

"THREE MUSKETEERS" DRAMATISED

IN 1851 when Napoleon III restored the Empire, two of France's most famous authors decided to holiday in Belgium. They were a staunch republican named Victor Hugo and the illegitimate son of a mulatto general from San Domingo named Alexandre Dumas. But, says one of Dumas's biographers, "the difference was that Hugo was fleeing before a tyrant, Dumas before the bailiffs." Without delving too deeply into Dumas's psychic processes we can see why bailiffs and their employers seldom play a role of unqualified nobility and heroism in Dumas's work while contrariwise, anyone who is long on heroism and nobility seems remarkably short on crowns and pistoles.

For instance, take the gallant D'Artagnan and his landlord, M. Bonacieux. The latter, through miserliness and sharp practice, no doubt, has acquired a fortune and a pretty wife; the youthful D'Artagnan has little more than 14 crowns and a 14-year-old horse of a yellow colour "very well known in botany but until the present time very rare in horses." But while D'Artagnan has all the swashbuckling courage and agility of Douglas Fairbanks (whom in many ways he resembles) M. Bonacieux is a loutish shopkeeper addicted to underhand practices. For instance, this poltroon tries to get the hero to find the abducted Mme. Bonacieux by blackmailing him with the fact that he has never paid any rent. Out of his generous heart, D'Artagnan pro-

mises to do this; and also to get M. Bonacieux out of prison where he is wrongfully flung.

With a thrust here, a cut there, puncturing a lung one day, piercing a heart the next, the courageous D'Artagnan—aided by his equally gallant comrades Porthos, Athos and Aramis—finally redeems the first half of his promise by rescuing Mme. Bonacieux, and at the same time saving his Queen from a fate worse than death, namely, going off to live in England with Buckingham. It is only a pity that what with one thing and another (the other thing being his falling in love with Mme. Bonacieux) D'Artagnan overlooks the second half of his promise to M. Bonacieux.

A condensed, recorded version of *The Three Musketeers*, with (of course!) Douglas Fairbanks Jr. playing D'Artagnan, will be heard from 1XH at 9.4 p.m. on April 4, and later from other YA and YZ stations.

Two other plays (BBC productions) will also be heard this week. *The Story of Eugene Onegin* tells of a philanderer, dandy, gambler, and man of the world who is left a country house by his uncle and goes there intending to avoid the local provincial society. He returns the love of Tanya Larin only when she is out of his reach, and kills his best friend in a duel (an ironic circumstance in that Alexander Pushkin, who wrote the original long poem, *Eugene Onegin*, was himself killed in the same fashion).



DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS JR.
Swords but no pistoles



DENHOLM ELLIOTT
Man of the world

Pushkin's poem was a long, vivid and lyrical "novel in verse," possibly the finest Russian long poem, which inspired Tchaikovsky's famous opera and was itself originally conceived in part imitation of Byron's Don Juan, that bored and dissolute hero who, with his fellows like Childe Harold, caused "Byronic" to pass into currency as an adjective. *Onegin* is played by Denholm Elliott and Tanya Larin by Maxine Audley.

In *First Person Singular*, adapted from the play by Lewis Grant Wallace, a famous author agrees to exchange manuscripts with a young, unknown and penniless writer who enters his life in

tragic circumstances. Part of the play's charm can be attributed to its picture of the English country home and life of Henry Beringer who, in his eightieth year, is about to publish another novel. Malcolm Graeme plays the part of Henry Beringer, Margot Boyd that of his wife Amy, and Lewis Stringer that of David Brown, the penniless unknown.

The Story of Eugene Onegin will be heard from 1YA at 9.15 p.m. on April 4, from 4YZ at 9.42 p.m. on April 6, and later from other YA and YZ stations. *First Person Singular* will be heard from 1YC at 10.0 p.m. on April 6 and later in the other centres from the YAs and YZs.

A GARLAND FOR JUDY

NOT so long ago they said it was curtains, not curtain-calls, for Judy Garland. Now she is back and, according to reports, they are tossing the orchids like hailstones for her performance in the musical film *A Star is Born*. Judy when young sang her way into the hearts of filmgoers in such light-hearted trifles as the *Andy Hardy* series, *Babes in Arms*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Meet Me in St. Louis*. She also made a not-so-popular attempt at a dramatic role in *The Clock*. In it she acted with surprising sensitivity and showed for the first time that she was more than just another singing ingenue. Then something went wrong. Divorce, and a nervous break-down brought on her withdrawal from films for a long time. The know-alls of Hollywood said that Judy Garland's bright, particular star had flickered out like Deanna Durbin's, Shirley Temple's, Margaret O'Brien's.

However, Judy considered herself far from spent. Summoning her courage she went back to the variety stage she had left as a child. On the largest of them—the London Palladium, New York's Empire, and in San Francisco, she conquered wherever she went. Then Warner Brothers decided to cast her in *A Star is Born*, with a screen-play by Moss Hart, which had some curious parallels to Miss Garland's own story. It tells of screen-struck Esther Blodgett (Judy Garland was christened

Frances Gumm) who is discovered by an older star (James Mason) and has her name changed. Her way up the show-business ladder as he goes down is hard and bitter. She suffers and in the end takes on that peculiar luminous glow of personality which is called stardom.

The film, which is in CinemaScope, lasts close to three hours, cost nearly six million dollars and took a year instead of the scheduled three months to make. Most of this extra time was taken because, as Jack Warner urbanely said, "Miss Garland is a perfectionist." According to other reports Miss Garland's perfectionism did not extend to her own temperament.

The songs which Judy Garland sobs, sulks, socks and sighs—as one critic put it, "like a cross between Bessie Smith (the great 'blues' singer) and Tara's harp"—are composed by Harold Arlen, with lyrics by Ira Gershwin. They include "The Man That Got Away," "Here's What I'm Here For" and "Lose That Long Face," an orphan number. One specialty song which Judy puts over in her

best style is "Born in a Trunk," by Leonard Gershe. This is a portmanteau act—unpacking, quick-change singing, dialogue and impersonation. Representing a trouper's life, it includes excerpts from "Swanee," "I'll Get By," "When My Sugar Walks Down the Street," "Black Bottom," "You Took Advantage of Me," "The Peanut Vendor," and "Melancholy Baby." Judy also cuts loose with "Someone at Last," a devastating parody of "early Judy Garland."

Apart from all the ballyhoo which strives to put *A Star is Born* among the greatest films, it would seem to be a film which tries to study seriously the sociological jungle which is Hollywood. Of course, Moss Hart, no hack writer himself, had an excellent framework to build upon. The first *A Star is Born*, made in 1937 with Janet Gaynor and Fredric March, was scripted by the satirist Dorothy Parker.

ZB Sunday Showcase will broadcast a programme of musical highlights from *A Star is Born* at 9.35 p.m. on April 10.



JUDY GARLAND in a scene from the film "A Star is Born."
With her is James Mason