





## GRACIE FIELDS

GRACIE FIELDS was born in the cotton town of Rochdale, Lancashire, on January 9th, 1898, and began singing in public at the age of seven. In the whole family of Mother, Father, Betty, Edith, Tommy and Gracie, the only stage-struck member was Mother, and to this day Gracie maintains that she was never fascinated by the bright lights of theatreland. So great was her mother's delight in the theatre that she always managed to discover where theatricals were lodging and to live in that street by hook or by crook. When Gracie was nine years old and had already the promise of an exceptional voice, it was suggested to Mrs. Fields that she should enter her daughter for a singing competition at a local Rochdale theatre. Aspirates were her bad point but after much encouragement she learned to sing "*Whhhhat Makes Me Love You?*" She won the competition. Although a 'half-timer' in the cotton mills she began to make irregular appearances on the music halls. She soon became a very successful singer and comedienne. Her greatest ambition had always been to earn £100 and to sing at the London Coliseum before she was 21. She fulfilled it in part — but not before she was 21. When she sang triumphantly in "*Mr. Tower of London*" at the Coliseum she was 26. But for her family's fear of burglars she would have framed the cheque and hung it on the wall.

In 1928 Sir Gerald du Maurier, looking for a star to take the leading lady's part in his production of "*S.O.S.*" at the St. James's Theatre, asked Gracie to go and see him. Restricted in her choice of clothes to a certain extent by her stage work, she gave her fancy free rein in private life and was inclined to indulge in a passion for colour and originality. Du Maurier imagined she was sophisticated but Gracie refused to live up to this preconception. Off she went, wearing a Scotch skirt, a Russian blouse, flat shoes and a Scotch tammy. Du Maurier, although momentarily astounded, obviously placed Gracie's good looks in a high category. Impressed by her personality and talent he offered her the part. It was her first attempt at straight acting and a great success.

After a triumphant tour of America in 1930, Gracie returned to play in the revue "*Walk This Way*," to tour in variety and to make her first film "*Sally*." She now occupied a unique position in the affections of the British people. She had become not just a favourite artist, a talented star, but "*Our Gracie*." So much did her warm-hearted nature overflow to her public that she soon found herself regarded as a benevolent institution. Appeals poured in for money, for jobs, for help in clearing debts, and even one from an old lady who desired a holiday in Gracie's villa in Capri, for which she was perfectly willing to pay. And still these letters come week by week wherever she is, all expressing a touching faith in her ability to bring immediate aid.

In 1939 the first cloud in a bright and successful career overshadowed her life. A single-minded dedication to the public that loved her, which resulted in continual overwork, brought about the illness that was regarded as a national disaster. An eloquent cartoon appeared in the "*Daily Express*" and portrayed Strube's Little Man, typifying the Average Englishman, holding a bunch of roses up to the window of the nursing home. The original was given to Gracie on her recovery, and in gratitude she gave it to her doctor.

During the late war she decided that she would sing for charity and war relief organisations only, and she travelled all over the world raising tremendous sums for war charities.

Twenty years ago, Gracie put some spare money to a good purpose and founded the Gracie Fields Children's Orphanage at Peacehaven. Originally it was intended as a summer home for sick children, and in the first year held ten children. Gradually it developed, supported entirely by Gracie (as it has been always) and it now holds thirty children.

To go back a little — in 1928 Gracie read the magic narrative by Norman Douglas called "*South Wind*," about the Isle of Capri. For three years she holidayed there with friends and on the third occasion she said to them, "I shan't be content until I own at least a blade of grass on this island." Some time later she was told that the villa in which she had stayed was up for sale. In Nelson's day it had been a naval and military prison, and consisted of three rooms and seven cells. She negotiated for its purchase and in the middle of a show at Rochdale was told by wire that it was hers. The villa is a place of beauty now, where Gracie retires as often as she can each year. Peaches, oranges, grape-vines, flowers and bushes grow in the gardens where once was a wilderness. The world knows the rest of the story. The former modest villa is now world-famous as Gracie's "*Canzone del mare*" (Song of the sea).

