

20th FOX

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RADIO-TV REVIEWS

'Magi' Charm Keys Air Repeats

CBS-TV turned O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi" into a charming musical hour December 9, with strong help in all departments. It's worth repeated airings and the absence of a cast album is a loss. Richard Adler's seven-tune score is mostly a literate delight, tho perhaps not fodder for singles, and it was rendered with class by Gordon MacRae and Sally Ann (Mrs. Adler) Howes. Standouts were the ballads "A Better Word Than Love" and "What to Do" and the bright novelty "Two Different People."

With fine support from Howard St. John, Bea Arthur and Bibi Osterwald, the videotape special boasted a beguiling cast which kept the pace of the Wilson Lehr adaptation hopping nimbly from vignette to vignette in an expanded version of the Christmas tale. Don Walker's orchestrations and the use of traditional carols as bridge music also helped mightily.

On the debit side were an under-rehearsed barber shop quartet in an unfunny "My Sugar Is the Salt of the Earth" and some lapses in the quality of the tape. But MacRae and Miss Howes showed warmth enough and the score was fine enough to turn the telecast into an amusing and moving experience.

Bob Bernstein.

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Sugar Ray Scores in Allen Show

Sugar Ray Robinson, the middle-weight boxing champion of the world, made his singing debut on Steve Allen's NBC-TV show last Sunday (7). Altho his voice doesn't have any great quality, the handsome champ has sufficient sales-savvy and personal magnetism to make his the best sports figure-bet for show business stardom since Esther Williams.

He registered well on "Mr. Success" and a duo—"The Lady's In Love With You"—with Allen, and scored highest, audience-wise, with an infectious song-and-dance routine, "Nice to Go Traveling." Quality-wise, musical honors went to the Hi-Los, who displayed their usual tasteful phrasing and smooth vocal blend on "Dancing on the Ceiling" and a joyous "Clap Your Hands." Pianist Andre Previn opened the show with a pleasant jazz-flavored solo—"Fascinating Rhythm."

The show was low on comedy spots. Allen, Joan Davis, Leo DeLyon and regulars Tom Poston, Don Knotts and Louis Nye tried hard, but the material wasn't there.

June Bundy.

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'Benny in Brussels' Fine TV Spec

Westinghouse Broadcasting Company has put together a one-hour TV spectacular, filmed at the Brussels World's Fair, titled "Benny in Brussels." It has been shown on the five WBC-stations in Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and San Francisco, and is being offered to educational TV stations across the country.

"Benny in Brussels" is an exciting and interesting hour-long show, that is long on music by the Goodman band and also contains much footage of the Brussels Fair, including shots of the buildings, the people and the grounds. It is well narrated and produced and should interest a large segment of the TV audience.

Film covers the opening night of the Goodman crew, and features the Goodman band in such standards as "One o'Clock Jump," "Sing, Sing, Sing," "Roll 'Em," and "Stealin' Apples." It also shows off blues singer Jimmy Rushing to advantage singing "Going to Chicago" and "Brussels Blues," and thrush Ethel Ennis' version of "I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues." Soloists Taft Jordan, Zoot Sims and Roy Burnes on drums stood out, as did Benny himself with this hard driving, swinging World's Fair Goodman crew.

The photography thruout was generally good, altho the indoor scenes did not come off as well as the outdoor ones. Human interest shots of kids at the Fair were often enchanting. Unfortunately the sound was not always up to par, with many of the ork renditions fuzzy sounding.

Bob Rolontz.

THEATER REVIEW

Music Fails to Fit Drama's Action

Despite many charming melodies by Alfred Brooks (music) Ira J. Bilowit (lyrics) and a script by Wilson Lehr and Bilowit that includes the essentials of the the Steinbeck work, the current production of "Of Mice and Men" at the Provincetown Playhouse does not come across as a musical. Among the show's better aspects are the performances by principals, Art Lund, Leo Penn and Jo Sullivan. Charles Brandon's sets are also a fine feature of the show.

Chief fault is the lack of relation of the music to the action. Except for the opening number, "Nice House We Got Here," the rest of the score represents a flock of pleasant melodies which do little to enhance the plot.

Art Lund cops top honors with a fine performance of the retarded Lennie. Miss Sullivan is pretty and in good voice, but not at all convincing as the trapped wife. Leo Penn as George, Lennie's protective and understanding side-kick, also fares well in the best part in the show.

Howard Cook.

Elektra Adds 3 to Staff

NEW YORK — New personnel added to the staff of Elektra Records since the firm's move to new quarters include David Jones, Bruce Allan and Mel Osner. Jones, formerly of Empirical Re-

cording, in the post of Chief Engineer, will tape all sessions and will be in charge of supervising engineering personnel, maintenance and quality control. Allan, who was with Joy Manufacturing, has become assistant to Elektra prexy Jac Holzman, while Posner, formerly head of shipping, was named office manager. New artists to be released on Elektra during 1959 are Sandy Paton and Mort Freeman.

