



FROM THE RADIO THEATRE

THE comment which most early visitors made after inspecting Station 1ZB's fine premises was "Well, the new studios are certainly magnificent. I wonder what the new programmes will be like?" By now, most New Zealanders who habitually listen to the ZB stations, have had an opportunity of judging for themselves, for the big half-hour shows presented from 1ZB six

nights of the week are being recorded and "aired" from the other stations as well.

All the programmes are heard from 1ZB in the first instance between 8.30 and 9.0 p.m., and all except one, the half hour of drama by the 1ZB Dramatic Players, originate from the radio theatre.

On Monday nights comes *Out of the Box*, a high-pressure variety show, composed and produced by Jimmy McFarlane, who is already well known to 4ZB listeners. Mr. McFarlane describes it as a "radio revue" complete with

HERE IS THE NEWS

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He was born in Hamilton, Ontario, the son of Charles T. Beatty, and took his B.A. at Toronto University before going into business as a cashier of the United Gas and Fuel Company. Business, however, had no very great attraction for him, and he was constantly torn between the rival attractions of the stage and flying. Indeed, in his more candid moments, he will describe his hobbies as (1) Flying; and (2) Making the money to pay for it.

Since the stage gave him the opportunity to make the money, he pursued his interest in the amateur drama to the extent of accepting an offer to come to England in 1936, where he spent a year at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Following that he understudied Raymond Massey in *Idiot's Delight* and then secured a series of parts in plays which included Michael Egan's *To Love and to Cherish*, and *Grouse in June*, at the Criterion Theatre. He has also played in radio drama and radio versions of films, and was opposite Florence Desmond in *Destry Rides Again*.

He joined the BBC in August, 1940, and is now best known to overseas listeners as the "At Your Request" man, the musical feature compiled by him from the requests of listeners all over the world.

ONE would expect that the high spot of an actor's memory would have been playing to our troops in France in the spring of 1940; and that was, in fact, one of the experiences of NORMAN CLARIDGE, now one of the announcers and narrators in the BBC's Empire Service. But the period he remembers as the most brightly coloured of his life was that shortly before the war, when he spent seven weeks on a cargo boat during her routine tour of the Mediterranean. "I had never before realised," he says, "what sunlight could be like, nor how blue the sea and sky could be."

Claridge is a member of an old stage family, and his mother, indeed, was the leading lady of the old Little Vic at Brighton, one of the English training grounds for actors and actresses. Norman himself went on the stage when he left school at about eighteen and has been on it ever since. He has played opposite Flora Robson in *Mary Reade*, worked for two years for Frank Hardy, the producer and author, and appeared in the revival of *The Farmer's Wife* in the early thirties. He joined the BBC, as a member of its Dramatic Repertory Company in July, 1940, and transferred to the Overseas Division, as an announcer, in February, 1941.

(Above): Eric Bradwell, right, rehearses four of the 1ZB Dramatic Players (Left): Arthur Collyns, right, and Theo. Walters, third from right, in a Harlem scene from one of the "From Where To-night?" programmes

gags, interludes by the 1ZB Orchestra under Theo. Walters, items by trios, solo vocalists, what Mr. McFarlane refers to as "squeeze box artists," and other instrumentalists. There are also "surprise items," but nobody is supposed to know anything about them until they go on the air. Local talent is being used to the utmost.

Escorted Musical Tours

On Tuesday nights comes Arthur Collyn's show, *From Where To-night*, which has an international flavour and takes listeners on escorted musical tours of most of the countries which are worth visiting. Mr. Collyns writes and produces the shows, and appears in them, too. Once again the 1ZB Orchestra is the foundation of the programme, and it is a tribute to its versatility that it can switch from Harlem to the Kentucky hills to Latin America to Sweden, to Russia without faltering.

Reg. Morgan has the Wednesday show, which is entitled *Souvenirs*, and which can be described roughly as a programme of familiar ballads. Some of them will be played by the orchestra, some by Eric Bell at the Novachord, some will be sung by trios and quartets, and a good few by Reg. Morgan himself. The programme is linked by means of a narrative.

Comedy is the keynote of the Thursday night's programme, which is conducted by Dudley Wrathall, well known as the "stooge" in *Chuckles with Jerry*, and is entitled *Musical Mirthquake*. Since "Dud" will be one of the most active participants, the compère will usually be done by Rex Walden. The musical side will feature occasional items by Johnny Madden as guest artist, and lest a surfeit of comedy should prove indigestible, there is a five minute contrast "Here is Mystery," a playlet with a believe-it-or-not sting in the tail. Several well known Auckland artists will be helping along the musical side.

On Friday nights comes Theo Walters's own programme, *Band Waggon*, which is designed to show off the capabilities of the 1ZB Orchestra, collectively and individually. It will be a novel programme, with items by all sorts of unusual combinations of instru-

ments, and there are also surprise features and what is technically known as "radio blackouts."

New Zealand Plays

Eric Bradwell, who is supervising the Saturday night drama presentations, is endeavouring to use, as far as possible, plays with a New Zealand atmosphere and written by New Zealanders. The first play produced was *The Damnation of Foster Brown*, by Isobel Andrews; the second, *Heritage*, by George Joseph; and the third, *Hard Luck Story*, by F. W. Kenyon, of Auckland. A young New Zealand writer, Mr. Kenyon has sold plays in Canada, Australia, and South Africa.

Three of the most interesting plays which Mr. Bradwell will produce were written by members of the CBS staff. Associated with "The Listeners' Theatre" is John Gordon, 1ZB's production supervisor, and W. Eliot, CBS head office production manager.



Spencer Digby photograph

★ C. G. SCRIMGEOUR, Controller of the Commercial Broadcasting Service, has returned to his desk at the CBS Head Office in Wellington after a lengthy spell of illness. ★