



GATHER 'ROUND THE RADIO
E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON OLD-TIME RADIO CLUB
THE GRTR STUDIO EDITION MARCH 17, 2017
THE CALUM'S ROAD ISSUE

THE SET-UP

Hello fine listeners, and welcome once again to the mythical confines of the GRTR Studio where we broadcast information and inspiration about radio, music, nostalgia, personality, books, and beyond. Terry Gross continues to be our inspiration. Listen to her "Fresh Air" radio show, live or podcast; check your NPR listings for a station where you can tune in.

Chuck and Joanie and I are here in the Mud Room with our tea and scones; the big snow storm that churned its way up the valley recently has left us now with calm air and a pale blue sky. Chuck has fired up the creaky old sound board, fine tuning the squawks and hums; he's piping in some J.S. Bach piano music, beautiful and insistent in

the “strangeness of its proportion.” Joanie has her eye on the clock as it sweeps towards network feed.

ON THE AIR

Hello everyone, and welcome to the broadcast. Messages among Club members have been flying in grand style; the dusty old courier pouch is full. Your Blue Coal wall calendar is going to fill up quick. I’ve had a bird’s eye view of Scotland’s northwest Isles of Skye and Raasay, from a recent radio drama streaming from BBC Radio 4. It’s a true story about an old crofter who built a road, to better connect his settlement to the harbor. Wonderful, with some masterful ambient sound of wind and stones, and a congregation singing a lament in a weather-beaten clapboard church. There are plenty of images of Calum’s Road on the Internet, with car, bicycle, and music along the way.

THERE IS STILL TIME TO SEE THIS PLAY IN BOWIE MD



“Night Watch,” by Lucille Fletcher, at The Bowie Playhouse, White Marsh Park.

Friday March 17, 8 PM. Saturday March 18, 2 PM and 8 PM.

Friday March 24, 8 PM. Saturday March 25, 8 PM. Sunday March 26, 2 PM.

A play of “deepening suspense and mystery...a troubled woman peers out her window into the building across the street....and sees (or thinks she sees) a murder...”

Bowie Community Theater, celebrating 50 Years. Here’s the web-site:

Website: www.BCTheatre.com Phone: 301.805.0219

NEXT EVENT: OLD-TIME RADIO SHOWS IN VIENNA VIRGINIA

“In Living Sound” is the title of an evening of OTR shows, presented by The Vienna Community Theatre. Great scripts, spot-on reading, and live sound effects will be featured. Ranging from 15-minute episodes to 30-minute episodes, the lineup includes:

- Buck Rogers: *Episode 1*
- Candy Matson YU 2-8209: *The Black Cat*
- Campbell Short Stories: *Success Story*
- My Favorite Husband: *Spring Cleaning*

Location: The Vienna Volunteer Fire Department #402, 400 Center St. South, Vienna VA.

In The Flame Room: **Friday March 31, Saturday April 1.**

Friday April 7, Saturday April 8.

Tickets available through the Vienna Parks and Recreation Department:

Use the WebTrac Portal: www.viennava.gov/webtrac All shows at 8 PM.

Friday tickets: \$14, food and treats available for purchase from the VVFD Auxiliary.

Saturday tickets: \$25, which includes dinner at 7:15 PM, and the show.

SMITHSONIAN PRESENTATION NEXT ON THE CALENDAR

Radio station WAMU (American University) is well-known to listeners world-wide, and to Club members, especially in the Washington DC Metro area, for our years of interaction and OTR broadcasts. **Jill Bailey**, the producer of WAMU’s “Big Broadcast” will present a two-hour program about radio history, called “The 1920s: Radio Finds Its Voice.” She calls it “radio’s new frontier...lawless, experimental, and exciting.”

I have the Smithsonian Associates new Catalog right here, and Joanie is going to step up to the microphone and read the entry:

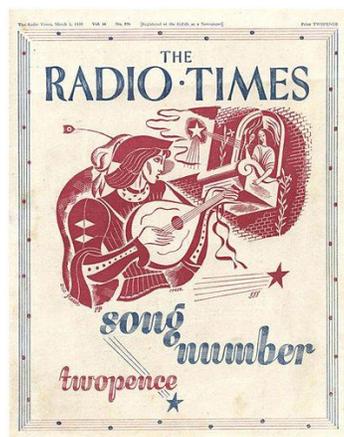
Drawing upon vintage sound clips from these early programs, and utilizing a sound effects demonstration, Bailey will cover the stars of stage and vaudeville whose transition to radio brought comedy, music, and variety acts to a nationwide audience. She will also key on the growing power of the woman's market. Playing excerpts from *Abbott & Costello*, *Jack Benny*, *Grand Ole Opry*, and similar radio treasures, Bailey will demonstrate the background of American broadcasting as it impacted the social, cultural, and technological changes of the 1920s.

