TRIBUTE

Zvi Zeitlin: Portrait of an Artist

Zvi Zeitlin, who died in May at age 90, was among the finest violinists of the 20th century. Born in Russia, he emigrated with his parents to Israel when he was 2, and to the United States to study at Juilliard when he was 12. In 1951, he made his performance debut in New York City, followed by years of touring with almost every major orchestra in the world, and fostering friendships with fellow musical icons such as Igor Stravinsky and Itzhak Perlman. In 1967, he joined the Eastman School faculty, where in 1974 he became the school’s first Kilbourn Professor and in 1998 was named Distinguished Professor of Violin.

The following is based on an essay I wrote as a freshman in Mr. Zeitlin’s studio. The student described is not just me, but every student touched by Mr. Zeitlin.

—Gregory Perrin ’12, ’12

Room 309, Eastman School of Music, is alive with creative fire.

Imposing file cabinets burst with scores and handwritten letters from legendary composers and musicians. Near a towering bookcase of LPs, a poster announces a concert long ago: Raphael Kubelik conducts the devilishly difficult Schoenberg violin concerto, with soloist Zvi Zeitlin.

In his antique cushioned chair, wearing his dark blue sweater vest, Professor Zeitlin, after play!” shouts Zeitlin. “Don’t just copy me! But that is better. Use your imagination and phrase according to the harmony and what the composer wrote.”

All this criticism, distilled from a lifetime of performing and teaching at the highest levels, is painful to students. Yet any observer is likely to sense Zeitlin’s deep love—a ferocious love—for his students.

To conclude two hours of incisive instruction and commentary, Zeitlin says, calmly, “I am on your side. But I am preparing you for the people who aren’t.”

In Memoriam

Alumni

Louise Davids Rickers ’31, April 2012
Doris Wilson Vickery ’32, April 2012
Alice Vanderbilt Del Junco ’34, March 2012
Ruth Simpson Hartwell ’34E, April 2012
Margaret Wright ’34, ’38 (MS), March 2012
Lorraine Woolston ’36E, ’41E (MM), April 2012
Ethel Griffiths Leary ’38E, May 2012
Margaret Willers Mabie ’38, April 2012
Robert A. Rosevear ’39E, ’43E (MM), April 2012
Clara Bates Allen ’41, May 2012

Lorene Carpenter Osborn ’41E, ’44E (MM), May 2012
Frank G. Stewart ’42E, May 2012
William L. Greer ’43M (MD), April 2012
Robert L. Swan ’44E, March 2012
Robert J. Ferris ’45, April 2012
John B. Flick ’45M (MD), March 2012
Alice Hopkins Foster ’45, ’48M (MD), October 2011
Lewis Hogg ’45M (MD), November 2011
Jean Hamilton Johns ’45, March 2012
Gordon Shillinglaw ’46, ’48S (MBA), March 2012
Bruce L. Brown ’47M (MD), April 2012
Stanley D. Gauger ’47E, January 2012

Helen Tappan Shaddix ’47E, April 2012
Margaret Atherton Utegg ’47N, May 2012
Ruth Woodcock Willet ’47, February 2011
Lois Mann Easton ’48, May 2012
Donald H. Porter ’48, January 2012
Robert T. Redden ’48 (Mas), May 2012
Roland L. Wheele ’48, April 2012
Edward J. Farrell ’49, ’53 (Mas), April 2012
William E. McKee ’50E (MM), September 2011
John D. Murphy ’50, ’53 (MA), February 2012
Robert D. Newton ’50, April 2012
Neil E. Pfouts ’50 (Mas), May 2012