



The Sara Payne Papers

N43

**The National Dance Archive of Ireland
Glucksman Library
University of Limerick**

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Reference Code: IE 2135 N43
Title: The Sara Payne Papers
Dates of Creation: 1921-1945
Level of Description: Fonds
Extent and Medium: 16 items (13 files)

CONTEXT

Name of Creator: Payne, Sara (1907-1993).

Biographical History: Sara Payne was born in England in 1907 into a theatrical family. She was the daughter of the theatre director Ben Iden Payne and actress Mona Limerick. Payne was amongst the first cohort of students at Ninette de Valois' school, the Academy of Choreographic Art, London. From 1928 until 1931 she was Principal at the Abbey Theatre School of Ballet. In 1936, Payne returned to Dublin, where she established the Sara Payne School of Dance and Mime and a dance company. In parallel, she worked as a choreographer and dancer at the Gate Theatre.

Payne's vision for the development of ballet in Ireland focused on fusing ballet with traditional Irish dance steps and patterns. This is exemplified by her Irish-themed ballets, including *Doomed Cuchulain*, *The Scarecrow*, and *A Fiddler's Story*. Payne's inclusion of trained traditional Irish dancers and musicians in performances took her vision a step further.

In c. 1946, Payne return to England, and by 1955 she was working again with de Valois at the White Lodge, Royal Ballet School, London, where she remained until her retirement in 1972. Sara Payne died in 1993 and is survived by a daughter and son.

Archival History: Collected by Sara Payne during her lifetime and passed to her son, Julian Kelly, after her death.

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Donated by Sara Payne's son, Julian Kelly to the National Dance Archive of Ireland on 13 December 2011, except for **N43/1/13**, which was donated by Sara Payne's daughter, Orlaith Kelly, on 7 March 2012.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Scope and Content: Mainly programmes and press cuttings illustrating Sara Payne's career as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer; the activities of the Payne School of Dance and Mime; and the early development of ballet as an art form in Ireland.

Appraisal, Destruction and Scheduling Information: All records have been retained.

Accruals: Accruals are not expected.

System of Arrangement: The documents have been divided into three series according to their form and thereunder arranged chronologically by date.

CONDITIONS OF ACCESS AND USE

Conditions Governing Access: Unrestricted access to all items.

Conditions Governing Reproduction: Standard copyright regulations apply to all items. For photocopying or reproducing material, please consult with the staff.

Language/ Scripts of Material: English.

Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements: Paper documents in good or reasonable condition.

Finding Aids: A hard copy of the descriptive catalogue is available at the Special Collections and Archives Department, Glucksman Library, University of Limerick.

ALLIED MATERIALS

Related Units of Description: For additional programmes of performances by Sara Payne Ballet, see the Catherine Gyll Papers (N26) in the National Dance Archive of Ireland.

DESCRIPTION CONTROL

Archivist's Note: Papers arranged and described by Anna-Maria Hajba.

Rules or Conventions: This description follows guidelines based on *ISAD(G)* 2nd edition, 2000; *Irish Guidelines for Archival Description*, 2009; *National Council on Archives: Rules for the Construction of Personal, Place and Corporate Names*, 1997; and *EAP Guidance on Data Protection for Archive Services*, 2018.

Date of Description: January 2012. Revised August 2020.

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The Sara Payne Papers**1 PROGRAMMES AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL (1931-1945)**

- 1/1** 14 February 1931
 Programme of a matinee performance by the Abbey Theatre School of Ballet at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. The repertoire included *Theme Classique*, *Prelude*, *The New Hat*, *Serenade*, *A Study in Plastic Movement*, *Once Upon a Time*, *Suite de Danses*, *When the Cat's Away*, *Pas de Trois*, *Russian Court Dance*, *When Philidda Flouts Him*, *Ballet Suite* from *Carmen*, *Holiday*, *Prelude Oriental*, and *Fedelma*.
 4 pp.
- 1/2** 14 February 1931
 As **1/1**, with handwritten corrections and additions by Sara Payne.
 4 pp.
- 1/3** 30 April 1939
 Flyer promoting a programme of ballet presented by The Payne School of Dance and Mime at the Gate Theatre, Dublin. The repertoire included *Coppelia*, *Fair Rosamund*, *Phillida Flouts Me*, *Irish Scena*, and a new Irish ballet, *The Scarecrow*.
 1 item
- 1/4** 14-15 April 1940
 Programme of performances by Sara Payne Ballet at the Gate Theatre, Dublin. The repertoire included *The Scarecrow*, *Lusmore*, *Dances*, *Faust*, *Doomed Cuchullan*, *Table d'Hote Or...*, *A Fiddler's Story*, and *The Snow Queen*.
 4 pp.
- 1/5** January 1941
 Programme of performances of James Bridie's play *Tobias and the Angel* at the Gate Theatre, Dublin. Among the actors was Sara Payne, who performed the dances in the play.
 4 pp.

