

ANNOUNCER'S HANDBOOK

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Program Director 1959-60

"...WVBR - FM and AM, serving the southern Finger Lakes region from Ithaca, New York...WVBR - FM and AM, Ithaca, New York - the stations owned and operated by students of Cornell University, who believe that creative radio is a contemporary art..."

The radio spectrum is a vitally important public resource, particularly in this era of mass marketing of products and ideas. Hence the use of a portion of the radio spectrum, whether only within buildings (as with WVBR-AM), or over a wide area (as with WVBR-FM), carries with it the obligation of public service, providing programs "in the public interest, convenience, and necessity." It is this moral obligation which the Federal Communications Commission was set up to enforce.

Michael J. Henry (General Manager 1958-9) described WVBR this way: "WVBR-FM is owned and operated by the Cornell Radio Guild, Inc., a non-profit membership corporation composed of students of Cornell University interested in the profession and art of radio broadcasting." The Cornell Radio Guild was founded to give Cornell students experience in radio. The best way to learn is by doing; hence the Cornell Radio Guild operates WVBR-AM and WVBR-FM. WVBR, then, is a place for Cornell students to learn about serious radio and at the same time provide a community service. Learning about serious radio requires working seriously at it. While it can be (and generally is) a lot of fun, it is NOT a "plaything for personal amusement."

Many programs at WVBR end with the triumphant phrase: "This is RADIO CORNELL." This is not a trite, meaningless blurb; it expresses pride in doing something well enough to be worthy of Cornell. Although we try to maintain the highest professional standards at WVBR, we are students, and our primary obligation is therefore our studies. WVBR is an extracurricular activity and serves its purpose best as such. No one should take on so much at WVBR that he cannot handle both this and his courses adequately.

THE ANNOUNCER

The announcer is important because he is the link between the station and the listener. His "radio personality" is the image which the listener receives of the station. The announcer must "project" his personality into the listener's living room, just as he would in a lively, animated conversation. But in a conversation, the announcer can use gestures and eye contact; on the radio, these are missing. Only his voice remains; because it is not "covered up" by personal contact, faults are much more noticeable.

The announcer needs four things: voice, intelligence, personality, and taste. He must have a certain minimum in each of these categories - above that, excellence in one category will help to make up for deficiencies in another. Note, too, that all four of these items can be developed, to a certain extent, by hard work.

You, as a competent announcer, have passed an audition. This indicated that you possess a voice of above average pleasantness (or the potential needed to develop it), and that your speech pattern is easily understood and non-regional (no heavy accent). It also indicates the possibility of your using your intelligence and good taste, and possessing (or being able to cultivate) a pleasing natural radio personality.

INTELLIGENCE

Radio, as a communications medium, should have something to communicate worth communicating. This is, of course, the reason we talk about intelligence. The rule is simple - use it! Radio, appealing only to the hearing, can communicate two types of information - objective ideas, expressible only by words, and subjective feelings, described by sounds and music (an important "special case" of sounds), but imperfectly represented by words. We get these inflections when we listen to the radio, but we lose them when we read a newspaper - then we have to fill them in for ourselves. In radio, we get not only the words, but also the "tone of voice."

The announcer, then, must understand completely what he is to present, if he is to present it effectively. He should read through the material carefully, outlining the key ideas. He should see how they fit together, and how they are "filled out" by subordinate material. Especially for a beginning announcer, it may help actually to mark up the copy, underlining key words and phrases which need emphasis, noting shifts in mood and tone, and marking logical pauses for SILENT breaths between phrases.

The announcer should listen carefully and attentively to the language which he speaks, and try to learn more about how it works. An idea, after all, is thought out and expressed in language, and so the language determines the way the idea comes out! Indeed, one of the big advantages of learning to speak a foreign language, is that you have to learn and analyze "a new way of saying the same thing," with different word order, constructions, and inflections. This helps you to see more clearly, by comparison, just how English works. You can thus "refine and make beautiful" your use of English.

Whether on a newscast, a music program, or a commercial, whatever the announcer has to say involves knowledge and information of some sort. A knowledge of government and history is necessary equipment for a newscaster, just as a background in music is essential for an announcer doing a music program. Indeed, this is the reason that programmer-announcers for popular and classical music programs are encouraged. The radio announcer is also expected to use perfect English, and pronounce everything impeccably. He is looked up to as a standard for pronunciation; he will be severely criticized (and the station along with him) if he mispronounces something. With foreign names the situation is even worse. The English are noted for their contempt of foreign languages and their highly individual pronunciation of foreign names, but they are criticized if they do this on radio at Cornell (and in the whole U.S.A.). The French can talk about "l'Avenue Vood-row Veel-son", but American announcers have to pronounce foreign names "authentically".

COMMUNICATION

Radio is a powerful communications medium; Orson Welles and his Martians proved that, more than 20 years ago. And in 1958 this was proved again, in a

different way, when radio station WFMT in Chicago received the award of the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation for distinguished service to youth through its extremely high-caliber programming.

