

THE ADAMANTER

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Reflections from the President – 2022 Reopening



I was thinking about all that has happened in the past year. We managed to reopen against what I would call long odds: our campus had been closed for two years and our Board was completely new to the idea of running the school and we had no

transition period to learn procedures and, in general, how everything on our “vintage” campus worked. Would our student base even remember the Adamant Music School? Our new treasurer, Steve Boyce, had the appropriate advice: when you enter a disaster area with no idea how to start, you just go from piece to piece, trying to make order out of the chaos, and keep at it.

By the early spring, we had hired our office administrator, Chelsea, and, of course, our director with over 20 years of experience as an Adamant faculty member, Matthew Manwarren. We hired a property manager to oversee things. Our neighbor, Eric Ryea, had already begun to prove himself to be our guardian angel, with his daily walks around the village, keeping an eye on buildings, letting us know if a light had been left on, or a door unlocked, as well as always being available to talk to me to discuss possible solutions to our substantial physical plant needs. We discovered the stark reality of hiring employees in a beautiful rural area: there are not a lot of people, and even fewer qualified workers, and even fewer that are available to work.

We publicized our programs. We engaged a website editor to make our creaky old website at least a little more user friendly.

It turns out that our base of students and faculty was eager to get back to Adamant. By April, the applications were rolling in, and our concern became not “Will they come?” but, “They’re coming! Will we be ready?” The water had not been turned on in any building since October of 2019. We were performing substantial renovations to Barney and Henry and could not even start to get the water flowing until June 1, a terrifying 25 days before the arrival of our first class, the O’Conor masterclass. The kitchen of Barney was nowhere near compliance with commercial kitchen requirements, our electric systems were, in many places, in an unsafe condition. Many of the steps to our practice studios were no longer in good repair, for example.

Our large Toyota Tundra truck was put to use. Your new Board President, unaccustomed to the rural world of Washington County, Vermont, put on his Adamant Music School baseball cap, hauled himself into the cab of this truck and discovered the range of excellent stores and contractors around us.

We hired Noah for his carpentry skills to repair those steps and put up some handrails. Noah and I spent lots of time in that truck picking up lumber and supplies. I drove it to Williston, VT to pick up the badly needed commercial kitchen sink so that our plumber could get our kitchen up to

code. We hired Annie to be our chef, and she could not wait to start. The truck was used to move furniture around campus. We hired trash haulers to remove mountains of, yes, trash from around our campus.

Eric spent time with me explaining how the water gets turned on. We turned on the water in the Quarry Annex and realized that a new water heater was needed. Every day had its set of newfound obstacles.

Our new piano technician Cameron Steinmetz, replacing Tom McNeil as he retired, had the daunting task of bringing those 43 pianos back into condition. We hired electricians to install code-compliant smoke detectors. Our plumber, Bob, got the kitchen in shape, and installed water heaters, replaced cracked toilets, checked leaky pipes as the water started to flow, helped arrange for the installation of a new pressure tank in Barney, and was available to work on the host of other plumbing issues that arose.

Finally, the last week of June came, and our first class arrived, putting our campus to the test. John O'Connor was gracious as he took one look at the furnishings in The Common and reported to me and Matt that more work was needed. We took a trip to Walmart to get what we could to spruce the place up – and it is a testament to the magic of Adamant to report that John, pushing a shopping cart, helped out in this shopping expedition.



Victor Rosenbaum, guest teacher for Traditional Session

Having the students back, hearing practicing through the trees, seeing the students walk around, scores in hand, talking, laughing, made these past 24 months of endless, numbing anxiety, all worth it. Of course, there were still many wrinkles to work out, but not a single participant lost their excitement to be back or their willingness to return next summer. I cannot express my gratitude sufficiently in writing for all the students and faculty who made this reopening year such an enormous success.

I want to express my deep thanks to Matt Manwarren, who brought a feeling of joy and excitement to the place as we reopened. He hired a magnificent faculty, and our Traditional Session was a time a rebirth and energy. My sincerest thanks to Roberta, Franklin, Deirdre, Elaine, and Jose for their work and friendliness. Our masterclass teachers, John O'Connor and Chris Elton brought many new and returning students. We had two new masterclasses. Lucie Robert, violin, and Jeffrey Cohen, piano, both former students of Menahem Pressler, ushering in a program of chamber music as well as solo repertoire. Angela Cheng and Alvin Chow also began to build on the Pressler heritage. All our masterclass teachers are eager to return.

I was also so impressed with Victor Rosenbaum, who came to the Traditional Sessions for two days. His excellent teaching was driven by his encouragement, wonderful and encyclopedic knowledge of the repertoire, and his immediate affection for Adamant, both the village and the school. I look forward to seeing him for many years to come.

The community showed up in numbers to support the school for our concerts. Rick Winston and Janet MacLeod made the Community Club, a beautiful building, and our original concert hall, ready for us. Eric built a ramp so that folks would not have to negotiate stairs. Linda, our housekeeper, brought some rugs to help mute the echo. It is also difficult for me to express my gratitude in writing for this amazing show of love for the school from our neighbors in the Montpelier area.

I must end this message with a statement of the obvious: we need to keep the momentum going. All the work we did was not cheap, the tuition we charge will never be able to pay the true cost of their attendance. I ask the readers of this article to consider a generous donation – we need every penny.

