

New Log With Latest Waves

Radio Digest

Journal

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Thirteenth Floor Is

Seven-Eleven Fifth Avenue No Such Thing as Hoo-doo

By P. H. W.



GERALD STOPP (above), director of the National Players, teaches Sunday school by dramatizing the Bible stories. At left he is shown going over scripts with players.

broadcasting.

Up yet another flight—and the zone of actual broadcasting is reached. Radio folk are not superstitious, for on the thirteenth floor of 711 Fifth Avenue are located the three biggest and busiest studios.

The lobby of the thirteenth floor isn't small, but it is filled to overflowing with people. Violin cases are stacked against the wall and bass viol players stagger by with their huge instruments in their arms. There is a buzz of conversation—a veritable Babel, for one hears words in English, French, Spanish, German and a half-dozen dialects of Central Europe.

Pages, immaculate in gray serge and silver buttons, dart through the lobby on apparently important missions. Porters are busy moving pianos about or shifting the Radio calliope from one studio to another.



SEVEN eleven Fifth Avenue. A tall, white building that might house lawyers' offices or the executive personnel of a railroad. Letters carried in stone tell that it is the New York home of the National Broadcasting Company—and therefore the place of origin of hundreds upon hundreds of Radio programs.

The long, ornate lobby at 711 Fifth Avenue is a busy street. Men and women, music rolls under their arms or carrying bulky musical instruments, move in and out from dawn until midnight. There are faces of every hue in the lobby parade. Pink Nordic faces, olive Latin faces, smiling ebony faces. The microphone calls all artists regardless of race or color. Up eleven stories in the elevator—up past a bank, past a floor devoted to antiques and art objects, past a wholesale millinery, until the first of five floors devoted to Radio is reached.

"Eleventh floor," chants the elevator boy. One steps out into a large lobby, modernistic in its decorations. There are no microphones here—no sound of music.

HERE on the eleventh floor are offices where artists are booked for Radio appearances and where arrangements are made for future programs. In one big office a dozen girls sit around a big table heaped high with mail. These dozen girls sort and read several thousands of letters each day—the pen-and-ink hand-clasp of the invisible audience.

Up another flight and there are more offices. In one room Radio continuities are written. Men and women are busy at typewriters or are dictating. An open door discloses a room filled with racks—the musical reference library where more than 15,000 pieces of music are available for the program makers. Other offices are occupied by men and women busy at the hundred and one tasks connected with



ALINE BERRY (left) finds her Radio dramatic work helpful in the new art of talking pictures. "Twin Pairs of Harmony" (below), vocal and piano.



MR. DIXON gives us in this article direct and sidelight views of the great operative plant of the National Broadcasting Company. Over 400 people are employed in this beehive of Radio.

AT each end of the lobby are zones of quiet—lounging rooms in modernistic style where artists pause to smoke a cigarette or chat with friends before going on the air.

Opening off the lobby are studios—three huge ones. A peek into studio A and one sees a man with rumpled white hair talking earnestly to a group of musicians seated in front of him. He raises his baton and music flows. He drops it as if in disgust. Somewhere he has detected an off-note in the orchestra and it must be corrected. This is a rehearsal and Harold Sanford, an NBC conductor, is going to be sure his men know the selection before it is presented to the critical Radio audience.

A peek into another studio—studio B this time. It is a large auditorium and is as quiet as a tomb. Then one hears a crystal clear tenor soaring up and up and up, to be lost among the mammoth lamps hanging from the ceiling. Unaccompanied, the man is singing into a microphone. Two other men watch him from behind a glass window set in a side wall. The two who watch are in a monitoring booth. The voice of the tenor is being tested. They shake their heads. The tenor tries again. They shake their heads and then come forth to explain in kind, low tones that his voice lacks the indefinable "something" necessary to a successful Radio artist. Another audition is over—just one of hundreds that are held every week at 711 Fifth Avenue.

There is still another studio—but a watchful page prevents a peek. A program is going on the air and admittance to the studio is forbidden.

THE page explains that one may look into the studio from a small room

ALINE BERRY (left) finds her Radio dramatic work helpful in the new art of talking pictures. "Twin Pairs of Harmony" (below), vocal and piano.

