

The Two Canadians – another duo of forgotten brass instrumentalists

Gavin Holman, 13 December 2025

Ida Mildred MacQualter was born on 5th March 1882 in Chelsea, London. Having learned to play the cornet, she quickly became known locally and performed in various church and charity concerts in London – for example on Tuesday 16th February 1897 she gave two cornet solos in a concert at St Luke's Evening Recreation Society, in Kilburn.

In early 1900 she joined Madame Lloyd's Dioramic and Operatic Company on tour as a cornet soloist. She remained with that company for several years on the theatre and vaudeville circuit.

She eventually teamed up with Annie Dorothy Hirst, who was born on 9th June 1883 in Castlebar, County Mayo. They performed as “The Two Canadians” under the stage names of Ida Grahame and Dorothy Gibson, playing cornets and other brass and wind instruments, including trombones, euphonium, trumpets and saxophones, from 1910 to 1930.



The Two Canadians, c. 1911

They were billed as “Canada’s Expert Instrumentalists” – a fair stretch given that Ida was born in Chelsea and Dorothy in Ireland!

During their off-season the two women lodged with Ida’s parents, William and Elizabeth, at 7a Pavilion Terrace, Wood Lane, London.

They toured Australia in vaudeville from April to August 1915, returning to the UK circuit in November 1915, when they were billed as having just returned from a ‘successful tour of the world’.

The Two Canadians toured to South Africa in 1920, and continued on the UK circuit until 1930. It appears that they then settled down, together, in Uxbridge, where they lived until their deaths (Ida in June 1951 and Annie in April 1964).



The Two Canadians.

Expert Instrumentalists for the Fuller Vaudeville Circuit,
Direct from London.

Australia, 1915