

# "CARMEN" SEASON BEGINS NEXT MONTH

*NZBS National Orchestra and London Stars*

**T**HIS year the four main centres of New Zealand will see and hear a full stage presentation of Bizet's *Carmen*, one of the most popular of all operas, with English artists engaged by the NZBS for the two main roles. *Carmen* was first produced at the Paris Opera Comique on March 3, 1875. It was based on a version by Meilhac and Halévy of a study by Prosper Mérimée, and in reconstructing the story in dramatic form the authors produced one of the most striking and successful libretti in the whole range of opera. In this "book" Bizet found material exactly fitted for his romantic music, and the resulting opera, though at first coolly received in Paris, has long since taken its place, by universal consent, in every operatic repertoire.

Janet Howe, who appeared in the role of *Carmen* at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith, last year, will take the lead. She was coached for the part by another famous *Carmen*, Zélie de Lussan, who is considered to be one of the most notable

interpreters of the role in operatic history. Janet Howe was born in London, of Scottish parents. After studying at the Metropolitan Academy and the Royal College of Music she went to Vienna and trained under Fritz Lunzer and Walter Stiasny, of the Vienna State Opera. When the war began she was appearing in Milan and soon afterwards she returned to England, where she quickly built up an excellent reputation on the concert platform and in oratorio. One of the first to recognise her talent was the late Sir Henry Wood, who booked her to appear in the Albert Hall "Proms."

Arthur Servent, who will play Don Jose, has sung the role frequently at Covent Garden. He is at present under contract to the Covent Garden Opera Syndicate and has its permission to visit New Zealand. Other principals will be engaged in New Zealand to make the tour, and the minor parts and choruses will be taken by local singers in the different centres. The National Orchestra of the NZBS will play for each performance.

The New Zealand season of *Carmen* will consist of eight nights in each centre, and the Dunedin performances, which will start at His Majesty's Theatre on Thursday, May 27, will be spread over a fortnight. The opera will be produced at the Theatre Royal, Christchurch, between June 24 and July 10; at the Grand Opera House, Wellington, between July 22 and August 7; and at His Majesty's Theatre, Auckland, between August 19 and September 4.

For the information of those who like to mix personal history with their opera, Celestine Galli-Marie was the first *Carmen*, as she was the first Mignon. Among her famous successors to the role were Minnie Hauk, Pauline Lucca, Zélie de Lussan, Emma Calvé, Clothilde Bressler-Gianoli and Maria Gay. Lotte Lehmann made her American debut as *Carmen*; Adelina Patti also played it. Olive Fremstad, Geraldine Farrar, Mary Garden, Conchita Supervia, Maria Jeritza, Bruna Castagna and Rosa Ponselle were among the other later *Carmens*.



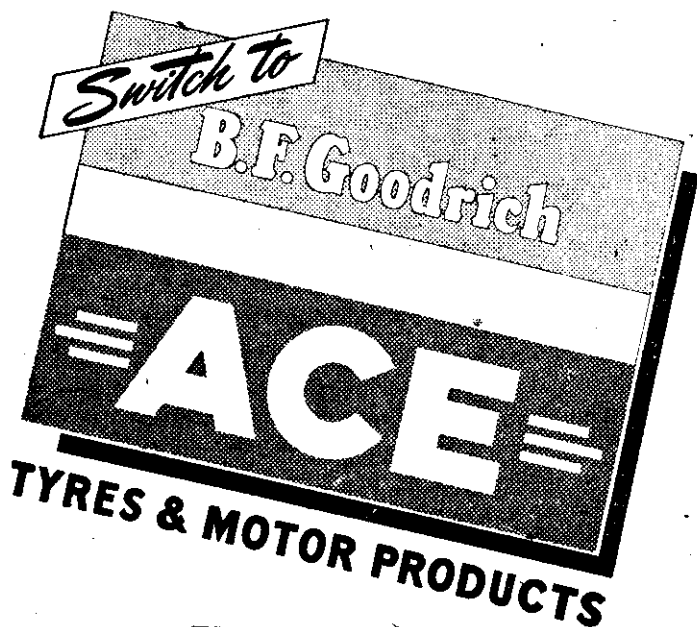
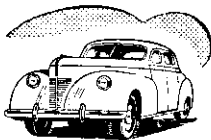
## Suite from Opera

**W**HEN the operatic score of *Carmen* arrived in New Zealand a few months ago Andersen Tyrer and other members of the NZBS decided to make a special orchestral arrangement of some of the more popular melodies and songs from the opera in the form of a short suite. Their idea was that this suite could be performed by the National Orchestra at some of its concerts this season to give audiences a foretaste of what they could expect when Bizet's opera is performed in the four main centres later in the year.

A selection was made from the score of three entr'actes, the overture, and two

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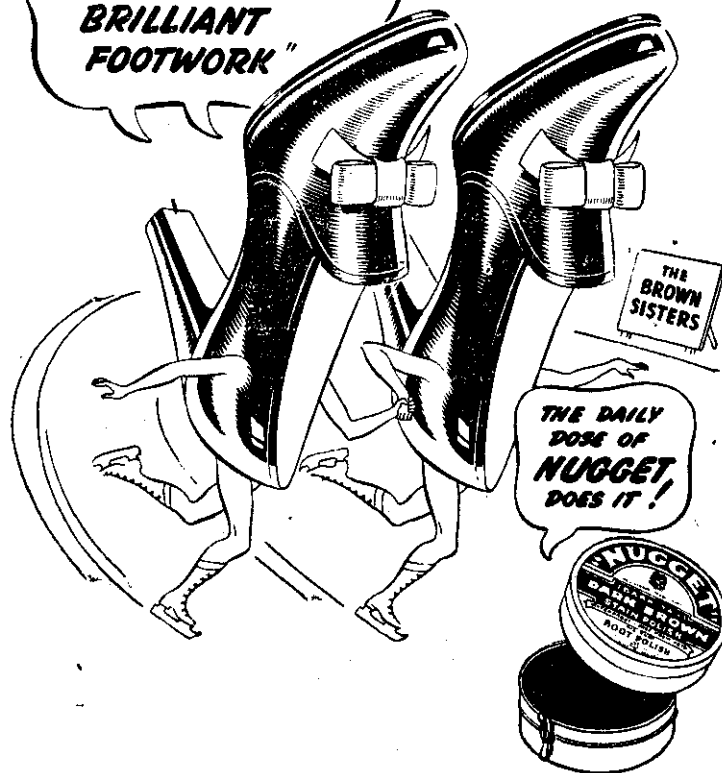
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