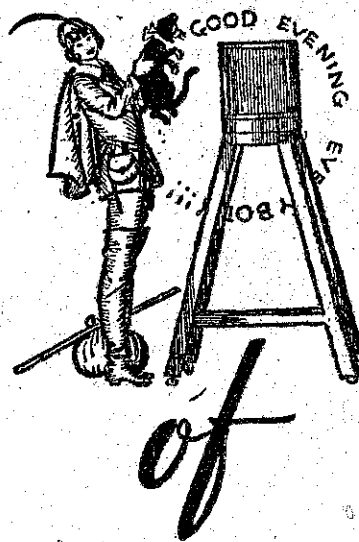


The Pantomime of Pantomimes



PANTOMIMES are so rarely performed these days that many listeners, especially those of the present generation, scarcely know what they are. In the following article Will Bishop, in characteristically breezy style, gives his impressions of the Christmas pantomime, and explains why he has revived this old-time form of entertainment in a specially-written Radio Pantomime of his own.

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Pantomimes—like the weather, the cakes such as Mother used to make, and practically everything else in this poor old world—ain't what they used to be!

Those of us who can recall the palmy days of the pantomime—and, gentle reader, I fear we plead guilty to being pretty "long in the tooth" when we confess that we can recall 'em—realise how much the quantity and the quality of this form of entertainment have definitely declined in these post-war days.

I often wonder why?

The pantomime had a universal appeal. The young and unsophisticated were thrilled by the stories they unfolded, while the enlightened could sit back and enjoy the topical matter, which was always inserted for their benefit, without worrying about the plot. Everyone could, and did, enjoy the spectacular methods of presentation and the fun without which no pantomime was worthy of the name.

Now, there is still a demand for spectacular forms of public entertainment; there is still, happily, a taste for the fanciful, if only as a relief to the modern insistence upon realism in the theatre—and goodness only knows there never has been a greater need for fun than there is to-day.

And yet the pantomime has declined because the public won't pay for it. The theatre would provide it if they would. I have never known a

A Christmas Broadcast Devised by



WILL BISHOP

Featuring

Elsie Croft
Gretta Stark
Rita Kemp
Nancy Bishop
Patricia Bishop
Ray Kemp
Arthur Pringle
C. Wynyard Cobby
Will Bishop

and

Frank Crowther
and his
Novelty Orchestra
will be presented from 2YA
on

**BOXING NIGHT
MONDAY
★ DECEMBER 26 ★**

theatrical manager who was not shrewd enough to pursue to the limit any form of entertainment which provided the possibility of profit, and I have seen not a few efforts to revive the public taste for pantomime "misfire" during the past few years.

I read recently a suggestion that the old, old pantomime stories had been worn threadbare—hence their failure to attract—but I don't believe it for a moment.

I can recall quite a number of pantomimes based upon original themes—notably those produced by George Lupino at the old "Brit" in Hoxton (I wonder if an old reader here and there can remember "The Giant Oof Bird" and "King Klondyke"?), which wouldn't have been pantomimes at all to me but for their invariable pantomime features, such as "strap chases," transformation scenes, and harlequinades.

Anyway, whatever may be the cause of the decline, I felt that I couldn't face this Christmas without a pantomime, and so I have persuaded the Broadcasting Board to let me have one on Boxing Night at 2YA.

It will be in strictly traditional style, and is, of course, in rhyme from beginning to end. This is all I'm going to tell you about it now—there are quite a number of surprises included, and to mention these would spoil the show.

Now, the broadcasting of a real pantomime simply can't be done, for the main appeal of those which linger in my own memory was undoubtedly to the eye, and not the ear. Therefore, I am going to disarm criticism by admitting that all I shall attempt to do is to produce a "radio" pantomime which is intended primarily to amuse the present generation, hoping that some of the older folks may find a few touches here and there which will revive pleasant memories of the wonderful Drury Lane and other productions of the past.

If I may, I want to take this opportunity of wishing all 2YA listeners a very, very Happy Xmas and—dare I?—a Prosperous New Year.