

By *Swarf*

SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT

SOME of the English literary figures of the nineties took their music hall songs and singers seriously. People who wrote affectionately of the great performers of the day included Max Beer-bohm, E. V. Lucas and James Agate. Sacheverell Sitwell not long ago wrote a piece which he called "Morning, Noon and Night in London," on Alfred Concanen's coloured song-covers of the sixties and seventies. Summing up the merits of the songs, Sir Richard Terry, for many years director of music at Westminster Cathedral, says that many may have been banal, but those which have lived have a melodic and rhythmic vitality; and from the nineties onward, when they got away from the old vamping type of accompaniment, the best were stamped with real musicianship. It is almost awe-inspiring, says Christopher Pulling in his "They Were Singing," to find the tune of G. H. Macdermott's song "By Jingo" analysed as "a pasticcio of the Kyrie in Mozart's Twelfth Mass, and the ballad 'Castles in the Air.'" But, asks Pulling, should we still remember "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay" if it had not been for "La Donna é Mobile?" Should we have gone mad on "Yes, We Have No Bananas," if Handel had never composed his "Hallelujah Chorus?" or should we have gone "Chasing Rainbows" without Chopin's inspiration?

with the rank of Major in 1946. For the last seven years he has done orchard work in the apple lands of Nelson.

In its first studio broadcast from Station 2XN at 8.30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24, the Hills Choir will present a programme ranging from Elizabethan airs to songs of the present day. Lilian Beere will accompany some of the pieces.

"INQUIRER" (Brooklyn, Wellington) asks about Frank Parker and Marion Marlow, popular duettists, heard the other evening from 2ZB.

Frank Parker, who was born in Manhattan, started out as a church chorister. He spent some time at the Milan Conservatory and returned to the U.S. to appear in Broadway productions. Eventually he was given leading roles and later he joined the casts of such well-known shows as those run by Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, and Eddie Cantor. He has also sung in grand opera.

Marion Marlow was born in St. Louis and began her radio career at the astonishing age of five. Aided by her mother she took up "little theatre" and light opera engagements, and later in Hollywood she underwent dramatic and vocal training which secured her a role in a London musical production. On returning to America she sang for one night at a hotel on Miami Beach and

HERE is Bill McGuffie at the piano in the BBC's "Show Band Show." As a boy his professional future seemed assured until the day he caught his hand in the door of a telephone kiosk and had to have the third finger of his right hand amputated. His music teacher saw this accident as the end of a promising career, but Bill was more optimistic and practised more fiercely than ever. He was voted the best jazz pianist of 1953 by two English musical papers.

attracted the attention of Arthur Godfrey, the American radio and television star, who engaged her for his shows.

"REGARDING the inquiry about the Winkler Quartet in *Open Microphone*, I would like to tell you that this group consists of two brothers and two sisters, all members of the same family."

MORE ABOUT Moore (Burwood, THE WINKLERS Christchurch). "However, I was always under the impression that they were Austrians, as I remember their singing long before I thought of coming to New Zealand. Their records are for me my most prized link with my native country. One of the recordings mentioned in *The Listener* is "Fischerin vom Bodensee," which means the "Fishergirl from Lake Constance." Another well-known record is "Fliege mit mir in die Heimat," which became popular as the hit "Forever and Ever" a year or two ago. There are many more of their quaint recordings. I hope this little information may be of some help to you."

Thank you, Mrs. Moore.

"EFFIE" (Tauranga): Diana Decker is an up and coming young American actress who went to Britain as a child, but "can't get rid of" her American accent. She has appeared (mainly in "tizzy" parts) in revue.

"GABIE" (c/o Hospital Staff, New Plymouth): Eric Kunz, sometimes called a baritone and sometimes a bass-baritone, has come into international prominence since the end of World War II. At present he is

SMALL MAN, appearing at the Metropolitan Opera House. He was born about 42 years ago in Austria, the son of a minor Government official. The singer's early musical training consisted of rather indifferent choir practice at school and church. He used to perform at small social gatherings and at one of these he was heard by a teacher who had him enrolled in the Vienna Conservatorium. After more downs than ups in professional life he reached a part in *Don Giovanni* at the Vienna Opera. His career was interrupted by World War II and little was heard of him until 1947, when he visited London as principal baritone with the Vienna State Opera. Though he has a big voice Eric Kunz is of slight build, and somewhat



BBC photograph

like the dancer Robert Helpmann. It has been said that there is no male singer on the European stage with more charm than Kunz.

"PEGGY LEE FAN" (Wellington) wants to know all about Peggy Lee and Billy Eckstine.

Peggy Lee (Norma Egstrom before her marriage) has been singing as long as she can remember. She began in Minneapolis with BLONDE BUT SHY Sev Olson, and for a brief period she sang with Will Osborne's Band; then she did single turns at Palm Springs, California, and Chicago's Hotel Ambassador. Benny Goodman engaged her in 1941. Aged 34, Peggy Lee is described as "blonde, shy and sartorially impeccable."

Billy Eckstine came to light round about 1946 when American night club managers were hiring a little-known Negro singer and labelling him "The Sepia Sinatra" and "The Bronze Baladeer" to lure customers in. Eckstine found his way to Broadway's Paramount Theatre. For a few songs, in association with Duke Ellington, Eckstine was able to make a respectable weekly wage. Pittsburgh-born Billy Eckstine is described as a modest, soft-spoken man off stage, who lives quietly when the auto-graph-hunters let him, with his wife and his collie "Crooner" in Manhattan. His one recreation is golf.

A. W. CHIARONI (Invercargill): All I can tell you about Renata Tebaldi, the young Italian soprano, is that her singing in most of Italy's major opera houses, in London, Edinburgh, Los Angeles and San Francisco and on long-playing records, has established her in the front rank of the world's operatic sopranos.

RENATA TEBALDI She was born at Pesaro in 1922, and studied at the Arrigo Boito Conservatoire, Parma, completing her studies with Carmen Melis at the Gioacchino Rossini Conservatoire, Pesaro. She made her debut at Rovigo in May, 1944, singing Elena in *Mefistofele*; in December, 1945, she sang Verdi's *Otello* at Trieste, and from then on the story of her career is success in various opera houses and in a variety of roles.

Sorry, no photograph is available

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