

Antidote for Dial-Hopping

GEORGE KENT

FOR the past three years, people who live in and around New York have been listening to something that seems almost too good to be true: a radio station with good manners. Instead of clattering into your privacy with a strident "Buy this. . . . Buy that. . . . It's the biggest. . . . It's the newest. . . ." WABF tiptoes into your living room with artfully chosen programs of classic music and then steps back to let you enjoy them in serenity. There are commercials, of course, but they are whispered almost apologetically, rarely more than a sentence or two, and stripped of adjectives and high pressure. Definitely tabu are the theme song, the jingling hosannas in praise of soap, cigarettes, and cereals. WABF does not forget it is a guest in your home, and behaves as becomes one.

The other day a Princeton University professor wrote the station a letter saying: "Anything as good as WABF must need money. Enclosed is my check for \$14."

The professor was wrong. WABF is making money. And it is growing. Engineering surveys, now completed, have cleared the way for the establishment soon of the six-station FM Metropolitan Network to link Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, New Haven, and Boston. Eventually, it will hook up with other FM chains, particularly those being operated without a profit by educational groups and institutions. By 1952 the programs of WABF should be audible from coast to coast and the new network will have become a great force for the improvement of radio.

When ordinary folks, like you and me, get mad at what the loudspeaker is spewing into our homes, all we do is turn it off. Ira A. Hirschmann, a dark, curly-topped man of forty-eight, also turned it off. But then he did more. He went out and started Station WABF, to broadcast, on FM only, good music, presented with tact and courtesy. He didn't have quite enough money but, being the type who can sell hatpins to porcupines, he persuaded a few men with money to join him.

Hirschmann had had some experience with radio. Back in the Twenties, as an employee of Bamberger's—a Newark, N. J., department store—he helped found Station WOR,

now key station of the Mutual Network. There he had had the distinction of putting the New York Philharmonic on the air for the first time. This was less showmanship than the gesture of a man who loved music sincerely and numbered Artur Schnabel and Arturo Toscanini among his close friends.

With the founding of WABF, split-second programming was abolished. "Music's the thing," Hirschmann said, "not the clock." On conventional stations, long musical compositions are often cut so that they will end on the hour or half hour. Hirschmann laid down the rule that all numbers were to be played through without interruption, regardless of time. (Usually there are no pauses between movements—certainly no commercials.) In a concert hall people do not keep looking at their watches; why in radio? Compositions on WABF wind up minutes after the hour, sometimes as many as seventeen minutes. Once a quartet was on the air when a cellist snapped a string on his instrument. On any other station, committed to a rigid advertising time-table, this would have been a calamity. On WABF the announcer simply informed the audience what had happened and a few minutes later the concert resumed. Characteristically, it started not from where it left off but from the beginning.

WABF does not play jazz. Occasionally, in historical surveys of the

American musical scene, there will be hot numbers, but at no other times. Last year an attempt was made to include a little jazz as a regular feature. But the listeners spoke up vehemently. The nays outweighed the yeas by ten to one. For much the same reason there is no newscast. Hirschmann feels that it becomes unpleasantly repetitious besides interrupting the flow of music. There is only one exception: a weekly fifteen-minute report from the United Nations.

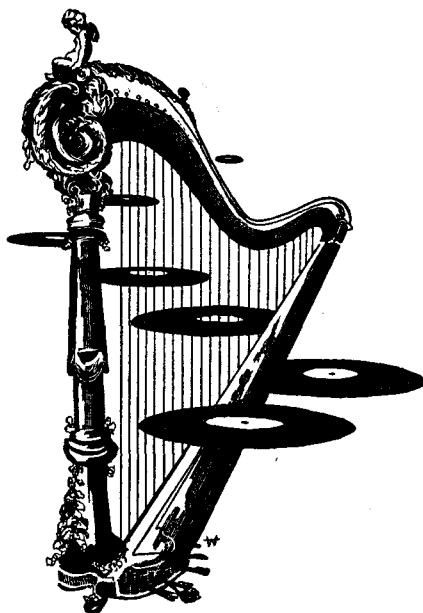
Commercials, Hirschmann decided, were a necessary evil if the station was to become self-supporting. But he felt that they should be edited, spaced, and delivered in a normal speaking voice. To make sure that the music remained more important than advertising, he gave the program department dominance over the sales people. Theirs is always the last word. He also gave them a mouthpiece in the monthly *Program Magazine*, which, in addition to listing all compositions, publishes editorials and articles on music for a paid-up circulation of 25,000.

