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Managing Theatre and Cinema in Colonial India: Maurice E. Bandmann, J.F. Madan and the War Films' Controversy

The aim of this article is to investigate the highly unusual situation of direct state involvement in theatrical business activity in a colonial context and in particular the managerial activity involved. The central case study concerns the rivalry between two theatre and cinema managers active in India in the first decades of the 20th century, Maurice E. Bandmann and J. F. Madan and their remarkably parallel activities. In 1915 both were involved in a bidding war for a lucrative contract to distribute British government war films in India and the Far East. Both controlled theatrical and cinematic networks which the British government needed to access. The first part of the article discusses the importance of the new managerial and/or entrepreneurial function in theatre and cinema and proposes that one can speak of a 'managerial turn' in the period in question. The second part looks briefly at the two protagonists, Bandmann and Madan and then, how the narrative of the war films' controversy played out in India and other countries. Christopher Balme holds the chair in theatre studies at LMU Munich.

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Maurice Bandmann, J. F. Madan, theatre management, theatrical entrepreneur,
Indian film industry, war films, colonial Indian theatre, World War 1, war
propaganda

Anyone working in the area of colonial theatre in India learns very quickly that the voluminous holdings of the India Office held at the British Library and the National Archives of India in New Delhi are largely silent on theatre and entertainment. While colonial officials certainly monitored native theatre, and censorship practices were imposed in certain parts of India, but by no means all, European theatrical activity went by largely unchecked, being of

interest, if at all, only to municipal authorities. It was perceived as part of business activities and no Englishman or Indian for that matter was to be hindered in the pursuit of commerce, that divine right that made all men, and some women, equal before the law in the British Empire.¹ Because of this quite literally *laissez faire* approach on the part of colonial authorities, it is remarkable when one finds not one but several files in the India Office directly concerned with not one but two theatrical and cinematic entrepreneurs, in this case Maurice E. Bandmann and J. F. Madan, the latter being one of the founders of the Indian film industry. The subject of the files is the distribution of war films during the First World War in partnership with His Majesty's government. Both Bandmann and Madan competed for the business, with the former finally receiving what was to be a highly profitable contract. The key terms here are 'partnership,' 'bidding,' 'contract' and, most egregiously of all, 'profit.'

The aim of this paper is twofold. I want to investigate the highly unusual situation of direct state involvement in theatrical business activity in a colonial context and in particular the managerial activity involved in this construction. I will proceed in three steps. Firstly, it is necessary to highlight the importance of the new managerial and/or entrepreneurial function in theatre and cinema and I shall propose that one can speak of a 'managerial turn' in the period in question. Secondly I will look briefly at the two protagonists, Bandmann and Madan and their remarkably parallel activities, which led to, thirdly, the war films' controversy, the narrative of which I will attempt to reconstruct.

The Managerial Turn

Managing theatre and cinema in colonial India was a tricky business. To be clear about what we are dealing with here: theatre and cinema were first and foremost a business that operated under the benign *laissez faire* capitalist gaze of the British colonial administration. Its primary function was to generate profit for its owners, and managers had little interest in building a nation, decolonising the stage or cinema, or indeed in constructing—with wise foresight—a cultural heritage for future scholars to ponder on. More by chance than good intention they did all these things. Their role in this has been, however, largely overlooked.

Defining theatrical management in the context here is not easy because the terms are unstable. Tracy Davis has referred to a "muddle of theatrical nomenclature" and provides what is, probably the first in-depth conceptual discussion of a set of often interchangeable terms: proprietor and patentee, 'lessee' and 'manager,' impresario and entrepreneur.² One could also add, in the current case, magnates. Whatever the activities, and there are important differences, they all fulfil a managerial function in some way.

We can observe in the late-19th and early-20th century a 'managerial turn' in theatre and the entertainment industry. In order to study the reorganisation of theatrical entertainment in this period, particularly outside of the main metropolitan centres, we need a concept of managerialism to fully grasp the dynamics of theatrical production and reception. A notion of managerialism requires, however, that we distinguish heuristically managing from managers,

the complex set of tasks and activities from the persons carrying them out. The distinction can only be a heuristic one, because in practice, management in the new sense, was created by biographical persons whose actions contributed to the creation of the new concept.

The *locus classicus* of this development is Frederick Winslow Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), an analysis of 'task' management in order to improve efficiency in the workplace on the basis of 'scientific' principles in order to free management from the serendipity of relying on 'some unusual or extraordinary man.'³ Although in theatre studies we tend to associate Taylorism, as it came to be called, somewhat eccentrically with Meyerhold's biomechanics, Taylor's own less than modest aims suggest very much an all encompassing shift or turn in modern life:

the same principles can be applied with equal force to all social activities: to the management of our homes; the management of our farms; the management of the business of our tradesmen, large and small; of our churches, our philanthropic institutions, our universities, and our governmental departments.⁴