The announcer must communicate, if he is to keep his listeners and sponsors! If he doesn't communicate effectively, listeners will grow bored and tune in to another station; what will happen if he doesn't communicate effectively on commercials is equally obvious! Remember, there are two kinds of information that can be transmitted - objective ideas and subjective feelings - both are necessary for really effective communication. Beginning announcers tend to think that only the words (the "objective" part) found in a newscast, say, are important, but this is not true. If you don't believe it, listen to a heated discussion around Cornell in Spanish! Notice how much information you can get without understanding a word of Spanish. Perhaps the best examples of all are the speeches of Adolf Hitler. Ernst Glaeser, in his novel "Der letzte Zivilist" (1935), had this to say about our unholy example:

"...A fantastic voice. Magnificent, the way he modulates it. The way he poses suggestive questions. The way he stretches out the pauses and then breaks down the tension....Suddenly he speaks like a child...Deutschland...Vaterland...Volk...Liebe..."

Henneke analyzes him as an announcer:

"...Hitler's voice compelled attention: without a knowledge of German the average American listener could determine when the German leader was pleading, accusing, denouncing, or cajoling. The listener could hear his voice drip sarcasm and often found himself excited in spite of himself when Hitler launched into a patriotic diatribe.

"If the person who listened to Hitler or to some other foreign orator was at all critical of the speaker and of his own reactions, he noticed that those interesting qualities of the speaker were the result of the control of the voice. Hitler's sarcasm, for instance, was in great contrast to his patriotic fervor. His speech was slow and incisive when he was most sarcastic; the pitch was low, with many circumflex inflections; he spoke quietly and patiently; and the quality of his voice showed him to be a man of sorrow who was more sinned against than sinning. But when he was speaking of Der Vaterland his pitch soared and fell, only to soar again even higher; he spoke rapidly and fervently and then stressed and prolonged key words; he ranted and split the air with violence and then cooed and fawned; the total effect was that of majestic, powerful horns. All this was discernible in the man's voice. No wonder he hypnotized a nation; as one radio executive has said, he was the best salesman ever to deliver a commercial on the radio. Yet his commercials were fustian; translations of Hitler's speeches show them to be trite, dull, repetitious, and full of specious reasoning and faulty logic.

"To be persuasive, the American announcer speaking to an American audience does not need to depend completely on his voice, for the words themselves may capture and hold attention. But the superior announcer never depends on what he has to say to secure a listener. Many a poor idea has been sold the public by the excellence with which it was voiced, and many a good idea has been ignored because of poor delivery."

The announcer must desire to communicate his "copy"; he must not be "bored with it all." If he is, it is time for a vacation.

Now consider the following example:

"Well!" ("I caught you stealing again.")
"Well?" ("What do you want?")
"Well..." ("My mind isn't quite made up.")
"Well!" ("This is enough; this is the end.")
"Well?" (You're reading the paper. Little brother wants a dime.)
"Well." (Someone has just asked in a bored voice, "How are you?")
"Well." (Someone has just told you you won a car in a raffle. You don't believe it.)
"Well!" (Exciting gossip about the neighbor next door.)
"Well..." ("Guess I'll go home. I've had a boring evening, but I should be polite.")
"Well..." (In answer to, "Why isn't this assignment in on time?" Stalling.)

In radio, you can hear the difference - clearly it is important to make the distinction, and make it correctly! The difference lies in four fundamental characteristics of speech: pitch, loudness, time, and quality. They are your "tools" in communicating, so they deserve some attention.

Pitch can be described by comparing it with a note on a piano. Speech and singing are closely related; try talking in a strict monotone for more than a few seconds, and you will find yourself singing. Just as, with a melody, you start with a certain area on the keyboard and then work in that general area, so you have a "base level", or key, for a sentence or group of sentences. This basic pitch should be low, but not uncomfortably low, because most voices are most pleasing in their lower registers. To separate different thoughts, the key can change from one paragraph, say, to the next. The melodic line can rise or fall, with "up-trends" or "down-trends"; you should do the same thing when speaking. A typical phrase will begin low, rise, and then subside, exactly like a typical sentence inflection pattern. Even on just one note or word, the inflection can vary, and in varying it will carry an additional shade of meaning. An announcer must pay particular attention to inflections; a poorly-chosen inflection may suggest something incorrect to the listener. For example, the announcer may unintentionally sound insincere on a commercial. Be especially careful to avoid stereotyped or awkward inflection patterns.

Loudness is the strength of your voice at a given moment. Here again, in music or in speech, you start at a given "base level", and vary about this point. For a build-up in tension you may use a gradual increase; for a relaxation you may use a gradual decrease. You also have accents, stressing individual words by making them stronger. On the other hand, you may have words or phrases that are "throwaway", on which your level is lower. Again, a different base level for different paragraphs or sections sets them apart.

