

TIBERIUS KLAUSNER



Tibor Klausner was 14 years old when he first heard a Gypsy playing the violin in the café next to his father's restaurant in Arad, Romania. Tibor wanted to play too, but his parents couldn't afford a violin then.

When he was 6, a professional musician tested him and confirmed his talent, and he started lessons. From then on, he practiced several hours a day under the watchful eyes and ears of his mother, Miriam Margarita Klausner. For Tibor, recreation meant chess with his older and younger brothers on *Shabbat*.

The Klausners lived in a two-room apartment in the same building as the restaurant operated by his father, Hermann Klausner. Hermann worked long hours, rarely spending time with the family, except for Shabbat. Tibor walked two kilometers to school in cold Romanian winters and went to cheder, Hebrew school, daily. On the way home, he liked to stop at the restaurant for a syrup and pretzel.

From 1939 to 1941, Arad's 6,430 Jews lost their businesses and were forced out of their homes into a ghetto. Hermann Klausner was taken to a labor camp but escaped. Miriam Klausner bought and sold on the black market to support the family. Tibor belonged to a Zionist underground organization. During the last year of the war, the family hid together on farms in the Romanian countryside.

Afterward, 14-year old Tibor escaped Communist Romania to study in Budapest at the Liszt Academy of Music. When he returned to Arad illegally to visit his parents, he was arrested. His father bribed the guard for his release.

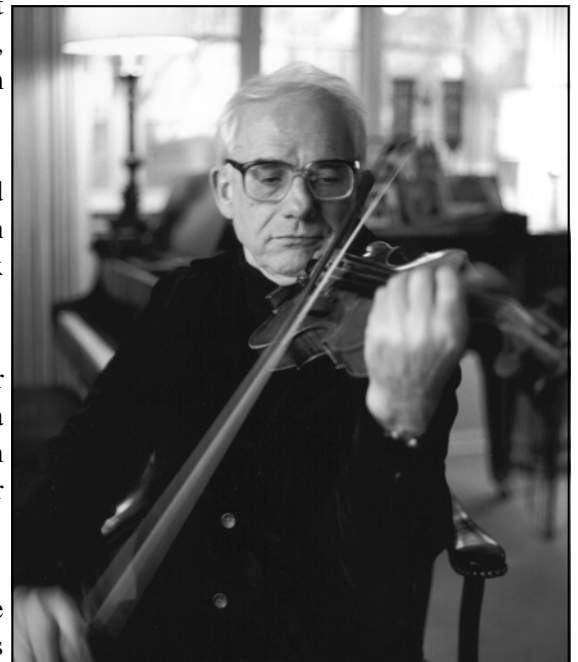
The border closed in 1948, the same year the International Conservatory of Music in Paris accepted Tibor on full scholarship. He added a "s" to the Romanian version of his name, Tiberiu, and was known as Tiberius Klausner. Five years later, after much struggling to obtain a visa, he came to New York to study at the Juilliard School of Music. At the time, he spoke Romanian, Hungarian, German and French, but no English. A part-time job helped him earn the \$25 a week he needed to eat and pay rent.

In 1955, at the age of 23, he joined the Kansas City Philharmonic and became the youngest concertmaster of a major symphony orchestra. When he was drafted in 1957, the Philharmonic arranged for him to serve six months on reserve duty.

In 1959, he met Carla Levine, who was home from college to visit her parents, Ed and Rose. Tiberius was at the house to rehearse for a Congregation Beth Shalom program in which Rose would accompany him on the piano. He and Carla married four years later, after she completed her Ph.D. at Harvard.

He resigned from the Philharmonic in 1967 to accept a professorship at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In 1981, when the Philharmonic was reborn as the Kansas City Symphony, he returned as concertmaster, until his retirement in 1999. Today, he continues to teach, record and perform. He also gets in a little bridge.

The Klausners have three daughters, Danielle and twins Mirra and Serena. Mirra is married to Todd Clauer, and they are the parents of the Klausners' first grandchild, Haidee.



Portrait by David Sosland

Excerpt from *From the Heart: Life Before and After the Holocaust ~ A Mosaic of Memories*

© 2001 Midwest Center for Holocaust Education