

# **Ada Rehan papers**

**Ms. Coll. 191**

**Finding aid prepared by Kimberly Tully.**

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Last updated on February 01, 2018.

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

1997

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
<b>Creator</b>	Rehan, Ada, 1857-1916
<b>Title</b>	Ada Rehan papers
<b>Call number</b>	Ms. Coll. 191
<b>Date</b>	circa 1879-1918
<b>Extent</b>	3 boxes
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Abstract</b>	The collection consists primarily of correspondence addressed to Ada Rehan but also includes some memorabilia, such as an analysis of Katharine in <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> in Ada Rehan's hand, clippings, dedications, menus and invitations, and programs and playbills.

**Cite as:**

Ada Rehan papers, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

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## Biography/History

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Ada Rehan was an Irish-born American theatrical actress best known for her regal beauty and her comedic talent. She was born Bridget Crehan in Limerick, Ireland on April 22, 1857. Her family emigrated to the United States and settled in Brooklyn, New York when she was around five years old. Following her older sisters on to the stage Ada made her stage debut in 1873 in Newark, New Jersey as Clara in *Across the Continent*. She then went on to join stock companies at Philadelphia's Arch Street Theatre, Louisville, KY's Barney Macauley's Theatre, and Albany, NY's Albaugh's Theatre. An error in an early program at the Arch Street Theatre gave Ada her stage name.

The attention of the prominent theatre manager Augustin Daly was first drawn to Ada during her stint as Bianca in a production of *Katherine & Petruchio* in Albany. She was engaged under Daly's management in 1879. Her first performances under his management included Mary Standish in August Daly's own *Pique* and Virginie in Zola's *L'Assommoir*.

On September 17, 1879 Daly's Theatre raised its curtains at its location on the corner of Broadway and Thirtieth in New York City. Ada's first role in the new theatre was Nelly Beers in *Love's Young Dream*. She made her first appearance on the London stage at Toole's Theatre under Daly's management. In 1886 she went on a performance tour through Paris, Hamburg, Berlin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and Dublin. In 1887 she was Katherine in the first American production of *The Taming of the Shrew* to include the Induction. Performed at Daly's Theatre in New York, the play was a grand success. She continued to perform seasons in London at the Lyceum Theater and in Paris at the Vaudeville Theatre. Ada is best known and most loved for her performance of Katherine in Shakespeare's comedy.

Ada Rehan soon found her niche in the classic comedies of Shakespeare and Sheridan and the new comedies of the day. Her portrayals of Katherine, Rosalind, Viola, Beatrice and Lady Teazle were well received by both critics and audiences. She was a principal figure in Daly's company throughout most of her career. She was often paired with fellow actor John Drew and their work together was widely popular. After Augustin Daly's death in 1899, Ada continued to perform those roles he had chosen for her.

Ada Rehan continued performing until her retirement in 1905. She had emerged from the anonymity of stock companies to become one of the most beloved comedic actresses of her time. Her biographer and contemporary William Winter's glowing words of praise are a testimony to her talent and appeal, "Ada Rehan was a creature of simplicity and truth, and likewise of piquancy and fascination...Her thoughts, and often her talk, dwelt upon traits of character, fabrics of art, and beauties of nature and she loved rather to speak of these than of the commonplace and practical affairs of the passing day." Ada Rehan died on January 8, 1916.

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## Scope and Contents

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The three containers of Ada Rehan papers consist predominately of correspondence addressed to Ada Rehan. The collection was apparently put together after Ada's death in 1916. The majority of included material is dated circa 1879 to 1918. There are 168 identified autographs, alphabetized by the correspondent's name, in the collection. Some of the more extensive folders of correspondence include letters from Ada's colleagues on the stage: Constant Coqueling, Sir Henry Irving, Edwin Booth, John Drew and Dame Ellen Terry. Other notable correspondence from literary and cultural figures of the time include letters from Augustin Daly, Horace Howard Furness, Henry James, Clement Scott, and William Winter. The largest number of letters from a single correspondent are those from George Bernard Shaw, Irish-born English author and playwright. All but five letters are handwritten copies of the originals and include the return correspondence from Ada Rehan. Note that this selection of letters is found in two

folders. In addition, there is on folder of unidentified autographs directly after the alphabetized correspondents.

A majority of the correspondence are letters of praise or congratulations to Miss Rehan on her latest performances and achievements. Some letters deal with the technical and practical details of the actress's management and promotion. One selection of correspondence from Graham Robertson is beautifully illustrated with hand-drawn and hand-painted pictures of Ada and ideas for custom-designed costumes. Another interesting part of the correspondence is a contract for performances with Oscar Wilde. Another large portion of the letters express condolences on the event of Augustin Daly's death in 1899.

Five folders following the incoming correspondence contain some general papers and memorabilia that belonged to Ada Rehan and some of which were collected after her death. A lengthy analysis of Katharine in *The Taming of the Shrew* in Rehan's own handwriting, newspaper clippings (including Rehan's obituary), various poems and dedications, signed menus, invitations, playbills and programs are found in these folders.

