

Maurice Farkoa

Maurice Farkoa was born on 23 April 1864 at Smyrna, Turkey, the son of a French father and an English mother, his maternal grandfather being Sir Robert Wilkinson, the local English consul. After varied success in his youth, including singing at private functions (at which he has always been welcome throughout the remainder of his life). Farkoa was selected by George Edwardes to fulfil the part of Carbonnet in *An Artist's Model* (Daly's, London, 2 February 1895 ; transferred to the Lyric, London, 28 May 1895), during the run of which his songs included 'Le Fou Rire' (which he first recorded for Berliner in Washington DC in 1896, and again in London in 1898, 1899 and 1905 ; see below) and Leslie Stuart's 'Trilby Will Be True'. The latter was written in the wake of the craze after the publication of George Du Maurier's successful novel of that name. Farkoa reprised the part when *An Artist's Model* was produced at the Broadway Theatre, New York, on 23 December 1895, following by a short tour.

'London, February 9 (1895) - ... Owen Hall's new play, *An Artist's Model*, was produced on Saturday night last at Daly's theater. For this production, as already cabled, George Edwardes gathered together the strongest cast ever seen in a similar production, including Marie Tempest, Lottie Venne, Lettie Lind, Leonora Braham, the original Patience of Gilbert & Sullivan's opera of that name ; Marie Studholme, Hayden Coffin, William Blakeley, Eric Lewis and others and the prettiest and most celebrated choristers in London...

'A capital success was earned by Maurice Farkoa, a well known society entertainer, but a newcomer on the London stage, who is under a two years' engagement to Mr Edwardes. As a French officer he had a song written and composed by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Watson and entitled "The Military Masher", which has a most animated, catchy melody, full of go and which this is the final stanza :

Well, I hope that when the time shall come for fighting,
We shan't have any quarrel with John Bull,
I would rather see my countrymen uniting
With Johnny in the self-same boat to pull ;
May we never draw the sword,
On land or on shipboard,
Against your Tommy Atkins or Jack Tar.
And if rivals we must be,
Let it be upon our knee,
With love and beauty for our guiding star.

(The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn, New York, Sunday, 10 February 1895, p.3c)

The Columbia Theatre, Brooklyn, New York, '.... Another artist with the company is Maurice Farkoa, who was formerly a French music hall singer. His ability is, with the slightest kind of a tenor voice, to make song, not clever in itself, full of significance. This is what he does with "Trilby true" and a marvellously natural laughing song ...'

(The Brooklyn Daily Eagle, Brooklyn, New York, Tuesday, 11 February 1896, p.7c)

Mr and Mrs Alfred C. Harmsworth's entertainment, Berkley Square, London, September/October 1899.

'Alfred C. Harmsworth may safely be said to be the most successful young man in England. Mr Harmsworth is not yet 35 years old. He is the proprietor of the London Daily News and half a dozen other highly successful newspapers and magazines. Mrs Harmsworth is one of the beauties of London and her entertainments have recently been dazzling that city. Their town house is in Berkley square, next door to the mansion of Lord Rosebery. At a recent concert given by the Harmsworths Paderewski played, and Coquelin, the younger and the older, Mme Suzanne Adams, Mlle St Andre, Mr David Bispham and Maurice Farkoa aided in the entertainment of the guests. For Paderewski's services alone Mr Harmsworth sent a check for \$5,000'.

(Newark Daily Advocate, Newark, Ohio, 12 October 1899, p3b)

Maurice Farkoa

Maurice Farkoa's appearances in *An Artist's Model* established him as a favourite with English-speaking audiences ; his Gallic charm and French accent were exploited on many occasions thereafter in a number of musical productions, chiefly in London and on Broadway, including *Kitty Grey* (Apollo, London, 7 September 1901, following a United Kingdom tour which has begun in the Summer of 1900), and (Apollo, London, 10 May 1902 ; transferred to the Prince of Wales's London, 8 September 1902). Farkoa joined the Three Little Maids cast when it was produced at. Having toured the United States and Australia, Farkoa returned to London in 1904 to appear in *Lady Madcap* (Prince of Wales's, 17 December) in which he sang (a duet with Delia Mason), and the immensely popular "I Like You in Velvet" both of which were recorded for the G&T label.

After the runs of the musical plays *The Little Cherub* (Prince of Wales's, 13 January 1906) and *See-See* (Prince of Wales's, 20 June 1906), in which he appeared respectively as the Rajah of Talcutta and Yen, Maurice Farkoa left London for New York. There, under the management of Joe Weber, he appeared in the musical extravaganza (Weber's Music Hall, 24 December 1906).