Time, in speech, involves several factors. You have a different tempo, or basic rate, for different sorts of expression, as well as for contrasting sections. You also have rhythm, to convey mood, and pauses, to set apart separate thoughts (phrases). A gradual increase in tempo adds excitement; a gradual slowing-down in tempo suggests relaxation of tension. A hesitation or a speed-up on a particular word will call attention to it.

The quality of your voice can also change to communicate emotion, or give emphasis. Consider a whisper, huskiness, and stridency - each can suggest something different. Stridency may suggest excitement; huskiness may suggest emotion. In some cases the quality of the voice can be used for special effects - hoarseness for a commercial for a cold-remedy (before the happy ending!).

Finally, the announcer who communicates must try to deserve the praise Puccini lavished on a great Italian conductor, when he said, "Toscanini conducts an opera not as the score requires, but as the composer imagined it, even though his hand may have failed him in the moment when he had to put upon paper that which he had so clearly conceived."

VOICE

The announcer's voice is very important to him - it represents his livelihood. Most of us could never sound like Caruso, or (perhaps more appropriately for radio) like a Russian basso profundo. Obviously, a certain minimum of voice is necessary, and a major speech impediment or a violent accent is unsuitable. Beyond that, there are two things anyone can do. First, one can learn about tone production - how it depends on health, posture, relaxation, and breathing - and carefully practice it. Second, one can "make the most of his voice" by being especially careful about phrasing, pronunciation, a pleasing "radio personality", etc. - in short, by developing intensely the other attributes of a good announcer, to make up for a mediocre voice.

All the "equipment" we use when speaking has other primary functions; none of it seems put in just for making conversation! When this equipment, or part of it, is being used for some other important function, speech becomes impossible. If a person has exerted himself physically, has been frightened or become angry, it is difficult or impossible for him to speak. You know it is difficult to speak while eating or drinking. And it is difficult to speak well when the resonators (nose and sinus cavities) are clogged by a cold. The moral is simple; the announcer must be careful of his voice, and his health in general.

Good health is necessary for good tone production, voice-teachers agree. In addition to making you sound better (more full and vibrant, less nasal), you will feel better, and be both more relaxed and more alert.

Posture is likewise very important for good tone production. Try speaking while sitting or standing (in your normal posture), and then try it standing erect with your back against a wall. When you are sitting or standing erect, your lungs and your whole vocal apparatus, all the way down to your diaphragm, are working properly; you will produce fuller, richer tones, with better breath control. In addition, you will remain more relaxed, and your voice will last longer.

Relaxation has three benefits for a radio announcer. When you are relaxed, your vocal chords work better. When you tense, they tighten; your voice goes up in pitch, and it sounds and feels strained. This is hard on you, and on your listeners, if you have a long shift to announce. In addition, radio operates under quite a bit of nervous tension. Everything must come off according to schedule; if mistakes occur, a lot of people

hear them. Finally, if you are relaxed, you will be better able to project a pleasing "radio personality" to your listener .

Breathing is the fourth requirement for good tone production - yes, it helps if you breathe occasionally. It seems to give radio that "live" feeling! But it is also important to breathe correctly. As we mentioned earlier, deep breathing, utilizing your whole breathing apparatus all the way down to the diaphragm, is necessary to produce fuller, richer tones. On the other hand, the microphone is very sensitive, and heavy breathing will convey to the listeners the cozy feeling that you are sharing the microphone with a panting collie on a hot summer afternoon. This may be classed as a "special effect" not too suitable for general use! In addition, you can't talk and inhale at the same time, so breaths (not too big ones!) must coincide with pauses. The thing to remember is to breathe silently through both the nose and mouth simultaneously. If possible, breathe into a "dead" area of the mike.

PERSONALITY

Personality is an important factor for the announcer, both on the air and off the air. The announcer is the voice of the station; he is directly concerned with public relations. When he appears publicly, he is the public appearance of the station, whether he is on or off duty. He is also concerned with his relations with the rest of the staff; WVBR has little respect for prima donnas who aren't magnificent enough (except in their own eyes) to warrant the bother of putting up with them. Especially at WVBR, the announcer spends a great deal of time with the public, and he must make a good appearance. There are a great number of students, faculty members, townspeople, and representatives of sponsors and other important visitors who must be shown around the studios. Students, announcers included, are in contact almost daily with local sponsors, and in daily contact with other students and faculty members, to whom they "represent" WVBR.

Personality is also important on the air; your "live" personality may not project over the radio. WVBR has had announcers whose "live" personalities were distinctive and likeable, but whose "radio personalities" were cold, distinctly non-radiant, authoritative but impersonal and aloof. It may help, for example, to speak "to" the engineer. In any case, the announcer is speaking to many people at once, but to each of them individually - this is the way radio works.

Naturalness, sincerity, and out-going friendliness are the key points to aim for in developing a "radio personality". Mike fright is probably the chief deterrent to a pleasing "radio personality", especially for new announcers. Henneke makes the following suggestions:

1. Everyone has had a similar experience and lived through it.
(comforting, isn't it!)
2. Don't think about how you feel. Think about what you are to communicate.
3. Assume a vital, positive, and assured manner and you will be more apt to be just that.
4. Know so well what you have to say that you are saying it before you have an opportunity to worry whether you will say it.
5. Breathe as deeply and as naturally as possible.

