



stant step towards the show we would recognise today, was known to have been in existence before the Middle Ages around the south of Italy. It was performed by enthusiastic players who re-enacted classical stories from a basic outline, so that a high degree of spontaneity and dialogue with the crowd ensued. Not that there was anything unusual about audiences getting involved in the action in those days – even in the comparatively stately Globe Theatre during Shakespeare's day, audiences walked around and interrupted the action of the play when they felt like it.

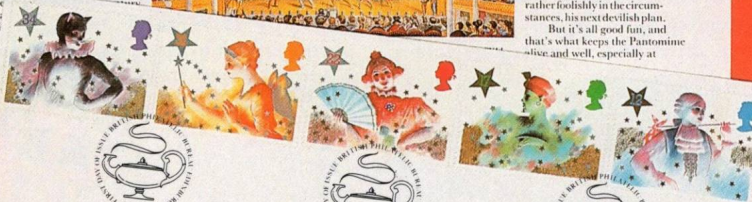
The Commedia dell'Arte came north to France during the late 16th century, but on its arrival across the Channel it was not enthusiastically welcomed. Britons were suspicious of foreign imports, particularly those which gave women the right to perform on stage, something which did not happen in England.



pantomime around the turn of the century, with names from music hall, such as Marie Lloyd, Vesta Tilley, Harry Lauder and Dan Leno appearing regularly. The growth in popularity of radio from 1930 onwards brought the BBC's leading variety stars into pantomime roles, and when TV took over during the '50s, a new generation of entertainers, like Norman Wisdom, reinforced their TV popularity with starring roles in Pantomime. The London Palladium, home of TV variety from the late '50s staged a big-name pantomime every year with stars drawn from every section of the theatre, including pop music.

The ageless, uncomplicated charm of Pantomime is as therapeutic for adults in the pressurised modern world as it is magical for young children who can not only let their imaginations run riot but their voices, too, as warnings are yelled at the heroine when she encounters dangers unseen to her, and 'boos' fill the auditorium when the villain stalks some unfortunate victim or reveals, rather foolishly in the circumstances, his next devilish plan.

But it's all good fun, and that's what keeps the Pantomime alive and well, especially at



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Christmas Stamps Issue 19 November 1985

The theme for this year's Christmas stamps is 'Pantomime'. The origins of Pantomime as we know it today date back to Roman times. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that it achieved the popularity it now enjoys as part of the traditional Christmas scene.

The stamps have been designed by Adrian George who was also responsible for the award-winning 'British Theatre' issue in 1982. They depict familiar characters from the magical world of Pantomime. The stamp subjects and values are as follows:—

- 12p Principal Boy.
- 17p Genie.
- 22p Pantomime Dame.
- 31p Good Fairy.
- 34p Pantomime Cat.

Technical Details

The stamps are printed in sheets of 100 by Harrison and Sons Limited. They are horizontal in format, measuring 41 mm x 30 mm with 15 x 14 perforations. The paper is unwatermarked phosphor coated for all values except the 12p which is printed on FCP with a single phosphor bar. The gum is PVA dextrin.

Values and Colours:

- 12p New blue, greenish yellow, bright rose, gold, grey-black, silver.
- 17p Emerald, greenish yellow, bright rose, new blue, black, gold, silver.
- 22p Bright carmine, greenish yellow, pale new blue, grey, gold, silver.
- 31p Bright orange, lemon, rose, slate-purple, silver, gold.
- 34p Bright reddish violet, bright blue, bright rose, black, grey-brown, gold, silver.

Cylinders used:

- 12p 1A 1B 1C 1D 1E 1F
- 17p 1A 1B 1C 1D 1E 1F 1G
- 22p 2A 1B 1C 1D 1E 1F
- 31p 1A 1B 2C 2D 1E 1F
- 34p 1A 1B 1C 1D 1E 1F 1G

First Day Cover

The first day cover, price 15p, has been designed by Carroll & Dempsey Limited. It will be available at most post offices from 5 November 1985.

Presentation Pack

A presentation pack, number 166, containing all five Christmas stamps will be on sale from 19 November 1985, price £1.37. The pack has been designed by Carroll & Dempsey Limited.

Postcards

Postcard size reproductions of each of the five stamps will be available at most post offices from 5 November 1985, price 14p each.

Souvenir Cover

A Christmas souvenir cover, price 15p, and also designed by Carroll & Dempsey Limited, will be available from all philatelic counters from 20 November 1985. It will remain on sale for a period of 12 months, or less, if stocks become exhausted.