To contextualise Taylor's vision we need to look at the term management itself. The guru of management studies, Peter F. Drucker, claims for his object of study the status of a 'pivotal event' in the twentieth century and essentially confirms with hindsight what Taylor envisioned: the emergence of management in this (20th) century may have been a pivotal event of history. It signalled a major transformation of society into a pluralist 'society of institutions,' of which managements are the effective organs.⁵ Drucker argues that management—as opposed to managers—marks, in somewhat simplified terms, the transition from small-scale, family-centred enterprises, to large-scale organisations. Scale, complexity of tasks and the thereby induced necessity for problem solving generate the rise of management.⁶

While theatre management is far from Taylor's or Drucker's minds it is, nevertheless, equally imbricated in these defining elements of modernity. Drawing on economic historian Alfred Chandler's work,⁷ Tracy Davis points to the late-19th century roots of modern management in the theatre and theatre's leading role in this development: "entertainment may be among the first sectors of the British economy to evince the organizational characteristics of centralized management and integrated production and distribution."⁸ These organisational characteristics refer to multi-unit, modern corporations with simultaneous investment in manufacturing, marketing, and management.⁹

Over and beyond the adoption or even pioneering of such techniques, the managerial turn means the perception of a distinct theatrical activity, often linked to a high profile personality, whose function was no longer primarily artistic in the sense of acting, singing, dancing or writing but whose name, whether personal or company, came to assume its own artistic dimension in the sense of standing for quality, genre etc. Managerial theatre is an early form of

theatrical branding.¹⁰ Theatre managers of the new type seldom ever bestrode the stages they managed yet they became as closely identified with them as any virtuosic actor: Max Reinhardt, George Edwardes, Diaghilev, J. C. Williamson, Isidore Schlesinger and, in our case study here, Maurice E. Bandmann, and J.F. Madan, all had brand recognition.

As the name suggests, the actor-manager model associated with 19th century theatre, but which in fact has roots in the early modern period, highlights the double function of artistic and business activities in one and the same person whereby the brand recognition was directed at the artistic, not the business activity. The actor-manager in this sense could range from the highly capitalised operations of a Henry Irving and Herbert Beerbohm Tree to the myriad number of lesser to better known actors and their spouses who plied their trade with the help of a small number of usually underpaid actors, some of whom were recruited on site. Typically an itinerant actor-manager of the lesser or better known (rather than virtuosic) variety would acquire the rights to a certain repertoire (in as much as it was in copyright), hire a group of supporting performers and journey from venue to venue. They would rent the venue from a lessee or proprietor and then pocket the box office. This was a high-risk undertaking dependent on the play or the leading actor(s) to draw in an audience. Although such performers were labelled 'managers,' the term itself was used fairly loosely and was applied to "anyone connected with the business affairs of a traveling troupe."¹¹ Although some actor-managers such as Henry Irving or Sarah Bernhardt did become exceptionally wealthy, and some new managers became impecunious, the important distinction was not so much wealth as the separation of managerial activity from the artistic sphere. J. C. Williamson's 'firm' could and did continue to operate long after its name-giver's death.

Victorian and particularly Edwardian theatre is replete with managerial theatre which replaced the small scale, often family-style operation, although the latter continued to exist. Management in this newer sense is linked more closely to entrepreneurialism than the task management described by Taylor. Looking beyond the U.K. and U.S. we find spectacular examples of managerial theatre which combined entrepreneurial elements of risk-taking, creative investment and planning, producing, as well the use of managers and management in the administrative sense to run highly dispersed organisations. The Australian producer J. C. Williamson, originally an American actor, created a theatrical empire in Australia that continued until 1976. The name J. C. Williamson meant control of venues (whether by lease or ownership), organisation of 'product' (touring artists and productions), innovative and aggressive publicity and the employment of mid-level site managers to administer local arrangements. Although Williamson died in 1913, his company, known simply as 'The Firm,' actually grew significantly under his successor, George Tallis (1869-1948), until it became the largest theatrical company in the world. The characterisation of Tallis in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* provides a succinct summary of the new breed: "He was a born manager whose talents blended creative perception, visual imagination, good taste, intuition and courage."¹²

Lesser known than J. C. Williamson but equally monopolistic in its approach was the South African-based African Theatres Trust, created by an insurance broker, Isidore Schlesinger (1871-1949). Schlesinger was born in New York into a Hungarian-Jewish family. He emigrated to South Africa aged 23 where he sold insurance on the goldfields. In 1913 he began acquiring theatres and cinemas until he controlled most forms of performed and screened entertainment throughout South Africa including Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Amongst theatre managers Schlesinger was unusual in that he did not have a theatrical background. He is reputed to have said: "What do I know about theatres? I won't buy any theatres unless I can control the whole theatrical business in South Africa, and put it on a decent business basis."¹³ In effect, that is what he did, as well establishing a local film industry.

