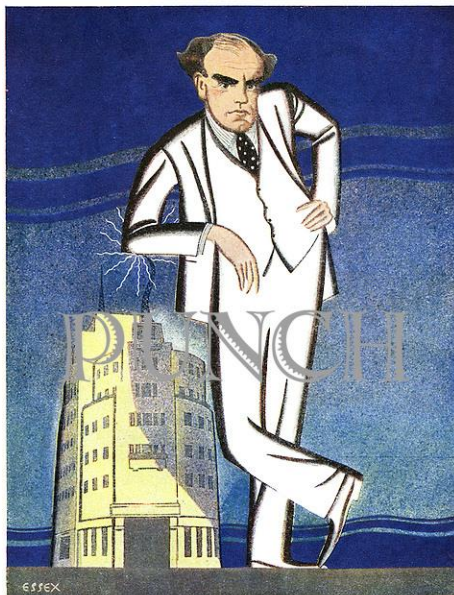


A Hundred years of the BBC



Prospero.
"The isle is full of noises, sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight"



John Mullen

Université de Rouen-Normandie

2023-2024

(...) One trusts that the reader will be able to say of this retrospect of five years' Broadcasting activity that it has steered a reasonable middle course between philosophic neutrality and over-emotiveness without falling into self-satisfaction. Setting aside such factors as an astonishing expansion and development, the ramifications of a vast and far-flung organisation with all its interests and complexities of administration, there remains for review the things which are less readily comprehended but certainly more material.

One is sensible, sometimes, of an inclination on the part of several critics to wonder why it is necessary or desirable to insist, to the extent that it is done, and so often as it is done, upon public service as the keynote of the work. Is there not some risk, it may be said, of the phrase becoming a formula of vain repetition, a surrender to complacency? The answer definitely is in the negative. At the beginning it was an assertion – in view of the state of things in America, a very necessary assertion – of the position that it was intended to take up, a flag to hoist over claimed territory. As time went on, it flew as a flag to which allegiance was expected of and given by a staff of men and women of widely varied outlook and abilities, and at moments it was waved with some vigour in public. And now, like any other flag, it has fixed itself so thoroughly in the spirit that parade of it on ordinary occasions may well be regarded as bad taste.

The issue of this handbook, however, is not an ordinary occasion, and one may be permitted to show the flag a little and say something about its make-up.

A Standard and an Outlook

In order to avoid misunderstandings, let it be said now that public service in this sense means primarily a standard and an outlook, and only secondarily a form of administration. The constitutional change-over from Company to Corporation status has for the moment drawn some attention to the administrative side, as it is change and not continuity that comes into the limelight. The outlook, though still developing by experience, is essentially the same.

What is this outlook? By the "public" is presumably meant the totality of the inhabitants of these Islands – and eventually those of the Continent and Overseas – irrespective of age and sex, tastes and education, religion and politics, wealth and status.

This generality of appeal was made a cardinal point of policy from the outset. Technically it determined the lay-out of the Stations on the map; it fixed the details of power and design by the average "poor man's" set; it imposed as a necessary ancillary the giving of free advice on technical matters of reception and interference; and it brought about contacts of all sorts all over the country as well as in London. Each year, except 1926, has witnessed the attainment of successive landmarks in this policy of getting within so-called "crystal" range of the whole population. Another landmark is now in sight.

In the field of programme selection and management, on the other hand, one is dealing with factors that are even less easily seen. Not only are they imponderable, they are often not even identifiable in advance of experience. One is liable, and indeed certain, to make mistakes which the instantaneity, the intimacy, and the universality of the mode of transmission render it almost impossible to retrieve and even to limit. And it was to be foreseen that other public programme interests would resent and oppose intrusions of the new social engine within their respective domains: the Press as regards news, the theatres and concert halls, the authors' and composers' associations, and the artists as regards music and drama, the cinema, the lecture-hall and – in another world of ideas – the churches, as regards the tying of people to their firesides (and even there the gramophone might look upon the radio set as an interloper). It was a sea full of more or less uncharted rocks, and to be navigated at fairly high speed into the bargain. (...)

Sir J. C. W. Reith, *B.B.C. Handbook*, 1928, pp. 31-35.

<https://worldradiohistory.com/UK/BBC-Annual/BBC-Year-Book-1928.pdf>

Comment on the following extract from the editorial pages of the *BBC Yearbook* of 1929.

Arising out of the recommendations of the Crawford Committee on broadcasting, the Government, in licensing the Corporation at the end of 1926, decided to transfer censorship functions from the Post Office to the Corporation for an experimental period. But the prohibition of political, industrial and religious controversy was to be maintained. Apparently the intention of the Government was to test the discretion of the new authority. Six months was the duration of the experimental period originally contemplated. This, however, was extended to fourteen months. Meanwhile the BBC lost no opportunity of emphasizing the view that controversial matter should be admitted. Some debates were organized, but the limitations necessarily imposed irritated both the speakers and listening public. The situation became acute when a series of “debates and counter-debates,” organized in cooperation with King Edwards Hospital fund for London, had to be abandoned before completion. There followed a period of violent Press attacks most of which were directed unfairly against the BBC. These attacks subsided when it became generally realised that the BBC did not agree with the policy of restriction which it was reluctantly applying. It should be noted, however, that the violence of the Press discussion was not discovered to reflect any widespread or deep interest in the subject. On the contrary, the general body of listeners was apathetic.

Later in February 1928 the government re-considered the position and decided to remove the restrictions. On March 5 the Prime Minister gave the following reply to a question from Captain Ian Fraser, C.B.E., M.P. :

“The Government have reviewed the decision taken at the time of the constitution of the British Broadcasting Corporation, under which the corporation has been prohibited from broadcasting (a) expressions of opinion by the Corporation on matters of public policy, and (b) statements involving matters of political, religious or industrial controversy. The Government have decided that the first of these prohibitions, i.e. that on the issue of ‘editorial’ pronouncements, must be maintained; but that the second shall be withdrawn forthwith. The corporation has been informed that the government expect it to use the discretionary power thus experimental entrusted to it strictly in accordance with the spirit of the Crawford Committee’s Report and that it is its responsibility to see that this is done.”

On the same day the Postmaster General sent to the BBC a formal communication elaborating the Prime Minister statement and making the following comment:

“The prohibition has now been in operation for 14 months, and the Postmaster-General desires me to convey to the Governors his appreciation of the loyal and punctilious manner in which they have conformed to the obligations thereby imposed.”