See you next summer!

Alex Last, President

Students of all ages attend the August masterclasses

Jeffrey Cohen and Lucie Robert Masterclass

On Aug. 9-13 Jeffrey Cohen and Lucie Robert of the Manhattan School of Music led a new offering at Adamant, a masterclass for both piano solo and piano/violin duo. Jeffrey taught the solo pianists in repertoire including the *Visions Fugitives* by Prokofieff, a Scherzo and Ballade by Chopin, Preludes Op. 32 by Rachmaninoff, Four Lieder by Fanny Mendelssohn, two movements from Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, arranged by the student performer, and other works by Liszt and Beethoven.



Lucie worked with the duos privately, and then both she and Jeffrey teamed up in masterclass to coach violin/piano sonatas by Mozart, Beethoven, Richard Strauss and César Franck. Concert audiences responded enthusiastically to the mix of solo and chamber repertoire.



Oberlin students YingQi Wang, Qianhui Dai and (standing) Jiongli Wang

This class held the widest age range, from 14 years old to 92. It made no difference to a group delighting in the joy of making music together.

Angela Cheng and Alvin Chow Masterclass

Adamant welcomed Angela Cheng and Alvin Chow of Oberlin College & Conservatory for the final masterclass of the season. The pair alternated in teaching the works of Bach, Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, Liszt, Scriabin, Ravel, Medtner, and Rachmaninoff. Auditors treated the class to a "Free-for-All" presentation of wide-ranging repertoire, concluding with a memorable performance of Chopin's Nocturne in E-flat by Angela Cheng.



Ty Promreuk and Tatyana Palmer had attended the Adamant Traditional Session when they were pre-college students. Now they are music majors at the Eastman School of Music and McGill University, respectively. Mike Preddy, Anita Humer, Vickie von Arx and Coordinator Elaine Greenfield had participated in Adamant classes for decades, with Elaine and Mike going all the way back to 1967 and 1968 when Edwine Behre was heading the school.



2nd row: Alvin Chow, Vickie von Arx, Ty Promreuk, Mike Preddy, Angela Cheng, Tatyana Palmer. 1st row: Janet Finch, Sandra Webster, Alex Last, Anita Humer.

We have re-established in the magic in the air!

One day at the Co-op, I ran into Eric Ryea, former Adamant Music School groundskeeper. With a lot of feeling in his voice, he said, “We have re-established the magic in the air!” No wonder. After the school’s two year shutdown, village residents can now hear strains of Chopin, Beethoven, and Liszt floating on the breeze all day long. That, with the promise of concerts at the end of the week: this is magic for those who live at Adamant.



Deidre O'Donohue Masterclass Students, General Session

There was magic for the performers, as well. This is what ZiAn, a Traditional Session student wrote to his teacher, Dr. Deirdre O'Donohue:

It still feels like waking up from a beautiful dream for me. I keep thinking of all the memories from Adamant, especially the time I had with the O'Donohue Studio. Before Adamant, I was used to practicing the piano just because I needed to do that and I almost forgot why I am doing all this. When I was having lessons with you, all I saw was a person who devoted all [of] herself into the music and was really enjoying it. I could feel that you really wanted to let us know the right way to practice and perform no matter what level we were at. It's all about love and music -- That's what I found in Adamant. I am very honored and grateful to have spent a wonderful time with all of you there. . . .

This summer was the first at Adamant for Janet Finch, a piano teacher and church musician from Kentucky, attending the Angela Cheng & Alvin Chow masterclass. She said “This is such a time of restoration and putting back into ourselves that which the world has taken out. Here we can return to what we were originally made to be!”

Mike Preddy, a student of Edwine Behre herself when he first attended as a teenager in 1967, commented, “There’s no place like this. It is Frank [Suchomel’s] dream and Edwine’s child come to life. For many younger students this may be a transit stop, but for us (established musicians), it is a destination. This is what a life in music is all about.”



Jeffrey Cohen Masterclass

And finally, longtime Adamant participant and supporter Victoria von Arx exclaimed, “I knew it would be wonderful, but it turned out to be many more degrees of wonderful than I ever imagined!”

Thanks to all the faculty, staff and students who made it happen.

Barbara Kudirka, Vice President

Adamant Music School featured on NPR's "All Things Considered"

The Adamant Music School was recently featured in a radio segment with Vermont Public Radio reporter Erica Heilman. Erica did an interview for VPR that ran on Aug. 30 on National Public Radio's afternoon news show, "All Things Considered," featuring Artistic Executive Director Matthew Manwarren, and Traditional Session faculty members Dr. Deirdre O'Donohue and Elaine Greenfield. You can hear the piece here—just click the link.

<https://www.vermontpublic.org/local-news/2022-08-30/this-school-in-tiny-adamant-has-been-a-haven-for-international-pianists-for-80-years>



Ice cream social during the Jeffrey Cohen/Lucie Robert piano and violin masterclass in August, 2022.



Adamant General Session (July 16 – August 6, 2022) teachers and students in front of Barney Hall



Head chef, Annie Finegan (right) and Sage Kennedy, in the dining room of Barney Hall, showcasing another appetizing presentation for Adamant teachers and students

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