Dream City, Weber's Music Hall, New York, 24 December 1906

'With a rejuvenated cast, a chorus that is easily the best looking seen on Broadway in years and two cleverly written skills from the pen of Edgar Smith and set to some of Victor Herbert's best music, Jose Weber has as a show with wonderful pleasure-producing possibilities. *Dream City* is billed as a dramatic "pipe" in two puffs, is about the most forceful rap taken at New York's concert in many mood, picturing as it does the gay metropolis relegated to the suburban league while *Dream City*, erected on the site of a Long Island truck garden has become the real big village. In *The Magic Knight*, or a *Dash at Grand Opera* us offered a delightful satire of New York craze for an lack appreciation of grand opera.

While there is no denying that the fact and avoirdupois of Marie Dressler is missed, it is none the less true that the little manager-comedian (Joe Weber) has surrounded himself with an exceptionally strong cast, including as it does such entertainers as Cecilia Loftus, Otis Harland and a half dozen well known Broadway favorites together with Mme Lilian Blauvelt, who has a grand opera voice and a burlesque sens of humor, and Maurice Farkoa, who sings well and plays the parts of a Frenchman with an accent that does not constantly call to mind a thirty-five cent table d'Hote bill of fare'.

(Trenton Evening Times, Trenton, New Jersey, Saturday, 29 december 1906, p.10b)

A special matinee as already announced will be given at His Majesty's Theatre next Monday at 2.15 with the object of raising a fund as a testimonial to William Ludwig, the baritone singer.

Mr. Ludwig was a prominent member of the original Carl Rosa Opera Company and took important parts in the productions of such works as Goring Thomas's *Esmeralda* and Mackenzie's *Columba*. He made his mark also in the first English performances of two of Wagner's operas, in the name part in *The Flying Dutchman* and as Hans Sachs in *The masstersingers*. Recently severe illness, an operation, and financial losses have made him poor, and the object of the fund is to purchase an annuity for him. It deserves all support.

Among the many prominent members of the theatra and musical professions who will take part in the matinee are Miss Marie Tempest, Miss Florence Smithson, Mr. H.B. Irving, Mr. Maurice Farkoa, Miss Margaret Cooper and Mr. Barclay Gammon. Mr. Arthur Bouchier and Miss Violet Vanbrugh will appear in *Pearls*, a one-act play ; Sir Herbert Tree and members of his company will give Van Dyke, Mr. George Grossmith and Miss Kitty Mason will give the Tango dance from *The Girl on the Film*. Among the popular concert-singers are Mr. Ben Davies and Miss Evangelina Florence. Sir Alexander Mackenzie will conduct the ballet music from *Columba* and Sir Charles Stanford the overture to *Shamus O'Brien*.

(The Times, 2 December 1913 - Page 12 - The Ludwig Benefit Matinee)

Maurice Farkoa

His majesty' theatre was filled this afternoon for the benefit performance given in aid of the William Ludwig testimonial fund, of which the Lord Lieutenant and the Countess Aberdeen are the patrons. Mr. Herbert Tree appeared with great success in the one-act dramatic episode "The Van Dyke" where Sir Herbert plays the part of a swell nobleman who with his band completely clears the flat of a collection of valuable furniture. The little play was acted in a most spirited manner and secured roars of laughter. The Rev. Dr. Collison was recalled several times after his singing of "Widow Brady" and "Flanagan's Flying Machine". Mr. H.B. Irving gave an amusing recitation, "Etiquette", by Sir W.S. Gilbert. The new tenor, Mr. Burke Leigh, had to give an encore to a ballad from "Esmeralda", and Mr. Maurice Farkoa sang "A Wee Deoch and Doris" in French. The financial results of the benefit should prove considerable. Towards the close of the performance, Mr. Ludwig, who has permanently lost his fine baritone voice, was brought to the front of the stage by Sir Herbert Tree and Mr. T.P. O'Connor to whisper "Thank you" to his friends in the house. He was given a great reception.

(Irish Times - 9 December 1913 - Page 7 - London Correspondence)

Back in London in December 1907, Maurice Farkoa succeeded Walter Hyde and F. Pope Stamer as the Bandmaster Van Vuyt in *Miss Hook of Holland* (Prince of Wales's, 31 January 1907) before creating the part of Emile Gerrard in *My Mimosa Maid*, an unsuccessful musical which began its 83 performance run at the Prince of Wales's on 21 April 1908. He next appeared with Zena Dare in Franz Lehár's one act operetta, (London Hippodrome, November 1909) before devoting himself to concert work for the next two years. On 30 December 1911 Maurice Farkoa appeared as Gabor Szabo at the Lyric, London, in *Nightbirds*, a musical play by Gladys Unger based upon *Die Fledermaus*, starring as the Countess Rosalinda Cliquot. He played the same part at the Casino, New York (12 August 1912), when the same piece was staged as ; José Collins played the Countess. Farkoa's next engagement was opposite Mabel Sealby in Blow and Douglas Hoare's farce, *This Way, Madam!* (Queen's Theatre, London, 27 September 1913), followed by his appearance as Pedro in the New York production of (Shubert, 24 December 1914). His next and final appearance was in the musical, **(George M. Cohan's Theatre, 5 October 1915).**

