

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE0320

## Tait, Viola

(1911 - 2002)

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**Born** 1 November, 1911, Pressburg Austria-Hungary

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**Died** 6 February, 2002

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**Occupation** Actor, Author, Philanthropist, Singer

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### Summary

Born in Pressburg, Austria-Hungary where her father was the manager of a branch of J P Coats thread mills. The family returned to Paisley, in Scotland, with the outbreak of World War I. She enrolled in the in the Scottish National Academy of Music in Glasgow, then studied singing under Francis Harford before joining the Carl Rosa Opera Company in 1935 and played at the London Lyceum Theatre and touring South Africa. In 1937 she joined the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company as a principal soprano, touring the English provinces and later America. In 1939 she was invited to join the Australian Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company as a principal for a year long tour of Australia and New Zealand. She met and married Frank (later Sir Frank) Tait, the youngest of the five Tait brothers. Her first book *A Family of Brothers* provides a history of the J C Williamson's theatre enterprise and the contribution of the Tait brothers to Australian theatre. This was followed by *Dames, Principal Boys...and all that: A history of Pantomime in Australia* in 2001.

(Source: *Farewell to a grand dame of light opera* by Elisabeth Kumm and *Grand lady of the stage* by Philip Jones)

### Published resources

#### Illustration

Tait theatre drawings : 8 May - 8 June 1979, Tait, Viola (introduction by), 1979

#### Book

*Dames, principal boys... and all that: a history of pantomime in Australia*, Tait, Viola and Humphries, Barry (prologue by), 2001

*A family of brothers : the Taites and J.C. Williamson : a theatre history*, Tait, Viola, 1971

#### Newspaper Article

*Farewell to a grand dame of light opera*, Kumm, Elisabeth, 2002

*Grand lady of the stage*, Jones, Philip, 2002

#### Resource Section

Viola Wilson (1938-39), The D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, 2001, <http://math.boisestate.edu/gas/whowaswho/W/WilsonViola.htm>

#### Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

## Archival resources

### **National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection**

[Papers of the Tait family, 1908-1990 \[manuscript\]](#)

### **National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection**

[Viola Tait interviewed by Michelle Potter \[sound recording\]](#)

### **Author Details**

Anne Heywood

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