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Table of Contents

	Page
1- W men in higher 13BC „taff ranks when she joined, 1957	1, 2, 3
7' \'/h y she moves from Radio to TV. The first "Top of the Pops"	3,4,5
Training for TV. TvV studio work in 1957	6
X TV staffmakinb own rules. Why she could not have a TV future	7
Return to Radio. Light Music Dept.	8
Rivalries between 0the two DepartmPnts at Aeolian Hall	9
Professionalism of Light Music Producers	9
)(The spe4trum of oBC Light Music	10
Specialist pockets - Jazz , Folk, Strict Tempo	10
)c Programmes she produced. S pecialevent concerts	11
Disdain of BBC serious music staff at Yalding House	11
Evolution of pop music, from melodic to Haley and Beatles	12
Producing the first Beatles show. Finding a title for it	13
„r: Role of the session p7ayers	13
'f BBC making "cover" recordings offamous stars' material	14, 15
x Big Band music surviving in the new pop era	16
x Effect of the pirate stations	16
"l- First day of Radio 1. A landmark	16, 17
Unusual appointments. e. g. Malcolm Mugceridge. Their posture	18
)(Emergence to -,eparation of Radios 1 and 2	19
Becoming Head of Radio 2 Music; the long-running series	20, 21
'?<-- he Light usic Festivals at the Fes tival Hall	22
'f Friday Night is Music Night	23
)(. BBC Concert Orchestra	23, 24
Repertoire. Selection of items for each broadcast	24, 25
-r- Assessment of David Hatch (C.R2)	25
Duties of Chief Asst. to Hatch	26
x Following Hatch from R2 to R4	27
x Scheduling broadcasts fro m Falklands war	28
M eeting national mood during Falklands war	29
X S peech/Music rations on R2 at that time: R2 the entertainment	30
Problems of p1easing two distinet mass audiences ... network (Music and Sport)	30
X Becoming Controller Radio 2, and Head of R2 Music	31
As Controller, introducing Music policy	32

Under copyright

rer 4 watchwords: Melody, Familiarity, Breadth, Excellence. 33
:>c Adding up to "a real tapestry of Music" 33
Stars as temporary Presenters 33
Giving R2 more gravitas, more bottom 33
Social action, Religion, R2 Lectures etc. 33
x Radio for grownups, mature listeners. Elderly audience 34
f Live music-making always preferred to records 35
A Enterprising use of the Record catalogue 35
X John Dunn show an outstanding example 36
) (Place of soap opera on R2 37
>< Giving R2 a distinctive feel 38
:X BBC Radio chiefs not understanding popular culture 39
Hatch, Forgan, R2 correcting this def{ciency 39
)< R2 under threat; re=rieved; becomes "Sony 3tation of the Year"" 40, 41
Loss of medium wave; its cost; competition from commerciul radio 40 - 42
Independent productions found to be valuable 42
Virtually no contact with BBC TV. Some improvement since 43
;r "Young Musician" competition; "Young Tradition" 45
'f- Radio 2 Lecture: Richard Stilgoe 46,47
Days Out; Seasons: omedy, Ballet, Religious 48
Religious broadcasting on R2; unconventional 48, 49
r Documentaries on R2 50
Multicultural policy 50, 51
Seamless presentation; broadcasters announcing themselves 51
x Upward internal relations slender. Little DG or loard interest 52
i- Her OBE 52-53-54
"/ Final reflections 54, 55

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BBC ORAL HISTORY

FRANK GILLARD interviewing FRANCES LINE

18 JULY 1996

GILLARD Now what's the date? The 18th .. 18th of July?

LINE It is, yes.

GILLARD Yes. It's July 18th 1996, and at her home in Eastbourne, this is Frank Gillard talking to Frances Line who has recently retired from the BBC, after what I regard as a really classic career.

LINE (LAUGHS)

GILLARD And I'm sure everybody's been pointing this out to you recently - starting as a secretary and finishing as a Controller. I should think that's a record.

LINE Well, I don't know anybody else that's managed to do it. But £6.13 a week to whatever I ended up with, was pretty good going I think.

GILLARD Congratulations , yes.

LINE Thank you.

GILLARD When you came into the BBC as a secretary, what was the attitude of the BBC towards women? Obviously women as secretaries , but were women .. did you find women in the higher ranks of the BBC in those days?

LINE Not a great deal ..

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GILLARD This would have been nineteen fifty -

LINE 19 ..

GILLARD 57.

LINE I think it was, yes. 1957 I joined the BBC.

GILLARD Now, women in 1957 in the BBC.

LINE Well, women were seen and not heard really. There were some women who had come through in Radio during the war and they had got to positions of some authority, but really when they went, they were just considered to be something which had happened .. a slight anomaly in the system .. and when they went, they went away and were replaced normally by men. Women called their bosses 'Sir"which they normally were or Mr"whatever and they really didn't have any expectations of power or promotion.

GILLARD There was a fierce lady I remember in those days called Miss Leonard, who was head of all .. all the .. all the secretaries in some departments ..

LINE Yes, yes.

GILLARD She was a formidable person, lay down the law even about how you had to dress I believe.

LINE That's right. Yes. We had a dress code in those days. If you appeared in anything remotely too short you were invited to call upon the administrative assistant who used to measure your skirt and point out the deficiencies and ask you please to rectify this because they really didn't

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have young ladies walking about the place just any old how. None of this coming in looking as though you were going to the beach. It was all very formal and no bad thing actually. I didn't mind, I never took any offence and there are today's women who look at me askance and say, Well, you know, it was a disgrace. Didn 't you complain? " But no, we didn't complain, we .. we understood our place in those days and that's how itwas.

GILLARD Perhaps it was the same in many other areas of employment as well. I mean, that was .. that was the way secretaries were supposed to behave.

LINE It was the times, absolutely . It's just how things were in those days .

GILLARD Yes.

LINE Same with women and promotion. Women did not expect to get on in other places either. It was not particularly discrimination in the BBC .. it was how it was.

GILLARD So there weren't any great prospects for you for promotion in Radio and you moved over to Television then I think.

LINE I did, in order to get the D grade , which was my next thing that I was after .. I'd got to the top of the secretarial skill and I wanted to go on and .. wanted promotion even though one wasn't greatly encouraged to look for it. So I went to Television in order to get this D grade which was a little more senior and of course more responsible work as a Producer's Assistant .. they were called in those days, working with all sorts of people, mostly in Light Entertainment and a little in Drama.

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GILLARD Mm. I'd like a word or two about your .. about the programmes you worked on in Television. **Juke Box Jury.**

LINE **Juke Box Jury,** yes.

GILLARD And you had David Jacob there.

LINE David Jacobs was the presenter, yes ..

GILLARD And there you were in Radio 2 employing him in another capacity.

LINE It's a very strange world. Also a strange coincidence .. in those days I was .. I was the sort of continuing factor with **Juke Box Jury** in that a number of new directors used to use it as kind of nursery slopes and one of those new directors was a chap called James Moir who appeared out of the blue, and as you say, circles go round. Later, many many years later, he took over from me as the Controller of Radio 2. So you never know who you're going to meet or how long they're going to stay in your life.

GILLARD Of course, the .. the music played in **Juke Box Jury** was .. was of .. of the times but it .. very unlike the music that would be played today presumably .

LINE Oh very unlike it, yes but .. yes of the times.

GILLARD And you were on .. you were on the .. what's the thing called .. **Top of the Pops** ..

LINE **Top of the Pops.**

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GILLARD That's right.

LINE The first ever edition. Had no idea we were making history. We were commissioned .. there was a commission for Johnny Stuart to produce a series of six pop programmes. Off went his team up to Manchester .. I was the second secretary because we had two secretaries . We were doing it at the old converted church - I forget the name of the .. the studio now, but I was working on it, it was New Year's Eve. We were all typing away on our camera scripts. At midnight, the chimes struck, we all got up, kissed each other and got on with our typing. (LAUGHTER) Drank a small glass of warm champagne, went on the air on New Year's Day and it was a great success. It was the Rolling Stones, Jimmy Savile was presenting it and it was quite a new thing , I mean it was ground breaking in its time and very innovative and there was great excitement about it and it's been going ever since. So .. and I feel I'm a little part of history .. though I didn't know at the time.

GILLARD In many ways you're a little part of history.

