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Thank you, Jascha Heifetz, for your Music

Campbell Britton · Wednesday, November 23rd, 2011

Thank you Jascha Heifetz. You set the virtuosic standard for violinists, wore your soul in your instrument and informed my entire lifetime of musical sensibility. I appreciate your mother's courage in venturing outside the Jewish Pale in (Russian) Lithuania to give you training and performance opportunities in the early part of the twentieth century. And her legacy of personal strength in you, as you insisted on artistic freedom even when challenged with Israeli criticism and physical attack, and even though I disagree with your program choice at that time. I am grateful that your family fled the 1917 Russian Revolution and came to settle in the U.S., and that your sensitivity to your adopted homeland enabled a tight friendship and collaboration with George Gershwin.

But most personally, I thank you for hiring my godfather, the late Brooks Smith, as your accompanist in the last decades of your career. You and your glorious fiddle tuned my childhood ears.

(Here's a video with Heifetz playing his own arrangement of Gershwin's *It Ain't Necessarily So*, with Brooks Smith at the piano.)

This entry was posted on Wednesday, November 23rd, 2011 at 5:48 am and is filed under Music
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