

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HER MAJESTY'S

FOR two and a half centuries Londoners have patronised Her Majesty's Theatre, where great artists, and others long forgotten, have played their parts. The history of this famous Haymarket landmark, home of tragedy, comedy, drama, opera, musical romance, revue and pantomime, has been recorded in three BBC programmes, *The Passing Pageant of Her Majesty's Theatre*. The first of these begins with the prologue written by Alfred Austin, then Poet Laureate, for the opening of the present building in 1897. It includes dramatic excerpts from Sheridan's *School For Scandal* and Shaw's *Pygmalion*, music from *Bitter Sweet*, *Dubarry Was A Lady*, *Faust*, *Big Top*, *The Co-optimists*, *Balalaika* and *Henry VIII* dances. The programme doesn't tell the name of the old lady who booked the same box for



MRS. PAT CAMPBELL
"Terrible scenes during rehearsals of
'Pygmalion'"

97 performances of *Bitter Sweet* (it ran for nearly 700), but it does tell of "terrible scenes" between Sir Herbert Tree, Mrs. Pat Campbell and Bernard Shaw during rehearsals of *Pygmalion*; and it recalls producers like C. B. Cochran and composers such as Stanford, Coleridge-Taylor, Delius and Edward German, as well as many great "Ladies and gentlemen of the footlights."

When Queen Victoria visited Her Majesty's Theatre in 1847 she heard the celebrated soprano Jenny Lind sing the magnificent title role in Bellini's *Norma*, and the overture to that opera introduces the second programme in the series. Romantic, swashbuckling memories spring alive too, in excerpts from the stage version of Dumas's *Three Musketeers*. Here, at Her Majesty's, Trilby and her Svengali trod the stage, then Queen Elizabeth and Drake in Louis Parker's pageant-play *Drake*.

Music spans the years to the present day—to the gay, insouciant tunes of the twenties, Gershwin's *Oh, Kay*, Jerome Kern's *Music in the Air*, Coward's *Operette*, then on to the immensely successful musicals of later years — to *Brigadoon* and *Paint Your Wagon*.

The three programmes in the series *The Passing Pageant of Her Majesty's Theatre* will be heard on Sundays at 9.35 p.m., beginning October 17, from all ZB stations.

N.Z. LISTENER, OCTOBER 8, 1954.

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