

Charles Heyn's Company - cornets and xylophones

Gavin Holman, 14 March 2022

Charles Heyn was a cornet and xylophone soloist. Very little is known about his life or his solo career, he may have had some acting roles in the mid-1890's. He did, however, promote himself as a 'Master Cornet & Xylophonist' - as seen in his publicity photograph. This was probably in the early 1900's.



In 1911 or earlier he formed the Chas. Heyn Company, a quartet of instrumentalists, consisting of himself, his wife and his two daughters. Their first appearance I have found was at the Colosseum in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany in October 1911.¹

Given his name and this early engagement, it is probable that he was German or Swiss by birth, as may also have been his family.

In 1912 the family appeared at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool, in April, billed as 'Celebrated Cornet à Piston and Xylophone Virtuosi'.² They performed with four xylophones and at least one of the family, other than Charles, also played the cornet. One of their popular pieces on the xylophones was the overture "*Zampa*".

"Those who had the satisfaction of enjoying the performance of the Charles Heyn Quartette are likely to revisit the theatre to confirm first impressions. It is worth while standing in a queue to hear such musicians. The performances on the cornets and xylophones were undoubtedly fine. The overture to *Zampa* was a delight to ear and heart. How delicately the air was wafted across the spacious and crowded theatre; how frequently the people marvelled at the manual dexterity of the performers; how daintily the diminuendos were observed, and how boldly and with what certainty the crescendo passages were delivered!"³



¹ Breisgauer Nachrichten, 6 October 1911

² Blackpool Gazette & Herald, 2 April 1912

³ Staffordshire Sentinel, 6 August 1912

The family toured various theatres in vaudeville shows over the next two years.

“The Chas. Heyn Quartette is composed of father, mother, and two daughters, and it must be said of their playing on cornets and xylophone, that few artistes could have done better. For the overture “*Zampa*” (Herold) on the xylophones they were heartily recalled, and to the accompaniment of a further selection the youngest artiste gave a clever exhibition of dancing.”⁴

Their last known engagement was in July 1914, at Bishop Auckland. If they were a German family, as surmised, the outbreak of WW1 would have curtailed their touring in England. Sadly, the names of the other family members are not known.

The quartet’s recorded appearances in the British Isles were:

May 1912 - Empire Theatre, Burnley

June 1912 - Savoy Theatre, Glasgow; Hippodrome, Preston; Tivoli Theatre, Dublin

July 1912 - King’s Theatre, Dundee

August 1912 - Grand Theatre, Hanley

September 1912 - Hippodrome, Nottingham

October 1912 - Empire Theatre, Holborn, Empire Theatre, Leeds

August 1913 - Tivoli Theatre, Manchester; Palace Theatre, Bradford

September 1913 - Palace Theatre, Carlisle; Palace Theatre, Blackburn; Palace Theatre, Halifax

October 1913 - Hippodrome & Palace Theatre, Warrington; Palace Theatre, Burnley

November 1913 - Gem Theatre, Yarmouth

December 1913 - Scala Theatre, Seacombe; Hippodrome, Accrington

January 1914 - Palace Theatre, Huddersfield

July 1914 - Hippodrome, Bishop Auckland

⁴ Burnley Express, 8 October 1913