The effect of the Prime Minister's announcement was to give the BBC freedom to develop controversial subjects in an experimental way in accordance with the spirit of the Report of the Crawford Committee. It is pertinent, therefore, to refer to this report, of which the relevant passage reads:

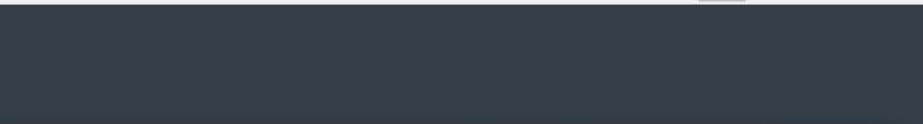
“We are unable to lay down a precise line of policy or to assess the degree to which argument can be safely transmitted. In the absence of authoritative evidence, such advice would be premature but, speaking generally, we believe that if the material be of high quality, not too lengthy or insistent, and distributed with scrupulous fairness, licensees will desire a moderate amount of controversy. But the discretion of the new authority must be upheld. Provided the Commission is strong and impartial, it will gradually assess the nature and extent of the demand ; in this and in other problems to be solved the Commissioners will do well at the outset to act with firm and consistent circumspection.

“Broadcasting Parliamentary speeches, although parallel, raises a different group of issues, on which we do not feel authorised to offer an opinion.”

An attitude of "firm and consistent circumspection" was entirely in accord with the policy of the Corporation in taking advantage of the Government's concession. It was decided to begin by the gradual and experimental introduction of political and economic controversy on clearly defined occasions with adequate safeguards for impartiality and equality of treatment. It will be observed that there was no change in the policy of the Corporation on matters of religion. Controversial matter was to be limited to the field of politics and economics. Moreover, subjects were to be dealt with in such a way that the main opposing views could be presented on

occasions clearly contrasted yet linked as closely as possible. The obvious, and perhaps the most attractive, form of presenting controversy is by way of debates. It was natural, therefore, that broadcast debates should be resumed now that the irritating restrictions had been removed.

PROGRAME - RADIO TIMES ISSUE EXPLORER



THE RADIO TIMES, ISSUE DATED JANUARY 12

NATIONAL PROGRAMME

DAVENTRY 193 kc/s 1,551.4m	LONDON 1,147 kc/s 261.6m	WEST 1,147 kc/s 261.6m	NORTH 995 kc/s 301.5m	SCOTTISH 1,010 kc/s 288.5m
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Sunday
JANUARY 14

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The National Programme will be transmitted by Daventry (1,551.4 mc), only, from 10.30 till 11.30 am (from 7.55 to 9.30 pm on the following page)

The Signal, Greenwich, at 10.30

10.30 (-10.45) Weather Forecast for Farmers and Shipping

The Signal, Greenwich, at 10.30

11.0 (-12.15) A RELIGIOUS SERVICE
In Welsh
Relayed from St. Michael's Church, Llanung, Caernarvon

Order of Service:
Hymn 533, O Fugall Israel, dwg 87m
Psalm 134 (Tune, Gerthwen)
The First Lesson, Isaiah xl, 1-11
The Second Lesson, St. Luke iv, 16-30
The Apostles' Creed
Hymn 604, By New, fy adlyfryn Teu (Tune, Clwyd)
Prayers
Hymn 565, O Tyrod, Argyrdd mawr (Tune, Malverro)
Sermon by the Rev. Alunur E. Lewis, B.A., B.D. (Rector of Llanung)
Hymn 661, O am nerth I dreilio'm dyddiau (Tune, Blawenwern)
The Blessing
Hymn from 'Emyniadur yr Eglwys yng Nghymru'
(The Church in Wales Hymnary)
Organist, NATH WILLIAMS
Conductor, Owen E. Owen
(For Regional Programmes)

12.30 A Recital for Two Pianofortes
by
BERTH GUSTHOFFER and CECIL BAUMER
En Bateau }
Corège } (Gretite Suite) Debussy
Piano-Pied }
Gigue }
Polichinelle }
Le Retour }
Scherzo }
Le Revenant }
Fen roulat }
Waltz }
Artist's Life }
Johann Strauss, arr. Charis
Fouquet }
Gael Bannan }
Le Revenant }
Fen roulat }
Waltz }
Artist's Life }
Johann Strauss, arr. Charis
Fouquet }
Gael Bannan }
Le Revenant }
Fen roulat }
Waltz }
Artist's Life }

pronounced of music for two pianos were a fairly frequent occurrence during the nineteenth century, and many of the eminent pianists of the day gave concerts together. Perhaps the greatest duo of all time was Ferruccio Busoni and Egon Petri, who gave many joint recitals in London up to the time of Busoni's death, in 1924.

Although the great composers have not written many works for two pianos, a wide repertoire is available in the form of transcriptions, such as the Debussy 'Petite Suite' and Strauss's 'Waltz, Artist's Life'. In fact, a great deal of classical music, such as the early symphonies of Haydn and Mozart, sounds quite as effective on two pianos as it does on the orchestra.

1.0 THE NORTHERN STUDIO ORCHESTRA
Directed by John Bridge
Lilian Cooper (soprano)
Fantasy on Mozart's Music arr. Urchak

2.40 'British Art'
Professor R. M. Y. GLADSTONE

3.0 THE VICTOR OLOF SEKTET
LEONARD GOWINGA (tenor)

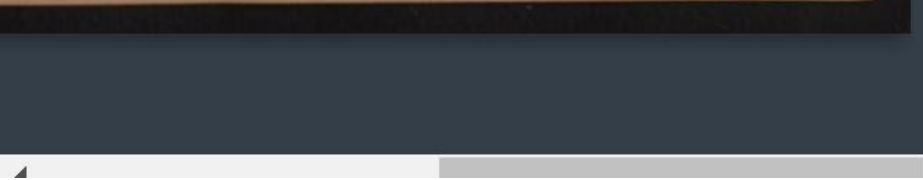
2.0 Gramophone Records
Music by Beethoven
The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham:
March (Prince Igor)
The London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Albert Coates: On the Steeples of Central Asia; Symphony No. 2 in B minor

4.0 A Recital
By OLGA HALEY (mezzo-soprano)
Should be upbraided..... Hilleg
Turn ye to me..... Zion,
Ferry Song (Immortal Hour)..... Beethoven
So we'll go no more a-roving
Cockle Gatherer (Hebrides) arr. Kennedy-Fraser
Cradle Song..... Back
Teans..... Schumann
Hindu Song (Sadko)..... Rimsky-Korsakov
The Lark..... Rubinstein
(Continued overhead)

SEKTET
Waltz, Der Rosenkavalier..... Strauss
Dreams..... Wagner
Lilian Cooper
Hart, bark, the lark }
Schaubert
LILIAN COOPER
Absence..... Berlioz
On Wings of Song..... Mendelssohn
Orpheus with his Lute
Vouglhan Williams
orchestra
Canzonetta..... Gaidard
Waltz, The Sleeping Beauty..... Coates
(North Regional Programme)

