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3/6

"FULL SPEED AHEAD WITH CULTURE"

Remarkable Career of Sol Hurok

THE coming visit to this country of the American violinist Isaac Stern, to give a series of concerts under NZBS auspices, provides New Zealand with a link with an American impresario who is perhaps the last of his almost legendary line. This impresario is Sol Hurok, by arrangement with whom Isaac Stern is to make his tour.

Hurok can claim to be the only independent showman still able to compete successfully with the big theatrical combines of to-day. Pavlova, Chaliapin, Elman, Gadske, Segovia are just a few of the names which have appeared on the billboards. Though he received little orthodox education and no artistic or musical training, the lack of these was compensated for in him by a happy knack of knowing what the public wants (or can be persuaded to want) and what it will pay its money to come and see. This useful attribute has won for Hurok an office on Fifth Avenue, a well-filled waistcoat, and a bankroll far too large for any wallet to contain.

Hardware the Hard Way

S. Hurok (as he refers to himself—it is never "I" nor "Solomon," nor even "Sol"), was born in Russia—in Pogor, to be precise—about 60 years ago. When he was 15, young Sol asked his father to let him go to near-by Kharkov to learn the hardware business. His father consented, gave him a liberal supply of expenses money, and the boy took his leave, going not to Kharkov, but to America, where he duly arrived, by way of Poland and Germany, with a little over a dollar left in his pocket. Luckily he had relatives in Philadelphia who took him in and suggested a career for him. Sol accepted their suggestion and within a week was out on the road with a peddler's basket on his arm. Though there may have been much to recommend his relatives' suggestion that this was the best way for him to learn something about this strange country and to master the everyday language of the people, the boy soon decided he was made for other things. Exactly what they were he was not sure, but he determined to find out. His determination led him into, and out of, 15 jobs in less than a year, the 15th proving no closer to his heart's desire than the first. He attributed this partly to the fact that he was too far removed from the centre of things, a state of affairs which he proceeded to remedy by moving to New York and taking a job as a clerk in a hardware store (the hardware business may have been in his blood—it was his father's occupation). Here he remained for a while, saving his earnings and paying occasional visits to the opera.

Down But Soon Up

Then abruptly, having saved what he considered to be a large enough sum (not much over £30) he rented a dance hall and persuaded the violinist Zimbalist to play there for the "culture-starved



SOL HUOK
New Zealand will have a link

proletariat." S. Hurok sold tickets himself, made more than £300, and then, in his own words, "got going full speed ahead in the culture line."

By 1923 he was making about 40,000 dollars a year: by 1925 he was bankrupt. He had gambled on one of his less fortunate ventures rather too heavily. But undismayed, he was soon at it again, and to-day he is back at the top.

"Audiences don't care what S. Hurok presents," he said modestly. "They know whatever S. Hurok presents is hokay."



BECAUSE he was unable to appear in all the New Zealand centres, and because he had received requests to be heard from many people unable to attend the city concerts, the American baritone JOHN CHARLES THOMAS (above) broadcast part of his final concert from the Auckland Town Hall. The broadcast, which the artist gave free, was made at his own request. It was relayed to all main National and Commercial stations and to Australia, where he had made many friends during his recent tour.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, AUGUST 22