



RADIO NEWS

H. GERNSBACK—Editor and Publisher
ROBERT E. LACAULT—Associate Editor

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Music vs. Radio

THE whole country has been watching with interest, and we believe with considerable annoyance as well, the fight between the music publishers and authors, conducted against radio broadcasting stations. The controversy in brief is that the music publishers and authors insist that the broadcasting stations pay them a royalty on their musical compositions, and until this payment is forthcoming, they refuse to let the broadcasters use their music. They claim this right under the copyright law.

Technically the musical interests are, of course, right. We believe they have the power of stopping anyone from using their musical compositions if the broadcasters do not pay for the license.

But the stupidity and short-sightedness of these self same musical interests would be ludicrous if it were not so appalling.

These musical interests, when they get out a new piece, will not hesitate to resort to any means in order to bring it to the attention of the public. Thousands of copies of sheet music are sent out free, and common hand-organs are hired to drum the piece into our heads. Vaudeville and motion picture theaters are in some cases paid good money simply for playing the piece in order to popularize it. Many musical compositions as yet unknown are sandwiched in some musical comedy for the simple purpose of getting them before the public.

When it comes to the greatest advertising medium, radio broadcasting, music publishers hold up their hands in horror and say that we are ruining their trade because if everybody listens to a musical composition by radio, none will wish to buy the sheet music, piano rolls or phonograph records. How these facts rhyme together only the music trades can make out. No one else, unbiased, has as yet been able to understand the peculiar slant of mind of the people behind the movement.

The childish arguments that are used by some of the champions of the cause are often amusing; witness the following, which appeared in a recent issue of the *Music Trades*:

"I am opposed to the radio broadcasting of music, especially the popular variety, for the very good reason that the practice is inimical to the welfare of the record and roll trade and, by no means last, the talking machine and player industry. When radio fans in the larger cities can hear solid dance programs played by the foremost orchestras with a \$5 outfit, it is only reasonable that they should ignore their player or talking machine, even if the rolls and records were supplied them gratis. Other forms of free public music are necessarily insignificant when compared with radio broadcasting."

This statement is made by none other than Mr. Arthur A. Friestedt, President of the United States Music Company of Chicago.

Following along the same line of logic, if Mr. Friestedt goes to see a musical comedy and hears a certain piece

that he likes he will promptly forget all about it. Contrary to his argument, however, as he leaves the theater, he will buy a copy of the selection for himself or for his daughter. As a matter of fact that is just what happens. The piece that was broadcast from the theater has pleased him and he wishes to either play it himself or let a member of his family do so.

If proof is wanted we might cite the following:

"A typical example of the effect of radio broadcasting was furnished by the testimony volunteered at the first meeting of the National Association of Broadcasters when Mr. Wendell Hall, a song writer, made the declaration that 'Mellow Moon' which he had written, made no appreciable headway in the hands of a publisher who resorted to the usual avenues open to publishers for exploiting a new musical creation. There was practically no sale. Then Mr. Hall began singing 'Mellow Moon' at KYW and WDAP Broadcasting Stations. He stated that in the month of April the sale of 'Mellow Moon' jumped to 100,000."

We believe that the entire controversy now staged by the musical interests against the broadcasters is nothing but a hoax and is not being conducted in good faith for the following reasons: The musical interests realize that in Radio they have a tremendous advertising force that will popularize a given piece of music more rapidly than any agency ever did. They know that sooner or later the broadcasters will no longer advertise their music free, but in the near future will wish to be paid for the tremendous service they are now rendering music publishers.

Down in their hearts, the musical interests know this and wish to forestall this move by making a demand upon the broadcasters themselves. They figure that if they could secure an agreement for a number of years, a compromise might be reached whereby the broadcasters would continue to advertise their musical productions free. We hope that the broadcasters will see through this game and will not allow themselves to be ensnared into a long time contract to their detriment.

The value of indirect advertising through broadcasting is tremendous. When Grand Opera Houses and Musical Comedies are playing to empty houses, they often resort to broadcasting one or more acts of the production. The result is like magic. The writer has seen it happen time and again when for instance a Musical Comedy was broadcast from Broadway that the attendance rose to tremendous proportions during the next few days. This is not a vague general statement, but has been carefully checked up from actual observation and with talks among theatrical producers. And the time will come, as the writer has predicted before, when theatrical producers will pay broadcasting stations handsomely for broadcasting one or more acts of their productions, and that time is nearer than any of us realize. If broadcasting stations can fill otherwise empty houses they should and will be reimbursed for such services. This is legitimate and we believe fair.

H. GERNSBACK,