

# GRACIE OUT OF TURN EMPTIES THE BAR

By CECIL WILSON

**G**RACIE FIELDS, singing for £10 a minute to 8,200 people at the Empress Hall, Earls Court, last night, caused a stampede back from the bars by deciding to go on the stage when the programme said "Interval."

She was billed as the final act in a show including Terry Thomas and Paul Fenoulhet's Orchestra.

Towards the end of the first half she said: "Ee! I can't keep 'em waiting all this time. I'll have a bash now and another in the second half."

## DRINKS LEFT

Six hundred people had drifted into the bars and were just ordering their drinks and snacks when a woman official ran around the corridors crying, "Gracie's on."

*The astonished bar attendants found their counters piled with unwanted sandwiches and lined with full glasses as the 600 rushed back to their seats to the opening strains of "Sally."*

Victor Hochhauser, 26-year-old impresario, is paying Gracie £20,000 for her six weeks' tour, including a minimum of £8,500 for her eight nights at Earls Court. Last night she sang for 40 minutes in each half, which works out at £10 a minute.

The audience paid £3,000 of Hochhauser's investment by spending between 2s. 6d. and 12s. 6d. on their seats. They began queuing four hours before the show opened, and the crush (with Black Market ticket salesmen trying to cash-in) grew so great that the doors had to be opened half an hour earlier than planned.

Gracie gave her audience good value in quantity and quality. Her artistry and sheer attack (can she really be 51?) reduced this vast arena to the cosiness of a cabaret floor.

## CARTWHEEL TOO

She sang old songs, new songs, comic songs, tender songs, sacred songs; she whistled, waltzed, turned a cartwheel, did a high kick, and told stories in an accent as richly Rochdale as ever.

*Her comedy is a little quieter these days, but her voice is possibly sweeter, and her energy quite astonishing.*

"I wish they'd let me retire and get on wi' me knitting," she says. But they won't, so long as she sings, makes 8,000 people sing and then cheer her at the end, as she did last night.

Hints that Gracie Fields is going to retire don't match up to what her husband, Monty Banks, told me a couple of days ago before he left for Capri.

"Gracie is writing her life-story as a film," says Monty, "she'll play in it and I might produce it."

*Gracie Fields will have played to 64,000 folk when her Empress Hall engagement ends tonight.*

## After her £10 a minute songs



The performance over, Gracie greets fans at her dressing-room door.

# Listen to this

THE B.B.C.'s handling of the coming Gracie Fields broadcast (May 30) seems to me distinctly lackadaisical. A broadcast by Gracie is a big radio occasion. It is odd that I feel it necessary to remind the B.B.C. of this.

In a wad of official publicity about the forthcoming programmes which Broadcasting House thinks we columnists ought to publicise, there are just four bald lines announcing that Gracie is coming to the microphone—and that's all!

There are sixteen lines announcing in great detail the broadcast of "Lelio" on Thursday, to which I am sure you are all looking forward. (Or didn't you know? It's a symphony on the Third.)

But the B.B.C. has been slow off the mark over Gracie's radio date from the start. It was not because the B.B.C. told me the news that I was able to state here first that she would broadcast on May 30. Official B.B.C. spokesmen had no news of the event when I asked.

Yet the little bird who told me knew the contract was already signed and the date fixed. Gracie was packing 8,000 people into the Empress Hall in London every night last week. Her television broadcast the other night was a peak "viewer" occasion.

One would expect the B.B.C. to muscle in on all this and give listeners all the details about her big broadcast—perhaps her only one this year.

Well—let me again give you the facts. Gracie has told the B.B.C.: "None of that studio audience lark, lads!" So the audience is out. Gracie wants to sing and talk to you and me, by the fireside, without studio interruptions.

She believes that radio is for the listener. Let it take Gracie Fields into the home, not to a studio pack of free-seat squatters. So that's the kind of show we are to get a week tomorrow—an intimate, pure radio show.

I now hope certain other "radio" artists, whose performances are spoiled by whistles and "heartly clap-ter," will take a tip from this supreme artist, and get tough with the B.B.C. about some of those studio audiences.

Her millions of admirers will welcome the news that Gracie Fields, perhaps the supreme artist of our generation; will broadcast a programme of her own on Friday next, and, we hope, make at least one other appearance during her present short visit to this country. She is also to record in advance a grand-scale programme which will be heard during the Christmas season.

## GRACIE TAKES THE SUN ...



IN Hyde Park yesterday—Gracie Fields, in a veiled straw hat trimmed with spring flowers. She has just returned from America for a concert tour.



## JOHN I RADIO

FOR the first time the haunting orchestral theme of the film "The Glass Mountain" is to be aired as a song on Christmas Day. Artiste putting it over is that super-salesman of song, Gracie Fields.

The next time I saw the Duk was at the Coliseum midweek matinee, organised by the Variety Club of Great Britain, in aid of the National Playing Fields Association, of which he is president. On this occasion he wore the new black bow tie, which is longer and narrower than usual. This was the gayest night of the week, and Gracie Fields was the brightest star of a wonderful cast.

Radio star Peter Sellers, with his brilliant impressions (including one of Reg Dixon), is another newcomer to the Palladium to score a success. But with all due respect to a very entertaining bill, at heart the audience were all waiting for Gracie Fields. She is still superb. What else could provide 40 minutes' entertainment with such variation as the Nuns' Chorus from "Casanova," Puccini's "O, My Beloved Father," "You Made Me Love You," and "My Hot Spanish Knight"? Gracie's appearance provides a fitting climax to the last Palladium Variety bill of the season.

"BANDBOX" also introduces tonight DELIA MURPHY, who is known in her own country as the Irish GRACIE FIELDS. In fairness to Gracie and in fairness to Delia, this fearful modern habit of comparisons should be stopped. Delia is a personality on her own. Though this is her first broadcast in England, her records are always being slipped into disc-jockey programmes. You probably know "The Spinning Wheel" and "If I were a Blackbird."