercutting the genre's potential for, and history of, acting as counter-culture. Music hall studies and the genre's well-documented

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<sup>7</sup> While the company's productions and success is built on a basis of volunteer labour and patronage, Drury Lane's musical directors, choreographers, and musicians are paid for their labour.

problems of censorship, moral judgement, and class warfare<sup>8</sup> help to elucidate the challenges faced by contemporary traditions drawing on this history.

Music hall, as a genre, does have the potential to “speak” for the people. As Bailey has articulated throughout his work in music hall studies, this style of comic entertainment did “survive” and thrive in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, making a “successful piecemeal transition to the new media, and... [as] ‘Old Tyme’ music hall[s]” (Bailey 128). The popularity of the music hall revival in the mid-twentieth century, much like the genre’s success in the nineteenth century, is prompted by the “audience’s recognition and identification with the routine yet piquant exploits of a comic realism that validates the shared experience of a typically urbanised, class bound world seen from below” (129). “Old Tyme” music halls and the genre’s rise in the Victorian period rely on the audience’s recognition of performances of class, gender, and narratives of worldly affairs. While medleys of songs by the Bee Gees, from musicals such as *Hairspray* or *Sister Act*, and the utilisation of sketches from *The Carol Burnett Show* suggest meaning and cultural relevance to those who grew up in the eras in which those were popular, their use in present *Music Hall* programmes fails to entrance youths en masse.

Much like the 1912 Royal Command Performance<sup>9</sup>, Drury Lane’s 40<sup>th</sup> annual *Music Hall* promises “a trip down memory lane” for its audience by featuring “guest artistes reprising some favourite numbers that span 4 decades” (“40<sup>th</sup> Olde Tyme Music Hall”). The Royal Command Performance, similarly featured the “stars” of the music hall, such as Dan Leno, Little Tich, and

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<sup>8</sup> David James and David Huxley’s “‘Drivel for Dregs’: Perceptions of class, race, and gender in British music hall, 1850-1914” and Dagmar Kift’s *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, class and conflict* both allude to censorship in the halls, by middle-class managers and moralists over working-class performers and audiences, as overt or ‘explicit’ modes of social control if not class-warfare.

<sup>9</sup> See “1912, London Palace Theatre” from the *The Royal Variety Performance Archive* for a general overview of the performance or Dave Russell’s “Varieties of Life: The Making of the Edwardian Music Hall” in *The Edwardian Theatre: Essays on Performance and the Stage* for an in-depth introduction to the performance.

Vesta Tiller performing their well-known acts for the Royal Family in celebration of George V's ascension to the throne ("1912, London Palace Theatre"). Nostalgia is inherent to the music hall revival; Huxley and James write that even as "music hall and variety as live performance continued its decline, [with all] but its virtual demise by the 1950s" productions like "The Good Old Days" capitalised on public nostalgia for a "lost" art form (Huxley and James 59). The rebranding of Drury Lane's 40<sup>th</sup> *Music Hall* to the 40<sup>th</sup> *Olde Tyme Music Hall* [underlining mine] signals the importance of nostalgia to capital in the genre today.

However, where nostalgia fuels the music hall revival, following the 1912 Royal Command Performance nostalgia for authentic music hall as opposed to its evolved form as *variety* was as hotly debated as to whether or not the genre had "died." Critics such as W.R. Titterton suggested that "new leisure entrepreneurs had 'improved' the music hall only as a Gothic Cathedral would be by the hacking off of gargoyles" (Titterton 124). "Common" people, like Charles E. Hands, felt that the "people's music hall" was long since "taken" from them by artists and managers (Hands) while news sources dismissed criticism of variety as misplaced nostalgia. In July 1913, *The Era* printed a 'defence' of music hall/variety which notes that:

We occasionally come across in the daily newspaper a plea for the ancient music hall, with its torpor of melancholy, its dingy surroundings, its chairman, even its music. Such eccentric writers seem to ignore the existence of conditions in the old days that paralysed the better impulses of the artiste and degraded his art (*The Era* cited in Russell 64).

In the period, the authenticity of music hall and early-variety was not defined through its utilisation of the genre's early staples such as the presence of a chairman, or master of ceremonies, and use of tables and chairs. The removal of these staples *does* support Summerfield's claim that the music hall genre developed through processes of deliberate



selection. The resultant tying of these items, seen as (misplaced) nostalgia in the period and as a sign of maintaining the genre's "authentic" form in revivals, such as Drury Lane's *Music Hall*, suggests that recognition in music hall is informed by content in both the programme and setting, a point vital to my focus and division of chapters in this thesis.

## THESIS OUTLINE

Informed by my experiences as a performer, writer, and member of the target demographic uninterested in the majority of the content deemed "allowable" for Drury Lane's *Music Hall*<sup>10</sup>, as well as by conversations in music hall studies focused on the classist impact of the London County Council (and music hall manager's) use of censorship, my thesis explores the innate connection between music hall and the desire for social control. This focus, and contribution to music hall studies proper, is made all the more significant due to my unique position as a music hall performer and writer in the present. As Peter Bailey observes in *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, in music hall scholarship "the text has still too rarely been made to leave the page, and the actual dynamics of engagement in the stage form remain understudied" (Bailey 131). To this end, my selection of material, both ephemeral and academic, and primary modes of focus center on contestation in the genre's history as a performance form. The historical documents and ephemeral evidence explored in this thesis centers on elements of the music hall's nature as staged, be this legislation passed on the requirements of the music hall as a physical site, in song-sheets from staged performances in the period, and the content chosen for the Royal Command performance, represented here through a digitally archived copy of the souvenir programme.

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<sup>10</sup> References to sexuality, such as a character in a sketch from *Kids in the Hall* noting they are "bisexual," are "offensive" to the sensibilities of Drury Lane's patrons and are barred from performance whereas jokes by the Chairperson, which rely on ageist, misogynistic, and/or racist punchlines, are permitted content.

Music hall scholarship is concerned with the "death" of the halls but scholars research and question this consideration differently. In "Effingham Arms" Summerfield explores middle-class tactics of control and authorization<sup>11</sup> and argues that the halls and theatres of variety at the end of the Victorian era were "resistant to outside cultural influence" while their predecessors had been steeped in a "culture of confrontation with the pressures of life in a capitalist society" (Summerfield 209). Likewise, Bailey tracks the changes to the music hall— within and outside of the theatrical space— through the genre's inherent connection to capital as a *business* of pleasure in which the leisure of working-class subjects constitutes a threat to the "discipline and cohesion of the bourgeois" hierarchy which relies on working-class submission (Bailey 20).<sup>12</sup>

Kift's work<sup>13</sup> reveals a further preoccupation in music hall studies: Senelick and Summerfield parallel the working classes gradual change from voting Liberal to voting for the Tories in the Victorian period to the tempering of songs—from those concerned with sexuality to conservatively oriented or blatantly nationalistic songs performed in the halls (Summerfield 231-236 cited in Kift 44-45). Conversely, Stedman Jones tracks the "growing Liberal participation in the temperance movements since the 1860s" and suggests that "music-hall proprietors were... forced into the arms of the Tories" given how rigorously Liberal temperance movements<sup>14</sup> opposed the principle and content produced in the halls (Stedman Jones 494 cited in Kift 43).

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<sup>11</sup> These modes were slowly implemented in the music hall and the disparate genres which fed into the halls (such as taverns, song saloons, and fairground entertainments) through licensing acts at the municipal level as well as through parliamentary acts, as explored in Chapter One.

<sup>12</sup> Across *Leisure and Class in Victorian Britain: Rational Recreation and Contest for Control, 1830-1885*, *Music Hall: the Business of Pleasure*, and his articles in *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, Bailey explores the "problem" that working-class leisure presented to the upper classes: in the enjoyment of leisure the working classes are offered "a freedom that outstripped the reach of traditional social controls"; and working class enjoyment must be controlled.

<sup>13</sup> Kift analyzes Stedman Jones, Russell, Summerfield, and Senelick's approaches to seeing a "direct parallel between the content of [music hall] and the attitudes of the audience" (Kift 36), akin to Stedman Jones and Russell who take up the potential for class conflict in their respective research.

<sup>14</sup> Such as the Social Purity Alliance, the National Vigilance Association, the Ladies' National Association, and the British Women's Temperance Association.

While Stedman Jones' understanding of the shifting political alliances in the halls is sound, my research more closely follows Summerfield's approach which "attributes the gradual change towards conservatively oriented songs to the potentially increasing pressures of the licensing authorities on music-hall proprietors" and suggests that managers and artists resorted to acts of self-censorship for financial, personal, or moral reasons while legislation repressed free-speech on the music hall stage (Summerfield 231-236 cited in Kift 44-45).

It is the repression of music hall's 'vital spark,' the connection created between its audience and content—physically in the markings and landscape(s) of the hall as well as on-stage in managerial control over performers and songs—which this thesis is explicitly interested in exploring. My thesis utilises early music hall history to explore temperance, performance in the halls, and the changing class divisions and allegiances of the genre in addition to its analysis of the dimming of a class-conscious music hall. Most notably, these texts centre on the slowly increasing and then drastically reducing number of halls in London<sup>15</sup>, actions taken by temperance organizations to counter the mass-spread of the proletariat enjoying leisure<sup>16</sup>, and social actors in the music hall, specifically Marie Lloyd.<sup>17</sup> Lloyd, one of the primary stars of the late music hall, is famously remembered for her innuendo-laden performances and as being the most notable actor snubbed from the running order of the Royal Command Performance in 1912

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<sup>15</sup> Diana Howard's *London Theatres and Music Halls, 1850-1950* records and details the growth and loss of licensed and (some) un-licensed halls in London, though its currency and ability to be an exact record is explored in chapter one.

<sup>16</sup> Counter-movements such as 'Rational Recreation' occur throughout the nineteenth century to ensure that the leisure activities and entertainments afforded to the working-classes maintain the hierarchal structures and labour intensive focus "necessary" for the working class to learn from and explore moral entertainments.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Anthony Baker's *Marie Lloyd: Queen of the Music Halls* and Naomi Jacob's *Our Marie, Marie Lloyd: A Biography* cover the serio-comic's life extensively, though I also explored in-period critiques or praises of her, such as James Agate's "Marie Lloyd" published in *At Half Past Eight* following the actor's death, as well as the article "East and West With Marie Lloyd," in which the author goes along with Marie through her typical nightly routine with stops at music halls across London, published by *The Sketch* in 1895.

(Baker 120). Marie's comic style<sup>18</sup> represented a tangible threat to the moral, middle-class, purification of the music hall and its audience and is explored in both Chapters Two and Three.

Much like Beale's work on Lloyd, my study of ephemeral artifacts which demonstrate the changing landscape of the music hall is aided by studies which articulate methods of social control in the Victorian period and current theories of censorship in addition to the research conducted by Bailey, Summerfield, Kift, Senelick, Stedman Jones, Russell, and other music hall scholars<sup>19</sup>. The utilisation of theories of censorship as a grounding methodology for this thesis differs by chapter as their focus requires. Chapter One applies the concept of implicit and explicit modes of social control, as presented in articles by Storch, Levinson, and Butler,<sup>20</sup> to create a workable timeline which demonstrates the development of the music hall genre through the explicit control represented by licensing laws, regulations, and governmental interference in the halls. To limit the scope of this chapter, and the thesis overall, only the developmental process of London music halls is examined and is framed through 'implicit' and 'explicit' changes to the physical 'landscape' of the halls by managers, public officials, and moralists. The primary artefacts in this chapter are licensing laws, represented as "explicit" acts of censorship by the upper-middle classes with the intent to regain social control over the lower classes.

Building on the middle-class, moral, perspectives demonstrated in Chapter One, Chapter Two further nuances Stedman Jones' suggestion that music hall managers were "forced into" conservative practices in their halls (Stedman Jones 494). Chapter Two details how willing

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<sup>18</sup> Samantha Beale's *Gagging for it: Irony, Innuendo, and the Politics of Subversion in Women's Comic Performance on the post-1880 London music-hall stage and its resonance in contemporary practice* masterfully analyses Lloyd's comic style on and off of the music hall stage which I have utilised to explore the double censoring she faces as a woman and comedian in Chapter Two.

<sup>19</sup> Tracy Davis, Barry Faulk, David Huxley and David James, additionally, are excellent music hall scholars whose work is included in this thesis but whose focuses are more diversely oriented than those listed.

<sup>20</sup> These articles are Robert Storch's "The Problem of Working-Class Leisure. Some Roots of Middle-Class Moral Reform in the Industrial North: 1825-50," Sanford Levinson's "The Tutelary State: "Censorship," "Silence," and the Practices of Cultural Regulation," and Judith Butler's "Ruled Out: Vocabularies of the Censor."

responses of managers to licensing laws in London’s music halls led to the creation of “House-rules”<sup>21</sup> which made artists accountable for financial loss or litigation against the proprietor and led female artists such as Marie Lloyd to develop processes of self-reflexive censorship in their performances<sup>22</sup>. Utilising Judith Butler’s “Burning Acts, Injurious Speech” and “Ruled Out: Vocabularies of the Censor” in addition to Tracy Davis’ extensive work on actresses as working women in the Victorian period, Chapter Two argues that implicit acts of self-censorship or “self-reflexive censorship” allowed female performers to financially thrive and maintain their connections to the audience and class allegiances while performing radically.

Chapter Three borrows conceptually from the work of Nicholas Till and Kandis Cook<sup>23</sup> as well as from Dagmar Kift’s study of “The music-hall programme” in *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, class and conflict*. Combining their theoretical approaches, Chapter Three argues that the “souvenir programme”<sup>24</sup> provided to audiences at the 1912 Royal Command Performance demonstrates how managerial control of the performance demonstrates a precise cutting of ties between the “respectable” music hall and the working classes. To do so, the chapter examines aspects of the Royal Command Performance, such as the authenticating nature of Royal taste-making—which had previously saved ballet from being branded as immoral by the English public—and introductory essays to the Royal Command Performance by Henry

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<sup>21</sup> “House-rules” in this thesis utilise the vocabulary from “Rules and Regulations, Collins’s Music Hall,” *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee on Theatres and Places of Entertainment*, Appendix 4, 1892, p. 441.

<sup>22</sup> As proprietors were fueled by the desire to maintain financial security and, eventually, attain the business of higher class patrons by promoting music hall as “respectable” entertainment, decisions on the content in the programme of the halls, specifically female, serio-comic, performance, utilise explicit methods of censorship, such as “House-Rules.”

<sup>23</sup> Till and Cook performed a programme analysis of music halls presented at Hoxton Hall in order to create a modern revival at Hoxton based on its performance history. Their process and findings are detailed in Till’s article “‘First-Class Evening Entertainments’: Spectacle and Social Control in a Mid-Victorian Music Hall” published in *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1, in 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Digitally archived through *Arthur Lloyd*.

George Hibbert and Malcolm Watson which erase the history of struggle, resistance, and control which characterised the music hall in the nineteenth century.

Literary scholars and those interested in how social control and censorship practices alter the intrinsic form of performance style and cultural output should find this thesis engaging. The concepts explored here can be considered a more applicable boon for those interested in "lifting" the history of the music hall off of "the page," as Bailey urges<sup>25</sup>, as this project articulates that processes of control in the name of "respectability" weaken the radical potential of the music hall form as performance. Chapter One's focus on licensing laws, litigation, and architectural responses to implicit and explicit censorship practices, Chapter Two's close-reading of song-sheets and published criticism of female comics, and Chapter Three's interest in the late-Victorian formalisation of taste and respectability makes the content explored in this thesis beneficial to those whose research falls outside of theatrical practice and music hall scholarship.

The analysis this thesis undertakes, particularly in Chapter Two, may be extended to past and present music hall studies, as Nicholas Till's work has<sup>26</sup>, to examine cases akin to Drury Lane's *Music Hall* which in their nostalgic desire to embrace authenticity of the form have appropriated the censorship practices which destroyed the genre's ability to speak for and to the people. Music hall, as this thesis hopes to present, is a form created to speak to the aspirations, struggles, and lives of those who conventional models of theatre—opera, ballet, and drama—failed to represent. As the genre's primacy grew in the eyes of public officials as a means of controlling the thoughts and actions of the masses, and in the eyes of managers (and individual

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<sup>25</sup> Bailey notes that much music hall scholarship fails to note its performed-nature as some scholars read it as singularly through the texts it left behind (song-sheets, reviews from critics, and other ephemera) as opposed to as a performance style. For more on this, consult "Music hall and the knowingness of popular culture," in *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 128-150.

<sup>26</sup> Further, the theorists upon which this thesis' arguments draw, namely Butler, Davis, Mizejewski, Levinson, and Eileen and Stephen Yeo extend the reach and potential use of this project outside of music hall studies to use in cultural studies and performance studies.

stars) as a means of achieving upward mobility, its connections to the working classes were increasingly severed. Ideally, this thesis may prompt scholars from other disciplines to consider the tangibility and importance of constructing a neo-music hall model which represents the tastes, struggles, and lives of the millennials and gen-z folx for whom the music hall revival fails to speak.

## Chapter One

### **‘Selective Evolution’ or Moral Judgement: Licensing as an ‘Implicit’ and ‘Explicit’ Censorship to the Form of the Victorian Music Hall**

Before delving into the well-established academic discussion of when and how the music hall genre and the working class bodies imperative to its origin were cleft, it is imperative to establish first a timeline of the legislative reforms enacted against the music hall and its working class-kin. In doing so, this chapter is concerned primarily with the discussion of how upper and middle-class ‘moralising’ or the desire for social-improvement of the lower, working, classes, incited this timeline and lengthy processes of change in the physical landscape of the London music hall. The origin of the halls, as well as of middle-class moral fears of and for the working-classes in leisure, can be traced back to the fairground.<sup>27</sup> Prior to movements from the country into cities such as London, these grounds featured a convergence of cultures as itinerant artists performed and informed the entertainments of the English working classes.

The outdoor nature of the fairground creates the possibility of classed-chaos and performances of and by the foreign other—bodies, in addition to those of the working-classes in leisure, which constitute a threat to middle-class understandings of English nationalism and social hierarchy— and were opposed by the upper and middle-classes. The Parliamentary Licensing Act of 1737, reaffirmed the monopoly of the “legitimate” theatres,<sup>28</sup> Covent Garden and Drury Lane, and was intended to oust popular fairground entertainments. This act confirms the Royal Patents of “legitimate” sites and stresses that only those with the ability to afford and attend the legitimate theatres are entitled to entertainment, and endorses the class-divisions of

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<sup>27</sup> Fairground culture, as explored in the works of Penelope Summerfield, crops up as a result of lower, working classes, trying to find suitable, affordable, and alternative entertainments to those hosted in the "legitimate," expensive, theatres of the city.

<sup>28</sup> According to Summerfield, Covent Garden and Drury Lane were granted Royal Patents in 1660; these patents gave legitimised holders the right to perform spoken drama and simultaneously made it illegal for non-holders to present “serious” content (Summerfield 210).



these spaces. The 1737 act, like its descendants in music hall's history, articulates the divide between 'lawful' and 'lawless' entertainments, between the "popular" or "low" and "legitimate" entertainments, as well as who is allowed to enjoy leisure as through divisions of class.

Though the Licensing Act of 1737 expressly targeted fairground culture and performances, such acts are just as readily employed over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to control indoor entertainments as the primacy of entertainment and alcohol to the working classes enjoying leisure in both locales stood in opposition to the burgeoning Victorian concept of "rational entertainment" (Beale 48). Moralists<sup>29</sup> assumed that all of these spaces fostered 'immoral' entertainment as it did not maintain the order or control of the workplace and their repugnance was "reinforced by the unavoidable, but unnerving encounters they experienced with working [classes] away from their jobs" (Storch 140). The working-class body held the potential to threaten the security of the middle-classes but were all the more 'dangerous' to normative concepts of hierarchy when given time, freedom, and the ability to coalesce as a group, imbibe, and enjoy themselves.

The fear of the working-class and their resultant infantilisation by middle-class moralists, temperance movements, and purity campaigners is a blatant, or 'explicit,' attempt to maintain social control over these bodies. Fueled by the misconception that "when at leisure, working people were so morally suggestible that they needed protecting from themselves" the middle classes of the period characterise working-class leisure as the prelude to spiritual slippage and therefore a deserving moral "project" (Beale 47). Legislative intervention in the taverns functions akin to the managerial positions which allowed the middle-class body to watch over, 'guide,' and control the lower classes at work, another form of explicit social control. To this end, the 1751

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<sup>29</sup> In the nineteenth century, the issues of abolition and temperance "formed the 'twin pillars' of moralism" and in the case of the temperance movement largely consisted of middle-class advocates (Robins).

