



For and Against the Woman Radio Speaker

BETWEEN receiving expressions of opinion from six men associated with broadcasting stations, and hearing by radio nearly all of the speakers at the Republican and Democratic national conventions, quite a bit of light has been thrown on the question discussed in this department last month relative to whether or not a woman's speaking voice is always displeasing over the microphone. The discussion started from the statement of a writer in *RADIO BROADCAST* that his experience in the phonograph business, and the experience of many others in this business, had proved conclusively that the public finds a woman's speaking voice displeasing unless she can be seen as she speaks. Therefore, women should never be allowed to talk over the microphone either as announcers or lecturers.

Mr. Martin P. Rice, manager of broadcasting station WGY at Schenectady, disposes of this moot question briefly and with emphasis. Here is what he has to say:

"It would be about as logical arbitrarily to condemn all women's voices for radio broadcasting as it would be to ascribe all the known virtues to women and all the vices to men. Women, as a class, have not had opportunities to adapt their voices to varying audiences and auditoriums. An insistent high-pitched voice may readily develop unpleasant characteristics, but this is just as true when the speaker appears in person as when she addresses a large audience by radio. Women have decided to take a part in public life as well as in domes-

tic life, and they will master the technic of radio if they have not already done so."

That scores one for the women.

Then along comes Mr. W. W. Rogers, of the publicity department of the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company at East Pittsburgh, and associated with station KDKA since the day it sent out the first program ever broadcast.

"Women as radio entertainers were pioneers at KDKA," he tells us. "They have had a definite place on the radio schedule since, and I cannot remember one radio program presented by KDKA which did not have at least one woman participating. As I remember, the worst lecturer and the best singer I ever heard by radio were women.

A Woman is Rarely a Success

BUT a woman speaker," goes on Mr. Rogers, "is rarely a success, and if I were a broadcast manager, which I am not, I would permit few women lecturers to appear. The reason is that their voices do not carry the appeal, and so, whatever the effect desired, it is lost on the radio audience. One of the chief reasons for this is that few women have voices with distinct personality. It is my opinion that women depend upon everything else but the voice for their appeal. Their voices are flat or they are shrill, and they are usually pitched far too high to be modulated correctly.

"Another reason is that women on the radio somehow don't seem able to become familiar

with their audiences, to have that 'clubby' feeling toward the listeners which is immediately felt and enjoyed. Still another thing that is lacking in most women before the microphone is summed up in that trite old phrase, 'sense of humor.' I didn't believe this at one time, but now—well, I think it's true. We need quite a bit of light and airy stuff, or humorous quirks by radio. To sum the matter up, women who are heard by radio seem unable to let themselves go. They are too self-contained to carry a real friendly feeling out past the transmitting station, through the ether, and into the homes of the radio audiences."

Passing from the opinion of one expert to another we come to Mr. Corley W. Kirby, director of station wwj at Detroit. As do the majority of the others, Mr. Kirby rather brushes aside the premise that no woman under any conditions whatsoever can be acceptable to a radio audience when she is

speaking. He states his position without equivocation.

"Women Are Not Fitted for Radio Announcers"

I DO not believe that women are fitted for radio announcers. They need body to their voices, and this is the most important thing, I think. I grant though that some of the women announcers have better sense than some of the men announcers. I look at an announcer in very much the same light that I would consider the old show announcer. He has something to tell the people, and what he has to tell them they want to hear. His announcements should be short, business-like, and to the point.

"When women announcers try to be congenial in their announcements, they become affected; and when they attempt to be business-like they are stiff. There also seems to be an



—Trinity Court Studio

AS THEY WOULD HAVE LOOKED IN 1860

No, the girls are not wearing a new style of bloomers. They're wearing what was the style back in 1860, and you know what they called 'em. Here, from left to right, are Raymond Griffin, baritone, Mabel King, contralto, Irma Carpenter, soprano, Roy Strayer, tenor, and Earl Mitchell, pianist. They took part in the concert of old-time melodies given at Carnegie Lecture Hall, Pittsburgh, staged and broadcast by station KDKA. This was the first of a series of costume recitals to be broadcast by this station and given before a public audience.

offensive nasal quality in their announcements. Their voices are pitched too high. As for women readers, they are as a rule simply terrible. This applies both to those we have had at our station and those I have heard from scores of others."

That is so clear that he who runs may read. So we will pass on to the next, Mr. J. M. Barnett, director of station WOR at Newark, which probably features more women speakers than any other station in the country.

"To my mind a woman's voice on the radio is not generally considered uninteresting," says Mr. Barnett. "It depends upon the work that she is doing and the way she does it. It is the same with a man's voice. There are many male voices that are very uninteresting. For certain types of radio work I consider that a woman's voice is very essential; but for announcing, a well modulated male voice is the most pleasing to listen to. I have absolutely nothing against a woman's announcing, but really do believe that unless a woman has the qualifications known as 'showman's instinct,' it really does become monotonous. As a general thing, a woman's voice is considerably higher pitched than a man's voice and sometimes becomes distorted. This, of course, is simply my personal opinion in the matter."

