

Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival

THE SOUTHAMPTON PRESS/AUGUST 16, 2001

Kids Get a Stellar Lesson in Composing

By Fred Volkmer

With its unique capacity to integrate itself into the community, the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festival has been offering educational "Kids' Concerts" along with its usual programming at the Bridgehampton Presbyterian Church. This is a wonderful opportunity for any child to be introduced to the language of classical music.

On Tuesday, August 7, not only was the audience young, but so was the featured artist, Athena Adamopoulos. Besides being a prize-winning pianist, the 14-year-old Miss Adamopoulos is a composer. Tuesday's program included the world premiere of her Trio No. 1 in G minor, Op. 1, No. 2 that was the centerpiece of program. The artists who performed it were violinist Alexander Simionescu, cellist Melissa Meell, and pianist Jeremy Denk. For the last two years Miss Adamopoulos has participated in the Perlman String program in East Hampton and Shelter Island and performed with them in the Mostly Mozart festival.

But the young man who made it all understandable to young minds was teaching artist David Wallace. Mr. Wallace, who taught so memorably last year, is back. A member of the faculty of Juilliard and Sarah Lawrence College, he has a dual career as soloist and as teaching artist. Among other things, he is a teaching artist for the New York Philharmonic and the Lincoln Center Institute.

With the aid of a child's metallophone—junior cousin to the xylophone, each tone of which is color coded—he asked for colors from the children in the audience which Miss

Adamopoulos then notated, creating a short melody. Mr. Wallace suggested that the audience could improve on the melody by adding harmony. Miss Adamopoulos then played several chords on the piano, on which the children voted. This little segment was then played by the three performers, the audience having created a short trio. The children suggested ways that the music could be made more exciting.

At another point in the program there were a half dozen musicians scattered throughout the sanctuary, each of whom was given a theme from Miss Adamopoulos's Trio. With the aid of children brandishing percussion instruments, they were told to play fast or slow, loud or soft, and we heard something that sounded not unlike bedlam. We were then invited to see how Miss Adamopoulos handled those themes.

As for Miss Adamopoulos's Trio, it was quite simply lovely. The first movement, with a brief propulsive

opening theme, gives way to something hauntingly beautiful and mournful, as though the young composer had autumn in her heart, rising finally to a crescendo of excitement. The second movement, marked andantino, had a dreamy, abstracted quality Miss Adamopoulos described it as "floaty." And the final tarantella was infectiously lively.

Miss Adamopoulos said that this last movement was inspired by a violinist friend who liked to play fast and loud. The trio of musicians treated the work as respectfully as if it were by Mendelssohn, giving it the kind of bravura performance that must have thrilled Miss Adamopoulos, as it did the audience. It seemed an extraordinarily mature and accomplished work for someone so young, who at one point in the questioning said, as precocious philosophically as she was musically: "I didn't choose to become a composer. It chose me." How fortunate for the rest of us.



KIRSHBAUM DEMLER & ASSOCIATES, INC.

711 WEST END AVENUE SUITE 5KN NEW YORK NY 10025

212 222 1212 TEL 212 222 7722 FAX 212 222 1500