

GATHER 'ROUND THE RADIO
E-NEWSLETTER FOR THE METROPOLITAN
WASHINGTON OLD-TIME RADIO CLUB
THE GRTR STUDIO EDITION
MARCH 15, 2018
THE GIBSON HOTEL 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.

The cold-snap has settled in. Frosty lawns in the morning and a chill wind sweeping up the valley are indications that storms are churning their way just east of here. The creek out back is scattered with leaves which catch the sunlight. Chuck has fired up the boiler in the studio, and he has tamed the squawks and hums of the old soundboard. He’s piping in some music for solo piano, from a 2016 Deutsche Grammophon recording. It’s a series of études written by the wonderful Franz Liszt, played by Danil Trifonov; and in the liner

notes we learn that Liszt changed the way music was written and we ourselves are changed by the way we listen. The album's title? "Transcendental."

Chuck, Joanie, and I are in the Mud Room, just finishing with our coffee and carrot cake, looking through the dusty courier pouch. The big clock sweeps towards network feed, we're heading down the hall. Chuck fades the Liszt and Joanie taps her clipboard and cues me in.

ON THE AIR

Hello, everyone, and welcome to the broadcast! Thanks for tuning in. That ethereal music you heard was the young artist Danil Trifonov with his 2016 recording of Franz Liszt's piano études, called "Transcendental." No guests are scheduled for today's broadcast; we do however have an important announcement about an evening of locally produced radio plays coming up; and we can talk about some good programs we've listened to lately – "A Man Called X" from the late 1940s and early 1950s seems to fit our current sense of alarm in the global community.

By way of commercial, we have news from our sponsor the Dayton Dragons as they work out at Spring Training. And from the Minor League Baseball website we credit Ben Hill for his feature about a milestone hire: The Class A Lexington Legends have hired a young lady named Emma Tiedemann to do their play-by-play from the booth this season. More on all this later in the program.

BOSTON BLACKIE IN GAITHERSBURG Thursday March 22, 2018

Mark your calendars! The Arts Barn in Gaithersburg Maryland is the venue for two performances of "Boston Blackie" Here's the press release from Laura Andruski of the Gaithersburg arts council: LAndruski@gaitthersburgmd.gov

**Mystery Solver Boston Blackie Returns to the Arts Barn in Gaithersburg on
March 22, 2018, performances at 1:00 PM and at 8:00PM.**

Gaithersburg, MD – In partnership with The Montgomery Playhouse, *Arts on the Green* presents a weekday performance of “**Boston Blackie Radio Plays**” on Thursday, March 22, 2018, at 1p.m. and 8 p.m. Admission is \$20, \$12 for those 14 years of age and under. Discounts are available for groups of ten or more. This performance is recommended for ages 12 and older. The ADA-compliant 99-seat Arts Barn theatre is located at 311 Kent Square Road.

Return to the glory days of radio when plays were performed live in front of a studio audience. Performances of two short mysteries from the radio series feature “Boston Blackie”, a fictional character created by author Jack Boyle.

Blackie, a jewel thief and safecracker in Boyle's stories, was given a new role as a detective in adaptations for films, radio and television—an "enemy to those who make him an enemy, friend to those who have no friend." Boston Blackie was the main character in 14 feature films between 1941 and 1949, and a radio series that ran from 1945 to 1950, with more than 300 broadcast dates.

Purchase tickets online [here](#) or call the Arts Barn Box Office at 301-258-6394.

About Arts on the Green

Arts on the Green is the City of Gaithersburg's home for the performing and visual arts. Among the offerings are extraordinary concerts that encompass everything from classical to pop on the intimate Arts Barn stage and in the elegant setting of Kentlands Mansion. Musicals, comedies, dramas, magic shows, and other theatrical performances also grace the Arts Barn stage, where every seat has superb visibility.

For more information call 301-258-6394, find us under the “Leisure” tab at www.gaithersburgmd.gov or follows us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) at ArtsontheGreen.

Media Contact: Laura Andruski, 301-258-6394 or LAndruski@gaitersburgmd.gov

GIVE A LISTEN TO “THE MAN CALLED ‘X’.

If you're looking to thwart a little Cold War sabotage, call Ken Thurston! He's an agent for the U. S. government and he travels the world looking to make things right for the oppressed people who seem to have no other recourse against the strongarm tactics of the profiteers who want to establish a new set of rules for them to live under. The 30-minute show ran from the mid-1940s until 1952, mainly on NBC under the direction of Jack Johnstone, starring Herbert Marshall. Sponsors were variously Buick, Anacin, and RCA Victor (Dunning, *On the Air*, 1998 rev., p. 431-432).