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## **Administrative Information**

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

1997

Finding aid prepared by Kimberly Tully.

### **Access Restrictions**

This collection is open for research use.

### **Use Restrictions**

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### **Source of Acquisition**

Purchased from George S. MacManus, 1963.

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## **Controlled Access Headings**

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## **FORM/GENRE(S)**

- Correspondence
- Manuscripts, American--19th century
- Manuscripts, American--20th century
- Manuscripts, English--19th century
- Manuscripts, English--20th century
- Playbills
- Theater programs

## **SUBJECT(S)**

- Actors
- Performing arts
- Theater--United States--19th century
- Theater--United States--20th century
- Women
- Women in the theater

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## **Other Finding Aids**

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For a complete listing of correspondents, do the following title search in Franklin: Ada Rehan Papers.

## Collection Inventory

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### I. INCOMING CORRESPONDENCE.

	Box	Folder
Abel, T. Steward, 1890.	1	1
Abott, Bessie, undated.	1	2
Adwell, John, 1888.	1	3
Aldrich, Louis, 1890.	1	4
Aldrich, Mildred, 1898.	1	5
Alexander, Sir George, 1901.	1	6
Anderson, Philip, 1890.	1	7
Arnold, Sir Edwin, 1892.	1	8
Ayer, Harriet Hubbard, undated.	1	9
Ballou, William Hosea, 1892.	1	10
Bancroft, Marie, undated.	1	11
Barrington, Christine, 1890.	1	12
Barrington, Eric, 1890.	1	13
Beel, Margaret, undated.	1	14

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Beere, F. Bernard, undated.	1	15
Bell, Hillary, 1890.	1	16
Bellew, Kyrle, 1906.	1	17
Benjamin, Marcus, 1890.	1	18
Biggs, Herman Michael, 1907.	1	19
Blashfield, Edwin Howland, undated.	1	20
Booth, Edwin, 1891.	1	21
Boucicault, Dion, 1887.	1	22
Bourchier, Arthur, undated.	1	23
Bright, Reginald E. Golding, 1893.	1	24
Brownlow, Adelaide, undated.	1	25
Bryhton, G.H., 1880-1890.	1	26
Burnand, Sir Francis Cowley, undated.	1	27
Calmour, Alfred Cecil, undated.	1	28
Campbell, P.F., undated.	1	29
Camps, Joseph, 1892.	1	30
Cantwell, J. Stephen, 1893.	1	31
Chambers, Charles Haddon, 1903.	1	32
Clark, Mary Brodie, 1891.	1	33



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Clarke, George, 1899.	1	34
Coleman, Charles C., 1899.	1	35
Collins, Arthur, undated.	1	36
Coquelin, Constant, 1894.	1	37
Crawford, F. Marion, 1893.	1	38
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Davies, Hubert Henry, 1899-1903.	1	43
Davis, Lucius Clarke, 1884.	1	44
Dickins, Richard & Isabel, 1911-1912.	1	45
Donald, John, 1899.	1	46
Drew, John, 1891.	1	47
Durham, Helen, 1903.	1	48
Ellison, Rodman Carlisle, 1890.	1	49
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Fawcett, Edgar, undated.	1	51
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Gerry, John Russell, 1888-1889.	1	57
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Gilder, Jeannette L., 1900.	1	59
Gordon, Charles George, 1874.	1	60
Gould, George, undated.	1	61
Grundy, Sydney, 1899.	1	62
Hamilton, M.F., 1899.	1	63
Hardman, Lady, undated.	1	64
Harriman, Sarah, undated.	1	65
Hartley, J. Scott, 1889.	1	66
Hatch, Mary R.P., undated.	1	67
Hawke, 1914-1915.	1	68
Hector, Annie French, 1894.	1	69
Hellering, Lisa, 1891.	1	70
Hichens, Robert Smythe, 1913.	1	71

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Himmings, John S., 1901.	1	72
Hutchinson, John W., Jr., 1892.	1	73
Irving, Sir Henry, 1886-1904.	1	74
James, Henry, 1892.	1	75
Johnson, Benjamin Pitt, 1899.	1	76
Jones, Henry Arthur, 1891.	1	77
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Knowles, Sir James, 1894.	2	85
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La Fleur, Floreece, undated.	2	87
Lancaster, Albert Edmund, 1899.	2	88
Langmaid, L.W., undated.	2	89
Langtry, Lillie, undated.	2	90

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Lathrop, G.H., 1895.	2	91
Leary, Anna, 1902.	2	92
<i>Life Magazine</i> , James McKeefe, 1889.	2	93
Linton, Elizabeth Lynn, 1894.	2	94
Lowrie, E.R., 1894.	2	95
Lytton, Neville, 1911.	2	96
MacDonagh, Frank, 1897.	2	97
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## II. MEMORABILIA.

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