

Gracie will sing old favourites tonight



Gracie with Cliff Richard at today's rehearsal.

'THEY'VE TALKED ME OUT OF TRYING ANYTHING NEW...'

Evening Standard Reporter

They've talked Gracie Fields out of singing any new songs or any comedy numbers for the Royal Variety Performance at the London Palladium tonight. As Gracie, wearing a plain black dress and gold necklace, sat in the dressing-room she shares with Lena Horne today, she told me:

"Though it is my eighth Royal Command Show, I still get nerves. I'm trying to remain calm, but everyone gets so excited backstage. I generally do a little sewing to keep my mind occupied.

"I wanted to sing a couple of new songs, but my husband, Boris, and everyone else wouldn't let me.

"So I shall be singing Sally, How Are Things in Glochamorra? Getting to Know You, September Song, Scarlet Ribbons, and I shall walk off to the strains of Wish Me Luck . . .

'A sort of dream . . .'

"I can't remember the last Command performance I did, but I think the first one was in 1927. One just never remembers the whole thing: it passes in a sort of dream.

"I'm leaving London tomorrow for New York, where I'm appearing on television in the Jack Parr Show, and then I'm going on a tour of Canada."

Gracie, 66, showed me the two dresses she will wear for tonight's show: one in blue and gold lurex, the other an evening dress for the finale, in red, with gold flowers.

She said: "I bought the material in John Lewis's, and had the mmade up by a little woman I know in Capri."

THE Queen arrives at the London Palladium for last night's show business event of the year, the Royal Variety performance.

And the real show-stopper is the Queen's dress. She wore a full-skirted gown of ice-blue organza, fitted bodice embroidered with diamante and finished with diamante icicles at the waist, a diamond tiara, necklace and earrings.

Looking out from the current Palladium poster—singer Cilla Black, one of the 300 performers in the talent-packed bill lined up for the Queen. Gracie Fields was making her ninth Royal show appearance at 66.

Transatlantic stars included Lena Horne and comedian Bob Newhart—he made that driving instructor record—who flew in with only five hours to spare because of fog delays.

Among the hit-parade names in the programme were Kathy Kirby, The Bachelors and Cliff Richard and The Shadows.

Last night's audience paid up to 20 guineas for a seat, and the show was expected to raise £30,000 for stage charities.

Gracie steals the Royal show.

—Page NINE.