

# TREND

## Beaux, bows and belles



Natty little bow tie, £11.95, teamed with a blue or grey cotton wing collar shirt with fly front, 14½ to 16½, £30, and blue, brown, fawn or navy pure new wool flannel suit, 36in. to 44in., £85. All from the Cue Shop at Austin Reed.



A black evening bow complements this polyester/cotton Rocola dress shirt — appropriately named "Lord" — featuring the increasingly popular wing collar, square double cuffs and black edged buttons, around £17.95.

BOWS for Him and trousers for Her. That's the theme for the festive social scene.

Trendy beaux and fashionable belles are forsaking conservative looks and opting for stylish designs to take them through from Christmas drinks parties to New Year's Eve balls.

When the mood is casual, He may adopt the Brideshead appearance of colourful bow tie, wing-collared shirt, V-neck sweater and front-pleated trousers, while She could be dressed in figure-hugging or baggy pants and simple blouse.

For formal occasions, His dinner suit may be complemented by a large bow and dress shirt while Her outfit could be a sophisticated jumpsuit or floating harem pants with flowing top.

Daywear — like seasonal wrapping paper — is colourful and patterned. For evening, flashing hints of gold or silver threads sparkle amid bright shades...just like the lights on Christmas trees.

**Hazel Turkington**



Elegant jumpsuits for special occasions ... and these three are just £9.99 each at major Woolworth and Woolco branches. They are all in a silky polyester fabric and the wrap-front style (left) comes in royal blue or claret while the other two are available in black or petrol blue. All in sizes 10 to 16.



# There's nothing like a Dame

One of the most loved characters in pantomime is the Dame. **BILLY SIMPSON** talks to some of them.



**BELOW** — Billy Rea (above) as one of the Ugly Sisters in Cinderella at the Little Theatre, Bangor.



**Derek Andrews** (below) and as one of the Ugly Sisters at the Little Theatre, Bangor.



**Paul Harris** (below) and above as Sarah the Cook in "Dick Whittington" at the Grand Opera House.



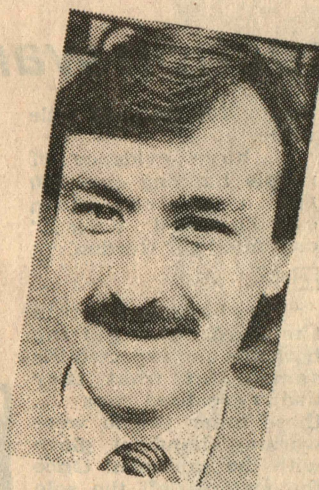
**BELOW** — Paul Acheson, Downtown Radio DJ. **ABOVE** — as Widow Twanky in Belfast Operatic Company's "Aladdin."

IF YOU think the ancient Japanese traditions in "Shogun" seem a bit strange, can you imagine trying to explain to an Oriental the great traditions of the British pantomime. Would he understand an entertainment where the leading man is a woman dressed as a man, singing love songs to a woman dressed as a woman. Or that the Dame is actually a man dressed up as a woman and often has a comic romantic attachment with a man dressed as a man.

Explained like that it sounds more like something the DUP would picket, rather than an entertainment for children.

But the whole comedy of the pantodame lies in the knowledge that it is only a man dressed up. It is a caricature of the bossy shrew that is larger than life, just as fantasy is larger than truth.

Over the Christmas period professional and amateur companies, schools and youth clubs throughout the country, will be putting on annual pantos and a great many men, who do not in the normal course of their lives dress up as women, will be climbing into an enormous number of



petticoats, large bloomers, false bosoms and gowns to portray Sarah the Cook, Widow Twankey, Mother Goose, Dame Trot, Ugly Sisters, etc. for our entertainment.

We have talked to some of them. Many have been doing it for years and for some it will be the first time.

**BILLY REA**, (27) who plays Priscilla, one of the Ugly Sisters in Bangor Operatic Society's production of Cinderella, at the Little Theatre — from December 27 to January 8 — is a schoolteacher at Kilmain

Primary School, Bangor. He has been involved with amateur dramatics for nine years, but has only had to dress up in drag once before, for a church panto some years ago. "I think the reason I was chosen was that when I did a reading of the part it came out as pure Edna Everage."

He has played some odd-bod parts before for Bangor Drama Club, including a Gingerbread Man and a Scarecrow.

Asked if he studied for his drag role by watching other Panto dames or real women, he said: "A bit of both."

He admired the characterisations of Belfast women by the late James Young. And he gets some of the voice patterns from listening to women in bus queues and in department stores.

In addition to preparing for his Ugly Sister role, Billy Rea, is producing his school pantomime "Babes in the Wood."

