



FROM
THE ZBS

Top Men of Tin Pan Alley

★ ABOVE: Three Tin Pan Alley composers who figure in the new ZB programme series. From left, Irving Caesar, J. Fred Coots and Bob Merrill.

TIN PAN ALLEY has become synonymous with American popular music, and to become a successful denizen of the Alley is the goal of every popular song writer. The stories of three who have become established in that fabulous precinct are told in the first programmes of a series which starts from the ZBs at 9.0 p.m. on Sunday, June 2, and from the ZAs and 1XH on Sunday, June 30. The writers, Bob Merrill, J. Fred Coots and Irving Caesar, introduce and sing their songs, and tell us how they came to be written.

Bob Merrill (1ZB, June 2) is a song writer who does not read music. In the programme he explains how he writes his songs with the help of a numbered xylophone. Naturally, he didn't plan for a musical career, but after trying stage acting, and directing, the Army, and directing and script-writing in Hollywood, he decided to have a go at song writing. He spent some years trying, but finally a succession of hits showed that he had been struggling in the right

direction. As well as "Doggie in the Window," he has written such songs as "Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania," and "Mambo Italiano."

J. Fred Coots (3ZB, June 2) has had more than 700 songs published since his first professional effort in 1922. As an experienced veteran he is considered one of the knowledgeable on the subject of Tin Pan Alley and the changing times. "There is actually little difference," he says, of popular song writing, "except that in the old days there was a great deal of romance attached to it, which seems to have vanished. Years ago it took months to establish a song, and a hit could last several years, until it grew into a standard. Today the song turnover is enormous." Coots is still writing songs, and working on a book on his experiences in the Alley.

Irving Caesar (2ZB, June 2) is another whose successful career has lasted many years. He has worked with such musicians as George Gershwin, Vincent Youmans and Victor Herbert, on hits which

have included "Tea for Two," "Swanee," and "Sometimes I'm Happy." His programmes cover only the high points and key songs in his career, but Irving Caesar, besides writing songs, has also worked hard to develop security for the song writer. He was President of the Song Writers' Protective Association, and a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers. Although song writing has been his career, he is proud of his ability as an entertainer.

These three composers contribute two programmes each to the ZB series, and in addition there will be two additional programmes—from the two husband-and-wife teams on radio, TV and films, Peter Lind Hayes and Mary Healy, and Eddie Albert and Margo. They sing their favourite songs, including the specialty numbers from their acts.

Folk Song Programmes

In his *History of Popular Music in America*, Sigmund Spaeth states that popular music is an index to the life

and history of a nation, reflecting, as it does the changing character of a people. He places popular songs in the category of folk music, noting that both, based on universal human characteristics, depend on a simple melody, and rhythm, and a similar balance of responsibility between text and tune. He considers that the best of this modern folk music will last as well as the older European folk songs. The latter will be represented in four programmes by the Roger Wagner Chorale (4ZB, June 2), who sing some well-known songs from the British Isles, France and Italy, and lesser known ones from Scandinavia, Spain and Germany.

Sea shanties, the folk music of a working class, will be sung in another programme by Leonard Warren, the Metropolitan Opera baritone, who will also provide a programme of the most popular baritone arias from Italian opera. Many of these, such as the "Largo Al Factotum," have become so well known that they, too, could be classed as popular music.



THEATRE OF MUSIC

Toujours l'Amour

THE top French cabaret stars who send their love from Paris, in *Theatre of Music* on Saturday, June 1, are Edith Piaf, Annie Cordy, Charles Trenet, Gilbert Beaud, and Les Compagnons de la Chanson. Naturally the songs are of Paris and the people who live (and love) there. For example, Charles Trenet, of the crushed hat, plaid jacket and beaming countenance, probes the "Heart of Paris," and Edith Piaf, red-haired and clear-voiced, "the authentic voice of Paris," walks "Under Paris Skies" to meet "The Poor People of Paris." Annie Cordy introduces the girl from Martinique who sold bonbons and caramels, and Gilbert Beaud, very popular among the younger set, describes another "Brand New Spring." Les Compagnons de la Chanson (seen at left) the nine singers who made such a hit with "The Three Bells," sing that old French favourite "Auprès de ma Blonde," and include the English version, "I Want To Be Near You." They also visit the Moulin Rouge with the earliest version of the well-known tune. And the programme is long enough to allow all the other singers a second appearance at the microphone before Charles Trenet takes us back to the music-hall.