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## “FOR MORE MUSIC YOU NEED MORE PEOPLE”

### An Englishman “Treads On Thin Ice”

A COMMENT on the growth of musical ability in New Zealand, and the need for fostering it, came the other day from a New Zealander in London, Dr. Hugo Anson, who is Registrar at the Royal College of Music. Dr. Anson expressed the hope that “the same spirit which has given birth to this talent will always be at work to provide an adequate living for such musicians.” The talent he referred to was something he believed to be new:

*“When I left New Zealand many years ago,” he said, “there used to be occasional visits from famous soloists, a few choral performances (often very indifferent in quality) of ‘The Messiah’ and organ recitals in which admirable city organists would work wonders before small audiences on their unwieldy instruments by playing arranged chamber and orchestral works, besides also playing works not properly composed for their instrument and not the best fare for students.*

*“Something seems to have happened recently which indicates a new spirit. It is evident that music training is now more widespread, less inclined to be directed toward the mere playing of an instrument or the mere singing of an after-dinner ballad or two, and more inclined toward the expression of the best music by the best performance.”*

When we read these remarks in a Wellington paper the other day, we remembered having seen one of the examiners from Dr. Anson's institution in a Wellington coffee shop, and we soon ran him to earth—Lloyd Powell, who is a professor at the Royal College and is here examining for the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. Mr. Powell had toured the world as a concert pianist before he joined the staff of the Royal College in 1919, and since 1935 he has come to New Zealand three times. He knows Dr. Anson well, and as we discovered after we had been talking to him for a while, he also knows New Zealand and New Zealanders well.

#### It Boils Down To Population

“Well, first of all, of course I fully agree with Anson, and I was very interested indeed when I read his remarks,” said Mr. Powell. “But to tell you the truth I think the whole thing simply boils down to the question of population. Anson says your local musician needs background, and it's perfectly true, as my own work has shown me. But I don't see how you can give it to him here without more people in the country. I met a University man who's in Auckland now who wanted to learn to play the clarinet, but couldn't get hold of a decent one anywhere. I said: ‘Get another million people and you'll have plenty of clarinets’ and I think that's the answer to all these complaints.

“Some people are saying that fear alone will make New Zealand take in another million somehow now that ‘it's had a good fright.’ I know I'd be thrown

out of New Zealand if I went round saying this everywhere, but I honestly believe that from the musical point of view it would do a tremendous amount of good to land 50,000 Europeans of some sort, no matter how annoying you may find them—it's been made pretty plain that you won't get many English. It sounds like a platitude, but it's true that there can be no culture without a conflict of cultures; the mere presence of one body of people with a different viewpoint stimulates arguments and interest. Refugees like Bach and Beethoven and Mozart. They don't want to hear a modern English composer or a modern Russian, and that's a start for a good argument that will wake things up. But apart from the conflict aspect, you know without my having to point it out, that a population twice the size would support the orchestras, chamber music groups, choirs, and so on that are necessary to provide the background Anson wants you to have; also they could easily provide the support that would give professional performers their bread and butter.

“On the other hand, if New Zealand doesn't take a lead somehow and make its music its own property it might easily become dominated by its worship of overseas artists. Or Australia might become the centre for this part of the world and your best musicians might all go over there, and I'm sure New Zealanders don't want that, Pact or no Pact!”

#### Money Is Not Enough

“Do you think subsidies or straight-out economic assistance as suggested by Anson would be a good idea?”

“I'd say they would be a good start, but without the background you'll get nowhere, no matter how good your best artists are. When I say background I mean the constant opportunity to take part in music and to hear the best music performed in the actuality, instead of this leaving the radio on all day—which, by the way, a Plunket nurse told me was very bad for children's nerves; though I really think people are getting a bit more discriminating over the last few years. . . . To go back to what I was saying, it wouldn't be much use to entice the musicians that have left you to come back, or to persuade your incoming ones to stay unless you could really offer them an audience, and an audience that will take a lively interest. I don't like to put my foot in it too often—I know this is thin ice—and I don't know whether you want me to say it or not, but I really think that immigration of some sort is the only thing if you want results within the next 10 or 20 years.”

#### Music and Song

ASSOCIATED with Ivan Ditmas, who is known as “the wizard of the organ and piano,” is Anita Boyer, and together they are presenting a series of programmes of music and song, both popular and classical in 22B's Sunday matinee, at 2.30. Anita Boyer is a featured solo artist in New York, and figures in many coast-to-coast broadcasts in America.