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THE RIALTO CINEMA

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YORK

*Sunday 21st November 1954 at 7.30 p.m.*

*Programme*

1. Songs from the North Atlantic —  
THE MAORI QUARTET with VOLA

2. The Famous South-African Pianist —  
LIONEL BOWMAN

5. Presenting —

GRACIE FIELDS

INTERVAL

4. Songs from the South Pacific —  
*(Performed in traditional Maori Costumes)*  
THE MAORI QUARTET with VOLA

5. The Maltese Master of Music —  
CAMILLERI

6. Re-introducing —

GRACIE FIELDS

*at the piano: VIC HAMMETT*

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*This Concert is Produced  
and Presented by*

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HAROLD FIELDING  
Fielding House — Haymarket  
London — S.W.1

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## Camilleri

Aptly described as "Malta's master of music," Camilleri could hardly have escaped becoming a professional accordionist if he had wanted to — for he is the son of a leading accordion player, and his first toy was a miniature accordion. Born at Hamrun in the George Cross isle in 1931, he may seem very young to have achieved success on the concert and variety stage, but behind him are many years of training and public performance. At seven he played on a stage for the first time, and the far-sighted critic of the local paper said he "showed himself a great accordionist in embryo." At thirteen he was the star of a concert party which was heard by many British servicemen on duty in the Mediterranean, and by seventeen he could claim to have given more than 500 broadcasts on Radio Malta. When he was eighteen, he emigrated with his family to Australia where he quickly won fame as a brilliant musician. The accordion has always been a popular instrument in that country which has produced some wonderful players, but, when Camilleri announced his departure from Australia early this year, critics and journalists there united in describing him as the greatest of them all. Hard-working and devoted to music, he spends several hours each day practising and extending his repertoire which covers an amazing range from classics to hot jazz. He also composes for the accordion, and does all his own arrangements. If there is time for relaxation, he likes to go fishing. At twenty-three he is unmarried, but makes no promise that he will still be that way at twenty-four.

## The Maori Quartet with Vola

Four young men with difficult names have come from New Zealand to entertain the people of Britain with their traditional songs and dances. They are Te Waari Anatioka Hohepa, Manu Rawiri Paraki, Henare Gilbert and Makarani Hata — but they are happy if people call them Joe, Pat, Henry and Mac. Professionally, they are called The Maori Quartet. Many of us know the Maori melody "Now Is The Hour," which Gracie Fields first heard when she was in New Zealand and subsequently made world-famous. Sports fans may have seen a Maori dance, for the visiting All Black Rugby teams often do a "haka" or Maori war dance when they come on the field. But there are many other New Zealand songs and dances in the repertoire of the Maori Quartet, and they also perform the songs and dances of Hawaii, Tahiti, Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Malaya and the Phillippines. As well, they can rival American close-harmony groups in singing the popular songs of the western world. Almost as soon as they arrived in England last year, they were chosen to appear in the Royal Command Variety Performance. Since then they have been in two films — "The Seekers" with Jack Hawkins, and "Up To His Neck" with Ronald Shiner — and made an extensive tour of France, Italy and Germany. With them is Vola, an exotic dancer from the South Sea Islands, who can not only sing but dances the hula with what is best described as intoxicating rhythm. These four men and a girl present a highly unusual act which one critic summed up in the phrase: "Here is all the fabled enchantment of the South Seas."

## Lionel Bowman

Lionel Bowman was born in South Africa and during his youth won eight scholarships, the last being the University of South Africa scholarship which brought him to the Royal Academy of Music in London just before the war. All his lessons have been on scholarship since the age of eight until he became a professional pianist at the age of nineteen. During the war he returned to South Africa and made an enviable reputation with his large and varied repertoire. He played and learned no less than thirty works for piano and orchestra during the first four years of his career there. After returning to England in 1946 he was soon engaged in giving concerts all over Britain and within a few years he had established himself as one of the foremost younger pianists. During a tour for Harold Fielding in 1947 he was heard at a concert by some American visitors and, impressed by his work, they arranged for him to go to America the following year, where he played in various arts centres, and also did a coast-to-coast broadcast of South African works for the piano. He was the first South African pianist to play in America.