

It all began, guys who knew him in those days will tell you, because Damon Runyon was broke. Not that broke, for Runyon was at that time one of the most successful sports writers in New York, but temporarily embarrassed by the high cost of a looming appendix operation. Before the doctor got his hands on the Runyon appendix, its owner had shut himself in his room to write a work of fiction which he hoped would bring in the necessary 500 dollars. Both the appendix and the fiction came out well, and a magazine editor offered to buy as many short stories of the same type as the author could supply. That was the start of a Broadway saga as story after story poured from Runyon's typewriter during the 1930's—sardonically humorous tales of tarnished saints and haloed sinners, where good and evil were mostly relative.

Runyon never wrote a story called *Guys and Dolls*, but a lot of theatre-goers in the United States and Britain know Runyon best through the musical adaptation, by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows, of his *The Idyll of Miss Sarah Brown*, with a few characters added from other tales. *Guys and Dolls* (music and lyrics by Frank Loesser) hit Broadway in 1950. It was promptly rated as the best musical book since *Pal Joey* (1940), and far and away the best musical of the year. The music from the show will be heard in *YA Theatre of Music* on Saturday, May 12, with the original Broadway cast led by Robert Alda as Sky Masterson; Isabel Bigley as Miss Sarah Brown; Vivian Blaine as Miss Adelaide, and Sam Levene as Nathan Detroit. New Zealanders will shortly be able to see a screen version, written and directed by Joseph Mankiewicz, and starring Marlon Brando, Jean Simmons, Vivian Blaine and Frank Sinatra, with Stubby Kaye, B. S. Pully and Johnny Silver in their Broadway roles of Nicely-Nicely Johnson, Big Jule and Benny Southstreet.

Frank Loesser's dexterous and witty lyrics, set to music ranging from the simple to the supercharged, include a couple of songs, "A Bushel and a Peck" and "Luck Be a Lady," which have already streamed out of countless radios and juke-boxes here. Some others have not been widely heard, and these include the romantic "If I Were a Bell"; the amusing "Adelaide's Lament"; "Sue



★ ABOVE: The guys, one step ahead of the police, keep their dice rolling. RIGHT: The dolls, with Vivian Blaine (right foreground) as Adelaide

Me," and "Marry the Man Today." "Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat," is an operatic but uproarious number put over in inimitable style by Stubby Kaye and chorus.

Guys and Dolls is a romantic story, demonstrating that "the softest hearts may be found beneath the latest fashion in bullet-proof vests," to quote J. C. Furnas on Runyon's work. Sergeant Sarah Brown, of the Save-A-Soul Mission, falls in love with Sky Masterson, a high-rolling gambler. In contrast there is the story of Nathan Detroit, relentlessly pursued to the altar by a

night-club singer, Adelaide, while trying to keep New York's oldest-established dice game afloat by moving it to a new location every night, one jump ahead of the police. Both dolls get their guys in the end, in completely virtuous fashion, the police are hoodwinked, and justice and morality survive some pretty close calls.



Spencer Digby photograph

WILLIAM AUSTIN

Light Music Programmes

WHEN nights draw in and chilblains prick warmly on the toes, then winter is i-cumen in and no mistake. Time then, for consolation where it is to be found and that, for many listeners, could be in relaxing to some of the NZBS programmes of light music which will be going the rounds of YA and YZ stations during the next three months. Starting next week, on Monday, May 7, William Austin will be dispensing coffee as before in a further series of *Won't You Come In?* Bill has been searching deeper into the recesses of his record library for material for his new programmes, and members of the Coffee Club who like a mixture of old and new, music and spoken word, the familiar and the off-the-beaten track in records should be happy listening on Monday nights.

Also returning to the microphone is a popular combination of singers and

Wurlitzer organ, the *Three's Company* team of Jean McPherson, John Hoskins and Finlay Robb at the organ. They present the sweet and singable in popular music that goes well with firelight and the rain on the roof. The Gil Dech Trio, of Dunedin, has designed six programmes for the middlebrow, and from Dunedin also come six programmes by the vocal duet-tists Dorothy Cayford and Roma Abotomey. They are to sing some of the lighter music of Mendelssohn, Rubinstein, Franck, the modern English composers and one operatic programme. Also from the South, from Invercargill, but strangely enough with the Irish, not the Scots in mind, comes a series of four programmes by Maurice Tansley (tenor), with Jack Thompson at the piano.

Something unusual in folk music will be two programmes of *Music from Iceland*. These will be introduced by Keith Kitchin, who recently visited the island and brought back these recordings. By courtesy of the Belgian Legation, a series of Belgian folk song recordings has also been made available to the NZBS. From 4YA on Thursday nights, the Christchurch Durham Street Methodist Choir is broadcasting a group of programmes of favourite hymns and anthems which will later be heard from other YA and YZ stations.