Presented one day with a long, high-pressure blurb for a record company that had leased six hours on his station, Hirschmann reduced it to a lean six paragraphs that told the story without frills or offensive insistence. The advertising agency that had prepared it was in a tizzy. But the sponsor, oddly enough, was enthusiastic. He thought it fitted better. "It married the music," he said.

Normally, commercials are given on the hour and half-hour, and never take more than two minutes for every sixty minutes of music, much less time than on most other stations. If a long composition is being played, the announcement waits until it is over. In the case of the "Requiem" of Berlioz, for example, there will be none for nearly two hours.

WABF announcers are forbidden, under pain of dismissal, to *punch* the advertising message into the mike. They may recommend, they may suggest; they may not implore, wheedle, or bully the listeners. They are not permitted to use their position, as do disc jockeys, to build up a personality. It gets in the way of the music, Hirschmann believes. "The radio station is merely the fortunate intermediary between Beethoven and the public," he said. "The broadcaster is a guest in a home and he must talk as he would talk sitting in a friend's living room." In the past three years two WABF announcers have been discharged for violating this rule.

WABF is estimated to have close to
(Continued on page 28)



What SRL Reviewers Are Giving for Christmas*

SARA HENDERSON HAY	The Mature Mind (H. A. Overstreet)	The Show of Violence (Fredric Wertham)	The Stumbling Stone (Aubrey Menen)	This I Remember (Eleanor Roosevelt)	Cry, the Beloved Country (Alan Paton)
DON HOLLENBECK	China Shakes the World (Jack Belden)	The Case of General Yamashita (A. Frank Reel)	This I Remember (Eleanor Roosevelt)	The Egyptian (Mika Waltari)	Live with Lightning (Mitchell Wilson)
MILTON R. KONVITZ	The Vital Center (Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.)	A Dreamer's Journey (Morris R. Cohen)	Goethe the Poet (Karl Vietor)	The Education of Free Men (Horace M. Kallen)	Trade Unions in the New Society (Harold J. Laski)
RICHARD E. LAUTERBACH	China Shakes the World (Jack Belden)	The United States and the Soviet Union (American Friends Service Committee)	Art & Life in America (Oliver W. Larkin)	See If He Wins (Richard Spong)	The Big Wheel (John Brooks)
JOSEPHINE LAWRENCE†	The Plum Tree (Mary Ellen Chase)	The Blue Field (John Moore)	Women are Here to Stay (Agnes Rogers)	Father of the Bride (Edward Streeter)	A Guide to Confident Living (Norman Vincent Peale)
ASHLEY MONTAGU	Male and Female (Margaret Mead)	Influence of the Po- tato on the Course of Irish History (Redcliffe N. Salaman)	Profile Art (R. L. McGroz)	The Meaning of Evolution (G. G. Simpson)	Killers of the Dream (Lillian Smith)
DALE L. MORGAN	The Evening and the Morning (Virginia Sorensen)	The Track of the Cat (Walter Van Tilburg Clark)	Their Finest Hour (Winston S. Churchill)	The Peaceable Kingdom (Ardyth Kennelly)	Nineteen Eighty-Four (George Orwell)
GORHAM MUNSON†	Strange Life of Ivan Osokin (P. D. Ouspensky)	I Wanted to Write (Kenneth Roberts)	The Best Short Stories from Collier's (Edited by Barthold Fies)	The Wind of Time (Rolfe Humphries)	
JOHN PFEIFFER	Cybernetics (Norbert Wiener)	Unresting Cells (Ralph W. Gerard)	The Story of Maps (Lloyd A. Brown)	Fear, War, and the Bomb (P. M. S. Blackett)	Mirror for Man (Clyde Kluckhohn)