My disc of thirty shows runs from 1948 to 1952, and vital information is the key. The locales are as diverse as Istanbul, Hong Kong, Vienna, occupied Japan, Cuba, and Athens. If the good scientist has the microfilm, the villains want it. If student unrest happens in the Netherlands, it's Communist agitators who start it. Ken Thurston must travel, find leads, and ask questions. If he's talking on the phone and hears a shot, chances are his contact on the line is falling dead. If he's invited to a hotel room, the person there may well have a knife in their back and the briefcase is stolen. Is there poison in that cup of coffee? A stamp taken from an album is covered with microscopic code. Ken must find it, with the help of his sidekick Pegon Zeldschmidt. The Iron Curtain is being put in place. Refugees are flooding the border from Albania to Greece; the citizens of Sofia and Budapest are running in the streets.

It's an open market for saboteurs. Radio Freedom is run by the Allies and is broadcasting messages of hope for the oppressed citizens of Europe, from a safe location in Zermatt, Switzerland. The transmitter and the antennae can reach only so far; so why is the broadcast heard so clearly somewhere the other side of the Matterhorn? It's bogus information, anyway. Off goes Ken and his cohorts on a small train half-way up the mountain to a weather station. The radio operators are dead, and the Communists are broadcasting. Altercation? Yes, the Allied station is secured, and justice is done.

Venezuela is much in the news these days, with the ungraceful and brutal dictatorship of Nicolas Maduro. Basic services are being denied to the citizens; the store shelves are bare, as money from the oil industry stays among the rich and does not filter into government programs. The “Man Called X” show of February 26, 1952 is called “Venezuelan Waterway Sabotage.” Early in the show Ken invokes the name of the South American Liberator Simon Bolivar, whose righteous dream of nationhood for the rich land of the northern coast would come to fruition. Now if only they could turn the natural resources to manufacturing and export for the good of the people.

Ken and Pegon visit Caracas to learn about how a government plan of canals from the mountains to the harbor has fallen victim to saboteurs. The waterways are designed to bring water power for factories downstream and barges full of iron ore for export. The result would be livelihood for the common people, urban renewal and schools, a new way of life. The engineer takes Ken on a tour of the broad and powerful Orinoco River, pointing out the riverside area where the canal would go. The next day there’s an inordinately large explosion upstream and the canal is flooded for miles. The engineer is dead from a gunshot; and Ken sets to work. A landowner is questioned; she has ties to mob bosses. Evidence is found, and justice prevails. For Venezuela in the real world, there were decades of prosperity until the populist Hugo Chavez rallied the people around him and he was elected into office. Corruption now follows with his successor Maduro. Mandates are put forth with a rubber-stamp congress, opposition is suppressed, and there we have Venezuela today.

MUSIC CUE AND COMMERCIAL

Chuck continues with the recoding of Liszt, and we look to our minor league sponsor, the Dayton Dragons, who are going full tilt in Spring Training. The venue is Goodyear, Arizona, and the parent club Cincinnati Reds are getting a good look at their young prospects. There’s a young pitcher from Sherman Oaks California; there’s a tall, strong player from Cuba. Defense is key to

winning at the minor league level; and new statistics about defensive effectiveness are being applied to the Dragons as they play their spring schedule. We are happy that the front office of the Dragons will keep us on for the new season. The GRTR Studio was not chosen to transmit the games to the valley farms and towns, but our Clubbers are true Dragons fans.

Benjamin Hill, a writer for MiLB.com, has written up this big news from the Lexington Kentucky Legends Class A farm team for the Kansas City Royals. The Legends team includes a lady owner, Sue Martinelli-Shea; and their front office already consists of seven women in full-time positions. And now they have added Emma Tiedemann to serve as their play-by-play announcer at Whitaker Bank Ballpark. Tiedemann is the second lady to do play-by-play in the minor leagues. She joins Kirsten Karbach of the Class A Clearwater Threshers in bringing the games to the fans.

Tiedemann had booth experience for teams in St Paul Minnesota and a very nice summer in Alaska, announcing for a prairie league team there. Now, as she prepares for this new season, she says:

"You have to prepare like there's no tomorrow, looking up the stories behind each player, preparing three to five talking points about every guy who steps to the plate and every guy on the mound," she said.

"That's more key in the game of baseball than any other, the time between pitches, all those little voids you have to fill. That's when the preparation pays off."

Emma learned a lot from her grandfather, Bill Mercer (pictured, courtesy: milb.com) who taught broadcasting at the University of North Texas; and he called games for the Texas Rangers and the Dallas Cowboys.



Benjamin Hill quotes Legends owner Sue Martinelli-Shea: "From talking to her and seeing her skill set and experience, and above all, her big-time energy and personality, it just clicked," she said. "We didn't want to let someone else scoop her up." We send best wishes to Emma Tiedemann as she embarks on this great step in her broadcasting career.

Chuck pipes in another lively piece by Liszt; Joanie is signaling network feed. That's the broadcast for this time. Keep those cards and letters coming! Soup and sandwiches in the Mud Room? But of course!

Thanks ever,

Mark Anderson