

this type of song to a level previously unknown, and if other popular composers would follow his scholarly example we might have a welcome renaissance of ballad singing. His songs? Maybe you couldn't name the composer, but you've heard two of them often enough—"I'll Walk Beside You" and "For England." On the other hand, what the Iraq National Anthem goes like nobody knows save Alan Murray and the Iraq population.

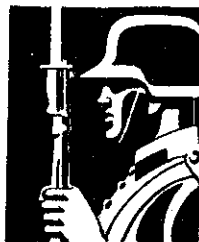
French Opera

ASKED suddenly to name three French operatic composers, the average listener might well flounder, "Oh, well, Gounod of course and er-er Gounod, and what's-his-name who wrote Carmen—" But for those listeners who imagine that French Opera began with the Soldiers' Chorus and ended with the Toreador's Song, the evening of French Opera from 4YA would be a revelation of the scope of such a subject. The very first aria presented, "Bois Epais," by Lully, was perhaps the loveliest; there is a quietude about it which the turbulent theatricalism of later works seems entirely to miss. The same composer's scene from Molière illustrated very clearly the difference in temperament between French Opera and its Italian or German prototype. When we reach Auber we are on the track of the fluent and florid style which to the average mind is the essence of Grand Opera, and the succession of Meyerbeer, Flotow, Gounod, Bizet is inevitable in its musical evolution. There is only one bough of the operatic tree which refuses to be trained in the conservative way, and that is the turbulent Berlioz, who was described as "saturated with Shakespeare even when occupied with Goethe." It seems a pity that the originality of his ideas is the very thing which makes producers fight shy of him, for it would be spectacular to see as well

as hear his operatic fantasies. It occurs to me that here is a splendid opportunity for some intellectual motion picture director to lead the way with an entirely new type of artistic creation!

Backfire at the BBC

"CHANGING THE TUNE," which came over from 2YA the other evening, is interesting, but as propaganda must be one of the feeblest sessions the BBC have perpetrated. The purpose of this "satirical document" (sic), we were told, was to show how Dr. Goebbels has had to alter the songs of the German people to suit the changing fortunes of war. In each case we were given first the recorded German version with heavily ironical comments by a very self-satisfied BBC voice, and then the same voice singing the English translation. The session began with a song of 1939 vintage entitled "We'll All Set Off Against England" (heard in the film version of *The Moon Is Down*), continued through a rousing melody about the Afrika Korps ("Let's All



Go to Africa") and the sentimental "Lilli Marlene" (unfortunately just as popular with our own troops as with our enemies!) and finished with a nostalgic little ditty in which three Germans on garrison duty in Russia yearn for home. Now there is no argument that originally there was self-confidence among the Germans and that this feeling must now have given place to disillusionment. But what about the complacency of our own mood at the beginning of the war, and our own songs: "We'll Hang Our Washing on the Siegfried Line" and "Run, Rabbit, Run"?

SITUATIONS VACANT

First Query of a Serviceman

"EXCUSE me, where can I get hold of a daily newspaper?" We had one with us, so handed it over to one of the service personnel who, with 218 others, arrived in Wellington from overseas for Christmas.

"No," he said, by way of explanation, "I don't want the racing news, but the situations vacant. I'm sorting myself out a good job." And there he sat, drinking tea, devouring cakes and, with equal gusto, the vacant positions columns. In this draft of returned men were 83 repatriated prisoners of war, 20 escaped prisoners of war, 30 sick and wounded men, 10 nurses, nine WAACS, 50 naval personnel, six wives of N.Z.E.F. men, a child, and 10 Duntroon cadets.

The young job-seeker was too anxious about settling down again in New Zealand at the earliest possible moment to talk. He had been away a long time. He went down the columns, borrowed a pencil and marked a few likely items for further reference, and then remarked, with an anticipatory smile, "Plenty of jobs going here."

We asked him about his life since he left New Zealand. With the skill of a trained diplomat he skated round various subjects for a quarter of an hour. All we could get from him was

that he had had a "pretty patchy time." It was "so-so, you know." Some parts were "just great," others were "not so hot. Gosh! but I'm glad to see old Wellington again."

His name? No, he wouldn't give it. "Some blokes," he said, "are pretty good at handing out their impressions. Me? I'm no good at all. But if you want to quote me at all, call me George. That might be anybody."

He did deliver himself of one impression, however, and that was the extraordinarily good fortune of New Zealand in missing a first-hand experience of bombs, shells and invading forces. "Not that I would like to see it any different," he said, "but I wouldn't be surprised if one or two blokes could do with a little shake-up, just to let them know there's a war on."

THE reception to men and women who have returned from the fighting fronts was very warm and obviously appreciated.

However, we saw some scenes of reunion which we hope will never need to be repeated again once the last victorious draft has come home.

"Golly," a young sailor said to us, "what with all the excitement of getting back, I've forgotten to send a wire home. Where's the place where you send these things?" We showed him and left him, crouching over the desk sending, probably, the longest telegram he had pencilled in his life.

—E.R.B.

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