

Letter by Natalie Curtis to Ferruccio Busoni (New York, 2 April 1914)

331 west 16 th H. New York. April second 1914

My dear friend and honoured master!

I have been reading in the Musical Courier of your Berlin concerts and now comes this interesting little package from you, containing the annotated programs. How I wish that I might have been present at the performances, and how I hope that I may have the opportunity next year of hearing at least a few of these interesting new works which I am sure are “pioneers”, every one of them.

_Travel- ers launched on new sear, with all sails set!-

I rejoice in the news that you are to plan the Indian fantasia in America, so that I shall at least hear that. It will do great good, I am sure, in pointing the way to for a further development of our natives folk-material while being in itself a vivid creation of your own thought and poetic vision. I sent you a little paper that I wrote or a protest against the proposed methods of our Government to put “harmonies” (Richter, Jadassohn, Bussler assisting!) to the simpler native melodies and with the aid of a harmonium and out of tune piano, “teach” these versions To the Indian students, from whom the songs in their purity must first be Foilinged learnt by the white Teacher! We Anglo-Saxons have so little imagination, and must always assume that we know everything better than everyone else. To encourage native music we must “teach” Indians our Richterized arrange- ments of the Indians’ own melodies! (We never can be good learners, it seems, in our contact with the simpler people).

I am most anxious to hear the fantasia, to see the vision that you have seen and listen to the nature-voice that you have heard. I read that you are coming to this country in August. Do take “Beni” to the great West! I hope to be in Arizona and new mexico myself in August and September

— is there any chance of our meeting?

- Do let me know your plans! We took Kurt Schindler to some Indian ceremonies last summer in Arizona, and he was much impressed. I feel that the real American lies in the young west, -

not in our congested commercial Forms; I wish that I could convert myself into a „Thomas Cook and sons “ and escort you on a personally conducted tour through primitive America. Alas, that I am not a man! -

I hope that you will continue to keep me in mind, however, and that you will send me a line telling me where and when you will be in what places? Does Mrs. Busoni accompany you? -

With my affection -

and greetings to your
wife, and my congratula-
tions to you, believe me
as always.

Faithfully your friend

Natalie Curtis