LEONARD GOWINGA
Charming Chile..... Edward German
A! Moon of my delight
Lisa Lehmann
SEKTET
Romance..... Sibelius
The Bee's Wedding..... Mendelssohn
Sultenne..... Verdi
Minuet..... Paganini, arr. Kreisler

SEKTET
Phyllis has such charming graces
arr. Lane Wilson
Listening..... Berlioz
Sea Rapture..... Eric Coates



Tallents and Ryan were authorised to appoint a Listener Research Officer. While all these deliberations were in progress I was merely one among millions of other anonymous members of the listening public, as totally unknown to virtually all those who were wrestling with these problems as they were, except in name, to me. I had only been a frequent listener for about six years; before that I hadn't had my own 'wireless set', as we then called radio. To be 'with it' at that time you had to be rather patronising about broadcasting and certainly supercilious about those who, like the suburban family in Herbert Farjeon's *Little Revue*, 'Thanked God for the BBC'. (Attitudes linger on; thirty years later Thomas Barman, at his retirement lunch, was to say that he recognised three religions in Britain Catholics, who ate fish on Fridays; Anglicans, who washed their cars on Sundays, and people who worshipped the BBC and watched *Panorama* on Mondays.) But though I found BBC-worship a trifle unctuous, I would have been less than honest if I had not acknowledged that I admired the Corporation and owed it a great deal. I was glad radio was run as a public service. That it was a monopoly didn't worry me: I was prepared to judge it on its performance and its performance suited me. It had given me opportunities to hear an abundance of good music. It brought me news, succinct and well-read and, as far as I could judge, without bias. I enjoyed many of its plays and features, as radio documentaries were then called, and those which didn't interest me I could always avoid. It's 'Talks' policy frequently challenged me with new ideas and enabled me to hear the voices of many whom previously I had only met in print. The Listener, to which I had subscribed almost since its inception, seemed to me to be a quite outstanding twopenny-worth. I didn't grudge the time the BBC gave to things which didn't interest me - or which I positively disliked. Even the famous Reithian Sunday policy didn't leave me personally in a state of impotent fury, though it was causing listeners, particularly working-class listeners, to turn to the continental radio stations broadcasting to Britain for a diet of Forbidden Fruit (dance music, no less) seasoned with advertising. I was not an avid listener to religious broadcasts but the Sunday programmes included enough other material to satisfy my tastes and in this I am sure I was not alone; though equally I was not alone in feeling that Reith's Sunday policy would have to be modified if the BBC were to continue to be a public service in fact as well as in name. It so happened that I had good reason to know the extent to which in the early thirties the British public was turning to Radio Normandy and Radio Luxembourg on Sundays.

Who's Listening?: The Story of BBC Audience Research, Robert J.E. Silvery

(The author is looking back on his life in the mid 1930s).

Olive Shapley obituary

Letting the people speak

By Anne Karpf

The Guardian Mon 15 Mar 1999 03.39 GMT

Olive Shapley, who has died aged 88, was a pioneering radio producer, one of the first to midwife the voices of ordinary people onto the airwaves. In a career spanning 40 years, which reads like an ordnance survey of British broadcasting, she also worked as a prominent presenter in radio and television. Her private experiences - of two nervous breakdowns, of psychoanalysis, as a socialist, professional woman and single parent - anticipated current concerns by 50 years.

Paddy Scannell, the historian of early radio, has argued that Shapley was one of the first British programme-makers not to seek to impose their own vision on their subject but to allow the subject to define themselves. To help her, she seized on the mobile recording van, a seven-ton vehicle, whose creative possibilities Shapley immediately recognised and which she used to develop her own broadcasting style.

Born in Peckham into a lower-middle-class Unitarian family, she was named after Olive Schreiner, author of *Story of an African Farm*. Like so many of her contemporaries she was radicalised at Oxford, where she read history at St Hugh's. (Her fleeting membership of the Communist Party was to dog her for the rest of her institutional life.) Shapley got a job as Children's Hour organiser in Manchester. In 1934 it was a crucible of creative, radical programming, initiated by Archie Harding, a Marxist intellectual whom Reith had banished from London to where he couldn't 'do so much damage'.

At a time when 'the regions' mattered much more in the BBC than they do today, the North Region under Harding had its own distinct culture: members included Wilfred Pickles, Joan Littlewood, the singer Ewan McColl, documentary producer, Geoffrey Bridson, and Shapley. In 1939 Shapley was promoted to assistant producer, and so began a stream of remarkable documentaries which, for the first time in British broadcasting, made imaginative use of recorded actuality.

Her first, presented by Wilfred Pickles, was on shopping. It was followed by features on canal workers, long distance lorry drivers, homeless people, miners' wives, and 24 hours in the life of a big hotel from the staff's point of view (so much for the 'innovation' of the recent TV docu-soap *Hotel*). Apart from the introductions and links, they were unscripted and unrehearsed, with ordinary people speaking about their lives to an extent previously unheard on British radio.

Her most famous feature, the 1939 *The Classic Soil*, was one of the most radical programmes the BBC had ever broadcast. Scripted by Joan Littlewood and produced by Shapley, it opened with a plummy BBC voice announcing a programme inspired

by the book *The Condition of the Working-Class in 1844* by Friedrich Engels and proceeded to put in question a century's social progress. Even now it stands in striking contrast to BBC notions of 'balance'.

At the end of an evening of GPO Film Unit documentaries at the Academy Cinema in London, Alberto Cavalcanti played Shapley's *Homeless People* and invited her to collaborate with them on a film and radio project, *Health of the Nation*. She did so, and worked alongside Humphrey Jennings for a time during the war.

In the meantime Shapley had met John Salt, the BBC's north region programme director. In June 1939 the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Dispatch* leaked his engagement to 'the girl whose voice is known to millions of radio listeners'. There was considerable opposition then to married women working, and BBC policy was not to employ staff married to each other. After their marriage in July 1939, Shapley resigned and worked for the BBC on a contract basis, producing documentaries about ordinary people's experience of the war. In 1941 Salt was posted to New York as deputy North American director of the BBC.

America energised them. They lived for a time in the stylish Fifth Avenue apartment of Alistair Cooke, and employed Mabel, Cooke's part-time Harlem maid. Through their friendship, Shapley gained access to the black community, enabling her to send back programmes about black people in America. She also sent a vivid fortnightly newsletter to *Children's Hour* which included memorable interviews with Eleanor Roosevelt and Paul Robeson. They were the precursor of Cooke's version for adults, initiated four years later.

...

