Masterpiece Theater
New Series to Focus on ‘Country Matters’

MASTERPIECE THEATRE will dip into rural England in the early 20's in a four-part series entitled COUNTRY MATTERS which will begin Sun. 22 at 8:30 on Channel 23.


"The Higgler" tells the story of a peddler in farm produce who is offered, and rejects, a tidy farm, a secure life, and a beautiful woman only to lose everything because he can't trust his own luck.

In "The Black Dog", an aristocratic young man falls in love with a village girl and discovers he has stepped into a ruthless environment that he cannot endure.

"The Watercress Girl" is a story of twisted love and hate and a brutal attack by one woman upon another.

"The Mill" probes the responsibility a father and son have for an innocent girl who has been seduced by the father.

Both Coppard and Bates began writing in the 1920's and shared strong feelings for the ways of country people and country life. They followed a strong tradition in English narrative writing which finds its inspiration in the countryside and in the lives of country people. The stories are unsentimental observations of nature and human character in a rural England that was fast disappearing.

Keith Drinkel plays Harvey Witlow, the higgler, in the MASTERPIECE THEATRE presentation of a COUNTRY MATTERS play "The Higgler" by A. E. Coppard Sunday at 8:30 on Channel 23.
'Lotsa Luck' For Lynn Irwin

By RUTH E. THOMPSON:

"Ooh! This is the first time I've seen you without your bathrobe!” gasped a pretty brunette named Sophia as Wynn Irwin drove into sight neatly clad in a sports jacket and slacks. It was indeed the first time that this Sophia (she is an NBC receptionist) ever had seen Wynn in person. He grinned. Strangers on the street holder the same phrase at him, or a variant, "Where's your bathrobe?" The bathrobe is the entire wardrobe assigned him as Dom DeLuise's parasite brother-in-law on NBC's "Lotsa Luck."

The series, which bowed last September, wasn't renewed for fall, but Wynn speaks warmly of it as, "My biggest break so far." Technically, the 41-year-old New Yorker has been an actor for only six years. But he has been in and out of show business since he and a partner developed a comedy act for Catskill resorts when they were still in high school. Right after high school, Wynn bought himself a small store, "Greeting cards, gifts and religious items" but sold it off to return to performing. All in all the act endured for eight years. With a few interruptions such as Army service for him, two years at New York University trying to buckle down to a business major. No go, he became a talent agent instead of a storekeeper again.

And what turned him to acting? "My marriage broke up suddenly. My wife went back to her home in California and took our son. In my depression — and I was depressed — I went one day to Roosevelt Raceway and bumped into a friend who produced plays on Long Island. "Why don't you give me an audition?" I asked. Well, three weeks later he did. Had me read both the Felix and Oscar roles in 'The Odd Couple' and hired me. Which role? Oscar, of course." (He has reprised the role since in Texas.)

With his first break-through into acting, Wynn closed out the family-sized spread in the pleasant residential section of Kew Gardens and moved into a studio apartment in the heart of Manhattan. "And I applied myself to acting so I made rounds every day." He got lucky with commercials, having appeared in over a dozen major ones. He has a long-range goal. "I would like to play Jimmy in 'Look Back in Anger.' But, of course, I will always like doing comedies, too." Good thing, too, because his short-range goal is to keep himself busy, earning and cheered up. It is strange that the big talk shows haven't discovered him yet. His dour humor wears well. He doesn't strain to say funny things... but the things he says just come out funny.

A week after "Lotsa Luck" finished filming, Wynn came East; a refresher to his Runyonesque spirit. "I'm a city type, California is a terrible place for me when I'm not working. I was starting to learn to play tennis. My lady friend said I should get involved and she bought me a racket." He doesn't name the "lady friend." Yes, she is still there at the moment but she prefers New York, too. But she is an actress and apparently practical enough to realize that's where the work is.