Disorderly Houses Act extended the social and site-specific control the bourgeois held over the working classes elsewhere into the sphere of leisure<sup>30</sup>. While the 1751 act did not "limit... drink" (Gerrard 492), it maintained that "houses, rooms and gardens, had to obtain a licence from the magistrates" to stage attractions alongside alcohol (Summerfield 211). Following the 1751 act, tavern entertainment progressed further away from performances by ballad singers, to communal singing, and eventually to singing with accompaniment and dancing, "popular" or "low" entertainments, tied to norms of the country and not the classical, rigid, concerts of the city. These pursuits, to the middle-class moralists, illustrated that the working-classes required further moral guidance and protection (Lee 47).

To account for the increased interest in physical entertainment, many pubs built expansions on to their businesses to separate the music, dancing and eating, from those interested solely in liquid pursuits. The physical alteration to sites of entertainment, by and for the working-classes, was acknowledged in 1793 when a second act was passed and further 'refined' lower class leisure spaces. The 1793 Music and Dancing Licence, which was "separate from the excise licence required for the sale of drink and the stage play licence," encouraged the "spontaneous amateur entertainment already taking place in [the] taverns," as well as a selective evolution of the halls, by enforcing that these "song saloon[s]" maintain building code (Summerfield 212). Placing these regulating acts into a timeline makes the separation of tavern from hall appear evident and as if it quickly progressed; however, we must be conscious of just how *long* it took as well as what was behind the form's evolution out of taverns.

The eventual separation of the pubs and song saloons, reinforced by the data present in Diana Howard's work, suggests that pubs continued strong across the period while the number of

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<sup>30</sup> This act "specifically linked the disorderly nature of tavern entertainment to opposition to work in the form of crime and idleness" (Summerfield 211).

licensed “(song) saloons” rose from 1 to 16 in London between 1850 and 1860 (Howard cited in Summerfield 217). This “rise” of the *licensed* song saloon- an important distinction- occurs much later than the 1793 *Music and Dancing Licence* which enabled it. Though my project is chiefly focused on the nature of the taverns, saloons, and eventually the halls, as sites of leisure and classed tension, they are also places of business and tavern owners, like their working-class patrons and performers, needed to turn a profit to survive. The inability for song-saloons to rival financially the taverns in terms of alcohol sale— and consumption— provides us with one reason for its slow evolution. Nonetheless, the form persisted.

### LICENSING ACTS, SALOONS, AND MORAL FEAR

By 1839, the pre-established Metropolitan Police Act was extended to cover song saloons, just as the Disorderly Houses Act of 1751 had been extended to target singing in pubs (212). The extension of these acts to sites of leisure associated with alcohol and communal singing demonstrates cyclical class-based attempts by the middle-classes to control and codify the [moral] behaviour of working-class Londoners.<sup>31</sup> The ideal image of the working-class audience demonstrates the common desire to "morally sanitise... (and politically neutralise)"<sup>32</sup> the working class through their amusements (Storch 139). The legislative acts made against the burgeoning genre, forty-six years before the extension of the Metropolitan Police act formalised and weaponised the moral fears of the middle-classes, were intended to do just this.

The song saloons of the early 1840s, an evolved form of the singing-taverns, are the birthplace of the halls. As places of entertainment, the synonymous song saloons, song-and-

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<sup>31</sup> Beale goes more in-depth into the concept of public-perceptions of the working-classes and moral controls enacted by the middle-classes in “‘Sentiments Unwomanly and Unnatural’: Moral Ambiguity, Censorship and Public Perceptions of the Serio-Comic Performer.”

<sup>32</sup> Janice Carlisle suggests that moral campaigners viewed licensing as a tool with the ability to reform working-class entertainments which, once cleansed, could "induct... [their audiences] into standards of public decorum and manners that were deemed essential for their... role as 'respectable' public citizens and subjects" (Carlisle 170).

supper-rooms, and cider cellars created "opportunities for socialisation, offering reassurance, confirmation and experiential information about learning 'how to live,' as well as 'space' for working-class... subcultures to flourish, especially among the young" (Rutherford 133). The elements behind this fear and desire are age, gender, ethnicity and class. Edward Lee asserts that the audience in the pre-halls of the 1840s were "under twenty-five as a whole, with a predominance of men," and therefore deemed the "future" of the nation as potential fathers, husbands, and soldiers (Lee 90)<sup>33</sup>. The relatively young age of the male working-classes in these sites and their role in societal and household hierarchies fueled the self-interested and procreative nature of the middle-class moral campaigns and increased licensing from the 1840s forward.

The saloon, as a "working-class recreational nexus" (Storch 149), provided men with alcohol, "toilet facilities... refuge from the wet and from the wife... cards, reading matter, food and music" (Harrison 46 cited in Storch 145). Though the saloon was a more conventional cultural space than the future counter-cultural music hall, the middle-classes saw the leisurely pursuits afforded to the malleable mind of the young, working-class, male in these sites as a palpable threat against the English subject and nation as a whole: much like in the fairground and early taverns, the possibility for disorderly conduct or insurrection by these subjects—inspired both by the lawlessness of the setting as well as proximity to alcohol and immoral activities such as gambling—was one fear. The reach these individuals attain as husbands and fathers fueled the desire for rational recreation and the Mechanics Institute of London was held by the middle-classes as the perfect alternative entertainment as it was a site of rational recreation.<sup>34</sup> The

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<sup>33</sup> Lee sees this trend in his study of the urbanisation of English folksong and its transformation through ballad culture in the eighteenth century and the early music halls. The age and gender of music hall's initial target audience is particularly striking when compared to those engaged in music hall by 1912, as Chapter Three demonstrates, as well as in music hall revivals.

<sup>34</sup> The Mechanics Institute of London was established in the early 1820s and, as demonstrated in Allin's *Mechanics Institution Defended on Christian Principles*, in addition to teaching skills was a site intended for moral instruction.

institute taught "the workings [and] the relations and duties of social life... [in the hopes of] damp[ing] down social passions," encouraged community building, skill building and work ethic outside of the job (Allin 15). As a result these sites held the possibility to reaffirm the importance of routine, morality, and institutional structures to the working class man and be passed down through the hierarchy of the household, ensuring social stability.

Unfortunately, moral instruction and amusement did not hold the same sway as food, drink, entertainment, and community after a long day of work. Where the Mechanics Institute failed to sway the majority of saloon patrons, "respectable" entrepreneurs who ran saloons, or song-and-supper rooms such as Evans's Late Joys,<sup>35</sup> were better able to deftly mix moral education and entertainment. Evans's, and London's Cider Cellar(s) and Coal Hole(s) attracted patrons through the quality and quantity of food and their convivial atmosphere as opposed to the availability of licentious performance alongside alcohol. The impact of the Music and Dancing Licence on the spatiality of these sites' is palpable; receiving a licence authorized and increased the building of song-saloons and their separation from taverns and allowed "performance space [to be] designed wherever it seemed convenient... Patrons sat around tables as they ate, drank, smoked and conversed, while performers sang somewhere in their midst" (Storch 114). W.C. Evans and his successor<sup>36</sup> were further legitimated through spatial separation as a result of the Music and Dancing License which "compelled the flourishing saloon theatres" to distance their performers from their audience (Senelick 152). While Evans's offered "lewd" performances, what could be shown to the audience was implicitly distanced *from* the audience by licensing

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<sup>35</sup> Evans's, which was purchased and run as a hotel in 1772, came to function as a "supper room" as a result of the Music and Dancing Licence and was able to profit from the growing interest of an increasingly literate working class in leisure and song ("Evan's Song and Supper Rooms, Covent Garden").

<sup>36</sup> Paddy Green ran Evans's as of 1856 and is responsible for maintaining the song-and-supper room throughout many tumultuous legal changes to the concept of song-and-supper rooms, music halls, and "minor theatres."

laws. These laws, in turn, physically distanced the audience from the performers and, thus, from sin in sites like Evans's as of 1856.<sup>37</sup> While the 1843 act encouraged the performance of drama, Evans's offerings remained unchanged even as the space took on the form of a crude theatre. This appearance, when paired with the possibility for the performance of drama, as opposed to song alone, made the song-and-supper rooms subject to British laws governing minor theatres.<sup>38</sup>

The survival of Evans's, where the managers were morally upstanding<sup>39</sup> and the content ran the gamut from tepid to slightly risqué, as opposed to its peers—the Coal Hole(s) and Cider Cellar(s)—demonstrates the biased "discretion" of magistrates and the morally motivated middle classes<sup>40</sup>. Though The Coal Hole and Cider Cellar "managed the step from saloon to [early] music hall," both were scrutinised by moralists who associated their names with morally repugnant 'dens of sin' (Pearsall 26). In middle-class moralising and writing, their names became emblematic with the music hall "problem" as they signal elements of the class attending them or of the entertainments provided there. "Coal Hole" is associated with mining and labour and "Cider Cellar" emphasizes the availability of alcohol. Their titles communicated their offerings and were taken up by moralists to "emphasize... both physical squalor and lack of orderliness" as well as the "moral failings" of these sites' patrons (Taylor 8). While "Coal Hole[s]" and "Cider Cellar[s]" navigated increasing legislation and licensing laws, the bawdiness of their offerings

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<sup>37</sup> Inspired by changes to the Music and Dancing license, Green built an addition on to the initial hotel space with an "allocated [spot] for the singers in the back of the room... this area was eventually adapted to accommodate a platform that served as a stage" (Scheide 114).

<sup>38</sup> As an "alternative," "low," unlicensed—and therefore uncontrollable—form of performance, the "minor theatres" which grew "out of fairground booths in the early eighteenth century" were ultimately opposed and subjected to regimentation by the middle-classes (Summerfield 210).

<sup>39</sup> Both Evans and Green were "former closter[s]," and their background added a modicum of respect to the establishment and combated the 'lowly' nature of the saloon. The entertainments offered at the Late Joys included "a choir of men and boys singing madrigals, ballads, and selections from operas, with piano or harmonium accompaniment" (Weightman).

<sup>40</sup> The distinction between unregulated and morally sanitised sites which occurs between 1840 and the 1850's is covered in Nicholas Till's "'First-Class Evening Entertainments.'"

led to the connotation of their name(s) with immorality, because of the revulsion of moralists, and resulted in their closure. The change from taverns to song-saloons and saloons to music halls “was not the result of a coherent, planned strategy” but consequential due to the decisions of individual managers, their audiences, and campaigns against them by moral reformers (Russell 61 cited in Scott). This is true in the case of Evans’s, the Coal Hole, and the Cider Cellar: a manager’s ability to cater to the moral middle-classes who controlled licensing and legislation as well as their working-class patrons, as W.C. Evans and Paddy Green did, made all the difference between a song-saloon “evolving” into a music hall or closing. As Howard’s data suggests, some song-saloons—like Evans’s<sup>41</sup>—continued to survive in relatively untransformed states as music halls began to thrive and, even, when these turned into theatres of variety.

Sentimentality, paired with the respectable and temperate nature of performances and the resistance to burgeoning music halls, helped Evans’s stay afloat. Pearsall suggests that the nostalgia for “original” entertainments and sites vied with the legitimizing impact of licensing, and as a result “even when [Evans’s] had been superseded by new enterprises... men preserved an affection for it” (Pearsall 22). Following the decrease in the number of saloons in London, from 10 in 1890 to 1 as of 1900, the licensed music halls increased steadily from 1860 forward (Howard cited in Summerfield 217). The ebb and flow of the saloons and music halls in London, as was the case with taverns and saloons previously, relied on licensing and governmental action as well as management's ability to entice patrons.

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<sup>41</sup> Evans’s Late Joys was one of the first London-based saloons to alter their performance space into that of a minor theatre and neither progressed into a music hall nor ceased to be as their competitors did. As sites like the Coal Hole and Cider Cellar saw thinning crowds and eventual closure due to government regulation and increasingly demure audiences, Evans’s continued on as a song-and-supper room and hotel until it was sold in 1891.

**SPATIAL, MORAL, AND CLASS-CENTERED ALTERATIONS**

Howard notes a dramatic rise from zero to eight licensed music halls and two unlicensed halls in London between 1850 and 1860,<sup>42</sup> and by 1866 the halls outnumbered the number of legitimate theatres in London (217). Similar to the utilisation of the 1843 Theatre Act to transform the expectations of management, audience, and saloons as a site, the 1878 Suitability Act was enacted to quell the growth of both licensed and unlicensed music halls in London. These newly licensed minor theatres<sup>43</sup> were governed "by legal measures and in-house regulations" and offer a clear example of how legislation impacts the spatiality of the music hall and is the basis for classed tensions between managers, audiences, and moral reformers (Scott).

The halls of the late 1860s were recognised not as 'dens of sin' but as sites of placation for the working-class. Henry Morley<sup>44</sup> noted that the "working-classes [sat] in a happy crowd, as orderly and reverent as if they were at church, and yet as unrestrained in their enjoyment as if listening to stories told them by their own firesides" (Morley cited in Carlisle 170). Music hall managers also reflected Morley's sentiments; in 1862 the manager of Wilton's Music Hall attributed the decrease of drunkenness and breaches of peace to "nothing else but the establishment of cheap and rational entertainment which these music halls have provided for the working classes of this country" (Honri 27 cited in Till 7). The halls which flourished in the late 50s and early 60s had evolved alongside the moral campaign for 'rational recreation' in Britain

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<sup>42</sup>Depending on source these numbers vary. For example, *The Era Almanac* suggests that by the mid-1860s, there were "thirty-one [music halls] in London alone and three hundred and eighty-four around the rest of the kingdom" (*The Era Almanac* x cited in Gerrard 493). The discrepancies in the number of music halls can be attributed to the relative disorder of "owners of saloons and taverns convert[ing] their properties into music halls" between 1851 and 1864 (Pearsall 33).

<sup>43</sup> Minor theatres were under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain's office during the Theatre Act of 1843 if they performed "spoken drama[s]" but their content overall was under the control of the city of London's municipal government.

<sup>44</sup> Morley was a social reformer in the period whose observation of the audience at a performance held at Sadler's Wells Theatre is recorded in "Phelps at Sadler's Wells" from *The Journal of a London Playgoer*, published in 1891.



which was itself a reflection of the 1820s reform campaign that held the Mechanic's Institute of London as the most suitable alternative to the saloon theatres for working-class leisure.

Despite no longer being codified as wholly immoral sites, the halls were made a point of contention by theatre managers, leading to legal hearings, as they vastly outnumbered and out-served London's theatres in the later 1860s (Stottlar 279). The theatre managers "cried that they would suffer [financial losses] if music halls were allowed to present drama, opera or ballet" and argued that the availability of food and drink provided the halls with an additional stream of revenue (Schoch 239). The argument against the halls was an aesthetic and moral argument in favour of the 'high culture' of the theatre as opposed to the music hall and its proximity to the working classes. The "social evil" of the halls was not their conduct but the classist attitudes of its opponents, as a piece from the *Observer* demonstrates, noting that "the real 'social evil'" of the halls existed *outside* of them "ready to pounce on innocent and unsuspecting" attendees and defame their leisure (*The Musician & Music Hall Times* 92-93 cited in Beale 32). Objections by the 'legitimate' theatre managers' fear of losing their capital, and audience, to a seemingly lower-class, or less worthy, competitor paralleled the earlier, moral, fear of the classed other.

Much of the "worth" of the halls, outside of arguments of "legitimacy"— which is vital to Chapter Three— stemmed from their working-class origin and ties to bawdiness. Having evolved from taverns, song-saloons, and environs focused on community and consumption, the halls of the 60s maintained both the 'song' and 'supper' of their predecessors. Reflecting on the 1866 complaints by London theatre managers, the availability and allowance for food and drink in the body of the halls is a prominent source of jealousy. The managers famously suggested that "Music halls already enjoyed the advantage of allowing the audience to smoke, eat and drink from the comfort of their seats" and that unless the magistrates quelled their spread

"Shakespeare would be forced to take up residence in the music hall, where he would play second fiddle to tobacco and whisky" (Schoch 239). While one could argue that moral fear and outrage is present in the theatre managers' diatribe against the halls, their invocation of Shakespeare as a 'high art' opposite to the consumption of tobacco and whisky is laughable given the reception and target audience of much of the Bard's work in the early modern period.

Despite the profitability of food and drink in the body of the hall, there were advantages to the spatial norms of the legitimate theatres and throughout the 1860s music hall's cabaret "layout gave way increasingly to seats, as in the theatres, because you could admit more people and control them more easily" (Lee 90). These changes included the separation of artist and audience, which had been accounted for earlier in the period, and the ability to seat more patrons in the standard, bolted, 'tip-up' seats of the legitimate theatres. Though these changes are not 'explicitly' tied to censorship, we must view the alteration of physical aspects of the halls as invariably tied to the desire of management, and censors, to separate the music hall, as both site and genre, from its working-class origins and resultant ties to alcohol and non-productive forms of leisure. In this separation, the physical alteration of the halls is implicit censorship. As clothing and actions are utilised to display one's wealth and social status— among other things— in the period, so too does the 'dressing' of the halls suggest their desired status and patrons.

The 1878 Suitability Act, which required halls to acquire a certificate of suitability,<sup>45</sup> furthered such implicit changes to the halls and separation from the working class. The layout of the halls—which experienced extensive changes over a 100-year span<sup>46</sup>—was altered further by the Suitability Act's necessitation of added proscenium walls to "divid[e] the stage from the

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<sup>45</sup> To attain a certificate of suitability, the Suitability Act necessitated that minor theatres separate the stage from the audience, "as in a theatre, [and] that a safety curtain" was added to protect the audience and performer alike (91).

<sup>46</sup> These changes spanned from being located in taverns, to off-shoot song-saloons separated from the body of other establishments, to including a stage raised above the eating area.

auditorium" and the inclusion of a safety curtain separating audience and artist(s) (Pearsall 39). This change impacted less affluent theatres or those who clung to the atmosphere based song-and-supper room style by instituting a sudden, wide, physical divide between performer and audience which, as Chapter Two suggests, was a goal for manager and moralist alike.

The inclusion of a proscenium and safety curtain undoubtedly altered the landscape and atmosphere of the halls; however, it was the second part of the 1878 Act of Suitability, the prohibition of liquor in the body of the hall which severely reduced the number of music halls in the London area (Lee 91). This change, when paired with the inclusion of proscenium and safety curtain, was flouted by the magistrates as levelling the music hall and conventional, and therefore respectable, theatres. Halls were required to surrender the easiest way to earn their traditional revenue, the 'wet money,' in order to evolve into a respectable site of business and stay open. In a turn which, as the period progressed, becomes synonymous with the selective evolution of the genre, richer halls were able to survive this addendum by building "a promenade at the back of the stalls," in addition to the proscenium, "so as not to risk losing" liquor sales (Pearsall 39).

As a "middle ground between public houses<sup>47</sup>... and the [legitimate] theatre," music halls are inherently connected to alcohol through their origin in tavern and song-saloons, and the sale of alcohol maintained business while lining the pockets of managers (Beale 46-48). The proscenium, in addition to permitting the sale of alcohol, became a site of solicitation, leading to further moral outrage and licensing, as will be explored in Chapter Two. The addition of a proscenium, which maintained 'wet money' and sparked a new draw for male patrons through

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<sup>47</sup> Beale posits that the existence of public houses in the period was "predicated on alcohol consumption and were therefore disapproved of in principle;" much like the public houses, music halls' association with liquor sales made the sites a contentious zone for the temperance movement (Beale 46).

the willing admittance of sex workers, was impossible for many smaller, improvised, and unlicensed halls. As a result sites that were unable to afford alterations closed by the end of the 1880s.

The increased licensing led to mass music hall closures in the late 1870s and early 1880s.<sup>48</sup> *The Era Almanac*, which records thirty-one halls in London at this time, demonstrates the changing nature of the halls as its list of “halls” includes surviving saloons as well as unlicensed halls scattered throughout the unregulated and unrecorded dens of London.<sup>49</sup> Many of these halls may have been “lost” to music hall history for the same reasons moral campaigners are interested in them in the period; their unregulated, unofficial, and ‘unevolved’ forms, when paired with the class of their patrons, may have left them invisible to the early music hall historian's nostalgic, middle-class, eye(s). Regardless of which of Howard, Lee, or *The Era Almanac*'s accounts of London's halls is ‘correct,’ what differences in these sources make obvious is that the 1878 Suitability Act further impacted the implicit censorship and distancing of the halls from their working-class patrons, locales, and origins.