OK for NBC Artists

Nerve Center for Continent Impressions of a Visitor

Dixon

HERE is the nerve center that carries thought and intelligence to human beings throughout our continent. It serves for pleasure and for constructive growth with world-wide service.

on the fourteenth floor. He beckons to another page and one is guided up to the fourteenth level and through a maze of corridors to a tiny room, cool and comfortably furnished. A Radio speaker is pouring out dance tunes. There is a heavy glass window in the side of the room and from this window one can look down into studio C.

A jazz orchestra is playing. The leader, busy at a banjo, is Harry Reser. The Chequot Club Eskimos are on the air.

A saxophone player rolls joyous eyes at another saxophone player. The piano player emphasizes the time with a convulsive movement of his lower jaw. Feet pat, shoulders sway and the studio seems steeped in the pounding, mad melody.

The page suggests that studio H might be worth a visit. Up another story to studio H.

There are many people in studio H. They are clustered around a short, swarthy man. They call him "maestro." He is Cesare Sodero, baton waver extraordinaire and the man who is responsible for opera broadcasts over NBC system.

EDWARD THORGARSEN (center), new NBC announcer. Uncle Bob Sherwood, old time circus clown, who runs Dixie Circus program. Below is a quartet from the Pacific Coast NBC called "The Rounders."



SODERO leaves the group, confers hurriedly with an announcer and then mounts a platform. He holds up his baton and there is silence in the studio. A red light blinks in the monitoring booth at the end of the big studio. The maestro's baton goes up.

In the soundless moments, the studio becomes a posed picture. Moss gray smocks of the musicians blend with the moss gray drapes on the walls. There is a flash of scarlet as the soprano throws back her fur coat revealing a vivid evening gown. Every eye is alert to the signal, not even a bit of rustling paper is permitted, while all around



RAQUEL NIETO, Mexican soprano, soloist with the Tango orchestra, very popular with NBC audiences. Lowney's Sweethearts (left) toss Cupid's bonbons to the listeners.

the studio walls stand tall gray pyramids, decorated in gold. One thinks of mummy cases in an Egyptian tomb.

The announcer speaks briefly. His carefully enunciated words are heard across the continent:

"This program is presented by the National Broadcasting Company and associated Radio stations."

Sodero's baton swings down and music floods the room like sunlight when shades are drawn. Moments of this and then there is singing.

An opera is being broadcast.

Down the swift elevator and again one is in the main lobby of 711 Fifth Avenue. It is near midnight and more persons are moving out of the building than are coming in.

Some are laughing. Happy because they intuitively know that their voices "went over" with the invisible audience. Some are silent. Perhaps there was a catch in a voice at the wrong moment and they imagine their

efforts were ruined—even though the slight error may have gone unnoticed.

Men and women, music rolls or instruments under their arms, stroll out into the night.

Another Radio day is over.

And now the Radio Digest reader may be interested in some of the casual personalities identified with the great staff of entertainers employed by the National Broadcasting Company in the studios at "seven eleven Fifth Avenue."

RETIRED veterans of the circus, dozing by their Radio speakers, must have been rudely awakened one evening last summer. The call to battle, known to all circus men, had come from the speaker with this famous challenge:

"Hey, rube!"

They must have rubbed their eyes, these old circus men. The voice was familiar. Where had they heard it before? On the lot with the old P. T. Barnum circus? Thirty years ago when the circus folk battled continuously with the towns people? Thirty years ago when "hey, rube," meant grab a tent stake and fight?

Some of them must have heard the identical voice years before on

the P. T. Barnum lot—for it was the voice of Bob Sherwood, last of the clowns who capered under the Barnum banner.

SHERWOOD, more familiarly known as "Uncle Bob," is re-creating the circus of yesterday in a series of Radio programs known as the "Dixie Circus." The program is broadcast every Friday night from 7:30 to 8 p. m., Eastern standard time, and usually is heard through stations WJZ, New York; WBZ, Springfield, Mass.; WBZA, Boston; KDKA, Pittsburgh; KYW, Chicago; WHAM, Rochester, N. Y.; WBAL, Baltimore, and WJR, Detroit.

"Uncle Bob" is one of the most colorful characters of the hundreds of interesting persons who drift in and out of the NBC studios in New York. He has white hair, but he gives no impression of age. His eyes sparkle and he moves as rapidly as a youngster in his teens. He clowns a bit when he isn't working and his greatest delight is to have a group of youngsters about him, listening to his stories of the circus.