Art is resigned to going West again, if work beckons. In fact he went out a year ago without an assignment just to look around. "I was sitting in Schwab's Drug Store... I really was — like Lina Turner without the sweater, when a good friend came up and said he was reading a pilot script that he thought would suit me. He wanted to get the script off me right away... but I was going to the hockey game that night. Well, so has he." So they met at intermission, Wynn saw the script, showed up unshaven the next day for an audition... and landed in "Lotsa Luck."

The working relationship were good, he says. But there was no after-hours fraternizing. "Dom and I have different interest. I have one vice, I go and watch horses run."
**THE QUESTION BOX**

**Question:** Is Grady taking over as the head man on "Sanford and Son" as I've been reading? What is his real name? Sandy.

**Answer:** Whitman Mayo, who plays Grady, was thrust into the series' lead when Redd Foxx bowed out for a time. He never cared the role of Sanford's friend was happy, surprise enough. Acting had become a moonlighting career for him until this role: his real job was as an agent. Incidentally, Redd Foxx is back with a new contract.

**Question:** Sometime around Valentine's Day last winter, Donna Mills starred in a new late-night mystery. I'm a loyal fan of Donna's so I'm clear about when the show was on. My question is, who played Jill?

A couple of us have gotten mental blocks trying to remember where we've seen the other actress. She looked so familiar. Roberta.

**Answer:** Most actors do soap operas for money, and b) to keep busy. Miss Stevens is down because she loves this whirl at acting. She certainly would not seem to need the money for she lives on the palatial scale of old-time movie stars.

**PROFILE OF THE WEEK:**

Gracious, bright and bubbly, actress Ruta Lee has long been in demand as a celebrity panelist on game shows. Now, she has moved up to daily headline rank as the co-host along with Alex Trebek of NBC's new mid-morning "High Rollers."

As is now the custom with game shows, all of a week's segments are now taped in a single day ... and a lucky break that is proving for Ruta. Her summer theater bookings run through September. (In July she starred in "Becky: A Rogue in the Right" in Worth and right now she is off to St. Louis with a production of "Goodbye Charlie").

She is an unusual young woman. Slender, blonde, pretty and always fastidiously groomed but never seeming to fuss about her looks. She is well organized and energetic without being abrasive about it. She is now serving her fourth term as president of The Thalians -- a group of performers who aid disturbed children -- and she is heart-and-soul dedicated to the cause. Where she has the time, she travels around for the American Cancer Society's crusading against smoking.

Back in her starlet days, Ruta suddenly made newspaper headlines of a happy sort when she crusaded to get her 85-year old grandmother sprung from behind the Iron Curtain to live out the rest of her years with her descendants in the U.S. Ruta waged a tireless fight and was able to contact the Red Cross in Moscow. She personally contacted the KGB and Everybody's surprise except for Ruta) it got the ball rolling. (The elderly woman did get to the U.S. where she survived until the age of 90).

Both Ruta's mother and father are of Lithuanian descent. She herself was born in Montreal, Canada and lived there until she was 12. Then her parents decided to relocate in California so she could train to be an actress and go into movies.

**MAIL BAG**

Q. -- I heard there will be a TV special starring Elvis Presley and Liberace. How come these two together? I can't figure it out. -- Mrs. F.D.I., Atlantic Beach, Fla.

A. -- Unless this special is being taped in complete secrecy, I would have to say it is not likely to become a reality. Elvis confines his TV appearances to specials starring himself, and Liberace is not slated to headline a TV special of his own.

Q. -- Here's one for the trivia nuts. I am going crazy trying to think of the TV series that starred a French actress and an American actor who played husband and wife. The series was on during the late '50s or early '60s. Please come up with it. -- P.I., Wichita, Kan.

A. -- You're thinking of "Angel," which starred Anne Farge and Marshall Thompson.

Q. -- Is Elizabeth Taylor going to do any TV this coming season? I heard she may play a series of queens in a special group of plays. -- L.S., Meriden, Conn.

A. -- The glamorous and talented actress is not slated to do a series of TV plays depicting the life and reign of various monarchs. She has no definite TV plans.

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