In 1949 Shapley became the presenter (sometimes called 'commere') of the daily *Woman's Hour*. She brought formerly taboo subjects, like menopause and women without men, onto the air. When domestic crises occurred, she brought her children into work with her; they learned to sit quietly and draw on the back of old scripts and became expert cutters of tape.

By now the family was living in Hampstead and Shapley was writing articles for *Modern Woman* magazine. In 1950 she began working in television, presenting the *Women of Today* series, and narrating tales for very young children in *Olive Shapley Tells a Story*. In 1952 she married Manchester businessman Christopher Gorton, and the following year they moved back to Manchester, into Rose Hill, an enormous Victorian Gothic house in Didsbury. By the late 1950s Shapley decided to shift to TV production rather than presentation and devised an innovative books programme, *Something to Read*. She had to fight the BBC to get Guardian journalist Brian Redhead as the presenter - they objected to his supposedly incomprehensible Geordie accent.

...

Philip Hope-Wallace, "Critic on the Hearth."
The Listener, vol. 33, no. 854, 24 May 1945, p. 584.

CRITIC ON THE HEARTH

Weekly comments on B.B.C. programmes by independent critics

BROADCAST DRAMA: Ploughshares

Now that the Victory Party has at last wound itself up, we can empty the ash-trays, inhale deeply and, carefully avoiding a guest's natural inclination to indulge in a *post mortem*, take a look at what comes next on the programme. Much the same, it seems. Is this comforting? In a way, yes. Like convicts newly released, we find consolation in the familiar rattle of chains. In a way though, it is disconcerting. Ought not things to be very different? Presumably they will be - soon. For how could so vast a switch-over, as this from war to peace, not find reflection in the programmes? Of course they will be very different, and so for that matter will we. First and foremost, a lot less indulgent. To mere broadcastings of other peoples' enjoyments; to the amateur croonings of works-managers' daughters; to all tipsy-sentimental, idiot-nostalgic patter; to these and a thousand other feeblenesses we can no longer extend the justification that, somewhere, they might be helping someone to forget the war for a few minutes.

Most of all, we shall be looking to radio not mainly as a drug and anodyne, but as a tonic agent for keeping the mind alert to the huge task of re-educating dried-up hearts and spoiled appetites; in discovering prophylactics against those plagues of the aftermath: distrust, disillusion and boredom.

How does all this affect Drama and Variety? These departments have contributed handsomely to helping us forget, but what now? Variety, in particular, will have to pull up its socks and concentrate sternly on quality rather than quantity. We shall need much less of it, presumably, and nothing which does not pass a certain standard of wit, originality and style (however low) *need* not be put out. It may then become a case of going to the radio for pleasure, like going to the theatre. Drama, without losing sight of the value, surely proved by now, of decently adapted stage successes, or slackening the often rewarding efforts with the more radiogenic classics, will no doubt give more thought to calling out, as and when it becomes more readily available, original, adult drama written entirely .for listening. But most of all, I hope to see a great extension of the kind of semi-dramatic *causerie* with a theme, of the kind that Stephen Potter, Nesta Pain and Jenifer Wayne, to name only three, have made outstanding successes on practical and artistic grounds. At their best, such programmes, with the scope for wit, sound sense and observation, have been real lessons in the art of living. There is no horse the Drama Department could more wisely put its shirt on in the approaching handicap events. And when I say extension, I don't mean just more of them, I mean a wider range of attack, harder hitting, and a resolute refusal to become just little parochial affairs safe in their flippancy or 'fairness' from any charge of upsetting people. (Do

plays, great plays, never upset people?) Beside 'How to blow your own trumpet' let us learn 'How to live more richly on even less pay'. Beside 'This is the law' let us have 'This is marriage'. A point of view with dramatic illustrations it is a splendid, inexhaustible formula. And of course if it were applied seriously it would end up by being highly tendentious, wicked Propaganda instead of harmless Fun. But what a false distinction is this! That is a danger you run anyway, with any work of art worth the name.

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(...) You must remember that any Government, whatever its colour, does not want any other stations in this country but the B.B.C., because they have at their disposal the colossal power of the only broadcasting stations in this country. Nowhere else in the world except Russia is there such colossal power vested in the Government to be used should they really want it. The Government to-day tell us that our future and our existence depend on exports, and so I think the Board of Trade should help us to get this inquiry. If you want to sell, you must advertise. There is no machinery for us to advertise at all, yet all the machinery exists for other people to advertise in this country. Why should you bar the trade from the one selling weapon that jumps all national barriers? It is a very difficult thing to answer, and I am sure the Board of Trade will have very definite views along those lines.

There is of course the question of entertainment. Entertainment I think we should look upon as an industry. The Government take the view that the concentration of the cinema industry into one canal so to speak is bad, and they have always opposed it. They seem to have forgotten entirely that the B.B.C. is the only channel in which the entertainment world can express itself. We must remember that the B.B.C. cannot pay the prices which are demanded to get the great artists and they are going to drift across the world to America where they can get bigger money, just as all our film talent went across the sea and is going across the sea. That is not good. I think it is vital to the spread of the British way of life that the world should listen to its great humorists and to its great artists.

I hope I have shown in the few words I have addressed to your Lordships no animosity towards the B.B.C. I should like to see them refreshed and some other organization besides them set up in this country. But I cannot help saying this in conclusion to the Government. In these days of nationalization and the increase of State-owned corporations, the Government would be well advised to set up a Joint Committee. If the Postmaster-General says, "I have no time to set up this Committee before the Charter ends,"- and he is going to grant an extension of the Charter for one year and set up a Committee in the meanwhile, that would be perfectly satisfactory. I am quite prepared to accept that, but if the Government refuse an inquiry what sort of interpretation will be put upon their action? Here is one of the first great national corporations, the B.B.C. Instead of saying how much they wish to help such an organization to keep alive, virile and up to date, their policy is to allow it, in the words of the old song, to "go sailing along in the old way." Is this the way the mines are going to be run, in a spirit of perpetual self-satisfaction? Are the railways, when they are taken over, never to be investigated and refreshed with new ideas once they are handled with the clammy hands of the State? Here indeed is the test. Do the Government really and sincerely believe in the strong medicine of nationalization and public ownership? Do they really want them kept up to date by inquiry and improvement, or are the Government a lot of quacks who know that they are selling to the people a series of dud set-ups that will not stand up to investigation in any form? If they refuse this inquiry into the B.B.C. they will show the world this significant fact: that they have no confidence in their own policy and no trust in themselves. I beg to move.

Moved to resolve, That this House is of the opinion that before an extension be granted of the B.B.C. Charter, an investigation into present development be held.—(Lord Brabazon of Tara.)

