

Judy O'Grady, The Colonel's Lady—They'll All Be Listening In When Gladys Moncrieff Sings This Week

"I SAW you in 'The Maid of the Mountains' in Christchurch. It was the first musical comedy I had ever seen."

"I'm afraid the show was a little bit tattered by the time we got down there. We'd been playing it a long time then, you know."

"But that didn't matter to me. I was thrilled to bits. That's a long time ago. It must be — let me see —"

"Yes, much too long to start thinking back," cut in Gladys with a smile. And when Gladys Moncrieff smiles you know why crowds have waited in wind and rain outside Australian theatres for her plays, why the London newspapers gave her space on the front page when she was in England, why the name of Gladys Moncrieff is as well known in Australia and New Zealand as Greta Garbo's, why Sir Benjamin Fuller said in Dunedin the other day, "We paid her £200 a week for 'Rio Rita' because there's only one Gladys Moncrieff."

Gladys (it seems all wrong to call her Miss Moncrieff) arrived in New Zealand on Monday morning for a tour of the national broadcasting stations. "It's lovely to be back," she said. "When I peeped out of my cabin on the Wanganella this morning I saw the rows of houses piled one above the other and I thought to myself, 'Wellington again.' Last time I arrived in Wellington was on the morning of an earthquake, and you can picture the porter at the Midland Hotel and myself standing under a doorway—as we'd always been told to do—and waiting for the worst to happen!"

"That would be the Murchison earthquake when you were here in 'Rio Rita,'" I said. I told her what Ben Fuller had had to say about his reason for paying her £200 a week for "Rio Rita."

"That was very charming of him. I thoroughly enjoyed playing in that show—it was bright, it was colourful, and it didn't put an unnecessary strain on any of the principals. Yes, Fullers paid me £200 a week for the part, and the Australian and New Zealand season lasted two years. But my favourite role is Sonia in 'The Merry Widow.' It has fire and colour—and marvellous singing opportunities."

"It was with the Royal Comic Opera Company that I first visited New Zealand, and it was here in Wellington that I had my first big chance—a good part in 'Katinka,' which had its Australasian premiere in the Opera House along the road. I loved that show—I remember we played it in Sydney on Armistice night."

"Later I went to London to play in 'The Blue Mazurka.' There was a big night there when the King and Queen visited the theatre—Daly's it was. I'll never forget looking up and seeing the Queen sitting in the Royal box—a pink



Gladys Moncrieff, snapped in front of a microphone by a "Radio Record" photographer soon after her arrival from Sydney. Miss Moncrieff's New Zealand broadcasting tour opens in Auckland this week, and she will be the star at a special celebrity concert to be given in Wellington on Thursday, July 11.

and silver gown on, with jewels and pink tulle round her shoulders. She looked as if she had been carved from pink wax. 'Riki-Tiki' was another show I played in in London. The first night was the most terrible flop and the gallery booed rather heartily. 'Riki-Tiki' had some lovely music and scenery, but the comedian had been allowed to rule the production to such an extent that, when it was finally put on, the book belonged more to the comedian than to the author. Before the second performance the production was given a vigorous overhauling and became quite popular. The London papers were wonderful to me, several of them giving me the credit for pulling 'Riki-Tiki' through. One paper had a headline after the first night 'Leading Lady in Tears'—and it was quite right. I was.

"I came back to Australia for 'Rio Rita' and was kept very busy for the next year or two. Since then I have appeared in a series of most successful revivals—done scenas in connection with picture screenings—and played the lead in some Australian-written musical comedies. 'Colt's Inn' was the first, and it was a huge success and a delightful show. I'm sorry it didn't come across to New Zealand. Then followed 'The Beloved Vagabond' and 'The Cedar Tree'—both jolly good shows."

"Tell me about the gallery girls."

"The gallery girls, as they were called, seemed to get a lot of publicity one way and another. Actually many of them were comfortably off and some of them had their own cars. They were wonderful to me—both in Sydney and Melbourne—and many were the bouquets and little presents that they sent me. When I was playing in 'The Jolly Roger' I received a large boat fashioned in flowers with silver sails. The card on it said 'From the Gallery Girls.' I have my own home in Sydney, and it is full of mementoes—crystal, silver, photographs and so on. Madge Elliot and Cyril Ritchard are doing well in Sydney in a revival of 'High Jinks.' They go up to Brisbane on Saturday night to open in 'Roberta,' and on the same evening Oscar Denes, the Hungarian comedian, opens in Sydney in 'Ball at the Savoy.' There's an actor for you! Denes—he pronounces his name Dan-ish—is very large but can he dance? He sings, he dances, he acts—and he's going over in a very big way in Australia."

"I must go and have a look at Clem Dawe's show while I'm here. Edna Moncrieff, who is with that company, is a cousin of mine. My broad- (Continued on page 58.)

An Interview With the "Radio Record"