

# More Half-Hours With Hancock

MANY listeners will be welcoming back an old friend on Sunday, April 12, when a new series of *Hancock's Half Hour* will start from 1XH, 22A and 42A. On May 5 it will start from the ZBs.

The lad himself has acquired a girl friend, Andrée Melly, a sensible girl with a delightful accent, who does her best to keep Tony's enthusiasm for his projects within reasonable bounds. Bill Kerr, the boy from Wagga, is still boarding with Hancock, and these two, even without outside assistance, are quite capable of making a shambles of

suburban life. What develops could only happen to one of Master Hancock's innocence and optimism. He is easy game for Sidney James, once more the wide boy with the persuasive line of sales talk. And he is also plagued by a supreme example of the next-door busy-body—a slightly larger-than-life version of a common enough suburban problem.

Tony, of course, is still the ordinary man Facing up to Life. But there's nothing Glum about him. His approach is cocksure but naive, and his reactions have a child-like candour.

This brand of comedy, which has won him a place among the top funny men of radio and television, is a far cry from his early ambition, which was to be the sort of comedian who "wore a white hat on the back of his head, rested one foot on the footlights, and told a series of smart, quick-fire funny stories." In *Hancock's Half Hour* Tony's attempts at smartness invariably trip him up. This routine is almost congenial with him. On his first stage appearance he literally tripped and fell flat on his face—and got his first laugh. Later, at another theatre he tripped on the footlights and took an unpremeditated dive into the orchestra pit; and on the way to one of the many war-time shows in which he took part, he fell, in the black-out, into a static water tank. Since hard knocks seemed to be his lot, Tony made the most of them, and an exaggerated clumsiness became an essential part of his comedy.

Tony started out entertaining the troops, but he had already had wide experience in show business (including a season at London's famous Windmill Theatre), before he ap-



BBC photograph

★  
TONY HANCOCK (second from right) shares a joke with Sidney James (on left), comedian Bill Kerr and Alan Simpson, one of the scriptwriters, during rehearsal of *Hancock's Half-Hour*

Parking Metres

## LARGE ECONOMY SIZE

YOUR pocket, already  
Well squeezed by the State,  
Is to suffer still worse  
After March, '58.  
From what they are saying,  
Your bill is to be  
Arrears of taxation,  
Plus PAYE.

And while politicians  
With gift of the gab  
Decide just how much  
They can decently grab,  
I guess, gentle reader,  
You're feeling like me  
As you wonder how much  
You can EAYP. —R.G.P.

appeared in BBC *Variety Bandbox* in 1949. The public immediately responded to the appeal of the little man who, with the best intentions, can only progress from disaster to disaster. He was soon broadcasting in other variety programmes, and his popularity was firmly established with radio audiences in Britain and overseas—in *Calling All Forces* in 1952, and *Educating Archie* in 1953. The first *Hancock's Half Hour* series was broadcast in 1954. Last year it took another step forward—on to BBC television.

He has not always been only a comedian—he played a season in Noel Coward's *Peace In Our Time*, and he did all sorts of chores in a tour of Ralph Reader's *Gang Show* that lasted over a year. Last year he played his first straight radio role when he became *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* for the BBC.

Newcomers to the new series are Andrée Melly and Kenneth Williams. Andrée began her stage career with the Liverpool Repertory Company in 1949. Three years later she made her radio debut in the leading role of Marie in T. H. White's *Mistress Masham's Repose*. Since then she has appeared on television, in films, and at the Old Vic. Kenneth Williams, a versatile character actor, graduated to the London stage through the ranks of the Royal Engineers and Repertory. His first major appearance in London's West End was as the Dauphin in Shaw's *Saint Joan*. In 1955 he played a fourteen-year-old schoolboy editor in the London musical play by Sandy Wilson, *The Buccaneer*.

## Theatre of Music

CARL NICOLAI'S comic opera, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, is better known for its Overture than for the rest of the music, but listeners to *Theatre of Music* on Saturday, April 20, will hear excerpts from this work. The singers are Maria Stader as Frau Fluth, Margarete Klose as Frau Reich, Kim Borg as Falstaff, and Eberhard Wachter as Herr Fluth. Ferdinand Leitner conducts this performance. There are few German comic operas with more than national appeal, but Nicolai's work has a universal audience. They respond to its fresh delightful melodies and its obvious association with Shakespeare's amusing plot.

*The Merry Wives* shows the influence of Nicolai's years of work in Italy and the Italian operas he wrote there, although this opera was written two years after he became director of the Berlin Opera.

N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 12, 1957,

(Solution to No. 843)

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## Clues Across

- I send a char for an old-fashioned conveyance (5, 5).
- A class of seat? (4).
- Royal grant expressed in an overbearing manner (10).
- A crooked ruse to produce the employer (4).
- Harbour for wine (4).
- Method of producing wrinkles from the Grecians (8).
- Here's an unqualified muddle (5).
- A number fail to win, but it's evidently a near thing (5).
- Makes Ada green, the swine! (8).
- Make eyes in the train to Glen-tui (4).
- After a rest, this downpour will check (4).

## "THE LISTENER" CROSSWORD

- I bring dust; it's rather upsetting (10).
- Cards found in a case (4).
- Unprovoked attack from Rosie's gang (10).
- Of his bones are coral made; Those are — that were his eyes" (Song from "The Tempest") (6).
- Family name of Catherine, wife of Henri II of France (6).
- This instrument will produce a groan, as well as the Lost Chord (5).
- Fruit from a Latin half back under fifty (5).

## Clues Down

- Trunk formed from twisted roots (5).
- It's clever when the vehicles go in reverse (5).
- Straightforward form of credit (6).
- Get beneath an over-turned weapon to find some gold (6).
- New Year's gift to be chosen from a second-hand selection of furniture (7).
- Part of Tunis Land-seer frequently painted (7).
- Not down like a tree (4).
- The language of Jersey? (4).
- Take her a gin, but mix it well (7).
- A retired player who makes exorbitant demands (7).
- This girl is found in gaol (4).
- Need for a garden (4).

No. 844 (Constructed by R.W.H.)

