

RACKET GUT AND PLANE WIRE

Stern's First "N.Z. Concert"

ALTHOUGH Isaac Stern's current tour is his first in New Zealand, it is not the first time he has played before New Zealanders, for he met Dominion airmen when he was touring the South Pacific with his pianist, Alexander Zakin, to entertain American troops. The concerts he has been giving here, however, are in striking contrast to the performance before the airmen.

While in the New Hebrides, Stern and Zakin were invited over to a New Zealand Air Force camp for the evening. They had just given a concert to the American Army, and so Stern left his violins behind. The New Zealanders asked him to play, and he made the excuse that he hadn't his "fiddle" with him. "That's all right," said the airmen, "we have one here."

"And they brought out their fiddle. It was black and had dust on it an inch thick. The E string was a piece of aeroplane wire and the A was made of tennis racket gut. However, I played it and we all sang community songs and had a jolly good time." The New Zealanders gave Zakin a pound of tea when they left, and as they both liked tea, and got only coffee at the American camps, it was a gift they highly appreciated.

On another occasion—also in the Pacific—they were driven down a mountain in a jeep from one station to another by New Zealanders—an event which has given Stern a nervous respect for New Zealand driving. Half way down the mountain they came face to face with a truck which blocked the road. The jeep went up the embankment, round the truck and back on to the road again. "I was hanging out the

side of the jeep nearest the embankment. I was clutching my violin with one hand, and yelling blue murder—all I could see was the ground of the embankment."

Stern also visited the North Atlantic to give concerts for troops. He was asked whether the cold had been a handicap in playing in such places as Greenland and Iceland. "No," he replied with a grin, "some of the Australian halls were a lot colder."

Nonetheless, he had thoroughly enjoyed his ten weeks in Australia. He had found audiences in the Commonwealth very appreciative, and though they might not be so sophisticated as some—"that will come with time"—they were eager to listen even to pieces they did not know. "This," Stern said, "made it very pleasant for us."

Asked about his most outstanding experiences in Australia, Stern mentioned playing with Goossens conducting and also under the baton of Rafael Kubelik. "It was an interesting thing," the violinist said, "that although Kubelik and I had completely dissimilar backgrounds, he having been nearly all the time in Europe and I in America, we had almost the same outlook on music." Kubelik was a fine conductor and although he was only 33 years of age, was amazingly experienced.

Stern also praised the work of the ABC in fostering musical culture in Australia. "They are doing an excellent job and are completely on the right path."

Other Australian experiences Stern recalled were his 27th birthday party, which continued into the early hours of the next morning, and the naming of two baby kangaroos in the Melbourne zoo after him and Zakin.



Sparrow photograph
STERN and ZAKIN joke over a discussion on the score during a rehearsal at the Auckland Town Hall

Stern's New Zealand visit is part of a tour, which in ten months has involved the giving of 130 concerts and travelling some 60,000 miles. He visited Canada, Cuba, and then gave about 90 concerts in America, before leaving for Honolulu, Australia and New Zealand. After his return to the States at the conclusion of the New Zealand tour he

will have a month's rest and then will play in various parts of the States until next May, when he will go to Europe. Zakin has been with Stern since the former came to America from Europe seven years ago. They had become the best of friends, Stern said.

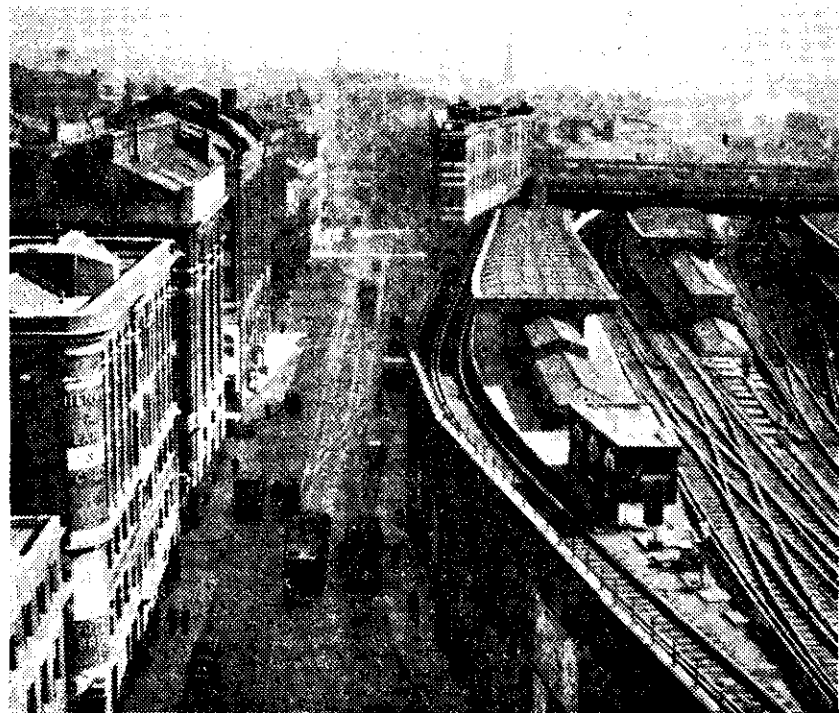
Stern brought with him two violins—a Guarnerius and a Guadagnini—their monetary value running into five figures.

It was with the former that the violinist was practising when a *Listener* representative called upon him at the Auckland Town Hall the morning after his arrival. Both Stern and Zakin were smoking as they practised, Stern with his mouth twisted to keep the cigarette away from his violin. Without interrupting his piece he invited a photographer to "come and take us while we are doing some so-called work," and still not stopping playing he walked round the piano and asked his NZBS manager to investigate some missing trunks. Nor did the movements of radio technicians adjusting microphones, stage hands fixing the lights, nor various people wandering in and out of the hall cause any annoyance to the players nor interrupt their playing.

Between pieces, Stern posed for a photograph, gave a brief interview, told an apocryphal joke about Sir Thomas Beecham and the player of a very ancient instrument producing very rude sounds, "ragged" Zakin, and asked his manager to arrange for dinner after the concert that evening.

But when Stern was instructing Zakin how to cut off a frayed hair from his bow, he was as serious and anxious as a fond mother watching her small child being operated upon, and even though he was not taking the practice very seriously at that stage, his music was a firm promise of what he was later to give at his concerts.

LONDON RIVER—New Talks Series



AFTER 17 years of attending to the handling and distribution of New Zealand's dairy produce for the New Zealand Government with the Port of London Authority, Frank H. Taylor has got to know the City and its river and docks extremely well. And by way of widening his experience, he travelled, in the Robert Gibbings's style, the length of the River Thames from its source to its mouth. Before he left this country he managed a dairy factory in Southland and later was a dairy instructor for the Agricultural Department. With all this work behind him, he is well qualified to give a series of talks under the general title of *London River*. The first talk, from 2YA, on Friday, October 3, at 7.12 p.m., will be on London's Docks and Wharves: the next about Tooley Street will be on October 10, and the third, dealing with the River Police, on October 17. There may be a fourth talk, but this has not yet been definitely decided. A photograph of Mr. Taylor appears on page 24.

Left: Looking down on Tooley Street, which will be the subject of F. H. Taylor's second talk