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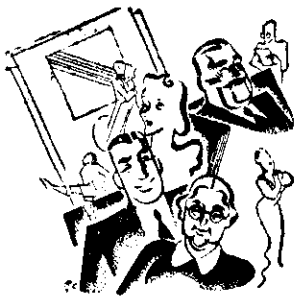


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Divided They Fall

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN are so generally accepted as an indivisible partnership that I have not reckoned on ever having to consider which of the two might be the stronger—any more than I might wonder whether it was Bryant or May that put the striking power into the match, or whether Lee or Perrin put the pep into the Worcester-shire sauce. The recent spate of Gilbert and Sullivan provided by the NBS

RADIO VIEWSREEL

What Our Commentators Say

has forced such considerations upon me. Gilbert's pen is needed to deal with the present situation in which parts of these operas pop up all over the country in no particular sequence, first acts cruelly sundered from second acts (1YA even followed Act I of *Iolanthe* by Act II of *The Sorcerer* the other night). With Gilbert's shrewd, lively dialogue gone, and its place taken by a commentary, we have the nearest possible approach to pure Sullivan. As I listened the other evening to *Iolanthe* I thought that a duel was being fought between the sounds from the radio and the blue- and gilt book on my shelf labelled "Savoy Operas," and that the book was holding its own. Either of these alone can call up memories of the whole partnerships seen on the stage. Yet Sullivan is not a Verdi nor even a Rossini, and I think Gilbert has been the greater strength in keeping the operas alive in our minds, in schools and around the domestic piano. Divided they fall, especially Sullivan.

The Hero's Wife

I AM disappointed in the "Nick Carter" series from 4ZB. Nick was always a favourite of mine; my hero-worship dates back to the days when I read him in paper covers, under pain of parental disapproval, at times I ought to have spent on homework. This radio serial is the first inkling I have had that the heroes of one's youth do not carry their glamour over into one's adult life. Not only is it just one more of those fast-moving thrillers with a corpse on every page, but it allows the hero's wife to butt in and discover these corpses—allotting her one split second for registering horror and dismay, and another split second for a fiery love-scene during which it seems one corpse, forgotten by all present, merely lies and waits for the action to finish. The listener, who is the only one who seems interested in the corpse for the moment, is bound to find either the body or the heroine redundant. No, let us have our detectives unmarried, and relegate the love-stories to the morning-tea session.

Tricorne

"MUSIC BY SPANISH COMPOSERS" is a not infrequent visitor to Christchurch programmes and one listens with a view, among other things, to seeking some definite national quality in the music. It is fairly often to be found, and such a work as "Salute to the Bullfighter" could scarcely fail to possess it. But one case recently where the distinctively Spanish quality lay less in the music than in the title was de Falla's "Three-Cornered Hat," to which a picturesque story could be appended. A reforming King of Spain in the 18th Century, Charles III, issued an edict forbidding the citizens of Madrid to continue wearing the national garb of broad-brimmed hats and voluminous black cloak, and ordering them to resort instead to French models. The earlier wear was, he said, too conducive to disguise and assassination and so forth—and the phrase "cloak-and-dagger work" bears him out. But so vehement was the popular resentment that that despotic and absolute monarch, lacking the instruments of pacification peculiar to the

present democratic age, found it necessary to take a country vacation until his good city of Madrid had simmered down; and the edict had to be withdrawn. For some reason, however, this episode never figures prominently in the history of liberty versus tyranny—and it took the combination of a Spanish composer and a Viewsreel commentator seeking grist for his mill to resurrect it in these columns.

The Knavish Sprite

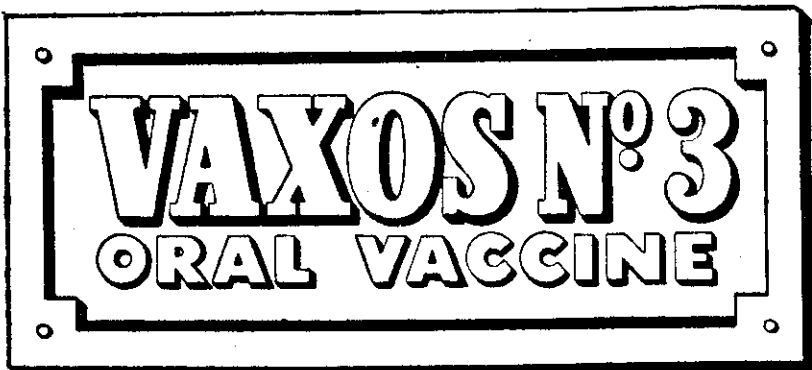
AN eminent dramatic critic, speaking of past actors in the part of Shakespeare's Puck, said with truth: "We all have our store of ghastly memories— young and cockney, old and whimsy, fey and hoydenish." In all of these categories at once we must regretfully place the hero of Olga Katzin's post-Shakespearean fantasy, "Puck's Post," broadcast by 3YA the other day. The plot is briefly this: Puck, charged with the delivery of a letter by Oberon, and being unwilling to brave the Luftwaffe-infested skies of London, places it in a pillarbox and decamps. Various other persons have drifted up by the time a browned-off Puck returns, Oberon having taken a poor view of his labour-saving expedient and sent him back for the letter. The mortals, however, have by this time opened the box and the letter; it proves



to be an ultimatum of Oberon's to the late A. Hitler, warning him of particularly lethal enchantments which await his legions if they set foot in England. The mortals then disperse, uplifted in spirit and instructed in What They Are Fighting For; and Puck recovers the letter with a final burst of that Puckish laughter which one remembers at odd moments, always with a twitch of the nerves. I am afraid it will not do—even apart from a certain faerie facetiousness in execution; the fact is that the Shakespearean Puck cannot be brought into direct contact with real life. The only mortal who ever got really close to Puck and his world was a weaver by trade; and he had to go somewhat more than halfway to meet the fairies, with certain concessions such as asses' heads and the like. I cannot see Oberon and Puck really joining the anti-Fascist front in any effective way; though such threats might come with real weight from Kipling's Puck, who always regarded Oberon with supreme contempt, and with whom—a dark and shameful confession—I am on far better terms than with Shakespeare's.

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