LINE (LAUGHS)

GILLARD Quite a big part of BBC history . The .. you were .. had to learn Television on the job, I suppose .

LINE Yes.

GILLARD You didn't get any special training.

LINE Oh, they did train you, yes. We went off for, I think , about a month . We worked with the new trainee directors and so the PA .. the Producer's Assistants and the Directors trained at the same time , and I remember a number of people on that course, one of .. one of whom did as his

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production exercise, the first episode ever of **Marriage Lines** which was another quite successful situation comedy and a number of those directors have gone on to be quite famous and successful. But yes, we were trained.

GILLARD Did you find the culture of Television, if I can use that kind of word, very different from that of Radio?

LINE Oh certainly different, yes. Great fun though. I really loved my time there. I found it most fascinating. Particularly loved being in the gallery and calling the shots and there were lots of very exotic characters around in those days. I worked for a while with a very over-the-top American called Buddy Bregman who did some enormous musical specials for the BBC and he was an extraordinary man. I also worked for John Paddy Carstairs , the film director who did all the Norman Wisdom films - very new to Television, he was used to the disciplines of film and we all had a great time because we were all learning together and it was exciting. Very good period.

GILLARD Did the ..

LINE I look back on it with great affection.

GILLARD .. did Television people as a whole feel they genuinely were part of the BBC or did they feel they were something quite separate and this was just a formal link, as it were, which they had to put up with?

LINE Oh I don't know. I think they felt .. yes, I think they were pretty autocratic. I mean they did go their own way, they didn't take much notice of Tom Sloane or whoever it was. They .. these people, in particular, who were sort of guest producers just came in, didn't really I suppose feel part of the BBC .. they were proud to be working for it. They didn't sort of latch on to all the politics of it, they just got on with what they wanted to do. Buddy Bregman

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used to go out and buy £25 worth of books, which was quite a lot in those days and say These are my reference books," and expect all his expenses to be signed. He never went to the library, didn't know there was a library. You know, it was all very much like that. It was .. they made up their own rules.

GILLARD Mm mm. Did .. was there a future for you in Television?

LINE No, not really because the next step would have been to become a floor manager or a PA .. PA's did the floor in those days and they didn't let women do the floor in Light Entertainment. I think there was one woman floor manager who again was leftover from the war, but they didn't want women to .. to do the floor because they had to mix with the scene crews and the scene crews used colourful language and they didn't think this was at all appropriate. So we were not encouraged to stay and make our way there. So I went back to Radio again.

GILLARD You came back to Radio, yes.

LINE With great joy, I'm so glad I did.

GILLARD Did you find Radio, though, at that stage pretty depressed? I mean, here was television overshadowing it .. in a big way.

LINE I don't remember it being depressed. No, we were quite a jolly bunch once again . I suppose it's because we .. I was young in those days and you know, we all had a lot of good times. I don 't remember deep depressions .. maybe amongst the older staff .. but the young staff were all enthusiastic and raring to go. Mm.

GILLARD You were in the Light Music department.

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LINE Yes, the Popular Music department, I think it was called.

GILLARD Ah. Who was .. who was head of the department then in those days?

LINE I think at the beginning a man called Jim Davidson, an Australian .. big character and following him, I think Con Mahoney .. I may have left someone out there -

GILLARD I think you have and I can't remember his name, never mind ..

LINE No .. little shaky on the actual history of those days.

GILLARD You were at Aeolian Hall.

LINE Aeolian Hall, yes .. wonderful place, historic..

GILLARD And you shared that with the Light Entertainment department.

LINE We did which is where I first met a number of colleagues who've gone onto great success and that I've come to work with - people like David Hatch and that were at Aeolian at the same time as me .. was a terrific place.

GILLARD Were there great rivalries between your .. the two departments housed in this out-building of the BBC?

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LINE I think there were. I think you're stirring some memories there. Yes. I don't think we thought too much of all these young undergraduates . We were the music people and they were the sort of red nosed entertainers and there was a little bit of rivalry, I suppose.

GILLARD But your .. were you yourself, you were musically inclined .. I mean, you had a musical background did you or ..

LINE No formal training, no. I played the piano as a child and I've always been intensely interested and keen on listening to music but no I'm not in anyway a performer.

GILLARD But light music isn't everybody's taste. I mean, a good many people .. not a good many .. but a proportion of people prefer more serious music.

LINE Absolutely. No, I always loved it.

GILLARD The light music side.

LINE Light music, yes, popular music.

GILLARD And did you find .. let me ask you this question early on. Did you find that your producers who were producing light music were just as professional and keen as those in Yalding House who were doing the big Prom .. the concerts and so on.

LINE Absolutely so. I mean there are standards in every discipline and we worked to the highest possible standards and these .. these musicians, it takes every bit as much to play a piece by Eric Coates as to play a piece by Tchaikovsky or whatever, Bach. It's all .. you know it has to be .. needs real talent to perform it properly.

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GILLARD And your .. your .. your .. your .. your resources, as it were, ranged all the way from pop right up to what, the concert orchestra, I suppose.

LINE Yes, yes. I suppose they were about as far to the right as we went, yes.

GILLARD And then .. this ..

LINE Right in the musical spectrum , I'm talking about. (LAUGHS) Yes.

GILLARD Yes I .. that's the word I'm seeking for .. yes, the spectrum.

LINE Yes, the spectrum was very broad because it went, as you say, from sort of rather gentle pop music, quite sedate pop music in those days, right the way across to .. to the light classics, yes - ballet music , that sort of thing.

GILLARD And .. and within it, there were pockets, e.g. folk music.

LINE Yes. We're talking here about the old light programme so you'll remember that there were all sorts of things represented there. Strict tempo music from Victor Sylvester , folk music, jazz, you know, it was all in there somewhere but all in dedicated programmes rather than the sequence programmes that we have now.

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GILLARD **Yes.** Then .. your own productions .. you were a producer, then you were a senior producer - tell us something about what you produced yourself.

LINE I think my .. my early days were spent on programmes like **Roundabout** and **Breakfast Special** really learning my trade as a producer. These were the .. really the earliest form of sequence programmes. They were the forerunner of today's sequences because they went right across the week in the same slot. In terms of my own programmes, I used to work with a number of people now sadly no longer with us, like Joe Henderson, the pianist .. I did the **Joe Henderson Show** for some time. I worked a lot with Sam Costa who was greatly loved and still much missed. I did the **Tony Brandon Show** - he was very popular in those days and that was .. that was fun .. had a lot of live music in that. And I did one or two programmes, specials .. things like **In Honour of the Queen** which was a marvellous concert that we did at the Royal Festival Hall for the Queen's .. what was it? The .. one of her Jubilees .. I've forgotten what it was.

GILLARD Her 25th.

LINE It probably was, and the idea was that all those who'd been honoured by the Queen returned the honour by giving a lovely concert so it was all people who were either .. been knighted or received some sort of award.

GILLARD Mm yes. The .. the you had no association at all then with Yalding House and .. and the serious music people. Did William Glock ever pay any attention to you?

LINE No. I think one sort of saw them about but no, they didn't really bother with us. I think they thought we were rather trivial and we

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didn't really merit their attention. I think they thought we were just the mob down the road and .. as far as I know, I never saw any of them.

GILLARD No I ..

LINE I knew who they were, I knew they existed but they never came to visit or to see how things were or never claimed any kinship with us or tried to take us over or anything. It was all quite separate .

GILLARD That's true. I remember as Managing Director, you know, noting when I took up the job that serious music was in Yalding House up there in Great Portland Street and you were at Aeolian Hall down in .. down in Bond Street and it seemed to me that every effort was made to keep you as far apart as possible.

LINE Well it's funny you say serious music. You see, I do think it was serious and trivial. It was a bit like that, you know. There was that distinction. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD Yeah. This, though, was the period when .. when the .. new blood was being injected into the whole light music world, was it not? I mean, the pop music was developing rapidly by the, what, early Sixties?

LINE Yes.

GILLARD And to begin with it was rather ballady type of song wasn't it but it quickly became beat music.