This leads one to conclude that WOR has not been deluged with complaints against women speakers.

Mr. Charles B. Popenoe, manager of stations WJZ and WJY, New York, disposes of the subject with few words, confining his statements wholly to the quality of transmission of a woman's voice. He says:

"We use, of course, just as every other station, a great many women speakers on

various subjects, but in no case does the female voice transmit as well as that of the man. As a general thing it does not carry the volume of the average male voice. As far as women announcers are concerned, we have never used them with the exception of Miss Bertha Brainard, who occasionally broadcasts theatrical material or announces a play being broadcast directly from the stage. In this case she is used because she knows a great deal about the theater."

Humor Has No Place in Radio Announcing

AS FOR Mr. M. A. Rigg, manager of station WGR at

Buffalo, announcing and voice are in most instances, "concerned chiefly with the individual and not with sex." He goes on to explain, "Although we have a woman announcer at this station, it is not my intention to feature a woman in this capacity. There are many reasons why, to my mind, it seems advisable to use a man as announcer, especially during the heavier part of the work."

Mr. Rigg also has something to say about the try-to-be funny announcer.

"Listeners-in will remember when it seemed



—Knight, New York

EDWIN FRANKO GOLDMAN

Conductor and founder of the Goldman Band, whose summer night concerts in Central Park, New York, have been a bi-weekly feature of WJZ and WJY programs

to be the policy of the various companies operating broadcasting stations to have a comedian as announcer. He would continually make supposedly bright remarks about the performers and every one in general during his announcing. WGR is especially watchful to keep all phases of entertainment out of announcements. We plan to make them simply as statements of facts. In other words, we believe in letting the performers do the performing."

The present writer has never yet heard a woman announcer who thought it her duty to entertain her listeners by constant jollyng, and that, at any rate, is one thing in the women's favor.

It is clear from the consensus of opinion expressed by these six broadcast managers that women as microphone entertainers have come to stay, although they are not at present considered the equal of men in this capacity chiefly because of the defects in their voices.

When Woman Radio Speakers Surpassed the Men

AND then—there are the memories of the speakers at the Republican and Democratic national conventions to upset this verdict.

Speaking before the microphone during those conventions were many men (far too many), all of whom should have proved that they knew something about the use of the voice and about diction when addressing an audience. But it was quite otherwise. The large majority of them pitched their voices high, adopted a booming aggressive tone, and never, during one sentence, changed either its pitch or quality. This meant not only that the voice was absolutely lacking in individuality, but intolerable to hear. But that was not all. These men talked on the back of their tongues, swallowing all of their consonants and spreading all of their vowels. Many of them gave the impression that they were talking through whiskers that had been allowed to go uncut since the last election.

No wonder that at both conventions many speakers were not allowed to finish, being ragged off the platform by the bored audience. Many a seconding nomination never got so far as to let the audience know who was, "the man I am about to name." The speaker was boo-ed off the stage.

With marvellous fidelity a good receiving set reveals such faults in tone and diction. Probably millions of listeners-in passed judgment on those men speakers and called them uncomplimentary names. But the moment someone rose to speak who had even a halfway idea of enunciation, and how to poise the tones, that speaker so far as this writer's experience goes was as plainly understood as if he had been in the very room where the listeners sat.



THE ARION TRIO

A frequent and always popular feature of the programs given at KGO, the Pacific Coast broadcasting station of the General Electric Company. Left to right they are, Margaret Avery, Josephine Holob, and Mrs. J. H. Barthelson



—Colegrove, Buffalo

GEORGE ALBERT BOUCHARD

Organist for WGR at the Hotel Statler, Buffalo, where he gives a daily program, Sunday excepted, from 12.30 to 1 P. M.

Which brings us back to women radio speakers. At these conventions some of them had it all over the men. Occasionally one heard a woman who talked through the top of her head—or shall we say through her hat?—and the opening seemed small. But there were others who came near to being ideal orators. Voices perfectly poised, flexible in pitch, and faultless diction.

The managers of both these conventions seemed to think that the calling of the roll of states for votes should be done by a man chosen only for the size of his voice. Diction was apparently not taken into consideration. One heard—"Wan" for one—"twarnty" for twenty—"saxty-sax" for sixty-six, and so on. Not from all the clerks, but from altogether too many of them.

The Democrats had a woman clerk who followed a man at times who spread all his vowels and was not on speaking terms with any consonant. After trying to understand what this man was saying, listening to the perfect diction of the woman clerk was like riding along

asphalt after being jolted unmercifully over cobblestones.

These conventions proved conclusively that if a woman knows her business when she tries to speak before the microphone she can create a most favorable impression. All who listened-in to these conventions must have felt the pleasing personality of some among the women speakers. And, by the same token, they must have felt just the opposite regarding many of the men.