One of the basic points to remember is vitality. Fundamentally, this means being alive rather than dead - awake rather than asleep. Vitality is necessary for communicating interest in a given subject to others. It does not necessarily mean shouting into a microphone, ultra-high-power-and-speed delivery, and over-aggressiveness; those things are out of keeping with any high-caliber radio station. It does mean, however, that a station identification announcement to be heard at 3:30 A. M., whether on tape or even live, must still sound awake and not half-asleep!

TASTE

As we noted earlier, taste is prerequisite of anyone working in radio. It is partly latent in the individual, and partly acquired. Through exposure to a wide variety of things, you gradually develop a feeling that some of these things are better than others, that some things are done and others are not (or should not be) done. It obviously does not make sense to malign present or potential sponsors who may be listening; it should make no more sense to offend the sensibilities of your listeners. We have three standards to live up to: the legal standards of the F.C.C. and the University, which "take a dim view of lewd or slightly off-color remarks being broadcast," and the even stronger standards of high quality and high fidelity. On F.M., improper remarks could even lead to suspension of broadcast privileges for the station; it is only fair, then, that both on FM and AM, announcers be suspended for such improper conduct on the air.

Taste, of course, will be mentioned again in connection with specific types of programs. We are not concerned, in this section, with whether one prefers Toscanini or Ormandy, or Basie or Brubeck; this involves familiarity with a specific field, and discrimination and personal reactions. But we are concerned with glaring lacks of taste. One example: in 1945, on a large clear channel station, the announcer presented an inspiring singing commercial for roach powder immediately after announcing the news flash of the death of President Roosevelt.

EQUIPMENT

The bit of equipment the announcer spends the most time with is, of course, the microphone. The announcer should spend a good deal of time, not on the air, but with a tape recorder, getting familiar with each type of mike the station uses. Each mike has "dead spots", where sounds will not be picked up as well; each mike also has its own distinctive pick-up and fidelity characteristics. This means that you will find a certain position, or placement, relative to each mike, that will make your voice sound best over the air. For example, if your "ssss's" tend to "whistle", speaking slightly across the mike may help. The only way, though, is to try various positions on each mike, and decide, by listening to the tape playback, which is best for you.

WVBR announcers are encouraged to learn how to engineer. This is a necessity in many stations, as it is cheaper! "Combo" operation - the announcer doing his own engineering - may make possible a slightly smoother show, too. Since most WVBR announcers will start on AM, where the studio set-up requires combo operation...! In addition, you will get an idea of what the engineer can and cannot do; you will learn to work smoothly with them. And by the same token, WVBR engineers are broad-minded people (including announcers, for example, as well as soldering-gun-pushers!) who

will watch attentively and make suggestions and helpful criticisms of your work. And similarly, when you engineer for someone else, you should observe carefully and, if necessary, make suggestions and helpful criticisms, and ask questions. Remember, it is very likely that your engineer, even if you know him only as a "soldering-gun pusher", knows more about a certain type of music than you do, and in addition has more clearly defined ideas about good taste on radio than you do! If you do know more than he does or than anyone else in the station does, fine...But, you had better make sure you're right!

Note finally that the engineering department is just as necessary for high fidelity and quality standards as the program department. Without the engineering department's ability, interest, and cooperation, WVBR could certainly not be what it is today. In particular, WVBR-FM, the most important part of WVBR, depends heavily on our engineering staff for continued high fidelity and carefully presented programs for a discriminating audience.

OPERATIONS

Just a word about operation at WVBR seems in order here. The Log lists the programs to be heard, the commercials and promos, the station identifications, etc. It must be adhered to strictly. Station identification must be within 2 minutes of the scheduled time, except on continuous works of classical music, lectures, etc., where it must come at the beginning and end of a work which would last beyond the scheduled time for a station ID. The Book for Announcers contains formats for programs and the commercial and special copy that is to be read. Note that much of the commercials, promos, and station ID's are on the Break Tape, which the engineer manipulates; be sure to check with him about such items, and about your program(s) in general, before you start your shift.

At WVBR, as in any station, station policy is set by the General Manager, following the general wishes of the owner(s), who in this case are the members of the Cornell Radio Guild, Inc. In line with this general policy, the program policy is established and maintained by the Program Director, with the help of the Program Department. If you have ideas for a new program or suggestions for a present one, suggest them to the Program Director; he will be glad to hear them and think about them.

CLASSICAL MUSIC PROGRAMS

Classical music, carefully selected - the highest quality and fidelity - makes up an important part of WVBR's broadcast schedule. It attracts our largest daily audience; the hours it is broadcast therefore become our choicest commercial time. And here, in particular, the audience looks to the announcer for authoritative pronunciation and pronouncements; errors of pronunciation or fact, and sloppiness in general, will cause the most damage to WVBR and hence cannot and shall not be tolerated. This is why WVBR-FM's finest announcers do the classical music programs.