The Suitability Act laid the moral groundwork for the London County Council which oversaw a decrease of 348 applications for music and ‘music and dancing’ licenses in London in 1889 to “a mere 215” in 1893 due to its campaigning for purity and control in the halls (Waters 59). Through both the 1878 Suitability Act, and its social-descendent, the London County Council, the ‘rich’ halls grew all the more affluent as their competitors among the ‘minor’ theatre

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<sup>48</sup> As noted previously, there are discrepancies in this data. Howard's tracks a smaller dip from eleven halls in London (ten licensed and one unlicensed) to nine licensed halls (Howard cited in Summerfield 217). Edward Lee notes the closure of 200 of an estimated “500 hundred [halls] in London in the 1880s” (Lee 91). *The Era Almanac* stands between both these arguments, suggesting that the halls flourished in late 1860s and early 1870s with “thirty-one in London alone” (*The Era Almanac* x).

<sup>49</sup> A hall may go unaccounted by both moral campaigners and historians when lacking the legitimacy of the larger halls as a result of class-based cataloguing. Campaigners in the period *were* highly interested in the smaller halls, many of which cropped up in lower, working-class areas or around immigrants and thus needed to be controlled, through regulation or shut-down to “protect” these minority groups from moral failing.

circuit thinned in the early 1880s and satisfied the moral bloodlust of campaigners against working-class leisure. This, in turn, allowed the transformed, surviving, halls to absorb venue-less patrons, court the more respectable middle and upper-classes, and host them in a space which signaled higher class aspirations and could house more bodies and, in the eyes of moral campaigners, could be utilised as a tool for the moral education and instruction of the masses.

### **THE LCC AND THE MHPPA: ARTICULATIONS OF CLASS REFORM**

As managers and moralists instituted changes to the body and number of halls in London, public efforts to eradicate indecency in the halls— performance and otherwise— came to a head. The Local Government Act of 1888 "transferred most of the administrative functions of the Quarter Sessions to newly created county councils. The London County Council (LCC) therefore took over the responsibility for registering premises of public entertainment and granting licenses to proprietors" ("Sources for the history..." 5). As a result of The Local Government Act, the LCC<sup>50</sup> took on the power and responsibilities of local magistrates and 300 organisations that oversaw "the roads, the sewers, the lighting" and the music halls despite overwhelming parliamentary legislation on the latter sites (Baker 26). To this end, the LCC established a 'Theatres and Music Halls Licensing Committee' to conduct the regulation, reform, and control of music hall venues within the city (Davis 113-114).<sup>51</sup>

A "conflict of interest" disqualified August Harris, the manager of Drury Lane Theatre, from gaining membership on the LCC's 'Theatres and Music Halls Licensing Committee,' but Frederick Charrington— an infamous moral reformer and member of the National Vigilance

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<sup>50</sup> The London County Council was officially established in 1889 and satiated the reform agitation of the early 1880s led by John Lloyd and J.F.B. Firth of the 'London Municipal Reform League' (Clifton 2).

<sup>51</sup> Those who had previously attempted and received mixed success with controlling the halls and their patrons, such as the National Vigilance Committee, hailed the creation of the LCC as a victory and an opportunity to enact social change and improvement to the music hall, and, by extension, the working classes.

Committee— became the poster child of the committee. Akin to the moral “discretion” of magistrates resulting in the closure of “Coal Hole[s]” over song-saloons, the decision of who would serve on the Licensing Committee was biased. Charrington was one of several persons chosen with recognisable links to temperance campaigns such as the Social Purity Alliance, the National Vigilance Association, the Ladies’ National Association, and the British Women’s Temperance Association (Beale 54).<sup>52</sup> The connection between the committee members and various temperance movements is understandable given the expectation of the council: the constraints of “mid-Victorian parsimony were loosening” and, until social policy came under the control of the central government, municipal activity and its influence on morality presented “an efficient collective response to modern social problems” (Davis 27).

As defenders of public morality the Committee members also functioned as cultural tastemakers and shapers, and in this regard, Yeo notes that “the exchange of meanings and mutual understandings of our own humanity and potential” is the crux of nineteenth-century moralising (Yeo 150). As had been the case in early licensing and litigation against fairground and tavern culture, the moral middle-class which comprised the Licensing Committee had the ability to shape the people’s entertainment and thus the people themselves. The “potential” the LCC saw in the music-hall patron, as well as the music hall itself, is best demonstrated by the writing of Councillor Captain Edmund Hope Verney who suggests that “the people of London looked to [the Theatres and Music Halls Licensing Committee and the LCC] for... the improvement of public morality” (Verney in *The Era*, 15, cited in Beale 46). In shaping public entertainment, Verney and his moral compatriots on the Committee constitute respectability

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<sup>52</sup> The most prominent of these on the Licensing Committee other than Charrington are McDougall and Captain Verney and William Barclay as the most notable individual inspector hired by the committee.

through "insider notions of what is normative or appropriate" which ultimately "come into conflict with outsider concerns about music-hall behaviour" (Scott). Akin to the Mechanics' Institute in the 1820s, the Committee as a subsection of the LCC were regarded, on the one hand, by those desperate for social control and its resultant purity as a social power with the ability to inculcate "the relations and duties of social life" to the lower classes (Allin 15 cited in Storch 150). On the other hand, the Committee was depicted by both music hall historians and the in-period managers as another hurdle for the halls to overcome.

The physical landscape, atmosphere, and behaviour of the audience in the halls became the primary focus of 'the Theatres and Music Halls Licensing Committee' as had been the case in the late 1870s due to the 1878 Suitability Act. Of the organisations whose power and responsibilities the LCC absorbed, the one with the potential to shape London's music halls was The Board of Works whose attempts to regulate the halls in 1887 were unsuccessful.<sup>53</sup> Utilising its methods— such as the ability to grant or refuse licenses on the grounds of "safety"— the LCC shrouded their moral objections to, and campaign against, the halls; however, the moral bias of the committee is palpable in Thomas Fardell's<sup>54</sup> *Report from the Select Committee*. Here, he suggests that the reduction of license applications<sup>55</sup> only impacted music halls "seldom frequented by 'respectable' people" and that the halls "lost" were "many smaller halls of questionable character could not carry out the alterations 'which were desirable in the public interest'" (*Report from the Select Committee* 293 cited in Waters 59).

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<sup>53</sup> The Metropolitan Board of Works famously "made the first systematic attempts to regulate London's music halls" in 1887 when "the Board was given the power to require all theatre and music-hall proprietors to remedy any structural defects in their halls before they could apply to the local justices for an operating license" (Waters 58).

<sup>54</sup> Fardel was the first Chairman of the LCC's 'Theatres and Music Halls Licensing Committee.'

<sup>55</sup> There were 133 fewer applications for licenses essential to the operation of the halls between 1889, the year the LCC was established, and 1893 (Waters 58).

The touting of ‘respectability’ is, of course, tied to the imbued place of class in the music hall, as both a site and form. The closure of smaller halls, as opposed to saloon-theatres and song-and-supper rooms in the name of ‘respectability,’ and through competition with increasingly middle-class, ‘legitimate’ minor theatre music halls, is best represented through the case of the Rose and Crown Theatre.<sup>56</sup> The proprietor of the Rose and Crown, a smaller East End music hall, had raised funds for structural repairs to meet the changes brought on by the Suitability Act and the moral campaign of the LCC only to "discover that inspectors reported the existence of soliciting by prostitutes in his auditorium... [and was] refuse[d] a licence" (59). The ‘Theatres and Music Halls Licensing Committee's' invention, and subsequent refusal of licenses, is a part of "an emerging municipal paternalism and an accompanying notion of moral ‘improvement’ [which] underpinned the cultural policies of the LCC at this time" (Beale 47). The Committee’s refusal to grant a license to the Rose and Crown is an example of smaller halls being targeted due to lower, working-class, affiliation and tensions by managers and the LCC.

These tensions, namely ‘The Theatres and Music Halls Licensing Committee’ and LCC's moral mission for social control, are evidenced through contributions to *The Era* and countered by music hall supporters and managers.<sup>57</sup> Here, James Graydon<sup>58</sup>, a leading member of 1892’s newly established Music Hall Proprietor’s Protection Association, created to fight against LCC policies, wrote that “Managers of music halls desire to cater for the respectable of all classes. If the managers are forced to raise their entertainment to a level of refinement which shall satisfy

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<sup>56</sup> The case of The Rose and Crown is covered in Chris Waters’ “Progressives, Puritans and the Cultural Politics of the Council, 1889-1914.”

<sup>57</sup> Although as the period progresses, press— especially *The Era*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The Globe*— features opinion pieces by a retinue of people— actors, singers, managers, moral campaigners, proto-feminists, and even clergy-people— on the music hall and morality. Their opinions and those who defend, or object to, the halls do not always maintain our expectation, such as in “A Frank Clergyman Visits a Music Hall, and Speaks His Mind” published in *Police & Public*, 26 Oct. 1889, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> Graydon was the manager of the Middlesex Music Hall in Covent Garden.



the squeamish sensibility of an individual committeeman, there is danger that they may elevate it over the heads of their regular audiences” (*The Era* 13 cited in Beale 54). The utilisation of the term “respectable” indicates Graydon’s understanding of the moral implications made by the LC and TMHLC against the halls, and the importance of “respectability” in the halls of the time.

Where The Coal Hole[s] and Cider Cellar[s] did not care to cater to public morality, by the 1880s and 90s the legitimacy of the title of “minor theatre,” and opposition by public office, meant that music hall had evolved into a genre that needed to cater to public taste, and morality— at a basic level— to be profitable. However, morality in the music hall is a fine line, as Graydon notes: if managers are made to maintain upper-middle-class senses of respectability, morality, and propriety in their offerings they risk alienating and eventually losing patrons who are uninterested in rational recreation. The changes to the content and running of the halls, desired by moral reformers on the LCC and demanded by the TMHLC, directly impact the financial stability and morality of the lower-working class patron, performer, and manager alike. As such, Graydon signals an early understanding of the difference between implicit and explicit censorship in the halls and the place of class at the heart of the LCC and the MHPPA’s decisions.

The LCC and TMHLC’s control over licensing London music halls through subjective sentiments on the necessity of morality is censorship, specifically "performed by a sovereign actor... explicit[ly], discrete[ly], and from outside the subject" (Post 8). That being said, their censorship in the halls—or the running of the halls through judgement on and control over the actions of performers, music, and the business of pleasure—is "necessarily incomplete because of the continued independence of the subject," that is, the halls (8). Though the LCC controlled the TMHLC and could circumscribe what counted as speakable discourse through licensing and refusal, it could not stop managers from creating the MHPPA or performers and patrons from

understanding their connection as counter-cultural. The speakable, explicit, desire to control the halls and the bodies in them by reformers<sup>59</sup> is recounted and recorded; however, the implicit and unspoken is often 'left unsaid.' What goes unsaid, in the case of the MHPPA, is that its existence is tied to the threat the LCC's 'Theatres and Music Halls Committee' posed to the social and financial aspirations of the middling-class managers of the halls. As was the case when the 1878 Act of Suitability threatened the flow of 'wet money' and managers responded by adding promenades alongside the mandated prosceniums, the MHPPA exists explicitly to counter the sanitising influence of the LCC while *implicitly* maintaining the revenue of hall managers.

Over time, the class-differentiation between managers, performers, moralists, and patrons blurs considerably; managers accrued wealth from their halls and began to build empires, and performers rose from being working-class patrons leading the sing-a-longs to being paid for turns at multiple halls a night. Though class-orientations shift in those explicitly tied to the halls, not all of these newly middle-class bodies nor their patrons were unanimously interested in having moral propriety present in their entertainments. We must read the creation of the MHPPA in 1892 as a form of self-promotion and self-defence by managers to the threat of financial loss represented by the LCC's puritanical licensing process but one which, like the halls, evolved as the financial stability of the newly-middle-class managers was put at risk. As a result of the pressures placed on managers, as well as popular opinions in the period<sup>60</sup>, xenophobia, classist attitudes, racism, sexism, and a desire for control over the non-normative became as inherent to

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<sup>59</sup> At this point, reformers are alone in their desire to control the halls, but by the late 1890s there was "co-operation of the licensing authorities and music-hall proprietors" to assure "public morality" as a result of manager's desires to maintain their financial security (Waters 62).

<sup>60</sup> Performances of race and nationality in the halls, such as black-face by The White Eyed Kaffir or in numbers centered on the Boer War, were deeply popular at this time. That being said, sketches or songs which relied on racist, sexist, and xenophobic caricatures while "popular" are problematic and emblematic of the genre's alliance with popular culture and thus, with maintaining white, Christian, heteronormative, *English* notions of life.

the inner workings of the halls as it was to the moral campaigns against them. The managers of the halls “had shown themselves as capable of exploiting [the] dynamic properties [of the halls] to reinforce class identity and build a new sense of community in a cellular suburban society” as the moral reformers (Bailey 28). Represented by these managers, the halls which survived were increasingly bourgeois and maintained middle-class values for middle-class patrons.

Halls which failed to meet the standards of the LCC and TMHLC and denied a license were protected by the MHPPA as of its creation in 1892; however, halls which did not comply with the “improvements” of the LCC or the increasingly middle-class sentiments of West End managers were not guaranteed protection. For example, The Rose and Crown, an East End music hall, was discriminated against by both the TMHLC and the MHPPA, composed of similarly othered—but differently classed—music hall proprietors. In the wake of the MHPPA's creation, the Rose and Crown and several other smaller-halls were granted hearings to contest the refusal of their licenses. Here the proprietor argued that, as was the case in fairgrounds and the smaller, unlicensed halls visited by immigrants before the 1878 Suitability Act, that the LCC and its inspectors discriminated against the Rose and Crown based wholly on its location in a “poor area... frequented by sailors” (Waters 59). The manager of the Rose and Crown rightly acknowledged the role location and nationality play in the discrimination of less lucrative halls; “in ports and seaside resorts [which lacked]... employment opportunities for women and where the male population was overwhelmingly mobile” there was moral-fear and thus retaliation against the prominence of sex-work (Kift 136). To the LCC, music halls and pubs by ports were sites where prostitution, foreign bodies, and venereal diseases could mingle freely, impacted by both the lewd entertainments and availability of alcohol.

To discriminate against such sites based on their patrons is inherently classist and denotes the threat which the halls constituted to public morality: the lower classes left to their own devices in such sites would invariably contract disease, both morally and physically, and— as fathers and dominant social actors— could proliferate sickness. Countering this opinion, The Rose and Crown argued that they were "unfairly singled out for attack because" of the class-identities of their patrons, the classist attitudes of those opposed to these persons, and the discrimination of the Council which took "no action against the West End halls where prostitutes were also thought to assemble" (136). Moreover, the brunt of the LCC's moralising policies and music hall management's complaints were directed at female sex workers and performers, while the male body, and its privilege as an actor in private and public spheres, was to be "saved" in the closure of such sites. The case of the Rose and Crown signals how the combined weight of increased licensing, scrutiny, and discrimination by the LCC and upper-middle class managers of the MHPPA led to the closure and forced evolution of the genre.

As has been argued throughout this chapter, whenever the music hall has "evolved," that is, selectively altered through legislation and class-based interests, the "little man" or earlier version has been silenced and destroyed by the alterations (except for the tavern). Elements of the halls—such as their interior layouts and names—were changing to reflect "legitimate" classical theatres, taking on the personae of "The Parthenon, The Coliseum, The Star," and others, yet much stayed the same (Bailey 145 cited in Gerrard 493). What is clear is that these changes to the interior and exterior of the hall(s) reflect the increasingly ambitious aspirations of (wealthy) proprietors. Though the architecture of the halls changed, traditional avenues, such as the sale of alcohol and tickets, provided the halls with their revenue. The longstanding

connection between alcohol and moral depravity maintained the LCC's attention and desire to counter the possibility of moral ambiguity.

Regardless, profit was to be made and drove both ends of the music hall's 'moral war.' The moralists of the council were successful in suppressing and controlling working-class entertainments "through a combination of economic buy-outs, political pressure and partisan officials" (Davis 116). The pressure of the LCC urged managers to become "more strict" in their running of the halls and afforded managers the ability to ensure the financial investment their halls represented (Stottlar 278). An alliance with the moralists of the TMHLC, however uneasy it may have been, was the only way for proprietors to protect their financial interests. Stottlar suggests that, as a result, managers increasingly "operate[d] their own systems of self-censorship and encourage[d] their artists to do the same" (52). Thus, public morality in and outside of the halls came to be assured by licensing authorities *and* music-hall proprietors as the class-relations and values of the proprietors changed alongside their altered, slowly legitimated, music halls.

## CONCLUSION

As individual, working-class, halls such as the Coal Hole and Cider Cellar, and later sites such as the Rose and Crown, fell due to the selective and discriminatory action of legislators and managers, whose altered class status and desire for capital superseded their ties to the working-classes, 'Empires' of variety rose. A joint between Oswald Stoll and Edward Moss<sup>61</sup> led to the "transformation" of music hall, "a cultural product with a disreputable image into an inexpensive family entertainment that became immensely popular after 1900" (Russell 64). It is a mistake, however, to view the "survival" of the music hall in theatres of variety as anything more than the continuation of "the capitalist system [which promotes] a seeming unchangingness" amongst

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<sup>61</sup> Moss and Stoll were individual, morally focused, owners of a few theatres of variety who partnered to create one of the most successful "empires" in the genre's history.

managers, moralists, audiences, and in the halls themselves (Yeo 131). The Moss/Stoll venture of the late 1880s did not merely transform the music hall; it had been consistently and cyclically controlled, remodelled, and altered to suit prevailing tastes and ensure managers' capital over a century of legislation and reactionary movements.

As this chapter has suggested, the music hall's very form was created through a process of movement and structural alterations in sites, from fairground to tavern, song-saloon/supper-room, individual unlicensed halls, licensed 'minor theatres,' and finally into halls which more closely resembled the "legitimate" theatres than their working-class predecessors. The physical landscape of the halls is not the only stage on which change occurred. The formation of the LCC, its 'Theatres and Music Hall Licensing Committee,' and the Music Hall Proprietor's Protection Association were all created to "put forward a strong case" for public morality, control of the content and running of the halls, and of the censorship and alteration of streams of revenue, respectively. As the Progressive party sought to purify and restrain the nature of the halls, their desires turned to the complete removal of both sex work and alcohol in the music hall/new theatres of variety. Chapter Two will continue the exploration of the classed connections between legislation and moral reformers— as signified by the LCC— and the tentative partnership between managers and legislators in the 1890s and early twentieth century. In doing so, I suggest that 'implicit' censorship in the halls was enacted by management over performers, such as Marie Lloyd, and that this implicit censorship in the name of 'respectability' was done to counter, as well as parallel and appease, the explicit censorship (and possibility for a loss of revenue) that the LCC and its licensing inspectors represented.

## Chapter Two

### **Sex and the City: (Self-Reflexive) Censorship in the Body and (Female) Bodies of the London Music Hall**

The creation and purpose of the LCC, the ‘Theatres and Music Hall Licensing Committee,’ and the Music Hall Proprietor's Protection Association suggest that the site and form of Victorian leisure intrinsically tie together matters of finance, class, morality and social (in)stability. As Chapter One detailed, as ‘empires’ and ‘palaces of varieties’ sprung up, able to "undertake any structural alterations the Council might require of them," a selective evolution amongst the genre, and form, occurred (Waters 60). This process of selection, much like the licensing campaigns and laws which shaped the music hall in the nineteenth century, was based on the desire to shape public morality through rational recreation and offering leisure outside of the realm of sin. Control of the halls became all the more vital to social purity campaigners, the LCC, and the ‘Theatres and Music Hall Licensing Committee’ as women’s desire to attend the halls increased<sup>62</sup>. The presence of alcohol, bawdy performance, and closeness of the sexes in the hall led to the County Council’s reluctance to grant drink licenses by 1890, and ultimately saw proprietors house sex-workers in their promenade(s) to make up for financial losses.<sup>63</sup>

The majority of managers were unable to run their halls ‘dry’ and this, alongside their unwillingness to turn away prostitutes took the shape of a moral predicament for the council. The women who are remembered in the period, and in music hall scholarship, are not the moral working-women who attended London’s music halls,<sup>64</sup> but those whose presence allowed the

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<sup>62</sup> The ‘Ladies Nights’ of Charles Morton’s music hall allowed women to enter the halls as audience members and performers. This change occurred between 1850 and 1860 and was quickly practised by other proprietors.

