

# Death of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree

## Shows to lose 30 mins

1917: The Home Office has asked theatres and music halls to shorten all performances by 30 minutes in order to save electricity and help the War Effort. The suggestion is that this cut is imposed voluntarily but if it is not seen to be working then it will be imposed by emergency legislation. Theatre managers have poured scorn on this idea. Mr Francis Laidler claimed the total cost saved in his own theatre would be less than 4/6d per show. Theatres are offering instead to effect a 10% saving on electricity used, and to keep a record of electrical consumption to prove that such a saving had been achieved.

## National Service rules for Theatres

1917: The newly appointed Entertainment's Industry Committee issued the following rules:

1. Every theatrical employer is expected to provide "some" men for National Service.
2. Any theatre which shows it has already made a satisfactory contribution will be exempt.
3. Managers must urge their men to enlist and give an undertaking that their jobs will be kept open for them at the end of their National Service.
4. If a Union man enrolls, his Union should be entitled to supply a substitute.

## Air Raid Warnings

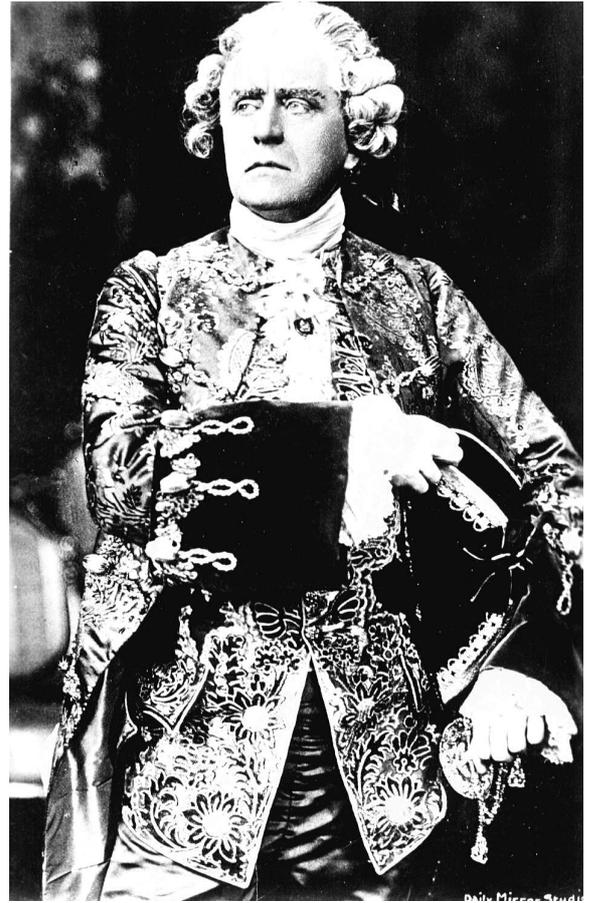
1917: Theatres and Picture Palaces have expressed concern at the suggestion that the Police will be issuing instructions to end performances as soon as an Air Raid Warning is given. Managers feel this is unnecessary and likely to cause panic. The question of continuing the show either in full or modified form is one that should be left to the individual management and not subject to Police decision.

1917: Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, one of the most distinguished members of the theatrical profession, has died at the age of 64. Actor-manager, half-brother of Max Beerbohm, founder of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, President of the Theatrical Managers Association, builder and proprietor of Her Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket, he was a giant of the theatre world.

A former amateur actor, he became professional in 1878, and entered management in 1887 at the Comedy Theatre, and then became manager of the Haymarket. In 1897 he built his own theatre, Her Majesty's.

His roles were as diverse as Svengali in "Trilby" and Professor Higgins in "Pygmalion" - but it is for his lavish Shakespeare productions that he will be remembered. He produced 18 Shakespeare plays between 1888 and 1914: in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" live rabbits ran across the stage; in "Twelfth Night" Malvolio was followed by four miniature Malvolios; in "Richard II" he was accompanied by a dog who, during the deposition scene, was trained to turn from Richard and lick the hand of Bolingbroke.

His great versatility allowed him to undertake lecture tours and to write three books and to be a pioneer in the new craft of acting for the cinema. He was knighted by King Edward VII in 1909. His wife, Helen Maude Holt, is an actress, and one of his three daughters, Viola, is already well established in the acting profession. His estate has been valued at £44,085 - the largest amount ever recorded in the will of an actor.



Daily Mirror Studios/ J Beagles & Co

## Dear Kaiser Bill, Re: Air raids and musicians. . .

1917: Mr J.Langdon Lee of the Dalston Theatre has been forced to abandon so many performances (and refund the ticket money on so many occasions) due to closure resulting from air raids, that he has unilaterally decided to employ artists and musicians on a nightly basis, and to make no payment if the performance is abandoned due to an air raid.

The Amalgamated Musicians Union has refused to accept this, and insists on two weeks' notice of any intention to withdraw payment for any evening when no performance will be given. Mr Langdon Lee has threatened to write to Kaiser Wilhelm and ask if he would kindly give the Amalgamated Musicians Union two weeks' notice of any planned air raids in the Dalston area.

## Entertainments Tax to increase again

1917: The Entertainments Tax (originally known as the Amusements Tax) is to be increased again - in some cases by as much as 200%. Since the introduction of the tax there has been a serious decrease in public patronage, and several formerly profitable theatres have now started losing heavily. Theatre managers are united in their loathing of the tax - not just because of the financial burden, but also because of the cumbersome method of accounting for it. (Mr Peter Davey claimed that during one single week his company had to fill in 142 different documents in connection with the tax. The total weight of the documents was 15 ounces.)

The Theatrical Management Association has called upon all member theatres to collect signatures seeking for public support to abandon the Entertainment Tax - and has sent its own petition to the King calling for its abolition.