

SANDLER OF THE BBC

THE life of Albert Sandler, the BBC's popular violinist, who died suddenly at the end of last month, makes as romantic a story of one man's progress from poverty to riches as anyone could wish for. It started in 1905, when a poor Russian whose anglicised name was Sandler, landed at a London dock with his wife and three young children. They had been exiled through poverty from their native land. The Russian rented rooms in the Russian émigré colony in the East End, setting up a cobbler's workshop in one of them. A year later his son Albert was born, and the boy's musical leanings were so strong that soon he was pestering his family for a violin.

His father saved up a few pence each week from his meagre earnings, until one day—the day before Albert's birthday—he stopped work earlier than usual. He put on his coat, walked up the street to the local pawnshop, and bought a three-quarter size violin for sixteen shillings.

Albert Sandler's first instruction came from his eldest brother (there were seven children), but soon he was taking lessons from a professional teacher—an East End "maestro" who charged ninepence a half-hour, and insisted on cash payment before each lesson started. From this man Sandler passed on to a higher grade professor whose charge was half-a-crown a lesson, a cost that was met only by all the family clubbing together. Then, through hard saving and the influence of his musical friends, he was able to study at the Guildhall School of Music, until eventually, at the age of 12, he became a professional musician. His earnings were five shillings a week, and his job was "relief" in a cinema orchestra.

His next job was as second violin in a Bermudey cinema at a weekly salary of 50 shillings, and six months later he was offered five pounds a week to be leader of the orchestra in the opposition cinema. By the time he was 18 he was an experienced cinema violinist, and his skilful playing soon brought him to the notice of the managers of a well-



BBC Photograph
ALBERT SANDLER

known chain of London restaurants. Beginning as sub-leader of one of their restaurant orchestras, he ended up as leading violinist at the Trocadero.

After some years he got another lucky break. The Grand Hotel at Eastbourne had lost their violinist and dance band leader de Groot, who had made the hotel famous by his broadcast concerts. Albert Sandler was recommended by de Groot himself for the job and in this way he took up the position through which he became known to millions of radio listeners. His activities later broadened to include other performances.

When he died last month he was only 42, but even in New Zealand he will be remembered for his broadcasts with the Palm Court Orchestra of the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne—broadcasts which established him as one of the few musicians to infuse character and true musicianship into violin playing of this type. Those who did not hear the last recorded series of Grand Hotel broadcasts issued by the Transcription Service of the BBC, will soon be able to hear a second series which arrived here recently. In the meantime, a special programme about Albert Sandler will be broadcast in 2YA's *Morning Star* session, at 9.32 a.m. next Wednesday, September 22.

(continued from previous page)

Anglican Church at Ohinemutu. Musical items by the four leading concert parties of the Arawa people—Ngati Pikiau, Ngati Whakau, Taiporoutu Club and the Tukorangi party—were recorded in the meeting-house at Ohinemutu.

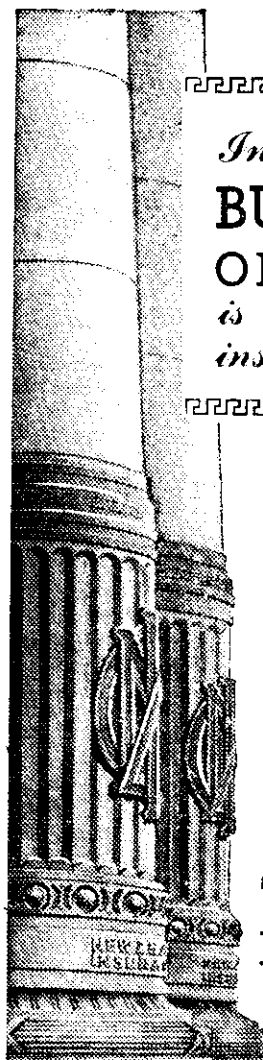
Recordings were made simultaneously for the BBC and the ABC by NZBS technicians, and six days were spent on the job. On one day alone, recording went on for 15½ hours almost without a break. Most of the time up to 1500 feet of cable were laid out to connect the Mobile Unit with farmhouses and other places from which sound effects were required.

In Whakarewarewa the van was halted at the entrance to the thermal region and a portable transmitter was carried in to pick up the roar of the geyser and the bubbling of the mud pools. "We were very lucky, for almost every thermal activity seemed to be specially turned on for us," one technician told *The Listener*. The power for these recordings was taken from a handy milk bar just across the road.

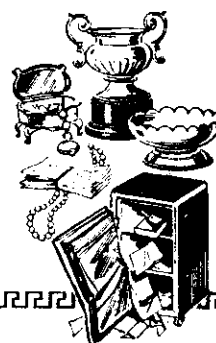
Donald Cameron (technician) toured round with the two commentators, carrying his two-way communication equipment, while C. A. Brown and H. A. Craig stayed in the van to monitor and record the information and sound effects from the scene.

When recording the Maori concert parties, both Bridson and Thomas insisted, so as to get the best possible balance, on having the soloists close to the microphone, which meant carrying it right up to the singers. And when hakas were performed, Thomas for the same reason chased the leader through his actions. On one Maori farm at Horo Horo, recordings were taken of a run of sheep, the barking of the dogs and whistling of the drovers. Later, when the Maoris gathered round the recording van to hear the records played back, the dogs, recognising the whistles, dashed about excitedly and bewildered by the instructions which came, apparently, from nowhere.

All told, about 65 twelve-inch and sixteen-inch recordings were made from these BBC and ABC programmes.



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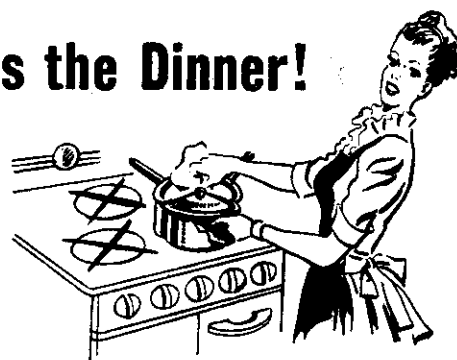
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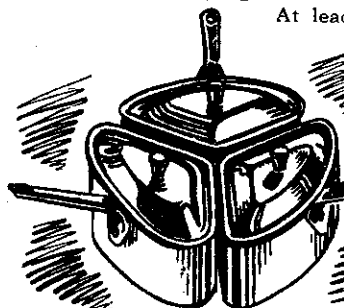
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