MUSIC AS WRITTEN

By BOB ROLONTZ

THE SWINGING PHILADELPHIANS

Joe Carlton, head of Carlton Records, threw his party for notable Philadelphians in New York last week at the Essex House. Party was in honor of the firm's hot dishing of "Philadelphia, U. S. A." by the Nu Tornados. We attended the meeting as a Philadelphian, not a reporter, but we are happy to report that it was a most enjoyable affair. Present were such ex-Quaker Cityites as Eddie Heller, now of RCA, Larry Newton, now of ABC-Paramount, Bernie Miller, now of RCA, George Dalin, now of Ardmore and Beechwood Music, Milt Kellem of Kellem Music, and his brother Ted Kellem promotion man of Marnel Distributors in Philadelphia. Nelson Verbit of Marnel Distributors was also present, up from Philadelphia with his wife. Did Heller talk to Newton and vice-versa? Certainly—Philadelphians always mind their manners. Given out were such items as salt and pepper shakers shaped by the Philadelphia Whiskey Company, packages of Philadelphia Cream Cheese and Phillies Cigars, as well as prizes.

Syd Nathan and Hal Neely, King Records execs, were in Los Angeles last week to wax Earl Bostic. On their way back to Cincinnati they will stop off in Dallas to wax newly signed thrush Tini Lopez. . . . Jubilee Records has snagged the soundtrack rights to the Paramount flick "Geisha Boy" starring Jerry Lewis. Track was penned by Jubilee artist Walter Scharf. Sound track album will contain excerpt's of Scharf's score, recorded by the Sinfonia Orchestra of London conducted by Muir Matheson. . . . Hal Schaeffer has been signed by United Artists Records as an independent producer to cut six jazz albums a year for the UA label. Appointment was made by Max Youngstein, head of UA Records.

Art and Dotty Todd are now at the Roney Plaza in Miami Beach. . . . Holland Records has signed Del Porter. . . . Jazz man John Hammond is profiled in the January issue of Esquire Magazine. . . . Frankie Avalon headlines at Loew's State Theater in New York at the Alan Freed show starting December 24. . . . Reese Markewich and his Jazz Quintet will be at The Bohemia in Greenwich Village, New York starting December 19.

Fletcher Butler, veteran cocktail pianist, died last week. . . . Pink Angel Records, with first artists being the Golden Sons, spiritual group, and the Debutantes, r.&r. group, has been formed in Chicago. . . . Chuck Berry set for an acting and singing role in a forthcoming picture to be produced by Alan Freed. . . . Tommy Edwards will play the Orchid Room in Kansas City for one week starting January 7. . . . Urania Records has leased new offices in New York City and will carry on its sales and promotion activities from there. Its general offices and disk pressing plant will remain in Belleville, N. J. Bill Nielsen, sales director and Dave Kleger, sales promotion head, will work out of the New York site. . . . Jack Kanes, who recently signed with Dot Records, will record two albums for the label in January. He has his own TV show on the Canadian Broadcasting Company network emanating from Toronto. . . . James Martin, head of Copa and Marquee Records in Houston, will release sides featuring Mildred Jones, Don Wilkerson and Liz Gray. First sides will be out in January. . . . Vanguard Records is releasing a new LP of Liturgical Music sung by the men and boys of the Washington Cathedral in Washington, under director Paul Callaway. LP will mark the 50th anniversary of St. Labans, the National Cathedral School for Boys. . . . The Playmates will appear on the Peter Lind Hayes Show over ABC-TV next week.

The Miller Brothers, Mercury artists whose new record of "Let Me See You Smile" was released last week, are now at the Apollo Theater in New York with deejay Herman Amis' Show. . . . Don Elliott opens at the Grate in Miami Beach on December 25. . . . Carlton Records has signed thrush Arlene Tye. . . . Teddi King starts at Mr. Kelly's in Chicago December 29. . . . The Four Voices are set for a 20-week tour of theaters and night clubs with Pearl Bailey, starting in January. . . . Pianist Paul Knopf and thrush Morgana King open a series of Monday night jazz concerts at the Banker's Club of New York tonight (15). . . . Atlantic jazz chief Neshui Ertegun's research on jazz for Life Magazine will be used as part of Life's special entertainment issue of December 22. . . . Jazzmen Phil Woods has set A. A. Milne's "Now We are Six" (about Christopher Robin, remember?) to music and is now looking for an adventurous diskery to record it.

Ray Quinlan, owner of dance studios in Kansas City and St. Louis, has started a new label, Ansero Records. First release features the Chuy Reyes Ork. . . . Matt Edwards, recording chief for Century Records of Pittsburgh, has signed a new group, The Doubles. . . . Trudy Adams' first sides for 20th Fox Records, "The Power of Love" and "You Can Sure Play That Pianna" were both penned by her hubby, Norm Martin. . . . Tina Robin has been re-signed by the Eden Roc in Miami for another appearance in January. . . . The Signatures are now on the road on the first leg of their GAC-booked winter tour. . . . Jester Records has opened its new offices and has signed a flock of new artists, including Buzz Roberts, Lynn Stevens, Don Connors, Lance Larson and the Dreamtones.

Harold Dittshoefer, product manager for Columbia Phonographs, became the father of a baby girl, Ellen Jill, last week. . . . Polly Bergen, the Four Voices and deejay W. B. Williams appeared at Andy & Dick's Record Shop in White Plains, N. Y., last weekend. "Andy" is comic Andy Griffith, "Dick" is bright-eyed manager Dick Linke. . . . Columbia Records has signed Hank (Sugarfoot) Garland to to make sides under Don Law down in Nashville. . . . Vanguard Records is re-releasing a single with the Weavers. Sides will contain two folk songs from their new album "The Weavers at Home." One side is "Aunt Rhodie," the flip is "Bury Me."