
GABRIEL BANAT [9/23/1926 – 7/23/2016]

BANAT—Gabriel.

Noted virtuoso violinist, 23-year member of the New York Philharmonic, musicologist, author, teacher, and holocaust survivor, Gabriel Banat died suddenly of a stroke at his summer home in Begur, Spain on July 23, 2016 in his 89th year. Born in Timisoara, Romania, he began his studies of the violin at age six. At age nine he was heard by Bela Bartok. As a result he became a student at the Royal Academy Franz List in Budapest, Hungary where his teachers included Ede Zathureczky and Zoltan Kodaly. Despite Hungary's anti-Jewish laws, while still a student at the Academy he appeared as soloist with most of Budapest's major symphony orchestras. At 17, just before going into hiding from the Nazis, he received his Academy diploma after playing his degree program in secret, with the faculty-jury hiding in the darkened hall. Liberated by the Red Army, he became the protege of Enescu, who joined him at the piano in concerts. After reaching the U.S. he worked with Nathan Milstein, then toured the U.S., Western Europe, and Japan, soloing with major orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, which he joined in 1970 and remained with for 23 years. As a chamber musician he performed with the Galimir Quartet, the Albeneri Trio, the Marlboro Festival, and the New York Philharmonic Chamber Ensembles, among others. He edited a six-volume collection of violinist-composers of the 17th and 18th centuries titled "Masters of the Violin". Discovering Mozart's original autograph manuscripts of his five violin concerti, he edited their facsimile publication as "The Mozart Violin Concerti" so that violinists could finally see Mozart's original bowing markings. He authored a biography of the Chevalier de St. Georges, the distinguished black French composer- virtuoso violinist of the late 18th century, and contributed articles for Strad Magazine, Allegro Magazine, Black Music Research Journal and "The New Grove 2000". He taught at Smith College and Hart College of Music, lectured at NYU, and headed the violin department of the Westchester Conservatory of Music where he conducted the orchestra. During the painful 1973 New York Philhamonic strike, elected by his colleagues, Banat organized a historic concert tour of Spain and Portugal by members of the orchestra, independent of its management, to enable them to meet their living expenses. He is survived by his wife, Diana Stevenson Banat, his children Catherine Banat and Peter Banat, grandchildren Alexander, Julia, Adam, and Derek, and his step-children Cynthia Wallin, Susannah Brengel and Christopher Brengel. Arrangements for a memorial service are incomplete at this time.

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