Joe Derrane Irish Music Materials

1928-circa 2010
IM.M208.2017

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Irish Music Archives

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Summary Information

Creator: Derrane, Joe
Title: Joe Derrane Irish music materials
Collection Identifier: IM.M208.2017
Date [inclusive]: 1928-circa 2010
Physical Description: 1.75 Linear Feet (3 boxes)
Language of the Material: English
Abstract: A button accordion, an event program, photographs, a set list, and phonograph records belonging to Boston-area Irish musician Joe Derrane.

Preferred Citation

Identification of item, Box number, Folder number, Joe Derrane Irish music materials, IM.M208.2017, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.
Administrative Information

Publication Information

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Restrictions on Access

Collection is open for research. The accordion may be viewed by researchers, but may not be played.

Provenance


Related Materials

Related Materials

Other Burns collections containing Joe Derrane's music:

- Gaelic Roots collection, IM.M070, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.


Recordings found on Derrane's phonograph records have all been re-released and are currently available:

- All of the Copley recordings of Joe Derrane with John O'Connor were reissued on the 1993 CD, *Irish Accordion*. 
- Jerry O'Brien's "Kildare Fancy" was reissued on the 1995 CD, *Irish Accordion Masters*.

- O'Leary's Irish Minstrels recording of "Turkey in the Straw" is available as an MP3 on the Irish Traditional Music Archive web site: https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/sound/cid-230588.
Biographical Note

Joseph P. Derrane (1930-2016), a Boston-based, Irish-American musician and composer, was well-known for his innovative approach to Irish traditional music on the D/C# button accordion. Born in Boston to Irish immigrants Patrick J. Derrane and Helen E. (Galvin) Derrane, Derrane grew up in Roxbury and attended Mission Church High School. Both his parents and younger brothers, George and Paul, were musical.

From age 10 to 12 Derrane took lessons on the single-row melodeon with Cork-born Jerry O'Brien. As a teenager, Derrane taught himself to play piano accordion and the two-row D/C# button accordion. His musical influences included the German-American melodeon player John "Irish Dutchman" Kimmel. He performed regularly as a soloist and with groups, at house parties, Dudley Street dance halls, and other venues, as well as on live radio.

Copley Records invited high-school senior Derrane to record commercially. The resulting recordings, with accompaniment by pianist John Connors, were praised for their precision, ornaments, and rhythmic variations. He went on to record with various collaborators, including his mentor Jerry O'Brien.

Derrane met Anne Connaughton in the early 1950s while doing a series of gigs in New York City. They married in 1955. By 1959 they settled in Randolph, Massachusetts with their two young children, Joseph and Sheila. With a family to support, and with Irish dance hall audiences declining, Derrane shifted his musical focus to piano accordion, keyboard, and synthesizer. Between 1962 and 1989, while holding various administrative positions at the MBTA, he performed jazz, pop, and repertoire from other ethnic traditions, including ten years in a duo with his son. In the late 1980s, Derrane retired from the MBTA, then from music, and took up part-time office work for St. Timothy's Catholic Church in Norwood.

In 1993, Rego Irish Records and Tapes compiled Derrane's earliest recordings and re-released them on CD. Following this re-release, Derrane was persuaded to try the button accordion again. An invitation to Virginia's 1994 Wolf Trap Festival ended his decades-long hiatus from the button box. The success of Derrane's performance with piano accompanist Felix Dolan prompted Derrane's return to Irish music, launching international performances, recording, and teaching.

The choice of instrument was integral to his playing style. At a 1994 accordion festival in Québec, Derrane tried a button box by French accordion maker Bertrand Gaillard and soon ordered a customized instrument. The first D/C# accordion that he purchased from Gaillard had 12 basses, with voicings of Derrane's design. In 1997, he purchased a second box, based on the maker's Cristal model, with 14 basses and a slightly modified swing tuning on the treble side. At Derrane's request, the bass couplers were removed to allow both major and minor options.

In 2004, the National Endowment for the Arts recognized Derrane with a National Heritage Fellowship. He retired from performing following the release of his final CD, Grove Lane (2010) with guitarist John McGann, but continued to teach privately. Derrane died July 22, 2016 after a long illness.

Sources:
Scope and Contents

These materials document the Irish music career of Boston-area accordionist Joe Derrane. The 1940s recordings that brought him recognition are included, as is his copy of a phonograph featuring his mentor Jerry O'Brien. His late-career return to performance is documented by his diatonic button accordion, the second made for him by the French craftsman Bertrand Gaillard, a modified version of the maker's Cristal model. The accordion case also contained one of Derrane’s set lists. Further materials include a program and a photograph from his receipt of a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship, and photographs of him with his Gaillard accordion.

Collection Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bertrand Gaillard button accordion with strap and medal of the Virgin Mary (Miraculous Medal), 1997</td>
<td>Accordion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-written set list, between 1997-2010</td>
<td>box 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship program, 2004</td>
<td>box 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Photographs of Derrane receiving the National Endowment for the Arts Master Artist award (with Earle Hitchner), and with his Gaillard button accordion, 2004-probably 2006

box 1 folder 3

Phonograph records

**Material Specific Details:** All phonograph records are 78 rpm 10" discs, with the exception of *The Old House.*

**Derrane, Joe with John Connors.** Side A: Collier's and Maurice Casey's Reels, Copley 9-110-A (3703-A); Side B: Mason's Apron and Buckley's Fancy Reels, Copley 9-110-B (3707-B), late 1940s

Shared box

**Derrane, Joe with John Connors.** Side A: Jackson's Polka, Copley 9-108-A (3705-A); Side B: Echo and Lawson's Hornpipes, Copley 9-108-B (3705-B), late 1940s

Shared box

**Derrane, Joe with John Connors.** Side A: John Kimmel's Favorite (An Accordion Fantasy), Copley 9-144-A; Side B: Peter Feeney's Dream and Flower of the Flock Medley of Reels, Copley 9-144-B, late 1940s

Shared box

**Derrane, Joe with John Connors.** Side A: The Merry Blacksmith and The Limestone Rock Medley of Reels, Copley 9-147-A; Side B: The Fisherman's Widow and Devin's Favorite Medley of Jigs, Copley 9-147-B, late 1940s

Shared box

**Derrane, Joe with John Connors.** Side A: Showman's Fancy Hornpipe, Copley 9-145-A; Side B: Boys at the Lough and The Long Strand Medley of Reels, Copley 9-145-B (2 copies), late 1940s

Shared box

**Derrane, Joe with John Connors.** Side A: Taylor's Fancy and Cronin's Rambles Hornpipes, Copley 9-109-A (3706-A); Side B: Salamance and Clancy's Fancy Reels, Copley 9-109-B (3706-B), late 1940s

Shared box

**Derrane, Joe with John Connors.** Side A: The Union Reel, Copley 9-146-A; Side B: Harvest Home and The Bird in the Tree Medley of Hornpipes, Copley 9-146-B, late 1940s

Shared box

**McDonald, John with Joe Derrane.** Sides A and B: *The Old House,* Vogt Quality Recordings CSRV 2734 (LP), 1970s

Shared box

**Side A:** O'Brien, Jerry. The Kildare Fancy, Columbia 33312-F (110064); **Side B:** O'Leary's Irish Minstrels. Turkey in the Straw (5th Figure Irish Dance Set No. 2), Columbia 33312-F (110029), 1928

Shared box