LORD BRABAZON OF TARA¹, House of Lords, 26 June 1946

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¹ Lord Brabazon of Tara was a Conservative politician and Minister of Transport and Minister of Aircraft Production during World War II. He was also a member of the board of Electric and Musical Industries, a record company which also manufactured broadcasting equipment, such as television transmitters and cameras.

Introduction to the B.B.C. Handbook (1928)

(...) One trusts that the reader will be able to say of this retrospect of five years' Broadcasting activity that it has steered a reasonable middle course between philosophic neutrality and over-emotiveness without falling into self-satisfaction. Setting aside such factors as an astonishing expansion and development, the ramifications of a vast and far-flung organisation with all its interests and complexities of administration, there remains for review the things which are less readily comprehended but certainly more material.

One is sensible, sometimes, of an inclination on the part of several critics to wonder why it is necessary or desirable to insist, to the extent that it is done, and so often as it is done, upon public service as the keynote of the work. Is there not some risk, it may be said, of the phrase becoming a formula of vain repetition, a surrender to complacency? The answer definitely is in the negative. At the beginning it was an assertion – in view of the state of things in America, a very necessary assertion – of the position that it was intended to take up, a flag to hoist over claimed territory. As time went on, it flew as a flag to which allegiance was expected of and given by a staff of men and women of widely varied outlook and abilities, and at moments it was waved with some vigour in public. And now, like any other flag, it has fixed itself so thoroughly in the spirit that parade of it on ordinary occasions may well be regarded as bad taste.

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A Standard and an Outlook

In order to avoid misunderstandings, let it be said now that public service in this sense means primarily a standard and an outlook, and only secondarily a form of administration. The constitutional change-over from Company to Corporation status has for the moment drawn some attention to the administrative side, as it is change and not continuity that comes into the limelight. The outlook, though still developing by experience, is essentially the same.

What is this outlook? By the "public" is presumably meant the totality of the inhabitants of these Islands – and eventually those of the Continent and Overseas – irrespective of age and sex, tastes and education, religion and politics, wealth and status.

This generality of appeal was made a cardinal point of policy from the outset. Technically it determined the lay-out of the Stations on the map; it fixed the details of power and design by the average "poor man's" set; it imposed as a necessary ancillary the giving of free advice on technical matters of reception and interference; and it brought about contacts of all sorts all over the country as well as in London. Each year, except 1926, has witnessed the attainment of successive landmarks in this policy of getting within so-called "crystal" range of the whole population. Another landmark is now in sight.

In the field of programme selection and management, on the other hand, one is dealing with factors that are even less easily seen. Not only are they imponderable, they are often not even identifiable in advance of experience. One is liable, and indeed certain, to make mistakes which the instantaneity, the intimacy, and the universality of the mode of transmission render it almost impossible to retrieve and even to limit. And it was to be foreseen that other public programme interests would resent and oppose intrusions of the new social engine within their respective domains: the Press as regards news, the theatres and concert halls, the authors' and composers' associations, and the artists as regards music and drama, the cinema, the lecture-hall and – in another world of ideas – the churches, as regards the tying of people to their firesides (and even there the gramophone might look upon the radio set as an interloper). It was a sea full of more or less uncharted rocks, and to be navigated at fairly high speed into the bargain. (...)

Sir J. C. W. Reith, *B.B.C. Handbook*, 1928, pp. 31-35.

<https://worldradiohistory.com/UK/BBC-Annual/BBC-Year-Book-1928.pdf>

ÉPREUVE DE COMMENTAIRE DE TEXTE EN ANGLAIS

SUJET N°1 : LA BBC ET LE SERVICE PUBLIC DE L'AUDIOVISUEL, 1922-1995

It is sometimes said that broadcasting has the effect of impressing upon the mass of the people a single pattern of culture. There are weighty arguments on the other side, but this much is undeniable. Broadcasting, because of its ubiquity, is an unrivalled means for the dissemination of ideas. Pitt's speeches in the critical years of the French wars were heard by a mere handful of men in the House of Commons. Gladstone's orations on the Bulgarian massacres, when the public meeting was in its heyday, were delivered to a few thousand, at most. But Winston Churchill's unforgettable words, uttered in the darkest days of the war, were heard in this country alone, by nearly seven people out of every ten.

The war provided countless other instances of a single voice speaking in level conversational tones, being heard by many millions, not in vast assembled concourses, but gathered by twos, threes and fours in the homes of Britain...

At times of acute crisis, a sharp conflict arose between those who thought the broadcasting of light entertainment unseemly at such times and those who felt more than ever the need for legitimate escape in their leisure. But careful study showed that the effect of anxiety was not to change, but merely to sharpen, taste. Critics of the policy of continuing to broadcast dance music and variety proved to be the minority whose recreation normally took other forms. And they were opposed by the great majority of the public. Garrison theatre, *Hi Gang*, *Music Hall*, *Hippodrome*, *The Old Town Hall*, *Monday Night at Eight* and *ITMA* are some of the most famous names among the variety series which, week after week throughout the war, were heard behind the black-out curtains of Britain. "Mind my bike", "The day war broke out", "Ee, if ever a man suffered" and the countless catchphrases of *ITMA*, from "Funf speaking" to "Can I do you now, sir?" And "I'll 'ave to ask me dad", which broadcast variety injected into the currency of common intercourse between 1939 and 1945 can justly claim to have contributed to the war effort.

If the demand for variety throughout the war was no surprise, another type of "recreational" broadcasting widened its appeal to a degree which can only be described as spectacular. Plays were a popular form of radio before the beginning of the war, but in the audiences they attracted they could not rival variety. But the war saw a vast increase in the public for radio drama. In 1939 or 1940 a play which was heard by fifteen per cent of the population would have been considered to have had an unusually large audience. By the end of the war audiences for plays were frequently over thirty per cent. Taste did not perhaps deepen to a comparable extent, but it is certainly true that the audiences for the best drama in 1945 were far larger than they had ever been before. There was a similar, though much less spectacular, widening of interest in serious music. In this field the most impressive change did not take the form of increased listening so much as decreased prejudice and hostility.

A further example is the feature programme, radio's documentary. Time after time outstanding successes were won by feature programmes which set out to exploit to the full the peculiar qualities of radio as a medium of communications.

Extracted from the article "Some Recent Trends in Listening" by R.J.E. Silver, Listener research Director.
From *BBC Yearbook*, 1946

(...) In addition to the six members of my Committee who used the strongest possible language, covering 20 printed pages, condemning commercial sponsoring, there were ten pages written by the two lady members and myself saying that we saw no objection – in fact, we saw advantage – in the B.B.C., or whatever other authority controls television or broadcasting, setting aside a limited time of, say, seven or ten minutes in an hour for advertisement, exactly as *The Times* and other newspapers set aside columns for advertisement. We saw no objection to that, with one condition. Of course, the obvious condition was that putting in an advertisement should not depend upon being allowed to tell the leader writer or the newspaper reporter what he ought to say. In other words, it would mean nothing in the nature of sponsoring. We were against sponsoring all through. So one may say that nine members of my Committee were as strongly, and rightly, against sponsoring for commercial reasons, or by people interested mainly in commerce, as they were, I think wrongly, against competition.

