

# Avonia JONES

*A 19th century 'rising celebrity' on our cover!*

An unusual first name coupled with a very ordinary surname cried out for an internet search. The second result was a series of images and in the second row was a small image that looked like the same person wearing the same dress. Held by the State Library of Victoria, this 'half-length, to left' photograph appears to have been taken on the same day as our cover photograph. So who was she?

According to Wikipedia, Avonia Stanhope JONES was an American actress born in 1839 in New York City NY USA, the daughter of George 'Count Joannes' JONES 1810–1879 and Melinda JONES c1815–1875.

Avonia and her mother toured Australia in 1859 where Avonia met Irish actor/producer Gustavus Vaughan BROOKE.

The acting of Miss Avonia Jones indicates a rising celebrity. She is an American lady. Her deep-set black eyes and defined eyebrows mark a will and a passion that augurs most favourably for her future eminence. She throws her whole soul in her personifications, and the effect is grand and thrilling.

*The South Australian Advertiser*  
Wednesday 30 January 1861 p3



## MELBOURNE.

*(From our own Correspondent.)*

**4th February.**

The Empress of the Seas, which sailed on Friday, was reported to carry to England Miss Avonia Jones and her mother. After having taken her passage, it appears that Miss Jones received several very tempting offers from country managers, and these decided her to remain in the colony for some time longer. She is, moreover, anxious if possible to appear in London with Mr. G.V. Brooke, and as this gentleman is detained by stress of creditors for some time longer, Miss Jones, to have gone to England now, must have sacrificed what to her will be an excellent opportunity of appearing to the best advantage on the London stage. I need scarcely say that the announcement of Miss Jones' name as one of the passengers of the Empress of the Seas, being so quickly followed by a common report that she "had not gone to England after all," occasioned a good deal of mischievous scandal, to which I need not further allude than to say I am quite convinced there was no other cause for her remaining here other than that which I have already assigned.

*The Star (Ballarat)*  
Wednesday 6 February 1861 p2

After leaving Australia in May 1861 for England, Avonia JONES made her London debut as Medea on 5 November 1861 at the Drury Lane Theatre. In February 1863 she married Gustavus Vaughan BROOKE who was 21 years her senior. BROOKE sailed for Australia in January 1866 on the *London* and perished when the ship sank in the Bay of Biscay.

Avonia Stanhope (JONES) BROOKE died of consumption in New York NY USA in October 1867 aged 28.

The Australian Dictionary of Biography has an entry for Robert Elias WALLEN 1831–1893, stockbroker and journalist, who was a contributor to newspapers including the *Age*, the *Leader* and the *Argus*, and as 'Aegles' wrote 'the shrewd and genial column 'Talk on Change' for the *Australasian*' for 8 years.

Is it too speculative to imagine that Robert Elias WALLEN might have been the beneficiary of the sincere friendship of Avonia JONES?

## Sources

Australian Dictionary of Biography

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/>

State Library of Victoria

[www.slv.vic.gov.au/pictoria/gid/slv-pic-aab61458](http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/pictoria/gid/slv-pic-aab61458)

Trove <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>

Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avonia\\_Jones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avonia_Jones)