<sup>63</sup> The council’s desire for “dry-halls” saw a cut to proprietor’s total takings by approximately “15% to 20%” (Russell cited in Scott).

<sup>64</sup> Working-class women did attend halls throughout England earlier than the 1850s (“The Story of the Music Hall”). However, in middle-class, London halls women were markedly absent until Morton’s introduction of “Ladies Nights” between the 1850s/60s.

LCC to frame the halls as centers of vice. This chapter is concerned primarily with the expression of sexuality in the music hall (both in the promenade and on-stage), the conflation of Victorian prostitute with music hall actress, and the tactics of explicit and implicit censorship which management—and artist—took to maintain financial stability

Un-chaperoned women were conflated with sex-workers<sup>65</sup> and while women were employed,<sup>66</sup> “Any... who dared leave her home in the evening unaccompanied by a man in order to go to a place of entertainment was automatically presumed to be a prostitute” (136). The presence of young, “impressionable,” working-women— who were already disobeying cultural norms *by working*— in counter-cultural sites creates both a problem and solution for moralists and managers interested in sanitising London’s music halls. The promenade stood as a micro-site of leisure and business for both managers (and sex workers) and as a threat to the LCC's puritanical campaign, was made all the more problematic as women’s presence created anxieties of lost control, changing social norms, and expectations of gender.<sup>67</sup> However, women in the halls provided managers and moralists with a viable scapegoat through which the music hall genre and landscape was “evolved”: their presence inspired expressions of sex and sexuality but also sparked a desire for control to quell potential social harm. In order to morally purify the music hall genre, the LCC and the TMHLC cited building codes, which allowed the council to “restrain the tone of performance... [while] govern[ing] the establishment of new halls and the repair of the older halls” (Pennybacker 212). The genre's "improvement" through selection and

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<sup>65</sup> This comparison is “explained by the lack of a female factory proletariat” in London as well as the normative conceptions of women’s place in the period (Kift 136).

<sup>66</sup> The overwhelming majority of women in London were employed as domestic servants, washer-women or in sweated industries (Kift 136).

<sup>67</sup> The closeness of the sexes in the promenades and body of the hall made the music hall a target of the National Vigilance Association's desire to "raise the standards of social morality in general by repressing sexuality and promoting chastity," which was well represented in the shared membership of the LCC, 'Theatres and Music Hall Licensing Committee,' and the NVA (Kift 158).



ensorship masks classed and gendered tensions which were inspired by and relied on the relocation, removal, and control of sex workers and women to maintain social normalcy in the halls.

A direct parallel focused on morally-driven legislation can be drawn between the case of The Rose and Crown and legislation against sex workers in the West End. Once lower-working class sites, such as “night houses,” were eliminated— limiting female prostitutes from gaining their income safely— the “unintended consequence of” these closures was that “more prostitutes [were pushed] on to the streets... [and] concentrate[d] in the music-hall promenades” (Bristow 168).<sup>68</sup> Legislation around entertainment, liquor sales, and foreign bodies, in the ports of the East End similarly led to an increase of “immoral” social actors and sites in the East End and thus discrimination against sites like The Rose and Crown at licensing hearings. In both cases, the increased visibility of sex work is doubly the result of the actions of moral reformers in local government. Laws and licensing acts which were passed against brothels and bawd-houses, and required music halls to remove alcohol from the body of the theatre, consolidated the [occasionally unknowing] collusion of sex workers and music hall managers.

As the nineteenth century saw a hierarchy established which distinguished moral entertainments from those of the music hall, so too was erotic culture negotiated by Victorian prudishness. This chapter asserts that the implicit, self-censorship, which artists developed as a result of increased managerial and moral control, can be wielded as a productive tool in performance to a knowing audience. To do so, the chapter examines the amalgamation of actress and sex-worker, careful to emphasize the financial relationship between both and the music hall

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<sup>68</sup> Charrington’s moral war against the music halls *and* sex work led to massive closures of both institutes across London, and led to him being a suspect in the Ripper murders. His actions against both inadvertently led to working-women losing their places of work, and thus safety and lives, during this period.

proprietor, the social threat their person constituted to Victorian sensibilities, and how the structure of the music hall supported their niche. From here, the chapter moves into an exploration of the sexist and financially-motivated modes of censorship enacted against both groups by social purity campaigners and music hall management in the name of defeating "social evil[s]," borrowing from Judith Butler's "Ruled Out: Vocabularies of the Censor" and "Burning Acts, Injurious Speech." Utilising this backing, the chapter closes with a study of Marie Lloyd to argue that (self)censorship, when tied to the inherent liminality of the music hall, is a productive, and radical, form of speech.

#### **'FOR WE THAT LIVE TO PLEASE, PLEASE TO LIVE'**

The changes to the body and running of London's music halls, as a result of processes of selection, legislation, and reactions to taste, did not quell the attendance of prostitutes. Rather, spaces like the promenade reinforced the erotic potential of the halls due to the attendance of "well-behaved, well-dressed prostitutes" (Davis 82). The presence of sex workers encouraged male attendees to spend time and money in the bar, "kept them there when the on-stage entertainment did not appeal," and encouraged return business (82). As a result, managers did not turn away prostitutes; they paid the entrance fee and were, thus, wholly entitled to promenade and take in the evening's performance. To a degree, Victorian prostitutes worked in tandem with the music hall's stars: both groups earned their wage through 'entertaining,' a field which required both to establish informal relationships with their clients, and whose skills were essential to a hall's success. Such parallels are obvious when actresses and prostitutes are examined through the lens of the music hall, which functioned as a site that profited from women's bodies. Both work alongside one another during "shifts" in public houses, gardens, and

halls and develop a “line of business,” niche, and move up "or down economic and professional scales implicating the retention of dignity" (83-84).

Where laws and forms of explicit censorship altered the landscape of the halls so too did censorship alter the expectations of women's work in the halls. All music-hall performers were forced to develop stage-personae to differentiate themselves from others flocking to the limelight, and women especially were forced to develop distinct formal strategies of presentation. As Butler writes of controlled communication, women’s use of language, costume, music, dance, vocal skill, and gesture were means by which they could perform culturally relevant material and maintain the “social parameters of speakable discourse” (Butler 251). However, the censorship of women in the music hall is more than prohibition of speech but a process of “nation building” by the music hall industry (252).

To build the respectability of the genre, managers— previously “marginalized groups” as a result of their class associations— worked on “behalf of a dominant power,” the LCC, to “control any challenges posed to its own legitimacy” (252). Women’s performance, given the contentions against sex work in the halls, women’s newfound liberty as workers, and the looming presence of women’s suffrage, threatened the respectability and financial security of the halls as middle-class entertainment. However, the strategies women developed in music hall performance, when posed with the question of whether censorship, “despite its constraining and regulatory function,” is “a way of *producing* speech” *gesture* "yes" (Butler 248). This chapter draws from Butler’s “Ruled Out: Vocabularies of the Censor” to explore the development of transgressive forms of self-censorship in music hall performance. Additionally, Butler’s work on power highlights how actresses, as ‘workers’ and ‘women’ and under double the scrutinising social constraints, were forced to counter the social conflation of their profession with sex work

through self-censorship in movement, dress, and other elements of performance, while still functioning as engaging entertainers due to managerial inaction.

Self-conscious and self-censored performance, both on and off the stage, to maintain respectability as a woman was made all the more imperative for the music hall actress based on her place of work. The halls, "widely regarded by respectable Victorian society as a disreputable and tawdry place," marked the "women who performed there" as "morally suspect and socially 'low'" (O'Hara 142). However, we must read this marking as being inherently related to conceptions of the halls as "low" sites— despite their increasing reputability and management's desires to achieve "respectability"— and, as a "low" place of work, marking the female employees' labour as "less" than that of their male compatriots. Further, moral suspicion that their employ was in the "oldest profession" marks the female actress as doubly transgressive: earning money publically and in an un-feminine trade, and as potentially sexually active.<sup>69</sup>

Dress is a key-distinguishing factor between classes and can help one obscure or perform across class.<sup>70</sup> To moralists, dress threatens Victorian notions of hierarchy and order through its association with the body and its potential to spark social instability. Actresses, like sex workers, were recognizable through costume, and styles of female performance in the music hall genre are dictated by dress such as the skirt dance<sup>71</sup> or a number akin to "Burlington Bertie."<sup>72</sup> In performance, distinctions of colour, neckline, pants or skirt, and length of the costume lead to

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<sup>69</sup> Ellen Carol Dubois and Linda Gordon note that Victorian prostitution was largely viewed as "the quintessential sexual terror" but that "some families (particularly dissenting Protestants) [viewed] the stage [as] almost worse" (Dubois and Gordon 32 cited in Davis 97).

<sup>70</sup> Dress "played a great part in recognizing street-walkers," and prostitutes were only deemed "recognisable when they were approached" as, otherwise, identifying one based on the act of "holding up their skirts [a little higher]" than a "lady" led to "respectable" women being importuned (Flanders).

<sup>71</sup> 'Skirt dancing' included the lifting of skirts to reveal the dancer's legs and was popularised, and understood as objectionable, alongside the cancan (Beale 56).

<sup>72</sup> Burlington Bertie, popularized by Vesta Tilley in 1900, drew focus to the female form through cross-dressing: Tilley's costuming— as a foppish young man— could comment on male privilege, distinctions of class, the war on leisure, and female suffrage.

vastly different interpretations of a character— and actor’s— morality, as was the case in identifying prostitutes in the halls. As a result, the costumed, moving, bodies of female music hall performers were similarly the subject of intense admiration, scrutiny, and fetishization because of the culturally constructed meanings that their style of dress signify. Commentators’ accounts on the women of the halls are demonstrative of this fact; critics of the period “frequently expose their own preoccupations and wider public expectations of women” by commenting on “a performer’s visual appeal” in tandem to the content of a performance (Beale 40-41). The focus on the female body as an object of potential male sexual gratification creates an overt parallel between Victorian sex workers and actresses, as does their exploitation in music halls as centers predicated on pleasure.<sup>73</sup> Though a woman may not openly engage in such acts, their dress, gestures, and presence in sites which promote their bodies as a product to indulge indicate “the invisible” (Davis 117). The “objectionable dances” performed by female actresses— namely the cancan and skirt dancing— function along similar lines where “potentially sexually arousing references or performance... [are] linked to an atmosphere of morally suspect behaviour” (Beale 56). Just as a woman’s visible knickers signify what is *underneath* to an observer watching the cancan, so too did moralists view women’s presence on the music hall stage or in the promenade, as a sign of their sexual availability.<sup>74</sup>

Actresses and sex workers, deemed “low[er]”<sup>75</sup> than their contemporaries in other service industries based on their potential to function as sexual partners, saw their labour reduced

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<sup>73</sup> The association between actresses and prostitutes is further augmented by “a rapidly growing market in pornographic images, which reinforced [this] reputation of actresses as sexually available” (Beale 31). Performers outside of pornography are “traded in the economy of the music hall,” where pleasure and the *desires* of the audience are ingrained to the show as well as in the spatial considerations of the site (O’Hara 142).

<sup>74</sup> Managers join the moralists in this stance as the period, and “refinement” of the music hall genre, progresses.

<sup>75</sup> When female labour goes devalued on moral grounds the act of socially designating certain women as “low” allows these women to “occupy a powerful *symbolic* domain *despite* and *because of* their actual social marginalization” (Pullen 94).

socially and managerially.<sup>76</sup> The conflation of the two is an act which “marks” and thus demarcates (and censors) potentially unruly feminine bodies for the very potential which makes them sexually desirable. Therefore, this process is a form of censorship which precedes “the text” or “other cultural expression” and is “in some sense responsible for [the] production” of cultural expression and associated meaning (Butler 284). The demarcation of socially conscious, chaste, women from those that were sexually conscious, urban, and public and the censorship of these secondary, othered, female bodies is present in decisions made on the basis of “public morality” by the Theatres and Music Halls licensing committee.<sup>77</sup> Though “public” in licensing laws of the period typically refer to the working-classes in need of middle-class, moral, guidance, those protected by these license refusals are female.

However, little was done to “protect” the women of the halls, from social death or harm. Books like *The New Swell’s Night Guide* were published to list “the advantages and drawbacks of various theatres for men of pleasure” (Flanders),<sup>78</sup> and fed into the sexual judgements against music hall performers by reinforcing the actions of stage-door seducers. Meanwhile, managers largely failed to protect the interests of their female performers from such scrutiny and the unwanted attention of male patrons off-stage.<sup>79</sup> Akin to the Contagious Diseases Act,<sup>80</sup> managers

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<sup>76</sup> This is likely due to the price affixed to their offerings and the importance of “pleasure” in their lines of work.

<sup>77</sup> Minutes from the Theatres and Music Hall Licensing Committee’s October 1889 meeting demonstrate the well-understood social distinction between “good” and “bad” women; these minutes note the license applications by The Royal Aquarium, The Trocadero, and The Rosemary Branch were “refused on grounds of public morality” (Pall Mall Gazette cited in Beale 50).

<sup>78</sup> Judith Flanders examined documents and publications on Victorian prostitution, from an exclusively male-perspective, which suggest that Victorian London was a “world of heterosexual commercial sex” where women were a purchasable product (Flanders).

<sup>79</sup> There are instances where managers, proprietors, or stage-hands stepped in to end back-stage soliciting; however, “off-stage concerns were linked with on-stage entertainments and were all seen as part of the same battle” (Beale 55). Like modern practices of slut-shaming, the “solution” to back-stage soliciting was to control the women’s behaviour on-stage as opposed to male actions off or backstage.

<sup>80</sup> Passed in 1864, with amendments in 1866 and 1869, The Contagious Diseases Act(s) were intended to “control the spread of contagious diseases in the armed forces” yet problematically targeted women as opposed to the men moralists intended to protect (Kift 157).

did not protect their [female] worker's bodily autonomy but "compliantly facilitated" men's backstage access and created a landscape where male pleasure—and the profit to be derived from it—was privileged over the safety and moral standing of female performers (Davis 150). Managers only knuckled to the hysteria sparked by the concept of the morally dangerous 'unaccompanied woman' when their finances were targeted by the increasing morality of their upper middle-class patrons. Managers put up signs prohibiting entry to unaccompanied women (Kift 137), and eventually stopped "defend[ing their] performers or their material" to avoid financial loss as a result of the regulatory, morally motivated, licencing system and conflation between actresses and sex-workers which they profited from earlier (Beale 51).<sup>81</sup>

While many actresses took precautions to maintain carefully controlled, decorous, private lives, their efforts were simultaneously unappreciated and undone through the actions of male management and would-be seducers. Both managers and the women of the halls are explicitly censored: managers through laws, licensing, and expectations of the moral majority seated in the LCC and TMHLC, and women based on their actions, bodies, costuming, performance, and private life. However, managers, *implicitly* altered by the potential for lost revenue if their hall(s), separated themselves from the women of the halls through the integration of "house-rules,"<sup>82</sup> or modes of explicit and implicit censorship of performers *by* the management.

"House-rules," such as those at Collins's Music Hall, stressed the unpredictability of communication between live-performer and audience and placed the onus for "vulgarity" in the halls on their female singers and serio-comics. Doing so, managers relied on and continued to

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<sup>81</sup> A desire for institutional accountability by the management against their staff for the protection of their audience is present throughout the early 1880s, evidenced by articles in *The Era* and minutes from meetings of the MHPPA.

<sup>82</sup> London hall managers, "in pursuit of control over their artists... developed House Rules" such as those at Collins's Music Hall which stated that "no artiste shall address the audience except in the regular course of the performance... [or forfeit] a night's salary" ("Rules and Regulations, Collins's Music Hall" 441 cited in Summerfield 224-225).

profit from the cultural conflation of female performance with sex-work and created a scapegoat to protect their corporate interests. The forfeiture of a woman's nightly wages if they engaged in improvised communication with their audience—an expectation of the genre—when paired with the control of performance through the censorship of a performer's gestures, dress, and the content of their songs is blatant censorship. Further, when tied to desires to control the spread of the "New Women," persons socially/morally marked by 'transgression' due to their financial involvement in businesses of pleasure, house-rules have the ability to regulate who and what constitute valid, paid, performer/performance and are thus a mode of explicit censorship.

Though the music hall performer is in no way "powerless," as they, like the music hall proprietor, rose in social-capital and power throughout the nineteenth century, their place as "worker" in the hall's hierarchy situates them in a lower position than their manager(s). Female performers are doubly marked and lessened in this hierarchy— as in the social hierarchy of Victorian London— through their roles as worker and woman. Catharine MacKinnon's views of censorship resonate here: "The operative definition of censorship accordingly shifts from government silencing what powerless people say, to powerful people violating powerless people into silence and hiding behind state power to do it" (MacKinnon 10 cited in Post 2). When paired with the social expectations of the "good woman," house-rules work to regulate and control the "entertaining woman" of the halls, a person doubly marked for social debasement by their sex and class in society and in the halls.

### **‘YOU CAN’T STOP A GIRL FROM THINKING’: SERIO-COMICS AND THE RADICAL POTENTIAL OF SELF-REFLEXIVE CENSORSHIP**

The actions of music hall proprietors led to a further division of female performers *in* the halls into "two types...: a 'lady-like' singer and a serio-comic whose impact is erotically and



comically challenging and though evidently appealing to [male audiences]... described in terms that give the impression of questionable morality" (Beale 38). Reviews of female performances, by both "lady-like" performers and serio-comics, demonstrate how gender diminishes the worth of their labour: reviewers throughout the period emphasise performer's "physical appearance" as the "principal site of [their] interest" as opposed to the quality of their performance (41). Female performers' acts were viewed in tandem to their erotic impact but this is especially true of serio-comics whose work as public arbiters of opinion, taste, and cultural recognition, in a previously all-male field, emphasised their gender. As women whose performance is actively voiced and maintains radical potentiality through its assumption of traits from the earlier, all-male, "lion-comique," serio-comics are figures loaded with anxieties on a woman's place, behaviour, and "respectability," marks liminality both on and off-stage, and is constrained more extensively.

Marked by their profession, women's performance styles and choice of song, costume, gesture, and the reputability of their private lives posit further distinctions between the "good" performer and the female comic. Before delving into the radical potential the female comic holds, it is essential to first examine the expectations of female (stage) performance and style in the music hall. Song style and characterisation, like other aspects of the hall, evolved over time but for female performers there exists a pre-established retinue of characters available to them, intended to soothe or excite their late-Victorian male patron(s). These included "comforting portrayals of innocent pre-pubescent girls; blushing brides-to-be and brides; good wives and devoted mothers; titillating 'bad' but attractive and sexually alluring 'fast' girls; and, physically unappealing but nonetheless amusing and entirely unthreatening old maids" (18-19).

These established caricatures, performed by women but *written by men*, suggest that "no text can be fully freed from the shackles of censorship because every text or expression is in part

structured through a process of selection that is determined in part by the decisions of an author (or, speaker)” (Butler 253). The ‘texts’ of the halls—songs composed of popular characters recycled by exclusively male music hall songwriters—are implicitly censored through the process of selection inherent to writing, producing, and performing them. Additionally, the gendered expectations of women’s bodies in the music hall—set out by managerial practices and social judgements of female performers—structures female expression further. Censorship, then, impacts both the female performer and her ability to communicate freely and therefore necessitates understanding the importance of communication between performer and audience. The culmination of this chapter turns to how the differentiation between author, speaker, audience and censor is embraced and commented on in female, self-reflexive, performance.

The separation of star from audience— through changes instituted as a result of the 1878 Suitability Act— and the implementation of house-rules controlled the “earthiness” of performance and, seemingly, the potential for a star to corrupt the public or act as *vox populi*. In addition to identifying these layered acts of censorship in the treatment of comic songs, female performance alters the meaning of these texts— and the changes imparted to them—through the focus on her body. This focus is dualistic: as hall management reduces female labour and worth to sexual possibility, moralists charge these performers as immoral provocateurs which results in loss of income for the managers and the scapegoating of the performers. In this dualism, there is transgressive potential for the female performer. Returning to the retinue of characters available to female music hall performers, we can see products of this potential.

