

AROUND AND BEHIND THE DIALS

LETTERS LEAD TO NEW PROGRAMMES

AS a result of letters received from listeners all over the world, NBC's shortwave stations W3XAL and W3XL have inaugurated such programmes as the Philatelic Hour in Spanish and the Mail Bag programme in Spanish and Portuguese. Stamps of practically every nation are shown on envelopes decorating the wall of the NBC International Division in Radio City, New York.

WHEN the National Broadcasting Company began operating short-wave stations for the benefit of listeners in other countries, it planned only to broadcast programmes. To-day, as a result of letters that come in from every continent in the world, it also has become a far-reaching philatelic exchange.

In the first few weeks after the shortwave stations began operations, letters came in slowly. A few minutes a day was all that was required to read and reply to the writers. To-day the NBC's International Division has what resembles a more than small post office, with piles of letters being sorted, classified, numbered, answered by mail and by the microphone, and filed away for any future use that may develop.

The task of reading the mail and gathering information requested by listeners requires almost full-time service by several members of the staff. This careful attention is shown to the letters not only because NBC desires to retain the goodwill of its listeners, but because in many instances their letters include information or comment that is of great value to NBC in planning its programme material and transmission.

The hundreds of letters which come from all parts of the world are directly responsible for the Philatelic Hour in Spanish which

is broadcast by NBC over station W3XAL and W3XL on Sundays from 9.30 to 9.45 p.m., E.S.T., and in Portuguese on Mondays from 7.30 to 7.45 p.m. Another programme they caused is the Mail Bag hour, in Spanish on Tuesdays from 5.15 to 5.30 and Thursdays from 8.45 to 9.0 p.m., and in Portuguese on Mondays from 4.30 to 4.45 p.m.

Mail reaches NBC from every country of South and Central America, and even from Magallanes, southernmost city in the world, on the farthest tip of Chile. Some of these letters, with the many different stamps they carry, are exhibited on a large-framed panel in the NBC International Division offices in Radio City, a panel that any stamp collector in the world could study for days with undiminished pleasure. The latest stamps from the vanished country of Austria are there beside others from French Indo-China, and the Straits Settlements, and other far-away places of the world.

In replying to these letters, the National Broadcasting Company, through the courtesy of the United States Post Office, has been able to use on its letters from time to time certain stamps which are out of circulation, thus giving the philatelists among its listeners in other countries a new source of seldom-seen issues. Six such stamps have been used by NBC in the past year.

Radio Round The World

EMPIRE listeners are more far-flung than numerous, according to the data recently collected by the BBC concerning the number of licensed listeners in the Dominions and Colonies. Actually they number fewer than a third of the licence-holders at Home, the approximate figure being a little over two and a half million.

Canada leads the way with approximately 1,050,000 licences, and Australia is the runner-up with about 1,030,000. Next comes New Zealand, with 280,000. Other licence figures are as follow:

South Africa	190,000
India	50,000
Palestine	29,000
Newfoundland	11,500
Southern Rhodesia	6,500
Ceylon	5,000
Trinidad	2,500
Burma	1,500

A relatively small proportion of these, of course, pick up the Daventry programmes.

THE total number of patents filed by the Marconi Company during 1937 was 1,351. Two hundred and fifty-two were filed in Great Britain, and of these 44 related to sound and vision reception. There are now approximately 6,000 of the Company's patents in force in various parts of the world.

WIRELESS pirates in Italy must be brave and resourceful, for the new regulations give them as much scope as a cat in a kennel of hounds. Each radio dealer keeps a register in which all transactions are registered, with the name and address of set purchasers. Every owner of a broadcast receiver is given a "broadcast listener's book," in which licence payments are recorded, and this must be produced on demand. If a licence is to be cancelled, notice must be given not later than November in the current year, otherwise the licence

must be renewed. If the listener cannot continue to use his set, but does not wish to dispose of it, the Post Office places it in a sealed case. Certain authorised radio dealers may install receiving sets on trial for a period not exceeding ten days. For this a special licence is obtainable.