LINE Well the Fifties were very melodic and then there was the watershed really of the advent of Bill Haley and indeed The Beatles who just changed the face of music forever more. I worked on their first ever Radio series, possibly their only Radio series, and I actually invented the title for

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it - we called it **Pop Go The Beatles** and that was quite fun too, interesting to look back on. Again, we had no idea this was a piece of history. The Beatles, then an unknown group .. we recorded them in the Paris studios, did them all very quickly. I think three shows a day or something because they were so much in demand, they were new stars. And I don't really remember very much about them except they were rather silly young fellas. They didn't seem to take it very seriously, they kind of came in and loaned about and did it and went away and we thought we would hear no more of them. How wrong we were.

GILLARD Were they producible?

LINE Sort of. I mean, they just got up and did their own material and sort of, the links were all pretty .. I thought they were silly. I mean, they weren't scripted and you know how The Beatles used to talk to each other in those early days - it was not particularly art .. artistic or articulate. I'd grown rather used to the Light Programme with its scripted links and rather elegant speech and it was a surprise to us all to find this sort of off the cuff nonsensical links coming out of these four young men.

GILLARD I remember being greatly shocked going .. paying visits to the studios when you were doing recordings and that sort of thing to find that the backing groups often contained people I recognised as qual.. very .. highly qualified session players.

LINE Mm.

GILLARD What on earth were they doing there?

LINE They were holding up those that didn't know how to play their instruments, that hadn't learnt their craft but happened to have had a hit record of some sort. So quite often you would find superb musicians

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sitting there quietly playing away and taking the money, while these other people were fronting it and getting the hits.

GILLARD Of course, it created all sorts of contractual problems and so on, that did, because when the band appeared on .. on .. in public, it obviously couldn't have these people in the ..

LINE No, it didn't sound quite the same or they'd put them in the pit or they'd put them behind curtains so they couldn't be seen . So ..

GILLARD Yes.

LINE I think quite often they .. they did seek considerable help from unnamed persons who, as I say, took the money and ran and didn't say too much about having been associated with these .. these pop merchants.

GILLARD Yes. I want to talk about .. about needletime and record time in a moment. But I do remember that at one stage, because of the restriction, the ationing of needletime to .. a record time, we attempted to reconstruct in BBC studios the recordings which had been made in EMI studios for commercial purposes -

LINE Yes.

GILLARD And it was quite impossible because of this backing problem actually.

LINE Yes.

GILLARD We couldn't get the same people in.

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LINE Well we did quite often on shows like **Saturday Club** and **Easy Beat** and programmes that I was .. then the programme secretary on, we did manage to do very good cover versions of these things - quite astounding. The artists were sometimes really surprised at the results that were coming out of BBC studios where we would only have a three hour session, they might have spent quite a lot longer doing it in studios but we would .. we would get .. make a pretty decent stab at getting the same sound. Sometimes you really couldn't tell. But it was an extraordinary business to sit there with the record on .. on one turntable, you'd play it and you'd say, now we're going to replicate that. What a funny way to spend your life really. Why .. you couldn't, as you say, just play the record because of the restrictions. But it was a strange thing to do to keep trying to copy this thing and make sounds which were exactly the same as those coming off the records . There were also the lunch time shows which used to do American hits and we couldn't get the Americans so you would also have singers trying to sound like the American singers and they would rush in the records from America that had just been, you know, gone into the charts in America and very good cover singers would try to sound exactly like Johnny Ray or whoever it was that had got the hit and would do so quite successively. But a funny old business.

GILLARD It was indeed.

LINE Mm.

GILLARD Yes it was indeed. And this 'pop' development, did it encroach consistently, regularly , considerably, is the word .. on .. on your light music output? Did it reshape it at all or do you .. were you able to maintain a balance there?

LINE I think we did try to maintain a balance though people were pop mad for a while. The other forms of music continued. I mean ,

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there were some wonderful bands around then , so there was a lot of big band music and people like Victor Sylvester and his orchestra were still going. So all those people were doing things like **Music While You Work** and .. other .. other programmes of that sort . **Radio 2 Ballroom,** those sort of things and they were all going strong in tandem with the pop music. So we weren't entirely taken over at first.

GILLARD Mm. This .. this was the age when the pirate stations began to develop ..

LINE Mm.

GILLARD They were .. we ought to explain these were broadcast to Britain but launched by pirate groups who were at sea ..

LINE Right.

GILLARD .. just off the coastline, three miles out in international waters and indeed there were quite a number of these pirate's ships by the time it was all over.

LINE Very successful. They had quite a following. Hence , of course, the creation of Radio 1 for the BBC to offer that service and the pirates then became illegal.

GILLARD Yes, they did, yes. Then .. they .. would you say gave an impetus to the development of the pop music culture in this country?

LINE Oh yes, because they didn't take any notice of restrictions. They just played records all the time and I think from that came the

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lightening of restrictions on us with Radio 1 - there was no .. no problem there about playing records.

GILLARD Yes.

LINE And .. I remember the first day of Radio 1 very clearly. Radio 2, the old Light Programme didn 't sound that different; Radio 1 was an extraordinary new thing to hear coming out of the BBC with jingles and idents and .. disc jockeys and .. it was very very strange and really a complete landmark . The whole geography of broadcasting changed at that time, as one would imagine.

GILLARD Mm, this was in September of 1957. The .. '67 of course.

LINE '67.

GILLARD '67, yes. The .. and .. and Robin Scott was in command of both ..

LINE Yes.

GILLARD .. Radio 1 and Radio 2.

LINE He was, that's right.

GILLARD How did you get on with Robin?

LINE I didn't know him particularly well because I was just a minion in those days, so one saw him around and he seemed an extremely nice man but I didn 't know him well. Yes, he was Controller 1 and 2 as was

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Charles McLennand when he first took over. It was quite late on that they actually separated the two out.

GILLARD Yes. Well the separation was largely the result of the liberalisation of the needletime situation .

LINE That's right. Mm mm.

GILLARD Yes. So .. you had Malcolm Muggeridge - not Malcolm ..

LINE Douglas.

GILLARD .. Douglas Muggeridge . How was .. because he seemed an extraordinary appointment to me. Was he .. was he in tune, as it were, with .. with what you were doing? He was brought in ..

LINE I think ..

GILLARD .. in a weird way from External Broadcasting.

LINE It was strange, but then Charles Mclelland was strange too. He was the Head of the Arabic Service . These were unusual appointments. But really I think what they did was they stood back and created a climate in which the .. the broadcasters could work. They may not have had extremely detailed knowledge of the product but then all the producers and the presenters knew their stuff so you didn't, you know, it was in a way like managing any business. They managed the business and left us to get on with the product.

GILLARD Yes.

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LINE He was an extremely nice man, I was very fond of him.

GILLARD Yes. The .. the Radio 1/Radio 2 situation developed because Radio 2 of course had been, as you said earlier, the Light Programme.

LINE Yes.

GILLARD A mixed net .. a mixed network ..

LINE Yes.

GILLARD .. with a good deal of speech in it in one way and another. And we very strongly felt that we wanted a consistent network that would maintain light music, pop music, right through the day. But we couldn't afford to make the big change and in any case we didn't want to be too dramatic about it because we were going to meet all sorts of opposition ..

LINE I think it was very wise, yes absolutely .. didn't want to take ..

GILLARD So we simply said we're on the .. on the Light Programme's Medium Wavelength when the Long Wave and the FM are carrying speech, Medium Wave will go on doing music. And this is what you were looking after -

LINE That's right.

GILLARD So on Medium Wave it was continuous. Then eventually we were .. we were able to separate them and give Radio 1 its full

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identity. Yes. Very interesting. And then Radio 1, of course, became the number one pop music station for the whole of Europe.

LINE Oh a huge success , yes .. yes, absolutely.

GILLARD And still is come to that, and in spite of everything.

LINE Oh yes.

GILLARD Yes. Well now, while you were there, you became Head of .. of .. you became Head of .. what was your title? Light Music .. yes, that was right, did you?

LINE Head of Radio 2 Music Department, it was called ..

GILLARD Oh ..

LINE .. by the time I took it over yes.

GILLARD Radio ..

LINE These titles change and (LAUGHS) and they go through transitions. Head of Radio 2 Music, H. R2. Mus.D I was and .. that's right, yes.

GILLARD So you didn't feed any light music into, say, the Home Service?

LINE No, I was a producer in those days.

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GILLARD Ah yes, yeah .. yeah.

LINE By the time I was the Head of the Music Department, it was just serving Radio 2 - it was a dedicated department. It .. one or two people made one or two programmes on Radio 3, but they were really our classic specialists, largely just Radio 2.