Songs featuring “innocent pre-pubescent girls” are distorted through gesture and intonation;<sup>83</sup> the cultural fetishisation of, and assertions of immorality made against, the grown

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<sup>83</sup> Marie Lloyd’s performance of ‘Johnny Jones,’ which is close-read later in the chapter, is a prime example of the alteration of the “good” or “innocent” young girl character.

woman knowingly playing innocence alter a comforting image into one that is unsettling and provocative. Though these characters initially lack sexual appetite, when absorbed and performed by the female music hall comic, they are ‘bawdily’ transformed into sexual beings which run the gamut of naïve-to-knowing. "Waiting at the Church," "I've Told His Missus All About Him," and "Now I Have to Call Him Father" satirize the images of the blushing-bride-to-be, good wives, and devoted mothers as "Johnny Jones" does with innocent girls, and all of these rely on cultural understanding of the censor, popular views of women, and tactically tip-toeing overt immorality.<sup>84</sup> In female, comic, renderings these characters are all transformed into potentially "bad" women whose sexual exploits are sources of pride, terror for their morally staunch parents (or opponents), and which often satirize men in their punchline.

When these sexualized female roles, intended for male pleasure, are comically reversed to signify female sexual appetite instead, it affords “power” to female performers and listeners. “Power” is in the “process of selection” managers, authors, and censors make on which caricatures are appropriate for performance, this power is “instanced in the act of censorship” (248-249). However, this power is leveraged by female serio-comics through their “ability to speak... [and] translate [the censored] word[s]” (Butler 248). Working from the “appropriate” selections made by managers and censors controlling their speech, serio-comics are able to infuse their performances with sexual, comic undertones by way of movement, dress, and gesture. Because they are women— the subject(s) under-control and requiring protection—

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<sup>84</sup> Each of these songs relies on a female-centered punchline: ‘Waiting at the Church’ features a heavily pregnant bride whose groom “can’t get away / to marry [her] today / [because his] wife won’t let [him]” (“(There Was I) Waiting at the Church”). “I’ve Told His Missus All About Him” is a sequel which features the scorned lover and wife of Obadiah Binks conspiring against him: “wait till he comes home, when the lights are low and dim / I’ll give him ‘Wife won’t let me’ when I lay my hands on him” (“I’ve Told His Missus All About Him”). “Now I Have to Call Him Father” sees the singer’s mother charm, and marry, the man she loves (“Now I Have to Call Him Father”).

whose work renders the social controls against them as performers *and* women as laughable, their work is an affront to middle-class moralising and the censors.

Moralist and purity campaigners heavily scrutinised these songs and the transgressive potential of such female, comic, performances. Such scrutiny helped develop the careers of stars like Marie Lloyd as women between 1880 and 1890 were "criticised and applauded for suggestive interpretations of the songs they performed and this morally ambiguous reputation impacted on their careers as they became the subject of public debates about impropriety and immorality in music-hall programmes" (45). In this regard, the LCC and the TMHLC argued that the control and censorship of British music hall songs was "a responsibility... [of] the managers" and that "If a manager failed to restrain indecent performers, then [the] London County Council could step in and, if it was deemed necessary, withdraw the hall's licence" (Scott). Women's ascent to stardom intensified the LCC and TMHLC's desire for institutional accountability, and as halls were denied licenses—and managers lost revenue—proprietors colluded with the LCC, TMHLC, and moral groups<sup>85</sup> to directly control their female performers and limit losses.

This collusion took the shape of intensified house-rules<sup>86</sup> that put the financial security of performers, who "[gave] expression to any vulgarity in words or actions when on stage," in jeopardy ("Rules and Regulations, Collins's Music Hall" 441 cited in Summerfield 224-225). In addition to losing salary from a nightly "turn," to soften the blow of a manager's losses, performers who flouted the censor or were deemed improper in their communication with audiences were subject to immediate dismissal at sites like Collins's Music Hall. Proprietors struggled to control the actions of their artists; despite intensified controls female music hall stars

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<sup>85</sup> These include, but are not limited to, the New Woman and Temperance movements.

<sup>86</sup> Such house-rules ignore the established norms of music hall performance, such as improvised patter, and instead stress the corporate interests of managers.

like Marie Lloyd— whose popularity exempted her from career threatening dismissals— practiced “self-reflexive” censorship in their performances, which embodies a spirit of radical change and creation to rival the stifling, moral, control of their would-be-silencers.

Self-reflexive censorship is a concept which expands on the well-worn use of self-censorship and is thus censorship that “refers to itself” despite the “constraining and regulatory function” of censorship and ultimately “*produces* speech that... is inverted” (Butler 248). By performing in light of censorship but also in ways which call attention to being censored, serio-comics invert the process of censorship and “speak” through it. While the actions of music hall management may resemble self-reflexive censorship practices, codifications of class and control which separate management from performer quantify their division as that of censor and censee. As Chapter One and the previous section of this chapter argue, managers began to mimic the implicit and explicit modes of censorship enacted by purity campaigners and the local government. These actions altered classed aspects of the physical and cultural landscape of the music hall and, when paired with their willing collusion with reformers to silence their employees and protect their [financial] interests, distinguish a division between those who censor themselves, and others, for gain as opposed to protect themselves from [unjust] laws.<sup>87</sup>

The definition of self-reflexive censorship utilised in this thesis does not refer to one's process of censoring *another*, as managers did, but of calling attention to the act of censorship.<sup>88</sup> As a result, I argue that female performances embody self-reflexive censorship. To do so, the chapter examines the songs and performance style of Marie Lloyd, hailed by *The Era* as the

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<sup>87</sup> Self-reflexive censorship in performance to maintain the expectations of performance while also ensuring parity with house-rules is one instance of this; however, women's constant shaming and subjection to acts intended to protect male interests, such as the Contagious Diseases Act(s), extend self-reflexive censorship practices outside of the halls.

<sup>88</sup> This concept draws from Butler's understanding of self-censorship as “productive speech,” but I have added the idea of self-censorship as being self-reflexive as female serio-comic performances refer back to being censored in their speech as opposed to speaking out despite the act of censorship.

“Queen of Seriocomedry” (*The Era* cited in Beale 39). Born in 1870,<sup>89</sup> Marie was hailed the “Queen of the Halls,” the voice of the lower class in the East End, and is remembered as the biggest star in the existence of the halls (Huxley and James 50).<sup>90</sup> These titles stem from her performance style, songs, and charitable actions<sup>91</sup> which reflected back on her class of origin and that of her fans, as well as her place in music hall’s history. Lloyd was one of the leaders of the 1907 music hall strike and Variety Artistes Federation which fought for the rights to fair pay for all music hall employees and is the most significant exclusion from the 1912 Royal Command Performance.<sup>92</sup> In addition to being remembered for her extensive charity work, songs, and political altercations, Lloyd’s ‘private’ life— frequently cited in music hall history as the reason for her exclusion from the RCP<sup>93</sup>— was highly publicised.

Among the moral judgements sparked by her line of work, failed marriages, and substance abuse, she died penniless at the age of 52 following a performance (Jacob 199).<sup>94</sup> Yet, Lloyd’s life and career parallel the golden years of the halls and, as a result, demonstrates how the actions of managers, moralists, and class-driven parties achieved the “respectable” heights of the genre through censorship. Her well-documented and outspoken resistance to performance censorship, while still performing, is why it is pertinent to examine her, and her infamous song

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<sup>89</sup> Marie’s earliest singing credits occurred in her youth; a London native, Lloyd “sang songs at the Royal Eagle Tavern, Hoxton,” as a child, established a singing group— The Fairy Bells— with her sisters at the age of ten, and made her professional debut with the act in 1884 (Gerrard 496). Ironically, Lloyd’s early work with The Fairy Bells was popular amongst temperate clientele!

<sup>90</sup> There is some dispute in this given writer’s bias and Marie’s infamy. Though included frequently in early music hall history, she is given less renown in these early texts than her male contemporaries— Dan Leno and Little Tich, specifically— which likely stems from the divided cultural opinion of her. However, present music hall scholars such as Bailey, Beale, Davis, and Pennybacker rightly note her unrivaled stardom.

<sup>91</sup> “East and West With Marie Lloyd,” published in *The Sketch* in December, 1895, catalogues some of Marie’s charitable work, such as “paying nightly for one hundred and fifty beds for the homeless and destitute of “Darker London,”” specifically for the homeless and destitute in the East End (“East and West...” 452-453).

<sup>92</sup> Marie’s exclusion from the RCP will be analyzed in-depth in Chapter Three.

<sup>93</sup> Baker records Marie’s reaction to being snubbed from the RCP, and articles such as “1912 – London Palace Theatre” and “1912, London Palace Theatre” record the snub generally.

<sup>94</sup> Lloyd’s last solo act in the halls “ended with her staggering around drunkenly singing ‘It’s a Bit of a Ruin That Cromwell Knocked About a Bit,’” and when she collapsed audiences assumed it was part of the act (Gerrard 496).

"You Can't Stop a Girl from Thinking," to conclude this chapter. Marie Lloyd is the epitome of self-reflexive censorship in music hall performance. Remembered for her performances and gestures, or the "unwritten and unspoken" aspects of performance which could "confirm the meaning [of] and ensure the audience's full appreciation of the possibilities held in the lyric[s]," Marie absorbed and embodied the scrutinised elements of women's performance, specifically gesture and dress, to transform meaning (Beale 143).

Interestingly, it was not costuming or words which made Lloyd's performance spectacular, or "vulgar," but her ability to utilise, call attention to, and communicate the unspoken and invisible in a song to her audiences.<sup>95</sup> Marie Lloyd "conformed to the "ways in which women presented themselves and displayed their bodies as part of comic acts" which were "limited to the evolving but well-established 'acceptable' versions of Victorian/Edwardian female" dress and deportment (*The Era* cited in Beale 19). However, her wit is notable even in her early performances: in her first year of performing professionally at London halls, Lloyd sang 'old favourites' and grew in popularity as her movements and wit enhanced the cultural understanding, and thus the potency, of these older numbers. Modeling the nature of critiques from the period, Gerrard notes of Marie's first professional engagement<sup>96</sup> that while her "voice... is disappointing" that her "saucy looks, illusions of beauty... vivaciousness and ability to... 'work' an audience were exemplary" (Gerrard 496).<sup>97</sup> Marie's ability to transform a song

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<sup>95</sup> Complaints to the invisible, or unspoken, were commonly targeted at "costumes worn by women performers, particularly when they revealed too much of their bodies or the shapes of their bodies" as opposed to at performance style (Beale 56).

<sup>96</sup> Marie's first managed appearance was at Belmont's Sebright Hall where she was paid "15d per week" (496).

<sup>97</sup> In "The Great British Music Hall: Its Importance to British Culture and 'The Trivial,'" published in 2013, Gerrard ties a study of Lloyd's appearance to her skill as a performer. The article has no reason to note that "Her appearance was one of pertness, but with a propensity to gain weight; her face was round, and she had proportionately large teeth" but does so regardless (Gerrard 496).

through movement— winks, nods, and twirls more so than by dancing— is a demonstration of her wit and understanding of culture, the audience's humour, and entertainment value.

Her style, which added to the lyrics rather than relying on them to create humour, made Marie one of many female music hall performers who were both "criticised and applauded for suggestive interpretations of the songs they performed" (Beale 45). As this chapter has charted, the "morally ambiguous reputation" associated with the halls *and* this style of performance made her "the subject of public debates about impropriety and immorality" just as much as the music hall's programmes or the sites themselves (45). Spurred by testimonies of offensive performances in the halls, and the potential of these sites, the 'offensive' women in them, and of the social harm which could befall patrons— and their families if such behaviours and impropriety followed them home— the LCC and the TMHLC embraced their "role as... cultural regulator(s)" and stressed the importance of institutional accountability in controlling speakable discourses and performance styles (Levinson 201). In their desire to maintain financial security, and place blame onto others, managers looked to the local government to institutionalise and formalise laws which would allow them to control the content of performance[s]. These publically regulated laws, in addition to house-rules, could seemingly maintain a hall's licenseability and financial security more explicitly than the selection of performer and programming already afforded them.

Female performers such as Lloyd, who were already doubly marked for 'impropriety' by womanhood and their business, were further subjected to moral judgement through the collusion of managers and moralists. The separation of lady-like singer and serio-comic in the hall, which appropriated the focus on their bodies, called "attention to [the female] body, actions and words [in performance]... [and] present[ed] a more threatening, direct sexuality, one that reflected



tensions over the nineteenth-century prostitute and feminist” and emphasised the need to control the body of female performers (Allen 128 cited in Pullen 96). As a result, in the period successful female performers like Lloyd pre-emptively self-censored privately to work in "the limitations" of Victorian society, "publically because they did not want to risk their reputations," and "as comic performers... to continue to engage and entertain their audiences and to get laughs" despite censors (138). Beale observes Marie Lloyd's career was flagged by moralists due to her intelligence, ability to imbue performances with additional meaning, and her popularity which could influence the adoring masses. Deemed "a woman to watch," by temperance movements, managers, critics and audiences, there are instances in Marie's career which allude to her transgressive potential as a performer in the transformed halls of the 1880s and 90s (Baker 31).

What made Lloyd "threatening" was her intelligence and understanding of "the audience's shared values": in songs like 'Twiggy Voo' the singer "can let them guess the rest," Lloyd "granted comic licence" to the audience by relying on the invisible, and unsung, which allowed audiences to "publically collude with her in the creation of forbidden meanings" (Beale 143). Marie capitalised on "the looks and smiles that made" her earlier songs successful and did so to a higher degree in "Twiggy Voo" as the song's style "gave [her] an ever greater chance to leave alternative meanings to the audience's imagination" (Baker 44). The verses of "Twiggy Voo" detail various, sexually charged, scenarios such as an unchaperoned woman taking the bus,<sup>98</sup> a lover and "his lass" being caught by her father, and a bride fretting about her wedding night ("Twiggy Voo"). In all of the verses, Lloyd breaks each story down into two sections, the set up and punchline, and both end with the repetition of "Twiggy voo? my boys, twiggy voo?"

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<sup>98</sup> The driver in the song confuses her request of going to "Pimlico" with taking her to the "railways," which was a site of prostitution ("Twiggy Voo").

(“Twiggy Voo”). “Twiggy voo,” had no meaning outside of ‘wink-wink’ ‘nudge-nudge,’ and in its simplicity and relative silence, the song’s salacious material came pre-censored. As a result, the song and Marie’s performance of it leave the most suggestive aspects of each scenario to the audience’s imagination and free her of blame or scrutiny.

Marie’s style of performance of these lyrics reveal the unintended consequence of censorship in the halls. As managers allied themselves to the LCC and moral campaigns, the style and content of music hall song, comedy, and performers changed to rely on the audience’s imagination and ability to fill in the blanks of their “suggestive” performances. Further, while the lyrics are “directed flirtatiously at ‘boys,’” the song— and Lloyd as its performer— encouraged “women to take advantage of the opportunities their increased independence offered” (Beale 144). By filling in the blanks of a song like ‘Twiggy Voo,’ female audience members could decide how far they wanted any of the sexual encounters in the song to progress and as a result Marie was defined as “a pleasure-seeking role model for young women” despite never explicitly highlighting *their* sexual potential (144). Songs like “Twiggy Voo,” which rely on comic innuendo, allowed Marie to perform invisible or unspeakable content while having the audience decide on the level of ‘vulgarity,’ and is therefore an example of Marie performing censorship reflexively. This style of performance, which relied on the “interplay between knowing and not knowing” what a song, and performer, was alluding to offers “comic jeopardy and therefore potentially the biggest laughs” in music hall performance (147). Akin to the comic reformation of female music-hall caricatures, Lloyd’s retinue of songs refigured female performance practices, and politics, in the ‘naughty nineties.’

Here we can see productive qualities of censorship: Summerfield notes that in songs like “Twiggy Voo,” ‘vulgarity,’ the aspect of female performance most heavily scrutinised, had

developed into a stylistic aspect as opposed to originating in the content of the song (Summerfield 234). As the objectionable content was performed in gestures rather than written or spoken word, licensing committees could not refuse licenses on the grounds of immoral or content. The "state," or LCC as a similar representation of local government with explicit control over the halls, *did* employ other tactics in their campaign for social purity and cleansed music halls. In addition to license refusals, their work alongside the MHPPA and the halls' position as minor theatres under the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain, provided the LCC and the TMHLC with other options through which they could oppose offensive performances.

While stories of Marie being summoned by the Lord Chamberlain to a hearing due to the 'vulgarity' of her performances are apocryphal,<sup>99</sup> Lloyd *was* summoned by the London County Council's Theatres and Music Halls Committee in 1896 to defend herself after Carina Reed,<sup>100</sup> complained about "Johnny Jones" (Davis 118). "Johnny Jones," which was a popular alternate title for her song "What's that For, Eh?," catalogues the experience of a young girl asking her parents questions about boys and their recent romantic advances. The chorus of the song, which reverses the use of "Ma" and "Pa" throughout, is a prime example of the audience being left to assume the meaning of what is unsaid: "What's that for, eh? Tell me Ma / If you don't tell me I'll ask Pa / But Ma said, "Oh its nothing shut your row" / Well, I've asked Johnny Jones, see / So I know now" (Lytton and Le Brunn). The song itself contains no flagrant vulgarities but there is a sexually knowing and "deviant" undertone present in both the daughter's "enquiring" with Johnny Jones and her response of "I know now."

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<sup>99</sup> Two of Lloyd's biographers, Baker and Jacob, note the apocryphal nature of accounts by early music hall historians, like Cheshire and Disher, whose understanding of Marie's defence vary. Tracy Davis, likewise, has given a considerable degree of attention to the potential of whether any meetings of this type occurred.

<sup>100</sup> Reed was a renowned temperance campaigner and, in alternate—apocryphal—versions of Marie being summoned to the TMHLC meeting, is replaced by Laura Ormiston Chant, another temperance campaigner and social reformer.

Accounts of Lloyd's hearing note that she sang 'Johnny Jones' devoid of movement or inflexion, the elements which gave meaning to her work, and that the council agreed that the lyrics—the only portion of the song which they had control over—were 'clean' (Davis 118). Though versions of this hearing include Marie singing "Come Into the Garden, Maud" to the council, accompanying the song with "every possible lewd gesture, wink and innuendo," and further stress the role of bodily action, as opposed to lyrics, as vulgar, this meeting has been debunked by her biographers (Baker 67). However, "three of [Marie's] songs" were brought to the council "for criticism" in 1896, and Lloyd told the press in 1897 that "the LCC had dissected *one* of her songs and had found it harmless" (Baker 45-46, emphasis mine). Across these accounts, the Committee realised by analysing the song that "lewdness," was not being performed on-stage but "in their own minds" (119). As a result, they were unable to censor performers like Marie who utilised self-censorship and audience's inherent immorality. Despite the efforts of moral reformers, the LCC, and music hall managers to raise objections to "questionable songs"—code for "knowing," insidiously sexual, female performance style—there were no statutes to control the comprehension of gesture. As a result, moralists and censors were backed into a corner by such performances as interpreting them as "vile" reflected on *their* understanding of the texts and thus placed guilt on them, as a willing listener and conspirator, as opposed to the performer.

Marie Lloyd's choice to rely on interpretation, use metaphor in her numbers,<sup>101</sup> and her ability to voice and gesture towards the "invisible," skirted censorship practices, but was unable to remove censorship or quell the late-Victorian desire to purify the halls through heightened

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<sup>101</sup> While Marie had control over the songs in her repertory, she did not write them. The LCC, TMHLC, and MHPPA's frustration with her over her lyrics would have been better articulated at her long-time collaborator and composer, George Le Brunn, or lyricists.

control and selection. However, as Foucault writes: when cultural elements and voices are "condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence... the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. A person who holds forth... places [themselves]... outside the reach of power, upset established law... [and] anticipate... the coming freedom" (Foucault 6). Marie Lloyd belonged to a work-force which profited from the labour of women while demeaning, controlling, extorting, and scapegoating them. For her to sing songs which maintain similar, knowing, and comedically self-censoring airs centered on female sexuality—at once the “expectation” created by managers and a “threat” to Victorian puritanism, social order, and a halls’ finances—is an act of both reflexive-silence and transgression. In silence, these songs used<sup>102</sup> language which freed Lloyd from house-rules’ threat of financial loss and put her outside the reach of the LCC’s power. Where her earlier hits allowed her to create laughter out of controlled silence, the most transgressive song Lloyd popularized through flouting the censor and letting her audience in on the joke, is also the most fitting example of self-reflexive censorship: "You Can't Stop a Girl From Thinking."

