

# Postlude . . . . By Ray C. B. Brown

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National Symphony Orchestra, Hans Kindler, conductor; Constitution Hall. American debut of Roman Totenberg, violinist. Program: Overture to "Les Petits Riens" (Mozart), violin concerto in D major (Beethoven), "En Saga" (Sibelius), "Dance of Persian Slave Girls" from "Khovanstchina" (Musorgski).

Returning the compliment that Roman Totenberg paid to the National Capital by choosing to make his American debut here rather than on the Island of Manhattan where first appearances flourish, last night's audience extended a rousing welcome to the young Polish violinist. The demonstration which followed his performance of the Beethoven concerto, recalling him a half dozen times to the stage, was a happy augury for his cordial reception by music lovers elsewhere.

The enthusiasm was fully justified by the artistic talent which the visitor displayed, a talent of fine musicianly fiber, technical expertise, and poetic quality. Mr. Totenberg's tone is eloquently persuasive and endowed with suavity, his clear phrasing bespeaks a keen sense of significant accent, and he has a well controlled temperamental fire. His playing is pervaded with a continuous glow, a steady radiance of timbre which indicates his emotional identity with the music he is disclosing.

In his reading of the concerto, he met with admirable competence the test which this great work places upon technique and interpretation. Other concertos may put greater strain upon virtuosity, but this mas-

terpiece demands for its adequate performance intellectual and spiritual reserves. To cope successfully with its full implications, the musician must be not only a master of his instrument but also somewhat of a seer. Mr. Totenberg read it with intelligence, with warmth, and with conviction.

The few rasps and faults of intonation that came to one's ears one is inclined to lay not to the player's discredit but to the instrument he used. At those rare moments it sounded as though it were not completely in rapport with the player, as though it were not vibrating in every cell responsively as does the violin which has become an extension of the player's personality.

Mr. Totenberg's triumph was preceded on the program by the graceful little overture which Mozart wrote during that sojourn in Paris which ended with one of the great griefs of his life—his mother's death. In the spring of 1778 he had dreams of winning fame with an opera, but he was then innocent of the intriguing ways that lead to stage productions, and all he was able to secure in that line was a commission to write some ballet music for the choreographer, Jean Georges Noverre.

"Les Petits Riens" was put on at the Italian opera as a curtain-raiser for Puccini's opera, "Le Finte Gemelle," and Mozart got no credit for it, because he did not advertise his authorship out of deference to Noverre. After a short run, the ballet went into retirement and the music is seldom heard in these latter days. One thanks Dr. Kindler for bringing the overture back for our delectation.

The stirring "En Saga" of Jean Sibelius was given a satisfyingly sturdy and strong performance. It is a tale of some ancient seafaring Vikings, a story of struggle with wind and waves and of battle on forlorn shores. In its measures are the mystery of the wide waters, the thrill of a landfall, the excitement of contest, and the mourning for the fallen.

In opposition to this saga of hte North was the closing selection from Musorgski's uncompleted opera, a highly orientalized dance brilliant with the orchestration of Rimski-Korsakov.