

TRIXIE IRELAND

(ca. 1899-1977) Singer, comic, dancer. Trixie Ireland began her stage career at age five as a toe dancer and contortionist with William Anderson and later toured with Pollard's Lilliputian Opera Company. While working for Harry Clay in the early 1920s she teamed up with Jack "Dinks" Paterson in a comedy, song and patter act. The pair spent a decade or more in the United Kingdom. After returning to Australia they continued to work in variety up until the late 1950s.

The daughter of James Thomas and Evangeline Alice Mary Ireland, Trixie Ireland was born Beatrice Victoria Ireland in Sydney, New South Wales, possibly in 1899. Her siblings were Adela May, Edith Elizabeth, James William, Irene Hope, and Edna May. Trained by her mother, a Sydney-based teacher of performing arts known professionally as either Mrs J. Ireland or Mrs E. M. Ireland, Trixie began her stage career at age five with William Anderson's Pantomime Company as a toe dancer and contortionist. She later appeared toured in such productions as *Sinbad*, *The Squatter's Daughter*, and *Cinderella*. Although several of her older siblings have been identified as performing at concerts staged by their mother - notably Edith and James - no record of Trixie's association with the school has yet been located.¹ The reasons for this are yet to be ascertained, but may possibly be due to her being "apprenticed" to Anderson's company at such an early age.

In 1908 Trixie was invited to join Pollard's Lilliputian children's opera company. With that troupe she spent some three years touring Australia and New Zealand. She later made it to the final selection of several music scholarships, including the *Theatre Magazine* Scholarship and Madame Melba's scholarship, and in the mid-1910s joined the Kennedy Company. This was followed sometime later by an engagement on Harry Clay's circuit, where she and her future husband Jack "Dinks" Paterson are thought to have met. Between 1919 and 1924, Ireland was a member of the Harmony Four. Also known as The Harmonious Four, the other three singers were Rene Ireland (likely her sister Irene), Rita Sullivan, and Ivy Gailer.

When the Wallace and Paterson partnership ended in late 1923, Paterson formed a new stage act with Ireland, while at the same time briefly touring his own revusical troupe - Dinks and Co. One of the couple's first engagements was in the Hugh J.

Ward/Fullers' 1923/1924 Christmas pantomime *Cinderella* (Princess Theatre, Melbourne). Shortly after completing this engagement, they finally married (after a four years engagement) and then left to work the United Kingdom's variety circuits where they billed themselves as "The Long-haired Scream and the Golden-voiced Personality Girl" (Van Straten, 93).



Dinks and Trixie

Source: Frank Van Straten. *Tivoli* (2003). 93.



As Dick Whittington

Fuller News Dec-Jan. (1921-22), 20.

In a letter to *Everyone's* in late 1928, Paterson records that he and Ireland had scored strongly in London with their act "Australia's Comedy Novelty." "[We] have worked our act up to a fast flash of 15 minutes, and it is a good one according to the critics. Reeves and Lamport have handled us pretty well all the time and they are a real live firm".² During their extended stay in the United Kingdom, Paterson and Ireland appeared in pantomime (invariably as dame and principal boy) and were also involved in a number of revues, including Maurice Cowan's *Hello Charleston*. In addition to their appearances under Reeves and Lamport, the pair occasionally worked for Stoll Moss. Dinks also worked a baton spinning and eccentric dancing routine in several West End cabarets.³ In a 1971 *Australian Women's Weekly* interview Paterson and Ireland recall one show at the National Theatre, Mayfair which they played with Jim Gerald. On their way to the theatre they bought a paper and discovered to their horror that they were the top bill. "I was so embarrassed," recalls Paterson, "I could hardly walk into the theatre, but Jimmy approved of the billing and we stayed the best of friends."⁴

¹ The Ireland sisters were often identified by the number appearing - e.g. "Misses Ireland (4)."

² *Everyone's* 17 Oct. (1928), 38.

³ *Everyone's* 24 July (1929), 41.

⁴ "When Tivoli Fans Laughed Till the Tears Ran Down Their Cheeks" (13).

Dinks and Trixie remained in England until 4 January 1929, returning to Australia via Africa. Contracted to appear on the Tivoli circuit, they made "a triumphal homecoming... [but] the lack of worthwhile opportunities saw them return to the United Kingdom where in 1933 they appeared in an experimental television show, thereby becoming possibly the first Australians to work in the new medium."⁵ They also toured with headliners like Gracie Fields and Vera Lyn. The two comedians came back to Australia in 1948, having spent some 16 altogether in the UK. One of their final stage performances together was in 1957, when they played the ugly sisters in an Adelaide production of *Cinderella*.

After ending their careers as variety entertainers Dinks and Trixie retired to their home in Woollahra, Sydney, where Paterson kept himself fit and healthy well into his late 80s. Trixie Ireland passed away in 1977, with Paterson following five years later in 1982.



SEE ALSO

- [Jack "Dinks" Paterson](#)

HISTORICAL NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

1. At least seven students with the surname Ireland have been identified in reviews for Mrs E. M. Ireland's concerts - these being the "Misses" Dot (aka Dorothy), Edith, Ida, and Nellie; and "Masters" A. Ireland, A. J. A. Ireland, and James (or J. Ireland). Several of these names do not correspond with Trixie's siblings as identified by descendents of James and Evangeline. It is therefore unclear which of these may have been James and Evangeline's own children (possibly using different stage name or nickname), which were relations (cousins etc), or which (if any) adopted Ireland as a stage name (a not an uncommon practice for students from this period).

For details regarding [Dot Ireland](#), see her entry in the AVTA.

2. Another Ireland - G. Ireland - has been identified as the school's secretary in 1906. His relationship with E.M. Ireland is also unknown. It may be that the G has been incorrectly substituted for a J - as in James Ireland (another common occurrence with newspapers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries).
3. It is also unclear at this time whether Trixie was related to Melbourne-based music director/musician Prof. Fred Ireland, or to another variety artist from the early 1900s, Harriet Ireland.

FURTHER REFERENCE

- "Ambitious Girl." *Fuller News* 18 Feb. 1922, 15 [re: Trixie Ireland]
 "Dinks and Trixie Back Next Year." *Everyone's* 17 Oct. (1928), 38.
 "Dinks and Trixie Back to England After Aus. Tour." *Everyone's* 24 July (1929), 41.
 Djubal, Clay. "[Paterson, Jack](#)." *AustLit* (2007).
 Van Straten, Frank. *Tivoli* (2003), 93.
 "[When Tivoli Fans Laughed Till the Tears Ran Down Their Cheeks](#)." *Australian Women's Weekly*: 30 June (1971), 12-13.



Australian Women's Weekly 30 June (1971), 13.

See also:

- Australian Variety:** 11 Dec. (1919), 16.
Everyone's: 12 Nov. (1924), 39 • 26 Nov. (1924), 28 • 1 Apr. (1925), 36.
Green Room: May (1924), 25.
Theatre Magazine: Oct. (1920), 20

⁵ "When Tivoli Fans Laughed Till the Tears Ran Down Their Cheeks" (13).