

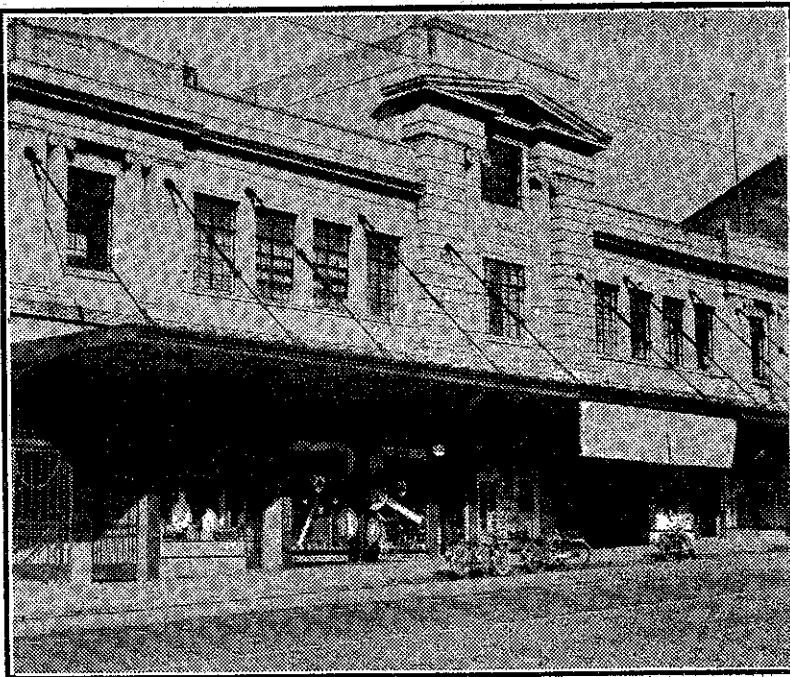
Early Days

wired by an Australian expert sent over for the purpose, and the station was told by the dance hall proprietor that a very "posh" orchestra had been engaged for the occasion. When the orchestra did turn up it consisted of a piano, a fiddle and a cornet. However, the broadcast went ahead merrily until a young stalwart and his lass staged a violent disagreement right under the microphone! The orchestra played up valiantly, but the voices of the protagonists were even louder and some gloriously lurid passages floated into the peaceful homes of hundreds of Aucklanders that night. The final scene was enacted when another man intervened and was sent sprawling to the floor by a well-directed blow.

On another occasion a well-known Auckland club was to have its evening programme broadcast from Scots Hall. The orchestra and performers were on the stage and the technicians who were looking after the relay were in the orchestral well. The mayor of a borough a mile or two from the city was chairman for the evening, and, in the course of his speech, he rolled off a very bright but scarcely drawing-room story, fully believing that the technicians had cut him off the air. Just what his wife said to him when he got home that night it would be cruel to repeat. Another Auckland club, well-known for its efforts for sweet charity's sake, had arranged for a two-hour broadcast of its evening programme. The assistants at the studio were accordingly given an evening off, but, at five minutes to eight, word came that the club's committee could not sanction a broadcast. The 1YA announcer had to get in front of the microphone and deliver the whole programme himself! For one number he was a bass, and for the next a baritone, and, when he had exhausted his singing possibilities, his eye fell on a magazine lying on the studio floor, so he picked it up and proceeded to give a "lecture" on beetles, reading from the paper. The operator laughed so much that he accidentally cut the station off the air.

When "Smithy" made his first flight across the Tasman the transmitter of the Southern Cross was fitted with a peculiar tuning note so that, when messages were not being broadcast, this note kept listeners informed that the plane was still on its way. The Auckland station lost contact with the Southern Cross, so it communicated with 2YA, which was still picking up the tuning note. For three hours no messages came to hand, only the monotonous hum of the note coming over the air. Next day, when the plane had reached Christchurch, it was discovered that the transmitter had been out of action for three hours on the trip across and the tuning note picked up by 2YA had been coming from an overseas commercial Morse station.

In the far-off days of 1926 records could not be played between the hours of eight and ten in the evening, and the stations were often hard-pressed to find enough performers to fill the bill. A pianist, who is now in a position of importance in the broadcasting service, would often appear under two names on the same programme—his own and that of Andrew White.



SCENE OF A BROADCASTING INDISCRETION.—Scots Hall, Auckland, where, in the early days of broadcasting, the Mayor of a well-known borough told a smoke-concert story which was accidentally broadcast.

It was rather amusing the number of letters that the station received comparing one pianist with the other.

While this article is primarily concerned with the amusing incidents in New Zealand broadcasting, it is worth mentioning, in passing, one or two "behind the scenes" dramas and comedies that have taken place in the august atmosphere of Broadcasting House in London. In the early hours of a winter's morning a young pianist who was due to broadcast in the Empire transmission to Australia and New Zealand was so anxious to be on time that he fell down a flight of stairs leading to the studio and cracked his head against a door. There was no time to bandage the injury, so he gallantly carried on with his work of accompanying two Empire singers. Each of the ladies sang and the other bathed the bleeding head of the accompanist with her handkerchief. Fortunately they did not have to sing a duet. The injury was not serious, but the artists had the utmost difficulty in preserving their gravity.

There was another incident associated with an early morning transmission, which was more romantic than humorous. Owing to some misunderstanding the accompanist did not turn up. Fortunately some one remembered that the night liftman was a bit of a musician. He was hurried to the studio and saved the situation nobly. It is pleasant to add that that gifted liftman shortly after received a lift of another kind, and he has now a much better position in the B.B.C.

In the Australian transmission artists who have perhaps remained up all night so as to be in time for an early morning broadcast are apt to give a wry smile when the announcer at 6.15 a.m. says "Good Evening Everybody." On one occasion a vocalist with a sense of humour could scarcely restrain his feelings as he sang *fortissimo* in the very early morning "Droop Not, Young Lover." An American lady wrote congratulating the B.B.C. on its Empire programmes, and finally said how much she enjoyed the daily theme song. After a certain amount of investigation it was found that the theme song which had so captivated her fancy was the National Anthem.