We can summarise the structural characteristics of theatrical managerialism in the early twentieth century as following a set of shared principles:

- **Pluralism:** theatre must be understood as spectacle and entertainment in the broadest sense: for this reason theatre and the new medium of cinema were not regarded as competing entertainment forms but rather as components of a varied assortment of products. In this period we must remember that cinema was just one element of a broad range of theatrical entertainments ranging from puppet shows to magicians, from musical comedy to drama, anything in fact that would fill a theatre. In this period, especially outside the main centres, theatre was in the truest sense of the word, a *theatron*, a place where one came to see.
- **Monopolism:** New managerialism tended towards vertical and horizontal monopolism in terms of controlling as many levels of the production and distribution of a theatrical product as possible as well as the actual theatres themselves whether by purchase, lease or even construction of new venues.
- **Diversification and capitalisation:** Common to most large-scale theatrical management was the creation of multiple, public companies traded on the stock market that not only do business with each other but also engage in non-theatrical business activities. The organisation as public companies ensured a much higher degree of capitalisation than even the most celebrated of traditional actor-managers could achieve.

A Tale of Two Managers

The managerial turn is characteristic of what can be termed early theatrical globalisation. By this term we mean a rapid expansion of theatrical infrastructure driven mainly by touring companies. Two theatrical managers competed on the highly lucrative Indian entertainment market: Maurice E. Bandmann, the Calcutta-based, undisputed king of 'light' theatrical entertainment, East of Suez, and J. F. Madan, the Parsi actor-turned-wine merchant-turned owner of the largest chain of theatres and cinemas in India in the first three decades of the 20th century.

Between 1900-1922 the Anglo-American theatre manager Maurice E. Bandmann (1872-1922) established a theatrical empire that stretched from

Gibraltar to Japan. Bandmann was born in New York in 1872, the son of the famous German-Jewish tragedian, Daniel Bandmann and his second wife Millicent Bandmann-Palmer. After his parents separated, he was educated in England and Germany. Following in his parents' footsteps, Maurice became an actor in England in the early 1890s playing alongside his mother. By the mid-1890s he had already become proprietor of two theatrical companies known as the 'North' and the 'South' Manxmann Companies working the English provinces. As an actor he was best known for the roles Svengali in *Trilby*, Pete in *The Manxman* and as Marcus Superbus in *The Sign of the Cross*. In the late 1890s he began touring in the Mediterranean on a circuit that included Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria and Cairo. Around the turn of the century he visited South America, the West Indies and Canada, and most importantly India. In 1905 he made Calcutta his headquarters and rapidly established a circuit, which by his own account took in "Gibraltar, Malta, Egypt, India, Burmah, with the Malay States, the Straits Settlements, China, Japan, Java and Philippine Islands."¹⁴

Bandmann's activities were based around multiple touring companies that operated on a rotation system. In terms of scale, complexity and global reach, the Bandmann circuit, as it was known, was unrivalled in the theatre industry of the time.¹⁵ The name Maurice E. Bandmann stood for the presentation of professional large-scale productions of mainly musical comedy but also of Shakespeare, contemporary drama, vaudeville and even, on occasion, Grand Opera. As the sole possessor of the rights to the productions of George Edwardes and of the Gaiety Theatre in the British colonies, Bandmann became a purveyor of Edwardian theatre to the furthest flung reaches of the British Empire and beyond. While the colonial settlements were his main ports of call, they by no means limited his reach, which at different periods of an incessantly peripatetic career also included South America, the West Indies as well as Canada, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines, China and Japan.

A remarkable feature of the Bandmann enterprises was the fact that it was based not in London, from whence he drew his theatrical product, but in Calcutta, where he built a new theatre in 1908, The Empire. As well as theatrical entertainment Bandmann also established a cinema business by introducing and distributing films, including the new Kinemacolor technology, an early form of stereoscopic and colour film. His business activities reached a peak in 1919 when he controlled two public companies, Bandman Varieties Ltd and Bandman Eastern Circuit, which managed different aspects of his enterprises.

On his premature death in 1922 the many obituaries emphasised his considerable impact and importance for the establishment of high quality theatrical entertainment throughout the region. His name as much or even more than his performers came to be recognised by his audiences as a trademark, a "guinea stamp among itinerant theatrical circles."¹⁶ In this sense he can be compared to J. C. Williamson or the American syndicate managers such as the Shubert Brothers or Marc Klaw and Abraham Erlanger. The name Bandmann had such high brand recognition that the Dunlop Tyre Company used him to endorse its products in Asia.¹⁷

Originally from Bombay, the Parsi entrepreneur J. F. (Jamsetji Framji) Madan (1856–1923) had begun as an actor in Parsi theatre in his home city but later established himself as a merchant supplying the British army with wine and other provisions. This formed the basis of his fortune with which he began to acquire theatres. In 1902 he relocated to Calcutta at almost exactly the same time as Bandmann where he founded J. F. Madan and Sons. He bought the Corinthian Theatre, founded the Elphinstone Bioscope Company and began showing films in tents on the Maidan before opening the first dedicated movie house in Calcutta, the Elphinstone Picture Palace. From there he acquired theatres all over India, became an agent for Pathé and also began producing films. In 1917 his company Madan's Far Eastern Films joined forces with Bandmann to form the Excelsior Cinematograph Syndicate dedicated to distributing films as well as owning and managing a chain of cinemas. In 1919 Madan, like Bandmann, floated a public company, Madan Theatres Ltd, which incorporated the other companies.¹⁸ It was this company that formed the basis of the remarkable growth of the Madan empire. By issuing shares and generating a much broader capital base, Madan was able to embark on a large-scale program of buying up theatre houses as well as distributing and producing films, both foreign and Indian. Using an initial capital of 100 lakhs of rupees (the equivalent of 10 million rupees) Madan acquired cinemas not just in India but also in Ceylon and Burma.

