

The Adamanter

THE ADAMANT MUSIC SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

May 2020

In this Issue —

- Benefit Concert in New York City postponed to Saturday evening, October 10th.
- Quarantine News and Photos from the Adamant World.
- An Essay reflecting on the power of Adamant

“To Be There Again...”

Barbara Kudirka

The Adamant Music School is beloved by all who are a part of it. We think of the master teachers, gorgeous pianos, hours of practice, repertoire learned and polished . . . so rich!

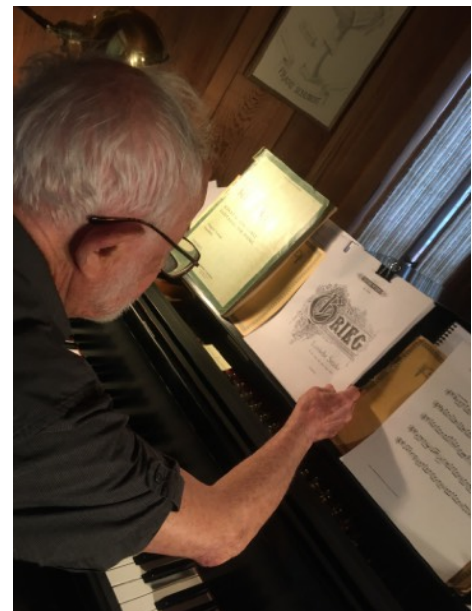
Yet there is more--layers of experience enabling us to walk away refreshed and revitalized. Like a retreat center, Adamant offers renewal for the whole of our being through its natural beauty, its invitation to do creative work, and the opportunity to form meaningful relationships.

The woods, the flowers, the meadow, the waterfall! At Adamant we can connect directly with Mother Earth--her beauty, her peace and the powerful life force surging unseen through flora and fauna. We read that taking a ‘forest bath’ benefits our health, and walking barefoot through the grass improves our immune system. Who hasn’t felt an uplift gazing at flowers, sitting near running water or looking at the starry sky? Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Liszt and so many other great composers were deeply tied to Nature. At Adamant, we have a chance to live in spirit with them, being as close to the natural world as they might have been. Could this give us deeper insight into their works?

continued on next page



In mid-April, Matt Meade took this photo of Barney Hall, while standing near the Adamant Pond dam. Vermont’s governor has enacted the “Stay Home/ Stay Safe” policy, effective until May 15th at the earliest.



Dick Sogg, a Menahem Pressler student, nursing an injured left shoulder, is working on Edvard Grieg’s ‘Solvejgs Lied’ from Peer Gynt Suite for right hand alone.

"To Be There Again...", continued

A wise person once said to me, "When you practice the piano you are praying, because you truly express your deepest self to the great Mystery and Source from where you have come." We enter a spiritual place when ego steps aside and we lose ourselves to the music we have been privileged to play. The tranquil solitude of Adamant's practice studios offers sanctuary where our souls can be fed.

If we never knew how important community was, we know it now during this isolating pandemic. Can you picture Barney Hall filled with delighted faces, laughter and happy chatter? Did we ever know what a gift it was to slip easily into the happy milieu of engaging piano-loving friends? Old friends, new friends, auditors, teachers, performers--all are welcome here. Such a supportive community feeds our individual and collective souls.

April 2020

Matt's Hard at Work***Peter Dugan, Host of NPR's "From the Top", Remembers Adamant***

"My summer experience, in 2008, at Adamant was unlike any other. The idyllic setting is conducive to the very best kind of learning and music-making. I distinctly remember my quiet evening walks down wooded paths to get to my practice cabin, where I could work uninterrupted for hours on a beautiful instrument. The intimate size created a sense of community that was incredibly supportive and never competitive. I made lifelong friends after just one week. We got to know our world-class instructors as people and artists, and we formed lasting bonds with them. I still find myself drawing on lessons I learned that summer over a decade ago in my own teaching and performing today."



Matt's starting to wake up flower beds, clean up trees, rake lawns, and reset stones. More pics to come!

