

## The real Vaux

- 1782: Vaux born in Surry, England
- 1789: Enlists in the *Astraea*
- 1799: Deserts
- 1800: Trial at the Old Bailey – convicted
- 1801: Embarks for N.S.W.
- 1807: Returns to England
- 1808: Marries for the first time
- 1809: Trial at the Old Bailey – transported for life
- 1810: Embarks for N.S.W. in the *Indian*
- 1812: Writes *Vocabulary of The Flash Language*
- 1816: Writes *The Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux*
- 1818: Marries a second time, Newcastle N.S.W.
- 1819: Memoirs published in London
- 1820: Conditional pardon
- 1823: Converted to Roman Catholicism
- 1825: Dismissed from the Colonial Secretary's Department
- 1827: Marries a third time in Parramatta, N.S.W.
- 1829: Escapes from N.S.W. via South America
- 1830: Trial in Dublin – convicted
- 1831: Embarks for N.S.W. for a third time
- 1839: Trial in Sydney – convicted
- 1841: Leaves prison and disappears

## Foreword

*Flash Jim Vaux* takes some liberties with the facts and dates of Vaux's life. It covers the period from 1807 to the 1840s.

James Hardy Vaux was a quick-witted and notorious pickpocket and swindler who flourished in the early nineteenth century, and who was transported to Australia on three different occasions. Whether free or in captivity, he contrived to lead a remarkably full life, and in 1819, while serving a life sentence in New South Wales, he published his, *Memoirs and Vocabulary of the Flash Language* in London.

The play has been written as a ballad opera – a popular form of drama with songs which evolved from 'the English Opera' of the later Seventeenth Century, in which spoken dialogue took the place of Italian recitative. The music was sometimes specially composed or more often largely arranged from traditional and popular airs. Among the writers who worked in the form were Fielding, Garrick, and Sheridan. The most famous ballad opera of all is John Gay's, *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) which was the inspiration for the Brecht-Weill *Threepenny Opera* (1928). The hero of Gay's work is the dashing highwayman, Captain Macheath. In his *Memoirs*, James Hardy Vaux thought of himself as something of a Macheath; it is fitting that Vaux's story be told through the ballad opera.

The play was originally written for a small theatre with a small cast. All the actors, with the exception of the one playing Vaux, played many parts. Indeed one of the composers not only played the piano in the production but acted also. This was all part of a tradition of a rough and portable theatre and contributed in no small way to the play's success. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the actors in the original cast.

There is nothing to prevent the play being done on a larger stage but if this is the case, then a larger cast must be used.

*The Memoirs of James Hardy Vaux*, including his dictionary, was most recently edited with an introduction and notes, by Dr. Noel McLachlan and published by Heinemann in 1964.

The music for the play, both original and arrangements of traditional melodies, is by Terence Clarke and Charles Colman and is under copyright. It is available upon request from Hilary Linstead and Associates.

*Flash Jim Vaux* was first performed at the Nimrod Street Theatre, Sydney on 28th April, 1971, with the following:

James Hardy Vaux, Flash Jim      John Gaden

Oxford Bob, a thief

Croaker, a defective

Catholic priest

Jack, a convict

Judge, foolish

Judge, sombre

Randy Buck

Mr. Newman, a gaoler

Kennedy, a vicious thug              John Wood

Cleric

Joshua Mahogany, a high class fence

Toff, a cabinet minister

Irish Mick, a convict taken in drink

Irish Judge

Hayes, a bully                              Bob Hornery

Percy, the pianist

Brothel Bullion, a pander

Billy, a convict

Candidate for election

Guard

Fred, a servant                              Terence Clarke

Frances Mahogany, a whore

Blowsy Meg, a diseased whore

Lady    Jane Harders

Nell, a motherly barmaid

A woman                                        Sheila Kenneally

Directed by

John Bell

Designed by

Larry Eastwood

Music by

Terence Clarke and Charles Colman