"With producing 'Babes' and being in 'Cinderella' there are times things are more like 'Cinderella in the Woods' at the moment."

He expects to take a bit of stick from his pupils when the Panto comes on. "Though I doubt if anyone would recognise me in my



stage get-up. I am hoping they won't recognise me."

**PAUL ACHESON** (34) is perhaps best known for his D.J. role on Downtown Radio on Sunday mornings, but this is only a part time job.

"I am full time schoolteacher at Orangefield in Belfast," he said.

Earlier this month he played Widow Twankey in Belfast Operatic Company's production of "Aladdin" at the Group Theatre. Now it goes to St. Comgall's new theatre, Victoria Road, Larne, on January 7 and 8.

I am not a member of

Belfast Operatic and this was the first time I'd ever done anything like this. Playing a dame. They just asked me in the summer time, if I'd be interested. I didn't study other panto dames. They wanted it played as a Belfast character so I rewrote my lines to put in Belfast terminology. It wasn't too difficult. A lot of kids from my school did turn up to see it, some of them with Scout groups, etc."

He says he hasn't had too much stick from his pupils. "I think they accept me as a bit of an eccentric both outside the classroom and inside."

Paul would like to do another panto sometime but isn't certain it will be next year, because of his teaching and radio commitments.

He is usually involved around this time of year with the school panto but dropped out this year because of his "Widow Twankey" role at the Group. He expects to be involved again with the school panto next year.

"It's all a question of finding the time," he said.

**PAUL HARRIS** is a full-time professional entertainer. This year marks his 21st panto and his 12 appearances as a



Dame. He plays Sarah the Cook in the Frank Carson pantomime "Dick Whittington" at the Opera House.

"This is my third consecutive year at the Opera House," he said. When he isn't in panto, he travels the country as a stand-up comedian in cabaret.

He says playing a dame in pantomime is not female impersonation. "It's a man dressed up as a woman playing a caricature of a woman. A caricature of a housewife."

He admits to having picked up a few tricks

over the years from observing women.

"For instance I was passing through Heathrow Airport last Sunday and heard one woman saying to another: "I got up this morning and saw how foggy it was so I put on my boots."

Father-of-two **DEREK ANDREWS** who plays the other Ugly Sister, Penicilla, at Bangor, is a supermarket manager and has been in amateur dramatics for nearly 30 years and has played the Dame three times before.

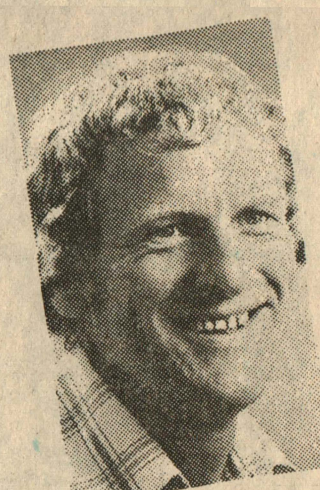
"I have been in panto since I was eleven," he said. "I've been with Bangor Operatic for seven years. Before that I was with an amateur group called Spectrum."

This year's panto is something of a family affair for him. His wife Ann sings and dances in the chorus.

Derek, who is 40, has no inhibitions about playing the Dame.

"You have to work out a style of your own. There are so many professional dames who have their own style. Like Billy Dainty, Les Dawson and the late Arthur Askey who was one of the best dames of all."

It was important, he said, to develop a style of



comedy you were comfortable with and that suits your own personality.

Together Billy Rea and he had worked out a lot of sight gags and jokes for their Ugly Sister roles.

"We could put in so many the show would run three hours. We have to decide which ones to leave out rather than which ones to put in."

Derek's 13-year-old daughter and 12-year-old son are both keen to join the Operatic when they are older.

**PETER KENNEDY** (24) who plays one of the Ugly Sisters in the Ulster

Operatic Company's production of "Cinderella" which opens at the Harberton Theatre, Balmoral on New Year's Eve, is a student at the Polytechnic studying for his BA in English.

He first appeared on stage at the age of eleven playing one of the Von Trapp children in an amateur production of "The Sound of Music" and has been with the Ulster Operatic for the past four years.

"This is the first time I've ever played a Dame," he said. "But I have played comedy roles opposite the dame. Parts like Idle Jack and Simple Simon."

His study for the part has really been confined to seeing other panto dames in action but he has used his observations of some aspects of women's behaviour as well. "Their bitchiness and such. Maybe I'd better not say bitchiness. I could get in trouble."

He admits he has had a bit of stick from his mates about dressing up as a woman for the part.

"My girlfriend Karen Davidson who plays Cinderella in the show, says she is worried about me wearing women's clothes for a fortnight, in case I get to like it."