We should note here something of importance which applies to all types of programs at WVBR; no announcer is forced to do programs he is not interested in. He is expected to be able to read commercials and news in a competent manner; but beyond that, he is not forced to do everything. The trend in quality radio is away from the all-purpose announcer toward the

person, even with a slightly less thrilling voice, who is an expert in his field. And this trend is encouraged at WVBR. We certainly do not object to announcers who can do any program well, but that is not expected of every announcer.

In the case of classical music programs, the "programmer-announcer" is encouraged at WVBR. This is a person who knows something about classical music, who works with the program staff in preparing his and other classical music programs. Because he has participated in planning his program and other programs heard in close proximity, he has the best chance for conveying to his audience the significance of the program content. He has a better chance, for example, of communicating fully than if he were merely reading a script someone else had written. People who have a definite interest in classical music, whether they already know quite a bit about it or want to learn, are invited to talk with the Program Director and the Chief Announcer.

NEWSCASTS

The newscast is the place where the announcer really can shine, simply because there is nothing else on the program to compete with him. Just sitting down comfortably before a microphone and reading for 5 or 15 minutes may seem simple - but it isn't! First, considerable effort should go into organizing and editing the news - this is necessary preparation before broadcast time. Second, the fact that there is no competition for you, and no variety from you for the listener, means that you have to use fully the devices we talked about earlier (phrasing, tempo, pitch, etc.) to avoid monotony and to communicate effectively. Within each individual news item you must be careful to emphasize the correct thoughts and words; you also must provide a smooth yet definite transition between items - not just a clumsy, abrupt pause, but a change, for example, in level, pitch, tempo, or a combination of these. Third, a newscast, like most other programs at WVBR (or at almost any radio station) is scheduled to last a certain amount of time. The newscast should not run overtime, without an exceedingly good excuse. Starting late is not an excuse. The newscast should not ordinarily run short, either, although this is permissible if the newscast is followed by a program of background or popular music. If it is followed by another type of program, on which the works played are scheduled, or which is a scheduled feature program (this includes another news program, a lecture or a jazz program, for example), it should not run appreciably short either. This means that you must decide in advance what to leave out if the program is running long. You have to look at the clock occasionally.

Preparation of a newscast can be one of two types: the "do-it-yourself" variety or the elegant affair prepared for you by the News Department. Five-minute newscasts are generally the "do-it-yourself" variety, but fortunately they are quite easy to prepare. Fifteen-minute newscasts are generally prepared by the News Department, but you should go over them before broadcast time anyway to be sure of what they contain.

WVBR news, with the exception of local and campus news, comes from the United Press teletype (the UPI Radio Wire). Campus and local news is either collected by the News Department or sent to WVBR by various campus offices, such as the University News Bureau and various campus organizations.

Typical order or sequence for any newscast might be the following: headlines, international, national, state, campus and local, sports, weather. The UPI Radio Wire sends out news items arranged for use by a typical small-town AM radio station; hence, for WVBR's more discriminating audience, they must be edited and rearranged. Also, because information about one news item will come over the wire at several times, all clippings dealing with a single item must be combined and consolidated (carefully, since there will be a great deal of repetition in general). WVBR does not consider it necessary to broadcast details of "off-beat" or suitably gory crimes, accidents, minor disasters, etc.; neither does it devote time to the busy love-and-marriage-and-divorce lives of Hollywood stars. This is tabloid-level material, beneath the dignity of a radio station concerned with high quality and high standards. Note that if a newscast prepared by the News Department violates these standards, both the person who prepared the newscast and the announcer who read it are at fault; if the newscast is a "do-it-yourself" affair only the newscaster is at fault.

The five-minute newscast is simple to prepare; the UP sends out, at regular intervals, a summary entitled The World in Brief, which is a collection of items which lasts about five minutes. Note: this must be edited, rearranged, and perhaps supplemented with additional material, for reasons discussed above.

The fifteen-minute newscast is more complicated; for it, you start with a summary of the news, then add details, and finally give sports and weather. Normally, a member of the News Department will prepare the fifteen-minute newscast, but the announcer must show up at the station early enough to do his own if necessary. The News Department member assigned may forget, he may not be able to get there in time, and he may be out getting special important campus or local news. If the news is not prepared in time, it is the fault both of the News Department member (who may be able to plead extenuating circumstances) and the announcer, who has no such excuse.

Needless to say, the announcer should go over the material for his newscast in advance. Sometimes lines are garbled and the mistake isn't caught when the newscast is prepared; in any case, you are likely to find names that must be pronounced correctly. And, especially for beginners, it helps to read over the material before trying to read it on the air!

