

## David Clyde: Stage and film actor

Written by Donald Fullarton - Last Updated Wednesday, 21 April 2010 18:50

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THE oldest of the three children of a Helensburgh family who became international stars was David Clyde.

Brother of Andy and Jean Clyde, he did not quite become as famous as they did, but he did make a very good career out of stage and film acting.

Born in Glasgow on May 27 1887, the third of six children of actor and theatre producer John Clyde and his wife Mary, he appeared in his father's travelling plays throughout Scotland and decided on acting and directing as a career.

Leaving the family behind in Helensburgh, he went to London, and by 1924 was a member of the Garrick Theatre Company.

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Next he went to America with his Birmingham-born character actress wife Gaby Fay, and worked in both cinema and theatre before moving to Vancouver, Canada.

He part-owned the Empress Theatre at Hastings and Gore, Vancouver, and spent several months refurbishing it.

On November 2 1929 it opened for the inaugural production of what would turn out to be Vancouver's last — and arguably the best — repertory theatre company before World War Two, the British Guild Players.

Built in 1908, when it was hailed as the largest theatre west of Chicago, the Empress (*below*) had housed a succession of stock theatre companies, with stage lives of anywhere from a few months to four and a half years.

The primary producers for the British Guild Players were David and colleague Norman Cannon, whose stage career had been primarily in cities outside London and who was the other part-owner of the theatre.



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From 1929 to 1931, Basil Radford, who had been touring in America and Australia, was a member of the company. These were no bit players — they distinguished themselves both on stage and later in film.

Gaby Fay, who was the principal leading lady in many of the Players productions, bought a house for herself and David in Vancouver in 1930. Radford returned to England's stage and screen, and one of his memorable roles was in Hitchcock's *The Lady Vanishes*.

From 1929 until November 1933, the British Guild Players defied the Depression, and competed with touring companies, radio, and talking pictures to produce current London and Broadway hits, often a new play every week.

It seems clear that they left Vancouver only when talking pictures proved insurmountable. David and Gaby went to Hollywood in 1934, and he appeared that year in his first film *Molly and Me*.

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