John O'Connor Quarantines in Sunshine State

Hoping to return to Ireland in mid-May, and disappointed by Adamant's suspended summer, John told Noah Hardaway recently, "I can't even remember how many years I have been going to Adamant." He remembered, "I think it's 15 years but it may be more. I went first for a weekend giving a couple of masterclasses and a recital of the last three Beethoven Sonatas. Frank Suchomel and I got on so well together that he invited me to come back the next year to do five days of masterclasses."



Elaine Greenfield Continues to Teach in Vermont and Record Ravel

Traditional Session teacher Elaine Greenfield, an Adamanter since the 1960s, is pictured above running a class during a recent summer at Adamant. She writes, "At present, during the Covid-19 pandemic, I am teaching private lessons and conducting monthly classes online! My Ravel recording project is in the editing stage, so I continue with that as well at home, and meet with the editor/masterer as soon as the situation is safe. Concerts are either cancelled or, hopefully, rescheduled until we return to some semblance of normalcy. It is so sad not to have Adamant to look forward to this summer. Just as everyone else, my life has been thrown into turmoil and demands readjustment. It is wonderful to contemplate being with students and colleagues again in Adamant, 2021."



John O'Connor with Alex Last in 2015

John regrets that, in this, Beethoven's 250th birthday year, so many of his concerts and lectures have been cancelled: Canada, the U.S., Japan, and Ireland, of course. He hopes that a recital in Aspen will take place on August 20th.

continued on following page

John O'Connor, continued

Recalling his many summers in Vermont, John continued, "The Adamant experience is unique. It seems to be in the middle of nowhere. As a result one can wander in the woods, swim in the lake, practice all hours of the day and night (in all these amazing little cabins with their own pianos) and use Barney Hall as a meeting place for a coffee, a debate or just to hang out. The meals are wonderful and everybody involved with the place makes you feel like family the instant you arrive. The camaraderie between the participants is wonderful and lifelong friendships have blossomed from the experience.

I will miss Adamant terribly this summer but I hope that we will all be back together again in 2021 when we will treasure its magic all the more."

April 2020



Dorien Spelbrink, a John O'Connor student, is "currently working on my three year or forever project of playing through all the WTC preludes and fugues and learning them to some satisfaction (my morning ritual, very comforting in these times), Chopin Op. 10, No. 3, and Beethoven's Tempest. All great music!"

Ben Laude, '06-'08 Alumnus, Recalls Adamant as 'Formative' Time

Ben recently wrote to Noah Hardaway, who is now assisting Ben at tonebase.

Among the countless music festivals I've attended in my life, Adamant is special. Looking back on the formative moments that shaped my growth as a musician, my experiences at Adamant Music School are at the top of the list. Between my sophomore and junior years of college, I spent a month at Adamant attending the Traditional Session. So enamored with the environment, I returned

the following two years for Master Class Sessions. In my three summers at Adamant, I met peers and mentors who proved to be central figures in my life, including one of my best friends, Peter Dugan, recently named host of *From the Top*. Peter and I met at the John O'Connor master class in 2008, and just recently I had the privilege of reconnecting and collaborating with John to produce masterclass videos of Beethoven and Haydn sonatas.

continued on following page

Ben Laude, continued

But Adamant did more than help me make a few connections. It provided a community of like-minded individuals dedicated to growing as pianists together, without pride or competitiveness, in a serene, healing environment tucked away in the Green Mountains. The camaraderie I felt for my peers was like nothing I have ever experienced – eating together, bunking together, swimming and hiking together, doing chores together, and visiting each other's practice cabins to talk music. It was dreamlike, the whole thing, and to this day I carry my memories of Adamant with me as sources of strength and inspiration. It's an unforgettable place.

The Adamanter

welcomes and needs contributions from all members of the Adamant community. Please let us know what all of you are up to, and please include photos. Send everything to alex.last@yahoo.com.

This edition would not have been possible without the efforts of the Adamant Project Committee, Noah Hardaway, chair. Noah solicited many of the stories for this edition.

