“Actually,” says Alison Larkin in a crisp and lilting English accent, “I record in a TARDIS.”

The British phone booth/spaceship in which the BBC’s Doctor Who has been traveling the universe since 1963? She chortles. “Actually, it’s the door of a phone box attached to the door of my recording studio behind my house in western Massachusetts. But I call it my TARDIS because narration is like time travel. Think of everywhere I’ve been.”

Neverland, for instance, with Peter Pan. That performance, in 2016, won Larkin an Earphones Award.

She also won an Earphones Award for her first audiobook, a recording of her novel The English American. The story, which was a one-woman comedy show before becoming a novel, is based on her experience of being born American and then being adopted by an English couple and raised in England. “I was extremely excited when I heard about the award—although I was so new to audiobooks that I didn’t know such a thing existed. Imagine! My mother wondered if someone might appear with earphones on a cushion.”

Larkin, who is a classically trained actress, as well as a comedian and novelist, then recorded all 12 books in Arthur Ransome’s cherished English children’s series, Swallows and Amazons. “That’s when I fell in love with narrating, and when the producers discovered I can do any accent. I love the craft. It’s never boring because it’s always different. And having children, it’s lovely that I can close the TARDIS door at three o’clock and go be with them.”

Of course, nothing is perfect. Isolation stalks narrators, who almost always work alone in what amounts to sound-proof box. So Larkin has begun to mix it up. In 2016, she founded her own production company, Alison Larkin Presents. “It’s terribly exciting because you get to choose the project—and experiment!”

For example, she and narrator James Warwick adapted Oscar Wilde’s Importance of Being Earnest and recorded it together. “We were in the same room, and, as James said, ‘It was bloody brilliant!’” Her production of Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice incorporated several popular songs of the Regency period—“what Jane might have listened to”—and captivated critic David Denby of the New Yorker. In the upcoming Devil’s Trill: A Mystery in Sonata-Allegro Form by violinist and writer Gerald Elias, Elias himself plays the violin. And her recent collection of classic fairy tales, Fairy Tales of the Fiercer Sex, includes only those in which girls aren’t victims. (Remember, Beauty does best the Beast.)

“Audio is at the beginning of a new heyday. Actually, it’s thrilling. We’re just getting started on the forms it can take. What matters is compelling and gripping listening. It’s like the Wild West!” says the English American.—Aurelia C. Scott

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THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST
Oscar Wilde
Read by James Warwick, Alison Larkin

What is arguably Oscar Wilde’s most popular work has stood the test of time as a classic comedy. In this new audio edition, narrators James Warwick and Alison Larkin take on the roles of all nine characters. Both performers expertly create unique personalities for all the roles, showing the extent of their talents. Even with only two actors at work, it’s nearly impossible to confuse the characters except where Wilde intends. As the characters indulge in high jinks, Warwick and Larkin are a delightful combination—for both listeners familiar with the story and newcomers. Get ready to listen and laugh as Wilde’s classic comedy comes to life once more. A.G.M.

Alison Larkin Presents 1.5 hrs. Unabridged
Trade Ed.: $6.95

Warwick and Larkin are a delightful combination.