

# Just a Little Yass Girl

ACTING in a radio serial that runs for 3000 episodes sounds like a safe enough way of earning a living. But the actress who plays a cute angle in the eternal triangle evidently stands in danger of having her eyes gouged or her hair pulled out in handfuls. According to the Australian stage and radio actress Diana Davidson (right), her portrayal of the vamp in the serial *Blue Hills* brought her a fan mail consisting largely of threatening letters. "You leave that Ted alone," warned one writer, "or I'll come in and fix you myself."

"It doesn't do to play the fast and naughty flibbertigibbet," says Miss Davidson sadly. "The women in the serials who have babies get layettes and all kinds of gifts. All I ever got was nasty letters."

Perhaps for this reason, Miss Davidson recalls little about the parts she has played in such radio serials as *Simon Templar*, *Night Beat*, *Dr Paul* and *Life With Dexter*. Listeners may identify her, however, in *Mary Livingstone, M.D.* She plays the part of Mary's sister Penny.

Outside her roles as the siren and the vamp, Diana Davidson describes herself as "just a little Yass girl." She hails from the township of Yass, in the Riverina district of New South Wales. Her earliest contact with the theatre consisted of "playing Prince Charming in green velvet tights" in the occasional dramas of the local convent school.

Later, in Sydney, she pursued literary ambitions. "I had visions of becoming a great poetess," she says, "and getting in the Saturday Supplements. I wrote verses about the types on the Manly Ferry and ghastly short stories of the modern school." Meantime, she earned a living as a secretary with the Australian Broadcasting Commission's newsroom, hoping in time to become a journalist.

At an impressionable 17, she saw her first professional drama. "It was a great

saga," she recalls, "full of blood and guts, and lasting about five hours." Young Diana knew at once the stage was for her—"The curtain going up for the show was like the curtain going up on me."

After a spell at the Independent Theatre School, Miss Davidson played in various companies, including Sydney's famed but short-lived Mercury Theatre. Today she finds most promise in Australia's Elizabethan Theatre Trust, a subsidised venture which aims to present worthwhile theatre. With good patronage and meatier fare, she thinks it may eventually make possible "indigenous Australian artists" who need not travel abroad to achieve success.

Married last February to a Sydney businessman, Max Donnellan, whom she calls her "steading anchor," Miss Davidson has a house in Turramurra and a log cabin retreat in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. She takes an interest in exotic foods, interior decoration and antique furniture. Though she has devoted the last 10 of her 27 years to the stage, Miss Davidson considers it the least of the arts: "A Gielgud can never compare with a Shaw. I think a lot of people take up acting to escape. Their real life looks inadequate to them, so they enter an imaginative one which looks more desirable. Children do it all the time."

Of modern playwrights, Miss Davidson likes Shaw the best. But, she adds, with a grimace, that he is also maddening and quite unrewarding for an actress. "Everyone goes away after the show saying, 'Isn't Shaw wonderful?' Definitely not an actor's playwright!"

She enjoys playing to children. "I've played Peter in *Peter Pan*," she says, "and it's fun—except for the parts where you fly onstage suspended from a piece of wire. Peter, of course, should never do wrong, but Peter usually does. He usually collects a piece of furniture on the way in. The mothers laugh, and the children cry because they think



something's happened to Peter. And something has! She's in the wings having hysterics."

Diana Davidson, like Guy Doleman, is at present touring New Zealand in *All For Mary*, an English comedy set

in the French Alps—with an all-Australian cast. She will also take the part of McClancy's wife in the forthcoming NZBS production of *The Spanish Captain*.

N.P.S. photograph



Morris Kershaw photo.



Art Studios photo



## Last of the 1957 Song Quest District Finalists

HERE are the last of the district finalists in this year's Mobil Song Quest. Selected to represent Whangarei district is Wendy Adams, well known to 1XN listeners and in local musical circles. She was Northland's district finalist in the 1956 Mobil Song Quest. Mrs Daphne Verwey, winner in Nelson district, also has a link with Whangarei, where she was born 23 years ago. She made her first radio broadcast from a southern station, however—3YZ Greymouth. While she was in Greymouth she joined the Operatic Society

there, and took part in three of their performances. For the last two and a half years she has lived in Nelson, keeping in vocal training as a pupil of Miss Linette Grayson. The Dunedin district finalist, Mrs Treasure Spencer, is interested in all types of music, but admits a special fondness for oratorio. She has been studying singing with the well-known concert artist Mary Pratt for about six years, in between keeping up a home and looking after a three-year-old daughter. She broadcasts regularly as a soloist, and is well known

as a guest artist singing with the Dunedin Studio Orchestra under Gil Dech. The 3ZB district finalist, Miss Heather Smith, of Kaiapoi, is one of a family all of whom are keenly interested in music. She is an L.R.S.M., and holds many awards and medals for her singing. She has been guest artist and soloist for several societies, including the Christchurch Liedertafel and the Christchurch Royal Musical Society, and has been heard in broadcasts from 3XC and from all three Christchurch stations. Terence Wilson, district final-

★ ABOVE (left to right): Treasure Spencer, Daphne Verwey, Wendy Adams, Heather Smith, Terence Wilson ★

ist at Gisborne, is eighteen years old, and at present a student at Auckland University College. In the past he has broadcast several recitals from 2YZ Napier, and was also a member and soloist of the Napier Orpheus Choir. In 1956 he was awarded the Executive Diploma of Music Bursary to study for three years at A.U.C. His present curriculum includes vocal training, piano, double-bass, and languages.