Unless (and this will happen only once) you are announcing the end of the world, it is quite likely that other people will be doing other newscasts after you do yours. This suggests that the kind and considerate thing to do (which is required at WVBR) is to save needed news items for the next announcer. Be especially careful to save weather and sports results; people often call the station about them, and it helps keep WVBR from looking foolish and/or incompetent if you have them handy, so you sound as if you know the information! This also means that the news booth must be kept clean and neat at all times. The Teletype machine, like any well-bred mechanical ogre, generally behaves itself but sometimes doesn't. Often, it starts chewing up its paper and all it needs is for the paper to be cranked out a bit farther and the messed up part thrown away. If this is not sufficient, notify the News Director or any member of the Technical Engineering staff. As a last resort, notify the Program Director, Technical Engineering Director, or Chief Engineer. *

We might close this brief discussion of the newscast by observing that, unless you know more about writing and the news than the UPI, you should not tamper with the content of the newscast except for correcting obvious mistakes. Injected comments, opinions, colorations are not advised.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS, SPORTS AND REMOTE BROADCASTING

There are two ways to work up to announcing special programs, sports, and remote broadcasts. The first way is to become an announcer, specifically a good announcer, and indicate an interest in doing these types of programs. The second is to work on these programs, and then to work into announcing them. The procedure depends on each person and each particular program. Because each type of program in this category is somewhat specialized, the persons permitted to announce these programs will of necessity know a good deal about the particular type of program. Hence a detailed discussion of techniques for this category of programs seems unnecessary.

In the case of sports broadcasts, you can work on sports in the News Department, or work on Remote Engineering and go along when we broadcast games - even out-of-town games. In the case of special concerts or other presentations, announcers are chosen who are experts in that particular field. In any case, approval is needed from the Program Director and Chief Announcer before you do any program.

If you are interested in this sort of program, and indicate in addition suitable ability and qualifications, you will receive special individual instruction from the member(s) of the Program Staff best suited to help you.

POPULAR MUSIC PROGRAMS

"There is in souls a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies."

--William Cowper

"Why not look below the surface occasionally and find out what it is in the direct appeal of the popular tune which makes the audience go home whistling; to see if there is not some artistic impulse hidden in unlikely corners..."

--Ralph Vaughan Williams

No, we aren't back three pages talking about classical music again! Yes, we are talking about "popular music" programs, referred to in some circles as "disc jockey" or "D-J" shows. The point we are trying to make is this - popular music is (or at least should be) music too! And at WBRB it is expected to be! It is true that a DJ show involves the personality of the DJ; he may very well talk about something other than just the music he presents. But we are talking about "taste" again, and "discrimination", the artistic variety - we are saying that the DJ must do two things: present popular music, and chat informally with his audience. Every DJ show does the latter; some shows, however, are so preoccupied with "gimmicks" (or with making as much money as fast as possible) that they neglect the former. They will present "popular music" which certainly is statistically popular, but which may not be music. This is not a crusade against popular music in general; this is just a reminder that taste and discrimination are just

as necessary in popular as in classical music.

First, let's talk about the music. Cowper makes two important observations: he observes that people are stimulated by music (which, after all, is the reason we bother to listen to it, let alone broadcast it!), and he notices that different people react differently to different music at different times and in different circumstances. In other words, a DJ ~~show~~ needs variety in programming! Vaughan Williams is preaching to a special category of classical music lovers - the narrow-minded "lunatic fringe" who refuse even to listen to any music not by Monteverdi or Bach or Beethoven or Tchaikovsky or Stravinsky, etc. But his point is perhaps even more important for a DJ. This eminent composer is suggesting that some popular music is popular because it has merit.

The point is clear for the DJ. The music he plays must be popular, with at most occasional (very occasional) diversions to jazz or blues, for example. It must always be music. WVBR does not believe in a large number of hindering "red-tape" restrictions; it prefers to trust its announcers. Hence it does not place a complete ban on rock-and-roll, novelty "gimmicked" records, etc. It does not require announcers either to play or not to play the "top 40" records, say, simply because they are popular statistically at the moment. Note here, also, that although WVBR-FM is more important (and correspondingly more respected) than WVBR-AM, and only the more experienced DJ's get on it, its standards are the same as those of WVBR-AM. Or to put it the other way around, lower standards are not tolerated at WVBR-AM simply because fewer people hear it; the experienced announcer on WVBR-FM can get fired or demoted for the same offenses that a less experienced announcer on WVBR-AM can be. Obviously, an allowance for greater polish and experience will be made, but no allowance for lack of taste.

The point about quality should be clear by this time; we still have variety to consider. This means not playing all old tunes, or all new tunes, or all "top 40" tunes, or all "non-top 40" tunes. The program should be distinctly yours - and an experienced listener to WVBR should be able to tell that it is your own show either by hearing what records in what sequence you play over a 15-minute period, without hearing your voice, or by seeing a script of what you said and how you said it. In other words, the program must be an expression of your own personality.

Variety also means not forcing your program, unless it is a specialized program, into too rigid a pattern by presenting too much of one type of music, or performer, or type of performer. Yes, all this talk about variety means that you will have to be reasonably broad-minded. You will have to play many records you don't especially like. This does not mean playing records which are of poor quality; as we mentioned earlier, they have to be good popular music; but you must recognize your own individual taste preferences and recognize that other people may have somewhat different ones. But the final decision must be based on this criterion: If in doubt, discard.