I have tried to-day to draw morals from the past of what should and should not be done about broadcasting by sound and vision in future. I think the first thing to be done is to realise the supreme importance of broadcasting as an influence upon the minds and opinions of our citizens. Natural scientists – and I am sorry the Minister of Power is not here – are perpetually posing our Governments with new problems. We all know that they have posed the whole world with a new problem about war. They have made it necessary to abolish war before it manages to abolish us. They are going to do very much the same thing about the means of communication through the air and the ether. They are making these means infinitely more powerful, more varied and influential – more effective for good and, it may be, more effective for bad.

I have spoken till this moment from the standpoint of the Broadcasting Committee of 1950. Assuming that commercial sponsoring is ruled out, as we tried to rule it out then, I see no harm at all in entrusting television, with its growing importance, to more than one authority. What we have before us now is the Report of the Pilkington Committee, and I should think that possibly the argument which has led that Committee to limit further facilities for television and broadcasting to the B.B.C is partly due to its fear that sponsoring might continue as the source of harmful television. With that judgment the attitude of that Committee is intelligible. But I hope that this Government, as all of us, recognise the change which natural science has made, and is making, in the arts of communication by broadcasting.

Let me end by saying that I have no cut and dried solution to this new problem which has been made for us by natural science. If we treat television as a university in the air, cutting out money that may come through commercial broadcasting, or limiting such money to harmless advertisement, without influencing the content of what is broadcast, we then face very serious problems of management, finance, of the constitution of the broadcasting and televising authority, and the way in which their expenses can be met. On the question of expense, can old people afford to pay more in licence fees? If they cannot, can the State contribute more to better standards of citizen life? One or other thing must be done. I am afraid we come back once more to the problem caused by the endless fall in the value of money, and by endless inflation. I do not know how these problems will be solved, but here it is that I agree so completely with the most important words used by the opening speaker, that further thought on many points is essential; and as the Leader of this House is also the Minister for Science I hope he will find a way to effect these thoughts. I fear that my only positive conclusion is for a fresh and full inquiry as to what is needed to deal with broadcasting on three assumptions: of more than one authority; of no commercial sponsoring – I do not mean no advertising – and of adequate help from the Government.

Lord Beveridge,

Speech in the House of Lords during the debate on the Pilkington Report on Broadcasting,
Hansard HL Deb 18 July 1962 vol. 242 cc. 634-636.

(...) I want to talk about the role of the BBC as the prime national instrument in broadcasting. I am *not* proposing direct Government control of the mass media, to which I would be wholly opposed. Nor am I making, for the purpose of this argument, any complaint of political bias. Arguments about political balance are quite separate and ought to be conducted quite separately from any debate on the future of mass communications. 5

Broadcasting should be used, to the full, to help individual men and women to live useful and full lives. That is to say that, in its broadest sense, communications should serve the people and not become their master. But if it is to do so, it has to make available the sort of information and programmes which are really relevant to human needs. These needs include the need to be entertained, the need to be informed and the need to be educated. The original BBC charter recognized this. 10

Now, a new dimension has to be added to this basic requirement. This is the need for helping us to adjust to the enormous changes which are occurring in society, and which are far greater for this generation than for any generation that has ever gone before it. We therefore have to add a new criterion relating to the method. If the broadcasting organisations are to perform their task, they must allow us to meet our objectives by talking to each other. Availability of access to the mass media becomes an integral part of the operational requirement. 15

Looking back over the history of the BBC, the general level of information, education and culture has risen sharply. It has also given pleasure to millions of people by bringing them entertainment, sporting events, drama and music. Criticisms must be set in the balance against these formidable achievements and a record of service to the public which is widely recognised and appreciated. 20

However, in recent years, this objectivity has been replaced by a growing tendency to personalise news presentation. The news reader has almost become a commentator; the gap between news and comment has greatly narrowed. This tendency to personalisation, carrying with it editorial powers exercised by individual commentators, has even more serious implications for other types of programmes. 25

The BBC retains, either on the staff or on contract, a whole host of commentators who, being quite free to comment, carry with them some inevitable suggestion of BBC authority. True, the BBC, through its board of Governors, has no collective view on public matters and very rarely issues a statement of any kind. But listeners and viewers have come to expect from certain well-known broadcasters a particular line of thought which is peculiar to them, but which, though the power of the medium, inevitably shapes public thinking. 30

Nobody wants to go back to the earlier tradition. Quite the reverse. What is wrong is that availability of access is still too restricted in that it is almost limited to a few hundred broadcasters, chosen by the BBC. 35

First, in respect of the choice of subjects: Britain has thousands of problems which would merit the attention of the broadcasting authorities. Certain ones are regularly picked out for treatment. They include the most important, but do not by any means cover all those that are important. The choice is supposedly influenced by the interests of the mass audience and it is here that the influence of the programme ratings begins to be felt. It would be surprising if the sort of subjects that are guaranteed to get a large audience in the popular newspapers were not effective on the radio or TV. This is exactly what is happening. 40

Second, in respect of the presentation of the subject. Here too, the influence of the ratings is very strong and so is the pressure of time. Important subjects are skimmed, important discussions are telescoped and conflicts are artificially sharpened. The result is inevitably to make for triviality and superficiality, over-simplifying what is immensely complicated and sensationalizing almost everything that is touched on. 45

Third, by choice of people. Any BBC producer soon learns that a certain sort of person will give him just what he wants (...)

Comment on the following document		
Kenneth Lamb, <i>The Broadcasting Problems Associated with Asian and Black Minorities in the United Kingdom</i> , (Confidential Note by D.P.A), 14 March 1977, p. 32-34.		

A different question is whether the BBC could help to improve employment prospects for those from ethnic minorities. So far, given the present financial constraints on the Corporation, there is little room for the introduction of special procedures, such as extra tuition in the English language, which would help certain candidates to overcome the disadvantage of a lack of educational opportunity. In certain areas, moreover, it must recruit those who have relevant professional experience and qualifications. It is unfortunate that so far very few people from ethnic minorities have acquired such experience, on national or provincial newspapers. It may be that journalism is not a profession that holds many attractions for Asians and blacks in Britain. Relatively few apply to the BBC's own news trainee scheme: but again, this does not reflect discrimination by the BBC. The field remains open and although the BBC does not claim any credit for employing representatives of almost every major ethnic group in its External Services, the fact that they have been part of the BBC for so long has established beyond doubt that the white majority has no monopoly of the skills acquired in broadcasting.

