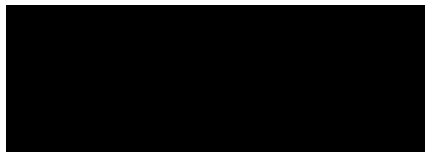


AUSTRALIAN SUFFRAGE THEATRE

**With Particular Reference to Inez Bensusan
and Miles Franklin**

A thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English and Communication Studies, University of New England.

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and the material has not been submitted, either in whole or part, for a degree at this or any other university.



SUSAN PFISTERER

25 August 1995

ABSTRACT

Australia led most of the world in the achievement of womanhood suffrage and Australian cultural history reflects this ambitious and progressive atmosphere. The impressive achievements of suffrage feminists in Australian theatre, however, is an untold story, as is their contribution as expatriates to the development of international women's theatre of this time. This thesis aims to bring these experiences and experiments to the notice of world theatre and feminist history, in particular through the stories of the theatrical careers of Inez Isabel Bensusan and Stella Miles Franklin. Chosen because of their expatriate involvement in the women's movement at the beginning of this century, their international profile as Australian women who had the vote, and their exceptional contribution to both the development of Australian drama and international feminist theatre, Franklin and Bensusan characterise the energies of Australian suffrage playwrights. The main argument of this thesis is that Australian feminist theatre practitioners played a significant role in the development of early feminist theatre one that has been largely unrecognised. Other examples to support this inquiry include Katharine Susannah Prichard, Adela Pankhurst, New Woman playwrights, and the theatrical endeavours of women university students during the suffrage era. Recognising that all struggle for female self-representation in and through the theatre takes part in historical circumstances, this thesis pays close attention not only to written texts, but also to the dramatic, political, and personal negotiations in which these women were involved in their daily lives. Australian suffrage playwrights emerge from this study as exceptional feminists, expatriates, and theatre workers, and this has considerable implications for both Australian theatre historiography and international feminist dramatic criticism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research for this thesis was made possible by a University of New England Postgraduate Research Award and generous financial and other support from my family, in particular Gerhard and Beate Pfisterer and Graeme and Thérèse Smith, to whom I would like to extend my sincere gratitude. Thanks are also due to my parents Colin Smith and Jeanette Greenham. During the course of my research many people have been of invaluable assistance and offered great encouragement. I extend my thanks to Julian Croft, Viv Gardner, Julie Holledge, Veronica Kelly, and Carl Bridge. Angela John and Katherine Kelly kindly shared information, and Doris Mardie Smith assisted in the transcription of material. The Australasian Drama Studies Association enabled me to test through publication and conferences many of the arguments contained in this thesis, and I appreciate that. Many institutions have given generously of their time, including the Imperial War Museum, Melbourne University's Janet Clarke Hall, and Berkelouw Antiquarian Bookdealers. The staff of Sydney's Mitchell Library, London's Fawcett Library, the Mander and Mitcheson Theatre Collection, and the Australian Jewish Historical Society were particularly helpful, as was Dr Anthony Joseph from the Jewish Historical Association of England, and Dr Rosemary Annable from Sydney University Women's College. Jackie Kramer's assistance in the preparation of this manuscript deserves special mention, as do Miles, Nero, John, Meryl, Lilly, Molly, and (most of all) Matthias without whom the completion of this thesis would be difficult to imagine. Finally, I would like to especially thank Jill Croxford and her son Robert Appleby—relatives of Inez Bensusan—for their reminiscences and delightful company.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Libraries and Special Collections

AJHS	Australian Jewish Historical Society
ANL	Australian National Library, Australian Capital Territory
BAT	Battye Library, Western Australia
BL	British Library, London
CHC	Campbell Howard Collection, New South Wales
FAL	Fales Library, New York
FAW	Fawcett Library, London
FL	Fisher Library, New South Wales
FP: ML	Miles Franklin Papers: Mitchell Library
JCH	Janet Clarke Hall Archives, Victoria
LTL	La Trobe Library, Victoria
LON	Museum of London Library, London
ML	Mitchell Library, New South Wales
MM	Mander and Mitcheson Theatre Collection, London
MOR	Mortlock Library, South Australia
MU	Melbourne University Archives
PACSA	Performing Arts Collection of South Australia
SUWC	Sydney University Women's College Archives, New South Wales

Organisations

AFL	Actresses' Franchise League
ANZAC	Australia and New Zealand Army Corps
ANZVV	Australia and New Zealand Women Voters
AJHS	Australian Jewish Historical Society
BJHA	British Jewish Historical Association
BRADC	British Rhine Army Dramatic Company

FHC	State Library of New South Wales Family History Centre
JTL	Jewish Theatre League
JLWS	Jewish League for Women's Suffrage
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NWTUL	National Woman's Trade Union League
SUDS	Sydney University Dramatic Society
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union
WWSL	Women Writer's Suffrage League