

RODGERS AND HART

RODGERS to day is almost inevitably followed by Hammerstein in the speech of enthusiasts for American musicals, but some 15 years ago it was Rodgers and Hart who wowed the audiences. On Saturday, May 4, *Theatre of Music* will include a quarter-hour of their lesser-known songs. There are plenty of shows from which to choose them, for in a partnership of 25 years their output included 25 musicals in New York, three in London, one non-musical play, some 30 songs in nine motion pictures, and "Blue Moon," their only popular song not included in a play or a film.

Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart began writing together in 1918, when a friend introduced them. At that time Hart, seven years older than Rodgers, had a job translating treacherous German operas. Rodgers later wrote, describing their first meeting: "He was violent on the subject of rhyming in songs, feeling that the public was capable of understanding better things than the current monosyllabic juxtaposition of 'mush' and 'slush.' It made good sense and I was enchanted by this little man and his ideas. I left Hart's house having acquired in one afternoon a career, a partner, a best friend, and a source of permanent irritation."

The new partners worked on songs for shows, mostly amateur, and scores for several varsity shows at Columbia University, until in 1925 they joined with junior members of the Theatre Guild to write *The Garrick Gaities*. This show, that was scheduled for two performances to raise money for some tapestries, ran for a year, until its successor was ready. Many years later, when the partners were at an opening night at the Guild Theatre, Hart nudged his partner. "See those tapestries, Dick? We're responsible for them." "Hell," replied Rodgers, "they're responsible for us!"

From this time there were many Broadway successes, four and five shows in a year, with runs of up to 400 performances. The introduction of the talking film took them to Hollywood, and in spite of an early satire they did on that city, they returned to write songs for many films, including those Bing Crosby crooned in *Mississippi*. Rodgers and Hart were always very particular about the way their songs were interpreted, and they insisted upon supervising all their compositions when they were first presented. For one film number which they wrote in New York, they had a film made of the authorised interpretation and flown to Hollywood.

Their later major successes were *On Your Toes*, *Babes in Arms*, *I Married an Angel* and *By Jupiter*—their show which had the most performances. This was about virile Amazon women and their effete consorts. In 1943 they wrote six new songs for a revival of *A Connecticut Yankee*. Eight days after the show opened the partnership came to an end. Hart died in hospital of pneumonia.

The critics and audiences had been enthusiastic about their work. They had brought fresh and unhackneyed treatments of stories, charming scores and ingenious lyrics. Irving Berlin's tribute to the partnership was:

Tuneful and tasteful,
Schmaltsy and smart,
Music by Rodgers,
Lyrics by Hart.

The first part of *Theatre of Music* on May 6 will be selections from two operettas by Franz Lehar, *The Land of Smiles* and *Paganini*. These operettas have little in common with the contemporary musical comedy. They are close relatives of the Italian opera buffa, the comic operas of Auber and Offenbach, and the Gilbert and Sullivan Savoy operas. These two works have charming stories. *The Land of Smiles* is China, to which a Viennese beauty goes with her Chinese husband and a Viennese admirer. There differences in outlook make her unhappy, and eventually she returns to Europe. The music is part-Viennese and part based on delightful Chinese melodies, comparable with those of Sullivan and Puccini. *Paganini* tells of a brief interlude in the life of the great violinist. For these selections of some of the most memorable songs, the Vienna Light Opera Company is directed by Franz Sandauer.



Drama

LOVE ON THE DOLE

LOVE ON THE DOLE, by Walter Greenwood, caused quite a stir when it was published as a novel in 1933, and another stir in New Zealand when the film was shown during the war. In *ZB Sunday Showcase* on May 5 listeners will hear an NZBS production of the play which Walter Greenwood wrote with Ronald Gow.

Hanky Park was a typical part of dreary English industrial town in the

'30s. As the factories dismissed staff, whole families tried to survive on the pitifully inadequate wages of one or two members or grudgingly given allowance of the dole, withdrawn if even one member of the family was still earning. Such conditions led to angry protests from the workers, one of whom was Larry Meath, played by Pat Smyth. He organised the demonstration that came as the crowning blow to the Hardcastle

family, including Sally, whom he had planned to marry. Sally is taken by Dorothy Campbell, and her care-worn mother by Nora Slaney, and Roy Leywood plays Mr Hardcastle, desperately trying to keep his family respectable in the face of complete poverty. Johnny Hardcastle, growing up to be a victim of the factory, is played by Alan Jervis, and Michael Cotterill plays Sam Grundy, the bookmaker with an eye for the ladies and a preference for Sally.

Love on the Dole is essentially a grim play, as its subject is the struggle for survival in life at its most hopeless. In such surroundings Sally's discovery of the beauty that there can be in life is precious but bitter, since it is followed by her awareness that such beauty may be forever out of her reach—and, indeed, out of the reach of all who live in Hanky Park.

The Monday night YA play next week is Norman King's drama, *The Shadow of Doubt*, first heard last year. Earle Rowell produced this mystery-adventure story for the NZBS, with John Huson as Arthur, the scientist who is being got at by a foreign Power.

Defeat, a BBC production, is the YC play, which will be heard on Tuesday, April 30, from 1YC, 3YC, 4YC and 4YZ. The exiled historian Thucydides reported from afar the disastrous campaign when the Athenian fleet attacked Sicily in 415 B.C. Graham Sutherland retells the story partly in the words of Thucydides and partly in flashbacks illustrating the campaign which led to the total defeat of the Athenian Empire. Thucydides is played by Derek Guyler, and Nicias, the unwilling leader, by Norman Shelley.



THIS is a shot from the celebrated 1941 screen version of "Love on the Dole." The star was Deborah Kerr