

# CHRISTMAS IN THE AIR

## National Station Programmes

IN these days when multiple organisations with abbreviated titles are busying themselves with international affairs, the simple spontaneous goodwill of Christmas time holds us with a renewed appeal. For a while at least people have the excuse of custom and tradition to lay aside formality of manner, habit and speech, to smile at—and even speak to—those whom normally they ignore.

But there are people who must work at Christmas time and among them are those behind the radio microphones. It is for them an occasion for special effort. In keeping with the Festival they must, of course, observe the tradition of song and story, without which Christmas would not be Christmas. But there will be new things too for listeners in the programmes for Christmas 1949, as well as new variations on the old familiar themes.

One is the first broadcast by the NZBS of a BBC play, *The Christmas Child*, by D. G. Bridson. This is a variation of a familiar theme but with a setting that could be in any manufacturing town in the north of England, and the two main characters any one of the young couples who have made a home in the rows of drab little houses that lie under the shadow of the factories. The story is told by a cast headed by Marjorie Westbury and Wilfred Pickles, and the music is sung by the Dorian Singers, conducted by Matyas Sieber. The play will be heard from 2YA on December 23 at 8.11 p.m., and from 1YA at 9.33 p.m., and 4YC at 8.0 p.m. on Christmas Day.

### New Cantata

Another new item will be *Christmas Cantata* by Geoffrey Bush, which will be performed for the first time in New Zealand by the Coventry Singers in the studio of 4YA at 9.30 p.m. on Christmas Day. The conductor will be George Wilkinson. Geoffrey Bush is a 29 year-old British composer who was a chorister at Salisbury Cathedral under Sir Walter Alcock. He entered Balliol College, Oxford, in 1938, with

a Nettlehip Scholarship. In 1940 he gained the degree of Mus. B., and five years later returned to Oxford to become Mus. Doc. *Christmas Cantata* is said to combine traditional carol melodies with modern harmonization and original choral writing; it was composed expressly for the Balliol Musical Society who first performed it at Christmas 1947.

### For Those Who Work

*Christmas Workers* (dedicated to those who have to work to keep essential services going while others are enjoying themselves) is the self-explanatory title of a feature to be presented from 2YA at 3.0 p.m. on Christmas Day. It was compiled by Jack Dobson, formerly with Wilfred Pickles's BBC show *Have a Go*, who spent his first few weeks in Wellington meeting some of these people. His quest took him into the engine-room of a large cargo vessel, to the Dominion Weather Office, and to a hostel where he met immigrants who will this year be spending their first Christmas in this country. In *Christmas Workers* listeners will also hear an interview with Hector Harrison and his baby elephant Jo-Dee (who found the microphone, piano and technical equipment in 2YA's studios fascinating playthings).

### Yuletide Plays

Some weeks ago the NZBS Production Studios recorded a nativity play called *The Three Kings*, written by Mordaunt Currie, with music by Armstrong Gibbs. There are 19 players in



the cast and the music, for chorus, strings and organ is by Wellington musicians conducted by Harry Brusey. *The Three Kings* will be heard from 2YA on Christmas Day at 9.32 p.m. Other plays to be broadcast on Christmas Day include *The Lovely Lady of Bethlehem*, another NZBS production, from 2YZ at 9.30 p.m.; *Bethlehem*, a choral drama by Rutland Boughton, adapted from the Coventry Nativity Play, from 1XH at 9.4 p.m.; *Quietly History Enters*, by John Gundry, an NZBS production, from 1YA at 4.0 p.m.; *A Child is Born*, by Stephen Vincent Benet, a "Voice of America" programme, from 3YA at 2.0 p.m.; and *Round About This Time*, by D'Arcy Niland, an NZBS production, at 9.0 p.m. from 1YC.



D. G. BRIDSON  
Variation on a familiar theme

### Seasonal Music

*Carols by Candlelight* will be heard on Friday, December 23, from 3YC at 9.30 p.m., on relay from the Avon River bank and led by Clifton Cook; then on Christmas Eve from 1YA on relay from the Marine Parade, Devonport, at 8.30 p.m.; from 2YZ at 9.30 p.m. on relay from the Botanical Gardens, Napier; from 2XA at 8.0 p.m. on relay from Cook's Gardens, Wanganui; and from 4YZ at 10.0 p.m. on relay from Kew Hospital, Invercargill.

Other musical presentations for Christmas Day will include Corelli's *Christmas Concerto*, followed by Benjamin Britten's *Ceremony of Carols*, a programme prepared and narrated by Maurice Leech (4YA, 2.30 p.m.); *Carol Symphony*, by Victor Hely-Hutchinson, a work in four parts based on traditional melodies and played by the London Radio Orchestra (2YA, 2.0 p.m.); The English Singers in a studio recital (2YA, 2.45 p.m.); *The Christmas Story*, a fantasia arranged for solo voices and chorus by Thomas Gray, directed by Roy Hill (2YA, 8.17 p.m.); *The Christmas Chorales* of J. S. Bach, by the Avon Singers, with Clarence B. Hall at the Civic Theatre organ (3YA, 3.0 p.m.); and a recording of music sung by the Christchurch Cathedral Choir in this year's carol service (3YA, 9.30 p.m.).

Midnight Mass will be relayed from St. Patrick's Cathedral by 1YA, from St. Gerard's Church by 2YA, and from St. Michael's Church by 3YA. (Other Christmas items will be found in the programme pages.)

## ZB Station Programmes

THIS Christmas at the Commercials the emphasis will be on pure, joyful entertainment. Mothers who all the year have to answer children's questions raised by what they've heard on the radio, fathers who work in worrying, mind-stretching jobs during the year, can be sure they will find nothing to batter their brains in the ZB programmes on Christmas Day. There is something for everybody, in any New Zealand Christmas surrounding, whether you carry your radio with you in fine weather, or stay at home to listen to it in wet.

The first link of the Commercials on Christmas Day will be at 2.30 p.m., when Marina of 1ZB, Elsie Lloyd of 2ZB, Mollie McNab of 3ZB, and Marjorie Green of 4ZB, will talk about some feature of past Christmases which stamped itself on their memories. They will be introduced by Athol Coates. When they have finished their reminiscing, a short dramatic sketch will be presented, called "Wishing on a Christmas Tree." This has been written by Margaret Pearson, London correspondent for the ZB Women's Hour, and tells of a family reunion in Christmas-time London. It will be produced in the studios of the NZBS.

Between 6.0 and 7.0 p.m. 2ZA will link with the other Commercial stations for a special broadcast from Scandinavia. The Danish State Broadcasting Service Children's Choir has made a special recording of a performance for the ZBs, and listeners who heard a somewhat similar feature last year will not be slow in tuning in again.

Following in this hour-long link, children from the Polish Hostel in Wellington will sing the Christmas songs of their country. Next will come *The Fourth Wise Man*, a dramatic adaptation by Bryan O'Brien of an old legend. The lead will be taken by Kenneth Firth, and suitable background music has been recorded by Charles Martin, the organist of St. Paul's Pro-Cathedral, Wellington. The last portion of the hour, for all stations with the exception of 1ZB, will be suitably filled by Anita Oliver conducting the 4ZB Choristers, in a specially-prepared programme of Christmas music.

At 8.0 p.m. stars from the British film studios of J. Arthur Rank will be heard in a dramatic presentation, *Five Wishes For Christmas*. No description of this show is necessary to entice movie fans to their radio sets when it is revealed that fabulous people like Stewart Granger, John Mills, and Googie Withers are included. Station



HECTOR HARRISON (left) and his baby elephant Jo-Dee being interviewed for the NZBS programme "Christmas Workers"