Omnibus Encyclopedia Article

Omnibus

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Omnibus

Produced and funded by the Radio and Television Workshop of the Ford Foundation under the direction of Robert Saudek, *Omnibus* introduced Sunday afternoon and evening commercial television audiences in the 1950s to a wide variety of programs of cultural distinction. Hosted by Alistair Cooke, the BBC's (British Broadcasting Corporation) American correspondent, the 90 minute *Omnibus* was carried by the CBS network from 1952-1956; by ABC from 1956-1957; and by NBC from 1957-1959. NBC continued *Omnibus* on an irregular basis during the 1960-1961 season, and ABC revived it briefly in 1980. Notable segments included James Agee's *Abraham Lincoln—The Early Years,* which appeared in installments during the 1952-1953 season; Orson Welles' television debut in *King Lear* in 1953; and concerts conducted by Leonard Bernstein during the 1954-1956 seasons. *Omnibus* helped establish an elite audience for programming later carried by PBS (Public Broadcasting Service).

Further Reading:

Bergreen, Laurence. *James Agee: A Life.* New York, E.P. Dutton, 1984.

McNeil, Alex. *Total Television: A Comprehensive Guide to Programming from 1948 to the Present.* New York, Penguin Books, 1991.