Good Radio Drama from KGO

AT KGO, the General Electric Company's Pacific Coast station, at Oakland California, they use a good many women as speakers and readers and also in the casts of their dramatic productions, as those who keep track of their programs know. So far as the present writer can discover, more dramas are given at KGO than at any other station in the country, with the exception of WGY, also a General Electric station. Among the plays

**MARJORY GARRIGUS SMITH**

Wife of Fred Smith, director of the Crosley radio station, WLW, was recently heard in a piano recital at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. She is the artist pupil of Marcian Thalberg and accompanist for Mme. Reiner, wife of Fritz Reiner, conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

recently given at KGO were, "Passing of the Third Floor Back," "Kindling," and "Peg O' My Heart"—a trio of titles that shows the standard aimed at in matters dramatic. Some of the best planned musical programs given by radio in the entire country come from this station, as note the following composers taken from a program that happens to be at hand: Handel, Grieg, Sinding, Leschetizky, Arthur Foote, Chadwick, Mendelssohn, Landon Ronald, Cadman, Huhn, Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, Massenet, Coleridge-Taylor, Lieurance.

Many of these musical programs are interrupted by an address absolutely foreign to music, as is the case with practically all broadcasting stations. The reason for this aggravating and inartistic custom is an unfathomable mystery to many listeners-in.

One of the outstanding features at KGO during the last months was the performance of Mendelssohn's "Hymn of Praise," given by chorus, soloists, and the KGO Little Symphony Orchestra, the entire production under the direction of Mr. Carl Anderson. This was not the broadcasting of a public concert, but a program prepared wholly for the purpose of radio listeners, something that few broadcasting

studios have the enterprise or faith in the public to undertake.

This choral performance was preceded by Mendelssohn's overture, "Ruy Blas," and a short biography of the composer. All other music played during the performance, such as interludes, was also by Mendelssohn. It is not often that a musical program of such standard, and kept so throughout, is given at a radio studio.

The Radio Audience Likes Regular Radio Features

EVERY week day, at 12.30 P. M., in the dining room of the Hotel Statler, Buffalo, George Albert Bouchard gives a short organ recital which is broadcast by station WGR. While the lighter numbers predominate in Mr. Bouchard's concerts, he manages to give a goodly number of standard works as well. This half hour program has proved one of the best liked regular features of WGR.

People who listen-in to programs given in hotel dining rooms have the advantage over those who are right there on the spot where the music is played. The radio audience does not suffer from the confusing sights and sounds that inevitably distract the attention when one is surrounded by diners and those who serve them.

People like it when a certain station features a certain kind of program at a given hour daily, as these programs of Mr. Bouchard's are featured. If they enjoy the feature they like to tune-in on it whenever the mood to do so prompts, and always find it at hand. According to Mr. M. A. Rigg, manager of WGR, Mr. Bouchard has a very large following of daily listeners.

The Radio Pianists Play Good Music

CONSIDERING in retrospect the music that has been heard by radio since this department was started, it has been decided that to the



ROBERT A. MUNN

In addition to being an announcer at station WGR, Buffalo, Mr. Munn, who is an accomplished musician, is frequently heard as organist from that station, and he could also present an excellent program of baritone solos if he so desired. He is the lone bachelor of the WGR staff, but doesn't look at all worried about it



BERTHA BRAINARD

Of the staff of station wjz and wjy, New York. Miss Brainard is heard on the air regularly from "Broadcast Central" in her talks called "Broadcasting Broadway"

pianists goes the credit for giving the largest number of selections taken from the standard composers. Of these composers Chopin and Liszt have been played the most often, with, perhaps, Rachmaninoff coming third, although he is seldom represented except by one of his two well-known preludes. Beethoven has been by no means neglected by these pianists who have broadcast, nor have Mozart or Grieg. Indeed very few poor compositions are played before the microphone by pianists who are capable of playing something better.

Violinists and 'cellists come next in the quality of their selections, but are not on a plane with the pianists. Let it be understood that this refers to the quality of the works they play and not to the quality of the playing.

Singers do only fairly well when it comes to presenting numbers that are really worth the hearing. Some numbers they sing little better than Annie or Susie, Joey or George next door could. Singers' programs are monotonous because they are so often made up of the same numbers one hears night after night, from

broadcasting stations, east, west, north, and south.

Orchestras play more trash than all the other musicians broadcasting combined. The same thing, night after night, in the same places—which means everywhere. But, before another year has passed, radio orchestras will be giving us real music. A few of them do now. But how many? This is what the present writer is trying to find out.

IT IS so unusual to get a thoroughly good musical program these days when you tune-in, meaning by this the sort of music you would be willing to pay to hear, that when WSAI was tuned-in some time ago and some really stunning music came through the horn, astonishment was on the faces of all who heard. Soon we learned from the announcer that the graduating exercises of the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music were being broadcast. Which accounted for our surprise and pleasure.

IT IS a question whether it is desirable to prelude each number of a musical program broadcast by an explanation of the number or an analysis of its mood. We doubt it. But it is being done. We wonder how many people actually like it.



—Swan, Buffalo

HELEN M. WHITE

Who is secretary to M. A. Rigg, Jr., the manager of station WGR, and is also sometimes at the microphone making announcements