

THE NEW ZEALAND Radio Record

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P.O. Box 1032,
WELLINGTON.

WELLINGTON, AUGUST 19, 1927.

The important event of the time for enthusiastic amateur listeners is undoubtedly the announcement from Britain that the British Broadcasting Corporation is giving a temporary license to the well-known short-wave enthusiast, Mr. Gerald Marcuse, to undertake as from September 1 experimental short-wave transmission, principally designed to reach Antipodean enthusiasts. The attitude of the British Broadcasting Corporation is that at present the difficulties of reception are such as to make it inadvisable for the Corporation itself to undertake such a service, because, while temporarily creating a good deal of enthusiasm and interest, the reaction from probable disappointment would be such as to operate against the real interests of broadcasting. A period of experiment still remains to be undertaken before a satisfactory stage of efficiency can be reached. This experimental work is to be undertaken by Mr. Marcuse, and his activities will certainly be followed with considerable interest by a number of enthusiastic listeners in both Australia and New Zealand.

The possibility of a considerable number of listeners enjoying the pleasure of broadcasts from London on this short-wave transmission is indicated by the fact that it is possible to adapt an ordinary receiving set for the reception of short-wave messages. A special article on our front cover indicates how this may be done. The work of adapting any valve receiving set to this class of reception is very clearly outlined, and as experimental work has successfully been undertaken with this set here in New Zealand, it is unquestionable that results will be secured by those who closely and carefully follow the instructions there given. This is a most remarkable phase in the development of radio broadcasting, and we await the outcome of Mr. Marcuse's experiments with intense interest. We will be glad to have records of reception of his transmission from those fortunate enough to receive them.

Apart from this experimental work by the enthusiastic band of amateurs, it is interesting to recall the opinion of the British Broadcasting Corporation that, for the present and immediate future, the most satisfactory results of Empire broadcasting are likely to be secured by the overseas stations installing short-wave receiving sets, and rebroadcasting on their ordinary wavelengths the original London transmission. 2YA, it is interesting to note, is preparing the way for short-wave reception, and when the experimental work now being undertaken is further advanced, and the scientific results achieved therefrom have been tabulated and co-ordinated sufficiently to admit of the British Broadcasting Corporation undertaking a definite Empire broadcasting service, then New Zealand listeners may look for occasional novelties in the rebroadcasts of British concerts, performances, and news items. The difficulties in the way are very considerable, and under present conditions no sure reliance can be placed on reception satisfactory for rebroadcasting, but scientific developments are certain, and listeners may look for advance along these lines as opportunity offers. There's a great difference, of course, between satisfactory expert individual amateur reception and reception suitable for rebroadcasting.

MUSIC FIRST FAVOURITE

Broadcasting began as an entertainment service; its success, wherever the success has been any way marked, has been due to the fact that it has been directly managed or sponsored by people who know the entertainment business; and it looks as if entertainment will always be the first consideration in providing a broadcasting service. Even when the amateurs took the initial inception steps in the new art it was music that was broadcast.

The popular plebsites also indicate that music and other forms of entertainment rather than more serious matters are desired by listeners. It follows then that the main part of the service must be at night. When the family is at the fireside, or at all events at home, that is the time to put on the star turns. Thus the broadcasting companies cater for the people to the best advantage. It is not much use putting on a special item when the majority of listeners are at work or otherwise unable to listen.

The National Broadcasting Company of America, which operate the famous W.B.A.B. chain of stations, is contemplating extending the hours of service to sixteen per day. No decision to launch such an extensive service appears to have been made so far, but the idea is one that sets us thinking. The hobby of a few years ago certain-

BRITISH MADE!

In February this year, says the British Commercial News, a cyclist was travelling home with a new radio valve in his left-hand coat pocket, when he was run down by a motor-car from behind, and thrown a good distance along the road, crashing on to his left side. It was some time before the pained and bewildered rider realised that his newly-purchased property might have met with disaster, but his unpleasant accident was somewhat mitigated by the surprise he had upon retrieving the radio valve from his pocket.

Although the box was completely smashed, the valve it contained was apparently unbroken, and the unfortunate incident of the road was completely forgotten when, upon inserting his new Mullard P.M. valve into his receiver, he found that it was in perfect condition.

Once more the merit of a British-made article has been brought home by an experience for which the manufacturer merely states in his literature "will withstand the roughest handling."

ly has come to stay and is providing a desired service if there is need for broadcasting for sixteen hours of the

PROGRAMMES!