His life history would make a book—in fact it is a book, for he has written his reminiscences. In addition to his career as a circus clown more than two score years ago, he has appeared in vaudeville and in the movies. His intimate knowledge of circus life made him much in demand in the film colonies when motion pictures of the big tops were being made.

His Radio program is his own idea and is a typical example of his greatest interest in life. The "Dixie Circus" program is built about three characters—Uncle Bob, little Dorothy and Dick. Uncle Bob each week takes the two children through Circus Land, telling them about the animals and artists and taking them behind the scenes of the circus. He also enacts the principal roles in the circus story such as animal trainer, boss of the big top, ring master, Barker and elephant boss.

THERE'S a callope in the program, too, and the melodies played on the callope are real old-time circus tunes. A clown band of trombones and saxophones also supplies musical atmosphere.

It was during a broadcast which had as its plot a fight between the circus folk

and the townspeople that Uncle Bob introduced the famous "Hey, rube" cry. And he did it as it used to be done on the circus lots—a truly terrifying battle cry.

Now that we have begun to both see and hear the movies Radio artists are coming into demand in the moving picture studios. Aline Berry is one of the first to enter this double sphere.

MORE than four years ago a little girl from Washington wandered back stage at the Theatre Guild in New York and timidly asked for a job. Perhaps it was her voice or perhaps it was her eyes or perhaps she was just lucky because instead of being told to "get out," she was taken on as an understudy.

The Theatre Guild at that time was presenting Shaw's "The Devil's Disciple." In the cast were such well-known actors as Basil Sydney, Roland Young, Helen Westley and others. Martha Brian Allen, a young ingenue, was playing the role of Essie. The little girl from Washington studied the different parts in the production and watched with eager eyes from the wings as these famous players worked before an audience.

Then came the lucky break that happens more often in fiction than in real life. Miss Allen had to leave the play on a day's notice. The little girl from Washington, with several other understudies, was given a try-out for the part. And the little girl from Washington made good.

Thus did Aline Berry begin a dramatic career that has taken her onto many stages, before motion picture cameras and recently before the microphone.

SHE had an audition in the studios of the National Broadcasting Company in New York and made her Radio debut in a Gold Spot Pals program.

While doing Radio work, a theatrical agency sent for her and offered her a part in a Long Island stock company if she could learn a long role on short notice. She got her part on a Saturday night and on Monday night went on as leading woman in "Tommy."

She stayed with the stock company until it closed and then went back to Radio, playing melodramatic roles in the series of revivals

of old-time plays being broadcast through WJZ and stations associated with the National Broadcasting company.

To complete her experience in the show business she went into a "talking movie" studio and her voice was used in an experimental "talkie."

At the present time she is working in Radio productions and in talking motion pictures.

"WHAT qualifications must a man have to become one of our announcers?" Leslie Joy repeated crisply, because this supervisor of the NBC announcers is a very keen man who thinks quickly and accurately. He said:

"First of all he must have experience. I save time by asking a man that at once. The second thing is whether he has had a college degree. If he has, it is a decided asset, because then he will have had two or three languages, and this is a great help in pronouncing musical terms and words and names.

"The third question is whether they are singers. If they are, they will have good speaking voices and will be familiar

with music and musicians. It is very important that our announcers understand the artistic temperament, because during the year most of the big artists of the country appear before our microphones.

"When they announce their voices must be understanding. In other words, they must have Radio personality, and Radio personality implies a person with a quick mind, tact and common sense. For instance, a good announcer will often have to decide things for himself, and we must feel safe to leave the situation in his hands. When any one applies to me for a position I can tell in five minutes whether he will do or not. Size has nothing to do with it. You will notice that one of our popular announcers is Paul Dumont, who is only five feet two inches tall, and another announcer with a very pleasing Radio personality is E. B. Ruffner, six feet seven.

"Applicants applying by mail I judge from the character of the letter, the paper and the handwriting. You would be surprised how correct an impression you can get from this.

"I like a man, therefore, who has had a college education, musical training and experience in all sorts of jobs.



Two heads may be better than one, but that's nothing compared to voices when you hear this Novelty team of the Stafford Sisters at KFON, Long Beach, Calif. Blues have a new meaning when Stafford and Stafford sing them.