Maurice Farkoa died on 21 March 1916, lamented by his army of admirers and by his many friends in the theatrical profession. He never married but is said to have been close to his two widowed sisters. Farkoa left behind a small number of charming gramophone recordings, the earliest of which, a version of the 'Laughing Song (Le Fou Rire)' from *An Artist's Model*, he made in Washington DC on 8 May 1896. He recorded the song again in London in October 1898, October 1899 (see above), and on (2.8M mp3 file, courtesy of the). This last version remained in the HMV catalogue for many years and continued to sell until the 1930s.

'The announcement of the death, which comes to us from New York, of Mr. Maurice Farkoa, has been received with regret by countless admirers in London of the delightful vocalist and actor. Born at Smyrna, of a French father and an English mother, Mr. Farkoa, who was forty-seven years old, was trained for a business career, which he abandoned at the age of twenty-one. Coming to London he had great difficulty in obtaining engagements, but at length he got the chance of singing for the at a Richmond reception, and fortune at once smiled on him. . . . 'Mr. Farkoa, who had a curious curly white lock in his black hair, was a great favourite in the society drawing-rooms of London and New York, and in his own particular line had no rival. Of a kindly and generous disposition, and with great charm of manner, he had warm friends everywhere.

'None regrets the loss of Mr. Farkoa more than Mr. , who was his sold agent, and probably his oldest friend. He managed his affairs for many years, and also acted as his exclusive accompanist on numerous tours in Russia and through the Orient. During this time Mr. Farkoa appeared in Athens, Cairo, Corfu, and Alexandria, and was honoured by the presence at his entertainment of the King and Queen of Greece and Royal Family.'

(The Era, London, Wednesday, 29 March 1916, p.13c)

MAURICE FARKOA DEAD.

**Musical Comedy Actor and Singer
Expires Suddenly of Apoplexy.**

Maurice Farkoa, actor and singer, died yesterday in his apartments at 42 West Seventy-second Street, following an attack of apoplexy. Mr. Farkoa was with his cousin, A. N. Fysher, with whom he lived, when he was stricken at 2 o'clock. Dr. B. F. Oppenheimer and Dr. Henry C. Coe were summoned immediately, but four hours later the actor died.

Mr. Farkoa was for the last twenty years a familiar figure on the musical comedy stages of New York and London. He was well known, too, in Paris as a singer at Fysher's, one of the fashionable night restaurants. He was born in 1867 in Smyrna, his father being French and his mother English. His first important success was in "An Artist's Model," at Daly's, London, in 1895, and some of his best rôles in London since then were in "Kitty Grey," "Three Little Maids," "Lady Madcap," "The Little Cherub," "Miss Hook of Holland," "My Mimosa Maid," "Mitslow, or the Love Match," and "Nightbirds."

Mr. Farkoa made his first appearance in America in 1904 when the London company that appeared in "Three Little Maids" at the Prince of Wales came here. Two years later Joe Weber brought Mr. Farkoa to America, when he was seen in "Dream City" and "The Magic Night." When Strauss's "Die Fledermaus" was done at the Lyric in London under the title of "Nightbirds" Mr. Farkoa sang the rôle of Gabor Szabo with such success that the following year he was brought to New York in the rôle. Here the piece was called "The Merry Countess" and was presented at the Casino. Last Spring he had a leading part in "Tonight's the Night," and his last stage appearance was with Elsie Janis in "Miss Information" at the Cohan Theatre.

Several months ago Mr. Fysher opened an after-theatre restaurant in West Forty-fifth Street and Mr. Farkoa was associated with him.

'One knows little of the political opinions of the world of entertainers, but it seems that the late Mr. Maurice Farkoa was an ardent pacifist. An incident of pathetic interest in his career was his visit to the Hague Peace Conference, his companion being his friend, agent, and accompanist, Mr. Victor Marmont. Two nephews of the deceased entertainer are fighting in the forces of our gallant French Allies.'

(*The Era, London, Wednesday, 5 April 1916, p.14a*)



The New York Times

Published: March 22, 1916

Copyright © The New York Times