

WE ARE ALL FOREIGNERS

Isador Goodman on Music and Musicians

TWO points of view on the ruling barring foreigners from membership of the Australian Musicians' Union were recently published in *The Listener*. The first was that of Eugene Goossens, director of the New South Wales Conservatorium, and conductor of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, who questioned whether Australia (particularly at its present stage of musical development) could entirely dispense with the cosmopolitan factor which had helped to make British and American orchestras what they were to-day. The second opinion came from Geoffrey Moore, Rotorua tenor, on his return from two-and-a-half years' study at the Sydney



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ISADOR GOODMAN

"Among musicians there can never be national or class distinctions"

Conservatorium. He said there was a very real fear among Australians that this country might be flooded with more musicians than it could afford to maintain.

Isador Goodman, the visiting pianist, whom *The Listener* interviewed the other day, said that if a country wanted progress, and by that he meant cultural development, even when there might be a temporary risk to certain individuals, the so-called foreigner should be given a fair hearing and accepted or discarded according to his merits—in much the same way as the music of "those dreadful foreigners" Chopin, Beethoven, Brahms, Liszt, Bach, Prokofieff, Vaughan Williams, William Walton and Benjamin Britten was accepted on its merits. "Aren't we all foreigners in some other country?" he asked.

Mr. Goodman said that for the last 15 years he had been abroad—in England, France, Italy, Germany, Holland and Switzerland—and he had a considerable knowledge of local conditions in those places, as well as in Australia, where he had lived for a number of years. This is his third tour of New Zealand—a country of which, he says, he has only a modest knowledge.

"My first reaction to all this controversy—if it is such—is to ask if Australians want purely Australian music and purely Australian musicians? Have New Zealanders similar desires? If so, we can immediately align those inclinations with the present tendencies in Russia to nationalise music in terms of political concepts, irrespective of whether music is understood as an expression of art or a broadening of experience for the people. My own view is that among musicians there can never be national or class distinctions. In the Dominions, which are comparatively young in all experiences, I should have thought there would be a great urge to learn more about other people and their ideas, and to enrich life here by those means."

"And what about the allegation that European musicians arrive in Australia under the Government immigration scheme as labourers or domestics, then get publicity by saying they are pianists or violinists who have studied under world-famous teachers?"

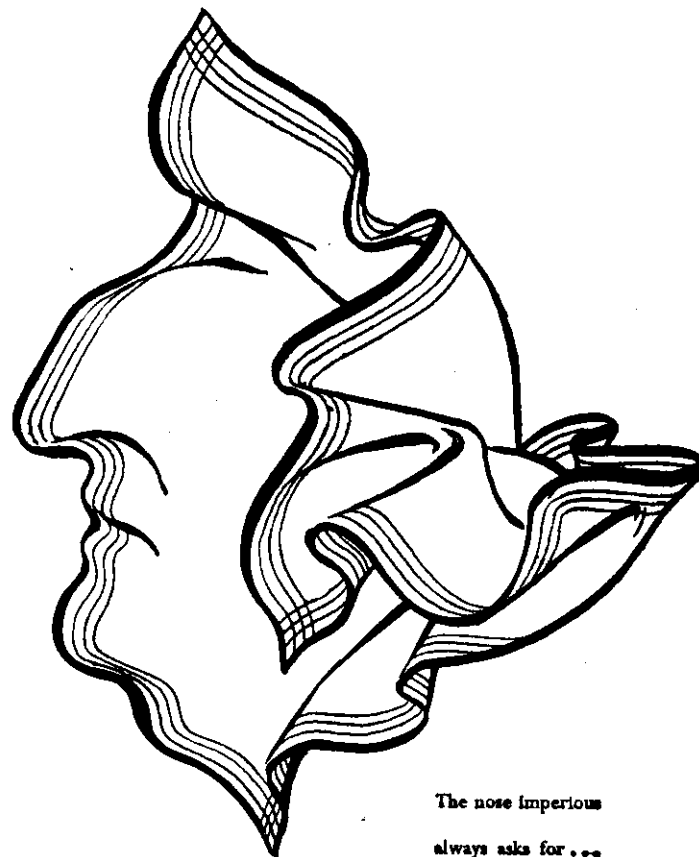
"I would refer people who hold those views to the aliens who were interned in Europe during the war and released after the war. To my knowledge there have been many exceptionally brilliant musicians, scientists and doctors among them. During their internment they were forced to be labourers, and so on, and their identity cards so described them. Who can blame them, therefore, if they now disclose their real talents?"

America's Proteges

The hub of the world of music to-day was America, said Mr. Goodman, and there one would find in the finest symphony orchestras musicians of every conceivable nationality—proud to call themselves Americans because they had adopted that country and it had been happy to adopt them. America had been enriched as perhaps no other country in the world in the sphere of music—"If you searched for the greatest pianists, violinists, cellists and singers, you would find them in one American town or another."

"This fear of intrusion by foreigners into the musical life of the Dominions gives rise to two thoughts as far as I am concerned. The first is that some foreign musicians might possibly (not necessarily) be superior; and if there is a great number of these and if the public inclination is for better and greater performances, then certainly, the livelihood of the local musician is temporarily in jeopardy. My second thought—and I dislike to harbour it even for a moment—is that there is a tendency to narrow-minded prejudice against anyone who comes from another country. It is amusing that so many people in the Dominions ridicule what they call a 'foreign accent' when they, themselves, are often quite incapable of speaking any language other than their own, whereas the much-scorned foreigner frequently speaks a number of languages—many of them fluently."

The first two of a series of studio recitals from the Main National stations by Isador Goodman will be heard from 2YA on Thursday, May 5, at 8.28 p.m., and on Sunday, May 8, at 8.5 p.m.



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