The song, written by Harrington, Le Brunn, and Tabrar in 1897, was "Marie's way of retaliating against the puritans" and leaves the transgressive work of the song to the "audience's imagination" and comprehensive cultural understandings (Baer 69). Like “Twiggy Voo,” the verses of "You Can't Stop a Girl From Thinking" chart different, though equally bawdy, setups and end by bridging into the chorus. The first verse follows a milk-maid and "young man with a stick": following pastoral norms, the two profess their love<sup>103</sup> in the woods and Lloyd trails off, singing: “in that brief ecstatic moment, their eyes met, their hands met and their lips met, in one long lingering, delicious... well you know” (“You Can’t Stop a Girl From Thinking”). The verses

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<sup>102</sup> Or perhaps, more aptly, did *not* use.

<sup>103</sup> Despite having just met.

comically undercut their salacious material, ending before Lloyd provides the juicy details, and instead lead into a chorus which goes as follows:

“I musn’t tell you what I mean! /  
Mustn’t tell you what I’ve seen! /  
Ev’rything that’s risky must be dropped /  
Well – I’ve been stopped for winking!<sup>104</sup> /  
Mustn’t tell you what I’ve heard! /  
Mustn’t say a naughty word! /  
So help my bob, it’s a jolly good job /  
They can’t stop a girl from thinking!” (Tabrar et al., 1897)<sup>105</sup>

The chorus cleverly highlights the role of the censor as controlling Marie’s ability to speak freely but not her, or the audience’s, ability to *think*. The lyrics simultaneously encourage the audience to fill in the blanks of the song, resolving “you know” with “thinking,” and make the presence of a censor laughable as they can control language but not “thinking.” The repetition of the chorus firmly suggests that audience and performer will continue to intrinsically understand one another despite control altering their ability to verbally communicate. As a result, Marie provides the listener with erotically charged setups in the verses, fizzled out by a self-censored, reflexive, chorus which at once acknowledges the altered nature of her performance and the method by which the song is “vulgar.” Comic for its flouting of the censor while, at once, being censored, the song comically refers back to Lloyd’s public history of censorship, as a woman and performer, and optimistically refutes social controls.

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<sup>104</sup> The public nature of Marie's private life, particularly the objections to her songs by moralists and local government in 1896, is referenced in the chorus.

<sup>105</sup> “You Can’t Stop a Girl From Thinking” is written by Joseph Tabrar, John P. Harrington, and George Le Brunn—a long-time collaborator of Lloyd.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that implicit, or self-censorship, can be wielded as a productive tool in performance to a knowing audience by figures with radical potential, demonstrated through the history of Marie Lloyd's performances of self-reflective censorship. Building on this argument, chapter three looks to how the managerial process of selection, akin to Royal taste-making, is a form of explicit censorship intended to separate the music hall, as a genre, from its class background through the language of "respectability." Much like the transgressive, self-reflexive, censorship present in performances of songs as cultural texts, ephemeral objects like programmes reveal the shifting nature of culture and ideology in the music hall. While Marie Lloyd was successful in evading the censors, and we can view "You Can't Stop a Girl from Thinking" as an anthem of self-reflexive censorship in performance. However, her behaviour on and off-stage was "intensely scrutinised" and "managers were required to either defend her performances at LCC hearings or claim that her infringements were delivered without their prior knowledge or consent" (Beale 140). By the turn of the twentieth century, Lloyd had been black-listed<sup>106</sup> by several proprietors for licensing issues and outrage brought against them by moral campaigners based on both her onstage antics and off-stage romantic entanglements. Additionally, her role as a music hall star— a liminal woman expected to maintain allegiance to various classes— when paired with her self-reflexive performances, non-traditional private life, and leadership in the music hall strike of 1907, ultimately led to her exclusion from the Royal Command Performance of 1912, the focus of the next chapter.

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<sup>106</sup> The most notable proprietor who refused to engage with Lloyd is Oswald Stoll of the Moss/Stoll Empire. Though he allowed her in some of his theatres, Chapter Three notes that as "respectability" in the halls increased that he was unwilling to besmirch his legacy with her presence.

### Chapter Three

#### **Respectability and Morality: The Royal Command Performance as a Signal of the Music Hall's Altered Class Allegiance**

The selective evolution of the music hall genre, influenced by moral agents, temperate concerns, and associated licensing acts as well as the malleable class-allegiances and tastes of its managers, stars, and patrons thus far is expressed through the censorship of individual acts. Such control, likewise, resulted in the shifting character and spirit of the halls. Between 1800 and 1890, the halls grew from taverns, song-and-supper rooms, and saloons into the "conventional" music hall, which, as Chapter One asserts, more closely resembled the "legitimate" theatres than its earlier-form by the twentieth century. To this end, Jacqueline Bratton writes that their shifting character and manager's dedication to the middle-class concept of respectability "eventually deracinated [the halls] which then failed to meet the challenge of further developments in the leisure industries" (Bratton 164). What is oft-considered the ultimate sign of this deracination, and the "death" of the music hall genre, is the Royal Command Performance of 1912.

Before delving into an examination of the Royal Command Performance and its associated transient objects, we must first broach the language of "death" in the genre as it is utilised by several historians and throughout music hall studies. Despite its popular and accepted usage, Russell argues that academic usage of this term in regards to the evolution of the music hall into variety is "hostile" and figures variety as "a supposedly manufactured, syndicated-dominated product" which "destroyed its somehow more authentic Victorian ancestor" (Russell 61). While I do agree that variety did not "kill" the music hall just as the halls did not "kill" their predecessors and that the language of "death" may over-emphasise and dramatize this evolution, I respectfully disagree with Russell. For example, Russell's insistence that managerial movement to syndicates— such as the Moss/Stoll Empire— did not "destroy" connections to the working-



class and the authenticity of the genre is short-sighted. While not all the syndicates overtly distanced their offerings from the working classes, Russell fails to articulate how the syndicates, in absorbing the power of the state represented by the LCC and the Royals, utilised practices of censorship and control to authenticate their businesses and boost their earnings.

Russell is right that the music hall was not “dead” in the early twentieth century, not by a long shot. Pennybacker records an “estimated nightly audience of as many as 59,000 music hall goers” as opposed to “47,000” who attended London theatres nightly (Pennybacker 211), and while Howard's data suggests a decrease in the number of London music halls from ten in 1890, to two in 1900 and finally zero in 1910, the number of variety theatres rose from nonexistence in the 90s to eleven in 1900 and thirteen in 1910 (Howard cited in Summerfield 217). Interestingly, this data suggests gain as opposed to loss; between 1890 and 1900 the majority of the formal licenses for the ten halls shifted to represent changing conventions of taste— altering their registration from “music hall” to “Theatre of Variety.” And yet two establishments were still registered as “halls” (Howard cited in Summerfield 217). The offerings at London variety theatres differed from those in the halls akin to how the song-saloons once differed from the music halls: their main distinctions being time, demonstrations of their allegiance to the upper-classes or “sophistication,” and the forms and names they presented physically and legally.

Many of the neo-classically resonant music halls, such as the Empire, the Palace, and the Star, offered variety entertainments which differed slightly from the long-running music hall programme and were at once considered variety theatres and music halls. While Howard's data tells us that the number of music halls— based on their registration or the clarity of their titles— decreased, with approximately eight of ten London music halls closing, when we consider variety theatres as the “next phase” of their evolution, London saw an increase in places of

entertainment, from ten to thirteen variety theatres by 1900. This growth, in turn, accounts for the 45 per cent increase in music hall audiences between 1894 and 1904 (Pennybacker 211).

While the halls continued into the early twentieth century under the labels of “music hall,” “variety,” and “variety entertainment,” Eileen and Stephen Yeo caution that “the tendency, and sometimes the intention too, is to mistake the survival of the capitalist system for a seeming unchangingness” (Yeo 131). The halls *were* changed as managers broadened their offerings<sup>107</sup> but they were also prompted by the stringent moral codes of the LCC to develop structures of discipline for their performers, workers and audiences. Bratton believes that this increase and the new contractual requirements managers required from their staff, as explored and focused through the lens of female performance, sex workers, and performers in Chapter Two, “marked the death of the Victorian music hall” and trapped workers in subordination (Bratton 174).<sup>108</sup> Further, while self-reflexive censorship provided serio-comics with leeway, contractual censorship forced stars to adjust their code of conduct or face termination. Those who failed to meet the restrictions and codes of respectability that marked the music halls in the latter half of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century were marked for their resistance regardless of their star quality.

Of these workers, the most famous is Marie Lloyd who was marked and morally judged due to her profession, onstage persona, and marriages. Though her intellect and song-writing team allowed her performances to remain above reproach, her acts of resistance to increasing managerial censorship continued in the twentieth century. The upward mobility of the music hall

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<sup>107</sup> These expanded offerings moved further from the topical and patter songs of the early halls to include “more segments of late-Victorian society” in manager’s desire to expand their audiences and revenue (Bratton).

<sup>108</sup> Bratton expands on this concept, suggesting that the contractual disciplining of performers, or house-rules, of the earlier period increased as the “respectable” halls “shifted power into the hands of business managers and investors... [who sought] protect[ion for] their investments” (Bratton).

and its managers led to the adoption of a two-turn nightly system with double matinees which limited employees from working ‘turns’ at multiple halls per night. To fight against contractually enforced “loyalty” of hall workers, Lloyd helped establish the Variety Artistes Federation which went on strike in 1907. Academics, biographers, and music hall historians have covered Marie's absence from the RCP and agree that her snubbing was due to "theatre owners and managers... [getting back at] her for helping to organize the 1907 strike" in addition to their objections to her private life and "reputation for being rude" (Baker 120).<sup>109</sup> What is pertinent to note about Marie's absence from the Royal Command Performance *and* her involvement in the strike is that both events demonstrate the strained connections between managers and performers, well as the audience,<sup>110</sup> whose relationship to the performers renders their experience of the halls.

Just as Chapters One and Two examine the development of the music hall form through processes of control and their impact, Chapter Three is similarly interested in how articulations of control furthered the selective development and evolution of the form. Chapter three is conscious of the physical and legal developments which allowed for the growth of the halls in the nineteenth century. Additionally, the chapter concerns itself with the ways in which class connections are articulated through "taste," particularly in the notion of "respectability" as presented in the souvenir programme for the 1912 Royal Command Performance. In my analysis of the programme's content— illustrations, two introductory essays, and running order— I argue that by embracing respectability through the authentication of upper-class patrons, the 1912 Royal Command Performance severed the genre's ties to the lower or working classes.

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<sup>109</sup> Baker and Jacob's biographies of Lloyd look at the snubbing from a personal perspective while Beale, Gerrard, Davis analyze different aspects of why she was not asked to perform. Newsprint from the period, namely *The Era*, *The New York Telegraph*, and *The Globe* in their discussion of the RCP— or of Marie's personal life— also note her absence.

<sup>110</sup>By controlling the communication between performers and audience, managers lost the ability to successfully interpret audience interests through their performers.

**TASTE-MAKING AS A PRELUDE TO THE ROYAL COMMAND PERFORMANCE**

Prior to analysing *how* the Royal Command Performance represents a further separation of the music hall from the working class patrons, concerns, and leisure in which it originated, this chapter begins with a brief overview of the Royal Command Performance event. As managers, investors, and owners moved to professionalise their halls and create respectable, *profitable*, entertainments by courting more upper-class patrons, divisions between the classes in the body of the hall and on-stage were figured by “those who were and those who were not respectable” (Best 256-263 cited in Bailey 30). Russell argues that the products of the syndicate halls were “reshaped by endless negotiation between entrepreneurial innovation and audience expectation” and beckoned the form’s evolution into Edwardian variety (Russell 61). This forced evolution, like the offerings of the syndicate programme, was created through managerial selection, acceptance, and rejection of styles of performance, in the hopes of matching their halls to the tastes of the (moral) majority.

This process of professionalization ran in tandem to the LCC’s demands for “institutional accountability” by the managers and their resultant, heightened, control over the acts and actions of their performers. The music hall “evolve[d] into a site where Royalty could appear” due to self-censorship becoming a pre-requisite for the financial stability of performers and managers (Waters 61). On their end, the Royal Family had grown slightly more “public” in their interests between Victoria and George V’s reigns. During this time music hall, ballet and musical comedies benefitted from the authenticating gestures of England’s supreme tastemakers: the Royal family. At the time of Victoria's ascension, "music was being diligently promoted... as a refined accessory to the good life and a help in moral rehabilitation" and the Royals, specifically

the Prince Consort, loved music (Pearsall 123).<sup>111</sup> Though the royal family appreciated music privately, the Queen publically visited a ballet for the first time in 1843. Like music hall, ballet was marked as a vulgar entertainment because of its inherent connection to and focus on women and their bodies. Laura Ormiston Chant famously spoke against ballet, arguing that leotards and tights emphasised the invisible and unspeakable: female genitals. Chant is particularly insistent that "the audience took these peculiarly objectionable parts very quietly," signalling their distaste (Davis 123). Following Victoria's visit, ballet, which had previously seemed incompatible with Victorian values of propriety, nation [as it was a mostly *foreign* entertainment] and therefore taste, was authenticated as a refined and respectable entertainment befitting royalty.

However private, Victoria and Albert's understood patronage of ballet and 'Ancient Concerts,' respectively, led to their continued popularization and success in the realm, as Davis notes: when "the Queen invited the most famous musicians of the day to play before her" the aristocracy "felt compelled to do likewise" (76). Though the response to the Queen's taste-making between the upper-most echelon and minor members of the court may not have resulted in the appreciation of ballet, classical music, or home performances it did boost the popularity of these entertainments to fill the ample leisure time of the upper classes (76). The ability to hire a performer to entertain oneself and friends was a sign of class and taste and Davis suggests that as the upper classes popularised private performance that "the middle classes emulated what they thought were upper-class leisure habits" (96). While this is true to a degree, the mimicry of the Royal's *private* patronage and appreciation of the arts did not support public entertainments, especially those— like music hall— which failed to be recognizable reputable until the end of

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<sup>111</sup> Albert was a well-known "patron of the Ancient Concerts... and [since] the Queen adored him and went along with everything he did or believed, [their authenticating gestures] made music in the home more than respectable" (Pearsall 76).

Victoria's reign. George V's interest in the music hall, much like Victoria's authentication of the ballet, made respectability for the long-contested genre possible.

Suitability act(s), the LCC's moral vigilance, and manager's efforts shaped the genre into a respectable entertainment that was appropriate for women and children, suggestible persons in need of moral guidance.<sup>112</sup> The alteration of the genre to suit the moral education and protection of these groups signals a doubling down of control by the middle-class due to the uncertainty and social instability that performance in the music halls had long represented. Working alongside the LCC, managers employed 'judgement,' moral and otherwise, and demonstrated their "ability to read the public taste, to know when to drop ballet and promote gymnasts... [and know] how to compile a programme of the widest appeal" (Bailey 83). In Chapter Two the actions of managers were analysed as moral judgements against the transgressive nature of the female body in Victorian culture, but when we focus on 'judgement' from the management's perspective calculated acts of censorship and control help us to observe the classed nature of taste.

One of the ways in which Paul Bourdieu characterises class is through one's association to and demonstrations of taste. He distinguishes the tastes of the working class as "being formed out of necessity rather than choice, arguing that a virtue is made of this necessity... However, this necessity transcends its original practical purpose: 'The working class indicat[e] a preference for [the] realistic and practical... working men are forbidden every pretension" (Bourdieu cited in Harker et al. 112 cited in Huxley and James 49). Bourdieu's understanding demonstrates a clear parallel to what Stedman-Jones and Summerfield deem the music hall's "culture of consolation." In the culture of consolation, which "compensates for political and social

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<sup>112</sup> The understanding of "need," or moral guidance of women and children at this point of the halls' development is akin to the moral middle-classes attempts to control fairground, tavern, and saloon entertainments to instruct working-class men through rational recreation.

impotence," the working class celebrates the small pleasures of ordinary life— the pleasures left to them when the upper-classes assume that all they *should* be interested in is the realistic and practical (Bailey 130). As Bourdieu notes, the realistic and practical is antonymic to pretensions or flights of fancy; moral education and rational recreation rose as managers and moralists stripped halls of spectacular entertainments that could distance the working-classes leisure from work. Alongside the loss of outlandish numbers, traditional coster songs and other “public forms of working-class self-expression”<sup>113</sup> were filtered out, and the programming of the music halls reflected solely middle and upper-class sensibilities of taste and control (Summerfield 210).

Classed judgement predicates managerial utilisation of "taste" in programmes. In their desire for upward mobility, managers, investors, and many stars cast off their connections to their class of origin, and the music hall's working-class roots, to court and retain upper-class patrons. Interestingly, at the same time as the music hall became increasingly professional, internally and externally as explored in Chapter One, the English monarchy was making "calculated attempt[s] to promote a less remote image" for themselves through "distance and cordiality, ceremony and informality" (Russell 66). Although there is a well-documented history of performers summoned to the English court(s) before the RCP, the connection between the music hall and the royal family officially began during the reign of Edward VII.<sup>114</sup>

Akin to Victoria's public support and interest in ballet, Edward VII, his wife Alexandria of Denmark, and the Prince of Wales, later George V, all publically supported English music hall without loss of prestige (Pearsall 12-13). While moralists had long campaigned for cleaner music

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<sup>113</sup> In addition to Coster songs, inspired by the pearl buttoned trousers of Costermongers, sung demonstrations of class in the music hall included “swell songs” which scrutinised upward mobility and the upper classes through class-drag and cross-dressing.

<sup>114</sup> Command performances began during Victoria's reign but were, for the most part, private and primarily comprised of theatrical productions.

halls and managers as of the late 1880s and early 90s were working hard to maintain respectable establishments and public credibility, royal visits held that much more power over public opinion of “taste” than the LCC. As Levinson suggests, “an important resource that is also and uniquely available to the state is its ability to *legitimate* certain arguments merely by virtue of state endorsement” (Levinson 196). Though the Hanoverians ruled as constitutional monarchs the intrinsic connection between Royal taste and the authenticating power of the monarchy, as “the state,” made it so that their appearances at ballets, theatres, and later, the music halls, provided these sites with the respectability associated with state endorsement.

To this end, Russell builds on this relationship noting that “The royal family were arguably exploiting the variety theatre as much as variety was exploiting them” and, in their shared, classed, pursuit of public adoration and stability, the Royal Command Performance of 1912 was born (Russell 66). George V’s coronation was hailed with a “Great Gala Performance” at His Majesty’s Theatre in London on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1911, which— like many of the private command performances before it—was composed of theatrical performances as opposed to variety fair (Gillan). However, George V like his father, Edward VII, was a known supporter of the music halls and his interest in the genre led to royal recognition of the form when the managers of London’s West End halls invited him to “command” a music hall performance.<sup>115</sup>

The performance, initially slated for The Empire Palace Theatre in Edinburgh in 1911— part of the Moss and Stoll Empire chain—was cancelled when the theatre burned down weeks before the event (119). London, the city where the LCC, and the Board of Works before it, took precautions to ensure the moral and physical safety of the halls,<sup>116</sup> was chosen as the new site of

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<sup>115</sup> The managerial process leading up to this invitation is covered in Baker’s biography of Lloyd—though this is a slightly skewed perspective—and in Dagmar Kift’s *The Victorian music hall: Culture, class and conflict*.

<sup>116</sup> Especially in regards to fire, given the Board of Works’ and the LCC’s earlier attempts at shutting down halls by citing fire code.



the performance. As a result, the first Royal Command Variety Performance took place at the Palace Theatre, part of Alfred Butt's syndicate. His syndicate, a competitor to the Moss and Stoll Empire until a merger after the Royal Command Performance, was the first to “bring... [in] Pavlova and the Russian ballet, and potted dramas,” according to Bratton, and as such had contributed to the development of the music hall as *variety* (Bratton 174).