£6.00 Pack of 12p Stamps

A special pack containing 50 loose 12p Christmas stamps (ordinary 12p value only, depicting Principal Boy) and costing £6.00 is also being produced. The pack carries a special offer for free National Gallery postcard prints. It will only be available from post offices in the Southampton area which has been chosen as a test market, all philatelic counters, and by post from the British Philatelic Bureau in Edinburgh. The pack only (with no stamps enclosed) will also be on sale from the British Philatelic Bureau price 50p. As with the Christmas stamp book, the pack will remain on sale until 24 December 1985 unless stocks are exhausted sooner.

Christmas Stamp Book

A new stamp book containing 20 x 12p Christmas special Stamps will go on sale on 1 November 1985, price £2.40. It will remain on sale until 24 December 1985 unless stocks are exhausted sooner. The cover, designed by Adrian George, who also designed the Christmas stamps, continues the theme of pantomime and depicts a glass slipper. The stamps will bear a single side phosphor bar, and will have a random series of small non-toxic stars printed on the reverse. The cylinder numbers for the 12p stamps in

the book are as follows:—

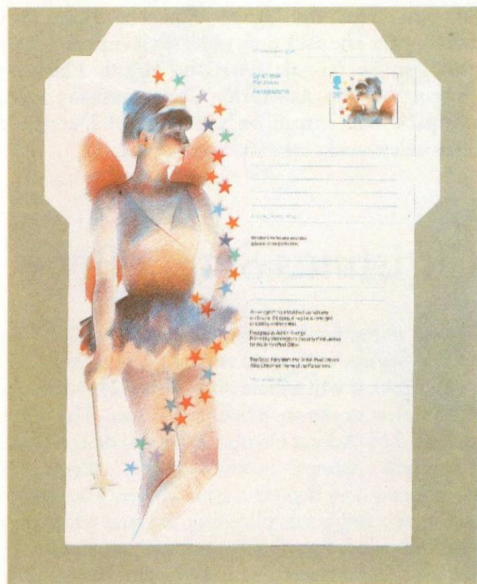
B2A B1B B1C B1D B1E B1F

Harrison & Sons Limited printed the stamps by the photogravure process, and the covers on the Libra book mailing machine.



Christmas Pictorial Aerogramme

The 1985 aerogramme illustrating a Pantomime Fairy has been designed by Adrian George who also designed the Christmas stamps. It will be available on 19 November 1985 from post offices and the British Philatelic Bureau. It has been printed by Waddingtons Security Print Limited with two phosphor bars and will cost 30p of which 26p is postage.



Stanley Gibbons Publications — 120 Years of Tradition

Compared with the 350 years service currently being celebrated by The Post Office, Stanley Gibbons 120 years in philatelic publishing almost pales into insignificance. Nevertheless Stanley Gibbons have a long and proud tradition and it is certainly true to say that their catalogues and albums have been a major influence in the development of the world's great collections over the past twelve decades.

A Penny Black for One Penny

Coincidentally Stanley Gibbons himself was born in the same year as the postage stamp — 1840 — but it was not until November 1865 that he produced his first publication, entitled the 'Description Price List and Catalogue of British, Colonial and Foreign Postage Stamps'. In it he priced a used Penny Black at 1d with a dozen being available for 6d. A Two Pence Blue without lines (the 1840 issue) could be had for 2d and a set of three 'embossed' for 7d. Today the Penny Black is priced at £140, the Two Pence Blue at £275 and the minimum price for an embossed set is £1125 — obviously stamp values have gone up a little over the years! Interestingly the unused Penny Black was not priced in his original list but five years later he was offering them at 1s.6d. (now £2750).

The Catalogue continued to appear on a monthly basis until 1879 when Gibbons produced his first annual volume, complete with illustrations. He did however produce regular supplements to it giving new issue information and these still appear each month in Gibbons Stamp Monthly.

By this time Stanley Gibbons was also publishing his own stamp albums, initially the 'improved' and the 'V.R.', the latter having a printed space for every stamp then issued. The first Great Britain only album — 'The Windsor' did not appear until 1925 when it was advertised as being 'The right album for your British stamps' — many collectors still find it so today!

The Great Britain Specialised Catalogue

Even before the end of the nineteenth century the Catalogue had expanded into two volumes; 'British Empire' and 'Foreign Countries'. In 1934 however an alternative became available in the form of the first edition of 'Stanley Gibbons Simplified Catalogue'. This gave a straightforward listing of the whole world's stamps and proved immediately popular.