Time and Location: **Monday April 24, 2017 from 6:45 – 8:45 PM.**

In the Ripley Center on the National Mall, 1100 Jefferson Drive SW, Washington DC.

Go to: www.SmithsonianAssociates.org for ticket prices and information about becoming a member of the Associates, and the benefits.

MUSIC BRIDGE AND COMMERCIAL



Joanie is tapping her pencil on her clipboard; we're late for commercial! Chuck finds time to pipe in music from the GRTR archives. This time it's lovely English madrigals recorded by a Dutch vocal ensemble called Quink. These 16th century songs are heady stuff, and not all about the merry month of May. Composers used melodic fervor to treat betrayal, disdain, and lament. And William Byrd tells "woeful Orpheus" to pull up his socks and play "some strange chromatic notes..." Can Bach be too far future in these terms?

News from the Dayton Dragons, our sponsor: Our Club members are preparing for the vaunted bus trip to Dayton for the baseball Futures Game at Fifth Third Park. Spring Training is in full swing. Stay tuned!

A CONVERGENCE OF RESEARCHERS

A while back, our *Radio Recall* editor Jack French coordinated a series of messages between a researcher named Amanda and Club member Michael Hayde, a prolific author who had unearthed extensive material about the person of Amanda's interest: Robert Maxwell. The thread revealed as well that Jack had printed an excerpt from Amanda's 2008 PhD dissertation, (in *Radio Recall* February 2014 p.10), which coordinated nicely with Michael's contribution: his August 2009 *Radio Recall* article, "Criminal Casebook," (lead story, p. 1); and his book about the Superman phenomenon, *Flights of Fantasy: The Unauthorized But True Story of Radio and TV's Adventures of Superman* (Bear Manor Media 2009).

Amanda's thesis was insightful. She was researching children's radio programs of the 1930s, detailing the distinctions between the themes of shows aimed at the boys' audience, and those for a girl's audience. Joanie is stepping up to the microphone to read what Amanda wrote:

"Over the course of the 1930s (radio) advertising stemmed from the predominately male ad agency professionals' preference for the boy consumer, whom they considered more predictable than girls.

Furthermore, advertising professionals and broadcasters believed both that boy listeners favored adult male heroes, and that listening to storytelling and music programs would diminish boys' masculinity. Girls, advertisers assumed, were more flexible in their program choices and would still listen to programs with male heroes. These assumptions had important ramifications for girl listeners, whose favorite music and story programs were cancelled (in) the 1930s due to a lack of sponsors."

And thus, did Amanda study the brutal world of commercial radio; and Michael put Robert Maxwell right in the midst of it. Maxwell had made *Superman* into "the hottest thing on Mutual..." writes Michael. A further quote from his article is this, from a critic who capsulizes the plight of the radio industry: "...which has been shouting its anxious intention to enlighten, instruct, and serve...". *Superman* scripts began treating "real-life perils," (prejudice and juvenile delinquency for example); and Maxwell was further involved in producing two shows geared towards crime prevention, which presented interviews with real convicts: their dreams, misfortunes, and their remorse. Michael tells us that, "despite plaudits," *I Was a Convict* was cancelled after a short run. *Criminal Casebook* was next, with the goal of benefitting society, and with good scripts, but "Again, critical praise was not enough," writes Michael, adding that "ad agencies and manufacturing concerns" rebuffed requests for sponsorship, relegating the show to being "lost in the ratings shuffle."

So, Amanda's shows for the girls' audience, and the crime prevention shows, lost out in the competitive world of broadcasting. Stories and music on the one hand, and criminal

psychology on the other, were excellent efforts, it seems. Michael's phrase puts both in perspective: "...making a little radio history." Jack French was surely pleased as well that he could make us aware of a "charming small world instance" of researchers sharing information.

MUSIC BRIDGE AND NETWORK FEED

We are all smiles as Chuck pipes in an encore from pianist Simone Dinnerstein and her masterful album: "Bach: A Strange Beauty" where she plays with a wonderful chamber ensemble in Berlin. (Sony Classical 2011).

Glad you could join us today for the broadcast. Keep those cards and letters coming. Look at your calendar, where cultural events abound. Look up Calum's Road! So, it's goodbye for now from the little tin pot studio down by the creek. Soup and sandwiches in the Mud Room? But of course!

Mark Anderson

Carlisle PA