GILLARD Did you have any .. any big series that were notable in a week's scheduling . I mean, Wednesday night was this, Thursday night was that.

LINE Well there was **Friday Night Is Music Night** which has been going forever and things like **Your Hundred Best Tunes** with Alan Keith which again is an evergreen. Oh dear .. what else was there? I mean, we really are the home of the long-running series. **Melodies for You** ..

GILLARD Yes, yes, yes. There they all were.

LINE Yes, they were all still .. all still there.

GILLARD I remember one on Sunday afternoon .. a group .. a bunch of singers ..

LINE Oh **Sing Something Simple**. How could I forget that? It's been going for ever and a day, absolutely. Marvel.. marvellously popular programme. Very simple, as the title suggests, very melodic, terribly popular, especially with the older listeners and still sells thousands of records.

GILLARD What was that group called?

LINE The Cliff Adam Singers. Mm.

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GILLARD Yes. Good. Now what about the light music festivals. I remember going to big festivals .. the Royal Festival ..

LINE Yes .. at the Festival Hall.

GILLARD .. Hall. I mean, they really were comparable to The Proms in my opinion.

LINE (LAUGHS) That was .. meant to be the popular music answer to the Proms, that's right and you would have the Festival Hall for maybe five nights a week and each night would be quite different. I mean, of course, it was a more modest set-up than The Proms but each night would be .. there would be a jazz night , maybe a .. a big band night, maybe a night with the concert orchestra playing ballet music or whatever and they 'd usually be themed and they were very successful in their time. I think over the years, you know, they sort of went out of fashion, bu t they were huge at one point .. you're quite right to recall them as a great success.

GILLARD But they were very smart. I mean, black-tie stuff and some of those remember, certainly among the .. the distinguished guests.

LINE Oh yes.

GILLARD And the high priced seats.

LINE Yes, that's right.

GILLARD Very successful.

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LINE They moved later down to Fairfield Halls in Croydon and then I think they just sort of gently tailed away. We should have stayed in the West End really .. that's where they needed to be.

GILLARD The Concert Orchestra did tour a bit though didn't it?

LINE Oh absolutely, yes. The Concert Orchestra has always toured, as has **Friday Night is Music Night.** That's always been a programme that goes around the country, not for every edition because quite a number of them are done from Golders Green Hippodrome but .. oh it's very much a touring orchestra. It likes to take its music out as much as can possibly be afforded. And people like to see it. It's a wonderful representative of Radio 2.

GILLARD How .. how big an orchestra is the Concert Orchestra or was it in your time? I mean, was it symphonic size?

LINE No, it's smaller than symphonic size. You don't actually need .. I mean, you could all mend up to symphonic size if you needed to and they quite often did for The Proms. But their standard thing was the standard line-up for a concert orchestra which is smaller than symphonic and .. I mean, I really believed in that orchestra. I'm really glad that .. to see them doing and playing so well today because they are completely unique among the BBC's hound of orchestras. Often forgotten, when people say the BBC's .. when people talk about the number of orchestras that the BBC supports, they are actually a real jewel. I believe in them totally . I .. I'm .. was always very proud to be associated with them. I think they're excellent players and I thought their repertoire was distinctive and very precious and is to be cherished.

GILLARD You had Vilem Tausky I remember conducting in ..

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LINE Yes ..

GILLARD .. and then .. then you had that Australian conductor, can't think of his name, Mackerras. Charles Mackerras.

LINE Yes, I think he did for some time.

GILLARD Yes he certainly did.

LINE Really .. the one I've known best has been Barry Wordsworth who's been ..

GILLARD Well, he's still doing it.

LINE Yes he is, yes, yes. And a number of guest conductors of course. I mean, they've always liked to work with a broad range of conductors of all kinds. I mean, I've seen all sorts of people from Malcolm Arnold, upwards, downwards and sideways conduct the Concert Orchestra with those degrees of success because the orchestra plays well for anybody but obviously they .. they have a better report with some than with others.

GILLARD What about the choice of items though. Is that the producer's responsibility or the conductor's, who?

LINE Well it depends what they 're doing. If they're doing **Friday Night is Music Night** they 'll probably play a sort of light music repertoire quite often or .. but they've diversified now and play a lot of show music so .. they can play right the way across. They can play symphonic music, they can play light music, as we call it, and they can play show tunes . It depends entirely what the need of the programme is.

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GILLARD But it's the producer who dictates, is it?

LINE Well yes, in conjunction with talking to the artists and the conductor and the .. maybe the lead or whatever, you know .. everybody has a little input as to what .. what might be played. Mm.

GILLARD Mm, yes. Well it's a continuing success. I think David Hatch as Controller of Radio 2 ..

LINE Mm.

GILLARD How was David as Controller Radio 2? How .. how did he perform in the Radio 2 world?

LINE Oh absolutely marvellous . One thinks of him as a speech man but he came in with .. all that David Hatch energy which can never be matched by anybody else. He used to exhaust me and he was still going strong at the end of the day. But he was .. he came in with huge enthusiasm. He decided that because music wasn't necessarily his forte, he would attack the speech and he really went about making sure that what he called the cement between the bricks was first rate of its kind. He really tried to get the very best presenters, the very best speech contributors. He worked at the speech side which, in a way, needed working at because it had always been adept work influenced by musicians. Sometimes the speech could be a little sloppy or less than interesting. He made quite sure that it was always stimulating, he booked excellent speakers, he booked excellent presenters and put his mark on it as he puts his mark on everything. He was superb and taught me such a lot. I just learnt such a lot from David because I worked with him in 2 and in 4 and he was an excellent Manager , very good with people - as I'm sure you would agree. Funny, amusing, passionate about Radio .. very exciting to work with.

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GILLARD You were his Chief Assistant?

LINE I was.

GILLARD Yes, that's right.

LINE First in 2 and then in 4. Mm.

GILLARD Yes. What .. so did you .. I mean, as Chief Assistant I imagine that you really ran the day to day, looked after the day to day running of the network, did you?

LINE Yes .. it .. main duty really was scheduling, making sure that all the things came through on time and were properly placed .. I did all the minutes of his meetings so it was very fascinating to sit and listen to all this going on .. writing it all down, recording it all. I'm sure it's all filed away somewhere. And you were just generally the Controller's right-hand person. So I was a sounding board, but I was also as you say, just busy keeping the ship going along on an even keel while the captain got on with the creative side of it and .. came up with ideas and generally turned the place upside down. Because he was not a man to leave things alone, he loved to .. move things on.

GILLARD Were there special problems at all? Does this stick in your memory or was it, on the whole a reasonably easy network to manage? I mean, it's something that recurred all the time, seeking possibly things that recurred all the time and you could never never put aside properly. I mean, it had been in my day, needletime , for example ..

LINE Yes.

GILLARD That was a fearful problem.

Under copyright

LINE Yes. I'm trying to think what the major problems were he tackled.

GILLARD Well if you .. if they don't come to mind, you ..

LINE They .. we just had all sorts of new ideas and just generally set about it.

GILLARD Yeah.

LINE But I don't remember exactly what he did now.

GILLARD Well no, anyway let's go on because you said that David moved onto Radio 4 -

LINE He did.

GILLARD - as Controller and you moved with him.

LINE Mm mm.

GILLARD Did you go at once together, the pair of you?

LINE No. No Bryant Marriott .. no wait a minute. Who took over from David in Radio 2? I'm just trying to think .. hang on a second.

GILLARD Wasn't it Bryant Marriott? Well never mind.

LINE It .. well, whatever. I didn't go immediately. I did stay a little while, while David went over to Radio 4. And then there was a vacancy for Chief Assistant there and because I'd so enjoyed working with him and because I felt that I would like to broaden my hand of cards by working on the

Under copyright

jewel in the crown of the network, as it's always thought of, I applied to go across, boarded and eventually joined him there and had, again, a most fascinating time. I scheduled the Falklands War there which was very exciting. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD Well I wanted to ask ..

LINE .. do such a thing.

GILLARD What did you do on Radio 4 about the Falklands War?