Bandmann and Madan were both competitors and partners, although after the First World War cooperation dominated. The two companies specialised: Bandmann provided a high quality theatrical product which was shown in theatres owned by Madan. The theatrical side of this collaboration broke down gradually after Bandmann's death when the supply began to decrease, as the Bandmann Eastern Circuit began itself to focus increasingly on cinema and became thus a competitor for the Madan companies. At its height, Madan's business reputedly controlled over 100 cinema houses and theatres throughout the Indian subcontinent as well as all levels of production and distribution, including even editing and later sound recording equipment. This virtual monopoly generated, not surprisingly, severe criticism and in the famous *Report of the Indian Cinematographic Committee of 1926-27*, Madan's operations, now controlled by his son, J. J. Madan, came in for particular scrutiny.¹⁹

The War Films War

A few years earlier, relations had not been so amicable.²⁰ In 1915 the war was not going well for Britain: troops were bogged down in France and Gallipoli. It was decided to open a new front: propaganda, also by cinematic means.²¹ The office in charge of overseas propaganda, situated at Wellington House, was a covert operation run by Charles Masterman, and aided by Ernest Gowers, who was in charge of the cinematic division. In 1915 the decision was taken to produce an openly propagandistic film, entitled *Britain Prepared*. Sponsored openly by the Admiralty and the War Office and covertly by Wellington House, production was entrusted to Jury's Imperial Pictures and Kineto, under the supervision of the American-born film producer Charles Urban. It was decided to exhibit the film as widely as possible including the Indian subcontinent and the Far East. Gowers was entrusted with the task of finding a suitable distributor,

and he soon turned to Bandmann. Before he received a reply from Bandmann, he was contacted by Madan who had already applied for permission to exhibit the film via an agent in England. Thus began a bidding war for the right to distribute the first British propaganda film.

In the ensuing correspondence that is well documented in files held by the India office and the National archives of India, we should remember that the centre of operations, Wellington house, did not 'exist.' It was a secret operation that was—somewhat paradoxically—entrusted with the task of organising highly public events, the exhibition of cinematic propaganda. Over a period of about a year we can trace a rivalry between Bandmann and Madan as both lobbied for what was obviously a lucrative contract in a monopolistic market. The home and political department of the government of India first mentions the case in a letter from Gowers, to the India Office, dated 12th of April 1916.

The present position is that the Cinema committee are anxious to await the arrival in England of someone who is now on his way here, who is anxious to secure the films, not only for India but for the whole of the far east, and we agreed that in the circumstances they might do so.²²

This person appears to be an agent sent by Madan, although it may also have been from Bandmann, who had also dispatched an agent. In a memorandum from 13th of June 1916, the India Office reported via the government of Bengal that Madan was still unable to obtain permission to exhibit the film and that he urgently required clarification:

The position is that the government of Bengal informed us that Madan & Co. are willing and anxious to obtain the film "Britain Prepared" that a portion of the film had already been purchased for Madan but they were prohibited from exhibiting the film by the home government. We then telegraphed to the Secretary of State asking that the agents of Madan be granted permission to purchase and exhibit the film in India.²³

In a letter dated 26th of May 1916 Gowers 'clarified' an extremely 'abstruse' situation, as he had to admit, and reported that, in short, the contract had been awarded to Bandmann:

Mr. Bandman will have the exclusive right of showing the film "Britain Prepared" in India. It cannot be placed or effectively shown on any other terms than exclusive terms. It is not the case that Mr. Madan procured part of the film or that the exhibition was ever prohibited by the home Government. What happened was this. Owing to the desire of the war office to keep the display in this country and the colonies of "Films from the Front" in their own hands, there is a complicated arrangement by which these films are dealt with in these countries by a different body (called the "Topical Committee") from our "Cinema Committee" which deals with these films in allied and neutral countries and with the film "Britain Prepared" (as distinct from the films from the Front) in this

country and elsewhere. The Topical Committee, apparently forgetful of the fact that India was not a colony, sent out one of the films from the Front to Mr. Madan, and we hope to be able to please all parties by giving "Britain Prepared" (with a few films from the Front substituted for the Army training in this country) to Mr. Bandman, and subsequently negotiating with Mr. Madan for the display of a collection of other Films from the Front. This sounds very abstruse, but I have made it as clear as I can. Anyhow, I have every hope that the result will be that everybody will be pleased and the films will have an effective show. There seems to be no doubt, on the whole, that Bandman can handle the films more effectively than Madan.²⁴

As it transpired, Bandmann obtained a virtual monopoly on all films produced under the supervision of Wellington House. While it was acknowledged that Madan had the larger distribution network on the Indian subcontinent, Bandmann's operations extended all the way to Japan and it became clear that the exhibition of *Britain Prepared* as well as other films such as the *Battle of the Somme*, should have as wide a distribution as possible and the Bandmann theatrical circuit ensured this.