THE board of the Swiss Broadcasting Company has decided to ask the telegraph administration to increase the Swiss radio licence from 15 to 18 francs per annum to meet the added cost of "the spiritual defence of the nation," namely, to provide programmes for the Swiss overseas and to extend the hours of transmission to counteract the effect of broadcasting from neighbouring countries.

FOR thirty-six hours recently wireless messages passed between two ships in the Indian Ocean. On one, the Greek cargo boat Shelatros, a member of the crew was in agony with an abscess in the back. On the other, the Port Wellington, the doctor (a brother of Clyde Fenton, Australia's well-known flying doctor) was answering the SOS for medical help.

Messages were sent telling the officers of the Shelatros how to go about the required operation. "I

don't quite know even now what happened," Dr. Fenton said. "Possibly the only equipment was what the chef could supply, but the last message was that the patient was recovering from the operation and was doing well. I left them with instructions as to his diet."

THE transmitter of Florence II (233.5 metres) is shortly to be moved from Via Bolognese to Trespiano, and its power increased from 1 to 5 k.w. Trespiano, where the 20 k.w. Florence I station is situated, is found to be a more favourable site for the propagation of wireless waves. The station will be equipped with a new aerial system.

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Composer Partly Wanted The Money

Why Tschaikovsky Wrote His Ballet

COMPOSER Tschaikovsky, writing to Rimsky-Korsakov in 1875, gave his fellow musician some side-lights on Moscow's musical doings, among which is this item of information: "The Opera Direction has commissioned me to write music for 'The Swan Lake.' I accepted the work, partly because I want the money, but also because I have long had a wish to try my hand at this kind of music."

At first, however, the "Swan Lake Ballet" was not a success, because it was poorly staged and executed. The ballet master was devoid of imagination, and the orchestra was conducted by an amateur unused to such complicated scores.

"Swan Lake" is the earliest of Tschaikovsky's ballets, and is an excellent example of the type of "classical" ballet which flourished in Russia in the hey-day of the Tzarodum.

Story of the ballet is about a young knight, Siegfried, who has reached marriageable years, but is still heart-whole. His mother wishes him to make his choice, and gives a great feast for this purpose.

On the preceding evening Siegfried sees a flock of swans, and goes with his friends to hunt them, but the swans he has seen are the Princess Odetta and her attendant maidens, changed by magic and condemned by a demon to fly about in the daytime as swans, and resume their human form only at night.

Siegfried sees Odetta and falls in love with her. She tells him of her pitiful fate, from which she can only be saved by the love and faithfulness of a pure heart. Siegfried declares he will be her knight. Odetta warns him that from the

moment he is unfaithful to her she will fall for all time into the power of the evil one.

In order to prevent the betrothal of Odetta, the demon appears at the feast, accompanied by his daughter Odella, to whom he has given the form of Odetta. Siegfried chooses her for his bride, and is therefore unfaithful to Odetta, who must now be sacrificed to the demon. Odetta, however, escapes her fate by throwing herself into the water at night time, when she has human form.

When Siegfried discovers his error and hears of Odetta's death, he also puts an end to his life, but the souls of both are reunited in the magic world of everlasting happiness.

2YA listeners are to hear the music of Tschaikovsky's "Swan Lake" Ballet, as an imaginary broadcast re-creating the atmosphere of the theatre during the season of the Ballet. This will be a 2YA feature on Tuesday, January 31.

THE wireless research department of the Royal Navy has been working under steadily increasing difficulties in its cramped quarters at the Portsmouth Barracks. The department designs the Navy's WT sets, and has among other things produced the apparatus for the Queen Bee wireless-controlled aeroplane. Within a year or two, however, the department will have spacious new accommodation in the Royal Naval Signal Schools which the Admiralty is building north of the city.

Radio Record
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