

JACK PATERSON

aka Dinks Paterson

In 1919 Jack Paterson teamed up George Wallace as Dinks and Oncus – with the partnership becoming one of Harry Clay's most popular acts. After they split in 1923, Paterson and Trixie Ireland spent several years working in Britain (as Dinks and Trixie). They came home briefly in 1929 to play the Tivoli circuit before returning to the UK, where they became one of the earliest performers to work in the television medium. Paterson and Ireland retired from the stage in Australia in the mid to late-1950s.

Born in Broken Hill (NSW) on 25 April 1892 and raised in Kalgoorlie, Jack Alexander "Dinks" Paterson developed an interest in the variety stage from an early age. In this respect, it is possible that he was influenced by the slightly older George Sorlie, who also grew up in the Western Australian mining town during the 1890s and early 1900s and learned to perform as an amateur and semi-professional entertainer. In a 1971 interview with *Australian Women's Weekly* he indicates that his interest in performing was really sparked following the visit to Kalgoorlie by a minstrel company when he was about eight. "You know how a kid will follow a band," he recalls, "they marched through the streets every night before the show-this fellow in front spinning a baton. What ballyhoo! "I was stagestruck. I got a sapling out of the bush and tried to do what the drum major was doing. "By the time I was ten I was a drum major of the school fife band" (13-14).

After completing his schooling Paterson's father sent him to Melbourne to take up an apprenticeship as a hairdresser. When WWI broke out he was working in Hamilton, Victoria as a hairdresser and also drum major of the town's fife band. He enlisted in the A.I.F. and while in France with the 13th Battalion organised Australia's first concert party. After being injured Paterson was sent to Kent for a period of convalescence and subsequently organised another concert party there. The troupe ended up presenting a show at the Aldwych Theatre, London, with Paterson as the producer.

After serving with the 13th Battalion, 1st A.I.F. (mostly in France) Paterson returned to Australia and shortly afterwards accepted a contract from Harry Clay to play his Sydney suburban and south-western New South Wales circuit. This engagement led in early 1919 to Paterson and one of Clay's other emerging comedians, George Wallace, teaming up as a duo in the vein of Stiffy and Mo. Although the partnership of Dinks and Oncus was relatively brief, lasting only around four years (1920-1924), it had the distinction of being arguably the most popular comedy duo ever to work for Harry Clay.

When the Wallace and Paterson partnership ended in late 1923, Paterson formed a new stage act with Trixie Ireland, while at the same time briefly touring his own revusical troupe - Dinks and Co. Ireland had been on the stage from an early age, working with the Lilliputian Opera Company and later playing juvenile parts in melodramas like *The Squatter's Daughter*. She later teamed up with her three sisters, Edna, Edith and Rene as The Harmony Four. One of the first engagements for Dinks and Trixie was in the Hugh J. Ward/Fullers' 1923/1924 Christmas pantomime *Cinderella* (Princess Theatre, Melbourne). Shortly after completing this engagement, the pair 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).

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" (17 Oct. 1928, 38). 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 (E: 24 July 1929, 41). In their 1971 interview Paterson and Ireland recall one show at the National Theatre, Mayfair which they played with Jim Gerald. On their



Dinks and Oncus
Source: Charles Norman
When Vaudeville was King (1983), 105.

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" (14).



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 they possibly became the first Australians to work in television, doing an experimental show in 1933 with the BBC ("When Tivoli" 13-14). 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.

Dinks and Trixie

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



SEE ALSO

- [Dinks and Oncus](#)
- [Trixie Ireland](#)

FURTHER REFERENCE

"Ambitious Girl." FN: 18 Feb. 1922, 15 [re: Trixie Ireland]

"Dinks and Trixie Back Next Year." E: 17 Oct. (1928), 38.

"Dinks and Trixie Back to England After Aus. Tour." E: 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](#)." AWW: 30 June (1971), 13-14.

See also:

AV: 11 Dec. (1919), 16.
E: 12 Nov. (1924), 39 • 26 Nov. (1924), 28 • 1 Apr. (1925), 36.
GR: May (1924), 25.
TT: Oct. (1920), 20



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

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