In the official agreement between the Cinema committee and Bandmann the question of distribution was an integral part of the contract. It laid out an exact itinerary of exhibition, stipulating wherever possible the actual theatres and cinemas to be used. The financial conditions were also extremely advantageous for Bandmann. The agreement stated that the Cinema committee:

shall provide without charge as many sets of positive films as the licensee can advantageously manage and control (not exceeding four). The Cinema committee shall furnish the licensee with such further films (hereinafter called "the new films") as they shall in the discretion think fit and the new films shall thereupon be included in the program and shall be in substitution for such films of the original programme as may be agreed.²⁵

These so-called 'new films' meant in effect a monopoly on other propaganda films still to be produced. The agreement also allowed Bandmann to retain almost 70% of total gross receipts. The Cinema committee was extremely anxious that the film *Britain Prepared* receive the utmost publicity and for this reason its premiere in Shimla was timed so that the Viceroy was present. There is also correspondence with the British Embassy in Tokyo to ensure that a command performance at the Imperial Opera House in front of the Emperor also be organised.

Telegraphic Address :
"Svengali, Calcutta."

Telegraphic Address :
"Svengali, London."

H.M. Government Tour of

"Britain Prepared"
and
The Official War Films

A Grand Review of
The Activities of His Majesty's Naval and Military Forces
Under the Patronage of
Their Majesties King George V. and Queen Mary

Photographed by Messrs. Vickers, Kinemacolor, Jury, Gaumont and Kineto by permission of H.M. Admiralty,
War Office and Ministry of Munitions.

Sole Director - for India and the East - Mr. Maurice E. Bandman

Empire Theatre, Calcutta. 28th, August 24 Haymarket, London, S. W.
1916.

HOME DEPT.
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
Branch - P.O. 11
Reg. No. 4188
Entered 31/8/16

MM
21-8-16

Figure 1. Bandmann's letterhead advertising and documenting his monopoly on the British 'Official War Films.' Source: NAI, Home Department 1916. Part B. nos. 416 - 420.

To manage this new lucrative business in war propaganda, Bandman, who had by now dropped the second 'n' in his name, set up a new company dedicated to marketing and distributing the official war films. The letterhead (Fig.1) declares him to be "sole director for India and the East." Indeed, the Maurice Bandman War Films became a well-known fixture on the cinematic circuit of India and the Far East. The exhibition was accompanied by generous advertising space in the local papers, much greater than he usually employed for his theatrical tours. An advertisement for the *Battle of the Somme*, the next, and film-historically speaking, the most famous of the war films, conveys an accurate idea of the discursive strategies at work marketing this highly lucrative commodity:

EMPIRE THEATRE.

Half-Owner and Managing Director: **Maurice E. Sandman.**
Secretary and General Manager: **Jas. Bury.**

TWICE NIGHTLY

THE BIG PUSH.

8-30 TO-NIGHT & 9-30
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN INDIA.

H. M. Government Tour of that Remarkable War Film
THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME
AND H. M. THE KING-EMPEROR ON THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD.

This film must not be confused with any other War films or Gazettes recently screened in Calcutta. This is the first and only film that shows the complete Battle of the Somme. **WAR IN ALL ITS HEROISM, WAR IN ALL ITS HIDEOUS RUIN, WAR IN ALL ITS GLORY.**

BRITISH ATTACK ON THE SOMME
July 1st, 1916
FILMED RIGHT IN THE THICK OF THE BATTLE.
NOTHING EVER SEEN LIKE IT BEFORE.

See the British Troops leap over the Trench Parapets, and advance towards the German Trenches under heavy fire of the enemy.
British Tommies rescuing a comrade under heavy shell fire.
British Wounded and Nerve-shattered Germans after the battle.
German Curtain Fire just outside Minden Post.
Routing Germans from the Dug-outs.

CLEARING THE BATTLE FIELD OF SNIPERS

Activity at Minden Post where the battle raged furiously. (You can see the front line trenches just a hundred yards away).

EVERYTHING SHOWN BEFORE THE FIGHT! AFTER THE BATTLE!!! NOTHING CENSORED. THE ATTACK!!

A BIG PAGE IN BRITISH HISTORY.

They show what our brave soldiers had to face in this Great War, and how they faced it. **A GREAT WAR SERMON. NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN.**
Solo Director for India and the East: **MAURICE E. SANDMAN**
Owing to the great demand for seats you are advised to book early.

At 8-30—Rs. 2, 1, As. 3 and 4. **PRICES:** At 9-30—Rs. 4, 2, 1, and As. 3.

Figure 2. Advertisement for The Battle of the Somme, in Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta, 8 November 1916, 8.

This “great War sermon,” employs the common euphemistic term “the big push” to characterise what is now considered to be the greatest disaster in British military history with the loss of 20,000 men killed on the first day. This film has been much analysed in recent years, especially in terms of its problematic authenticity in depicting battle scenes (mentioned explicitly in the advertisement). It is now accepted that some of these scenes were staged and filmed well away from the battlefield, although most of the footage was indeed filmed in the immediate vicinity of the Somme.²⁶ The advertisement is also a rich text in its own right containing a plethora of information and rhetorical devices including options in terms of reception: “war in all its heroism, all its hideous ruin, or all its glory.”

