

LIR Seminar, Fall 2021/Clune & Cohen

Will It Play in Peoria? The Vaudeville Era, 1880-1930



**“If you were beyond the reach of vaudeville,
then you were really in the sticks.”**

“From the early 1880s to the end of the 1920s vaudeville was the most popular form of live entertainment in the United States. A vaudeville show was a succession of seven to ten live stage acts, the "bill," which built to a climax with the performance of its top star, the "headliner.”

--Library of Congress exhibits website

“The watchword of vaudeville was **VARIETY**....Over the course of a couple of hours the vaudeville audience might encounter singers, comedians, musicians, dancers, trained animals, female-impersonators, acrobats, magicians, hypnotists, jugglers, contortionists, mind readers, and a wide variety of strange, uncategorizable performers usually lumped into the category of ‘nuts.’...**High art, low art, and no art stood cheek by jowl.** Like George Jessel’s act of the same name, these disparate personalities were all sown together like ‘patches from a crazy quilt.’”

From *No Applause—Just Throw Money* by Trav S.D.

LIR Seminar, Fall 2021/Clune & Cohen

Will It Play in Peoria? The Vaudeville Era, 1880-1930

Interesting Websites (asterisk denotes especially useful sites)

American Vaudeville Museum

<https://www.vaudeville.org/product-category/encyclopedia/>

*The American Vaudeville Museum Archive: Preserving Vaudeville History & Memorabilia Since 1982 <http://speccoll.library.arizona.edu/collections/vaudeville/>

The American Vaudeville Museum Digital Archive contains over 4,321 items, from various vaudeville collections which are housed at the University of Arizona's Special Collections. Presented in the digital archive are original materials comprised of theatre programs and postcards, sheet music, magazines, playbills, photographs and posters, stage scripts and other manuscripts, clippings and scrapbooks, films, miscellaneous papers.

<https://broadwayscene.com/vaudeville-americas-vibrant-art-form-with-a-short-lifetime/>

Library of Congress Exhibits

<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/bobhope/thebill.html>

List of Vaudeville Performers, A-Z

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_vaudeville_performers:A%E2%80%93K

Vaudeville America: Type of Acts. <http://vaudevilleamerica.org/type-of-acts/>

Books (most are available through public libraries)

*Cohan, George M. *Twenty Years on Broadway and the Years It Took to Get There*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924.

*Gilbert, Douglas. *American Vaudeville: Its Life and Times*. New York: Dover Publications, 1940.

Monad, David. *Vaudeville and the Making of Modern Entertainment, 1890-1925*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

Slide, Anthony. *The Encyclopedia of Vaudeville*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Slide, Anthony. *New York City: Vaudeville* [Images of America]. Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2006.

Snyder, Robert W. *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1989.

*Sobel, Bernard. *A Pictorial History of Vaudeville*. New York: Citadel Press, 1961.

*Trav, S.D. *No Applause—Just Throw Money: The Book That Made Vaudeville Famous*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

A Few Movies About Vaudeville

<https://www.slashfilm.com/best-vaudeville-movies-you-havent-seen/>

“Wait for Your Laugh: the Rose Marie Story” (2017, available on Amazon Prime)

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5710688/>

“The Curtain Comes Down: The Birth of American Family Entertainment” (2013, available on Amazon Prime for \$2.99)

*“Vaudeville: American Masters,” PBS.

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/vaudeville-about-vaudeville/721/>