PART FOUR: CONCLUSION

If one accepts that special programmes for immigrants can succeed in their aim of helping to achieve integration, then one must also accept that a time may come when they have completed their task. Equally, if the programmes fail in their aim, or are no longer regarded as helpful, it will be difficult to justify their place in the schedules. On present evidence, the BBC believes that it is right to seek to provide both a direct service to the immigrant minorities and a comprehensive service to the nation as a whole, which recognises the minorities in its midst, reflects their contribution to a wider culture and respect their rights. It regards as acceptable the risk that in pursuing these policies it may, from time to time, be accused of behaving in a 'white liberal' or patronising manner; and that there will always be people, with axes to grind, who will attack it for what it is doing to provide for the immigrant communities.

Assimilation is an end which, on the basis of past experience, is achievable only after the passage of many years. There are communities in Britain, of Greek and Italian origin for example, which, having become integrated with local communities, and fully conscious of their rights as British citizens, have maintained their separate identities and to that extent have resisted integration, but not to assume that assimilation is a necessary goal. It will help those who are inexperienced in the use of the English language to become more expert. It will exercise the greatest care and restraint lest its programmes exacerbate race relations. It will take every opportunity to represent racial harmony by challenging stereotypes and focussing attention on injustices. However, it does not believe that it is the BBC's task to subordinate the pursuit of truth and truthful representation to a policy designed, however good the intentions, to distract attention from the real problems of a multi-racial society.

The brave *Sun* screamed : ‘There are traitors in our midst’, and named Peter Snow and the BBC. Robert Adley, MP for Christchurch and Lymington, took issue over film of the funerals of Argentinian sailors, saying we had become ‘General Galtieri’s fifth column in Britain’. The temperature was rising fast. Even Francis Pym, the Foreign Secretary, joined the fray after a meeting of the War Cabinet. Speaking to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, he said that ‘I think all of us are aware of the criticism of the presentation [of the war], particularly by the BBC. The Government are very concerned about it indeed.’

Were we getting it wrong? As a matter of fact, there were very few complaints from the public until after the attack on HMS *Sheffield*. Then the charges began. We were giving too much time to Argentine views, to pictures from Argentina. In an interview I gave to the *Standard* at the time, I said I had sensed that if there were losses and the Government came under pressure, it would be likely to turn on the media and the BBC especially. It happened a little later than I expected, but with a ferocity I did not expect. We were all acutely aware of the sensitivities of the situation. Language, tone, pictures – any slip could inflame or would. Ever since we screened a deeply moving interview with the mother of a sailor who had been killed on *Sheffield*, even though she clearly wanted to talk, I was worried about interviews with the bereaved and we stressed to our people the need for the utmost care in that area.

But things were now coming to the boil. Panorama on 10th May was a study of those who had doubts about the Falklands action. The previous edition of the programme had been given over to an interview with the Prime Minister. The introduction to the programme made it clear what the brief was. Robert Kee said:

At a critical moment like this, it’s just worth remembering who started all this and how and the principle at stake. It was Argentina who unquestionably put herself in the wrong by acting unilaterally to settle this long-standing diplomatic dispute by military aggression...By this weekend it was equally clear we wouldn’t be insisting on return to British administration and control and would be prepared to hand this over to the United Nations and the pledge to the islanders of self-determination and the paramountcy of their wishes had become much more ambiguous. Nothing could show more clearly than these really quite considerable concessions the Government’s wish to avoid was, if possible. Opinion at home is now undoubtedly behind Mrs Thatcher if war seems necessary, but there are still reservations here at home. What weight do such voices carry, now that we may be posed for an invasion of the Falklands?

The programme contained five extracts from speeches and interviews with the Prime Minister together with other brief extracts from speeches by pro-Government Conservative MPs, and interviews with a retired Air Vice-Marshal, an Anglo-Argentinian opponent of the Junta, two Labour MPs and two Conservative MPs. The four MPs expressed doubts about Government policy. The film was followed by a live studio interview with Cecil Parkinson, who made no criticism of the film. I still believe it was a reasonable report to undertake, particularly as it was prefaced with a careful introduction; though with the memories of Suez nearly thirty years earlier still vivid in my mind, perhaps I should have known better.

All hell broke loose. There were some four hundred telephone complaints. In the House, Sally Oppenheim raised the matter claiming that ‘for the most part it was an odious and subversive travesty’. The Prime Minister commented: ‘I share the deep concern that has been expressed on many sides, particularly about the contents of yesterday’s *Panorama*. I know how strongly many people feel that the case for our country is not being put with sufficient vigour on certain – I do not say all – programmes.’

Alasdair Milne, *DG: The Memoirs of a British Broadcaster*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1988, pp. 118-120.

Comment on the following document		
Denis Potter, <i>James MacTaggart Memorial Lecture</i> , Edinburgh, 27 August 1993.		

The political pressures from market-obsessed radicals, and the huckster atmosphere that follows has by degrees, and in confused self-defence, drawn the BBC so heavily into the dogma-coated discourses of so-called 'market efficiency' that in the end it might lose clear sight of why it, the BBC, is there in the first place.

5 I fear the time is near when we must save not the BBC from itself, but public service
broadcasting from the BBC. The old Titan should spawn smaller and more nimble offspring
[sic] if its present controllers cannot be removed. Why not think about it anyway? Why not
separate Radio from Television? Why not let BBC2 be a separate public service
10 broadcaster? Let us begin to consider afresh how the thousands of millions of pounds of
licence money could be apportioned between two, three or four successors to the currently
misled Corporation. One of the successors could certainly be a publishing or commissioning
authority on the model of Channel 4.

15 Indeed, Channel 4, if freed from its advertisements, could continue to evolve out of its
original, ever-precious remit into a passably good model of the kinds of television some of
us seek. Michael Grade is becoming, by default, the new Director General, and the ironies,
if not the comedy, of such an unexpected grace remind me that it is time to wind down
before I exhaust myself with my own restraint. I prefer a dialogue, and that will be possible
on Sunday.

20 Thirty years ago, under the personal pressures of whatever guilt, whatever shame and
whatever remaining shard of idealism, I found or I made up what I may unwisely have
termed a sense of Vocation. I have it still. I was born, of course, from the already aborted
dream of a common culture, which has long since been zapped into glistening fragments
by those who are now the real, if not always recognized, Occupying Powers of our culture.
25 Look in the pink pages, and see their mesh of connections. Open the *Sun* and measure
their aspirations. Put Rupert Murdoch on public trial, and televise every single second of it.
Show us who is abusing us, and why. Ask your public library – if there is one left – to file
the Television Franchise Applications on the shelf hitherto kept for Fantasy, Astrology and
Crime bracket Bizarre bracket.