EMPIRE THEATRE
 Hall-Owner & Managing Director MAURICE E. BANDMAN,
 Secretary & General Manager LEW MARKS.

Mr. MAURICE E. BANDMAN has the honour to announce that he has been appointed Sole Director for India and the Far East of

H. M. GOVERNMENT TOUR
 of the Latest and Greatest of the
 OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT WAR FILMS

THE BATTLE OF THE ANCRE
 AND THE
ADVANCE OF THE TANKS

It is a film that everyone should see.
 You see the Tanks from their first start to their triumphant return. You see their crews getting them ready for the fray, you watch them creeping from their hiding places, you follow them till they cross the trenches and wade over "No Man's Land," you see them crushing down the German wire entanglements and you welcome them back in triumph to the cheers of the soldiers who surround them.

Even apart from the Tanks this new film is wonderful. It surpasses in its enthralling detail even the great "Somme" Film. It shows every phase of the Great Battle of the Ancre. It enables you to realize what our men are doing in the present "Push," the terrible artillery duel, its close co-operation with the infantry, who are seen crossing "No Man's Land" behind the shelter of the "Barraque," the work of the Red Cross, the use of mud that covers everything, the ordinary life of the trenches, and the thrilling moments of attack.

It is both your duty and your privilege to see this wonderful film. It is even more enthralling in its illumination detail than the great "Somme" film. It gives a real insight into what life at the front means in all its excitement, its dangers and its realities. A large Percentage of the Gross Receipts from the film will be devoted to Military Charities.

NOTE—The British General Headquarters is responsible for the censorship of these films and allows nothing in the nature of a "fake" to be shown. The pictures are authentic and taken on the battlefield.

ALSO
GLIMPSES OF THE NAVY IN WAR TIME
 Filmed immediately after the Battle of Jutland.
FILMS THAT WILL LIVE IN HISTORY.

PRICES:
 At 9-30 p.m. Rs. 4, 2, 1 & As. 8.
 At 6-0 p.m. Rs. 2, 1 & As. 8.

THESE HISTORIC FILMS
 WILL BE EXHIBITED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN INDIA ON
Thursday, April 26th, at 9-30 p.m.
 and following Evenings at 6 & 9-30 p.m.

Figure 3. Advertisement for *The Battle of the Ancre*, The Empire, 24 April 1917, 4.

Advertising for the next film to be exhibited, *The Battle of the Ancre* (Fig. 3), superseded the *Battle of the Somme* in terms of its pictorial and textual richness. The text accompanying the images was clearly written by the propaganda department and engages with the previous film's reception (it had been too graphic in its depiction of war and evidently questions had been raised about its authentic depiction of battle). It includes a note that reads: "The British General headquarters is responsible for the censorship of these films and allows nothing in the nature of a 'fake' to be shown. The pictures are authentic and taken on the battlefield." The film depicted a later phase of the battle of the Somme, which lasted from July to November 1916. A review in *The Statesman*, the Calcutta-based national daily, praised the relative restraint: "there is less evidence of the horrors of the grim struggle now in progress" and highlighted the "appearance of the 'tanks,' these wonderful engines of destruction which ... are leading our troops to victory and mowing down the German defences."²⁷

The triumphant and no doubt commercially lucrative progress of the Bandmann War Films did not pass without critical notice along the itinerary of his tours between Bombay and Tokyo. On 9 January 1917 *The Straits Times* in Singapore carried a report outlining not only Bandmann's newest theatrical offerings—his acquisition of "the exclusive rights of a large and wonderful repertoire of the latest London successes with which to enliven theatre-goers in 1917"—but also a new undertaking:

Another enterprise is connected with films, and the Bandmann Film Control is being formed to supply picture theatre managers throughout India and the Far East with all British films. This is in addition to the

Government pictures *Britain Prepared* and *The Battle of the Somme*, practically the whole profits of which go to military charities.²⁸

The key word here is 'practically' because, as we have seen from the agreement, almost 70% of gross receipts went to Bandmann, while 33% went to the Cinema committee, which did indeed denote its profit to war charities. This somewhat murky financial arrangement did not go unnoticed. A month later, the same paper reproduced an article from *The Peking and Tientsin Times* in which the whole question of distribution of propaganda for personal profit was criticised. The author compares the German practice of actually paying for their war films to be exhibited: "They did not bargain for ninety percent of the receipts wherever their films were shown. In Tientsin they were willing to pay \$2,000 for the use of a theatre in the Chinese City for two weeks, besides allowing the proprietor the benefit of all receipts at the door." He complains that the British war films have not been shown in Tientsin or anywhere in North China. The reason for this neglect is, he argues, obvious:

The exclusive rights of exhibiting each series have been granted, upon hat terms, we are not in a position to state, to Mr. Maurice E. Bandmann, who is following the natural course of a man enjoying so valuable a concession, of showing them where and when he can obtain the best financial results ... we are constrained to ask whether it was wise of the British authorities, in any case, to part with the exclusive rights in such valuable and inspiring films to an individual in the theatrical business (emphasis added, C.B.).²⁹

The contrast between a profit-driven English theatrical business model and 'stupid German money,' i.e. state-supported distribution, could not be clearer and marks a fundamental difference between the two countries, even allowing for the special case of propaganda which is produced in the first instance to "produce most moral effect."³⁰ In fact, Tientsin and Peking were expressly included in the original agreement for *Britain Prepares* and as Bandmann frequently visited these cities with his theatre companies, there was no reason not to include them. The criticism may have just been premature.

