



## **Frank Gagliano**

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[“We’ll Meet Again,” Vera Lynn, Bill Kenny, Miss Marple and the keepers of the consonant]

Singer Dame Vera Lynn just died. She was 103 years old (<https://www.latimes.com/obituar.../.../2020-06-18/vera-lynn-dead>). Dame Lynn was a first rate UK singer of the pop songs of the 1930s and 40s. During W2, she was THE voice that kept the home fires burning for the British soldiers at war. One of her signature songs was “We’ll Meet Again.” Apparently, that song and Dame Lynn’s singing of it, was revived in the UK during this Covid-19 period. And is it any wonder? The song recognizes the pain of separation, but offers hope of reconnecting.

Within the first three notes of any of her recordings, I would say, “Ah. Vera Lynn,” and sit back, luxuriate in the one-of-a-kind fingerprint that was her voice; in the power of it, in the emotional life she gave it, in her belief in what she was saying—and in the clarity of her diction. Loved her consonants. Pure and on the head. The following YouTube link cleverly shows Dame Lynn beginning the song back in the period when she first sang it, then picks up the song in future decades and in various venues, ending an a massive sing along. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6X1D2h8AheU>).

And that got me thinking about another version of “We’ll Meet Again” — the Bill Kenny, Ink Spots version. Their speciality format — (that never varied, from what I could tell) — was for tenor Bill Kenny to sing the song through, then have the lyric spoken by another member of the Ink Spots in a breezy vernacular way (usually to his “honey”) — then back to Kenny, singing straight through to end the song. Kenny’s consonants (which he never pushed—just touched) were as clear as Dame Lynn’s. In my yore days, when I could still carry a tune, I’d attempt to replicate Kenny’s diction and phrasing. As a New Yorker, usually racing through the language and blurring his consonants and short changing his vowels, the energy it took for me to attempt the Kenny diction, made me marvel at what he could simply do, with ease. Here’s the Kenny/Ink spots link to, “We’ll Meet Again.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kW89WnxX80A>)

And that got me thinking about another UK cornucopia of consonants. The remastered Miss Marple series on the BBC streaming service Britbox. I have watched the beautifully written Agatha Christie dramatization, “Nemesis,” until I’m now analyzing the dramatization, shot by superbly directed and edited shots. But it’s the acting — all of the acting — that I find a marvel of casting: Men and Women. Hickson, of course, was born for the role of Miss Marple and speaks it brilliantly. But it is the diction of Helen Cherry, Valery Lush, Margaret Tyzack, Anna Cropper and Peter Copley that raise the consonant bar for me, and leaves what little hair I have left, standing.

So. To Dame Vera Lynn, Bill Kenny, Joan Hickson. . . and, perhaps, the death of the consonant . . .R.I.P.  
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