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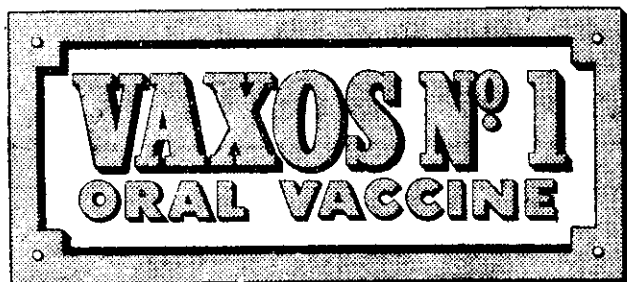
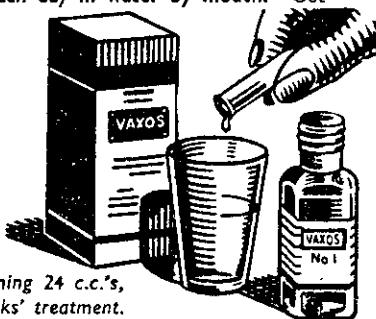
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"CHU CHIN CHOW"

Stage Favourite Recorded for Radio

A BBC production of *Chu Chin Chow*, lasting one hour, will be broadcast by 2YA at 8.0 p.m. on Wednesday, September 25 (or on 2YC if Parliament is broadcast). It was broadcast first to English listeners and the BBC transcription of it has now come to New Zealand. S. R. Littlewood, a dramatic critic, and editor of *The Stage*, wrote a short introductory article about *Chu Chin Chow* for *Radio Times* readers when the production was broadcast in 1944. Here is what he had to say:

WHAT is the secret link between our youngest present-day listeners and the audience at His Majesty's on the last day of summer in 1916? We who were at His Majesty's will never forget how the thronging colours and melodies and familiar marvels of *Chun Chin Chow* created together a charm which was to hold London audiences through five years of war and peace. The link is, surely, let cynics say what they will, that romance still lives for its own sake. It does so more than ever in wartime, when far-off wonders are near and true. We have to be all the more grateful for that rainy day in Manchester when Oscar Asche—inspired partly by the success of *Kismet* and partly by his own South Sea adventures—decided to take the old story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves for what it was worth.

Little he knew that £700,000 was to be made out of his simple but happy thought of getting back to the old Arabian Nights atmosphere that had been destroyed by pantomime comedians for so long. On that dull afternoon in 1916 "a musical tale of the East" was born.

Release from the Humdrum

Delicious as Frederic Norton's music was and is, Oscar Asche's faith in romance still means as much to it as ever Gilbert did to Sullivan. Thanks to this we have for one little hour and more the joy of release from our own humdrum scenes and social conventions. The camels and donkeys, the dusky slave girls, the merchants, "shayks," and robbers who crowd the cave, palace, market-place,

and cactus grove of *Chu Chin Chow* are no mere pageant figures. They are real in spirit as in fact. It is the life of romance—old and distant as the Crusades and yet close at hand as the Zoo.

Chu Chin Chow himself, with his pompous stride; Kasim, the mean and wealthy; Ali Baba, his poor but lovable brother; comely Alcolom and homely Mahbubah; Mustafa, the toiling cobbler; Zahrat, the adored—they give us a delightful holiday from western worries as well as western morals. But for the moment how real and human they are! In some revivals this genuine life of romance has been forgotten. "Any Time's Kissing Time" was sung by Courtice Pounds and Aileen D'Orme on the first night with a gentle grace and sincerity which one misses when that middle-aged love-affair is merely "guyed." Of course, Ali and Alcolom did happen to be married—and not to each other. But in the world of romance, where dreams come true, the colonels in the audience understand and forgive them. Is not this one of the secrets which listeners of to-day can share with the playgoers of the last war?

The cobbler, too, if he lived here and now would belong to a union and refuse to "cobble all day." But as he lives for romance he just sings a song about it. Officially, of course, one should be sorry for Mahbubah, the shrew of a wife over whom the late Sydney Fairbrother lavished the riches of her character. In this musical tale of the East it is enough that she prompted Frederic Norton to one of the gayest and catchiest of his lilt. As for Zahrat Al-Kulub, she is, of course, romance personified. On the first night, one remembers, the audience wanted a better chance for Lily Brayton. So a new scene, with the mysterious "desert lover" duly arriving, was introduced during the run. But it made curiously little difference. It is another link with listeners that those of us who were in the mood for romance were quite able to imagine him.

The radio adaptation is by Henrik Ege, and the producers are Gwen Williams and Harold Neden. Here is the cast:

(continued on next page)