HOW THEY ARE MADE

PROBLEMS AND PERPLEXITIES

WHAT THE ORGANISER ENDURES.

Have you ever arranged a concert? If you have not, you have a friend who has. Ask him or her the story of the effort. Was it all plain sailing—one concert, and three months to arrange it? Now contemplate the task of the broadcast programme organiser in securing satisfactory programmes every night of the week. This article presents some of his problems and difficulties.

Of the making of programmes, as of books, there is no end. So thinks the man who provides radio entertainment for the people who listen-in. With his calendar set five weeks ahead he is working day and night finding talent and arranging programmes. But though he is continually working on programmes which keep ahead of him, just as the horizon does to a traveller, there is much to be done by the way-side. He cannot say when he has filled up the form for a day five weeks distant, "Well, that's done," and, putting it from his mind for ever, start on the next day's. He has that programme on his mind until the broadcasting is completed, and the announcer has said "Good night" to everyone in Radioland. There are so many things that can happen to upset the best laid plans and programmes.

It is difficult to finalise a programme. When an organiser sets out he has a form of programme in mind, and he aims to get the talent which will provide just the entertainment he plans. It may seem easy in theory, but in practice it is a most exacting and exasperating undertaking.

He Has His Little List!

The programme organiser has his list of artists, and he sees them, or he gets busy on the telephone, with more or less success. He has to choose the talent which is suitable to the occasion, and procure it if it is available, and then the items have to be selected. It is a long and tedious business. Time and again the whole programme has to be remodelled. Some artists want to sing, some do not, and have to be persuaded. Young talent has to be encouraged. Some of these young artists will be "stars" some day. Some will never sing in radio again, and some do not want to. Allowance has to be made for those who have "microphone fright," which has as paralysing an effect as "stage fright." Artists have their foibles and their fancies, and musical people have a right to have, and supreme tact is one of the qualifications of a successful programme organiser.

Changes Frequent and Many.

Before a programme is broadcast it usually undergoes a lot of changes. For one cause and another artists drop out, songs are changed, and many rearrangements have to be made. Frequently a visiting artist, who is too good to be missed, is obtainable, and a place on the programme has to be found for him. Then there are many events, happening at short notice, of which a description, a relay, or a rebroadcast is worth while, even at the cost of remaking a programme.

Broadcasting officials have a lot of interruptions by telephone and from callers. Every city abounds with infant prodigies, it seems, so many parents come to the stations. There must be a lot of embryo Paderewskis, Melbas and Carusos. A lot of people come along to plead the case of someone else, who, they assure the programme organiser, has a divine voice, plays delightfully, or recites wonderfully well. They are awfully proud when they can say that their child, friend, brother, sister, wife, or husband, or whoever they speak of, is entirely self-taught. Few of them get beyond the audition. All new artists have to have auditions, and these frequently happen at the most awkward and busiest times.

The Artistic Temperament.

Sometimes, when one is busiest, a person will ring up and seek to change a song to be sung the following week. This means a number of suggestions will be made, and "Don't you think that so and so will do?" is often said, the reasons why it won't do will be given, then other suggestions will be made, and finally a song is decided upon. During this conversation the singer has been referring to piles of music, perhaps going into another room to refer to it. Then, before the programme can be definitely altered, it is necessary to find the names of the composer and the publisher. That necessitates an apologetic singer referring to the music books again in a frantic search to locate the song once more. Those names simply have to be obtained. The programme cannot be completed without them. Singers don't realise the importance of supplying this information, and the eventual securing of it gives a lot of trouble, frequently holding up programmes for days, and sometimes necessitating changes in the items.

The Business Side of Programmes.

The making of programmes results in much office work, for very complete

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records have to be kept, not the least important being those relating to copyright.

More or less satisfied with his work, the programme organiser sees the entertainment go "on the air," and he wonders how it has been received. There is no applause or any demonstration. It is so different from the concert hall, with a sympathetic audience in front of the artists. But one is not long in the broadcasting profession before one becomes accustomed to its peculiar conditions—and its criticisms.

Knowing the criticism that is levelled at programmes after they are broadcast, a pressman called on a programme organiser with a view to getting an insight into his work, and, if possible, hearing something of the lighter side. His choice of day for calling was, we hope, more or less unlucky. He spent several hours in the programme organiser's sanctum, and what he got was something like this:

Are There Any Humorous Incidents?

"Humorous incidents?" said the organiser, lifting up his head from his work and staring hard at the scribe, who thought, having glanced at the table of papers, that he had picked an unfortunate time to ask a radio programme organiser to tell of the humorous side of his work. "There's not much humour attached to it, I am afraid. It is mostly hard work and disappointments, but we can't let it bear too heavily upon us."