The programme for the performance, the main focus of analysis in the next portion of this chapter, was developed by a variety of owners and managers, including Moss and Stoll alongside Butt. In their selection of material to present to the King, Royal family and visitors, and audience, the managers proclaimed that the entertainments "would contain the usual roster of acts" and feature a finale with one hundred and fifty artistes singing together (Gerrard 500). As we will see, the choice of who would perform and *what* they would perform ultimately ties the Royal Command Performance to the histories of censorship, control, and regulatory practices in the music hall genre. As a result of these practices the Royal Command Performance can be interpreted as both the pinnacle of achievement and popularity of the halls as well as its symbolic "death" as what was presented scarcely depicted or stayed true to its working-class origins.

## **THE PROCESS OF PROGRAMME ANALYSIS**

The work of Nicholas Till and Kandis Cook, who were commissioned by Hoxton Hall and the English National Opera Studio to make a new musical theatre piece for Hoxton based on the hall's history,<sup>117</sup> informs my process of analysis. I will follow Till in arguing that the process of programme selection is an example of the mid-Victorian project to exercise social control over the urban working classes. Unlike Till, my analysis will build on the use of Judith Butler's work

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<sup>117</sup> Till's article, “‘First-Class Evening Entertainments’: Spectacle and Social Control in a Mid-Victorian Music Hall,” offers us a reading of an 1863 Hoxton Hall programme through its investigation of the content and context of original programmes from the hall.

on censorship and control, as demonstrated in the earlier chapters. Where chapter one questioned the distinctions between implicit and explicit censorship in the licensing, regulating, and changed landscapes of London music halls and chapter two focused on self-reflexive censorship and the threat of the “unspoken” or “invisible,” my analysis of the programme will combine these arguments into a study of the “invisible” or erased.

Pulling from Butler’s *Excitable Speech*, I posit that the souvenir programme of the 1912 Royal Command Performance formalises and publicises the longstanding managerial efforts to erase music hall’s connections to the working class. It does so through illustrations, introductory essays, and its running order. The illustrations, like the neo-classical theatre names and interiors alluded to at the end of Chapter One, tie the music hall to the “legitimate” theatre, while the essays more expressly relate to Butler’s work. My argument here builds on Butler’s assertion that “agents other than governments and branches of government wield the power to injure through words” and that “citizens can effectively deprive *each other* of such rights and liberties through words that wound” (Butler 47-48). The programme’s introductory essays, “The Story of the Music Hall” and “A Foreword,” serve as envoys of music hall’s increased respectability and the classed-connotations of the RCP. As a result the “words that wound” take the form of a fictive, cleansed, history of the genre. Finally, akin to the glance at knickers made in Chapter Two, the programme’s running order reveals more about the classed associations with and desire for respectability by looking at what is “invisible,” or missing, in addition to what is present. As Butler writes in “Burning Acts, Injurious Speech”:

The point of this kind of reading is not only to expose a contradictory set of rhetorical strategies at work in the decision, but to consider the power of that discursive domain which not only produces what will and will not count as speakable but which regulates

the political field of contestation through the tactical manipulation of that very distinction. (Butler 54)

My analysis substitutes the speakable in Butler's quotation to focus instead on the cult of respectability, though the two are related in music hall studies and my analysis. Respectability, a "highly specific value system of considerable normative power," in and outside of the Victorian music hall was a term and a process by which the working class could be incorporated "into the social consensus that assured mid-Victorian society" (Bailey 30). Respectability was thus a force of evolution and erasure which targeted the working-class just as it was used to cleanse the halls.

One of the most evident aspects of a programme, be it for the conventional theatre or a music hall, is that it is the product of a process of selection. Both the product, the programme, and the process "presuppose a decision" made by the author or collator but these subjects do not, in Butler's terms, "create the rules according to which selection is made" (248-249). Invariably, conventions of taste govern the creation of programmes and, as a result, are decided before their selection. The programme for the 1912 Royal Command Performance similarly featured performances based on both the long-running history of music hall or variety content— after all, the performance was supposed to highlight the "best of music hall"— as well as the accounts of social control and legislation which shaped what was appropriate to perform.

By the 1890s attempts were made to formalise the process of creating the running order through the "official regulation and control" over the programme which "reflected broader, class-based attempts to exert controls over the behaviour and leisure activities of working Londoners" (Beale 46). The moral nature of performances and bills was further regulated based on who owned or managed the hall and what their stances were; in the Moss Stoll Empire, one of the sixteen syndicates who ruled the music halls, vulgarity was effectively outlawed. Stoll was

recorded in theatrical papers in the early 1900s, saying that he “intended to sever all links with the music-hall of the past” and stating further that “Coarseness and vulgarity are not allowed at the Coliseum,” the pinnacle of the Empire's building efforts (Barker cited in Baker 100). In the case of the Moss / Stoll theatres, the refinement of the music hall stemmed from their moral positions whereas the shift of other theatres to “respectable” entertainments was influenced by public opinion and the looming presence of the London County Council.

Much like the morals which had shifted, the offerings of the music hall and conventional variety programming had changed as public taste and standards dictated. Bratton writes that “drama, comic song, and ‘speciality’ acts... includ[ing] dance and clowning as well as all sorts of physical feats” were “the major ingredients of the typical music-hall bill during the 1870s, 80s, and 90s” (Bratton 169). Drama, comic song, and speciality performances relate to the three streams which fed into the halls: drama, as licensing laws allowed music halls to borrow more than just the physical trappings of the legitimate theatres, song from the long-running growth from tavern/song-and-supper-room/singing-saloons, and “speciality acts” from the fairgrounds and carnivals. The drama of the halls between the 70s and 90s included “song and dance which explored the old comedy of relations between the sexes and between classes,” borrowing plot and characters from the conventional theatres, only to comically reverse them (Bratton 169). In the halls, comic singing is divisible into further categories such as the topical song— which borrowed from popular culture and was no longer practised, or programmed, by the 1890s—, patter numbers which relied on the connection between audience and performer, and character songs. Finally, bills included “specialty acts” in the form of sideshow staples and “freaks, such as dwarfs and Siamese twins,” who represented the exotic other (173). Following the cleansing of

the halls, programmes relied less on these vulgar or class-conscious staples and the command performance, as a royal affair, made such exclusion all the more pertinent.

The running order of the 1912 command performance was contracted and arranged by a committee consisting of Moss, Stoll, Butt, and other prolific managers, which separates it from those of the early halls, performed on a 'by demand' basis or arranged on the spot by the chairperson. Butler's analysis of protected speech can be applied here: the artists and acts chosen represent the "adjudication of what will and will not count as protected" (and therefore respectable) "speech" and is itself "a kind of speech, one which implicates the state in the very problem of discursive power with which it is invested to regulate, sanction, and restrict such speech" (Butler 54). The removal of classed-acts, such as Coster songs, is one example of managerial interference and bias in the selection of content for the RCP, but— as explored in Chapter Two— performance by female serio-comics is a site of transgressive speech conscious of state control. Though female comics were included in the RCP, the exclusion of Marie Lloyd from the roster of artists for the Royal Command Performance is a prime example of how moral judgement of an artist, and the desire to restrict speaking out against control in the halls, lead to the adjudication of the "acceptable" in music hall programming.

Lloyd "was music-halls top earner," making more from her appearances than other top-performers Dan Leno and Little Tich (both of whom were invited to perform) (Baker 107).<sup>118</sup> Unlike her male counterparts, it is uncontested that gendered and classed judgements fuelled Marie's snubbing from the RCP.<sup>119</sup> Music hall scholars give three reasons behind this decision:

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<sup>118</sup> Marie's involvement in the strike and testimony at its hearings in 1907 revealed that she made more in single appearances and per night than her male counterparts.

<sup>119</sup> Little Tich was also involved in the leadership of the strike; however, unlike Marie, he was male and his performances relied on his small stature, not the censors, as its punchline.

her private life,<sup>120</sup> her role in the strike, and her reputation for speaking out against control in the music halls by speaking directly to the lower-classes (120). All three of the reasons academics have agreed on for the managerial snubbing of Marie deal with lines of class and gender.<sup>121</sup> Stoll's involvement in the decision could also have played a significant role as he had previously outlawed Lloyd from performing at his newly erected Coliseum theatre where his new, moral, entertainments were held (100). As Cook and Heilmann have argued, censorship regimes "object to how views are expressed," especially in cases of "national security, public order or democratic equality" (180-181). Lloyd's signature performance style which relied on the patter-songs, connection to her audience, and clear communication of what Butler refers to as "unspeakable" subjects (physically if not verbally) was a clear threat to moral tastes and public order given the moral nature of those in power. As the decisions of managers and investors further professionalised the halls and separated the genre from its roots in the taverns, and thus amongst the lower, working classes, class allegiances were changing.

Despite her increased wages, Marie maintained loyalties to the working class, spending money on her family, buying necessities for working-class children, and making waves as a leader of the VAF in the strike, which was itself dedicated to providing the workers of the halls with a living wage and safety (Baker 122). Like Marie's morally objectionable performances, her commitment to her class of origin was problematic to the classed-cleansing the halls were undergoing and made her all the more intolerable to managers. Marie's absence marks a definite

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<sup>120</sup> Marie lived openly with her lover, Dillon— who would become her third and final husband— while married to her second husband, Alec.

<sup>121</sup> Baker considers Marie's maintained working-class identity as one of the reasons behind her snub, while Summerfield and Beale consider her defiance as a working-class woman and female comic. See Davis' "Indecency and Vigilance in the Music Halls" for a perspective which considers Marie's place as a woman, liminal performer, and woman of low-class origin.

point in which the London music hall industry drew a line between its working-class roots and its respectable future which marked those opposed as traitors to their liminal class.

Unlike Marie, those chosen to perform in the Royal Command Performance did not present direct threats to hegemonic or normative concepts of nationhood, class, and taste in their person or performances. There are instances in the programme of more “radical” performances, such as Vesta Tilley’s male-impersonation, but the running order for the RCP presents distinct differences from earlier music hall fare (“Royal Performance”). Bratton’s work and the writing of early music hall historians, such as Disher and Cheshire, reveal that the dominance of the comic singer weakened in “the nineteenth century, as the programme incorporated more diversity of performance” and the Royal Command Performance falls well within this trend (Scott). The selection of “appropriate” performance material functions similarly to the choice of performers, because both qualify as an adjudication of what will or will not count as “protected speech” or performance (Butler 54). However, the selection of material in the case of the Royal Command Performance does so consciously to circumscribe “the social parameters of speakable discourse” in regards to taste (251). By embracing conventions of the legitimate Victorian theatre the “halls” and the genre, represented by managers more than performers, and through the adjudication of speakable discourses based on the biased discretion of management and members of the LCC and TMHLC, music hall lost its working-class authenticity.

### **THE PROGRAMME AS TEXT**

While there are elements of the traditional programming, these are mixed amongst performances of high(er) culture and aspiration. This division of class by demonstration of taste is especially visible when comparing the running order of the RCP to bills from West End Halls. The Royal Command Performance featured 25 ‘numbers’ or performances, which I have

separated into three categories: speciality acts, comic singing, and sketch comedy ("Royal Performance). While this seems in line with Bratton's findings, the division of the bill is uneven: speciality acts, a catch-all term for performances ranging in style and taste levels (such as Anna Pavlova, an assortment of ventriloquists, a juggler, the Royal Orchestra, etc.), make up 44% of the bill, while comic singing clocks in at 28% and sketches make up the remaining 24%.

Though the three elements of a traditional music hall bill are present in the RCP, the division of taste and class is made all the more evident when compared to programmes from West End halls in the mid-90s. For example, the Oxford Music Hall and the Tivoli Music Hall feature 22 performances, each, in their bills from late 1893 (Scott). The Oxford's programme features seven speciality acts (instrumental music, a dancer, a burlesque performer, and ballad singers), one sketch, and 14 comic singers or straight comics (Short 229). The breakdown of performance in this bill is roughly 32% speciality numbers, 64% comic singers or comedians, and 5% sketches which makes sense given the licensing laws against multiple sketches in a music hall programme. The programme from the Tivoli Music Hall is much the same. Here the programme is broken down into nine speciality acts (40%), 11 comic-singers or comedians (50%), and two sketches (9%).<sup>122</sup>

Both West End programmes articulate the slow but present move towards variety in the halls, with speciality acts generally making up a third of their shows; nevertheless, the dominant form and style in both is overwhelmingly the comic singer. In contrast, in the programme for the Royal Command Performance the variety or speciality acts make up half of the show while sketch comedy and comic singers count as a quarter of the material presented, effectively reversing the typical division of acts on the bill. Sketches, which Lois Rutherford has argued

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<sup>122</sup> The number of speciality acts can be broken down further as two of them are specifically horse focused. The accurate division then is 50% comic singing, 9% horses, 9% sketch comedy, and 32% speciality numbers.



were "often held up as symbols of progressive cultural improvement from within music-hall entertainment," were on the rise as comic singing decreased (131). Rutherford makes a further, pertinent distinction between sketch comedy and comic singing, noting that "comic song was peculiarly associated with the pub-based music hall" whereas "sketches were regarded as positively contributing towards the music halls' aspirations to be accorded the status of 'variety theatre'" (132). Comic-singers, like seating and chairperson of the tavern-halls, are products of the halls' development and signify classed connections between performer and audience. Conversely, sketch comedy— controlled by the Lord Chamberlain's office as "spoken drama"— was as much a part of legitimising and cleansing the halls as the inclusion of tip-up seating.

As Summerfield explains, pressure was "mounting to make music hall songs conform to a 'legitimate' type of entertainment" and comic acts which relied on topical knowledge, a connection between performer and audience, and often "rude" or "vulgar" humour failed to meet the expectations of respectability and therefore legitimacy (Summerfield 231). We can see a divide between "popular" and "classical" or upper-class amusements and sentiments throughout the Victorian period and into the Edwardian, so much so that it is in this period that the term "popular" takes on the following meanings: "relating to, deriving from, or consisting of ordinary people," "generated by the general public," and "of low birth; not noble; plebeian" (*OED*).<sup>123</sup> Music hall as a genre is inherently a collection of the "popular": constructed by and for the people and relating to their lives.

In contrast, by 1912 and the Royal Command Performance the hall was less a reflection of the popular as it was of the middle class and managerial aspirations of upward mobility. The snubbing of Marie, altered landscapes of the hall, and the division of content in the RCP— which

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<sup>123</sup> All three of these meanings originate in 1533, however usage of popular as synonymous to "plebeian" and therefore "vulgar" is now an obsolete definition (*OED*).

featured fewer female-led acts than the programme at the Oxford, with 32% and 50% female acts, respectively— is a demonstration of managerial attempts to "reconstruct audiences" and taste "by excluding poorer elements and imposing restraints on behaviour" (Russell 62). Where earlier efforts by managers to control the content and tone of their performers can be related to fear of the LCC removing their license and resultant financial loss, there was no such fear for the Royal Command Performance. The content would be sanctioned by the Royals, symbolically representing the "state," and the financial gain from audience members wanting to watch the performance alongside the monarchs would be paramount.

The control and division of content then, especially in the number of comedians and female performers, must primarily be related to normative concepts of moral taste and judgement and fear of the (female) comic's power. Performance styles previously thought to be unbecoming for royalty *did* make the bill.<sup>124</sup> Certain comic numbers were *also* presented yet the topicality of these numbers, such as Barclay Gammon's "The Suffragettes," were non-threatening to normative concepts of nation, gender, sex, class, or race. "The Suffragettes" as a representation of what was sanctioned speech is especially telling as the perspective it embraces is one in which the concept that women are "people," which was itself threatening to social norms, is made laughable. Unlike Marie's numbers, which highlighted female desire and called attention to the censor— and were thus too risqué for Royalty— numbers which reaffirmed masculine control over the female body and in society were approved.

Vesta Tilley's male-impersonation is a point of interest here, as it was considered respectable, yet was censored by Queen Mary who is remembered for asking that "the gaze of the Ladies of the Royal Party be not directed at the stage" when Tilley performed (Gerrard 500).

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<sup>124</sup> These included multiple ballet and dance numbers by La Pia, Anna Pavlova, and the Palace Girls ("Royal Performance").

For Bourdieu, the necessity for a practice of censorship manifested by “explicit prohibitions imposed and sanctioned by institutionalized authority, diminishes” when “the structure of the field itself” governs “expression by [controlling]... both access to expression and the form of expression” (Bourdieu cited in Post 3). However, this is not the case in the Royal Command Performance. Queen Mary’s aversion to the act of female cross-dressing— and necessitation that none of the Royal *women* view this transgression of heteronormativity— demonstrates that not all of the forms of expression deemed appropriate by management’s opinion were considered viewable by the aristocracy. This faux pas is, undoubtedly, based on the class differentiation between the royals and the newly upper-middle class managers; however, management otherwise successfully governed and cleansed their material so as to not offend the Royal sensibilities.

Where the music hall’s content had long been controlled and threatened by the censorship practices of the moral majority and the LCC, here it was managers who censored and selected content deemed appropriate for the royal visitors. While Tilley’s act is a misstep in this process, it does suggest that the moral *managers* were not controlled by external forces, outside of hegemonic norms that is, in their selection of material. The only “censor” in the choice of material were those selecting what would be presented, that is: external censorship against the music hall is internalised in the selection of acts for the Royal Command Performance. Programming is a valuable medium through which we may observe “form[s] of self-promotion and self-defence practised” in the halls and extend our analysis to the programme’s other content, such as its use of illustrations and introductory essays (O’Hara 141-142).

These elements, like the running order, demonstrate faith in social improvement, mobility, normative narratives of national identity and sentiment towards the monarchy (Till 4). In stressing these elements, the illustrations and essays featured in the souvenir programme of

the RCP explicitly articulate how the show signals the music hall's separation from the working classes. The souvenir programme features several photographs, of the King, Queen, the management behind the production, and the performers featured (“Royal Performance”). Additionally, it features illustrations across its pages, and includes Henry George Hibbert’s “The Story of the Music Hall” and “A Foreword” by Malcolm Watson. The rest of this chapter will employ a close reading of the programme's illustrations and essays, which detail aspects of music hall history and note the significance of this performance, to argue that they indicate a changing understanding and target audience of the halls. These aspects of the programme also demonstrate posturing by the London Palace's management to separate the Royal Command Performance *and* “current” music hall from its undesirable past and the bodies which make up that class-identity.

The cover of the programme and four pages before the first of the essays feature elements which tie the performance to (the upper) classes. The cover is marked with the English coat of arms and the text “Royal Performance / By Command Of / His Majesty the King / Palace Theatre / 1<sup>st</sup> July 1912” in purple ink, accented by the inclusion of a purple tasselled bookmark (“Royal Performance...”). The second page is similarly emblazoned with a stamped coat of arms, illustrations, and text reading “Souvenir / Comprising / The Story of the Music Hall / and the / Programme Present on the Occasion / Of / The Royal Performance / Given by Command of His Majesty the King / on / Monday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1912” (“Royal Performance...”). The use of imagery, colour, and pomp commodify and re-deploy the ephemeral text that is the programme, providing it and that which it signifies, the music hall, with “social legitimation” despite their “domestic origins” (Till 16).

The Royal seal of approval appears in the program and hall of the Royal Command Performance literally and figuratively through the programme’s text, use of the coat of arms (or

Royal seal), and included photographs of the King and Queen, mirroring their physical presence looking down on the festivities from the Royal box. Much like the landscape of the music hall which, as chapter one notes, had embraced neo-classical architecture in its legitimisation and evolution, the programme mirrors these sensibilities (“Royal Performance...”). The programme’s second page features a court jester with a baton which is slightly raised above the Royal crest, a lute and sheet music below him, roses and the ‘sock and buskin’ or representations of Melpomene and Thalia, muses of tragedy and comedy (“Royal Performance...”). While the jester, especially, can be interpreted as a working-class body in service to the king— akin to the performers in the RCP— when paired with the lute it invokes memory of the Royal court clowns.<sup>125</sup> Though we can parallel the jester with variety performers, utilising the image of the jester as opposed to a coster-singer places music hall in a history of courtly traditions and norms, in contrast to an entertainment of the working classes. The lute similarly was “popular with the upper classes” and a product of classical tastes as opposed to the “popular” tastes of the early halls (Lee 51-52). The addition of the sock and buskin to these other illustrations further stresses the desire to transplant music hall in a respectable, legitimising, history of the theatre. The invocation of the muses in the programme of the RCP, akin to using neo-classical names for London theatres, erases the music hall’s connections to sites like the “Coal Hole” while simultaneously embracing the birthplace of the legitimate theatres.