- 1/6 June 1941
 Programme of performances of ballets, directed by Sara Payne, at the Gate Theatre, Dublin. The repertoire included *Doomed Cuchulain*, *Pas de Trois (Swan Lake)*, *Nautch Dance*, *Villikins*, *the Ratcatcher's Daughter*, *The Sugar-Plum Fairy (The Nutcracker)*, *Mazurka (Coppelia)*, *Polka*, *Waltz (Les Sylphides)*, *Farewell and Adieu/ Stormalong/ A'Roving/ Fire Down Below*, *Ballet for the Opera Faust*, and *Ballet Atha Cliath*.
 2 items
- 1/7 August 1941
 Programme of performances of Molière's classic comédie-ballet, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, at the Gate Theatre, Dublin. The dancers included Sara Payne, who was also responsible for the choreography.
 2 items
- 1/8 November 1941
 Programme of performances of ballets, directed by Sara Payne, at the Gate Theatre, Dublin. The repertoire included *The Snow Queen*, *Spanish Dance*, *Folk Songs*, *Liebeslieder*, *Pas de Trois (Swan Lake)*, *Sea Shanties*, and *The Scarecrow*.
 2 items
- 1/9 June 1942
 Programme of performances of ballets, directed by Sara Payne, at the Gate Theatre, Dublin. The repertoire included *Casse Noisette Act II*, *Russian Court Dance*, *Mairin de Barra/ Thankye Ma'am Says Dan*, *Waltz (Les Sylphides)*, *Czardas*, *Tarantelle*, *Van Dieman's Land*, *Pas Seul*, *Silent Noon*, *Waltz, A Fiddler's Story*, *Ich Grolle Nicht*, and *Liebeslieder*.
 4 pp.
- 1/10 1942-1943
 Programme of performances of the Christmas show *Jack in the Box*, a mixture of theatre and revue, at the Gate Theatre, Dublin. The repertoire included *Prelude*, *The Little Match Girl*, *Zoo Blues*, *A Lady Fair*, *Thirst*, *Four Flops*, *La Sainte Courtesane or The Woman Covered in Jewels*, *Finnigan's Wake*, *Interlude*, *The Old Sailor*, *The Stylish Marriage*, *Snow in the Air*, *Songs with the Harp*, *The Fall*, *Vache Sur de Toit or Liffey-Side Nights: A Political Misconception*, and *Jack-in-the-Box*. The performers included Sara Payne. The programme incorporates introductions by Hilton Edwards and Micheál Mac Liammóir and short articles by Lynn Doyle, Myles Na gCopaleen and M. H. Jellet, and has been signed by Hilton Edwards, Micheál Mac Liammóir, and many of the performers, including Christopher Casson.
 16 pp.

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- 1/11** Christmas 1945
Programme of a performance of *Prunella*, a romantic pantomime by Laurence Housman and Granville Barker, at the Gate Theatre, Dublin. The performers included Sara Payne.
4 pp.

2 PRESS CUTTINGS (1936-1942)

- 1/12** 1936-1942
Scrapbook containing reviews and other press cuttings relating to Sara Payne and the Payne School of Dance and Mime, providing a detailed insight into the early years of ballet in Ireland. One of the items is loose.
Fragile.
53 pp.

3 BOOKS (1921)

- 1/13** 1921
Yeats, William Butler. *Four Plays for Dancers*. London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1921. Lacking dust jacket. Signed on the inside by Sara Payne, and by the original owner of the book, Abbey Theatre actor Joseph O'Neill. The pages contain handwritten annotations for possible movement and sound direction, and the players' cues for the play *At the Hawks Well*. *Fragile.*
138 pp.