Postwar reconciliation

After the end of the First World War the equilibrium of theatrical and cinematic entertainment shifted significantly as the business of touring live theatre became less profitable. This was due to several factors. The rise of cinema meant competition on the entertainment market that forced troupes to charge ticket prices that were little more than the cinema. Advertisements on the amusements pages of the local Bombay or Calcutta newspapers show an overwhelming preponderance of films, while a Bandmann troupe provided the only professional theatrical shows on offer. In 1920 *The Times of India* analysed the situation in terms of ticket prices that had remained unchanged for a decade while the travelling expenses of a theatrical company had doubled compared to before the war. This pressure on costs combined with a drop in audiences led to a dearth of high quality theatre. The article compares the less than 200

spectators at the 1200-seat Bombay Opera House (built by Bandmann in 1912 but relinquished by him to his co-owner, J. F. Karaka) to the full houses at the smaller but more expensive Excelsior Theatre (owned by Madan and used by Bandmann on his visits to Bombay).³¹ For Bandmann, the solution was to join forces with Madan by gaining access to his chain of theatres at reasonable prices; for Madan, Bandmann's theatre companies offered additional revenue and perhaps a sachet of cultural respectability that his cinematic offerings certainly did not have.³² In fact cinema was becoming a 'problem' in the eyes of colonial authorities and the morally uprighteous, owing to the importation of cheap American product, especially Westerns, and their problematic representation of race. The English trade paper *The Bioscope* carried an article in 1921 entitled "Films in India" which adumbrated the problem: "It must be obvious that films showing acts of violence on white women by Mexicans and such-like films are highly dangerous."³³ The article reprised what was an on-going public debate in India on the dangers of cinema and the need for censorship, which resulted in the implementation of a committee of inquiry whose report, published in 1928, ran to six volumes.³⁴

Conclusion

In an era predating state subsidy, theatre and cinema needed to be traded for a profit and they could be highly profitable. Bandmann certainly made a modest fortune, Madan an even greater one, while J. C. Williamson died a multi-millionaire (in today's currency). I have only analysed one small part of each manager's activities. The War Films were for Madan an opportunity lost, for Bandmann a lucrative one gained. This case provides insight into the mechanics and dynamics of theatrical entrepreneurship under the special circumstances of wartime propaganda. In the context of imperial politics theatrical management needs to be understood not as a mere administrative task but as perhaps the most important activity in a complex actor-network linking covert wartime propaganda, entrepreneurial vision, existing distribution networks, marketing strategies and fundamental unease about 'theatrical business' in a time of war. If we review the three categories defining theatrical managerialism in the early twentieth century—pluralism, monopolism, and diversification—then we can find both confirmation and modification of the three concepts. Pluralism was inherent in the theatre business: outside the metropolitan centres, managers such as Bandmann traded in spectacle ranging from puppet shows to cinema. Bandmann's success in obtaining the war film contract was determined largely by his pre-existing theatrical circuit on which he showed anything. The monopolistic tendencies of his war film operation eponymously named the Bandman Film Control was not of his own devising but certainly in his interest, but its operation went directly against the principles of free trade and competition. But all the large-scale theatre managers operating 'abroad' attempted to establish monopolies and they were largely successful. Diversification meant creating groups of companies under one controlling figure: in this respect Bandmann and Madan resembled each other with their own companies trading with each other.

The managerial turn lives on in the sector of commercial theatre in a few metropolitan centres. Generally speaking, it was replaced by artistic directors in subsidised theatres managing pre-existing budgets. In an age of the performative turn, the managerial turn of the previous century seems strangely familiar: similarly undefinable and equally all-pervasive: the slogan then was 'manage or else'!

¹ For a legal ruling on this principle in relation to theatre, see Christopher Balme, "His means are in supposition': Shakespeare and the beginnings of the global theatre trade," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 150 (2014): 111-127.

² Tracy C. Davis, *The Economics of the British Stage, 1800-1914* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 167.

³ Frederick Winslow Taylor, *Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper & Brothers, [1911] 1919), 7.

⁴ Taylor, *Principles of Scientific Management*, 7.

⁵ Peter F. Drucker, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 1.

⁶ Drucker, *Management*, 4-5.

⁷ Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Harvard University Press, 1977).

⁸ Davis, *The Economics of the British Stage*, 181.

