

Still, that's all in the game. If theatre is in the blood, there's the thrill of the nightly triumph. Nor must the financial return be overlooked. Many of these performers, if they're worthy of their art, are well-paid for the work they do.

Who can but envy Australia's Shirley Abicair, a young lass who made good on London's BBC with a low-cut voice and a zither? She has remarked more than once that she "gets well paid for the work she likes". Her joy is in finding happiness and security in her job.

Or take the silver screen and Hollywood, which have made thousands of screen stars and not a few millionaires, who work at unusual times. Let us consider a few.

William Holden and John Wayne each received £A330,000 as co-stars in the production "Horse Soldiers". Marlon Brando is to get the same amount for playing the lead in "Ophelus Descending", based on Tennessee Williams' play. Ava Gardner, for her work in "On the Beach" now in production in Australia, will be paid £A177,000 after tax. Glamorous singing star Doris Day received £A113,000 for her work in "The Pyjama Game".

The highest fee yet offered for a film role—and refused—appears to be the million dollars (£A446,000) with which a Hollywood syndicate tried to lure Grace Kelly, the Monaco princess, back to film land.

With the glamorous ones, it's possible to calculate salary even by the minute. The coloured actor-singer, Harry Belafonte, made £A5,000 a night for a week's season at London's Gaumont State Theatre last year and is to receive £A30,000, the highest fee the BBC has paid for any performer, for a series of TV shows over the next five years.

Still, he has a long way to go to catch up with comedian Bob Hope who is reputed to have received something like £A80,000 for a two-hour TV show.

Strip-teasers get anything up to £1,000 a week in some of London's night clubs.

The Australian actor Ron Randall is, in terms of hourly salary, probably the highest paid actor ever to reach the New York stage. Starring in the Broadway box-office smash, "The World of Suzie Wong", he has been paid £5 2s. 6d. a minute for appearing on stage for only 10 minutes in each of the eight performances a week.

World-famous violinist David Oistrakh received £A1,000 for a 1½-hour concert on his Australian tour last year. In New South Wales he gave five concerts. That worked out at more than £11 a minute!

Brilliant Trinidad honky-tonk pianist, Winifred Attwell, when touring Australia in 1955, earned at least £A3,000 a week and doubtless improved on that during her 1958 season. Her hands, by the way, are insured for £40,000.

That brings up the angle of the heavy insurance some of these artists carry on their hands, arms, legs and voices as valuable stock-in-trade.

It's interesting to find out, too, not only what theatrical folk have earned during their lifetime, but what some have left in their wills.

When Phineas T. Barnum, the fabulous showman, died at the age of 80, he left an estate worth a million pounds. Al Jolson, the black-face singer who became famous as the first talkie star, left an estate of £A1,750,000, at the age of 64. The English actor, George Arliss, left £A137,000, and Wallace Beery, clever American exponent of beefy buffoonery on the screen, at 60, left £A500,000.

These all died in an era when values weren't what they are today. On present valuations the figures could be at least doubled—possibly trebled.

While we're on the topic of those who work while we're free, it's interesting to find that in all forms of art Australia has produced celebrities of world standing. Melba, the incomparable, was the greatest coloratura of them all, feted by kings and commoners. Marjorie Lawrence, Joan Hammond, Peter Dawson and John Brownlee are just a few others.

In ballet are the Borovansky Company and the National Ballet, while the presentation some time back of Ray Lawler's "Summer of the Seventeenth Doll" has enhanced the Australian theatre and even induced overseas capital to film it in its own land.

Should you feel a trifle overpowered by these facts about people who apparently work little and are paid much, it's some consolation to learn that a recent survey among the main industrial English-speaking nations revealed that Australia is the country with the most leisure.

Australians, it would seem, work fewest hours. In one year the Englishman works 2,156 hours, the Canadian 2,024 hours, the American 2,000 hours, the Australian 1,936 hours.



Ronnie Ardler, Cyril McLeod, Darcy Johnston and Joe Dixon waiting for the fish to run at Wreck Bay.