We hope to publish another edition by mid-June.

THE EDITORIAL STAFF

Christopher Elton is ready for Adamant in '21

Chris has been an Adamant masterclass teacher since 2018, and spoke recently with Noah Hardaway

From the moment I arrived at Adamant, I felt so engaged by its atmosphere and ethos - by its rare sense of being a genuine "community" and of the rich musical results created by staff and students genuinely sharing the experience. I have never taught a course where there was such a total absence of any "competitive" feeling between participants, and for this reason everyone benefited - and also clearly found almost equal pleasure in observing the progress of their peers as in their own musical experience.

One of my own Royal Academy students told my wife that she had never - in the course of three years - seen me SO relaxed and so clearly loving every minute of my time teaching and soaking up the musical, social and environmental benefits and joy of Adamant. I breathed differently in this amazing rural landscape. I will miss everything so much- those behind the organization are wonderful and selfless, and the students are a very special group of people who really CARE about music.

So thanks to all, and let us hope that 2020 is but a short hiatus in "the Adamant experience"!

Adamant Benefit Concert Postponed Until October 10th

The Annual Benefit Concert, which had originally been scheduled for June 6th, will take place - we hope! - on Saturday, October, 10th, in the evening, at the same venue, The DiMenna Center for Classical Music, in Manhattan. As all of us know, restrictions are in place in New York City that prohibit all public events. As the summer unfolds, we will learn if an event of this type, in a hall that holds 150 people, will be safe for all. We look forward to hearing the playing of Alexandra Eames, Ilya Friedberg, Elaine Greenfield, Noah Hardaway, Franklin Larey, Matthew Manwarren, Marina Mitsuta, and Janice Nimetz.

A Note from Florida

Dear Adamanters--Warmest greetings! These extraordinarily difficult and challenging times encourage me to treasure the Adamant Music School even more. Recalling golden memories of inspiring music, caring and supportive friends, and amazing natural surroundings lifts my heart. I draw strength from thinking about returning to Adamant and continuing our long standing traditions while thriving in a changing world. I miss all of you and look forward seeing you when it is possible. Until then my thoughts are with everyone to stay safe and healthy.

We are already looking forward to writing the June Adamanter. If you were a performer last summer at the Traditional Session or Mr. Pressler's Master Class, would you be willing to write a short (or as long as you wish) article about it. If you would like to write an article on any music or school related topic, we would love to hear about it. How are you coping with teaching/classes/lessons during this time? We would welcome any thoughts you have to share. Please send all of your ideas and comments to alex.last@yahoo.com.

Janet Yanuklis



William Bellehumeur, George Bowerman, and William Hume outside of Waterside Hall just before an evening concert during the John O'Connor masterclass week of 2015.



Mark Jaffe, an O'Connor student, is working on Brahms Op. 118 No. 2 and Schubert Sonata D. 959. He sends his best wishes from Florida.

Elaine Wright, who has performed in the masterclasses of John O'Connor and Christopher Elton, gave a recital on February 29th. Elaine is a resident of Winchester, Va., the home of Shenandoah University, where John is a Distinguished Artist-in-Resident, Chair of the Keyboard Division, and Professor of Piano. Elaine reports that John "heard some very good things. [I performed] a Scarlatti Sonata, Mozart Sonata in D major, K 311; Beethoven, Opus 109, and a Chopin group, which included three Etudes and the Third Ballade. It felt really good to have given this recital."



[Click here](#) to use PayPal to donate to the Adamant Music School, to become a Sustaining Member, or to find tax information about donations.

Please consider donating at the following levels:

<i>Prelude</i>	<i>at least \$25</i>
<i>Fugue</i>	<i>\$50 or greater</i>
<i>Rondo</i>	<i>\$100 or greater</i>
<i>Allegro de Concert</i>	<i>\$250 or greater</i>
<i>Sonata</i>	<i>\$500 or greater</i>
<i>Concerto</i>	<i>\$1,000 or greater</i>