The erasure of the music hall's history in the Royal Command Performance— which was intended to celebrate the genre— is that much more apparent in the introductory essays featured in the programme. Henry George Hibbert’s “The Story of the Music Hall” and “A Foreword” by Malcolm Watson resemble Butler’s concept of ‘words that wound’ as they explicitly embody the

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<sup>125</sup> The tradition of “court clowns” was lost during the reign of Charles II who, notably, instead patronised “the theatre and the proto-music hall” (Soutworth 89-93).

erasure of the lower class from music hall's history. "The Story of the Music Hall," the first of the two essays, maintains the fiction the programme's images illustrate. Hibbert "introduces" the audience to the music hall as well as to the RCP by noting that "those who would have us believe that [music hall] is just a growth from the song and supper room of half a century ago do the variety stage an injustice... Why, its foundations are in remote antiquity; and it can marshal a patron saint of the most exemplary character" (Hibbert). As chapter one characterised, the music halls were very clearly a product of working-class leisure, growing out from the fairgrounds and taverns and altered through licensing and censorship practices. Hibbert's introductory essay actively embraces moral platitudes and conveniently forgets those who were similarly disenfranchised by the moral campaigning of the LCC and, later, managers.

In his suggestion that "the music hall is the minister" of amusement, twinning religion to the halls and comparing the role of Chairperson to Raheer (Hibbert), Hibbert's text can be analyzed through Butler's concept of injurious speech, to argue that the metaphor "carries with it its *own* violence" (Butler 54). The conscious attacks against, control of, and moral evolution of the halls is a classed warfare fought by moralists against, but also for, the working classes whom they infantilised. While the halls were *always* nationalistic, an overt pairing of them with the morals which sought to cleanse, if not wholly destroy, them is an erasure of the violence enacted against the working classes. Hibbert's essay, like the Royal Command Performance itself, is a "form of domestic and cultural production" that is inherently violent and enacted, first, by the state, and then "by citizen-subjects toward members of minority groups" (48). His analogy signals managerial efforts to pass the transformed halls off as respectable entertainment by erasing its "immoral" origins. In a way, his essay functions microcosmically to the macrocosm of

the music hall's "evolution": both are cleansed by the power of state interference while erasing the history and memory of this interference and the memories of who and what it opposed.

Watson's "A Foreword" works similarly, though it does more acutely cite fundamental elements of music hall history. Adding insult to the injury caused by Hibbert's classist "history" Watson's analogy features the "Coal-hole... [and] Caves of Harmony" as the origins of the RCP but does so to critique the "low rate of intelligence" of the working class audiences in the early halls (Watson). Much like early moral campaigners, he characterises the offerings and audiences of the tavern halls as "low brow," to compliment his paralleling of the genre to Cinderella, who "had good reason to be ashamed of herself and her patrons," but whose growth mirrors the "development of popular taste" (Watson). Watson's "Foreword" sees the possibility for improvement, socially and personally, akin to the cleansing and transformation of the genre/Cinderella. This use of language signalling social growth and national identity figures the music hall genre as ascending as the "true" English entertainment, able to triumph over its step-sisters—ballet and opera, respectively—and court the love of the "Prince." The "Foreword," like the managerial aspirations, is one of upward mobility.

Closing the foreword and signalling the beginning of the performance, Watson acknowledges the magnitude of George V's attendance, writing that:

His Majesty the King sets the seal of State recognition upon the English variety theatre... the work of many years has yielded a rich and abundant harvest... It provides the culminating point of a singularly brilliant chapter in the history of the variety theatre... FINIS CORONAT OPUS (Watson).

"Finis coronat opus," translated as "the end crowns the work," fits with his characterisation of music hall as Cinderella and like Hibbert's willingness to embrace staples of classical theatre is

hubristic. It is Watson's choice of wording that deems the Royal Command Performance the "culminating point of... the variety theatre," and ironically figures the RCP as the "finis" or "end" of the music hall genre.

## CONCLUSION

The programme essays, akin to the illustrations and programming itself, demonstrate the textual distancing of the Royal Command Performance from the genre's "seedier" history. What is particularly insidious about them is how casually they cast aside the working-class bodies, histories, and tastes which played a fundamental role in the genre's creation and was made to suffer for "lack of taste" and "immorality." That being said, this erasure "fits the bill" presented in chapters one and two. As the music hall was embraced as a national, authentically English, entertainment, the people who provided it with this *working-class* authenticity and identity are relegated to the sidelines by processes of state-control which appropriate and commodify that which they cleansed. However, in removing itself from its hallmarks, such as performers like Marie Lloyd and songs which characterised the struggles of the working classes (such as costermonger numbers or Chevalier's "My Old Dutch"), the "clean" halls following the 1912 Royal Command Performance "did not please those who admired music hall for its vulgarity and brash common touch" (Hands cited in Gerrard 500). The line between acceptable, respectful, performance and popular performance was made all the more impenetrable as increasingly technological entertainments, changing social landscapes, and the tides of war sparked nostalgia for authentic English entertainments, such as the music hall which was "lost" in its evolution into Edwardian variety.



## Conclusion

### **Life after “Death”: Nostalgia and the Neo-Music Hall**

Through its analysis of ephemeral artifacts and historical documents representative of the end of London's music hall and use of theories of censorship, this thesis has demonstrated that the "death" of the genre, characterised not by the RCP but by the division of the halls from their working-class patrons, was enacted long before 1912. Governmental interference through licensing laws, Theatre Acts, and building codes before the formation of the LCC in 1889 undeniably guided the progression of working-class entertainments to music hall (Beale 5).

The nationalism of the English middle and upper classes, paired with the unreasonable fear of the foreign other (such as fairground performers and, later, sailors) led to the movement of working-class entertainments from outdoor to an indoor tavern and pub culture. While the foreign other would maintain its presence and persist as a problem to the moral middle-classes in working-class entertainments, the availability of alcohol, gambling, and sex-work in these sites constituted the potential for immorality amongst the lower, working, classes and social instability. To the moral, middle-classes, the music hall's potential to spark unrest amongst the working-classes and women marked it as the site of conflict and, thus, necessitated control. As licensing and regulation increased, tavern singing evolved into saloons, song-and-supper rooms, and music halls, at the same time that the new managers, artists, and audiences of the genre were increasingly policed by temperance movements which gained power as the body of the London County Council in the '80s. Utilising theories of explicit and implicit censorship to explore the hearings, pressures, and closures enacted by moralists within the LCC against the music halls—represented by their managers—I have demonstrated that both alterations to the landscape of London's halls and the number of licensed halls in the city rise as the genre progressed.

Chapter Two builds on this point, suggesting that just as managers were required to maintain institutional accountability so too were women in the halls, as performers and sex-workers, more heavily scrutinised and impacted by the practices of managers and moralists alike. This thesis, much like the work of Samantha Beale, was intended to fill a gap in music hall scholarship to examine the work of women, specifically serio-comics, through lenses of public censorship and moral judgement due to their public visibility and audibility as early 'stars.' Akin to the centrality given to the ways in which the music hall's physical landscape defined the connection between the genre and its audience, chapter two argues that female music hall performers were "forced to develop formal strategies (using language, gesture, costume, music and dance)" to maintain their connection to the audience (Beale 23). While developing these strategies, female performers developed sophisticated means of circumventing the censor and limitations imposed on them by managers. In this regard, the chapter closed with a study of Marie Lloyd, specifically her song "You Can't Stop a Girl from Thinking," as emblematic of the self-reflexive censorship embraced by music hall comics in the late '90s.

As public officials, financial interests, and syndicates progressively purified the music halls, the radicalism of comedy, and the female body, the inherent connection between audience and performer was regulated formally. The formalisation of moral judgement, classism, and disapproval were instituted as official aspects of the genre through programming which made it possible for managers, stars and the halls to achieve "respectability" and upward mobility enough to court the authentication of the Royal family. Building on the arguments of chapters one and two, chapter three utilises a close reading of elements of the 1912 Royal Command Performance's souvenir programme to contend that the separation of the music hall genre from the working classes was "a process already well advanced" (Russell 66). Though aspects of

traditional programming, such as comic singing, sketches, and speciality acts are present in the RCP's programme, the success of both the performance *and* the process of eliminating the working-class from the working-memory of the music hall genre, is established through the inclusion of high culture and exclusion of staples of popular culture, like Marie Lloyd.

The point of this project is to add to discussions of the music hall's life and "death" in contemporary music hall studies and elaborate on classed and culturally based aspects which are missing in Summerfield and Stedman Jones' analyses. To this end, my project gave specific focus to the study of how methods of implicit and explicit censorship altered the "landscape" of the hall as a physical site. Building on this analysis, chapter two looked explicitly at how moral and governmental duress on managers led to their explicit control of female staff—further evolving into self-reflexive censorship styles of female serio comics like Marie Lloyd. Further, the chapter movement in this project traced how the developments in the physical and performance-based elements of the London halls were then heightened to achieve "respectability" in the RCP. The use of historical documents, such as minutes from hearings and licensing meetings, articles from *The Era* and the *Observer*, the songs of Marie Lloyd's retinue, and ephemeral texts like the illustrations, running order, and essays present in programmes for the Oxford Hall, the Tivoli, and the London Palace theatres, through the critical lens of theories of censorship helps lift these and the history of resistance in the halls which they represent off the page. Although the nineteenth-century London music hall is a cultural institution governed by legal measures, moral judgement, and in-house regulations, "unscripted codes of behaviour also came into play" (Scott). It is the potential of rowdiness, drunkenness, obscenity, and prostitution in the leisure hours of the working classes, and the social unrest such 'immoral' entertainments presented, which prompted outsider concerns over music hall behaviour.

The potential of radicalism in the music hall, its performers and audience especially, when paired with the rigorous modes of Victorian control which shaped and altered the genre beyond working-class recognition is a point this conclusion hopes to stress. While this study has argued that the Victorian music hall's death was inherent to the processes of control and development which sparked its creation, it has also subtly argued that the form has been utilised radically in its long history and has the potential for radical, political, personal, use today. Though Stedman Jones and Summerfield both argue that conservatism in the music hall and its audience increased as processes of control and censorship became the norm as opposed to the exception, the *form* of what was performed and how performers communicated their meanings to their audience despite the threat of the censor, has the potential to "deconstruct traditional systems of representation and perception" in the music hall (Case 115). Aspects of music hall performance like the "joke" of censorship in "You Can't Stop a Girl from Thinking" and the topicality of sexist, sanctioned speech in "The Suffragettes" act maintain that the key to the music hall's success is the ability to form a genuine connection between its audience and actors.

Much like the Royal Command Performance, products of the music hall revival—such as "The Good Old Days" and Drury Lane's *Music Hall*—are targeted at the financially secure, upper-middle classes and are unable to communicate and connect to the lower, working classes composed of generation x, millennials, and gen-z'ers. Revivals, fueled by "unrepentant" nostalgia for the authenticity of the Victorian halls, uncritically embrace elements of respectability, such as the seating of the saloons, and the control which altered the genre alongside the content and form of the halls. For music hall to "live," or to survive the present era, revivals such as *Music Hall* must continue the tradition of using performance to challenge

representation, refuse hegemonic norms and conventions, and ground the experiences of musical comedy in lived experiences set out by music hall legends such as Lloyd.

Where the authentic, working class, music hall failed to generate an “anti-language in the accepted sense of the term,” the resistance of performers and audience members to cultural regulation and moral purification *did* resignify “everyday language which knowingly corrupted its conventional referentiality and required a certain competency in its decoding” (Bailey 142). This resignification of language and action went un-included in the Royal Command Performance and can be understood as a reason behind its failure to speak to the working-classes as well as one of the reasons behind music hall’s “failure” post-1912. Nostalgia relies on such practises of resignification and meaning-making/attribution in its imagining and evocation of the past. Much of the success of programs like "The Good Old Days" and Drury Lane’s *Music Hall* is due to their ability to enhance the lives and experiences of their viewers through reference to their past, invoking staples of yesteryear in their content and form. By the same token, the concept of a neo-music hall could just as effectively speak to the nostalgic masses of gen x, z, and the millennials in much the same way as Disney reboots, television shows like *Stranger Things*, or the recent golden age of “Dungeon and Dragons” has by invoking the 1970s and 80s.

While Drury Lane celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> *Music Hall*, it does so in the same way that the Royal Command Performance celebrated and touted the "best" of the music hall. Although the RCP symbolised the death of the Victorian, working-class, music hall and the rise of Edwardian variety, it also represents the changing tastes and world of the early twentieth century, and thus, the decline of traditional entertainment forms. By characterising their performance as the culminating point of forty years of productions, or “finis coronat opus” as Watson does in his “Foreword” to the RCP, Drury Lane has similarly implicitly signalled the end of *Music Hall*

without embracing the radical potential of the genre as a solution to its quickly dwindling audiences. It is unlikely that Drury Lane will embrace the neo-music hall form which this conclusion hopes to see the genre move into, as reforms intended to re-articulate the youthful, working-class, subversive, sexually charged, politically literate, and radically comedic tone of the genre are traditionally “Treated with scorn and ridicule” (Senelick 166). Nevertheless, where there is power, there is also resistance.

As censorship over the content of Victorian music hall performance had the unintended consequence of “influencing the style and content of music-hall comedy in this period and of increasing audience enjoyment by prompting performers to offer a subversive commentary on what was implicitly and explicitly censored throughout Victorian society,” the implicit intent of this thesis was to articulate to other scholars, theatre lovers, and those interested in music hall of the potential for a neo-music hall (Beale 155-156). Steven Gerrard closes his article “The Great British Music Hall: Its Importance to British Culture and 'The Trivial'” by noting that “the fact that the Music Hall is still around today, albeit in a transformed state... is a testament to its marked resilience” and a reason for its celebration (Gerrard 510). I propose, as the end of this project, that the concept of a neo-music hall heralds the third age of music hall studies. Just as the study of the Victorian and Edwardian styles of music hall and variety performance, and the music hall revival have proven fruitful for music hall scholarship, so too the grounding of music hall's resiliency, topicality, and self-reflexive performance presently represents an even more significant potential for future study.

Though the specifics of a neo-music hall form or its acceptance by millennials on and off stage and page is untested and unproven, as Marie Lloyd famously uttered: “They can't stop a girl from thinking” (Tabrar et al., 1897).

**Appendix:****Oxford Music Hall Programme, 18 Sept. 1893:**

	Performer	Listing	Performance Type
1	<i>By the Band, J. Wosswick.</i>	Overture, "Electric."	Specialty
2	Miss Winifred Johnson	Banjoist & Dancer	Specialty (Female)
3	Mr. Tom Leamore	Comedian	Comedian (Male)
4	Mr. Will Evans and Miss Ada Luxmore	Eccentric Instrumentalists	Specialty
5	Miss Ada Lundberg	Comedienne	Comedian (Female)
6	Miss Flo Hastings	Serio-Comic	Comedian (Female Comic Singer)
7	Mr. Sam Redfern	Negro Comedian	Comedian (Male)
8	Miss Kate James	Comedienne	Comedian (Female)
9	Miss Lucy Clarke	Ballad Vocalist	Specialty Singer (Female)
10	The Bros. Horn	In their Boxing Sketch	Sketch
11	Miss Florrie Gallimore	Serio-Comic	Comedian (Female Comic Singer)
12	Mr. Harry Atkinson	The Australian Orpheus	Specialty
13	Mr. R. G. Knowles	Comedian	Comedian (Male)
14	Miss Minnie Cunningham	Serio-Comic & Dancer	Comedian (Female Comic Singer)
15	Mr. Leo Stormont	Baritone Vocalist	Specialty Singer (Male)
16	Miss Nellie Navette	Serio-Comic & Dancer	Comedian (Female Comic Singer)
17	Mr. Charles Godfrey	Comedian	Comedian (Male)
18	Miss Fannie Leslie	Burlesque Artist	Specialty (Female)
19	Mr. Dan Leno	Comedian	Comedian (Male)
20	Miss Marie Lloyd	Comedienne	Comedian (Female)
21	Miss Jenny Valmore	Serio-Comic	Comedian (Female Comic Singer)
22	Mr. Arthur Rigby	Comedian	Comedian (Male)

**Tivoli Music Hall Programme, 30 Dec. 1893:**

	Performer	Listing	Performance Type
1	Angelo Asher	Overture, "Tivoli Revels."	Specialty
2	Little Chip	Comedian	Comedian (Male)
3	Flo Gallimore	Comedienne	Comedian (Female)
4	G. W. Kenway	Mimic	Specialty
5	Bros. Horn	Boxing Sketch	Sketch
6	Jenny Valmore	Serio-Comic	Comedian (Female Comic Singer)
7	Dutch Daly	Comedian	Comedian (Male)
8	Ada Lundberg	Comedienne	Comedian (Female)
9	Harry Atkinson	The Australian Orpheus	Specialty
10	Marie Le Blanc	Comedienne	Comedian (Female)

11	The Three Delevines	In their Satanic Gambols	Sketch
12	Minnie Cunningham	Serio-Comic & Dancer	Comedian (Female Comic Singer)
13	G. W. Hunter	Comedian	Comedian (Male)
14	Howard Reynolds	Cornet Soloist	Specialty
15	"Mahomet"	The educated Talking and Thought-Reading Horse	Specialty
16	Tom White's Arabs	[Horses]	Specialty
17	Kate James	Comedienne	Comedian (Female)
18	F. H. Celli	Baritone Vocalist	Specialty
19	Nellie Navette	Serio-Comic & Dancer	Comedian (Female Comic Singer)
20	Sam Redfern	The Black Philosopher	Specialty
21	The Kellinos	In their Risely Act	Specialty
22	Evans and Luxmore	Musical Eccentrics	Specialty

#### Royal Command Performance Programme, 1 July 1912:

	Performer	Listing	Performance Type
1	Sir Alexander Mackenzie, The Palace Orchestra	Overture, "Britannia"	Specialty
2	Pipifax and Panlo	Humpsti Bumpsti	Specialty (Acrobatics)
3	Barclay Gammon	"Rule Britannia," "In the Shadows," "The Suffragettes"	Comedian (Male, comic singing)
4	The Palace Girls	"A Fantasy in Black and White"	Specialty (Choral Singing / Dancing)
5	G. H. Chirgwin	The White Eyed Kaffir	Popular Number (Minstrel Act)
6	The Bogannys	"Five Minutes in China Town"	Sketch
7	Fanny Fields	"Happy Little Dutch Girl"	Specialty (Song / Ventriloquist)
8	Cinquevalli	"The Human Billiard Table"	Specialty (Juggler)
9	Harry Tate	The Pleasures of Motoring	Specialty (Educational Film)
10	Ida Crispi and Fred Farren	"Everybody's doing it"	Comedian (Comic duet)
11	Vesta Tilley	"Algy, the Piccadilly Johnnie"	Comedian (Female, Cross-dressed Song)
12	La Pia	"The Dance of Fire" and "The Spirit of the Waves"	Specialty (Dancer)
13	Little Tich	"The Gamekeeper" and his Big Boots	Sketch / Popular Number (Big Boots Dance)
14	Arthur Prince and "Jim"	In a Nautical	Specialty (Ventriloquist)



		Ventriloquial Scene	
15	Herman Finch and The Palace Orchestra	"Melodious Memories"	Specialty (Instrumental)
16	Alfred Lester and Buena Bent	"The Village Fire Brigade"	Sketch
17	Clarice Mayne and J.W. Tate	"I'm Longing for Someone to love me"	Comedian (Comic duet)
18	Charles T. Aldrich	Quick Change Characters (Buffalo Bill, David Garrick, Fagin, The Jew) and Juggling	Sketch / Specialty
19	George Robey	"The Mayor of Mudcumdyke"	Sketch
20	David Devant	Sleight of Hand Mystifications and "The Artiste's Dream"	Specialty
21	Wilkie Bard	"Want to Sing in Opera"	Comedian (Male, comic singing)
22	Anna Pavlova and Members of The Imperial Russian Ballet	"Le Cygne," "Papillon," "A Divertissement," and "Valse Caprice."	Specialty (Ballet)
23	Harry Lauder	"Roamin' in the Gloamin'"	Comedian (Male, comic singing)
24	Cecilia Loftus	"Impressions of Artistes"	Specialty
25	"Variety's" Garden Party	All.	Finale

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