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NEWS OF BROADCASTERS
ON AND OFF THE RECORD



AFTER 20-odd years as a world traveller, the New Zealand author Ronald Syme has come home—but not to roost. The only certain thing he can say of his stay in Auckland is that when it ends it will end abruptly. Mr. Syme arrived in Auckland last November and has recorded five talks about his travels, which will start from 1YA on May 2 and later will be heard from other stations.

Born in Wanganui 43 years ago, Ronald Syme found after leaving school that of all his interests only writing would help him to travel, so he joined the *Wanganui Chronicle*, and by 1932 had saved enough to book his passage to Britain. He travelled by way of Tahiti (where he lived in luxury on £7 a month) and France, and arrived in England with only £24. For the next two years he haunted Fleet Street, and after a long struggle his articles and stories began to sell. Before he left for Paris (he describes a year in Montmartre in his first talk) he was earning £4 a week at a time when payment was 10/6 for 1000 words.

Ronald Syme's first book, a thriller called *The Dancing Shadow*, was published in 1937, after he had had a spell in Algiers. He then wrote a biography

of the Duke and Duchess of Kent, which became an official biography when their Royal Highnesses felt obliged to read the proofs—just in case. From 1937 to 1939 Mr. Syme visited Spain, the Sudan, West and South Africa, the West Indies and Mexico, and when the war came he joined the merchant navy as a gunner. Later his knowledge of Arabic, French and Italian—besides English and Maori—and his experience of foreign countries were used in counter-espionage work in Egypt, North Africa and Italy.

Since the war Ronald Syme has written more books, driven a grocery

ANDERSEN TYRER

NEW ZEALANDERS will be interested in news of Andersen Tyrer, first conductor of the National Orchestra, to hand in the last issue of the "Monthly Musical Record." This reports the publication of a new Suite for Piano Solo by Mr. Tyrer, and comments: "The four movements of this suite (Prelude, Gavotte, Melodie, Giga) offer excellent material of an elementary standard. The writing never transcends three parts and always lies beautifully under the hands."

van in Canada, serviced the diesels on a Caribbean schooner, and travelled extensively in the South Seas. In 1953 he visited New Zealand briefly and he is now working in an Auckland bookshop. He has written plays for the BBC and has given broadcast talks wherever he has gone. His hobbies are photography and fishing.

Mr. Syme has written 23 books, several of them under a pen name. Since the war he has been writing adventure stories for teenagers, and in 1951 won the Gold Medal Award of the Junior Book Clubs of America. "There is a tremendous market for books for teenagers—the potential sale is around 9000 copies compared with 3000 for an ordinary novel," he told us.

"It all started with a piece of green paper one warm afternoon in Kingston. . . . After nearly four years many listeners will still remember *Prophet*

Without Portfolio, a talk heard from NZBS stations, which began with that green handbill and ended with a visit to Prophet Ernest Emmanuel, a West Indian Negro living in the slums of Kingston. The talk was given by a British merchant navy officer who had once visited the prophet. Not long after his broadcast William R. Roff joined the Talks Section of the NZBS, where he first worked as News Compiler, and now handles YC talks. Last year he was responsible for the much-talked-about programme *To Pass the Time*. A documentary which gave young New Zealanders a chance to describe how they spent their leisure, it attracted attention even in Australia. This programme was one of a series on adolescence planned by Mr. Roff.

Bill Roff (below) was born 26 years ago in Glasgow. He went to sea when he was 17 and spent the next six years on deck and on the bridge, sailing mostly in the Middle East and the East, and



Spencer Digby photograph

especially to India and Burma. He visited New Zealand while in the force, and later, after getting his second mate's ticket, came back here to work on the coast. While at sea he had done some free lance journalism, and when the *Prophet* got him a connection with broadcasting he decided to give up the sea for this new career.

Late last year Mr. Roff was away from New Zealand for six weeks with tape recorder and notebook gathering material for six programmes on oil production. Travelling by air and by tanker he visited Singapore, Borneo and Australia. Besides his programmes on oil—described on page 7—he made one entitled *Ulu Rejang*, which many listeners will already have heard, bringing vividly to life the events of an overnight stay in a Sea Dyak longhouse in North Borneo. (2YA will broadcast it again on May 4.) This taste of life in Borneo has made him restless for life out East again. He has a great affection for the East—"in fact," he says, "I am slowly turning brown"—and when we last saw him he was successfully eating Chicken Chow Mien with chopsticks, keeping in practice, he said, just in case. Apart from his two professions, Mr. Roff is very interested in history, and has been working for a B.A. in this subject which he hopes to finish this year.

NEW ZEALAND COMPOSERS

NEW ZEALAND composers are well represented in next week's programmes: On different occasions the works of three will be heard. A studio broadcast by the New Zealand pianist David Galbraith from 2YC on May 2 will include works by two Wellingtonians—"Fantasia Scherzo," by Ashley Heenan, and "Capriccio," by Larry Pruden. On Saturday, May 5, "Five Fancies," by Max Saunders, who has lived for some years in Britain, will be heard from 2YC in a recorded recital by Vincent Aspey (violin) and Eric Lawson (viola), which is later to be broadcast from other YC stations. Another work by Larry Pruden, "Soliloquy for Strings," is soon to be heard in a studio broadcast by the National Orchestra, which for the occasion will be conducted by the composer.



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