LINE Well it was fantastically difficult because you know what an inflexible network Radio 4 can be. It is very much made up of built programmes and the need in time of war is of course, for huge flexibility. So what we did was we had our schedule, we lengthened all the seq.. all the news sequences because obviously they were going to be longer than usual and then we held all sorts of standby programmes of all sorts of lengths so that if necessary we could take a quick half an hour update or whatever it happened to be, according to how the war was going and what was happening and then we would fill in the mosaic of programmes around it, all at the last minute. But it was a very stimulating and .. and challenging time because Radio 4 is not a flexible network and that's what was needed most of all.

GILLARD Yes.

LINE .. now all be on 5Live with no problem you see, you could just broadcast whatever you wanted to, break in. This .. once you were into a 90 minute drama, if something enormous happened, it was extremely difficult to cover it.

GILLARD Yes. Did .. did the considerations of the war spill over into other kinds of programming and was the .. was the nation very

Under copyright

serious at that time or did you feel you could continue with entertainment .. in particular .. and not .. not infringe the national mood?

LINE You could and you couldn't. But what you never knew was what was going to happen. Was there going to be a Belgrano or something like that where we were going to need to follow it with a quite .. a serious and sensitive programme? You couldn't just put on some comedy programme after that. So whereas you know, the mood of the nation was all right, it would accept things so long as they were tasteful , you just never knew what was round the corner, how the war was going to go. As you'll know, these things are totally unpredictable . So we had standby programmes of different complexions to make sure that, you know, we were always able to reflect the mood of the nation which changed from day to day.

GILLARD Yes.

LINE Mm.

GILLARD Yes. It must have been a very .. very anxious time for you, I think.

LINE It was.

GILLARD Yes. And a good job we had people like you and David at the head, I think, in those days. What about the .. the .. I was going to .. do you mind if we revert to Radio 2 for a minute ..

LINE Please.

GILLARD What was the speech/music ratio on .. on .. on Radio 2, for example? Would you .. would it be half and half or would there be more music ..

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LINE No, it ..

GILLARD .. than speech?

LINE .. was .. certainly predominantly music. There wasn't all that much in the way of speech. Certain shows like the **John Dunn Show** have always been .. have always had more speech in it than the **Jimmy Young Show.** But there were a lot of pure music sequences really , with just a little bit of chat in between from whoever was presenting. So I would say it was .. I don't really want to put a figure on it because it depends on what time of day you were listening but it was certainly very much a music network, music led.

GILLARD Yes, yes. I thought it was, yes. Nice point to make. Yes. In .. was Radio 2 then, still sticking there for a moment , and subsequently in your time as Controller, was it a generic .. as in .. to .. using .. using the fanciful word that was popular at the time, was it a special ist network or a mixed network?

LINE Well, it had a lot of things in it so it was hard to say that it was a specialist network but I always wanted to call it the entertainment network because I thought that that reflected what Radio 2 was trying to do. It was trying to entertain people and it had in it things like, of course, there was music but there was also sport and there was a little bit of religion and .. You know, these things were all done in an entertaining way and one hoped that one could, by calling it the entertainment network, pool together some of these rather disparate things because music and sport tended to war with each other a little bit. Those that liked music were very sad if their programmes disappeared for Wimbledon or whatever it happened to be, they very much wanted to hear music all the time. And the sports people had a huge thirst and appetite for more sport. So there was always this slight problem of trying to please the two audiences. I

Under copyright

thought by calling it entertain .. the entertainment network it would probably best describe what we were trying to do and would embrace both sides and perhaps bring them together.

GILLARD Yes. I used to think of it as the middle of the road network but maybe that's not accurate and I may .. perhaps Radio 4 was more that.

LINE Well, I always thought of Radio 4 as the .. the speech network really . I mean, it's always been our only real speech network hasn 't it.

GILLARD Yes. Well anyway, you became Controller Radio 2 ..

LINE Yes.

GILLARD .. from being Chief Assistant , Radio 4.

LINE Not quite. No, I was Head of the Music Department in between.

GILLARD Oh yes.

LINE Yes. After I was Chief Assistant , Radio 4, I went back as the Head of Radio 2 and really spent ten years in a very influential position because first of all I was the Head of Radio 2 Music, then I became Controller and Head of Radio 2 Music - my old post lapsed and I was also running the Music Department. So five years of each means that for ten years I was really very much leading the policies of the place.

Under copyright

GILLARD Yes. And .. did that continue till the end or was somebody else then brought in .. to look after the ..

LINE **No,** eventually they did recreate the post of (LAUGHS) Head of Radio 2 Music .. and you know how these things do .. go at the BBC - sometimes they lose a post, then it's added again later on. But it .. actually it was very demanding .. I was really doing rather too much then . It's hard to run a department and be Controller , although it was just necessary at the time .. there was a period when we restructured and it seemed like a good idea. It was really rather a lot to do and so eventually we recreated the post.

GILLARD When you took over Radio 2 as Controller, did you feel there was things that were urgently necessary that needed to be done .. that Radio 2 was ..

LINE Yes, I did .. I certainly did. I think I began really .. could I just talk first of all about what I started to do ..

GILLARD Oh do.

LINE .. when I was first Head of Radio 2 Music because .. the first thing I did was to introduce a proper music policy . It may seem very strange for a music network but by day no-one quite knew what they were meant to be playing. People were just playing whatever took their fancy in a way and they vaguely knew it was Radio 2 but they didn't know how to judge the music. And we .. came up with some watch words .. I came up with some watch words - four of them. And they were 'melody ' - everything on that network should be melodic, it should be a melodic sound ; 'familiarity' - I wanted a spine of familiar music because that would hold people with us .. people .. all research demonstrates people like to hear things that they know, with the odd surprise; 'breadth' - I wanted great breadth of styles. I didn't just want us to be playing old records or old pop hits, I wanted some of that, of course, but also all sorts of other

Under copyright

music. I wanted to hear folk and jazz and country and military bands and even yodelling, whatever you like, during the day. So that there was a real tapestry of music, a lot of different textures of music; and a final word was 'excellence'.. I mean, obviously everything must be particularly good of its kind .. I wanted standards. I also tried to introduce a policy for presenters so that .. In the old days when presenters went on leave, as Jimmy Young went away for three weeks, quite often they would just use a staff announcer or something which, nothing particularly wrong with that but it .. it failed really to get us the publicity that I thought we were so lacking. People didn't know much about Radio 2 and I wanted to really put it on the map. So whenever one of our presenters went away, we started having stars in - all sorts of extraordinary people. I mean , Neil Kinnock sitting in for Jimmy Young; John Stalker sitting in for John Dunn. These were not people who could do it all the time but they were .. they were guests on the network, they brightened it up, people were listening just to see what on earth happened, you know .. what is .. what is Neil Kinnock going to say today? And it was a very exciting time because it meant that the papers were often you know showing much more interest in the network and trying to find out what we were going to do, who we were going to book in the way of star names. We had Earl Spencer , Diana's father, doing his own series of classical music and .. I always thought it looked very strange in **Radio Times** - it just said, " Eight o'clock, Earl Spencer .. it might have .. you know, it looked a bit like Duke Ellington or whatever .. (LAUGHS) We had Norma Major doing a Christmas special for us, choosing her own classical choice. All sorts of actors, characters from **Eastenders .** It was just nice to have different voices in there bringing their own personalities to the network. Sir Dirk Bogart sat in for David Jacobs while he was taking some holiday. It was good and exciting to have these different people working for us. So I'd got all that going .. that was going along quite nicely. But the real urgency, I thought, when I became Controller was to give the network a little more gravitas .. a bit more bottom. I thought it was a bit light .. it needed to be properly distinctive in order to survive in this new world of commercial competition. So I .. my .. set about as Controller making sure that we did an

Under copyright

appropriate amount of social action work. I extended the Religious programming. I tried to bring more accountability to the network through programmes like **It's Your Radio 2** where we took public meetings on the road .. I started a Radio 2 lecture. I gave higher profile to live music and we did much more of it. introduced arts programming, documentaries, features .. and a very strong spine of news always - breaking news as it happened whenever we could, Budget Specials, by-election coverage. I tried to make sure that Radio 2, while remaining accessible, definitely popular and definitely middle of the road, as you would put it, had at the same time its own voice in all these different genres of programming which it wasn't covering before I joined.

GILLARD And when you envisaged your audience, was it a middle aged, elderly .. what sort of audience was it?