⁹ "The theatrical corollary to manufacturing is the centralised brokering of talent, such as a London agency putting together whole packages of music hall or theatre programmes for distribution on tour to distant provincial or foreign locations." See Davis, *The Economics of the British Stage*, 182.

¹⁰ See here David Savran, "Trafficking in Transnational Brands: The New 'Broadway-Style' Musical," *Theatre Survey* 55.3 (2014): 318-342.

¹¹ Levi Damon Phillips, "Uses of the Term 'Manager' in 19th Century U.S. Theatre," *Theatre Survey* 20.2 (1979): 62-63, here 63.

¹² Mimi Colligan, "Tallis, Sir George (1869–1948)," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tallis-sir-george-8744/text15313>. Accessed online 1 October 2014. The only serious rival to 'The Firm' in Australia came from the brothers J. & N. Tait. In 1920 the J. & N. Tait and J. C. Williamson interests combined, with J. & N. Tait continuing as a separate company to promote celebrity artists. Such mergers were typical of the managerial dynamism of the period; in this respect theatre was no different from other spheres of business.

¹³ *Stage and Cinema*, 8 July (1916), 2. Quoted in <http://tlweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/25/rose-of-rhodesia/parsons-1.html>.

¹⁴ *Weekly Sun* (Singapore), 9 September 1911, 12.

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of the Bandmann circuit, see Christopher Balme, "The Bandmann Circuit: Theatrical Networks in the First Age of Globalization," *Theatre Research International* 40:1 (2015): 19-36. In terms of capitalisation and assets, Williamson and Schlesinger were much larger operations, but neither had the geographical reach of the Bandmann circuit, preferring instead to manage geographically contiguous areas, Australia and New Zealand, or Southern Africa respectively.

¹⁶ *The Eastern Daily Mail* (Singapore) 12 February 1906, 2.

¹⁷ See *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 14 March 1912, 10.

¹⁸ This information follows Sharmistha Gooptu, *Bengali Cinema: 'An Other Nation'* (London: Routledge, 2011), 15-16.

¹⁹ See the *Report of the Indian Cinematographic Committee 1927-28*, vol.1 (Madras: Government Press, 1928), 43-45, which lists and discusses the main complaints. Although the report did recognise certain monopolistic tendencies, it did see reason for direct interference.

²⁰ As mentioned, the careers of both entrepreneurs reveal remarkable parallels including even the dates of their deaths: Bandmann died of typhus in 1922, Madan a year later in 1923. At the

beginning of the century they were direct competitors in Calcutta, as both were trying to establish the new medium of cinema there: Madan in the tents on the Maidan, Bandmann in the two theatres he controlled, The Theatre Royal and newly built Empire, which would remain his headquarters and centre of operations until his death. Cinema was for Bandmann always a sideline, a fill-in for his theatres when no live acts were available.

²¹ The power of the new medium was recorded in India Office files by reference to a film called "Is England Ready?" "During its run at Zurich it was received with great enthusiasm by the people. The review of the troops by the King, as well as the meeting of Joffre and Kitchener was received with cheers. The audience was so enthusiastic that the Manager of the film – a Hun proprietor, was much annoyed and stopped the performance." National Archives of India (NAI). Home and Political Department 1916. Part B. nos. 168-181, 35. For a more general discussion of the use of cinema for propaganda in India, see Philip Woods, "Film Propaganda in India, 1914-23," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 15:4 (1995): 543-53.

²² NAI, Home Department 1916. Part B. nos. 416-420, 10.

²³ NAI, Home Department 1916. Part B. nos. 416-420, 2.

²⁴ Letter from Gowers to India Office, NAI, Home Department 1916. Part B. nos. 416-420, 12.

²⁵ *Agreement as to the exhibition of "BRITAIN PREPARED" and "OFFICIAL WAR FILMS" in India and the Far East between W. F. Jury, Esquire, and Others and M. E. Bandmann, Esquire, 23 June, 1916.* Vizard, Oldham, Crowder, & Cash, 51 Lincoln's Inn Fields. W.C. London. NAI, Home Department 1916. Part B. nos. 416-420.

²⁶ Roger Smither, "'A Wonderful Idea of the Fighting': The Question of Fakes in 'The Battle of the Somme'," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 13:2 (1993): 149-69.

²⁷ *The Statesman* (Calcutta), 27 April 1917, 4.

²⁸ "Untitled," *The Straits Times*, 9 January 1917, 6.

²⁹ "Propaganda by Films," *The Straits Times*, 7 February 1917, 10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ "Bombay Theatre Prices – the Touring Company," *Times of India*, 7 October 1920, 11.

³² *The Times of India* reported: "The company [Madan & Sons] has entered into a fresh agreement with Mr ME Bandman for the presentation of all Bandman Theatrical Companies exclusively at our theatres in towns where one exists, except in Calcutta, and also with Messrs Pathe Cinema of India for the exclusive rights throughout our territory for all Pathe films including the famous series, 'Trade and Finance'," *The Times of India*, 14 May 1921, 6.

³³ "Films in India," *The Bioscope* (October 1920): 18d-18e.

³⁴ *Report of the Indian Cinematograph Committee 1927-28* (Madras: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1928).