

PERSONALITIES

of the week

PIANIST-COMPOSER

ABRAM CHASINS is the first young American composer to be honoured by Toscanini with representation on a New York Philharmonic Orchestral programme. Born in New York in 1903, of Russian parentage, he showed unusual musical gifts in early childhood. When seven years old he came under the sympathetic guidance of Bertha F. Tapper, who supervised his musical development until her death, four years later. Shortly after this he won valuable scholarships; then followed study with Ernest Hutcheson and Rubin Goldmark. In 1926 he enjoyed the rare opportunity of travel and study with Josef Hofmann, who later appointed him to the faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. His strikingly modern novel, imaginative and whimsically humorous piano pieces have brought him world fame.

LIVE AND LET LIVE

MANY artists, each famous in his own sphere, who might otherwise never meet at all, meet occasionally in the gramophone recording studio. Sir Edward Elgar, with the aid of a large orchestra, had been completing the records of his tone poem "Falstaff" in one studio, while in another studio Gracie Fields was recording some of her famous comedy songs for the Christmas season. Sir Edward, describing the comedienne "as a very great artist," hinted at the possibility of going and looking through a crack in the door to see her at work. He added: "I have heard some of her records, but have never actually seen her, but, of course, she wouldn't like it if I did." On being reassured that Gracie would not in the least mind the presence of such a distinguished visitor, but would regard it as a great compliment, Sir Edward's natural diffidence was finally overcome, and he followed his guide. Running upstairs to the other studio like a young man (although he was wearing his

famous heavy fur coat), he listened with the greatest interest to Gracie making her characteristic records. Then, when these two famous figures were introduced, he would not hear a word about himself, but showered compliments upon her, as well as on the band and Ray Noble, who had orchestrated the songs. He left the studio and its occupants with a never-to-be-forgotten memory of a very modest and great-hearted Englishman. Another contrast in artists and a further example of artistic broad-mindedness was Schnabel's intense interest in a Jack Hulbert recording session following his work on Beethoven sonatas.

PERFECT MELISANDE

AT the age of 19, after only four years with Jean de Reszke, the famous French singer and Parisian teacher, Maggie Teyte was called upon at short notice to play the part of Melisande in Debussy's "Pelléas and Melisande," at first much to the consternation of the composer himself! After hearing only a few bars, however, Debussy realised that here was the perfect Melisande, the Melisande around whose frail and unhappy figure he has written his mysteriously lovely music. Maggie Teyte, by the captivating simplicity of her interpretations, re-created Melisande into an infinitely more appealing, more fundamentally innocent personality.

THOSE "GANGSTERS"

FRANK LEE, of the "Gangster" firm of Haver and Lee, was, before his now successful partnership began, a member of the famous "Boisset Troupe of Acrobats." With this troupe once at Rickard's Opera House in Melbourne, a part of Lee's act was to be seized by the seat of his trousers by a bulldog trained for the purpose. On arrival in Melbourne his bulldog was missing, and it was urgently necessary to find another dog which would know the wrong end of Lee. An advertisement brought scores of owners and their dogs to the stage door. The most likely-looking animal was eventually bought from a shady-looking individual for a fiver. The first evening the dog gave such a perfect performance that Lee's suspicions were aroused. Yes, it was their own dog, stolen, and sold back to them.

HARRIET COHEN'S FRIENDS

FROM the memorable occasion when Harriet Cohen as a child of six enjoyed the distinction of sitting on Paderewski's knee in the artist's room at Queen's Hall, she has not only developed an amazing genius for piano playing, but one for friendship also. During a visit to Berlin she met Einstein, the eminent scientist, found him

to be a great Bach enthusiast like herself, and with him played Bach and Mozart violin and piano sonatas. On another occasion she enjoyed a very energetic bout with four-handed arrangements of Beethoven, and other symphonies, with Bernard Shaw, who, she declares, is a very capable pianist. At their first meeting Mr. Shaw gave her a long lecture on Mozart and Wagner. Other intimate friends were Arnold Bennett and Delius.

CUNNINGHAM'S MEMORY

G. D. CUNNINGHAM, organist to the city of Birmingham and its university, is among the few famous organists who give their recitals from memory. In the way of composers he has few preferences, but he puts Bach first, and declares that, as the years go on, he loves the work of that man more and more. His repertoire consists of something like a thousand works, including the Bach and Mendelssohn organ music.

WHAT NAME, PLEASE?

THE names given below are those of men and women who are featured in the coming programmes from the New Zealand national stations or of radio performers who have been featured in the news during the week. On these pages are paragraphs relating to the activities of the persons mentioned in this column.

ABRAM CHASINS, in recorded pianoforte numbers from 2YA on Wednesday, December 19.

GRACIE FIELDS, comedienne, in recorded items from 2YA on Wednesday, December 19, and from 4YA on Monday, December 17.

MAGGIE TEYTE, famous English soprano, in recorded solos from 4YA, Tuesday, December 18.

HAVER AND LEE, the recording "gangster" comedians, from 3YA on Thursday, December 20.

HARRIET COHEN, in recorded piano solos, 3YA on Monday, December 17.

G. D. CUNNINGHAM, in recorded items, from 1YA on Friday, December 21.