LINE Well the audience has always been .. the medium age of the audience was something like 63 I think when I took over and it's not much less now. I think that is who's going to listen. It is very largely retired people who have the time to listen who really enjoy the company. A lot of lonely people use Radio 2 as a real friend, a friend in the corner of the room. It's .. it's company for people; Two 's company was all .. always our slogan and it's largely of course for .. for mature people. I tried not to put an age limit on it, though you do need to know who you're playing to. I tried to say it was radio for grown-ups, radio for the mature listener, as opposed to the kids on One.

GILLARD We've already talked about needletime . But I'd like to ask you, were there any record restrictions in your day or had they all been .. had been .. banished?

LINE I think they'd more or less gone by the time I was Head of Music.

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GILLARD You could play as many records as you liked?

LINE I think we could but we often chose not to because we had the money to be able to employ musicians and to do things which were either not available on record like .. you know, original works or artists playing songs that they hadn't recorded. We had the concert orchestra, we had the big band .. you know, we wanted very much, especially in our specialist programmes in the evening which is a really marvellous part of Radio 2. The evenings are something I was very very proud of with all these different special interest programmes. That was all live .. one .. mostly they tended not to want to play records. They wanted to record people who perhaps weren't available elsewhere.

GILLARD Yes. I was always appreciative of the fact that you made record programmes more than just a collection of discs.

LINE Oh yes, yes. Well the record ..

GILLARD I mean, the **John Dunn Show** for example.

LINE That's right. Well, there I would really encourage them to go to town with all .. sort of different sorts of music which is available on record because it's a great shame just to play one sort when there is .. you know, all these marvellous records sitting in the library. We had this huge asset, the Gramophone Library, and I just urged the producers to go in there and find terrific things, otherwise people were tending just to have a little cupboard of records in their office and .. and just put up their hand and take the latest whatever it was and play it and you know, this is just not a very interesting way to programme is it? You actually need to hear all sorts of different sounds not to know what's coming, otherwise you might just as well put on a cassette.

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GILLARD Yes, I suppose .. I'm thinking of what you .. you call a sequence programme.

LINE Yes.

GILLARD But .. one would get a record or two and then somebody interesting and quite unexpected for a minute or two.

LINE Yes .. yes John Dunn and his various guests and .. yes .. oh it was a fascinating programme .. I've always learnt a lot from that, as I'm sure many of our listeners do.

GILLARD Yes but it was quite an innovation in its way I think.

LINE Yes. I'm trying to think whether it was already going - I think it was but that's exactly the sort of thing .. I was trying to encourage, intelligent speech.

GILLARD Yes.

LINE What about .. what about drama?

LINE I have of late introduced some drama. It's in fact only just at its starting point but we started asking the drama department to do adaptations of airport fiction .. that sort .. those sort of big books that sell a lot of .. copies and .. popular drama, quite a lot of readings .. and also drama readings .. it's gone out of my head what I was going to say there Frank, I'm sorry.

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GILLARD Never mind. I was going to ask you about soaps, I mean , it's a network where one would expect to find a soap opera of some kind.

LINE I think it is. I remember the experience though of **Waggoner's Walk** which just wasn't all that popular with the audience .. it used to halve the audience. There'd be music and there would be **Waggoner's Walk** and then half the audience would just turn off because they didn't want to hear it. So I think it's one of those things which I always slightly resisted .. I didn't ever have a soap. I think there is an argument for having one and maybe my successor will come up with one. But I didn't personally introduce the soap. I helped to axe **Waggoner's Walk** as a matter of fact because it was so expensive and in Charles McLennand's time we needed to make some savings and that .. that was what we chose to .. to get rid of and actually the figures went up when it went.

GILLARD What about sport?

LINE Sport was with us initially and then of course has its own channel in 5Live now. But as I say, it was always a slight problem to accommodate spo rt. We were able to split for some time and put the music on FM and the sport on Medium W ave . But later we weren't able to do that and it was then very difficult to know what to cover and I was very glad that it got its proper coverage in 5Live.

GILLARD Yes. Did you go for any particular kind of sport .. to include when you were running it? You ..

LINE No I really .. I went for what the Sports Department recommended. The major matches of all sorts, you know. Wimbledon, major football - certainly we would be' inund ated by Olympics if we

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were doing it at the moment. But one was slightly selective. Cricket was on Three anyway, so we didn't bother about that but other .. other wise just tried to give a pretty good mixed diet. But it was most .. it was commentary. It was not actually Sports programmes.

GILLARD And did you do any big OBs of ceremonial events and those sort of occasions or did you .. was that Radio 4 material?

LINE We were just starting to do some of those really. I got John Dunn to do .. ah, what was it? It wasn't the .. I think it might have been the Maundy Thursday Service. Certainly we did carry Trooping the Colour one year when Radio 4 wasn't able to take it. We did cover some of the big events, yes. We always did Remembrance Sunday and we were always there for that but we were just sort of getting really into that field. Four, I think would like to see Two do more of .. or in the old way .. when Michael Green was the Controller, we were just starting to talk about maybe moving some of the major events over to Two where they could find a very good home because so many of them were so much music based. So they were quite comfortably .. they sat quite comfortably on Two as they were music based events.

GILLARD Mm. But you managed to give Radio 2 a distinctive feel. I mean ..

LINE That's what I was trying to do.

GILLARD Nobody gave you a written directive to do that. It was up to you to invent the feel, wasn't it?

LINE Yes it was. I did talk a lot to David Hatch who was the Mana·ging Director so .. because he understood the network well having been its Cont roller, I tried to carry on what he had started doing and I think that we both understood that in order for Radio 2 to survive it had to become a broad

Under copyright

and .. sensible network, you know .. not just a chap and a pile of records. It had to have much more to it. It had to be ..

Side A ends

Continues on Side B

LINE .. work to do to make sure it didn't and that that headline never appeared again. What I felt is that we've always been the soft option. A number of people have tried to get rid of Radio 2 because they haven't understood it. The .. the culture in BBC Radio has always been one of people from journalistic backgrounds, they would like opera, they would like the ballet .. they would like classical music. They didn't really understand what Radio 2 was about. They didn't really understand popular culture and I think that has been a great drawback to Radio 2 .. that it's many years been misunderstood and underestimated. No longer, I'm happy to say, because David Hatch understood popular culture, so did Liz Forgan and you know it's now very much got its own due. But in the early days it was quite a fight really to explain to people what we were doing and why it was important.

GILLARD It's a very interesting account from Lord Rees-Mogg who was Vice Chairman of the Governors about the presentation of Black Spot to the Governors' Annual Conference which at that time was held at a place called Elvethan Hall and .. and .. Checkland, in particular, who'd been a member of the Black Spot group was quite certain that Radio 2 ought to go in order to release the money that was needed for other things. And it was Rees-Mogg who blocked it, he says, because he'd been in bed .. you know, this is what a Governor always says to you .. you know .. as if he's paying you an enormous .. "I've had a few days in bed and so I've been able to listen to the Radio, Frank."

LINE (LAUGHS)

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GILLARD But anyway, he'd been in bed and he .. listened to the radio in bed and he had fully approved .. it's incredible that a man of .. of the .. Reith-Mogg .. Rees-Mogg type should .. should fall for Radio 2 in the way that he did but he blocked it, he says.

LINE I'm immensely glad he was ill. I'm glad he .. that he actually was stricken for those few days .. it might have been a quite different future for everyone if not.

GILLARD Well you were determined and he was determined and between the two of you, you saved it anyway and there it is. And now, of course, it's .. it's .. what is it .. Network of the Year or something?

LINE Station of the Year we were in the years I left. Yes, we've just been superseded by 5Live, but we had a glorious year as Station of the Year and it was a very proud moment because I really felt that .. you know, everything had been vindicated by then. It was so lovely for the staff. They were so .. rejoicing was just paramount the day that we got that award. It was brilliant.

GILLARD Mm. Well many congratulations on it.

LINE Thank you.

GILLARD What about the loss of the Medium Wave because eventually you went entirely FM didn't you. Did you drop a lot of listeners on that?

LINE We reckon that we lost about half a million. I don't know what happened to them but I just don't think they ever found us again or wearied of looking for us. But we had a huge campaign to make sure we took most of them with us. It was a very long and wearisome process, keep on explaining time and time again .. (BACKGROUND NOISE) .. goodness me.

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(CUT)

GILLARD Having dealt with the extraneous noise, I'm going to ask .. I'm going to .. going to ask Frances if she will start again with the matter of the .. of .. of the .. of the enormous distinction of becoming not Radio 2 under threat, but Radio 2, the network ..

