

Roman Totenberg

Professor Emeritus of Music at Boston University

Across the continents and the span of seven decades, violinist Roman Totenberg has been singled out by critics as an outstanding violinist, a sensitive musician and a brilliant teacher. Roman Totenberg was born in Poland in 1911 and made his debut with the Warsaw Philharmonic when he was 11 years old. Soon after his Berlin debut, he was performing with every major European orchestra, making recordings and eventually playing with major orchestras in the United States, at the White House and the Library of Congress. His work as a chamber music performer was widely acclaimed when he played regularly with the New Friends of Music in New York and in 1940 when he became Director of live chamber music concerts for New York radio station WQXR. As a young artist he toured South America with Arthur Rubinstein and met composer Darius Milhaud after Totenberg's Paris debut which Milhaud had reviewed. More than two decades later, Totenberg, with the composer conducting, would play a premiere performance of Milhaud's 2nd Violin Concerto in Aspen, Colorado and in Berlin with the Berlin Philharmonic. These concerts were among a number of first performances of composers' works that Totenberg would play over the years.

Totenberg continues performing as a soloist with orchestra in recital and in chamber music concerts. As his reputation for concert performances has grown, so too has his reputation for fine teaching and musical expertise. In 1983, he was named Artist Teacher of the Year by the American String Teachers Association. Currently teaching at Boston University, he headed the String Department there from 1961 to 1978. He taught at the Mannes School of Music in New York, headed the string department of the Peabody Conservatory of Music, Baltimore, and the Longy School of Music which he was the Director from 1978 to 1985.

His summers have blended teaching and performing. Since 1975 he has played and taught chamber music in Kneisel Hall at Blue Hill, Maine. Prior to that he taught and played at the Tanglewood Festival, the Aspen Music Festival, the Music Academy of the West and Salzburg's Mozarteum. Totenberg has recorded under various labels including Musical Heritage, Vanguard, Deutsche Grammophon (DGG), Telefunken, Philips and De Camera. In 1989, a compact disc of the Brahms and Lipsinki violin concerti was released under the Titanic label. It was on the list of that year's outstanding recordings.

In 1992, two Totenberg compact discs were released: the Ernest Bloch Violin Concerto and Bartok's Rhapsody for Violin and Orchestra and Beethoven's Violin concerto with Szymanowski's Violin Concerto No. 1 Opus 35.

In 1988, Mr. Totenberg was awarded a medal of merit by the Polish government for his life-long cultural contributions to Polish society.

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