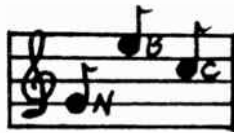


THE NBC CHIMES

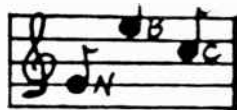


The NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY made its business debut on September 9, 1926 as a corporation owned jointly by RCA, GE, and Westinghouse. Two months later, on November 15th at 8:05pm, NBC began network broadcasting on 24 member stations from WEAJ in New York. In the months to follow, the rapidly growing number of affiliated stations were experiencing wide-spread confusion at the conclusion of network programs on the hour and half-hour. A coordinating alert-signal was required...a signature which would be a consistent and identifiable cue to precisely synchronize all programming and station-breaks.

A team of three men at NBC were instrumental in developing a musical cue to signal station identification on the hour and half-hour; OSCAR HANSON, a former long-lines engineer for A.T.&T., was destined to become VP In Charge of Engineering...ERNEST LaPRADE, orchestra leader on The Collier Hour program, would become NBC's Director of Musical Research...PHILLIPS CARLIN, one of NBC's busiest announcers on shows such as The Clicquot Club Eskimos and The A&P Gypsies, later became Eastern Program Manager of NBC. These three professionals experimented on the air from 1927 to 1928 with a complicated 7-note arrangement of chimes. However, staff air-men found the seven notes difficult to strike correctly and the series was reduced to four. On November 29, 1929 the "G-E-C" triad was first broadcast and soon became the signature known to the entire world as the NBC CHIMES at 29:30 and 59:30 past the hour.

The J.C. DEAGAN COMPANY in Chicago made the actual NBC Chimes from their inception until 1954. The company also made 4-note Dinner Chimes which are now often mistaken for the NBC Chimes. The "200 Series" Dinner set consisted of four note-bars mounted in tonal progression on four resonator tubes. However, the NBC Studio Chimes had only three note-bars mounted in

THE NBC CHIMES



striking order on a wood resonator-chambered box, padded on the corners with leather bumpers. The authentic NBC Chime set had a cast aluminum handle attached to it to enable the announcer to hold the chimes close to the microphone while striking them.

In the interest of timing, pitch and proper sequence, the NBC Chimes were automatically sounded from 1932 on, by means of an "electronic music-box." Each note in the triad was composed of eight partial notes in the form of metal reeds, perfectly tuned. These 24 partial-note reeds were plucked by fingers on a revolving drum, striking a three-chord chime. Technically each set of parallel metal reeds formed a small condenser, the capacitance of which was varied by the vibrations of the reeds. The notes were amplified and sent out over the Network.

During World War II, the famous 4th Chime was used to alert the NBC News Department of war bulletins. The 4th Chime was first heard on the air in 1937 with the report of the crash of the HINDENBURG, again in 1938 during the Munich Crisis, and in 1941 with news of the attack on Pearl Harbor. By the way, the 4th Chime was actually a second strike of the last note ("C").

On April 1, 1941 at 1:29pm, the NBC Chimes heralded the beginning of NBC television broadcasting and the sign-on of WNBT in New York. Ten years later, NBC would introduce the visual symbol of the Bar & Mallet Chimes on Network TV station-breaks. On color telecasts, the N-bar was red; the B-bar was green; the C-bar was blue.

The Chimes became the registered trade and service mark of NBC in 1950. The three-note sequence was the first audible trademark to be registered by the U.S. Patent Office.

On September 12, 1971 NBC discontinued the regular use of the Chimes on radio and television station-breaks. © 1976 Rod Phillips