LINE Station of the Year. Sony Award for Station of the Year. Yes, it was a great honour. It was an absolutely terrific moment to go up and accept that and I was just so pleased for the staff. I thought all the policies had been vindicated, all the hard work had paid off and the rejoicing in Western House which is our .. where all the Radio 2 staff live was great. They really were dancing in the aisles when they heard it. It was terrific news and we were all very excited.

GILLARD Yes, jolly good. What about the expansion of commercial radio in Britain. Did you hit you very much?

LINE Oh inevitably. Of course, Radio 1 was at the forefront of the fight but as time went on, it wasn't just pop stations, there were all sorts of gold stations playing easy listening hits, all sorts of stations which appealed to the older audience. We are now absolutely in the front line along with everybody else really. I mean, the .. even Radio 3 has Classic FM up against it ; Four has got competition. All of us are now absolutely in front line positions against the commercial .. competition. (DRILLING IN BACKGROUND)

GILLARD Really, yeah. What about independent produc.. productions and producers? Were you able to use them very much?

LINE Yes, quite a lot. I actually was pretty pleased with the advent of the independent sector. I found there were some very good

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people out there who had a good understanding of the network and its needs. I found that we were getting good product from them and better product from in-house because it put people on their mettle. They were so terrified of losing the commissions that they started to really work at coming up with wonderful ideas and this was tremendously encouraging. (DRILLING)

LINE He's out the front now, isn't he?

GILLARD Is he the same ..?

LINE Yes. (LAUGHS) I think he thinks ..

GILLARD Well if we can shut these doors, we'll shut him out ..

LINE I am sorry, Frank.

GILLARD Yeah, that's all right.

(CUT)

Well after yet another interruption (LAUGHTER) .. which we think we've now dealt with, I'll ask the question again.
You were able to make some use of independent producers when that system began to be introduced into the BBC.

LINE Yes. I was very pleased when the independent sector started to .. to grow and to offer ideas to Radio 2 because I felt not only did I find there were a lot of very able producers out there who understood the network's needs and coming up with good ideas, fresh ideas. But also it put the in-house producers on their mettle. They started to really rack their brains and come up with much better ideas for the network than I've ever had before. So it

Under copyright

improved quality all round and gave me a very good choice. I could always go elsewhere if I didn't like what was happening in-house. Very good all round I thought ..

GILLARD Yeah. You think there's scope there for further development?

LINE Oh certainly.

GILLARD Mm. When you became an all FM channel, were .. did you exploit the .. the high quality of FM in any way?

LINE Yes, we pushed very hard the message that you know, you've now got better .. better quality music than ever before. This was really the only way to listen to radio .. radio music. It was terrible .. I mean, if you think of people listening on Medium Wave, wonderful to have stereo. Just the only way to listen.

GILLARD What about relationships with your colleagues in television? Were you two quite separate empires or did you have any association?

LINE Pretty separate actually, yes. Amazingly so. I suppose it's just the geographical separation with, you know, television functioning over in Shepherds Bush and we were over in the West End. We never saw each other for many years. But at .. when I left, you know, there was a coming together going on where we were starting to do things together, to talk a lot and have meetings and I think that's really a result of John Birt's new policies really. We had also people like Jim Moir I'm sure will take that on because he came straight from Television, so has many contacts over there. I suppose we were just a little nervous of Television. We thought we were two different

Under copyright

mediums and we thought we didn't want to be taken over by big brother so we got on and did our own thing.

GILLARD Yes. But did you lose any programme ideas to Television? I mean, they've .. they've certainly taken over some Light Entertainment shows.

LINE No, it was Light Entertainment that was feeling the brain drain . That was always a great difficulty for them because anything that they did that was good was then snapped up and .. it was okay. I mean, to a certain extent that's okay because there was some seed money coming in from Television to help to get new writers and new performers going but the danger is that you just lost too much and there was no possibility of replacing it and Radio was always left the poorer.

GILLARD Yes. I wondered .. I remember in my time that we had .. did have a fair amount of integration on the Drama side and indeed, Television authorised the Head of Radio Drama to .. to contract any promising script writers without even reference to them.

LINE Mm.

GILLARD Giving the BBC the first call on .. on .. on three .. the first three of their scripts .

LINE Yes ..

GILLARD I don't think it lasted long but there .. that kind of development I would have thought is possible.

LINE Mm.

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GILLARD Never mind. Finding talent, in other words.

LINE Oh yes. It happens certainly in the Light Entertainment field.

GILLARD It does, yes, yes, yes. I'd like .. what about some of these special projects of yours. Can we have a little more detail on them. You had the young musician competition ..

LINE Yes, that was something ..

GILLARD What was that?

LINE .. that was something I invented. It's been going for about five years now. It's a competition for young musicians who intend to become professionals and it happens annually. Their reward being that they have a showcase on Radio 2 and a number of guest appearances in things like **Friday Night is Music Night** and our live music shows , playing with the concert orchestra. It's .. it's a very special way of identifying new talent and encouraging young players. A very popular project..

GILLARD Was it?

LINE I'm pleased with the way it's gone, yes.

GILLARD And then what about the Young Tradition?

LINE Well that's a similar thing, a competition for young players .. in the field of .. as you would expect, traditional music. That , again, was started during my time, I think, as the Head of the Music Department. That's again, been very successful in identifying and encouraging new young

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players in that field. There was no reward for players in .. in the folk and traditional music field and there is now and it's very well thought of.

GILLARD Mm. But you've got a special interest in folk music anyway.

LINE Well I have because I produced folk music for many years and through that, my husband Jim Lloyd who has for twenty-five years, twenty-six years now, been the presenter of **Folk on Two** for Radio 2. So yes, I suppose I do have a special .. special interest in that. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD And now, you mentioned earlier the Radio 2 Lecture. Was this an annual thing?

LINE Yes, it sounds a bit unlikely doesn't it but I thought well, why should the devil have all the good tunes? Radio 4 has the Reith Lecture, why shouldn't we have a Radio 2 Lecture about popular culture? And we got .. a splendid man whose name I've forgotten. Not Richard Digance, what's his name? Oh.

GILLARD Never mind ..

LINE Oh ..

GILLARD .. leave a gap.

LINE .. it's terribly important. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD Oh right .. our normal lecturer was .. whoever this man was and I have to think of his name .. it's absolutely terrible. Richard Stilgoe .. how could I forget?

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GILLARD Oh Richard St.. start again then.

LINE Yes.

GILLARD We got Richard Stilgoe.

LINE Our initial .. our inaugural lecturer was Richard Stilgoe , I think three years ago and .. he did an absolutely splendid piece for us. We had a Black Tie event, everybody came and sat in the Council Chamber in Broadcasting House and he delivered his lecture and we broadcast it and really it created a lot of interest. People were intrigued , puzzled, wondered what was going on here .. you know, Radio 2 Lecture .. and most people took to it very well. So it's now become an annual event. That's right, yes.

GILLARD Is it live or recorded?

LINE Recorded. Sheridan Morley just did the last one this year and in between Terry Wogan did one and there was someone else as well .. it's been going four years I think.

GILLARD Then you had days out. What were they?

LINE Well, they were days celebrating some sort of event. We went to Paris for the day for no particular reason , except that Paris in the Spring is so lovely. So we took the entire network and the Concert Orchestra over to Paris and allowed our listeners to have a sort of refreshing day out with us, which we hoped they enjoyed and we subsequently went over to Rome doing a similar exercise. We had days to mark an anniversary of the Light Programme. We recreated the whole of the Light Programme which was a delightful exercise and we resurrected things like **Housewives' Choice** and **Music While You**

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Work and **Workers' Playtime** and that was a very interesting day. We had a day for the various wartime anniversaries and marked those all in different ways. It was just another little way to give an interest to the schedule and to create attention for Radio 2 without spending a lot of money.

GILLARD And you had seasons. I suppose for the same .. for the same sort of reason or were they different?