Another sort of variety affects the DJ also - variety in his audience. In the morning, for example, coeds are at breakfast from about 7:15 to 7:45; this means that a lot of coeds will be listening at about 8 o'clock. On WVBR-AM your audience will of course be almost wholly students; when you graduate to WVBR-FM, your audience will consist of perhaps as many townspeople (including faculty members and their wives) as students. This means

a difference in emphasis on the program. On FM, you will have a more discriminating and also perhaps (and only perhaps) a more conservative audience. But on AM, you must realize that freshmen eventually become seniors (unless they bust out, of course) and start listening to WVBR-FM when they move out of the dorms. So you must create and leave with your audience a good ~~impression~~ - even on AM.

Naturally, you will need to explore the WVBR record collection, to know what it contains and be able to find anything on short notice.

One final comment about variety: not even the "sweetest", most "beautiful" tunes - April Showers, Stardust, Smoke Gets in Your Eyes, etc. - are enjoyable in too large doses - just like ice cream and cake! Remember, in South Pacific we heard Some Enchanted Evening and Younger than Springtime - but we also heard the very different There is Nothin' Like a Dame!

Now that we have discussed the music part of the DJ show, let's watch Bill Ellison put together a half-hour show illustrating these principles. Remember, he graduated in 1955, and didn't have to select current hits from a collection almost exclusively rock-and-roll.

1. I Never Was Loved by Anyone Else - - - Hugo Winterhalter
It is good for an opener; it does not type the show, because it is both lively and neutral.
2. Narcissus - - - Henri Rene
Another neutral, pleasant number, because many listeners are still tuning in.
3. Any current Hit Parade favorite
As the first record in the 'body of the show, it is one that can start people whistling something familiar, and get them interested.
4. My Bolero - - - Vic Damone
An older tune, perhaps not too well known, but done well by a good singer.
5. Cocktails for Two - - - Spike Jones
A novelty, of course, something to break the monotony of standard numbers.
6. I Only Have Eyes for You - - - Doris Day
This is your 'catch' number, a beautiful song by a favorite among Cornellians, something to make the audience stop and listen.
7. Plink Plank Plunk - - - Three Suns
A catchy, bouncy, instrumental to maintain interest while you stray away from vocals and to provide a transition from an old favorite to another current hit
8. Any Pleasant Current Vocal Hit
Keeping the show up to date. Avoid two instrumentals in a row, unless you talk a bit between them, or unless for some special reason.

9. Manhattan

- - - D. Shore & T. Martin

A gay, lighthearted piece to provide variation from the current hit, and to round out the half hour nicely.

And that was Bill Ellison's sample half hour, complete with his explanation of why he chose what he did. Obviously, it would be impossible in a handbook of this sort to keep the examples current. We have therefore chosen an example from WVBR's past. The thing for you to do is think about the problems involved, and then make up a sample program, listing the records chosen in order, and talk the list over with a staff announcer who does a show something like the way you'd like to do, one.

Now we turn to the difficult part - talking. The advice is frequently given to beginning DJ's, "Don't say much - just play music." This at least avoids the problem of figuring out something interesting to say and saying it well - but it also avoids being a DJ! And it certainly doesn't give you much experience, either, which is one reason you are doing the program! Besides, unless your music is really brilliantly programmed, it will be a very uninteresting program.

What you are doing, of course, on a DJ show, is simply chatting - projecting your personality, just as we discussed earlier. So you must sound friendly, talk interestingly about something interesting, and know what you are talking about! There are two things you can talk about: the music, and anything else. With regard to the music, don't bore the listeners with trite and/or trivial and/or inaccurate information about the artists (for example, "This singer's real name is ___" or "He has been singing professionally ever since the age of 27 days and he sounds worse than ever" or "He eats ___ at every meal", etc. ad nauseum).

As for other topics, you have a great deal of freedom and a wide choice. Just make sure what you are talking about is interesting to a sizable part of your audience; make sure you aren't so "progressive" or "exclusive" or bohemian in your vocabulary and conversation topics that ordinary mortals like the overwhelming majority of your listeners don't understand you and turn to another station.

Of course, what ever you are talking about, don't be wrong! Listeners are remarkably rapid to get the idea that an announcer doesn't know what he is talking about; they are equally rapid to listen to another station, and WVBR suffers because he didn't know what he was talking about. Besides, it sounds stupid. Similarly, it's fine to have a sense of humor, but don't overdo it; and make sure that whatever you say is funny to at least part of your audience! Of course, you always have one chance (and only one) to impress your friends by being "clever" on the air. So don't start playing sound effects records, doing vocal impersonations, or entertaining the people around the station. Do guard yourself from using certain phrases or expressions over and over again - they may be quite original and appropriate the first time through, but they can get stale rather quickly. Whatever you do, it should sound intelligent, even if sometimes frivolous.

