

THIS WEEK'S SIGNED ARTICLE.

Split Seconds on a Radio Network By Nola Luxford

A SPLIT second does not usually mean much in the life of the average person—but what a split second can mean on a radio broadcast is colossal! I think it is impossible for listeners to realise the importance of timing on a broadcast. Of course, for little local broadcasts, the slip up of a minute will not do a great deal of harm—but take the network programme. Most of the important broadcasts in this country are on the net work—that means they originate either here, in Hollywood, or New York, or some other large city with the right facilities, and are broadcast throughout this country and perhaps into Canada.

A programme that originates here and lasts one hour like Hollywood Hotel, or the Lux Radio Theatre, or Shell Chateau, is usually rehearsed the day before for several hours. Before that the producer and the continuity writers have, usually spent many hours together—whipping the programme into shape.

During the Christmas International Broadcast I produced in 1934, an incident occurred that seriously hurt the entire programme. Francis Lederer was invited to speak because it was for international goodwill, and Francis is particularly keen on that subject. The whole programme was timed to a split second—I had 150 people on the broadcast—an orchestra of 60, a choir of 40, as well as smaller groups and several stars. Francis was given three minutes. He started out splendidly, and I was silently congratulating myself on his appearance, when he came to the end of the speech he had written and started to "ad lib." I gave rather a frantic look at the clock on the wall, to see he had used up his given time. But so enthusiastic had he become on the subject that he went on and on for ten more minutes. I was standing back of him almost tearing my hair out. Jan Rubini, the violinist, was waiting to play next, and Jan turned to me with a look of despair. Finally, after Francis had spoken for almost fifteen minutes, I touched his arm, he gave a startled look—ended abruptly, and left the microphone.

Introducing . . .

NOLA LUXFORD, well-known New Zealander living in Hollywood. Miss Luxford, who has appeared in several films, is particularly interested in broadcasting, her special Christmas programmes, and her broadcasts from KFI during the Olympic Games in Los Angeles earning her a large listening public in the Dominion. She has also done much to make American listeners "New Zealand-conscious" by broadcasting Maori songs and talks about this country.



might say, was done. Only this. That broadcast was on the network, and we were given one hour on the air—no more, no less. The time that Francis took up had to be taken away from the others on the programme. I had to do some quick re-arranging—cutting out about three numbers—which, of course, was a shame for the others, and made quite a difference in the continuity. For instance, when Sir Cedrick Hardwicke came to his reading of Dickens' "Christmas Carol" I had to ask him to hurry, and his beautiful reading was definitely hurt.

In some programmes the musical part of the programme is frequently interspersed with sound effects and dialogue, and this is very hard to time. The orchestral background has always to be shaded properly. This means rehearsing and rehearsing, usually a bar at a time. Corrections on scores and scripts are made, brasses are changed into other positions, drums are put further away from the microphone, in fact the orchestra has to weave its own particular picture, sometimes in pastel shades, and sometimes in brilliant hues.

Singing groups also are difficult to handle. Some voices have greater carrying power than others, and perfect enunciation and harmony must be striven for. In the dramatic end of production, sound effects play a very important part. As the audience relies on its ears, with no aid of eyes, the sound effects have to help create the picture, and they must be as realistic as possible, as well as perfectly timed.

One very awkward thing happened on the "California's Farewell to Admiral Byrd" broadcast which I produced. Somewhere in my script there was a call for soft church bells—the young man in charge didn't seem to notice, in his excitement, I wanted church bells, and instead of low, beautiful bells ringing I was suddenly startled by what sounded like fire engine bells going at sixty miles an hour! You can imagine my embarrassment!

One of my most frantic (Continued on page 58)

AOTSAOTS

GERMANY'S foreign policy is Deutsch to most of us.

DR. W. PASCOE GOARD, British-Israel representative, is favourably impressed by Dominion newspapers.

"PALMER will fight 15 rounds" (Wellington headline). Can we take that as a safe bet, or is he just an optimist?

A TWO-WAY radio telephone conversation between Wellington and the Awatea will be rebroadcast by all YA stations at 8 p.m. on September 1.

THE educational sessions, such a popular Tuesday feature, are at present in recess during the term holidays. The first of the new term's broadcasts is to be given on Tuesday, September 15.

AOTSAOTS

SMALL Sunday School scholar in Dunedin: "The first book in the Bible is Guinness's."

WELLINGTON heading: "Pensions" Head.—His job is to look after pension tales.

PROBABLE 1936 matriculation problem: Name one product which will not be branded "Coronation" next year.

SO much for weather reputations—the Fijian ladies' hockey team which recently visited New Zealand struck rain in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch—and brilliant sunshine in Dunedin.

ANOTHER batch of unlicensed radio set owners came before the Auckland Police Court last week. The inspectors are still hot on the trail of other defaulting owners.

The criticising and reviewing of films is the subject of an article written by A. R. McElwain, of Wellington, for next week's paper.