LINE Seasons really were my way of saying look at all the things that we do on Radio 2. So we decided that we would do a number of seasons just pointing out what we did. We had a Comedy Season where one tried to concentrate the opening of many new ser.. as many new series as possible and specials into a week so that you had a week where the accent was very much on comedy. We had a Ballet Season where we had the Bolshoi Ballet playing for us, which is .. dancing for us accompanied by the Concert Orchestra and ballet on Radio may sound strange but it was a terrific season. We had a thing which has been very successful called **World of Faith** which .. was the Religious Season and all the different programmes tried to find some little way to .. to offer a small bit of religious programming so that that also ran over, I think ten days that one. But they've been very successful and what they do show is the diversity of Radio 2. Again without spending a lot of money, it's just rescheduling programmes so that they're all happening and there's an actual spotlight on .. on an area of our broadcasting which can attract the press, which will please the listener without boring them and which will just draw attention to what we're doing.

GILLARD What about religion generally. Were you able to give it reasonable coverage?

LINE Well I extended it quite considerably. There's always been **Good Morning Sunday** - a very successful programme - and

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Songs of Praise and of course, **Pause for Thought** which is the most heard religious broadcast of .. I think it is .. the network. It's only a little short piece but it's in the Terry Wogan Show. I extended that so that we had four editions of that, two during the night and two during the day and .. this man again .. sorry.
I was also, as I say, we had this .. this season which was very successful and became an annual event. We had the Choir Girl of the Year going but only as a rather sort of quiet little competition. We've extended that and made that very special, put the spotlight on it. And generally, I mean, always at Christmas , at Easter, at any occasions when one could do something special , we worked very hard to give religion its head and to make sure it was properly represented. Because the old audience love it and have always been very receptive to Religious Broadcasting programme .. Broadcastings programmes.

GILLARD And the RB Department, they responded too to the opportunity?

LINE Oh they loved it, yes. They were very pleased to have all the extra air-time and rose to the challenge beautifully.

GILLARD But you were asking them to be unconventional weren't you, in terms of Religious Broadcasting really in many ways?

LINE Adventurous rather than unconventional , I think. You know, I was asking them to concentrate on a different approach, an entertaining approach, an accessible approach, a multicultural approach.

GILLARD Mm.

LINE And they were able to do that very well, yes.

GILLARD What about Tuesday documentaries?

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LINE Well again I thought, I suppose it's the Radio 4 experience brought me back thinking well, you know, everything is taken very seriously in Radio 4. We should take things which suit Radio 2 seriously and we should do documentaries about composers' lives, we should do really most of them that weren't musically based but not all of them. We were able to start doing documentaries of all sorts .. I'm sorry .. I've lost my thread 'cos I'm distracted by this man out here.

GILLARD Oh .. start again. Documentaries.

LINE What can I say about documentaries?

GILLARD Tuesday's .. were they every Tuesday?

LINE Yes, they did tend to be on Tuesdays. Really I was trying once again to improve the speech on Radio 2. So we introduced documentaries, features, readings. I tried to get some .. take some of the leaves out of the Radio 4 book where I've learnt so much and to .. to start featuring documentaries and features in a Radio 2 way.

GILLARD Mm.

LINE I don't think I can say much more about that.

GILLARD No, that's all right. What about the .. the .. the multicultural work of Radio 2? You've had performers and staff people even, had you not or announcers anyway who were Asian, who were in Africa.

LINE Well we've been working very hard at that. Working to make sure that the .. that our presenters appropriately represent the population as a whole. There were very few women. I worked hard to get women

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on the air and to make sure they were getting chances. I made sure that we had got some black presenters, some Asian presenters, as you say. We created a slot, a sort of nursery slopes first thing in the morning so that we gave particular chances to women and to black and Asian presenters, to try and get them on, to get them used to the style of Radio 2 and then to give them their head and try and bring them into main daytime programming. While still, of course, using the very experienced people like Trevor McDonald and Moira Stua rt, no problem with them at all. But I wanted to get some new voices on as well. And I feel now that we've stopped being just a white male channel which we were in danger of being at one point and we now sound much more like the population as a whole.

GILLARD Your .. your presentation technique anyway was quite different, wasn't it. I mean, you didn't have formal announcements between one programme and the next.

LINE No.

GILLARD I found myself doing work for you where I had to announce myself as it were.

LINE That's right. We tried to be seamless, so that the listener wouldn't notice the elision from one programme into the next because quite often they would hear The time is twelve o'clock" or whatever and they would think, right, I'll turn off now and go and do something else. We found that it was much better to have during the day, the presenters handing one to the other and where it wasn't possible in the evenings, to have people just saying, 'I'm .. I'm Frank Gillard, good evening" and introducing themselves and then getting on with it, rather than having this strange little no-man's-land where an announcer would pop up and tell you what the last programme was and what the next one was going to be. We just got on with it without that.

GILLARD Mm.

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LINE We used to have announcers but no longer. Well, the announcers that we have read the news and .. and do our trailers and .. of course interact with Terry Wogan in the morning show.

GILLARD Yes, yes. And lastly, what about relations with the hierarchy. I mean, did you feel that the .. at the Board of Management level, the Director-General, level that people were noting what you were doing, were interested in what you were doing? Did you ever see the Director-General? Did you meet with him or ..

LINE I certainly saw all Director-Generals .. well, I saw them about but it was really when Mike Checkland was in office that one really became aware of a Director-General showing an interest in things and certainly John Birt we saw a great deal of. I think my sorrow always was that the Governors didn't spend more time listening and certainly didn't listen much to Radio 2. It wasn't their particular taste and so I always felt that they could have done more towards supporting us, although they listened politely and you know, if you explained what you were doing, were always very pleasant about it. I never thought they actively listened to us or really knew what we were up to. But the Board of Management, pretty good. I mean , I thought they certainly knew what was going on towards the end because there was more and more opportunities to meet them and to explain your policies and your thoughts and your aspirations for the channel and Managing Directors, certainly I mean, I've always seen a lot of Managing Directors and .. 'cos David and Liz Forgan have been excellent. You know, always most supportive and helpful.

GILLARD Well lastly, the QBE. That was a great .. great triumph.

LINE What a ..

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GILLARD Wonderful reward.

LINE Absolutely tremendous.

GILLARD Extremely well deserved. Gave enormous pleasure up and down the BBC ..

LINE Oh, I was delighted.

GILLARD .. to see you in that list.

LINE Yes, I was really really delighted, very honoured . Had a lovely time at the Palace and it was a very very proud moment.

GILLARD Who actually gave it to you, the Queen?

LINE It was the Queen , yes.

GILLARD Oh you were lucky.

LINE Yes .. oh I was thrilled. It was really lovely. Just had a wonderful day and ..

GILLARD Yes.

LINE .. just the most exciting occasion. A day I shall never ever forget and a marvellous culmination of my career. I was thrilled with it.

GILLARD And you .. when .. when you were in the ballroom or wherever it was this happened, there was a band up in the gallery playing music.

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LINE Playing away, yes. I strode along to it. I think they were playing "Blue Tango" when I came on. (LAUGHS)

GILLARD Well I thought perhaps they might have asked you .. what they should play for you?

LINE There were no special requests. I'm afraid I didn't have any input into the musical programming for a change but it was a very nice and very .. very elegant occasion.

GILLARD When I got my CBE , the band up there was a string band .. Royal something or .. Royal Marines .. I don't know ..

LINE Yes.

GILLARD .. yes, String Band. Anyway, and at the moment when she was about to hang this thing round my neck, they started playing 76 Trombones and.." (LAUGHTER) and I was convulsed with laughter. And she twigged it and she was too. So comical, these fiddles playing away.

LINE Oh yes, wonderful.

GILLARD All about seventy-six trombones. Anyway, it must have been a great .. a great finish.

LINE Ah, tremendous finish. I think I left just at the right time and with some grace really. It was just about time to go - Station of the Year, OBE, out. I was ..

GILLARD Very good, yes. And you look back on the BBC.. you're glad you spent your career there?

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LINE Oh, I had a wonderful time Frank, I really did. I thoroughly enjoyed my life at the BBC. It was .. there's no better way I think to have spent it. I thoroughly enjoyed and I'm very dedicated to public service and I feel I've given a lot of pleasure to a lot of people and had a lot of pleasure myself.

GILLARD Well that's .. that's wonderful to hear and I'm sure you paid back into the BBC far far more really than the BBC ever gave to you. You'll be much missed there but you'll also be very very well and gratefully remembered, I assure you. Now let's wind up this interview. Thank you so much.

LINE Thank you Frank, that was lovely.

(CUT)

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