30 I was exceptionally fortunate to begin my career in television at a time when the BBC was
so infuriatingly confident about what public service broadcasting meant that the question
itself was not even on what would now be called the agenda. The then ITV companies
shared much more of this ethos than they were then willing to acknowledge. Our profession
was then mostly filled with men and women who mostly cared about the programmes
rather than the dividend. And the venomous hostilities of the small minority who are the
35 political right – before its wholly ideological transformation into the type of venal, wet-
mouthed radicalism which can even assert without a hint of shame that 'there is no such
thing as society' – before those people had yet launched their poisoned arrows. Clunk!
They go Clunk! Clunk! And, lo and behold, we have in the fullness of such darkness been
sent unto us a Director General who bares his chest to receive these arrows, a Saint
40 Sebastian eager for their punishing stings.

Play for today – but what about tomorrow?

20

We're nostalgic for the glory days of Play for Today, which launched the careers of writers and directors such as Stephen Frears, Ken Loach and Mike Leigh. But, in a ratings-driven TV climate, will we ever have a 'national theatre of the air' again?

Liz Hoggard, The Guardian

Sun 5 Sep 2004 14.07 BST

At the Edinburgh Television Festival last Sunday, director-general Mark Thompson declared the BBC should invest in programmes with 'clear public value'. Out go makeover shows (Changing Rooms was axed) and in comes quality drama. Thompson cited *The Lost Prince*, *The Long Firm* and political thrillers such as *State of Play* as programmes to aspire to. In fact he and chairman Michael Grade have promised a return to the tradition of single dramas that make statements about contemporary Britain. 'Play for Today is back!' trumpeted the headlines.

Well, not quite. We're unlikely ever to see a return to anthology series such as *Play for Today* or *Armchair Theatre* where audiences knew they could tune in for the classic play at 9pm every week; which is bad news if you're nostalgic for the 'golden age' of TV when *Abigail's Party* or *Blue Remembered Hills* could attract 14 million. Now, programmers prefer to sprinkle one-off dramas throughout the schedules. And the word 'play' is likely to have them spluttering into their frappuccinos. They prefer euphemisms such as 'single' or 'event' drama. The analogy with theatre seems distinctly old-fashioned.

'Single drama' no longer means a well-crafted 90-minute play. It could mean a series like *Shameless* or a two-parter such as *England Expects*. 'What we mean by single drama is singular voice,' says BBC head of drama commissioning Jane Tranter. 'The point is that it's one writer's clear vision.'

Crucially, serial is no longer a dirty word. 'Serials were seen as the place where writers who aren't good enough to make movies go,' says C4 head of drama John Yorke. 'And I've always found that a bizarre argument because the Americans have been making series for years and they're not ashamed of populism. What I've tried with *Shameless*, *No Angels* and *NY-LON* is aspire to that level of writing, so you get Paul Abbott and Simon Burke to embrace the series format and come up with something that's both good and popular. And writers like Paul who actually come from a working-class background write about the working classes far more optimistically than kitchen sink realism made by middle-class people.'

But shouldn't TV be a national theatre of the air? Play for Today launched Dennis Potter, Mike Leigh, Alan Bennett, Stephen Poliakoff and Stephen Frears. Speaking in Edinburgh last week, Frears put his success in Hollywood squarely down to Play for Today. 'To all intents and purposes my breakthrough film, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, was a Play for Today. We were just these blokes who'd been making films for the BBC for 15 years, working with the best writers in England.' But can we realistically ever go back? In 1977 when *Abigail's Party* was broadcast, there were only three channels, and, sportingly, no one pitted drama against drama. Today we no longer watch TV in a deferential way. With hundreds of stations, we shop around.

During the market-led ethos of the Nineties, there was a backlash against tightly scripted stories in the Play for Today tradition. Schedulers wanted feelgood 'slice of life' films that were not remotely issue-driven. But you can't dumb down TV for ever. This autumn, no one is playing safe. Last week we had C4's *Hamburg Cell*; in October there's Abi Morgan's *Sex Traffic* (C4) and *Dirty War* (BBC1), about a radiological 'dirty bomb' attack on London. BBC1 is filming two dramas by Poliakoff (billed as a bold reinvention of the single play). The first follows the shifting power balance between a boss and his secretary through the Eighties and Nineties. The second, set after Labour's 1997 election victory, stars Bill Nighy as a PR guru forced to re-appraise his world.

So why won't programmers take the risk of bringing back the single play slot? Tranter thinks we would find it off-putting. 'Audiences like things positioned as treats. In fact the only people who like everything tagged under banners like "a season of new writing" are journalists. We prefer to dot new dramas around the schedule, where they're very audience-focused, and say: "OK, you've had 10 weeks of *Spooks*, now here's something a bit different.'"

Mitch Benn (song) « I'm proud of the BBC »

[Verse]

Newsround, Newsnight, iPlayer website

Toni Arthur, Brian Cant, Spooks and Adam Adamant

Postman Pat, Blackadder, Hancock and Yes Minister

Later with Jools Holland, Pride

And Prejudice, Hitchhiker's Guide

World Service, Stewart Lee, Mr Benn, Casualty

6 Music, Glastonbury, Horrible Histories

[...]

Dennis Potter, CBeebies, Quatermass and Two Ronnies

[...]

[Chorus]

I'm proud of the BBC, it's part of you and it's part of me

It's just this and lousy weather that holds us together

I'm proud of the BBC, it's not too slick but it was never supposed to be

It's comfort and inspiration for the nation

[Verse]

John Motson, Red Dwarf, Our Friends in the North

Culture Show, Woman's Hour, [...]

[Chorus]

I'm proud of the BBC, it's part of you and it's part of me

We're not just listeners and viewers, it belongs to us

I'm proud of the BBC, and at least it doesn't pretend to be free

And it's nothing to what we'll pay if it goes away

[Verse]

Top Gear, Merlin, Ivor the Engine

Watchdog, Wimbledon, Springwatch, Formula One

Blue Peter, Swap Shop, 5 Live, Top of the Pops

[...]

[Chorus]

I'm proud of the BBC, like everybody has the right to be
It's as British as midsummer showers, and it's ours
I'm proud of the BBC, if we let it go, then it's gone perpetually
And even if you don't always choose it
You'll know what you had if you lose it
And it wouldn't be the same without it
No doubt about it

[Outro]

I see The Wombles
I see The Office
I see Nigella
On the BBC
I see Rolf Harris
I see Sue Barker
And Bob the Builder
On the BBC
[...]