DONALD CULROSS PEATTIE	The Complete Poems of Robert Frost	This Far and No Farther (Rumer Godden)	The Diary of Philip Vickers Fithian	The Life of St. Francis of Assisi (Luigi Salvatorelli)	Field Guide to the Birds (Roger Tory Peterson)
ROBERT PICK	Rembrandt (Jakob Rosenberg)	The Heat of the Day (Elizabeth Bowen)	The Golden Apples (Eudora Welty)	The Golden Warrior (Hope Muntz)	Under the Volcano (Malcolm Lowry)
BEN RAY REDMAN	The Bhagavadgita (Trans. by S. Radhakrishnan)	Matthew Arnold (Lionel Trilling)	Erasmus's Praise of Folly (Trans. by Leonard F. Dean)	Elizabethan Lyrics (Edited by Norman Ault)	John Aubrey's Brief Lives (Edited by Anthony Powell)
WELLINGTON ROE	This I Remember (Eleanor Roosevelt)	The Mudlark (Theodore Bonnet)	The U. A. W. and Walter Reuther (Irving Howe and B. J. Widick)	World Revolution in the Cause of Peace (Lionel Curtis)	Father of the Bride (Edward Streeter)
LINDSAY ROGERS	Don Quixote (Miguel de Cer- vantes, Trans. by Samuel Putnam)	This I Remember (Eleanor Roosevelt)	The Magnificent MacInnes (Shepherd Mead)	Power and Morals (Martin J. Hillenbrand)	The Pollsters (Lindsay Rogers)
NATHAN L. ROTHMAN	A Study of History (Arnold Toynbee)	Nineteen Eighty-Four (George Orwell)	The Dukays (Lajos Zilahy)	A Dreamer's Journey (Morris R. Cohen)	Journals of André Gide (Trans. and annotated by Justin O'Brien)
IVAN T. SANDERSON	North African Prelude (Galbraith Welch)	The Jungle Is Neutral (F. Spencer Chapman)	This I Remember (Eleanor Roosevelt)	W. C. Fields (Robert Lewis Taylor)	The Sure Thing (Merle Miller)
ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, JR.	Nineteen Eighty-Four (George Orwell)	Faith and History (Reinhold Niebuhr)	Love in a Cold Climate (Nancy Mitford)	Social Thought in America (Morton G. White)	The Country of the Blind (G. Counts & N. Lodge)
BRADFORD SMITH	Album of American History (James T. Adams, etc.)	American Freedom and Catholic Power (Paul Blanchard)	The Mature Mind (H. A. Overstreet)	Wells Fargo (Edward Hungerford)	Presidents on Parade (Mithollen & Kaplan)
WILLIAM SOSKIN	Don Quixote (Miguel de Cervantes, Trans. by Samuel Putnam)	A Harvest of World Folk Tales (Edited by Milton Rugoff)	Pioneer America (Carl W. Drepperd)	A Treasury of Early American Homes (Richard Pratt)	The Fireside Cook Book (James Beard)
WILLARD L. SPERRY	Out of My Life and Thought. 1949 Edition (Albert Schweitzer)	Roosevelt and the Russians (E. R. Stettinius, Jr.)	Jane Austen (Elizabeth Jenkins)	The Last Attachment (Iris Origo)	Domestic Manners of the Americans (Frances Trollope, Edited by Donald Smalley)
ROBERT E. SPILLER	This I Remember (Eleanor Roosevelt)	Pennsylvania Songs and Legends (George Korson)	Emily Dickinson: Poems, First and Second Series (Intro. by C. Van Doren)	Death of a Salesman (Arthur Miller)	Rand-McNally Cosmopolitan World Atlas
PAMELA TAYLOR	Benefits Forgot (G. B. Stern)	The Art of Living (Saul Steinberg)	Morning Faces (John Mason Brown)	The Corner That Held Them (Sylvia Townsend Warner)	
JOHN T. WINTERICH	This I Remember (Eleanor Roosevelt)	The Love Letters of Mark Twain (Edited by Dixon Wecter)	The Home Book of Bible Quotations (Edited by Burton Stevenson)	A Sort of a Saga (Bill Mauldin)	The Autobiography of Will Rogers (Edited by Donald Day)
ANN F. WOLFE	The Lion Tamer (Bryan MacMahon)	Cream Hill (Lewis Gannett)	Morning Faces (John Mason Brown)	London Book of English Verse (Edited by H. Read & B. Dobree)	Christina Rossetti (Marya Zaturenska)

*Part I of this list ran in last week's issue.

† Miss Lawrence and Mr. Munson both suggested American Booksellers Association Give-a-Book Certificates as excellent gifts for readers of any taste.