The telephone rang, and the organiser answered. There was a long talk. The party at the other end was saying a lot. It was evidently a lady who wished to sing. She was put on the list for an audition.

"Humorous incidents. I can't recall any offhand. Some other time—"

The Lady and Her Bridge.

The telephone rang again. "It inconvenienced us a tremendous lot. . . . We have to keep faith with the public. . . . Our whole programme and time-table was upset because you did not come. . . . Yes, but you had made a contract with the Broadcasting Company before your bridge party was arranged. . . . No, you don't realise the trouble people cause by not keeping their engagements. . . . The least you could have done was to let us know in plenty of time—"

"That was a lady who did not come to sing last evening, and the public wonders why we do not keep exactly to our published programmes. She won't have the chance of singing again. What was it you wanted to know?"

Ring! Ring! Ring! It was evidently a man this time. He explained that he could not sing at the studio the following week. The programme organiser was heard to express his regrets, and to pencil his name down for a concert a long way ahead.

"That's very unfortunate. He's the third one to-day in that same programme. The other two were ladies. Some of our best singers. I'll have to remodel it once again. That will have to be done straight away to catch the mail. Will you excuse me while I ring up a man I think I can get?"

The newspaper man said, "Certainly, go ahead."

Trying for a Substitute.

The organiser referred to his card index drawer and selected a likely substitute and rang up. Not at home. That was a nuisance. Another was tried. He had a prior engagement, and it could not be put off. Still another was rung up. After much persuasion he consented. What would he sing? Oh, so and so, or so and so. "Unfortunately they do not suit the type of programme, and we have those by another singer the same week," said the programme organiser. At last two items were decided upon, and the programme organiser sighed with relief, called in the typist, and sent the amended programme off by the mail. The interlude had taken at least half an hour.

"I don't think you should have called in to-day," said the programme organiser to the pressman. "I've been keeping you waiting. I—"

Ring! Ring! Ring! The programme organiser was wanted again, and for once his urbanity, which is proverbial, became a little ruffled. The man at the other end of the wire was evidently indignant because he had not yet been asked to sing, after having an audition. "Well, you admitted yourself, when you came along here, that you did not know the song properly, and your voice was not exactly Class A; but if you had known your song a little better you would have been graded higher. It would not have been fair to you, or fair to us, to put you on with that song."

The gentleman concerned was not supremely pleased, but he was, no doubt, convinced that it is now harder

to get to the microphone than it used to be, or he thought it would be.

Stage Managing a "Success."

"Well, if he's a good sport he'll take that in the right spirit," said the organiser. "We have a lot of annoyance from people who think they can sing, and persist in applying for a chance. It is quite a common thing for a bit of 'stage management' to be invoked. After a person has sung, people will write from various parts of the district praising up the particular item. Of course, that is an old trick. One of the neatest moves of this nature took place not long ago. After a certain star, whose persistence had won the way to a place on the programme, had finished singing, a boy walked into the studio with a gift from an anonymous admirer. That sort of thing works very well in a concert hall, where the audience sees all that goes on, but with the radio it is a difficult matter to stage it. The singer, however, rose nobly to the occasion. Saying how necessary it was to thank the unknown (?) admirer, the artist endeavoured to induce the announcer to broadcast the incident. It was a shrewd move, but it failed."

The pressman was by this time fully realising that it is no easy matter to arrange, day after day, a programme that is acceptable to the majority of people. It is not easy to do this when one is unhindered in the work, but with constant interruption, disappointments, breaking of contracts, etc., it is a harassing job.

Organising the Nation's Talent.

Said the broadcaster, as the pressman rose to leave:—

"The Broadcasting Company is the greatest concert organisation in New Zealand, and it is worth while for artists to cultivate its good-will. It has hundreds of engagements now to offer at the various stations, and the number will increase. It is well worth while to sing for radio in New Zealand, and artists should increase their repertoire as much as possible. We cannot go on indefinitely calling on an artist who has only a couple of dozen ballads to his or her credit. Most of the old songs are great favourites, but we want as much variety as we can get in our programmes. Artists should supply us with their repertoire, which should consist of 40 or 50 items, so that we can make selections to suit all types of programmes. Now, I think I had better start my work."

Then the telephone went again.

"Well, I'm jiggered," said the programme man when he had hung up his receiver, and sank into his chair. "That man who cancelled his engagement now finds he can sing, after all."

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