Above all, listen - to yourself, to the new records, to other DJ's - and be constantly on the lookout for new and interesting material to talk about. WVBR is not opposed to DJ's, by any means - the Program Director rarely, if ever, eats stewed-DJ-on-toast for supper - but WVBR is dedicated

to quality broadcasting, and it will not broadcast any type of program, even a DJ show, if it cannot be consistently well done.

COMMERCIALS

And now, after talking about various types of programs WVBR presents, we turn to the important subject of who or what pays for them! In any professional radio station, even more strongly than at WVBR, the announcer is hired, promoted, or fired chiefly on the basis of how he can handle commercials. Naturally, the announcer must sincerely try to do his best on every commercial he handles.

The log has special symbols for different types of "commercials":

SA = sustaining announcement - an "advertisement" for WVBR - called a "promo"

DH = deadhead - a free advertisement for a recognized charity - this may also be in a "promo"

CA = commercial announcement - the true "commercial", paid for by a sponsor

You must "communicate" the commercial just as you would anything else on radio; you must be talking to and with your listener, right in his home or dorm room. Naturally, you must be familiar with the copy so you understand how to read it most effectively, without stumbling. You must sound friendly and sincere. This deserves many hours of practice for the beginning announcer - some copy is straight-forward and easy to read, while some is far more difficult. The sentence structure may be more complicated (the announcer must not change the wording of the commercial, because it is set by agreement with the sponsor); it may not even make sense! (Or at least not much!) But remember, your success at WVBR, and even more so in commercial radio, depends on how well you can handle commercials.

THE ANNOUNCER AND THE STATION

We shall conclude this brief discussion of the announcer's job with a few observations about his relation to the rest of the station.

In general, announcers, like all other personnel, are expected to show up for shifts on time unless they notify the Program Director in advance with an explanation of their reasons. Naturally, the poorer their reasons, the poorer opinion of the announcer that the Program Director acquires. In addition, the announcer must find a replacement satisfactory to the Program Director.

Scripts, logs, formats, etc. are reasonably delicate - they are not rip-proof, fireproof, or Coke-proof - and they deserve reasonable care. Similarly, WVBR has a very large investment in records, which likewise can be damaged. Even a "slight" scratch may make a record unairable - even, as is the case with many WVBR recordings - if the record cannot be replaced. This means that records must be handled carefully - not thrown around or allowed to get too dusty - and they must be refiled after they have been played. If the announcer is tape recorded for a program, the engineer has the responsibility of filing records. If the announcer does the program "live", he must file his own records. The rest of the WVBR staff has better things to do than file records for lazy, careless announcers, and they will be quick to tell the errant announcer that!

Some of the other departments of WVBR also affect the announcer, so he should know a bit about them:

First, within the Program Department, the Continuity Department writes local commercials, supervises the scheduling of national ones, and writes scripts for special shows not handled by another division of the Program Department; you should get to know these people, to work with them, and compliment them when they do an especially good job. The News Department is responsible for all news programs; they supply the announcer's edited material in some cases, and merely supervise it in others. The News Director will teach you more about preparing a newscast; he is also in charge of maintaining high standards on news programs, so his suggestions and advice are respected. The Production Department prepares special programs and features; it is in charge of non-music programs, with the exception of news programs (e.g., the Lecture Series). The Production Director consults with the Program Director and Chief Announcer to determine who will get to do a certain program, so he is especially important to announcers. Popular music and Classical music programs are prepared by, and under the responsibility of the Program Staff, headed by the Popular Music Director and the Classical Music Director respectively; this division is also responsible for supervising the care of WVBR's record library.

In the other main departments of WVBR, we also have divisions affecting the announcer. The Technical Engineering division, or simply "Tech", is responsible for keeping the station working. Tech engineers will not interfere with you unless necessary. Remember, they deserve your respect if you expect them to respect you enough really to worry about your listeners continuing to hear you!

Finally, in the Business Department, the Business and Sales staff has the important job of selling commercials - local ones directly, and national ones through the Ivy Network. Public Relations and Promotion are concerned with WVBR's relations with its audience (publicity, interest, good will, etc.) and also with important special groups such as sponsors, alumni, and the University (both as a unit and as individual faculty members). So they too deserve your cooperation and respect.

A great deal of credit is due the following sources:

- 1) WVBR Announcer's Handbook - the predecessor of this new version - both in the original version by Bill Ellison, I. & L. R. '55, and as revised in 1957 by John A. Jensen, Arts '60 (General Manager, 1959-60)
- 2) Henneke: The Radio Announcer's Handbook - Rinehart & Co., 1948
- 3) Gould & Dimond: Training the Local Announcer - Longmans, Green & Co., 1950

The first is a memento of the very different WVBR of several years ago; the second and third are good books to explore for further hints and helps.

In addition, my thanks to George E. Beine (Chief Announcer 1958-60) for his valuable criticisms of this manuscript, and to Frank L. Huband for encouraging me to write it.